

**EPHEMERA IN LITERATURES
AND LITERARY WORKS
OF IRELAND AND BANGLADESH:
PEOPLE'S NARRATIVES OF
MARTYRDOM**

Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Arts of Jadavpur University in
partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English**

by

KUSUMITA DATTA

Supervisor

Dr. Santanu Biswas

Professor, Department of English

Jadavpur University

Department of English

Jadavpur University

2023

Certified that the Thesis entitled

Ephemera in literatures and literary works of Ireland and Bangladesh: People's narratives of martyrdom submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my own work carried out under the supervision of Professor Santanu Biswas of Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata; and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

To *Maa* and *Dada*, for everything.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EPHEMERA HOLDINGS	
Ephemera archives at libraries and museums	
ECNIPC	Ephemera Collection, Northern Ireland Political Collection (Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
EHIRHM	Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum (Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
GTAM	1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum (Khulna, Bangladesh)
HA	Heritage Archives (Rajshahi, Bangladesh)
LWM	Liberation War Museum (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
NIPC	Northern Ireland Political Collection (Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
PANIPC	Political Artefacts, Northern Ireland Political Collection (Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
PECPM	Political Ephemera Collection of Peter Moloney (Tower Museum, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
TICR	Troubled Images CD-ROM (2001, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
Ephemera holdings at museum displays	
BNM	Bangladesh National Museum (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
DAHNM	Decorative Arts and History, National Museum of Ireland (Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
UM	Ulster Museum (Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
Ephemera holdings at memorial sites, organisations and individual collections	
FSBTC	Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
JKM	Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
MMC	Muntassir Mamoon Collection (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
MMCR	Martyrs' Memorial Collection, University of Rajshahi (Rajshahi, Bangladesh)
<i>Projonmo'71</i>	Projonmo'71 (Children of the Martyrs of Liberation War) (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Ephemera holdings at souvenir shops	
GPOMGS	GPO Museum Gift shop (Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
SFS	Sinn Féin shop (Falls Road, West Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
UJSS	Union Jack Souvenir shop (Newtownards Road, East Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)
POLITICAL GROUPS, PARTIES, ORGANISATIONS AND COUNTRIES	
AL	Awami League
BJI	Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EP	East Pakistan
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IRBG	Irish in Britain Representation Group
MLWA	Ministry of Liberation War Affairs
NGA	National Graves Association
NI	Northern Ireland
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
PFC	Pat Finucane Centre
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SF	Sinn Féin
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

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INTRODUCTION

As the world engages in fresh debates regarding the meaning of nationalism, patriotism and exile along with the notions of divisiveness, fanaticism and at-homeness, the language of martyrdom has witnessed an upsurge in its continuation, contestation and confusion, especially in the context of the confluence of martyrdom with religious intolerance and secular terrorism. This comparative study aims to evaluate the different and yet complementary martyr traditions in one country in the West (Ireland) and in another in South Asia (Bangladesh) to explore how the sacred–secular martyr framework operates during and after times of political conflict. The study focused on specific metaphors of socio-cultural exchange in the martyr traditions of the two cultures and attempted to unravel the words ‘martyr’ and ‘martyrdom’ through their use by people in relation to everyday objects (ephemera) and processes in Ireland and Bangladesh.

A. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Martyrdom is a contested issue, and martyrs have long been the subject of debates and controversies. In the process of martyrs gaining fame or being brought into disrepute, or only being framed as such, we overlook the small objects of everyday life associated with martyrs and martyrdom movements. This research will focus on those objects and processes through which people create, debate and remember martyrs and martyrdom movements. Ephemera are minor, transient documents of everyday life that are not intended to survive after serving their immediate purpose; that is, they only exist briefly. However, when preserved, they can provide a rich resource for understanding

martyrdom and its afterlives because although they originate from the martyr or the martyrdom movement, they reverberate differently and severally later. A study of ephemera is most useful for exploring martyrdom as a continual and connected narrative. This study will examine the role of ephemera related to body, rituals, religion, historical struggles, philosophy, government, politics, law, death, psychology, gender, class, media, and memory, in disseminating the narratives of martyrdom. These narratives influence one another through transference, interjection, intermingling and replacement in the life of any martyr or martyr narrative to make martyrdom an overused/underused, changed/unchanged and risky/irrelevant concept, all at once. Therefore, it is imperative to identify the exact nature of the sacrifices of people; the word 'martyr' and how people appropriate/misappropriate/deny/confuse/replace it in their everyday lives must be unravelled. In this study, this unravelling was done in the context of undivided Bengal and undivided Ireland, present Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland, and Bangladesh, at the different stages of their post-conflict and post-independence situations. Moreover, this study took place within the context of the peace terms of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and continued clashes, as well as the recent resurgence of violence against the impending backdrop of Brexit and the rise of forces that want NI to cut its ties with the United Kingdom (UK); and in the context of a developing vocabulary of martyrdom in contemporary Bangladesh, where a resurgence of violence in political conflict is occurring against an impending background of rising fundamentalism.

B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Following the development of the research problem discussed above, the study objectives were developed. The **first** study objective was to identify some well-known and less-known figures who have died due to historical and political reasons; however, in this study, they were identified based on their existence and recurrence in ephemera. The **second** objective was to identify the role of ephemera in the representation of martyrs and martyrdom movements and develop a methodology that will bring ephemera and martyrdom studies together.

Ephemera challenge the basic terminology and premises of martyrs and martyrdom as well as their various contexts. The **third** objective of this study was to find novel facts about well-known martyrs and new facts about less-known martyrs in order to understand these figures as individuals not only through an analysis of the considerations, contestations and contexts behind their naming but also by tracing the various disjunctions in each of the people's narratives of martyrdom. Disjunctions are not only present in the basic contestations in the naming and making of martyrs but also in the evolving, continual practices of martyrs and martyrdom as well as in the subversions of these processes. The **fourth** objective was to explore the literary renditions of people's martyrs and ephemera. In this study, 'literary works' include literary writings, artistic works and music; their representation on ephemera and literary works that feature ephemera as central motifs will define several modes of people's martyrology. Additionally, the scope of paper-based literary ephemera was expanded to include print items, visual literary ephemera (such as handkerchief poetry, portrait painting, procession photograph painting and banner painting) and digital items like choric lines of songs in musical video screenshots.

The first four objectives shaped the **fifth** objective, which was to initiate the building of a martyr ephemera archive, constructed from existing religious and political ephemera collections but as a separate category and inclusive of paper-based ephemera, non-paper but transient ephemera, photographs, objects created for short-term use, non-print ephemera where the medium is paint or print but the content is verbal, digital ephemera and country-specific ephemera. Along with this extended range of ephemera, should exist the oral interpretations of ephemera, especially for instances where ephemera have either not been produced, or created ephemera have been destroyed by war and conflict. This constituted the **sixth** objective of this study. The **seventh** and final objective of this study was to assess the relevance of these emergent narratives in contemporary times for the state and society and their role in policy debates.

These research objectives raised several interrelated questions:

1. Why are ephemera and their oral interpretations useful in exploring people's narratives of martyrdom?
2. Where and how are these ephemera and their oral interpretations to be collected?
3. What are the terms used by people to name those who have died due to historical and political reasons? What are their reasons for using these terms?
4. How do ephemera and their oral interpretations enable the formation of these terminologies?
5. How do ephemera and their oral interpretations explore the contexts of people's narratives of martyrdom?
6. How do continuums and subversions of martyrdom explore people's narratives and how are they comparable between the two countries?

7. How do ephemera and literary works interact with one another to represent people's narratives of martyrdom?
8. What is the relevance and use of these narratives in contemporary times?

This study will enable society to understand the language of the sacrificial economy of specific classes. Martyrs, as state and non-state actors and across the rural-urban divide, will be understood through the very everyday documents and artefacts that blur these boundaries. The meaning of patriotism, nationalism and sacrifice, based on a study of the ephemera of martyrs, will create an understanding of plurality derived from a sense of shared objects with shared meaning and memory of everyday existence. There are contesting martyrs across historical, religious and political divides. This study assessed how people simultaneously engage with these contestations in their everyday lives so that society will have more comprehensive knowledge about these contestations and thereby transcend them.

C. OVERVIEW OF EACH CHAPTER

This study addressed the abovementioned questions in five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One addresses the first two questions. It outlines the scope and significance of ephemera and their oral interpretations in generating people's narratives of martyrdom. Consequently, it explores martyr historiography through the following perspectives so that the contextual and interpretative histories of ephemera are grounded in a comparative historical context:

IRELAND	BANGLADESH
Chronological history	
<p>From the folk histories to the decades leading to the emergence of the nation-state and the end of independence struggles, continuing into the post-conflict period and contemporary times—to explore the similarities and differences between them.</p>	<p>From the folk histories to the decades leading to the emergence of the nation-state and the end of independence struggles, continuing into the post-independence period and contemporary times—to explore the similarities and differences between them.</p>
Community history	
<p>Republican, unionist, nationalist, loyalist, Catholic, Protestant, neutral—to explore the similarities and differences between them.</p>	<p>Hindu, Muslim, Bihari, pro-Liberation, anti-Liberation—to explore the similarities and differences between them.</p>
Person-based history	
<p>Key individuals like Saint Oliver Plunkett martyred in 1681, the Manchester Martyrs in 1867, the Drumboe martyrs in 1923, Easter Rising martyrs, the pro- and anti-Treaty martyrs, Bloody Sunday victims, hunger striker martyrs, Gibraltar Martyrs of 1988, disappeared victims and those who sacrificed their lives along with them.</p>	<p>Key individuals like Titu Mir, Surya Sen, martyrs of the 1952 language movement, martyrs Asad and Matiur of 1969 mass uprising, Sheikh Mujib and family, General Zia, martyr Sikdar of the post-independence Mujib regime, Martyr Noor Hossain of the 1987 anti-Ershad protests, Awami League activist martyrs and those who sacrificed their lives along with them.</p>

Events-based history	
Key moments such as Easter 1916, the 1919-1921 War of Independence, martyrs of the civil rights' movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the Troubles from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, the post-Troubles period and the events interspersed between them.	Key moments such as peasants' revolt of 1830s, 1952 Language movement, mass uprising of 1969, 1971 Liberation War, 1987 protest movement against General Ershad's military regime, till the 2013 Shahbag protests and the events interspersed between them.
Party-based history	
Key political parties such as Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist party and the party narratives in people's martyrologies.	Key political parties such as Awami League, Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami and party narratives in people's martyrologies.
Paramilitary organisation-based history	
Key organisations such as the Irish Republican Army, Provisional Irish Republican Army, Ulster Volunteer Force, Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Defence Regiment and how common people die because of the actions of these organisations or due to their involvement with them.	Not existent in Bangladesh.

Table. 1. Various forms of historical explorations to assess the emergence of martyrdom narratives in the comparative context of Ireland and Bangladesh.

The chapter explores the evolution of the concept of martyrdom as well as examines the method used by communities, institutions, political parties and paramilitary

organisations to designate specific individuals as ‘martyrs’, evaluates the reasons for the same so that the depiction of ‘martyrs’ on ephemera may be understood and delineates people’s responses to them. Furthermore, this chapter explores associated ephemera archives in terms of their accessibility, nature, range and plurality and lays out the methodology used to probe the martyr and ephemera narratives. Obtained from social science and literary research, the mixed methodology pertains to the mode of data collection and analysis. All ephemera are closely assessed in terms of their historical context, thematic focus, symbolic connotations and objective details, based on which the first step of unravelling the figure of the martyr—naming—will be undertaken.

Naming remains the most contested and vulnerable issue in martyrdom. Chapter Two deals with the next two questions mentioned above regarding the various terminologies used to refer to people who have died due to historical and political reasons during conflicts and struggles. It probes the processes of death, personalities and commemorative afterlives of martyrs and investigative claims of justice for martyrs so that the reasons and implications of naming may become clear. Furthermore, in this chapter, death ephemera, emerging from the narrative of last words, establish the interactive personal and public voices of martyrs, while narratives of burial foreground a tangible remembrance of loss and official remembrance of reinterment. Funeral processes of memorial remembrance, scenes and processions establish the deification and defiance of martyr deaths. Personalities ephemera focus on naming through the physical body and its related documentations; the political, national and international representations and responses to martyred figures name martyrs in various ways, even as civilian deaths expand the scope of martyr naming through graffiti, posters, temporary memorials and fluctuating memories. Commemoration ephemera name martyrs through ritualism and banning; institutional, organisational initiatives and

regional art; nationally, socially, religiously and individually organised memorial events; and a dignified display of collectibles. Even though it is often termed a ‘sacrifice’, a martyr’s death is an unjust one. Therefore, in Chapter Two, investigation ephemera name martyrs through organisational listing, with various centres for justice substantiating these listings and working for the families of the dead, while justice ephemera call for international recognition of unjust and mass killings.

Once naming is laid out, the context for each naming is probed. Chapter Three presents the analyses of six contexts of contestations in martyrdom—locations, processes, emblems, propaganda, community engagement and oral modes and traditions—to deal with the fifth research question. While burial, reburial, memorial, property, home and other sites contest the role of organisations and individuals who want to appropriate the martyrs in their name, there are also ample instances of the lack of these spaces for some and struggles to attain them. Through parades, elections, hunger strikes, provision of monetary aid, enlistments and international relations, martyrs are constructed and debated over along paramilitary, political, governmental and international lines. Flags, stamps and portraits are common national emblems; in this study, they are probed as anti-colonial, party, educational institution emblems while crosses, murals and saints’ touch are given different moorings in the martyr cultures of the two countries. Ephemera are mostly minor documents of propaganda circulated at a mass level. Nevertheless, newspaper headlines and posters, leaflets, political cards and justice ephemera narrate the individual life stories of martyrs, the commonplace occurrences during eventful days and post-conflict reconciliation narratives. In this chapter, prison ephemera are also explored as works of literary and artistic brilliance, and leaflets for welfare campaigns lay the ground for discussions on national and regional initiatives for martyrs. Largely opposed to propaganda is community

engagement. However, listings and pamphlets produced by communities and specific social classes are probed as propagandist in their affiliations to martyr-making. Moreover, certain ephemera, used solely by civilians, probe ways in which the martyr is created and debated through individual stances. Finally, oral modes and traditions include the words of martyrs and those which the common people use to remember martyrs. They are often written as ballads and *punthis* and circulated as texts of commemoration, instruction and entertainment.

Chapter Four deals with the sixth question, which involves how continuums and subversions of martyrdom unravel people's narratives. Continuums of martyrdom are explored in the continuities of divine legacies, sacrifices and local paramilitary clashes in Ireland. While divine legacies probe people's understanding of religious and political figures as divine emissaries across ages, the participation of the unionist community in the two world wars demonstrates their continued sacrifices for the UK, even as tensions between local paramilitaries continue. Continuums of martyrdom are explored in the continuities of legacies, slogans and awards in Bangladesh. With Bangladesh's more secular structure, martyrs are seen as socio-economic revolutionaries across ages, who have created timeless slogans as universal cries. Continuities of awards reception, with their ingrained contestations, will be probed in this chapter. What generates common continuums in Ireland and Bangladesh is not just continuities in martyr histories and martyrdoms due to political party ideologies but also community deaths and mass martyrdoms across generations and families helping one another to seek justice. Other than continuums, subversions also generate narratives that challenge existing narratives of identities, structures and purposes. Additionally, the identity of females and that of the disappeared challenge the construct of the heteronormative existent martyr. Breakdown, destruction and rebuilding will also generate martyr narratives anew. The

purpose of martyrdom comprises narratives of martyr symbolisation in Ireland and the making or attempt at making claims for martyr families in Bangladesh.

Chapter Five deals with the seventh question. The interaction of ephemera with literary works has generated four kinds of literary works—literary works by martyrs in ephemera, literary works on martyrs in ephemera, literary works on martyr ephemera and literary ephemera on martyrs. Some of these works by martyrs feature in religious, official and personal ephemera, while literary works on martyrs include poetic quotes, short poems, fictional characters, songs, documentaries, biographies and paintings. All these, when featured in ephemera, are characterised by the ephemera’s date, medium, material and mode of dissemination. To explore these, an objective analysis was performed, and literary works featuring martyr ephemera were analysed to understand how people’s narratives are unravelled through the use of such ephemera. Literary ephemera are literary works characterised by the nature of ephemera, and they cannot exist without the ephemera. Leaflet poetry does not exist outside the leaflet, and essays in competition booklets for martyr commemoration events are only written for that occasion.

The final question on the relevance and use of these narratives is discussed throughout each chapter and summarised in a conclusion section at the end.

D. NOTE TO THE THESIS

This thesis includes numerous images, all of which have been duly captioned for sources, dates, credits and copyrights. The date mentioned under each image refers to either the date printed on the ephemera, the date provided in documents in the archives or inferred from the content or the date listed by the creator of the ephemera. Otherwise,

the date represents the day I took the photograph of the ephemera. The kind of ephemera is clearly mentioned before the colon in the caption, followed by the details after it. All images used in this thesis are copyrighted to the institutions or individuals whose names are mentioned in the captions. These are only used for educational purposes to support my thesis and not for profit. Unless otherwise stated in the image caption or citation, all photographs were taken by me. All translations of Bangla texts cited and interviews conducted are mine, except for the translation of an unpublished Bangla *punthi* [ballad], kindly done by Nabanita Sengupta, who has been involved with similar translation projects of Sahitya Akademi and Viswa Bharati. The translation of a few phrases in Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic were kindly done by my friend Tom Davis, a native Catholic living in the Republic of Ireland. I have consistently followed the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition) for all citations within this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

PEOPLE’S MARTYRS AND EPHEMERA: MEANING AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will lay out the meaning of this study on people’s martyrs through ephemera, and the methodology to explore interactions between the two in generating people’s narratives of martyrdom. The first section on the ‘meaning’ lays out the scope of the study with reference to each idea that has been used. The socio-political and historical background of Ireland and Bangladesh as well as the martyr historiography in these countries, ephemera and people’s narratives will be analysed through their etymological and evolving meanings to identify the transitions in their scope and foreground the originality of this study, that will address various gaps in research. The methodology, derived from history, social sciences and literary studies will probe the processes of identifying, collecting and analysing data in this study.

1.1 MEANING

This study attempts to probe ‘martyr’ and ‘martyrdom’ by assessing their use in relation to everyday objects (ephemera) and related processes in Ireland and Bangladesh.

1.1.1 Scope

The words in the title lay out the scope of the dissertation. The keywords include ‘Ireland’, ‘Bangladesh’, ‘ephemera’, ‘martyrdom’, ‘literatures’, ‘literary works’ and ‘people’s narratives’. The grand narratives of history, politics, religion, economics,

culture and society of Ireland and Bangladesh have been studied through ephemera to delineate people's narratives of martyrdom. Each of the quoted words, along with their interrelations, will be discussed in detail to establish the purview of the present study.

1.1.1.1 Historical, political, religious, social context, connections and contestations between 'Ireland' and 'Bangladesh'

The island of Ireland encompasses two countries in north-western Europe. It was split into two separate jurisdictions in 1921, leading to the formation of Northern and Southern Ireland. Both belonged to the UK till 1922, following which NI became a separate country consisting of six counties, while Southern Ireland became the Irish Free State and exited the Commonwealth of Nations in 1949. It is now known as the Republic of Ireland and consists of the remaining twenty-six counties. Thus, Ireland, as a whole, refers to the island of Ireland, and includes two countries, presently termed as NI and the Republic of Ireland. People in NI refer to the Republic as the 'South'.

Irish republicanism is known as the political movement aimed to acquire unity and independence in Ireland, which has led to the creation of paramilitary groups including the Irish Republican Army (IRA), followed by its more radical form, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). IRA's political party, Sinn Féin (SF), was forbidden from appearing on Irish TV or radio from around 1971 to 1994, due to restrictions firstly, imposed by Section 31 of the Republic of Ireland's Broadcasting Act and then across UK.¹ However, today, they are the second largest party in NI, with roots growing in the South. The party emerged as the largest majority in the May 2022 elections. Moreover, the martyrs of the hunger strikes belonged to the SF, with no other parties considering them to be 'martyrs'. However, with the 1998 Good Friday

1. Kevin Sharkey, "Twenty years on: The lifting of the ban on broadcasting Sinn Féin," *BBC News NI*, January 22, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-25843314>.

Agreement, which initiated the decommissioning of weapons by the IRA, the SF tried to put its radical violent past behind. The extent to which it has been able to do so, along with how people respond to the violence of the past as well as the fear of brutality in the present, will be studied in the following chapters.

Irish loyalism, on the other hand, is the political movement that opposed the Catholic Emancipation and Irish independence from Great Britain and led to the creation of paramilitary groups, such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), who are also illegal organisations in the UK. Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is a unionist, loyalist, and national conservative political party in NI that secured the second-largest majority in the May 2022 elections. Contestations between Irish republicanism and unionism in narratives of martyrdom will be explored.

Irish nationalists, including some Protestants² and more Catholics³, wanted NI to leave the UK to merge with the South in order to become a united Ireland. However, the response of the Northern and Southern Nationalists varies. The problem with the foundation of Ireland is that the IRA and the Northern Nationalists felt that they were abandoned by the South. The IRA wished to form a United Ireland by overthrowing the government of the Republic of Ireland, down South. Hence, their contesting attitude to martyrdom will also be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

2. Wolfe Tone, a martyr of this tradition, will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. Patrick Pearse, a martyr of this tradition, will be discussed in the next chapter.

A range of political, religious and ethnic traditions in NI tend to broadly align into Protestant/unionist/loyalist and Catholic/nationalist/republican blocs. Such blocs

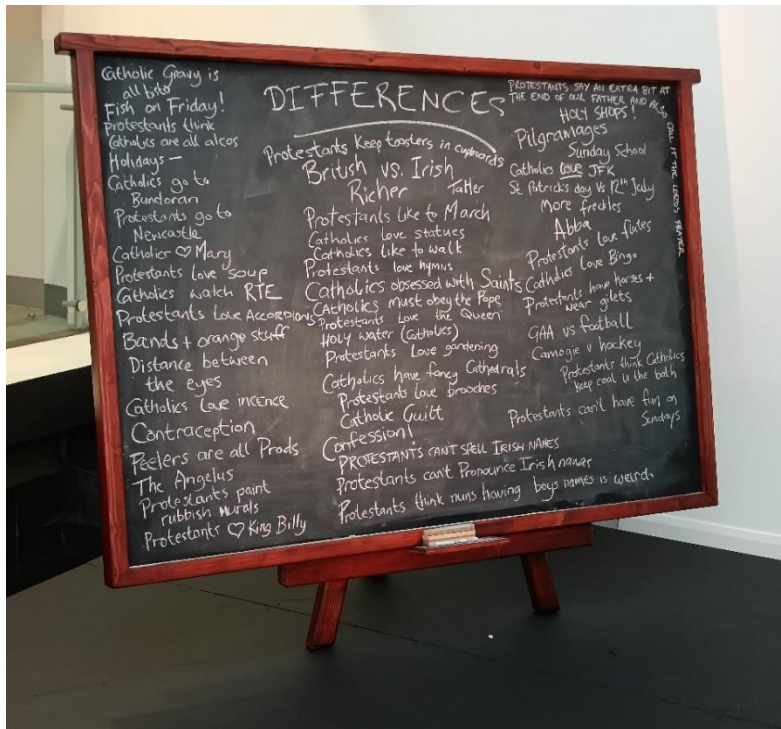


Fig. 1.01. Photograph: Blackboard enumerating everyday differences between Protestants and Catholics. Entrance to Ulster Museum, Belfast. April 24, 2022.

maintain incompatible views of history⁴ and responses to historical events, which are essentially related to incompatibilities in their everyday lives (fig. 1.01). The board, at the entrance of the Ulster Museum at Belfast,

enumerates the differences between

these two blocs, in historical lineage, religious obligations, food habits, language habits, sports and music preferences. Therefore, the differing responses of the two communities to their martyrs along with the memorialisation of martyrs are ingrained in their everyday lives. That is not to say that there were no interconnections between these broad blocs. Protestants became part of the nationalist cause during the 1916 Easter Rising⁵, even as they mostly belonged to the unionist cause during the 1921 War of Independence and the Troubles. Irish unionism was popular among a small minority of propertied Catholics, who had benefitted from the schooling and profession in the Union

4. Lee A. Smithey, "Introduction," in *Unionists, Loyalists, and Conflict Transformation in NI*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

5. Joseph Plunkett, a Protestant martyr, is mentioned in the mass card of the Easter Rising.

and Empire.⁶ These interconnections and their ensuing contestations will be explored in the following chapters.

Bangladesh was born as a state following the 1971 Liberation War. The idea of an independent state is older and goes back to 1940 when it was mentioned in the Lahore Resolution of 1940. This saw the rise of state-making politics in the region. Essentially anti-colonial politics in the Indian subcontinent, specifically undivided Bengal, was dependent on the peasantry who first resisted colonial rule in 1760 soon after the British take over in 1757. These resistances were led by the older elite who had been displaced by colonialism. These resistance leaders, such as martyrs Majnu Shah and Titu Mir, were often part of the most effective social network—religious groups—which in turn were dependent on the peasantry for their survival (who participated as armed militants), birthing a shared notion of martyrdom for social causes. By 1811, the zamindari project had failed to take off and intermediary tax collection system by the British was introduced. In 1812 the widest spread peasant resistance began—Faraizi movement—which was heavily influenced by Wahabism of Saudi Arabia. The movement drew support from peasant power to confront the British though externally it claimed to be a ‘holy war’ against the oppressor.

After 1857 (Sepoy Mutiny), the British invested great resources in land reforms. The decision in 1905 to create East Bengal was motivated by several factors including appeasement of militant peasants. However, the project failed due to opposition from the powerful minority led by the elite of Kolkata. But electoral politics began to emerge from then on, under which the first elections were held in 1937 where the majority peasants installed their representational parties in power. In 1940, the Lahore/Pakistan

6. Alvin Jackson, “Loyalists and unionists,” in *The Oxford History of Modern Irish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 46.

Resolution was passed. Even though it was amended by the All-India Muslim League in 1946, the amendment was rejected by the Bengal Muslim League who opted for United Bengal movement to set up a separate state. This movement made some progress but was ultimately rejected by Bengal Congress who passed the Partition of Bengal Resolution in 1947.

The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 divided the province of Bengal into East Bengal and West Bengal, the former becoming a province of the Dominion of Pakistan, while the latter became a part of India. During the 1952 language movement, people rebelled against the autocratic government of Pakistan but still accepted the single nationhood of Pakistan. Leaflets of the language movement ended with the patriotic slogan '*Pakistan Zindabad*' [Long live Pakistan]. The people demanded the coexistence of Bangla and Urdu as state languages. East Bengal was renamed East Pakistan (EP) in 1955 under the One Unit Scheme, as a parallel to West Pakistan, which comprised the four provinces of West Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Since the political imagination of the Bengal Muslim League did not envision life under North Indian/Punjab—coded as 'Punjabi' rule in popular imagination—central control, their resistance was immediate and the 'One Pakistan' idea never made a landfall in EP/East Bengal. The Pakistan Army in the 1971 genocide was termed 'Punjabis' to refer to the people of West Pakistan. For them, 1971 was a civil war, and not a War of Independence.

The martyr narrative in Ireland and Bangladesh does not only consider the people killed in Ireland's War of Independence against British imperialism that led to the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922; or India's freedom struggle that caused the independence of Pakistan in 1947, or EP's War of Independence that led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. In fact, the struggle for political independence is a continuous

battle that preceded and succeeded these major historical landmarks marking the proclamation of independence. Thus, the generation of martyrs has been continuous. In fact, Ireland had a Proclamation of Independence in 1916; however, it became fully independent in 1949 when the Republic of Ireland Act was passed, while NI remained under Britain as a constituent country. The Provisional Government of Bangladesh issued a Proclamation of Independence from Kolkata on 10th April, 1971 and became fully independent on 16th December, 1971; however, Mirpur in Dhaka became liberated on 31st January, 1972. While NI remains as part of UK after its prolonged struggle for freedom; in Bangladesh, following independence, violent politics emerged including military coups and counter coups. Division of concepts of martyrdom increased. A case in point is General Ziaur Rahman who came to power after 1975 following several coups and counter coups after the assassination of the Bangladesh founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Later Gen Zia was also killed in a coup. While the followers of Zia call him, '*Shaheed Zia*' [martyr Zia] the followers of Mujib do not. Similarly, to Mujib's followers he died a martyr's death but not to his enemies including Zia's supporters. Each political party and entity whose leaders have died violently and for a cause therefore has their own list. Conflicts also intensified when the comrades of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, died in clashes with the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman-led Awami League (Bangladesh Awami League, mostly simply called the Awami League; AL) government and were termed 'martyrs'. The conflicts between the sectarian paramilitary organisations in NI, as well as the political parties in EP, and later in Bangladesh, generated martyrs with multiple contestations over their identities. This study will probe martyrdom in the post-conflict world of Ireland and the post-independence world of EP and Bangladesh as a continual and evolving narrative in the everyday lives of people. Contestations in a country that is still seeking independence

(NI) to a country that has already achieved independence (Bangladesh) will become the premise of understanding people's differing narratives of martyrdom.

In their historical and political interactions, Ireland and Bangladesh have acknowledged martyr narratives of one another. Surya Sen has compared the Easter Rising of 1916 to the 'eastern rising' of the 1930 Chittagong armoury raid. Revolutionaries led by him referred to themselves as the Indian Republican Army, or IRA, similar to the members of the Irish Republican Army, and they learnt revolutionary strategies from books written by Irish guerrilla fighters.⁷ After the end of the 1971 Liberation War, Éamon de Valera, as President of the Republic of Ireland, acknowledged Bangladesh as an independent country in 1972. In *Bangladesh*, a fortnightly news bulletin, published in 1973, Dr E DeValera is quoted as saying that on the occasion of the National Day of Bangladesh, he conveys the best greetings to Prime Minister Mujib on behalf of the people of Ireland for the 'prosperity and happiness of the People of Bangladesh.'⁸ The official acknowledgement emerged from the political party leader of Fianna Fáil, that associated the people of Ireland and Bangladesh in their similar struggle for freedom of the nation. The result of martyrdom in Bangladesh and Ireland became intertwined in the presidential narrative of de Valera, spurred on by the struggle of the people, who had finally gained a right to prosperity and happiness.

The connection between Ireland and Bangladesh went beyond the official endorsement to international legal and populist solidarity. Irish lawyer and Easter 1916 executed John MacBride's son, Sean MacBride was a representative of Amnesty

7. Arpita Sen, "The Proscription of an Irish Text and the Chittagong Rising of 1930," *Indian Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (2007): 95–121, <https://doi.org/10.1177/037698360703400206>.

8. 'Greetings from World Leaders,' *Bangladesh* 3, no. 5. April 6, 1973. Published by the Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Washington DC, USA, <https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Bangladesh/TWEwAQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=justice+abu+sayed+chowdhury+ireland&pg=RA21-PA4&printsec=frontcover>.

International in post-independence Bangladesh. In the first international call for justice against the assassins of *Bangabandhu* [Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, literally, ‘Friend of Bengal’] and four national leaders, *Bangabandhu*’s daughter, Sheikh Rehana, raised the demand at an international conference in 1979 in Stockholm, Sweden. Sultan Shariff, President of the UK wing of the AL, mentioned that the party’s international cell formed a probe committee under Sean MacBride and tried to help them come to the country and investigate the assassination. However, their visa application was turned down by the Gen Zia government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The ruling AL government (also the present ruling political party) awarded MacBride with the ‘Friend of the Liberation War Honour’ posthumously on 27th March, 2012. Moreover, Sultan Shariff’s wife, British-Irish national Barrister Nora Shariff, a social worker, also received this award⁹ due to her contribution to the six-point movement led by AL leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She distributed leaflets and organised seminars on this movement in Ireland. During 1971, she also assisted the new government of Bangladesh, organising campaigns and meetings, and even providing her flat to Bengali campaigners to come and make placards for demonstrations.¹⁰ Thus, she was witness to the creation of populist ephemera of 1971.

Nevertheless, there were also conflicts between the political allegiances of de Valera and MacBride. MacBride worked as a secretary for de Valera, but he also joined the Anti-Treaty forces that aimed to create a united Republic. He oversaw the dispatch of arms to the North to achieve this aim, shared his prison cell with Rory O’Connor, a martyr of the Anti-Treaty side, and established a reprieve committee for IRA comrades

9. “Liberation War Friends of Bangladesh,” *Songramer notebook* (blog), <https://songramernotebook.com/archives/394963>.

10. “Friend of Bangladesh Nora Sharif dies,” *The Daily Star*, December 1, 2013, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/friend-of-bangladesh-nora-sharif-dies>.

who were sentenced to death for shooting a policeman in NI in 1942.¹¹ However, he also had connections with Michael Collins, a popular hero in Ireland and a pro-Treaty figure, who was killed by factions of the Anti-Treaty side. The martyr narratives of pro and anti-Treaty figures will be explored in the next chapter.

Other than historical and political connections, official acknowledgements and contributions of important personalities, martyrdoms due to religious causes have also been reported in both countries. While a conflicting Christian narrative exists between Catholicism and Protestantism in the martyr narratives in Ireland, differing Hindu and Muslim religious perspectives predominate martyr narratives in EP and Bangladesh. Although the religious narrative remains more pronounced in Ireland in terms of sectarian divisions, religion itself is losing ground in the deteriorating influence of the church in martyr commemorative rituals, and religious reconciliation is at least in the offing.¹² In Bangladesh, while Pakistan may claim that the Hindus were revolting against the Muslim-predominated West Pakistan, most of the people in Bangladesh were Muslims. More than religious intolerance, it was socio-economic disparity between West and East Pakistan, that led to the revolt and ultimate sacrifice of common people. There are also interrelations between the representative religious narratives of Ireland and Bangladesh, such as the response of the Muslim communities to martyrs in NI. In NI, the Muslim community has been a bearer of peace amidst its everyday conflicts. In the context of the creation of a Muslim plot for burial in Londonderry, the perception, that the Islamic community is a peace-loving one, which is usually associated with

11. Tim Pat Coogan, "The I.R.A. in the North," in *The I.R.A.* (Great Britain: Pall Mall Press Ltd., 1970), 232.

12. Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001).

‘crazed terrorist fanatics’, made the rounds.¹³ There is also the conflicting response of the Christian missionaries in the martyr history of Bangladesh,¹⁴ especially during the 1971 War of Independence, wherein they wished to be loyal to the state of Pakistan but were not spared by the genocide. The perspectives of the common people in this community will be further analysed through their role in commemoration of martyrs and rehabilitation of the country following the Liberation War.

Thus, the comparisons between the sides that sought independence as in Ireland, and achieved independence as in Bangladesh, evolve as cross-connections. This study does not attempt to strike similarities between the ideologies of the IRA and the Liberation War freedom fighters, nor the republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations in one country and the anti-Liberation War forces in the other, but rather explores how common people with multiple affiliations and allegiances remember and debate over martyrs. Furthermore, the focus of this study is also on common people who are considered ‘martyrs’ in the civil rights movements in NI and EP. The civil rights marches in the early 1970s in NI and the 1969 mass uprising in EP resulted in the deaths of many civilians. These mass uprisings have been dubbed as anti-state riots by governmental state apparatuses such as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the police force in NI from 1922 to 2001, and the EP government. The murdered have furthermore been dubbed ‘martyrs’ by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) even as the families of the victims deny this terminology. Additionally, this study will also explore the martyrdom of the ordinary people living in the remote counties in Ireland and NI, and the villages in Bangladesh. This study will include interviews with the

13. Eileen Fleming, “Muslim plot for maiden city,” *Belfast Telegraph*, September 4, 1999.

14. S. M. Tanveer Ahmed, *Christian Missions in East Bengal: The Life and Times of Archbishop Theotonius Amal Ganguly, CSC (1920–1977)* (UK: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018).

families of the deceased individuals to understand their individual perspectives behind their broad narratives of historical, political, social and civil rights. Most victims of 1971, particularly ordinary people who died in situations of war, have uncomplicated and uncontested identification as martyrs as their life and death carry no extra political gain or loss of value to anyone. Thus contestations, and the reasons for their creation, will be explored in the following chapters.

1.1.1.2 Etymology and evolution of ‘martyrdom’

The etymological meaning of the word ‘martyr’ is derived from the Greek meaning of ‘witness’. However, its applied meaning ranges from a ‘specific designation of honour’¹⁵ for one who voluntarily undergoes the penalty of death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith or any of its articles, ‘suffers death in an evil cause’, undergoes death on behalf of any ‘religious or other belief or cause or as a consequence of his devotion to some object’, or ‘dies a victim’¹⁶. These varied applied meanings have been addressed and unravelled in this study.

In India, soldiers who are killed in action are not officially declared ‘martyrs’. The Ministry of Defence clarified in Parliament on 28th March, 2022 that the term ‘martyr’ is not used for personnel who sacrifice their lives in the line of duty.¹⁷ This is also applicable to soldiers who died in the 1971 Liberation War. Rathindra Nath Datta, who has worked on the compilation of the martyr gazettes of the country for years, and is presently deputy secretary at the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka (MLWA), specifically mentioned that those who die in the line of duty are only termed ‘martyrs’

15. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. “martyr”.

16. *Oxford English Dictionary*, “martyr”.

17. Man Aman Singh Chhina, “Explained: Why Indian Armed Forces don’t use the term ‘martyr’ for personnel who die in the line of duty,” *The Indian Express*, March 30, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/indian-army-martyr-term-objection-7842487/>.

in the martyr gazettes of Bangladesh. The word '*shaheed*' is put beside their name.¹⁸ In Ireland, sacrifices of personnel are dubbed as 'martyrdom' according to the community to which they belong rather than as a government-sanctioned term. This study will explore republican and unionist ephemera using terms such as 'martyrs' or other alternatives as well as the contested reasons for doing so, to probe the nature of people's martyrdoms. John Lloyd writes that the martyrdom of twenty-eight people, in a recent bombing by the real IRA, led to 'a turning away from an archaic sectarianism toward collaboration among neighbo[u]rs in the modern state envisioned in the Good Friday Agreement of this past spring.'¹⁹ From conflict to conciliation, people's martyrdom would be explored in this study.

Significantly, the word 'martyr' is negated since it has been initially associated with death due to religious reasons. However, this study will include only a single reference to a martyr saint in Ireland, while the rest of the references will attempt to explore how historical and political deaths approximate or negate saint-like veneration. Bangladesh is historically linked to social movements that are linked to religious networks. Nevertheless, this study does not only concentrate on secular and socialist martyrs in the case of Ireland, or religious martyrs in case of Bangladesh, but an interstices of the two.

This is because there are many who are swayed by religion, while others might not follow it. To the Irish, religion in martyrdom is depicted in terms of the metaphysical

18. Rathindra Nath Datta (deputy secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 4, 2022.

19. John Lloyd, "A New Meaning for Irish Martyrdom," *The Washington Post*, August 23, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1998/08/23/a-new-meaning-for-irish-martyrdom/5b97e3f1-bcdd-4224-b159-eab8cb5a66b1/>.

core of the martyr—the Christ-like suffering²⁰ and transmutation of all violence into republican heroic self-martyrdom²¹. The religious framework of Christ-like suffering in the presentation of martyrs is similar in the case of both republican and unionist martyrs. In NI, the image of Christ on the handkerchiefs produced by the republican prisoners for the commemoration of their martyred predecessors is similar to the Twelfth of July songbook, which states, “In God our trust”. The god, king, and country become part of a nationalist construct wherein martyrdom is a result of their ideological stance. This study would explore these religions representations of martyrs in ephemera in Ireland. In Bangladesh too, the idea of martyrdom as a religiously anointed act was deep and intensified with time. It began with the anti-colonial peasant movement against the British, wherein most peasants were looked down upon as ‘folk’ or impure Muslims by the Wahabis and other orthodox Muslim middle class, who deemed that they led a ‘holy war’ against the oppressors.

When anti-colonial resistance grew, the social construction of martyrdom became well embedded in society and the honorific developed a tradition. It became one of the triggers to produce and provide activists. It also made any cause including violent confrontational ones above doubts and criticism since participants of ‘holy war’ are martyrs and martyrs are sacrosanct identities. A long supply of militancy was therefore possible, such as the revolt of martyr Titu Mir. On the other hand, socio-political alliance cut across class identities. For the martyr, the identity, devoid of class status, provided an imagination of equality as well. After the establishment of zamindari (through Permanent settlement in 1793) the Bengali Hindu religious community based middle

20. Candida Moss has discussed the various premises of imitation of martyr figures with Christ in her book published in 2010, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*.

21. Seán Ó Cadhla, ““Then to Death Walked, Softly Smiling”: Violence and Martyrdom in Modern Irish Republican Ballads,” *Ethnomusicology* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 263.

class of Kolkata became more compliant towards colonialism. For the Kolkata *babus*, Titu Mir was anti-British, communal, even a terrorist.²² In Bangladesh, he is considered as a figure of liberation, with which the history of East Bengal identified, but not West Bengal. Surya Sen's martyrdom was less contested and he was considered 'anti-British' in East Bengal history. Thus, martyrdom in East and West Bengal became a contested identity, depending on affiliating religious politics. Thus, religious and political martyrdom had its contestations.

After 1947, protest immediately began against central Pakistan and it was based on limiting access of the middle class to economics. By 1948 widespread urban agitation began, based on opposition to most central policies, whether construction of the constitution or restriction on the use of language for civil service exams. It exploded into a violent incident at Dhaka University area where police resorted to firing to disperse militant processions in 1952. A new imagination of the urban martyr, that was secular and socialist in nature, began to grow—21st February is observed as Language Martyrs Day—which now partnered with the rural based anti-colonial martyrs such as Titu Mir. Thus, the martyr memory and myth became a glue that helped both rural and urban humanity to share the imagination of socio-political militancy through the lenses of martyrdom. Students in the language movement sacrificed their lives in order to gain access to education and employment, whereas the intellectuals lost their lives due to their ideological stance of freedom against the West Pakistan Army. Hence, it can be said that their ideology somewhat varies from the republican ideology of nationalist separation in Ireland. While paramilitary confrontations generating sectarian violence between communities continued in NI, in Bangladesh, martyrdom became contested

22. Deep Biswas, "Titumir: Freedom Fighter... or Islamic Zealot? Hero...or terrorist?" *Sriti o Chetona*, January 23, 2018, <https://sritiochetona.org/titumir-freedom-fighter-or-islamic-zealot-hero-or-terrorist/>.

based on political identities. Hence the mainstream politics claimed all its dead as martyrs but ignored the dead belonging to other political streams, many of whom were also against the ruling party in 1971 but fought against West Pakistan.

The major section of the rural martyrs in Bangladesh sought to defend their stock, women, and children, sacrificing their lives in the process. Historian Afsan Chowdhury, who has worked on the 1971 rural narratives for over thirty years explained that religion was part of their everyday existence, like God, who had given them land, wind and water. It was not associated with the martyred. Martyrdom is rooted in the existential paradigm of survival, which is interpreted by villagers through psychology and not any nation-based idea of philosophy. It is non-religious in nature even as it includes belief in the god paradigm. The rural population were not martyred because of Bengali nationalism; rather, they wished to avenge the deaths of others in their family or prevent further damage to their food, shelter and people.²³ The Bengali middle classes interpret martyrdom as secular since they are not dependent on the god paradigm as a survival strategy. They fight to gain a new state, deeming it to be political freedom. Thus, the middle-class martyrs are worshipped as secular martyrs of the nation. Therefore, the non-religious and secular martyrs vary in Bangladesh. The 1969 mass uprising as well as the martyrdom of Amanullah Asaduzzaman (hereafter referred to as Asad) can be easily considered instances of a situation where people were not swayed by religion at all, but stood up against the imperialist rule of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. In Ireland, such differences between the non-religious and secular martyrs are not based on class affiliations but on community affiliations.

23. Afsan Chowdhury (Bangladeshi liberation war researcher, columnist and journalist), interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022. Transcript with author.

Martyr meanings become a way to explore people's historiography in a country in terms of geography, class, economy and community identities. Ireland and Bangladesh originate from two different stages of economic culture. Bangladesh is largely a peasant society with a small urban population. Most of its martyrs belonged to an agricultural community. Ephemera such as booklets of martyr commemoration committees will include a study of local district issues. Ireland also has local martyr organisations based in the counties such as the Clonmult Martyrs Commemoration Committee in Cork; however, these counties can be considered townlands rather than the full peasant community of Uttor Dhemsha in the Satkania district of Chittagong. Even the martyrs who are commemorated by local commemoration committees belong to the broader republican movement of comrades in arms, transcending their class affiliations and rural identities. Although the martyrs of the 1798 insurrection and the 1972 civil rights march voiced the deprivations of their communities, their martyr stances were not rooted in their peasant or townland communities. In Bangladesh before 1971, the peasants organised social movements themselves (discussed above). In 1971, many members of the *Mukti Bahini* [Liberation Army] were poor peasants from the Bengali-Muslim communities, who were trained by the Indian Army to fight against the military of West Pakistan. On the other hand, the republicans of Ireland mostly comprised urban, middle-class members to undertake organisational strategies of guerrilla warfare against the British. Several studies have been undertaken on the social structure of IRA martyrs, which explored how the ranks were filled with 'young men of the middling classes'²⁴. This study attempts to tap into the individual voices behind this

24. Peter Hart, "The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916–1923," *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 1999): 207–231.

social structure in the remembrance of the martyrs through the ephemera, to analyse their class and regional identities.

Other than religion, politics, psychology, region, class and history, gender will also be addressed as a category in this study. In exploring the gendered aspect of martyrdom, this study will not only include a feminist reading of the agency of the woman in terms of her power of sacrifice, but also an analysis of how martyrdom is associated with women as well as the type of agency generated by it. In this process, the etymological concept of gender will be unravelled, further probing whether martyrdom grants any agency at all. The study will include women martyr intellectuals and freedom fighters in terms of the generalised and male-centric modes of martyrdom, and further analyse how female martyrs of all classes contributed as martyrs in their everyday lives in Ireland and Bangladesh. However, the community-based rhetorical terms, along with the narrative strategies of the sacrifice of women in Ireland, vary from the class-based premises of action of the sacrifices of women in Bangladesh. These premises will be examined in print ephemera, such as political cards, along with oral interpretations of ephemera, such as interviews. This study will offer a transnational, transperiod and transgeneric panorama of women's sacrifices.

A few other explorations of processes of martyrdom will also be undertaken in this study. While exploring the disappeared martyrs, this study will observe martyrdom wherein death is not a fixed constant. While assessing the subversive processes of martyrdom such as appropriation of spaces, negligence, destruction and reconstruction, this study will analyse how oppositions of commemoration processes also rekindle names of martyrs in people's memories and help people to come together in order to challenge the same. Forgetting and erasure will be probed in the ephemera associated with the subversive processes. In exploring the subversion of martyr symbolism in

Ireland and the subversion of martyr claims in Bangladesh, this study attempts to examine the predominant culture of martyrdom in the two countries.

1.1.1.3 Etymology and evolution of ‘ephemera’

This study analyses the people’s responses to these related conflicts and the lives sacrificed therein through a study of ephemera. The blog of the Ephemera Society of America cites the *Oxford Reference* to define ephemera as things that exist or are used or enjoyed for only a short period of time, including items of collectable memorabilia that were typically written or printed for short-term usefulness or popularity. It is recorded in English from the late sixteenth century as the plural of ‘ephemeron’ from Greek neuter of ‘ephēmeros’ [lasting only a day].²⁵ Maurice Rickards, one of the founders of Ephemera Society of America, termed ephemera as ‘transient everyday items of paper, mostly printed, which are manufactured specifically to use and throw away’.²⁶ However, Michael Twyman has explained that even Rickards recognised that not all ephemera were transient or made of paper. They range from manuscripts or printed matter, documents that are discarded or kept, including trivial documents or documents of importance.²⁷ This study will include ephemera that are made of paper such as newsletter, placard, press obituary, prison diary, pamphlet, postcard, pin badge, etc. as well as flags and posters that are both paper and non-paper based. Photographs, as visual ephemera, will be used to represent one-time events of a certain historical period such as an Easter parade and a funeral procession, and slogans and quotes as

25. “What is ephemera?” *The Ephemera Society of America*, <https://www.ephemerasociety.org/definition/>.

26. Maurice Rickards, “Foreword,” in *This is ephemera: Collecting printed throwaways* (Vermont: The Gossamer Press, 1977), 7.

27. Michael Twyman, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A guide to the fragmentary documents of everyday life for the collector, curator and historian* by Maurice Rickards, edited and compiled by Michael Twyman (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), v.

verbal ephemera will be used to represent the voices of people's martyrdom. Both visual and verbal ephemera feature on photographs taken by me, except a ballad as verbal ephemera that has been recorded by me in Bangladesh.

A range of commemorative artefacts and objects have been included, that were created for one-time use only and not made of paper, such as badges and life masks. The Northern Ireland Political Collection (NIPC) has characterised political cards as artefacts while booklets, leaflets, pamphlets, newspaper cuttings feature as ephemera. In this study, both will be considered as print ephemera. A number of objects created for short-term use will also be used as ephemera because there are no multiple copies of them. These include objects belonging to or associated with martyrs, such as bloodstained shirts, mugs, music records, badges, binlid, broomstick, utensils, trophies, signboard, roll of honour, which are not intended to survive its immediate purpose but have been preserved and maintained.

This study includes conventional ephemera that specifically focus on martyr narratives. Some were generated when the individual was about to die, for example, last letters and trial and execution speech booklets, while others were generated after their death, such as burial certificates, burial site subscription papers, papers of burial honours, and papers of bringing back burial remains and re-internment. Rickards writes about an unprecedented usage of the poster as a means of mass communication during the First World War.²⁸ This study will refer to war ephemera ranging from posters to official documents to banal objects, as they epitomise the martyrdom of common people, which involves a person dying during a social, religious or political conflict, following which their memorialisation takes place. Precisely, ephemera is produced

28. Maurice Rickards, *The rise and fall of the poster* (Great Britain: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1971), 25.

during times of instability, the period following peace and prior to the start of a war. During this time, institutions are built or rebuilt, organisations are formed or reformed, and people and families and acquaintances partly settle to preserve the ephemera for themselves. The ephemera used by the martyrs during their lives, which indicate the reasons for their death, were produced prior to the event of martyrdom, whereas the ephemera for the martyrs were produced following their martyrdom. In including both, therefore, this study investigates both of the historical pasts of the martyrs and reassesses the present while taking into account their pasts.

The continuity in ephemera scholarship is the specific and designated identification of produced tools that are available in developed countries. Thus, posters, leaflets, signboards, and tickets comprise ephemera of the literate world. The ephemera from the Second World War are common, and museums have devoted entire sections to present them. However, there are no ephemera of the same event in Bengal, where people experienced the war through the lenses of famine, presenting a vastly different memory space that remained undominated by the produced ephemera. This study will focus on them as well as on the non-literate village ephemera in Ireland, such as folk ephemera, and the literate urban ephemera in Bangladesh, including print ephemera, to underscore the fact that although Ireland has a more urban economy than Bangladesh, its counties were dominated by a number of villages, where people produced non-elitist ephemera. Therefore, ephemera studies will become an apt method for studying history that is broadly split between the institutional and formal spaces and the non-institutional and the informal.

Comparisons will also be made between Ireland and Bangladesh and the relevance of ephemera in a world with larger issues that dominate people's memory, such as death, loss and suffering, rather than the production and preservation of

memorial products/ephemera. In such instances, memory takes the place of ephemera itself. To understand the role of memory, interviews were conducted for this study, primarily for two reasons. Interviews gave an insight into martyr narratives where ephemera was deemed irrelevant or remained absent. Furthermore, when interviews were conducted, the role of the interviewees as producers and preservers of ephemera was analysed. Since most ephemera such as leaflets, pamphlets, posters, tickets, and certificates, are produced by an institution or organisation for the martyr, this element of artificiality may conflict with the psychological ephemera of memories that may be deemed natural and original. Thus, both have been discussed together. In the oral interpretations of ephemera, perspectives were presented of the original producers, family members and acquaintances of the producer of ephemera, such as photographers of commemoration parades, processions and rallies, and donators and archivists of museums where the ephemera are preserved. Many instances also reflect my perspective when I took photographs of certain ephemera. While interpreting each ephemera, this study would also interpret the oral interpretations of ephemera of each of the subjects mentioned above.

The study delves into the inherent contradictions of ephemera, that are trivial and superficial but are significant enough to be preserved. The reasons behind why and how someone collects martyr ephemera define the agency in people's narratives of martyrdom. This study will aim to maintain a balance between the object's domination and the meaning of the attached memory to ensure that the objectivity of material realities and the subjectivity of memorial interpretations lead to an insightful understanding of people's narratives of martyrdom, bringing together the superfluous and the memorable.

The concept of digitisation of ephemera emerges as a challenge because one no longer needs to rely on physical structures in order to remember or preserve people's martyr narratives. This is because nothing, whether superfluous or memorable or both, is forgotten by the digital space. As social media begins to preserve, the scale of collation becomes vast. Sarah Wasserman believes that the category of ephemera may cease to exist as its contents have been ultimately preserved; however, she reiterates that even when objects transition from the material to the digital, they can elicit the same type of competing desires.²⁹ Digital archiving will not cease to characterise the nature of ephemera, since ephemera will still remain minor objects of everyday life, belonging to a certain period in time. In this study, primarily two types of digital ephemera will be used. Firstly, those ephemera that are only digital versions of conventional print ephemera such as images of martyrs and martyr ephemera uploaded on social media handles and blogs, banners, stamps, photographs, gazette notifications and declassified documents. Secondly, those ephemera that only have a digital life such as emails, social media posts and comments, words at the beginning of an international concert circulated on digital platforms, online merchandise and screenshots of customised playlists for commemoration programmes on martyrs. The veracity of these digital versions has been undertaken by cross-checking with people who have worked with these documents.

1.1.1.4. Etymology and evolution of 'literatures', 'literary works' and 'people's narratives'

'Literature' as printed matter of any kind is part of the colloquial meaning of the word, as defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary*. This meaning is substantiated by citations from newspapers, including *The Daily News* and *Westminster Gazette*, to refer

29. Sarah Wasserman, "Coda. The Afterlife of Things: Ephemera in the Digital Age," in *The Death of Things: Ephemera and the American Novel* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 242.

to printed matter on tourist brochures, posters, and the like.³⁰ Interestingly, these are also examples of ephemera; the printed matter, symbolism and medium of which will be explored in detail in this study. This steps away from ‘literature’ as a purely aesthetic narrative to one that is focused on the objective materiality of a text in a parallel manner. This study will assign the emergent narratives of naming, making, continuums and subversions in people’s martyrdoms in ephemera in the following chapters as ‘literatures’ in this study. ‘Literatures’ will persist in examining the aesthetic, materialistic and cultural contexts of ephemera, which lead to such narratives. These narratives will be further supplemented by their examination of historical and social contexts. These further examinations, as well as the combined use of written matter, symbolism and medium, justify the usage of the word ‘literature’ in this study.

Among various meanings of ‘literature’, ‘literary work’ is specific. This study includes various forms of literary works in a broad sense, including poetry, prose, painting, drama, cartoon, documentaries and songs; however, only those that feature on ephemera or those wherein ephemera features as a focal emblem are considered. The study will locate a distinct literariness and artistic eminence in these productions and establish them as significant works that represent people’s narratives of martyrdom. The word ‘narrative’ refers to the recounting of one or more real or fictional events that have been communicated by one or more narrators along with its interpretation³¹, and used in the context of people.

‘People’s narratives’ involve the emergent narratives in the interaction of martyrs and ephemera, literatures and literary works that include and also transcend the issues of class, community, religion and authority that Outram and Laybourn discuss in

30. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. “literature”.

31. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, 1st paperback ed. (1989), s.v. “narrative”.

their concept of ‘people’s martyrology’³². In this study, ‘people’ refer to the etymological meaning of an ‘individual’ or ‘person’ in the singular (Patrick Pearse, Asad); a body of persons in the plural composing a ‘community’ (Manchester martyrs, martyrs of the language movement), ‘nation’ (martyrs of NI, Republic of Ireland and Bangladesh); belonging to a ‘place’ (Shantallow martyrs, martyrs of Mirpur), ‘group’ (martyrs of the Easter Rising, martyrs of the 1969 mass uprising), ‘class’ (martyrs of trade unions of Dublin, martyred intellectuals of Bangladesh); ‘armed followers’ (martyrs of the World Wars in Ireland, martyred officers of the *Mukti Bahini* [Liberation Army] in 1971), ‘common people’ (disappeared martyrs of NI and Bangladesh), ‘lay people’ (martyrs of counties and villages in NI and Bangladesh), and ‘people’s army’ (UVF heroes of NI, *Gonobahini* [People’s Army], which was part of *Mukti Bahini*). All of these quoted definitions are enumerated in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.³³ This study on ‘people’ focuses on the ordinary lives of well-known martyrs and the significant lives of less-known martyrs through ephemera as well as responses of the common people who have created such ephemera along with their oral interpretations. Thus, this study attempts to lay down a people’s martyrology and people’s history of martyrdom.

1.1.2 Literature review and research gaps

Since martyrdom is a popular issue, its different facets, as identified and interpreted in different ways by critics, are naturally large. However, ephemera studies have not generated an equally large body of criticism, and the confluence of martyrdom

32. Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn, “A Divine Discontent with Wrong: The People’s Martyrology,” in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the Present* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–30.

33. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. “people”.

and ephemera studies will become a new area of exploration in people's martyr narratives, especially in the comparative context of Ireland and Bangladesh.

The language of martyrdom has witnessed an upsurge³⁴ in its continuation³⁵, contestation³⁶ and confusion³⁷. An unravelling of the term³⁸ and its context through its use by people's involvement with everyday objects³⁹ and processes would help in grounding martyrdom studies in the domain of comparative studies of religion, politics and history,⁴⁰ and clear its misappropriated confluence with terrorism in real-time living. Furthermore, the comparative study between Ireland and Bangladesh deems interesting and innovative. This study would also take into account the evolution of martyrdom and nationhood in undivided Bengal (i.e., before Bangladesh was formed as a nation), and the relationship with the Irish nationalist movement in the nineteenth century. The study will also trace later developments and interconnections between the two countries on which few research works have focused, except Kate O'Malley's work on historical connections of radical groups of 1919-64 between Ireland and India⁴¹ and the

34. "Describing executed war criminal a 'martyr' sparks protest in Dhaka," *Bangla Tribune*. December 13, 2019, <https://en.banglatribune.com/others/news/87690/Muktijoddha-Manch-besieges-Jamaat-mouthpiece-Daily>.

35. Catherine Pepinster, *Martyrdom: Why Martyrs Still Matter* (UK: SPCK, 2020).

36. Ihab Saloul and Jan Willem Henten, *Martyrdom: Canonisation, Contestation and Afterlives* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

37. Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors: The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (UK: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

38. Rona M. Fields, et al., "A Conversation among the Collaborators," in *The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (London: Praeger., 2004), 149–170.

39. Joanna Brück and Lisa Godson, eds., *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising* (UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

40. Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp, "Martyrs and martyrdom," *Mortality* 19, no. 2 (2014): 105–116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2014.904848>.

41. Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919–64*. (UK: Manchester University Press, 2008).

commemoration of local Irish nationalist heroes in India during the 1920s⁴².

The developing vocabulary of martyrdom in Ireland and Bangladesh have been studied separately with a specific focus on religion⁴³ and sacrifice⁴⁴, with the confluence of religiosity and secularism in Ireland⁴⁵, and the emergence of Islamism as a legitimate political force through democratic means in the largely secular state of Bangladesh⁴⁶. Meir Hatina's book extends Islamic religious martyrdom to the domain of sacrifice and suicide attacks⁴⁷, while Guy Beiner's chapter⁴⁸ explores the martyrdom-terrorism nexus prior to the War of Independence in Ireland. However, this study concentrates on the way in which minor, almost random acts of sacrifice and dying become recognised acts of martyrdom, including Fenian heroes in Ireland and military heroes in Bangladesh to ordinary martyrs in both countries.

In Bangladesh, the debate on numbers, explored through documentary evidence in print media⁴⁹, forensic evidence⁵⁰ and the inclusion of alleged *razakars* (local

42. Michael Silvestri, "The Remains of Ireland's Loneliest Martyr: The Commemoration of the Connaught Rangers Mutiny," in *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 139–175.

43. David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

44. David Blake and Paddy Monaghan, *Ireland: The blood sacrifice*. The booklet has been accessed from NIPC (PH2681).

45. John Wolffe, *Sacred and Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland Since 1914* (UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

46. Ali Riaz, *God Willing: The Politics of Islamism in Bangladesh* (UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

47. Meir Hatina, *Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power, and Politics* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

48. Guy Beiner, "Fenianism and the Martyrdom-Terrorism Nexus in Ireland before Independence," in *Martyrdom and Terrorism: Pre-Modern to Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Dominic Janes and Alex Houen (USA: Oxford University Press, 2014), 199–220.

49. Arif Rahman, *Muktijuddhe trish lakh shoheed: Myth na reality* [30 lakh martyrs in the Liberation War: Myth or reality] (Chaitanya Prokashon: Dhaka, 2020).

50. Dr M. A. Hasan, human rights defender, individually conducted these examinations for about 40 years. His organisation, War Crimes Fact Finding Committee, also published a list of war criminals on 3rd April 2008.

collaborators in EP) and real *muktijoddhas* (freedom fighters) in government gazettes could not focus on the process of enlisting and its reactions, along with the nature of claims made by martyrs or victims, that will be explored in this study. Moreover, journalistic literature, attempting to enumerate the dead, use biased language and entries that leans towards one side⁵¹ or group⁵². The study of martyrdom through ephemera unravels these biases as well as posit narratives that transcend these biases to foreground people's narratives of martyrdom.

Biographical studies on martyrdom based in both countries involve centenary series⁵³, localities⁵⁴, communities (that of the IRA⁵⁵ or the East Belfast heroes⁵⁶), places

51. David McKittrick, in his book, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (UK: Mainstream, 2001), states that the information of a victim's death, at times only become, a faithful rehash of the British Army's version of events.

52. The list of martyrs published by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs often includes different names during the tenure of Awami League-led government and BNP-led governments. Therefore, deletion and replacement in the list continue as each government comes to power.

53. In Ireland, Centenaries Book Series published by the National Commemorations Committee, Sinn Féin, include *The Story of Kevin Barry* and *O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral Souvenir Programme*; Brian Hanley et al., "'Moderates and Peacemakers': Irish Historians and the Revolutionary Centenary," *Irish Economic and Social History* 43, no. 1 (2016): 113–30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26375948>. In Bangladesh, the Bangla Academy has published single volumes on the lives of the acclaimed martyrs of the country. The children of martyrs have also written well-researched histories such as Shahaduz Zaman and Khairul Islam's 2022 publication, *Muktijuddher Chikitsa Itihash* [Medical History of the Liberation War], the first-ever book on the history of medical treatment during the Liberation War

54. Tomás Mac Conmara, *The Scariiff Martyrs: War, Murder and Memory in East Clare* (Ireland: Mercier Press, 2021). In Bangladesh, the 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum at Khulna has published 117 books on most places of genocide in their *Gonohotya* [Genocide] series, presenting the names of the martyrs in the villages, martyr monuments, interviews with surviving members regarding the 1971 war, and depicting the present locations of where their family members had been killed.

55. Peter Rogers, *Burke and Grealy: Mullingar's Two Forgotten Martyrs* (South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018).

56. *Not Forgotten, 27th June 1970*. Published by the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society.

of death⁵⁷, bodies⁵⁸, transnational connections⁵⁹ and oral commemorations⁶⁰. This study includes an exploration of all these narratives in the minor documents of everyday lives. The folk motif in Ireland is mostly studied as derived from the Cuchulainn narrative of martyrdom in Irish mythology, with the modern ‘martyr’ emulating the archetypal sacrifice of this Gaelic figure⁶¹. This study pays equal attention to nationalist and unionist appropriations of this figure as well as that of the unionist mythical motif of martyrdom in the ‘Red Hand of Ulster’. While there are studies on the martyrdom motif in Karbala and its active and passive appropriations in modern political movements⁶²,

57. In NI, Peter McCabe’s book, *Belfast City Cemetery*, published in 2018, includes a number of themed trails around the Belfast City Cemetery such as the ‘Murder Victims’ trial, which enumerates details of lives and deaths of ordinary citizens who were murdered in the Glenalina extension of the cemetery. In Bangladesh, collection of oral histories of burial sites is also taking place. 38 books, especially on mass killing fields, constitute the *Gonohotya Bodhyobhumi o Gonokobor Jorip* [Survey of mass killing fields and mass graves] and are based on each district of the country, which is a recent and ongoing publication series of the 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum at Khulna.

58. M. DeSoucey, J-E. Pozner, C. Fields, K. Dobransky, and G. A. Fine, “Memory and Sacrifice: An Embodied Theory of Martyrdom,” *Cultural Sociology* 2, no. 1, (2008): 99–121, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507086276>.

59. Mansour Bonakdarian, “Iranian consecration of Irish nationalist ‘martyrs’: The Islamic Republic of Iran and the 1981 republican prisoners’ hunger strike in Northern Ireland,” *Social History* 43:3 (2018): 293–331, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2018.1472884>; Faisal Khosa, *The Making of Martyrs in India, Pakistan & Bangladesh: Indira, Bhutto & Mujib* (India: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

60. Joanne O’Brien, *A Matter of Minutes: The Enduring Legacy of Bloody Sunday* (Ireland: Wolfhound Press, 2002); Patrick Radden Keefe, *Say Nothing: A True Story Of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (UK: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018); Freya McClements and Joe Duffy, *Children of the Troubles: The Untold Story of the Children Killed in the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Ireland: Hachette Books Ireland, 2019). In Bangladesh, the Liberation War Museum has a collection of unpublished oral interviews of family members of martyrs and participants of the Liberation War from each district.

61. Cuchulainn’s popularity in the martyr narrative was captured by Yeats’ poem, *The Statues* (1938) in the line “When Pearse summoned Cuchulainn to his side”.

62. Edith Szanto, “Beyond the Karbala Paradigm: Rethinking Revolution and Redemption in Twelver Shi’a Mourning Rituals,” *Journal of Shi’a Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013): 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.1353/isl.2013.0007>.

its folk renditions in Bangladesh,⁶³ along with other folk performances⁶⁴ of secular martyrs such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his son, Russel⁶⁵, a confluence of the Hindu and Islamic folk narratives, along with the verbal and the print narratives of the same in the representation of religious and secular martyrs, will be undertaken in this study through ephemera.

In Bangladesh, verbal ephemera of religious piety⁶⁶, along with banners, posters, placards, murals, and cartoons as part of cultural ephemera that contributed to political consciousness from 1969–1971⁶⁷ have been explored, with a few pertaining to martyr consciousness. In Ireland, Neil Jarman’s work on material conflicts⁶⁸ and Frances King’s work on material religion⁶⁹ discuss how objects gain new meanings in a domestic and local environment. A few studies have specifically focused on martyr artefacts⁷⁰, including bloodstained shirts, and processes, such as those of funerals⁷¹, especially in

63. Saymon Zakaria and Nazmin Mortuza, *Folklore o likhito jarigaan-r ashore Bishaad Sindhu: Attikoron o poribeshon* [Bishaad Sindhu in folklore and written jarigaan: Assimilation and performance] (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2012).

64. Syed Akbar Hyder, “Lyrical Martyrdom,” in *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105–135.

65. Saymon Zakaria, *Lokayat sahityo o songite Bangabandhu o Muktijuddho* [Bangabandhu and Liberation War in popular history and music]. The book, still in its manuscript version with the writer, was kindly shared for the purposes of this dissertation only.

66. Max Stille, *Islamic Sermons and Public Piety in Bangladesh: The Poetics of Popular Preaching* (India: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

67. Tapan Kumar Palit, *Bangladesher Sanskritik andoloner bikaash dhara (1969-1990): Ekti porjalochona* [Development Trends of Cultural Movement in Bangladesh (1969–1990): A Review], PhD diss., University of Dhaka, (unpublished manuscript, 2022). Accessed with kind permission of the author and his co-supervisor, Prof Muntasir Mamoon.

68. Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

69. E. Frances King, *Material Religion and Popular Culture* (Ukraine: Taylor & Francis, 2009).

70. Siobhan Doyle, “James Connolly’s Bloodstained Vest: Mediating Death and Violence in Commemorative Exhibitions,” in Florin Abraham and Réka Földváryné Kiss, eds. *Remembrance and Solidarity Studies in 20th Century European History*, no. 6 (2018): 46–59.

71. Paige Reynolds, “Modernist Martyrdom: The Funerals of Terence MacSwiney,” *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 4 (2002): 535–559, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2002.0078>.

the context of objects of the dead as ‘human artefacts’⁷² in museums. Nevertheless, these studies lack a panoramic focus on print, visual and digital ephemera, which will be addressed in this study. Studies on literary ephemera including art, such as murals representing unionist and nationalist heroes and martyrs⁷³, are further substantiated by other ephemera in this study, which includes posters, banners, parade photographs and mass cards. In this study, sustained research on martyr ephemera will be partnered with distinct methodologies to examine the same, which are further discussed in section 1.2.

Research on the continuums and subversions of martyr-making with reference to both countries, would also act as a significant contribution of this study. While studies on continuum connect episodes through related historical and political connections⁷⁴ or developing modes of oral tradition, icons and images, rituals, and re-enactments of commemorations across historical periods⁷⁵, they are seldom focused on ephemera. Ephemera constitute minor documents of a single period of history with new meanings in subsequent periods, similar to how a martyr’s legacy is born only after his death and reborn in subsequent periods. Ian McBride’s edited work includes Luke Gibbons’ essay on subversive aspects like commemoration at sites where martyr structures are not present⁷⁶, while Guy Beiner’s work on the afterlives of commemoratives of the 1798

72. Elizabeth Crooke, “The material culture of conflict: Artefacts in the Museum of Free Derry, Northern Ireland,” in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories: Essays in Honour of Professor Susan M. Pearce* edited by Susan M. Pearce (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 31.

73. Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Memorial Meaning of the Mural Art of Belfast,” in *Art Rethought: The Social Practices of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 152–166.

74. Afsan Chowdhury, *Bangladesher swadhinatar andolon; Dharabahikotar itihash 1905-1971* [Independence struggle of Bangladesh: A History of Continuum 1905–1971] (Dhaka: Kothaprokash, 2023).

75. Ian McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

76. McBride, *History and Memory*, 139-159.

rebellion focuses on forgetting, neglect, disregard, and re-commemorating⁷⁷. This study will probe aspects of appropriation, negligence, destruction and reconstruction of martyr structures through various associated ephemera, such as campaign leaflets and complaint letters. Works on subversion of gender identities in martyrdom have focused on its various rhetoric and narrative strategies, along with the different structures of sacrifice deployed by women martyrs in different countries⁷⁸. The disappeared are considered through strategies based on issues of justice⁷⁹; however, specific case studies in Ireland and Bangladesh have not been thoroughly examined, as this study attempts to do. The aftermath of disappearance resulting in one form of gendered sacrifice has been explored in Bangladesh in a novel by Nadeem Qadir, *Half Widow: A Woman and the Bangladesh War* (2022) where he discusses the travails and triumphs of his mother, even as the latter was not sure whether her husband, Lt. Col Qadir was martyred or not.

This study also attempts to significantly contribute to the relation between literary works and ephemera to explore people's martyrdom. Literary afterlives of martyrs have become the subject of critical scrutiny in Ireland, such as martyr Roger Casement's trial⁸⁰ as well as consistent use of metaphors of martyrdom in Anglo-Irish literature⁸¹. Here, his trial will be explored as part of trial and execution literature, as comparable to similar literature in Bangladesh, and the construction of Casement's

77. Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

78. Alireza Korangy and Leyla Rouhi, *The 'Other' Martyrs: Women and the Poetics of Sexuality, Sacrifice, and Death in World Literatures* (Germany: Eisenbrauns, 2019).

79. Lauren Dempster, *Transitional Justice and the 'Disappeared' of Northern Ireland: Silence, Memory, and the Construction of the Past* (UK: Taylor & Francis, 2019).

80. Alison Garden, "Saint Casement: The 'national political trial', partition and the dramatic troubles of Sir Roger," in *The Literary Afterlives of Roger Casement, 1899–2016* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 105–128.

81. Colm Tóibín, *Martyrs and Metaphors* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1987).

martyrdom will be undertaken through photocollage cards. Literary afterlives of martyrs and related ephemera have also become the subject of novelistic exploration such as Sheikh Mujib's garb and words⁸² in Bangladesh. Here, the literary afterlives of unexplored female martyrs and martyr politicians in ephemera will be additionally studied in detail. It was found that critical discussions on literary works on martyrs in ephemera are scarce. Quinn writes about the representation of the 1798 martyrs, James Connolly, Kevin Barry and Irish hunger strikers in rebel songs, and their dissemination through handbills and broadsides⁸³. However, this critical study extends the range of martyrs to include the Gibraltar, unionist and civilian martyrs, and the range of ephemera to include poetry cards, posters, plaques, newspapers and murals. In Bangladesh, critical studies on fiction, poems, songs and documentaries in their representation of martyrdom, as well as discussions on literary works in ephemera are currently unavailable. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to this canon.

Studies abound on the influence of the martyrs and their ideology on literary artists, such as the influence of the socialist principles of James Connolly on Bernard Shaw and Sean O'Casey⁸⁴, or the influence of the martyred intellectuals in Bangladesh on later generations of writers in their specific fields. Literary works focusing on martyr ephemera have been undertaken in Ireland, such as Connolly's play based on the flag as ephemera, namely *Under Which Flag?* that has been compared with Shaw's drama on nationalism, *John Bull's Other Island*. This study extends this scope to include literary works on ephemera such as the roll of honour, the last word used by the martyr and

82. Neamat Imam, *The Black Coat* (India: Penguin Books Limited, 2013).

83. E. Moore Quinn, "The radio said, 'There's another shot dead': Popular culture, 'rebel' songs and death in Irish memory," in *Death in Contemporary Popular Culture*, eds. Adriana Teodorescu, Michael Hviid Jacobsen (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 151–174.

84. Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel, *Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, and the Dead James Connolly* (Massachusetts, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

witness statements in this study. The flag has been analysed as a focal emblem in a painting in this study. For Bangladesh, similar literary works on martyr ephemera ranging from poems, novels, documentary films to cartoons have been analysed, as no similar critical studies are presently available. Studies on literary ephemera as a separate genre have focused on the 18th century British life, literature and the French Revolution⁸⁵ but no such explorations have been undertaken in the context of Ireland and Bangladesh.

A project conducted from 2013 to 2015⁸⁶, based in Belfast and Dublin, along with Bradford and London, was the most recent attempt to capture the meaning and validity of martyrdom for people today; however, it was only conducted in the form of interviews, some of which will be analysed in this study to form a dimension of ephemera studies. In Bangladesh, a recent project on the ‘Martyred Intellectuals of 1971 and the Targeted killings of Enlisted Teachers: The Cultural and Intellectual Consciousness of the Liberation War and the role of the University of Dhaka’, begun in 2016 by the Department of History, University of Dhaka, and headed by the department’s erstwhile professor, Mesbah Kamal, studies numerous ephemera related to the martyred intellectuals, student martyrs and non-teaching staff martyrs of 1971. It would be further enriching to develop such research in the comparative perspective of the two countries and a wider periphery of martyrdom, beyond well-known sites and famous individuals.

85. Sandro Jung, “Literary Ephemera,” an issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life* 44, no. 2 (April 2020), <https://www.dukeupress.edu/literary-ephemera>.

86. John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead, *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties – Part 2: Martyrdom interviews* (Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive, 2017), <https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of studying people's narratives of martyrdom through ephemera consists of data collection of martyr narratives, ephemera and its oral interpretations, and data analysis of the collected material.

1.2.1 Data collection

For this study, ephemera have been collected through field study, from archives, other holdings, and publications. Moreover, interviews were used both as the basic source of ephemera in people's memories as well as for the oral interpretations of ephemera.

1.2.1.1 Field study

Field study has been significant in understanding the martyr narratives in Ireland and Bangladesh since it enabled a close insight into the socio-political, economic and cultural world where ephemera originated and evolved. The field notes made following visits to the memorial sites have been referred to throughout this study. From interaction with members of various political, religious, and social communities to explore their basic understanding of martyrdom, performing field visits of martyr memorial sites to exploring its landscape and the kind of people who visited such sites, and witnessing major commemoration events, field study constituted an important means of situating the ephemera as minor objects of everyday life and grounded the oral interpretations of ephemera in real-time histories.

Martyrdom is rooted in the remembrance of important historical figures, about whom numerous historical studies can be found. However, this study observes the everyday lives of such figures through ephemera. Therefore, it was significant to become familiar with the terminology used for the martyrs, along with the nuances of the specific terms used for them, such as 'dead', 'sacrificed', 'killed', 'executed',

‘murdered’ and ‘victim’. Conversing with local people, sometimes in the form of semi-structured interviews but also in the form of informal conversational interviews, revealed the subtle nuances along with the general glorification and wariness regarding the usage of the term ‘martyr’ in their everyday lives to refer to individuals who died due to historical and political reasons.

During the field study, it was possible to interview people in various national and local martyr organisations, such as *Projonmo '71* (Children of the Martyrs of Liberation War) and *Roktadhara '71* [Bloodline '71] in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This experience enabled me to also talk to common people who participated in events organised by them or were beneficiaries of their initiatives. While some interviews were conducted over the telephone or via emails with people who presently reside in other countries, such as Akku Chowdhury in Nepal and Peter Moloney in London, it must be noted that they are formal collectors of ephemera, and their present location did not add much to their knowledge-sharing. However, for the others, in-person interviews were conducted to ensure that the reasons behind the nuances in their usage of the term ‘martyr’ could be perceived. For instance, when Asif Munier, secretary of *Projonmo '71* and son of martyred intellectual Munier Chowdhury, was interviewed in the living room of the martyr’s house, the location reflected the socio-economic class from which the martyr hailed, as well as the intellectual stance of the martyr and the continuity of the intellectual tradition in the family. This was demonstrated by the awards given to the martyr accompanying the awards given to his wife, theatre activist Lily Chowdhury, and his son, the late Mishuk Munier, a media specialist, broadcast journalist and well-known cinematographer. The house, which Asif Munier wants to convert into a museum later, could be intimately explored along with the various ideas that he had for the initiative. With individual attempts by the civil society, ephemera is mostly preserved in this

manner in Bangladesh. Original in-depth interviews also enabled a similar close personal interaction with the family members of the Bloody Sunday victims in Derry, who died on 30th January, 1972. I visited their houses and observed the kind of keepsakes they kept as a memory of their loved ones. These ephemera were photographed by me and were used as primary data in this study.

While visiting memorial sites in NI, the condition and awareness of the local people regarding the sites were explored, and a few funeral flower messages were studied. The location of the sites reflected the community allegiances of the martyrs who were commemorated. I was able to study the murals in NI at close quarters and perceive the lines of an encounter between various communities living on the same streets. While visiting memorial sites in the capital city of Dhaka in Bangladesh, the present condition of the sites was explored to understand how martyr narratives were sustained and subverted. Specifically, one memorial site in Mirpur, Dhaka was a killing field in the past and has been excavated and preserved by the Liberation War Museum (LWM). The study of the site, the attendance registers of the visitors in the museum and the surrounding murals enabled an understanding of the community initiative of museums towards the community, from where ephemera was collected.

The field study enabled witnessing of certain events such as the Easter parade on 17th April in NI and the National Mourning Day on 15th August⁸⁷ in Bangladesh. In NI, this helped to study the groups and organisations that arranged the parades, as well as the various roads taken by the parades, the varying traffic rules for the day, and the

87. 15th August is the assassination day of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family, and is celebrated as the National Mourning Day by the Awami League government. The political opposition usually considers 30th May as the National Mourning Day when President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated, and at times celebrates 15th August as the birthday of BNP chairperson, Khaleda Zia. Recently, there have been demands to deem both these days as days of National Mourning.

general responses of the people during the event. Moreover, people wore many ephemera like paper badges and roll of honour stoles, and also carried paper flags (fig. 1.02). In Bangladesh, National Mourning Day was preceded and followed by events for the whole month. Nirmalendu Goon's 2001 poem entitled 'August shoker mash, kado' [August is the month of mourning, cry] sums up the ethos of the various events and populist reactions surrounding the remembrance of the assassination of the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along



Fig. 1.02. Photograph: Crowds carrying the Irish tricolour flag during the Easter parade organised by the National Graves Association. Falls Road, West Belfast. April 17, 2022.

with his family. Government officials wore black ribbon badges throughout the month, and banners indicating the 47th martyr anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was



Fig. 1.03. Banner: 47th martyr anniversary and national mourning day 2022. Gate of the Department of Government Transport office building. Dhaka. August 4, 2022.

hung in front of all offices (fig. 1.03), buildings and along roadsides. Furthermore, banners indicating the events held in memory of Sheikh Kamal's (elder son of Mujib) killing were also displayed. Specifically, on 15th August, throughout the day, several television channels broadcast events held in various

districts of the country, which enabled a clearer understanding of the people's responses towards the martyrdom of Mujib. From showing snippets from a 2018 Bangladeshi independent historical docudrama named *Hasina: A Daughter's Tale*, to various political and cultural organisations commemorating the event to news commentators exploring the socio-economic conditions of people in the wake of the independence of a country for which a whole family sacrificed their lives, news channels voiced varied opinions and stances, all of which laid the groundwork for understanding varied ephemera. While the Easter parades may be considered more of a community commemoration of the sacrifices of their dead, the National Mourning Day was a national celebration commemorating a single family, and both events brought together popular perceptions and symbols.

Beyond specific events, walks along specific roads proved essential to understand the context of the ephemera, such as murals, plaques and banners. EastSide Visitor Centre heritage officer Lisa Rea Currie gave me a tour to explain unionist emblems and murals along Newtownards Road. This also enabled me to visit the local memorials. The journey along Falls Road was critical to explore nationalist symbols with guidance from the volunteer at the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum (EHIRHM). I also travelled to the Republic of Ireland to understand the inevitable part played by Dublin, its capital city, in the history of undivided Ireland. The city continues to play a key role in the present politics between the Free State and the North. Walking tours were similarly undertaken in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, where many people have been martyred. The grounds of the University of Dhaka, along with the sites of the killing of teachers and staff along with their resident families, and students during the 1971 genocide, were explored with Ajoy Dasgupta, a freedom fighter, journalist, writer, and retired lecturer at the University of Dhaka.

Dasgupta provided a historical overview and anecdotes of locations and processes in the making of martyrdom. It was part of Dasgupta's novel initiative, *The Walking Museum*⁸⁸, under the auspices of the Centre for Genocide Studies at the University of Dhaka. During these walking tours, ample photographs were taken of various ephemera, including posters, banners, murals and conditions of memorial sites to gauge the relevance of ephemera to commemorate the martyrs in the contemporary world.

During the field study, it was also possible to view ephemera holdings at souvenir shops in NI and the Republic of Ireland. The badges, keyrings, T-shirts with images of martyrs displayed at the Sinn Féin shop in Falls Road, Belfast, and the GPO Museum Gift Shop in Dublin, along with the badges, banners, framed photographs and posters on sale at the Union Jack shop in Newtownards Road enabled an awareness of the type of ephemera mostly in demand. In Bangladesh, separate ephemera holdings were available only with individuals associated with the martyrs.

1.2.1.2 Archives and other holdings

Ephemera archives pertaining to martyrs in NI were mostly found in community museums belonging to the unionist and republican communities. In Belfast, the Loyalist Conflict Museum and the Museum of the Orange Parade contain ephemera that were created in memory of Protestant martyrs, martyrs of Ulster who died defending their land, and loyalist prisoners. Moreover, the EHIRHM displays ephemera created in memory of the members of the nationalist community and republican prisoners. The former museums were still closed from the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when I visited Belfast in April 2022. Therefore, a Facebook video upload showcasing the range of items held at the Museum of Loyalist history, Ballymac, was referred to view the

88. *The Walking Museum: 1971 Genocide & the University of Dhaka*. Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka. <https://cgsdu.org/walking-museum/>.

range of loyalist historical ephemera⁸⁹. However, those have not been included as primary data in this study. Ephemera at the galleries and the stored archives at the EHIRHM will be studied at length for this research. The ephemera archives at the Linen Hall Library in Belfast contain items from opposing communities as well as neutral ephemera relating to the conflicts in Ireland. Items from the Ephemera Collection in the Northern Ireland Political Collection (ECNIPC) will also be studied along with print ephemera, such as political cards from the Political Artefacts collection in the Northern Ireland Political Collection (PANIPC). Artefacts ranging from keyrings, T-shirts, and stickers could only be studied in specially conditioned rooms due to their fragility. Such artefacts could only be accessed only in-person, along with newspaper documents, posters, postcards, photographs, mass cards, candles, badges, leaflets, songbooks, and speech from the docks. Other than these physical holdings, posters could also be accessed from the Troubled Images CD-ROM (TICR), which was compiled in 2001 by the Linen Hall Library.

In Derry/Londonderry, the Siege Museum features exhibits that cover the Siege of Derry and the Apprentice Boys of Derry. The Siege of Derry includes the deaths of ordinary Protestants who died defending the walls of Derry, whereas the Apprentice Boys of Derry refer to the Protestant Order formed to commemorate the thirteen apprentice boys who closed the gates of Derry on the English Catholic invaders. Ephemera related to the parades held by the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the ordinary martyrs of the Siege are also found in the archives of the Political Ephemera Collection of Peter Moloney (PECPM), which are sometimes displayed at the Tower Museum. However, the complete collection was accessed from the museum's stores located at

89. William McCaughey (narrator and curator), Museum of Loyalist history, Ballymac Centre, Belfast, Facebook, January 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/100077323144874/videos/1407555493017199/>.

Pennyburn Industrial Estate. This collection also included ephemera of the martyrs for the nationalist, republican and the unionist cause as well as other victims who were killed due to the Troubles in NI, which will be subsequently studied at length. On the other hand, the Museum of Free Derry tells the story of the victims of Bloody Sunday and the history of the civil rights movement in Ireland. While the museum housed several ephemera, all of them could not be accessed in-person since the museum had been shifted to the Bogside area of Derry only recently before the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, such ephemera have not been discussed in detail. Nevertheless, the museum was an important site where the members of the Bloody Sunday Trust, i.e., the family members of the victims of Bloody Sunday, were encountered. Many of them acted as key informants in this research, such as Tony Doherty, the son of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Patrick Doherty and also Chair of the Bloody Sunday Trust and one of the trustees of the Museum.

A few objects have been donated to the Ulster Museum in Belfast. A unique aspect of this museum was not the artefacts that covered the Troubles; rather, a short video on the awareness of ephemera was shown as an important historical memory trigger. In the video, a middle-aged man named David disinterestedly enters the museum where he has come to donate a bus ticket on the advice of his daughter. He had acquired the ticket while travelling on a bus to the Orpheus Hall, the 'Ballroom of Romance', for an evening of entertainment, when the bus got caught in a gun battle. Finally, egged on by a college student speaking on the relevance of the past, he enters the museum and is overwhelmed by its experience. The student then asks him whether he wishes to donate the bus ticket, and he replies that he would feel lost without it. Thus, ephemera are not always parted with; sometimes they are donated, loaned, gifted, sold and rented. Two of such options are also indicated in fig. 1.04, which depicts the object entry form for

collecting ephemera and other objects from people at the EHIRHM. Collecting the Troubles is not only an accumulation of the minor objects of everyday life but the major emotions of the life to come. When such ephemera are donated to museums, it must be understood that they are a window into the most intimate spaces of one's life, which is also an interpretative space. Similarly in Bangladesh, at the LWM, the person who gives the ephemera provides a write-up on the person and states the purpose of creation and use of the ephemera, explained the archivist Sofia Nazneen Neeta.⁹⁰ This information is interpretative of the way the martyr ephemera has been internalised in the memory of the later generation, whose representative is the donor. For the martyr ephemera, which witnesses the loss of life, the emotional effect is more pronounced. On viewing,

IRISH REPUBLICAN HISTORY MUSEUM
CONWAY MILL COMPLEX
5-7 CONWAY STREET
BELFAST BT13

DESCRIPTION

LEFT BY - NAME:
ADDRESS
CONTACT DETAILS

DONATION LOAN

OTHER COMMENTS

RECEIVED BY:

CONDITIONS

1. ALL SPECIMENS ARE LEFT AT OWNERS OWN RISK
2. NO VALUATIONS CAN BE GIVEN
3. THIS RECEIPT MUST BE PRODUCED WHEN OBJECT IS COLLECTED FROM THE MUSEUM

Fig. 1.04. Object entry form of Irish Republican History Museum. Courtesy: EHIRHM

the emotional burden is as if transferred to the viewer of the ephemera, which must be borne with dignity. Therefore, museum gallery displays were chosen as sites for ephemera holdings in this study. It was also useful to travel to Dublin and witness the historical collections at the Decorative Arts and History galleries of the National Museum of Ireland (DAHNMI).

90. Sofia Nazneen Neeta (archivist, Liberation War Museum, Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 17, 2022.

In Bangladesh, there are no separate ephemera collections in the archives of libraries and museums. Therefore, ephemera needed to be separately accessed following a preliminary search of catalogues, including the 'Object Donor List' in the LWM, which enlists several objects under the souvenirs and ephemera category. It must be noted that not all the artefacts were made from old paper. A few objects were used in this study, for instance, the bloodstained shirt sleeves of a martyr with a handwritten note by his friend, the skulls and bones from Jalladkhana Muslim Bazar Mirpur killing fields, and the utensils used by the mass martyrs of Bangladesh. The rest include paper ephemera such as letters, manuscripts and prison diaries, printed ephemera including leaflets, newspaper columns, brochures and stamps along with photographs. Photographs constitute a major part of the print ephemera in Bangladesh because after the genocide of 1971, with mass looting and entire villages being set on fire, not much of the ephemera could be preserved by common people. Photographs taken by Rashid Talukder, an iconic photographer whose works were not published but who held onto his negatives, remain witness to many iconic events such as the nature of commemorative processions after a martyr's death, which will be discussed. The 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive at Khulna (GTAMK) contains artefacts and ephemera on the 1971 genocide, whereas the Heritage Archives (HA) at Rajshahi is the only archive in Bangladesh that does not focus on state records⁹¹ but houses ephemera ranging from leaflets, posters, banners, festoons, manifestoes, pamphlets and stamps along with books, journals, magazines and periodicals on local history. It is housed in the home of Mahbubar Rahman, who founded and funded the building of the archive and acts as a guide on the diverse items that he has acquired. This study will discuss several ephemera

91. Excerpt from Brochure 'Heritage Archives of Bangladesh History' from 'Heritage - Archives of Bangladesh History,' International Institute of Social History, <https://iisg.nl/asia/heritage.php>.

on post-1971 martyrdom in Bangladesh, mostly accessed from the collection of leaflets and posters that have been catalogued by Rahman. The Bangladesh National Museum (BNM) contains ephemera and artefacts on well-known martyrs, who have been given gallantry awards and the martyred intellectuals of the country, along with iconic photographs of the martyr narrative. Other than the gallery displays, primary data were collected from the exhibition named, 'Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman', which was inaugurated on 15th August, 2022 and contained the most popular martyr ephemera relating to the 1971 Liberation War.

In Bangladesh, memorial sites also contain martyrs' documents and associated ephemera. The Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site at Mirpur is maintained by the LWM; however, it has its own separate holdings that comprise transcripts of oral interviews of family members of the martyrs in the Mirpur region along with newspaper articles and reports on the memorial site, carefully stored by the supervisor, Promila Biswas. An earlier interview of a first-generation member of a martyr's family will be compared and contrasted with the interview of a second-generation or a third-generation family member that was conducted specifically for this study. Comparisons will also be drawn between the interview given by a same family member following a gap of a few years. The feedback registers of the visitors at the memorial record visitors' responses to these ordinary martyrs of a certain region and how they individually understand the concept of martyrdom.

Educational institutions have been recurrent sites of mass killing in Bangladesh. While places in and around the University of Dhaka have been explored, the University of Rajshahi was also found to be a significant site in the districts. The university has a Martyrs' Memorial Collection (MMCR) from which general photographs of ordinary

martyrs, such as a fruit seller, along with mass martyrs at Dhaka and post-1971 rehabilitation efforts, were found. Such cases will be discussed in detail in this study.

Apart from memorial sites, certain civil society organisations have maintained their own archives, such as *Projonmo '71* (Children of the Martyrs of Liberation War). Founded on 29th October, 1991, when most of the children of the martyred intellectuals based at the University of Dhaka became adult citizens; the organisation did not only bring the children of the martyred intellectuals from across the country to share their personal stories of loss and trauma but also continued to coordinate several events over the years on commemorating martyrs, looking into their rights as martyr families, and on general social evils, including fundamentalism. Recently, the organisation has also established branches in the districts of Kishoregonj and Gopalganj, and renewed its efforts for the international recognition of the 1971 genocide. Related ephemera, some held with Asif Munier, present secretary of the organisation, and some from the erstwhile secretary Tawheed Reza Moor, will be a part of this study. Justice and welfare organisations, such as the Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 (FSBTWC), popularly known as the 'Nirmul Committee', also exist in Bangladesh. The president, Shariar Kabir, has been associated with heading the demand of justice for the martyrs in Bangladesh for years. This organisation does not only focus on the investigation of war crimes and the trial of war criminals in Bangladesh but also undertakes various commemoration programmes for historical martyrs, such as Bagha Jatin, and events such as the Tebhaga revolt, along with commemoration and justice of the 1971 martyrs. Fig. 1.05 features a booklet cover of a conference that was held to commemorate the hundred years of the martyrdom of the freedom fighter, Bagha Jatin.

The flags of Bangladesh and India on the top-right of the souvenir indicate Bagha Jatin as the hero of undivided Bengal, issued by the National Committee of observing Bagha Jatin's 100 years of martyrdom. FSBTWC's ephemera on the trials, martyr commemoration initiatives on a mass scale, demand for justice using mundane objects of everyday life and propaganda pamphlets modulating mass opinion during elections will be analysed in this study. In NI, organisations which are non-party political, anti-sectarian human rights group advocating a non-

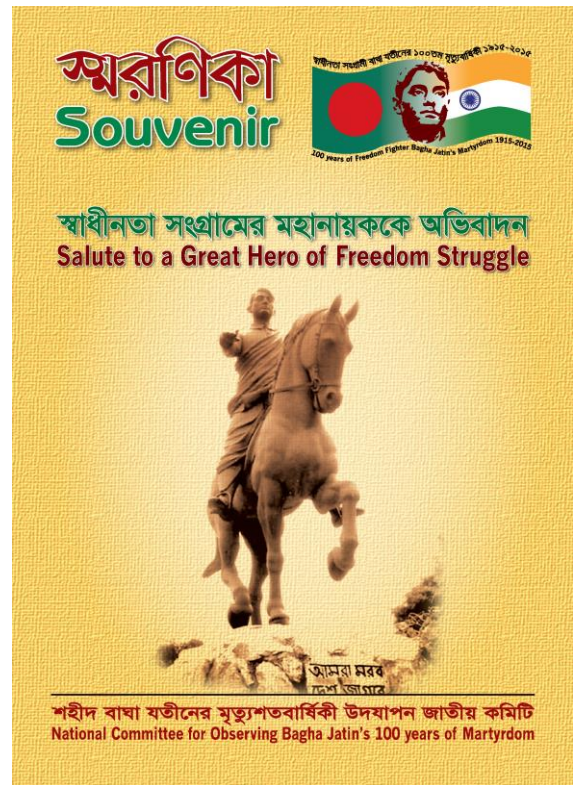


Fig. 1.05. Booklet cover: Salute to a great hero of freedom struggle Bagha Jatin. National Committee of observing Bagha Jatin's 100 years of martyrdom September 2, 2015. Courtesy: FSBTWC

violent resolution of the conflict on the island of Ireland, such as the Pat Finucane Centre (PFC), also work towards the same goal. Their legal initiatives have led to the declassification of some documents, which are evidence of the ways in which the British Parachute Regiment, along with the republican and loyalist paramilitaries, have interspersed the lives of civilians with everyday violence.

Other than archives and museum displays, ephemera holdings are also available with individuals like historian Muntasir Mamoon. His personal collection of calendars, and commemoration booklets on martyr intellectuals and martyrs of districts at the Muntasir Mamoon Collection, Dhaka (MMC) is vast, especially because he has presided over various educational and research bodies, and has participated in political and legal battles in generating consciousness of the Liberation War in Bangladesh.

A few ephemera are only available with certain individuals as they are associated with them. At times, they do not wish to display the ephemera in the public space of the museums, such as the copy of a gazette or certain artefacts. Especially in Bangladesh, since there are fewer ephemera collections in museums, private papers of individuals including photographs of eroding burial grounds and ephemera objects, as well as private archives, such as a filmmaker's archives containing ephemera including documentary stills, will be referred to in this study. Some individuals are creators of certain ephemera, including a ballad singer and a mural artist in Bangladesh, while other individuals are bearers of oral interpretations of ephemera. The latter will be mentioned in the next section.

Apart from individuals, digital platforms also contain ephemera holdings, such as digitised versions of print ephemera, that were accessed from websites that feature digitised collections of museums, as well as digital ephemera, including various social media posts and comments on digital handles of martyr commemoration committees. Individuals also post on martyrs of their families, and spontaneously make commemoration speeches that are only circulated through the social media. While these may be biased and depict perspectival comments that brandish the ordinary martyr for the masses, they provide an insight into the contestations of martyrdom in people's everyday lives. Digital platforms allow uploading videos of martyr commemoration programmes of political parties held in the districts and display various ephemera utilised therein. Some ephemera are only available on online merchant websites, such as the Kevin Barry memorial jersey, with a customised shadowy image of the martyr. Online merchant sites do not only display these populist customisations, but also banned

figurines such as that of an IRA hero of the 1921 War of Independence.⁹² The range of holdings indicates that ephemera studies are not to be restricted to archival studies but include individual and digital spaces of material and memory as well.

1.2.1.3 Interviews

Ephemera are memory triggers, and even when associated with martyrs, they were only identified and explored with the help of people. Thus, oral interpretations of ephemera are complementary to an understanding of the idea and constitute part of the primary data in this study. Primarily, two types of interviews were conducted—semi-structured interviews and informal, conversational interviews.

For an in-depth understanding of narratives of people's martyrdom and its ephemera, semi-structured interviews with a set of open-ended questions were conducted in both NI and Bangladesh that focused on the following:

- Terminology of the martyr
- Usage of other related terms
- Response to martyrs and martyrdom events
- Memories of family members regarding how martyrs were killed
- Knowledge of local people about martyrs
- Contestations in their identification as martyrs
- Awareness of initiatives on how these martyrs are commemorated now (nationally, locally and personally)
- Reactions to them as martyr families
- Sense of connection to national memorials
- Desire for local memorials

92. Anne Walsh, "Martyr figurines – Colonialist ephemera," *Open Space* (blog), June 11, 2010, <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2010/06/martyr-figurines-colonialist-ephemera/>.

- Association of ephemera or minor transient objects of everyday life with the martyrs and its preservation
- Awareness of literary works associated with martyrs by local artists
- Importance of such ephemera for future generations regarding the remembrance of martyrs.

These broad topics were considered during interviews for this study; however, they also somewhat differed in focus depending on the person interviewed, such as the economic background of the martyrs, and the financial situation of their families now. Unpublished interviews conducted by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead as part of their *Martyrdom interviews* have been cited as primary data to explore the responses of the common people regarding the nature of martyrs and emblems in martyr ephemera in Belfast and Dublin. An unpublished interview from the Jalladkhana killing field memorial site was cited and compared to the original interview of the same person conducted after fourteen years in August 2022. Moreover, female martyrs are scarcely acknowledged as such, and so a published interview of the sister of a martyred female freedom fighter was utilised to explore the gendered nuances in martyrdom.

Moreover, the interviewees discussed a range of martyr ephemera, which could not be found but were well-known among the people, such as the badges and school bag embossing of the Titu Mir (a martyr of the peasant revolt who died in 1831) house in the BAF Shaheen School in Dhaka. Interviewees such as Paul O'Connor, director at PFC, a human rights advocacy and lobbying entity acting on behalf of the families of murdered victims of state and paramilitary violence during the NI Troubles, also discussed ephemera and the lack thereof⁹³, such as in the case of the Irish soccer player

93. Paul O'Connor (director, Pat Finucane Centre), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 28, 2022. Transcript, with author.

James McClean not wearing the poppy, an emblem of remembrance for the people who died during the World War. Afsan Chowdhury mentioned a widow, whose memories of her husband's killing are a trigger to her life of suffering afterwards rather than the event itself. The reminiscence is not a family scrapbook to her;⁹⁴ since the suffering was so painful that she did not want to remember it. She also had no use for memory triggers. Thus, interviews also brought out the spaces where ephemera was too painful to feature.

In NI, semi-structured interviews were conducted for the heritage officer at the EastSide Visitor Centre to find out about the unionist and loyalist culture, focusing on the range of ephemera associated with martyrs that emerged therein, and the volunteer at EHIRHM to investigate the nationalist and republican culture based on the range of ephemera associated with martyrs. Furthermore, the family members of three of the victims of Bloody Sunday were contacted to know about their most personal ephemera as associated with the murdered victim. Paul O'Connor was also reached out to find out about the kind of ephemera associated with the demands for justice and redress of the murdered victims, along with how the usage of the word 'martyr' had been appropriated. Lastly, the director of a play on the Saville inquiry, who investigated events that led to Bloody Sunday, was contacted to know about the reasons for using witness statements as legal documentary ephemera.

In Bangladesh, original semi-structured interviews were conducted for family members of five martyrs of 1971 who were killed in Mirpur. The reason for choosing the ordinary martyrs of Mirpur was their lack of mention in the martyr gazettes of the country, the close connection of these families with the local memorial site where martyr ephemera are preserved, and perpetration of the killings by local community collaborators of the Pakistan Army in January 1972. During the interview, some of the

94. Afsan Chowdhury, interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022.

interviewees even brought personal ephemera ranging from documents, artworks and items of personal clothing of martyrs, all of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The supervisor of the memorial site, Promila Biswas, was interviewed to inquire about the history of the Mirpur killings, and regarding how the elder and younger generations of the families of the martyrs participated in various activities of the museum.

Martyr organisations are mostly run by civil society in both countries. Its members are family members of martyrs, for instance, Asif Munier, the secretary of *Projonmo '71* and Mizan Talukdar, the secretary of *Roktoddhara '71* and son of martyred freedom fighter Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar. The semi-structured interviews conducted with them on the purview and activities of the former organisation that focused on children of the martyrs of the Liberation War, along with the broadened purview and scope of the latter organisation that included the grandchildren of the martyrs, were found to be insightful. The former organisation has worked with the families of the martyred intellectuals, whereas the latter hoped to reach out to more ordinary martyrs, as explained by Mizan Talukdar.⁹⁵ Similar to NI, justice and welfare organisations prevail in Bangladesh, such as FSBTWC, whose president Shariar Kabir was interviewed regarding the various initiatives taken to commemorate the ordinary martyrs, bring the war criminals to justice, and related ephemera commonly featured in these processes.

Genocide researchers, including Muntasir Mamoon, were interviewed on the range of national and local ephemera in Bangladesh as it evolved over the years, while Afsan Chowdhury was interviewed about the martyrdom in villages and the lack of

95. Mizan Talukdar (son of martyr Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar), interview by author, Dhaka, August 9, 2022. Transcript, with author.

ephemera found in those areas. In NI, material conflict researchers, such as Kris Brown, were interviewed regarding the balanced nature of the ephemera collection at NIPC, the nature of studies on martyr ephemera, the methodology of data analysis of ephemera, and the digital challenge in ephemera studies. Peter Moloney was also interviewed regarding the oral interpretations of various ephemera, focusing on the history of various republican and unionist ephemera, their evolutions and their replacements. Moreover, a study of the catalogues of ephemera in his collection, listed to item level, was useful in selecting the range of martyrs and ephemera that were not often analysed, such as personalities ephemera.

In Bangladesh, producers of ephemera, such as ballad singer Fakir Abul Hashem and mural artist, Arafat Karim, were interviewed regarding verbal and visual ephemera and common people's knowledge of such ephemera concerning martyrs in their everyday lives. Saymon Zakaria, Bangladeshi folk researcher and Deputy Director of the Department of Culture in the Bangla Academy, Dhaka, was interviewed regarding the manuscripts of verbal ephemera like ballads, ephemera on folk martyrs and the scope of its region-based studies. Nahid Masud, brother of filmmaker Tareque Masud, was interviewed regarding the way a documentary captured the people's responses to songs of the 1971 Liberation War. He mentioned the technicalities of camerawork and the initiatives of young students in carrying the portable screen setup to the remotest corners of rural Bangladesh.

A few informal, conversational interviews were also conducted as people spoke about various aspects and ephemera collections of martyrdom on their own accord while I researched the ephemera archives. This was useful to understand ephemera as minor documents of everyday life. Shamima Akter Rima, an IT assistant, spontaneously spoke about the various gallery displays relating generally to the history and the culture of

Bangladesh and specifically to martyrdom in the country, taking me to the newly inaugurated exhibition at the BNM. She also talked about how privileged martyr families availed numerous benefits in education and employment while families of poor mass martyrs languished in oblivion. Tony Boyle, archivist at the Tower Museum in Derry, specified numerous object ephemera in the Pennyburn storehouse beyond the Peter Moloney collection, such as a memorial card in a photo frame that had been collected from the home of a family member of a Bloody Sunday victim. It indicated the popularity of the commemorative memorial card and its sacral nature in the lives of the people in Derry after 1972. He also showed a plastic bullet, which the soldiers fired upon the crowd on Bloody Sunday. After a perception of these, the names of the victims became a cruel and palpable reality. Thus, informal conversational interviews not only provided naturalistic data but also situated the meaning of ephemera in an intimate manner. Informal conversational interviews are also useful when data is not available regarding a particular topic. While discussing ephemera related to female martyrs, Suraiya Begum, who has studied the role of women in the war, in the war crimes tribunal and in countering fundamentalism, mentioned that although women have been considered as heroes in the past, they were not deemed martyrs. Therefore, roadside plaques in the name of female martyrs were hardly noticed when she travelled across the country to research on the war heroines of 1971. Her insights into her research opened up avenues for martyr ephemera of women. Debdas Ghosh of the Rangpur district in Bangladesh revealed novel issues regarding the conditions of martyrs in the districts as well as cultural organisations that were engaged in their betterment. Mesbah Kamal provided insight into the leftist narratives of martyrdom in the context of the 1969 uprising.

When organisers of events were interviewed regarding the usage of posters in the events, their reminiscences regarding the build-up to the event and the audience response made the poster of a cultural social a signifier of a range of other martyr ephemera. Informal conversational interviews are apt when walking along various sites and becoming inquisitive regarding the varied nature of the locations. Such an interview was conducted with Ajoy Dasgupta during the Walking Museum tour in Dhaka. At times, representatives of political parties do not allow formal recorded interviews due to various legal and political inhibitions. Bangladesh drafted the Liberation War Denial Crimes Act in 2016; therefore, while voicing the BNP's (present main political party in opposition) stance regarding the national martyr of the Liberation War, its vice-president, Shamsuzzaman Dudu's point of view contrasted with the AL perspective, and there were contestations regarding which one could be considered the pro-Liberation perspective. In this regard, informal conversational interviews record spontaneous and populist responses. Oftentimes, formal interviews were also denied, especially when people were undertakers of governmental works in progress. Col Zahir is presently working on the identification of 1971 martyrs' graves in India and their reinternment in Bangladesh.⁹⁶ Since these are sensitive and confidential issues, detailed and factual information could not be shared.

Informal conversational interviews are also useful for multiple questioning. Mofidul Haque, a trustee of the LWM and a knowledge bank in himself, first guided me on the various martyr ephemera and then explained how comparisons between the historical narratives of Ireland and Bangladesh are evoked in post-1975 Bangladesh. He

96. Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir (veteran of the 1971 Liberation War, and awarded with the *Birprotik* by the government of Bangladesh and the *Padma Shri* by the government of India, who has done extensive work on the identification of graves of Bangladeshi 1971 martyrs in India), telephone discussion with the author, September 15, 2022.

was not originally questioned beyond the archival holdings of the Museum. Adrian Kerr, curator at the Museum of Free Derry, and Sofia Nazneen Neeta, archivist at the LWM, Dhaka discussed the range of ephemera holdings, especially those that could not be accessed due to physical impediment of shifting or due to the immense range of ephemera that needed to be understood first before the specific ephemera could be selected. Informal conversations with salespersons at museum souvenir shops in Belfast and Dublin explained the type of ephemera and objects that people usually brought, along with their personal favourites. These could not be known through formal interviews and were best discussed through informal conversations to ensure that the people are able to share information in an uninhibited manner.

1.2.1.4 Published books and literary publications

Some ephemera have featured in published books only once; thus, ephemera, such as a ballad on martyrs of Baruitola in Bangladesh, has been compiled in a study on the genocide of that district, while another ballad is cited from an edited version of the works of the ballad writer. Essays will be cited from a book published with the proceedings of a literary competition held in the memory of martyrs. The hymn on the ‘Declaration of Loyalty and Fidelity’ to Oliver Plunkett was referred from the book published on the occasion of the reopening of the Church of St. Oliver Plunkett Parish in Belfast. Finally, a photograph of a martyr memorial in an obscure slum in Bangladesh was sourced from a collection of photographs published to commemorate the 1952 language movement. These are not to be found in any other publication.

Literary publications also constitute a primary source in this study. Novels depict ephemera such as martyr’s slogans and funeral processions, poems feature ephemera such as martyr’s clothes, a cartoon displays ephemera such as gazette papers and stamps, plays demonstrate ephemera such as the last words of martyrs and the witness statements

of survivors, and a documentary illustrates ephemera on songs and audience reactions as important emblems. Artworks are also explored as ‘literary’ works featuring ephemera such as a painting which shows ephemera like a flag. Two literary publications have featured as extant publications in their manuscript forms that constitute paper ephemera. One literary publication by a person who later became a martyr, Terence MacSwiney, will be cited as it contains an oral interpretation of the flag as ephemera.

1.2.2 Data analysis

Ephemera studies, being a new knowledge frontier, did not possess developed comprehensive methodologies, and not all knowledge regarding martyrdom is data-driven as during periods of conflict, data preservation became difficult. Moreover, ephemera are defined as minor documents of everyday life that are not always consciously preserved. This study, therefore, uses a mixed methodology of social science research for primary data identification and collection, along with a thematic and objective analysis as used in literary research. Both social science research and literary research were conducted within the larger domain of comparative historical and socio-cultural studies, with each methodology subject to a comparison between instances in Ireland and Bangladesh.

The primary sources discussed above have been identified, collected and analysed through the following modes of qualitative analysis. One of the modes of qualitative research is snowball sampling, which has been used to identify information-rich key informants or critical cases.⁹⁷ In this study, the critical case is that of identifying persons and ephemera, of martyrs and martyrdom. The snowball sampling method is

97. Michael Quinn Patton, “Designing Qualitative Studies,” in *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed., (California: Sage Publications Inc., 2002), 237.

supplemented by the constant comparative method, whereby different ephemera were sorted and organised into groups and attributes⁹⁸, such as the varied contestations in the naming, making, continuums and subversions of martyrdom. It was then followed by the participant-observer immersion method, through which the data was critically explored. This method was further supplemented by the archival method of ephemera studies. Other than the qualitative analysis of the primary data, analysis of ‘literary’ works, including art, music, was also conducted. Furthermore, the literary works were explored from the perspective of martyr and ephemera studies, which contain either the ephemera or the martyr as a focal emblem.

1.2.2.1 Snowballing and the constant comparative method

While it may be argued that there is no dearth of martyr figures or their related ephemera in both Ireland and Bangladesh, the methodology to find and identify martyrs has altered over time as memories and witnesses have depleted. Specifically, when ephemera are used to gauge people’s understanding of martyrs and martyrdom in terms of daily lives, locating such ephemera also becomes difficult since they are minor transient objects. Given such conditions, the snowball method based on the period of study and area of activity was found to be convenient. This method allows quicker identification of places of interest, focused selection of bearer of memories, and pre-interview of interaction with the concerned subjects. In this study, snowball sampling was used both for the identification of ephemera as well as the oral interpretations of these ephemera. One ephemera leads to the next, similar to a calendar featuring a memorial certificate as one of its images, or publication details of a republican political card on one martyr leading to political cards on other martyrs; or money receipts of

98. Elaine Stratford used the mode of constant comparative approach to analyse the pamphlets of the women’s cooperatives in the Greek island of Lesbos in her 2018 book, *Island Geographies*.

compensation received by martyr families leading to the names of various martyrs, whose lives were then discussed. For oral interpretations of ephemera, interviewees or participants became key informants and referred or recruited subjects for interviews, such as the supervisor at Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, who referred to the families of martyrs in the area of Mirpur and told them to arrive at the memorial site for the interviews. In addition, the curator at the Museum of Free Derry in NI referred to the families of the Bloody Sunday victims, some of whom also worked at the Bloody Sunday Trust.

Snowball sampling is considered to be a non-probability sampling method. This is because not all martyr families in Mirpur had an equal chance of being selected for an interview, and not all family members of the Bloody Sunday victims were referred, depending on their desire and comfort in giving an interview. The referral is based on social position, institutional affiliation, political allegiance, economic background and psychological comfort. However, participants were also selected based on an entirely different position, affiliation, allegiance and background since it is imperative to interact with as many people as possible apart from the focus group. Members of these hidden populations of unknown martyrs tend to be closely connected since they share interests or histories and are also usually involved in the same social group. Related ephemera are, therefore, found at community museums in NI, namely the EHIRHM and the Orange Museum. However, the narrative of martyrdom may be used more in one community than the other. In NI, republican ephemera represented more narratives of martyrdom than unionist and loyalist ephemera. Richard Kearney writes about martyrdom as a ‘mythical nucleus’ in the Irish Republican Movement.⁹⁹ Through the

99. Richard Kearney, “Myth and Terror,” *The Crane Bag* 2, no. 1/2, *The Other Ireland* (1978): 125, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30059472>.

snowballing method, the volunteer at EHIRHM referred to the Sinn Féin shop, from where republican ephemera such as the rolls of honour, Easter lily badges and T-shirts with images of martyrs were stocked in abundance. On the other hand, the heritage officer at the EastSide Visitor Centre led to the Union Jack shop and referred to the Orange Museum. This study has looked into several unexplored ephemera of the unionist and loyalist community, as well as civil rights associations and civilian deaths, at the Linen Hall Library and the Peter Moloney collection at Tower Museum.

The snowballing method will be used with a comparative method to give representation to the variant voices of martyr narratives. In Bangladesh, archives at the LWM contained ephemera related to the nationally acclaimed martyr figures, such as Asad and Matiur and famous women martyrs, including Meherunessa and Selina Parvin. However, one of the trustees, Mofidul Haque, referred to the Jalladkhana killing field memorial site, where families of ordinary martyrs could be identified and interviewed. Thus, referral leads to the identification of further ephemera and bearer of memories. Particularly in Bangladesh, this process led to the private archives of individuals including family members of martyrs, producers of ephemera and historians. The snowballing method helped studying the ephemera that existed beyond the political restrictions and governmental affiliations of the state archives.

The limitations of snowballing method were overcome by the constant comparative method, and therefore, one is used in tandem with the other. It not only represented the variant voices of martyrdom but also enabled the identification of unexplored martyrs and ephemera on the basis of comparative modes, such as comparative identification through groups (gaining knowledge about the group of martyrs of the Easter Rising from the well-known ones such as Patrick Pearse and Eamonn Ceannt to the less-known ones including Cornelius Colbert and Michael

Mallin), relatability (the 1971 martyrs of the Liberation War related to the traditional folk martyrs like Imam Hasan and Huseyn), derivation (the word ‘martyr’ or ‘martyrs’ as derived from current newspapers when immediately after the events, the deceased individuals are termed so by the newspaper editors such as the naming of martyr Asad after the 1969 mass uprising or by civil rights groups dubbing the victims of Bloody Sunday as ‘martyrs’), association (martyrs and victims of one movement such as Springhill massacre and the Annie’s bar massacre of 1972 associated in their seeking of justice by similar organisations) and adjacent connectivity (the identities of about four thousand martyrs whose bodies lie buried in India emerge to the fore when the case of the reinternment of the remains of martyred intellectual Abdul Wahab Talukdar is probed). Through such comparative modes, martyrs have been identified, and subsequently, their ephemera have been explored in detail in this study. Moreover, object analysis of ephemera and oral interpretation of ephemera have also been compared with one another to validate the claims of each. For instance, the emblem of the Easter lily is found in republican political cards and posters; however, during the study of interviews, it was clarified that in some unionist areas, it was a symbol of affront, while in others, it did not have the same response.

Snowball sampling is useful when the data such as martyr ephemera and people who are unbiased regarding martyrdom narratives, is difficult to find. Data protection is also enabled since the researcher did not directly choose the ephemera or the participants in interviews. Furthermore, data diversification was enabled through the constant comparative mode.

1.2.2.2 Participant-observer immersion method

Immersion methodology is common in anthropology and sociology and has also been used in research with respect to people's history and conflicts in Ireland¹⁰⁰ and Bangladesh¹⁰¹. Immersion implies collecting data while immersed in the life of the subject area of research. In this method, the observer and the participant reduce as much social and psychological distance as possible through a sustained period. It is also known as the participant-observer method. My fieldwork in Ireland and Bangladesh enabled an understanding of the ephemera and their oral interpretations, especially the terms used to refer to death due to historical and political reasons. However, unlike the instance with Irish studies, wherein the immersion is a variation of ethnographic study (as in most instances of the West)¹⁰², the Bangladeshi rural world highly varies from its urban world; more so than the differences between the rural and the urban in Ireland. Therefore, a layered information-gathering method¹⁰³ was employed, especially since my stay in Ireland and Bangladesh covered a short period of three and two weeks respectively during which interviewees themselves became participant researchers who contributed to an understanding of each ephemera. Material conflict and genocide

100. Marilyn Silverman and P. H. Gulliver, *Approaching the Past: Historical Anthropology through Irish Case Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, ed., *Irish Ethnologies* (United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017); Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, *The Anthropology of Ireland* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020).

101. Ben J. Wallace and Michael Harris, "Anthropology and Development in Bangladesh," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 18, no. 3/4 (1989): 241–64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40553163>; Tasnim Rahman, *Remembering 1971: On British Bangladeshis Transmitting Memories from the Bangladesh Liberation War* (master's thesis, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London, 2020); Sanjib Kr. Biswas and Priyanka Tripathi, *The Gendered War: Evaluating Feminist Ethnographic Narratives of the 1971 War of Bangladesh* (India: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

102. Scott A. Lukas, *A Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces* (United States: Carnegie Mellon ETC Press, 2016).

103. The layered information-gathering method has been used by Afsan Chowdhury in his studies on *Gramer Ekattor* [The 1971 of Villages] (2019), *Hindu Jonogosthir Ekattor* [The 1971 of the Hindu community], and *Narider Ekattor* [The 1971 of Women] (2022).

researchers, family members and acquaintances of martyrs, community and political party representatives, producers of ephemera, playhouse staff on literary renditions of martyr ephemera, representatives of legal and civic organisations associated with Troubles-related deaths and martyrs in Ireland and Bangladesh, were interviewed as key informants in this study. These people led to an unveiling of several ephemera and clarified the evolving meaning of ephemera in their known historical contexts. Martyr families demonstrated the meaning of an ephemera within the context of their family history, while researchers depicted the meaning of an ephemera in the state and national historical context. Librarians, curators, archivists and volunteers provided knowledge and guidance of the material from the ephemera archives from the perspective of martyr ephemera. Participant-observer immersion method has previously not been considered as a methodology of ephemera collection and analysis of martyrdom, either in Ireland or Bangladesh.

Individual immersion researchers, who conduct an ethnographic analysis of each of the counties and districts where martyrs are to be found, may avail an overwhelming amount of data¹⁰⁴. However, they might get biased data since they would gradually lose the objective stance of a researcher and become an intimate insider of the field of survey. Such an intimate stance is best avoided in the interests of the researcher as well as the object of study. Paul O'Connor mentioned that researchers were not always allowed to directly interact with the families of victims of Troubles-related deaths, both because it

104. In Bangladesh, the Liberation War Museum at Dhaka has an archive of oral interviews from across most districts of Bangladesh where the memories of 1971 are recorded. The 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum at Khulna has published 117 books on most places of genocide in Bangladesh in the *Gonohotya* [Genocide] series, presenting the names of the martyrs in the villages, martyr monuments, interviews with surviving members regarding the 1971 war, and the present locations of where their family members had been killed. These books have small chapters on the present conditions of martyr families. In NI, David McKittrick's book, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, is an examination of every death that was directly caused by the Troubles.

becomes difficult for the families to relive the trauma each time with the questions of the interview and the researchers may unknowingly ask intrusive questions regarding issues of trauma and death. Spokesperson of these families, heading organisations for legal redress of these families, and inhabitants of those specific places where the massacres had taken place, provide as much information to the researchers as possible. If the researcher requires information beyond their scope, then only are the families contacted.¹⁰⁵ Thus, interviews of key informants were best suited to this study.

Over the years, martyr memories have not only become depleted but also reorganised according to the current situation of the family members and the society. For some martyr families in Bangladesh, the martyrdom of their family members is a legacy that they nurture till date, or it is the loss of the only earning member of a family whose demise has put the succeeding generations into deprivation. In this study with the layered immersion method, as a researcher from India, I did not have a personal stake in the martyr's narratives of Ireland and Bangladesh and was thus able to analyse the contestations of evolving and obliterating nature of martyr memories through ephemera. The collected information regarding martyrs and ephemera belonged to multiple sources, and so they have been cross-checked with one another, till the validity was reiterated at various quarters.

1.2.2.3 Archival method

Archival methods used in ephemera-based research are slightly different from usual archival methods. Ephemera archives are mostly created by activist archivists with a specific agenda.¹⁰⁶ They are used to collect information and validate or negate findings

105. Paul O'Connor, interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 28, 2022.

106. M. K. Organ, "Ephemera in Archives: What to Do? A Possible Solution from the University of New South Wales Archives," *Archives and Manuscripts – Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, Canberra 15, no.2, (November 1987): 109.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1602&context=asdpapers>.

on existing data drawn from the field. Whenever an ephemera related to a well-known martyr is found, it highlights a less-discussed aspect of his life. For instance, Patrick Pearse is a well-known martyr of Easter 1916, and much has been written about his philosophy of self-sacrifice. However, pin badges, made of paper, with the portrait pictures of his brother William and himself, were circulated to raise funds for St. Edna's school founded by the Pearse brothers following their execution in the Easter 1916 Rising. Thus, this ephemera comments on the range of martyr afterlives and the utilisation of martyr memories.

In case of archival data, the first step is to identify the location and identity of the archives. The archives' custodian may produce and hoard data that are dominated by social or political ideology. In this ephemera-based research, a few archives contain data that are community-oriented (like EHIRHM) and historical allegiance-oriented (like LWM). In the case of private archives, socio-political affiliations have generated related martyr ephemera. Contestations in ephemera in representation of martyrs will unravel the exact nature of these collections.

Most ephemera holdings in this study contained popular and populist narratives of opposing communities, and therefore the nature of each holding was assessed in terms of its collection. For instance, while a few political cards from PANIPC may have been cited, they have been explored in terms of the range of political cards there. The nature of the archives was identified since the research was topic-bound: people's understanding of martyrs as represented through ephemera. During the search for martyrdom-related ephemera and those related to conflict deaths, general commemorative ephemera were also included, and filtered according to my selection.

Moreover, due to historical and political bias, more material on the martyrs of one specific religious and political community was found. In NI, republican ephemera

constitute a greater percentage of martyr ephemera than unionist ephemera, even though the content of the former was anti-state in nature. In Bangladesh, the ephemera holdings in the capital city of Dhaka contained more pro-Liberation AL martyr ephemera than the archives at Rajshahi, where martyr ephemera was also related to the student wing of different political parties, communist parties, and the present political party in opposition, the BNP. Moreover, archives in the districts reflected the agenda of district committees of martyr organisations that formed a critical narrative of people's understanding and relevance of martyrdom.

A balanced analysis of collected data will be undertaken in this study to ensure a reflection of authenticity in common people's martyrdom narratives. Since ephemera are mostly populist and propagandist, it is crucial to find the most historically accurate data (as far as possible within the context of commemorative or artistic reflection in comparison with the conventional historical records, including field-based primary data). It was, therefore, necessary to be familiar with historical records and understand the issue of not just martyrdom but the overall history of the conflict and the independence struggle in the countries to detect the nature of ephemera. Hence, news articles will be used extensively as secondary sources to ground the interpretation of ephemera in contemporary history. The confirmation of the actual generic history of ephemera data forms one type of data, and if it deviates, it leads to the formation of the second type of data. Both have been discussed in the exploration of ephemera, because martyrdom not only related to real-time history but also the legacy history constructed by people.

Archival data have been derived from ephemera collections, as well as museum displays. The displays were based on the focused themes, namely the exhibition inaugurated on 15th August, 2022 entitled 'Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman' at the BNM. While exhibitions are themed populist displays, the items held are broad-based data. Both have been probed to capture people's narratives of martyrdom and their relevance in contemporary society. Archival research of ephemera, hence, becomes the most significant method as it explores the relationship between the actual contested people's history and the perceived history of martyrdom, along with the depiction of imagination of both.

Some ephemera will also referred from an informal society experiencing war, where the production of artefacts is limited, along with digital ephemera, for which social media archives, official websites and blogs have been accessed. Thus, mixed method is used to capture both the war and the perception and reflection of the same as expressed through ephemera. The two layers are used simultaneously for assessment. Since ephemera can be found in archives as well as the memory of people, one must cross-check the oral interpretations with the ephemera to reach a conclusion. This process benefits the selection of appropriate ephemera the most, as the reality of the conflict and the war with all its fragility are reflected in both remembering and forgetting. Thus, choosing the most appropriate ephemera is backed by the most appropriate real-life data.

The stages of the mixed method of archival process include:

- Consulting existing data based on appropriate collection methodology
- Consulting researchers familiar with similar data collection methodology
- Developing a data collection framework based on the above interactions
- Exploring archives for appropriate ephemera
- Processing the data by employing source tracking
- Discarding superficial ephemera and focusing on core ephemera
- Specifying sectors of human ephemera and conducting the search

- Identifying specific subjects and including the snowball technique to identify key informants
- Summarising findings and cross-checking with data and data collectors
- Finalising and moving to the next stage of consulting secondary sources to complete the framework

1.2.2.4 Thematic, symbolic and objective analysis of literary works

Other than a historical, sociological and archival exploration of martyrs and ephemera, this study also includes an exploration of literature and art. The word ‘literary’ has been used in a broad sense that includes art, music, etc. Firstly, literary texts, such as poems written by people who were later martyred, will be examined. Several themes emerged in this scenario, including the nature of legacy narratives for common people as well as the historical and socio-cultural identities of future martyrs. Comparisons were drawn between ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh and the nature of literary texts written by martyrs on ephemera in these countries. Secondly, literary works on martyrs written in ephemera are usually dedicatory pieces. An objective analysis of these literary texts will be undertaken, with their thematic focus modulated by the objective structure of the ephemera. Objective details include the date, that at times is inferred from the content in the ephemera, and the material nature of the ephemera. The medium of the ephemera interacts with the meaning of the literary works to generate people’s narratives of martyrdom. Literary works, in this instance, range from poems, paintings, biographies, songs and fictional characters in plays. The nature of ephemera will range from the political, archival to digital. Thirdly, literary works on martyr ephemera will be explored. Martyr ephemera are political ephemera of martyrs, including their last words, flags, the roll of honour, funeral processions, clothes and witness statements in trials. Ephemera such as murals, songs and their reactions,

slogans, and stamps specifically related to martyrs are also included, followed by a symbolic analysis where these martyr ephemera will be explored as central emblems in literary works. Lastly, literary ephemera which are literary works created spontaneously to commemorate martyrs that continue to exist through ephemera. At times they deal with recurrent events such as writings on handkerchief poetry commonly done by republican and loyalist prisoners, and at times with isolated ones, such as images of the funeral procession of specific martyrs on specific photographs. Here, the literary forms are defined by the objective structure of ephemera. Thus, an admixture of objective and thematic analysis, in leaflet poetry, handkerchief poetry, competition booklet and literary creations in brochures, is undertaken. The explored ephemera range from print versions, like the final correction proofs of song-collections, and digital versions, such as the screenshots of song videos. A comparative study of literary ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh will also be undertaken, ranging from old extant literary works, such as lyric poem and epic poem featuring common martyrs to leaflets and booklets in memory of the well-known martyrs.

Conclusion

In laying out the meaning and methodology, this chapter has paved way for a detailed study of the various contestations of naming, making, continuums, subversions and literary renditions. The scope of the study has been discussed in a comparative context so that the backdrop of these contestations become meaningful and the original nature of this research is established. The methodology has dealt with the subjective figure of the martyr and the objective entity of ephemera together to carefully unravel the interrelation between them.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTESTATIONS IN NAMING OF PEOPLE’S MARTYRS IN EPHEMERA

Introduction

The word ‘martyr’ abounds in ephemera of Ireland and Bangladesh but is deeply steeped in numerous contestations. This chapter describes these contestations in the naming of figures in ephemera who are termed martyrs in one instance and are subject to different terminology in other instances. Ephemera are minor objects of everyday life, and this chapter will focus on how the naming of martyrs in ephemera follows the journey of the process of martyrdom. Such temporal objects of everyday use help us understand how people create, remember and debate over those who died during and because of conflict. Ephemera do not only literally name through words but also symbolically name through images, emblems and texts. In both Ireland and Bangladesh, some ephemera are similar in that they represent the features of martyrdom but differ in that they reflect their cultural affiliations. This chapter will trace the evolution of naming in various ephemera and across history. The process of naming becomes an evolving narrative through the periods of historical chronology and the developing imagery and emblems in the ephemera.

2.1 DEATH AND ITS RELATED EPHEMERA

Martyrs are created primarily in the moment of their deaths and their identities are reinvigorated during the funerary activities following it.

2.1.1 Death words' ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

The martyr prepares for his death in different ways. From personal letters to friends and comrades to countrymen at large, the martyr, through his last words and according to his terms, creates his martyrdom for future generations. During his trial or execution, the heroism of the martyr is laid down in his words, along with his oratorical skills; his religious, political and legal conflicts with the established authorities of the times; and his figurative victory despite his bodily defeat. Such verbal ephemera, created at the moment of martyrdom, make the martyr both an intimately known person and a transcendental persona. While some ephemera may use the word 'martyrdom' as in the letters written by republican prisoners in NI, others do not use the term yet because in execution literature ephemera, the 'martyr' is yet to be born through his death.

2.1.1.1 Contestations of naming in Immaculate and last letters of martyrdom

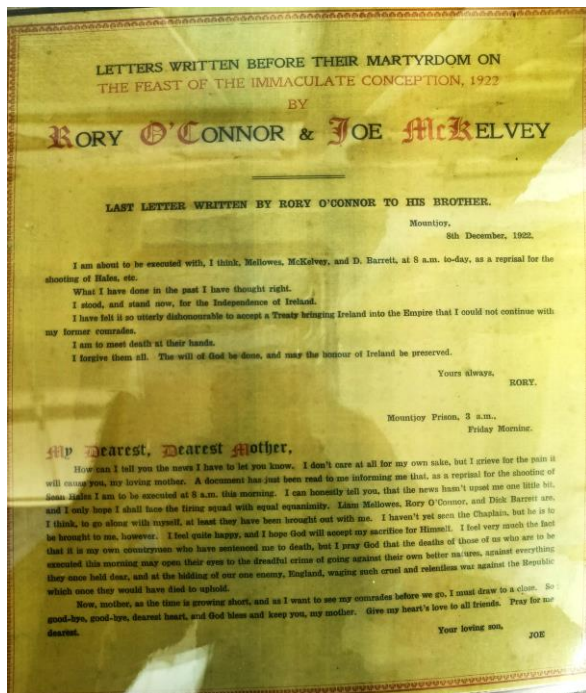


Fig. 2.01. Last letters: Rory O'Connor and Joe McKelvey before their martyrdom. Feast of the Immaculate Conception December 8, 1922. Courtesy: EHIHRM

During the 1919-1921 War of Independence in Ireland, the dead officers of the Anti-Treaty forces were transformed into martyrs not only through the poetic verses of veneration and political statements in newspapers but also by their own words, framed in the vocabulary of the religious Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The feast celebrates God's preservation of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the original

sin of the sexual act, leading to the birth of Jesus. The last letters of Joe McKelvey (fig. 2.01) and Liam Mellows, officers of the IRA during the Irish Civil War, were addressed to their mothers. The trope of the feast gears this address to new birth. Written on the eve of their death just before they were to be shot dead on the day of the feast (8th December, 1922), the words do not signify an end but a new beginning. Martyrs are not dead people but living personas. Their rebirth after death is inevitable like the immaculate birth of Christ. The martyr's death is a sacrifice to God, undertaken for a heavenly reward. Thus, there is no fear of its arrival. Rather, there is happiness that the death will ultimately enable the martyr's countrymen, who have decided to execute him, to see that England is misguiding them to wage war against their own republic, which the Irish proclaimed in Easter 1916. In this letter to his brother (fig. 2.01), Rory O'Connor presents his death as perpetrated by his countrymen. This is the 'will of God' for which he has forgiven them. This saint-like stance elevates him to the level of a martyr who has discarded the 'dishonour' of the Treaty and stands for the 'independence of Ireland'. Significantly, the religious framework does not mean blind religious subservience. In a similar letter to his mother, Liam (fondly called 'Willie') claimed that he had been unable to accept the 'Bishop's Pastoral'—which tells of the bishop's role as an intermediary to accessing peace and sanctity from God—even though he had met the chaplain to make his last dying confession. The martyr, as the venerable, has a direct connection with God whose will he has accepted with a 'clear conscience'. These are not just personal letters because the writer knows that he will not share his burial space with his family members but with the politically 'worldly pomp' of Glasnevin Cemetery. From the personal to the political and spiritual, the letters' words construct the comprehensive martyr.

Letters written before ‘martyrdom’ are not always explicitly termed as such. However, last letters are witness to the ‘martyrdom’ of people in various ways. While some utilise the language of religious imagery and are addressed to family members

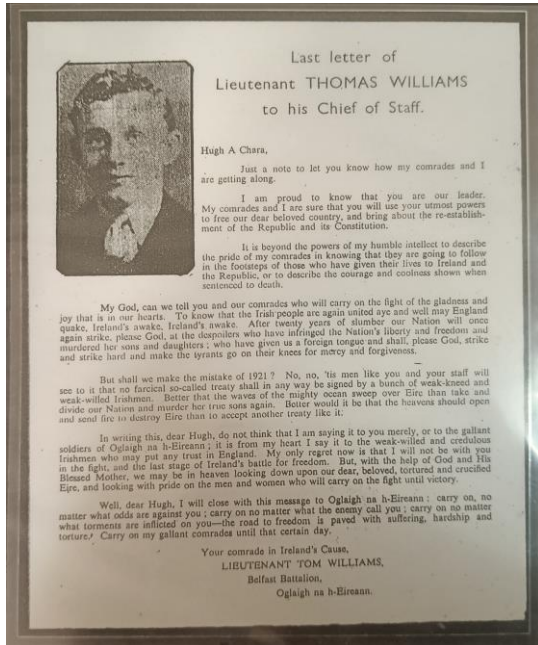


Fig. 2.02. Last letter: Lt. Tom Williams to his Chief of Staff. September 1922. Courtesy: EHIRHM

and close acquaintances, others are addressed to official compatriots who share or are going to share a similar fate.

Fig. 2.02 features the last letter of Lieutenant Tom Williams to his Chief of Staff Hugh A Chara describing his final days in prison. He was a young member of the ‘C’ Company of the IRA that had decided to create a diversionary act for the

RUC, the police force in NI at that time, so that the banned parades may be carried

out in memory of the Easter martyrs, and was shot in the process. The letter posits Williams and his comrades journeying toward a glorious death for the re-establishment of the independence of the Republic and its constitution. What adds to the language of martyrdom is the calmness shown by the comrades in the face of death. This death will lead the martyr to heaven where he will look down upon numerous others who would be similarly willing to lay down their lives for the cause of Ireland’s freedom. However, the country, not the martyr, becomes the ‘crucified’. The emotive language of the martyr’s defiance in the face of death is allied to the political language of the martyr’s defiance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty which would divide Ireland into two and keep NI as part of the UK. Such an alliance makes the

martyr's sacrifice into a legacy that others are encouraged to follow despite 'odds' and 'torments'.

Last letters are not only addressed to family members and acquaintances but also to the nation. Fig. 2.03 features the last, handwritten letter of a martyr's mother, Jahanara Imam, to the people of her country. Written from her hospital bed, this was an appeal to future citizens to continue to root out the war criminals as she had done. With her death, the successors of the movement became the people of the nation, who would have to overcome more obstacles to free the nation of these elements.

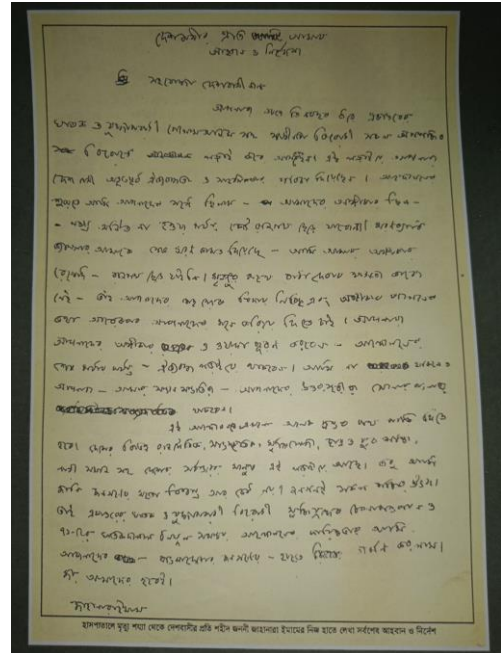


Fig. 2.03. Handwritten last letter: Martyr mother Jahanara Imam to the people of her country. June 1994. Courtesy: LWM

From the martyrs to the mother of martyrs and from a group responsibility to a national one, last letters are appeals and orders for the future of a freedom struggle. Significantly, the struggle continues even after the achievement of martyrdom. Williams' letter, written after the Irish War of Independence, was an appeal to continue the struggle to unite Ireland, while Imam's letter was an appeal to protect the unity of Bangladesh from alleged divisive elements.

In Ireland, contestations are being expressed in sectarian factions within and outside the IRA ranks regarding the martyrdom of the figures mentioned and the legitimacy of the Anti-Treaty forces, while in Bangladesh, the anti-Liberation forces

continue to challenge some martyrs as being merely political propaganda figures who are brandishing martyr politics after the 1971 Liberation War.

2.1.1.2 Contestations of naming in trial and execution literature

Speeches from the dock are statements made by people in anticipation of, or in

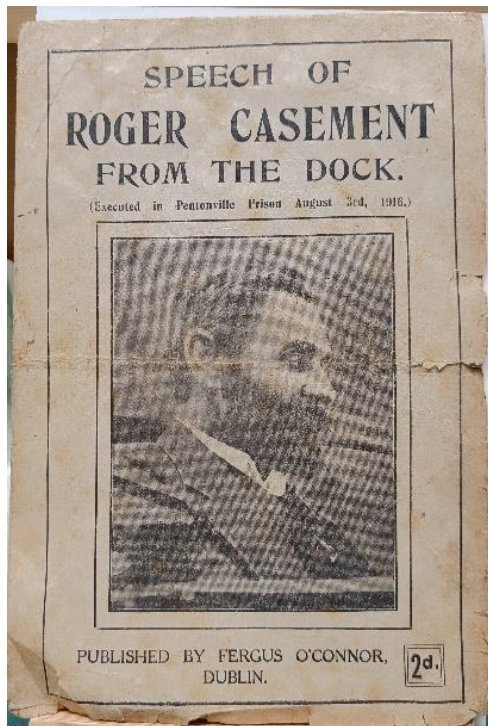


Fig. 2.04. Booklet: Speech of Roger Casement from the docks. Dublin: Fergus O'Connor, 1916. Courtesy: EHIRHM

the moment just prior to, their death. Their dying confessions and exhortations make them heroes, with massive crowds standing around, crying and cheering. Print ephemera like speech booklets are circulated among those who witness the spectacle that the speech generates. The booklet (fig. 2.04) is a memento, a vestige of the martyr, that the crowds will carry with them. It remains as a keepsake of the words which they had heard.

When Roger Casement was tried, for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising, in London, he used a conventional language of defence. On the advice of his lawyer, Casement uttered a 2705-word speech wherein the words 'right' and 'law' were used twenty-five and twenty-three times, respectively. The speech focused on Ireland's rights and the rule of law, with numerous facts on the American support for the Irish struggle for independence, and the wars Irishmen were fighting for England in Gallipoli and Belgium. While the latter points made Casement a loyal servant of the British Crown, his former allegiances made him a 'traitor'. The figure of the 'martyr' lies in the interstices of the two—parallely a patriot and a rebel, loyal and treasonous. Before an audience in London, where the Manchester martyrs had

once been convicted in 1867, stood Casement, about to die for his country, about to become a martyr, challenging the legality of all the arguments that branded him a treasonous traitor. The booklet containing Casement's speech was published by Fergus O'Connor, a Dublin publisher who was imprisoned after the Easter Rising following his publication of several Easter Rising ephemera like postcards and leaflets. O'Connor must have published this booklet, after his release from prison. He used the word 'executed' for Casement in the leaflet, indicating an act of murder committed by the English government. This formal accusation was disseminated in Dublin, at two pence each, to the people.

Other than speech booklets, centenary posters also published speeches from the dock, on the eve of the centenary of a rebellion to foreground the importance of these dying confessions as they become a separate genre like gallows literature. Robert Emmet delivered his speech from the dock in 1803. He was a member of the United Irishmen (a republican society committed to uprooting British rule in Ireland) who initiated the republican insurrection of 1798, for which he was tried for treason by a British Court. Fig. 2.05 is a witness to the enduring legacy of Emmet's words, a legacy that



Fig. 2.05. Centenary poster: Robert Emmet's speech. 1898. Courtesy: EHIRHM

constructed his martyrdom. Peter Collins wrote of the 1798 centenary outpouring of posters which were more kitsch¹ because of their excessive ornamentation and sentimentality, without specifically discussing Emmet’s speech. Emmet was certain that his death would immortalise his memory for posterity and make him part of a hallowed group of martyrs. The poster, with its embellishment of an angel who had broken the chains and was surrounded by the shamrock (the national flower of Ireland), with the pikes holding the banners of the 1798 rebellion, also included the memorialisation of the legal loopholes of the British judicial system which had made Emmet part of the injustice. That injustice continued in 1898, as Ireland remained a colony of the UK. Words of verbal rather than political independence make the speech relevant as a centenary piece along with its hortatory brilliance: ‘Let them and me repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times, and other men, can do justice to my character; when my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, *then, and not till then*, let my epitaph be written.’²

The last words of a martyr before his execution contain an oratorical charm that may be disseminated in various forms of ephemera—print or digital.

They are circulated among the common people who

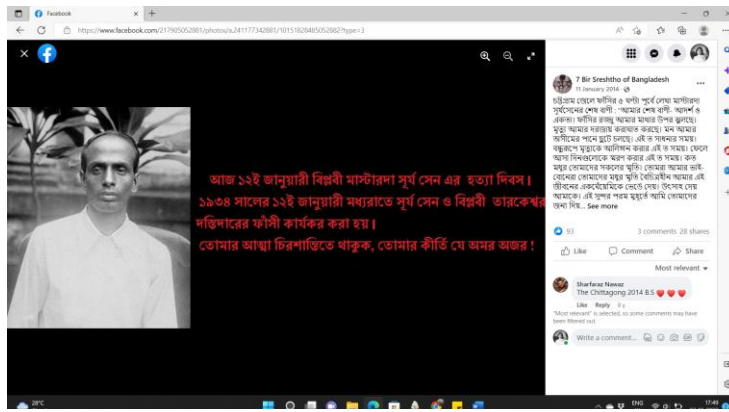


Fig. 2.06. Post: 7 Bir Sreshtho of Bangladesh. “Masterda Surya Sen er shesh bani [Last words of Masterda Surya Sen].” Facebook. January 11, 2014. Courtesy: 7 Bir Sreshtho of Bangladesh.

1. Peter Collins, “The Contest of Memory: The Continuing Impact of 1798 Commemoration,” *Eire-Ireland* 34, no. 2 (Samhradh / Summer 1999): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.1999.0002>.

2. Timothy. D. Sullivan and Alexander. M. Sullivan, *Speeches from the Dock, or, Protests of Irish patriotism*, (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1904), 50.

stand witness to an execution or remember the time of execution later. Through remembrance, the martyr moves beyond death to becoming a conqueror of death. Fig. 2.06 is a screenshot from the Facebook page dedicated to the seven martyrs of Bangladesh who have been given gallantry awards and the death conqueror Surya Sen.³ Sen initiated the eastern rebellion against British imperialism and was executed on 12th January, 1934 in Chittagong prison. On each anniversary of his death, this page remembers him through his last words. Written five hours before his execution, the last words represent his situation facing the gallows when an innate discipline and dedication creep in, remembering the past and moving towards the future. Death was embraced as a friend by this martyr. This martyr's legacy was the dream of a golden Bengal which he bequeathed to his friends and followers, for he had been stopped suddenly during its pursuit, by death. In his speech, he urges them to remember the Easter rebellion of Ireland, comparable to their Eastern rebellion. He also reminds them of the Chittagong armoury raid on 18th April, 1930; the struggles at Jalalabad, Julkha, Chandannagore and Dhalghat; and the names of the heroes who have given their lives for such liberation struggles. Moreover, he urges that there should not be self-conflict among the people which the British may take advantage of.

While Roger Casement and Roger Emmet delivered their speeches from the dock, Surya Sen's last words were written in the cell of a prison and given to fellow prisoner Kalikinkar Dey by a prison sweeper. In a post on the same Facebook page, written for the 81st anniversary, the responses of his comrades and fellow revolutionaries were described. The moments during which the last words of the hero were written were accompanied by the last salute of others who wanted to touch Sen's

3. 7 Bir Sreshtho of Bangladesh. "Masterda Surya Sen er shesh bani [Last words of Masterda Surya Sen]," Facebook. January 11, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/217905052881/photos/a.241177342881/10151828485052882?type=3>

dead body to obtain the promise of liberation. Their desires were not fulfilled as the British authorities threw the martyr's body into the sea, but these words became the tangible presence by which they swore to gain freedom. Through such digital ephemera, people came to know about Surya Sen in their village and country. We also come to know about other martyrs like Tarashankar Dastidar who was executed along with him and many others who were killed in the struggle with him. Surya Sen knew what it meant to pay respect to martyrs, a legacy he tried to lay down in his last words.

Contestations occur regarding the legal terminology used in Casement's and Sen's speeches to posit them as political criminals and the martyr-like veneration they receive based on their last words. Even during centenary celebrations of such speeches, these contestations continue, as republican publications bring out these posters to propagate their myth of martyrdom.

2.1.2 Burial ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Following death, a martyr's body is to be granted its final resting place. Burial ephemera range from one-time objects such as a piece of wooden coffin to the soil (taken from the field where the mass killing occurred) which is retained in the memory of the person who has died. These include specific objects structured into an art form and burial soil collected by people from different villages. These ephemera narrate the circumstances of the martyr's death and are followed by the involvement of the common people who give honours to the burial site. At times, the burial site itself may not be affixed and the martyr's journey is a claim to that site. When family members and close relatives called for the return of the remains of the dead forty-six years after the 1971 war (in 2017), and that call was documented in transient documents like

articles in newspapers and leaflets, it constitutes ephemera. These are mostly official burial ephemera.

2.1.2.1 Contestations of naming in martyr's in burial remains

For the martyr, death is an event that transforms the identity from that of a brave hero to that of a spectacular martyr. Fig. 2.07 features a shard of wood said to have been retrieved from the coffin transport case of Terence MacSwiney's body as it was stolen and moved from the funeral mass in Holyhead, Wales to the Custom House Quay in Cork, where the MacSwiney family was forced to receive the empty coffin.⁴ MacSwiney was an Irish playwright, author and politician who was elected as SF Lord Mayor of Cork. Devoid of the body in a place where it would create an eventful, public impact, this shard of wood is witness to the strategies undertaken by the British authorities to prevent the creation of MacSwiney as a spectacular martyr. The emptiness of the coffin case foregrounded the absence of the body within it. His martyrdom was not celebrated with grief over his remains but with grievance over the lack of remains.



Fig. 2.07. Object: Shard of wood in coffin transport case of Terence MacSwiney. Courtesy: Independence Museum, Kilmurry, County Clare, Republic of Ireland

The shard of wood is a signifier of that grievance, as the people in Cork went to the funeral ceremony in Dublin and celebrated the requiem mass followed by a funeral procession with it. Built by the British authorities, the coffin transport case was a marker of funerary appropriation of the martyr, which was transformed by the people

4. Excerpts taken from the website of the Independence Museum, Kilmurry in County Clare where some ephemera associated with Terence MacSwiney are kept, <http://kilmurrymuseum.ie/object-of-the-month/shard-of-wood/>.

into a marker of their funerary propaganda. From the appropriation to the propaganda, the martyrdom of MacSwiney was constructed.

Burial remains define martyrdom, not as an end but as a process. Fig. 2.08



Fig. 2.08. Object:
Baruitola Killing field soil.
March 7, 2007. Courtesy:
JKM

features the Baroitola killing field soil. It names not just one martyr but indicate many who were martyred in a single village (Baruitola) in the district of Kishoreganj in Bangladesh. A district survey by the Genocide Museum at Khulna, in May 2017, published the names of 171 martyrs from various villages surrounding Baruitola. This soil was collected at a time when the names of these people were not known. Even now in Mirpur, Dhaka, where this soil is being preserved, people hardly know these martyrs or their names.

Without the names, this soil is a way to connect with the martyrs in a tangible form and realise what they have become after their sacrifice. Humans turn to dust after their death, becoming one with the soil. Devoid of a proper burial, these martyrs became one with the soil in the most brutal way. Preservation of the soil of the killing fields is also forensic evidence that a genocide had taken place.

There is contestation over the burial remains that foreground the existence of numerous unnameable martyrs in Bangladesh and the stealth attempts to obliterate it in Ireland. In Bangladesh, the bodies were either burnt or left to perish in mass graves and contestations exist regarding whether to declare the killing field soil vague and irrelevant or consider it important as a tangible, forensic evidence for naming martyrs.

2.1.2.2 Contestations of naming in burial site subscription papers and burial

honours

Fig. 2.09 features a leaflet issued by the National Graves Association (NGA), a wing of the Irish republican movement that takes care of the graves of republican heroes and name the fallen dead as martyrs, in 1966 in preparation for reinterment of the remains of Tom Williams in Ireland, which would place him in the league of prisoners like Roger Casement who was similarly buried in an English prison and whose remains had been reinterred in Ireland. The people were made part of the campaign for the remains to be reclaimed by the home country. The son of the soil should come back home, albeit dead. This wish was not

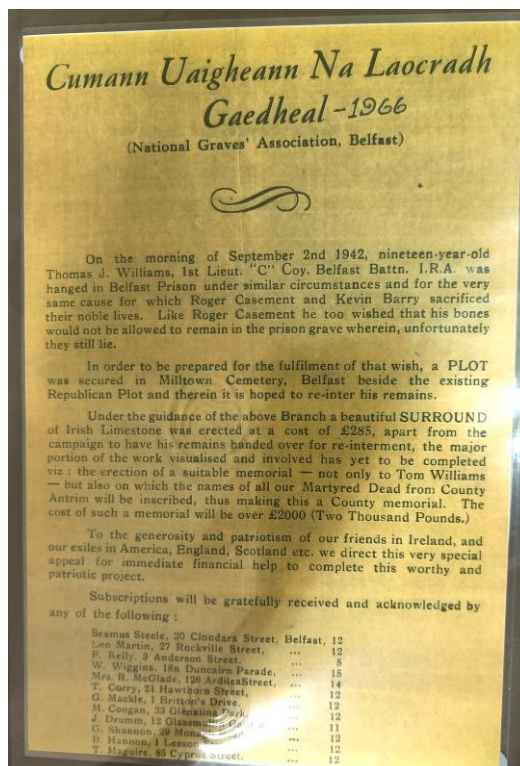


Fig. 2.09. Leaflet: Subscription of Tom Williams memorial. Dublin: National Graves Association, 1966. Courtesy: EHIRHM

only that of the family but that of the whole country in which a plot had been secured where the other martyred sons of the soil lay. Incidentally, even though a separate republican plot had been secured for him, Williams was not eventually buried there. This ephemera mentions the campaign to bring back his remains as well as a new campaign to erect a memorial for Williams along with the other martyrs of County Antrim. Even as the reclaiming is part of a national appropriation of the figure of the martyr, local memorials commemorate in terms of the everyday. The 'County memorial', which this burial site subscription aimed to build, was part of the memorialisation process at the grassroots. For this, people needed to be patriotic and

contribute financially. The martyr's legacy was sustained by the patriotic way in which people from Ireland and the Irish community in England, Scotland and America came together in this initiative. This ephemera highlights how people in the home and immigrant communities were brought together by the construction of a memorial to the martyr. Moreover, their subscriptions were acknowledged by local poets like Seamus Steele and other dignitaries. Well-known people of the county were made part of the memorialisation process so that the common people were proud of their acknowledged contributions.

While subscriptions were used to initiate the involvement of the common people in Ireland, it was the thronging crowds who saw to the reburial of the martyr's remains in Bangladesh. Reports of thousands thronging the graveyard at Mirpur, where the remains of *Bir Shrestho* [The Most Valiant Hero] Hamidur Rahman was brought back and buried, dominated print media in December 2007. The *Daily Sun* reported that when his remains were brought back, he was given state honours by the Armed Forces division amidst huge crowds.⁵ It was the national narrative that pulled the crowds to this event. In Bangladesh, populist narratives have not always directly generated print ephemera, but it is through other print ephemera resources like newspapers, which are now also part of digital archives, that we know about the tenor of the times. The involvement of the common people is a consequence of a governmental initiative for state ceremony for the martyred in Bangladesh; and of the insistence of the NGA of Dublin in the independent Republic in 1992 that their counterpart in Belfast (still part of UK) try to negotiate again to bring back the remains of Williams, which finally took place on 19th January, 2000. The hurdles faced by the

5. "State Rituals for Hamidur Take Off," *Bdnews24.com*, December 11, 2007, <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2007/12/11/state-rituals-for-hamidur-take-off><https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2007/12/11/state-rituals-for-hamidur-take-off>.

government of Bangladesh while attempting to bring back the remains of Hamidur Rahman from India were political and religious in nature (details discussed in Chapter Three); however, these were overcome, and martyr Hamidur Rahman received burial honours from the government of India too. The hurdles faced by the NGA were not the concerns of an allied country but the dominations of a colonial power.

Here, contestation verges on the populist appropriation of the martyr's remains as it derives from and further creates the national narrative of the martyr's remains. Yet, there is a vehement difference posited between IRA officers who are considered terrorists and Liberation War officers who are considered freedom fighters. Ajoy Dasgupta adds that Bangladesh's freedom struggle was not conducted by a group of rebels as in Ireland but by the orders of the Mujibnagar government, led by AL which gained the absolute majority, winning 160 of the 162 general seats and all seven women's seats in EP in the 1970 Pakistani general elections.⁶

2.1.2.3 Contestations of naming in reburial certificates and reinterment process

The difference between the original place of burial and the place of reinterment is a long journey undertaken by martyrs and their remains. Fig. 2.10 features the burial certificate, issued by NGA, of Tom Williams as his remains were finally reinterred in Milltown Cemetery in Belfast in January 2000; his original burial site was an unmarked grave in Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast where he had been executed in September 1942. NGA had launched a campaign to bring the remains of Williams to the republican plot in Milltown Cemetery; the campaign involved a judicial review of the decision that the body and the remains of the executed should remain within the

6. Ajoy Dasgupta (freedom fighter, journalist, writer, and retired lecturer at the University of Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 4, 2022.

same confines. What the certificate demonstrates is the climax of that struggle by the republicans and Williams' family members to claim a body as that of an individual. The certificate is also an appropriation of the life and death of Williams to the republican cause, even though he was not ultimately buried in the republican plot, such plots being marked out in all cemeteries in NI. This ephemera was given to those who attended the occasion on January 2000,



Fig. 2.10. Burial certificate: Lt. Tom Williams. Belfast: National Graves Association, 2000. Courtesy: EHIRHM

thereby making them witnesses to the rights of the dead republican, as a martyr and as an individual. Martyrdom thrives on legacy; therefore, a consecration of the dead and their remains is a defence of that legacy.

More than the reburial certificate of sepoy Hamidur Rahman in Mirpur, the



Fig. 2.11. Photograph: Digging the grave of *Bir Shrestho* Hamidur Rahman. Tripura, India. September 4, 2007. Courtesy: Lt. Col (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir

process of reburial generated keen interest. Fig. 2.11 is a photograph of the common people of Ambasa in the Dhalai district of Tripura and the people of Hatimarachora village, along with the border security forces and the police officers of India at the site where Hamidur's grave

was being dug. Colonel Sajjad *Birprotik* [fourth highest gallantry award in

Bangladesh] had met young Hamidur three days before his death and took the initiative to track and trail his grave to India and bring his remains back to Bangladesh.⁷ The photograph is a witness to the interest that was generated among the people of a different country for a hero of Bangladesh. In 1971, the family of Lokman Miah lent their land for use as the martyr's burial site and continued to conduct all commemoration rituals, along with a few people⁸. Katahan Riang, a native family of the mountainous district purchased the land where Hamidur was buried from this Muslim family and began cultivation and then fishing on it, having no idea about the martyr's grave.⁹ Sajjad notes the grief this family felt when they found out about the martyr's remains and their full support in assisting in the search for these remains, establishing Hamidur as a people's martyr.

There are many instances of the remains of a martyr's body being brought back to their native country, either from the prison of an imperialist country like England; or from the site of battle like in India before the formation of independent Bangladesh. The reinterment is either undertaken by organisations like the NGA or routed through the MLWA. Colonel Sajjad meticulously noted the minutes of important meetings in his book on the return of Hamidur's remains.¹⁰ Here, the contestation of naming is generated in the conflictual acceptance of the IRA officers as martyrs and the wide acceptance of the martyrs of Bangladesh even among the common people of India.

7. He has also written a book in English on the same topic *The Return of a Hero* (2009).

8. Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir Birprotik, *Birsreshtho Hamidurer Deshe Phera* [Return of Bir Sreshtho Hamidur Rahman to his country], (Shudhui Muktijuddho, Dhaka, 2019), 68-70.

9. Col. Sajjad, *Birsreshtho Hamidurer Deshe Phera*, 71-72.

10. Col. Sajjad, *Birsreshtho Hamidurer Deshe Phera*, 76-78.

2.1.2.4 Contestations of naming in burial site reinterment papers

The body of a martyr is the physical indicator of his legacy; hence, there have

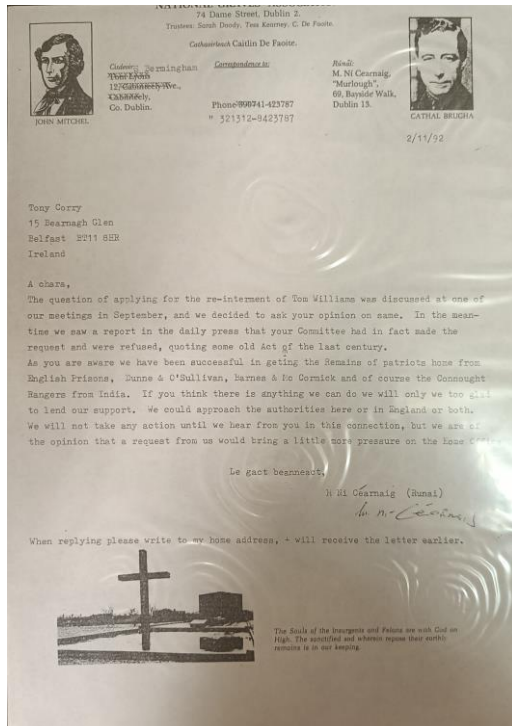


Fig. 2.12. NGA document for reinterment of burial remains of Tom Williams memorial. 1966. Courtesy: EHIRHM

been several conflicts regarding the location for the burial of the martyr's body. When an authority claims a martyr's remains, it wants to exert its corporeal right and wield its political power. A person does not become a martyr through an ordinary death but through an eventful one. The campaign to reinter the bodily remains of the martyr creates a spectacle of death and transforms it into an event in which people participate, political institutions generate propaganda and communities locate heroes in the pantheon of martyrs whose remains have

been similarly reinterred. Fig. 2.12 features a reinterment document issued by the NGA of Dublin and addressed to its counterpart in Belfast. Both branches, bearing the responsibility of the upkeep of the bodily remains of dead insurgents and Fenians, wanted to bring back Williams' remains. The document mentions that the Belfast branch had already tried negotiating with the prison authorities at Crumlin Road Gaol to no avail. In the meantime, the issue had already been raised in a meeting held by the Dublin branch, which had already brought back the remains of Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan from the Wandsworth prison in London in 1967, those of Peter Barnes and James McCormick from Winson Green Prison, Birmingham in 1969 and those of Private Peter Sears, Private Patrick Smythe and Private James Joseph Daly of

the Connaught Rangers (an Irish line infantry regiment of the British Army) from India in 1970.¹¹ This ephemera concretely places Williams in the pantheon of these ‘martyrs’ who were IRA volunteers and contributed to the nationalist struggle. The letterhead, flanked by images of the nationalist writer John Mitchel during the 1840s famine, and the 1922 Anti-Treaty revolutionary Cathal Brugha, declares its effort in pressurising the English authorities to return the remains of the present nationalist hero, Williams. Their logo, which states their responsibility, is a ‘sanctified’ one, at par with the work of God who takes care of the souls, even as the association takes care of the body.

A right deriving from an international legal Geneva convention on the return of the remains of the war dead, its resting in respect, and the performance of final rituals for the dead, has revitalized the name of the martyr in legal and official ephemera of reburial. Freedom fighter Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar was a martyred intellectual. In Bangladesh, few remember the names of these martyred intellectuals beyond the passive remembrance of commemoration programmes. It is only when the call for the return of the remains of the dead sounds that these names are actively referred to and remembered. Fig.

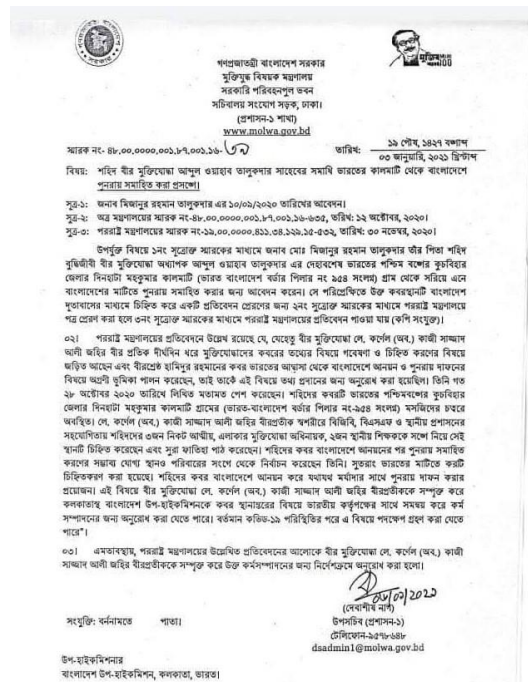


Fig. 2.13. Copy of the gazette: Transfer of the return of remains of martyred freedom fighter Prof. Abdul Wahab Talukdar. Dhaka: Ministry of Liberation War Affairs. January 3, 2001. Courtesy: Private papers of Mizan Talukdar

11. Patrick McGrath, “The Connaught Rangers Mutiny India 1920,” *Find a Grave*, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59056448/connaught_rangers-memorial.

2.13 features a document issued by the MLWA regarding the return of Prof Talukdar's remains. The need for the return sprang from personal familial grief and the lack of ritualistic fulfilment. Mizanur Rahman Talukdar, aged 50, said, 'We could not pray for my father from near his grave as it is situated in Indian no-man's land. We appeal to the government to relocate the grave to Bangladesh.'¹² Now, the grave has been identified by the governments of both countries, and a final resting place has been established in a border village in Bangladesh. In stark contrast to a no man's land, the martyr, now lying in the relocated space of Kurigram District in Bangladesh, would be a man of defining space.

The contestation lies in the attempts of the Belfast and Dublin branches of the NGA to bring back Williams' remains and in the greater success of the Dublin branch even though Williams remains more of a 'martyr' in the North. In Bangladesh, the contestation lies in the formal international convention-derived rights of martyr families to bring back their loved ones' remains and the continuing governmental attempts to materialise this.

2.1.3 Funeral ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

After the burial or reburial of the martyr, funeral ceremonies were held, ranging from personal ceremonies held by family and acquaintances, where personal memorial cards were printed and circulated among close circles, in Ireland, to prayers held in houses or local mosques in Bangladesh. From being held within intimate circles, funeral ceremonies moved to a celebration of the martyr on the state and national levels, where thousands of mass cards were printed and distributed to the masses in Ireland and prayers were accompanied by religious festivities in

12. Abdul Wahed, "Bring FF's Remains From no-man's Land," *The Daily Star*, December 19, 2017, <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/bring-ffs-remains-no-mans-land-1507036>.

Bangladesh. The latter was propagated by photographs or posters and banners of various organisations dedicated to various figures and events. Although such ephemera in both Ireland and Bangladesh are related to the rituals and language of religion, those in Ireland contain excerpts of scriptures in print ephemera, while those in Bangladesh are visual representations. In Ireland, prayers for the dead were conducted either in the church or chapel of an organisation, by a priest; in Bangladesh, an *imam* (one who leads Muslim worshippers in prayer) or a senior teacher from the local madrassa were invited to conduct the prayer ceremonies to seek blessings for the dead. There usually was no written document accompanying this. However, in the immediate aftermath of the death of a hero, the scenes were published in newspapers.

2.1.3.1 Contestations of naming in individual memorial cards in Ireland

Young people who were accidentally killed were commemorated in personal ceremonies before they are made part of larger mourning events. Such martyrs are remembered fondly and are considered personal heroes by their family members. Hence, these memorial cards feature individual photographs with the words

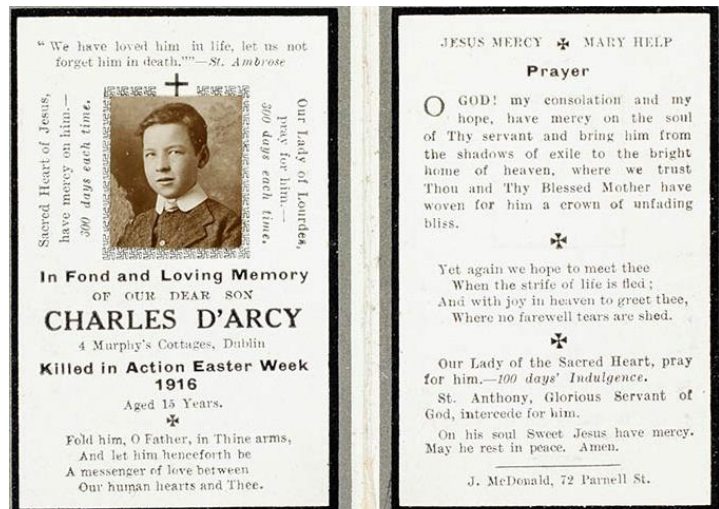


Fig. 2.14. Memorial Card: Memorial card for Charles D'Arcy, killed in action in Easter Week, 1916. Courtesy: National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

‘fond’ and ‘loving’ highlighted, like that of Charles D’Arcy who died on 24th April, 1916, the first day of the Easter Rising (fig. 2.14). As a member of the Irish Citizen Army, he had been part of the attempted invasion of Dublin Castle on Easter Monday; however, in the memorial card, he was presented as a dear son who had been killed in

action. Ephemera, being minor and transitory documents, are even more intimate as memory triggers. This set of memorial cards of Easter 1916 were printed by local publishers of funeralia like J. McDonald of Dublin in the case of Charles D’Arcy and circulated within close circles. They only came to the public eye as the keepsake of the child martyr of the 1916 Rising¹³, fifty-four years after the Rising, in 1970, when Charles’ mother Elizabeth Darcy donated the memorial card and other objects belonging to her son to the National Museum of Ireland,¹⁴ making D’Arcy a more popular executed hero of 1916.

Contestations abound when the religious remembrance of those killed gets



conflated with the religious remembrance of a saint. Fig. 2.15 features a mass card printed for Kevin Barry’s funeral on All Saints’ Day (1st November). Like D’Arcy, Kevin Barry was one of the youngest members of the ‘C’ Company of the IRA, who were instructed to raid

Fig. 2.15. Mass Card: Kevin Barry. November 1, 1920.
Courtesy: EHIRHM

13. Antoine Guillemette writes in the chapter entitled “Commemorating under the Mantle of Religion: a Shield From the Empire” in her 2013 dissertation that masses offered for the repose of the 1916 martyrs became common across the 26 Southern counties. The focus was put on notions of suffering, death and willing sacrifices. Prayer cards were circulated widely and became prized mementoes. “Coming Together at Easter: Commemorating the 1916 Rising in Ireland, 1916-1966,” PhD Diss., Concordia University, 2013, 48.

14. “1916 Object Stories,” *National Museum of Ireland*, <https://microsites.museum.ie/1916objectstories/ObjectDetail/memorial-card>.

an arms lorry. The raid was not successful, and Barry was arrested, tried, and later executed. According to the Catholic tradition, 1st November is a feast day that celebrates the saints of the church. The execution of Barry on that day enabled the Irish to incorporate him into the pantheon of saints. This sainthood then becomes a witness to his cause, which moved from being an anti-state action to suffering for a justified cause. Only following the act of bearing witness can the servant of God leave the purgatory of the sinner and attain 400 days of indulgence, and Barry has attained it. Therefore, he rests in peace. Suffering justified making Barry a symbolic martyr¹⁵.

Contestations exist regarding the consideration of the martyr as an executed hero killed in action who is remembered either as a loving son or a venerable saint, one a personal metaphor for the dead and the other a personalised metaphor for the dead, contributing to the nature of the cause of martyrdom.

2.1.3.2 Contestations of naming in individual *milaad* photographs in Bangladesh

A *milaad* is a religious gathering where prayers are uttered for the dead after

which food is served to the local children and beggars of an area. Family members call the *imam* from the local



Fig. 2.16. Photographs: Shumon Zahid. *Milaad* near the grave of martyr journalist Selina Parvin after which food was given to the local children and beggars. March 31, 2017.

15. Thérèse Elizabeth Mcintyre, "Another Martyr for Old Ireland: Historical 'Fact' Vs. Folk Memory - Kevin Barry as a 'Hero' in Irish Ballad Tradition," MA Diss., National University of Ireland, Galway, 16.

mosque or senior teachers from the local madrassa to conduct the *monajaat* (prayers) and bring children along with them for *doya* (blessings). They read passages from the *Quran*. Furthermore, the work of charity is done to seek blessings for the dead. Through such rituals, the local community comes to know and remember the names of the martyrs in their localities. People were informed about these gatherings through word of mouth in their localities and schools, and they came for sweetmeats and prayers for the dead. Nowadays, people are also informed through social media, and later, images of the gatherings are posted so that more people participate and are informed about the noble cause of the martyr. Fig. 2.16 features two photographs uploaded on Facebook by the son of a martyred intellectual of 1971, Selina Parvin. They are photographs of the *doya* and *mahfil* (festivities, here following the prayers for the dead) conducted to remember her martyrdom and charity in her name.¹⁶



Fig. 2.17. Poster: ‘*Ekushe Auguster bir shoheedder bhuli nai*’ [We do not forget the brave martyrs of 21st August’]. Bangladesh Awami League. August 8, 2011. Courtesy: HA

As in Ireland, political parties often hold remembrance celebrations for political figures in Bangladesh. Ivy Rahman, once the Women’s Affairs secretary of AL, was injured in the Dhaka grenade attack on 21st August, 2004 and died on the 24th of the same month. Reading verses from the *Quran* along with *doya* and *mahfil* took place in her home in Bhairab Upazila of Kishoreganj district in Dhaka, and after the *namaaz* at noon there,

16. Shumon Zahid, “Today 31/03/2017 Birthday of Muktijuddaha Shoheed Sambadik Selina Parveen,” Facebook, March 31, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/513039392089141/permalink/1372593512800387/>.

those who went to the local mosques came together for *milaad mahfil*,¹⁷ all organised by the party she belonged to. She was considered a martyr from the time of her death, even though she has not died in a freedom struggle but a conflict situation. Fig. 2.17 features a poster from 2011, where those who had been killed in the 2004 attack are called brave martyrs by the ruling political party—AL. According to this party, the cause was the terrorist activities coordinated by the BNP and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI), the two opposition political parties in 2004, and the consequence was the brutal deaths of fifteen people whose names are listed in the poster. All of them became martyrs in the attack, even though a national remembrance was only held for the leader. The gruesomeness of the images also added to the spectacle of martyrdom in the post-conflict situation. Contestations exist within martyrdom due to political causes in Bangladesh, with most martyred intellectuals accepted by all and some party activist martyrs countered by some.

2.1.3.3 Contestations of naming in event mass cards in Ireland

From personal heroes to saints, there are those who were murdered in cold blood. Paul O'Connor, director at the PFC in Derry which works to provide information to victims' families by conducting a preliminary investigation, clarified that the families did not consider those



Fig. 2.18. Memorial card: Those shot on Bloody Sunday, missing the name of John Johnson who died of his injuries on June 16, 1972. Courtesy: EHIRHM

17. "Aaj Ivy Rahman r 18th shahadatbarshiki [18th martyr anniversary of Ivy Rahman]," *Amader Shomoi*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.dainikamadershomoy.com/post/391523>.

who were killed on Bloody Sunday to be martyrs but murdered. Civilians killed on 30th January, 1972 did not die in any freedom struggle but were shot dead by the British paramilitary troops during the conflict. For the republicans, the IRA members who were killed during the conflict were the ‘innocent dead’ but the civilians were not, and this term used to describe them was considered insulting by the families, when applied or imposed on their dear dead ones.¹⁸ ‘Innocent dead’ is the predominant pro-state opinion regarding the naming of the dead. In the mass card for the Bloody Sunday victims (fig. 2.18), the word ‘martyr’ was not used, and instead, it was emphasised that they were shot in cold blood by British Paratroopers. It was immediately printed in the aftermath of 30th January, without the name of John Johnson who died on 16th June, 1972 after succumbing to injuries he had sustained in the January shooting. The city of Derry, defying the official name of Londonderry, remembered its victims in a funeral mass.

Through political defiance, martyrdom at times generates a new political

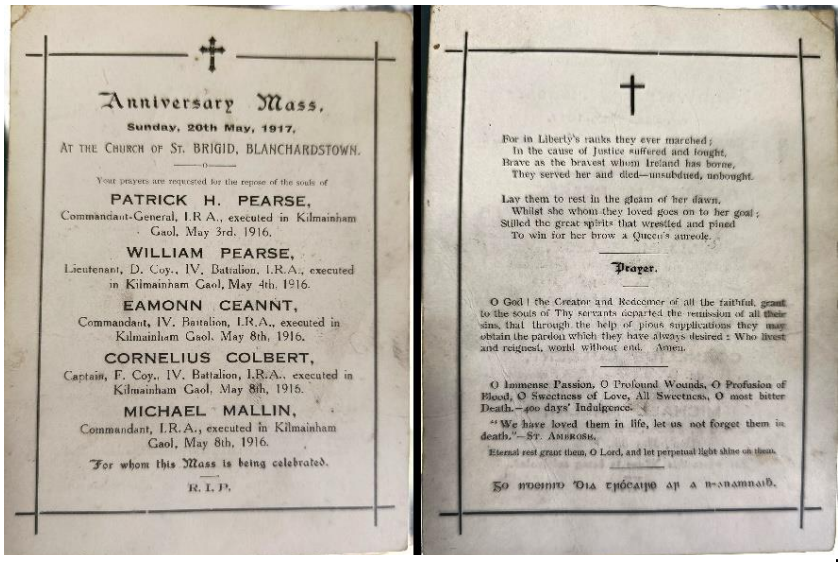


Fig. 2.19. Anniversary mass card: Easter 1916 executed leaders. Church of St. Brigid, Blanchardstown, Dublin. May 20, 1917. Courtesy: EHIRHM

allegiance. Hence, ephemera generated much later after historical events, were circulated secretly due to restrictions in Ireland. Fig. 2.19 features an

18. Paul O'Connor (director, Pat Finucane Centre), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 28, 2022. Transcript, with author.

anniversary mass card of 1917, created a year after the 1916 Rising to bring people together again in celebration of the ideals of the Easter patriot dead. The names of Cornelius Colbert and Michael Mallin, both of whom were executed at Kilmainham Gaol in May 1916, were included along with the familiar names of Patrick Pearse and Eamonn Ceannt. The call for gathering in the outer suburbs of Dublin at Blanchardstown was a document of defiance against the proclamation issued by General Sir Brian Mahon ‘preventing any commemorative gatherings in the city during the week marking the anniversary of the uprising’¹⁹, by putting up various police barracks across Dublin. Thus, ephemera became a witness of people coming together in dedication and defiance, who shaped martyrs through commemoration and conflict. Prayers were symbolic of both grief and grievance, a new allegiance of the common people who came together despite the orders in the proclamation.

Memorial mass cards were also published as part of propaganda ephemera by radical factions which proliferated after the 1916 Easter Rising. The executed leaders now became the ‘absent’ ones to whom the people must be ‘faithful’ (fig. 2.20). They were like Christ who was unjustly crucified. Prayer cards were also distributed on the 1916 All Souls’ Day in memory of the executed leaders. In this regard, the executed leader became like a martyred saint. In fig. 2.20, an armed Irish volunteer, who has adopted a more radical policy to



Fig. 2.20. Memorial Mass Card: Easter 1918. April 1918. Courtesy: EHIRHM

19. Donal Fallon, “Easter 1917: How Dublin Commemorated the Rising One Year On,” *Independent.ie*, February 29, 2016, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/after-the-rising/easter-1917-how-dublin>

fight for Ireland’s independence, kneels before an executed leader. Significantly, with the dissemination of such martyr ephemera among the masses, the radical SF party, which had never stood in a general election, won six seats in the by-elections of 1917–1918. The party had vowed in its manifesto to establish the independent Irish Republic, a promise that the Easter leaders laid down in the Proclamation of 1916. For it, they laid down their own lives, just as any owner of the card is expected to ‘be faithful unto death’. The ranks of the SF swelled with radical volunteers who had been inspired by the 1916 Rising. Contestations exist regarding the terms ‘innocent dead’, ‘martyr’ and ‘murdered’ used variously for the Bloody Sunday victims; the decision to consciously venerate martyrs who were intentionally murdered, and saint-like figures who were faithful witnesses to the saga of oppression and the justification of their cause.

2.1.3.4 Contestations of naming in funeral processions photographs in Bangladesh

Fig. 2.21 features a photograph of the funeral procession in Dhaka in 1971



Fig. 2.21. Photograph: Funeral procession with dead bodies of martyrs of 1971. Dhaka. 1971.

Courtesy: MMCR

when mass killings became so common that people spontaneously came together and initiated a funeral procession. With mass destruction, photographs constitute the predominant ephemera of remembrance of mass martyrs in Bangladesh in 1952, 1969 and 1971. In Ireland, requiem masses were held in churches; in Bangladesh, religious gatherings like the *milaad* emanated from everyday

ritualism; both rituals that people were used to. Hence, even without organised and institutionalised religion and its appendages, most funeral gatherings were held on the streets to pray for the dead. In 1971, such gatherings generated an emotive spur among people to participate in the independence War, either in the name of the nation, village or person. The photograph shows multiple dead bodies on biers being carried forward by the crowd; various classes of people are seen waving the black flags of protest, generating both grief and grievance as in the case of Ireland.

2.1.3.5 Contestations of naming in funerary scenes in newspapers in Ireland and Bangladesh

Funerary scenes occupied the front pages or a significant space in centenary issues but were also prominently published in general issues after the event. Different from centenary issues, funerary

scenes in general issues are not only geared at memorialisation but at depicting the state of common people on the day of the funeral. Fig. 2.22 depicts such a newspaper issue on mourning for Michael Collins. The top left image shows the funeral of Collins as a public ceremony with the funerary protocol being followed. Guards of honour stand witness as mourners pass through the death chamber,



Fig. 2.22. Newspaper page: 'Mourning for Collins. Impressive Dublin Scenes'. *The Sunday Chronicle*. August 27, 1992. Courtesy: EHIHRM

each offering prayers for the dead leader, in the image next to it. The visuals and inscription below attest that Collins was a pro-Free State figure, whose funeral could be a public ceremony with the state apparatus working in tandem. Amidst the state apparatus of the silent guard outside City Hall in Dublin was also the apparatus of the family, the latter a part of the ideological state apparatus, and conjoining the personal and political.²⁰ When a hero dies, a brother is lost, and this is for the cause of the sustenance of the independence of a nation. Collins became a ‘martyr’ in the sense of a soldier. The common people undertook such a martyr’s mourning en masse. This ephemera provides visuals of the number and kinds of common people who participated in the occasion of the funeral. What is of greater significance is that the ephemera not only focuses on what happened during the funeral but also on what happened on other occasions during this time. Impressive Dublin scenes comprise the depiction of famous female movie stars, glider sports stars Martens and Hentzen, rehearsing scenes of plays like *The Smith Family*, and the emergence of a new kind of chariot race game in Essex sport. There are everyday family outing ideas for children on the beach, to a ‘tourist’s holiday ‘snap’, and the Earl of Beauchamp’s family on a visit to a hospital recreation wing. Interspersed are images related to the mourning of Collins, like the Salford Conservative Women’s Association (based in Lancashire in England) who were in Whitehall in Dublin on their way to the Cenotaph (built to honour Collins) and Sir John Montagu Barlow, MP, who was laying the wreath there. Images of the cotton trade in Preston and the procession during the trade union Guild Week in Preston celebrating the activities of the same indicate Collins’ role in including members of various trade unions in the fight for the Republic. Pdraig Yeates and Conor McNamara wrote about the infiltration of the republicans into the

20. Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian, (London: Verso, 2014), 243. However, the family does not discipline or impose a stricture but is part of the strictures of the funeral ceremony.

trade unions and their role in influencing men of different trade unions and sites to join the cause of the Republic from their own front, which are mentioned in their Military Service of Pension applications.²¹ The inclusion of such people was damaging to the enemies of the Republic because these people were capable of making the economy of the Republic self-reliant. The images attest to the wide range of Collins’ influence. In the everyday actions and celebrations of these people, the mourning for Collins attained a different stature. It became not only a lament for something lost but also a social legacy left behind.

The range of life references in Collins’ funeral was wide compared to the limited life references that came out in the wake of martyr Matiur Rahman Mallik’s death in Dhaka. Most of the

print media focused on the personal reminiscences of the father of this young boy who was shot in the aftermath of Asad’s death on 20th January, 1969. When Matiur’s father wrote about



Fig. 2.23. Newspaper column: Memorial for martyr Matiur Rahman. *Daily Ittefaq*. January 24, 1969. Courtesy: LWM

the events following the killing of his son a year later, it became a personal, reported narrative of a martyr’s death. The image of the young boy featured in fig. 2.23 bears the martyr’s name along with the image of the martyr’s mother. Matiur’s father remembered the procession of people who cried out that the deaths of Asad and Matiur will not be wasted. Amidst the flying posters and festoons, the father reported that he

21. Pdraig Yeates and Conor McNamara, “Michael Collins’s ‘Secret Service Unit’ in the Trade Union Movement,” *History Ireland* 22 Issue 3 (May/June 2014), <https://www.historyireland.com/michael-collinss-secret-service-unit-trade-union-movement/>.

felt proud that his son had sacrificed his life for the country. That is how the mother was pacified, and that is how the father bore the poverty. Matiur, even as a schoolboy, went out for protests and long marches following Asad's death. It was only at a protest rally called on 24th January, 1969 in response to Asad's martyrdom on 20th January, that the class ten student was shot along with others. It was the martyrdom of one that led to the martyrdom of others. One year after the 1969 mass uprising, people understood that it had been a people's martyrdom, wherein student union leaders and young boys were targeted by the imperialist regime of West Pakistan. Beyond the student politics of the time, the child martyr was exalted as an apolitical figure along with the sentimental evocations of his parents that were featured in newspapers, much more than the print media coverage of martyr Asad.²²

Contestations exist regarding the representation of Collins as the soldier and popular hero in Ireland, and between child martyrs and student leaders in 1969 Bangladesh, the latter given less press coverage due their practice of radical politics.

2.2 PERSONALITIES AND THEIR RELATED EPHEMERA

Following death, a martyr is born as a personality after the completion of burial and funerary activities. The personality is born in the body and then moves to its elite and common manifestations, each creating and contesting the martyr in its own way.

2.2.1 Body ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

The remembrance of a martyr is the remembrance of a person and not just a persona. Body ephemera construct martyrdom in its most tangible form, locating the

22. Mesbah Kamal (Professor in History, University of Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 6, 2022.

martyr as a person in his everyday world. From press obituaries immediately following the martyr's death to life masks of the martyr made just before his death and skulls generated following it, body ephemera are palpable yet transient ephemera of martyrdom. Some ephemera had been touched by the martyr's body in the moment of martyrdom and define the cult of martyrdom thereon. Professional and commonplace objects used by different martyrs come from the life before death, for in martyrdom, death comes first and then the bygone life is recreated.

2.2.1.1 Contestations of naming in press obituaries

Obituaries are published in newspapers in the immediate aftermath of the death of a person. When Tom Williams accepted death on behalf of his comrades in 1942, the latter published an obituary in a local newspaper (fig. 2.24). It was a remembrance for Thomas Joseph Williams who would rest in peace because he had given his life for 'Mother Ireland'. He was a 'martyr' who had died for his country. For the sake of formality, a person's full name is used in obituary writing.

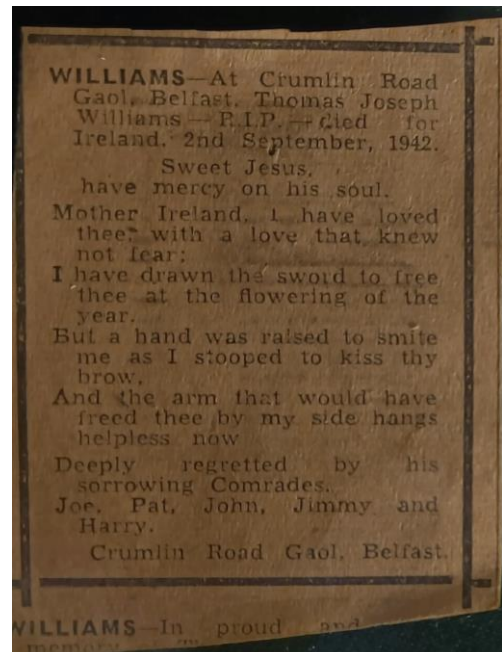


Fig. 2.24. Press obituary: Tom Williams. 1942. Courtesy: EHIHRM

As minor documents at the time, such ephemera provided personal details about one's life and friends. This obituary also included Williams' poetic confession about his sacrifice for the defence of his country. The hand which he had raised to protect his country, stood cut off by his side. These lines made his sacrifice gruesome and the reader emotionally aggrieved so that others may rise to commit the same actions. Significantly, these words were penned by the republican community to which they all

belonged. The sorrowing comrades transformed their grief into a grievance, making the ‘martyr’ into not just a person or persona but propaganda. Moreover, it was not only political propaganda but propaganda in the name of religion. Addressed to ‘Sweet Jesus’, the communication with one’s God was made as if overheard by others. Propaganda works through various rhetorical devices, and here, the indirect mode of metaphorical and allusive language was utilised.

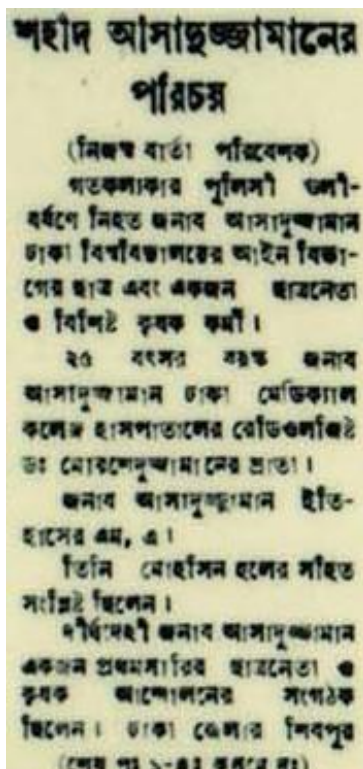


Fig. 2.25. Press obituary: Amanullah Asaduzzaman. *Daily Sangbad*. January 21, 1969. Courtesy: LWM

In the immediate aftermath of the death of martyr Asad, his obituary was printed in the next day’s *Daily Sangbad* on 21st January, 1969, as a custom message (fig. 2.25). Details included were that Asad was a student of law at Dhaka University, a student leader and a former activist—the tall person at the frontline of organising student movements. It was also stated that his ancestral home was in Dhanoa village in Narsingdi district’s Shibpur Upazila which also became his final resting place. His life, actions and death were presented in his obituary by the authorities of the press.

Unlike the poetic evocation of Williams’ obituary note, Asad’s remembrance contained stark details of activism and revolution. It is also significant

that the obituary notes of both did not name them as martyrs but as people who had been killed. Obituaries highlight the life stories of the dead, generating martyr narratives later. In immediate remembrance of the dead body, it focusses on the person who would go on to become a martyr. Contestations exist about viewing martyrs as individuals in a family and as comrades in a political group.

2.2.1.2 Contestations of naming in masks and skulls

While death masks were common in sustaining the life-like features of a person so that it becomes an iconic emblem to be used in later portrait images, they turned out to be gruesome at times. Even though martyrdom aims to highlight the spectacular, it strives to be faithful to everyday contours and ordinary expressions. The life mask of Terence MacSwiney featured in fig. 2.26 is similar to a death mask in its plaster form,²³ but differs in the calm smile and closed peaceful eyes which continued to be



Fig. 2.26. Object: Life mask of Terence MacSwiney. October 25, 1920. Courtesy: DAHNMI

used later in portrait images in mass cards, postcards, stickers, banners, road signs and election campaign leaflets. When MacSwiney was in prison under a death sentence, artist Albert Power visited him under the guise of a relative bidding goodbye to a dying man. These were attempts to capture his image for posterity even before his death. The body ephemera of the life mask prepared the man for death, even as it highlighted the physical deterioration of the imprisoned dying man in the hollowness of his eyes and cheeks. Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch wrote that even though MacSwiney's face showed the effects of the hunger strike, he was ascetically portrayed in the life mask, like the Christian martyrs of traditional paintings and sculptures.²⁴

23. The text from the object label at Decorative Arts & History, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin may be accessed at [https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Collection/Resilience/Artefact/Test-2-\(1\)/578353a6-a33d-49a9-9315-d735d37948f6](https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Collection/Resilience/Artefact/Test-2-(1)/578353a6-a33d-49a9-9315-d735d37948f6).

24. Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, “‘An Immortal Smile of Victory’,” *History Ireland* 27, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 2019): 42, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26853125>.



Fig. 2.27. Object: Skulls and bones from Jalladkhana Muslim Bazar Mirpur killing fields. Dhaka. 1971. Courtesy: LWM

It was possible to make a life or death mask of individuals in Ireland, but with thousands being martyred, skulls and bones of the martyred could only be retained as object-based ephemera in Bangladesh. They are evidence of the genocide of Bangalees in 1971 by Pakistanis. They have been recovered from numerous sites such as those in

Dhaka like the Jalladkhana Muslim Bazar Mirpur killing fields, and those from the mass grave beside Zoha Hall at Rajshahi University. About twenty to twenty-five thousand were killed in Mirpur alone, one of the largest killing fields in the country.²⁵ The Pakistan Army, especially its local Bihari collaborators, cut off people's heads and threw them into a well, hurling the headless bodies in another. This place had a pond (for drainage) connected to the Turag River, and this is why many dead bodies floated away into the river and could not be recovered. After the war, with the help of the Bangladesh Army, about seventy skulls were unearthed here.²⁶ These have been kept in the LWM (fig. 2.27). Promila Biswas added that Dr. Hasan of the War Crimes Fact-Finding Committee continued efforts to use these skulls in Mirpur as forensic evidence for identifying martyrs. This work was done on a personal basis using his own resources, and now, he has given all the evidence that he had collected for over thirty years from across Bangladesh to the forensic department for DNA sampling and

25. Public Diplomacy Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh, *Recognising the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide: An Appeal for Rendering Justice* (Dhaka: Nymphaea Publication, 2022): 4, [bd_genocide_booklet.pdf](https://www.bd-genocide-booklet.pdf) (ucl.ac.uk).

26. Sheikh Iraj, "Liberation War Memorials," *The Independent*, March 18, 2022, <https://m.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/142524>.

preservation.²⁷ From corpses to skulls, body ephemera comprises transmutation that is not devoid of forensic specificity. Contestations of naming are expressed in the specificity of the life mask in Ireland, transmuted into art, while it is expressed in the unnameability of countless recovered skulls, transmuted into the macabre.

2.2.1.3 Contestations of naming in blood-stained clothes

Garments worn by a martyr become sacred for later generations because they are literal vestiges of the martyr's bodily presence, acting as significant witnesses to the moment of initiation into martyrdom like the shirt worn by Volunteer Tom Williams when he was shot and wounded on Easter Sunday 1942 in a house in Cawnpore Street off Kashmir Road in the Clonard area of Belfast (fig. 2.28). The bullet holes and dried-blood stains on the shirt make the wounds



Fig. 2.28. Object: Shirt worn by Tom Williams when he was shot and wounded. Kashmir Road, Belfast. Easter Sunday 1942. Courtesy: EHIRHM

Williams suffered tangible, even though the fabric of the garment makes it subject to the effects of time and cannot be preserved. The inner white shirt worn by the young soldier was the closest piece of garment to touch his body, the body which had not received time to mature. Devoid of military emblems, the plain white shirt became symbolic of pristine youth which was stained by the bullets of the RUC. When the state law is an authoritarian opposition, the individual becomes the anti-authoritarian representative of the masses. The personal opposes the political; thus, when people see such personal ephemera on display in museums, their emotions are affected. They

27. Promila Biswas (supervisor, Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site), interview by author, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript with author.

grieve for a young boy who gave up his life. They mourn for a youth whose life was cut short by execution. The viewer’s grief and mourning are like those of a family member or friend, as the ephemera seems to have come out of Tom’s wardrobe. These personal belongings are part of affective ephemera. Unlike clothes worn at the time of death which are usually thrown away or burnt along with the dead body, a personal ephemera remains to haunt its audience.

It is not just the martyr’s shirt but the blood on it which exerts an emotive

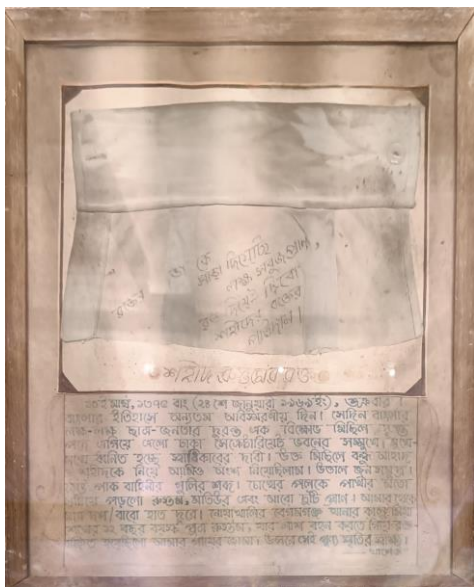


Fig. 2.29. Object: Shirt sleeves stained by martyr Rustom’s blood and a handwritten note by friend Khaleq. January 24, 1969. Courtesy: LWM

effect that generates empathy for the martyr and motivates people. Fig. 2.29 features the shirt of martyr Rustom’s friend Khaleq which was stained by the blood-drenched body of twelve-year-old Rustom from Noakhali who was shot in front of the secretariat building in Dhaka on 24th January, 1969, during an anti-Ayub rally.

The shirt is witness to what Khaleq calls the *punno smriti* [pure memory] of Rustom. The note on the martyrdom of this young boy informed about the blood martyrdom of two

other teenagers. The mass uprising of 1969 led to the death of many, which spurred more strikes and rallies breaching section 144 and resulted in more shootings and deaths. Defying the boundaries of class and age, this mass uprising deified the people’s martyrdom. Here, the contestation occurs between Williams, the IRA martyr and Rustom, a people’s martyr; both young boys, martyred in their everyday garb.

2.2.1.4 Contestations of naming in the people's body in Bangladesh

A martyr's body generates a narrative of appeal after his death. For Noor Hossain who was protesting the injustices of the Ershad regime of the 1980s and early 1990s, the words painted on his body reverberated in posters, slogans, murals and an animation film later on. Two others were shot along with Noor Hossain, but he became famous because of the iconic slogans painted on his body.



Fig. 2.30. Body in mural: Martyr Noor Hossain. Shahidul Alam. Dhaka University campus, 1990.

Courtesy: Shahidul Alam (Bangladeshi photojournalist).

Fig. 2.30 features an image of the body of Hossain on the mural at the Dhaka University campus where the contestations over transmuting the image into an icon become clear. The representation of the transient body constitutes ephemera, even though murals have also been characterised as ephemera by Peter Moloney, whose Ephemera Collection has also been explored in this study. Primarily, it was the daring decision of Noor Hossain to imprint the slogan on his body that distinguished him from the other protesters.²⁸ The slogan was popularised by students' political groups like the *Chatra league* [Students' League] and *Samajtantrik Chatra front* [Socialist Students' Front]. Hossain's body had the slogan, '*Sairachar nipat jak*' [Down with autocracy] and '*Gonotontra mukti pak*' [Let there be democracy] written on the front and back of his body, respectively. It reverberated with the other slogans painted by political protest groups, like 'revolution is the only path towards liberation' and 'revolutionists are the

28. Moazzem Hossain, "Noor Hossain and the image that helped bring down a Dictator," *BBC News*, December 6, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55177686>.

greatest heroes across ages’. Devoid of a background in student politics and working in a small shop selling furniture, Hossain is incorporated into this pantheon of slogan-making against an imperialist government in this mural. As a martyr, he sacrificed his body for the slogans to be painted; it could not be washed out even during his burial.²⁹ The slogan has also been appropriated by Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSHAL) with their tagline of ‘bloodied bodies of the deprived’ and accompanies slogans like ‘*Joy Bangla!*’ [Hail to Bengal], ‘*Joy Bangabandhu!*’ [Hail to the Father of Bangladesh] and ‘Martyr Zia who made the nation, Khaleda Zia who is our leader’. While the contestations of the AL and the BNP (Gen. Zia and his wife Khaleda were BNP leaders) continued after the fall of the Ershad regime, here is its foretelling in the slogan-appropriation of Hossain. Martyr ephemera here does not only name and create the martyr but nurtures martyr legacies and its ensuing debates.³⁰ The contestation is expressed between an ordinary boy crying out against oppression and being appropriated as a martyr of political propaganda.

2.2.2 Political, national, and international elite ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

People’s martyrs range from the national elites in Bangladesh to the nationalist and unionist elites in NI whose martyrdom was created and debated over by the common people. Elites also comprise martyred intellectuals in Bangladesh and the republican and loyalist elites in NI. Ephemera, as minor documents, locate the elite in

29. Hossain, “Noor Hossain and the image.”

30. There are also bodies painted on the eve of the National Mourning Day in Bangladesh during the AL regime, disseminating the narrative of the martyrdom of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family. The image of a young boy with the flag and respect to the father of the nation is accompanied by slashed red paint indicating dripping blood, circulated much in 2016 and is part of *Getty Images*, an American visual media company that is a supplier of stock images, editorial photography, video, and music for businesses and consumers, with a library of over 477 million assets. The image may be accessed at <https://www.gettyimages.in/detail/news-photo/man-tutul-decorated-in-dhaka-banladesh-on-15-august-2016-news-photo/589716694?adppopup=true>.

their everyday world, through various contestations. The national often becomes collated with the political, as the martyr narratives are created and sustained by them in distinct ways.³¹ The scope of work of martyred intellectuals is represented in their professional ephemera while the protest of republicans is foregrounded in prison ephemera and loyalists' display of allegiances through banners. Finally, the representation of such figures on overseas ephemera associates them with different international personalities, with the latter's own martyr contestations.

2.2.2.1 Contestations of naming in large-scale posters, murals and political party motifs

Fig. 2.31 features a large-scale poster mounted on the crossing in front of the

Milltown cemetery which I saw while walking down to the bus stop on a rainy afternoon on 17th April, 2022 in Falls Road, Belfast. While the Easter commemoration remembered and honoured Ireland's patriot dead, the faces of the 1981 hunger strikers became



Fig. 2.31. Poster: Belfast Easter Commemoration organised by NGA, Belfast. Falls Road, Belfast. April 17, 2022.

the most popular and iconic emblems. This poster is of the main parade organised by the NGA, starting from Beechmount Avenue in Falls Road and ending with the honouring of the dead and the speech by the SF candidate Mary Lou MacDonal. From 1916 to 1981, the 'patriot dead' represented '#Time4Unity'. On the eve of the

31. Clashes occur between the unionists and loyalists, even though both stand against republicans, such as families of UDR men killed by IRA bomb 'being divided by Orange Order stance on memorials'. The news article may be accessed at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/families-of-udr-men-killed-by-ira-bomb-being-divided-by-orange-order-stance-on-memorials/1370475359.html>.

impending elections in May 2022, such a commemoration was seen as a political propaganda for national unity by the SF. In her speech at the parade, MacDonald stated that in remembrance, all people should come together and vote for those ideals for which the patriot dead sacrificed their lives, a fact established amidst loud cheering from the huge crowd assembled at the cemetery. Such large-scale posters dominate the landscape and mindscape of a region and its people, especially during commemoration parades. It also shows that the objective of the NGA is not only to restore, where necessary, and fittingly maintain the graves and memorials of Ireland’s patriot dead from every generation and commemorate them but to also generate an ephemera wherein the people become witness to the space and memory of the dead.

The motif of remembrance of the dead featured in the speeches and writings of



Fig. 2.32. Party logo: Ulster Unionist Party, Waringstown branch. Facebook. November 8, 2020.

Ian Paisley, leader of the second-largest political party in the May 2022 elections after SF—the DUP—but the cult of remembrance is also found in other unionist political parties like the Ulster Unionist Party. Fig. 2.32 is an image of the party logo with images of a remembrance poppy at the centre as well as others permeating the figure of the soldier remembering his fallen comrades.³² Such images are not permanent markers but are created as part of a collective memory and its manifestation. This

image was taken from a Facebook update by the Waringstown branch of this party. These motifs are part of the national political language of remembering the martyred in NI, as part of the UK.

32. Waringstown Branch - Ulster Unionist Party, “At the going down of the sun,” Facebook, November 8, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/WBUUP/photos/pb.100069219369723.-2207520000./3516521231775102/?type=3>.

Large-scale posters of other parades by other Easter commemoration committees in other places were also found in Falls Road, Belfast. The National Republican Commemoration Committee based in Derry/Londonderry organises a parade in memory of the Easter patriot dead each year. Fig. 2.33 features the poster of the parade which took place on 18th April, 2022 there. People from all over NI participate in such parades,



Fig. 2.33. Poster: National Republican Committee Easter Commemoration. Falls Rad, Belfast. April 18, 2022.

and therefore, the poster is also put up in Belfast, all the more visible to participants of the parade in this other town, many of whom would join the parade in Derry the next day, travelling for about two and a half hours by bus or train. As minor documents, ephemera may be easily found and disseminated among people in various locations, making martyrdom an event to be reckoned with. Even the name of the location ‘Derry’ is contested, being Londonderry to the NI government and the Police Service in Northern Ireland (PSNI). When the poster reads ‘Free Derry Corner’ to announce the parade, it imprints how we are to envisage the ‘dead’. Even though they are patriots to those who believe in Derry’s republican and nationalist ideals, they are ‘terrorists’ to those who believe in Londonderry’s loyalist and unionist ideals. The ‘martyr’ is presented as a visual emblem holding high the flag of freedom, surrounded by several textual indicators which define the nature of martyrdom like the organisers, Saoradh, a far-left political party and pressure group formed by dissident Irish republicans in 2016. Thus, the Easter patriots became affiliates of left-wing politics

and political dissidence, a participant in an ‘unfinished revolution’ which seeks to complete itself.

Large-scale posters capture the populist tempo of the times, but within the



Fig. 2.34. Framed photograph: Loyalist mural of UVF heroes in Ballymacarrett. 2011. Courtesy: UJSS

unionist community of Newtownards Road, it is also the large-scale murals which are popularised in photographs and posters, and thereby constitute important ephemera. Fig. 2.34

features a photograph of a revamped mural in the area, which is a popular

item of sale in the local souvenir shop. Along with portrait images of

those killed, as in the republican posters above, there are images of black-hooded men in balaclavas with their arms on the ready, protecting the funeral procession of the dead. The martyred here require a defensive position, unlike the glorification stance of the republican community. On the extreme left in the photo is Vol Robert Seymour, a leading member of the banned organisation UVF, who was shot dead in June 1988 by the PIRA in retaliation for their bombing of a pub in which three Catholics were also killed. He had become a local legend after killing a leading PIRA member James Burns in 1981. Next is Captain Joe Long, killed in action on February 1977, followed by James Cordner and Joseph Long who were killed in a premature explosion, and Robert Bennett who was killed by the British Army during a riot.³³ Their actions are named as acts of valour and sacrifice in front of the mural. They were also named as

33. Peter Moloney, “God, Give Us Men!” *Extramural Activity*, August 19, 2006, <https://petermoloneycollection.wordpress.com/2006/08/19/god-give-us-men/>.

part of the ‘people’s army’,³⁴ the UVF, during the unveiling of the mural, which had replaced another mural during the 2011 NI riots around Ballymacarrett. The earlier mural included a head of state and a military man, both donning their military garb. During the funeral processions of these members of the East Battalion, they were named soldiers who had given their lives for their country which, for them, was the UK. The people will remember them, and the vigilance is for any move towards oblivion. Heroes are not only people of valour but also later occupy official positions,³⁵ a case which is similar to that in Bangladesh. Significantly, the replacement was not a complete one in 2011 as the names of the four remained in a plaque in front of the previous mural. The plaque is still existent. Thus, the people’s martyrs remain part of popular memory, whether on a large or small scale.³⁶

In Bangladesh, large-scale posters are mostly put up by the ruling government. It was during a walk along the office of the Ministry of Planning on the day following 15th August that I saw large poster installations along the building’s walls. Fig. 2.35 features one of them where the Prime Minister is seen



Fig. 2.35. Poster: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paying tributes to the martyrs of her family on the martyr anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Ministry of Planning, Dhaka. August 15, 2022.

34. “Oration given at the unveiling of the Mural,” Ulster Volunteer Force, June 16, 2001, <http://ulstermurals.20m.com/custom.html>.

35. They were Lieutenant. Col. James Craig, Assistant Adjutant/Quarter-Master General, UVF 36th Division, former Prime Minister of NI, and Major Frederick Hugh Crawford, who felt that home rule should be resisted by force of arms. He was a founding member of the UVF and imported huge amounts of weapons for their cause. Even though he was not killed, Crawford’s actions of recruiting members for the Young Citizen Volunteers and commitment to the unionist cause made him a representative of the state. The then Prime Minister of NI, Basil Brooke, describe him as a fearless fighter in the historic fight to keep Ulster British, when he died in November 1952.

36. Moloney, “God, Give Us Men!” August 19, 2006.

giving tribute to the martyred members of her own family at the Banani graveyard. On 15th August, this image was shown and reshown on every news channel. The next day, I saw the blown-up version of this image as a poster along the office walls. Since the AL government, on 8th August, 1996, declared 15th August as the National Mourning Day and a public holiday, the martyr anniversary of Sheikh Mujib and his family has been commemorated all over the capital city of Dhaka where such posters and festoons are rampant. The tenor of the nation is overwritten with sadness as numerous programmes and religious rituals are held in memory of the dead. Banners remembering the martyrs are held during rallies of mourning. From the black badge worn by government officials throughout the month of August to commemoration programmes held throughout the country, people become attuned to grieving. As my friend in Dhaka mentioned, it is as if a voice in the nation shrieks out, ‘cry Bengalis, cry!’

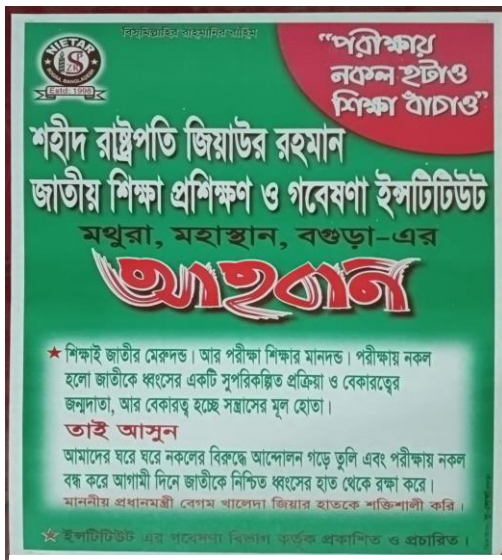


Fig. 2.36. Poster: Martyr President Ziaur Rahman National Education Training and Research Institute. Published by the Research department of the institute. Courtesy: HA

Large-scale posters also dominate the martyr narrative of the political world of the BNP, which considers President Zia the national martyr. Shamsuzzaman Dudu explained that Ziaur Rahman is famously known as ‘Martyr Zia’ while Sheikh Mujib is known as ‘*Bangabandhu*’.³⁷ Fig. 2.36 features a call from the Martyr Zia Education Training and Research Institute in Bagura district, for cheating during examinations, to

37. Shamsuzzaman Dudu (Vice President, BNP), telephone discussion with the author, August 24, 2022.

be banned. It is not just the martyr anniversary celebrations of General Zia that draw crowds; allied programmes related to a national policy on constructive education in nation-building also draw the masses in the name of the national martyr. The 41st martyr anniversary of General Zia on 30th May, 2022 in Mymensingh popularised martyr memorial libraries³⁸ which have been set up across the country to permeate the historical thinking that President Zia was the declarant of Bangladesh’s independence and a true bearer of its ideals of freedom.

Witness to mass-scale events, these posters and mural depictions represent the people’s contestations of martyr narratives through the glorification of opposing political figures through usage of similar motifs; from representation of sectarian to community issues mediated by opposing political ideologies that parallelly attract masses.

2.2.2.2 Contestations of naming in political and intellectual personalities ephemera

Peter Moloney has photographed several people and incidents which are of seminal importance in Irish history and political culture. It constitutes his personalities ephemera, which includes this banner of the



Fig. 2.37. Banner: Personalities ephemera - Brookeborough martyrs. Plantation Rd. 2013. Courtesy: PECPM

38. Programme: BNP, “Shaheed Zia r shahadat barshiki upolokkhe Mymensingh e boi, alokchitro prodorshoni o alochona shobha [A book, photo exhibition and discussion meeting on the occasion of Shaheed Zia’s martyr anniversary in Mymensingh],” *YouTube*, June 10, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeLEK_YQA88. Martyr memorial libraries are set up by all political and cultural organisations in the country, generally in the name of various martyrs.

Brookeborough martyrs being held by republicans on Plantation Road in NI in 2013 on the eve of their martyrdom anniversary celebrations. While most ephemera are minor documents of the everyday life of common people, some are generated within specific martyr communities. Fig. 2.37 features armed republican personnel holding the banner; they organised the commemoration in 2013. While the Provisional SF appropriated the cause of the Brookeborough raid to endorse their policing actions, the republican SF exposed the treachery of the former by ‘highlighting the obvious differences in armed resistance to policing agents and political endorsement of the same agents.’³⁹ Thus, the ephemera is made significant by the armed men flaunting their weapons, making the viewer wonder to what extent martyrdom associated with armed resistance is justified and whether the policing actions and police repression depicted on it is justifiable. The personalities evoke the context of the ephemera in which the martyrs originated and in which they are presently located.

Significantly, it is the elite that generate personalities ephemera in Bangladesh.



Fig. 2.38. Placard: Portrait images of martyrs held by their friends and family near *Shahid Minar*. Courtesy: *Projonmo '71*

Posters and banners containing portrait images of martyrs require the support of a martyr's organisation like *Projonmo '71*. Even though these organisations have made their inroads into

various districts of Bangladesh, a country with an overwhelming rural majority, the significant events and portraits of martyrs are based in the city of Dhaka. Fig. 2.38

39. Kevin Hearty, “The Patriot Dead” in *Critical Engagement: Irish Republicanism, Memory Politics and Policing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 133.

features friends and family members of martyred intellectuals who were killed in 1971 on the Dhaka University campus, especially on 16th December; they can be seen holding placards with portrait images. This event took place in the famous urban location of the *Shahid Minar* [Martyr's Monument], and demands were made for justice for all martyrs and protection for their families. Among the numerous personalities ephemera in Bangladesh, some placards do not bear photographs because some martyrs hailed from remote rural areas and had no photographs taken of them. In Ireland, such personalities ephemera are smaller in number because the IRA is still an illegal organisation in NI. After all, the country is still part of the UK. After gaining independence, the narrative of martyrdom in Bangladesh has gained a national and political elite space.

Contestations exist regarding the consideration of the martyr as a glorified hero versus the martyr as a armed rebel in NI and the martyr as the iconic intellectual elite versus the martyr as a faceless intellectual from a remote village in Bangladesh.

2.2.2.3 Contestations of naming in class ephemera

Imprisoned republicans had their distinctive ephemera of martyr creation and commemoration, including handkerchiefs, nail art, woodworks and leatherworks. These artworks, containing embroidered or drawn designs on handkerchiefs, Celtic crosses or leatherwork were created as a way of passing the time and raising funds for family support.⁴⁰ The political handkerchiefs initiate a commemoration process in which a hero of a previous era and a contemporary prisoner feature together. The Celtic cross, commonly used in Easter commemorations, is depicted in fig. 2.39. The

40. Peter Moloney, "Introduction to Handkerchiefs," *CAIN*, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/moloney/intro/handkerchief.htm>. *CAIN* (Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland) is a collection of information and source material on 'the Troubles' and politics in NI from 1968 to the present, based in Ulster University. It contains digitized images of numerous ephemera from various archives in NI and the Republic of Ireland.

dead prisoner, Staff Captain Brian Fox of the Provisional IRA, who died in active service in England on 21st December, 1974, is remembered by his fellow prisoner.



Fig. 2.39. Handkerchief: 'In loving memory of Staff Captain Brian Fox.' Mounted on wooden block. Made by a prisoner. Long Kesh. 1974. Courtesy: EHIRHM

The inscription on the handkerchief includes a prayer for the dead, and the dead are made part of a generation that continues to give their lives and be remembered. They become the blessed Son of God; they become the martyr. In the words of one martyr, Pearse, is another martyr, Fox, commemorated, and symbols of Ireland's Celtic origins are part of it. From being a symbol of the crucifixion of Christ to being the object through which St Patrick

illustrated the Christian teachings of the Holy Trinity, the Celtic cross, harp and shamrock are symbolic of Ireland's faith, nationality and unity. The use of Celtic imagery is indicative of the republican tradition's reliance on Irish cultural and national symbols rather than common Christian symbols. The tricolour in the image symbolises the desire for an independent Ireland, which has remained partially unfulfilled and for which the life of both Patrick Pearse and Brian Fox had been laid. Within the confines of a prison began the commemoration process of previous leaders who were themselves imprisoned and finally executed. The remembrance of martyrdom became located at the very site of other possible martyrdoms. Sent as tokens of good death of which family members and friends should be proud, the handkerchiefs were both an example of the prisoners' brilliant handiwork and an emblem of pride for family members.

Dr Alim Chowdhury is listed as a ‘martyred intellectual’,⁴¹ but it was his prescription pad and a diary (fig. 2.40) with his name seal that made clear his social position as a physician.

When martyred intellectuals feature in ephemera archives, documents associated

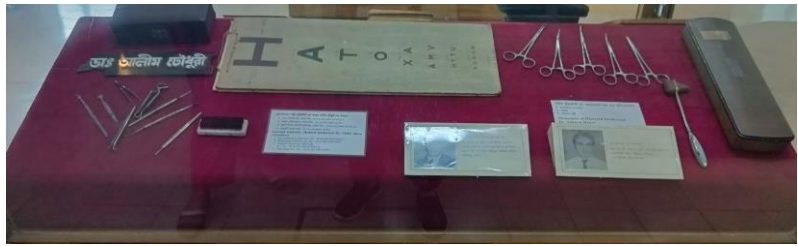


Fig. 2.40. Doctor’s documents: Martyr physician Dr. Alim Chowdhury. 1971. Courtesy: BNM

with their intellectual pursuits initially substantiate their ideological stance. A prescription pad of Chowdhury initially indicated that he could be a physician. In the process of researching his ‘intellectual’ pursuits, it was discovered how he ‘devoted himself to the treatment of injured freedom fighters’.⁴² He also wrote for literary and medical journals and became vice president of Dhaka Medical College Students’ Union (1954-1955), joint secretary of the EP unit of Pakistan Medical Association (1957-1958), general secretary from 1967–1968 and the general secretary of EP Ophthalmological Society in 1969. Thus, the medical profession became the ideological tool through which he waged his war. Preserved pages from his prescription pad as ephemera are a haunting witness to his sacrifice. Ephemera archives, through their collection of minor and small objects, propel us to look for major, larger, immortal object stories. For Dr Alim Choudhury, his social position contributed to his final martyrdom. Acts of martyrdom also propelled the intellectuals

41. Some ‘martyred intellectuals’ are not foregrounded through their professional objects but according to the events of their killing like Professor Abul Hasem Mia, killed at Maijdi, Noakhali on December 7, 1971.

42. “Chowdhury, AFM Abdul Alim,” *Banglapedia - National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, May 5, 2014, http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Chowdhury,_AFM_Abdul_Alim.

much beyond their cultural expertise like Altaf Mahmud⁴³ who was adept at mass mobilisation through music but was also brilliant as a guerrilla fighter and maker of homemade bombs.

Contestations over the naming of martyrs occur between the martyr as a prisoner and as a commemorative medium in NI and the martyr whose intellectualism constitutes his ideology and the martyr whose intellectualism only incites his martyr creed in Bangladesh.

2.2.2.4 Contestations of naming in overseas solidarity posters and newsletters



Fig. 2.41. Poster: ‘The heroic stance of the martyr Bobby Sands.’ Islamic Republic of Iran. 1981. Courtesy: EHIRHM

Martyrdom is used to propagate solidarity movements. When relations between the USA and UK were extremely strained, the Islamic Republic of Iran sent a message of solidarity to the family of Bobby Sands. Fig. 2.41 features a poster representing this solidarity. The outline of Sands’ image is preceded by a quote from Imam Khomeyni, who founded the Islamic Republic in 1979, against the historical monarchical regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Even though many may claim that with the revolution, Iran turned into a theocracy, the poster printed by the Islamic

Republic of Iran in 1981 posits the revolution as a liberation war. Like the liberation movement in Iran, the struggle of the hunger strikers of H-Block is a struggle for liberation against the criminalisation of British rule. Herein, the hunger strike becomes

43. Altaf Mahmud set to music the famous song ‘Amar Bhaier Rakte Rabgano Ekushe February, Ami ki bhulite pari?’ [With my brother’s blood, 21st February is painted red/ Oh how can I ever forget?] sung to commemorate the martyrs of the Language Movement of 1952.

the heroic stance of a martyr, and such movements are like the sacrifice of Christ, which is represented by an emaciated, skull-like figure in the posture of the crucifixion with some figures lying around.

A radical solidarity movement supported the hunger strike along with support groups like the American Republican Irish Northern Aid. Fig. 2.42 is a poster printed by the Irish Northern Aid Committee in May 1981 after sixty-one days of hunger strike. The support was not for the aforementioned ideals of religious theocracy and idealism but for the hunger strikers' defence fund. Movements can only continue based on such financial support of the hunger strikers and their families. Here, the martyrdom of Raymond McCreech was utilised to garner financial support for future martyrs. It also continued the liberation narrative of martyrdom, as in the previous poster, in living with freedom or consciously choosing death ('Live free...or die').

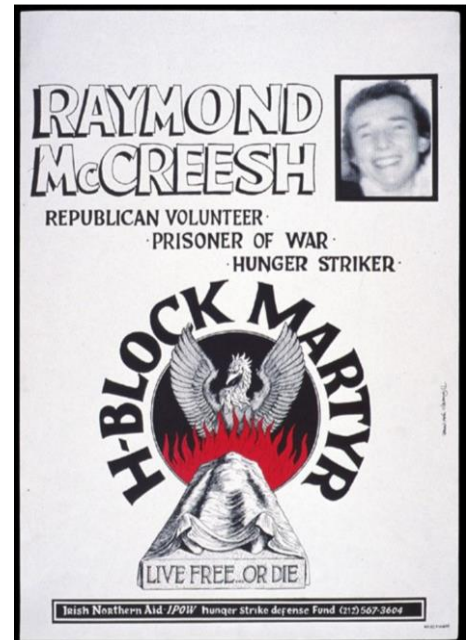


Fig. 2.42. Poster: 'Raymond McCreech. H-Block martyr. Live free...or die'. Northern Irish Aid Committee – IPOW hunger strike defense fund. 1981. Image ID: PPO1477. Courtesy: TICR

The American intellectual and civil society has also supported the cause for the freedom of Bangladesh. Fig. 2.43 features a newsletter issued by the Bangladesh Defense League reporting on the 1971 march and rally in San Francisco; it was written in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Bangladesh. An important symbol was the black coffin placed on the steps of the Federal Building there during the event. The American League for Bangladesh exposed the role of the United States government in

providing aid to West Pakistan that resulted in the genocide of millions in Bangladesh.

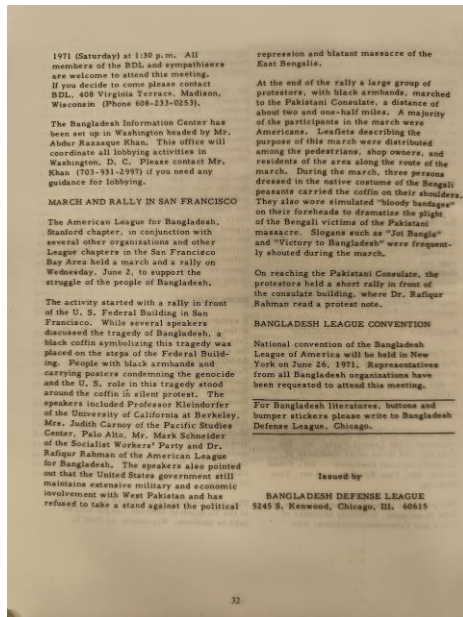


Fig. 2.43. Newsletter:
Bangladesh Newsletter. No. 4.
Bangladesh Defense League,
Chicago. July 1, 1971. Courtesy:

People wore black armbands and carried posters condemning the genocide.

Solidarity movements uphold the stance of martyrs across different countries. Martyrs of the Northern Irish struggle gained ground as heroic leaders of overseas movements, while the mass martyrs of Bangladesh became victims of the role of a foreign government, generating an upsurge in the latter's society. In support or defiance, the martyr is named, remembered and contested.

2.2.3 Civilian and banal ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

When civilians are randomly, accidentally or intentionally killed, their deaths do not easily move into the pantheon of the martyred. Nevertheless, there are various ephemera where the names of these people feature in collective memories. They may emerge locally in their places of birth or death in political cards or small festoon murals. Wall graffiti are the most sporadic forms of martyr representations, making the sites of martyrdom and the names of civilians immortal in people's memories. When civilian deaths become common in civil rights movements and mass uprisings, posters and banners are generated that foreground the numerous dead by their specific names or en masse. Sometimes, martyr objects themselves become festoons for these movements. At other times, their memory becomes the only ephemera that is preserved for future generations.

2.2.3.1 Contestations of naming in civilian cards, posters and tin plaques

Fig. 2.44 is a political card made in July 1985. It states that Michael McCartan was murdered by RUC, the 'security forces' in NI. Hundreds of such deaths are hardly investigated and only two perpetrators have been sentenced for this murder. The murder took place in July 1980, but these cards were made in July 1985 and sold for fifteen pence apiece,

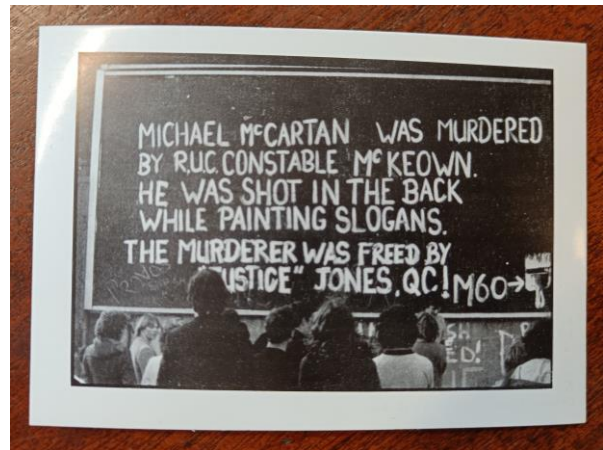


Fig. 2.44. Political card: Michael McCartan was murdered by R.U.C Constable McKeown. Proceeds to the Prisoners Book Scheme. Belfast: Just Books, 1983. Political Cards – Republican (box 1). Courtesy: PANIPC

the proceeds of which went to the Prisoners Book Scheme in Belfast. The sacrifice of this civilian teenager became part of the political literature read by prisoners, financed through these proceeds. The card shows local people drawn into the political atmosphere by painting slogans, but these deaths were situated in the interstices of random and intentional killing. Hence, while one side claimed that they were 'murdered' and even questioned the 'Justice Jones' who freed the murderer, the other claimed that they were justifiably shot dead by the state apparatus to maintain order in the society. The ephemera captured the contestation of naming the martyr as a person who was unjustifiably murdered or lawfully killed.

When civilian deaths become part of a political contest, they command a large space in the cultural landscape. Fig. 2.45 is a photograph taken along Newtownards Road where a large-scale banner describes not only the death of Leanne Murray in the Shankill bombing by the IRA but the saga of 'slaughter' by 'Sinn Fein/IRA'.



Fig. 2.45. Poster: ‘The dead cannot cry out for justice/It is the duty of the living to do so for them’. In memory of murdered Leanne Murray. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

Moreover, the red poppies in the photograph make the death part of the national emblem of unionist sacrifice. The young girl was a murdered innocent whose youth was cut short when she had gone out shopping. Sean Kelly received a total of nine life sentences for his role in the attack but was released early in July 2000, under

the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.⁴⁴

A signboard memorial featured in fig. 2.46 is a common, low-cost memorial in Mirpur, Bangladesh, set up as temporary and immediate memorials by friends and



Fig. 2.46. Object: Signboard in memory of the martyred in the killing fields of Mirpur. Dhaka. 1972. August 8, 2022.

family members of martyrs in the wake of civilian deaths, here, specifically the target of the Bihari collaborators after the 1971 War. The fading paint of this common object ephemera, already on the ruins, lists the names of forty people, the last name being that of a female martyr, Maksuda Begum Molly. Her name does not feature in the glass plaque inside the Killing field Memorial. While interviewing martyr families in this area, I came across many families whose female

44. Mark Simpson, “Shankill Bomb: Mother recalls plea for help from Sean Kelly,” *BBC News NI*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-45914674>.

members had also lost their lives in the 1971 war. While the male members are remembered as martyrs, the female members are only perceived as dead. Hence, this earlier temporary memorial marks the sacrifice of common people, men and women alike. Furthermore, the list is not comprehensive because civilian deaths are not easily identified.

Contestations occur regarding naming the martyr as either the murdered or lawfully annihilated or innocent dead in NI; between martyrs as victims of the local collaborators' targeted annihilation programme and their gendered and ordinary identity in Bangladesh.

2.2.3.2 Contestations of naming in wall graffiti



Fig. 2.47. Graffiti: 'Bloody Sunday'.
Creggan area, Derry. April 25, 2022.

Wall graffiti as ephemera reflect the changing mood of the community as they are constantly being written and erased. Fig. 2.47 is a photograph (taken in April 2022) of a wall graffiti in the Creggan area of Derry where people had gathered for a peaceful protest on 30th

January, 1972. It features the 'martyrs' of 1972 as the innocent dead or the day as one where innocence died. The language shows that the contents of the graffiti was sprayed over after the completion of the Saville inquiry in 2010 when only one soldier was accused of criminal offense, and he was dubbed 'Soldier F' by the British government. Deputy Peadar Tóibín, leader of Aontú (an all-Ireland political party that was formally launched in January 2019 and operates in both the Republic of Ireland

and NI), referred to Soldier F by his real name, David James Cleary, in Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament, on 9th February, 2022. Using his real name made the accused a real target in the minds of the people, a target whose villainy had killed fourteen common people on Bloody Sunday. Partially erased from the wall were the new laws on strip-searching political prisoners, which had been inscribed by the Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association. These multiple inscriptions make martyrdom a concrete loss of actual lives and expose those who had perpetrated it as well as the causes therein, both of which need to be randomly and often reiterated.



Fig. 2.48. Graffiti: 'I am in pain. I will not live. Please inform at Bishnupriya Bhavan, Purana Paltan.' Arafat Karim. Bangladesh Medical College, Dhaka. 2021. Courtesy: Artist Arafat Karim

Wall graffiti capture the core of any emotion through images and words. Arafat Karim's wall graffiti (fig. 2.48) depicts the pain that a dying person experiences even as he desires to cling to life. During the 1952 language movement, student protesters were shot while participating in rallies near Dhaka University. Aptly dressed in a shirt and trouser like a city student, the student protester in the graffiti is represented as calling out for his family members living in old Dhaka (Bishnupriya

Bhavan, purana paltan). Karim represents the essence of the 1952 movement of martyrs in pain, with a desire to meet their family members in their final moments. The martyrdom entails a personal and national loss, without any intrusion by the political.

Graffiti, as ephemera, are a splash of images and text which are made by the artist to immediately capture the attention of the viewer. They feature on walls that are traversed frequently, and are often splashed over by other texts and images. They do

not aim to glorify the martyr but depict the rawness of martyrdom, thus foregrounding the martyrdom of the common man. Contestations arise when one name is erased with another and the wall of the status quo is splashed with new images.

2.2.3.3 Contestations of naming in civil rights association posters and banners

Families of the Bloody Sunday victims do not consider the deaths of their loved ones to be martyrdom. Paul O'Connor, director of the PFC in Derry, stated that the deaths were murders and not martyrdom. However, fig. 2.49 features a poster produced for the ill-fated NICRA march during which thirteen Catholics were shot dead by the British Army while a fourteenth succumbed to injuries six months later. Unlike political propaganda leaflets focussing on specific figures, this poster depicts in silhouette numerous people who lost their lives for the cause of civil

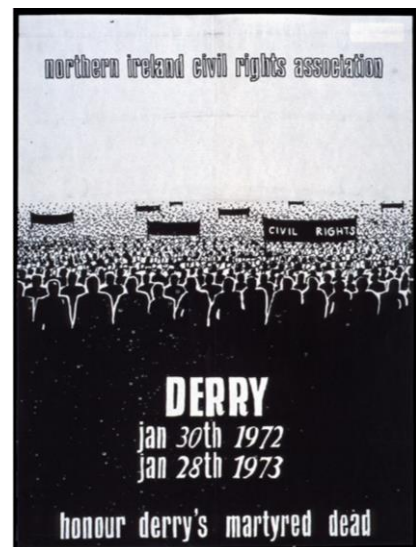


Fig. 2.49. Poster: 'honour derry's martyred dead'. NICRA. 1973. Image ID: PPO0469. Courtesy: TICR

rights and dubs them the 'martyred dead'. More than the honour to be accrued to them, the poster is devoid of portrait images and their glorification. Its black-and-white sombre image conveys the sombreness of the marches to be held each year henceforth.⁴⁵ Such marches bring together family members, friends and acquaintances who grieve for their loss and express grievance at the continuing injustice of failure to recognise the innocence of the dead.

Fig. 2.50 features a photograph that depicts a banner mentioning that martyr memories remain immortal, in 1969 Bangladesh. In the aftermath of Asad's martyrdom, common folk were spurred to organise a funeral procession in defiance of

45. Quoted from the poster in the Troubled Images CD-ROM, 2001, Linen Hall Library.

section 144 imposed by the Ayub regime to control countrywide strikes. It was Asad's



Fig. 2.50. Photograph: A large number of common people out in a procession with a black flag after Asad was shot in 1969. Photographer: Rashid Talukder. Courtesy: LWM

shirt, a tangible, yet transitory, remnant of the dead student leader, that inspired these people to come together to protest the imprisonment of Sheikh Mujib in the Agartala conspiracy case, the discrepancy in wages of labourers, exploitation by landowners in villages and emptying of EP's resources for the development of the West.

The crowd, in both Ireland and Bangladesh, name the martyrs in civil rights movements. From the recognition of the martyred to the immortalisation of martyr memories to debate over political issues, uprisings of the common people utilise ephemera like posters and banners. Such uprisings are mostly centred in cities like Belfast and Derry in NI and Dhaka and Khulna in Bangladesh. Contestations range from the martyrs as protest march civilians to crowds gathered in the name of martyr commemoration and future action.

2.2.3.4 Contestations of naming in remote counties and villages and the expansion of ephemera

Production of memory triggers to be used for a short time is largely a behavior of the socio-cultural centre with access to and desire for the production of ephemera. The margin did not produce much ephemera, such as the civilian deaths in NI counties and in villages of Bangladesh, where life—for example in 1971—was itself ephemeral or transient. Most of the deaths in NI do not have a physical, public space to remember

them, whether urban or rural. Kris Brown, who has worked extensively on NIPC and post-conflict political commemorations, referred to an exhibition of Healing through Remembering (extensive cross-community project to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in and about NI), where people walked along the Falls and Shankill Road with a map, marking places where there were murals and memorial gardens to commemorate the dead, and also those areas where deaths had taken place, but had no markers. The latter greatly outnumbered the former.⁴⁶ A woman living in a village in Bangladesh recalled her family being killed in 1971 by the Pakistan Army. She described the event when they were lined up and killed after being made to dig their own grave. What she described was the archetypal act of cruelty perpetrated by the army. Similar events happened elsewhere and were broadcast by the media, becoming the symbolic memory of many. The facts of her family's death are known to only a few who saw, many of whom had also forgotten.⁴⁷ National memory in the digital form is threatening to replace her personal memory. The killing did take place; however, the details of the killing may be too horrific to remember, and thus, a trend of standardisation of memory to escape the reality of memory is sought. The cultural construction of the memory is not as important as the objective to induce passive forgetting. Therefore, memory becomes ephemeral in a sense as it keeps appearing and disappearing, alive only in individual or collective minds.

Rural murders in Ireland due to the Troubles also differed from those in the city, due to the remote location of the places. One day, two Catholic brothers and two Protestant brothers were playing pool at a pub in a small rural town. The close-knit

46. Kris Brown (Lecturer in the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy, University of Ulster), interview by author via zoom. February 15, 2023. Transcript, with author.

47. Afsan Choudhury (Bangladeshi liberation war researcher, columnist, and journalist), interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022. Transcript, with author.

communities there knew that they played games in non-Gaelic football teams even though it was not allowed until 1971. The next day, the two Catholic brothers were killed. Situating themselves in nearby farmhouses, the gunmen travelled the roads with impunity. A family member of the deceased Catholic brothers alleged that in the Protestant-dominated countryside, the security forces and gunmen knew each other and possibly waved them on. The two Protestant brothers along with nine others were shot dead, supposedly in retaliation by this aggrieved family member of the deceased. The next day, he was dubbed a member of the IRA, who had killed the Protestant brothers or whose brothers were killed by the IRA because he did not toe the line. All of it was so confusing because none of it was true. However, the village people distanced themselves from this family, making life difficult for them.⁴⁸ The memory of martyrdom keeps appearing and disappearing and keeps getting created and distorted.

While common martyrs are hardly named in both countries, contestations occur over naming martyrs as either the remembered or obliterated dead in Bangladesh, and as the falsely accused or innocent in Ireland.

2.3 COMMEMORATION AND ITS RELATED EPHEMERA

After martyrs are named as personalities, whether individually or en masse, they are commemorated through various means, ranging from official papers to martyr's used objects; musical ephemera like hymns, songbooks and oral ballads; print ephemera like commemorative booklets and memorial lecture posters; and collectibles ephemera like souvenirs.

48. Caitlin Thompson, "Unsolved murders and unexamined atrocities," *Coda Story* (blog), July 26, 2022, <https://www.codastory.com/rewriting-history/northern-irelands-troubles/>.

2.3.1 Commemorative hymns, objects and papers in Ireland and Bangladesh

The commemoration of martyrs occurs through dedicatory religious verses which are written in their memory and popularly sung by people in public spaces like churches; or personal objects and papers which are mostly kept in private spaces like homes and official folders. Personal objects may be specific to an individual or of common usage like shoes and utensils indicating the loss of numerous commonplace lives. Some are throwaway items but not paper-based and some are paper-based but meant to be preserved like official documents. While some documents are used by all, some are banned and thereby become more popular among people.

2.3.1.1 Contestations of naming in martyr's hymns, objects and official papers

Pope
Benedict XV
declared St
Oliver Plunkett
a martyr for the
faith on St
Patrick's Day in
1918. Plunkett

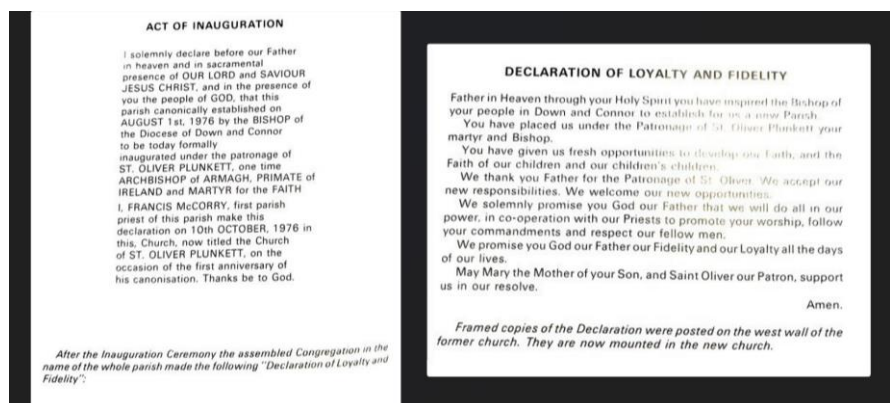


Fig. 2.51. Hymn: 'Declaration of Loyalty and Fidelity'. Framed copies have been mounted in the new church. Book: *St. Oliver Plunkett Parish Belfast: Church re-opening and re-dedication Sunday, 21st April, 1985*, 47. Edited by Tony McGee. Belfast: [s.n.], 1985.

was beatified in 1920 and canonised as the martyr saint of Ireland in 1975. The anniversary celebration of canonisation was headed by Fathers Francis McCorry and Matthew Wallace on 10th October, 1976. During the ceremony, the new parish of St Oliver Plunkett was officially inaugurated. Fig. 2.51 features the text of the inauguration ceremony (on the left side of the image) as declared solemnly by Father

McCorry and the following declaration of loyalty and fidelity (on the right side of the image) was to be uttered by every visitor of the Church. Through homilies and prayers delivered on a certain day to numerous adherents of the Christian faith, a martyr's name is propagated for the new generation and reiterated for the old. This hymn worked as verbal ephemera which was propagated through print ephemera, like letters through which people are made aware of the delivery of the hymn in a certain place. This letter of invitation is usually issued by the archbishop inviting all members of the Armagh parish to participate in the mass and processions leaving St Malachy's Church to carry 'the Relic of our Holy Archbishop and Martyr'.⁴⁹ These are not conventional historical documents. Framed copies of such hymns and pieces of letter are created once to remain in parish offices for a certain period. It is through such daily religious commemorations that the martyred saint lives on in people's collective memories.

When asked about a minor object of the everyday life of Kevin (a commoner) that makes Roslyn remember her brother who was murdered on Bloody Sunday in 1972, she brought out this record (fig. 2.52) of the second audio album released by English rock band *T. Rex*, which topped the UK music charts to become the best-selling album in 1971. It was the kind of music Kevin listened to as a young boy before he was shot at the age of seventeen. Kevin did not collate British culture with British imperialism in the



Fig. 2.52. Object: Vinyl Record of the *Electric Warrior* by T Rex belonging to Kevin McElhinney. Derry/Londonderry. Courtesy: Roslyn Boyle. April 28, 2022.

49. Letter from Archbishop Martin ahead of the St Oliver Plunkett celebrations! News, Parish Office, St Patrick's Cathedral Parish, Archdiocese of Armagh, June 19, 2019, <https://armaghparish.net/letter-from-archbishop-martin-ahead-of-the-st-oliver-plunkett-celebrations/>.

North and participated in the civil rights march which was dubbed a riot by the British. Such ephemera clearly show that boys like Kevin were not conscious rioters but people who wanted basic existential rights. It is an insight into a person and not just a persona that is remembered. In a personal interview, Leo Young, the elder brother of John Young, another seventeen-year-old who was killed on the same day, spoke about how people asked him about the kind of life John led and how he had to answer that John had no life because it was brutally cut short.⁵⁰ Fig. 2.52 is an image of the life into which they were initiated and which they would have led if only they had been alive. It is also significant to note that these objects have not been donated to the local museum in Derry or any other museum in NI or elsewhere. When asked, Roslyn replied that these objects were too personal and intimate and that they could not part with them.⁵¹ Although ephemera archives are often found in several libraries and museums, they often exist in people's homes. However, they are not for public display, and must hence be studied with due reverence and ethicality, granting a true understanding of the people who are being remembered and retaining the sanctity of the objects. Personal ephemera are not for the politics of collective commemoration for the cause of the nation; such ephemera are minor documents of the everyday life that was led by these people who have unwittingly become important historical figures. However, it must be remembered that they did not desire it and that their sacrifice was enforced. The ephemera above is a testimony to Kevin as an individual—a brother, a young boy and a victim.

50. Leo Young (elder brother of a victim of Bloody Sunday, John Young), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

51. Roslyn Doyle (sister of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Kevin McElhinney), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Official papers also represent the personal saga that goes on to create the martyr persona. Some life actions begin with an indication that they would end in sacrificial death. Fig. 2.53 features the appointment letter of Fazlur Rehman Khan, a Bangladeshi intellectual and geologist who was appointed as a lecturer in Soil Science at the University of Dhaka in June 1963. The letter written by the registrar lays down the strictures of the educational institution, namely that Khan would not be able to join any political organisation without prior permission from the University and that his appointment would only be confirmed after a satisfactory report about his political antecedents. Even though he was given an appointment on 1st August, 1963, he was not lacking in political antecedents and consciousness. Yet he was politically neutral and engaged with dedication to his teaching career. His death was part of a targeted killing of martyred intellectuals near the university area on 25th March, 1971. The professor lived at Iqbal Hall with his nephew Kanchan, along with an elderly caretaker Joban Ali and a young manservant. The professor and his nephew returned on the fateful day because they both thought that the other would be left alone. Even when the caretaker brought news of the Pakistan Army's killing at Jagannath and Iqbal Halls, the professor felt that they would be spared if they surrendered before the army. However, within minutes of coming out of his room in flat no. 23/F, they were sprayed with bullets. The professor and his nephew died, and their bodies remained in the

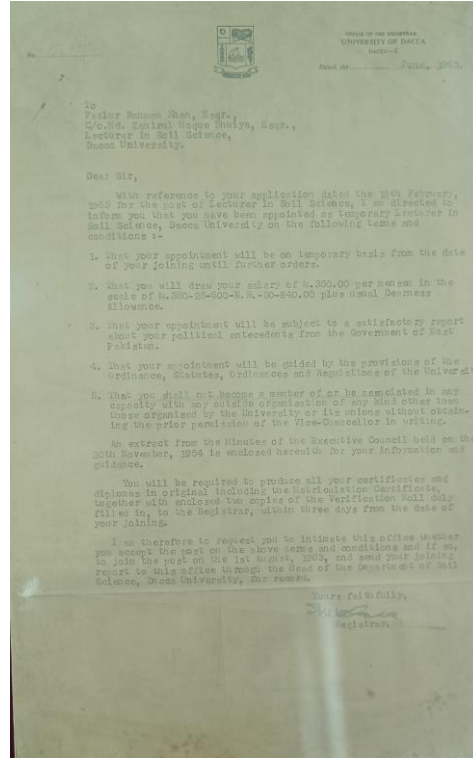


Fig. 2.53. Appointment letter: Martyred intellectual Fazlur Rehman Khan. University of Dacca. June, 1963. Courtesy: BNM

room for one and a half days before the emergency was lifted and family members were allowed to come and bury them in the Azimpur graveyard. The political stricture indicated in the letter prophesied the death of Fazlur Rehman Khan due to political causes. The agenda of the stricture was also exposed as a façade, when the nephew was sacrificed along with the intellectual, like numerous other students at Dhaka University, merely as collateral damage.

While the vinyl record is an intimate ephemera, the appointment letter is an official one. The hymn is a ritualistic ephemera that became part of people's everyday practices. Such ephemera bring to life the hopes, desires and intimidations of ended lives. Such conflicting emotions were part of the real lives of martyrs. Ephemera generate reverence, sensational pathos for the martyred and anger towards the authorities. Contestations over the naming of martyrs occur when the term 'martyr' ranges from a religious designation to an incorrect imposition to a political agenda.

2.3.1.2 Contestations of naming in banal objects of everyday life

There are some objects which are remnants of mass martyrs in Ireland and Bangladesh, lacking an intimate or distinct specificity. These are not paper-based ephemera but throwaway objects. Fig. 2.54 features a photograph of a campaign entitled 'In Their Footsteps'⁵² which began as an initiative between the Bloody Sunday Trust and the PFC to mark the anniversary of the publication of the Saville Inquiry report into Bloody Sunday and commemorate those who were killed in the conflicts in NI. It is an exhibition of shoes that families give, with a note written with them. Paul O'Connor explains that usually, these are not the shoes worn by those killed. Families are asked to go to second-hand shops and get a pair of shoes they think would have fit

52. Pat Finucane Centre, "In their Footsteps," <https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/projects/their-footsteps>.

their loved ones.⁵³ It is a tangible way for family members to remember their loved



Fig. 2.54. Photograph: Campaign entitled “In Their Footsteps”. Day of Action in Dublin demanding effective mechanisms to deal with the past. Dublin. June 15, 2017. Courtesy: PFC.

ones. The old shoes are reminiscent of a past that has permeated into the present in the most quotidian of objects. The notes then personalise the quotidian and become an existential emblem of loss and love. This exhibition now includes about two hundred shoes and remains a powerful commemorative campaign, shown across various cities in Ireland in Dublin, as depicted in fig. 2.54.

Some banal objects of everyday life such as utensils were used by martyrs during the 1971 war in Bangladesh, to eat or provide food to freedom fighters, the latter specifically making them targets of the Pakistan Army. For those in villages, which comprise the largest percentage of unnamed martyrs, such incidents were the most common because they mostly did not participate directly in the 1971 struggle. Living in remote villages, their participation was



Fig. 2.55. Objects: Utensils used by martyred freedom fighters of 1971. Courtesy: LWM

induced by the burning of their homes, the raping of their women, the theft of their cattle, etc. They participated to protect their basic means of survival—food and shelter. The utensils became an emblem of that basic object which these people put at

53. Paul O’Connor, interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 28, 2022.

stake as their sacrifice. The names of these unnamed mass martyrs are encoded in these banal objects, preserved in the LWM (fig. 2.55). Contestations over the naming of martyrs lie in civilians' force-induced sacrifice in political events and their survival-induced sacrifice in political events.

2.3.1.3 Contestations of naming in banned documents

A person who would become a martyr often uses banned documents, conflicting with the authorities. Fig. 2.56 features a 'comm' (a smuggled communication between prisoners and the movement outside)⁵⁴ sent by Bobby Sands thanking the Irish people who campaigned for the prisoners on hunger strike. The campaign resulted in the British government agreeing to their demands to be treated as political prisoners and not as criminals. The success of the 1980 strike was shared with the masses during Christmas week

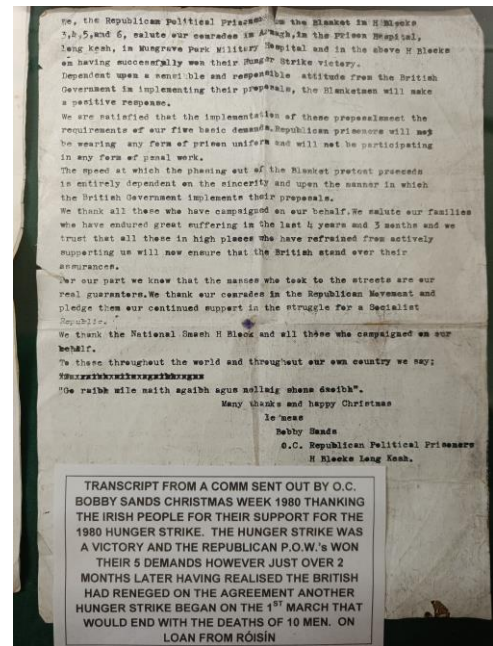


Fig. 2.56. Comm: Transcript from a 'comm' sent out by Bobby Sands. Christmas week 1980. Courtesy: EHIRHM

so that support for such future endeavours continued. Ironically, this became true as the hunger strike was again initiated after the British authorities reneged on the agreement. The smuggled communication, banned by the authorities, became the voice of the prisoners who soon die from the hunger strikes, causing the masses to erupt in grief and grievance. Here, the future martyr writes in the most minute fonts,

54. Neil Jarman, in his 1997 book *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland*, writes about such 'comms' sent by Bobby Sands, which generated ephemera like paintings on street walls and posters as part of the campaign for the blanket protests in 1979. However, they only kicked off after the death of the hunger strikers.

Banned documents are anti-authority and anti-state in nature, and they generate protest movements to build a new nation. They are used to nurture the narrative of martyrdom among the people and propel them towards campaigns of defiance against the authority and state on a massive level. While the cause of the hunger strikers and the student protesters are widely different, their individual and collective names become beacons for justice campaigns. Here, the contestation lies in naming martyrs as anti-state figures who want to uphold their rights, and the structure of the state in which this rebellion emanates, indicated through their call of state allegiance '*Pakistan Zindabad!*' [Hail to Pakistan!] at the end of the leaflet.

2.3.2 Commemorative publications in Ireland and Bangladesh

Commemorative publications are issued by individuals or martyr commemoration associations or institutions with which the martyrs had been associated. Many such memorial associations also make martyrs' successors their members, making them part of a martyrology. Many of their publications, like commemorative calendars, reach the drawing rooms of the people, with iconic images and history becoming familiar to people. Commemorative musical airs and ballads are also transcribed to represent auditory ephemera people listen to in their localities, making the names of certain martyrs part of their everyday vocabulary.

2.3.2.1 Contestations of naming in commemoration booklets

The commemoration booklet contains a narrative written by people and institutions that want to create the persona of the martyr. A martyr is not a being but an identity that must be created, constructed and debated over for its sustenance. Benmore, a writer, described Roger Casement (fig. 2.58) as a man of resolute mould and a lover of his country who 'died' on 3rd August, 1916. The 'mighty dead' of

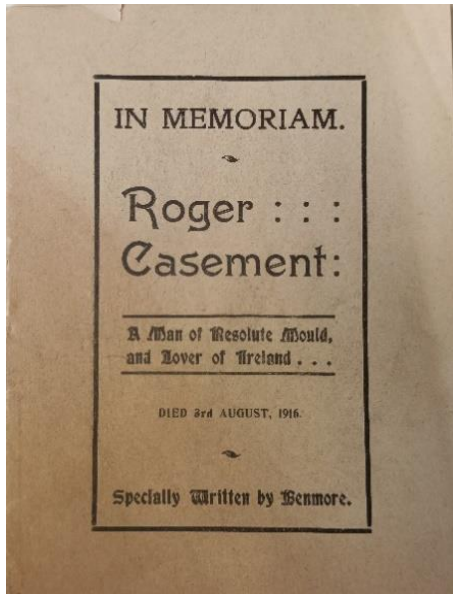


Fig. 2.58. Booklet: In Memoriam Roger Casement. August 1916. Sinn Féin 1915 – 1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966). Courtesy: ECNIPC

Ireland was the ‘felon’ according to British law. The great execution of the hero was transmuted into the common burial of a convicted criminal. In the interstices of the hero and felon is the martyr who claims to have died for his country. His martyrdom filled the minds of people in Donegal, Antrim, Connaught and Cushendun with sorrow. People stood praying for the martyr outside the prison where he was executed. Casement knew Benmore as a writer and was an admirer of his. The memoir also includes Casement’s own poem on ‘The Irish Language’,

a language which he was ashamed to know so little.

What was specially written in Ireland; was written by sector commanders, friends and acquaintances in Bangladesh. The sector commander Major General C. R. Datta primarily established the narrative of martyr naming, substantiated the reception of *Bir Uttom* [the second-highest award for individual gallantry in Bangladesh] by Khaza Nizam Uddin Bhuiyan (the only

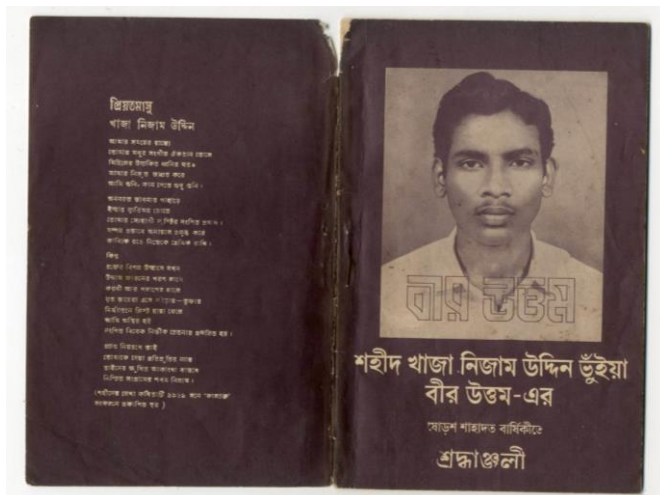


Fig. 2.59. Booklet: “Bir Uttom”, published as tribute to commemorate the 16th martyrdom anniversary of Khaza Nizam Uddin Bhuiyan, Bir Uttom. 1987. Courtesy: A.K.M Rafiqul Hoque (donor)/LWM

Bangladeshi officer of the *Gonobahini* [civilian army] to receive it) and advocated that

the highest award *Bir Shreshtho* be granted to him. The narrative of Bhuiyan's naming then moves to his revolutionary political identity as a member of the *Bangla Chatra League* [Bengali Students' League] in 1969 amidst the imperialist rule of President Ayub Khan, personal reminiscences about his physique and childhood, guerrilla tactics deployed by him and his experiences during the Liberation War. The booklet also includes a letter written by his father to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh regarding the construction of a monument around the grave of his late son in Kanaighat PS in Sylhet since the body had not been brought home to his village in Malapara Union in Comilla. Beyond the voices of others is the cultural voice of the hero himself in the evocative lines of the cover page which is featured in fig. 2.59, where he addresses his country as his beloved for whom he had engaged in activism and for which he will ultimately sacrifice himself. The naming of this martyr encompasses everything from the military to the personal, governmental, familial and poetical.

Martyrs who are termed 'saints' in Bangladesh belonged to the Catholic

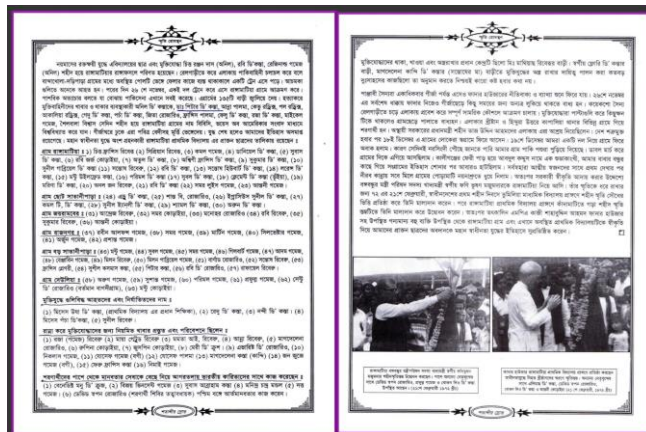


Fig. 2.60. Booklet: Rangamatia Government Primary School Diamond Jubilee Commemoration. Issu. February 15, 2019. https://issuu.com/jeromedcosta/docs/former_students_of_rangamatia_and_b.

community and engaged in missionary activities in various districts. Father Fernandez who died on 14th November, 1602 is considered the first martyr priest in undivided Bengal, along with Father William Evans, who was martyred on 13th November, 1971, by the West Pakistan army.

The latter has become a famous martyr saint among the Catholics in Bangladesh. However, for the common people, he is not a ‘saint’⁵⁵ but a martyr of the Liberation War. While Jerome D’Costa only wrote of the *Tribeni Chhatra Kalyan Sangha* [Tribeni Youth Welfare Organization] in 1972 that began giving the ‘Father Evans Scholarship’ to poor but excellent students and founded the ‘Father Evans Memorial Football Tournament’ in 1973 and *Shurid Sangha* (another youth organisation) in old Dhaka which started its annual ‘Shaheed Father Evans Memorial Basketball Competition’ among different youth organisations, there are many in the local Christian communities who were martyred. Fig. 2.60 features the commemorative booklet of a primary government school in Chittagong (which also has a Christian diocese) that contains the names of Christians in the local communities such as Robbie D’Costa and Reginald Gomez who had been martyred. Significantly, it features the names of villages where the influence of the Christian missionaries was significant, and they had been martyred in significant numbers. Contestations over the martyr’s designation ranges from that of a hero to that of a soldier, a saint and a common man.

2.3.2.2 Contestations of naming in memorial association certificates and advertisements

Certain ephemera are found within other ephemera. The location of the Wolfe Tone and Ninety-Eight Memorial Association certificate in the Republican Resistance Calendar of 1998 and 1999 is a marker of the enduring legacy of this memorial association in the minds of the people. Fig. 2.61 is an enlarged version of that

55. There are famous saints in Bangladesh like Shah Jalal whose mosque the Pakistan army entered in 1971. Since he is a living saint, the angels in his *dargah* (shrine) flew away, dooming Pakistan. Afsan Chowdhury explains that it was the most powerful divine motivational story of 1971, one that was social knowledge among the people, exuding social power. Related ephemera are manifest everywhere from travellers viewing the name of the Hazrat Shah Jalal International Airport in Dhaka during flights to people in Sylhet visiting the *dargah* en masse. All these constitute the ephemera of social power. However, he is not a martyr.

certificate.⁵⁶ This image posits martyrdom as a comprehensive narrative that comprises separate important events. Remembering the martyr includes a remembrance of the moment of death as well as the lived life before death. The

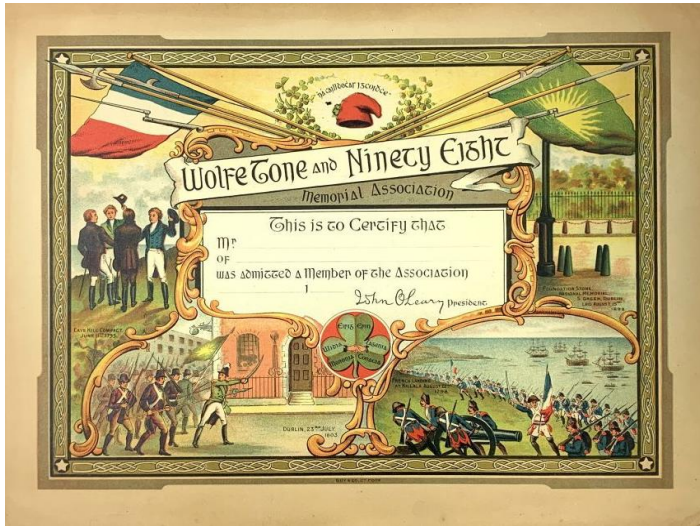


Fig. 2.61. Certificate: Enlarged version of the Wolfe Tone and Ninety-Eight Memorial Association certificate. From the 1998 Republican Resistance Calendar. Courtesy: EHIRHM

grandeur lies not in death but in the journey towards death, sacrifice being encoded in each seminal act of the martyr's life. From the fluttering flag of France on the left, which indicates Tone's support for the revolutionary French government, to the sunburst

flag on the right, which was used by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in 1858, and from the Cave Hill pact between United Irishmen Theobald Wolfe Tone and Henry Joy McCracken in June 1795 to launch the rebellion of 1798 to the Irish rebellion of 1803 whose architect was Robert Emmet, (group of figures on the left) the patches of images lay out a historical continuum. Whoever was certified became a witness to these events. The certification was given by John O'Leary—the president of the association and a leading Fenian leader who founded the IRB in 1858—on the occasion of the 1898 centenary of the Rising. Moreover, the image of the foundation stone, a national memorial to Tone which was visited by thousands of people on the eve of its laying in August 1898, makes the certificate a witness to the popularity of

56. The National Library of Ireland cites this as a pamphlet printed in Dublin in 1898. The details may be accessed at <https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000573677>.

Tone's martyr narratives. Furthermore, it leads one to several others who sacrificed their lives for the same cause, namely McCracken and Emmet.⁵⁷

Organisations like *Projonmo '71* extended an invitation to the children of the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War to become members. From 1992 to 1993,

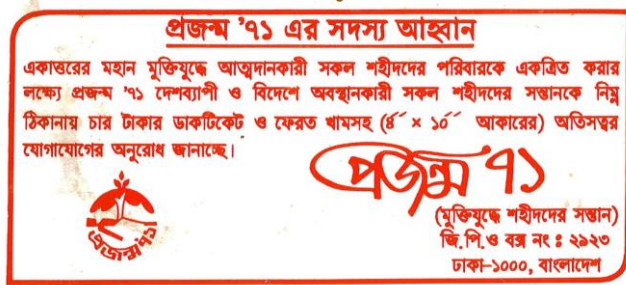


Fig. 2.62. Advertisement: Call to children of martyrs to join *Projonmo '71*. 1992-3. Courtesy: *Projonmo '71*

newspapers also advertised this call (fig. 2.62) so that the children of the martyrs, some of whom had migrated to other countries like India and Canada during and after the war, could come together on one platform and share their

experiences of loss. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and any other bereaved person could become part of this organisation. In Bangladesh, this organisation was one of the first to bring the first and second generations of martyr families together, who also provided witness accounts of what had happened to their martyred family members, an important resource for the sustenance of facts against the distortion and contestation of history. This organisation engages the family members as people rather than as intellectuals, as only a few have written books on the role of the martyred intellectuals in nation-building in 1971. Here, the contestations lie in naming the martyr as either a supporter of revolutionary action or a popular local hero in Ireland; as either an intellectual icon or creator of new legacies in Bangladesh.

2.3.2.3 Contestations of naming in memorial and commemorative calendars

Republican martyrdom has always reached the level of saint-like veneration. While officers of the IRA were shot dead by pro-treaty forces during the Irish Civil

57. Such representations are found in commemorative coins of the 1798 Rising.

War in 1922 (that followed the Irish War of Independence) and their deaths were official executions, the republican tradition elevated them to the level of martyrs. Fig. 2.63 features multiple narratives that explicate this process of elevation. On the surface of a quotidian calendar of 1971 are represented the visual portraits of Rory (Rory O'Connor), Liam (Liam Mellows), Dick (Richard Barrett, commonly called Dick Barrett) and Joe (Joseph McKelvey), inscribed as the 'four martyrs'. The veneration was ascribed by the verse of Pádraig de Brún, a priest, scholar and academic administrator, who was also briefly imprisoned at Mountjoy jail in February 1923, just like the four martyrs he mourned, who were imprisoned and executed a year before him. Thus, these lines echo the blessing that Brún evokes for the dead so that Virgin Mary may lead them to a heavenly home. They are the heralds of a new dawn, the 'star of the morning' whose sacrifice is posited as pristine. Their heart's blood is bright red, and their souls are as pure as snow. It is only when the death is presented as a 'good death' does the martyr become a sacred hero and his actions become devoid of political affiliations. In this regard, the homage paid by a future prisoner, who fought on the Anti-Treaty side, enables a justification for rebellion against the stance of the newly elected Provisional government of the Free State. Through such popular ephemera, the justification of the two sides reached the future generations in 1971. This year significantly introduced interment without trial for prisoners, a roadblock for many prisoners of war who felt

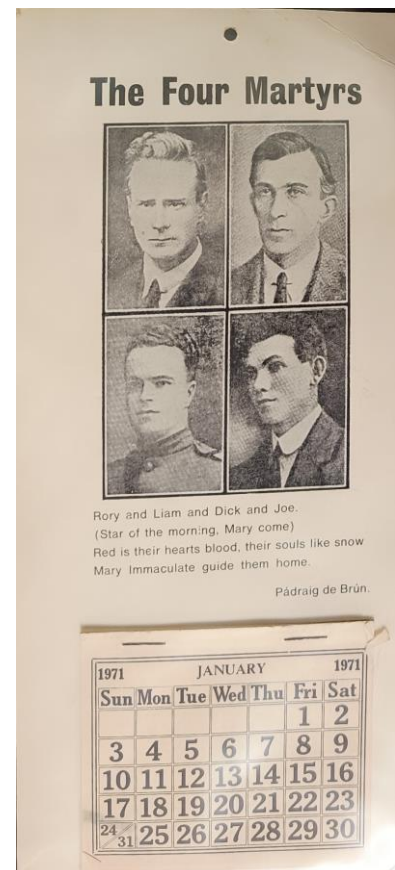


Fig. 2.63. Memorial Calendar: The Four Martyrs. January 1971. Courtesy: EHIHRM

their imprisonment was unjustified. This roadblock petered down to rioters who were imprisoned without trial, especially in Derry, during clashes with the British Army. Although the rioters deemed their imprisonment and killing to be more for a civil rights cause than for a political cause, republican ephemera deemed otherwise. They sought a justification, similar to the one sought by the four martyrs, following the Irish War of Independence. On a memorial card was attached a small calendar, bringing the sacred and secular together in the ephemera delineating people’s narrative of martyrdom.

Unlike memorial calendars which were printed in the aftermath of an event, the naming of martyrs in commemorative calendars is ascribed by later generations who

use it for different purposes. Calendars as ephemera were produced as both a fundraiser and a method of getting a message across to households



Fig. 2.64. Commemorative Calendar: Michael Collins, The Life & Times, Calendar 2011. The House of Calendars, Dublin. 2011. Courtesy: EHIHRM

across Ireland and Great Britain. These calendars

range from small plastic-covered cards that fit inside wallets to poster-sized examples and the more common glossy productions of a page per month.⁵⁸ An example of a commemorative calendar, is the glossy and illustrated ephemera produced in memory of Michael Collins by the House of Calendar, Ireland’s premier calendar company which was established in 2009. This company produces beautifully crafted calendars

58. “Introduction to Calendars,” *CAIN*, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/moloney/intro/calendar.htm>.

as part of commemoration or Irish hero series. Fig. 2.64 features the 2011 commemoration calendar where the ‘martyr’ is presented as a ‘rebel with a cause whose name should be carved with pride’. All photographs on this calendar were sourced from various books on Collins, and the chronology of his life and time is laid out. Such ephemera are not only collector items but are a way for people to know about the life and works of Collins. Common people deal more with documents of everyday life that present historical facts rather than with history books which are for scholarly academicians. Commemorative calendars enabled people to know about this War of Independence hero who was assassinated by the Anti-Treaty forces in 1922. They aimed at influencing all the northern counties to become part of independent Ireland. From his thoughts and words to his life, his leadership of the SF, his membership in the First Dáil (the unicameral Parliament of the Irish Republic convened in 1919), his address to a huge crowd before the elections of 1920, and his assassination squad—the Flying Column—which wiped out British intelligence officers, the popularity of Collins is palpable even now.⁵⁹ His signature on the last page of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and images of his participation in pro-Treaty rallies makes the man and his actions popular among all sides, substantiated by quotes from Collins’ nephew and the words of the Anti-Treaty leader Eamon de Valera. Each month, inside people’s houses, a piece of Collins’ life and times is turned over. It is ephemeral because it only lasts for that year and is replaced by a new history in the next.

Although the mass martyrs in Bangladesh are not often remembered in calendars, there are a few institutes that have published commemorative calendars

59. My friend, Tom Davis, a native from Dublin, often mentions that he is a Collins admirer, pro-Collins even to the extent of being biased. There were also children’s books at display in the souvenir shop at the GPO Museum, like Eithne Massey’s 2020 book *Michael Collins: Hero and Rebel*.

in which martyrs are not separately remembered but the 1971 War of Independence is cited through iconic photographs. The contrast highlights the concept of mass martyrdom in Bangladesh. Fig. 2.65 is a photograph from the 1997 commemorative calendar published by *Muktijuddher Smriti Songrokkhon Kendra* [Liberation War Memorial Institute]. This trust was formed in 1992 to awaken in the young generation the spirit of 1971 because the intellectuals believed that the nation's history was being distorted. One of its initiatives was the publishing of a calendar with photographs of the Liberation War, and one of the iconic photographs, is a gruesome image of the dead bodies of intellectuals who were mostly martyred on 16th December, 1971 at Rayerbazar and other killing fields.



Fig. 2.65. Calendar: The Liberation War of Bangladesh 1997. Obverse page of month of December. Image of the dead in the killing fields of Bangladesh. Liberation War Memorial Institute Trust, Dhaka. 1997. Courtesy: MMC

The representation of Collins as a popular leader who organised the common people and waded through blood, with political leaders and his family members all vouching for his daring nature and his proclamation of sovereignty for Ireland by any means make him a living legend, is a status also imbued on the mass martyrs of Bangladesh, like the painting of a heroic soldier plunging into the battlefield by M. F. Husain (fig. 2.66). The green forests in this painting are symbolic of the rural areas where most of the battles took place, and the bright red *roktojoba* (hibiscus) is symbolic of the blood that was shed during the battle. The contrast between the Irish and Bangladeshi representation is between factual and sensational imagery. On the one hand, there is the gruesomeness of the bodies lying in killing fields,

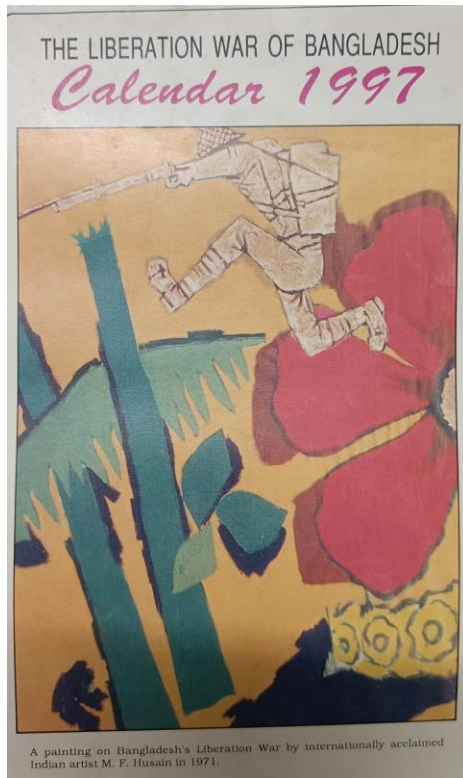


Fig. 2.66. Calendar: The Liberation War of Bangladesh 1997. Cover page. Image of a painting of the Bangladesh War by M. F. Husain in 1971. Liberation War Memorial Institute Trust, Dhaka. 1997. Courtesy: MMC

unidentifiable and rotting (in one of the pages of the calendar). On the other hand, there is the symbolic evocation of the local environment and flowers by the Indian artist who paints the saga of blood martyrdom (on the cover page of the calendar). While the Irish saga of martyrdom is presented as a continuum of sacrifice from Terence MacSwiney, which will be won by him who can suffer the most such as Collins; the Bangladeshi saga of struggle against British imperialism is narrated in the history composed

for the calendar by Dr. Mohammad Hannan and the artistic evocation of Husain. The contestation lies in the martyr as the popular hero, skilled at organisation and action but also

considered a rebel in Ireland, and the mass martyrs who were victims of circumstances beyond their control but who also voluntarily plunged into war in Bangladesh.

2.3.2.4 Contestations of naming in musical airs and ballads

Other than verbal and visual ephemera, auditory ephemera may be transcribed by individual artists at times. When martyrs are remembered in local areas, there springs forth a spontaneous musical air, which is often a song-like vocal or instrumental composition. The term 'auditory ephemera' can also be applied to the interchangeable melodies of folk songs and ballads. Fig. 2.67 is a transcript which was found among the papers of the late Kitty Colgan of *Cumann na mBan*, an Irish

republican women’s paramilitary organisation formed in Dublin on 2nd April, 1914. The writer of this transcript remains unknown. The transcript contains the air of the ‘croppy boy’, an Irish ballad set in the 1798 Rising and relating to the despair of a doomed young ‘croppy’ or rebel. This air focuses on Thomas Williams who was executed in a Belfast Jail. This melody sings of the republican martyr Tom’s bravery, who later became one with the blessed of St Patrick and the heroes of 1916, and this melody will be sung amidst marches by the Orange band of the loyalists.

Ballads or *punthis* are also created in memory of the young dead, who either died in active service or were witness to assassination attempts. Sheikh Russel, the youngest son of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was not spared when his father was

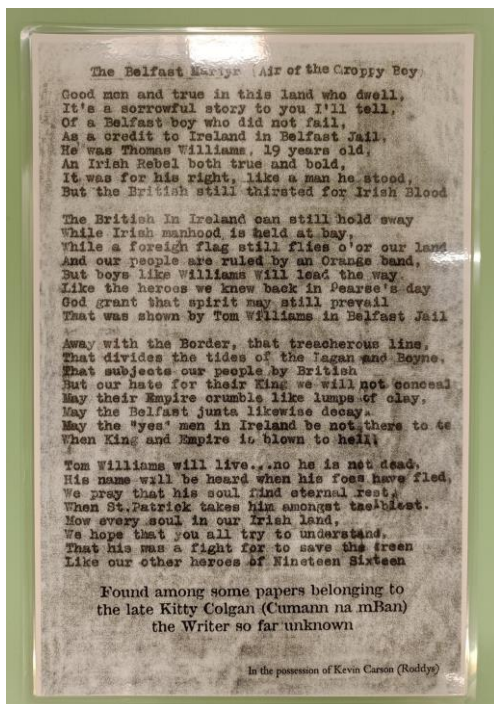


Fig. 2.67. Ballad: ‘The Belfast Martyr (Air of the Croppy Boy)’. Found among papers of Kitty Colgan. In possession of Kevin Carson. Courtesy: EHIRHM

assassinated along with his entire family in 1975. In 2021, the Cabinet Division of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh declared 18th October, Sheikh Russel’s birthday, as Sheikh Russel Day.⁶⁰ Fakir Abul Hashem of Pabna district, who has sung various songs and poems on historical and social issues, commented that Sheikh Mujib organised the independence struggle of Bangladesh in which many martyrs sacrificed their lives. His

latest composition (transcript and translation of audio record in table 2) is the only ballad on the youngest martyr of the Mujib family in

the country. In the ballad, Russel is presented as the brother of Sheikh Kamal and

60. Ali Asif Shawon, “Sheikh Russel Day Tuesday,” *Dhaka Tribune*, October 17, 2022, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/10/17/sheikh-russel-day-tuesday>.

Sheikh Jamal, who were killed on the same night, and also as the brother of present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who is fulfilling her father's promise of building a golden country. This is the path the young martyr would have taken if he had been reborn, and the ballad is an attempt to garner blessings for the same. It is for this reason that Sheikh Russel demands that the *punthi* be written by Fakir Hashem. Choric reiterations in the ballad represent the familial and political lineage of the martyr, which becomes a part of the national present. The earlier legacy of his martyred parents and elder brothers are reiterated as young Russel becomes a bearer of their legacies, a legacy that will be continued in the act of nation-building by his sister Sheikh Hasina. Thus, martyrdom is posited as a premise of nation-building, a narrative that is circulated among the people in remote villages as fakirs sing these *punthis*.

While the Irish ballad sings of the heroism of Williams as a continuum from the past to the present, the *punthi* in Bangladesh sings of the desired rebirth of the martyr. While there is a marked difference between the death of an IRA volunteer on duty and that of a young child in a political family, the remembrance of martyrs as young boys has become part of the social and national memory of both countries.

Bengali transcript of the <i>punthi</i>	English translation of the <i>punthi</i>
<i>Ore Sheikh Kamal r bhai</i>	I am the brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Ami Sheikh Jamal r bhai</i>	And Brother of Sheikh Jamal
<i>Sheikh Kamal r bhai</i>	O brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Ami Sheikh Jamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Jamal
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Sheikh Kamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Ami Sheikh Jamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Jamal

<i>Sheikh Kamal r bhai ami</i>	Brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Sheikh Jamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Jamal
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Jonmo amar Tungipara</i>	Born in Tungipara
<i>Sheikh Mujib r ghore</i>	In Sheikh Mujib's home
<i>Sheikh Fazilatunnesa</i>	Sheikh Fazilatunnesa
<i>Jononi r o dore</i>	Was mother's love
<i>Jonmo amar Tungipara</i>	Born in Tungipara
<i>Sheikh Mujib r ghore</i>	In Sheikh Mujib's home
<i>Sheikh Fazilatunnesa</i>	Sheikh Fazilatunnesa
<i>Jononi r o dore</i>	Was mother's love
<i>Ore pita mata ador kore</i>	O the affection of parents
<i>Pita mata ador kore</i>	Parents affectionately
<i>Russel naam diyeche tai</i>	Gave the name Russel
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Ami jani boro apu</i>	I know elder sister
<i>Prodhan matri hoiya</i>	After becoming Prime Minister
<i>Ore desh gorar kaaje legeche</i>	Is committed fully
<i>Protishruti diya</i>	To build this country
<i>Ami jani boro apu</i>	I know elder sister
<i>Prodhan matri hoiya</i>	After becoming Prime Minister
<i>Ore desh gorar kaaje legeche</i>	Is committed fully
<i>Protishruti diya</i>	To build this country
<i>Ore choto apu r shonge niya</i>	O with my younger sister at her side
<i>Choto apu r shonge niya</i>	With my younger sister at her side
<i>Shonar desh goreche bhai</i>	Has built the golden country
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son

<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Ami jodi thaktam beche</i>	Had I been alive
<i>Dhora dhamer pore</i>	Upon this earth,
<i>Shoitan der taraiya ditam</i>	I would have cast the enemies
<i>Lokkho mile dure</i>	Miles away
<i>Ami jodi thaktam beche</i>	Had I been alive
<i>Dhora dhamer pore</i>	Upon this earth,
<i>Shoitan der taraiya ditam</i>	Would have cast the enemies
<i>Lokkho mile dure</i>	Miles away
<i>Abar ami ashbo phire</i>	I will come back
<i>Are porojonome ashbo phire</i>	O in my rebirth I will return
<i>Shobar kache doya chai</i>	I pray for blessings to all
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am the <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Sheikh Hasina r kache aache</i>	Sheikh Hasina has with her
<i>Bisshyo gorar chabi</i>	The key to build the world
<i>Sheikh Rihana hobe ekdin</i>	Sheikh Rihana will become
<i>Bangladesh r Robi</i>	The dawn of Bangladesh
<i>Sheikh Hasina r kache aache</i>	Sheikh Hasina has with her
<i>Bisshyo gorar chabi</i>	The key to build the world
<i>Sheikh Rihana hobe ekdin</i>	Sheikh Rihana will become
<i>Bangladesh r Robi</i>	The dawn of Bangladesh
<i>Ore Sheikh Russel r etai daabi</i>	O Sheikh Russel demands this
<i>Sheikh Russel r etai daabi</i>	Sheikh Russel demands only this
<i>Gaan ti likhbe Hashem bhai</i>	The song be written by brother Hashem
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Ore Sheikh Jamal r bhai ami</i>	O brother of Sheikh Jamal
<i>Sheikh Kamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Sheikh Jamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Jamal

<i>Ami Sheikh Kamal r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Kamal
<i>Sheikh Mujib r putro ami</i>	I am Sheikh Mujib's son
<i>Sheikh Hasina r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Hasina
<i>Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana
<i>Are Bangabandhu r putro ami</i>	I am <i>Bangabandhu's</i> son
<i>Sheikh Rihana r bhai</i>	Brother of Sheikh Rihana

Fig. 2.68. Ballad: *Punthi* on Sheikh Russel by Fakir Abul Hashem. Recorded at Dhaka by author. August 15, 2022. Courtesy: Fakir Abul Hashem (artist). Transcription by author. Translation by Nabanita Sengupta

2.3.3 Commemorative events in Ireland and Bangladesh

Naming does not only occur through direct terming but also through derivative modality. The word ‘martyr’ is an appendage of historical importance as well as populist iconoclasm. In this regard, ephemera tap the essence of the spread of the martyrdom narrative even more. Commemorative events for martyrs range from religious pilgrimages for the martyr saint to benefit socials that popularise martyr narratives so that assaults against them may be countered, and campaigns for justice carried out. Memorial lectures and screening of documentaries do not only create and disseminate martyr narratives but also make the people debate their relevance in post-conflict situations.

2.3.3.1 Contestations of naming in annual pilgrimages in Ireland

The Annual Procession with the Relics of St Oliver Plunkett takes place in Drogheda on 7th July. Yet each year, the pilgrimage and its programme are subject to different situations. Hence, their annual recurrence does not take away from their momentary and transitory nature. Even though the 2019 procession,



Fig. 2.68. Procession: Saint Oliver Plunkett Festival Procession, Drogheda Our Lady of Lourdes. The Catholic Heritage Association of Ireland. 2011. Courtesy: *Catholic Heritage* (blog)



Fig. 2.69. Banner: 'Saint Oliver Pray for Us'. Oliver Plunkett Festival Procession 2011. Courtesy: *Catholic Heritage* (blog)

which began from the Holy Family Church, Ballsgrove, Drogheda at 3 pm and proceeded across the river Boyne to St Peter's Church (the Memorial Church of St Oliver Plunkett) for Mass at 4 pm in County Louth, includes a pilgrimage to honour the martyr, previous processions were memorial events to honour different sites with the relics of martyr Plunkett. These processions are not only participatory events for churchgoers or an occasion for reinstating an icon of witness in the face of oppression of the church faithful in the people's minds but also a mode of spreading knowledge among the parishioners that martyrs of faith are relevant in the history of nation-building. Together with the

flourish of banners and the mass of people in the processions, are local political leaders, Mayor Paul Bell and councillors Oliver Tully and Pio Smith⁶¹ who join the religious procession. The relevance of such processions is not only understood through traditionally circulated religious print ephemera, like mass cards, but also through improvised visual ephemera like banners for each year's procession. Figs. 2.68 and 2.69 are photographs of the 2011 annual procession which were posted in a blog article⁶² on 8th July, 2011, a week after the feast day of St Plunkett (1st July). While the two photographs feature the young and old participating in these processions, in the first, the procession is on the steps of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda, with white and blue banners with religious emblems and portraits, and in the second, procession is on the steps of St Peter's Church, Drogheda, with the banner using a quote from the prayer to St Oliver. At the end of the procession, a mass is organised and this prayer is recited. The photographs as ephemera capture the momentary essence of the processions and banners displayed therein, but the latter also constitute ephemera. Appearing in a blog post where people voice their opinions on the significance of such coming together of people, these processions generate comments on the diversity and beauty of the Christian faith as well as the hypocrisy of the church which has witnessed sexual scandals in recent years⁶³. The blog comments constitute digital ephemera through which the images and their contextualities are archived and propagated. Contestations constitute the naming and veneration of the martyr saint of

61. Hubert Murphy, "Procession Honours Memory of Drogheda's Noble Saint Oliver," *Drogheda Independent*, July 13, 2019, <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/droghedaindependent/news/procession-honours-memory-of-droghedas-noble-saint-oliver-38293018.html>.

62. "Processions, Processions, Processions!" *Catholic Heritage* (blog), July 8, 2011, <http://catholicheritage.blogspot.com/2011/07/processions-processions-processions.html>.

63. "Processions, Processions, Processions!"

the church as a religious and political icon and a world when the church itself is gradually becoming a site of abuse.

2.3.3.2 Contestations of naming in tickets of commemorative socials

Once a figure is established as a 'martyr' in the sense of a hero or national icon, his life, times and ideals are evoked in the contemporary context through commemoration events ephemera. Benefit socials are events of social commemoration undertaken in the martyr's name and

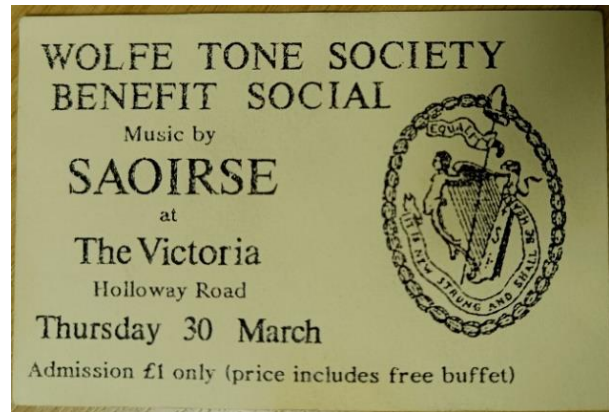


Fig. 2.70. Ticket: Wolfe Tone Society Benefit Social. England. March 30, 2000. Courtesy: PECPM

underscored through music and free buffet dinners. Figs. 2.70 and 2.71 are tickets to



Fig. 2.71. Ticket: Wolfe Tone Society Benefit Social. England. January 28, 2010. Courtesy: PECPM

the Wolfe Tone Society Benefit Social which took place in the iconic Victoria tavern on Holloway Road in London. From the ticket, we come to know the location of the social as well as the traditional Irish music performed in the social. The tickets indicate a

campaign event geared towards promoting the cause of unity of the Irish Republic and making the cause popular through a free buffet in a tavern, all under the banner of martyr Theobald Wolfe Tone's name. This site of local entertainment, where people gather for their rest after a day's work with a drink in hand, becomes a site of contemporaneity of the martyr. The leader of the United Irishmen who was hanged to

death for his cause is popularly evoked in such benefit socials and its one-pound tickets. The emblem of the Irish harp, which is ‘newly strung and shall be heard’ evokes a nationalist overtone substantiated by the songs of Irish freedom by musical band *Saoirse*.



Fig. 2.72. Ticket: 1916 Rising Social. England. May 5, 2000. Courtesy: PECPM

While some tickets name the martyr, others name the event. For the annual 1916 Rising Benefit Social, the commemoration of the event is undertaken through rebel ballads, exhibition slides, poetry and songs at the Lar-lonad na Gael located in Davenport Road, London.

Fig. 2.72 features a ticket for an annual social held in London by the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IRBG) based in the borough of Lewisham on 5th May, 2000. The presence of an ex-prisoner who participated in the no-wash protests for the right of political prisoners, along with the singing of rebel ballads, make the social a commemoration of people who are deemed revolutionary in the present national and political world, especially in the capital city of the British Crown, of which Ireland is the oldest colony. The image of the insurgent in the Easter Rising is akin to that of a freedom fighter who has raised the tricolour in front of an iconic building, the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin. The iconic moment is posited as a legacy for the actions of the McNamara brothers, John and James, who planted explosives across Cincinnati in America to bomb the factories of steelworkers (ballads on them were sung in the social). Such violent methods of trade union activities culminated in the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* building in Los Angeles, California, on 1st October, 1910.

Named in the context of a rebel tradition, they are also vouched for as part of a future radical generation—blanket men who demanded political rights as prisoners, such as a speech by the ex-blanket man from Long Kesh prison, Paul Lyttle. Between rebel ballads and political discussions, the martyrs of the Easter Rising became rebel heroes, famous in far-off lands and part of rebel folklore.

The folkloric tradition is further upheld by live music where the word ‘martyr’ is often used. Information on Sean Brady’s band performing live music at the 1916 commemoration, organised by the IRBG based in Lewisham in 1998, features in a ticket (fig. 2.73). It shows that such commemorative socials were regular annual events and included musical



Fig. 2.73. Ticket: 1916 commemoration. England. April 3, 1998. Courtesy: PECPM

artists who were traditional Irish singers. Significantly, such socials were organised in 1998 in London when the British government was working on enacting the Good Friday Agreement which was implemented in the same year. Unlike previous tickets, this one is tagged as ‘complimentary’. Unlike open rallies or mass meetings, the Irish community in Britain were invited to attend these paid events in the wake of the peace agreement.

Tickets for commemoration socials are allied with justice for the martyr’s family in Bangladesh. Fig. 2.74 features a ticket for a cultural social held in 1994 in support of Jahanara Imam’s (commonly known as ‘the mother of martyrs’) movement for justice for the martyr’s family through the workings of the FSBTWC. The

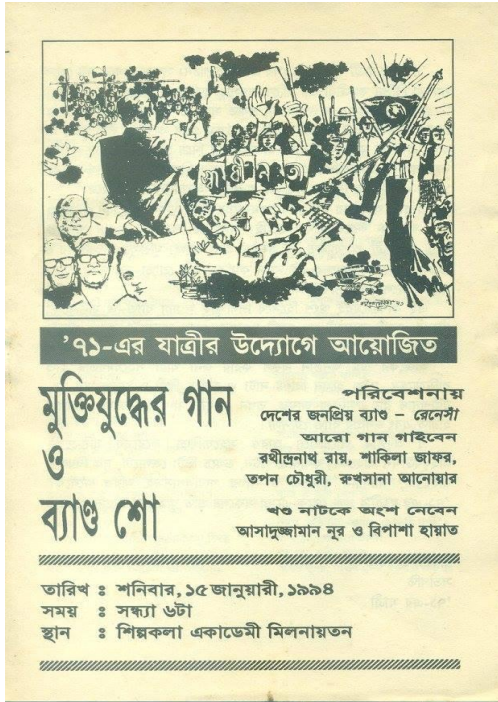


Fig. 2.74. Ticket: 1971 cultural social which held on January 15, 1994. *Ekattorer Jatri* [Journeyman 1971]. Shilpakala Academy auditorium. 1994. Courtesy: Private archives of Akku Chowdhury

organisers of *Ekattorer Jatri* [Journeyman 1971], headed by Akku Chowdhury and Professor Muntassir Mamoon, invited the band *Renaissance* to sing songs on 1971 along with some other artists. According to Chowdhury, an ex-trustee of the LWM and a freedom fighter himself, in a discussion held in September 2022, this was a way of making the narratives of 1971 more accessible and interactive for the younger generation, so that they saw the past as a picture of strength. The image includes posters of earlier mass movements which culminated in the 1971 war and evoked for the audience at Shilpakala

Academy, the cultural quarters of Bangladesh, songs of freedom and sacrifice, amidst an atmosphere of repression of the ideals and values of the Liberation War, in 1994.⁶⁴

64. Akku Chowdhury (freedom fighter of 1971, founder member, and trustee of Liberation War Museum, Dhaka), telephone conversation with the author, September 15, 2022.

Tickets were also ways of disseminating the narratives of martyrdom among people, especially when there was governmental stricture regarding the same. Here, the naming of the martyr does not feature directly but through audience participation and the subsequent remembrance of martyrs. In Bangladesh, there are many mass martyrs in each village, and when the 1995 Tareque Masud documentary *Muktir Gaan* [Song of Freedom] was held up by the Censor Board for five months and could not be released in



Fig. 2.75. Documentary still with captions in English: Tickets being sold for the screening of the documentary *Muktir Kotha* in various districts and villages. Directed by Tareque Masud. 1999. Courtesy: Tareque Masud Archives

cinemas due to the lack of distributors, the director decided to personally screen the film in villages from 1996 to 1999, and tickets were sold to gather initial funds and evoke spontaneous participation from the people. These processes became the subject matter of the documentary *Muktir Kotha* [Words of Freedom] by the same director. The documentary captured the oral responses of the audience as they recounted their experiences and those of the martyrs in their local villages, as they sat watching *Muktir Gaan*. The young students who came to see the documentary multiple times became part of the team that were actively involved in the screening process, gathering the martyr narratives as they went along (fig. 2.75).

Contestations over naming occur between the martyr as a popular and radical icon in Ireland, while in Bangladesh, the contestation verges on the martyr as a signifier of the past and the new significant martyrs made known each day through initiatives of the common people.

2.3.3.3 Contestations of naming in memorial lectures

Martyr legacies are constructed, commemorated and debated in memorial



Fig. 2.76. Poster: Terence MacSwiney memorial lecture. 1986. Courtesy: PECPM

lectures. Posters of such memorial lectures compile issues that will be discussed in the forum, depending on the allegiances of the organisation. Figs.



Fig. 2.77. Poster: Terence MacSwiney memorial lecture. 1987. Courtesy: PECPM

the 1986 and 1987 Terence MacSwiney memorial lectures, respectively. The ‘martyr’ is foregrounded as the hunger striker who sacrificed his life for Ireland’s freedom in Brixton prison in the London borough of Lambeth. With his portrait embossed against the tricolour of the Irish flag and the martyr legacy discussed at the London conference centre, the memorial lecture became representative of Ireland and Britain’s political and intellectual interaction. In 1986, the Greater London Council organised the memorial lecture in an attempt to improve understanding and good relations among Londoners, especially through a better understanding of Anglo-Irish relations. The memorial lecture became part of a policy initiative of the Greater London Council (GLC) and later of the London Strategic Policy Unit (LSPU). Topics to be discussed by leading academicians ranged from the emigration of the Irish to Ireland to Britain’s commonwealth relations. While Ireland’s own culture and resistance were discussed

with a focus on Gaelic Ireland and the role of women in Irish history, an exploration of Ireland's relationship with Britain was the primary focus. MacSwiney's imminent death generated various policy implications for the British empire like boycott sanctions by America and petitions from the Spanish government for his release in the 1920s. As the oldest surviving colony of Britain, Ireland affected policy initiatives in the 1980s and continues to do so even now. Such ephemera construct the martyr through policy legacies discussed in academic forums.⁶⁵

Martyr memorial lectures are held throughout the year in Bangladesh. Significantly, these lectures form a forum for discussing issues and initiatives affecting the nation and its people. Such memorial lectures are either held to commemorate martyred intellectuals in general (such as those organised by various departments of Dhaka University) or specifically in the name of a martyred intellectual like the professor and proctor of Rajshahi University—Mohammad Shamsuzzoha. The 18th of February, the day of Mohammad Shamsuzzoha's martyrdom in 1969, is now celebrated as teachers' day at Rajshahi University; each year, various cultural programmes are held, and the martyr memorial collection there is open to visitors throughout the day.⁶⁶ The martyrdom of other intellectuals like Selina Parvin is celebrated by giving scholarships to poor but meritorious students of Feni government school where this journalist was once a student. The day is also commemorated by visiting the killing ground at Rayerbazar. The children and grandchildren of martyrs deliver memorial lectures, and on these days, calls for justice for the martyred intellectuals abound. Meghna Guhathakurta (daughter of martyred intellectual

65. Sean MacBride, C. Desmond Greaves, L. De Paor, et al. *Terence MacSwiney memorial lectures* (London: Greater London Council, 1986).

66. For details of the programs, refer to the official website of Rajshahi University at [University of Rajshahi – Official website for Rajshahi University \(ru.ac.bd\)](http://University_of_Rajshahi_-_Official_website_for_Rajshahi_University_(ru.ac.bd)).

Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta), in a telephone interview given to *The Daily Star* on the commemoration of the day a verdict was passed against war criminal Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, mentioned that the commemoration of martyred intellectuals on 14th December was an acknowledgement, but that on 17th July, 2018 (the day of the verdict) was an achievement.⁶⁷ Thus, these lectures give voice to various such issues and initiatives. However, for the other thousands martyred, there are no memorial lectures; their names only stand out in discussions of family members and their local acquaintances. Chittagong's Basruzzaman Choudhury was martyred while he and his friends were providing food to freedom fighters and became the target of the Pakistan Army. It is only in social media discussions that their commemoration continues.⁶⁸

Memorial lectures and their associated posters and fliers are part of efforts by an intellectual group as well as friends and families to disseminate ideas about the works, relevance and memories of martyrs. Memorial lectures for the common man are yet to be nurtured, and their roles are yet to be understood. In Ireland, contestations over naming occur between the martyr as an imprisoned unlawful citizen and the martyr as the initiator of policy debates in the colonising country. In Bangladesh, contestations over naming occur between those in whose names legacies are created and those who names are tenuously held on to by near and dear ones.

67. Tamanna Khan and Prabir Barua Chowdhury, "Justice, At Long Last," *The Daily Star*, July 18, 2013, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/justice-at-long-last>.

68. Post: Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed. "Amar chacha Chattogram Pak hyenar gulite shahadat boronkari [My uncle was martyred by the Pakistan army at Chittagong]," Facebook, March 28, 2018, <https://m.facebook.com/jabedmp/photos/a.858137137537251/2273468752670742/>.

2.3.3.4 Contestations of naming in victory torch rallies and marching parades

On 17th December, 2020, on the occasion of the official *Bijoy Dibosh* [Victory Day] for Bangladesh (16th December), India and Bangladesh held a virtual summit where the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, paid deep homage to the three million martyrs who had laid down their lives. In the same breath, she also paid tribute to members of the Indian armed



Fig. 2.78. Photograph: Gymnast Dipa Karmakar carrying the 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' in Agartala. Courtesy: *Times of India* November 6, 2021.

forces who were martyred in the 1971 Liberation War along with their family members. India also celebrated these martyrs by taking the *Swarnim Vijay Mashaal* [golden victory torch] with the burning flame to the villages of all the martyrs in India. Fig. 2.78 is a photograph of the champion gymnast of India taking the victory torch to the home village of Lance Naik Albert Ekka in Agartala. People crowded around the popular icon, and it was an effective way for the government of India to disseminate the name of those martyrs who had already been awarded India's highest military decoration—the *Param Vir Chakra*—for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime. While the presence of the sports celebrity popularised the martyr on the national news media, the people also came to know about the local roots of the martyr of Agartala and the role Agartala played in the strategic planning for the 1971 Liberation War.

India's celebration of the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War as the martyrdom of military officials in an Indo-Pak War and the popularisation of their names in various

corners of the country is similar to the celebratory commemoration of military victory that characterises loyalist parades in various districts of Ireland. Fawney Heroes LOL 329 in Lisnaskea is one of the Orange Lodges (Protestant fraternal organisations) based in County Fermanagh in NI. It holds parades each year to mourn the death of its members. Fig. 2.79 is an image of a banner from a Facebook post⁶⁹ remembering their ‘murdered brethren’ who were killed between 1971 and 1993, like Brother Albert Craig (thirty-three



Fig. 2.79. Banner: The Loyal Orders. ‘In Remembrance of our Murdered Brethren’. Facebook. February 2, 2020.

years old; married with one child) who was shot while directing traffic in County Armagh on 18th September, 1976 and Brother James Albert Graham BEM (thirty-nine years old; married with two children) who was a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and was killed off duty while driving a

bus in Derrylin, County Fermanagh on 1st February, 1985. They feature in the ranks of the Fawney heroes. The banner of the Fawney heroes also contains another image to commemorate the brethren murdered during the conflict. The Protestant brethren had made such sacrifices earlier, as represented in the image on the banner of the defence of

69. The Loyal Orders, Facebook, February 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1546171992225224&set=pcb.1546172108891879>.

Londonderry (fig. 2.80). Marianne Elliott mentioned other Orange Lodge banners commemorated martyrs like Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer who were burnt at the stake in Oxford during the reign of the aptly named ‘Bloody’ Mary.⁷⁰ Fig. 2.80 features the English colonisers of Catholic King James’ army who wanted to win Derry and the Protestants of King Williams’ side who held onto the city and finally won the siege of Derry; it is commonly known among the Protestants as the defence of Londonderry. During the



Fig. 2.80. Banner: A loyalist banner on ‘The defence of Londonderry. LOL 329’ by the Orange Order. Enniskillen. 1985.

Troubles, deaths in NI were also included in the pantheon of loyalist order sacrifice and Irish Protestant martyrology, focusing on English heroes and the defence that the English began to undertake in Ireland. Contestations over naming martyrs of military victories lie in the martyr as an armed personnel and local hero who is celebrated in victory parades in India and NI.

2.3.4 Commemorative souvenirs in Ireland and Bangladesh

Commemorative souvenirs are either produced by the state (like stamps, first-day covers and badges) or by martyr commemoration organisations (like political cards and artefacts). While these are distributed among people on certain commemorative occasions and events and worn as markers of pride and display,

70. Marianne Elliott, “Protestantism and the Spectre of Popery,” in *When God Took Sides: Religion and Identity in Ireland – Unfinished History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 63.

institutional authorities produce commemorative institutional ephemera, to garner funds, or for use by children throughout the year (such as school diaries).

2.3.4.1 Contestations of naming in commemorative stamps and first-day covers

Issued for the first time on 6th May, 1998, the commemorative stamps of 1798 carry the images of Wolfe Tone and Henry Joy McCracken, the French flag (see section 2.3.2.2 for significance), and the green flag adorned with a golden Harp



Fig. 2.81. Stamp and FDC: FDC and 2 sheets of stamps. Bicentenary of the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798. *An Post* [The Post]. Dublin. 1998. Courtesy: EHIRHM



Fig. 2.82. Stamp: Commemorative stamp of Selina Parvin in the martyred intellectuals stamp series. Bangladesh Post Office. 1991. Facebook. December 12, 2017.

(the unofficial Irish Flag used in the 1798 Rebellion).

Fig. 2.81 also features stamps that were used in the Republic of Ireland ('Eire' is the Gaelic name for Ireland and the Irish name of the Republic of Ireland). The Irish Post Office issued these, but they were not used in NI, where stamps were issued by the Royal Mail, UK and bore the image of the British monarch. It makes the martyr narratives of the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion acceptable by the government of the Republic's counties which became independent in 1922.

The postal department of the government of independent Bangladesh issued a stamp in Selina Parvin's name in the martyred

intellectual stamp series in 1991. Fig. 2.82 features the commemorative stamp uploaded by Parvin’s son, Choudhury Shumon Zahid.⁷¹ It was one of the first attempts at naming Parvin as a female freedom fighter as well as a martyred intellectual when both domains were dominated by her male counterparts. On the eve of Martyred Intellectuals’ Day on 14th December, this acknowledgment popularised her name among the common people. The image on this martyred intellectual stamp differs from the militaristic garb and national flags on the Irish stamp. Contestations over naming verges on the martyr as a political rebel and a state hero in Ireland. In Bangladesh, the contestation verges on the affinity between an individual’s intellectual and political rebellion.

2.3.4.2 Contestations of naming in centenary badges and cards

One hundred years after 1798, its centenary celebrations of martyrdom rose



Fig. 2.83. Badge: ‘Who fears to speak of ’98’. 1898. Courtesy: EHIHRM

anew. Fig. 2.83 shows an 1898 commemorative medal struck in the name of the



Fig. 2.84. Badge: United Irishmen Bi-Centenary Society. 1998. Courtesy: EHIHRM

carries the title of an 1898 pamphlet published by William O’Brien—*Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?* from which the date is gauged. While the pike situates the

71. Shumon Zahid, ‘Commemorative stamp of Selina Parvin in the martyred intellectuals stamp series,’ *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokha porshod* [Martyr Journalist Selina Parveen Commemoration Committee], December 12, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1589361937776389&set=pcb.1628598380533231>.

badge amidst the action of the 1798 rebellion, the title of the pamphlet signifies a world in which, one hundred years later, the insurgency staged by Tone was being interpreted as ‘patriotic agitation’⁷². Naming therefore occurs through emblematic derivation and centennial indication. On the commemoration of the next centenary in 1998, the United Irishmen Bi-Centenary Society circulated badges like the one shown in fig. 2.84. Continuing with the image of the Irish harp, this badge foregrounds the role of society in propagating the ideals of the United Irishmen and Tone. The name of the martyr features in new celebrations in 1998, a year that witnessed the cessation of conflicts in Ireland with the Good Friday Agreement. Centenary committees generate



Fig. 2.85. Badges: Easter 1916 leaders portrait badges in keyrings on sale. Courtesy: GPOMGS. Dublin, Republic of Ireland. April 25, 2022.

a variety of campaign ephemera like badges and campaign literature like pamphlets namely *Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?* which was also published in 1898 by Cumann Cuimheachain National '98 Commemoration Association. Martyrs are resurrected and recast through these commemoration associations which circulate contemporary agendas among the people through such ephemera.

72. Sophie Ollivier, “Presence and Absence of Wolfe Tone During the Centenary Commemoration of the 1798 Rebellion” in *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, ed. Laurence M. Geary (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 181.

Museums preserve commemorative badges and souvenir shops sell them (fig. 2.85). The signatories of the Proclamation who are most popular among the local people, are those who saved lives like Doctor Kathleen Lynn. The young saleswoman at the souvenir shop of the GPO Museum wore Doctor Lynn’s locket close to her heart. As a small artefact, it was most effective in commemorating the martyr for common people. However, according to her, the ‘martyr’ or ‘hero’ whose image was most popular was Michael Collins. It had already sold out when I visited the shop on 21st April, 2022, and another carton had been ordered. There were metal portraits and framed pictures of martyrs for wealthier people who preferred a finer keepsake.⁷³

Fig. 2.86 features the range of centenary badges sold at the Union Jack shop in East Belfast.

Instead of the names of the heroes, the badges contain messages of remembrance and support for the heroes who had sacrificed their lives in the Battle of Somme during the



Fig. 2.86. Badges: Unionist commemorative badges on sale. UJSS. April 11, 2022.

First World War; these messages included ‘All gave some, some gave all’, ‘Lest we forget’ and ‘At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember

⁷³. Saleswoman (GPO Museum souvenir shop, Dublin), conversation with the author, Dublin, April 25, 2022.

them’. The Great War Centenary in 2014–2018 is also celebrated in some of the badges. The Somme centenary is celebrated by the Royal British Legion Northern Ireland, the UK’s leading service charity which ‘safeguard the memory of those who have given their lives for our [UK’s] freedom through Remembrance education and events’⁷⁴. Most powerfully emblematic of martyrdom is the badge entitled ‘Row on Row’ and bearing crosses; it is indicative of the endless burial sites of the numerous killed. In some badges, the crosses are adjoined with frames of red remembrance poppies which are also shaped as wreaths for the dead.



Fig. 2.87. Badge: ‘Thou shalt not kill, remember?’ Badge used after the 1971 Liberation War.

Courtesy: BNM

Badges are not a popular ephemera in the naming and dissemination of the martyr narrative in Bangladesh. Fig. 2.87 features one of the few badges made during the 1971 Liberation War, indicating the directive of God through the Biblical lines (*Exodus 20:13*) that ‘thou shalt not kill’, a warning against the genocide of 1971.

The narrative of martyrdom is not only that of vouching for war and sacrifice but an acknowledgment that the future must move toward peace. Remembrance is not about pursuing the same path but about working towards a different future where a similar situation will not arise. Memory is not about re-creation but about re-making.

Contestation over naming occurs between the martyr as either a bearer of rebellious ideals or peace agreements in Ireland. Similarly in Bangladesh the contestation occurs regarding naming martyrs as either participants in war or bearers

74. “Welcome to The Royal British Legion in Northern Ireland,” *Royal British Legion*, <https://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/northern-ireland/>.

of peace. Thereby, survivors are seen as more heroic than martyrs. Contestation also lies in martyrs commemorated as either the sacrificial figures of world wars or sacrificial figures in local troubles in Ireland.

Other than the Republican Publications and the Connolly Association, during the 1916 centenary, local publishing houses in the Republic of Ireland like Caz Cards (based in County Leitrim) printed memorial Christmas cards. Fig. 2.88 features the portrait of Sean Mac Diarmada, one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, who was executed on 12th May, 1916, on a Christmas card. Here, he is termed a ‘leader’.

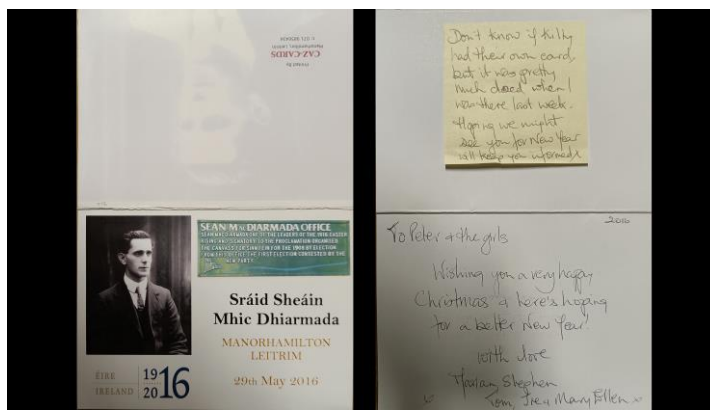


Fig. 2.88. Christmas card: Sraid Sheain Mhic Dhiarmada [Sean Mac Diarmada Street] Christmas Card. 2016. Courtesy: PECPM

The centenary remembrance was about his specific political contribution. His office was located on the later-named Sean Mac Diarmada Street in Manorhamilton in County Leitrim, and from there, he

organised the manifesto of the SF for the 1908 by-election when the party first came into existence. The information in the inscription on the card turned his death into political martyrdom or martyrdom for a political cause. Mac Diarmada was born in County Leitrim where he began his career in revolutionary politics. Hence, the printing of the Christmas card in Leitrim is part of the local celebrations of the 1916 Rising in the county. Ephemera, though minor documents, are minute in their precise detailing and information. Other than the printed inscription, the festive greetings also characterise the card as a martyr ephemera. Martyrdom is a sacrifice geared towards a better future. This is what the festive greeting is about, as addressed to ‘Peter and the

girls'. There is also a postscript on a sticky note attached to the card. Such Christmas cards celebrating local leaders and heroes were a possession every family desired. Thus, the postscript referred to Kitty who may not have gotten this card, and the local shop where it could have been bought but is now closed. Within families, such ephemera are not only historic, political and commemorative but also popular, used as festive and personal ways of greeting.

Fig. 2.89 features a postcard from a series issued as a tribute to *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation of Bangladesh, on his 25th *Shahadat*

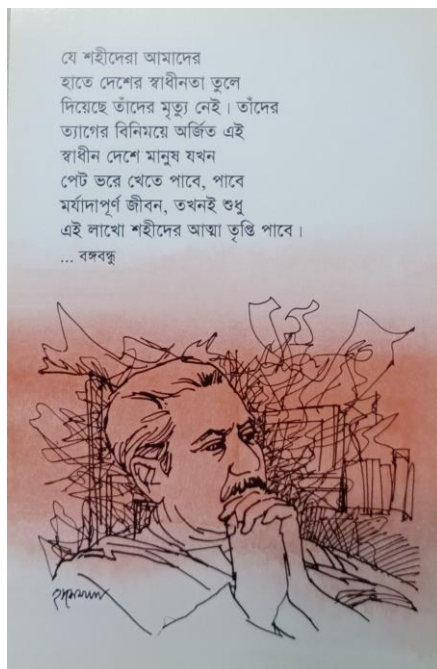


Fig. 2.89. Postcard: A quote on martyrs by *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and drawing by Hashem Khan.

Institute of Liberation
Bangabandhu and Bangladesh
Studies National University,
Dhaka. 2000. Courtesy: MMC

[martyrdom] anniversary in 2000 by the Institute of Liberation Bangabandhu and Bangladesh Studies National University, Dhaka. Planned by historian Muntassir Mamoon, these were used as greeting cards to invite people to various commemorative programmes on Mujib's sacrifice and legacy. The postcard features a line drawing by Bangladeshi painter Hashem Khan, representing the father of the nation in deep thought on the rebuilding of Bangladesh after the genocide of 1971. The words written on the postcard give voice to Mujib's thoughts. Martyrdom is not only about the sacrifice of lives lost but the survival of the lives present. Those martyrs whose sacrifice has enabled freedom of the country will be truly honoured and rest in peace if the people of this independent country have food and lead a life of dignity. However, this is difficult to achieve. The entangled, somewhat chaotic lines

behind the portrait of Mujib are emblematic of the chaos of a war-ravaged country, also indicating the outlines of flying flags and banners as the festoons of freedom that have flown at times. The legacy of martyrdom is the sustenance of desire and the overcoming of destruction. Contestations over naming occur between the martyr as the national and local hero in Ireland and the martyr's desire for a great nation and the exigencies of the nation's everyday rebuilding in Bangladesh.

2.3.4.3 Contestations of naming on mugs



Fig. 2.90. Mug: Different sides of the Theobald Wolfe Tone 1798 Mug. 2000. Courtesy: PECPM

Fig. 2.90 represents a mug, made by the Connolly Association in London and circulated as a memento among its members. It was photographed in 2000 by Peter Moloney in London, and included as part of the Political Ephemera Collection of Peter Moloney as object ephemera, or as Kris Brown specifically pointed out, as artefact. Founded in 1938, the Connolly Association celebrated fifty years since its inception which coincided with the centenary of Wolfe Tone's death. This organisation, based among Irish emigrants in Britain, voiced the interests of the Irish people, which is epitomised in the words of Tone's quote about uniting the Irish people; this was

embossed on the surface of the mug. The name of the martyr is associated with the name of another martyr, James Connolly, and martyr association even as it is disseminated in another country—Britain, Ireland’s coloniser. From a disposable porcelain to a metal mug, the mug and its quote served as a document of martyr affiliation across generations and of martyr conflict with colonising powers.

Mugs are also made by Bangladeshi martyr organisations such as *Roktoddhara’71* which started its journey on 2nd March, 2020 and made mugs a token of association with its well-wishers. Fig. 2.91 features a mug that was gifted to me by Nadeem Qadir, President and Mizan Talukdar, Secretary of the organisation. Photographs of these mementos abound on social media and are one of the ways in which an organisation builds its network so that more people



Fig. 2.91. Mug:
Roktoddhara’71 mug, 2021.
Courtesy: Nadeem Qadir and
Mizan Talukder

come to know about martyr families and are guided on how to appeal for such martyr families to various authorities. As part of the modern mass-produced ephemera, these mementos provide substantial business opportunities to local companies like the Mirpur ceramic brand in Dhaka which makes similar theme-based mugs for other organisations. Furthermore, the tagline ‘*Muktijuddhe shohidder uttorshuri*’ [successors of the martyrs of the Liberation War], and its associated emotion finds a space in people’s homes.

Contestations over naming occurs between the martyr as a bearer of historical legacies or a medium of social awareness and catering to modern local business ventures. It is through these contestations between the old and new that they enter people’s homes.

2.3.4.4 Contestations of naming in commemorative institutional ephemera

Paper pin badges are more of personal ephemera as they are easily made by people. Fig. 2.92 features one with the black sketched portraits of the ‘martyrs’ Patrick and William Pearse as emblems. As per the information provided by the EHIRHM caption label, it was issued by St Edna School for its Pearse Memorial Fund.



Fig. 2.92. Pin badge: Pearse Memorial Fund Pin Badge. 1916.

Courtesy: EHIRHM

Patrick Pearse founded the school eight years before his death. This badge was

made in 1916 to raise funds to keep the school open after the Pearse brothers' execution. Apart from political institutions, educational institutions also generate and disseminate the narrative of martyrdom. In this school, Pearse had nurtured young children in the ideals of sacrifice for the cause of the motherland. The image of these two young brothers who had sacrificed their lives was an emblem to hold on to, as it had both symbolic and economic value. Due to their easy circulation, ephemera can raise funds on a large scale, making inroads into the houses of school children.

Martyr lieutenant Samad of Kurigram district in Bangladesh was awarded the *Bir Uttom*. Gallantry awards represent the official memory of the martyr, but the national imagination goes beyond the official memory at times. Abdul Wahed writes of locals and a few other non-government organisations who observe Shaheed Samad day. Locals have set up a few institutions in his name including Shaheed Lt. Samadnagore Girls' High School and Shaheed Lt. Samadnagore Technical School & College in the Joymonirhaat union and Shaheed Lt. Samad Bir Uttom High School in

the Rangpur Cantonment area.⁷⁵ The name of the martyr is inscribed in the memory of

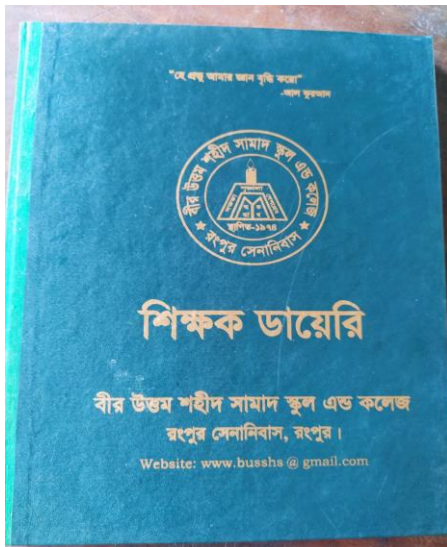


Fig. 2.93. Diary cover: Cover of a teachers' diary of *Bir Uttom* awardee martyr Samad school and college. Bir Uttom Shaheed Samad School & College, Rangpur. Courtesy: Bir Uttom Shaheed Samad School & College

the people through these educational institutions which are visited by the children and youth of the district each day. Fig. 2.93 is the cover of a teacher's diary of the Martyr Samad School⁷⁶, which now also has a college. Such diaries with the name of the martyr inscribed on them are documents that the teachers and children carry each day, constituting the living memory of the martyr. There are several memorials of martyr Samad like foundation stones in the school and city which work to engrave the name of the martyr on the people's memory each day.

Contestations over the naming of martyrs occur between martyrs as static icons of the past and fluid emblems of the present, wherein their earlier ideals are sustained but new ideals are ready to be made in the living memory of people, through institutions that young minds visit—schools.

2.4 INVESTIGATION AND ITS RELATED EPHEMERA

Some families of martyrs do not want commemorations. Post-conflict deaths continue to be part of the martyr vocabulary in their calls for justice. Significantly, for

75. Abdul Wahed, "Kurigram Demands Shaheed Samad Day," *The Daily Star*, May 22, 2013, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/kurigram-demands-shaheed-samad-day>.

76. The image may be accessed from the photo gallery of Bir Uttom Shaheed Samad School & College, Rangpur at <http://www.busshsr.edu.bd/gallery/photo-gallery/>.

most of these deaths, the investigation remains contested and the demand for justice continues. The sacrifice of these people is consistently highlighted in numerous reports, apologies, convictions and acquittals that continue even now. This makes the martyr narrative most persistent in the everyday lives of the people now, especially for the loss of loved ones who were not part of any political organisation. For those who died in active service, the commemorations comprise the end of the martyr narrative because the families feel that they died in active service but the due acknowledgment of that sacrifice, at times, remains incomplete. Friends and families direct inquests when they feel that their loved ones died unarmed and did not pose a threat but were summarily murdered.

2.4.1 Investigative ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

The state and its ruling government may make a list of martyrs but in Bangladesh, the list of martyrs has changed with each change in government. The process of enlistment began in 1972 but has now been put on hold because there are too many claims without proper verification. Investigations regarding inclusion into governmental gazettes are mostly conducted by governmental and civil society organisations, but political influences continue to infiltrate and affect the course of investigations in both. In Ireland, the certifications are names enlisted in the rolls of honour published by paramilitary organisations, one list contending with the other. Investigations are conducted both by governmental police units like the Historical Enquiries Team and non-governmental human rights advocacy and lobbying entities like the PFC. Families of victims of various massacres including the Ballymurphy, Springhill and Enniskillen massacres have their individual justice campaign platforms.

2.4.1.1 Contestations of naming in Rolls of Honour and martyr gazettes

Fig. 2.94 is a Republican Roll of Honour, a common republican ephemera like the Republican Resistance Calendars, in which the former commonly features. A Roll

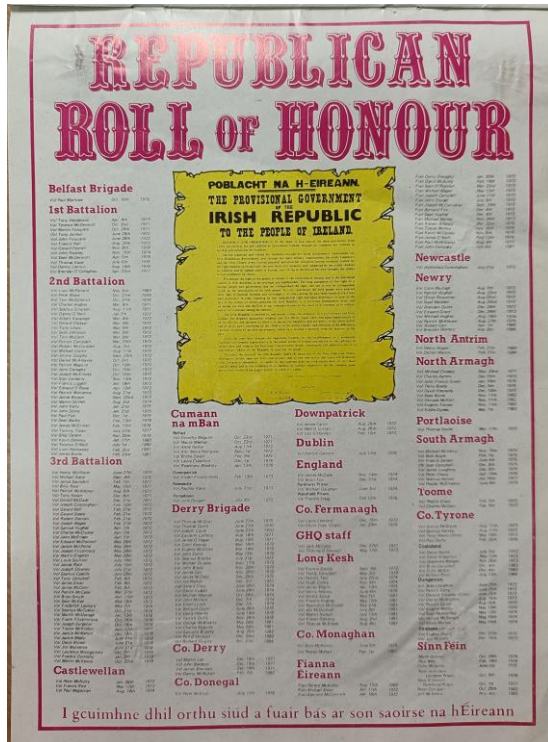


Fig. 2.94. Roll of Honour: Republican Roll of Honour in the last page of the Republican Resistance Calendar 1985. Republican Publications. Courtesy: EHIRHM

of Honour constitutes lists of names of those who were killed in the 1970s during the Troubles in Ireland. Fig. 2.94 concentrates mostly on those who were killed in active service in the IRA based in the Belfast and Derry brigades; it also presents those who were killed in other townlands in Newry and Downpatrick and in rural South Armagh and Toome. Furthermore, it lists the names of women who died during active service in the *Cumann na mBan* and the political prisoners who served and eventually died from hunger strikes in Long Kesh. From

members of the SF to those who died in England, the list of martyrs in the Roll of Honour is compiled anew each year, a remembrance which keeps the memory of their sacrifice alive so that proper justice may be served to their friends and families. After obtaining preliminary information, these names are incorporated into the list following which the Roll of Honour situates their actions as acts of righteous rebellion—like the actions of the leaders of the Easter Rising who proclaimed the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic in 1916 by reading out the Proclamation of Independence, here, featured in the middle in fig. 2.94.

The Republican Roll of Honour is contested by the Orange Roll of Honour which lists the names of people who have died due to acts of 'terrorism' by the IRA in the last twenty-eight years.

Published in February 1997, the Orange Roll of Honour in fig. 2.95 came three months

after the previous edition of remembrance in the *Orange Standard* newspaper in November 1996. Family members and acquaintances of the

UDR members who were killed, contacted members of the Orange Lodges. They had been subject to the 'terrorist' actions of the same republicans whose names figured in Republican Rolls of Honour, such as the one discussed above. While 165 names are listed in fig. 2.95, others are awaiting verification before their 'supreme sacrifice' becomes acknowledged through listing. The names in the Orange Roll of Honour range from those who had been killed and shot, from villages like Grotin and Galbally. Although most of the names are from townlands in other counties in NI, there are also names of servicemen in prisons like H. M. Prison Service. While the Republican Roll of Honour only included political prisoners, the Orange Roll of Honour also incorporates the names of servicemen. Both sides have their parallel lists and acknowledgments. Significantly, this list is accompanied by information on public conduct during the 11th July bonfires (discussed in a separate article in the newspaper) which are organised to celebrate Protestant victory in NI. Both lists look at the past, but the Orange Roll of Honour resides more in celebrations than the former.



Fig. 2.95. Newspaper cutting: Orange Roll of Honour. *Orange Standard*. Feb 1997. Deaths (troubles related deaths) box 1. Courtesy: ECNIPC

Fig. 2.96 features a certificate (on the right) given to a martyr's family in Bangladesh as an official acknowledgment by the MLWA, which was set up in 2001.

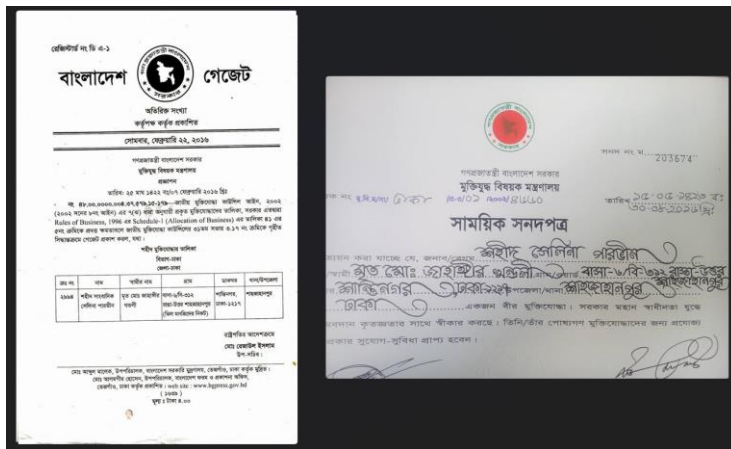


Fig. 2.96. Gazette notification and martyr certificate: ‘Some facts about martyred freedom fighter journalist Selina Parvin’. Shumon Zahid. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokkha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. February 22, 2016.

Issued in 2016, forty-five years after the Liberation War, this gazette notification and memorial certification for Selina Parvin⁷⁷ grants not only dignity to the martyr's family but also a fixed amount of money and certain benefits like age

relaxation in government jobs for her next of kin. This certification depicts the martyred intellectual as a brave freedom fighter. While many martyred intellectuals have been awarded this certificate, for Selina Parvin, it is an acknowledgment that came too late. Her son did not enjoy any of the benefits as her successor and died two years after receiving the certificate.⁷⁸ In Ireland, no formal certifications are issued to the people who are killed because their deaths are largely seen as executions while on duty, killings during riots and rallies, and murders of loved ones rather than sacrifices for a freedom struggle. Even when the word ‘martyr’ is used, there is no national acknowledgment of the same because the concept of the Irish nation remains contested post-conflict. Contestations regarding the naming of martyrs are not just limited to the

77. Shumon Zahid, ‘Some facts about martyred freedom fighter journalist Selina Parvin,’ *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokkha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. February 22, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/513039392089141/permalink/1628609277198808/>.

78. Shumon also faced many hurdles in martyr commemoration as discussed in section 3.1.5 in the next chapter.

same people termed as both martyrs and terrorists in Ireland but also to such naming coming too late to be of any concrete importance to the martyrs or their successors in Bangladesh.

2.4.1.2 Contestations of naming in investigation centres and civilian tribunals papers

Since martyr deaths are contested both before and after the independence of a country, investigations continue as families seek information on the death of their loved ones. The PFC works on behalf of about 250 families who lost their loved ones in the Northern Irish Troubles, interacting with various statutory bodies on both sides of the border such as the Police Ombudsman, An Garda Síochána (Ireland’s National Police and Security Service), Courts Service (for inquest documents) and Departments of Justice in Dublin and Belfast. Fig. 2.97 features a

declassified document that exists as digital ephemera on the official site of the Centre.⁷⁹ It is a loose minute relating to an investigation of the British Army L67 plastic bullet gun which caused severe injuries when used on people. The pigs, on whom the medical trial of the effect of plastic bullets was conducted, were anaesthetised. However, young Stephen McConomy who was aged eleven years was hit on the head. While this document does not note any connection with Stephen’s case

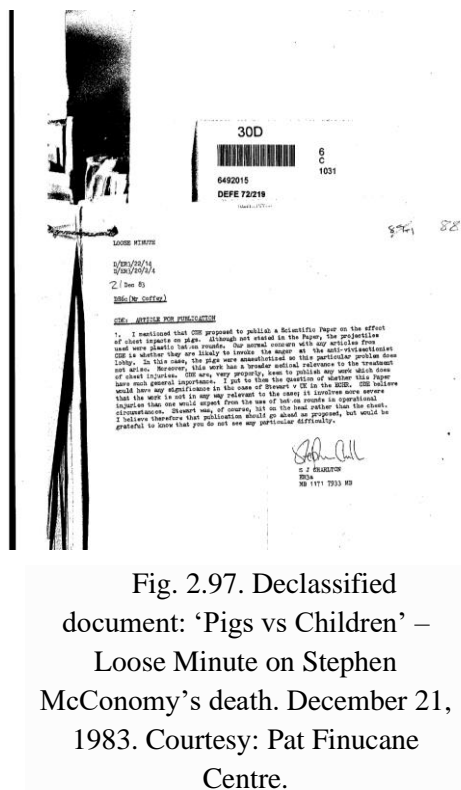


Fig. 2.97. Declassified document: ‘Pigs vs Children’ – Loose Minute on Stephen McConomy’s death. December 21, 1983. Courtesy: Pat Finucane Centre.

79. “Pigs vs Children,” Pat Finucane Centre, <https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/pigs%20v%20children.pdf>.

because it deals with chest injuries, it makes us more conscious of the reasons for Stephen's death, as the effect of the plastic bullets on the heads of young humans would be more brutal and fatal. Investigation centres publicise these documents so that families may demand fresh inquests into their cases. These documents were set to remain 'classified' until 1st January, 2071, almost a hundred years after Stephen was killed, when no one related to the case would remain alive to provide a witness. Martyr legacies are therefore made part of public memory through constant inquiries rather than final acquittals.

Civil societies also formed investigation committees like the National

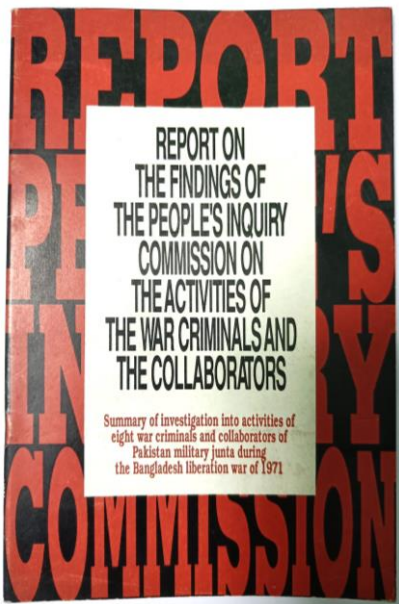


Fig. 2.98. Report on the findings of the people's inquiry commission on the activities of the war criminals and the collaborators. National Coordinating Committee for the Realisation of Bangladesh War Ideals and Trials of Bangladesh War Criminals of 1971. Courtesy: FSBTWC

Coordinating Committee for the Realisation of the Bangladesh Liberation War Ideals and Trial of Bangladesh War Criminals of 1971. Formed on 11th February, 1992 with the participation of seventy-two political, socio-cultural and trade union organisations and women's freedom fighters' and student groups, this committee gathered evidence on the accused.

Fig. 2.98 is a report on the findings of the people's inquiry commission following their investigation into the activities of eight war criminals, where families of martyrs provided witness evidence before the commission. Newspaper reports are cited where the Al-Badr (local militia of the Pakistani government) and the *razakars* were exhorted to

perform their national duty of eliminating the enemies of Pakistan. These are included as documentary evidence against them in the people's inquiry commission.

These investigations generate more contestations regarding the nature of the incidents and the status of the martyrs in contemporary memory, bringing present socio-religio-political affiliations into conflict. The culpability is slung from one group to another, and the common people are integrated into mass gatherings supporting various groups. In Ireland, contestations regarding the naming of martyrs occur not only between the relevance and irrelevance of the term but also between the indication established through the cover-up or declassification of documents. In Bangladesh, contestation over the naming of martyrs occurs between martyrs whose families produce evidence against the killers and the killers themselves holding key positions in government and politics, and designating themselves as ‘martyrs’.

2.4.2 Justice ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Investigations propagate contestations over the naming of martyrs, but the demand for justice continues. In NI and Bangladesh, conflict-related deaths are being investigated and reports are being brought out into the public domain. The first and second generations of the families of the dead continue the struggle for justice because the names, however contested, should not be forgotten. Even if partial claims to justice are met, complete acquittal remains undone. Only complete justice will enable a closure for the martyr legacy, and calls related to it are mostly sounded through banners.

2.4.2.1 Contestations of naming in various calls for justice banners

Fig. 2.99 depicts a banner and board reminding people of the deaths of Jimmy



Fig. 2.99. Banner: Jimmy McCurrie and Bobby O'Neill, murdered 27/28 June 1970. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

McCurrie and Bobby Neill, next to the memorial garden dedicated to them (to the right in the photograph) on Newtownards Road, with the cranes—Samson and Goliath—in the background.

These are important landmarks in Belfast and add to the symbolic nature of civilian

deaths and their call for justice. The two civilians died along this road while rioting in a gun battle around St Matthew's.⁸⁰ Jimmy was a Protestant who had been married with four kids, and Bobby Neill, aged thirty-eight, was a Protestant sheet metal worker who was murdered in June 1970 by PIRA snipers in the Catholic-dominated enclave of Short Strand. The banner claims that they have still not received truth and justice; the banner also implicates Matt Baggott, the NI chief of police in 2013. The South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) posted about their deaths on their Twitter handle on 29th June, 2022, where information regarding the IRA's 'propaganda' and the response of the Protestants in the area are discussed.⁸¹ Such narratives of popular justice are disseminated through visual and digital ephemera among the people.

80. Peter Moloney, "McCurrie and Neill," *Extramural Activity*, January 28, 2013, <https://extramuralactivity.com/2013/01/28/mccurrie-neill/>.

81. SEFF, "Apologies for Late Post Remembering Jimmy McCurrie," Twitter, June 29, 2022, <https://mobile.twitter.com/SEFFLisnaskea/status/1542070607734611970/photo/1>.

When I visited Derry in April 2022, I saw the Free Derry Wall covered with a banner on Stephen McConomy. It is the site where such spontaneous calls for remembrance and justice are put up.

Fig. 2.100 features the banner put up by the PFC, challenging the claim of NI Secretary of State Brandon Lewis that the killings by the security forces were ‘lawful’.



Fig. 2.100. Banner: Stephen McConomy who was shot dead in April 1982. Free Derry Corner. April 28, 2022.

The question was asked in this central location in Derry, which

people often traverse. Most events that demand public opinion takes place here. Thus, this call for justice become a popular demand through the ephemera and its location.

In Bangladesh, calls for justice are accompanied by concrete demands from the present AL government regarding war criminals.

Fig. 2.101 features the FSBTWC in collaboration with *Projonmo '71* holding placards,

demanding that the lands occupied by Abdul Monem Khan, former governor

of EP and a collaborator of the Pakistani junta, be seized and that

hospitals be constructed for the families of the martyred and wounded freedom fighters there.

While such placards demonise the anti-Liberation figures, they aim to seek material reparations for the Liberation figures. These actions become popular across towns and villages



Fig. 2.101. Placard: ‘On the land of Monaem Khan and such collaborators of the Pakistan Army during the 1971 war, hospitals for the martyrs should be built’. November 12, 2016. Courtesy: *Projonmo '71*

concerning properties owned by families of the wealthy, whose lands have been claimed by the government because they are the war accused. Khan's family properties were demolished in Banani, Dhaka and made an open green area for public use.⁸² Contestations range from martyrs as civilians who require acquittal and conviction of perpetrators, to mass martyrs whose families seek appropriation of the assets of war criminals, for a kind of closure.

2.4.2.2 Contestations of naming in milestones for justice events photographs and posters

Figs. 2.102 and 2.103 are images from a commemoration social held in memory of the vindication

of the civilians who died in the Ballymurphy massacre of August 1971, the Bloody Sunday victims killed in January 1972 and victims of the Springhill massacre



of July 1972. Those who had participated in the Ballymurphy rally in Belfast

Fig. 2.102. Banner and posters: Personalities ephemera - Relatives of victims of Ballymurphy, Bloody Sunday and Springhill massacre celebrating the vindication delivered by the Saville Inquiry of 2010 in a commemoration social. Linsfort Drive, Derry/Londonderry. 2011. Courtesy: PECPM

came down to Derry to participate in the civil rights march in January 1972. The continuum is not only about the death of innocent civilians but also about the long legal battle to prove that they were the 'innocent dead' and 'murdered'. Families of the Ballymurphy massacre victims proposed the appointment of an Independent Panel in

82. "Monem Khan Family's Structures Demolished," *The Daily Star*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/monem-khan-familys-structures-demolished-1309309>.

2010 to examine all documents relating to the context, circumstances and aftermath of the deaths of their loved ones, along with an investigation of the role of the British government, British Army, criminal justice agencies such as the RUC and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Coroner's Office and the significance of the media.⁸³ The families of the Bloody Sunday victims received an 'unjustified and unjustifiable' verdict from British Prime Minister David Cameron after the second inquiry was conducted by Lord Saville in 2010. Young people holding banners in 2011 are a witness to future generations who take part in the ensuing struggle



to achieve vindication and become heirs to justice. New inquests into the

Fig. 2.103. Policeman cradling machine gun on the same occasion. 2011. Courtesy: PECPM

Springhill/Westrock killings were ordered by the Attorney General at the time, John Larkin, in 2014, and the campaign for truth and justice was relaunched in 2019.⁸⁴ These photographs are a witness to the people's continuing struggle. The triumph of one incident buoys up the celebration of the other. The common people crowd to listen to news of the struggle and the songs. Amidst the celebratory mood, the grief of those who lost their family members, the grievance of those who claimed due justice and the relief of those who triumphed in achieving it, are shared. The photographs, taken by

83. 'Ballymurphy Independent Panel: A proposal by the bereaved families,' *Ballymurphy Massacre*, http://www.ballymurphy massacre.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Ballymurphy_Independent_Panel.pdf.

84. Liam Kelly, "Support the Springhill Families in their Fight for Justice," *The Irish Voice*, August 22, 2021, <https://www.theirishvoice.com/comment/support-the-springhill-families-in-their-fight-for-justice/>.

Peter Moloney, are included as personalities ephemera. Each person on stage—the banner carrier, the guitarist, and the family members—is an important personality who has nurtured the legacy of this uprising. The image of the policeman cradling a gun in the same event is a mimicry of the state forces who had murdered the civilians and were now liable to be punished; the inscriptions on the banner behind him make his stance clear. For the state forces, it is now time for truth; the truth that was being celebrated in Whiterock road,⁸⁵ where the Ballymurphy massacre occurred. While in the former image, there is substantial construction of the personalities in the legacy narrative, in the latter, there is the mimicking deconstruction of the policeman aiming his rifle in a mock gesture.

In Bangladesh, the milestone of justice is the right of mass martyrs to claim

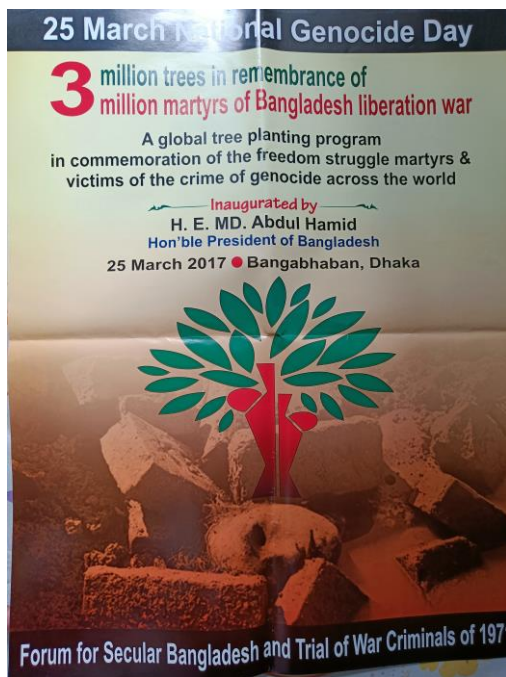


Fig. 2.104. Poster: 3 million trees in remembrance of 3 million martyrs of Bangladesh Liberation. March 25, 2017. Courtesy: FSBTWC

rights and dignity for themselves, along with some of the socio-economic benefits that accrue to family members of the 1971 Liberation War martyrs whose names are listed in the gazette. Fig. 2.104 is an English poster made on the global tree planting programme, where each tree is named after a martyr beginning from Rani Laxmi Bai of undivided India to modern-day martyrs in Bangladesh. Initially planted on the grounds of the President's quarters and then on small plots of land in various villages, the trees

85. The map of the interactive tours which are conducted in sites where the massacres took place features the area around Whiterock road and may be accessed at www.ballymurphy massacre.com/cms/interactive-tour-location-2-upper-whiterock-road/.

make the names of the martyrs known to the common people in the area so that their claims to justice may be initiated. Contestations over the naming of martyrs range from the massacred and victims in Ireland to celebrated historical figures and commoners in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

Naming of people's martyrs range from a glorified use of the term to a complete denial of the same as irrelevant or its usage as something risky. In the interstices, words like dead, sacrificed, hero, felon, killed, executed, murdered, victim abound. In the processes of death, funeral, commemoration and investigations, these terminologies of martyrdom are subject to numerous contestations. While the term is excessively used in Bangladesh, in NI, it is almost dangerous to use the term and in Ireland, the term continues its affiliation with some segments of society. Through an exploration of pious, populist, propagandist and quotidian ephemera, these contestations in people's naming of martyrs have been probed. The processes of its making will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTESTATIONS IN MAKING OF PEOPLE'S MARTYRS IN EPHEMERA

Introduction

After a martyr is named as such within a certain context, numerous contestations come into its making. Within each country, and its communities, the ways in which the martyr is created and debated over are varied. This chapter will trace the history of each martyr's ephemera and its contribution to the making of the martyr. While the previous chapter has focussed on singular and still photographs of martyr ephemera, along with their contestations, this chapter will focus on varied ephemera from panoramic, to moving image, to historical ephemera. This will enable us to visualise the context in which the ephemera were located previously in their everyday use and how they are re-located in their usage now.

3.1 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE'S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH LOCATIONS

Contested locations of martyrdom range from burial sites assigned to different communities to sites used by individuals to nurture a distinct meaning of martyrdom. At times, individuals cannot even retain the space of burial, and are only left with the sacredness associated with it. Reburial contestations arise when a martyr's remains have to be relocated from another country, and therefore revitalise their martyrdom in the internal politics of the country, and the debates of religion and environment,

specifically in Bangladesh. When martyrs receive a memorial site to their credit, its contestations become part of the residential landscape, commonplace thoroughfares, vandalised sites, and grand national shrines, sustaining and recreating their legacies in multiple ways. Properties have plaques to commemorate martyrs and demands are made for properties of contested martyrs to be reused for different purposes, so that the dignity of accepted ones are sustained. Finally, when locations are named after martyrs, there are ways in which they are accepted in the populist imagination as well as attempts are made to retain those named heritage. The most intimate space when the retaining is done on an individual and familial level is the house of the martyr, which has the most personal ephemera related to their life narratives.

3.1.1 Burial site photographs in Ireland and Bangladesh

Each burial site is assigned a different space in the common ground of the dead. While visiting Derry in April 2022, I walked along the Derry City Cemetery, where the graves of the many killed during the Troubles have found their resting place. Fig. 3.01 shows that those who belonged to the IRA and died in active service have been put to rest in tombs with elaborately sculpted mythological Cuchulainn figures on their gravestones. Even those who were active members of the paramilitary force but died of natural causes are granted space in the same sacred ground. This distinction not only makes



Fig. 3.01. Photograph: Gravestone of IRA volunteers killed in Derry and the accompanying flagpoles. Derry City Cemetery. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022.

them martyrs because of their paramilitary service but also through the inviolable sanctity of the ground, which others dare not breach. Because of this, Tom Williams’ family members did not want his remains to be reinterred to an IRA plot, even though the republicans claimed that to be his dying wish.¹ There is almost an uneasiness connected to this act of supreme sacrifice.²

Some people want the bodies of their family members to be on the familial plot. Thus, martyrdom is initiated through individual memory and is consciously separated from the collective memory of a paramilitary community. The writing on the gravestone of John Young’s burial plot (fig. 3.02) shows that he is buried along with his family members, Elizabeth and Nellie. John was a young victim of the Bloody Sunday shootings. His martyrdom is indicated through the words



Fig. 3.02. Photographs: Gravestone of John Young and the surrounding area. Derry City Cemetery. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022.

‘murdered by British paratroopers’ etched on the gravestone. Fig. 3.02 features a plot in the Derry cemetery used for civilian burials. While the mythological connection is retained with a Celtic cross and the ritualistic connection with a figure of the blessing Jesus, it is consciously devoid of the political. The killing of civilians in January 1972 is viewed as murder because they were unarmed and did not voluntarily go, to give up their lives. As John’s elder brother Leo said, John was a pretty lad and went out on a

1. Anne Cadwallader, “The life, death—and burial—of IRA man Tom Williams,” *The Irish Echo*, February 16, 2011, <https://group.irishecho.com/2011/02/the-life-death-and-burial-of-ira-man-tom-williams-2/>.

2. Leo Young (elder brother of John Young), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Sunday with his friends. The martyrdom of civilians did not cut short a saga of dedicated life service, but often, it cut short life itself. Leo mentions that many ask him about the kind of life John led, to which he answers that he did not lead a life; he was about to begin to lead a life.



Fig. 3.03. Documentary still: (captions in English): A widow from Sohagpur points out the killing site of her husband in her house yard. *Tahader Juddho* [Their War]. Directed by Afsan Chowdhury. 2001. Courtesy: Tuku Khandokar & Nurul Alam Atique (still photographers) and Afsan Chowdhury (director).

Burial sites for martyrs in the villages of Bangladesh are almost a luxury. The people do not have the resources to mark a person's grave because they live on that site every day. In fig. 3.03, a widow at Sohagpur points to the yard of her house where her husband was killed. He was buried behind the house with his son, with no shrouds or clothes.³ In this

village, where all males in the entire village were killed during the 1971 War, the widows remember the day, not as a memorial but as the day when hunger and death began. The most painful memory for them is that of burying the male dead and how it violated their religious 'belief' whereby Muslim women and men are not supposed to touch the dead body of the opposite sex. However, they performed the act, including burying their husbands and sons together in a common grave, breaking an even worse taboo. This was followed by starvation and every other kind of suffering including doing menial jobs in the bazaar and being unable to care for the graves. Interestingly,

3. Afsan Chowdhury, "Tahader Juddho [Their War]," YouTube, November 12, 2021, video, 15:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdiX-QEbtAU>.

the primary memory trigger is the grave, which, unlike ephemera, is not transient and is meant for future preservation; it is fairly useless except for remembrance. However, as the need for agricultural land increases, the graves will disappear, and so will their memory. In this village located in the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh, on 25th July, 1971, 187 males were killed, and no male was left to help in the burial process. Women survivors recount that men were killed in the paddy fields near the walls of houses, and the women dug holes to bury two or three people together. Here, only oral histories captured in such documentaries by historians can locate and sustain such burial sites in popular memory of the martyr, propagated all the more by their dissemination through the online video sharing and social media platform YouTube. A specific documentary still constitutes the ephemera here.

In the common ground for the dead, burial site contestations in Ireland occur between martyrs who have distinct spaces and gravestones assigned for them and individual family members who acquire a different space because the nature of the site characterises the nature of the death. In Bangladesh, site-specific locations are mostly unavailable, with bodies stowed in agricultural fields and riverine lands. Thus, the contestation is between the few who have the privilege of burial—and thereby, the privilege of being made martyrs—and the many who do not.

3.1.2 Reburial photographs in Bangladesh

Reburial is deemed important when, for the family members of disappeared martyrs, prayers for the dead begin with a search, continue with prayers on roads near the person's last home or tentative place of death, and end with the creation of the grave. On 17th April, 1971, Lt. Col Md. Abdul Qadir was taken away from his Panchlaish residential quarters in Chittagong because he helped the freedom fighters

with combustible material from the Oil and Gas Development Company as war aid in the Liberation War. His quarters were taken over by a businessman by the name of Masud, following which the colonel's son Nadeem Qadir had to pray for his father on the road. Hence, Nadeem desired the reburial of his father's remains and went through the processes discussed below. Other than the personal and the national reburial of the martyr's remains, the journey is established and disseminated in various ways.⁴ The martyr's name is invoked in each step of the dissemination. His martyrdom becomes enmeshed in various contestations because it is difficult to identify and verify the

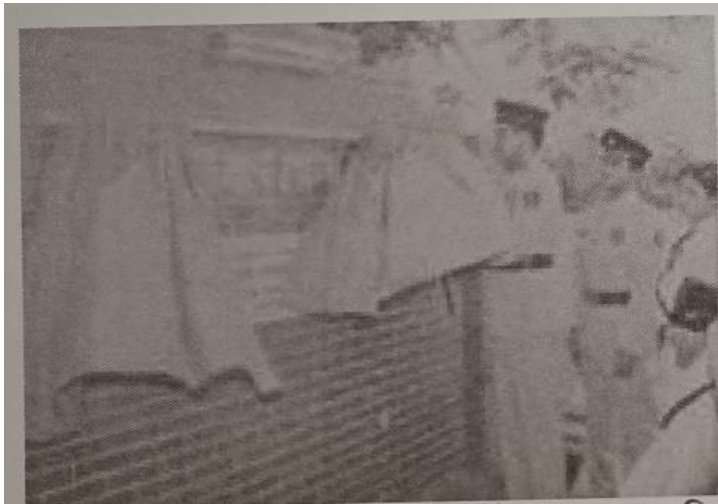


Fig. 3.04. Photograph: President Lt. Gen Md. Ershad inaugurating the Qadirabad Cantonment with martyr wife Hasna Hena Qadir behind. 1983. Courtesy: Private papers of Nadeem Qadir, son of martyr Lt. Colonel Qadir.

remains thirty years later. First, Nadeem was referred a book by Dr Mahfuzur Rahman *Bangaleer Jatiyotabadi Songram, Muktijuddhe Chattogram* [Nationalist struggle, Liberation War in Chittagong], where he found information on thirty-five

people who were killed along with his father.⁵ Second, Army Chief General Moyeen U. Ahmed set up a military committee for the verification of the martyr's remains but could not take action until an elected government came into action.⁶ Third, Nadeem

4. Lt. Col (Retd) Quazi Sazzad Ali Zahir had written a chapter on the disregard of the martyr's grave in his book *Deshtake Bhalobeshe – 1* (Dhaka: Shudhui Muktijuddho, 2010) 88–89.

5. Nadeem Qadir, "Bir Muktijoddhar Punodafon" [Reburial of the brave freedom fighter], in *Muktijuddho Ajana Odhyay* [Unknown chapter of the Liberation War] (Dhaka: Jagriti Prokashoni, 2015), 19.

6. Qadir, "Bir Muktijoddhar Punodafon," 20.

Qadir received information from the army quarters that the grave had been identified in his father's Panchlaish residential quarters in Chittagong, and witnesses who had put the Colonel to rest in the grave had been interviewed but the grave had not been still preserved with due identification and honours.⁷ Fourth, a letter was written to the MLWA regarding the national recognition of the grave and its reburial from Chittagong in 2009.⁸ Fifth, officials at Chittagong army quarters and the Special Works Organization assured Nadeem regarding the upkeep of the grave.⁹ Sixth, a letter was written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina regarding the reburial and honour of Colonel Qadir's grave in 2010.¹⁰ Furthermore, leading news dailies such as *Bhorer Kagoj* and later *Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo*, and *bdnews24.com* published much on the same issue in 2011,¹¹ creating a lot of pressure on the Caretaker government.¹² Finally, on 22nd September, 2011, the remains were helicoptered to Qadirabad Cantonment, Natore. In each step, considering Nadeem's journalistic contacts and his ability to appeal to governmental, military, and political institutions, the journey was far from smooth. With obstacles at every step, he moved to the next until the final rest for his father was achieved. A postage stamp had already been issued for Lt. Col Qadir as an intellectual in the 1995 stamp series, and the Qadirabad Cantonment in Natore was named after him. Fig. 3.04 is a photograph of President Lt. Gen. Ershad inaugurating the Cantonment in 1983. While the place became a famous site after the inauguration,

7. Qadir, "Bir," 21.

8. Qadir, "Bir," 23.

9. Qadir, "Bir," 24.

10. Qadir, "Bir," 25.

11. Qadir, "Bir," 20.

12. This caretaker government was abolished by the AL through the passage of the 15th amendment to the constitution with its majority in Parliament in 2011.

it became a true memorial site only in 2011, as it was the first private attempt to create a memorial in Bangladesh. This shows that ephemera not only capture the popularity of an event in a particular moment, but they also indicate the particularity of that moment. Some ephemera, therefore, only indicate a starting point that generates several more later on, thereby implicating the limiting outreach of many, such as the photograph of 1983 and the postage stamp of 1995. Nevertheless, as national sites and icons, these motifs continue to be foremost in the minds of the common people, like the postage stamp, which figure as the WhatsApp status of Nadeem Qadir; and some ephemera are interpreted in terms of others.

Other than reburial within and across countries (as in the case of *Bir Shrestho* Matiur Rahman whose remains were brought from Pakistan to Bangladesh), some martyrs languish in a no-man’s land between countries. Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar



Fig. 3.05. Photograph: Martyred freedom fighter Prof. Abdul Wahab Talukdar’s grave in Kalmati village, with its nearby land being eroded. 2019. Courtesy: Mizan Talukdar

was born in the bordering village of Kalmati, in the Bamanhat gram panchayat of the Dinhat subdivision in the Cooch Behar district, as well as martyred there. Until 1983, his family in the Singhar village of Joymonirhat Union in the Bhurungamari subdistrict of the Kurigram

district, which shares a border with India, either visited his grave in the nearby Kalmati village just across the border, or his other family members in Kalmati would

pay respects and take care of the grave. Later, the border fencing was structured¹³ and families living in the bordering regions retreated further to the interiors of the countries. His family from Bangladesh could not travel to another country without visas, and there was no one to take care of the grave on the Indian side of the border. Now, the grave near the Bagni river would soon be eroded.¹⁴ Hence, the martyr's grave needs to be shifted to Kurigram for its due preservation for the family and the country. Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar's family has decided that he would be reburied along with a few other freedom fighters who are already buried in Kurigram. His son, Mizan Talukdar, emphasises that resting place of one buried should not be disturbed without valid reasons. In an interview, he explains that only international border restrictions and geographical calamities justify the reburial, as evident in the photograph (fig. 3.05).¹⁵ He adds that other than the religious reason, there have also been identification confusions in other cases of reburial and relocation.¹⁶ Till the time they could visit the grave, Mizan Talukdar kept a red banner over the grave, which was separately located near a mosque yard, to mark it for posterity. Thus, reburial reinvigorates the idea of the martyr anew, through these debates.

Reburial in Ireland and Bangladesh involves relocating burial remains from countries such as England and Pakistan respectively, overcoming colonial and imperialistic contestations over the right to the remains of the martyred, who are

13. Abhimanyu Datta, "Barbed Wire Border Fencing," *India Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (March 2018): 42–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505569>.

14. Abdul Wahed, "Bring FF's remains from no-man's land," *The Daily Star*, December 19, 2017, <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/bring-ffs-remains-no-mans-land-1507036>.

15. Mizan Talukdar (son of martyr Prof. Abdul Wahab Talukdar), interview by author, Dhaka, August 9, 2022. Transcript, with author.

16. Abu Saleh (Roni), "Bharat theke deshe anar opekkhae char hajar shohider kobor, [Graves of 4000 martyrs waiting to be brought home from India]," *Samakal*, December 16, 2022.

deemed criminals. Within Bangladesh, contestations occur between political and ideological opponents who create residential projects to encroach on burial spaces, and the martyr's family members who are denied prayers and closure. Reburial also challenges contestations from religious quarters about the disturbance of the sacred space of rest for the dead and addresses the ecological concerns for its maintenance, even when the remains are to be relocated from India.

3.1.3 Memorial site photographs and papers in Ireland and Bangladesh

Memorial sites of IRA volunteers and members are sacred grounds for the republicans, located well inside neighbourhoods, that people walk along in their daily



Fig. 3.06. Photograph: Memorial site for martyred IRA volunteers. Creggan area. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022.

journeys. Fig. 3.06 features the memorial site at Creggan Heights in Derry/Londonderry. This residential location in the Ballymagowan area is ‘still affected by dissident republican activity’¹⁷, a point also emphasised by Leo Young. For him, the impending uneasiness

is not to belittle the lives lost; rather, it is an envisaged precarity so that more lives are not lost.¹⁸ This structure memorialises the volunteer soldiers of the 2nd battalion of the Derry brigade of IRA who lay their lives for Ireland, and other activists who

17. “Detectives make arrest over January shooting in Londonderry,” *ITV*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/update/2017-11-17/detectives-make-arrest-over-january-shooting-in-londonderry/>.

18. Leo Young (elder brother of a victim of Bloody Sunday, John Young), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

contributed to the freedom struggle in their own ways. While the names of the martyred volunteers are proudly engraved at the site, the inscription generates a space of community fear of sectarian clashes. Moreover, a memorial site such as this is also a structure in progress, with a stone on the left-hand side dedicated to Eamonn (Peggy) McCourt, one of the founding members of the Creggan monument committee. While this ex-IRA activist did not die a martyr's death, he did build monuments in their honour in the Creggan area.

Similar fears may also arise out of a lack of sanctions. For instance, the Red Hand Commando Memorial Garden is an illegal structure in East Belfast. Even though it proudly displays the flag of the UK over it, the organisation has been accused of carrying out targeted shootings of Catholic civilians. According to Lisa Currie, who has worked on heritage sites and trails of the Protestant communities in East Belfast for years, it is built on public land and is still visited by people, even though the structure does not have planning permission. She explains that it is like building something on land which does not belong to you.¹⁹ Thereby, the site and its construction becomes confrontational, like marking out territory. This is another form of contestation that occurs in case of martyrs.²⁰

Memorial sites that are borne out of vandalism are also common in NI. In many ways, martyrdom is not only created/generated in conflict, but also something that creates conflict by itself. Fig. 3.07 features the gravestones in the Belfast Republican Plot for volunteers Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann, and Sean Savage, who were killed by the British Special Air Service (SAS) in Gibraltar on 6th March, 1988.

19. Lisa Rea Currie (Heritage Officer, EastSide Partnership), interview by author, East Belfast, April 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

20. Contested memorial sites of various paramilitary groups in Belfast and the similar language and motifs that they deploy have been discussed by Elisabetta Viggiani in *Talking Stones: The Politics of Memorialization in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland* (New York & Oxford: Berhahn Books, 2014), 31.

Immediately above, there is the gravestone of Catholic civilians Thomas McErlean and John Murray, and Vol Kevin Brady. They were killed when loyalist Michael Stone launched a grenade strike at the funeral of the Gibraltar Three on 16th March, 1988. This is not a mere instance of vandalism, but rather of one memorial leading to another. These people were unarmed, and hence, their family members would not use the word ‘martyr’ for them.



Fig. 3.07. Photograph: Gravestones for the Gibraltar Three and the three mourners in their funeral ceremony. Milltown Cemetery, Belfast. April 17, 2022.

Here, martyrs are those who were killed while defending their people. Civilians and

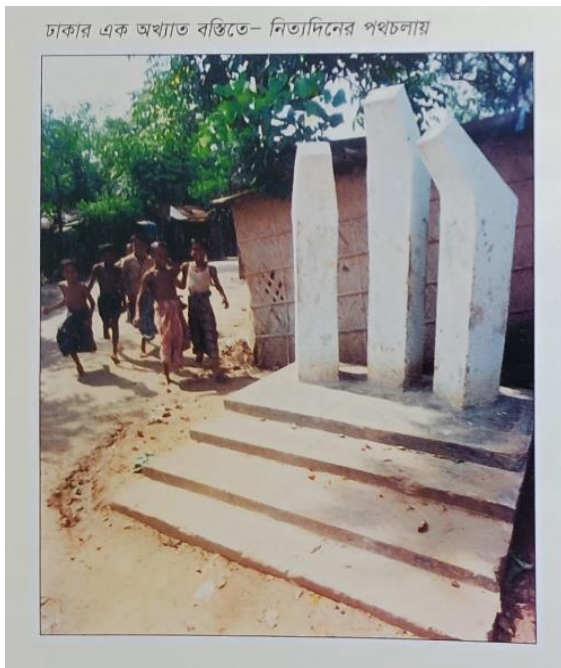


Fig. 3.08. Photograph: Photograph of a *Shahid Minar* in an unknown slum in a village. Book: *Ekusher Tomshuk: Collected Photographs of the 1952 language movement over the last century*. Photography and words by Amanul Haque. Dhaka: Sahitya Prokash, 2003, 22.

IRA volunteers, those who were mourned, and those who were killed in the mourning are collated in the same plane of remembrance. From 6th March, 1988, to 16th March, 1988, a saga of martyrdom and martyr legacy was created.

In Bangladesh, the *Shahid Minar* is a memorial site in central Dhaka, where Shafique, Barkat, and Rafiq were shot on 21st February, 1952, and two others were shot in the area surrounding

it later the following day. It not only exists as a site of killing of these young boys who were pulled into the rally demanding Bangla be declared the state language, but has also evolved into a site of anti-authoritarian calls for known personalities and common people.²¹ Here, political leaders express their reverence to the language martyrs after taking an oath in parliament, and people visit after *Eid* celebrations. While the site becomes overcrowded on specific days such as 25th March (Genocide Day), 14th December (Martyred Intellectuals Day) and 16th December (Victory Day) when the nation remembers its martyrs, the site remains more owned by the pro-AL and the pro-Left organisations than the BNP and the BJI. Sites of martyrdom are fluid spaces with evolving memorialisation, invoking the martyrs in their context. On the eve of its destruction, the site was razed to the ground and the word ‘masjid’ was inscribed on the broken remains. Fig. 3.08 is a photograph published on the eve of International Mother Language Day in 2003. It resembles the structure of the central *Shahid Minar* in an unknown slum in a village. Situated beside a hut, the structure lies in the everyday path of the villagers. Such constructions can be found in every nook and corner of Bangladesh, mostly built by AL members who extol the martyr narrative in the country, thereby presenting themselves as pro-Liberation forces. Inspired by the students of Dhaka University, the students of the Edward College in Pabna district in 1952 also built a *Shahid Minar* and commemorated the language martyrs.²² While district towns still bear the names of the language martyrs on the memorial site around these places, in remote villages, the national memory of the central site is disseminated

21. Ajoy Dasgupta (journalist, writer) in a discussion with the author while giving a tour of the University and its surrounding precincts as part of his initiative ‘Walking Museum: 1971 Genocide & the University of Dhaka’, started in January 2022.

22. M. Abdul Alim, *Pabna e Bhasha Andolon* [Language movement in Pabna] (Dhaka: Agamee Prokashoni, 2018), 131.

in the villages without organically evoking the community's martyr history, with its own narratives of local martyrs not known among people.

Initiatives for memorial sites at the national and district levels are in progress in Bangladesh. Fig. 3.09 features a 2022–23 short-term annual development

The table is a detailed budgetary document for the 2022-23 fiscal year. It lists various projects under the heading '২০২২-২০২৩ বর্ষ সংশোধিত বার্ষিক বিকাশ কর্মসূচি (মিলিয়নে)'. The columns include project names, types (e.g., 'নির্মাণ', 'সংস্কার'), and budget amounts in lakhs. The projects listed include the construction of martyr memorials, maintenance of burial grounds, and other related activities. The table is organized into several sections, with each section containing multiple rows of project details.

Fig. 3.09. Document: 2022–23 short-term annual development programme on the construction of martyr memorials. Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka. Courtesy: Rathindra Nath Datta

programme for the construction of martyr memorials. A memorial site for the Indian martyrs of the Liberation War, *Mitra Bahini*, has an estimated budget of 4680 lakhs while the preservation and maintenance of burial grounds of martyrs of the Liberation War has an estimated budget of 44524 lakhs. Further, preservation of mass killings fields has an estimated budget of 44240 lakhs. The prospect of building further national memorial sites

includes a large number of workers as stated in the 2022–2023 Development Project Proposal of the MLWA. The draft proposal aims to honour all the Indian friends of the Liberation War who had provided training, refuge, and arms. Thus, memorial sites also move beyond the martyred people to honour their communities and countries. This governmental attempt to create national monuments is its way of generating a martyr consciousness among the people, as well as jobs for them, explains Rathindra Nath Datta.²³

²³ Rathindra Nath Datta (deputy secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 4, 2022.

In NI, memorial sites are subject to contestations between paramilitary glorification and sectarian divides, and between the colonial power and its illegal structures. During an instance of contestation, memorial sites also bring together the mourned and the mourners, who are to be subsequently mourned. In Bangladesh, memorial sites are subject to, contestations of the national sacred space of the *Shahid Minars* made for the numerous martyred, the partial signification of local sacrifices, and the deployment of the local workforce in building these structures.

3.1.4 Plaques and property photographs in Ireland and Bangladesh

Fig. 3.10 features a photograph of a building on Newtownards Road, which



Fig. 3.10. Photograph: 'Not for sale'. Building which was a property of the UVF quarters, that also contains a plaque. Newtownards Road, East Belfast April 11, 2022.

was a property of the East Belfast UVF. The UVF is presently a banned loyalist paramilitary organisation, featuring on Schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000.²⁴ However, their property is considered sacrosanct that will not

be part of any commercial property ventures. Apart from this written

indication on the wall, the ephemeral writing that has still sustained itself in its paled-out form, is a plaque commemorating the fallen comrades in this organisation. Martyrdom continues through the remembrance of the volunteers (whose lives have been discussed in section 2.2.2.1) like local UVF heroes, but they are now increasingly associated with fear and criminality. Loyalist community worker William

24. 'Terrorism Act 2000, Schedule 2,' UK Public Legislation Acts, *legislation.gov.uk*, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/schedule/2>.

McCaughey, curator of a museum dedicated to the UVF, said in an interview while showing the ephemera and artefacts at the museum,²⁵ that the modern-day UVF are not part of the rich history of Ulstermen. The heroes had defended Ulster for hundreds of years when they were seen as a people’s army, but now, they have become part of drug gangs and are accused of torturing the local Protestant population. For the people, martyr legacy is best dissociated from in its modern-day counterparts, which is best not challenged due to social and communal fear.

If some properties are not to be sold, then they are to be appropriated for honouring the martyr legacy. Fig. 3.11 is a human chain demanding that the properties



Fig. 3.11. Banner: Human chain demanding that the properties of war collaborators be used for the welfare of martyr families. November 12, 2016. Courtesy: *Projonmo '71*

of war criminals and collaborators be seized and then utilised for the welfare of the 1971 Liberation War freedom fighters and martyr families (a similar instance has been discussed in fig. 2.101). Here, the demand is made by *Projonmo '71*, an organisation of the children of the martyrs of the Liberation War,

mostly belonging to the intellectual classes. Significantly, even the intellectual elites lived in very poor conditions during the days of the 1971 struggle when their residential quarters at Dhaka University were seized. On 14th March, 2022, the Cabinet of Bangladesh gave the final approval to the draft of the Abandoned Houses (Supplementary Provisions) Act, 2022 with a provision stating that the confiscated

25. William McCaughey (narrator and curator), Museum of Loyalist history, Ballymac Centre, Belfast, Facebook, January 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/100077323144874/videos/1407555493017199/>.

properties of convicted war criminals would be treated as “abandoned assets”.²⁶ It remains to be seen how these may be disbursed to the martyr families living in deplorable conditions in Bangladeshi villages, as these properties are mostly located in cities, especially when most of the war criminals have transferred their properties to their next of kin.²⁷ Moreover, in district towns like Chittagong, there have been numerous instances of convicted war criminals’ properties being branded; for example, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury’s properties were branded as ‘Rajakar Hill’, where the word ‘rajakar’ branded him as a war criminal, especially when his son used the word ‘martyr’ while referring to him in a public speech.²⁸

While state laws in NI protect properties of martyred people and groups, even when they turn into illegal organisations, in Bangladesh, these properties are relegated for the welfare of the martyred. However, in both countries, contestations exist between laws that are used to retain such properties and the actual benefits people gain from their confiscation.

3.1.5 Papers and photographs of sites named after martyrs in Ireland and Bangladesh

The naming of sites after martyrs remains a practise in both Ireland and Bangladesh. In Ireland, such naming is difficult, as the colonial powers have retained their place in the city corporation documents and official street signs. However, there

26. “Cabinet okays provision to confiscate houses of war criminals,” *Dhaka Tribune*, March 14, 2022, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/government-affairs/2022/03/14/cabinet-okays-provision-to-confiscate-houses-of-war-criminals>.

27. S M Mozan, “Juddhoporadhider shompod jobder ki holo? [What happened to the confiscation of war criminals’ assets?]” *Bhorer Kagoj*, December 8, 2021, [যুদ্ধাপরাধীদের সম্পদ জব্বের কী হলো - Bhorer Kagoj](#).

28. Chittagong Bureau, “‘Goods hill’ ke ‘rajakar hill’ naamkoron muktijoddhar shontander [Good’s Hill named ‘Rajakar hill’ by freedom fighters’ children],” *Samakal*, October 29, 2022, [‘গুডস হিলকে’ রাজাকার হিল’ নামকরণ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের \(samakal.com\)](#).

are some examples in the Republic of Ireland, such as in the town of Clonakilty in West Cork, with streets named after martyrs. Paul Clements writes that ‘The main of Clonakilty seems to stretch on forever. It is five streets that merge into each other. Oliver Plunkett Street and Pearse Street run into Ashe Street which in turn leads to Wolfe Tone Street and Strand Road’.²⁹ In 1966, on the fiftieth anniversary of the

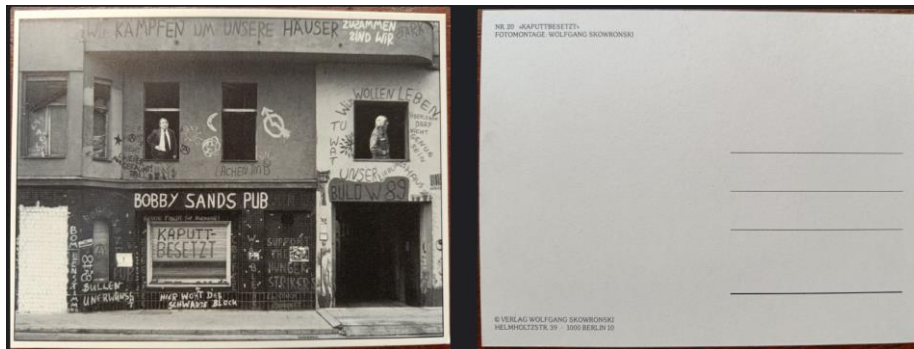


Fig. 3.12. Political card: ‘Bobby Sands Pub’. Berlin: Verlag Wolfgang Skowronski. Political Cards – Republican (box 1). Courtesy: PANIPC

Easter
Rising in
1916, fifteen
main stations
in Ireland
had their
names

changed to honour the patriots who were executed for their roles in the Rising, such as the James Connolly rail station, the busiest in Dublin. Luas tram tickets introduced me to this name as I journeyed from Dublin Connolly to the National Museum of Ireland. The bus stops as well as the train stations make these names part of locational references that are used by people every day. While travelling from India to Dublin for a single day, Connolly’s name was my travel indicator for the day. Bobby Sands is another martyr whose name figures in the name of a pub in Berlin (fig. 3.12). Today, he has become an iconic image of the freedom struggle, like the slogan voicing the social right of houses painted above the name of the pub. The image has become part of a homage to the martyr in another country. This is a political card issued in Berlin, Germany. Social rights and political rights are viewed as issues that martyrs fight for, legacies which are borne in other countries.

²⁹ Paul Clements, *Irish Shores: A Journey round the rim of Ireland* (Ballycastle, Northern Ireland: Clachan Publishing, 2016), 88.

Fig. 3.13 is a photograph of a banner lying on the ground that would be used to repair the back of a marble plaque on a road named after martyred intellectual Selina Parvin. An image of the banner, posted by her son Shumon Zahid on 19th May, 2017,³⁰ refers to one of the few streets that have been named after a female martyred



Fig. 3.13. Banner: To be used for the marble plaque of Martyr Selina Parvin Street in Feni, Chittagong. Shumon Zahid. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokkha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. March 27, 2017.

intellectual in a country with several female martyrs. Martyr Selina Parvin Street was named in 2012 and is located in the city of Feni in the Chittagong district of Bangladesh, where she was born. A road in Dhaka's Mogbazar was also named after her, as Shahid Sangbadik Selina Parvin Road, in 2002, after much effort by her son, explains

Meghna Guhathakurta.³¹ Recent reports inform that the Dhaka City Corporation has decided to change the name of this road to New Circular Road again, which was the original name of the street when Parvin used to live there with her mother and son in 1971. Most of the shop signboards bear the street's old name and people have become

30. Shumon Zahid, "Phenir pholoker pichon dik songoskarer kichu chobi [Some pictures of the restoration of the back side of the Feni plaque], Facebook, May 29, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1408242889221629&set=pcb.1431230180270053>.

31. Meghna Guhathakurta (Executive Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 11, 2022.

used to it.³² The efforts at changing the name of the site now seem futile, especially after the death of Parvin’s son.

For the martyrs of NI, the naming of sites finds itself in the contestations between the colonial authorities denying their martyrdom and international solidarity activists upholding it. However, in the Free State of the South, the independent Republic of Ireland, such naming is gaining popularity. In Bangladesh, contestations of naming such sites occur between abundant renaming after the 1971 war and the attempt to rename by subsequent governments, especially when they deem themselves as pro-Liberation forces.

3.1.6 House photographs in Ireland and Bangladesh

The places where martyrs are remembered, relived, and recreated each day the most, are in the households of their family members. It may be the house where they were born and later brought up in, or their family member’s house where their presence is intimately preserved. Several ephemera are not donated or lent to museums, libraries, or associations because they are too personal. Intimate ephemera and martyr’s objects have been discussed in Chapter Two.



Fig. 3.14. Object: Trophy belonging to Kevin McElhinney, held by Roslyn and Michael Doyle. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022.

This chapter will analyse a martyr’s house as an intimate space. The house as a commemorative, remains incomplete without the oral memories of its members. When

32. Delawar Hossain Dolon, “Selina Parvin shorok naki New Circular Road! [Selina Parveen Road or New Circular Road],” *Dhaka Mail*, February 26, 2022, <https://dhakamail.com/national/3247>.

I visited Kevin McElhinney's sister's house, the doorway entrance had a painting of the seventeen-year-old who was shot dead by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday. Roslyn Doyle, Kevin's sister, explains that the photograph is the one object that keeps him alive for her amidst the housework. A small trophy he received for athletics is kept in the kitchen drawer. In fig. 3.14, Roslyn and her husband Michael hold the small relic in their living room. Kevin's family has not donated any of his personal items because some things are too personal to part with.³³ There is a very close-knit community where everyone knows each other's house. The Doyle couple took me to Leo Young's house and asked about his health. The families of the victims of Bloody Sunday often meet weekly or monthly to pray for the dead in the local chapel or discuss strategies for seeking justice. Michael, Roslyn's husband, adds that the families would organise justice campaigns in the immediate aftermath of the event; unfortunately, they were turned away by the Irish government in Dublin. Thus, the houses, the families and their proximity to one another have been an impetus in the sustenance of the struggle to achieve justice for the victims' deaths, despite the odds.



Fig. 3.15. Objects: Television and bookcase in the present living room at the house of martyred intellectual Munier Choudhury. Banani, Dhaka. August 12, 2022.

The stories narrated by such houses are not only intimate but also wide-ranging. Primarily, they enable us to listen to those words that are unspoken. Asif Munier, son of the martyred intellectual Munier Chowdhury, explains that in their house, he and

33. Roslyn Doyle (sister of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Kevin McElhinney), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

his two brothers have never discussed their experiences of 1971. Today, after so many years, it has become difficult for them to remember. The photographs, therefore, also narrate this story that is embedded in the trauma, which is beyond orality. On visiting this martyr intellectual's house, I looked through a range of awards that his family had been given during both the BNP and AL governments (to be discussed in section 4.1.2.3). Ironically, the BNP government sent strict notices to the families of martyred intellectuals to vacate their homes after allowing them to stay at their residential quarters in the University of Dhaka for fifteen years after 1971. Chowdhury's present house at Banani, Dhaka, has an old bookshelf containing his books and the television set (which he brought from Japan and where his first play was broadcasted) along with family albums (fig. 3.15). The family wants to convert this house into a museum. Asif adds that the living room with the big secretariat table along with the television and radio reviews of various books will be part of the museum archives in the ground floor space of the house and that a trust fund will be initiated in the name of his parents for its continued maintenance. Thus, houses become part of both private and public worlds, mostly through personal initiatives.

The house of a martyr captures all the contestations that exist in the narratives of their life as they lived through them—between the persona of a rioter and the persona of a young boy going out with friends, and between the differing political affiliations that acknowledge the martyr and the consistent personal initiatives of a free mind.

3.2 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE’S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH PROCESSES

In Ireland and Bangladesh, martyr legacies are created, constructed, and debated through various processes in people’s daily lives, like parades and rallies, which mark territories and socio-political affiliations. In addition, elections are a popular process through which mass support for martyrs is displayed, even though electoral campaigns are also used to dissuade people from supporting rivals in the name of martyrs. When events such as hunger strikes create a martyr, there are internal contestations that exist within the very process. Further, martyr families are sustained through collective funds established with help from the government and distributed by the government itself; however, these funds always lay bare the contestations of power politics in the name of helping or providing aid to people. In the following sections, the identification and verification processes of martyr-making specifically deal with martyr politics turning martyrs’ names into a brand of a memory mediated through honour, trauma, misinformation, and oblivion. In the world of international relations, similar internal contestations continue, in solidarity campaigns of other countries propagating their ideologies in invoking martyrs.

3.2.1 Parades and rallies ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

In Ireland, on 17th April, 2022, the day of the Easter parade, it is as if Belfast was swarming with people. People of all ages, wearing small Easter lily badges or carrying small flags, walked to the tune of drums and flute music, along Falls Road. I walked along with them. It was the main parade, organised by the NGA, and it left Beechmount Avenue at 1.30 pm and travelled to Milltown cemetery. The Jim O’Neill & Robert Allsopp Memorial Flute Band played the music, as they do to commemorate

martyrs such as Wolfe Tone in County Kildare.³⁴ The walk to the cemetery was a witness to murals and poster portraits of the fallen in the republican tradition. Their names also featured on the bass drum heads, the shirts worn by band members, and the songs sung during the parade (fig. 3.16), and finally, in the speeches at the Milltown cemetery. Information about the numerous parades organised by the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the D Company, one which left Barrack Street at 12.30 pm and travelled to the D Coy garden of remembrance, were put up on posters all over



Fig. 3.16. Parade: Easter Parade displaying banners, with flags fluttering from rooftops and portrait of the hunger strikers in the far-off building. Falls Road, West Belfast. April 17, 2022.

Belfast.³⁵ They informed people about the time and routes. Similar information was also obtained when people went to the SF shop to buy Easter lily paper badges, especially to wear to the parades.³⁶ The

remembrance of the names and actions of martyrs is a kind of rebellion in the parade, which was not allowed even in the recent past, and even now is central to increasing violence.³⁷ In this event, after the Decade of the Rosaries, members of martyr families

34. Jaime Rollins in the chapter “Parading Identities,” in *Lullabies and Battle Cries* (2018) conducts an ethnographic study of the Easter parades, the bands, the various republican associations conducting their parades, the speech at the Milltown Cemetery, and their contestations.

35. Fearghal (volunteer, Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum), discussion with the author, Belfast, April 16, 2022.

36. Saleswoman (Sinn Féin shop, Belfast), conversation with the author, Belfast, April 16, 2022.

37. In April 2022 (when I visited NI) and even this year, there have been reports of petrol bombings in Derry during the Easter parades. Masked men threw petrol bombs at a police van overseeing the parade on Easter Monday in Derry this year. Such attacks are related to the increasingly violence post-Good Friday Agreement, post-Brexit and impending visit of US President Joe Biden’s visit to Northern

lay wreaths at the graves along the Republican plot and listened to the Easter commemoration speech while carrying portrait pictures of their loved ones. The remembrance of those who died in combat and/or because of the conflict, broadened the narrative of people's martyrdom. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was read out as part of the tradition. Following this, a speech was delivered by Mary Louise McDonald, an Irish politician serving as Leader of the Opposition in Ireland since June 2020 and President of SF, the party which went on to win the largest number of seats in the May 2022 elections. Amidst the cheering crowds, the commitment of the party is laid down and the establishment of a citizen's assembly is promised. Speaking in both Irish and English, she emphasised that gathering together on this hallowed ground is a befitting way to remember the sacrifices of those who laid down their lives for Irish freedom and expressed solidarity with freedom struggles worldwide, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She also emphasised that the people of the Easter Rising were 'ordinary noble people' supported by people of 'no property'.³⁸

From the territorial display to the invocation of martyrs to building a new legacy, parades become the most emphatic process of the dissemination of martyrdom, which is still marred by confrontational acts of more violent groups of republicans such as Saoradh.³⁹

Ireland as the cause of increasing tensions which marked this event of remembering the 1916 Easter Rising martyrs. Newspaper articles provide much details on the same, such as, Rory Carroll and Lisa O'Carroll, "Derry crowd petrol-bombs police vehicle as Joe Biden heads to Northern Ireland," *The Guardian*, April 11, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/10/derry-security-operation-under-way-before-dissident-republican-parade>.

38. Mary Louise McDonald, "Easter Commemoration Speech," Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, April 17, 2022. The speech may be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j_v38k2RKY. Interestingly, it also shows the author attending and recording the event.

39. Dominic McGrath, "New arrest after Easter Rising parade in Londonderry," *The Independent*, April 19, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/londonderry-police-police-service-of-northern-ireland-b2060910.html>.

Fig. 3.17 shows a poster of the East Battalion Belfast Parade that was held on June 2019. The image in the poster is that of Robert Seymour, in whose memory the



Fig. 3.17. Poster: East Battalion Belfast Parade. 2019. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

parade takes place each year on 15th June, which marks the day he was killed (details of his death discussed in section 2.2.2.1). Like the Easter parade, the East Belfast Battalion Parade is associated with local heroes and their sacrifices. In this parade of the unionist community, drum and flute bands march towards the great

murals representing the heroes. This poster is of the 2019 parade, which met at the Belvoir Bar on Newtownards Road. In 2021, there was a parade by the UVF, on the same local hero, Robert Seymour.⁴⁰



Fig. 3.18. Photograph: Students' procession commemorating the language martyrs. February 21, 1964. Photographer: Rashid Talukder. Courtesy: LWM

Most parades in Bangladesh, such as the annual processions on the morning of 21st February each year, are held in commemoration of the martyred of 1952, killed in the quest to establish Bangla as the official language of EP. The movement was first initiated

40. Belfast Telegraph, "East Belfast Battalion Memorial parade on the Newtownards Road," Facebook, June 13, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/belfasttelegraph/videos/471211847300243>.

mostly by students and the salaried class to attain parity with West Pakistan in terms of various economic and administrative opportunities. This annual procession is organised by various sociocultural and political organisations, in both Dhaka as well as in most of the districts and villages in Bangladesh. Fig. 3.18 features a photograph taken during the students' procession on 21st February, 1964. It was the year of the EP riots when communal riots had also begun in West Pakistan and India due to rumours of the theft of Prophet Mohammad's hair in Kashmir, India. These riots and the imposition of martial law by President Ayub Khan to contain them marked the year with censorship and brutality. The dark poster on the extreme right uses the alphabets of the Bangla language for the ritualistic chants of Islam. The black flag at the centre is carried by Sheikh Mujib, who became the Father of the Nation after the Liberation War. With black flags and armbands, this annual ritualistic procession became a parade of unique linguistic and social identity. In this communal atmosphere, coming out with a student's procession to remember the language movement, the language martyrs, and their associated cultural plurality, especially through this image, becomes a challenge to the majoritarian stance of Hindus fleeing on a large scale, and a ban on photography itself.⁴¹ Non-Bengalis in EP were understood as Pakistanis and Bengalis as Bangladeshis; the former was viewed as the oppressor and the latter the oppressed. Language became a way to address these everyday disturbances between the oppressor and the oppressed.⁴² These processions are similar to the parades in NI, with political figures participating in them, where the making of the state is not yet complete, thus making all parades confrontational. The procession in Bangladesh, however, utilises language and religious motifs to address the socio-economic disparity and enact the

41. "1964 East Pakistan Riots: The forgotten episode," *Hindu Post*, March 22, 2022, <https://hindupost.in/history/1964-east-pakistan-riots-the-forgotten-episode/>.

42. Afsan Choudhury (Bangladeshi liberation war researcher, columnist, and journalist), interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022. Transcript, with author.

confrontation to the state, with ephemera used by the upcoming educated classes, mostly based in the University of Dhaka.

In NI, community parades ritualistically commemorate martyrs and contestations occur during these commemorations in marked-out territories, leading to sectarian clashes. In Bangladesh, the contestations in martyr commemoration rallies include demands for a state language and political rights, and its communal misinterpretation.

3.2.2 Election papers in Ireland and Bangladesh

Election papers are a unique way of propagating the name of martyrs. As

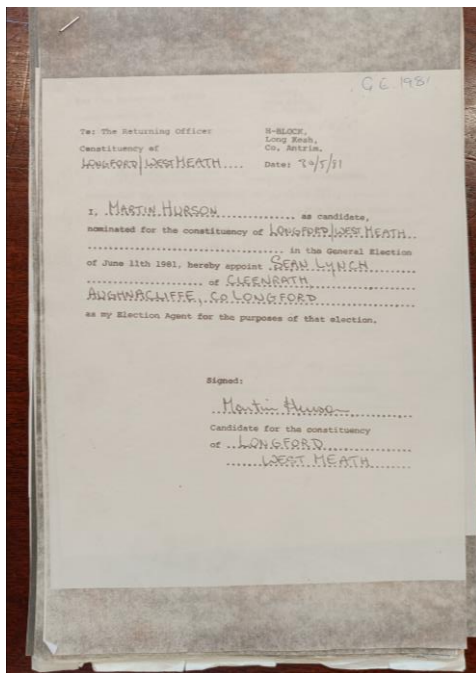


Fig. 3.19. Election nomination paper: Hunger striker Martin Hurson. May 30, 1981. Hunger Strikes box 15 (inc. 25th anniversary materials) Courtesy: ECNIPC

common people, martyrs come from various regions and the people of those regions enable them to become national figures. For instance, the hunger strikers in NI were made part of people's collective empathy during the elections in 1981. Twenty-four days after the death of Bobby Sands on 5th May, 1981, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee announced that it would endorse nine prisoners, who were on hunger strike, as election candidates in the upcoming Free State general elections on 11th June, 1981.⁴³ Fig.

3.19 features the nomination paper of Martin Hurson, one of the hunger strikers fielded as a candidate. Because he was in prison, this paper states that the local county

43. Kevin Burke, "Prisoners use election platform," *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, June 6, 1981.

councillor Sean Lynch was his election agent. Hurson was not elected from Longford/Westmeath but he got more than 4500 first preference votes. The area was known for its republican support and Longford County councillor Tony Carberry stepped down in favour of the hunger striker. The whole political spectrum of the region supported the hunger strikers, aware of their personas as election propaganda. Support for the candidate was perceived as support for the demands of the hunger strikers, and it went on to make the republicans and the people of the H-Block prisons popular among the people, despite the hunger strikers' association with armed struggle.⁴⁴ Hurson died on 13th July, 1981, and similar deaths of candidates in the hunger strikes made the prisoners sacrificial figures for Irish freedom. After the election victories in other counties, prisoners cheered their fallen comrades through various signature card campaigns.

Election campaigns not only nominated future martyrs as candidates but also prevented present candidates from being elected. After the Liberation War, the AL government remained in power till 1975, when Sheikh Mujib and his family were assassinated in a military coup d'état. According to pro-Liberation forces, the governments which subsequently came to power were anti-Liberation. The Liberation War forces

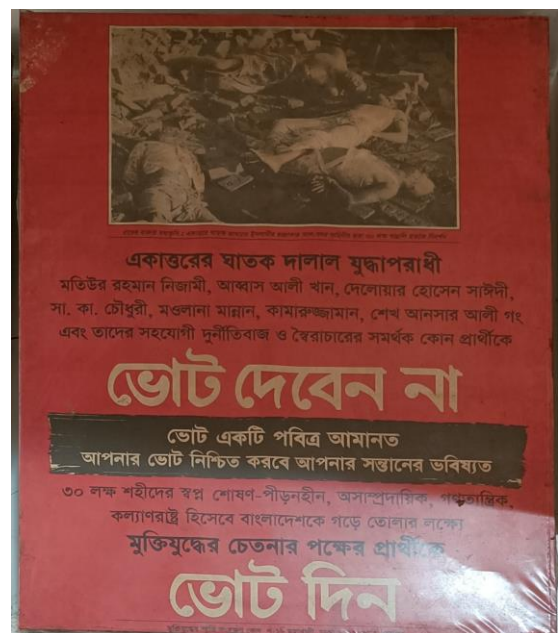


Fig. 3.20. Propaganda pamphlet: ‘Do not vote’ pamphlets circulated during the elections of 2009. Distributed by Liberation War Memorial Centre, Dhaka. Courtesy: FSBTWC

44. Robert White, “The Armalite and the ballot box (1981-1983),” in *Out of the Ashes: An Oral History of the Provisional Irish Republican Movement* (Co. Kildare, Ireland: Merrion Press, 2017), loc. 268 of 701. Kindle.

attempted to quell the efforts of the latter in forming governments. Fig. 3.20 features a propaganda pamphlet circulated during the 2001 elections when the leader of BJI became a member of Parliament from the Pabna district and others from this party continued to hold important cabinet portfolios. People were encouraged to not vote for Motiur Rahman Nizami, Maulana Manna, Kamruzzaman, Sheikh Ansar Ali, and other corrupt and fundamentalist leaders. It is because of this campaign by the Liberation War Memorial Centre for the protection of the historical sanctity of the memories of the thirty lakh martyrs that Shariar Kabir was arrested. Here, political elections are conflated with historical ideologies, as political mileage by BJI leaders is used to further historical subversion in Bangladesh. According to Shariar Kabir, such pamphlets, circulated among the people in the districts and villages, enabled the pro-Liberation AL to later create political consciousness among the masses and win the elections in 2009.⁴⁵ Thus, the election process in both countries utilise martyrs in different ways.

While election papers in NI foreground the conflict between governmental impositions on a prisoner and the impositions by the prisoner on elections for governmental seats, in Bangladesh, during such campaigns, opposition groups are targeted as anti-martyr forces, and electoral campaigns are contested between pro- and anti-martyr forces.

3.2.3 Hunger strike papers in Ireland

Hunger strikes are one of the most popular processes of martyr-making in NI. There has always been both support and opposition to hunger strikes, with its ephemera calling upon people to pray for the strikers so that they may not die, and

45. Shariar Kabir (President, Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971), interview by author, Dhaka, August 6, 2022. Transcript, with author.

offering overwhelming support for them after their death. Contestations also exist between families of hunger strikers not wanting them to go on a hunger strike and the republican movement pushing them towards it.

The risk of death to the point of complete annihilation becomes a ground or site of something new and consolidated. Soumyabrata Choudhury, who has worked on the pragmatics of death and modes of individuation in sacrificial figures such as Socrates, Antigone and Jesus, and the modern sacrificial figures in people's movements in India, explains that the body of the hunger striker reaching the point of death becomes a rite of passage, and martyrdom is this rite of passage, in which we see the reality of hunger strikes.⁴⁶ Fig. 3.21 shows a pamphlet

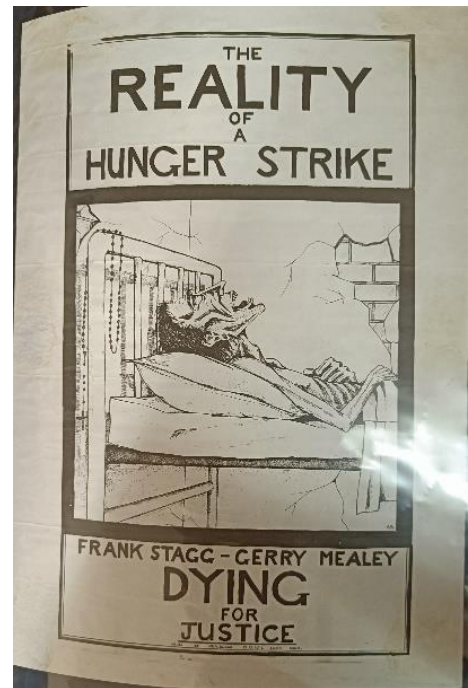


Fig. 3.21. Pamphlet: 'The Reality of a hunger strike – Frank Stagg and Gerry Healey: Dying for Justice'. Issued by the Republican Prisoners of War, Long Kesh. 1976. Courtesy: EHIRHM

issued by the republican prisoners of war from Long Kesh prison representing the reality of Frank Stagg and Gerry Healey's hunger strike. It features their decapitated bodies as they lie dying for justice. The rosary lies separately on the prison bed, but at this ultimate hour, the hunger strikers could not pray anymore. The prisoners were on no-wash protests, and they lay in their excreta in their final days. These pamphlets were part of the Hunger Strike and Prisoners Campaign of 1976. They bore images of emaciated 'martyrs', who were giving up their lives for the cause of the nation. The campaigners wanted these narratives to reach the common people, thereby making the reality of the hunger strike well-known to the common people before a series of deaths

46. Soumyabrata Choudhury (Associate Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), telephone conversation with the author, August 10, 2019.

began in 1981. In 1981, the cause was extolled as a fight for the rights and dignity of man by men of politics. Furthermore, in this image, religious consolation is seen as a deprivation of physiological rights of the body of the prisoner. Most martyrology of the hunger strikers has dealt with the myth of Bobby Sands, who was the first to die. But martyr-making as a process has continued with death and non-death motifs. While republican print media focussed on huge funeral processions, iconic images of the final salute, portrait images of the hunger strikers in badges and other ephemera, popular upsurge and riots following each death, and stances of international solidarity,⁴⁷ the story of each hunger striker dying for justice remains unexplored. The narratives of prayer and support reached each household through Christmas greetings and pamphlets like the one shown above. Such Christmas greetings were also carried by newspapers, sending wishes to everyone who read it in prison cells, homes, or in exile at other places. Christmas bound them all in a moment in time but not fortune. For friends, Christmas became an occasion to look forward to a successful year of struggle. For enemies, like the British government and its advocates in the Dublin government, Christmas became an occasion to wish them defeat in this freedom movement in the New Year.⁴⁸ Contestations exist between such pamphlets depicting the personal deterioration of the figure of the hunger striker and the propagandist power of the same ephemera, when circulated on the occasion of Christmas.

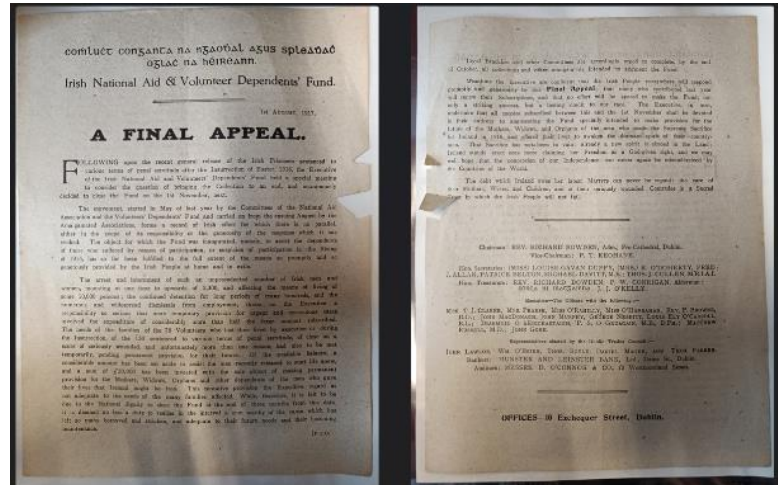
47. All editions of *An Phoblacht/Republican News* following the weeks of deaths of the hunger strikers in 1981 may be accessed at the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum in Belfast.

48. "Christmas Greetings!" *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, December 17, 1981.

3.2.4 Provision of monetary aid documents in Ireland and Bangladesh

If martyrs are made through death and their legacies, then the provision of monetary aid is one of the processes through which a martyr's legacy is sustained. For

those who have lost loved ones, it is also the loss of an able and earning member of their family. In Ireland, such provisions partly came from the government



after the Easter 1916 uprising. The Irish National Aid Association

Fig. 3.22. Leaflet: 'A Final Appeal'. Irish National Aid & Volunteer Dependents' Fund. Aug 1, 1917. Sinn Féin 1915 – 1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966). Courtesy: ECNIPC

was initiated under the direction of parliamentarians George Gavan Duffy and Alderman Patrick Corrigan. Later, the association was merged into the Volunteers' Dependent Fund opened by the widow of Thomas Clarke (executed in 1916). There were conflicts with Mrs Clarke regarding the merger of the two funds⁴⁹. The leaflet (fig. 3.22) informs that after aiding the families of the martyred of 1916, the fund had also to cater to about seventy-eight republican Volunteers, who lost their lives and about sentenced to imprisonment. Therefore, to continue the aid, the present fund needed to close as an imperative for national dignity. An amount of 20000 pounds was kept aside for the welfare of the mothers, widows, orphans, and other dependents of the martyred, but it was inadequate. The executive committee comprising the widows

49. Joseph E.A. Connell Jr., "100 YEARS AGO: Irish National Aid and Volunteers' Dependents' Fund," *History Ireland* 25, no. 2 (March/April 2017), <https://www.historyireland.com/100-years-ago-irish-national-aid-volunteers-dependents-fund/>.

and wards of the leaders executed in the 1916 Rising⁵⁰ along with representatives elected from the Dublin Trades Council, appealed to Irish people at home and abroad for subscriptions. Then this political welfare organisation that shaped public opinion regarding the Rising and created a ‘revolutionary network’⁵¹ after 1917 decided to shut down soon, as this leaflet indicates. However, as this appeal also represents, some individuals made attempts to continue the care for the mothers, wives, and children of the martyred. There were also postcards whose proceeds went to the aid of Irish political prisoners and dependents who had died or were imprisoned during the hunger strikes of the 1980s.

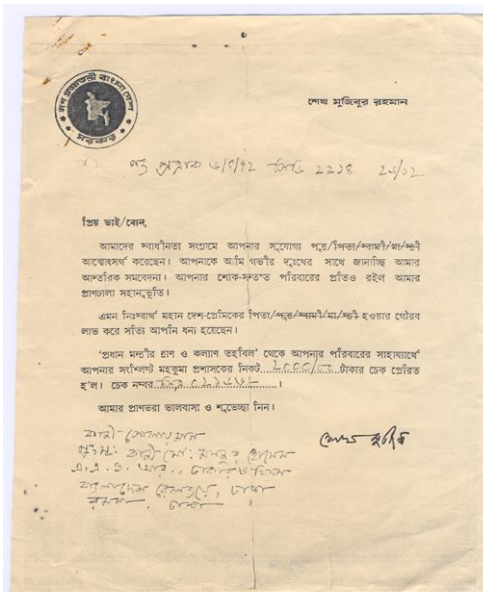


Fig. 3.23. Letter: From Sheikh Mujib to Kazi Solaiman, authorizing and providing tk. 2000 as assistance to the martyr family from the Prime Minister’s Relief and Welfare Fund. April 6, 1972. Courtesy: LWM

In Bangladesh, political welfare associations provided national aid after the country achieved independence in 1971. A study of the money receipts issued by various organisations in 1971 demonstrates the different amounts of money that the families of the martyred were given. The most popular is the letter written by Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to each martyr family, with an acknowledgement of the male or female member who has been sacrificed, and an

50. Cumann Gaolta 1916 [The 1916 Relatives Association], founded in June 2014, holds commemorative events to honour the martyred of Easter Rising. Their function is purely commemorative and not financial. Details regarding their activities may be accessed at <https://1916relatives.com/>.

51. Caoimhe nic Dháibhéid, “The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland, 1916–1918,” *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (September 2012): 707, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23263270>.

amount of 2000 takas⁵² issued via cheque to the local district offices. Such letters were issued to most families, whether the martyrs died on active duty during 1971 under sector commanders or not. These letters served as an official acknowledgement of the martyrs by the independent government of Bangladesh. The letter in fig. 3.23, was issued based on sector commander Khaled Mosharraf's certification that Kazi Solaiman had served in sector no. 2. On 7th November, 1971, Kazi Solaiman killed five Pakistani soldiers and was shot thereafter. These certificates became important documents for the inclusion of martyrs' names in the gazette. Apart from this national relief fund, there were also Adhoc Relief Welfare Funds under sector commands, based on each cantonment. People could apply to them stating the financial condition of their families. The amounts granted under these funds varied from 100 to 200 takas for families who had lost their entire properties and male children. With the lack of food, the health of the living continued to deteriorate. The applicants also appealed to cantonment executive officers for the release of funds for pensions or those kept in their savings and separate aids as civilian workers, all of which were either forwarded to the station headquarters of the offices or granted as one-time amounts from the Adhoc relief funds. Grants were disbursed from the area command for furnishing the staff officer's mess and to clerks who had purchased stationery during the Liberation War as well as those whose family members later suffered from mental diseases. Although the provision of monetary aid catered to all kinds of martyrs, people who were killed while bearing letters or shot while journeying from one place to another were granted minimal relief from the Welfare Fund and were asked to appeal to the civil administration or captains, to again receive minimal relief from the Adhoc fund. Thus, unlike in Ireland, Bangladesh had a complete network of financial support and

52. The Bangladeshi taka is the currency of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

work created for the rehabilitation of martyr families and honour the legacy of martyrdom, albeit with its inbuilt discrepancies at times. The lists maintained by the cantonment and East Bengal regiment offices of people who received amounts such as ten takas from their area commanders are documents that have enabled future monetary aid for many of the martyr families. For some, however, this was the last of any aid they received from the government.⁵³

Thus, funds for martyr families are collected through individual and organisational attempts in Ireland, while they are collected and disbursed through national attempts in Bangladesh. Yet, contestations occur when these attempts are foreclosed or not continued in later years, thereby foregrounding the popular acceptance of the martyrs at one point in history and conflicts regarding their claims in later periods.

3.2.5 Identification and verification processes in Ireland and Bangladesh

While exploring the Troubles-related deaths in NI, particular documents recurred among the print ephemera—the Roll of Honour (fig. 3.24) and the victims' list (found in most newspapers during the Troubles⁵⁴). The Rolls of Honour not only contain the names of the well-known commemorated dead and their opponents but also provide an insight into the process of the creation of and martyrs' inclusion in the newspaper lists. They reveal how the martyr narrative is structured in the interstices of oppositional narratives. There are names of people killed by the PIRA, with about 1790 deaths attributed to them since being founded in December 1969 (fig. 3.24). The

53. Abdul Hamid (son of martyr Abdul Hakim, a peasant at Mirpur, Dhaka) mentioned this during a conversation with the author, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. He could only provide Sheikh Mujib's letter as proof of the only monetary aid his family had ever received.

54. Numerous lists are to be found in the Deaths (troubles related deaths) boxes 1-2 in the ephemera collection at the Linen Hall Library.

list with the lowest number of people belongs to the organisation's final year, 1997, when the leader of PIRA, Gerry Adams, met British Prime Minister Tony Blair, leading to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and the ceasing of hostilities. Combined lists of the terror toll in NI, where loyalist and republican paramilitaries were made the targets, are laid down with their family affiliations, as published in the

Belfast Telegraph. Then there is the Irish Information Partnership, which published case reports of casualties caused by security forces in NI. Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is an independent policy institute based in London that



Fig. 3.24. Newspaper cutting: 'No Going Back'. Roll of Honour. Deaths (troubles related deaths) box 2 (Civilian). Courtesy: ECNIPC

published a day-to-day timeline of the people killed, for example, a hairdresser shot by the UFF and loyalists murdering Catholic dustbin men. There is also a Linen Hall library list of political deaths from 1994 to 2000 that include the name of people who died, details of the incidents, and organisations responsible for their deaths. Some newspapers, publishing grim, long lists include an appended note; for example in the Good Friday edition of *The Irish News* (1st April, 1988), which stated that the making of lists were a 'quasi-penitential exercise' – a realisation that the grim reality is continuing for long, that each name is a family member lost, leaving behind a trail of survivors, whether the person died as a result of a conflict within or outside NI. The Good Friday Agreement could not do much to eradicate people's pathological habit of

violence and suspicion that made them kill one another by mistaking a person for a Protestant, Catholic or an informer of the security forces. Research undertaken by independent organisations established killing as an everyday reality during the Troubles, in every neighbourhood, with someone found dead in every home. These deaths were not only generated by the community, organisation or religious prejudice but they resulted more from personal animosities or psychological fears of sectarianism, which were also reasons for most mass killings in Bangladesh. At times, the incorporation of names in these lists was guided by personal relations with the organisation formulating the list, for instance, people coming to the Orange orders and asking for a revision of names in the Order's Roll of Honours. Borne by people in parades on stoles, and featured in Christmas cards and postcards, a Roll of Honour served as an emblem of the everyday sacrifice of people and martyr legacy and was enumerated in terms of specific names and actions. Begoña Aretxaga writes that these Rolls of Honour in NI are located at sites, the names of which are the legacy of British imperialism, such as the Kashmir Road, where the Roll of Honour of the Clonard martyrs is located.⁵⁵ Here, they represent a unified spatial challenge, but on T-shirts and scarves, they become part of a daily existential challenge.

In Bangladesh, the identification of martyrs is not a homogeneous process. If the martyr was a wealthy person, one has to cross-check his name from his opponent, and if the martyr was a poor villager, then one may ask anybody. Afsan Chowdhury⁵⁶ adds that to enable the process of verification, one must know about the socio-economic realities of a certain area before beginning the process of identification. Key

55. Begoña Aretxaga, "Catholic West Belfast: A Sense of Place," in *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 44.

56. Afsan Chowdhury, interview by author, Dhaka. August 12, 2022.

informants know the martyr's family and are an important resource beyond governmental documents. The list-making does not only represent the contestation between communities that structure the Rolls of Honour, as in the case of Ireland. In the case of mass killings in Bangladesh, there are entire villages whose people have been killed, and it is this terrible reality that makes the narrative of martyrdom a universal reality in such places. If a village has martyrs, then the whole village is proud of it. Thus, if there are contestations about a martyr's identification or a family falsely claims that there are martyrs in their family, then the village heads clarify the truth of the matter. However, there is also the case of martyr families being too reticent and not claiming that they have martyrs in their families. Debdas Ghosh⁵⁷ mentioned that he knew a poor young boy who never claimed that there was a martyr in his family. Being associated with an organisation for martyrs, *Roktadhara '71*, Ghosh took the initiative of gathering all the relevant information to help in the receiving of subsequent financial claims granted to a martyr's family, on behalf of the young boy. Thus, both claims and non-claims are associated with the financial and social privileges that a martyr's family often receives.

There are also instances of people not wanting to remember a tortured past, albeit for any reason. When an event and its consequence overlap and both produce trauma, ephemera are not found. In most cases in Bangladesh, graves are primary memory triggers but they hardly fit the Greek description of legacy. Therefore, ephemera, in the conventional scholarship, are reflections on the past made in leisure and even nostalgia. However, in rural areas that have experienced war most intensely, people want to forget. Thus, the contestation is not about selecting memorabilia or

57. Debdas Ghosh (a member of *Roktadhara '71* and an inhabitant of Rangpur district), telephone interview with the author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022.

artefacts to remember, no matter how trivial, but about remembering and forgetting. Identification, thus, routes itself through the gaps between the availability and non-availability of ephemera, and between remembering and forgetting. The insubstantiality and uncertainty of memory are the closest ephemeral things many have in the world of the marginal. Thus, in Bangladesh, interviews and the collection of oral narratives are sponsored as part of the government's outreach programmes for the memorialisation of the martyred.

Contestations regarding the identification and naming of martyrs are demonstrated through a glorious display of Rolls of Honour in community-based commemorations and the differing claims of people to be included in these lists in NI. The latter is also a predominant contestation in Bangladesh, along with other contestations between national and individual memory, and between memory and oblivion.

3.2.6 International relations papers in Ireland and Bangladesh

Claire Norton writes on the symbolic power of a martyr as an icon in the political, military, and national lexicography of not only transnational liberationist, anti-colonial and revolutionary discourses, but also in the national rhetoric of more established European and American nations.⁵⁸ Fig. 3.25 shows a poster for a parade, held at the town of Bundoran in County Donegal in the Republic of Ireland, in commemoration of the extensive overseas support for the 1981 hunger strikers or the H-Block martyrs. Notably, it was not published by the political wing of republicanism, which mostly termed the 1981 prisoners who died as 'martyrs'. Speakers in the parade included the Grand Marshall of New York, along with a politician from SF. Alongside

58. Claire Norton and Mark Donnelly, "Weapons of war: The power of the poster," in *Liberating Histories* (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 138-9.

the overseas New York Police Band was the Lurgan Martyrs Republican flute band.

With the families of the hunger strikers coming out to remember the dead, were the Martin Hurson Memorial Band and the Kevin Lynch Memorial Band, who remembered the dead through music collectively. With portrait images of all the hunger strikers, individual bands named in their memory and based in Ireland attest to the continuance of martyr memorialisation at the local level, which, here, is supplemented by the overseas global speakers and their memorialisation as Ireland, America, Scotland and Europe remember the 1981 H-Block martyrs in this 1986 rally in the



Fig. 3.25. Poster: ‘Ireland, America, Scotland & Europe commemorate “H”-Block Hunger-Strike martyrs’. 1986. Image ID: PPO1427. Courtesy: TICR



Fig. 3.26. Political card: ‘Support the Turkish hunger strike. She was inspired by Bobby Sands.’ Political Cards – Republican (box 3, including photographic postcards and murals). Courtesy: PANIPC

Free state. International solidarity not only supported campaigns but also specific individuals, such as the support for a Turkish hunger striker in political cards (fig. 3.26). Peter Moloney, ephemera collector, writes about this mural representing Zehra Kulaksiz,⁵⁹ who like Bobby Sands, protested against

59. Peter Moloney, “Support the Turkish Hunger Strike,” *Extramural Activity* (blog). January 26, 2002, <https://petermoloneycollection.wordpress.com/2002/01/26/support-the-turkish-hunger-strike/>.

the prison conditions in Turkey. A total of 122 people died in it, much more than in NI. Such political memory cards made global martyrdom an everyday knowledge. Similar memory cards also featured connections between Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) member Hugh Torney, who was shot while transporting weapons in April 1995, and Argentine Marxist revolutionary, physician, writer, guerrilla leader, diplomat, and military theorist Che Guevara. It is not only Guevara's iconic portrait and quote on 'togetherness in death' (fig. 3.27)

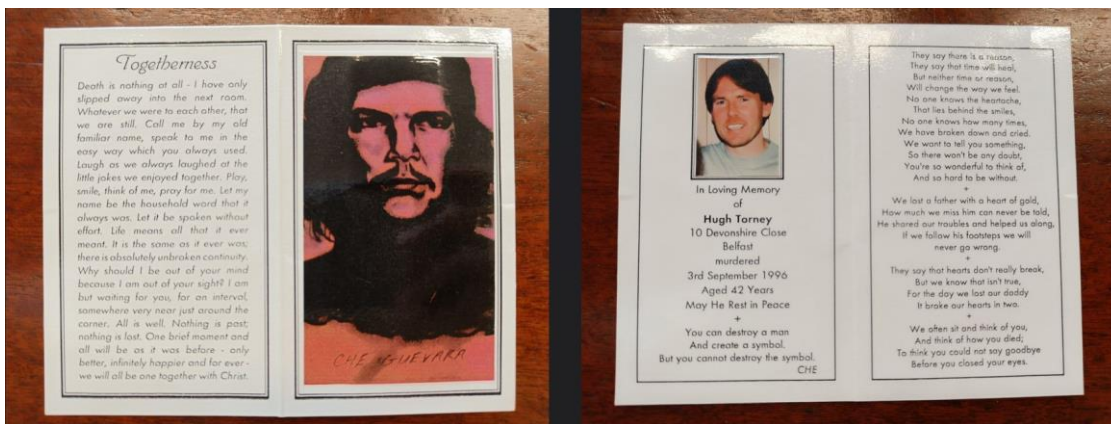


Fig. 3.27. Political card: 'Togetherness' (Che Guevara). In loving memory of Hugh Torney. 1996. Political Cards – Republican (box 2). Courtesy: PANIPC

but his presence in the popular imagination of people across the world, that makes his figure and words common usage in the commemoration traditions of republican martyrs in NI. Solidarity movements are also built on religious ideologies; for example, Imam Khomeyni and the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed solidarity with the prison struggles undertaken by H-Block prisoners in NI, in a 1981 poster (discussed in section 2.2.2.4), even though the latter's struggle was not based on religious theocracy.

Solidarity movements have also been initiated in Bangladesh to not only commemorate the war dead of 1971 but also provide the martyred with international recognition as victims of genocide. Attempts of political parties to commemorate the

solidarity with the Muslim brotherhood resurged in Bangladesh after the assassination

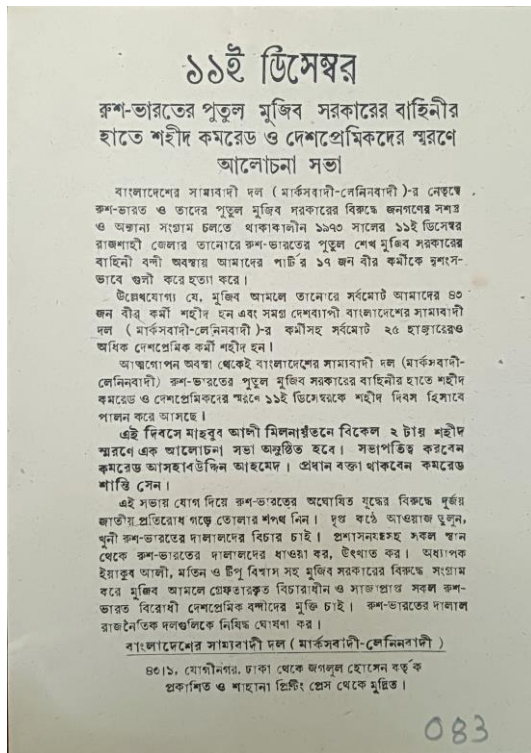


Fig. 3.28. Leaflet: Celebration of martyrs' day on December 11. Bangladesh Communist Party. Courtesy: HA

of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Fig. 3.28 is a leaflet that calls upon the people of Bangladesh to celebrate martyrs' day on 11th December by standing up against the imperialism of India and Russia. Issued by the Bangladesh Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), the leaflet asked people to commemorate the common people's armed struggle against the puppet Mujibnagar government, allegedly controlled by India and Russia.

During this struggle, forty-three party workers in the Tanore Upazila of the

Rajshahi district, and more than 25000 workers all over the country were martyred. Through this call for the meeting, people were invited to demonstrate a popular consensus of dissatisfaction with those collaborating with Indo-Russian agents. It also held an added call for the release of political prisoners who were imprisoned by the puppet Mujibnagar government. There was a similar call for anti-solidarity with Indo-Russian agents, especially political parties supporting their ideologies. Many such leaflets from 1975 made references to the Mujibnagar government and its close ties with India and Russia. One such leaflet, issued by the youth wing of the BNP, expressed solidarity with the international Muslim Brotherhood (like that of the anti-Al Bangladesh Communist Party), similar to the stance of Iranian religious leaders expressing solidarity with the hunger strikers of NI. These leaflets focussed on India

trafficking animals along the border and Russia providing arms training to collaborators in Bangladesh. The actions of India and Russia were posited as anti-people and the BNP looked forward to the rise of the common working-class people again against these countries and their agents in Bangladesh.

Thus, international solidarities make martyrs through contestations between authoritarian oppressions of the home country and advocacy for rights in other countries that the oppressed martyrs died for. Contestations also continue when other countries support the internal contestations of martyrdom in a home country, leading to international anti-solidarities.

3.3 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE'S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH EMBLEMS

Other than locations and processes, emblems also narrate martyrdom through their objective realities and symbolic interpretations. They are to be found in religious ephemera, such as crosses and saints' touch, national ephemera, such as stamps and flags, and visual ephemera like images of martyrs in portraits and murals. Religious emblems in prisoners' work and objects of community use provide new insights into martyr-making. National ephemera provide new insights into martyr-making in the context of different movements and political party contestations, even as they turn the martyr and martyrdom movements into icons in a country. Lastly, visual ephemera provide new insights in the making of martyrs through their spatial contexts.

3.3.1 Crosses in Ireland and Bangladesh

One of the most popular forms of artwork by the prisoners of Long Kesh included representations of Celtic crosses made from materials available to them, such as wood and matchsticks. The Cross featured in fig. 3.29 contains miniature portrait images of the signatories of the Easter 1916 Proclamation and an image of the document itself. The Celtic Cross did not emerge from the Christian crucifixion but from a more ancient symbol—the Chi-Rho monogram, which is the name of Christ in the Greek alphabet. Thus, the cross has both a pagan as well as a Christian association. The Most Rev Diarmuid Martin Archbishop of Dublin remarked that even though bishops and priests had condemned the leaders of the Rising, they were unequivocal nationalists in desiring an independent Irish Republic.⁶⁰ The reason for this was not the spectacle of martyrdom in the executions of the leaders, but rather



Fig. 3.29. Object: Wooden Celtic Cross for Easter Rising patriots. Made by Republican POWs. Long Kesh. Courtesy: EHIRHM

faith in their cause. In this regard, their sacrifice is similar to the sacrifice of Christ, as symbolised by the Church.⁶¹ When the republican Prisoners of War made the Celtic Cross in memory of the Easter signatories at Long Kesh prison in the 1970s, they reiterated the popularity of that motif. The Celtic Cross became an emblem of

60. Remarks of Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin, on reviewing *The Church and the Rising*, edited by Greg Daly (Ireland: The Irish Catholic, 2016). The remarks may be accessed at <https://dublindiocese.ie/the-church-and-the-1916-rising-archbishop-martin/>.

61. Discussions on specific leaders as Christ figures are found in Sheridan Gilley, "Pearse's Sacrifice: Christ and Cuchulain Crucified and Risen in the Easter Rising, 1916," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, eds. Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 479–97.

martyrdom standing witness across generations, from 1916 to the 1970s. Globally, the Easter Rising Celtic Cross has become a leitmotif in 1916 commemorations, with the cross bearing the names of the executed leaders of the Rising and carried during a parade of Irish-Americans in Chicago.⁶²

For the Bloody Sunday commemoration, the crosses are borne by future



Fig. 3.30. Photograph: Bloody Sunday family members with tinfoil crosses. 2014. Courtesy: PECPM.

generations. As part of the personalities ephemera, fig. 3.30 features a photograph taken by Peter Moloney, of the Bloody Sunday march organised by the involved family members, where they bear crosses for each

dead. While the tinfoil cross is emblematic of the cross borne by the archetypal martyr Jesus, the surviving family members contest the term ‘martyr’. For them, the crosses are a symbol of the peace that these souls deserve. Nevertheless, the relatives of the Bloody Sunday martyrs and the Executive Committee of NICRA issued leaflets,⁶³ which refers to the commemorated Bloody Sunday victims as ‘martyrs’ on the occasion of the unveiling of the Bloody Sunday memorial on 26th January, 1974. The narratives of the Bloody Sunday victims should be separated from these ‘martyr’ narratives and they should be perceived as common people murdered for demanding

62. Maura Grace Harrington, “Perspectives on the Easter Rising,” in *The Irish-American Experience in New Jersey and Metropolitan New York: Cultural Identity, Hybridity and Commemoration*, eds. Marta Mestrovic Deyrup and Maura Grace Harrington (London: Lexington Books, 2014), 66.

63. Brian Conway refers to one such ephemera in the chapter “A ‘Simple People Who Want a Simple Memorial’” in *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: Pathways of Memory* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2010), 55. This ephemera is to be found in the Northern Ireland Political Collection of the Linen Hall Library in NICRA box 1.

civil rights. Even though there are parade flags being carried by the other marchers behind, the crosses are at the forefront, carried mostly by the young marchers. Thus, the sacrifices and the demands for peace and justice were symbolically foregrounded than the colours of freedom (referring to the flags) with which they may be affiliated.

As in NI, crosses have also been made to commemorate the martyred in Bangladesh. Fig. 3.31 features a charred cross of Bangladesh, made by St Paul’s Cathedral Relief Services, Calcutta, using the beams of village huts wantonly destroyed by arson. Devoid of names of specific martyrs, the charred cross signifies the masses of people whose houses were burnt down. According to Afsan Chowdhury, who has studied the impact of the 1971 genocide in rural areas, arson and looting were the most common methods of killing people in the villages. The burnt cross epitomises these ways of mass martyrdom; moreover, such remembrance also includes a mark of the rehabilitation that followed. Made by the missionary relief services who rebuilt 10000 of such burnt houses, the cross became a symbol of the greatest consequence of martyrdom as a conflict—reconciliation.



Fig. 3.31. Object: Charred cross of Bangladesh given to *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. St. Paul’s Cathedral Relief Services, Calcutta. 1972. Exhibition: *Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. Courtesy: BNM

Crosses in NI emblemise an artist’s voice of freedom and a society’s voice for the just investigation of the dead against the contestations of criminality, according

to laws. In Bangladesh, the cross commemorates the martyred of 1971 and is emblematic of the voice of the rehabilitation of those who died in the genocide against the claims of Pakistan who dubbed 1971 as a civil and just war.

3.3.2 Flags in Ireland and Bangladesh

Flags are the most common ephemera that depict martyrs, either through imagistic symbolism or being wrapped around the coffin, indicating their due importance in the making of the martyr. Funeral scenes of the Easter 1916 leaders, the war of independence



Fig. 3.32. Label: Ireland Political: Manchester Martyrs Label (reprint on silk). Courtesy: eBay.

heroes, the hunger strikers, and the Gibraltar martyrs always involve draping the coffin in the Irish tricolour, just like the Union Jack is draped on the coffins of the unionists who die in NI. Specific symbols on flags (for example, the harp symbol on the Manchester Martyr murals) indicate the individual's affiliation, making it the martyr's espoused affiliation. Flags also emblematised the association of martyrdom with nationhood—these heroes fell for the sanctity of the flag and their martyrdom occurs in the name of the country. Fig. 3.32 features a label of the Manchester Martyrs against the image of the flag. The image of the martyrs is posited against the outline of the shamrock and the coloured background of the flag. This iteration of the flag was originally used as a stamp issued by the Irish Republic during the Easter 1916 Rising. From then, it became an iconic image that was reproduced in varied ephemera, which

are now sold as pricey keepsakes for as much as a forty-pound personal memorial item, such as this label⁶⁴. Shops sell various flags such as the Ulster flag, the UVF flag, the flag with the poppies, and flags with images of the cross signifying the dead, to locals and tourists (fig. 3.33). They are also featured in postcards and Christmas cards. The flying of flags across the country also marks the territories in NI. The locals

interpret this act as an ‘imagery of paramilitarism and terrorism’⁶⁵, which is emblematic of earlier sacrifices in those areas. The sanctity of martyrdom becomes further enmeshed in



Fig. 3.33. Miniature flags: Various unionist flags for sale. April 11, 2022. Courtesy: UJSS

flag disputes in NI. To avoid dissidence over such

increasing emblems in thoroughfares from Armagh to Caledon, Dungannon, Omagh and Enniskillen, roads service signs up for the ‘Multi-Agency Protocol for the Display of Flags in Public Areas’⁶⁶ or members of some communities like the PUL (Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist) Community remove loyalist flags themselves as in Derry⁶⁷.

64. The image is sourced from eBay, which sells a range of Irish political ephemera for auction houses, museums, and individuals. Tony Boyle at the Tower Museum even showed around some of the ephemera the museum bought from eBay. It may be accessed at <https://www.ebay.com/itm/372755278864>.

65. “Drop flags and slogans – UUP,” *Newry Democrat*, July 23, 2008.

66. “Challenge over dissident emblems,” *Belfast Newsletter*, April 27, 2009.

67. “Almost 700 loyalist flags removed,” *Derry Journal*, September 10, 2008.

In Bangladesh, flags are associated with iconic sites. Fig. 3.34 is a photograph of the rooftop above the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts building in Dhaka University, where the flag of independent Bangladesh was raised on 2nd March, 1971. On this day, students at the university had organised a mass meeting against President Yahya’s shocking declaration of suspension of parliamentary session sine die,⁶⁸ to be held on 3rd March. Due to a lack of space at the *bot tala* [under the banyan tree], the students moved to the rooftop where the flag of independent Bangladesh was raised when the genocide began. It is at the same site that the students raised a black flag in protest on 22nd February, 1952, the day rickshaw puller Salam and High Court employee Shafiur died in police firing.⁶⁹ Figuring in all kinds of print ephemera and figurative of the blood that the martyrs have given for their country, it is the national emblem of Bangladesh that never becomes confrontational.



Fig. 3.34. Mural: Flag hoisted at a students’ meeting on March 2, 1971. Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Dhaka. August 2, 2022.

68. “MARCH 3, 1971: Dhaka turns a city of processions,” *The Daily Star*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/march-3-1971-dhaka-turns-city-processions-1542805>.

69. Hasan Hamid, “How many were martyred in 1952 Language Movement?” *bdnews24.com*, February 20, 2019, <https://bdnews24.com/opinion/comment/how-many-were-martyred-in-1952-language-movement>.



Fig. 3.35. Poster: 'This flag is the blood flag of the workers.'
Bangladesh Communist Party.
Courtesy: HA

The flag, as a transient ephemera features on a more permanent ephemera, the mural. While the ceramic mural in fig. 3.34 is of a more permanent nature than the murals identified by Peter Moloney as ephemera in NI, the flag represented on it is ephemera. Therefore, the content, and not the medium of the mural, characterises it as ephemera. Nevertheless, other ideological flags exist parallelly to the national flag of Bangladesh, calling upon people to remember the sacrifices of the working classes, and those who

have been repressed under the post-Independence regime. Fig. 3.35 shows a poster referring to the working-class heroes whose have also shed blood for the country, similar to the martyr blood of the 1971 heroes. Issued by the Bangladesh Communist Party, the poster uses an international emblem of working-class struggle in defiance of Bangladesh's national flag, that has been appropriated by the predominant political parties of Bangladesh. The flag of the martyred workers is the flag of the communist party. The gruesome image of those killed as a result of post-Independence state oppression emphasises the act of the oppressors as murderers who shall not be pardoned by the people. Thus, akin to NI, conflicts are narrated through martyr motifs of sacrifice and spectacle. However, in NI, flags remain sectarian emblems of conflicting sacrifice.

In summary, flags are hoisted on sites of contestation in both Bangladesh and NI. In Bangladesh, the flags stand witness to the martyrdom of language martyrs and party activists as they agitate against an imperialistic country and authoritarian

government, especially with the latter claiming to be a pro-Liberation voice. In NI, flags emblematised the contestations between martyr commemorations and their nationalistic affiliations and commercial makeovers.

3.3.3 Portraits in Ireland and Bangladesh

‘...there has always been a certain something about Kevin’s face that gets me, can’t quite put my finger on what it is, but it feels special, and so so sad.’⁷⁰ These words by Deidre M. Jennings from a 2018 comment to a Facebook post resonate with both the common and critical perspectives in the visual making



Fig. 3.36. Badge: Commemorative badge for Kevin Barry. Courtesy: EHIRHM



Fig. 3.37. Object: “Official Limited Edition Kevin Barry Memorial Jersey for sale!!” Intosport.ie. Facebook, October 19, 2020. Courtesy: Facebook page of *Intosport.ie*.

of the martyr Kevin Barry. The portrait of Kevin as a young handsome boy, features on the Kevin Barry Centenary Commemoration 2020 Rathvilly County Carlow Committee’s official website. Barry went to school in Rathvilly, County Carlow, and later went to Dublin to study medicine at University College Dublin (UCD). The commemoration committee of 2020 continues to depend on the same

70. Deidre M. Jennings, August 12 2018 14:31pm, “comment on,” Irish History 1916 through to 1923, “The Ballad of Kevin Barry,” Facebook, August 12, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/1916risingirishcivilwar/posts/the-ballad-of-kevin-barry-the-ballad-kevin-barry-was-written-shortly-after-his-e/1915386771854211/>.

portrait of Barry, which was printed on the first of the mortuary cards by the UCD Commemoration Committee after his death.⁷¹ The same image of a young boy with an intense, shy gaze haunts memorial cards, commemoration flyers, DVD covers, commemorative badges (fig. 3.36), and jerseys (fig. 3.37⁷²). As both a stark, bold portrait and its shadowy replica, the image on the jersey, jointly made by the Rathvilly Kevin Barry Memorial Committee and Intosport.ie, an Irish sportswear manufacturer since 1991, contributes to the continual making of this martyr. Jack Elliott writes of the emotional connection in ‘mass-produced ephemera and more personalized items’⁷³ contrasting the portrait images of the Easter 1916 rebels in the newspapers and counterparts in small lockets worn as jewellery by people after the Rising, making these newspaper portrait images familiar and intimate. However, the same portrait image does not always persist. The face of the statue for which the Commemoration Committee is in the process of gathering funds will be another variant of Barry’s portrait. On the occasion of his 100th death anniversary, a new full-size sculpture will be erected using these funds, which were generated using the previous image with the intense, shy gaze. The sale of one martyr image contributes to the making of another martyr image. Therefore, it is important to understand the production of martyr images not only through their visuality but also through their visual reproduction. Visual ephemera facilitate sanctity and saleability at the same time. Variant images of a martyr are interlinked through nuances such as facial similarity, focus on youthfulness,

71. Discussion cited from the details of ‘Papers of the Kevin Barry Memorial Committee,’ University College Dublin Digital Library, <https://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:38697>.

72. Intosport.ie, “Official Limited Edition Kevin Barry Memorial Jersey for sale!!” Facebook, October 19, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Intosport.ie/posts/pfbid0UffsR9PwBnyRFd5epNfJdG5Nf5hhzR3sPH5inG61bDHcSMbVt91YcAZycjmZ75GLl>.

73. Jack Elliott, “‘After I am hanged my portrait will be interesting and not before’: Ephemera and the construction of personal responses to the Easter Rising” in *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, eds. Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 95.

genuine radiance, and committed idealism, all of which make and sustain the martyr in the minds of the people, featuring which any flyer or banner is immediately associated with the name of this martyr. The act of the execution of a person creates a martyr in one way, but the image of the person creates a martyr in multiple ways, as single-person portraits continue to resonate as singular individuals who rebel, sacrifice, and finally, transcend.

While sculptures endorse the creation of a martyr in more concrete terms, snapshots of sculptures circulate portrait images more easily through the digital medium, and constitute digital ephemera. These are different from the enduring portrait of Kevin Barry in the mortuary cards issued by the UCD Commemoration Committee. A 2020 Twitter post⁷⁴ on the 100th anniversary of Barry’s martyrdom

features
three
sculptural
depictions,
one at St
Catherine’s
Church,



Fig. 3.38. Photographs: History of Dublin@history_dublin. “Three sculptural depictions of #KevinBarry.” Twitter. November 1, 2020.

Meath Street, Dublin 8, the next at Kevin Barry Monument, Rathvilly, Carlow, and the third at Kilmainham Gaol Museum (fig. 3.38). While the portrait image in third sculpture resonates with the patriotic idealism of a youth martyr, the first portrait image carries a beatific composure. The wide eyes of the youthful figure grow more composed and serene as one looks at it. Differing from both is the side portrait of the

74. History of Dublin@history_dublin, “Three sculptural depictions of #KevinBarry,” Twitter, November 1, 2020 10:45pm, <https://twitter.com/statuesofdublin/status/1322950521964138497>.

middle image. It bears a mature quietness of a visionary intent on dedicating his life to a cause—it is an image of a rebel to become a martyr. The various facets of these portrait pictures constitute the various facets of Kevin Barry’s martyrdom. Different portrait pictures are used for different causes and different occasions. On 1st November, 2020, a commemorative

sculpture was unveiled at County Carlow and it bears this side portrait of his face at the centre (fig. 3.39)⁷⁵. Varying portraits together constitute a narrative of evolving portrait ephemera that sustain the making of the martyr across generations. It is in front of the portrait that people of a certain village may gather. It is the portrait that the people look to and remember the forgotten hero, the digital images of which are tweeted for a larger segment of people to remember and revere. While sculptures



Fig. 3.39. Photograph: Memorial to Kevin Barry. County Carlow. Paidin O’Hir. “Kevin Barry, ‘Just A Boy of Eighteen Summers’.” Courtesy: November 2, 2013. Courtesy: paddy1992addy (blog)

and monuments serve to commemorate the martyr, mere monumental commemoration does not constitute the whole process of martyr-making. In fact, the visual and digital ephemera associated with the monument make the martyr for most people.

Portrait images are also significant in the martyrdom narrative of Bangladesh. However, they are restricted to images of elite military martyrs and martyred intellectuals (other specific reasons discussed in section 2.2.2.2) who were socially

75. Paidin O’Hir, “Kevin Barry, ‘Just A Boy of Eighteen Summers’,” *paddy1992addy* (blog), November 2, 2013, <https://paddy1992addy.wordpress.com/2013/11/02/kevin-barry-just-a-boy-of-eighteen-summers/>. The post includes a range of ephemera dedicated to Barry such as postal stamps, photographs of crowds from Barry’s funeral, mass cards, and banners.

well-known, based in the cities and often photographed. Portraiture is featured through the complete body language of the martyr figure. The martyr in fig. 3.40 is the national figure, the Father of the Nation, whose bodily gestures have become part of the print ephemera in the country, circulated all the more on the occasion of his martyr



Fig. 3.40. Postcard. Drawing of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujib by Hashem Khan. 1997. Courtesy: MMC

anniversary. The drawing on the postcard features the iconic image of Sheikh Mujib with the populist stance of moving the index finger of his right hand while delivering a speech on 7th March, 1971, at the Race Course Maidan in Dhaka.

This iconic stance make people immediately remember his words that convey that the struggle of this time is the struggle for liberation and independence. It is not just the stance of an orator but also of a person who decided to publicly speak out against the changing responses of President Yahya in granting power to the people of EP. Since the government of Pakistan and President Yahya at the time did not acknowledge him, Mujib had to establish a justification for his cause. The dramatic



Fig. 3.41. Posters: Iconic posters with slogans of the 1971 Liberation War written on them. Courtesy: LWM

defiance of the pointer or index finger establishes the righteous stance of a people's leader who declared independence for them. This image, which is a drawing by Hashem Khan, was also circulated as postcards during the 25th *Shahadat* anniversary in 2000 by the Institute of Liberation Bangabandhu and Bangladesh Studies National University, Dhaka (fig. 3.40).

Like in Ireland, these portrait emblems become part of personal ephemera, featuring on the walls of people's households. This stance also features in posters, along with his iconic words. Other portraits, as featured in fig. 3.41, are of unnamed people, but these emblematic portraits have become symbolic of the common people who went on to become the mass martyrs for Bangladesh. The wide eyes and calm face of the young man and woman represent the young men, the mothers and the daughters of the country who became freedom fighters. Such people plunged into the 1971 War without any training whatsoever, as every

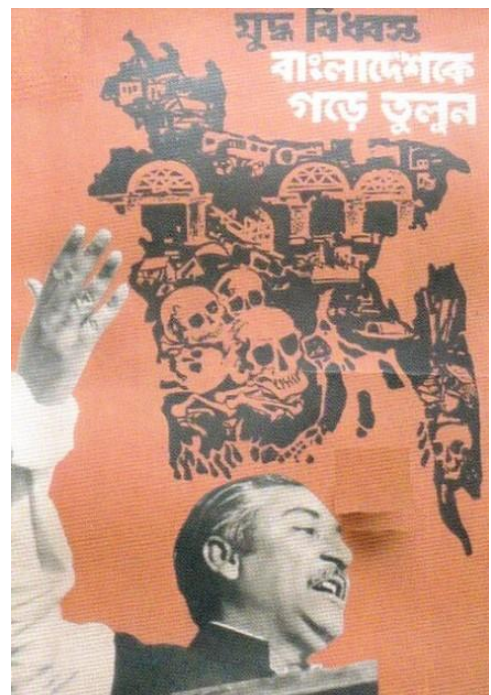


Fig. 3.42. Poster: Sheikh Mujib calling upon the people to rebuild a war-torn Bangladesh. 1972. Courtesy: *Muktijuddho e-Archive*.

house became a site of war. Fig. 3.42 features a poster depicting Mujib with the same stance of a raised right hand that he used, to call for the people to rebuild Bangladesh

after the 1971 Liberation War, which became the face of many posters in 1972⁷⁶. In this poster, the mass martyrs of the country are featured as skulls lying before houses and along rivers all over the country.

Thus, portrait images present the martyrs through their youth and their committed engagement with the masses. They include a range of peculiarities, from facial expressions to bodily gestures. In Bangladesh, other than specific individuals who go on to become icons, there are also instances of common people becoming iconic faces of the struggle. Contestations occur between the portraiture created at the institutional or national level and the people’s remembrance of them at different phases of history.

3.3.4 Stamps in Ireland and Bangladesh



Fig. 3.43. Stamp and First Day Cover (FDC): ‘The Patriot Dead 1922-1923’. Printed by Kellyprint Ltd. for the Harp Cover Club of Ireland, Dublin. January 21, 1969. Courtesy: EHIRHM

It is not only through images of martyrs but also through emblematic motifs that martyrdom is commemorated in countries. Fig. 3.43 features a special postage stamp that was issued on 1st June, 1972, entitled ‘The Patriot Dead’. It commemorates the 50th anniversary of the first meeting of the Dail (the revolutionary, unicameral parliament of the Irish Republic from 1919 to 1922) when seventy percent of the Irish electorate voted to withdraw from the UK and establish the Irish Republic. The British

government did not accept the same and imposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty whereby

76. Muktijuddho e-archive, ‘Poster 1972,’ Flickr, April 14, 2021, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/liberationwarbangladesh/51116322845/in/album-72157718940047372/>.

twenty-six counties out of thirty-two became independent and the other six remained under British rule. However, this resulted in the 1922 War of Independence, which was a civil war between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty sides. This stamp commemorates those who died in it. The image of the dove soaring above the rising moon is symbolic of the aspirations with which the soldiers fought, over land and water. This stamp printed for the Harp Cover Club of Ireland in Dublin, a civil society organisation, was used to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the issuance of the first postage stamp by the Dail to claim legitimate authority over all of Ireland. With the use of the Irish language and the emblem of the patriot dead, the stamps and the first-day covers commemorate a narrative of martyrdom. There is also the 1916–2016 8th Definitive Series, which was a series of postage stamps that were used to commemorate the Easter Rising. The series was grouped into four categories: Leaders and Icons, Participants, Easter Week, and the Aftermath. In the first category, the stamps featured portrait images of the executed leaders, signifying the importance of their iconic portraits. Outram and Laybourn mention that this occurs when a martyr is adopted by the state and thereby becomes a people's martyr.⁷⁷ In NI, still a part of the UK, stamps issued by the Royal Mail still feature a profile portrait of the British Queen.

Similar motifs were present in the stamps that were issued two years after the independence of Bangladesh. The stamps were designed by K. G. Mostafa, printed in the USA, and issued on 25th March, 1973. The design in fig. 3.44 shows the broken skull of a slain martyr lying amidst fields of the countryside where most of the mass killings took place. There were too many martyrs to be individually named, but each

77. Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn, "A Divine Discontent with Wrong: The People's Martyrology," in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the Present* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 19.

skull is shown giving rise to a beautiful white flower growing higher and higher, like a symbol of freedom and liberated aspiration rising higher and higher. The words ‘In



Fig. 3.44. Stamp: ‘In memory of the martyrs of the liberation war’. Bangladesh Post Office. March 25, 1973. Courtesy: LWM

memory of the martyrs of the liberation war’ in both English and Bangla indicates its original issuance abroad, as well as enabled such stamps to be circulated worldwide, so that the world would know and acknowledge the genocide in Bangladesh. As in Ireland, other stamps in Bangladesh feature portrait images of martyrs, such as that of the seven *Bir Shreshthos* who received gallantry awards for their martyrdom in 1971, the martyred intellectuals of 1971 whose names have been included in the gazette

in 2021, the five language martyrs of 1952, and of Nur Hossain, the student leader who was shot dead in the mass uprising of 1969. Muntasir Mamoon explained that the research behind the issuance of the postal tickets in the 1991 series laid the process for including the names of these martyrs in the gazette.⁷⁸ Significantly, martyr memorial sites have also featured on stamps, coins, and banknotes, like the *Shahid Minar* that was first built after the death of the language martyrs but has now become a cultural site for the people of the country to pay



Fig. 3.45. Stamp: Memorabilia postal stamp in the remembrance of language movement. Price value: 20 paisa. Bangladesh Post Office. Courtesy: LWM

78. Professor Muntasir Mamoon (Bangladeshi writer, historian, scholar, secularist, translator, and professor at University of Dhaka), interview by author, Dhaka, August 10, 2022. Transcript, with author.

homage to during any event. Fig. 3.45 illustrates one of the earliest stamps featuring the martyrs' memorial, with the Bangla words '*Shahid shorone*' [In memory of martyrs] at the top; and 21st February at the two sides, commemorating that fatal day, signifying the language movement.

To sum up, commemorative stamps are issued in the Republic of Ireland to commemorate the martyrs of Ireland, but not so in the North. This demonstrates contestations between a government that issues its own stamps and the commemorative stamps issued by the government of the independent Republic. In Bangladesh, stamps commemorating earlier martyrdoms only began with the independence of the country in 1971.

3.3.5 Saints' touch in Ireland

While St Oliver Plunkett is the last official Catholic martyr to be executed in England, on 1st July, 1681, his name recently figured in the unveiling of a statue on 9th July, 2019, at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. In a mass in November 2018, Archbishop Eamon Martin mentioned his desire to commission a statue as a special acknowledgment of Plunkett, and through him, honour the martyrs of the past, present, and future. In the homily, Plunkett is addressed as a 'martyr for the faith', whose 'martyrdom and persecution' is not something of the past but that reminds one of the martyrs of the Christian faith in Sri Lanka and Burkina Faso.⁷⁹ New statues will become new sites of pilgrimage, where visitors will come to touch the sacred saint and redeem themselves. While the statue of St Oliver Plunkett made by Dublin-based artist Dony Mac Manus is a concrete memorial capturing a moment of martyrdom, the

79. The homily may be accessed in full on the website of the Archdiocese of Armagh, <https://www.armagharchdiocese.org/archbishop-eamon-martin-unveils-new-statue-of-saint-oliver-plunkett-in-honour-of-martyrs-yesterday-today-and-tomorrow/>.

three-day pilgrimage undertaken by 100 pilgrims on a 100 kilometers trek⁸⁰ on the occasion of the statue's unveiling, to touch the relics of martyrdom, is an instance of ephemera. The one-time sacred nature of each touch characterises it as pious ephemera. Plunkett also became popular for the relics that were given to various churches in Ireland, such as the left femur bone of his body, presented to the Irish hierarchy by the Abbot and Benedictine Community of Downside Abbey in Somerset on June 1975. The footage of the relic's reception shows common people of all ages coming to watch it.⁸¹ The Annual Procession with the Relics takes place in Drogheda on Sunday, 7th July, where the Relic of the Head was transferred in 1921. Thousands of pilgrims visit this national shrine each year. A description can be found on the shrine where the head and arms are placed: 'On each angle of the roof is a silver flame, emblematical of martyrdom'.⁸² Such emblematical motifs characterise the relic's touch and associate it with martyrdom. The head also becomes a significant object of a search and revelation.⁸³ The saint's touch is also evident in various activities undertaken by the parish groups of the Church such as the Environmental Committee which works together with the Department of Environment, Belfast City

80. Chai Brady, "St Oliver Plunkett honoured with procession, Camino and 7-foot statue," *The Irish Catholic*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.irishcatholic.com/st-oliver-plunkett-honoured-with-procession-camino-and-7-foot-statue/>.

81. The footage, entitled 'Oldcastle Welcomes Relic 1975' at the RTÉ archives may be accessed at <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2020/1028/1174471-saint-oliver-plunkett-relic/>.

82. Patrick Francis Moran, 'Veneration shown to Dr. Plunkett after his death', in *Memoirs of the Most Rev. Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, who suffered death for the Catholic faith in the year 1681* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1861), 377.

83. *Bring Me the Head of Oliver Plunkett* (2004) is the second novel of the *Eddie & the Gang with No Name* trilogy by Northern Irish author Colin Bateman. The book is a crime fiction where the young boys witness the theft of the Head and help in its finding to overcome their guilt in not being able to prevent the crime.

Council, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to improve the cleanliness of the parish area, which is especially blessed by him.⁸⁴

The fleeting gesture of touch exists in the relics of martyred saints in Ireland, but in Bangladesh, martyrs are more secular figures. Saints such as Shah Jalal are not martyrs for the people of Bangladesh, even though their divine motivational stories continue to inspire the people of the country.

3.3.6 Murals in Ireland and Bangladesh

The images painted on the murals are one of the many ways in which martyr narratives are easily disseminated among people, either through murals on the walls or through their photographs or postcards. Murals are not permanent fixtures though; they are painted over by other images, brought back to other sites, and continue to remain on the walls



Fig. 3.46. Mural: 'Manchester Martyrs: Bring them home to Irish soil'. Divis Street, Belfast. 2006. Courtesy: PECPM (non-existent now)

amidst debates surrounding their validity. They have been characterised as ephemera in the PECPM. Presently, in NI, most of them are painted on the long International Wall (also known as 'Solidarity Wall') on Divis Street, through which one enters into republican West Belfast. The remaining others are strewn over the city, including the unionist East Belfast. The ephemeral nature of a mural consists of its reiteration, replacement, redundancy, and reinvigoration. These are the modes through which the narrative of martyrdom is disseminated across generations. Fig. 3.46 is a mural of the

84. Tony McGee ed., *St. Oliver Plunkett Parish Belfast: Church re-opening and re-dedication Sunday, Apr 21, 1985* (Belfast: [s.n.], 1985), 67.

Manchester martyrs, which was replaced by another mural (fig. 3.47) on the International Wall of Divis Street. The former appears more traditional, with portraits



Fig. 3.47. Mural: ‘Manchester Martyrs: Bring them home to Irish soil’. Divis Street, Belfast. 2008. Courtesy: PECPM (non-existent now)

of the martyrs framed within the contours of a shamrock (the three leaves of which symbolise the Holy Trinity) while surrounding the Irish harp (national symbol of Ireland). In the modern version, the sacralising traditional and national emblems are removed and the portraits of martyrs are featured on ‘convicted felon’

posters produced by the British authorities. It offers an authentic feel of the rigorous criminal proceedings that were directed against them, resulting in their death sentences. The mural contains a reproduction of the painting showing the IRB’s attack on the prison van that killed a guard, to free Colonel Thomas J. Kelly and Captain Timothy Deasy, which resulted in Captain Michael O’Brien, Michael Larkin and William O’Meara Allen being arrested, tried and later executed. This secret society wanted to overthrow British rule in Ireland through armed insurrection (like the later IRA). There is a reference to a desire to bring their remains back to the Irish soil (similar to the previous mural) but the fact, that the remains of the bodies of the three Irishmen who had been falsely accused remain in Manchester, England, is elaborated in the later one. The word ‘felon’ refers to a person convicted of a political crime. Like the phrase ‘God Save Ireland’, which has become part of the musical culture of Irish nationalist imagination, the word ‘felon’ in the latter version also adds the charm of revolutionary politics to the martyrs’ figures. In the Northern Irish murals, the

invocation of God and the depiction of motifs related to Christ in the representation of martyrs is situated in the context of the conflict between loyalist and republican paramilitaries and the British state,⁸⁵ unlike the religious symbolism in the political murals of martyrs in Iran, propagating the myth of Karbala, ‘to control the masses, bolster elite power and marginalise opposition to that power’.⁸⁶

Murals are often made through local community initiatives to honour local volunteers,⁸⁷ but they may be

scarcely noticed by the locals living in the area. Yet they claim much of the local space, for instance the sides of households that allow part of their premises to be painted as murals. Fig. 3.48 features a



residential building alongside which the East Belfast UVF mural commemorating the First World

Fig. 3.48. Mural: Commemorating the martyrs of the East Belfast Battalion and the Battle of Somme in the First World War. Alongside a house. Newtownards, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

War heroes, its regimental flute and drum band, and individual members of the Royal Irish Rifles who died, is painted. Murals such as these become territory markers and sites of Troubles tourism, where tourist guides and black taxi cabs explain these sites to curious foreigners. To a certain extent, these sectarian markers in lanes and by lanes are retained to cater to this booming tourist business. However, as I walked along Falls Road, I could see the nature of the murals changing. There were unionist murals

85. Norton and Donnelly, “Weapons of war,” *Liberating Histories*, 139.

86. Bill Rolston, “When everywhere is Karbala: Murals, martyrdom and propaganda in Iran,” *Memory Studies* 13, no. 1 (2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017730870>.

87. “The Art of the Oppressed,” *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, May 19, 1988.

paying tribute to all the foreign nationals who had fought alongside the British Empire under the Action for Community Transformation Initiative, installations on conflict resolution and peace under the European Regional Development Fund, and particularly, images of the Troubles in patches along with murals with the proclamation that in understanding, all walls shall fall. Thus, martyr narratives in these murals look forward to a future of peace and understanding.

On the other hand, murals and graffiti in Bangladesh are not territorial markers.



Fig. 3.49. Mural: Commemorating the language martyrs of 1952. Opposite wall of Mirpur Jalladkhana field memorial site. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022.

They depict martyrs for glorification purposes, such as the more permanent ceramic mural commemorating the language martyrs outside the Central Students' Union building at Dhaka University (popularly known as DUCSU Bhavan). It foregrounds the fact that the University has been central to the initiation of the language movement, in which students rebelled against the use of Urdu as the state and official language

because it mostly ruined their job prospects. This mural was commissioned by the curator of the museum at DUCSU without any support from the University authorities, explained Tawheed Reza Noor.⁸⁸ Murals have also been commissioned by the Dhaka city corporation, like the one just outside the Mirpur Jalladkhana field memorial site at Mirpur, Dhaka (fig. 3.49). It features along the wall of a playground and interestingly

88. Tawheed Reza Noor (erstwhile student of Dhaka University and son of martyred journalist Serajuddin Hossain), telephone interview by author, November 7, 2022. Transcript, with author.

represents men and women agitating for Bangla as state language, being shot by the police. The smile on their faces is the archetypal image of martyrs as sacrificial figures and here, this expression is appropriated by the martyred common people. At one end of the playground, there is a platform for giving speeches on any occasion. As children play or people arrive to collect COVID-19 relief material that is distributed from this site, people see the figures of the *Bir Shreshthos* every day. Children know about the complete trajectory of the Liberation War through this mural narrative along the walls—from the gallantry awardees of the nation to the ordinary martyrs. Like in NI, martyr depiction in murals amalgamates with the national martyr narrative, but the sectarian marking of a site is not present in Bangladesh.

Murals and graffiti, thus, work as emblems of contestation between paramilitary organisations or institutions that commission them and their symbolic interpretations as voices for the oppressed. In addition, their locations also enable people to know about these martyrs and the kinds of heroes their local society commemorates. Moreover, while an image of the police shooting the martyrs in the language movement exists near a playground in Bangladesh, murals of hooded men pointing guns at the viewer while standing on the defensive for funeral ceremonies in NI are being replaced.

3.4 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE’S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is a specific means of martyr-making, as it foregrounds the role of the parties in conflict. These parties use various propaganda machines such as newspaper headlines, posters, pamphlets, leaflets, welfare and justice campaigns, and

prison artwork. While these methods generate propaganda, they are also utilised by martyrs of various classes to cater to the demands of their group. In the name of addressing the needs of the people, contestations arise between the people’s understanding of martyr narratives and what is posited as people’s understanding, as well as between institutional and individual narratives.

3.4.1 Newspaper front pages and headlines in Ireland and Bangladesh



Fig. 3.50. Newspaper front page: ‘The Collins Family: A Sister’s Dream’. *Daily Sketch*. August 25, 1922. Courtesy: EHIRHM

The front page of a newspaper is not only a factual source of record but also a visual compendium that has a great impact in retrospect. It tells the reader which news was important enough to make the headline, as well as occupy the front page of the newspaper. Supporting studies have dealt with references in British and Irish newspaper articles in presenting Collins as a ‘nationalist martyr’⁸⁹.

Fig. 3.50 features a British national tabloid, which gave a full front–page coverage to the news of Collins’ assassination along with full-blown images of Collins’ family. It informs that ‘crowds wait all night for dead Irish leader’. The news documents the thousands who participated in Collins’ funeral; this witnessing turned him into a ‘martyr’. The news also brings together references to the political honours given to the fallen leader as he was borne to the City Hall at

89. Amber Anna Colvin, “‘The Big Fellow Is Dead!’: Michael Collins as Celebrity and Nationalist Martyr,” in *(Extra)Ordinary?: The Concept of Authenticity in Celebrity and Fan Studies*, eds. Jade Alexander and Katarzyna Bronk (Brill, 2018), 11–33.

Dublin City Centre, along with the personal memories that his sister honoured him with. Further, information on four generations of the Collins family is presented parallel to the information on “impressive scenes in Dublin” during Collins’ funeral. A detailed study of how British newspapers use other news to counter the significance of Collins’ death, is the additional contribution of this ephemera in making the martyr. This front page grants equal space to the “natural” death of Thomas Armstrong as opposed to the assassination of Collins, while it presents Marshal Chang Tso-lin as a ‘threat to the British’, similar to the threat posed by Collins to the British state. Thus, the martyr’s moment of death as well as his life’s actions are constructed through ironical contestations.

Unlike a British tabloid, in Bangladesh, the narrative of front-page martyrdom was undertaken by an anti-government news daily, the *Daily Sangbad*. After the killing of Asad, the front page featured news (fig. 3.51) about events leading to the killing, the subsequent strikes all over the country and ones by the medical college doctors, the mourning procession by student groups, and the protest marches in Lahore, Pakistan; all of this as students waited outside the medical college hospital for the body of the slain leader. These



Fig. 3.51. Press obituary: Amanullah Asaduzzaman. *Daily Sangbad*. January 21, 1969. Courtesy: LWM

narratives establish Asad as more of a public persona, than just someone who had been

a part of the students' protests for a long time and would lead to a students' uprising in 1969. His martyrdom became a process in which various protest actions were generated against the Ayub regime. Significantly, in fig. 3.51, the image of Asad's slain body is more in focus than the image of the police firing at the crowds in the mass uprising, thereby evoking the affective emotions of grief and grievance, one directed at the body and the other at the police of the President Ayub regime.

While a slain hero is not named a martyr in Ireland, the response of the common people remains the same in both countries. Collins' murder in August 1922 followed the War of Independence in July 1921. The crowds in Dublin mourned in the Irish Free State while the crowds in Dhaka and other districts mourned Asad in Dhaka, before its liberation in 1971. Whether it is a military leader or a student leader, their deaths are later cast as martyr narratives in the same mode of people's martyrdom, even as the contestation between naming and not naming the martyr continues. Collins' martyrdom is enmeshed in the national narrative of the Free State as the Irish tricolour was flown at half-mast in tribute to the dead leader even as it retaliates against the impositions of the British government, while Asad's death led to anti-government actions such as strikes and protest marches; both are representative of anti-government propaganda, whether partly or fully.

Newspaper front pages and headlines are spaces granted by pro- or anti-government print media to feature the life narratives and death saga of martyrs. Contestations in this case occur between the affiliations of the media houses and the content they depict, thus balancing the representation of the martyr as a cult hero or a man to be critiqued. They also uphold the response of the masses in commemorating the martyred.

3.4.2 Political cards, leaflets, and poster narratives in Ireland and Bangladesh

Martyr narratives are propagated among people in various ways. In Ireland, political cards⁹⁰ are issued on Easter, May Day, and New Year. The Republican Movement cards feature republican heroes and the hunger strikers who died or who were on their way to death. It also printed membership cards for the SF in Bobby Sands' constituency with the party's manifesto, or for the republican flute bands propagating the names of those executed in 1916. Further, the Bloody Sunday Initiative Archive cards feature Operation Bloody Sunday and the people who were affected by it; the European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation cards feature young children who have been killed in the Troubles; and the West Belfast SF appeal for funds to build the Connolly House using the 'buy a brick appeal' cards. While most of the ephemera are community-oriented, some move towards peace and reconciliation narratives as they present the martyr narratives of common people caught up in cross-community conflicts and groups.

In Bangladesh, leaflets and posters⁹¹ form more of their propagandist ephemera than newspapers. In every programme, martyrs are evoked. These programmes vary, such as the day of commemorating left-wing comrades such as Martyr Sikdar (shot by the *Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini*, a Bangladeshi para-military force formed in 1972 by the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman government), trade union activist like Tajul Islam (killed by the armed cadres loyal to the autocratic regime of President Hussain Muhammad Ershad) and others whose actions should inspire one to work against imperialism. On her death anniversary, martyr mother Jahanara Imam is evoked, along with her

90. The political cards studied here are available in the Political Artefacts boxes of the Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, UK.

91. The leaflets and posters studied here are available at the Heritage Archives, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

demand of punishment for war criminals. Her demand was enmeshed with her personal experience of knowing about her son, Rumi's death, who had been sent to war and had died of torture at the hands of the Pakistan Army, just like her own husband. She was fighting cancer but still wrote about these experiences and wanted all mothers to protest against such injustices. For this, she faced criminal proceedings as an anti-national figure. The National Mourning Day celebrates the pro-Liberation martyrs. Their celebration should lead to the defeat of anti-Liberation forces, for causes such as education reform, restoration of democracy, etc.

Unlike in NI, where such ephemera reached individuals, in Bangladesh, they always called upon the masses. These ephemera are printed and distributed by institutional bodies such as the Bangladesh Chhatra League (student wing of the AL), Samajtantrik Chhatrafront (students' wing of Rajshahi University), Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Parishad (formed after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman), Martyr Zia Commemoration Committees based in various districts, various cultural organisations, independent commemoration committees named after martyrs, and research wings of certain institutes. While institutions mobilise the people and create an environment of martyr-making through their leaflets and posters, they also deeply divide people based on their various socio-political alignments through the process of their propaganda. Along with the names of martyrs such as Asad, Matiur, Shamsuzzoha, and Sergeant Zahurul Haque, others such as Nargis, Rabiul, Shekhar, Helal, and Rokon who defeated the Mujib regime, are also invoked. Even though these ephemera talk about bringing about a semblance of socio-economic parity in people's present living conditions especially after the 1971 Independence—which would affect the lives of all workers, farmers, and middle-class people, the students are the ones who mostly demand things such as free and fair elections and

jobs, along with the defeat of American imperialism, Soviet repression, and the control of India. Such uses of martyr narratives do not always affect the martyr families living through difficult economic conditions. For the families of the poor mass martyrs of Bangladesh, their demands remain rooted in a lack of information and initiatives. A significant part of the population in villages did not die on active service but due to multiple other reasons such as torture, random shooting, village arson, and murder associated with loot. Their sacrifices have not yet become part of the national narrative. People in their own villages hardly know their names. In discussions with various CNG drivers in the city of Dhaka,⁹² who come from villages, most of them revealed that they were well aware of the families of martyred freedom fighters who had availed multiple socio-economic benefits and led their lives leisurely, while the rest had to send some kin to cities, to support their families back in the villages.

Thus, contestations occur between various ephemera contending different figures as martyrs, who have opposing, political, ideological, and existential affiliations. Contestations further occur between what these ephemera proclaim and to what extent these narratives affect the lives of the common people. In this regard, martyr narratives become people's narratives.

3.4.3 Prison ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Prison inmates paid tribute to the fallen martyrs of previous years as well as the comrades who have died in recent years within the confines of prison. In Ireland, prisoner art, like leather purses, glass paintings and nail art all glorify heroes. Similarly, handkerchiefs are one of the most popular ephemera produced by

92. The author discussed the relevance of martyr narratives with them on several of her journeys across the capital city during her fieldwork in Dhaka from 2nd to 17th August, 2022.

republican and loyalist prisoners, belonging to Provisional SF, UDA, UFF, as well as individual prisoners,⁹³ both male and female.⁹⁴ They were smuggled out of the prison

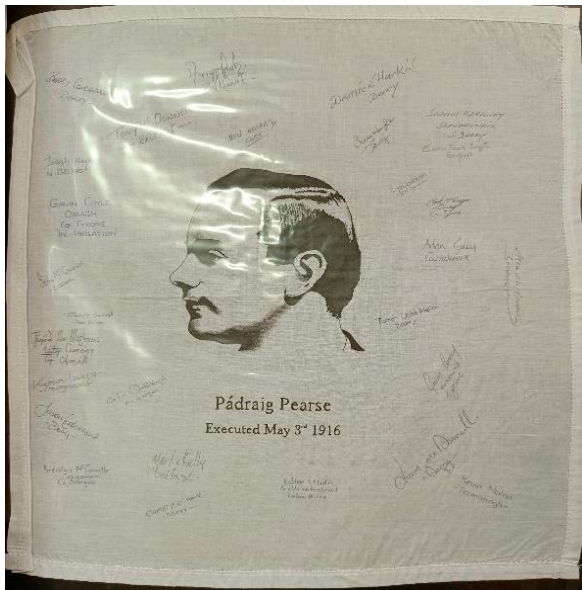


Fig. 3.52. Handkerchief: 'Padraig Pearse executed May 3rd 1916'. With signatures of 28 prisoners. Long Kesh. 1973. Courtesy: EHIRHM

to generate support for the cause of the prisoners. Some prisoners commemorated the martyrs of the Easter Rising or the members of the East Belfast Battalion on them, while others remembered comrades in other prisons; for example, a UDA handkerchief remembering the loyalist prisoners of the Crumlin Road Gaol. In fig. 3.52, on the handkerchief, prisoners such as Gavin Coyle from Armagh to

Liam McDonnell from Derry mark their presence using secretly stowed lead pencils on a white handkerchief, containing a black imprint of Pearse's portrait. Signatures by prisoners who underwent similar ordeals in prisons across Portlaoise, Lurgan, Belfast, and Strabane and become witnesses to Pearse's sacrifice, transform the handkerchief into a martyr ephemera. The aesthetics of this ephemera lie in the larger-than-life stakes involved. With a risk to their lives, the prisoners remember the leader who was executed fifty-seven years ago. Prisoners from various counties came together in their remembrance of the state-accepted national martyr figure of Padraig Pearse.

93. The Political Ephemera Collection of Peter Moloney holds handkerchiefs by most of these organisations.

94. Louise Purbrick discusses the handkerchiefs made by Armagh female prisoners as politicised and gendered objects in her 2014 article entitled "Cloth, gender, politics: the Armagh Handkerchief, 1976" (2014). It may be accessed at <https://journals.openedition.org/cliowgh/688>.

Prison ephemera in Bangladesh is limited to prison diaries written by martyred intellectuals such as Munier Chowdhury. While the prisoners in NI work on a definitive martyr narrative, intellectuals in Bangladesh focus on the limitations of any

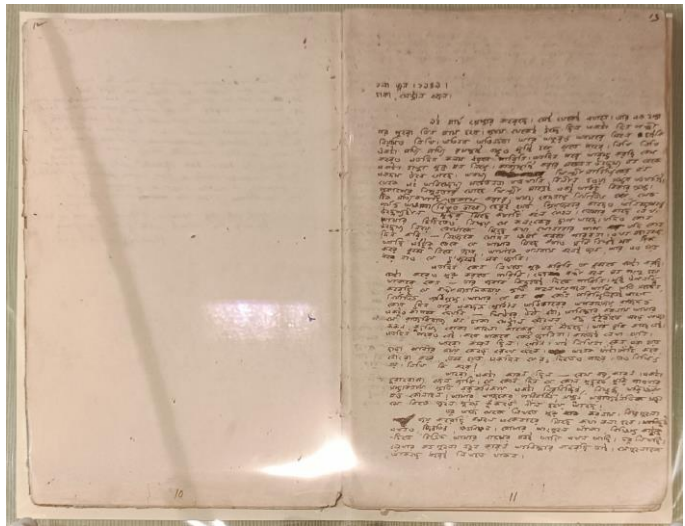


Fig. 3.53. Prison diary: Handwritten text in first page of Munier Chowdhury's diary. 1949. Courtesy: LWM

creative process inside the confines of a prison and the series of oppression that they overcame, to finally become victims of targeted killings in 1971. Fig. 3.53 is the first page of Chowdhury's prison diary where he states that idiomatic expressions such as 'the imprisonment of the body' and the 'freedom of the mind' could not enable him to start any creative process. The state of imprisonment takes away the political, social, and individual rights of a human being, making it difficult to nurture the creative process. Moreover, Chowdhury was also aware that the prison authorities would confiscate any manuscripts he may write. Nevertheless, with a scattered and distracted mind, he would begin his creative journey through such diary entries, and it would later result in the 1953 play *Kobor* [The Grave] being written and performed in prison.

While prison ephemera is more common in NI than in Bangladesh, contestations occur in both. These contestations are between the imprisoned position of the prisoners and the freedom of their art. Martyr narratives are creations within prison spaces, irrespective of whether historical (as in NI) or fictional (as in Bangladesh). Moreover, both are also creations by prisoners to be martyred in the future.

3.4.4 Welfare association ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Demands for the welfare of martyr families have been made at the local, state and national levels through campaigns. In NI, care for such families is limited to financial support for some of the immediate family members. Such campaigns are conducted by family members and prisoners' organisations, as reflected in the leaflet featured in fig. 3.54. It discusses the activities of the Greater Clonard Ex-Prisoners Association based in the republican area of Clonard in West

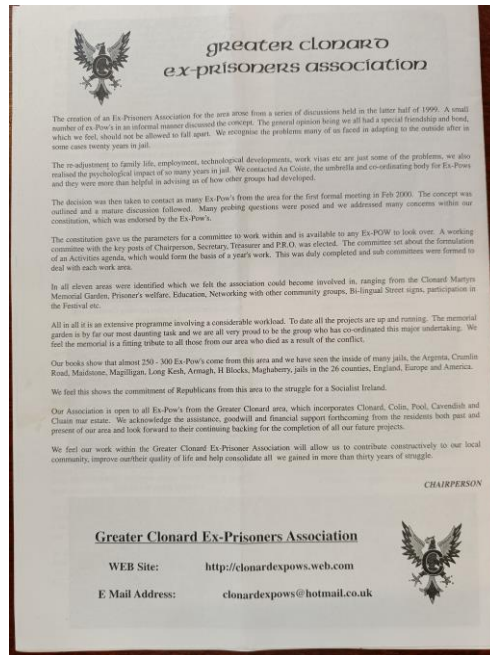


Fig. 3.54. Leaflet: Greater Clonard Ex-Prisoners Association. Murals (inc. memorials) box 2. Courtesy: ECNIPC.

Belfast, which is also home to several martyr memorials. This association not only

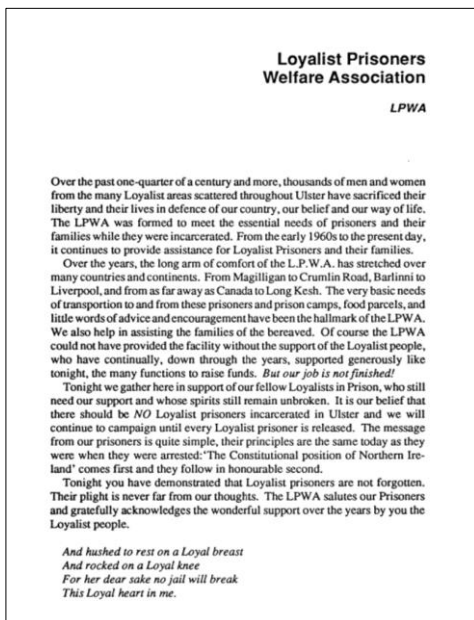


Fig. 3.55. Leaflet: Loyalist Prisoners Welfare Association. Courtesy: The University of Ottawa Scholars Portal.

cares for those prisoners of war who face trauma and social isolation but also for the families of those who have died in prisons. However, it is mainly a republican association whose main contribution has been the building of the Clonard Memorial Garden for republican volunteers and the people of Clonard who sacrificed their lives during the Troubles. Other activities of this association involve networking with other community groups, making more bi-lingual street signs, and

catering to prisoners' welfare and education. Another such organisation is the Loyalist Prisoners' Welfare Association, which provides relief to the families of those who are imprisoned and bereaved in that community (fig. 3.55). Working since the 1960s, its areas of focus range from Magilligan to Crumlin Road, Barlinni to Liverpool, and from as far away as Canada to Long Kesh. This welfare organisation also adopts the loyalist prisoners' stance of respecting the Constitution of Northern Ireland. This was not the case with the former association, which functioned mostly through the funds of the local people, and therefore commemorated martyrs who were not considered as 'freedom fighters' but 'terrorists', remaining anti-Constitution and anti-government.

In Bangladesh, the martyred families' demand for relief has featured in many official ephemera. Fig. 3.56 features the leaflet of the Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust, kindly provided by Md Nazrul Islam, Senior Assistant Secretary, MLWA, when I asked him about the various initiatives for martyrs in the country. The trust was initiated through a governmental order (no. 94/1972) and it was given to business and industrial organisations to carry out its work. To continue its work, the act was amended in 2018. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh became the chairperson of the trust and the working committee of this trust functioned under the MLWA. The trust is dedicated to the welfare of martyred freedom fighters, whose names mostly figure in the

gazettes prepared by the MLWA. Benefits offered by the trust include monthly

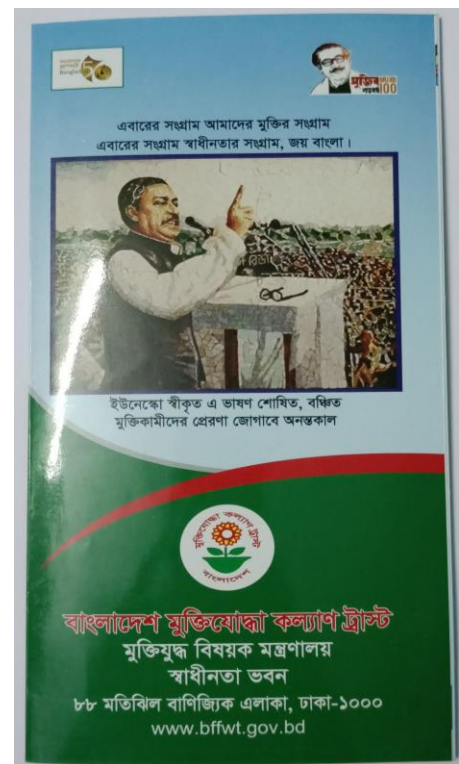


Fig. 3.56. Leaflet: Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust. Courtesy: Md. Nazrul Islam.

financial support of 30000 taka; a house for rehabilitation; ration; vocational training for family members; special grants for education, marriage, and festivals; a place for work; and socio-economic benefits. Its branches are located in the districts of Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Chittagong, but those in districts other than Dhaka are mostly on rent and their activities have reduced in scope over the years.

Loyalist and republican prisoner associations in NI focus on the welfare of the martyred but they remain confined to their communities, and do not reach out to civilian martyrs even though they are funded by the people. Welfare associations, even though mostly funded by the government in Bangladesh, fail to reach out to ordinary martyrs as the complete list of martyrs is in making. Contestations occur in the former because, whether pro- or anti-government, they do not focus on martyred civilians. Contestations occur in the latter, when even politically and socially well-connected people are not even aware that such welfare trusts exist.

3.4.5 Justice campaign ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Political cards were one of the many ways through which small contributions

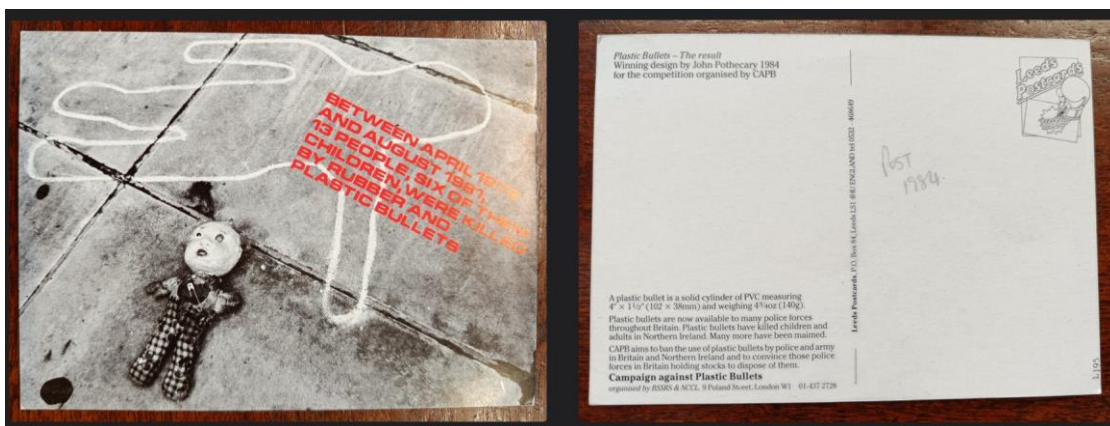


Fig. 3.57. Political Card: Plastic Bullets – The result - Winning design by John Pothearcy. Campaign against Plastic Bullets. Leeds Postcards, England. 1984. Political Cards – Republican (box 1). Courtesy: PANIPC

were collected from people so that legal battles for the hunger strikers could be fought

and campaigns for the demands of the political prisoners could be met and mobilised. They were also used to garner support for the ordinary victims. Portrayal of martyrs, presented as victims in such ephemera, enables people to come together for justice. For instance, the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets published cards featuring young victims of the Troubles (fig. 3.57). There were also ‘demands for justice inquiry’ cards, like the one created by the Justice for Diarmuid O’Neill Campaign. People could buy these cards and send them to the office of the Home Secretary in London demanding independent public inquiry into Diarmuid’s death, a PIRA volunteer who was unarmed and shot six times. The card urges that the lies contained in the initial police briefing should be investigated again. The image of bloodstains along the steps where he was dragged and then denied medical treatment adds to the emotive narrative of the injustice that continues. Similar cards were also addressed to Kevin McNamara (Former British Labour Party MP and opposition spokesperson at Northern Ireland Parliament Buildings in London, who supported the cause of Irish nationalism), along with images of officers of the RUC carrying plastic bullets in a funeral cortege of the republican dead, fearing riots.⁹⁵ The political cards represent the incriminations faced by the victims and victims’ families. Competitions were organised by the Campaign against Plastic Bullets, and the 1984 competition’s winning image and design is featured in fig. 3.57. For the common people, it is the contours of dead bodies and an image of a stuffed toy ripped apart during the killings, that make them understand the injustice meted out every day. Words are written in bold red, in the English language as it is spoken by the Irish—‘six of them children’ instead of ‘six children’, the latter being the standard Queen’s English. Such campaign competitions tap into the popular response of people’s martyrdoms. Significantly,

95. The political cards studied here are available in the Political Artefacts (Political Cards – Republican (box 1) of the Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, UK.

these cards are printed and published in London and circulated in local districts, thereby enabling the building of popular campaigns outside Ireland.

The justice campaign ephemera in Bangladesh feature fewer organisational attempts and more collective stances for justice. Fig. 3.58 is a popular photograph of

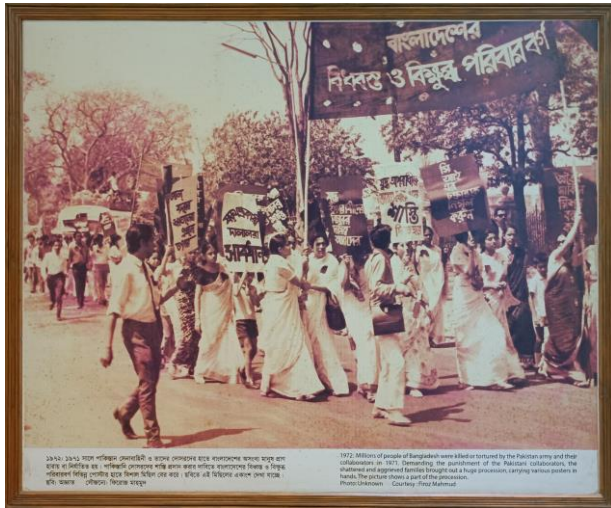


Fig. 3.58. Photograph: Martyr families in a procession demanding punishment of war criminals. 1972. Courtesy: Firoz Mahmud/BNM

martyr families carrying out huge processions to demand justice for war criminals in 1972. Immediately after the war, the children of the war collaborators were intent on imposing a different worldview, especially during the time of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, when collaborators accused of minor crimes, including those of Al-Badr

were pardoned and the Collaborators Act was repealed by a Presidential order on 31st December, 1975.⁹⁶ The martyr families also demanded elimination of the strategies of American imperialism conducted through its intelligence counterpart, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). These demands, as stated in the posters carried by them (in fig. 3.58), were mostly made by the women and children survivors in martyr families, as most of the male members were killed during the 1971 War. All their demands were directed to *Bangabandhu*. Several photographs of martyr families meeting him, demanding justice, can be found. According to Shariar Kabir,⁹⁷ martyr families have

96. Md. Saidul, ““Minority Islam” in Muslim Majority Bangladesh: The Violent Road to a New Brand of Secularism,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2011): 130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2011.556893>.

also been at the forefront of demands for war crimes justice, mostly conducted by civil society and local communities. The role of the pro-Liberation government, according to him, has not measured up to people's expectations. The FSBTWC endeavoured to seek international recognition for the war to be considered genocide, in order to seek redressal for martyr families. The current government has much to do in this regard. Martyr families come together on the eve of the national Bangladesh Genocide Remembrance Day (25th March) to light lamps of vigil every year. These annual initiatives become a forum for martyr families to renew their demands for justice. Even though the families who participate are titled martyrs, these attempts become the voice of a nation seeking justice. This justice is not only about reparation, it is also about apology and acknowledgement. Kabir recalls how Anam Zakaria, a Muslim researcher from Pakistan, had met martyr families in the villages who said that they were glad she had come to meet them and wanted to know about the difficulties they had gone through. It was an ethical reconciliation that had greater redressal value than political and economic compensation.

In NI, families of martyrs supported by political and legal organizations, also seek apologies for the deaths, mostly on an individual level. Fig. 3.59 features an article from an Irish Left journal, *The Blanket*, published by the families of two hunger strikers, Patsy O'Hara and Mickey Devine. The Sinn Féin 81 Committee organised a Night of Remembrance for hunger striker and INLA Volunteer Mickey Devine at Derry's Guildhall on 19th August, 2006, so that the Ex-Mayor of Derry City, Lynn Fleming of SF, could apologise to their families. Patsy O'Hara and Mickey Devine were imprisoned due to an arms raid that was undertaken after they received death

97. Shariar Kabir (President, Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971) in an interview with the author, Dhaka, August 6, 2022.

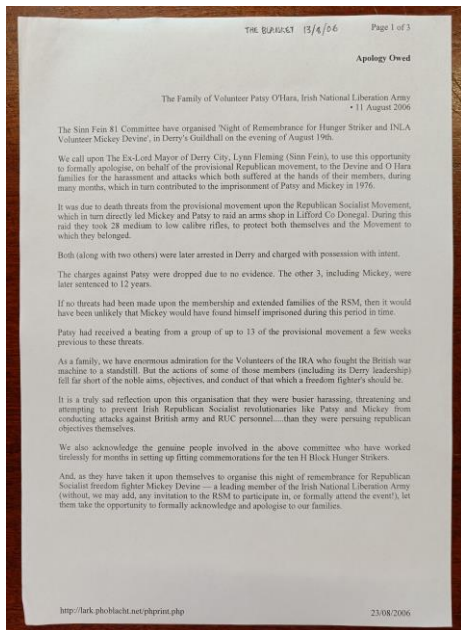


Fig. 3.59. Newspaper article: 'Apology Owed' published by the families of Patsy O'Hara and Mickey Devine. *The Blanket*. April 13, 2006. Hunger Strikes box 15 (inc. 25th anniversary materials). Courtesy: ECNIPC

threats from the provisional movement. Seeking of apology remains a means of post-conflict justice and redressal of trauma. Apology is sought from local collaborators and political organisations or perpetrators of imperialist countries. Moreover, in Bangladesh, there is the multi-branched Nirmul Committee (also based in a few districts) that focuses on justice for martyr families there, while Ireland has independent organisations like Justice for the Forgotten, which works to demand independent inquiry commissions for investigations into rural murders of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings

and the lives lost therein.

Thus, justice campaign contestations in NI and Bangladesh range from common people's internalisations of nature of injustices meted out to them and the constant public demands for trials of war criminals; from denial of closure to seeking apologies to end trauma.

3.5 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE'S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Martyr narratives are not just propagandist but also community-generated. From regional commemoration booklets to those based on the life and works of martyred intellectuals to people commemorating their local heroes, community

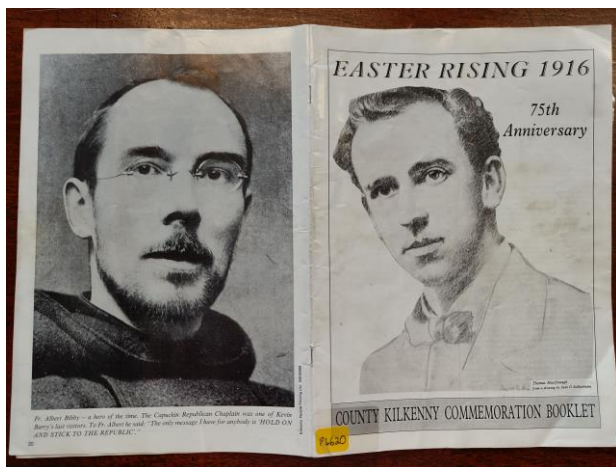
engagement tells us about common people who become martyrs. Various programmes to commemorate martyrs and various means of museums to reach out to people to make them aware of martyr ephemera in their families, allows such martyr-making to remain a continuous process. Intellectuals and trade union activists also contribute to martyr-making for reasons associated with their class identities. Walls, litterbin posters, rally banners, bin lids, and broomsticks become the ephemera of the local community, thereby creating the local martyrs to be seen by the immediate society and the world.

3.5.1 Commemoration booklets in Ireland and Bangladesh

Commemoration booklets are not only individual instances of people or organisations remembering martyrs, but a reflection of how their remembrance and its varied ways help construct martyrs as common people. Consider the ‘In Memoriam’ booklet for Roger Casement written by Benmore (mentioned in section 2.3.2.1). The booklet primarily reveals the extent of personal sacrifice that Casement had made. The writing is dedicated to Casement’s sister, Mrs Newman, who had worked with him over his years of struggle against British rule. She worked to obtain legal defence for Casement’s trial, since for the British, people like Casement were all involved in illegal activities. The memoir makes the difficult political situation of Easter 1916 clear through personal dedication. The personal and the political in the booklet culminate in the present narrative of “sacrifice”. Here, Casement is the “criminal” and “illegal” person whose death is a “penalty”. The commemoration then moves to the mourning of Casement as the Irishman who worked in the Gaelic Associations in the ‘historic and romantic Gens of Antrim’. As a site of the educational and cultural movement in the native Irish language, the schoolrooms of Glen were filled with

young children. Casement's contribution in shaping a Gaelic policy for NI is a testament to his years of activism for the cause of the nation, a testament that stands as a witness to his sacrifice. He is admired as a person who stirred the ideals of a native Gael to uphold the language and the fighting spirit of the nation. Yet, he also becomes something more than a person when he passes from life onto a greater life through death. Remarkably, this piece of commemoration ephemera includes a personal ephemera of Casement, namely his letter to the writer, through his sister, in which he includes a poem on the Irish language. Even as the republican movement has been studied as centered in the urban regions of Ireland, its roots had spread to the countryside long ago. Casement's work in Antrim, Connaught, Connemara, and Donegal among its local people made him a people's hero there and later their martyr.

Regional communities also generated commemoration booklets, such as, the



County Kilkenny Commemoration Booklet (fig. 3.60). It enumerates the members of the 1916 commemoration committee, which published this booklet as part of the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising. It features the everyday life

Fig. 3.60. Booklet: County Kilkenny 1916 Commemoration Committee. Easter Rising 1916: 75th anniversary: County Kilkenny commemoration committee. Kilkenny: Kilkenny 1916 Commemoration Committee, 1991.

of the Easter Rising-executed Thomas MacDonagh, the measures of whose clothes are given in the

form of an excerpt from the boutique shop in Kilkenny. It also includes the formation of the Kilkenny volunteers in 1914, the cancellation of the actions of Easter 1916 after the failure of the main uprising in Dublin, the role of Father Albert from Kilkenny in

administering the word of God and calm to the leaders of the 1916 Rising before their execution; and the life story of Patrick Baylon from Kilkenny who worked as a foreman and had acted as a dispatch carrier for the Irish Volunteers, which resulted in him being shot dead by the British Army.

In Bangladesh, commemoration booklets abound for martyred intellectuals. For some, commemoration programmes are held in the National Museum of Dhaka, like the one for Dhaka University professor Dhirendranath Datta, organised by the Dhirendranath Datta Commemoration Committee in 1993. Except the martyred intellectual stamp series of 1991 when he featured, there was no national recognition of this martyred intellectual until 1993, when this programme was organised. His contribution to the language movement against the imperialistic imposition of Urdu was deliberated here as an official and educational initiative. Such commemoration committees are a coming together of future intellectuals such as Sufia Kamal, Rashid Haider, Showkat Osman, Badruddin Omar and others, who connected the past and the present, to uphold and sustain the narrative of martyrdom. The booklet outlined the chronology of the martyr's life events, much of which had been unrecognised. Thus, the booklet becomes a narrative that looks forward to generating further narratives of this martyr, initiated by this commemoration programme.

Meanwhile, commemoration booklets of innumerable mass martyrs are based on district surveys conducted by various local martyr organisations in different districts and cultural organisations. Fig. 3.61 features a commemoration booklet of martyrs from the Narayanganj district published by the district committee of *Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi*, the largest anti-communal, progressive, and voluntary cultural organisation in Bangladesh. Commemoration booklets also



Fig. 3.61. Commemoration booklet: *Shoheed sharok* [Martyrs' souvenir]. Narayanganj district committee. Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi, Dhaka. Courtesy: MMC

demonstrate how the business world represents its corporate social responsibility by providing advertisements in such memorial booklets. Fig. 3.62 features a page from the commemoration booklet dedicated to martyred intellectual Zahir Raihan. Uttara Bank Ltd., one of the largest private sector banks in the country, features commemorative lines on Raihan—how his talent and brilliancy was cut short by his brutal death. Even though the range of commemoration booklets in Bangladesh is wider and more populist in their dissemination,

the literary nature of such commemoration publications is different. The poem by Casement is a sustained understanding of how the native Irish language penetrates the streams and rivers of Ireland, as the rhythms of speech synchronise all of nature. By

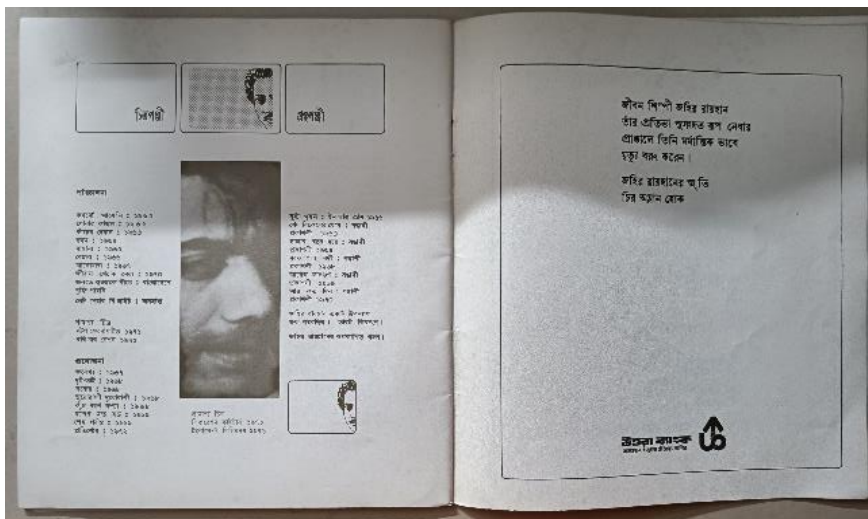


Fig. 3.62. Commemoration booklet: Zahir Raihan. Edited by Gazi Shahabuddin Ahmed. Sandhani Prokashoni, Dhaka. Courtesy: MMC

replacing the language of the people with the colonial language of English, the strength of expression and the claim of rights have been

withheld in the commemoration booklet in Ireland. In Bangladesh, advertisers are

geared toward a language of remembrance, which includes their role in the journey of the country's liberation. In remembering martyr Zahir Raihan, famous filmmaker and brother of Saidullah Kaiser—who went missing while looking for his brother in Mirpur in January 1972—the Uttara Bank advertisement commemorates the life-artisty of Raihan and his sad demise, the memory of which will continue to live across generations in Bangladesh. While advertisements provide financial and populist support, they also enmesh the narrative of martyrdom into the mainstream national narrative. In NI, however, they are part of an oppositional foil narrative of the nation and its language.

Contestations in commemoration booklets, thus, occur between the representation of martyrs as national and regional figures, and martyrs who have not been represented at the national level. Contestations also lie in the life works and artworks of martyrs and the commercial enterprises that glorify these narratives for specific aims.

3.5.2 Community ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

Community engagement for the making of a martyr generates varied ephemera. It enables each person to collectively remember the martyrs from their areas in their own ways. In NI, there are community engagement initiatives for distinct commemoration of the dead, as featured in fig. 3.63. It is an open letter addressed to the people of BT14 in Belfast from the Management Committee of Survivors of Trauma, stating that they want to build a glass wall displaying the names of all those who have died in that area. They published this open letter in the newspaper along with a list of those who died in the area during the Troubles since 1969 to 1998. The letter asked people to send photographs of their loved ones so that a permanent

photographic exhibition could be held in memory of the dead. Such newspaper extracts are attempts in which people of small communities come together to



Fig. 3.63. Roll of Honour: Newspaper extract: “In honour of the dead from BT14”. *The Irish News*. July 1, 2001. Deaths (troubles related deaths) box 1. Courtesy:

commemorate the dead in their areas. In this case, the resources are not limited to their own; rather, they include support from the Belfast Regeneration Office and the Irish government. Thus, at times, the government supports community engagements. However, sometimes, the people are also wary of the contributions made by the government. Asif Munier, while explaining the beginning of *Projonmo '71* in Bangladesh, mentions that contributions were surreptitiously made by governmental and intelligence authorities who wanted to intrude into the organisation (which

was mainly for the children and families of the martyrs of the Liberation War) and thereby distort the history of 1971 for future generations.⁹⁸ Thus, community engagement should keep itself beyond the reach of populist propaganda to sustain martyr legacies.

Interaction with the community also includes how martyr history is taught to future generations. The history and social science book for Class 6 students in Bangladesh, published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board in 2022, takes an interactive approach to the historiography of martyr-making. It contains a chapter

98. Asif Munier (son of martyred intellectual Munier Choudhury), interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022.

called ‘*Amader elakae Muktijuddho*’ [Liberation War in our area], which begins with the story of martyr Asad of the 1969 mass uprising, who chose to die instead of tell on his comrades. There are many such Asads in all areas of the country, and the children are asked to learn about the martyr narratives in their own families and narrate them to the rest. After knowing the national narrative of the freedom struggle, they are asked to follow a basic questionnaire and find out about the martyrs in their areas, along with their friends. These questionnaires, when circulated by the young children in their areas, will constitute ephemera of community engagement. This will help develop an interest in them to know about martyrdom in Bangladesh. Such community-based education can nurture martyr narratives at the level of local villages and towns.

Further, a wide range of events aimed at integrating the community in the remembrance of martyrs are organised. Through such activities people come to know about and internalise martyr conflicts and martyr emotions in their everyday



Fig. 3.64. Pamphlet: Hunger Strike 35th Anniversary - Weekend of Events Belfast. August 12-14, 2016. Hunger Strikes box 15 (inc. 25th anniversary materials).

Courtesy: ECNIPC

lives. Fig. 3.64 features a pamphlet of several events designed for the 35th anniversary of the hunger strikes in NI. From the screening of a drama entitled '81 (a 1996 comedy drama directed by Stephen Burke about a French T.V. crew that arrives in Belfast in 1981 to cover the hunger strike of IRA prisoner Bobby Sands) to the rededication of a Republican plot; from a concert playing trending songs to the Bobby Sands Cup final; from the Ballymurphy March for Truth to a Hunger Strike Parade; each event involves

people who engage in martyr-making through the artistic evocation of a martyr's rights, by sanctifying the ground of the dead, by playing in opposing sides, through demand for truth, and through demonstrations of power in a parade. The community engages in these ways in creating figures of martyrs for the people. The pamphlet also includes a range of stamps issued in remembrance of the H-Block martyrs along with various posters and statements of protest like 'From the Cages to the Blocks', 'Youth against H-Block and Armagh: Young People on the March', 'From Gaol [jail] to Gaeltacht (large areas of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry as well as sections of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford in which Irish Gaelic is the vernacular speech)', etc.



Fig. 3.65. Photograph: Mobile museum and the bus of the LWM. Taliapara, Mymensingh Division, Sherpur. 1996. Courtesy: Personal archives of Akku Chowdhury

Outreach programmes are also part of community engagements to rejuvenate martyr legacies. Fig. 3.65 is a photograph of the LWM's initial initiative of bringing the archives of the museum at the doorsteps of people in rural areas. It was started in Taliapara, where the Museum's

mobile bus was launched that travelled all over Bangladesh so that students in rural schools could access the mini museum in the bus. The trustees of the Museum travelled in the bus to various parts of the country, explaining to people the importance of the objects and ephemera included in the museum, and how people could look for such ephemera, preserve them and even send it to museums. The mobile museum,

with photographs put up on the walls of a village hut, locate martyr histories in people's everyday lives, shown in the surging crowds looking at the photographs. Instead of going to Dhaka, the children would be made aware of these histories in their area. Akku Chowdhury, one of the trustees, mentioned that this bus launch began from Taliapara to memorialise the first Muktiyuddho Commanders meeting.⁹⁹

Contestations in the making of a martyr through community ephemera occur between a call to include the names of common people in the list of the honoured dead and the process of verification which is influenced by paramilitary affiliations and community belonging; between the popularity of weekend events and the saga of socio-political protests; and between the mobile museum with ephemera reaching out to the remote spaces of martyrs in villages and the impossibility of retaining ephemera existing in the lives of these martyrs in the face of mass destruction.

3.5.3 Wall, litterbin posters and rally banners in Ireland and Bangladesh

Wall posters effectively reach local communities, as they are put up for display on a wall or litter bin. In Belfast, litter bins are permanent structures made of iron and are found at regular and close intervals across the city. One of the ways through which posters are disseminated for public viewing is through advertising spaces on public properties. Wall posters are mostly found on walls and are located in a specific place. Therefore, they indicate much about the content through the spatial dialectics of the place. Fig. 3.66 is a photograph of a poster put up on the wall of a building on Falls Road in West Belfast during the Easter Sunday parade on 17th April, 2022, the one organised by the Falls Cultural Society. I saw such posters mostly in Catholic-dominated West Belfast. In the Protestant-dominated East Belfast, it would be

99. Akku Chowdhury (trustee, Liberation War Museum and Liberation War freedom fighter), telephone conversation with the author, September 15, 2022.

dangerous to put up such posters, and they would be ripped off. In this poster, ‘martyrs’ are referred to as ‘Ireland’s dead’ who must be honoured. In the centre is the emblem of the ‘D’ Company, a company formed in 1917 with Irish volunteers of the



Fig. 3.66. Poster: Wall poster of Falls Cultural Society Easter Commemoration. Falls Road, West Belfast. April 17, 2022.

Belfast battalion who would go on to become the Irish Republican Army. On the left of that poster is a representative member of *Na Fianna Éireann*, known as the Fianna, an Irish nationalist youth organisation founded by Bulmer Hobson and Constance Markievicz in 1909. This organisation was involved in the setting up of the armed nationalist body, the Irish Volunteers. Martyrdom is, therefore, associated with armed revolution, wherein

the dead are commemorated by armed volunteers committed to the freedom of the nation. The present stance during the Easter parade, as dictated by the poster, is to wear an Easter lily, a confrontational visual emblem on one’s body.

Wall posters are also more sporadic in nature, as they may be put up individually by people and not always by organisations. Peter Moloney has commented on the competing nature of posters put up and distributed during the 2016 commemoration of the Easter Rising based on the different dates for the Easter parade.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, the confrontation lies between public and institutional narratives. Such community ephemera are made with much cheaper paper than the

100. Peter Moloney, “I could hardly wait to keep our date,” *Extramural Activity* (blog), April 24, 2016, <https://extramuralactivity.com/2016/04/24/i-could-hardly-wait-to-keep-our-date/>.

glossy print poster of the NGA. Wall posters are sporadic also because they manage to convene a general assemblage of people. Mostly devoid of a key speaker or a political affiliate such as SF leader Gerry Adams, such posters are a call to the people to organise a commemoration on their own, to honour *their* (emphasis mine) dead leaders. Such are the manifestations of people’s martyrdom in community ephemera. These ephemera can also be randomly overwritten by wall graffiti because they do not occupy an organisational space. It is not that posters by organisations are not put up on public walls. They, however, are more prominently displayed in greater numbers, and parallelly put up in other public spaces and even as hoardings.

Communities also engage through rallying cries against the common difficulties they face. Fig. 3.67 shows a banner carried by people in a programme organised by the children of the martyrs of the



Fig. 3.67. Banner: Rally against religious fundamentalism. October 21, 2022. Courtesy: *Projonmo '71*

Liberation War against the rise of religious fundamentalism. The issue focussed on the increased recent destruction of Hindu temples and homes in Brahmanbaria, along with the Hindu festival pandals of Durga Puja that were destroyed in the Chandpur, Comilla, Noakhali, and Rangpur districts in 2021. The organisation lamented the attack on Hindu community festival sites and the lack of state protection. Such community engagement relates to the martyred intellectuals’ sacrifice to uphold

secular ideologies in 1971, and the religious fundamentalism that is raging in the years after. Rallies against community conflicts are allied with additional agendas such as permission to observe festivals of all communities, removal of sectarian motifs in the school curriculum, and generation of protest movements against religious prejudices at the state and national levels. During COVID-19 restrictions, such rallies were a rare form of community engagement to keep the ideals of martyrdom relevant for the people.

Spontaneous propaganda and protest ephemera place martyr legacies not only in the confrontational commemorations of the dead but also in the form of social demands such as the removal of fundamentalism and the upholding of secular values. Contestations occur when these ephemera are allied to propagandist martyr affiliations and posters and rallies for social justice associate with them.

3.5.4 Ephemera of social communities in Ireland and Bangladesh

People from working-class communities were also martyred in the Easter 1916

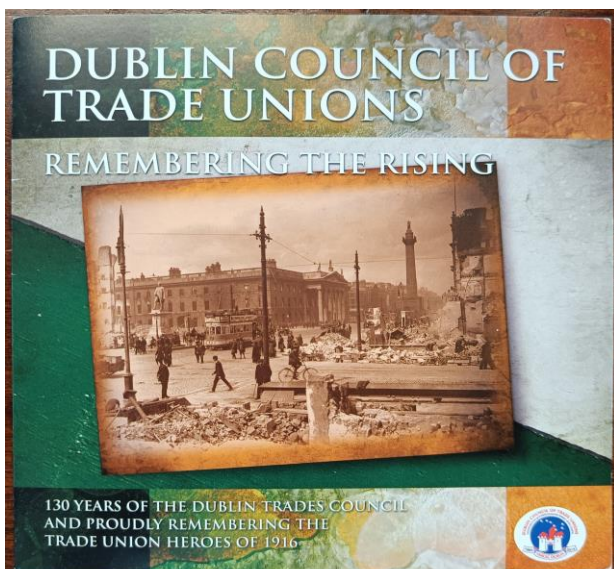


Fig. 3.68. Booklet: Cover page of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions: Remembering the Rising. Dublin Council of Trade Unions. 2016. Murals (inc. memorials) box 2. Courtesy: ECNIPC

Rising in Ireland. Fig. 3.68 features a commemorative booklet for the trade union heroes of the 1916 Rising, printed and published by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. It not only commemorates the deaths of trade unionist/soldier Peadar Macken, as well as leader of the Dublin Group and founding member and lieutenant of the Irish

Volunteers Richard O'Carroll, both of whom went on to lay down their lives in the Easter Rising. It is also a commemoration of the contribution of trade union activists and the development of radical Labour and Republican paramilitary organisations, who wanted the people to join the Irish Citizen's Army headed by Connolly or the Irish Volunteers to avert the conscription for Britain. The image at the centre and the logo of the Council at the bottom right-hand corner envisages the everyday and heroic Dublin, i.e., the Dublin of the working-class communities upholding the dignity of their life and labour after the wreckage of Dublin city centre following the quelling of the 1916 Rising by the British troops.

In Bangladesh, the intellectuals who were the subject of targeted killings by the Pakistan Army belonged to varied social classes. Specific objects defined their martyrdom in distinct ways. Their personal belongings (vocational in nature as discussed in section 2.2.2.3) mostly generate the semiotics of their sacrifice. Bavand Behpoor, an art theorist, artist, and critic based in Munich, explains that this semiotics reflect no additional meaning but rather an absence of meaning: 'If the museum represents a martyr's personal belongings it is not to make a statement about the war in general, but to underline his singular absence, which, like his unheard-of proper name, does little to describe him. The objects are not signs or relics, they are what they are, everyday banal objects.'¹⁰¹ These everyday, banal objects become important in the moment of martyrdom. Serajul Haque Khan was an assistant professor at the Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University and is considered a martyred intellectual in the stamp data of the country, as per the list published by the *Bangladesh Genocide Archive*. His son Enamul Huq writes, 'I identified my father's body with his belt and

101. Bavand Behpoor, "Metaphysics of Absence: Martyr's Museums in Iran," *Bavand Behpoor Personal Website*, December 2, 2008, 2.55 minutes, <http://www.behpoor.com/?p=326>.

the Italian gabardine trousers. I also found his identity card in his pocket'.¹⁰² These objects exist as ephemera, as fragments from the exhumed bodies of the dead. The identity card does not only remain a University document, it becomes an ephemera for the martyr. There are, however, different kinds of ephemera for a martyr, and within the larger body of war ephemera, the identity card and scraps of clothing function as two different kinds of ephemera. The identity card becomes a definitive martyr ephemera, as martyr intellectuals such as Anwar Pasha, Rashidul Hasan, and Serajul Haque Khan went forth and identified themselves in front of the Pakistani Army, with it.¹⁰³ Without the identity card, they could not have been identified, but they emblazoned their identity on their bosom and went forth to martyrdom. Here, this ephemera is forced out of absence into presence, but its presence is negated when the army kills them despite the identity card, or rather because of it. Next, the identity card is a memorial ephemera, while the scraps of clothing are body ephemera. Regarding scraps of clothing as ephemera, David Freund writes: 'Not simply a memento like a thimble or a tumbler once used by the now ghost, the association of the scrap with the body of the wearer serves as a more vivid prompt to recall.'¹⁰⁴ As mourning ephemera, these scraps of clothing, enable the family members to identify and specifically mourn the martyr. The specificity adds completion to the mourning ritual for an individual family. Beyond the general commemoration and mourning undertaken by the state, this individual closure makes the martyr for the family. This is not to say that the family's search is always to create the legacy of the martyr. For an individual family,

102. Wasim Bin Habib and Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary, "Cold, killing design," *The Daily Star*, December 14, 2014, <https://www.thedailystar.net/cold-killing-design-55227>.

103. Pramathesh Shil, "Martyred Intellectual Day, Prof Rashidul Hasan and Anwar Pasha," YouTube Video, 2:55, December 15, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkyBY__TQA4.

104. David Freund, "Personal Visual Albums," *The Ephemera Journal* 14, no. 2 (January 2012): 10, <https://www.ephemerassociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Ephemera-Journal-Vol14-Issue-2.pdf>.

the making of the martyr may not a relevant narrative, but the search is to understand the loss. It is a desperate search. Enamul Huq explains, ‘I left no stone unturned. For two weeks we searched almost all killing grounds in Dhaka city and its surrounding areas. I even rushed to a river in Fatullah after hearing about dead bodies floating there, but I didn’t find him.’¹⁰⁵ The family started losing hope until National Security Intelligence official Sattar, a classmate of his father’s, went to their home with Mafizuddin in January 1972. Mafizuddin was the one who drove the minibus for Al-Badr that picked up the intellectuals from the university campus. Following Mafizuddin’s lead, eight bodies were exhumed from the graveyard.¹⁰⁶ After exhumation, the emergent ephemera become memorial and mourning ephemera. The interpretation of the death goes on to constitute these as martyr ephemera, incorporating them into the social dynamic of martyrdom. In isolation, these objects are for everyday use by a person during their time of living. With death, they continue to retain their commonplace nature. It is only after death that the search for such ephemera begins and these objects attain a new signification. Martyrdom does not refer to the exact moment of death. It refers to the moment when death is lent a new meaning. For martyred intellectuals, the new meaning of their death is rooted in the ideology they advocated, directed against the oppressive state of Pakistan, which becomes more significant in the context of their brutal killing. It is understood that the Pakistan Army desired to annihilate the ideology of nationalism in the state of Bangladesh through the killing of the intellectuals who would build this ideology. In this regard, these everyday objects become imbued with the ideology under assault.

105. Habib & Adhikary, “Cold, killing design.”

106. Wasim Bin Habib and Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary, “Martyred Intellectuals Day Today: Cold, Killing Design,” *The Daily Star*, December 14, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/cold-killing-design-1673488>.

Social classes are sites of contestation with authoritarian apparatuses of imperialist powers in Ireland. The intellectual classes of Bangladesh and the trade union classes of Ireland act against the oppressions of Pakistan and Britain respectively and mediate their distinct ideological and labour contestations therein.

3.5.5 Binlids and broomsticks in Ireland and Bangladesh

Communities have mundane object ephemera of everyday use such as binlids



Fig. 3.69. Binlid: In a banner held during International solidarity rally during the hunger strike. Republican Resistance Calendar. 1991. Courtesy: EHIRHM

and broomsticks, utterly forgettable as significant in any day of one's life. These also shape martyr commemoration narratives distinctly. Following the introduction of the Internment in NI in 1971, nationalists used metal dustbin lids to warn their neighbours that the army and

police were raiding the area. In 1991, to celebrate the anniversary of Operation Demetrius (a British Army operation that started the internment without trial), several old bin lids were collected and painted with suitable revolutionary slogans and symbols and displayed at demonstrations.¹⁰⁷ Fig. 3.69 features a popular poster image of the play *Binlids* in the Republican Resistance Calendar of 1991 along with the remembrance of the martyrs of Ireland. Binlids were used by women in their daily lives as well as to warn the people of the community, thereby establishing the intimate

107. Peter Moloney, "Introduction to Binlids," *CAIN*, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/moloney/intro/binlid.htm>.

support that the nationalists received. Their acts were viewed as a stand for the community in its struggle for freedom. Thus, binlids became a motif of community engagement for martyrs. The banner was made by the New York H-Block Armagh Committee for an international solidarity march in support of the hunger strikers proclaiming that the ‘world shall know of our martyrs’. The play was a joint production from Dubbeljoint (formed in 1991) and the Justus Community Theatre (formed in 1995); the latter was formed by a group of West Belfast women to produce theatre works that told their stories in their own words. Billed as ‘the story of West Belfast resistance’, the play presented a republican perspective of the Troubles’ impact on West Belfast and was quickly circulated as an image in various ephemera.

Like binlids are used to cover litter bins containing waste in Ireland, broomsticks are used in Bangladesh to dust the waste away. It is believed brooms have the power to ward off evil spirits and other villainous beings. For the local people, the Pakistan Army and its local collaborators



Fig. 3.70. Photograph: Broomstick rally in front of the Pakistan High Commission. December 18, 2000.

Courtesy: Shariar Kabir.

of 1971 were such beings. Broomsticks became an emblem of the resistance of poor women, especially in villages, where women would them pick up to ward off or attack the enemy. In fig. 3.70, borne by women, the broomsticks can be seen as a symbol of resistance, to ward off oppression perpetrated specifically on them, such as rape, torture, and mass killing, irrespective of their class. Therefore, this rally includes Member of Parliament Mariam Begum, professor Panna Kaiser (daughter of a

martyred intellectual Shahidullah Kaiser), Member of Parliament Mahmuda Saogat, and women's leader Raoshan Jahan, along with women from various towns and villages. Together, they marched to the Pakistan High Commission in the broomstick rally organised by the Nirmul Committee to demand compensation for the martyred families of the 1971 war. As the banner calls for a mass gathering and a protest meeting, the broomstick, from a commonplace object of people's daily lives, turned into an object of international protest for war crimes.

While banal objects such as binlids and broomsticks are community ephemera, contestations in their regard occur when binlids are appropriated by republican organisations for the protection of Catholic communities in NI, and broomsticks are appropriated by the pro-Liberation Nirmul Committee for the rights of the families of the martyred. Contestations also occur in the extent to which the common people use these objects in their everyday struggles for the protection of their loved ones, regardless of belonging to any community and side.

3.6 CONTESTATIONS IN PEOPLE'S MARTYR-MAKING THROUGH ORAL MODES AND TRADITIONS

Contestations with respect to martyr-making also reside in oral literature such as ballads, folk traditions, and mythical characters. Through these modes, people learn about popular martyr figures, as well as local martyrs and the everyday lives of common people who have been martyred. It is not only the ballad songs that were written earlier but also their popular adaptations later on that carry martyr legacies across print and digital ephemera. The lyrics, sounds, and speeches enable an auditory creation of the martyrs, while the audience response signifies their popularity. Some

speeches are geared towards audience response such as advocating via religious institutions and through hortatory speeches. Thus, people's martyrdom is of the people, by the people, and for the people.

3.6.1 Ballads in Ireland and Bangladesh

When martyrs are made popular through songs and ballads, they comply with patriotic idealisms of the bardic tradition. The martyrdom of Kevin Barry is created around such idealisms. It was not only the naming of Kevin Barry in a ballad written immediately after his execution on 1st November, 1920 that circulated his name among the people but also musical ephemera that introduced his name to later generations.

Ephemera is transitory in nature. It is created for the moment, assumes significance for that moment, and then remains transitory. This momentary significance and belated transience work in a unique way in naming the martyr through musical ephemera. Musical ephemera refers to a particular whistle tune derived from a ballad or song; or a changed lyric of a given song depending the singer or listener. This is how oral tradition also thrives in the name of the martyr.

In a post on a Facebook group named *Irish History 1916 through to 1923 @1916risingirishcivilwar*,¹⁰⁸ Kevin Rooney writes about the enduring musical legacy of Kevin Barry that spread like 'wildfire'. The martyr-making occurs based on a value of tonal effect, sentimentally nurturing the pristine youth of his beautiful life with haunting lyrics:

108. Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/1916risingirishcivilwar/posts/pfbid02xhBPGFeqh1GBdBo28hn5Cp2UezA8m1x3Tjg9EiW7DXQVTG2kSu4dxTu3xA1aPfEgl>.

‘Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty.

But a lad of eighteen summers,
Still, there’s no one can deny,
As he walked to death that morning,
He proudly held his head on high.’¹⁰⁹

People also mentioned how ballad sellers sold song lyrics at matches, fairs and markets and would give a song rendition, if asked. Discussions on the nature of lyrics, varying versions and modalities across the 127 comments on the Facebook post not only represent the popularity of the ballad but also demonstrate a personalised response to the ballad in the process of martyr-making (discussions on the varying tones in next section 3.6.2).

When martyr idealisms are transmitted into other renditions, these idealisms continue to contextualise the lyrics and music. Leonard Cohen’s song on Kevin Barry was part of his world-tour musical repertoire and was sung during its performance in Israel in 1972. It was then posted on YouTube.¹¹⁰ What constitute the ephemera are the few introductory lines to the new international rendition of the martyr’s ballad. Those words formed the context of the 1972 performance. Yet this introductory verbal ephemera constituted the mode through which Barry’s name would continue to resonate as a martyr before a world audience. For Leonard Cohen, the famous singer-songwriter, patriotic idealism meant a sacrifice of youth for liberty. In an empathetic interaction with his audience, where he did not want to burden them with the legacy of another war or another cause, Cohen emphasises the struggles that nevertheless

109. Kevin Rooney, “The ballad of Kevin Barry - ingrained on Irish America’s minds,” *Irish Central*, November 8, 2019, <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/the-ballad-of-kevin-barry>.

110. Words at international concert: Leonard Cohen - Kevin Barry (live 1972). *Leonard Cohen Live in Concert*. Facebook. 0:01-0:40. October 28, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100067658738676/search/?q=kevin%20barry>.

continued in other places and amounted to the same destruction. People may have gradually grown bored with news of war and destruction, yet it did not cease to exist. Young men of eighteen and nineteen years old continued to lose their lives. Cohen did not desire a direct retaliation from the global audience, yet he made people aware of the sacrifices that young people continued to make for the cause of liberty. Ireland's martyr became a global icon for this cause of liberty.

Punthis in Bangladesh belong to the oral tradition of sharing narratives and reciting them before an audience. They represent martyrs of the villages who were mostly subject to mass killings. The *Baruitola Gonohotya Punthi* was composed by Lal Mahmud,¹¹¹ a travelling folk poet from Baruitola village in the Kishoreganj district of Bangladesh. During 1971, he acted as a spy for the Liberation War fighters because of which he was forced by the local collaborators to walk for miles and witness rape, torture, loot, and killings. When the Pakistan Army began the killings, six of his family members were martyred. He sung many poems on such torture of the *razakars*. The *Baruitola Gonohotya Punthi* begins with the poet calling upon God and his parents to inspire him to write an elegy for the dead. About 350 people were mercilessly killed by President Yahya on 13th October, 1971. These people were identified and captured by the *razakars* of the village, accompanied by the Al-Badr militia. Beatings with bayonets and random shooting of bullets prevented the villagers from escaping the *razakars*. The *punthi* describes local enmities, which fuelled conflicts in 1971. The Pakistan Army were allowed into the villages and it led to the improving of the economic conditions of the *razakars*, the *munshis* (well-to-do villagers who collaborated with the 'Punjabis'), and the imams who formed part of the

111. Harechuzzaman, "Baruitola Gonohotya punthi [Ballad of Baruitola genocide]," in *Baruitola Gonohotya*, Khulna: 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum Trust, 2017, 47–48. The text of the *punthi* has only been published here along with an interview with the poet Lal Mahmud.

Jamaat group. The politically affluent kept the *razakars* around to loot villages. After the loot and killings, they ate meat and engaged in festivities. Contrastingly, other villagers, for fear of being killed themselves, killed and ate the meat of their cattle. Additionally, villagers were also killed because they helped freedom fighters with food. When the ‘Punjabis’ left after the war, the *razakars* had no option but to surrender before the Liberation forces. It was then that theirs became a tale of woe. Such *punthis* demonstrate the causes and conditions in which mass killings occurred in the villages. Martyrdom was, therefore, not always a conscious choice for sacrifice but one resulting from local enmities arising out of socio-economic disparities.

Contestations in ballads in Ireland occur between the representation of martyrs as common people and the varying representational and tonal versions of commonality. In Bangladesh, the ballads represent contestations between the representation of martyrs as common people and the varying personal rivalries and socio-economic differentiation existent and made among them by the army and its collaborators.

3.6.2 Tones in Ireland and Bangladesh

Songs may be written in the memory of martyrs to perpetuate their memory but it is the specific tones of songs that make the memory of the martyr palpable. The humming of a familiar tune establishes a personalised response to the ballad and the martyr in whose memory the ballad has been composed, while an upbeat tone makes the commemorative martyr in Irish pubs. For instance, Agnes Grogan Brady, who lives in California, USA, remembers the ballad of Kevin Barry like other popular rebel

songs sung in pubs with fond nostalgia.¹¹² For Will McDonald, the martyr's image is conflated with that of patriotic idealism and nostalgia (for the mother who used to sing the song and has now passed away) and that is what recreates the music of the ballad afresh in terrains far away from home in Spain.¹¹³

In County Mayo, Ireland, Margaret Hunt remembers a 'lovely gentleman...long gone...sang this song every time he visited our home, which was often...he sang it at my 21st birthday party too sitting on a high stool in our kitchen...fond memories'.¹¹⁴ These snippets of the ballad's transmission constitute a rich archive of musical effect ephemera. At times, the tune of the ballad is appropriated to the tune of another street ballad lamenting 'hanging men and women there for the Wearin' o' the Green', as fondly recollected by Yvonne Wolfkill, who now lives in Pennsylvania, USA, and remembers the ballad as a birthday song.¹¹⁵ Or, at times, the ballad finds an accompaniment in Kevin Sharkey Barry's 'tin whistle'.¹¹⁶ Through the voices of parents and grandparents, this ballad becomes a legacy for future generations. Emer Mezzetti of Dublin, Ireland, now quite aged remembers that she was taught to sing the song when she was five years old by her parents,¹¹⁷ just like it was taught to John Nally and Kevin Sharkey Barry by their parents long ago. These variant renditions

112. Agnes Grogan Brady, August 12 2018 11:47pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018.

113. Will McDonald, August 12 2018 02:13pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook.

114. Margaret Hunt, August 12 2018 05:02pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018.

115. Yvonne Wolfkill, August 12 2018 06:57pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018.

116. Kevin Sharkey Barry, August 12 2018 11:18pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018.

117. Emer Mezzetti, August 12 2018 05:16pm, "comment on," Irish History 1916 through to 1923, "The Ballad of Kevin Barry," Facebook, August 12, 2018.

represent the sentimental value of the Kevin Barry ballad which makes people want to listen to them often. Such renditions are powerful ways of making a martyr, with a more personalised impetus for creation.

Tones of martyr songs are not only upbeat with inspiration and glorification



Fig. 3.71. Wall painting: Lyrics ‘*Amar Bhaier rokte rangano Ekushe February/Ami ki bhulite pari*’ [With my brother’s blood, 21st February is painted red/ Oh how can I ever forget]. The wall opposite the central *Shahid Minar*. Dhaka. August 2, 2022.

but also rendered with lament from the present generation for the bygone martyrs. Fig. 3.71 features a photograph of the wall opposite the central *Shahid Minar* in Dhaka. It is painted with the lyrics of the song composed by Abdul Gaffar

Chowdhury in 1953 in a leaflet published by Dhaka college students to observe *Shaheed Day* on 21st

February, 1953: ‘*Amar Bhaier rokte*

rangano Ekushe February/Ami ki bhulite pari’ [With my brother’s blood, 21st February is painted red/ Oh how can I ever forget]. This tune is hummed by people on every occasion that celebrates martyrdom in Bangladesh, spreading the tone of tragedy and triumph in their veins. The lyrics not only remain restricted to the commemoration of the language martyrs who were shot dead on 21st February, 1952, but have also become an oral motif for commemorating the martyred of the country. On 21st February, children from schools go to their local *Shahid Minar* and sing this song.¹¹⁸ The young generation learn of this song at an early age. Another popular phrase of

118. Sadat Nihan, “‘Amar Bhaier rokte rangano Ekushe February,’ *Somewhere in...blog*, February 21, 2013, 04:19 pm, <https://m.somewhereinblog.net/mobile/blog/nazmussadat/29778759>.

lament is '*kando bangali kando*' [Cry Bengalis cry]. It was first used to mourn the dead during the devastating cyclone of 1970 in Bangladesh. Now, it has become a leitmotif for mourning the death of Sheikh Mujib and his family. Nirmalendu Goon, who has written a poem on the it mentions that the martyrdom of the whole family in a coup four years after independence evokes a grief-stricken response, like that of a child who has not received the milk of the mother, and like that of a daughter who has lost a father.¹¹⁹ The poet adds in English that "August is the cruelest [sic] month" whose organic and familial grief is aroused through banners, posters, and speeches blaring over loudspeakers during the month of mourning in August. Mourning and martyrdom become enmeshed in this oral tradition.

In popular memory, certain tones of song and speech are associated with martyrdom. These range from tones of elegy, nostalgia, sacrifice, and remembrance that are associated the with martyrs and contest with their mass appropriation for any commemorative occasion. These tones defocus the people's attention from sectarian and political agendas and extend them to universal tones of lament.

3.6.3 Folk traditions in Ireland and Bangladesh

Ireland has a long history of martyrdom. Irish mythology has a story of the *Tain bo Cuailnge* [The cattle raid of Cooley]. It was part of the oral tradition of storytelling and is considered to be about 2000 years old. The story was written down in Gaelic between the 4th and 8th centuries. According to the story, the army of Ulster was cursed so that in Ulster's time of need, they would suffer the pains of childbirth and would be unable to fight. When Queen Mebh of Connaught came with her army to

119. Nirmalendu Goon, "*August shoker mash, kado* [August is the month of mourning, cry]," in *Nirmalendu Gooner eksho kobita* [A Collection of poems by Nirmalendu Goon], Tripura: Okkhor Publications, 2003, 140. The poem was first published in 2001 in the collection entitled *Mujib*.

steal the famous bull of Cooley, the only person to stand against her army was Cuchulainn. Cuchulainn was considered a mighty warrior and being but a boy, did not

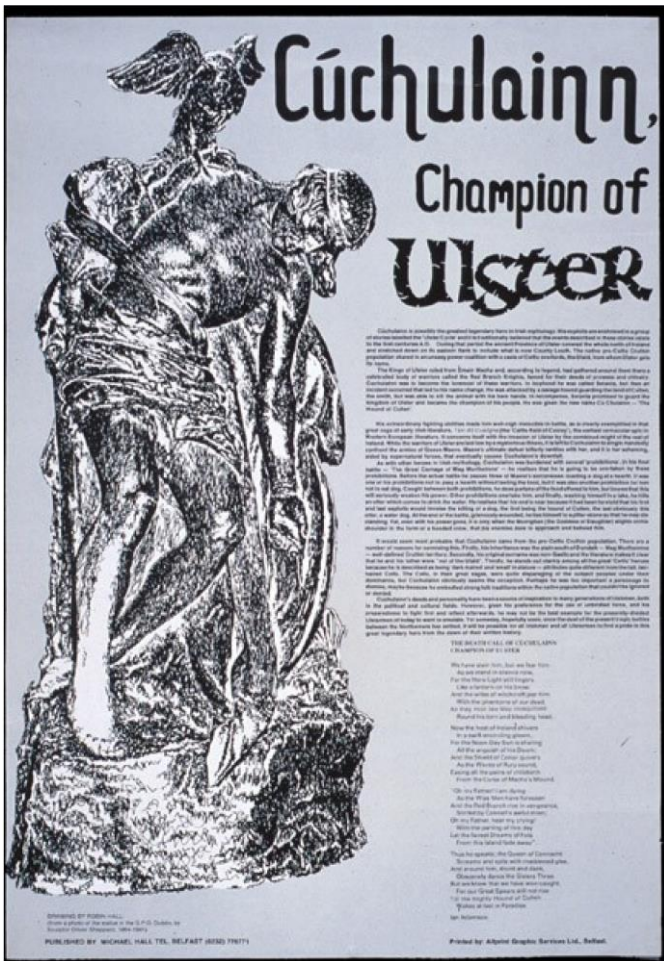


Fig. 3.72. Poster: Poster of *Cuchulainn: Champion of Ulster*. 1990-1999. Image ID: PPO2415. Courtesy: TICR

suffer childbirth pains. Eventually, after many raids and much single-handed combat, Cuchulainn was severely wounded and tied himself tied to a tree so that he could continue to stand and fight. In fact, Cuchulainn had delayed Mebh's army for so long that the men of Ulster had recovered from their pains of childbirth.

The stance of an IRA volunteer is compared to the difficult stance of Cuchulainn, both of whom made a supreme

sacrifice so that their country could be free. This mythological figure has been used by both republican as well as nationalist communities to represent heroic martyrdom. A statue of Cuchulainn's death, sculpted by Oliver Sheppard, was unveiled at the GPO in Dublin in 1935 as a memorial to the Easter Rising of 1916. The Cuchulainn was also photographed by Bill Rolston in Long Kesh shortly after the prison had closed. Like the republican prisoners, loyalist prisoners also considered their political struggle similar to the mythical struggle of Cuchulainn. Peter Moloney explains that the loyalists claim that they have descended from a people called the Cruthin, who came

from Ulster to settle in Scotland in ancient history, and therefore, see Cuchulainn as an appropriate image of heroic martyrdom for them to identify with and use.¹²⁰ Fig. 3.72 features a poster that was produced as a response to the claim by both loyalists and republicans that the mythical hero Cuchulainn ‘belonged’ to ‘their’ community. According to Michael Hall, the publisher of the poster, it served to draw attention to the shared nature of Ulster’s cultural inheritance. The narrative of martyrdom is thereby located at the syncretism of the folk narrative by different communities. The poster was followed by a graphic novel *Cuchulainn: Champion of Ulster* that came out in 1989. The poster was distributed among the community and political organisations of both communities, displayed in sensitive places as diverse as the Springhill Community House in Ballymurphy (the site of the Springhill massacre in 1972 and the Ballymurphy massacre in 1971) and the UDA headquarters in East Belfast (the site of the Battle of St Matthew’s or the Battle of Short Strand). Nevertheless, Cuchulainn is a figure of sacrifice for the republicans and nationalists and a figure of the defender against various attacks for the loyalists and unionists.

The red hand of Ulster is Ulster’s traditional emblem, a folk image that is the oldest symbol of unionist and loyalist organizations in NI. Fig. 3.73 features a wall in the unionist Newtownards Road where the folk narrative is laid down, just beside another wall painting claiming that this area is the loyalist East Belfast. The wall narrative proclaims that Heremon O’Neill, who was racing a rival chieftain for the possession of Ireland, became the first man to touch its soil by cutting off his hand and hurling it ashore! Both loyalists and republicans compare their martyrdom to this myth of sacrifice and claim their causes as righteous as the discovery and birth of a new

120. Peter Moloney (collector of Troubles-related ephemera of Ireland for over 50 years, which has resulted in the Northern Ireland Political Ephemera Collection), interview by author via email, February 13, 2020. Transcript, with author.

nation. They claim for themselves the pride of Ulstermen who would defeat despots and win freedom for the nation. The image and the words written on the wall are



Fig. 3.73. Wall painting: Folk narrative of the Red Hand of Ulster. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

found in numerous ephemera like posters and pamphlets while the image of the red hand of Ulster features in hymnbooks, murals, and handkerchiefs made by republican prisoners, thereby making it a cross-community symbol.

One of the folk traditions that relate to the narrative of martyrdom in the Islamic world is the story of the martyrdom of the two sons, Imam Hassan and Husayn, of the last prophet of Islam, Hazrat Mohammad, on the historical battlefields of Karbala, which forms the content of *karbalar jarigaan*. The word *jari*, derived from Persian etymology, means lament or crying out in grief, while *jarigaan* refers to the traditional and folk form of performing a song and dance of lament. Although narratives of various political and socio-economic conditions are staged in the mode of the *jarigaan*, the martyr narrative is



Fig. 3.74. Procession: ‘Verses on the martyrdom of Imam Hassan-Hussain being read from a handwritten manuscript by *shayar* Shamim Kaderi, who is leading the jari-marsiya procession in Dhaka’. Courtesy: Saymon Zakaria’s *Facebook* post. August 9, 2022.

ritualistically performed during *Ashura*, the day when the martyred of Karbala are commemorated. It is the 10th day of the month of *Muharram*. Fig. 3.74 is an image of the sacred book, which contains the passages of Hassan and Husayn's martyrdom, being read out by a *shayar* [poet] during the ritual of lamenting and expressing grief. In the image from a 2022 Facebook post¹²¹, the participants are wearing the black garb of mourning and beating their chests with their hands. Though the *jarigaans* focus on the oral narratives of poetic utterance and gestures of inflicting pain to commemorate the grief of martyrdom, they also have been written down in manuscript forms that are kept in most mosques. According to Saymon Zakaria, who has worked on the *jarigaan* tradition across various districts in Bangladesh, this writing is a way of preventing the distortion of a sacred narrative through oral reiterations during performances and processions.¹²² The sacredness belongs to both the content as well as its rendition. Thus, orality is mediated through writing in manuscripts in such folk ephemera. Furthermore, this folk narrative also refers to many common martyrs. The *jarigaan* started around the 15th century and began with the performance of a *junganama* (epic poetry) on historic battles. It also focussed on the narrative of Imam Husayn and his followers' cry for water as their access to it was prevented by Umar Ibn Sa'ad during the war, which resulted in Imam Husayn's comrades being martyred. The rendition also remembers his newborn child Asgar who was killed by an arrow before he could be fed water by his father. The death of Hassan, Husayn, the infant, and their numerous comrades became people's narrative of martyrdom in every household, so intimate, as if their sons had died. For this, fasting is also undertaken during *Ashura*,

121. Bhab Nagar (Saymon Zakaria), "*Ashurar shok michil* [Ashura mourning procession]," Facebook, August 9, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/bhab.nagar/posts/pfbid03eqmwm4diZiyt9wkadRNLmbci6rv5SG4vt8p7XpTpHeJVgDvV4SMJ4Y6j4RMUQ7zl>.

122. Saymon Zakaria (Bangladeshi folk researcher and Deputy Director of the Department of Culture in the Bangla Academy, Dhaka), interview by author, Dhaka, August 11, 2022.

as if to purge the ceremonial defilement (*'osouch'*) of the death. Furthermore, water is offered to the people who participate in the *Ashura* processions, often by people belonging to different religious communities in the villages, to pay respect to the martyred. In villages, there are also spatial replicas of the desert terrains of Karbala towards which the *Muharram* processions are directed. These have become sacred grounds where *jarigaan* competitions are organised from the 1st to the 10th of the month of *Muharram*. Parallely, fairs and games of stick-fighting and sword-fighting are also organised to recreate the acts of warfare between Yazid and Hasan and Husain. The sacred grounds transform into centres of communal togetherness throughout these ten days, where whole families participate in the *jarigaan* festivities.

It is not only the death of common people but also the death of national figures that is compared to this archetypal folk death. Saidur Rahman *Boaati* [mystic poet and minstrel] has a *punthi-jari* entitled *Mujib Shahid* [martyr Mujib], which narrates the death of the father of the nation, Mujib, in folkloric terms.¹²³ In the text, the people who had come to kill Mujib are represented as comrades of the archangel of death, Azrael (in the Islamic folk religion), and the house of the new prime minister of independent Bangladesh became the fortress, which was meant to protect him but resulted in his death, like the death of Lakshinder in an impenetrable chamber as depicted in the Hindu epic *Manasamangal*. The syncretism of folk traditions of different religious cultures is employed in the understanding of Mujib's death, turning him into a local folktale figure whose death is historicised as the death of a nation.

Thus, in NI, contestations in folk narratives occur between the mythological ideologies of certain figures and their appropriations by opposing communities. In

123. Saidur Rahman Boyati, "Mujib Shahid," in *Saidur Rahman Boaati: Sadhoker Sadesh o Samogra* [Mystic minstrel Saidur Rahman: An ascetic poet's nation and narratives], ed. Najmin Mortuza (Dhaka: Samhati Publications, 2017), 130.

Bangladesh, contestations occur between Islamic and Hindu folk narratives, oral and written folk narratives, and representation of national and ordinary martyrs, all interconnected with each other.

3.6.4 Speech texts in Ireland

Speeches by martyrs are most impactful when they are delivered at a moment of the martyr's journey towards a conscious end—death. The tenor of such speeches often resides in the martyr's oratorical skills and is painstakingly created by them. As discussed in section 2.1.1.2, the martyr's conflicts with the state and its repressive apparatuses make the speeches have a powerful impact on the audience. The impact is generated through the content of imminent martyrdom and is proliferated by the rhetorical nuances. The



Fig. 3.75. Photocollage card: Roger Casement. Courtesy: EHIRHM

exception here is that for the martyr, it is free speech in the sense that Foucault used the concept: 'Someone is said to use parrhesia and merits consideration as a parrhesiastes only if there is a risk or danger for him or her in telling the truth'.¹²⁴ The martyr's speech becomes free speech when it becomes a discourse in the Foucauldian sense. Though this association of martyrdom and free speech has been made in the

124. Michel Foucault, "Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia," (6 lectures, University of California, Berkeley, CA, Oct–Nov. 1983), <https://foucault.info/parrhesia/foucault.DT1.wordParrhesia.en/>.

context of antiquity and early Christianity¹²⁵, the association of the speech as discourse is all the more enhanced when the audience witnesses it. Just as the martyr's words are a witness to his faith and truth, the audience stands as a witness to the martyr's words. This has been demonstrated in several ephemera that circulate the words of the martyr. Fig. 3.75 features a photo collage card published for Roger Casement. Such cards were printed for circulation among the masses in memory of the executed individual. These cards contain in miniature the life narrative behind the event of the martyr's death. While the portrait of Casement on the top left indicates his brightness and focus, the photograph of his meeting with Mrs Alice Stopford Green and Lord Ashbourne at the top right reveals their common interest in Irish self-rule. Also, Green organised a defence fund when Casement was arrested and then campaigned for a reprieve when he was sentenced to death.¹²⁶ One of the motifs in a martyr's life narrative is the witness to his speech. The photograph of the crowd awaiting the results of the Casement trial in London makes the crowd a palpable presence, one that heard the speech from the dock amidst the tension of waiting. The whole collage is made more personal with Casement signing off with 'yours', directly addressing the imagery to the viewer.

Either the crowd en masse or the singular individual is addressed, such as in the case of George Bernard Shaw whose letter to Francis Sheehy Skeffington's wife constitutes the complete text of the Easter Rising martyr's *Speech from the Dock*. Skeffington was summarily executed by the British in 1916. When he protested against the conscription of the Irish to fight for the British in the First World War, he

125. Irene van Renswoude, *The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

126. Noel French, "Alice Stopford Green," *Meath History Hub* (blog), <https://meathhistoryhub.ie/alice-stopford-green/>.

was arrested, after which a trial was held. Mrs Skeffington had sent a transcript of the speech made by Skeffington during the trial, to which Shaw had responded personally. Moreover, Shaw was following the case of Skeffington's trial and proceedings before the magistrate, through newspaper accounts and noted the references made to the case in the Parliament, in this letter.¹²⁷ The respondent to the speech refers to Skeffington's just stance but also makes clear that England would modulate it as unjust according to their whims,

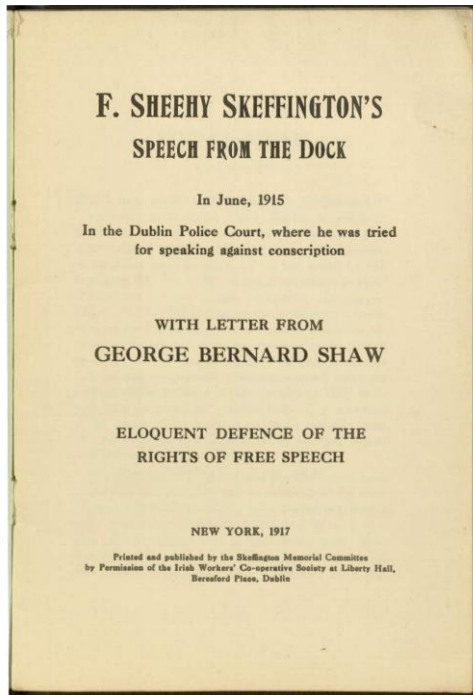
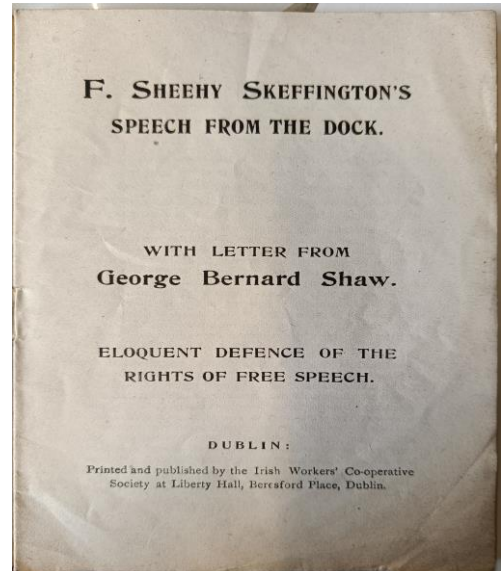


Fig. 3.77. Booklet: Front page of Skeffington's *Speech from the Dock*. 1917. Sinn Féin 1915 – 1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966). Courtesy: ECNIPC



in the name

of acts such as the

Fig. 3.76. Booklet: Front page of Skeffington's *Speech from the Dock*. June 1915. Sinn Féin 1915–1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966). Courtesy: ECNIPC

Defence of the Realm Act. Shaw further adds that if the British knew he had sympathised with Skeffington, then he would be imprisoned for life.¹²⁸ This shows that Shaw knew the potential of such speeches in transmuting death into martyrdom. Thus, speeches formed the basis of a martyr's life narrative and the circulation of such speech

127. F. Sheehy-Skeffington, "Letter from George Bernard Shaw on Sheehy-Skeffington's sentence," in *Speech from the Dock* (New York: The Co-Operative Press, 1917), i.

128. Sheehy-Skeffington, "Letter," iv.

texts serve as a witness to the making of the martyr after his death. Fig. 3.76 is the cover page of the first edition of Skeffington's *Speech*, printed and published by the Irish Workers' Co-Operative Society at Liberty Hall, Beresford Place, Dublin, in 1915, when the speech was delivered and distributed for a penny among the masses. Fig. 3.77 is the cover page of the first edition of Skeffington's *Speech*, printed and published by the Skeffington Memorial Committee in New York with permission of the first publisher, in 1917, after his execution on 26th April, 1916. After his execution, the speech was circulated in America, which was especially significant in the context of Skeffington's support towards peace efforts there. Speech texts, therefore, also contribute to the transnational making of the martyr and the transnational connections of martyr memorial committees.

Thus, contestations in speech texts occur between the gestures in oratorical skills that define the stance of a future martyr when he is in conflict with the colonial powers and its judicial affiliates, and the reality of being thence confined. It is out of the imprisoned self that the free spirit of a martyr proclaims the stature of martyrdom.

3.6.5 Catechism and hortatory words in Ireland and Bangladesh

Catechism is a way of orally imparting Christian doctrines to adults and children in the form of questions and answers. During Ireland's protracted struggle for freedom against England, people were often given lessons about their duty of the hour for the country, through tracts of catechism distributed among the masses at a penny a piece (fig. 3.78). In this pamphlet, the questions and answers are reprinted from Darrell Figgis's well-known pamphlet *The Sinn Féin Catechism*, so that they throw light on the present situation of a people's struggle for freedom. In this didactic questionnaire, people are exhorted to establish the freedom of Ireland in their minds,

due to which they can never accept Ireland as conquered. For the creation of a martyr legacy, it is important to nurture such unfettered minds. England is viewed as the robber who has forced Ireland into an unwanted subjugation, an indicator of SF's political vocabulary enmeshed in the didacticism of the questionnaire. Significantly, there is also a supplementary question not written by Figgis, one that was spontaneously asked during the catechism in the church about the reward of a person who advises his fellow countrymen to give their lives and take lives for the freedom of their country and then orders their execution. Religious doctrines cannot provide an undisputed answer to such a question. Martyr legacy, as nurtured by religious doctrines, tries to stay away from equivocal ideas about martyrdom. Exhortations reside in mass motivation that is laid down in terms of clear binaries and oppositions.

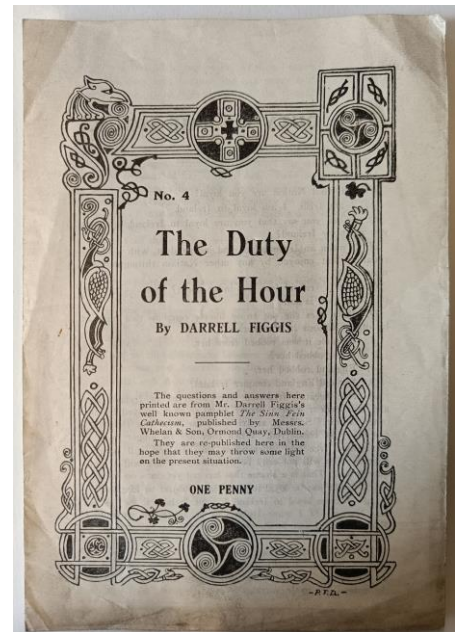


Fig. 3.78. Catechism booklet: Front page of Darrell Figgis's *The Duty of the Hour*. The questions and answers are reprinted from Darrell Figgis's well-known pamphlet *The Sinn Féin Catechism*. January 1, 1918. Sinn Féin 1915 – 1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966). Courtesy: ECNIPC

In the 2013 Shahbag movement in Bangladesh, people retaliated against war criminals, who were awarded capital punishments but were immediately hailed as martyrs to defiantly sing of victory on the pulpit of execution.¹²⁹ The term *gonojagoron* [popular rising] may have been used for pro-Shahbag protests but there are instances where they were used for anti-Shahbag protests as well. Even as the

129. Gonojagoron Chittagong, "Shahid Muhammad Kamruzzaman: Phasir Monche dariye ami bijoyer joy gaan gai [Martyr Muhammad Kamruzzaman: I sing of Victory on the Pulpit of Execution]," Facebook, April 11, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/416935725045874/posts/5293962627343135/>.

middle classes cried out for the pro-Liberation ideologies of 1971 to be safeguarded, thousands of people gathered in and around Shahbag square in Dhaka. In the name of religion, huge crowds were sourced from the *madrasas* (local schools for Islamic studies) in villages to glorify the war criminals as heroes and martyrs. It is not only the speeches made by the Shahbag activists in Dhaka but also those made by the local people in villages and towns remote from the capital city that comprise the hortatory speeches that sway the masses, albeit on a smaller scale. Furthermore, *gonojagoron monchos* [stages for popular rising] in the districts are not offshoots of the central platform at Shahbag, Dhaka but spontaneous street protests which gain digital footprints when their participants or bystanders upload the photos on social media. Ohiduzzaman Sapan is a proprietor and contractor from Narsingdi district who uploaded a photo of himself giving a speech at a *gonojagoron moncho* at the Baroicha bus stand. Under a tree, in front of a makeshift stage, with some people looking for a bus rather than engaging in the speech, Ohiduzzaman Sapan made a Shahbag square of his own.¹³⁰ With forty-eight likes and two shares, this post does not make a remarkable digital statement but it does reflect an attempt by small-town internet users to gradually enter the digital world. Three years after the Shahbag protests, this post is a witness to the belated, persistent reach of mass awakening ethos as well as the late knowledge of digital education in district and village uprisings. While this is an instance of small gatherings in villages, there are also instances of people coming together in huge gatherings and crying out for the martyrdom of the Jamaat leaders, from all over the country. Anti-Shahbag rallies often had larger turnouts. However, there are also instances of people gathering in huge numbers without knowing what

130. Ohiduzzaman Sapan, "Gonojagoron moncho, Baroicha Bus-stand, Belabo, Narsingdi," Facebook, April 16, 2016, <https://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1714243438799094&id=100006403633805&set=a.1714243425465762>.

the protest was about, like the case of the young children from Gazipur district who came for a protest march against the bloggers.¹³¹

Words of the heads and other authorities of religious institutions in Ireland generate contestations between the good and evil in Ireland, and between the hortatory speeches by known activists and the common man in Bangladesh. However, such inflammatory words should make people aware that martyrdom is not about generating more conflicts but about gaining closure, and dignity for the martyred self and others.

Conclusion

The making of a martyr traverses through locations, emblems, various processes, modes of propaganda, and includes community engagement and oral modes. To demonstrate these, both physical ephemera and the oral interpretations of those ephemera have been used. People's martyr narratives are not confined to print ephemera but have expanded to auditory, visual, and digital ephemera. This expansion is important to characterise martyr ephemera featuring people's narratives. In both Ireland and Bangladesh, martyr politics is not just a contested process; through these contestations, people are involved in martyr-making in their distinct ways. The making of a martyr also highlights how people are posited as martyrs, with contestations in their naming, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the continuums and subversions, which will be discussed in the next.

131. Nusrat Sabina Chowdhury, "Death, Despair and Democracy in Bangladesh," in *Emotions, Mobilisations and South Asian Politics*, eds. Blom and Tawa Lama-Rewal (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2020), 275.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTESTATIONS IN THE CONTINUUMS AND SUBVERSIONS OF PEOPLE'S MARTYRS IN EPHEMERA

Introduction

Following contestations in the naming and making of martyrs, martyrdom sustains itself through continuums and subversions. Continuum is the close and evolving connection across variant entities for the emergence of a developing narrative. Subversion is the challenging, undermining and unravelling of established ideas. Subversion narratives are not only counter-narratives but also challenge contestations to re-establish the processes of everyday. In the continuums and subversions of martyrdom, the figures, events and legacies of one historical moment or period influence the next, including internal contestations between members of opposing groups as well as the conflicts that ensue when members of opposing factions generate parallel narratives and challenge their embedded meanings. The challenge may result in a radical remodelling, factionalism, interjection, appropriation, individualism and transcendence. These are the subversions, which are challenges to established norms of martyrdom that have been generated through multiple contestations. Gender binaries and disappearances of victims will subvert established identities of martyrs as existent male figures. Subversion of structures will posit narratives of appropriation, destruction and deconstruction as ways of retaining martyr legacies. After the subversion of identities and structures, the very purpose of martyrdom will be subverted through the differential understanding of emblems that structure martyr narratives in Ireland and through the differential execution of claims

that structure martyr narratives in Bangladesh. Continuums are evident, as the struggle for martyrdom did not end with liberation and instead continues in post-conflict NI, post-independent Ireland and Bangladesh. The continuums and subversions are understood through ephemera which are transitory documents of everyday life, subject to figurative and oral interpretations at different instances.

4.1 CONTINUUMS

Martyrdom is established, disseminated and debated upon as an evolving narrative with continual interjections; therefore, continuum refers to sequential flow. The nature of continuums in Ireland and Bangladesh differ in terms of religio-political, socio-political and legacy issues. Historical struggles and political party affiliations, daily tragedies of death and justice-seeking commonly characterise the people's developing narratives of the martyr while continuing to deal with the ongoing issues of martyrdom in both countries.

4.1.1 The continuums in Ireland

The continuums in Ireland range from a religious succession embedded in a political world to a generation and propagation of sectarian divisions and a continuation of commemorations of political sacrifices at national and local levels.

4.1.1.1 Continuum of apostolic and heavenly successions

In republican communities, there is the tradition of apostolic succession in which an emissary or envoy conveys the message of freedom to different generations as each continue to strive for freedom. Catholic churchgoers understand St Oliver Plunkett—the first recognised Christian martyr of Ireland and a nationalist martyr like Terence MacSwiney, who died on a hunger strike—to be part of an apostolic succession. This is demonstrated in an interview conducted in 2013 in which a forty-year-old Catholic

male churchgoer stated that “there is almost this Apostolic Succession in republican communities where you commemorate the deceased, whether it’s Oliver Plunkett or Terence MacSwiney—all those names throughout the years—there is a continuum then.”¹ The saint who was killed in 1681 and the hunger striker who died in 1920 have both become emissaries for enduring pain rather than inflicting it. Print media has also focused on a series of sacrificial fasting that took place when the hunger strikes of 1980 began. People are made aware of other martyred hunger strikers, like Tony D’Arcy and John McNeela who died in 1940,² as well as what their sacrifices resulted in, creating figures again in the minds of the people, who are led to support such acts leading to martyrdom. Nevertheless, the churchgoer also stated that the apostolic succession of martyred saints and heroes now serves to enable factions to justify their cause. Thus, the continuum is not about consistent glorification but about having a full knowledge of the related realities of sectarianism, the prospective inability to achieve the desired freedom (especially stressed by British daily newspapers) and the foregrounding of a desire to deny the apostolic heritage of martyrs. The contestation over the continuum of apostolic succession involves the martyr being a witness to sacrifices in the past, but whose remembrance does not justify recurrence.

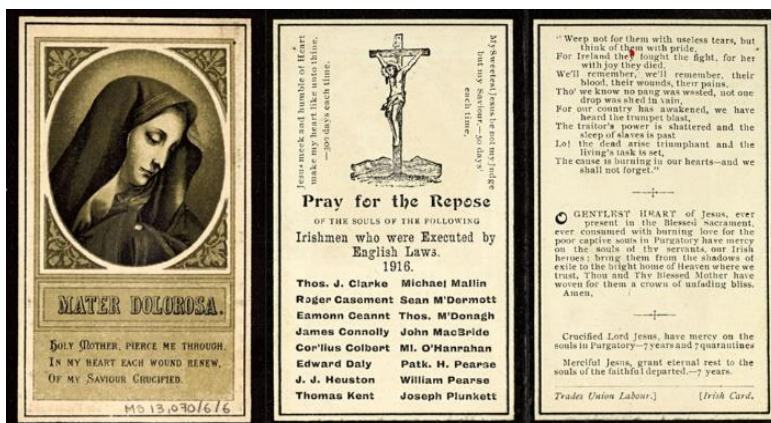
Oliver Plunkett is an inspiration and instigator of modern-day martyrdom in Ireland, and similarly, St Stephen was the source of inspiration for Plunkett’s martyrdom because when the sentence of death was passed upon Plunkett and he

1. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Belfast 2:10. The format of reference gives the location, followed by the interview number and (after the colon), the page number of the transcript. It is followed in all subsequent citations of these interviews. The interviews were conducted by John Bell, Neil Jarman, Gavin Moorhead and John Wolffe in a collaboration between The Open University and the Institute for Conflict Research funded by the ESRC under the RCUK Global Uncertainties programme. Transcripts are deposited with the UK Data Service as Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive. [10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554](https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalog/studies/study?id=10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554).

2. David Beresford, “Fasting in the long shadow of Terence McSweeney,” *The Guardian*, October 28, 1980.

recognised the other friars as being unjust towards him, he pardoned them, just as St Stephen had done before him.³ The continuum is that of saintly pardon for sinners. Moreover, there is the final apocalyptic prophecy of the final Pope, Pope Petrus Romanus, according to which, St Stephen's martyrdom will be akin to the martyrdom of the Irish martyrs and patriots who have all fought for Irish unity and freedom and this would be demonstrated in the six counties of NI becoming part of the Republic.⁴ The contestation of this futuristic, transcendental continuum lies in the conflicted and continued struggle of NI to become part of the Free State, and its present existence as part of the UK.

The heavenly succession of martyr figures is also represented in the imitation of the Christ figure, in which saints are heavenly emissaries. Mass cards were



distributed during requiem masses held for individual martyrs. Fig. 4.01 depicts a mass card for those who were executed in the aftermath of the Dublin rebellion⁵, distributed

Fig. 4.01. Mass Card: Executed of 1916. Trades Union Labour. Irish Card. Courtesy: EHIRHM

during a requiem mass held in Dublin in honour of the executed rebel leaders of the

3. Oliver Plunkett, *The last speech of Mr. Oliver Plunket, titular Primate of Ireland who was executed at Tyburn on Friday the 1st of this instant July, 1681 written by his own hand* (London: Printed by N. Thompson, 1681), 4.

4. Jack Spring, *The Rapture of Darkness: A Novel of Hope for the Coming Age* (Bloomington, Indiana: WestBow Press, 2012), 238.

5. "Disturbances in Dublin after Requiem Mass for Rebel Leader," *Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ)*, June 19, 1916, <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/disturbances-in-dublin-after-requiem-mass-for-rebel-leader>.

Easter 1916 Rising and containing a prayer for the repose of the souls of the dead. The prayer is a selection of lines taken from the hymn *Mater Dolorosa*, the Lady of the Sorrows, which talks of Mother Mary weeping for her son Jesus who had sacrificed his life. The leaders' Christ-like martyrdom for humanity, narrated through post-conflict deaths due to execution by military law, is seen as martyrdom at the confluence of sacred sacrifice and political death. Such likening to Christ and saint-like veneration are used as personalised metaphors to disseminate the narrative of martyrdom among the masses. Jack O'Keefe writes that 'Catholics printed thousands of holy cards with pictures of martyred rebels'⁶ because the identification of



Fig. 4.02. Political card: Mural image showing the parents carrying the body of a dead Long Kesh hunger striker. Irish Political box. Courtesy: PANIPC

the rebellion with Christ's suffering and death resonated with the Irish people. The heavenly continuum of the personalised Christ figure is also found in later periods, as in this depiction of the martyred hunger striker being borne by a sorrowful father and mother. Fig. 4.02 features a political card with a mural image, printed by Republican Publications in Belfast to garner support for the hunger strikers. The mother may be associated with the figure of Mary holding Jesus' dead body, as represented in the Pietà archetype. This archetype is personalised by the inclusion of images of both parents, while retaining the posture of mourning. The mourned in this archetype was a prisoner from Long Kesh who had participated in the no-wash protests and was now

6. Jack O'Keefe, "Martyrs," in *Legacy of the Easter Rising: Blood Will Have Blood* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2018), https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Legacy_of_the_Easter_Rising/U7mkDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Catholics+printed+thousands+of+holy+cards+with+pictures+of+martyred+rebels%E2%80%99&pg=PT36&printsec=frontcover.

wrapped in the IRA flag that is symbolic of his sacrifice for freedom. From god to saints, heroes and rebels, the continuum of apostolic and heavenly succession evolves. However, contestations occur when transcendental figures become subject to quotidian realities of family grief and everyday propaganda.

4.1.1.2 Continuum of sectarian divisions

Oliver Plunkett was beatified as a martyr and became popular following his canonisation as a saint. With his death, the Holy See of Rome thought it inopportune to declare him the holy prelate of Ireland as he had been dubbed treasonous by the English nation.⁷ Thus, he became a saint of the Catholic order, and his canonisation was contested by the priests of the Protestant order, such as Reverend James Good. There were claims that this canonisation would increase ‘sectarian bitterness’⁸ in NI, which were part of a wider claim of the church’s obsession with sectarianism⁹. Allegedly, Plunkett was in conflict with the lawful authority of the time, where the laws were of both God and the King of Britain. Incidentally, while Plunkett was not denied being a man of God, his religion was dubbed as ‘false’¹⁰. This was the bone of religio-political contention during the martyr’s trial that was later invoked to contest his canonisation. However, Plunkett had claimed that no Christian had been allowed to visit him in the prison in Coventry¹¹, England, and he had believed that he could prove himself innocent in Ireland. Furthermore, his jurors were the very ones who had

7. Patrick Francis Moran, “Veneration Shown to Dr. Plunkett After His Death,” in *Memoirs of the Most Rev. Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, who suffered death for the Catholic faith in the year 1681* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1861), 369.

8. Reverend James Good, “Behind the Canonisation,” *Hibernia*, March 30, 1973.

9. S. E. Long, “Sectarianism,” *The Church Magazine*, October, 1998.

10. Alice Curtayne, “The Death Sentence,” in *The Trial of Oliver Plunkett* (Reprint of London: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 192.

11. Curtayne, “The Death Sentence,” 189.

brought up the accusation of treason against him. Nevertheless, when a Protestant minister was allowed to administer the last rites prior to his execution, Plunkett happily agreed. Thus, although his martyrdom may have resulted from institutional religious bigotry, that did little to salvage his everyday religious faith. This everyday religiosity was foregone when Reverend Good wrote about the ‘parallel between the story of Oliver Plunkett and the sectarian murders of today’¹². In present-day NI, the church remains only a site of solace for those remembering the martyred, and this association of sectarianism has been cast aside, especially with the people distancing themselves from the church on account of the increasing instances of abuse. Leo Young, elder brother of John Young who died on Bloody Sunday, stated that the church has nothing to do with glorifying or propagating the narratives of the dead in conflicts, except for the bodies which were brought to the premises of the Derry church after the shootings. The image of Father Edward Daly risking his life during Bloody Sunday to take care of a wounded prisoner is an instance of everyday religiosity of an individual.¹³

Even without the church generating sectarian divisions, political sectarianism afflicted the Bloody Sunday memorialisation. Young stated that the innocent victims of Bloody Sunday should never be associated with the PIRA members who died protesting against the British.¹⁴ However, in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, sectarian tensions rose, with several young people in Derry joining the IRA ranks. Fig. 4.03 features a banner in remembrance of the Shantallow martyrs carried along for a rally that took place in 2011. Shantallow is a town in Derry. Significantly, the streets

12. Rev. James Good, “Behind the Canonisation”.

13. Leo Young (elder brother of a victim of Bloody Sunday, John Young), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

14. Leo Young, interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022.

(around Creggan) that were traversed during this rally in Derry were the same ones that had been traversed for the commemoration of the Bloody Sunday victims in 1972. The Shantallow martyrs comprise young IRA volunteers, who commemorate the Bloody Sunday victims each year, thereby demonstrating that sectarian conflicts and



Fig. 4.03. Banners and procession: Personalities ephemera - March for Shantallow martyrs. Derry/Londonderry. 2011. Courtesy: PECPM

commemorations continue. The Shantallow martyrs are Óglach James ‘Junior’ McDaid (a bricklayer by trade who had been killed while unarmed by occupational forces in 1972), Óglach Gerard Craig (who had been killed during a premature explosion while planting a bomb in a shop on Greenhaw Road, Shantallow, in 1974), Óglach David Russell (a Protestant who had been killed alongside Craig when the bomb they were carrying exploded accidentally in Shantallow, in 1974), Óglach Michael Meenan (participant of military and community action, especially with the

Workers’ Union, who had been killed in active service in 1974), Óglach Jim Gallagher (who had been shot while travelling in a bus after being released from jail six days before for attempting to plant a bomb for the IRA in 1976), Óglach Dennis Heaney (who had been shot dead in 1978 on the streets of his home town Derry by undercover soldiers of the British Army’s Fourteenth Intelligence Company, while he was going to his parents’ house, contesting that he was armed), Óglach Eamonn ‘Bronco’ Bradley (who had been killed while unarmed and walking along Racecourse Road with a friend in 1982) and Óglach Tony Gough (who had been shot for his IRA

activities in 1996). The continuation of such rallies and the parenthetical information explains the continuance of radicalisation in the streets of Derry following deaths in conflicts, especially amongst the nationalist youth. Here, contestation verges on religious sectarianism and political sectarianism on the one hand, and everyday religiosity and everyday radicalisation on the other.

4.1.1.3 Continuum of unionist sacrifices

The unionists of NI participated in both the world wars, and most martyr



Fig. 4.04. Banner: 36th Ulster Division Centenary.
Courtesy: UJSS

ephemera in East Belfast commemorate these war dead. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 delayed the introduction of the Home Rule Bill (that would grant self-government

and national autonomy to the whole of Ireland), against which the UVF had worked for years. The UVF was subsumed into the 36th Ulster Division and became famous for their bravery at the Battle of Somme in 1916, suffering about 5000 casualties in two days. The centenary of the 36th Ulster Division is widely celebrated, and banners referring to it are commonplace (fig. 4.04). It is an important emblem of unionist sacrifice that has been celebrated for generations afterwards. In this regard, the UVF is also seen as a flagbearer of freedom for people with a unionist allegiance. As part of the British Commonwealth, NI also celebrates the ending of hostilities in the First World War and the sacrifices of the fallen. 11th November is the designated Memorial Day on which members of the armed forces who had died in the line of duty are commemorated. They are the remembered as expressed in this poster (fig. 4.05). The

same motif of the comrade with his head bowed in grief for the fallen, is used as in all other world war martyr commemorations across the UK. This takes place on Remembrance Sunday, although NI prefers to remain strict about the date rather than the day. In this 2022 poster, 11th November fell on a Friday. Nevertheless, Armistice Day was marked as in the UK, with a two-minute silence at 11 am on the eleventh day



Fig. 4.05. Poster: 11th November – ‘We will remember them’. Courtesy: UJSS

of the eleventh month.¹⁵ These continuums are part of the political and commemorative allegiances that connect NI to the UK. Contestations occur when the flagbearers of freedom became banned organisations (such as the UVF) and when the commemorative practices are carried out across barriers of day and

date.



Fig. 4.06. Banner: Battle of Britain – ‘Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few’. Courtesy: UJSS

Even though the Republic of Ireland maintained a neutral stance during the Second World War, NI, due to its loyalty to Britain, participated in the war effort.¹⁶

The heroism and sacrifices in the war effort and its ensuing

15. “Armistice Day,” The Royal British Legion, <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance/armistice-day>.

16. Ian S. Wood, “Northern Ireland at War,” in *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 171-195.

emblems abound in banners where the Battle of Britain, also known as the Air Battle for England—a military campaign of the Second World War, in which the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air arm of the Royal Navy defended the UK against the Germans—is celebrated (fig. 4.06). Lisa Currie explained the differences in the nature of remembrance of the two world wars, as she took me around. Unlike the remembrance of the First World War dead, this memorialisation is more community-generated than government-generated,¹⁷ more about pride for the sacrifices of the few than about grief for the sacrificed.

Other than the continuum in the commemorations of the war dead, there is also continuum in the commemoration of the martyred of local paramilitary organisations that is also community-generated because they deal with local sectarian violence. The continuum of martyrdom is foregrounded in the series of defence organisations that have been created over the years for the protection of the common people against the atrocities of the IRA. Figs. 4.07 and 4.08 feature murals of past and present defenders of Ulster. The unionists use ‘Ulster’ to



Fig. 4.07. Mural: Ulster’s past defenders. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

refer only to NI, marking its separation from the Republic down south, and they are in conflict with the republicans who want to make Ireland completely free, both North and South. In the 1920s, the Ulster Special Constabulary was established, and fifty-four of its members were killed during its existence. After its disbandment in the 1970s, the Ulster Defence Regiment was formed, and 200 of its members were killed

17. Lisa Rea Currie (Heritage Officer, EastSide Partnership), interview by author, East Belfast, April 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

during the Troubles. From the 1970s, other paramilitary organisations formed, such as the UDA that headed all vigilante loyalist groups to protect the Protestant community from IRA violence. The Ulster Freedom Fighters was formed in 1973 as the military group of the UDA; they served a similar purpose of defending the Protestant community. Here, the contestation lies between their existence as a sanctioned infantry group of the British Army and as a self-appointed group of citizens undertaking law enforcement in their community without legal authority. Even though past defenders were banned, present defenders continue, albeit as illegal organisations of the UK but



Fig. 4.08. Mural: Ulster's present defenders. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

with the British Crown proudly figuring as an emblem at the top of their mural. The present-day organisation is becoming more radically active, pointing the gun directly at the viewer or any enemy of the community, as represented in the mural. Their dead are remembered

with dignified commemoration like the military dead of the world wars, even though, in many cases, the local Catholic communities consider them criminals.

4.1.2 The continuums in Bangladesh

Unlike in Ireland, the continuums in Bangladesh focus less on religio-political issues and more on post-political conflicts pertaining to martyr legacies for socio-political transformation, similarity of slogans used in different contexts and a continual transformation of awards and terms of recognition.

4.1.2.1 Continuum of martyr legacies

In every historical movement in Bangladesh, the martyrs' call constitutes the continuum. Fig. 4.09 features a photograph from the 1969 mass uprising in Bangladesh where a poster contained the words 'Shohider dak: Bangalee jago' [Martyr's Call, Wake Up Bengalis]. This refers to the memory of the martyrs of 1952 and 1960s who had continued the struggle for freedom from East Pakistan. The 'Bengalis' do not refer to the non-Muslims but to the non-Punjabis. To sustain the legacy of the martyrs, the present generation must again wake up and continue with its demand for equal socio-economic and political rights for people of all classes. From the confines of students' protests at Dhaka University, this mass movement of 1969 spread to all classes of people, from the cities to remote villages. In 1952, students had begun actively participating in political agitation in the country, and after a decade, a generation became politically educated and returned to their homes in the villages, carrying ideas of the uprising with them. Hence, the call of the martyrs reached the villages, as all communities became involved in the political struggle, leading to mass revolt prior to the Liberation War. These martyrs of the uprising included Sergeant Zahurul Haque whose funeral processions brought people together in defiance of the impositions of section 144, to carry the dead body of the Sergeant in 1969. Banners abounded claiming that the blood of the martyr would not



Fig. 4.09. Photograph: Banner of 'Martyr's Call: "Wake up Bengalis"' during the 1969 people's upsurge. Book: Ahmed, Sharif uddin. *Bangabandhu and Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2021. Courtesy: BNM

be wasted. He was an accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case, but the people refused to accept this sedition case imposed by the government of Pakistan. The death of Haque in February 1969 enabled Maulana Bhasani to garner huge support for the masses against the impositions of the Ayub regime. The martyr's call as a legacy of defiance was also invoked in commemoration leaflets. In the leaflet depicted in fig.

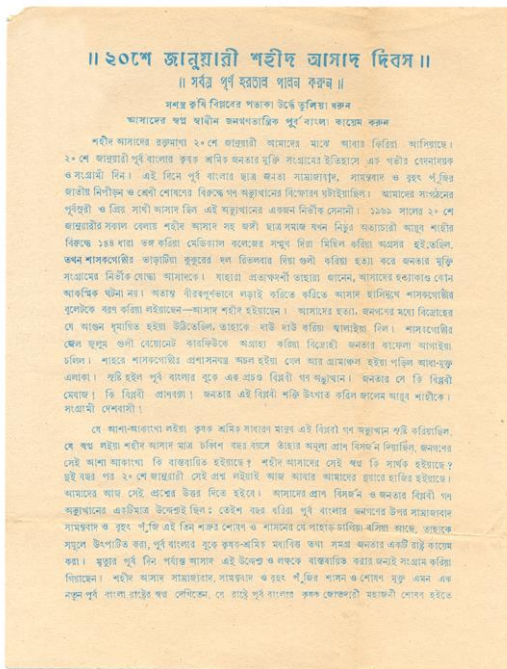


Fig. 4.10. Leaflet: Martyr Asad Day. January 20, 1971. Courtesy: LWM

4.10, the death of martyr Asad on 20th January, 1969 is cited again, to convey the extent to which society has been able to achieve the ideals that the martyr had died defending. This leaflet of martyr Asad Day was published two years later in January 1971, when the country was on the brink of a military crackdown that had been slated for 25th March, 1971. After two years, the society was once again faced with problems of political imperialism

leading to social inequality. These problems ranged from the oppression of the peasants by landlords and moneylenders to the travails of landless labourers, from the difficulties faced due to unjust wages to bonded slavery, and from the lack of opportunities for the middle class to unemployment of the intellectual class. The claim of the people was that all should have proper access to food, clothing, shelter, education and health. For the same, Asad had worked to mobilise masses in the villages by initiating them into the armed struggle. Once the villages declared themselves free, then the governmental apparatuses of state oppression in the cities could be brought down. This leaflet (fig 4.10) was published by the East Pakistan

students' union, calling upon the masses to embark on nationwide strikes again, similar to what was done in 1969. Therefore, the continuum is of the revolutionary events but is also a means of protest. It is important to understand the means of protest because the society has not yet achieved the desired ideals. The government retaliated by stating that a political intervention was necessary to establish a stable government where President Ayub Khan could continue his martial law and crush the revolting stance of the mass uprising. This leaflet was a call for the people to readopt martyr Asad's means of revolting. All should work towards a revolutionary politics, declaring strikes in cities, villages, lands, ports, schools, colleges, wholesale and retail markets to bring to fruition the unrealised dreams of thousands of martyrs like Asad. From 1968/69 to 1971, the continuum of mass struggle was mediated through the legacy of blood martyrdom as revolutionary politics. The series of events and means of dealing with those events moved along a chronological trajectory through reiteration. Asad was shot during the market strikes in 1968 before his death in 1969; emulating this, rebellious farmers observed strikes in Khulna and Sylhet in 1971. Martyr legacies are sustained to bring about a revolution in society, but when it threatens the essential status quo, it is neutralised and diverted. In such instance, a call for observance of the memory of the martyr is a revolutionary call for rebellion. Contestation is expressed between the need for revolutionary politics to maintain social equanimity and its negation by the authority. For this reason, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the child martyr Matiur and his accidental death were exalted much more than the socio-political martyrdom of the student leader, Asad.

4.1.2.2 Continuum of slogans

Slogans constitute a continuum of martyrdom in Bangladesh. Movies about the 1971 Liberation War show freedom fighters uttering the *Joy Bangla!* slogan before

they are shot dead. It is not just the use of the popular *Joy Bangla!* slogan in speeches, banners, posters and pamphlets and as salutations that constitutes its continuum in the present but also how it has evolved from being a word of protest to being a defiant utterance. According to Sirajul Alam Khan, Bangladeshi political analyst, philosopher and writer, Dhaka University students Aftab Uddin Ahmed and Chisti Shah Helalur Rahman were the first to utter the slogan. Rahman was the joint secretary of the Chattra League Central Committee (Sirajul Alam Khan was one of the founders) for the All-Party Student Struggle Council meeting on 15th September, 1969.¹⁸ Poet Nirmalendu Goon, in his book *Attokotha '71 [Autobiography '71]*, writes about how Rahman became a target of the Pakistan Army when they were shooting students, teachers and staff at Dhaka University. He was a staff reporter of the university, and when he tried to escape along the backyard, he was shot and cried out *Joy Bangla!* This citation has been taken from the local newspaper of Bogura district, to which Rahman belonged.¹⁹ Therefore, this slogan emerged from the world of student politics and became well-known in the district villages from where most of the students came. Subsequently, this slogan was used by Sirajul Alam Khan in a mass meeting of the AL election campaign at Racecourse in Dhaka on 18th January, 1970. On 7th June, 1970, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also used the slogan for the first time in a mass meeting and later in the famous speech on 7th March, 1971. Md. Shamsul Haque, in his 2020 book, narrates an episode in which 300 people were killed in a single day in a village in Chittagong. An aged man named Sen babu was said to have been reading the

18. Md. Sakhawat Hossain, *Sirajul Alam Khan: Swadhinata Saswastra Songram ebong agameer Bangladesh* [Sirajul Alam Khan: Armed struggle for Independence and future Bangladesh] (Dhaka: Ankur Prakashoni, 2019), 69-70.

19. “Bogura jelar Prothom shahid chattroneta, Chisti Shah Helalur Rahman [Chishti Shah Helalur Rahman, the first martyred student leader of Bogura district],” *Bogura Live*, April 7, 2019, [বগুড়া জেলার প্রথম শহীদ ছাত্রনেতা চিশতি শাহ হেলালুর রহমান | বগুড়া লাইভ \(boguralive.com\)](http://বগুড়া জেলার প্রথম শহীদ ছাত্রনেতা চিশতি শাহ হেলালুর রহমান | বগুড়া লাইভ (boguralive.com)).

Ramayana for the peace and well-being of the country when members of the Pakistan Army and their local stooges came in and mockingly asked him to utter *Joy Bangla!*. When he unwittingly did so, a rifle was put to his mouth, and the trigger was pulled. Another villager, Sadhu Nabin was similarly shot while reciting the *Bhagavad Gita*.²⁰ The focus here is not only on the Hindus who uttered the slogans and were targeted in the 1971 war but also on the slogan's use to establish a deliberate 'enemy' for the killing, such as, in this episode, where the local Bengali collaborators forced Sen and Nabin to utter the slogan so that they could be killed. Reasons for such killings as borne out of personal enmities were common in the villages. Thus, this slogan was not only uttered as words of protest or defiance by freedom fighters but was also used as a trick for getting them killed. The broad affiliation of the slogan with the pro-Liberation forces was utilised in generating such tricks for killing in 1971. This affiliation continued even after the murder of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members in 1975, when the military government banned the use of this slogan, for it was often uttered by members of the resistance group who initiated an armed struggle against the Prime Minister's assassins. In 2020, Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina, the present Prime Minister, stated that those who refuse to utter this slogan with pride are now the anti-Liberation forces of the country. The cabinet decided to make *Joy Bangla!* the national slogan, pursuant to a related High Court verdict delivered in 2020.²¹ The continuum of the slogan comprises its voice as protest, defiance, trick, national unity from 1969 to post-1975, and governmental order, each of which resulted in the martyrdom of people in Bangladesh. The continuum is

20. Md. Shamsul Haque, "*Joy Bangla bolar shonge shonge mukher bhetor guli* [Shot in the mouth as soon as Joy Bangla is said]," in *Ekattorer Shookgatha [Tragedy of '71]* (Chottogram: Itihaser Khosra, 2020), 32-33.

21. "Bangladesh introduces Joy Bangla as national slogan," *New Age*, February 20, 2022, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/163263/bangladesh-introduces-joy-bangla-as-national-slogan>.

sustained by the political opposition transmuting the *Joy Bangla!* slogan to *Bangladesh Zindabad!* [Long live Bangladesh]. Contestation exists regarding the usage of the slogan as a mark of pride in martyrdom to the slogan becoming a trick to kill people to AL party workers using *Joy Bangla!* while committing acts of oppression. There was a series of incidents in Manikganj, where party activists, crying out *Joy Bangla!* beat up a Hindu college professor and a principal along with some students.²² Therefore, the slogan is often a reiteration of party domination that is propagated in the name of nationalism, when it should only exist as a call for the glory of the nation.

4.1.2.3 Continuum of awards



Fig. 4.11. Photograph: Colonel Ziaur Rahman visiting Comilla cantonment devastated during the liberation war in 1971. Comilla. 1971. Courtesy: MMCR

Martyrdom is one brand in Bangladesh that everyone wants to display. There are people of contesting ideological and political affiliations who have received gallantry awards in 1972 after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. From Ziaur Rahman to Khaled Mosharraf Hossain, sector

commanders have been bestowed gallantry awards like *Bir Uttom* and *Bir Protik*. While exploring ephemera archives at Dhaka and Rajshahi, the contributions of these people and those belonging to their opposing political factions were included in the narrative of the Liberation War. Fig. 4.11 features a photograph of Major Ziaur

22. Sayan Dey, "Manikganj: Hindu Professor beaten up by AL cadres shouting Joy Bangla slogan," August 14, 2022, *Sriti o Chetona*, https://sritiochetona.org/manikganj-hindu-professor-beaten-up-by-awami-league-cadres-shouting-joy-bangla-slogan/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=manikganj-hindu-professor-beaten-up-by-awami-league-cadres-shouting-joy-bangla-slogan.

Rahman visiting a cantonment in the district of Comilla after it was devastated by the 1971 war, and fig. 4.12 features the mementos of Major Khaled Mosharraf. The former photograph represents the field visits conducted by Major Zia to alleviate the sufferings of the people, and the latter illustrates his gallantry medal, Commander's badge and other identification documents. Both symbolise the refined military knowledge that was used in guerrilla warfare to counter West Pakistan on political, economic and administrative grounds, as well as the able governmental and military stance in helping recuperate with post-war losses. Thus, these contributions are remembered over the years and

acknowledged by awarding gallantry medals. Contestations exist regarding when such contributions are foregone in present attempts to revoke the title awarded to a martyr, like the title of President Ziaur Rahman. However, as Anis



Fig. 4.12. Objects: Passport, identity card, medal and badge of Major Khaled Mosharraf. Courtesy: BNM

Alamgir makes clear, while the title may be revoked soon, his title as a freedom fighter will not be challenged and neither will his being an accused in the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family be revoked.²³ It is through contributions as well as the disputes that these martyrs remain relevant in people's minds.

23. Anis Alamgir, "Should Ziaur Rahman's gallantry title be revoked?" *Dhaka Tribune*, February 12, 2021, <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2021/02/13/op-ed-should-ziaur-rahman-s-gallantry-title-be-revoked>.

It is the awardees as well as the awarding authorities who create a continuum



Fig. 4.13. Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury on the silver jubilee of *Bijoy Dibosh*. University of Dhaka. 1996. August 12, 2022.

in the martyr history of Bangladesh. The various awards received by one of the famous martyred intellectuals of the country, Munier Chowdhury, established a continuum in the awarding and recognition itself. While political parties like the AL and BNP may contest the number and nature of martyrs and have biased approaches towards the martyrs' families, they have been unanimous in bestowing posthumous awards on martyrs.

Fig. 4.13 features the award given by the University of Dhaka to Munier Choudhury

as an eminent professor in the university before he was killed along with other teachers, staff and students on 14th December, 1971. The award was given on 16th December, the official *Bijoy Dibosh* for Bangladesh, recognising his sacrifices in the Liberation War. In 1996, Bangladesh celebrated the silver jubilee of its War of Independence. Stanley Kochanek informs that the year was marked by the resignation of the BNP, an abortive military coup, two elections in less than four months and the return of the AL to power after twenty-one years.²⁴ The celebration of the *Bijoy Dibosh* was an attempt by the AL government to set right what it claimed were the lies²⁵ propagated by the anti-Liberation stance of governments preceding it. Partially overcoming a difficult claim to power and patronage, awards thereon became

24. Stanley A. Kochanek, "Bangladesh in 1996: The 25th Year of Independence," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1996: Part II (February 1997): 136, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645479>.

25. Kochanek, "Bangladesh in 1996," 140.

witnesses to overriding claims and the celebratory promotion of the 1971 ideals. Fig.



Fig. 4.14. Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. Destiny-2000 Ltd. 2009. August 12, 2022.

4.14 features the award given in 2009 by a private company on behalf of Bangabandhu International Convention Centre to Chowdhury's family. During this first year of the second term of the government of Sheikh Hasina, as the AL-led government became secure in its position, private companies became aligned with these historical commemorations, bearing a corporate social responsibility to the nation and government.

Fig. 4.15 features the award given to the same martyred intellectual by the Language Soldier and Political Prisoner Council in 1993 (the third year of the leader of BNP, Khaleda Zia's first term in government). The award recognised the contribution of Munier Chowdhury to the language movement and his imprisonment because of it. Equally proficient in Bangla and English, he went to Harvard University to study linguistics. He also wrote the play *Kobor* about the atrocities in the 1952 language movement to mark the movement's anniversary on 21st

February, 1953, while in prison. Significantly, this award overlooked his targeted



Fig. 4.15. Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. Language Soldier and Political Prisoner Council. 1993. August 12, 2022.

killing as an intellectual in 1971. While the continuum of martyr recognition remains, different contributions are chosen for recognition by different governmental ideologies. Contestation lies in the simultaneous functioning of oppositional ideologies with dominant ideologies to nurture their causes. Fig. 4.16 features the award given to martyr Munier Chowdhury by the *Bangladesh Mujibnagar Karmachari Kalyan*

Sangsad

[Bangla

desh Mujibnagar Employees Welfare Association] on *Bijoy Dibosh*. The award was not given by the then Khaleda Zia-led government but by a socio-political organisation that claimed to protect the spirit of the 1971 Liberation War. Deriving its name from the Mujibnagar government that was formed in April 1971 to conduct the War of Liberation, this organisation has protested against the anti-Liberation forces of the country. Therefore, its award was a challenge



Fig. 4.16. Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. *Bangladesh Mujibnagar Karmachari Kalyan Sangsad*. December 25, 1992.

August 12, 2022.

to the governmental status quo in 1992, which it had considered anti-Liberation in

spirit. While the image of the pen is a symbol of the defiant writing of Chowdhury for the cause of the nation, the iconic structure of the Mujibnagar government was posited as a challenge to the existing government in 1992. These awards remain in the living room of Chowdhury's house, unkempt except for the personal initiative of his son Asif Munier. An urgent contestation emerges in these photographs as markers of glorification as well as the ruin that will soon set upon these objects.

4.1.3 The continuums in Ireland and Bangladesh

Both Ireland and Bangladesh have a long history of colonial conflicts and post-conflict political oppositions that generate martyrs through different ways of appropriation among people, such as historical characterisations, remembrances, motifs, historical struggles that led to everyday partisan contestations by brandishing the names of martyrs in election manifestos, deployment of the language of martyrdom to justify armed struggle and filing of criminal cases, and appropriation of martyr causes for political mileage. Everyday deaths result from the protracted saga of historical struggles, political conflicts and banal vendettas. There are justice groups and other socio-political organisations that fight over years for the rights of the civilian martyr families on common platforms. There is also a continuum in the nature of justice sought, from convictions to social and individual closure.

4.1.3.1 Continuum of historical struggles

Historical revolutions connect the narrative of martyrdom across generations. Fig. 4.17 depicts the cover page of the republican print media *An Phoblacht/Republican News* referring to the death of the Gibraltar martyrs of 1988, who were part of Ireland's historical struggles. The side-by-side images of Martin Savage, an IRA volunteer who was killed in action in 1919, and Sean Savage, an IRA volunteer who was executed in 1988, indicate the role of the Catholic community in

the continued historical struggles for freedom. The death of Martin Savage on Ashtown Road in Dublin in 1919, prior to the Irish War of Independence and that of Sean Savage in Gibraltar in Spain in 1988, before the Good Friday Agreement of

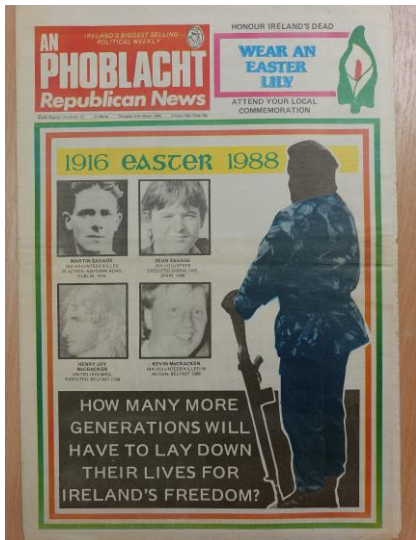


Fig. 4.17. Newspaper front page: *An Phoblacht/Republican News*. March 31, 1988. Courtesy: EHIRHM

1998, indicate the necessity of martyr struggles for independence and peace. The images of Henry Joy McCracken, an Irish republican and member of the United Irishmen who was executed in 1798, and Kevin McCracken, an IRA volunteer who was killed in action in 1988, also placed side by side indicate a similar continuity, even though the range of the struggles referred to has changed. While the oppositional force of the British Crown and army remains the same, there is an increasing pressure to

historically justify these struggles. From the 1916 Easter Rising to 1988, the figure of the republican volunteer has become that of a martyr, a part of generations of sacrifice. When local people are called upon to wear an Easter lily and attend local commemorations with such ephemera, they are symbolically transformed into successors of a patriotic generation. This appropriation is done by the republicans, in the face of the British criminalising the actions of the Gibraltar Three and putting the mourners under siege in their funeral ceremony.

The loyalist tradition takes us back much further to establish its continuum of historical struggles. Fig. 4.18 features a banner of the Martyrs of the Grassmarket being carried during the Orange Order parade in Belfast in 2009. During these annual parades, the people of the Orange Order remember these martyrs. The image at the centre describes the signing of the National Covenant in the Greyfriars churchyard at

Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1638, when King Charles I introduced the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1637 to establish the power of the British Crown over the Church. However, the Scotsmen refused to accept the English liturgical practice and church government norms. The National Covenant was an agreement between the Scotsmen and the King, maintaining the Reformed faith and Presbyterian discipline of the former. The Convention of Reformed Presbyterian Churches mentions this incident as the ‘keystone of the arch of the liberties, civil and religious, which Great Britain enjoys today’²⁶. This historical heritage is upheld by the loyalist orders in NI, even though the martyrdom of the covenanters is rooted in a conflict with the British monarchy. These Orange Order parades are also held in London and Edinburgh.



Fig. 4.18. Banner: Loyalist banner of the Martyrs of the Grassmarket. LOL No. 94'. Belfast. 2009. Courtesy: PECPM

Historical continuum is also demonstrated in the everyday lives of people like the Titu Mir house in the BAF Shaheen School in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It popularises Titu Mir’s name and the narrative of ‘*Basher Kella*’ [the fortress of bamboo], which signified his resistance against the British, among students. The peasants’ revolt was led by Titu Mir. Due to the imposition of the British agricultural capitalist system, this class quickly became deprived, and the zamindari system came under the control of landlord *babus* of Kolkata. Titu Mir became part of the rural middle-class order who coordinated the peasant struggle against the atrocities of these landlords. The landlords were brought in the British East India Company to aid them, and in the ensuing

26. Rev. John M’Donald and B.D. Airdrie, “Convention of Reformed Presbyterian Churches,” in *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* (Pittsburgh: Myers, Shinkle & Co., 1894), 84.

struggle, Titu Mir died a martyr along with his comrades in the flimsy bamboo fortress in 1831. Primarily, only the Muslim peasants revolted, but in later stages, the Hindu peasants also joined because of similar oppressions. Thus, Titu Mir became the icon of a united mass revolt against an oppressive class. He is the archetype of the anti-British, anti-zamindar resistance against oppression in Bangladesh. Even now, the successors of the zamindar class are regarded with much hatred; Professor Afsan Chowdhury was considered a part of this group when he visited his village in Noakhali.²⁷ In this continuum of heroic historical struggle, contestations lie in the use of iconic references to spread ideas of radical fundamentalism. ‘Basherkella’ is the unauthorised Facebook page²⁸ of the pro-Jamaat and Chhatra Shibir (student wing of the BJI), responsible for issuing death threats to writers and criticising the judiciary when it convicted certain Jamaat perpetrators of war crimes. Moreover, this social media page creates religious fictions such as the envisioning of the face of martyrs like Delawar Hossain Sayeedi on the moon, and this is enough to send the masses on a rampage. Often, these social media pages are closed down, characterising them as digital ephemera which were only subject to short-term availability and access. The contestation in the continuum ranges from the emulation of historical heritage and archetype to their radical remodelling.

Historical continuum in the rural countryside is also found in Ireland. Tony Harnden writes about Cal Mor, an outlaw sentenced to death in 1978 as a cattle thief in South Armagh. In the 1980s, he was seen as the ancestor of the republican hunger strikers. Cal Mor had taken cattle seized by the bailiff because the people could not pay the exorbitant rent 300 years ago. Harnden explains that it was like a political

27. Afsan Choudhury (Bangladeshi liberation war researcher, columnist, and journalist), interview by author, Dhaka, August 12, 2022. Transcript, with author.

28. Basherkella, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/basherkella09>.

execution the IRA prisoners were facing years later.²⁹ This is how common people encounter continuums of martyrdom in their everyday lives, through sustained socio-economic and political disparities. However, ephemera regarding the same have not been produced, similar to the scarcity of rural ephemera in Bangladesh.

4.1.3.2 Continuum of political party affiliations

There is a continuum in political parties' affiliation with martyrs and their ideologies. Oppositional parties of Ireland have continually affiliated themselves with different groups of martyrs. Although oppositional, these trajectories continue, sustaining the narrative of martyrdom. Fig. 4.19 features a 2001 election campaign poster of the SF. As in the party's Easter parades, their prisoners' art and commissioned murals, this election campaign poster establishes the connection between the sacrifices of the Easter 1916



Fig. 4.19. Poster: Sinn Féin election campaign, 2001. Courtesy: EHIRHM

martyrs and the 1981 hunger strikers. The continuum is laid out in the party's manifesto, which is sourced from the Proclamation of 1916 with its ideals of a free provisional government, the Easter Rising with its ideals of a free Irish Republic and the hunger strikers with their ideals of just prison rights. These outlined the ideals of social equality and economic and political freedom for the people of the country. The sacrifices of the martyrs had catered to all these fields that affect the everyday lives of

29. Tony Harnden, "Roots of Rebellion," in *Bandit County: IRA and the South Armagh* (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1999), 93-94.

the people. The contribution of the martyrs and the comrades belonging to their ranks shaped the ideals of social, economic and political equality differently. Some belonged to the educated middle class, some came from the rural countryside, some participated as labour activists and some as political prisoners. The continuing political party affiliation of martyrs has also been used to swell the ranks of the party. After the Easter Rising of 1916, the Bloody Sunday of 1972 and the hunger strikes of 1981, the party's vote share increased. The deployment of impending martyrs as electoral candidates has been discussed in section 3.2.2; however, contestations are expressed

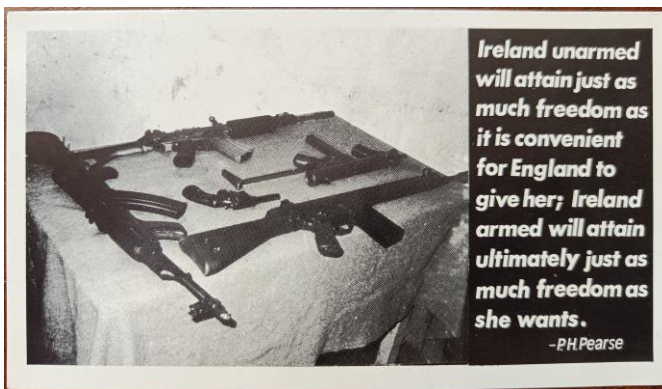


Fig. 4.20. Political Card: Some IRA weapons during decommission with a quote by Pearse. 1987. Political Cards – Republican (box 1). Courtesy: PANIPC

regarding the enunciation of ideals and their different enactments. Fig. 4.20 features a political card from 1987 that contains words of armed insurrection from the 1916 Rising against the British for the freedom of Ireland. It is a quote

by Pearse that ‘Ireland armed will attain ultimately just as much freedom as she wants’. The image of laid down guns indicates the party’s contemporary stance regarding the decommissioning of arms. In the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, SF agreed to the decommission, along with other parties, but later claimed that it had no plans to do so.³⁰ This is the contestation between the justification of armed struggle and the vouching for non-violent means.

Unlike the SF, which has republican sympathies, the DUP is a political party in NI with unionist aims. Nevertheless, both parties foreground the commemoration of

30. “Timeline: The Road to Decommissioning,” *The Guardian*, December 19, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/dec/19/northernireland>.

the dead. News updates of the DUP feature the East Londonderry MP Gregory Campbell, who tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling on the House to remember the Ballykelly bombing which occurred on 6th December, 1982, resulting in the murder of seventeen people.³¹ Significantly, the word ‘murdered’ was used instead of ‘martyrdom’. Even though Reverend Ian Paisley, who co-founded this party, built a narrative of martyrdom as represented in the figures at the Protestant Martyrs’ Memorial Church in Belfast, which was established by him, the language of martyrdom becomes based on broad religious binaries as evoked in the language of party ministers in 20th party politics. MLA for South Antrim, Trevor Clarke mentions that the murder of soldiers in Antrim was similar to the death of a hero gunned down by men with evil in their hearts. Hence, the martyrdom of the soldier becomes an act perpetuated by the evil of others.³² The continuum resides in the evocation of the dead, and contestation is expressed in the differing utilisation of the language of martyrdom for Protestant martyrs and modern-day soldiers of this community.

The affiliation of political parties with martyrs is also a means of continuing political contestations in Bangladesh. Fig. 4.21 is a poster of the Rajshahi branch of the Martyr Zia Memorial Committee. In 1978, General Zia floated the BNP, and his widow Khaleda Zia served as the leader of the party following his death and was herself the prime minister of Bangladesh from 1991 to 1996, and again from 2001 to 2006. On 1st November, 2007, the caretaker government assumed power in the country, but it was alleged that the president-cum-chief advisor was taking clandestine

31. Gregory Campbell, “Commons should remember 25th Anniversary of Ballykelly Bombing,” Statement by Gregory Campbell then Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) MP, MLA, 2007, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/docs/political_parties/dup/campbell_061207.pdf.

32. Trevor Clarke, “Clarke Passes on Sympathy to Soldiers’ Families,” Statement by Trevor Clarke, then Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) MLA, March 19, 2009, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/docs/political_parties/dup/clarke_190309.pdf.

instructions from the son of Begum Khaleda Zia.³³ The poster refers to the case of 1/11 (accusing the Zia family of installing an army-backed Caretaker government), with the portrait images of two generations of the Zia family on the top left-hand corner. The accusation against the party and family of martyr Ziaur Rahman became



enmeshed in this continuum. The images in the centre are of members of the new committee branch at Rajshahi, who work towards the revocation of this criminal case. The focus of district branches on these issues has resulted in a polarised allegiance of the people there to political martyr families.

During different periods in history, the national martyr families in Bangladesh and its political wings, namely the BNP and AL, have initiated criminal proceedings against one

Fig. 4.21. Poster: Revoke the false allegation from the Zia family. Martyr Zia memorial committee. Courtesy: HA

another. The BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury announced the committee’s election promise for 2023; that his party would prepare a list of independence war martyrs if they were voted into power.³⁴ However, the list is being prepared by the ruling party AL, which has been in power since 2009 and has resisted every attempt at mudslinging this process. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told the media on 24th January, 2016, that they had received a letter on the sedition case of Khaleda Zia for her comments on the number of people martyred in

33. Syed Badrul Ahsan, “Looking back on the 1/11 era,” *Dhaka Tribune*, January 13, 2022, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/op-ed/2022/01/12/looking-back-on-the-111-era>.

34. “BNP to prepare list of martyrs if voted to power,” *New Age*, December 21, 2019, <https://www.newagebd.net/article/94190/bnp-to-prepare-list-of-martyrs-if-voted-to-power>.

the Liberation War. Her remarks on 21st December, 2015, circulated on numerous print media, constitute speech ephemera, which was immediately countered with several legal ephemera. Two days later, on 23rd December, lawyer Mehedi sent a legal notice to the BNP chairperson, asking her to apologise to the nation for her comments on the number of the Liberation War martyrs. As the BNP chief did not respond to the notice, Mehedi sought the home ministry's approval to lodge a case. Supreme Court lawyer Momtaz Uddin Ahmed Mehedi, also a member of executive body of AL, filed the case with the court, urging it to issue a warrant for Khaleda's arrest on 25th January.³⁵ The government allowed the case to be filed, and Mehedi defined such comments on the martyrs as 'seditious'. Supreme Court Bar Association President Khandker Mahbub Hossain, however pointed out, that the government had taken the decision 'emotionally' without considering legal issues. "Her comments cannot be seditious according to the definition of sedition in the law," he claimed³⁶. On 10th August, 2016, Metropolitan Sessions Judge Kamrul Hossain Mollah granted Khaleda Zia bail in the sedition case.³⁷ Case notice, sedition reports and bail pleas circulate through newspapers amidst the masses to subsume them into opposing martyr brigades in the country. With each filing and hearing of the case, the political narrative of martyrdom enters the legal discourse, which is then disseminated through ephemera, like newspapers, news reports on television channels and local debates in rallies.

35. "Court asks Khaleda to explain 10 April," *Prothom Alo*, March 3, 2016, <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/Court-asks-Khaleda-to-explain-10-April>.

36. "Government okays sedition case against Khaleda Zia for remarks on 1971 martyrs," *Bdnews.com*, January 25, 2016, <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2016/01/24/government-okays-sedition-case-against-khaleda-zia-for-remarks-on-1971-martyrs>.

37. "BNP Chief Khaleda Zia gets bail in 9 Cases including sedition," *NDTV*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/bangladesh-nationalist-party-chief-khaleda-zia-gets-bail-in-9-cases-including-sedition-1442577>.

Political party contestations utilising the language of martyrdom are an everyday reality in Bangladesh. A week before Zia's comments at a public event in 2015, she was seen laying wreaths to pay homage to martyred intellectuals³⁸ during the 14th December celebration, along with the President and Prime Minister (belonging to the rival AL party). Election manifestoes of the 2018 general elections of both AL and BNP assigned an important place to martyrs. AL states as its important objective and plan the following: 'Protecting the memories of the Liberation War everywhere across the country, preventing the distortion of history, and special actions for displaying the real history of liberation will be continuing. Marking the killing fields and mass graves, collecting the names and whereabouts of the martyrs and building monuments will continue.'³⁹ The BNP has also promised in its manifesto to make a comprehensive list of martyrs all across the country, and uncover all the undiscovered Freedom Fighters in order to finally uphold them as 'honorary citizens.'⁴⁰ BJI, while unveiling its election manifesto for the 2018 Parliamentary elections, discussed how the 'Jamaat Ameer paid his rich tributes to the martyred freedom fighters, who laid down lives for the liberation of Bangladesh during the nine-month bloody war.'⁴¹ Following its election promise on 12th December, 2008, the Bangladesh AL set up the International War Crimes Tribunal comprising civil society members and led by the Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF). The Forum was formed in

38. NTV News, "President, PM and Khaleda Zia Pay Homage to Martyred Intellectuals," YouTube, December 14, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iPZMnbx2sI>.

39. "11th National Parliament Election-2018 Election Manifesto 2018 of Bangladesh AL," SDG Tracker, https://www.sdg.gov.bd/public/files/upload/5c324288063ba_2_Manifesto-2018en.pdf.

40. "FFs to Become 'honorary citizens': BNP," *The Daily Star*, December 18, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh-national-election-2018/bangladesh-freedom-fighters-become-honorary-citizens-bnp-manifesto-pledges-1675393>.

41. "Parties Unveil Manifestos for Sangsad Election," *Radiance Weekly*, December 28, 2008, <https://www.radianceweekly.com/139/3096/WHAT-AMISS-ANTULAY-DID/2008-12-28/Bangladesh-Newsletter/Story-Detail/Parties-Unveil-Manifestos-for-Sangsad-Election.html>.

2007 by the ex-sector and sub-sector commanders of the Liberation War, who campaigned for the trial of war crimes committed during the 1971 war. In response to this, the BJI formed the Jatiyo Muktiyoddha Parishad in January 2008. The SCF along with the *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* (Committee to Exterminate the Killers and Collaborators of 1971) have only intensified their demands for the trial of war criminals.⁴² While the BNP manifesto grants ‘honorary’ status to the freedom fighters, the BJI’s manifesto makes an allied promise regarding ‘the rights of freedom fighters and their rehabilitation’. Thus, the continuum lies in the attempts by political parties to nurture the Liberation War politics in their name, from glorification to conviction, and the contestation lies in the utilisation and justification of martyrdom.

4.1.3.3 Continuum of everyday deaths

In NI, everyday deaths are variously represented in ephemera. Fig. 4.22 features posters as a mural along the streets of Newtownards Road in East Belfast, in which the murdered innocents of the Troubles are remembered. The continuum is foregrounded in the series of posters enumerating deaths and the reasons for



Fig. 4.22. Posters: ‘We owe it to the future and the victims not to forget the past.’ Wall mural. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

civilian deaths, mostly targeted by the PIRA and SF. The reason for this continued remembrance of the past is the balanced movement towards a terror-free future. Here, the death of the innocents is seen as perpetrated by an oppositional ideology and party. The focus is on the nature of everyday life, from city towns to countryside villages as

42. Smruti S. Pattanaik, “What Does the War Crimes Trial Portend for the Future of Bangladesh?” *Mainstream LI*, no. 14 (March 2013) - Special Supplement on Bangladesh, <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article4070.html>.

well as beyond NI, which have been disrupted by the Troubles. Some instances include the lives of the innocent Protestant men in 1970 Ballymacarrett; a schoolgirl, a woman and four men who died in a car bomb in 1972 at Claudy; twenty-one people who died in two city centre pub blasts in 1974 at Belfast; three married couples who were killed in 1978 at La Mon house; seven houses blown up and four soldiers killed in 1982 at Hyde Park in London; and ten Protestant men who were gunned down by the South Armagh Republican Action Force. The last is an example of sectarian killing while the rest were cold-blooded murders of civilians. The journey towards peace involves the safeguarding of innocent civilians. In the last poster on the right featured in the mural, there is an attempt at establishing the nature of the victims. While it is said that the republicans use their being oppressed in their own land to justify their actions, the unionists of this area claim that they are democratic and British. The appropriation of victimhood justifies the eternal vigilance that unionist and loyalist paramilitary groups practice not only to protect members of their community but also to assault republican paramilitary groups in retaliation or aggression. Contestations occur over the depicted consistent defensive position and the real tiredness of the people who witnessed these happenings during the Troubles and just want their daily lives to be devoid of such sectarian conflicts.

The representation of everyday deaths during the 1971 War also recurs in Bangladesh. Unlike the factual posters in NI, the photographs in Bangladesh visually depict dead bodies of common people like the fruit seller in fig. 4.23. Local and national memorial collections in Bangladesh represent these everyday deaths and the resultant loss of food and livestock. The landscape contributes much to an understanding of the everyday deaths that occurred in 1971 as people's martyrdom. Whole villages were burnt down, and dead bodies were either buried in fields or

thrown into rivers. District survey studies of the mass killings that took place in various districts and sub-districts frequently featured images of dead bodies collected from the Buriganga River. While the continuum in NI extended over decades, that in Bangladesh extended only from March to December 1971. However, from 25th March to the end of April,



Fig. 4.23. Photograph: A fruit seller shot by Pak Army, 1971. Courtesy: MMCR

people formed resistance groups to defeat members of the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators. In the Chilmari subdistrict of the Kurigram district, people had similarly captured some men of the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators, when one member of the army took a gun from one of the resistance fighters and shot a few of them. Enraged, the resistance fighters killed him and his family members along with his small child and threw their bodies into the Buriganga River; after a cyclone, the bodies of the mother and child were seen together and perceived as ‘united in death’. People in the area believe that the present erosion of the land in Chilmari is the vengeance of gods on the people for having committed crimes on innocent people, albeit belonging to the opposition. Like in NI, innocents were killed because of conflicts between oppositional factions in Bangladesh. However, unlike in NI, the remembrance does not reside on specific naming but on superstitious beliefs and common knowledge and is shared to succeeding generations through oral reiterations. Contestations exist regarding the continuum when the freedom fighters and the

Pakistani Army and their local collaborators undertake everyday killings for different reasons.

4.1.3.4 Continuum of justice-seeking

Photograph comprising personalities ephemera represent the support of



Fig. 4.24. Photograph: Bloody Sunday March for Justice supports Ballymurphy families. Whiterock Road. 2012. Courtesy: PECPM

bereaved families for one another in their marches for justice. Fig. 4.24 features one such frame captured by Peter Moloney in NI, where the banner in the foreground informs that the Bloody Sunday march for justice in 2012

supports the Ballymurphy families, while that in the background depicts the Springhill/Westrock massacre. The shootings at Ballymurphy occurred between 9th and 11th August, 1972, about four months before the same First Battalion Parachute Regiment of the British Army shot thirteen civilians in Derry on 31st January, 1972. It has become popularly known as Belfast's Bloody Sunday. Even though the Saville inquiry accepted those shot as innocents and not terrorists, there were no convictions. Justice continues to be delayed; therefore, the march for justice continues. For the Ballymurphy and Springhill massacres, justice has been similarly delayed. For civilians, this is how they are brought together to support a cause. It is difficult to publish posters, pamphlets and banners without a political affiliation and

organisational support,⁴³ and the personalities ephemera depicts solidarity effort. Leo Young explains that the Bloody Sunday dead were in no way involved with the IRA and their activities, who dub the dead as ‘martyrs’. In fact, Young considers the IRA to be supportive of violent politics, something they do not condone. Even though he acknowledges that SF supported the campaign for justice in gaining populist media attention, he states that it has also reaped political benefits from the campaign.⁴⁴

Civilian groups connect with each other to protect the deaths from such false martyr nomenclatures. In the same march along Whiterock Road in Belfast in 2012 (fig. 4.25), the families and friends of the Ballymurphy,



Fig. 4.25. Photograph: Innocent victims of McGurk’s bar massacre. Whiterock Rd. 2012. Courtesy: PECPM

Bloody Sunday and Springhill massacre dead also walked for justice for those who died in the McGurk’s bar massacre where sixteen civilians were killed including two children. The official website of the December 1971 bombing states that within hours of the explosion, the British armed forces briefed journalists that the massacre was the result of a republican ‘own-goal’.⁴⁵ However, as with previous campaigns, McGurk’s bar bombing campaigners have distanced themselves from the political propaganda of the IRA and SF, like the very atmosphere of McGurk’s bar, where people of all affiliations gathered. One ephemera leads to the next, and it is one of the remarkable

43. Adrian Kerr (Manager/Curator of the Museum of Free Derry), discussion with the author, Derry/Londonderry, April 22, 2022.

44. Leo Young, interview by author.

45. “The McGurk’s Bar Massacre Campaign,” McGurk’s Bar, <https://mcgurksbar.com/campaign/>.

ways in which the historiography of ephemera is structured. It is not just the archiving of legacy debates but the relatability of civilian deaths that generate the narrative of ‘martyrdom’⁴⁶, even though the term remains repudiated by bereaved families. Theirs is not a political sacrifice for the cause of the nation but an accidental death during the Troubles. What translates their deaths into a sacrifice, albeit unintentional, is the intentional shooting by the British regiments or their loyalist counterparts. In most banners for the murdered victims, the slogan of generations awaiting the ‘time for truth’ is common. The loss of the lives of these common people discards the political propaganda of the Troubles, preventing spectacle and the furtherance of political goals. Through these marches for their beloved dead, common people mourn. The continuum is also sustained by various groups that organise campaigns for civilian massacre victims from time to time. Paul O’Connor and Ciaran Cahill (coordinator of the Springhill Community House) work for the Bloody Sunday and Ballymurphy families respectively but have also worked together as spokespersons for these families. Contestations in this continuum occur regarding when these families are differentiated in terms of the support granted by the government of the Free State. Roslyn Doyle remembers that when the Bloody Sunday victims’ families and friends marched down South, they were turned away. Although the parliamentary statements⁴⁷ of the Dáil Éireann (the lower house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland, down south) on the legacy debates highlight the grief and struggle faced by the Bloody

46. For a presentation of the massacre victims as ‘martyrs,’ see Stephen Linstead and Garance Maréchal, “The Rhythm of the Martyrs: Barricades, Boundaries, and Arts-Based Interventions in communities with a History of Violence,” in *Demo(s)*, ed. G Lightfoot, J. L. Moriceau and Hugo Letiche (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016), https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/158460/1/Rhythm_of_The_Martyrs_24pp_booklet_low_res.pdf. The term is not explored here but a generalised term applied to various massacre victims during the NI Troubles.

47. “Legacy Issues in Northern Ireland and New Decade, New Approach: Statements,” *Dáil Éireann debate* - Tuesday 1017, no. 2 (February 2022), <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2022-02-01/15/>.

Sunday families and victimised families of other groups like the Enniskillen dead, they only supported the cause of the Ballymurphy victims through ‘an all-party motion backing calls for a public inquiry’⁴⁸ into the massacre.

Continuum of justice-seeking in Bangladesh consists of martyr families and friends demanding the punishment of war criminals. Fig. 4.26 features an iconic photograph in post-1971 Bangladesh, when martyr families came to meet the new



Fig. 4.26. Photograph: Martyr families meet *Bangabandhu* for justice. 1972. Courtesy: Exhibition: Leader of Liberation: *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. BNM

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujib. This meeting was featured in a series of photographs in an exhibition inaugurated in his name on 15th August, 2022. The women and children who survived the 1971 war came to meet him with their problems, as he travelled to various districts to meet the families after the devastation of the war. While

justice-seeking was mostly directed towards the national figures, it was coordinated and organised by the civil society. The mother of martyrs, Jahanara Imam, set up a people’s court in the Central Park of Dhaka for the symbolic trial of Gholam Azam, BJI’s supremo and well-known war criminal of 1971. These *gonojagoron monchos* have become platforms for citizens’ trial in Bangladesh for years now. Families of martyred intellectuals also came together to form *Projonmo’71*, comprising first-generation successors of 1971 who had mostly been young students in the 1990s.

48. Mags Gargan, “Dáil support offers hope to Ballymurphy massacre families,” *The Irish Catholic*, July 23, 2015, <https://www.irishcatholic.com/dail-support-offers-hope-to-ballymurphy-massacre-families/>.

Members of this organisation continue to agitate for the acknowledgement of the killings in Bangladesh as well as the genocides that occurred across different countries, like Canada and New York.⁴⁹ The campaign in New York for the United Nations' recognition of Bangladesh Genocide was jointly conducted with the European Bangladesh Forum, Bangladesh Support Group and *Amra Ekattor* [We '71].

While these international and national debates on justice continue, the local continuum of justice-seeking in Bangladesh remains contested at various levels. Asif Munier mentions that family members who witnessed the atrocities recently gave statements to the war crimes tribunal, but their lives are always at risk. This risk comes from oppositional political forces that have appropriated the process of genocide trials. It started when General Ziaur Rahman illegally seized power in the country after the military assassinated Sheikh Mujib in 1975 and stopped the war crimes trials. In fact, he was accused of reinstating accused members of BJI to key Cabinet positions. This change in ideological positions has affected the way justice-seeking continues as a narrative in modern-day Bangladesh. When I talked with Fakir Abul Hashem⁵⁰ of the martyrs in his local village in the district of Pabna, he mentioned that even though these villagers died during 1971, their families support the BNP, a political party founded by General Ziaur in 1978. These villagers feel that they had to sacrifice their lives only because of the unjustified decision of East Pakistan to separate itself from West Pakistan. Therefore, contestation herein exists regarding the vehement denial to claim any justice from the present AL-led government and the sacrifices made by the

49. Photographs of these campaigns were uploaded on *Facebook* on October 2, 2022 by Tawheed Reza Noor, son of martyred journalist, and may be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/tawheed.noor/posts/pfbid0efajScNnmkNyVrymnAtZHFFqiFd1RJTBIh55Z2j95QLjxWtSQobJZRuzsx7aDsZhl>. (at Toronto, Canada) and <https://www.facebook.com/tawheed.noor/posts/pfbid02YJZUuosGDgQhKM8YsW5A2cgK2r6CJyudQpkkmJ1N9NWZV9RoRخانvZ9yNG174QrMI>. (at Times Square, New York).

50. Fakir Abul Hashem (folk poet), interview by author, Dhaka, August 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

people. The local people at Mirpur, Dhaka, whom I interviewed on 8th August, 2022 claimed that justice for them would entail the present government's recognition of the martyrs in their families. Shabnam Mustari,⁵¹ daughter-in-law of martyr Nur Mohammad Mullick, clarified that this recognition included only social dignity and an individual respect for martyr families.

4.2 SUBVERSIONS

Martyrdom is not only constituted through contestations but also through a clear subversion of existent processes to posit a different, specifically opposing set of ideas. Subversions of identities, structures and purposes have included contestations in the naming and making of martyrs as part of their established grand narratives. Therefore, narratives of subversion will include new narratives of martyrdom like the neglected topic of gender and the disappeared, the demolition and vandalism that unfold a desire to reconstruct martyr structures, banned and recreated symbols along with the problematics of claims that generate purposes and cross-purposes.

4.2.1 The subversion of identities

The identity of the martyr as a female figure is not a subversion in itself, but the permeation of socio-political norms and patriarchal prejudices in the representation of the female martyr is a challenge for established ideals and leads to differing narratives of martyrdom. 'Disappeared' victims subvert the processes associated with the naming and making of martyrs in related but differing ways. The martyred are the abducted rather than killed, the locating of their remains continue even while their deaths remain uncertain and justice is sought even while its ends are self-defeating.

51. Shabnam Mustari (daughter-in-law of martyr Nur Mohammad Mullick), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

4.2.1.1 Gender in Ireland and Bangladesh

Gender, as the social and individual identity of a person, constitutes the martyr narrative in its distinct way. Martyrs who sacrifice their lives and whose martyrdom is acknowledged because they actively participate in war, are often men of the society. The sacrifices of women are dubbed as passive suffering and their deaths as collateral damage. In NI, women are represented in those commemorative martyr narratives that are assigned to the men, like a Roll of Honour. Fig. 4.27 is a Roll of Honour



Fig. 4.27. Political Card: In memory of their comrades. Women's Roll of Honour. Political Cards – Republican (box 2). Courtesy: PANIPC

for women from the republican community who died during the Troubles of the 1970s and 1980s; it is a rare find, even in ephemera archives. Although the women are named and their sacrifices are foregrounded through the poetic voice of the women prisoners of Maghaberry (in which the female comrades in prison are represented as forming a sisterhood of protest), defying the political obstacles and emotional confusions; the folk touchstone of sacrifice remains the male Cuchulainn figure, and the historical touchstone the male voice of Padraig Pearse from the Easter 1916 Rising. For the latter, some 'good man' would redeem the generation with his sacrifice.

It is not just the rare find or minimal recognition of women martyrs that creates the subversion of gender stereotypes, but also the contestations that lie in the continuance of these patriarchal archetypes, permeating documents of female martyrdom and its glorification. Moreover, women's sacrifices are more glorified in

their survival than in their death. Mary Hughes and Siobhán O’Hanlon, two SF activists who sacrificed their lives for the republican community but died natural deaths, feature in republican ephemera. Information regarding the twenty-two women martyrs in the Roll of Honour and Roll of Remembrance and the need for their commemoration is only found as a comment in a leaflet for the design and planning of a memorial garden for Siobhán O’Hanlon, one year after her death. Other than propaganda narratives, youthfulness may enable female martyrs to be known and remembered. Bernadette Martin has been mourned as an innocent victim of love—a love that could not conquer sectarian boundaries as this young Catholic girl was shot by the loyalist paramilitary while staying over in the house of her Protestant boyfriend Gordon Green⁵²—or as someone whose innocence remains assaulted as her killer roams free.⁵³ Fig. 4.28 is an image of an organ donor card that features in this newspaper cutting and remains as a witness to the sacrifice of Bernadette. She had decided to donate her organs to others, and with her death, the loss became that of the people she had wanted to serve through her death. The martyrdom of women intimately affects the lives of the others they served or desired to serve. The ephemera of common female martyrs becomes personal and very intimate in this regard. Contestations in intimate ephemera of women martyrs arise



Fig. 4.28. Newspaper cutting: Photograph of the organ donor card of Bernadette Martin. Deaths (troubles related deaths) box 2 (Civilian). Courtesy: ECNIPC

52. Carmel Robinson and Lynn Cochrane, “Sectarian bullet which ended love that crossed barricades,” *The Scotsman*, July 17, 1997.

53. John Mullin, “Terrorist who shot sleeping girl ‘will go free in a year,’” *The Guardian*, June 10, 1999.

when their sacrifices are used to propagate further deaths in society. While these ephemera may evoke more emotions and sentimental responses, they are understood to generate fewer reprisals.

In interviews with the local people of Mirpur⁵⁴ and various other districts in Bangladesh, the interviewees named the male members in their families as ‘martyrs’ and the women as merely ‘killed’. It is a passive death, of being dead in war rather than for war. Interestingly, a few of my interviewees were first-, second- and third-generation female members of martyr families and still considered only the male members to be martyrs. Hence, it is not just the issue of active participation or death in the line of duty or the conscious embracing of death that privileges the male martyr over his female counterpart; the concept of the female martyr in Bangladesh exists as an idea that challenges these pre-existing ideas, as subversion. While there is a consciousness that women martyrs must be duly acknowledged, case studies regarding this are few. Nasreen researched and compiled the stories of female martyrs of different religious and regional affiliations like Anjuman Ara (of Parbatipur, Dinajpur), Surlala Debi (of Dinajpur), Bhramor (of Saidpur, Nilphamari), Bidhyasundari Das (of Patuakhali), Kiron Rani Saha (of Bhanga, Faridpur) and a few others.⁵⁵ It is not just the stories of women martyrs but their commemoration that nurture their martyrdom. When the author asked Suraiya Begum about the commemoration of women as martyrs in the various districts and villages she has visited to interview women, she mentioned that these names hardly featured in

54. Five interviews with family members of five out of a total of about seventy martyred people in Mirpur were conducted at the Jalladkhana field memorial site at Mirpur, Dhaka on August 8, 2022 in Bengali, with their due permission. Transcripts of the same in English and documents shared by the interviewees to support their statements are available with the author.

55. Zobaida Nasreen, “How could we forget our women martyrs?” *The Daily Star*, December 17, 2019, <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/how-could-we-forget-our-women-martyrs-1841143>.

memorial plaques made by the local people and that there was scope for a sustained research on this.⁵⁶ Meghna Guhathakurta, daughter of martyred intellectual Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta, mentioned the troubles Shumon Zahid had to go through with bureaucracy and the government in the process of naming a flyover in Dhaka after his mother, martyred intellectual Selina Parvin, whose name remains well known as a female martyr in the country.⁵⁷ While studying the memorial plaque in Mirpur, I came across the name of one female martyr in the plaque—Martyr Maksuda Begum Moli—and another in the interview archives of the Jalladkhana memorial—Martyr Johorjan Begum. Thus, local initiatives by people do exist and wait to be explored by society, a subversion generated by the peoples' narrative of martyrdom. While only a photograph of the young Maksuda remains in the archives, Johorjan's daughter stated in the interview that her mother refused to leave her home in Mirpur even when the troubles of 1971 began. For the female martyr, the refusal to abandon the home and hearth is also the cause of death. Moreover, the daughter also mentioned that her father has remarried and that no remains of her mother are to be presently found with them.⁵⁸ The fate of the female martyr is not remembrance or the lack of it; it is a lack of voice and replaceability.

Professor Chowdhury has published the case study of Nipa Lahiri, as an interview conducted with his sister Nira.⁵⁹ The analysis of the case study from the perspective of female martyrdom reveals different nuances of the role of a woman

56. Suraiya Begum (Assistant Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 11, 2022.

57. Meghna Guhathakurta (Executive Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh), interview by author, Dhaka, August 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

58. Raushanara Begum (daughter of Johorjan Begum), interview by Satyajit Ray Majumdar, April 11, 2008. Accessed from the archives of the 1971 Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur, Dhaka.

59. Nira Lahiri (elder sister of martyr Nipa Lahiri), interview by Afsan Chowdhury, *Narider Ekattor* [The 1971 of Women] (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 2022), 23-31.

beyond a mere participant in war. Nipa was a medical student who had participated in active frontline duty as a member of the Pubail-Kaliganj sector of the Gazipur district and had cared for wounded freedom fighters. Like numerous others, she was inspired by Sheikh Mujib's speech in 1971 and decided to go to the training camps in India, to later return to her country and join the war efforts. Even during this period, she continued to provide medical care and write to her mother that she would definitely return. This correspondence with her family in addition to her conviction that she will return to her motherland complemented her brave act of leaving the house and travelling alone to another country. Her medical support to the freedom fighters also made her journey to different remote areas in Bangladesh, an imperative for a woman in war but a subversion for the conservative middle class society's limitations where the father was upset with the young daughter participating in political rallies outside the threshold of the home. The figure of the woman martyr as the caregiver or killer is subverted because both are found in her. During the day, she would provide saline and antibiotics to wounded freedom fighters, while at night, she would shoot any member of the infiltrating Pakistan Army trying to enter the villages. Along with male members, she moved through jungles and attacked the army gunboats. When the Pakistan Army began their air warfare and burnt the village of Tumulia, she had to move to the trenches, where there were mostly male freedom fighters. She also shifted her patients from a burning house to the trenches. It was when, she decided to go back to the burning room to retrieve the arms and ammunition, which would be essential for the freedom fighters, that she was burnt alive. Her pain, dedication, care and courage are not subversions in themselves but subversions of socio-patriarchal prejudices that structured the figure of the 1971 women martyrs.

In NI, the identities of female martyrs subvert patriarchal means of propagandist projection of male martyrs by utilising it for the projection of female martyrs or by creating new means of projection like using intimate physiological ephemera, that is a subversion of the commonplace male perspective. In Bangladesh, identities of female martyrs exist as subversions of socio-patriarchal means of creating their martyrdom. Contestations occur when these subversions do not only contest but generate new and under-studied means of female projection of martyrs at the level of the everyday, thereby constituting people's martyrdom.

4.2.1.2 Disappearances in Ireland and Bangladesh

Rona M. Fields writes that the disappearances, like torture to death and then destruction of the dead body, were a means of countering the narrative of political martyrdom itself.⁶⁰ The disappeared are not the missing but those who have been consciously done away with by the political authorities that abducted and killed them. From the victims among the common people in NI to the disappeared military personnel, philanthropist and common people in Bangladesh, the disappeared subvert the existence of the martyr as an observable figure and a traceable, evolving martyr legacy. If martyrdom is understood as being generated through death and its narratives, then the disappeared make the concept of death tentative and martyrdom delayed. For family members, the search continues for years, beginning and ending anew each day with the possibility that the disappeared might return. Furthermore, it was only on 9th November, 2009 that death certificates were issued for victims of the Troubles who had disappeared.⁶¹ In NI, the disappeared have become part of the

60. Rona M. Fields, "The Psychology and Sociology of Martyrdom," in *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-sacrifice*, eds. Rona M. Fields and C oil n Owens (USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 73.

61. Elaine Keogh and Tom Brady, "Family of 'Disappeared' victim still awaiting closure," *The Independent*, November 10, 2009.

martyr narrative through the demand for the remains of the dead and for justice by families and friends. Even though the process of seeking justice in the making of the

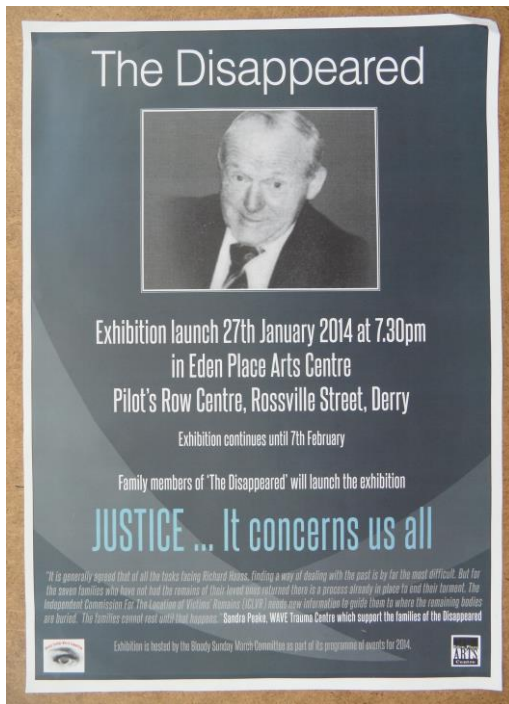


Fig. 4.29. Poster: Exhibition launch of *The Disappeared*. Eden Place Arts Centre, Rossville Street, Derry. January 27, 2014. Courtesy: PECPM

martyr have been discussed in previous chapters, it is subverted in the case of the disappeared. The term ‘martyr’ is irrelevant, almost an assault to the disappeared victims who had had no desire to stand witness to a set of events. If martyrdom has to define the end of these people, then the term has to be made devoid of its propagandist and radical brand politics. The disappeared were victims of the IRA and INLA violence, both proscribed organisations according to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions)

Act 1996. Fig. 4.29 depicts a 2014 poster printed by the Bloody Sunday March Committee in Ireland, following the initiatives of Richard Haass, a US envoy who had been chairing talks on dealing with the past—especially the Independent Commission for The Location of Victims’ Remains—to provide closure for the families of the disappeared. It was distributed for the launch of an exhibition on the disappeared, where the family members of the disappeared victims would come together. The poster refers to the continual process of the search for the remains and new guidelines required to locate the remains of more bodies. Jean McConville’s daughter mentioned that those who had abducted her mother were local people known to her.⁶² Therefore, it becomes very difficult to locate the remains of the dead and seek justice for the

62. BBC Newsnight, “Jean McConville’s daughter ready to give names of mother’s killers to police,” *BBC*, May 2, 2014, <https://youtu.be/udMYSUO2HyY>.

perpetrators, a process followed for other martyrs. This subversion becomes further foregrounded in the Northern Ireland (Location of Victims' Remains) Act 1999, where it is stated that the evidence gained during the search 'shall not be admissible in evidence in any criminal proceedings'.⁶³ Even though UK laws recognise the outlawed nature of the perpetrators, it does not allow for criminal proceedings against them. Contestation occurs when the family members seek different legal means to get the perpetrators convicted, to the point of being ready to give the names of the killers to the PSNI. A society that glosses over justice in the name of peace and stability will be challenged, as the families of the victims seek justice and closure. Moreover, the *Historical Dictionary of Northern Ireland Conflict* informs that the disappeared are victims of paramilitary violence and that some are specifically members of the Catholic community.⁶⁴ The IRA has often claimed to champion the cause of the Catholic community by targeting the Protestant community, an idea that is subverted in its role in the disappearances during the Troubles.

The disappeared in Bangladesh are victims of political violence perpetrated by the Pakistan Army. Mofidul Haque writes that the term 'martyr' has been casually used for the disappeared victims in Bangladesh but that criminal proceedings should be initiated against the perpetrators of the same because the International Crimes Court considers enforced disappearance a crime, along with murder and extermination.⁶⁵ Ranada Prasad Saha, a gallantry award-receiving soldier in the British Army was taken to the state headquarters on 5th May, 1971 and released within a day. The next

63. Northern Ireland (Location of Victims' Remains) Act 1999 CHAPTER 7, May 26, 1999, Section 3, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/7>.

64. Gordon Gillespie, "Disappeared," in *Historical Dictionary of Northern Ireland Conflict* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 92.

65. Mofidul Haque, "Disappeared ba nikhaj manusher odhikar ebong onnoyo shaheed R.P.Saha [Disappeared or missing person's rights and the unique martyr R.P.Saha]," in *Ranada Prasad Saha Sarokgrontho* [Ranada Prasad Memorial Collection] (Dhaka: Sahitya Prakash, 2013), 165.

day, Saha, his son, his friend, his housekeeper and his guard were abducted from their home in Narayanganj after they had fled from Mirzapur due to the mass killing of people there. The enforced disappearance of this family was due to the intentional destruction of the activities of the Kumodini Welfare Trust, which philanthropist Saha had founded. The Pakistan Army wanted to annihilate the people and bring their



Fig. 4.30. Photographs: Kumodini Complex built by R. P. Saha. Courtesy: LWM

activities of welfare and survival to a halt; thus, the Kumodini Complex was destroyed before the army went out in search of its owners. Fig. 4.30 features photographs of the Kumodini Complex which form part of the artefacts displayed in memory of martyr R. P. Saha at the LWM,

indicating the grandeur of the welfare structures in the country and the association of the common people with them. Akin to NI, the justice sought in Bangladesh is denied and misdirected. Haque mentions that Major General Rao Forman Ali, Major General Rahim and other military personnel should be convicted in this regard.⁶⁶ Contestations and a travesty occurred when only Mahbubar Rahman, a *razakar* and member of the local militia, was convicted after forty-eight years of injustice in 2019. However, unlike in NI, Bangladesh has moved towards the prosecution of perpetrators through the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)—a domestic war crimes tribunal set up in 2009 that outlines disappearance as a crime, specifically if it is aimed at the ‘desired destruction of a more limited number of persons selected for the impact that their

66. Haque, “Disappeared ba nikhoj,” 169.

disappearance would have upon the survival of the group as such'.⁶⁷ Here, contestation lies in the alleged claims that the Hindu minority was targeted by the Pakistan Army while actually the target was the destruction of an economically solvent class to undermine the financial foothold of East Pakistan. The instances of common people being subjected to enforced disappearances also arises out of social reasons like class, wealth and stature rather than political reasons resulting in paramilitary violence in the case of NI.

4.2.2 The subversion of structures

Martyrs are commemorated through memorial structures. However, martyrs are also remembered in the context of subversions of these memorial structures through the appropriation, encroachment and negligence of freedom corners as well as the demolition and vandalism of martyr memorial sites, indicating that martyr legacies are retained not through creations and constructions but through their destructions, reconstructions and deconstructions.

4.2.2.1 Appropriation and negligence of freedom corners and independence squares in Ireland and Bangladesh

Freedom corners are sites marked out as territories for activities of protest, commemoration of the dead and celebration of independence. While freedom corners in NI are sites of protest and defiance wherein civilians and paramilitary groups claim a different freedom for themselves, the independence square in Bangladesh is a witness to neglect and to its transformation into an amusement park. This study explores how different martyrs are commemorated at these sites and how these commemorations are subversive of one another. Fig. 2.100 in Chapter Two features a young boy represented on the Free Derry wall who has been shot by a British soldier

⁶⁷. Judgement of ICT-BD [ICT-1] Case No. 01 of 2018, Section 296, *International Crimes Tribunal-1 [ICT-1]*, Jun 27, 2019, 115.

in 1982. In NI, which is still under the UK, and Derry, which is officially named Londonderry, the site of the Free Derry corner is a landmark of defiant protest. The martyrs who are acknowledged in this gable wall are the people’s defiant martyrs, just like Stephen McConomy. The site is immortalised in the original slogan ‘Free Derry’



Fig. 4.31. Photograph: Freedom Corner space. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

by Liam Hellen in the gable wall, which was written in the context of the civil rights campaign in 1969 when the People’s Democracy march was being repeatedly attacked and people became wary of the B-specials of the Ulster Special Constabulary⁶⁸. Even now, over the

Free Derry corner flies the

Palestinian flag in solidarity with the civil rights movement there. Subverting these stands of martyrdom and liberation, the freedom corner at Newtownards Road in East Belfast is a marker of the loyalist paramilitary group’s challenge to defend the freedom of Ulster and commemorate the dead of the East Belfast Brigade (fig. 4.31).

‘Freedom corner’ is not a community name like the Free Derry corner but a paramilitary name that is written in the style of the other loyalist murals so as to almost claim legitimacy for itself. It has been around since the 1980s and has been repainted in various places quite a lot, especially in the context of the changes brought about by the nature of loyalist paramilitary murals and their images of masked gunmen which the images in the freedom corner emulated. This constant painting over characterises it as an ephemera. Contestations occur as new murals like Linenopolis—

68. “Free Derry wall painter Liam Hillen passes away,” *Derry Journal*, December 27, 2018, <https://www.derryjournal.com/news/free-derry-wall-painter-liam-hillen-passes-away-167508>.

fighter of the Pabna district.⁷¹ While the role of various districts in the 1971 Liberation War and the freedom fighters there are worthy of remembrance, the extent to which these freedom squares remain relevant as a structure for people post-commemoration is debatable.

4.2.2.2 Destruction, reconstruction and deconstruction after demolition and vandalism in Ireland and Bangladesh

The demolition of the last meeting place of the 1916 martyrs of the Easter

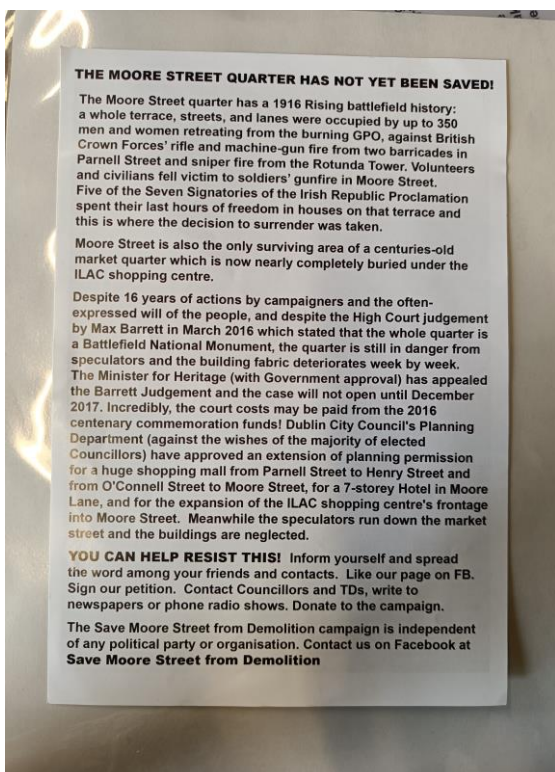


Fig. 4.33. Leaflet: ‘The Moore Street Quarter has not yet been saved.’ The Save Moore Street from Demolition Campaign. Sinn Féin 1915 – 1920 box 1 (including: material on the Easter Rising, pre-1966).

Courtesy: ECNIPC

Rising to make space for a shopping mall in Dublin is a subversion of the Republic of Ireland’s attempts to commemorate the martyrs who died for its freedom.

Fig. 4.33 features a leaflet distributed during the campaign—entitled *Save Moore Street from Demolition* in 2016—

so that people could come together and refresh their memory of martyrs and martyrdom while protesting. While it is

claimed that SF led the campaign for the preservation of the site that was witness to the decision of the final surrender of the 1916 leaders and the last moments of

life of The O’Rahilly, Henry Coyle, Francis Macken, Michael Mulvihill, Patrick Shortis and some civilians, the *Save Moore Street from Demolition* campaign was

71. “Swadhinata Chattor udbodhon, [Inauguration of Freedom Square]”, *barta24.com*, July 30, 2018, স্বাধীনতা চত্বর উদ্বোধন (barta24.com).

independent of any political party or organisation. The campaign's official website⁷² as well as the Facebook page⁷³ also demonstrates various ways of protecting the historic revolutionary quarter and street market (such as distributing leaflets, carrying out blockades against the contractors and conducting free history tours for adults and children, etc.), in which the families and relatives of the 1916 martyrs and the NGA are also involved. While no one other than The O'Rahilly has been named as a martyr in most Easter Rising commemorative ephemera, the anti-demolition campaign leaflet creates awareness of the number of people who lost their lives and the present will of the common people in protecting the site against the interest of property speculators. The High Court Judgement by Max Barrett on March 2016 identified the whole quarter surrounding Moore Street, through which the 1916 leaders moved, as a Battlefield National Monument, while the Minister for Heritage appealed against the Barrett judgement. This decision to seek a review of the judgement with the government's approval is an attempt to restore the dignity of martyr sites. Contestation occurs when funds for court appeals and continued demand for the preservation of Moore Street is sourced from the 2016 centenary martyr funds, and the issue is raised again in commemoration booklets. Moreover, the leaflet also urges people to write to the representatives of the government, sign petitions and donate to the campaign. These initiatives create a people's narrative of martyrdom, not through the building of new memorial sites but through the protection of the old.

Even when martyr memorials are made with personal effort and funds and on personal lands, like the one for Lt. Col Qadir, the result is disappointing in many ways. In the remote part of Badarganj Upazila of Rangpur division in Bangladesh, there are

72. Save Moore Street from Demolition, <https://smsfd.ie/>.

73. "Save Moore Street from Demolition," Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/save.moore.st.from.demolition>.

no proper roads to enable one to reach the martyr’s memorial. Caught up in the rules of public works and road making on government and personal lands,⁷⁴ this memorial is already threatened by erosion due to sand lifting in the nearby Chikli River. Nadeem

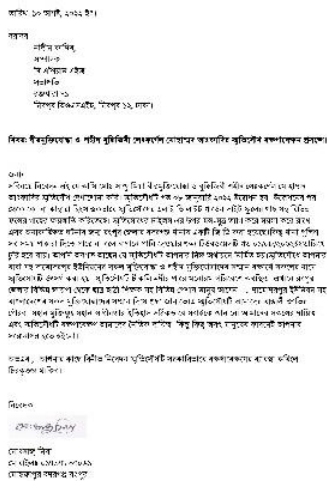


Fig. 4.34. Email: From the caretaker of the martyr’s shrine in memory of Lt. Colonel Qadir to Nadeem Qadir. August 10, 2022. Courtesy: Nadeem Qadir, son of martyr Lt. Colonel Qadir

Qadir, the eldest son of the martyr, has made attempts at maintenance and restoration but to no avail; he states that the local Member of Parliament is holding back regarding the making of the roads. Despite vocal support for the brave heroes of the land in the country, people commonly face such political clashes. The people’s martyr emerges from this subversive martyrdom residing in everyday conflicts which honour and dishonour the martyr simultaneously. Inaugurated on 8th January, 2022, there were immediate complaints of people ruining the lights, flowers, and fruit trees beautifying the memorial. Fig. 4.34 is the letter received by Nadeem Qadir from Md.

Saju Miah, caretaker of the memorial, in which he informs that although a police complaint had been filed, no action had been taken. This historical memorial has also been dedicated to eleven other freedom fighters of the Damodorpur union, creating a consciousness for martyr memories in remote interiors of the country. Hence, the caretaker appealed to the government to take an initiative to preserve the same, in the email written to Nadeem. The people’s martyrdom may be subverted by political factionalism, but they may also rise beyond it. If martyrdom creates debates, such ephemera highlight that martyrdom may also provide its resolution. While Sheikh

74. Sarker Mazharul Mannan, “Lt. Col. Md. Abdul Qadir: Martyr Memorial with individual initiative,” *Jamuna TV*, October 3, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1175943499940753>.

Hasina of the AL helped with the transfer of Nadeem's father's remains from Chittagong to Rajshahi, its political opposition—BNP—allowed safe travel of the martyr's family to attend the reburial ceremony despite the fact that a nationwide strike had been called on the same day by them. It is with support from all quarters and people that subversions can be challenged anew.

Demolition and vandalism of martyr sites and memorials in both countries are subversions of martyr commemoration structures, either for the prospects of commercial business ventures or partisan clashes. In Ireland, since such sites are limited, a campaign has been mobilised for their preservation; however, in Bangladesh, such vandalism occur frequently, and there is a definite lack of mass campaigns to preserve the sanctity of such sites.

4.2.3 The subversions of purposes

The purpose of martyrdom is to acknowledge the sacrifices of the people who have laid down their lives for the country. It is contested when emblems of sacrifice are utilised for propaganda, commercial gains and conflict generation. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission), pursuant to Section 69(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, has compiled a list of rules for government and public offices, private individuals and groups regarding the human rights connected to various forms of expression, including flags, symbols and emblems.⁷⁵ Subversions occur when people differentiate between the symbol and the symbolised, challenge sectarian ideologies, intermix symbolic connotations, use universal emblems and voice personal choices. Subversions of purposes in Bangladesh are generated when martyr memories face oblivion, indifference and distortions, when the eligibility,

75. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, "The Display of Flags, Symbols and Emblems in Northern Ireland," September 2013, <https://nihrc.org/publication/detail/the-display-of-flags-symbols-and-emblems-in-northern-ireland2>.

identification and verification claim of martyrs become self-defeating, when people are limited by party complexities despite having party affiliations and when they are able to challenge present sectarianisms.

4.2.3.1 Symbolisms in Ireland

Wearing of emblems both celebrate and censor martyrdom. In Ireland, martyrs and martyrdom are commemorated through emblems such as the use of the Easter lily to indicate the sacrifices of republican icons, the wearing of the poppy to commemorate the World War dead, wearing of bowler hats during the remembrance of the Orange Order heroes. The people's understanding of martyrs challenges these emblems and generates their subversive narratives. This segment will look at how the Easter lily, the poppy and other emblems figure in the contested emblem world of Ireland through an exploration of republican and unionist ephemera as well as the published martyrdom interviews conducted in 2013.

Sectarian ideologies have been imposed on emblems in Ireland; hence, the first subversion lies in challenging the association of the symbol and symbolised. People feel that it is not the actual wearing of the emblem that is important but the understanding that anyone may wear an emblem to commemorate their dead. According to a Protestant churchgoer, people uphold the Easter 1916 Rising leaders as martyrs, but also mention that their cause was flawed.⁷⁶ Symbolic connotations make emblems toxic in nature and further ideological conflicts, from its positive source meaning as an indicator of independence to its negative transmutation as an indicator of terrorism.⁷⁷ This insight among people is a challenge that everyday narratives cast on ideological makeovers that lead to people looking for emblems with more neutral

76. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Belfast 6: 5.

77. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Belfast 7: 4.

symbolism. Similar to the Easter lily, the poppy has also become an institutionalised emblem. Therefore, a person who used to wear a poppy because his family members sacrificed their lives in the First World War ceases to do so because he now looks for an emblem of peace.⁷⁸ Contestations to the people’s subversions occur when people of different religious and community affiliations state these opinions. A Roman Catholic perceives the methods of the 1916 leaders as flawed, even though most of the leaders were Catholics whose deaths have been glorified in the Catholic church masses. Similarly, a Unitarian person claims that the poppy, although symbolising the World War dead, is best given up because of its militaristic and imperialistic associations, even though the Unitarian church in the Republic of Ireland has a service for Armistice Day to commemorate the World War dead.

Even the imposition of symbolic meanings has its subversion. In republican ephemera, the image of the Easter lily includes imposed narratives. Fig. 4.35 features a political card printed by the Republican SF in Dublin. It posits the Easter lily narrative



Fig. 4.35. Political Card: ‘Wear an Easter Lily’. Front and back. Republican Sinn Féin, Dublin. Political Cards – Republican (box 2). Courtesy: PANIPC

78. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Dublin 3: 7.

as a national one, with the statement at the top proclaiming ‘national memories’ in Scottish Gaelic: the lily as the ‘national emblem’, the lily as the unison of the North and South in its proclamation of freedom, the lily as the emblem of hope and confidence, and the appeal to the nation, especially the young, to wear the lily. The reproduction of the first Easter lily poster (which had been undertaken by the National Commemoration Committee of 1925) establishes that these national narratives have continued through the years. The Easter lily is associated with the 1916 Easter Rising because the plant was used as a decoration in churches at the time. In the early 1970s, the way in which republicans attached Easter lilies to their lapels was an indication of which republican faction they supported—the Provisional or Official. Provisionals pinned theirs to their lapels, while the Officials ‘stuck’ them to theirs. The term



Fig. 4.36. Political Card: ‘Heigh O! The Lily O!...Thou emblem of freedom and flower of the Boyne’. C. Porter & Co., Belfast. Irish Political box. Courtesy: PANIPC

‘Stickies’ or ‘Sticks’ became a popular way of labelling Official Republicans.⁷⁹ The second subversion occurs when similar martyr emblems are cast with opposing ethno-nationalist narratives. Fig. 4.36 supplants the colour of the white Easter lily to that of the orange to commemorate the Protestant celebratory heritage of King William at the Battle of Boyne in Ireland in 1690. The orange lily became the emblem of freedom attained at Boyne. The Twelfth day, also known as Orangemen’s Day, is commemorated through orange parades, and this postcard is

79. Extract from the details to the Image of Easter Lilies (Image ID: PA0186) 1970 – 1979, in the Troubled Images CD-ROM, 2001, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, UK.

unionist ephemera, indicating unionist heritage and martyr legacies. The competing narrative is the narrative of freedom, although emanating from opposing factions. Contestation in this subversion occurs when the martyr emblem commemorates sacrifice on the one hand and victory and celebration on the other.

Emblems are overlaid with certain associations that discourage people from associating with them, even though they want to commemorate the dead and respect martyrs' legacy. An aged Roman Catholic woman mentioned that the symbolic value of the Easter lily became more radicalised with internment without trial of the republican prisoners.⁸⁰ This was following the suspension of the NI Government with some changes under the direct-rule administration from Britain until 5th December, 1975. Mostly nationalists were imprisoned during these internment years, and therefore, any emblem associated with the same could not be worn in the unionist areas during this time because it would be considered an affront to the direct rule of Britain and its Union Jack. Thus, emblems alternated between being associated with the commemoration of the martyred at one point and governance at another. This governance led to the deaths of the hunger strikers in the early 1980s, and so the emblems, like the tricolour and the Easter lily, became affiliated with these radicalisations. Impressions of the tricolour would feature in election pamphlets for the candidature of the hunger strikers, and the Easter lily would feature in commemoration leaflets of Easter 1916, with images of republican icons such as James Connolly, Padraig Pearse, Mairead Farrell and Bobby Sands. The inclusion of icons from different eras was a clear attempt at persuading the reader that the latest phase of republican struggle is as legitimate as the 1916 Easter Rising. Similarly, the poppy is overlaid with associations of unionist culture and governance. Therefore, the

80. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Dublin 5: 10.

nationalist and Catholic communities have not been able to associate with it, even though Catholic servicemen had sacrificed their lives in the World Wars. The aged Roman Catholic woman mentioned that funds gotten from the sale of poppy badges contribute to the welfare of the families of ex-Catholic servicemen, and that she has personally known such families. This is a subversion of the common knowledge that the British Legion does not support the families of ex-Catholic servicemen. The third subversion is an exposition of propagandist narratives by tolerant and adaptive communities. She mentioned that she could buy and wear a poppy in the nationalist and republican Falls Road in Belfast and nobody would say anything to her. However, the impression of the tricolour she had on the school blazer was removed when her father mentioned that it would be problematic for her; it was a marker of the nationalist phase that she was going through.⁸¹ Therefore, contestations occur when in the same location, one oppositional emblem can be worn while another adaptive emblem cannot. Contestations also occur when people are brutally castigated because of their individual stance and are simultaneously appreciated as popular and individualist icons like the case of the soccer player James McClean⁸² who, while he faced much abuse over the last decade for his decision to not wear the poppy because of the events of Bloody Sunday in his native Derry in 1972, was supported by the Royal British Legion because of his personal choice.⁸³

Personal choices generate the use of personalised emblems that subvert usage of community-affiliated emblems due to common reasons like not being able to

81. Martyrdom Interviews, Dublin 5: 10.

82. The instance of James McClean was discussed by Paul O'Connor during the interview.

83. Ronan McGreevy, "Royal British Legion stands by James McClean's right not to wear poppy," *The Irish Times*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/royal-british-legion-stands-by-james-mcclean-s-right-not-to-wear-poppy-1.4488902>.

produce emblems en masse or them being strictly restricted to the commemoration of the dead, the sale of which generate funds for the justice of the dead. Fig. 4.37 features the black ribbon badges with commemorative medals that Leo Young had kept with him over the years as mementos of the marches and vigils (held to commemorate the Bloody Sunday victims) that he had participated in. The Museum of Free Derry sells these badges every year to raise funds for the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign. The photograph features the commemorative badges issued in 2012 and 2022. Currently, people are informed of the badges through the social media page of the Museum, especially about the sale of the commemorative medals.⁸⁴



Fig. 4.37. Badges: Black ribbon badges with commemorative medals in memory of Bloody Sunday victims, for the 40th and 100th anniversaries of the event. Courtesy: Leo Young

However, they are also sold online and offline at the SF shop, along with their select collection of propaganda ephemera. The older black ribbons are a universal emblem of mourning which are also worn by AL party members in Bangladesh, government officials and organisations that claim to be the pro-Liberation and want to mourn the

84. Museum of Free Derry, "Merchandise Available," December 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/mofd.derry/posts/pfbid05kV9HqAqrhkhpAnPAaFcT8GLwjhUvF18QEdPr16N6r6M8wZnu7yLeyu7b8tdUi1Wl>.

death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members. Portraits also become emblems of commemoration, like the picture of Zoe's mother who was killed by a bomb when Zoe was two years old. The picture, drawn by the child, is an image of her childhood as she tries to come to terms with her mother's death. She was not able to

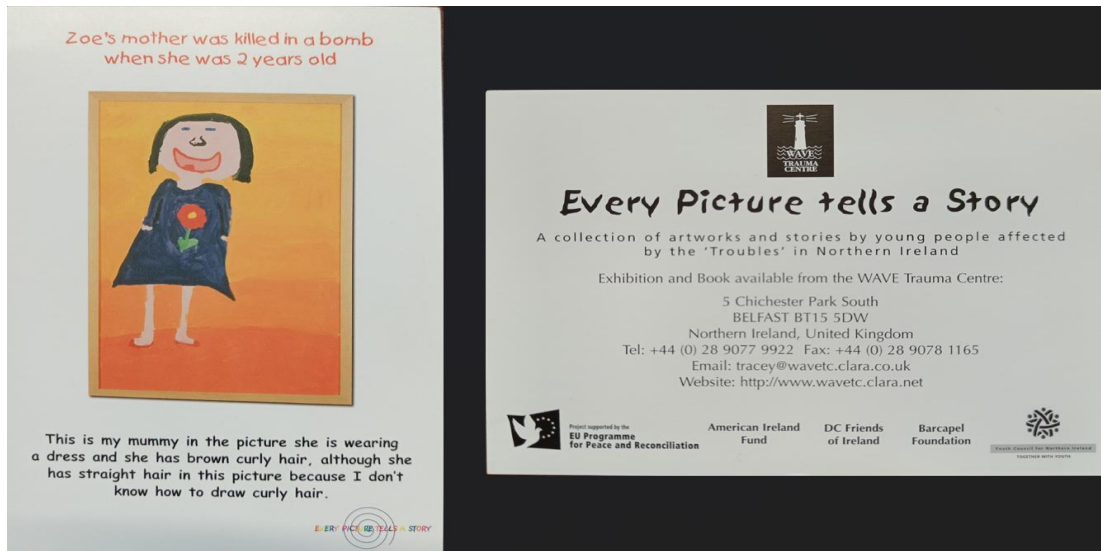


Fig. 4.38. Political Card: 'Every picture tells a story'. Printed for WAVE Trauma Centre. Political Cards – Republican (box 1). Courtesy: PANIPC

draw her mother's curly hair, and therefore, the picture has the simple contours of a child's artwork. This is the everyday martyr emblem that resides beyond contestations and subverts narratives of imposition and propaganda to uphold pure recuperation in a post-conflict period. Fig. 4.38 features this political card in ephemera archives as a republican artefact, even though it challenges the republican appropriation of emblematic narratives. It was printed by the European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation for the WAVE (initially stood for Widows Against Violence Empower and is now the largest cross-community victims' group in NI) Trauma Centre. The exhibition, which displayed these artworks, is based in Belfast, the epicentre of the conflicts during the Troubles. Thus, people's personal narratives may reside within the real and archival worlds of community-generated emblems, but they are reoriented to help people live beyond the post-conflict trauma.

Symbolisation generates oppositional narratives that abound in Ireland, both North and South. Even in 2022, people in the Catholic West Belfast warned that wearing an Easter lily in the Protestant East Belfast would not be “healthy”⁸⁵. Similarly, the wearing of the poppy in pockets of Dublin (in the independent Republic of Ireland) was like siding with the traitors. A Unitarian, former Roman Catholic male indicated that the poppy and World War dead were considered traitors among the Catholic population. In Dublin, there is a gate up in Stephen’s Green commemorating the Dublin Fusiliers of the Boer War, and it is common referred to as the traitor’s gate.⁸⁶ The emblem’s symbolic significance appropriates the oppositional extremist stances of the friend-enemy binary. The final subversion occurs when people distance themselves from most of these emblems due to their anti-war stance and wariness to get involved in sectarianism. Since these martyr remembrances become part of people’s daily lives rather than annual commemorative practices, martyrdom generates a continual conflict that people want to be rid of. For them, the in-your-face emblems are less about respect for the dead and more about the creation of conflict zones.

Fig. 4.39 features Irene’s curated quilt, a remarkable piece of handicraft representing the thousands killed during the Troubles in NI. Her work includes 5161 red patches embedded in a piece of quilt, each representing the dead during the Troubles. The patches of cloth embedded on a quilt are easily perishable minor everyday objects, meant to provide comfort to people. Therefore it is a marker of the comfort of people’s everyday lives; even as the red colour remains an indicator of the blood spilled when they have been killed. Their deaths are acknowledged without contestations of political propaganda. On a single surface, the martyred become a

85. An informal conversation with people during the Easter parade on April 17, 2022.

86. OU/ICR Martyrdom Interviews, Dublin 7: 9.

palpable, statistical reality. While there may be debates about the names and numbers of people killed between 1969 and 1994 from both sides, an acknowledgement that each death is a loss to be remembered, without the distinctions and the debates, is



Fig. 4.39. Photograph: 'Peace Quilt – Common Loss'. Irene MacWilliam. Northern Ireland, 1996. Courtesy: Tony Boyle (archivist, Tower Museum, Derry)

itself a challenge to the narrative of martyrdom where the naming, making, continuum and subversion are subject to contestations. The symmetry in the work and lack of naming and other identifying tags make the quilt a neutral and wholesome entity, which generates acknowledgement and

reverence.

4.2.3.2 Claims in Bangladesh

The present situation in Bangladesh does not focus much on the bygone act of martyrdom but on the present martyr claims, since those who can claim to belong to a martyr family may enjoy many privileges. I conducted a series of interviews in Mirpur with people who belonged to the majority group vaguely titled 'mass martyrs' in Bangladesh and found that they have been unable to enjoy these supposed socio-economic and political benefits. The interviewees were purposefully selected across different social, political, gender and familial affiliations. The mode of interview was mixed, including both focus group discussions as well as in-depth individual interviews.

The first subversion occurs in terms of martyr claims and their association to memorialisation. Nur Jahan Mallick Suchi,⁸⁷ a young college girl, who had not yet been born in 1972 when her brother died, informed that she does not even refer to herself as a member of the martyr family, because it hardly matters to people. Here, remembrance has been subverted by indifference. Abdul Hamid⁸⁸, whose martyred father was a worker in a ceramic factory, mentions that their family has less and less to say about the martyrdom of his father now because the event had taken place about fifty years ago. In 1972, he was a young boy of three years old, and his memories are dependent on what his elder brothers and sisters have told him. With their death, his memory has become faint, and to remember and visit the administrative and governmental authorities to make claims for his family is a far-fetched idea to him. Furthermore, documents related to his father are scarce, especially since the family moved to Savar from Dhaka during the troubles of January 1972, when Mirpur was still occupied by the Biharis, the local collaborators of the Pakistan Army. Hamid mentioned that no portrait of his father or others of his generation exist because, according to the *Hadith* (recorded Islamic tradition), photography was considered unlawful and a sin. He added that only a written document from the local *mullah* (a Muslim well versed in Islamic theology and sacred law) could have enabled martyr creation through portrait images. Thus, in this case, memories and memory triggers are either blurry or unavailable or considered irrelevant and subvert the creation of the martyr.

87. Nur Jahan Mallick Suchi (youngest sister of martyr Nazrul Islam Mallick), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

88. Abdul Hamid (son of martyr Abdul Hakim), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

The second subversion occurs in terms of martyr claims and its association with documentation. None of the martyrs of Jalladkhana have their names incorporated in the gazette prepared by the MLWA. Md. Janab Ali⁸⁹ showed several documents that he often carries with him, including a letter written by him (in 2019) to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, wherein he states that his father (martyr Torab Ali) and uncles had provided financial aid to members of the *Mukti Bahini*, making their family the target of the Pakistan Army who killed nine of their family members. Enclosed with this letter is a 2013 report by the district office of the government of Bangladesh that had conducted surveys of martyr families in Mirpur and stated that Torab Ali was not a freedom fighter but that his family had been martyred and may therefore be acknowledged as such. The documents also include a letter written in 2013 by the Dhaka Unit Command of the *Bangladesh Muktijoddha Songshod* [Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Council] verifying that Janab Ali was the only living son of this martyr's family, and a letter issued in 2019 by the Dhaka City Corporation stating that the martyr had engaged in no anti-national activities and was of good behaviour. Till date, such documents have not sufficed to make the martyr claim of his father a reality. Additionally, there are also instances of partial documentation. The daughter-in-law⁹⁰ of martyr Nur Mohammad Mallick who served in sector command two, mentions that while most other documents for a martyr claim are available to them, the clearance from the training camp in India has been lost. It was difficult to retain such documents during a war, especially when many people had secretly run away from their families to fight for the country and did not want to retain any documents.

89. Md. Janab Ali (son of martyr Torab Ali), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

90. Shabnam Mustari (daughter-in-law of martyr Nur Mohammad Mullick), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

The third subversion occurs in terms of martyr claims and party affiliations. Janab Ali added that his father was a businessman, a local leader who had raised the flag of Bangladesh in different areas and an AL party member. He added that his mother and siblings were also party members and that he had later testified in the criminal proceedings against Abdul Qader Molla. Thus, the martyrdom of their family members was well-known to the government. Presently, Janab Ali himself suffers from anxiety and lack of security from opposition political and fundamentalist parties due to his close association with the ruling party. Hence, it is ironical for him that the same government to which he is affiliated has refused to acknowledge him as a martyr family member, even though some families have falsely claimed martyr family dignity and privileges for themselves. Hamidur Rahman Chowdhury⁹¹ whose father was an officer in a local government office in 1972 explained that they depend on the present government to overcome bureaucratic complexities and make a list of all the martyrs for an urgent sustenance of martyr memories to prevent loss for future generations by an anti-Liberation political party again leading the government.

The fourth subversion of martyr dignity lies in its confrontation of sectarian challenges. Hamidur Rahman Chowdhury talked at length about the Bihari perpetrators of the slaughter of people in 1972, along with Abdul Hamid whose father built illegal underground bunkers in the houses of the Biharis and had not felt threatened by them. The Biharis had murdered both their fathers and even now occupy major bureaucratic positions in Mirpur. While some areas have been taken away from them, some still pose a threat to the martyr families of the Liberation War. Hence, the acknowledgement and transmission of oral legacies becomes even more vital for the present generation to receive pro-Liberation War values. Contestations occur when

91. Hamidur Rahman Chowdhury (son of martyr Gisaur Rahman Chowdhury), interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

young Bihari children also listen to these oral narratives as they learn about the lessons of human history and feel that they will act otherwise in the future, explains Promila Biswas, who coordinates these storytelling sessions at the Mirpur memorial.⁹²

The fifth subversion occurs in terms of martyr claims and their denial. Abdul Hamid mentioned the families of his martyr uncles who did not take the money and certificate provided by *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman because it would entail documentation of the dead and force one to live off the money for the dead, both of which, according to them, were anti-religious. He further stated that the gazette would be a means of retaining the names of people who had sacrificed their lives, before these names fade into complete oblivion in the fourth generation.⁹³ Each of these subversions are contested. All martyr families claim that while an inordinate amount of money is spent on making the lists of freedom fighters and martyrs, it has made no difference to the people's remembrance of the martyrs as individuals. While I surveyed the newspaper supplements for job vacancies in August 2022, I discovered that the eligibility criteria always included relaxations for martyr families in government sectors. Perhaps, these incentives have led to increasingly false documentation in the country. Hence, documentation in the form of an uncontested gazette would provide dignity to the peoples' martyrs, beyond the honorific invocation of the three million dead. However, this task remains an overwhelming one. Rathindra Nath Datta explained to me that those who died in active duty are considered martyrs in these gazettes, while the rest are commemorated as mass martyrs through various

92. Promila Biswas (supervisor, Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site) in a discussion with the author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

93. Abdul Hamid, interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 8, 2022.

initiatives by the government.⁹⁴ More pertinent would be the understanding of these martyrs as individuals and the unravelling of their life narratives so that we can respect them as people.

The final subversion occurs when people do not consider martyrdom to be an indicator important enough to base a claim on. Debdas Ghosh⁹⁵ of Rangpur is associated with *Roktoddhara '71*, an organisation of the children and grandchildren of the martyrs of the Liberation War, which helps to voice these people's claims. He mentioned the instance of a young boy in a remote village in Rangpur who did not know about these martyr claims at all and was surprised that he could claim something on the basis of the martyrdom of his family member. The martyred family member, like many in his village, remained oblivious of the existence of these claims. Ghosh came to know about this boy through his personal interactions and tried to gather sufficient documentation so that the family members could make the claims. In Bangladesh, civilians and civil society organisations contribute much to the making of martyr claims, while journalists also attempt to identify unknown martyrs.⁹⁶ Contestations occur when administrative units assigned with the task of identifying such martyrs either do not make enough unbiased effort or are limited by the amount of documentation and bureaucratic hassles involved in the process.

The in-depth interviews not only probed the histories and compulsions behind print ephemera like legal documents and commemorative newspaper supplements but

94. Rathindra Nath Datta (deputy secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka), discussion with the author, Dhaka, August 4, 2022.

95. Debdas Ghosh (a member of *Roktoddhara '71* and an inhabitant of Rangpur district), telephone interview with the author, August 12, 2022.

96. Ahmed Istiaque, "Ojana ek shoheed bir muktijoddhar khoje [In search of an unknown martyred freedom fighter]," *The Daily Star*, December 10, 2021, [অজানা এক শহীদ বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধার খোঁজে | The Daily Star Bangla](#).

also enabled an interaction with the objects the interviewees brought with them as everyday commemoratives for their lost loved ones. I have also made comparisons between my interview findings and those of compiled oral interviews available at the Jalladkhana memorial, conducted by researchers of the LWM over time. This enabled the assessment of the same family members of the same martyr and how their perspectives have changed over time. While Abdul Hamid talked about the impending financial difficulties they were facing as a family due to their father's death in an interview given in 2007, now, fifteen years later, he is focused on how memories may be retained, as future generations lose interest in the martyrs of the past.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Through an exploration of ephemera complemented by a study of oral interpretations of ephemera, various continuums and subversions of people's understanding of martyr have been evaluated. These posit ideas that have continued, over generations, to structure martyr legacies as well as challenge those ideas that are currently afflicting martyr legacies. Historical struggles, party ideologies, everyday deaths and seeking of justice are broad continuums within which conflictual ideas continue, with martyrs as divine emissaries, sectarian figures, defenders of communities, protectors of rights and receiver of awards across ages, along with a challenge to their very position as martyrs. Subversions reveal a challenging use of established language, deconstruction and reconstruction of structures, symbolic contestations and claims debates. These continuums and subversions range from the

97. Abdul Hamid, interview by author, Mirpur, Dhaka.

evolution to the ebbing of martyrdom as it lives on with indifference and reconstructed augmentation.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERARY WORKS OF PEOPLE'S MARTYRS AND EPHEMERA

Introduction

Ephemera contains varied literary works and writings that represent people's martyrs. This chapter would mention those ephemera that have been discussed in previous chapters. Ephemera are minor transient documents of everyday life. The word 'literary' has been used in a broad sense that includes texts, art, music, etc. One of the ways in which the essence of everyday martyrdom is captured is through popular or ephemera-specific literary works, quotes and vocabulary. Moreover, there are also well-known literary works that describe martyr ephemera such as flags, rolls of honour, martyr's garments, martyr's stamps and so on. Such ephemera have been described as singular symbols or evolving emblems, subject to thematic and objective analysis. Finally, literary ephemera, which comprise those works that imbibe qualities of the ephemera, its minor, transient and extant nature, also define people's martyrs. Such works, in Ireland and Bangladesh, define martyrs in their spontaneous and sustained manner.

5.1 Literary works by martyrs in ephemera in Ireland and Bangladesh

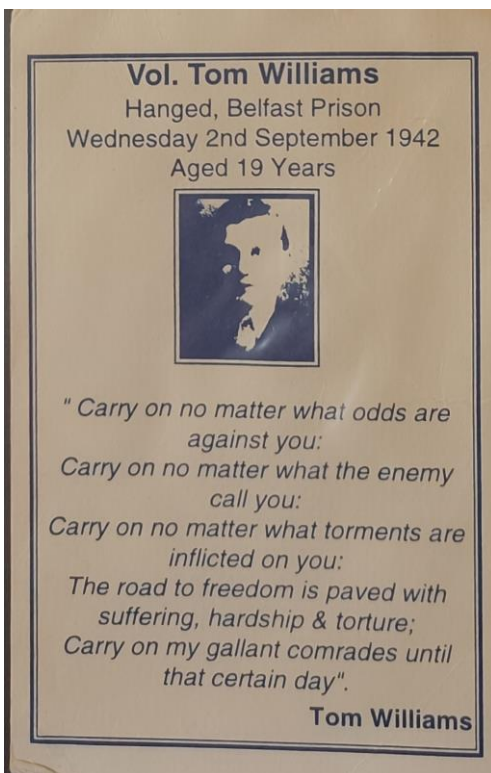
Martyrs themselves compose literary works, which later become part of the established published canon or remain confined only to ephemera. Ephemera might be directly or indirectly related to them. When literary works authored by martyrs become part of Irish ephemera, they are used to garner mass support for the martyr's cause or to commemorate their murders as legacy deaths. When literary compositions

by martyrs feature in Bangladeshi ephemera, they either complement the author's poetic themes through visual elements such as providing a visual image of the martyr's ideas to the public or establishing the author's political persona and vision.

5.1.1 Poem by martyr in memory card in Ireland

In Ireland, poems written by prospective martyrs are circulated through memory cards, after their deaths. Such ephemera include a portrait of the martyr to evoke a palpable sense of loss. Instead of passages from the scriptures, such memory cards contain the words of the dead hero, which are honoured as the sanctified thoughts of a sacrificing person.

For instance, fig. 5.01 features such a card, containing the "gallant" lines of



Tom Williams. Carrying the image of a young boy, along with a clear indication of his age at death being nineteen years, the card informs us that Williams was hanged in Belfast Prison on 2nd September, 1942. According to Jack Elliott, such memory cards focus less on the commemoration of the dead and more on their lives spent in preparation for the ultimate sacrifice.¹ Elliott refers to the funeral ephemera of republican martyr Thomas Ashe, which contained his image and poetry, offering the crowds a glimpse of Ashe himself. Likewise,

Fig. 5.01. Memory card: Vol. Tom Williams. 1942. Courtesy: EHIRHM

Tom Williams' words share a piece of himself, not only for emulation but also for

1. Jack Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity in Dublin, 1890-1917*, PhD diss. (University of Warwick, 2012), 268.

motivation. The poem is addressed to his comrades, urging them to carry on despite opposition, castigation by the enemy and infliction of tortures, on the road to freedom. The road would be full of “suffering, hardship & torture”, but they needed to persevere until freedom was achieved. Williams was an IRA volunteer, and such memory cards were printed by Republican publications to boost the morale of IRA volunteers.

In such memory cards, literature is modulated through the medium of the ephemera and the content of martyrdom. For instance, the lines in the memory card shown above are excerpts from a poem ‘Carry on, no matter what odds are against you’, written by Tom Williams. Other excerpts from the same poem containing phrases such as “patriot name” and “liberty’s ruin” feature in other memory cards of Williams, which have been circulated through the social media pages of Republican flute bands.² Thus, these ephemera do not remain purely propagandist, but become an aesthetic appropriation of the minds of the readers. Furthermore, these political ephemera transcend their print form to enter the digital world. They have been appropriated by organisations such as the Coatbridge Republican Flute Band based in Scotland, which participate in popular Republican parades in the UK.

5.1.2 Poetry by martyr in mass cards in Ireland

The mass card for Terence MacSwiney’s funeral served as a commemorative witness in the absence of the martyr’s body. MacSwiney was a public figure, the Lord Mayor of Cork. His body was stolen from his funeral procession at Wales. His aggrieved admirers distributed these mass cards, featured in fig. 5.02, at the requiem mass and the funeral procession held in Dublin. In the absence of the physical remains of the martyr, the poetic evocation in the memory card became all the more pertinent.

2. CoatbridgeRFB@coatbridge_rfb, “Carry on no matter what,” Twitter, September 2, 2020, 4.30 p.m., https://twitter.com/coatbridge_rfb/status/1301105992793546752?lang=en.

People attending requiem mass held the mass cards in their hands and read the poetic excerpts.

In MacSwiney's mass card, the voices of Jesus and Mary, bestowing peace on the soul of the martyr, are joined by the voice of the martyr himself, through the poem he wrote when he was alive in Brixton jail in London. The poem is



Fig. 5.02. Mass Card: Terence MacSwiney. Front and back. October 25, 1920. Courtesy: EHIRHM

entitled 'Teach us how to die'. In this poem, MacSwiney refers to the sacrificing of "martyr's blood"³, which will not cease till freedom is attained. The call of the poem, that the martyr's fate will finally rest with God, is realised through the mass card. The final resting place for the martyr is not death, because the martyr is not someone who has died, but someone whose memory is retained and reiterated after death. The requiem mass is a means for that remembrance, and the mass card is its celebration. According to the mass card, the martyr now rests beneath the shamrock, the three-leaved lawn weed, native to Ireland, which has been associated with the Irish pagans before the arrival of Christianity. The shamrock was then worn on St. Patrick's Day, celebrating the patron saint of Ireland, who had brought Christianity to Ireland. It was later appropriated by the nationalists. The shamrock, in this mass card, becomes a confluence of paganism and Christianity, just like the image of the Celtic cross.

3. Terence MacSwiney, "Teach us how to die," *Rebel Songbook*, <https://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rstuv/id28.html>.

MacSwiney's martyrdom and sacrifice is situated in the interstices of paganism and Christianity. Moreover, as he was a nationalist, the shamrock represented the native ideals of MacSwiney, both in life and death. From the poetic to the political to the pious, the mass card of MacSwiney is a martyr ephemera that unravels all these dimensions of dying. Thus, the sacred dead survive through ephemera.

The poetry in mass cards is also a witness to the continuum and radicalisation discussed in the previous chapter. Young nationalist recruits, who were killed from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, are remembered in the mass cards printed by *Na Fianna Eireann* [The Fianna of Ireland], the Irish nationalist youth organisation founded in 1902,

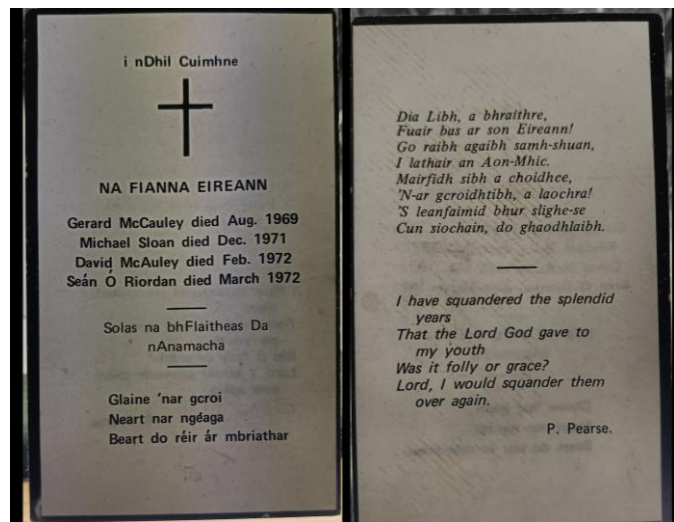


Fig. 5.03. Mass Card: Four comrades killed. 1969-1972. Courtesy: EHIRHM

which faced several splits in the 1960s and 1970s. After its affiliation with the PIRA, with its more radical policy of complete separation from the political and governmental working of the Irish Free State, *Na Fianna Eireann* presently supports the less radical republican IRA. Fig. 5.03 commemorates the deaths of: Gerard McCauley, who was fifteen when he was shot dead by a loyalist gunman in August 1969, while helping families move out of the burned streets of Clonard; Fian Sean O'Riordan, who was thirteen years old, when he was shot in the back of his head by a British soldier; and Fian Michael Sloan, who was accidentally shot dead at fifteen years while on active service and Fian David McAuley was just fifteen when he was accidentally shot in the stomach by a gun he was handling. It is not clear whether he was shot in Ardoyne or at a training camp in the Republic. However, these deaths are

martyrdom, albeit random, purposive, or accidental. The nature of these deaths is reflected in the poetry on the mass cards. Popular martyrdom thrives on this kind of admixture. Therefore, in the mass card in fig. 5.03, the remembrance is represented by an admixture of Biblical lines written in Irish Gaelic, a poetic address to comrades in Scottish Gaelic, and an excerpt from Padraig Pearse's poem 'The Fool'. While the caption sets the tone with martyrs being called the souls of the light of heaven, the following lines comment on the purity of the souls of and the strength of the limbs of the martyred. The next set of lines in Scottish Gaelic addresses the fallen comrades as brothers and sons of Ireland, who are the blessed of God. These lines say that, their death for the country has granted them a peaceful sleep and eternal life, just like the Son of God. This comparison will inspire others to follow the example of the martyrs. The poetic extract from 'The Fools' by Pearse parodies popular understanding of the loss of life. For most people, the martyrdom of commoners is not a dedicated sacrifice, but a random squandering of life. For the individual, it is their own life; it is something sacred, which has been lost. Whether it is dubbed folly or grace is irrelevant, because the individual will commit the same "slander" or mistake again – that of sacrificing their life for their nation. In this regard, the one who is a fool for the opinionated public, is a martyr for the nation. While it is debatable whether the deaths of recruits in radical organisations actually constitute martyrdom, the deaths of the above-mentioned young boys have been considered a continuum of the legacy of the Easter 1916 martyrs. Pearse's lines reverberate in Ireland of the 1960s and 1970s, through continuum, through radicalisation, and their contestations.

Mass cards are a kind of print ephemera, which are circulated during death rituals, and elevate a person into a persona, through a series of religious and poetic verses. They can also embody a persona, whose martyred body has been stolen. These

verses in ephemera capture the populist essence of commoners' martyrdom, by simultaneously making the martyrs both transcendental and earthly beings in the public mind.

5.1.3 Poetry by martyr in manuscript in Bangladesh

While some poetry by Irish martyrs has been circulated in print ephemera, some poetry by Bangladeshi martyrs is found in the form of manuscripts. Therefore, while the latter has not been circulated en masse, it constituted a minor object of everyday life for the writer and their family and presently functions as an artefact commemorating the martyr. The poetry therein is often evoked on the martyr's death anniversary.

Being unpublished works, these poetic manuscripts constitute a unique form of ephemera. By inserting the graphic element of a circular structure (fig. 5.04) around each of the keywords of a group of poems, namely, *Chetona* [Consciousness], *Prem* [Love] and *Prokriti* [Nature], the writer suggests that they have equal importance and an interconnected nature. The woman martyr Meherunessa (who wrote these verses referred to in fig. 5.04) framed slogans demanding that Bangla be made the official language. These slogans were used by the martyrs of the language movement in 1952. She also wrote poems against the impositions of the Ayub regime in 1969, and publicly read a poem '*Jonota jegeche*' ['The crowd is awake'], about seven

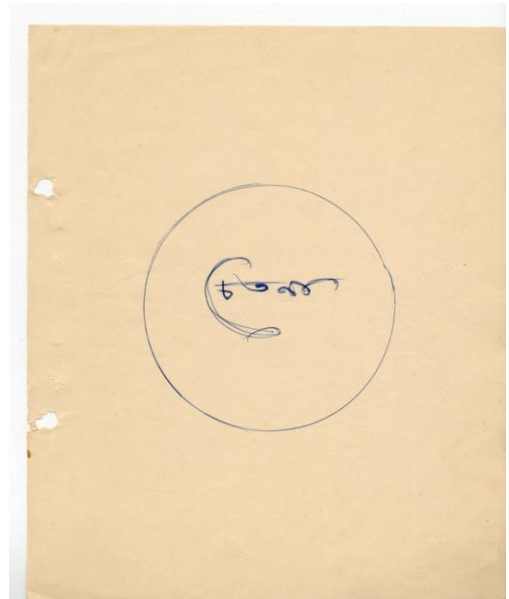


Fig. 5.04. Manuscript: Graphic element around the word enaming the first group of poems *Chetona* [Consciousness]. Poet Meherunessa. Killed by Biharis on March 28, 1971, at her own house in Mirpur. Courtesy: LWM

crore Bangladeshis fighting in defiance of death during the 1971 Liberation War. In the case of poets such as Meherunessa, their love for their people generated in them, a keen consciousness of Nature. For such poets, Nature lived in human beings not only through their physical beings but also through their high ideals.⁴ Meherunessa described how, in 1971, people were ready for both physical and mental martyrdom for the sake of their ideals, in order to attain the land of *Joy Bangla*, the land of eternal victory. The poem was read by Meherunessa on 23rd March, 1971, in the presence of eminent men poets of her generation, at Bangla Academy, four days before she was killed along with her family in Mirpur, Dhaka. This information is now a part of digital ephemera, and has been circulated as a Facebook post by Riaz Mahmud Mithu, the sole documentary-maker on Meherunessa.⁵

The poems in Meherunessa's manuscript indicate an emergent martyr consciousness. They urge everyone to make a fiery promise not to laugh while the sun shines, as the darkness of the night would soon sweep through. In her poem '*Roudra Shopoth*' ['Burning Oath'] she declares that poetry will make the martyrs' minds as bright and powerful as the sun. In her poem '*Moner mon ke*' ['Who is the mind of the mind'], she laments that she has to overcome the problems of the everyday, the pangs of hunger, and the confusions of thinking. '*Moner mon ke*' reflects the transcendental mind of the martyr, which strives for a better morrow. The same theme runs through her poem '*Suryaraag*' ['The Melody of the Sun']. Again, the martyr is depicted as a unique traveller, who overcomes life's disasters, in her eponymous poem '*Onnonyo Jatri*' ['Unique Traveller']. While the above unpublished poems of the martyr poet

4. Meherunessa explored these ideas in her poem '*Jonota jegeche*' ['The crowd is awake'], published in *Begum* magazine on March 23, 1971. Cited in Riaz Mahmud Mithu, "Kobi Meherunessar mrityubarshiki" ["Death anniversary of poet Meherunessa"], Facebook, March 27, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=497887052205633&id=858868784205851.

5. Riaz Mahmud Mithu, "Kobi Meherunessar mrityubarshiki."

reflect the heroic consciousness of the narrator, they are not distinctly propagandist in nature like Tom Williams’ poetry on the Irish memory cards. Even as the nature of the ephemera differs, from a personal manuscript to a public card, the manner and purpose of evocation of the martyrs also change. Williams and MacSwiney are contested martyrs in Ireland, more emblematic of the republican heroic pantheon and nationalist mythology, in contrast to Meherunessa, who is one of the most uncontested intellectual martyrs in Bangladesh.

5.1.4 Handwritten poem by martyr in party letterhead in Bangladesh

That is not to say that political poetry written by martyr politicians are not found in Bangladesh. Fig. 5.05

features two handwritten poems by A.H.M.

Kamruzzaman, one of the four national leaders, who along with Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad and Captain Mansur Ali, was assassinated

inside the Dhaka Central Jail on 3rd November, 1975.⁶

Kamruzzaman was the

minister for the Home, Relief and Rehabilitation Departments of the Bangladesh Provisional Government in exile, the government that led the Liberation War in 1971.

In 1975 he was appointed minister of industries and a member of the executive committee of BAKSAL, comprising Bangladesh Awami League, Communist Party of

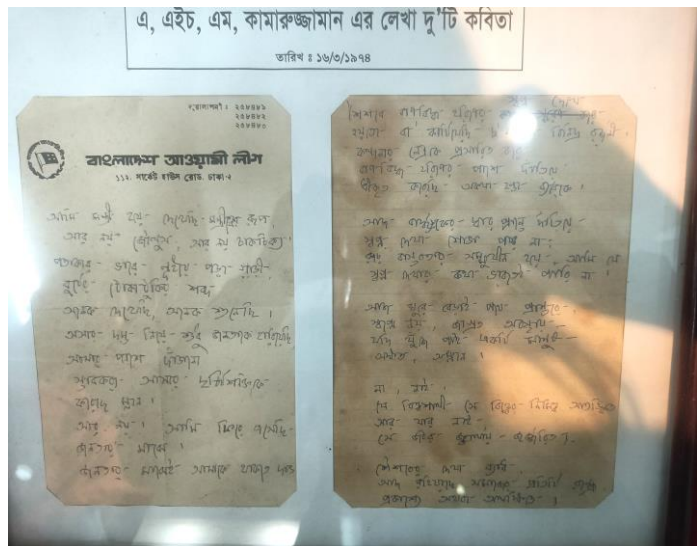


Fig. 5.05. Manuscript: Two handwritten poems. Martyr politician A.H.M. Kamruzzaman. March 16, 1974. Courtesy: Exhibition: Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. BNM

6. “Awami League pays homage to Bangabandhu and four national leaders,” *Bangladesh Awami League*, November 3, 2020, <https://www.albd.org/articles/news/35131/Awami-League-pays-homage-to-Bangabandhu-and-four-national-leaders>.

Bangladesh, National Awami Party (Muzaffar) and Jatiyo League. Thus, he does not belong to a rebel group like the IRA volunteer, whose poetry propelled his comrades to freedom, but is an established figure in the government. This was not the government in exile in India, but the government formed in Bangladesh after its independence. The poet foregrounds this stance in his poems, written on the official letterhead of the political party, the AL. In the first poem on the left in fig. 5.05, he does not want to remain confined to merely being a party representative or a minister, but wishes to become a voice of the masses, devoid of the pride of power. The second poem on the right discusses the futility of such dreams in old age, as he is confronted with the crude realities of the day. Political contestations became more acute after the 1971 war, as the ruling party was toppled by a military coup led by General Ziaur Rahman in 1975, who declared that he was ridding the country of dictatorial governmental rule. In this regard, holding onto the popular mandate was important for leaders like Kamruzzaman. This is not specifically martyr poetry of heroic sacrifice but martyr poetry of political existentialism. It does not represent the martyr as an individual who is preparing himself to make great sacrifices for the country, but an individual who is trying to maintain political stability in the country before it is overtaken by political opposition.

5.2 Literary works on martyrs in ephemera in Ireland

Ephemera also become a means to circulate literary texts on martyrs. Literary texts by martyrs use ephemera as a medium, only when the manufacturers of such ephemera modulate the nature of the literary work according to the nature of the ephemera. Thus, memory cards and mass cards feature different kinds of poetic

excerpts, and an intellectual’s manuscript poetry varies from a politician’s manuscript poetry.

Literary works on martyrs are not completely modulated by the nature of the ephemera through which they are circulated. Nevertheless, these usually short literary texts are disseminated among people, so that they become aware of martyrs’ narratives. Moreover, such martyrs’ narratives are people’s narratives in many ways, written in short, immediately impactful modes, thereby enabling their mass circulation. A range of literary works and ephemera interact with one another to feature popular martyrs. For instance, poetry on political martyrs feature in political, archival and digital ephemera, to poetry on civilian martyrs in commemorative ephemera, as well as poetry on political events in digital ephemera.

5.2.1 Poem on Anti-treaty IRA martyrs in poetry card

Poetry cards consist of poetic verses dedicated to the fallen heroes. Using images of the fallen dead and verses suggestive of grit and survival, such poetry cards or leaflets depict martyrs as glorious heroes, who are to be venerated.

For instance, fig. 5.06 contains a poem, which was distributed in a poetry card among the general public, after the deaths of certain IRA officers.

Though these officers were part of the Anti-Treaty campaign, they received much veneration from the

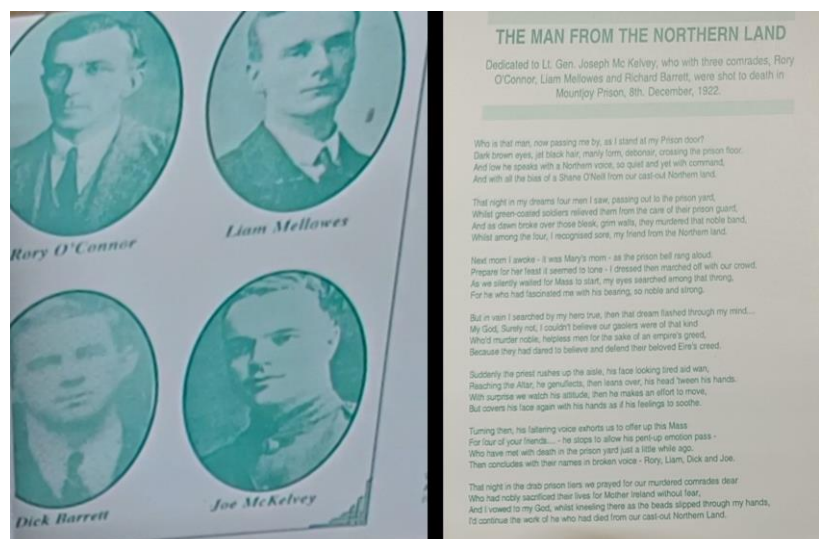


Fig. 5.06. Poetry card: Poem entitled ‘The Man from the Northern Land’. December 8, 1922. Courtesy: EHIRHM

common people, just like the more popular “hero” and pro-treaty figure, Michael

Collins. Since Joseph (Joe) McKelvey (Lieutenant General), Rory O'Connor (Director for Engineering), Commander General Liam Mellows (Director of Purchases), and Richard (Dick) Barrett (Assistant Quartermaster-General of the IRA with the rank of Commandant), were officials of the revolutionary army, their deaths were seen as executions.

In the poem, they are epitomised as the “man from the Northern land”, since they courageously bear witness to their beliefs. Their political execution by the Free State forces of the Provisional Government down south is transmuted into heroic narratives of the North. The archetype of the Northern hero speaks with a low Northern voice “so quiet and yet with command”. The Northern hero is epitomised by Shane O'Neill, a mid-16th century Irish chieftain of the O'Neill dynasty of Ulster, who was beheaded by his enemies, the MacDonnells, at the Battle of Farsetmore. Ironically, the above poem of dedication also becomes a poetic invocation of the tragic fate of the martyrs, describing them as heroes who lost the war. The transition from one thought to another is mediated through the world of dreams, wherein the narrator imagines that he sees four men go out of the prison yard, when in fact, they were brutally shot dead in prison, in reprisal for the killing of Seán Hales T.D. by republican forces the previous day. The gaolers are represented as cruel murderers, trying to defend the greed of the British Empire in trying to hold onto a part of Ireland through the enactment of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. According to this treaty, NI would not become part of the Free State but would remain under the rule of the UK government. Such characterisation expectedly comes from the narrator, who was a comrade of the martyrs in prison, saw their lives being brutally cut short, and promised to carry on their unfinished task.

Like the memory card poetry of IRA volunteer Tom Williams, this also serves as propaganda poetry. However, unlike the former, this poem does not include the

personal voice of the martyr. Rather, it impersonalises the martyr's voice, to delineate others' responses to these martyrdoms. Hence, this poetic voice becomes representative of people's voices. In fact, the distribution of such poetic cards or leaflets sought to gather public voice in favour of the Anti-Treaty cause, which repudiated the authority of the Free State government.

5.2.2 Poem on Gibraltar martyrs in newspaper

Newspapers publish events and voices related to everyday life. Maurice Rickards writes that, of "...all ephemera, the newspaper offers perhaps the most prolific, if not always the most reliable, source of records. The field is vast in terms of period, location, and circumstance..." A newspaper ballad, published by a local songwriter from the republican-community dominated Falls Road, is featured in fig. 5.07. Falls Road is an indicator of a community and its affiliated locations, and the literary mode of the ballad voices support for the Gibraltar martyrs. The balladeer Séamus Robinson, an Irish republican and politician, pays his tributes to the three martyrs, who were shot dead the previous March in Gibraltar. This ballad is written as an anniversary commemorative verse. Robinson has penned both the Irish and the English versions of the ballad, along with a commemorative poem on Roger McCorley, an IRA activist of the Belfast Brigade. While

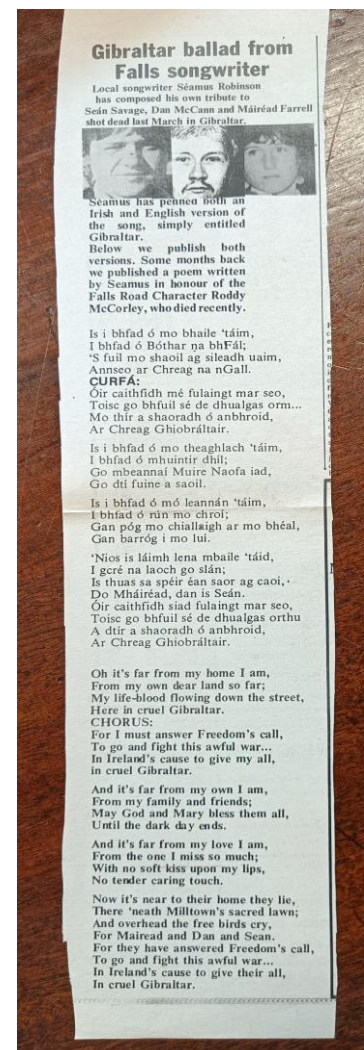


Fig. 5.07. Newspaper cutting: Ballad entitled 'Gibraltar'. 1998. Disputed Killings box 8 (Gibraltar killings). Courtesy: ECNIPC

the latter is only about a republican activist and not martyrs, the ballad featured in this cutting is a martyr's song.

The narrator appropriates the voice of the martyrs, whose life-blood has been cruelly shed in faraway Gibraltar in Spain, only for the sake of freedom. In the ballad, the martyrs' voice call upon Mary, the Mother of God, to shower her blessings on their family members, whose tangible touch is now lost to them. The martyrs' home is no longer the house they lived in, but the cold earth in Milltown Cemetery. This graveyard in Belfast is still in UK-governed NI, but the birds flying above the graves belong to no country. They cry out in honour of the martyrs, with their voices symbolising freedom.

The ballad thus highlights the precarious situation of the republicans living amongst the majority population of Ulster Protestants in 1988. Existing alongside numerous newspaper reports of sectarian murders of the times, the ballad in this ephemera narrates the everyday reality of the times, through the memories of the martyrs.

5.2.3 Poetic quotes on IRA volunteers in poster

Ephemera such as posters include quotations from literary texts. During the 2022 Easter commemorations in NI, the parade of PIRA's 'D' Company (IRA unit based in the Lower Falls area of Belfast), started from Barack Street at 12.30 pm. Its Easter parade posters were displayed there. The logo on this poster contains the emblem of the 'D' Coy 2nd Battalion, surrounded by lines from Luke Kelly's poem 'For what died the sons of Róisín' (1970)⁷. This poster thus makes Kelly's poem, a popular air in Ireland, all the more visually palpable to the public. The poem refers to the martyrs of Easter 1916 as "brave" and "patriots", whose ideals have not been

7. Lawrence William White, "Luke Kelly," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, October 2009, revised March 2014, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/kelly-luke-a4454>.

upheld in 1970s and 1980s Ireland. Martyrdom is said to lose its very meaning in the face of Ireland becoming part of Britain's economic and political imperialism. In the context of PIRA units being forced to accept secret negotiations between the IRA leadership and the British government, the issue of questionable and changing allegiances is foregrounded in the rhetorical question of the poem, "For what died the sons of Róisín". The sacrifices of the volunteers of the 'D' Coy have gone in vain. This opening line from Kelly's poem and song have been invoked multiple times, to reiterate the question for the present SF and expose its ironical fallacy. For instance, when SF leaders like Mary Lou McDonald congratulated the British monarch on reigning for seventy years, critics pointed out how those years have been marked by British military occupation, internment without trial, killing of innocent civilians and so on.⁸ Hence, when these posters are seen by people during the 'D' company's separate Easter parade, they feel compelled to examine anew, their allegiances to 'D' Coy. Significantly in 2022, when I was in Belfast, the following at this parade was much lesser than that at the NGA's parade, where SF President Mary Lou McDonald was the key speaker. Such ephemera ground people's martyrs less in the myths of yore, and more in everyday political conflicts.

5.2.4 Poem on unionist martyrs in mural

Fig. 5.08 depicts a mural poem written to honour unionist UVF martyrs. Usually, IRA volunteer martyrs are invoked through quotes from songs in the official emblems of their battalions. These songs also comment on the nature of succeeding martyrs. However, the poem on unionist martyrs in a mural is drawn from another poetic work. It is not distributed through print ephemera such as parade posters, but through visual ephemera as seen in the above photograph of a previously-existing

8. *Tomás Ó Flatharta* (blog); "For What Died the Daughters and Sons of Róisín?" by John Meehan, posted February 17, 2022, <https://tomasoflatharta.com/2022/02/17/for-what-died-the-daughters-and-sons-of-roisin/>.

mural (fig. 5.08). Peter Moloney photographed this mural at Ballymacarrett Road in East Belfast. It contained lines from Josiah Gilbert Holland's poem 'God, give us men!' Volunteers Robert Seymour, Captain Joe Long, James Cordner and Robert Bennett are the four local UVF heroes commemorated in the mural (the contexts of their deaths have been discussed in section 2.2.2.1). The poem on the mural emphasizes that their position in the loyalist paramilitary organisation was not due to



Fig. 5.08. Mural: Poem on UVF memorial mural. Ballymacarrett Road, East Belfast. 2006. (non-existent now) Courtesy: PECPM

their greed for power. Neither did their ambitions result in their deaths. The lines of the poem are used to proclaim that they have been killed because of their sense of honour, their opinions and their determination. But such killing does not result in death.

Martyrs are deathless. As in the case of the IRA volunteers, they have sacrificed their lives for the same causes of Justice and Freedom, which are mentioned in the poem, but are not part of the extract of the poem in the mural.

Written on the brickwork below the mural, the above poetic extract was not originally ephemeral in nature. However, its removal has made the brickwork a transient object, a part of ephemera. Due to the banning of the UVF, the mural has been removed. Thus, ironically, such ephemera not only comment on the popular glorification of martyrs but their discarding and neglect by present-day society.

5.2.5 Poems on civilian martyr in plastic plaque

While some poems are used to commemorate martyrs belonging to paramilitary organisations, civilian martyrs are also commemorated through poems by

local community organisations such as the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society, in NI. An example of such poetry on a plastic plaque is seen in fig. 5.09. However, as the emblem of the poppy on the left-hand installation in white, and the Union Jack emblem in the logo on the right-hand installation indicate, East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society has connections with the unionist culture that predominates East Belfast. Such organisations fund plaques containing commemorative poetry for civilian martyrs. Thus, individual civilian martyrs become part of the community’s collective protest against IRA killings. Specifically it is the plastic plaque that characterises it as a transient document—an ephemera.

Fig. 5.09 features the plaques in front of the Jimmy McCurrie and Robert Neill Memorial Garden. The plaque

on the right features a poem by W. J. Magee entitled ‘Murder most foul’ written in 2003. The murders of civilians Jimmy McCurrie and Robert Neill were not voluntary sacrifices but unsolicited killings, as discussed in section 2.4.2.1.



Fig. 5.09. Plaque: Poem on the white plaque on the right to the gate of the Jimmy McCurrie and Robert Neill Memorial Garden. Ballymacarrett Road, East Belfast. April 11, 2022.

The poem sensationalises

these killings, making the narrator cry out in remembrance. Other than the dead who are specifically commemorated here, the poem also mentions other men and women who were shot. The PIRA members “open up something like hell” and destroy normal life through their killings of these civilians. PIRA’s actions amount to sacrilege when the shooting of Robert Neill takes place from the sacred precincts of the bell tower of

St Matthew's Chapel. The violence unleashed also becomes a brutal assault on innocence, as the shot Jimmy McCurrie lies dead in front of the Beechfield School Gate. Apart from the two dead, about twenty-eight individuals were wounded. The sensationalisation foregrounds the shocking and "burning" nature of the event, thus justifying the lack of compromise with the PIRA. It is crude murder, most foul, and it should never be allowed to happen again. This is the stance of most unionist commemorative ephemera, with the tagline "never again" used often. The poem is more effective by virtue of its location on the plaque. The plaque exists because it is maintained by the community organisation, thereby making it more topical, and as a plastic installation, thereby making it ephemeral.

5.2.6 Poem on McGurk's massacre in blog and political poetry in Facebook post

Often, social media is used to disseminate news about martyrdom among the masses. Social media contains numerous digital ephemera such as blog posts, Facebook posts and Twitter uploads.

The blog poem on the massacre at McGurk's Bar is a part of digital ephemera, because the poem is found only on the digital platform created by the massacre survivors and campaigners of justice for the victims. The tone of the poem is attuned to its digital existence, existing as campaign literature. The massacre of innocent civilians generates a distinct kind of poetry, which is different from the dedicatory and glorifying poetry on political martyrs, discussed above.

Poet and satirist Mario Brian O'Clery's poem entitled 'McGurk's Bar' refers to the rubble found after the bombing using gelignite. The bombers randomly targeted innocent civilians. Just as the bombing resulted in the shattering of bodies and destruction of buildings, the investigation and resultant truths following the bombing

were also deliberately fragmented. Justice was made “half price”⁹, a cheap object from the flea market, by deflecting the blame from the British Crown, while presenting a half-hearted stand just to keep the dead in the news, vicariously dubbing them as republican nationalists and terrorists. According to the poet, the ‘martyrdom’ of these victims does not demand a name but a narrative and a campaign. This narrative exposing their random killing and the half-baked justice meted out to them is the reward of civilian martyrs. The imagery is not metaphorical but quotidian. The dead are kept “in the frame”. They are memorialised, just like political or military martyrs, but the memory is one of collective randomness and mass ruin.

Facebook posts, being minor statements of everyday life, also constitute digital ephemera. The Waringstown branch of the Ulster Unionist Party of NI posted a poem by Clive Sanders on their social media page. This poem had the partisan and unionist tagline of “lest we forget” and the quotidian motif of minute human busts beside it.¹⁰ Like the blog poem above, this literary text is not part of a print publication. Being digital ephemera, it is more propagandist in nature, written for the unionist dead and their remembrance. However, the literary text itself challenges such sectarianism to posit a people’s martyrdom. Unlike the poem by Magee, this poem does not name the perpetrators, but focuses more on the people instructed by politicians to man sectarian divides, and how after thirty years, several people have lost their lives because of it. These losses have not been glorified in political poetry, but the sense of injustice is renewed when comrades of the party are arrested for defending their community and for allegedly leading to the loss of several lives. The word “comrades” relocates the poetic narrative as propagandist literature, which is suitably voiced on the social media

9. Mario Brian O’ Clery, “McGurk’s Bar,” *McGurk’s Bar* (blog), <https://mcgurksbar.com/victims/>.

10. Waringstown Branch – Ulster Unionist Party, “Lest We Forget,” Facebook, December 22, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/WBUUP/posts/pfbid0BVbaJ2BBqtTEiSD918ssC2MDRcAUJfkErN8Tz5W4GH9s4K3TSVtH3eTHYP28amyql>.

handle of a unionist political party. Yet, propaganda does not make it simultaneously populist. As the poet laments, “We got no applause for our suffering/We carry our wounds with us still.”

Literary works on martyrs in digital ephemera range from blogs to social media handles, from their utilisation by common people to political parties. Such digital ephemera are minor documents of everyday life, which make the claims in literary texts popular among the people, and honour people’s martyrs.

5.3 Literary works on martyrs in ephemera in Bangladesh

As in Ireland, various ephemera in Bangladesh also enable us to reassess the nature and the interpretation of literary works on martyrs. Some Bangladeshi ephemera such as murals, papers containing poetry by political leaders and social media posts, are similar to the political ephemera used for disseminating martyr narratives in Ireland. Additionally, Bangladesh also features martyr ephemera such as feedback registers placed at martyrs’ memorials, programme playlists on national days that were used to commemorate the 1971 Liberation War and tin rickshaw backboards featuring paintings. Literary works on martyrs are commonly found as print ephemera in Ireland, while in Bangladesh, handwritten, audio-visual and object-based ephemera are more commonly used to disseminate literary works on martyrs. Furthermore, there is an increasing use of digital ephemera in both countries to disseminate martyr narratives. However, in Bangladesh, while movements such as Shahbag may have disseminated martyrs’ contestations through digital modes on digital platforms, literary works on martyrs mainly comprise the songs of Shahbag.¹¹

11. Shahbag generated cultural martyrdom on Twitter from a Joan Baez song “We will overcome” to songs for protesters by bloggers, shared on platforms like YouTube, SoundCloud, and Vimeo, to be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JmyKCs_Wj8_and and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE1CvOahBQw>. Simultaneously, alleged war criminal Qader

5.3.1 Fictional martyrs in graffiti

Fig. 5.10 features a wall graffiti by Arafat Karim, wherein he represents the famous fictional character of the dead fakir, from Munier Chowdhury's play *Kobor* (1953), calling upon the language martyrs to rise again in protesting rallies. The play is

set in the Azimpur graveyard, where this mural was painted in 2021. The significance of the graffiti also lies in the location where it is made. People easily relate to his work at a site where many martyrs across generations have been laid to rest. This graveyard is also the final resting place of several unnamed and unclaimed martyrs of the country, who



Fig. 5.10. Mural: 'The dead fakir calling upon the language martyrs of 1952 to rise again'. Azimpur graveyard. Dhaka. 2021. Courtesy: Arafat Karim (artist)

were not honoured with any burial ceremonies or rituals, as their bodies were surreptitiously removed by government authorities. The dead fakir was an intellectual, a teacher, who had seen the bodies of his family members being eaten by vultures during the famine of 1943. He therefore stayed at the Azimpur graveyard, so that he might promptly jump into a grave before his death.¹² This person becomes the voice of

Molla generated his own brand of lyrical remembrance, in the song, to be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_Omo34DkyA.

12. Munier Chowdhury, *Kobor [The Grave]* in *Munier Chowdhury Rachanasamagra [Collected Works of Munier Chowdhury]*, vol.1, edited by Anisuzzaman, Dhaka: Onnopokash, 2001, 184.

the dead generation of martyrs. He is also depicted as a manipulative dervish¹³, whose realistic statement that an immense number of bodies can only be given a mass burial in a single grave, is deemed a wild, ritualistic opinion. According to the fakir, even the witnesses of the killings of slogan-shouting protesters in the rallies of 1952 demanding Bangla as the official language, need to be killed. The dead fakir adds that the killed protesters will never be dead.¹⁴ Witnesses will see death, die, rise again and protest again. Martyrs are those who are killed, but are never dead. Even as the figure of the politician in the play claims that all will be shot repeatedly till they finally fall into the graves, the fakir comes in and hands him the bloodstained bullet,¹⁵ which had been used to shoot them earlier. The fakir then organises the dead for a new rally again. Karim captures the fierce body language of the iconic fakir in his visual depiction, which would inspire future generations to make their rightful demands, thereby establishing the martyrs of the language movement as immortal figures in the lives of the common people. Unlike murals, graffiti is more individualistic in representing the voices of the people and the popular fictional icons of martyr movements. Such an ephemera epitomises the nature of political martyrdom in Bangladesh without becoming an ephemera of political propaganda.¹⁶

5.3.2 Poem on 1971 martyrs in private papers

While the poems on martyrs in Irish ephemera are written by literary artists, fig. 5.11 features a poem written by an Indian army captain on the Liberation Army fighters of Bangladesh, who were aided by the members of the Indian Army. Written

13. Chowdhury, *Kobor*, 185.

14. *Kobor*, 187.

15. *Kobor*, 195.

16. Arafat Karim (graffiti artist and leading cartoonist at *Prothom Alo*), telephone interview by author, November 15, 2022. Transcript, with author.

by Captain N.K. Mahajan, it was found in his private papers, which were displayed in the “Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman” exhibition at Bangladesh National Museum, 2022. As an official document, it specifies the location of the captain, along with the date and the details of the military operation of the guerrilla army of Bangladesh on 5th October, 1971, when Tantar, Panihata and Baromari were raided or attacked.

The poem is written from the perspective of the Indian Army, which aided the 1971 Liberation War, wherein many of its soldiers were martyred. Indian soldiers have been commemorated in both countries on a national scale recently, especially by Bangladesh with student scholarships¹⁷ and martyr memorials¹⁸. This poem is a literary enunciation of their contribution and commemoration. It refers to the bloodshed, the lamentation, and the chaos that could not be prevented by a brave leader. The writer also focuses on women, who endured the maximum collateral damage of war as victims of sexual violence. He also concentrates on the refugees, who faced numerous challenges while crossing the borders, bereft of home and kin. This

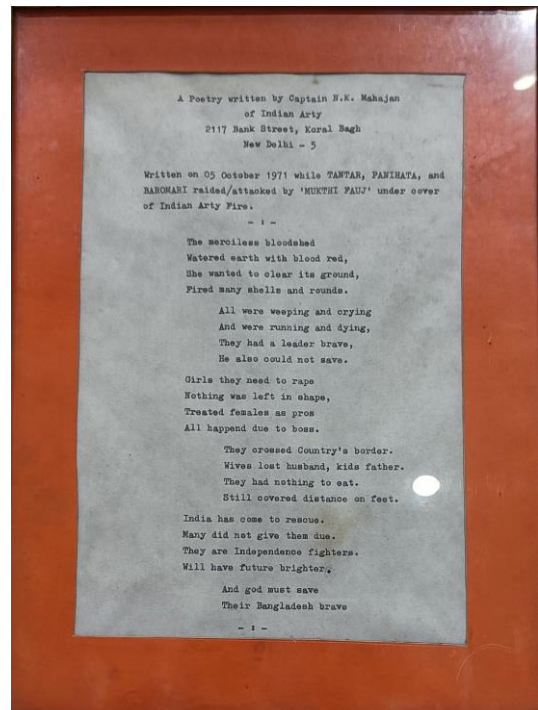


Fig. 5.11. Manuscript: Typewritten poem by Captain N. K. Mahajan for those who fought in the 1971 war.

Courtesy: Exhibition: Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. BNM

17. “Descendants of soldiers martyred in 1971 Bangladesh war honoured,” *The Pioneer*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/india/descendants-of-soldiers-martyred-in-1971-bangladesh-war-honoured.html>.

18. “Bangladesh to build monument for Indian soldiers martyred in 1971 Liberation War,” *Wion World News*, August 9, 2020, <https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/bangladesh-to-build-monument-for-indian-soldiers-martyred-in-1971-liberation-war-319192>.

ephemera is one of the earliest poetic evocations on the independence fighters from India, who were undeniably allied fighters and inevitable martyrs in the 1971 struggle for freedom. The poem ends with an invocation to God, to save the brave hearts of Bangladesh.

While there are some spelling errors in this typewritten text, composed amidst ongoing warfare, it communicates the raw emotions of personnel on the frontline, ready to sacrifice their lives. It is poetry with thematic urgency, rather than the poetry of stylistic brilliance. This makes it clear that, martyr poetry in ephemera has to adapt its literary nature to the imperative demands and immediacy of the situation it deals with; the situation generating the ephemera.

5.3.3 Songs on martyrs in programme playlists

Martyrs are commemorated on specific national days of commemoration in Bangladesh, through songs sung, especially by the younger generation. It is one of the most popular ways in which the new generation comes to know about martyrs. Fig. 5.12 features the playlists framed for children of the area surrounding the Jalladkhana Killing field in Mirpur, who practise these songs each Saturday after school. 10th January celebrates the return of the Father of the Nation, from Pakistani custody due to

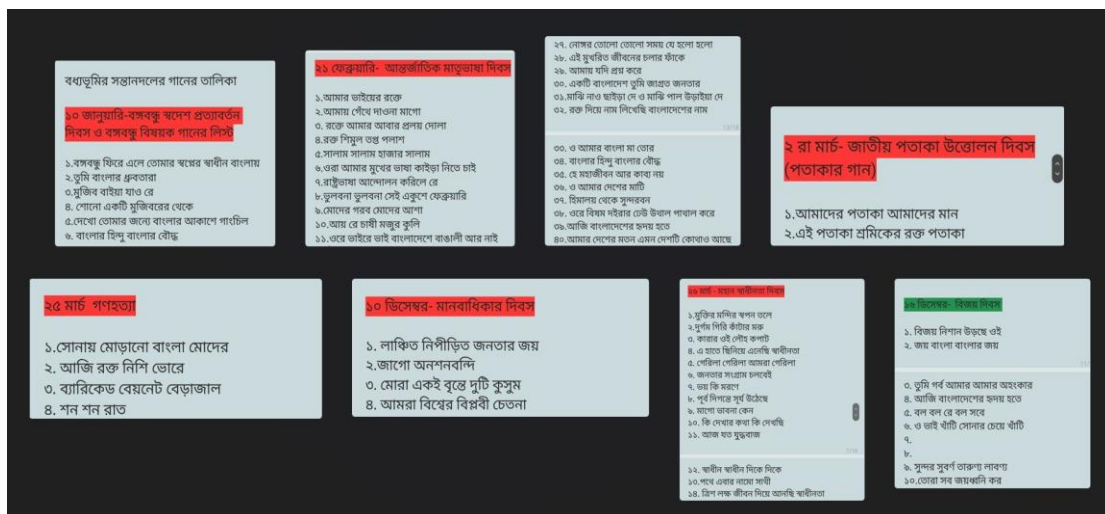


Fig. 5.12. Playlists: Screenshots of personal laptop for songs sung during commemoration programmes for martyrs of Bangladesh. Courtesy: Promila Biswas. JKM

international pressure. Remembering this day, they sing of *Bangabandhu* as the polestar of freedom who has returned to his land, and of Mujib as a benediction for the people.

21st February is observed as International Mother Language Day, in remembrance of the martyrs, who were shot dead in 1952, during rallies demanding that Bangla be made the official language. On this day, youth sing of the blood of those martyrs, who have written the history of free Bangladesh, inviting peasants, workers and labourers to join this saga of commemorative pride. They sing of the appropriateness of the time, when the anchor is lifted and the revolution sets sail. Though some of their songs may be perceived only as patriotic songs, the songs also comment on the grand lives and deaths of martyrs who no longer need poetry. Literariness is an insufficient means of commemoration, in the face of such enormous sacrifices. On 2nd March, celebrated as National Flag Day, children and youth sing of the flag erected by workers' blood. On 25th March, remembered as Genocide Day, they sing of the bloodshed from morn to night, which took place on the fateful day of the military operation by the Pakistan Army. On 10th December, observed as International Human Rights Day, they sing of the victory of humiliated downtrodden masses, hunger strikers and revolutionaries, whose fundamental freedoms have been violated. On 26th March (Independence Day) and on 16th December (Victory Day), popular patriotic songs are sung, celebrating the three million martyrs who won freedom for Bangladesh. The playlists for these songs, framed and reframed, provide insights into the popular imagination of the people, who nurture martyrs and martyrdom, in their everyday lives. While these songs are not ephemera by themselves, their featuring on popular playlists makes them part of common people's ephemera on martyrs, stored in digital format on smartphones for practice sessions.

with spontaneous poetic evocations, the feedback register also reveals that student visitors from other districts paid greater attention to killing fields in their own villages and districts following visits to martyrs' memorial sites. They have noted down information regarding these killing fields in the feedback registers, along with their poems.

5.3.5 Biographies in documentary shooting posts and stills

Martyr biographies are also the subjects of documentary film-making in Bangladesh. From intellectual martyrs to women martyrs, photographs related to the making of documentaries as also stills from documentaries capture distinct narratives on people's martyrs in ephemera. Stills comprise audio-visual ephemera (minor documents of the documentary making process), and posts additionally comprise digital ephemera.

In a Facebook post on 3rd December, 2022, Bangladeshi filmmaker Tanvir Mokammel announced that he was making a documentary on martyr intellectual Dhirendranath Datta. The documentary would be shot in Ramrail, Brahmanbaria, where Datta was born in 1886.¹⁹ It has been entitled *Dhirendranath Datta: Titas Parer Manushti* [Dhirendranath Datta: The Man from the Shore of Titas]. Mokammel posted photographs of the shooting of the documentary film, with each of them foregrounding the importance of various sites and persons in the life of the martyr. There is a photograph of a railway line, beside which the camera takes a long shot. This is the only railway station in the Kasba Upazila of Brahmanbaria district, and was significant for Datta as he travelled much from his hometown to the cities. In another photograph, Mokammel is seen interviewing an old lady, who was the caretaker of

19. Tanvir Mokammel's Films, "Brahmanbariae Tanvir Mokammeler porichalona 'Dhirendranath Datta: Titas Parer Manushti'" [Directed by Tanvir Mokammel in Brahmanbaria "Dhirendranath Datta: The Man from the Shore of Titas"], Facebook, December 3, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/tanvirmokammelfilms/posts/pfbid08knpuM3TTBJij2jhftMwcb6hCzmCN4Udcr797roLSvSzsKMMicgdAPqP66hayRVjl>.

Datta's house in Ramrail, and cared for him whenever he came to stay there. There is also a photograph of the construction of the martyr commemoration library by the district committee, in front of which the entire crew pose at the end of a day's shooting. These photographs establish the martyr intellectual as a person, going much beyond his image as a persona celebrated on Martyred Intellectuals Day. Mokammel adds that there was not much awareness and appreciation of the life of this martyr intellectual, even in his home village. Such neglect is becoming especially perceptible now, with increasing communalism at the local level, wherein the contribution of such Hindu martyred intellectuals is easily forgotten, even as national-level commemorations continue.²⁰



Fig. 5.14. Documentary still: (captions in English): Sri Tapan Kumar Dutta, a local proprietor, pointing at the historical Dutta house where martyr Lutfur Nahar Helen was killed. *Jonojuddha '71* [People's War of 1971]. Directed by Shanu Manik. Supervision by Tanvir Mokammel. 2021. Courtesy: Tanvir Mokammel archives.

Another documentary film by Mokammel, featuring the life narratives of several martyrs, was shown in some programmes and film festivals during October, November and December 2022.

Fig. 5.14 shows a still from this documentary entitled *Jonojuddha '71* [People's War of 1971]. The still features Sri Tapan Kumar Dutta, a local proprietor, who

points out the site where lady martyr Lutfur Nahar Helen was killed. The narration by

20. Tanvir Mokammel (Bangladeshi filmmaker), telephone interview by the author, December 10, 2022.

Chittralekha Guha informs us that Helen was a teacher, a political activist, and an organiser of the freedom struggle, who transformed the *razakar* camp in Mohammadpur, Magura, where she lived, into a freedom fighters' training camp. In the above photograph, the proprietor points out the historical Dutta mansion that was a *razakar* camp in 1971, and is now leased out to various shops. Here Helen was brought, tortured, killed, and then thrown into the river. Many other freedom fighters and the general public were subjected to the same fate in this house. Her naked body was paraded along the streets of Magura, so that her father and brother would come out of their house and be captured. The torture and death narratives of this woman martyr are captured in terms of the timescapes of 1971 and of the present, through such audio-visual literary interventions. Documentaries are non-fictional literary works; photographs and individual stills related to their making represent martyr narratives, linking past to present. Moreover, such ephemera work in tandem with oral interpretations and narrations of the director and narrator of the documentary films.

5.3.6 Paintings on rickshaw backboards

Rickshaws are the most common and cheapest mode of travel in the congested city of Dhaka in Bangladesh with its lanes and by lanes. Rickshaw paintings include the representation of images on the tin backboard and rear side-panels, cut-outs appliquéd on to hoods, and paintings on the seat covers. While most of the earlier images depicted popular actors of upcoming films as well as figures from well-known myths, in the 1970s, the Liberation War became the dominant theme of rickshaw paintings. Local culture, beliefs and aspirations began to make their way to the tin sheets adorning rickshaws.²¹ The artists depicted the heroes, who would go on to become martyrs in the mass genocide during the 1971 war. Rickshaw paintings did not

21. Mehjabin Tuly & Rafia Mahmud Prato, "Rickshaw art seeks refuge on boxes, cups and ornaments," *The Business Standard*, January 14, 2022, <https://www.tbsnews.net/features/panorama/rickshaw-art-seeks-refuge-boxes-cups-and-ornaments-357286>.

focus on the cruel brutalities of martyrdom, but on the heroic remembrance of the freedom fighters. Simultaneously, rickshaw artists continued to depict scenes from rural life and places of religious worship, environments in which the freedom fighters lived their everyday lives.

Fig. 5.15 features a rickshaw painting from the nomination file for inscription of “Rickshaws and rickshaw painting in Dhaka”²² in UNESCO’s representative 2018 list, prepared by Bangla Academy consultant Dr Firoz Mahmud. A young boy and two



Fig. 5.15. Rickshaw painting on tin backboard: Three freedom fighters. This depiction is reminiscent of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Bangla Academy’s nomination file for inscription of ‘Rickshaws and rickshaw painting in Dhaka’ on UNESCO’s representative list. 2018.

men are shown running with rifles in their hands, towards something, with all their might. The bodily contours could also refer to a young boy, who is turning into a tried and tested war veteran. The background of the rural

countryside gradually blurs into a fiery red against a black darkness, indicating that their journey is towards a future when entire villages would be set on fire by the Pakistan Army and its collaborators. The fiery redness also indicates the sun, that red illuminating mark of freedom, as featured in the flag of Bangladesh, which emerges from the blood of the martyrs. From heroic death to glorious afterlife, the paintings on rickshaws deal with the idealisms of war, so that viewers are inspired to participate in greater numbers in the freedom struggle. This image is archived in the UNESCO’s list of intangible pieces of heritage, as it does not physically exist anymore. Hence, such

22. “Rickshaws and rickshaw painting in Dhaka,” Bangladesh Representative List 2018, UNESCO, https://ich.unesco.org/en/10b-representative-list-01013?include=slideshow_inc.php&id=00960&width=620&call=slideshow&mode=scroll.

images continue to remain as ephemera. Moreover, these artistic creations are threatened by digital print, which now embellishes the backboards and hoods of rickshaws.

5.4 Literary works on martyr ephemera in Ireland

Martyr ephemera refer to political and commemorative ephemera that name, describe and debate over martyrs. In Ireland, unlike some ephemera discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.2, these are not to be understood independently as political ephemera as in the case of leaflets, posters, newspapers. Specifically martyr ephemera refer to minor transient documents relating to a martyr—the words describing a martyr, the last words of a martyr, emblems of the martyrs' movements, the roll of honour for a martyr, and the witness statements for a martyr. Literary works such as songs, drama, poetry and painting contain martyr ephemera as their central motifs and themes. However, there are also some political ephemera such as murals, wherein the use of certain words and images characterises them as martyr ephemera.

5.4.1 'Roll of Honour' song

Some ephemera themselves have been transmuted into literary works, in the form of important symbols. While the printed Roll of Honour enumerates the names of the martyred patriots whose sacrifice needs to be commemorated, the song entitled 'Roll of Honour' deals with the reasons for and the significance of that commemoration.

The 'Roll of Honour' is an Irish republican song from the 2013 album *The Roll of Honour*, written by Gerry O'Glacain of the band, The Irish Brigade. This song contains a list of the dead, but that list is interspersed with narratives of the lives and

afterlives of the enlisted dead. It commemorates the ten IRA and INLA hunger strikers, who died during the 1981 hunger strikes in NI, and immortalises their names.

As discussed in section 2.4.1.1, printed Rolls of Honour are found in other ephemera such as newspapers and calendars. Moreover, they are also found on local memorials for public display, and have survived into later years. The above-mentioned song incorporates both the ephemeral nature and eternal rendition of such Rolls of Honour. It also expresses how these ephemera became popular among the common people, who remembered the dead in this way.

As a literary work, the song focusses on its martyrs as “Ireland’s bravest”²³, and on the H-Block hunger strikers as “Irish soldiers”²⁴, thus emphasizing their anti-British stance. The martyrs are also seen as the sons of Bellghy, Armagh hills and Derry, where they are now mourned. Through this song, people can hear the souls of the martyrs cry out that their deaths will not be in vain, if more people continue the fight for freedom.²⁵ Such lyrics make the song ‘Roll of Honour’ a living entity with a voice, a voice that will guide people with every rendition.

5.4.2 Mural word

In some cases, specific terms or words used in murals play a major role as martyr ephemera. For instance, the use of the word ‘felon’ (mentioned in the mural in fig. 3.45) for the Manchester Martyrs (discussed in section 3.3.6) is suggestive of martyrs as being both political criminals and rebel icons. The word ‘felon’ entered Irish revolutionary canon with Lady Gregory’s 1900 essay ‘Felons of our Land’. This essay explains that the concept of ‘felon’ systematizes and consolidates the traditions of rebel culture, with particular emphasis on the names of the felons, or political

23. The Irish Brigade, ‘Roll of Honour,’ *Genius*, <https://genius.com/The-irish-brigade-roll-of-honour-lyrics>.

24. The Irish Brigade, ‘Roll of Honour.’

25. The Irish Brigade, ‘Roll of Honour.’

prisoners. Rebel poems and ballads dealing with ‘felons’ not only name the heroes, but also grant intensity and continuity of purpose to these anti-hero figures.

In her essay, Gregory characterises the Manchester martyrs as being different from the educated and sophisticated Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, who are popular martyrs in Irish history. She writes, “They [Manchester martyrs] were all men of good character, working for their bread. O’Brien was the son of an evicted farmer; Larkin, the grandson of a farmer flogged and transported in ’98; Allen, for whose fate most pity was felt, had been brought up a carpenter, was only 19, and was soon to have been married.”²⁶ Such ordinary, innocent lives were brutally sacrificed, thus turning all three of them into the martyrs of a people’s movement. Gregory approvingly points out their significance for Fenian culture: “Their fate gave the touch of pathos that had been wanting to the Fenian movement.”²⁷ This “pathos” emanates from their simplicity, and transmutes their sacrifice into a tragedy of commoners, who rebel against an oppressive power. Their act of shooting a police officer, albeit accidental, is overshadowed by the charm of their defiance. Gregory’s discussion of all the rebel martyrs as local folk heroes, not only represents the voice of the people, but also justifies the everyday, commonplace acts of courage that may not be criminally culpable or lawfully penalized.

5.4.3 Last words of martyrs in drama

The last words of martyrs in dramatic works relating to themes of martyrdom play a significant role as martyr ephemera. The words comprise verbal ephemera which have been given dramatic rendering in the play. *Easter Rising: The Last Words of Patrick Pearse* by Brian Gordon Sinclair was published in 2016, to mark the 100th

26. Lady Gregory, ‘The Felons of Our Land,’ *Cornhill Magazine* (May 1900): 630.

27. Lady Gregory, ‘The Felons of Our Land,’ 630.

anniversary of the Easter Revolution. It not only features the last words of Pearse, but also of the other leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, in separate dramatic monologues.

As stated in the section on ‘Performance Rights’ by Sinclair, who plays the role of Pearse, the original production of the play was multi-media, and employed a series of twin slide projections as well as a soundtrack through which the writer narrated the saga of martyrdom in Easter 1916. From slide Stage Right (SR) featuring the words “Poblacht na hEireann” [“Republic of Ireland”] to slide Stage Left (SL) featuring the words “Provisional Government of the Irish Republic”, the play represents the human voices behind the historical proclamation, and the real conditions of historical locations related to the Rising. The sound of the drum roll is played, as Pearse practices reading the famous speech of the Proclamation. The grand sites of the Liberty Hall are prepared as the stage for the Rising, with the Citizen Army and the Volunteer Army, but the leaders arrive at these grand sites by whatever means of transport are available to them. Therefore, the slides feature these sites, and then feature a tram on a slide and the tram bell on a soundtrack.²⁸

The focus of the dramatic monologue is not just on the content of the speeches and the poetry of Pearse, but also on the rendering of these words through everyday conversational language and soulful echoes. Pearse is presented as a fine character whom the English judge finds hard to convict²⁹, and as an upholder of the rights of landless men, who wants to control the mobs from looting the beautiful shops in Dublin and taking away expensive items³⁰. The grandeur of his symbolic poetry in ‘The Rose Tree’ is posited along with his idealistic desire to build a civilian

28. Brian Gordon Sinclair, Act I, *Easter Rising: The Last Words of Patrick Pearse* (Absolutely Amazing Ebooks, 2016), loc. 17 of 127, Kindle.

29. Act III, loc. 72 of 127.

30. Act I, loc. 34 of 127.

constabulary that would fight crime with walking sticks.³¹ These contesting idealisms make him wonder whether he would be a hero or a sad, frustrated failure, making passionate, final gestures of a dramatic monologue. These are not only the words of the monologue but the dramatic nature of Pearse's martyrdom.

Other than Pearse, there are instances of the accidental martyrdom of Bridget McKane³², who is shot by the Volunteers, and the voluntary martyrdom of Danny Porter³³, who acts as a human shield for Pearse and dies at the hands of the British Army.

The last words of all the characters are important in the saga of the martyrdoms of the Easter Rising. Importantly, the play also includes a response to the last words of the martyrs, in the words of a mother. The words have been written by Pearse himself, from the poem entitled 'The Mother', which the writer turns into a common poetic response.³⁴ After Pearse takes the Holy Communion in spiritual preparation for his death, the voice-over reveals that, even though the mother undergoes painful nights remembering the sons (Patrick and William Pearse), yet she is happy because they have been faithful and they fought.³⁵ Martyrdom generates both joy and grief for the dead. This play thus represents and gives voice to the martyred leaders as common people and the common people as martyrs.

5.4.4 Flag in painting

Flags are ephemera. Paintings of nationalist flags constitute an important literary and artistic element of martyr ephemera. John Lavery, an Irish artist, painted a

31. Act II, loc. 42 of 127.

32. Act III, loc. 64 of 127.

33. Act III, loc. 62 of 127.

34. Act III, loc. 76 of 127.

35. Act III, loc. 77 of 127.

scene showing the requiem mass of martyr Terence MacSwiney,³⁶ a hunger striker who died in 1920, with a beam of sunlight shining on his coffin draped in the Irish tricolour flag. MacSwiney has been the subject of artistic rendition in the final moments of his death (see section 2.2.1.2). However, this painting entitled *Funeral of Terence MacSwiney, Mayor of Cork* is not just a rendition of the death of the martyr, but specifically focuses on the role of the tricolour flag in the creation of the martyr. The tricolour-draped coffin is represented as a small detail in the painting but with a highlighted focus.

Lavery has also painted *Michael Collins: Love of Ireland* (1922, Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin), wherein the Archbishop is seen blessing the Irish tricolour. Thus, the flag as an object of veneration did feature in paintings of the time. However, the *MacSwiney* painting depicts how martyrdom generates a renewed popular interest in the tricolour. Hence, in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, teeming with people at the memorial service, attention is drawn, not towards the altar of God but towards the altar of the martyr—the tricolour coffin. Republicans later used this same flag to cover the coffins of IRA volunteer Michael Gaughan, who was force-fed to death in 1974³⁷ and Volunteer James McDade, who died in a premature explosion in Coventry on 14th November, 1974.³⁸ The legacy of martyrdom as traced through this tricolour transmutes from its being a rebel flag to becoming a radical ensign. In *Principles of*

36. Sir John Lavery, *Southwark Cathedral London 1920 (Terence MacSwiney)*, Hugh Lane Gallery, 1920, <https://hughlane.emuseum.com/objects/1041/southwark-cathedral-london-1920-terence-macswiney?ctx=a0084166736b6014994a3cf35982808de560e122&idx=33>.

37. Ruan O'Donnell, "The Provisional IRA: History, Politics and Remembrance," in *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland* edited by Jim Smyth (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Remembering_the_Troubles/QJYHDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=tricolour+at+macswiney%27s+painting&pg=PT61&printsec=frontcover.

38. Joe Dwyer, "Beneath a Rebel flag in the heart of the Empire," *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/28129>.

Freedom, MacSwiney writes about bearing the flag despite divergent opinions, so that the undefeated spirit persists:

“At all times and forever be for it proud, passionate, persistent, jubilant, defiant; stirring hidden memories, kindling old fires, wakening the finer instincts of men, till all are one in the old spirit, the spirit that will not admit defeat, that has been voiced by thousands...”³⁹

MacSwiney may have been silenced by death, but the legacy of his martyrdom continues, through the illumination of the tricolour coffin, as featured in Lavery’s painting.

5.4.5 Witness statements in drama

The word ‘martyr’ refers to someone who bears witness or gives testimony or evidence in a court of law. Like words, witness statements comprise verbal ephemera, especially in the context of martyr events where justice is still being sought. Plays involving witnesses to events of martyrdom form a significant, even if rare, part of martyr verbal ephemera. Plays on Bloody Sunday have often featured popular ephemera associated with the event such as Bishop Daly using the white handkerchief to stop the bleeding of John ‘Jackie’ Duddy who had been shot. A staff of The Playhouse, Derry explained that it was a realistic symbol, that formed the central symbol in the play *The White Handkerchief* (staged on 30th January, 2022).⁴⁰ Roslyn also mentioned that all the families of the Bloody Sunday victims received a white handkerchief with a portrait of the victims as a memento when they went to watch the play. The play was staged as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the

39. Terence MacSwiney, “The Bearn Baoghail – Conclusion,” in *Principles of Freedom* (Dublin: The Talbot Press Ltd., 1921), 243.

40. Staff member (The Playhouse, Derry), Telephone discussion with the author, April 21, 2023.

incident. Even though a minor, transient object, she had framed it and kept it as a commemorative ephemera.⁴¹

Unlike commemorative ephemera, the play *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* by Richard Norton-Taylor, first performed on 7th April, 2005, contained verbal legal ephemera. It was staged prior to the publication of the Saville Inquiry report, which was published on 15th June, 2010 in ten volumes, making strong demands for the latter. Taylor does not allow his own voice to directly permeate the play, but presents himself as the editor of scene transcripts from the Saville Inquiry. This play probes the nature of the killings on 30th January, 1972, focusing specifically on witness statements and reactions, which shape people's responses to those killed, and constitute verbal ephemera, that are not only words but its contexts, modulations, changes and conflicts that have been at the core of the Saville Inquiry Report. Witness statements have defined the dead as 'martyrs', but some point out that it is incorrect to club the civilians killed in the same category as members of paramilitary organisations. Thus, this modern play, located in the world of legal proceedings and dealing with the legality of terms, removes itself from the world of Greek martyrology. As a literary work, it revolves around and examines those witness statements, wherein other contesting terms (discussed in previous chapters) come up during the interrogation process. The play is a literary constituent of martyr ephemera, because death becomes an integral part of the equation of seeking justice after Bloody Sunday.⁴²

The analysis of witness statements in the play is important, because the event is not only of private interest to the family members of those who have lost their lives,

41. Roslyn Doyle (sister of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Kevin McElhinney), interview by author, Derry/Londonderry, April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

42. Richard Norton-Taylor, "Bernadette McAliskey 15 May 2001," *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* (London: Oberon Books, 2005), loc. 37 of 112, Kindle.

but also of public importance for those participating in protest marches for the victims' civil rights. At the beginning of the play, the counsel tries to implicate the Church's stance on the marches. Bishop Daly clarifies, that, on that day, Father O'Neill had asked people not to get into any confrontation with the paratroopers, at the end of the Mass. The Bishop is further questioned about his position on violence. He explains that, just because some protest marches may turn violent at some point, it does not mean that protesting against anything unjustified should altogether cease. Thus, the play establishes the right of people to protest as civilians. Moreover, as Paul O'Connor mentions, the term 'innocent dead' would be used by families of IRA members who had died (discussed in section 2.1.3.3). The British Army had dubbed many of the victims as gunmen, nail bombers and petrol bombers in the Widgery report (published in 1972) submitted for the Bloody Sunday inquiry, by conflating them with the IRA, which becomes their excuse. In this play, lawyer Michael Mansfield, representing the families of William Nash and Barney McGuigan, asks whether there had been instances of the paramilitaries using civil rights marches to strike at the Army⁴³, and counsel C. Clarke asks whether the IRA would do so to alienate the sympathies of the civilians⁴⁴. Both receive answers in the negative. These debates, which have afflicted the Troubles in Ireland for long, became central to the play. The claim of the British Army that the soldiers opened fire because they had been attacked first is exposed as a false concoction of memory, that was constituted of an assumption of good behaviour by leading commanders of the paratroopers⁴⁵, and an intentional misconstruing of facts

43. "Bishop Edward Daly 6 February 2001," loc. 20 of 112.

44. "General Sir Robert Ford 29 October – 12 November 2002," loc. 65 of 112.

45. "General Sir Robert Ford 29 October – 12 November 2002."

by Soldier F (his real name and context has been explored in section 2.2.3.2), so that the shootings would be justified⁴⁶.

Thus, the play is a dramatic rendering of human intentions, memory distortions and legal circumlocutions, while providing space for people's clapping, crying and turning away, which mere witness statements in an inquiry report cannot demonstrate. As an iconic text, which establishes the victims of Bloody Sunday as the murdered, this play and its related drama ephemera such as programme schedules, are displayed in museums. In Ulster Museum, the programme displayed includes details from previous plays, such as details related to tribunals, photographs, extracts of evidence and other contextual information.⁴⁷ It features a map of Derry depicting streets such as William Street, Chamberlain Street, Rossville Street, and Little James Street, which have been mentioned around sixty-eight times in the play. The play encourages the viewer to probe beyond the map and understand the lives lost in those places.

5.5 Literary works on martyr ephemera in Bangladesh

Martyr ephemera in Bangladesh range from individual-specific ephemera such as bloodstained clothes, to group-specific ephemera such as slogans, funeral processions, to event-specific ephemera such as songs for martyrs' movements and its associated reactions, to nation-specific ephemera such as stamps and debates over the numbers of martyrs. The Bangladeshi martyr ephemera are mostly personal objects that turn into political ephemera, when compared to the Irish political ephemera discussed in section 5.4. In this section, we discuss Bangladeshi literary works such as

46. "Soldier F 1-2 October 2003," loc. 104 of 112.

47. Ulster Museum, "Programme of *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry*," *BELUM*. W2017.8.2.

poems, plays, novels, cartoons and documentary films, which feature martyr ephemera as their central motifs and themes, and thereby explicate the nature of such ephemera and martyrdom.

5.5.1 Martyr's clothes in poetry

Martyr's clothes⁴⁸ are borne through funeral processions as an affective object of display. Such displays are poignantly captured in poetic works. 'Asader Shirt' ['Asad's Shirt'], a poem by Shamsur Rahman, metaphorically describes the bloodstained shirt of a martyr as red blossoms, fiery red hues of dusk and the blue expanse of the skies. This unfading shirt has been woven by his sister with bright starry buttons and the golden fibres of his heart.⁴⁹ While this transcendental imagery makes the shirt an immortal object that would continue to live in the minds of the people, the everyday action of the mother setting the shirt out to dry in the sunlight redirects our attention to the fact that it belonged to a real person who lived each day. With death, that life has been cut short. Martyrdom has wrenched the martyr's shirt from the quiet shade of the pomegranate tree in his courtyard, and flourishes it through the thoroughfares of the capital city in turbulent rallies, over factory chimneys during furious workers' protests, and in every nook and corner of those cities⁵⁰ where people bring out funeral processions to symbolise defiant marches of the people's revolution. In this process, the shirt has engrained itself as a motif in people's consciousness, in their fiery hearts, in their reverberating protests. In the last stanza, the poet emphasizes that the shirt is a humane garb ("*bostro manobik*"), which has covered the weaknesses,

48. They have been probed as affective martyr ephemera in section 2.2.1.3 and in fig. 2.50.

49. Shamsur Rahman, 'Asader Shirt' in *Shamsur Rahamaner Shrestha Kobita* [Selected poetry of Shamsur Rahman] (Dhaka: Jatiyo Sahitya Prokashoni, 1976, 3rd ed., 1989), 73.

50. Shamsur Rahman, 'Asader Shirt,' 74.

fears, guilt and shame of the people, so that they may ultimately glorify the martyr's shirt as a flag symbolising the pride of life.⁵¹

'Asader Shirt' is a cult poem in Bangladesh, displayed in the gallery of the BNM along with photographs of martyrs Asad and Matiur, who died in the 1969 uprising. A young museum assistant mentioned that questions from this poem had featured in their school examinations.⁵² Thus, such literary works make martyr ephemera popular.

5.5.2 Martyr's slogans in novel

Literary works aptly capture the nuances of mass emotions in responding to acts of martyrdom. Slogans not only remain words of defiant utterance but also chaotic intermixing. Sometimes people become tired after hours of shouting slogans. These tired responses turn the slogans for martyrs into human responses with human frailties.

For example, few Bangladeshi novels contain instances of slogans getting intermixed as crowds spontaneously come together to honour a martyr's body, thus turning a funeral procession into a rally. In Akhteruzzaman Elias' 1987 novel, *Chilekothar Sepai* [Rooftop Soldier], street urchins move around in random groups informing student leaders that, this snacks' shop is open and that cycle parts' shop has not closed down following the declaration of a strike, and run around to shut down some shops. They shout slogans along with other members of the public in defiance of President Ayub Khan, who introduced martial law to crush the revolting stance of the mass uprising: "*Ayub shahi, Monaem shahi, dhongsho hok, dhongsho hok*" ["Ayub's rule, Monaem's rule, be destroyed, be destroyed"], "*Shahider rokto britha jete debo na*" ["I will not let the martyr's blood go in vain"] and "*Jalo, jalo, agun jalo*" ["Burn,

51. Rahman, 'Asader Shirt,' 74.

52. Shamima Akter Rima (IT assistant, Bangladesh National Museum), conversation with the author, Dhaka, August 7, 2022.

burn, burn fire”]. At times, the words get entangled, with the street urchins uttering “*Ayub shahi, jalem shahi*” [“Ayub’s rule, the oppressor’s rule”], while the others respond “*Britha jete debo na*” [“will not go in vain”], and the slogan “*shahider rokto*” [“Martyr’s blood”] is combined with “*jalo, jalo, agun jalo*” [“Burn, burn, burn fire”].⁵³ The tiredness, the intermixing is the new legacy of people’s martyrdom, while the slogans constitute the verbal ephemera that demonstrate it.

5.5.3 Martyr’s funeral processions in novel

Photographs of funeral processions features in numerous iconic photographs of the 1971 War (discussed in section 2.1.3.4). Written in the context of the 1969 people’s revolt, Akhteruzzaman Elias’ novel centres around the death of Taleb, who randomly walks into a rally near Nilkhet, a neighbourhood in Dhaka, and is shot dead by the police. Student leaders appropriate the body to transmute its funeral into a mass rally. Like that for other martyrs, Taleb’s funeral is undertaken at the Baitul Mokatrem National Mosque, and his body is buried at the Azimpur graveyard.⁵⁴ Thousands say prayers for him, but Elias questions whether it would all be meaningful for his poor family. National and political forces, working towards state-making through funeral processions, do not look into the emotions, anguish, and everyday needs of the living survivors, in their focus on the dead.

Furthermore, the middle-class pride in utilizing people’s martyrdom is narrated in terms of magic realism, indicating that it will remain a dream forever. Osman Goni, Taleb’s neighbour and the narrator of the novel imagines many such martyrs’ bodies on his rooftop wall. His heroism is activated by his desire to protest, but delimited by imperatives of catering to the exigencies of everyday living. When he sees the bodies

53. Akhteruzzaman Elias, *Chilekothar Sepai* [Rooftop Soldier] (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1987), 15.

54. Elias, *Chilekothar Sepai*, 10.

of two martyrs, namely Moqbular Rahman and Rustam Ali, who had been shot dead by the police in front of the secretariat building, he feels their bodies are riding on waves of black hair, floating along a vacuum, and rues that he himself missed this grand chance of being similarly martyred. Then again, he becomes thankful that he is alive, and bears witness to the eagerness of the people when a funeral procession transmutes into a rally of political protest.⁵⁵

Literary texts such as this novel explore the commonplace reality of martyrs' funeral processions, wherein hot tea and snacks along with cigarettes and beedis are sold for the gathering crowds coming from Postagola, Faridabad, Milbarrack, and so on.⁵⁶ Such funeral processions had become common in 1969, with participants often being shot by the military and the police. That had become a part of people's everyday lives. As Elias' novel puts it, if someone walked briskly enough, others would perceive that he was coming from a funeral procession.⁵⁷ Elias' novel thus probes martyrs' funeral processions not in terms of the political appropriation of martyrdom but as martyr ephemera—the martyr as a minor, transient object of everyday living, evoked in terms of the broken and volatile announcements of the martyr's name sounded through the mike, the sudden upsurge of people standing up after generations of oppressive hunger and exploitation, and the fervid and flippant desires of the people participating in funeral processions while simultaneously spending time with peers and binging on tasty snacks.

As in novels, funeral processions have also been represented in political ephemera such as newspaper headlines (section 3.4.1). The human nature and ephemerality of popular martyrdom, shifting swiftly between power and banality, are

55. *Chilekothar Sepai*, 146.

56. *Chilekothar Sepai*, 11.

57. *Chilekothar Sepai*, 23.

unravelling through literary works, more realistically than the factual and biased narratives of ephemera such as newspaper front pages.

5.5.4 Martyrs' songs and reactions to these songs in documentary film

Songs related to martyrs and its public responses to these songs together constitute part of Bangladeshi martyr ephemera. For instance, songs in memory of martyrs and their dissemination become the subject of Tareque Masud's 1999 documentary film *Muktir Kotha*, which captures the endeavours of a group of young projectionists to show the banned 1995 documentary *Muktir Gaan* across various villages in Bangladesh. The 1995 documentary comprised footage of Lear Levin on the works of the moving musical group, *Bangladesh Mukti Songrami Shilpi Songostha* [Bangladesh Freedom Fighter Artists' Association], who visited various refugee camps singing the songs of freedom during 1971. Unearthed in 1990 by American filmmaker Catherine Masud, the footage was made into a documentary *Muktir Gaan* by Catherine and her husband Tareque, for which they loaned a substantial amount. Thus, when its screening was banned, they decided to show it as a 16mm film, using portable gear that had to be carried across villages, because it was economical and convenient, explains Nahid Masud, Tareque's brother. Thus, *Muktir Kotha* was a daring experiment in many ways.⁵⁸

In *Muktir Gaan*, the audiences view the saga of the refugees, each of whom had witnessed killings and rapes of their family members, through the musical troupe. The troupe sings of blood-filled Bangladesh, whose blood flows across Padma, Meghna and Jamuna rivers. This especially refers to the mass migration, when thousands died along the way, and vultures ate their bodies. The documentary also shows the musical troupe singing at the training centres along the borders, where

58. Nahid Masud (location sound recordist and mixer, and younger brother of Tareque Masud), telephone interview by author, September 15, 2022. Transcript, with author.

youth came to prepare themselves for battle and sacrifice. These situations represent various facets of martyrdom during the genocide of Bangladesh. Tareque Ali, one of the members of the musical troupe, wanted to become a freedom fighter, but was declared medically unfit due to his weak eyesight. While the group sings of the sacrifices of the freedom fighters in the free zones controlled by the guerrilla fighters in the 1971 War, he remembers his desire again. The documentary ends with Ali, the narrator, revisiting the sacrifices of the freedom fighters, and questioning himself whether the people have been able to live up to the same.

These songs of freedom and sacrifice were not allowed to be shown in Bangladesh, during the political reign of the BNP till 1996, for which the party faced huge protests, especially directed by AL, who understood the publicity value of the film. Thus, several martyrs' sacrifices could not be remembered. *Muktir Kotha* taps the desires and complaints of an entire generation, who have no knowledge of war and martyrdom. It indicates that martyr legacy is an emotional need of the people, especially in the face of distortion of history. The demands of the people, the overflowing emotions when villagers saw *Muktir Gaan* and the discussions between the young people who were showing the documentary across the country constitute a significant verbal ephemera.

The documentary also questions the nature of martyrdom in the 1971 War. The war generated sacrificial figures, who were not akin to great saints but were ordinary heroes. Sadly, such ordinary heroism cannot be retained with veneration by the present society. Moushumi Bhowmik's lyrics in 'Jessore Road' (which featured in *Muktir Gaan*) refer to the dead god presiding in the skies, to whom the people cannot complain. Contemporary society is presided over by all-powerful dictators, who fear these narratives of martyrdom. Therefore, it is important that the words of freedom break free through such documentaries, capturing the voices of teachers and farmers,

and the emotions of people in some of the most remote villages in Bangladesh. Such ephemera do not refer only to the songs for martyrs but also to the varied audience responses to them, thereby making people remember and revisit narratives of martyrdom.

5.5.5 Martyr numbers and stamps in cartoon

In Bangladesh, while popular martyr ephemera such as audience responses are subject to variations, martyr ephemera such as commemorative stamps and debates on the number of people to be commemorated are subject to parody and irony in cartoons. *Liberation War in Comics* compiles a series of comics published during 1971 in international and local newspapers. The editors of the book have referred to a cartoon by Chandi Lahiri in a Bengali news daily printed in Calcutta, India.⁵⁹ The cartoon suggests that the new postage stamps of Bangladesh should feature the perpetrator of genocide, President Yahya Khan, who is to be shown with his neck being wringed hard as he is thrown out of the country. The space created by his removal should be given to the new moon. The cartoonist indicates that, it is only by casting aside the old dictator that the new light of freedom will shine through. And that moon will be an “*ordho chandra*” [“half-moon”], because even after independence, the anti-Liberation forces continue to hold dominion over the country.

Amidst the above-mentioned anarchic atmosphere, there was a denial that some individuals were martyrs, as well as a denial of the genocide. Hence, another cartoon contains a representative image of a person trying to account for the innumerable dead.⁶⁰ The title foregrounds the accounting of the number of dead in the

59. Chandi Lahiri, Cartoon: “What should be shown in the postage stamps of Bangladesh?” *Anandabazar Patrika*, December 31, 1971, in *Liberation War in Comics*, vol. 1, edited by Muntassir Mamoon and Chowdhury Shahid Kader (Kathaprokash: Dhaka, 2022), 405.

60. Lahiri, Cartoon: “What I have not received, accounting for it...” *Anandabazar Patrika*, December 31, 1971, in *Liberation War in Comics*, 387.

immediate aftermath of the war, with military, bureaucratic, journalistic and party units compiling such lists. Such a census became the basis for the rule of the Liberation forces in Bangladesh. Therefore, on 31st December, 1971, this accounting would set out that genocide had been committed in Bangladesh. Presently, the sanctity of numbers is under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and any challenge to it would result in contempt of court, as in the case of David Bergman. Historian Afsan Choudhury discusses the continuing subversions of the numbers of martyrs, and explains that this is because Bangladesh has an emotional rather than a fact-based national history.⁶¹ The face of the accounting personnel in the cartoon emphasises the tiredness he suffers after trying to enumerate the immense number of martyrs. The process of identification and verification of martyrs (discussed in section 3.2.5) is a strenuous and overwhelming task, which must be undertaken with immense care, especially since public acknowledgement of the martyrdom is at stake.

Lists of martyrs and stamps are the ephemera which feature in cartoons, indicating their popularity in the public imagination of martyrs in the country. Literary texts such as cartoons accommodate martyr ephemera with its contestations of real-time existence.

5.6 Literary ephemera on martyrs in Ireland

Some minor, transient documents of everyday life exist as literary ephemera. This section deals with those literary works on martyrs that are not part of the published literary canon, but continue to remain in print and digital ephemera archives, or those published works that coexist with an ephemera. They either narrate the evolving history of an ephemera, emboss itself on it, or even retaliate against it.

61. Afsan Chowdhury, "Itihasheer Sondhane na Sonkhar Sondhane" ["In Search of History or Numbers"] *bdnews*, December 4, 2014, <https://opinion.bdnews24.com/bangla/archives/22787>.

Through these modes, they capture the essence of people’s martyrdom via topical content, vital tone and fluid stance. These are not brilliant literary works, but exist more as literary martyr ephemera, created not only due to the contribution of the author but also due to their role as ephemera. They exist solely on ephemera and disseminate people’s narratives through them.

5.6.1 Final correction proofs of ‘Songs of People of No Property’

I found the final version of the *Songs of People of No Property* in the ephemera archives of Peter Moloney. It was the draft of this song-collection, ready for its final correction. Presently, these songs are available online, sung by a group of radical songwriters in Belfast who got together (under false names) to record a classic set of albums such as *The Men of No Property*. However, the version under study contains a reference to ephemera—‘Frank Stagg poster B&W’. Fig. 5.16 features the page containing the song on martyr Frank

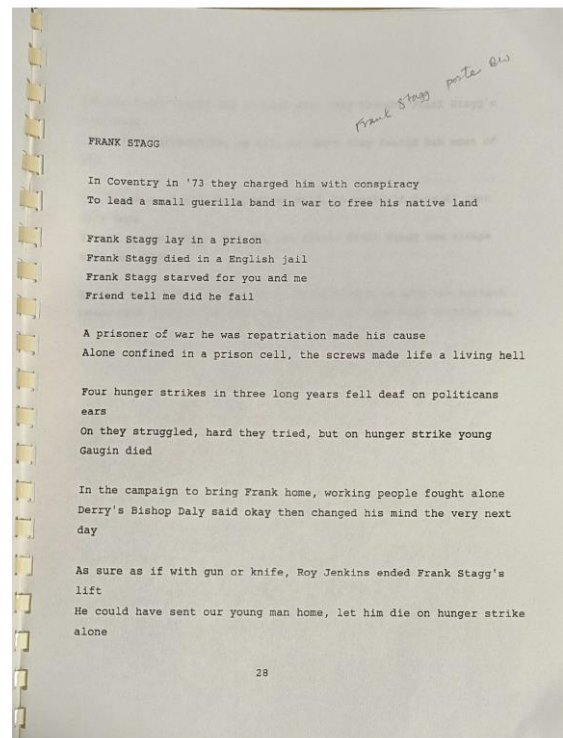


Fig. 5.16. Typewritten manuscript: Proof for correction of *Songs of People of No Property*. Pencilled remark mentioning the Frank Stagg poster B&W, alongside the song entitled ‘Frank Stagg’. Courtesy: PECPM

Stagg along with a mention of Stagg’s black and white poster. The pencilled remark alongside the lyrics makes the reader immediately remember the ephemera to which these songs give a literary rendition. Volunteer Frank Stagg of the IRA, died while on hunger strike in Wakefield Prison, on 12th February, 1976. Republican prison ephemera explore the reality of the hunger strikes (discussed in section 3.2.3) of prisoners like Stagg, who died after sixty-two days of the strike. Posters and mass

cards for Stagg were published by the republicans which featured the poster portrait of Stagg. However, this song outlines the history that contextualises the ephemera and its content—poster portrait—and explores the person behind the portrait. In the song, the accusation against Stagg, of leading a guerrilla band to free his native land, is described as a “conspiracy”. The readers are made part of the republican cause when the songwriter claims that “Frank Stagg starved for you and me”. The song also refers to the decision of British politician Roy Jenkins who refused the repatriation of Stagg, for which the hunger strike began. It also indicates the changing stance of Bishop Daly, who felt that Stagg’s protest was taking place due to political reasons that should not be supported. Daly later claimed that common people feared the violence of the Provisionals (PIRA), which would be imminent as a response to Stagg’s death, and therefore Stagg should not be allowed to die.⁶² The song tries to overcome the association of the Provisionals’ brand of politics with violence, by foregrounding the fact that the Free State forces secretly buried Stagg’s body, because they were afraid of a “martyr’s funeral” and “peace with justice”. The song also mentions that working people fought for Stagg and hopes that more people would be inspired to do so. The black and white poster is a summation of all these narratives, which has been communicated through alternate rhymes and doggerel verse.

Thus, such songs not only served the cause of revolutionary violence, but also reflected the ambiguities in the stances of their writers⁶³, and redefined the nature of martyrdom events for the common people. Interestingly, the reference to one kind of ephemera—poster—features on another ephemera—final correction proofs of a song.

62. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), “Restricted: Frank Stagg,” January 30, 1976, PRONI Records on *CAIN*, [prni_NIO-12-482_1976-01-30.pdf](https://www.prni.nio-12-482_1976-01-30.pdf) (ulster.ac.uk).

63. Richard Parfitt, “Great Men and Straight Men?: Music, Radicalisation and Revolution, 1913–1921,” in *Musical Culture and the Spirit of Irish Nationalism, 1848–1972* (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 61.

This is literary ephemera as there is no existence of it without the literary counterpart of the song.

5.6.2 Handkerchief poetry

Fig. 5.17 contains a beautiful instance of poetry on handkerchiefs, which constitute poignant literary ephemera on martyrs. Joseph Fitzsimmons is one of the several IRA volunteers, who died in premature bomb explosions. He died in a house on Anderson Street, Short Strand, Belfast on 28th May, 1972. His death is acknowledged through a poem by Gerard Mahon, a prisoner in Long Kesh. The

prisoner transmutes the death of his comrade into martyrdom through a poem written on his handkerchief. As his body is lowered into an open grave on a May morning, the prisoner acknowledges that it is his comrade, for whom he would have given his life. But now such thoughts cannot awaken the dead. The silent dead body will remain in the clay. The living can only acknowledge him and

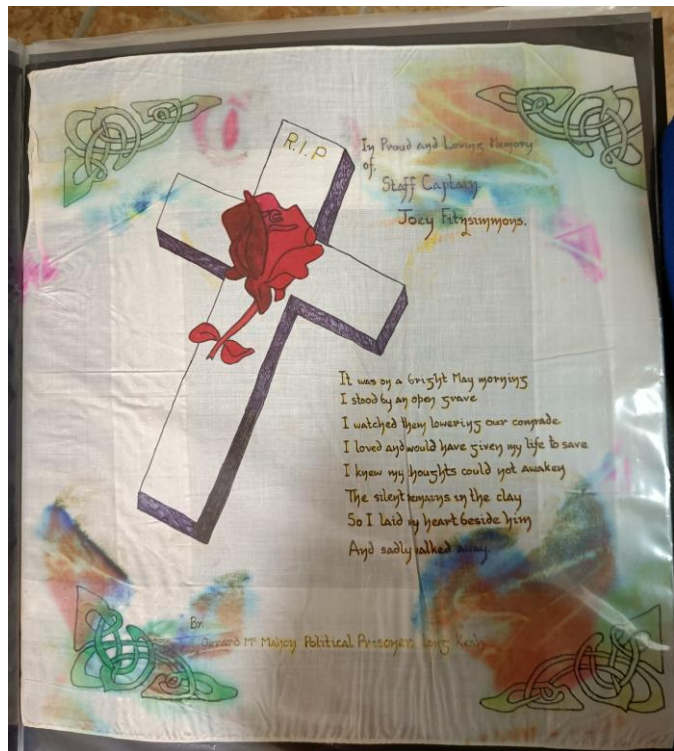


Fig. 5.17. Handkerchief: 'In proud and loving memory of Staff Captain Joseph Fitzsimmons by political prisoner Gerard Mahon. Long Kesh. 1972.

Courtesy: EHIRHM

walk away. Within the confines of the prison, personal poetry emerges. A martyr is not only to be politically grieved but also empathetically aggrieved. On a piece of political cloth, the handkerchief, the personal poetic voice of the political prisoner, Gerard Mahon, at Long Kesh, is featured (fig. 5.17). The image of the red rose cross is a marker of Christian teachings combined with esoteric thought. The cross on the

handkerchief in prison in an Irish jail, represents the remembrance of Fitzsimmons as the inheritor of a distinct Irish heritage, which is a combination of Christianity and esotericism, and both stand counter to British political authoritarianism (signified by the red rose of the Tudors and is the traditional floral heraldic emblem of England). Thus, the cross appropriates the rose for itself.

Thus, such commemorative poetry is accompanied by associative derivative symbolism, which characterises literary renditions on ephemera such as handkerchiefs and cannot exist without the latter. Moreover, within the confines of a prison, when sustained literary works could not always be composed, such ephemera provide precious scope for literary commemorations.

5.6.3 Choric ironies of the dead in song video screenshots

There are debates over songs that commemorate martyrs, by various political



Fig. 5.18. Video still screenshot: Blarney Pilgrims. 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' YouTube. Easter 1998.

and civil rights organisations in Ireland. The common people shot in the civil rights march in Derry on 30th January, 1972 have been called 'martyrs' by American newspapers and cultural artists. The civil

rights uprisings in NI were an offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA⁶⁴ that continued from 1954 to 1968 to abolish institutional racial segregation, discrimination and disenfranchisement. Hence, American artists like John Lennon

64. Sheila McClean, artist and wife of Dr. Raymond McClean produced the iconic civil rights symbol which became the logo for the Civil Rights movement in Derry. The symbol was inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. It featured on numerous ephemera, as posted by the Museum of Free Derry in Facebook on March 23, 2023, which may be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/mofd.derry/posts/pfbid02vYBY86d2nH7UgzLfp1jycAGT3hZuWCW2Un73TLamX8H4ZgqadjqFsEaSn9JDJ5DTI>.

expressed solidarity with the cause of the NI civil rights demands, such as the withdrawal of the British troops and ending of internment without trial, in a 5th February, 1972 protest in New York. Fig. 5.18 features a YouTube video screenshot⁶⁵ of the lyrics of the song ‘Sunday, Bloody Sunday’ alongside a republican poster issued by the IRA in the 1980s. This customised poster is an example of digital ephemera, containing as it does an image of a print ephemera—the poster. The poster, is the front page of the Marxist underground newspaper *Red Mole*, borne by Lennon himself, supporting the IRA against British imperialism. This poster was made to substantiate claims that the artist supported the cause of the IRA and its policies of revolutionary violence, to the extent of even funding their cause. Lennon’s widow, who appears alongside him, however, claimed that he only sent money for the cause of women and children in need during the Troubles. Lennon also wrote another song in late 1972, ‘The Luck of the Irish’, the proceeds of which were donated to the Irish Civil Rights Movement.⁶⁶ Thus, the appropriation of the song as part of the ephemera (the poster), moves away from a superficial understanding of the lyrics. Such a deeper reading would enable us to understand the people’s understanding of martyrdom. The easy mis(appropriation) come with the word “martyr”. The IRA has also sought to dub the Bloody Sunday victims as “martyrs”, and Lennon had ostensibly supported the IRA cause in this poster as well as in his usage of the word in the line “The cry of fourteen martyrs”.

Following the shooting of civilians in Derry on 30th January, 1972, Lennon had penned a song for *The Blarney Pilgrims*. This song was recorded live in the Mean Fiddler, Dublin in Easter 1998, for the Classic Glasgow-Irish Album, on the occasion

65. Blarney Pilgrims, ‘Sunday Bloody Sunday,’ YouTube. Easter 1998. 0:18. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF9qlakyiIc>.

66. Colin Blackstock, “Lennon did not give cash to IRA, says Yoko,” *The Guardian*, February 22, 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/feb/22/colinblackstock1>.

of the 82nd anniversary of the Easter 1916 Rising. The song situates the ‘martyrdom’ narrative as a populist appeal for the right of the common people to voice their demands. Moreover, in continuum with the 1916 Rising, the deaths of the Derry civilians become similar to the executions of the Easter 1916 leaders, who set up the Provisional Government leading to the formation of the Irish Republic. While the family members of the dead vehemently refuse to collate these murders with legacy deaths⁶⁷, populist culture has sentimentalised them for the cause of populist uprisings. Mass mobilisation and political propaganda necessitate such collation.

Nevertheless, the language of the song does not include overt political tones. Lennon explains that the cries of fourteen martyrs filled the air of Free Derry, a city which is officially named Londonderry. The British Parachute Regiment blamed the young marchers for stone-pelting, to which the troops had retaliated with bullets. Lennon however points out that, if this was true, the soldiers should also have been bloodied red, just like the marchers, who were bloodied when they were laid in their coffins. He thus challenges the very British premise that they were maintaining law and order in the face of riots. He continues to suggest that the British government and their sanctioned government at Stormont are a “minority”, who have no rights over the “majority” in Ireland. Their laws such as internment without trial are irrelevant in containing uprisings for freedom, because brave hearts will participate in such revolts, and their mothers will sacrifice their own means of survival and lives for the same. The British and their Scottish and Irish counterparts, who continue to colonise the north of Ireland and intimidate the local people with their Union Jack flag, only create “concentration camps” such as that on the Falls Road in West Belfast. Lennon dares them to give up their forceful occupation and everyday sectarian intimidation. Ireland

67. A few contesting terms used by the family members including “murdered”, “innocent dead” and “killed” have been discussed in section 2.2.3.3.

should be left to the Irish. For Lennon, Bloody Sunday not only represents an incident but a phenomenon, wherein people are not given their due rights and are subjected to authoritarian repression as in the concentration camps. In the aftermath of the H-Block prison protests and the arrest of civilians without trial under emergency laws, dubbing them as ‘terrorists’, concentration camps were an existential reality in NI. According to the song, those Protestants and loyalists who claim to be Irish should repatriate themselves to Britain, because Ireland would no longer cater to the political affiliation of London or the religious affiliation of Catholic Rome. What the English were committing in NI was what the Pakistan Army had committed in Bangladesh—“genocide” (from ‘The Luck of the Irish’), and the Irish youth and the IRA were not to be blamed for this. From referring to the events of Sunday 1972 as “bloody”, which is a swear word used to emphasize a comment or an angry statement, to the refusal to blame the IRA, the literary rendition of Lennon’s lyrics both works independently and also along with colloquial interpretations, to comment on the events. The choric lines of Lennon’s song exist in an ironic interrelationship with each other, and also with the martyr ephemera—the poster.

5.7 Literary ephemera on martyrs in Bangladesh

Literary works by common people, written on the spur of the moment to commemorate martyrs, without sustained artistic dedication and obligation, also exist in martyr ephemera in Bangladesh. Such ephemera include certain works by refined artists, such as Joynul Abedin’s painting, which is only featured on ephemera like banners. These works constitute literary martyr ephemera, because they have been circulated more as ephemera rather than as individual literary works of art or paintings. Furthermore, photographs as ephemera also become the subject matter of

paintings. It is not the mode of circulation that defines these works as literary ephemera, but the ephemeral subject matter they capture, for instance, a martyrs' funeral procession and a political rally, or the ephemera as medium, such as the banner and portrait canvas. These works of art become important with reference to the photographic ephemera they are derived from, and expand to become seminal literary martyr ephemera.

5.7.1 Portrait painting

Fig. 5.19 features an oil painting of a martyred son by his father, which had been presented to the Prime Minister of independent Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, fondly called *Bangabandhu*. This portrait was displayed in the August 2022 exhibition on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the BNM. The painter, a martyr's father, had added a caption explaining that this work was a symbol of dedication to the national leader. It comprises the portrait of martyr Mojib, whose name sounds similar to the name of Prime Minister Mujib. The image even seems uncannily similar to that of young Mujib, with his dark-rimmed spectacles. The formal name of the martyr in the painting is M. Kasar, and he hailed from Viralla village in Comilla district. His father Amjad Hossain Khan had made this painting to present it to the Prime Minister, when the latter visited the district after the 1971 War had ravaged the country. People welcomed Mujib, either as members of party units or individually, in every district that he visited to assess the post-war impact.

This portrait is not just a loving imagistic rendition of a martyred son by a father, but also an icon of the sacrifice of many such freedom fighters for the liberation of the country. Therefore, in the painting, martyr Mojib is referred to as a *muktijoddha* in parenthesis, and is represented as wearing an olive-green military uniform, worn by

the *Mukti Bahini*, which emulated the same from the Indian Army.⁶⁸ The painting summarises the range of people's martyrdom, from the personal loss of family members, to the social loss of the brave and intelligent youth of a country, to the political loss of supporters of freedom. The painting also suggests premonitions of the martyrdom that would unfold for the country in 1975. This is because, the receiver of this portrait painting would himself be martyred within three years of its reception, and similarly be extolled in paintings and other literary works, many of which were also displayed in the exhibition. As a painting, it depicts an idealistic image of the fair, youthful martyr with a clear gaze and firm stance. However, as a literary ephemera on martyrs, it comments on how a father would want to envision his son after death. A father captures the prime of his son's life, which has been brutally cut short, and presents that rendition to the father of the nation, unaware of the same fate.



Fig. 5.19. Oil painting: A father's painting of his martyred son presented to *Bangabandhu*. Comilla, Bangladesh. Feb 27, 1972. Courtesy: Exhibition: Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. BNM

5.7.2 Banner painting

Paintings on banners also constitute important literary ephemera in Bangladesh. This has been explained through the example in this unit.

In Bangladesh, the mass upsurge of 1969 for democratic and political rights turned into an uprising for civil rights, with the eleven-points programme framed by

68. Y. M. Bammi, "Brief Introduction to Bangladesh," in *India Bangladesh Relations: The Way Ahead* (New Delhi: Vij India Books Pvt. Ltd., 2010), 30.

the students. Centered mainly on students' protests in the city of Dhaka and its suburbs, it began to include different classes of people. Historian Mesbah Kamal



Fig. 5.20. Banner: Painting. Artist Joynul Abedin. February 21, 1969. Courtesy: LWM

writes that company man Abdul Majid, school teacher Abdus Siddiqui, student activist Asad, farmer activists Chirag and Ahsan Ali, teenager Rustom, class nine student Motiur, and mother Anwara Begum were shot dead among many others during the

events of 1969.⁶⁹ From police stations in cities to markets in rural areas, from autorickshaw drivers to foodgrain truck drivers, from politicians in cities to village union councils, people everywhere protested against low wages, exploitative land control, vehicle license and fares, and killing of the various martyrs named above. They brought out funeral processions for the martyrs despite not getting their bodies, breaching section 144 imposed by the Ayub government, which led to further clashes and killings of commoners. Fig. 5.20 features the banner painted by Joynul Abedin on 21st February, 1969, in the context of rising conflicts for the fulfilment of the eleven-points programme⁷⁰. On this day dedicated to the remembrance of the language martyrs, political prisoners including Sheikh Mujib were released. There were demands for a new stamp to commemorate the day, and demands to continue the struggle for language-based nationality. Political and cultural programmes were conflated on the eve of the day of remembrance of the language martyrs.

69. Mesbah Kamal, "Unosottorer gono-obhuthyan o Maulana Bhasani" ["1969 Mass Uprising and Maulana Bhasani"] in *Bangladesher Swadhinata Juddha: Bampondhider Bhumika* [Liberation War of Bangladesh: Role of the Leftists] (Calcutta: Shomporko, 2000), 92-131.

70. Mesbah Kamal, "Unosottorer gono-obhuthyan o Maulana Bhasani," 110.

In the above context, the human figures on the banner represent the common people, who had been shot dead, while crying out for their rights across several decades, in Bangladesh. The context of 21st February as Mother Language Day, is foregrounded through the image of the fallen book, which itself has become red with blood. While some are lying dead, others cry out for them, in grief and grievance, edging towards death themselves. Therefore, their bodies are also lined with red streaks. Their body contours are emboldened, especially without revealing their dress and class affiliations, because the 1969 uprising was a mass uprising, bringing people of all socioeconomic and political quarters together, to protest against the various exploitations by the imperialist autocracy of the Ayub regime. The bold body contours of the standing figures expose their skeletal structure, which was the bodily condition of most people in the villages, as the prices of foodgrains like rice and wheat shot up.⁷¹ While this work has been circulated more as a banner on special national days, it is also a brilliant artistic creation on martyrs and martyrdom in Bangladesh.

5.7.3 Procession photograph painting

Mass movements in Bangladesh have been captured through iconic photographs and constitute martyr ephemera. Paintings of such processions or mass movements constitute literary ephemera on martyr.

For instance, there is a famous photograph of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Maulana Bhasani at the *provatferi* [bare-footed procession in the early morning] to show respect to the language martyrs on 21st February, 1954. The 2022 watercolour painting by Mishkatul Abir is based on this photograph, but expands the horizon of the

71. People committed suicide in such conditions, like Haran's wife in Tanvir Mokammel's documentary *Hooliya* (Wanted). With wall graffiti along village roads claiming that workers and farmers should come together in this struggle, and Lord Ganesh being worshipped alongside the new deity Karl Marx, the film explored how the people of villages understood the demand for socialism and the liberation of the country. This experimental film based on a political poem by Nirmalendu Goon was shot in 1984 and may be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064061650741/search/?q=hooliya>.

image to include other leaders such as Tajuddin Ahmed and students (fig. 5.21). Along with the leaders defiantly walking towards the *Shahid Minar* in Dhaka and holding flowers to place on its dais, some students are seen carrying posters and festoons conveying pride about the Bangla language and the demand for Bangla as one of the



Fig. 5.21. Painting: Tribute to the Language Martyrs. Artist Mishkatul Abir. 2022. Courtesy: Exhibition: Leader of Liberation: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Inaugurated on August 15, 2022. BNM

state languages. After the death of the language martyrs in 1952, this day became significant in gathering people and political activists to demonstrate their defiance against the government. Riding on the consciousness created by the language

movement, political leaders called for the creation of a *Jukto Front* [United Front] on 14th November, 1953, bringing together Maulana Bhasani, A. K. Fazlul Haq and Shaheed Suhrawardy. In the EP Provincial Assembly election of March 1954, the *Jukto Front* in a coalition with the Awami Muslim League won 223 out of 237 seats, defeating the East Pakistan Muslim League.⁷² Thus, this procession on 21st February, 1954 was a display of the joint stance of the leaders before the climactic election victory on 10th March, 1954. Other than this overt display, the image also brings to mind the differences between the ideological roots and the national politics of leaders. The language movement was essentially a middle-class revolt of the literate, who were demanding jobs and bureaucratic roles. In featuring alongside Mujib, Bhasani, the peasant leader, is to be understood as toeing the middle-class line of the party, even as

72. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, "A Political Profile," in *The Unfinished Memoirs*, trans. Dr. Fakrul Alam (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 2012), xviii.

Mujib was toeing the peasant line in creating an alliance with Bhasani. In state-making, there needs to be an alliance between the two classes. Bhasani working for the peasant state and Mujib working for the peasant state led by the middle class⁷³ came together in such iconic moments of martyr commemoration to create new political ideologies. There is a young Tajuddin Ahmed just behind Mujib. Ahmed was then secretary of Dhaka District AL. The surrounding students are representative of those who fell as martyrs in 1952, now being led forward by camaraderie and youthful rebellion. In the background at the far end, there are outlines of people sitting and watching the procession.

While many processions were led all over the country in 1954, this was the most politically emblematic. Thus, in the 2022 Bangabandhu exhibition, this painting was displayed, to foreground the role of the political alliances as a legacy of the language martyrdom. As literary ephemera, it represents the role of other political leaders such as Ahmed, as well as the existential reality of people with both serious and smiling looks walking with the procession, with many watching as bystanders.

5.8 Literary ephemera on martyrs in Ireland and Bangladesh

Some types of literary ephemera on martyrs are found in both Ireland and Bangladesh. They are either commonly published literary works reproduced as a part of ephemera to be circulated among the public later, or written spontaneously as commemorative literary works on ephemera such as leaflets. Some literary works, written spontaneously as essays and poems in literary competitions, have been published in the form of booklets and brochures, only once and specifically for that occasion. Some published works also exist as ephemera because they are extant literature. They had been printed and published only once and then, due to their

73. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, "A Political Profile," 243.

diminishing popularity, these texts did not remain part of the published canon. Nevertheless, they represent certain features of the popular martyrology of the earlier times. Hence, these works are different from literary works on martyrs in ephemera such as leaflets, because they are not written with a focus on the ephemera's mode of dissemination and are less modulated by the nature of the latter.

5.8.1 Leaflet poetry

Leaflet poetry does not refer to a poem by an established or amateur author, which is written on ephemera such as leaflets, but refers to literary works especially written for them. Fig. 5.22 features a leaflet created around the early 1970s to include the ballad of Michael McGinley. The title 'The Woods of Drumboe' is significantly

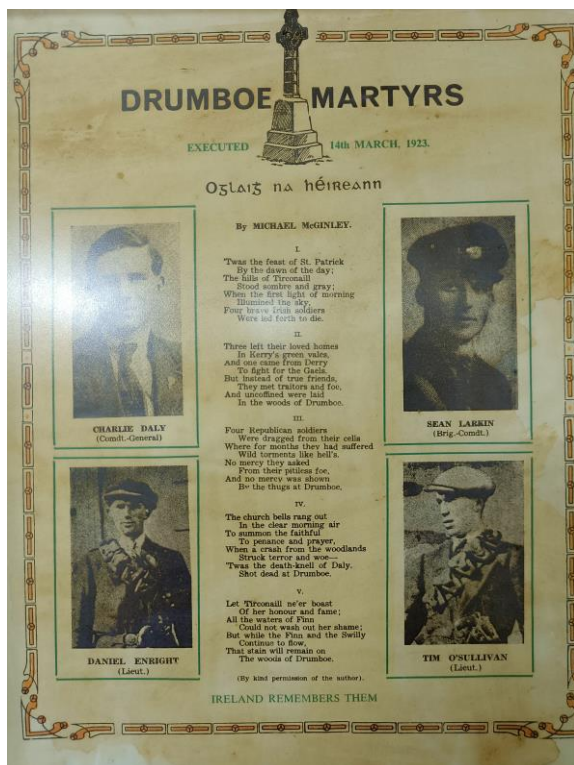


Fig. 5.22. Leaflet: Poem on the Drumboe Martyrs. Michael McGinley. Courtesy: EHIRHM

not mentioned here, because the creator of the leaflet wishes to redirect attention from the text as a literary work to the text as commemorative propaganda for the Drumboe martyrs (executed on 14th March, 1923). It is a statement from *Óglaiġ na hÉireann* [Irish for IRA], the name used by both pro and anti-Treaty forces during the Civil War, for the martyrs belonging to the latter. The martyrdom of Charles Daly, Tim O'Sullivan and Daniel Enright from Kerry and Seán Larkin

from Derry is described as a consequence of meeting "traitors", "foes" and "thugs". Eight southern republicans were imprisoned at Drumboe Castle during their campaign

against the north, especially after their leader Charles Daly had saved the lives of the Free State commander in Donegal, Comdt.-General Joe Sweeney, and the Free State officer Tom Glennon.⁷⁴ Kieran Glennon, grandson of Tom Glennon, explains that these four were shot in reprisal for the killing of a Free State officer, Captain Bernard Cannon. In clarifying Cannon's death, Glennon cites local historian, Fr. John Silke, who had posited that the dead officer was killed by friends of the arrested drunks, who were neither republicans nor Free State soldiers.⁷⁵ Thus, treachery and wrongful killing resulted in the death of the Drumboe martyrs, which is the "shame" of Donegal. While the rivers of the region continue to flow, this shame will not be washed away, says the poem.

Issued in the 1970s, the poem has been reprinted to strengthen the position of the IRA, which since 1969, was moving more towards violent and radical means in its claim to achieve complete freedom for the Irish Republic. Brian Hanley writes about the commemoration of the Anti-Treaty IRA prisoners, whose deaths strengthened the refusal of political parties in the 1970s to accept that the deaths of IRA members (or specifically PIRA and the official IRA after 1969) were similarly justified.⁷⁶ Thus, the local voice of songwriter McGinley is appropriated to further the claims of IRA. The leaflet reiterates that, in the 1970s, Ireland remembers these martyrs, and any opposition to the 1970s Ireland would result in furthering the "shame" that already afflicts the opponents of the martyrs.

74. Kieran Glennon, "The execution of the "Drumboe Martyrs" 14 March 1923," *Irish Story* (blog), March 14, 2012, <https://www.theirishstory.com/2012/03/14/today-in-irish-history-the-execution-of-the-drumboe-martyrs-14th-march-1923/#.Y7kmXP5By3D>.

75. Glennon, "The execution of the "Drumboe Martyrs"." Glennon cites from Fr. John Silke, "The Drumboe Martyrs," *Donegal Annual* 60 (2008).

76. Brian Hanley, " 'But then they started all this killing': Attitudes to the IRA in the Irish Republic since 1969," *Irish Historical Studies* 38, no. 151 (May 2013): 439-456, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43654445>.

Poetry in memory of Comrade Siraj Sikdar on the occasion of his fourth death anniversary is written in the leaflet published by the highest revolutionary council of the *Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party* [Proletarian Party of East Bengal] in December 1978 (fig. 5.23). The agenda is laid out at the beginning: that the Mujib government had circulated news of the arrest and killing of Sikdar, claiming in a false press note that he was shot, while he was trying to escape on 2nd January, 1975. On that very day, in protest, this poem was written. The first poem entitled '*Bhaira*' ['Brothers'] describes the false information spread by the government as the dark clouds that suddenly appeared amidst the shining truth. Next, the writers describe the birth of the clandestine organisation *Purba Bangla Sramik Andolon* [East Bengal Workers Movement] at the hands of this martyred leader in 1968, and his struggles as a Liberation War hero in 1971. The pro-Liberation AL forces are seen as false collaborators, against whom the rebellion of the communist forces led by Sikdar is justified. The writer, a comrade of the party established by Sikdar in June 1971, reiterates that martyrs have to die, only to remain alive in the hearts of the people.

'*Ekhono shey cholchei*' ['He is still going on'] is the next poem, where Sikdar's struggles from 1968 onwards are seen as continuing relentlessly through the struggles of the people even after his martyrdom. It is these struggles that are alive, which make people remember and lament Sikdar, rather than their own family members who have died, as expressed in the poem '*Manush chirodin bachena*' ['People do not live forever']. Therefore, Siraj is alive in every speck of dust and fragrance, in every patriotic protest and rebellion, as emphasised in the poem '*Ke bole Siraj nei*' ['Who says there is no Siraj?']. The next poem '*Ei toh okhane*' ['Just over there'] visualises Sikdar on the Chittagong hills where he was arrested and on the roads of Savar where he was shot. There are topical references, to the political troubles of 1975 when the ruling party engaged in mass killing of opponents in Munshiganj and

Mymensingh, in the poem, whose title ‘*shorone snato hoi/ shoke pobitro hoi/ shopothe dripto hoi*’ [‘baptized in memory/ holy in grief/ emboldened with oath’] also names the leaflet ‘*shopothe dripto hoi*’. It states that 2nd January has given birth to a martyr (Sikdar), whose immortality will defeat inequalities at home and American imperialism abroad. The last poem ‘*Lorbei shesh porjonto*’ [‘Will fight till the end’] is written by a communist prisoner, imprisoned by Ziaur Rahman in 1978. General Zia is described as the fascist President

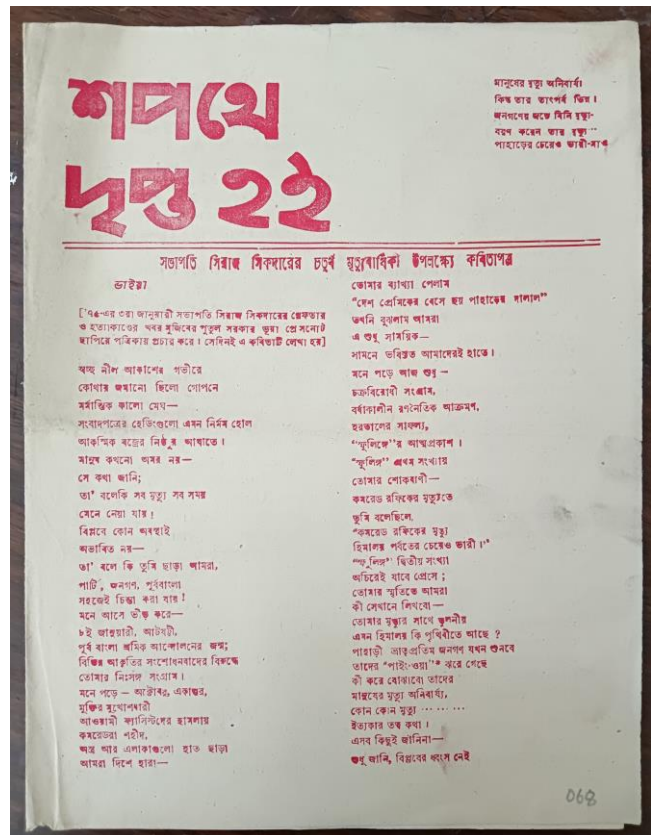


Fig. 5.23. Leaflet: Poems on martyr Siraj Sikdar. Published by *Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party*. December 1978. Courtesy: HA

against the autocracies of other political parties in Bangladesh—AL and BNP. Every muscle and every drop of blood of the tortured body will fight till the end to fulfil the dream of the revered and admired comrade, writes the poet.

The stances of the above writings in both Ireland and Bangladesh are anti-government, and they have therefore been circulated in the form of leaflet poetry. While the former commemorative verse is written by a well-known songwriter whose ballad is a famous Donegal song in Ireland, the latter is partisan in tone and includes topical references to the injustices of the Mujib and Zia governments in Bangladesh. While the former text has been made into a popular song by the band The Irish Brigade, the latter has not become part of the published canon yet.

5.8.2 Competition booklets and brochures' literary creations

Competitions are one of the means to popularise the names of martyrs among people. SF published a series of prize-winning entries in the Bobby Sands essay competition, held in 1983.⁷⁷ The circulation of information regarding the start of the competition in newspapers like the *Irish Press* was difficult, as the latter queried whether it was “legal”⁷⁸ to at all hold such a competition. Even though the announcement was made by the same newspaper later, the debate highlights the contested nature of martyrs like Sands (discussed in section 3.2.3) and others like Pearse in the official imagination of the 1980s. The writer of the introduction to the volume of essays, committee member Uinseann MacEoin, an Irish architect, journalist, republican campaigner and historian, however claims that such debates symbolise the meekness of Irish media. The first prize awarded to an essay written in Gaelic, is on the split between the Young Irelanders and Daniel O’Connell, which overrode the moral nationalism of the latter and popularised the trend of militant nationalism of the former. Militant nationalism and armed struggle led to the deaths of Pearse and Sands. The second prize was awarded to an English essay on the philosophy and poetry of Pearse, which assessed the nature of his rebellion as a self-sacrifice rather than mindless violence and pure love for the country.⁷⁹ These extreme positions have been used to understand Pearse’s martyrdom, but the young essay writer takes into account his poetry, wherein the hero shows a duality in rejecting the pleasures of the body but accepting its limitations, gains spiritual transcendence but also reveals himself as a

77. Sinn Féin, *The Spirit of Freedom: Prize-winning entries in the Bobby Sands commemoration school essay competition* (Gleann na gCaorach: Choiste Chomóradh Roibeáird Mhic Sáidair, 1983).

78. Uinseann MacEoin, “Introduction” in *The Spirit of Freedom*.

79. Richard Humphreys, “The Philosophy and Poetry of Patrick Pearse,” in *The Spirit of Freedom*, 13.

fool.⁸⁰ Pearse's poetry is explored for its sexual and religious symbolism, so that the pain of his martyrdom is situated in his real-time experiences. The third prize was given to an essay on the hunger strikes, probing the nature of their victory or defeat.⁸¹ There is an essay on O'Donovan Rossa, who did not lead men to battle or die a martyr's death, but was proud of his Irish past, spoke the Irish language, and wanted unfettered freedom from English rule. Rossa compiled a list of Irish prisoners in English prisons, most of whom were given death sentences. Another English essay is on the "great Irish patriot" Tom Barry.

Thus, the essays have focussed on the evolving history of the nation, so that the policies of the future may be aptly framed. The agenda was to "scatter" the award money of a thousand pounds among five or six children—who would write essays on any figure associated with Irish history since 1169—because most people was suffering from economic deprivation in the country during the Troubles. This literary competition is geared towards the nurturing of a historical consciousness and providing economic relief to some of the hundreds of thousands of children and youth of Ireland. The young writers came from all parts of Ireland to narrate their "spirit of freedom", which is the name of the collection of essays in the competition held in the name and memory of a martyr—Bobby Sands.

Fig. 5.24 features the front and back page of the brochure of the Martyr Matiur Rahman Award Competition, which has been introduced to inculcate a passion for literary works among children and teenagers. It is sponsored by a fund created by the royalties of the sale of Foyez Ahmad's books, and the money from the poet and journalist's Bangla Academy Literary Award on children's literature. Every year, the

80. Humphreys, "The Philosophy and Poetry of Patrick Pearse," 14.

81. Paula Shields, "The Hunger-Strike: Victory or Defeat," in *The Spirit of Freedom*, 20.

National Library of Bangladesh grants money from this fund for the Martyr Matiur Rahman Award.

The cover page (image on the left) contains Matiur's portrait along with the



Fig. 5.24. Brochure: Martyr Matiur Award Competition. Front and back. Courtesy: LWM

context of his death in the 1969 uprising (discussed in section 2.1.3.5). The main blown-up image is that of a young boy sitting atop a hen and playing. Shot at the age of twelve years, Matiur's playful years were cut short. This competition also seeks to nurture the playful years among the children. This is shown through the samples of paintings of children playing in a garden, in the image on the right in fig. 5.24, which features the obverse of the brochure. There is a painting by a child, drawings of children participating in processions, and photographs of children taking part in elocution contests. Painting, storytelling, and elocution are the various activities organised for children till twelve years of age.

The doodle of a flower on the brochure contains the words: books teach us how to live. Since Matiur was killed at a young age, he could not live with his books for long. The brochure also includes clippings from newspapers of 1975, wherein Matiur is described as the representative of gradually evolving teenage social consciousness, while martyr Asad (older to Matiur) is described as the representative of the mass uprising with a formed political consciousness, because of his continued participation in students' movements. This figure of teenage consciousness is also mourned in a

symbolic image in newspaper clippings—children and teenagers erecting a *Shahid Minar* in their locality and praying for martyrs Sergeant Zahrul Haque, Matiur Rahman, Rustam Ali, Makbul Hossain and other nameless martyrs of 1969. Another clipping of the 1983 issue of *Dainik Sangbad* includes a report of affective emotions. It contains an excerpt from the last letter written by Matiur to his mother, informing her that he was going to join the procession and if he did not return, it would be for the liberation of Bangladesh. This letter, drenched in blood, was found on his dead body. The 1988 issue of the same news daily features an article entitled ‘*Khelaghor*’ [‘The Playhouse’] by Matiur’s classmate, wherein he describes students refusing to wear the prescribed school uniform, because they did not want to don the khaki military-coloured garb. Thus, teenagers were becoming part of a rebellious political consciousness in the late 1960s, and Matiur’s actions became the representative stance of many. These ideals are sought to be nurtured among the children of the new generation through the literary competitions.

The agenda of the literary competitions range across historical, political, economic, and social themes. In Ireland, the essays demonstrate the evolving ideals of nationalism that are cherished by the children and youth of the country. In Bangladesh, literary competitions focus on the nature of youth and their freedom, and move onto various kinds of literary works such as paintings and stories, substantiated by snippets from newspaper reports.

5.8.3 Extant literary works

Extant literary works refer to old but still surviving texts. They only exist as print ephemera, printed during the time of their writing. *The Martyr’s Tomb*, a collection of poems containing the oldest poem on the ‘martyr’ written in Ireland in 1837, was written by Thomas Munnie. The title poem reflects the popular martyrology of the times, of the martyrs of the Church of England, of Scotland, and Ireland.

Significantly, this early poetry saw Ireland as an indisputable part of the British empire, standing in defiance to “Papal superstition”⁸². Addressed to the revered Fathers of the Church, it establishes the Church as an organ of the state. In the poem, the heroic martyr is seen as afflicted by persecution everywhere, and the tomb of the martyr as holding the sacred truth, a knowledge that only the Muses grant. The martyr is not remembered for fortune or greed, but through meditation and memory. A martyr is a figure of history, but also a figure created by people’s sentiments. Sentiments not only include empathy for the martyr, but opposition to the cruel and sacrilegious acts of the evil others. The poet says that the inscriptions on a martyr’s tomb do not do justice to their torturous deaths, such as that of Jerome (the first martyr of the Bohemian Hussite Church for the Protestant Reformation in 1416), William Tyndale (English martyr burnt at the stake for translating the Gospel into English in 1536), John Bradford (English Reformer and martyr, burnt at the stake for alleged crimes against Queen Mary I in July 1555) or Robert Glover (an English Protestant martyr burnt at Coventry in September 1555). History and songs carry the tales of the martyr everywhere, while anti-Christian laws continue to generate more martyrs like Margaret Wilson and Margaret McLachlan (Wigtown martyrs, who were drowned for refusing to swear an oath declaring James VII of Scotland as head of the church in 1685) in Scotland. It is the martyr’s tomb that connects the human to the divine, where the unjust will be prosecuted. The martyr’s tomb has a prophetic value in future, in seeking liberty and immortality. The poem juxtaposes the power of correcting present injustices and seeking of future rights. The text of the poem is ‘inscribed’⁸³ to Rev. S. Gamble and D. D. Ramelton, to serve as a lasting record of print literature of the

82. Thomas Munnie, “To the Reader,” in *The Martyr’s Tomb: A Fragment and other Poems* (Derry: Sentinel Office, 1837), v.

83. Thomas Munnie, *The Martyr’s Tomb*, 7.

times. Rather than a complete historical and political document, the poem exists as a fragment, and a valid one.

In Bangladesh, the extant poetic literature on martyrs includes the 1973 epic poem on the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh. It was written by a folk poet Darog Ali, born in the Sahapur village, in the jurisdiction of Raipura police station of Narsingdi district. For the poet, martyrdom did not always entail people being inspired to voluntarily sacrifice their lives, but also accidental and random deaths. Even though the *Banga Bishaad Punthi* [Elegy of Bengal] narrates historical events from the 1952 language movement to the autocratic rule of Ayub Khan and Munaem Khan in 1969, to the role of Sheikh Mujib throughout,⁸⁴ it also features the narratives of betrayal of friends and the death of Sadat Ali, a solicitor, in sections like ‘*Harishe Bishaad*’ [‘Sadness in Joy’]. Through the narrative of the doubtful death of an informal advocate in the village, the poet narrates the sagas of people’s martyrdoms. The verse opens with a parable of the ways of God being unknown to man.⁸⁵ Then there is the choric representation of killings of intellectuals in Dhaka, the armed support of the Indian forces, and the failing operations of the Pakistan Army. As the guerrilla armies of Bangladesh declared certain areas free, people of the nearby villages rejoiced, amidst whom there was Sadat Ali. He had given up his practice in the city to engage in the Liberation War completely. Now, with freedom, he went to an empty police station late at night, along with some other freedom fighters, to enjoy himself. They smoked and drank to their heart’s content, and then, a freedom fighter tried to pull the trigger of a gun. Since it was jammed, Sadat Ali tried to loosen it, and accidentally shot himself. In the last moments of his life, he laments not been able to

84. Md. Habibullah Pathan, “Darog Ali: Muktijuddher kritiman lokkabyakar” [“Darog Ali: Accomplished folk poet of the Liberation War”], *Bangla Academy Folklore Potrika* Year 3, vol. 1 (July-December 2021): 3.

85. Darog Ali, ‘*Harishe Bishaad*,’ in *Banga-Bishaad punthi* (Narsingdi: Al Amin Press, 1973), 83.

live in independent Bangladesh.⁸⁶ Such extant pieces therefore contain narratives of parodic martyrdom, as the folk poet explains how Sadat Ali died with this lament on his lips, with people expressing both glee and grief for him in drunkenness. Later, like any other martyr of the 1971 War, Sadat Ali was mourned by thousands. The poet hyperbolically adds that the wind and the skies cried out for this patriot. About 2000 people joined his funeral procession to finally bury him. In 1971, if only one dies, does one immediately become immortal like a martyr.⁸⁷

From the popular historical and religious mediations of martyrdom in Ireland to the historical saga of the freedom struggle as enmeshed in the everyday lives of the people in Bangladesh, extant literatures in both countries capture the populist narratives of people's martyrdom. They have been printed and published locally just once, and presently exist only in the archives of libraries and museums. This indicates that even though they were popular during their time of writing, they have not continued to remain as popular. 'The Martyr's Tomb' still considers Ireland to be an indisputable part of the British empire, and '*Harishe Bishaad*' considers any death of a freedom fighter as martyrdom. Such politically conservative and parodic stances are not commonly made part of martyr narratives in countries where such literatures are sustained on sacred premises, even as they are gradually becoming part of contesting narratives of people's martyrdom (discussed in the previous chapters).

Conclusion

This chapter discusses those ephemera, which have been introduced in previous chapters, to explore their literary nature as well as literary works that include ephemera as central motifs, so as to understand how they enunciate people's

86. Darog Ali, "Harishe Bishaad," 84.

87. Ali, "Harishe Bishaad," 85.

martyrdom. Literary works may comment on people's martyr narratives, but they do not always emerge as minor documents from their world of everyday life. The literary works discussed here are mostly unpublished texts, even extant, or exist as digital ephemera in contemporary times. Such literary works comment on the nature of martyr ephemera, representing them as living entities, multiple realities, quotidian voices, parodic subversions, and conflicting realities. Through ephemera ranging from leaflets, posters, and banners, to prison handkerchiefs, YouTube video screenshots and photographs of documentary shootings, martyrs are unravelled as people who are intense, glorious, victims, fools, policymakers and mass instigators. In these interactions among literary works, martyrs and ephemera, the common people's world of sacrifices and survival come to the fore.

CONCLUSION

While some martyrs receive excessive attention, most languish in oblivion. Since martyrdom is a contested issue, and minor documents of everyday lives enable an understanding of such contestations at the level of quotidian existence, an understanding of such documents will make it possible for martyrs to be both contentiously remembered and comprehensively revered by people. It is important to acknowledge those who sacrificed their lives not just as ‘martyrs’ but as ‘people’, especially in a world where intolerance for the way the idea of martyrdom is being appropriated and imposed is rising. Without religious or political tags and without individual or community commemoration, such ephemera became a quotidian marker of lives lost, whether accidentally or in active combat, whether in ambush or in prison, whether attending a personal event or diverting a political event and so on. This study has not only laid down the varied instances of naming, making, continuums, subversions and literary renditions of people’s martyrs in ephemera but has also explored their historical, political, religious, social, cultural and artistic implications.

A. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND FINDINGS

Chapter One explored the contesting narratives of history, politics, geography, law, society, culture, community, party and gender, which interact with one another, to lay down the premises of the emergence of contestations in martyrdom. The new mixed methodology of snowballing, constant comparison, archival study and thematic and objective analysis has enabled the exact identification of data pertaining to martyrdom and ephemera amidst numerous contestations. This data established people’s martyrdom

as propagandist and pluralist at the same time by redirecting our attention to various common people who have sacrificed or had to sacrifice their lives. Once our attention was drawn to their everyday lives, the causes, contestations, constructions and consequences of martyrdom took on different meanings altogether.

Chapter Two presented the various processes by which martyrs are named and the contestations therein. Death narratives such as the last words of martyrs established the personal voice in intimate and political terms and the public voice as mediated through authoritarian and individualistic stances. Burial narratives foregrounded processes that reinvigorated martyrs as people for whom the body and its remains, local memorials and burial soil need rights and remembrance at the personal, official and national levels. The people at these levels were not discussed in abstract but as real-time persons. Funeral narratives, disseminated through propagandist initiatives, upheld the martyr through personalised images of parents mourning the child figure or children remembering their martyred parents or through images of state mourning and its everyday appropriations. Personalities narratives named the martyr through the body—its biographical information, artistic rendition, forensic nature, garb and tattooed slogans. Political, national and international ephemera named martyrs through governmental stances as well as people's initiatives, revealing the roles of foreign governments (who demonstrate ideological solidarity) and civil societies (who provide existential support). Civilian and banal ephemera extended the scope of martyr naming from spontaneous outbursts in graffiti, temporary memorials and confusions in memory to populist views in rally posters. Commemoration ephemera established sacrificial language through the language of religion and banality, even at anti-state and anti-nation levels. However, commemoration booklets, memorial association documents and stray musical pieces mostly invoked martyrs in glory and even made its audiences bearers of

dignity. Like commemorative souvenirs, these glorifications made martyrs, who were historically obscure figures of sacrifice, well-known in their very localities and generated business for associated collectibles. Commemorative events worked as sites of power and propaganda, with most ordinary martyrs and victims having none to their credit. With much investigation, the call for justice for well-known and less-known martyrs has been strengthened and will make the people more conscious about closure than about mere commemoration.

Chapter Three explored the narratives of naming in their deep-rooted contexts, causes and consequences. Martyrs are made, unmade and remade through locations, processes, emblems, propaganda, community-engagement and oral modes and traditions. Memorial sites for well-known martyrs are subject to propagandist appropriations and official negotiations and parallelly generate fear and respect, while most families of ordinary martyrs, who have no official recognition, struggle to survive each day. Houses act as memorial sites for most ordinary martyrs, but at times they are also a luxury some cannot afford. Memorial events such as parades remain mostly confrontational in nature, even though they bring common people together for collective remembrance. Processes such as electoral campaigns create support but also dissuade people in the name of martyrs. Hunger strikes generate sacrificial figures but also degenerate bodies. While many national- and local-level aids are created for families and dependents of martyrs, more often than not, they are soon discontinued. International support for martyrs comes at the cost of ideological appropriation. Emblems such as crosses are made by prisoners to commemorate their comrades and by common people to commemorate victims, with the charred cross signifying the burnt dead. Flags demonstrate both pride and defiance, making them markers of revolutionary martyrdom. Portrait images exert a sentimental effect and also exude commercial value.

Commemorative stamps of martyrs circulate in the Republic of Ireland, just as stamps of the Royal Mail circulate in the North. Martyr saints transform sites into pilgrimage destinations and community upliftment initiatives for parishes. Martyr memorial murals exist, depending on the nature of the imagery they display. Newspapers represent martyrs based on their affiliations with the political authority of the times, while civil societies independently brought out certain lists of the dead in different newspapers and publications. Prison inmates generate commemorative art using the materials at their disposal along with the consciousness of the very conditions in which the martyrs had once lived. Martyr afterlives exist as football matches in the name of the dead, sites of grief tourism and rallies on contemporary social evils. Binlids and broomsticks have become popular emblems of voices against oppression, with martyrdom as a rallying cry for social betterment. Words and tones constitute verbal ephemera and represent the socio-economic and daily lives of ordinary martyrs. Folk narratives also represent similar issues, even though they are appropriated by sectarian communities and parties. Religious and political leaders have affiliated platforms for their didactic lessons but the families and acquaintances of the ordinary martyrs only have their spontaneous people's platforms.

Chapter Four dealt with contestations beyond those of naming and making. Continuums have established that martyrs are seen as divine emissaries across ages utilised to generate or control sectarian divisions. In NI, while nationalist allegiances are represented by the unionist community, participating in both world wars, their local sectarian clashes with republican paramilitary groups make their paramilitary organisations illegal ones in the nation. Bangladesh has generated martyrdom mostly for social causes in order to challenge socio-economic disparities. Ingrained political dissonances are featured through different governments, companies and educational

institutes giving awards to martyrs to sustain their martyr narrative as a political ideology. In both Ireland and Bangladesh, a continuum of historical struggles is enacted in everyday political party conflicts as community emblems on parade banners, martyr portrait emblems on school items and martyr propaganda emblems on social media sites. Iterative displays of everyday deaths are foregrounded in NI because community clashes seek justification for past attacks and lay down premises for further attacks. Gradually, they are also seeking reconciliation. Iterative displays of everyday deaths in Bangladesh foreground the range of brutalities, with a fruit seller's body blown open and villagers' corpses dumped along the banks of Buriganga. The effort of the civil society in both countries in seeking justice for martyrs and victims is praiseworthy. In both Ireland and Bangladesh, subversions have recreated martyrs for debate and discussion through challenges to identities, structures and purposes. The identity of the female is not considered appropriate for martyrdom but the language of martyrdom has been utilised for them. Disappeared victims exist somewhere between martyrs and non-martyrs, making their identities and demands for justice delayed or denied. Martyrs are also remembered when people attempt to reconstruct memorial structures that are appropriated, encroached upon, neglected, demolished or vandalised. The purposes of martyrdom in Ireland and Bangladesh differ. In Ireland, martyrdom thrives more in subversions of symbolisms and emblems; martyrs are remembered when people differentiate between a symbol and the symbolised, intermix symbolic connotations, replace symbolic meanings with universal emblems or create unique emblems for martyrs. Contrastingly, in Bangladesh, subversions are more grounded in everyday claims for martyr families, which are often distorted, even though most mass martyrs do not meet the criteria for martyr claims.

Chapter Five presented literary works, including artistic works and music, as they relate to and represent people's martyrs and ephemera. While the literary works in ephemera are mostly propagandist, they also propagate martyrs as artists so that their poetry may be disseminated for propaganda purposes. Literary works on martyrs in ephemera analysed non-canonical works or motifs and characters from canonical works as featured in various forms of ephemera to understand the spontaneity and uniqueness of these works in disseminating people's narratives of martyrdom. Martyr ephemera are a specific kind of political ephemera that emerged in the course of this study. Literary works including songs and paintings have explored them as such to foreground the significance of martyr ephemera in the world of literature and art as well as learn how people's voices on martyr narratives are represented as multiple, symbolically powerful, argumentative, existential and parodic. Literary ephemera have been highlighted as works that represent people's voices; they cannot exist separately as either ephemera or literary works as these works contain qualities of both. For example, neither handkerchiefs nor poetry could separately communicate the commemorative martyr narratives of the prisoners of Long Kesh prison in NI. Once they had been interpreted beyond the materiality of the handkerchief and the thematic content of the poem written on it, there emerged a distinct narrative, found only on this handkerchief—a composition of words, images, colours and tone—suited as a literary ephemera verse. These are the most powerful literary representatives of people's martyr narratives.

B. RESEARCH OUTCOMES

This study is significant because it developed a sustained language of the sacrificial economy so that people's martyrs and martyrdom movements can explore the

pride and pitfalls of internalising narratives of martyrdom. In NI, it is difficult to use the tag ‘martyr’ to label the brave, insurgent, rebel, saint, patriot, hero, victim, murdered, killed in action, accidental dead, innocent dead, sacrificed or prison dead; martyrdom is mostly confrontational in the country. In contrast, the Republic of Ireland uses the expression of martyrdom in the sense of patriotism and commemorative idealism. In Bangladesh, the concept of martyrdom has gained popularity. Official documents name a range of people as martyrs, even though few are awarded medals based on their martyrdom. Bangladesh attained independence in 1971; thus, it has been able to use the word ‘martyr’ as part of its narration of independent nationhood. If there is a conscious dearth of the ‘martyr’ in NI which has not yet attained freedom, then there is an excess of ‘martyr’ in Bangladesh which has appropriated it for social, economic and political gains. ‘Martyr’ is the most popular tag with which to label a person, and while some are termed so in retrospect, others are not granted the basic dignity in view of their sacrifice. Linguistic mediations bring out people’s stance during conscious or imposed remembrance. Even when martyrdom remains anonymous and silent, the emerging reasons contribute much to the narratives of lack and denial.

An awareness that not all are martyrs, not all martyrs are the same and not all die for the same cause or reason will enable us to probe the validity and justification of causes that lie at the root of killings and sacrifices. *Shahadat* is an act of conscience, but each death is specific. While dying for language is martyrdom for job access, dying for land rights is peasant resistance, and rallying for one man-one vote and housing rights is civil uprising. Even behind the garb of sacrificing one’s life for the nation or being murdered in the name of the state lie these existential reasons for survival.

These are the real-time struggles explored in terms of the microhistories of people. Since ephemera are both propagandist and idiosyncratic in nature, they can be

used to analyse the divergent opinions held by people towards legacy and living, one often enmeshed with the other. Mass martyrs are not an overwhelming category of people to contend with, and the disappeared are no more an abstract group to be investigated. Through ephemera, individual narratives are revealed, and these narratives will go on to construct a historiography of martyrdom—that will be derived from the national and political history of the state and also discover new contesting and even subversive histories. This study does not posit alternate histories but rather thrives on an interaction between microhistory and macrohistory.

This study has expanded the boundaries of the creation of ephemera archives to include object, digital and paper-based items, each redefining martyr ephemera as an evolving category that is continually created and that remains mutually interactive. While the partially structured ephemera archives in NI have lent much to the mode of organisation of ephemera, the scattered private archives and papers in Bangladesh have added to the range of ephemera associated with martyrdom, thereby enabling a structure for martyr ephemera archives as an independent category for study. Additionally, oral interpretations of ephemera have been consistently used, making a strong case for their inclusion in ephemera archives, especially lyrical ephemera such as ballads that may be easily obliterated from people's memories.

Thematic, symbolic and objective analyses of literary works included written texts as well as artistic works so that their featuring on ephemera may be collectively studied. Politicians and paramilitary volunteers have been studied as writers and artists, and the agenda of poets have been explored.

A methodology related to the kind of ephemera this research deals with has been developed to study this new category of martyr ephemera. This mixed methodology

integrated the subjective and objective analysis of ephemera, bringing together archival and field studies. This methodology will enable scholars of the social sciences such as history, political science and sociology to engage in an interdisciplinary study that would at once contribute to comparative socio-cultural and historical studies as well as Irish, Bengali, Bangladesh, Archival, Ephemera and Martyrdom studies. This study would also enable policymakers to utilise the clarity regarding the narrative of martyrdom for consensus, unity, peace and reconciliation among people at national and individual levels because the sacrifice and loss of each life have been probed and deemed equally important.

C. PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study has attempted to explore the narratives of people's martyrology, the field is constantly expanding. Regarding the Troubles in NI, civilian deaths and massacres must be explored further so that their distinct ephemera can also be studied. Regarding the genocide in Bangladesh, it would be important to separately study civilian deaths and their related ephemera so that they may be differentiated from political and propagandist ephemera. Moreover, ephemera related to the recent upsurge of violence in Ireland and Bangladesh, and their affinities will reveal much about post-conflict and post-Independence narratives that could be of significance to us.

Some ephemera and artefacts, such as candles, stickers and ticket stubs, could be further explored as part of commemorative, political and event-based martyr ephemera. Studies may also explore digital ephemera archives like the largest social media webpages that include varied ephemera, such as the Irish Political Ephemera¹ and

1. Irish Political Ephemera, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/IrishPoliticalEphemera>.

Bangladesher dushprapyo chobi samagra [Collection of rare photographs of Bangladesh]² to extract ephemera pertaining to martyrdom. A comparative study may also be undertaken with the martyr ephemera of other countries such as the political posters of Lebanon's Civil War (1975-1990)³.

Exploration of the ephemera of the martyred could be allied to that of freedom fighters and survivors who died natural deaths, leading to a sustained probing of commemorative practices. Abdul Wahed, the journalist at *The Daily Star*, who wrote on martyred freedom fighter Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar in 2017, also wrote about how the Kurigram district administration archives freedom fighters' information with palm imprints.⁴ Freedom fighters who die of natural causes are not martyrs; however, their sacrifices are no less important. Retaining the hand and footprints of the dead as a keepsake is a common tradition associated with the remains of the dead.

While governmental procedures are already underway to recover the remains of the martyred in the 1971 Liberation War in India, an awareness of these martyrs in their local terrains should also be created so that their contributions to the 1971 freedom struggle can be justified. Even as some initiatives are already underway such as educational scholarships for children of the martyr families by the central government in India,⁵ further initiatives may be jointly undertaken by the governments of both India and Bangladesh.

2. *Bangladesher dushprapyo chobi samagra*, Facebook, July 16, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/BDoldphotos>.

3. Signs of Conflict – political posters of Lebanon's Civil War, 2003, <http://www.signsofconflict.com/>.

4. Abdul Wahed, "A unique way to honour war heroes," *The Daily Star*, March 25, 2019, <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/unique-way-honour-war-heroes-1719988>.

5. Lt. Col (Retd) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir (veteran of the 1971 Liberation War, and awarded with the *Birprotik* by the government of Bangladesh and the *Padma Shri* by the government of India, who has

Moreover, studies may be conducted on the various lyrical ephemera in each district and county of countries so that local ballads on the remembrance of martyrs could be preserved for future generations. They are mostly oral creations and run the risk of complete obliteration. Therefore, folk researchers and historians have important contributions to make in the field of martyrdom studies in this regard.

Studies on minor works of poets, artists and politicians as featured on ephemera would enable the exploration of new sites and impetuses of artistic creation. Numerous ephemera feature different kinds of literary works, waiting to be explored. Moreover, an analysis of the reactions of readers and audiences on print and digital media has revealed the popularity of such works among people. Thus, scholars may address and examine the relevance of these readers' and audiences' responses in contemporary times. Although they may be categorised as minor and marginal literature, they grant an understanding of canonical works through the everyday responses of people. Literary ephemera, including those that feature martyrdom narratives, have emerged as a new kind of literary and artistic work that is found solely on ephemera and is distributed through it among people. It is important to explore the essence of people's spontaneous literary and artistic creations because they deal with contentious issues of the time. Without ornamental language, these are the raw evocations of people's remembrance of martyrs, full of irony and parody.

International recognition of conflict and genocide has only been partial so far. By knowing about the contributions of each martyr narrative, policymakers may work towards facilitating a more comprehensive recognition by various governments and parliaments of the world. Regarding both the Troubles in NI and the genocide in

done extensive work on the identification of graves of Bangladeshi 1971 martyrs in India), telephone discussion with the author, September 15, 2022.

Bangladesh, there is an increasing trend in transnational justice that all perpetrators should be pardoned. The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill is awaiting its final reading at the House of Lords and Royal Assent after being passed in the House of Commons.⁶ It will debar any investigation into crimes committed by the paramilitary organisations and British soldiers during the Troubles. Uninvestigated reprieve will foreclose any attempts at psychological and ethical closure that survivors and the families of victims hope to attain. Similarly, in Bangladesh, *Bangabandhu* allegedly pardoned all the perpetrators of the 1971 Liberation War; this is wrong. This rumour has only enabled the perpetrating country to avoid culpability and reparation-making, many of whose collaborators continue to remain in Bangladesh, in powerful political positions. A study on the sacrifices of common people, who were not always direct participants in the war, is an urgent appeal that their contributions be acknowledged for peace and justice.

It would be important for academicians and policymakers to foreground martyrdom studies in a comparative context by translating people's narratives in ephemera into English, which would inform world leaders about them so that their solidarities with freedom struggles around the world is premised on individual stances of the sacrifices of people and due acknowledgment rather than on affinity of ideologies.

This study did not aim to posit one country's freedom fighter as another country's terrorist but to unravel the narratives of sacrifice behind both personas so that people's striving to survive in a world of contestations can be elucidated. The masses, the less-known, the unknown and the anonymous must be granted space because their contributions shaped our past and will shape our future. In the process, martyrdom has

6. "Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill," UK Parliamentary Bills, July 5, 2022, <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3160>.

been established as less of a narrative of fame or fear and more of a narrative of existentialism.

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Badges: Easter lily pin badges on sale. Sinn Féin shop. Falls Road, West Belfast.

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Banner: 36th Ulster Division Centenary. Union Jack Souvenir shop. Newtownards Road, East Belfast.

Banner: Battle of Britain – ‘Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few’. Union Jack Souvenir shop. Newtownards Road, East Belfast.

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Poster: 11th November – ‘We will remember them’. Union Jack Souvenir shop. Newtownards Road, East Belfast.

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Documentary still: (captions in English): Sri Tapan Kumar Dutta, a local proprietor, pointing at the historical Dutta house where martyr Lutfur Nahar Helen was killed. *Jonojuddha '71* [People's War of 1971]. Directed by Shanu Manik. Supervision by Tanvir Mokammel. 2021. Courtesy: Tanvir Mokammel archives.

Documentary still with captions in English: Tickets being sold for the screening of the documentary *Muktir Kotha* in various districts and villages. Directed by Tareque Masud. 1999. Courtesy: Tareque Masud Archives.

Email: From the caretaker of the martyr's shrine in memory of Lt. Colonel Qadir to Nadeem Qadir. August 10, 2022. Courtesy: Nadeem Qadir (son of martyr Lt. Colonel Qadir).

Graffiti: 'I am in pain. I will not live. Please inform at Bishnupriya Bhavan, Purana Paltan.' Arafat Karim. Bangladesh Medical College, Dhaka. 2021. Courtesy: Arafat Karim (artist).

Leaflet: Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust. Courtesy: Md. Nazrul Islam (Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Dhaka)

Mug: *Roktoddhara '71* mug. 2021. Courtesy: Nadeem Qadir (President, *Roktoddhara '71*) and Mizan Talukder (Secretary, *Roktoddhara '71*).

Mural: 'The dead fakir calling upon the language martyrs of 1952 to rise again'. Azimpur graveyard. Dhaka. 2021. Courtesy: Arafat Karim (artist).

Object: Vinyl Record of the *Electric Warrior* by T Rex belonging to Kevin McElhinney. Derry/Londonderry. Courtesy: Roslyn Boyle (sister of the victim of Bloody Sunday).

Photograph: 'Peace Quilt – Common Loss'. Irene MacWilliam. Northern Ireland, 1996. Courtesy: Tony Boyle (archivist, Tower Museum, Derry).

Photograph: Digging the grave of *Bir Shrestho* Hamidur Rahman. Tripura, India. September 4, 2007. Courtesy: Lt. Col (Retd) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir (veteran of the Bangladesh Liberation War).

Photograph: Martyred freedom fighter Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar's grave in Kalmati village, with its nearby land being eroded. 2019. Courtesy: Mizan Talukdar (son of martyred freedom fighter).

Photograph: Mobile museum and the bus of the LWM. Taliapara, Mymensingh Division, Sherpur. 1996. Courtesy: Akku Chowdhury (ex-trustee, Liberation War Museum, Dhaka)

Photograph: President Lt. Gen Md. Ershad inaugurating the Qadirabad Cantonment with martyr wife Hasna Hena Qadir behind. 1983. Courtesy: Nadeem Qadir (son of martyr Lt. Colonel Qadir).

Playlists: Screenshots of personal laptop for songs sung during commemoration programmes for martyrs of Bangladesh. Courtesy: Promila Biswas (supervisor, Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur, Dhaka).

Ticket: 1971 cultural social which held on January 15, 1994. *Ekattorer Jatri* [Journeyman 1971]. Shilpakala Academy auditorium. 1994. Courtesy: Akku Chowdhury (one of the coordinators of the programme).

vi. Ephemera holdings on digital platforms

Official websites

Declassified document: 'Pigs vs Children' – Loose Minute on Stephen McConomy's death. Pat Finucane Centre. December 21, 1983.
<https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/pigs%20v%20children.pdf>.

Memorial Card: Memorial card for Charles D'Arcy, killed in action in Easter Week. 1916. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.
<https://microsites.museum.ie/1916objectstories/ObjectDetail/memorial-card>.

Object: Shard of wood in coffin transport case of Terence MacSwiney. Independence Museum. Kilmurry, County Clare. <http://kilmurrymuseum.ie/object-of-the-month/shard-of-wood/>.

Photograph: Campaign entitled “In Their Footsteps”. Day of Action in Dublin demanding effective mechanisms to deal with the past. Dublin. Organised by a coalition of groups and individuals, including the Pat Finucane Centre, Bloody Sunday Trust, Justice for the Forgotten, (including the Dublin, Monaghan, Dundalk, Castleblaney and Belturbet bombings) the Ballymurphy Massacre families, and families linked to McGurks Bar, the MRF cases, the Glenanne gang, plastic and rubber bullet deaths, Mount Vernon, Kelly’s Bar, Miami Showband survivors and a large number of individual families. June 15, 2017. <https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/projects/their-footsteps>.

Social media

Banner: The Loyal Orders. ‘In Remembrance of our Murdered Brethren’. Facebook. February 2, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1546171992225224&set=pcb.1546172108891879>.

Banner: To be used for the marble plaque of Martyr Selina Parvin Street in Feni, Chittagong. Shumon Zahid. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. March 27, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1408242889221629&set=pcb.1431230180270053>.

Comments: Irish History 1916 through to 1923. “The Ballad of Kevin Barry.” Facebook, August 12, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/1916risingirishcivilwar/posts/pfbid02xhBPGFegh1GBdBo28hn5Cp2UezA8m1x3Tjg9EiW7DXQVTG2kSu4dxTu3xA1aPfEgl>.

Gazette notification and martyr certificate: ‘Some facts about martyred freedom fighter journalist Selina Parvin’. Shumon Zahid. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. February 22, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/513039392089141/permalink/1628609277198808/>.

Object: “Official Limited Edition Kevin Barry Memorial Jersey for sale!!” Intosport.ie. Facebook, October 19, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Intosport.ie/posts/pfbid0UffsR9PwBnyRFd5epNfJDG5Nf5hhzR3sPH5inG61bDHcSMbVt91YcAZycjmZ75GLI>.

Party logo: Ulster Unionist Party, Warsington branch. Facebook. November 8, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/WBUUP/photos/pb.100069219369723.-2207520000./3516521231775102/?type=3>.

- Photographs: History of Dublin@history_dublin. “Three sculptural depictions of #KevinBarry.” Twitter. November 1, 2020 10:45pm, <https://twitter.com/statusofdublin/status/1322950521964138497>.
- Photographs: Shumon Zahid. *Milaad* near the grave of martyr journalist Selina Parvin after which food was given to the local children and beggars. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokka porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration committee]. Facebook. March 31, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/513039392089141/permalink/1372593512800387/>.
- Photographs: Tanvir Mokammel’s Films. “Brahmanbariae Tanvir Mokammeler porichalona Dhirendranath Datta: Titas Parer Manushti [Directed by Tanvir Mokammel in Brahmanbaria *Dhirendranath Datta: The Man from the shore of Titas*]. Facebook. December 3, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/tanvirmokammelfilms/posts/pfbid08knpuM3TTBJij2jhftMwcb6hCzmCN4Udcr797roLSvSzsKMMicgdAPqP66hayRVjl>.
- Post: 7 Bir Sreshtho of Bangladesh. “Masterda Surya Sen er shesh bani [Last words of Masterda Surya Sen].” Facebook. January 11, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/217905052881/photos/a.241177342881/10151828485052882?type=3>.
- Post: Gonojagoron Chittagong. “Shahid Muhammad Kamruzzaman: Phasir Monche dariye ami bijoyer joy gaan gai [Martyr Muhammad Kamruzzaman: I sing of Victory on the Pulpit of Execution].” Facebook. April 11, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/416935725045874/posts/5293962627343135/>.
- Post: Ohiduzzaman Sapan. “Gonojagoron moncho, Baroicha Bus-stand, Belabo, Narsingdi.” Facebook. April 16, 2016. <https://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1714243438799094&id=100006403633805&set=a.1714243425465762>.
- Post: Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed. “*Amar chacha Chattogram Pak hyenar gulite shahadat boronkari* [My uncle was martyred by the Pakistan army at Chittagong]. Facebook. March 28, 2018. <https://m.facebook.com/jabedmp/photos/a.858137137537251/2273468752670742/>.
- Procession: ‘Verses on the martyrdom of Imam Hassan-Hussain being read from a handwritten manuscript by *shayar* Shamim Kaderi, who is leading the jari-marsiya procession in Dhaka’. Bhab Nagar (Saymon Zakaria). “*Ashurar shok michil* [Ashura mourning procession].” Facebook. August 9, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/bhab.nagar/posts/pfbid03eqmwm4diZiyt9wkadRNLmbci6rv5SG4vt8p7XpTpHeJVgDvV4SMJ4Y6j4RMUQ7zl>.
- Programme: BNP. “Shaheed Zia r shahadat barshiki upolokkhe Mymensingh e boi, alokchitro prodorshoni o alochona shobha [A book, photo exhibition and discussion meeting on the occasion of Shaheed Zia’s martyr anniversary in

Mymensingh].” YouTube. June 10, 2022.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeLEK_YQA88.

Stamp: Commemorative stamp of Selina Parvin in the martyred intellectuals stamp series. Bangladesh Post Office. 1991. Shumon Zahid. *Shoheed sambadik Selina Parvin sritirokha porshod* [Martyr journalist Selina Parvin Commemoration Committee]. Facebook. December 12, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1589361937776389&set=pcb.1628598380533231>.

Video still screenshot: Blarney Pilgrims. ‘Sunday Bloody Sunday’ YouTube. Easter 1998. 0:18. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF9qlakyiIc>.

Video: Pramathesh Shil, “Martyred Intellectual Day, Prof Rashidul Hasan and Anwar Pasha,” YouTube. 2:55. December 15, 2017.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkyBY__TQA4.

Words at international concert: Leonard Cohen - Kevin Barry (live 1972). *Leonard Cohen Live in Concert*. Facebook. 3:21. October 28, 2018.
<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100067658738676/search/?q=kevin%20barry>.

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<http://catholicheritage.blogspot.com/2011/07/processions-processions-processions.html>.

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<https://mcurksbar.com/victims/>.

Booklet: Rangamatia Government Primary School Diamond Jubilee Commemoration. Issuu. February 15, 2019.
https://issuu.com/jeromedcosta/docs/former_students_of_rangamatia_and_b.

Diary cover: Cover of a teachers’ diary of *Bir Uttom* awardee martyr Samad school and college. Bir Uttom Shaheed Samad School & College, Rangpur.
<http://www.busshsr.edu.bd/gallery/photo-gallery/>.

Label: Ireland Political: Manchester Martyrs Label (reprint on silk). eBay.
<https://www.ebay.com/itm/372755278864>.

Leaflet: Loyalist Prisoners Welfare Association. The University of Ottawa Scholars Portal.
<https://uottawa.scholarsportal.info/ottawa/index.php/jpp/article/download/5757/4809/17437>.

Official paper: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). “Restricted: Frank Stagg.” January 30, 1976. PRONI Records on *CAIN*. [pron_iio-12-482_1976-01-30.pdf](https://www.proni.nio-12-482_1976-01-30.pdf) (ulster.ac.uk).

Oration excerpt: "Oration given at the unveiling of the Mural." Ulster Volunteer Force. June 16, 2001. <http://ulstermurals.20m.com/custom.html>.

Photograph: Gymnast Dipa Karmakar carrying the 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' in Agartala. *The Times of India*. November 6, 2021. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agartala/victory-torch-of-1971-war-reaches-agartala-homage-paid-to-martyrs/articleshow/87552066.cms>.

Photograph: Memorial to Kevin Barry. County Carlow. Paidin O'Hir. "Kevin Barry, 'Just A Boy of Eighteen Summers'," *paddy1992addy* (blog). November 2, 2013. <https://paddy1992addy.wordpress.com/2013/11/02/kevin-barry-just-a-boy-of-eighteen-summers/>.

Post: Poem entitled Clive Sanders. 'The Troubles'. Waringstown Branch – Ulster Unionist Party, "Lest We Forget," Facebook. December 22, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/WBUUP/posts/pfbid0BVbaJ2BBqtTEiSD918ssC2MDRcAUJfkErN8Tz5W4GH9s4K3TSVtH3eTHYP28amyql>.

Poster: Sheikh Mujib calling upon the people to rebuild a war-torn Bangladesh. 1972. Muktiyuddho e-Archive. April 14, 2021. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/liberationwarbangladesh/51116322845/in/album-72157718940047372/>.

Procession: Saint Oliver Plunkett Festival Procession, Drogheda Our Lady of Lourdes. The Catholic Heritage Association of Ireland. 2011. <http://catholicheritage.blogspot.com/2011/07/processions-processions-processions.html>.

Rickshaw painting on tin backboard: Three freedom fighters. This depiction is reminiscent of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Bangla Academy's nomination file for inscription of 'Rickshaws and rickshaw painting in Dhaka' on UNESCO's representative list. 2013. https://ich.unesco.org/en/10b-representative-list-01013?include=slideshow_inc.php&id=00960&width=620&call=slideshow&mode=scroll#https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/08671-HUG.jpg.

Song: The Irish Brigade. "Roll of Honour." *Genius*. <https://genius.com/The-irish-brigade-roll-of-honour-lyrics>.

vii. Ephemera photographed by the author [the date in parenthesis indicates the date of taking the photograph]

Banner: 47th martyr anniversary and national mourning day 2022. Gate of the Department of Government Transport. Dhaka. [August 4, 2022]

Banner: Jimmy McCurrie and Bobby O'Neill, murdered 27/28 June 1970. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Banner: Stephen McConomy who was shot dead in April 1982. Free Derry Corner. [April 28, 2022]

Graffiti: 'Bloody Sunday'. Creggan area, Derry. [April 25, 2022]

Lyrics painted on the wall: '*Amar Bhaier rokto rangano Ekushe February/Ami ki bhulite pari*' [With my brother's blood, 21st February is painted red/ Oh how can I ever forget]. Opposite the central *Shahid Minar*. Secretariat Road, Dhaka. [August 2, 2022]

Mural: Commemorating the language martyrs of 1952. Opposite wall of Mirpur Jalladkhana field memorial site. Mirpur, Dhaka. [August 8, 2022]

Mural: Commemorating the martyrs of the East Belfast Battalion and the Battle of Somme in the First World War. Alongside a house. Newtownards, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Mural: Flag hoisted at a students' meeting on March 2, 1971. Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Dhaka. [August 2, 2022]

Mural: Ulster's past defenders. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Mural: Ulster's present defenders. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Object: Signboard in memory of the martyred in the killing fields of Mirpur. Mirpur, Dhaka. 1972. [August 8, 2022]

Object: Trophy belonging to Kevin McElhinney, held by Roslyn and Michael Doyle. Derry/Londonderry. [April 25, 2022]

Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury on the silver jubilee of *Bijoy Dibosh*. University of Dhaka. 1996. [August 12, 2022]

Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. *Bangladesh Mujibnagar Karmachari Kalyan Sangsad*. December 25, 1992. [August 12, 2022]

Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. Destiny-2000 Ltd. 2009. [August 12, 2022]

Object: Trophy to Munier Chowdhury. Language Soldier and Political Prisoner Council. 1993. [August 12, 2022]

Objects: Television and bookcase in the present living room at the house of martyred intellectual Munier Chowdhury. Banani, Dhaka. [August 12, 2022]

Parade: Easter Parade displaying banners, with flags fluttering from rooftops and portrait of the hunger strikers in the far-off building. Falls Road, West Belfast. [April 17, 2022]

Pencil scribble: On the memorial plaque of martyr Mohammad Ruhul Amin. *Swadhinata Chattar* [Independence Square]. Kachukhet, Dhaka. [August 2, 2022]

Photograph: Blackboard enumerating everyday differences between Protestants and Catholics. Entrance to Ulster Museum, Belfast. [April 24, 2022]

Photograph: Crowds carrying the Irish tricolour flag during the Easter parade organised by the National Graves Association. Falls Road, West Belfast. [April 17, 2022]

Photograph: 'Not for sale'. Building which was a property of the UVF quarters, that also contains a plaque. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Photograph: Freedom Corner space. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Photograph: Gravestone of IRA volunteers killed in Derry and the accompanying flagpoles. Derry City Cemetery. Derry/Londonderry. [April 25, 2022]

Photograph: Gravestones for the Gibraltar Three and the three mourners in their funeral ceremony. Milltown Cemetery, Belfast. [April 17, 2022]

Photograph: Memorial site for martyred IRA volunteers. Creggan area. Derry/Londonderry. [April 25, 2022]

Photographs: Gravestone of John Young and the surrounding area. Derry City Cemetery. Derry/Londonderry. [April 25, 2022]

Plaque: Poem on the white plaque on the right to the gate of the Jimmy McCurrie and Robert Neill Memorial Garden. Ballymacarrett Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Poster: 'The dead cannot cry out for justice/It is the duty of the living to do so for them'. In memory of murdered Leanne Murray. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Poster: Belfast Easter Commemoration organised by NGA, Belfast. Falls Road, Belfast. April 17, 2022. [April 17, 2022]

Poster: East Battalion Belfast Parade. 2019. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Poster: National Republican Committee Easter Commemoration. Falls Rad, Belfast. April 18, 2022. [April 18, 2022]

Poster: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paying tributes to the martyrs of her family on the martyr anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Ministry of Planning, Dhaka. August 15, 2022. [August 16, 2022]

Poster: Wall poster of Falls Cultural Society Easter Commemoration. April 17, 2022. Falls Road, West Belfast. [April 17, 2022]

Posters: ‘We owe it to the future and the victims not to forget the past.’ Wall mural. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Speech: Mary Louise McDonald. “Easter Commemoration Speech.” Milltown Cemetery. Belfast. [April 17, 2022]. The speech was later uploaded on YouTube. It may be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j_v38k2RKY.

Wall painting: Folk narrative of the Red Hand of Ulster. Newtownards Road, East Belfast. [April 11, 2022]

Wall painting: Lyrics ‘*Amar Bhaier rokte rangano Ekushe February/Ami ki bhulite pari*’ [With my brother’s blood, 21st February is painted red/ Oh how can I ever forget]. The wall opposite the central *Shahid Minar*. Dhaka. [August 2, 2022]

viii. Ephemera in published books (only published once in these books)

Ballad: Book: Harechuzzaman. “Baruitola Gonohotya punthi [Ballad of Baruitola genocide],” 47–48. In *Baruitola Gonohotya*. Khulna: 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum Trust. 2017.

Ballad: Book: Saidur Rahman Boyati, “Mujib Shahid.” In *Saidur Rahman Boati: Sadhoker Sadesh o Samogra* [Mystic minstrel Saidur Rahman: An ascetic poet’s nation and narratives], 130. Edited by Najmin Mortuza. Dhaka: Samhati Publications, 2017.

Essays from competition booklet: Sinn Féin. *The Spirit of freedom: prize winning entries in the Bobby Sands commemoration school essay competition*. Gleanna na gCaorach: Choiste Chomóradh Roibeáird Mhic Sándair, 1983.

Hymn: ‘Declaration of Loyalty and Fidelity’. Framed copies have been mounted in the new church. Book: *St. Oliver Plunkett Parish Belfast: Church re-opening and re-dedication Sunday, 21st April, 1985*, 47. Edited by Tony McGee. Belfast: [s.n.], 1985.

Photograph: Photograph of a *Shahid Minar* in an unknown slum in a village. Book: *Ekusher Tomshuk: Collected Photographs of the 1952 language movement over the last century*. Photography and words by Amanul Haque. Dhaka: Sahitya Prokash, 2003, 22.

ix. Interviews

Original semi-structured interviews in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

Brown, Kris (Lecturer in the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy, University of Ulster). Interview by author via zoom. February 15, 2023. Transcript, with author.

Currie, Lisa Rea (Heritage Officer, EastSide Partnership). Interview by author. East Belfast. April 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Doherty, Tony (son of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Patrick Doherty, and trustee, Museum of Free Derry). Interview by author. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Doyle, Roslyn (sister of a victim of Bloody Sunday, Kevin McElhinney). Interview by author. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Fearghal (Volunteer, Eileen Hickey Irish Republican Hickey Museum). Interview by author. Falls Road, West Belfast. April 14, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Moloney, Peter (collector of Troubles-related ephemera of Ireland for over 50 years, which has resulted in the Northern Ireland Political Ephemera Collection). Interview by author via email. February 13, 2020. Transcript, with author.

O'Connor, Paul (director, Pat Finucane Centre). Interview by author. Derry/Londonderry. April 28, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Young, Leo (elder brother of a victim of Bloody Sunday, John Young). Interview by author. Derry/Londonderry. April 25, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Unpublished interviews in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

Interviewee 2 (Male, 40, Catholic, Churchgoer). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Belfast. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Interviewee 6 (Male, 50s, Protestant, Churchgoer). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Belfast. July 24, 2013. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Interviewee 7 (Male, 40s, Catholic, Churchgoer). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Belfast. July 24, 2013. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Unpublished interviews in Dublin, Republic of Ireland

Interviewee 3 (Male, 60s, Unitarian). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Dublin. June 25, 2014. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*.

[Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Interviewee 5 (Female, 60s, Roman Catholic). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Dublin. July 3, 2014. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Interviewee 7 (Male, 59, Unitarian, formerly Roman Catholic). Interview by John Wolffe and Gavin Moorhead. Dublin. July 4, 2014. Wolffe, John and Moorhead, Gavin (2017). *Religion martyrdom and global uncertainties - Part 2: Martyrdom interviews*. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852554>. Transcript at UK Data Archive.

Original semi-structured interviews in Bangladesh

Ali, Md. Janab (son of martyr Torab Ali). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Biswas, Promila (supervisor, Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Choudhury, Afsan (Bangladeshi liberation war researcher, columnist, and journalist). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 12, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Guhathakurta, Meghna (Executive Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh). Interview by author. Dhaka, August 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Hamid, Abdul (son of martyr Abdul Hakim). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Hashem, Fakir Abul (folk poet). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Kabir, Shariar (President, Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 6, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Karim, Arafat (graffiti artist and leading cartoonist at *Prothom Alo*). Telephone interview by author. November 15, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Mallick Suchi, Nur Jahan (youngest sister of martyr Nazrul Islam Mallick). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.¹

1. Mallick is the surname and Suchi is the nickname followed by Nur Jahan which is the name of the interviewee. In Bangladesh, the Muslim names often comprise Arabian and Persian names and surnames along with a Bangla add-on as a nickname. However, since the brackets do not exist in Bangladeshi publications, they have been ignored here. Hence the format of the bibliographic entry is surname, nickname, name.

Mamoon, Muntasir (Bangladeshi writer, historian, scholar, secularist, translator, and professor at University of Dhaka). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 10, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Masud, Nahid (location sound recordist and mixer, and younger brother of Tareque Masud). Telephone interview by author. September 15, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Mokammel, Tanvir (Bangladeshi filmmaker). Telephone interview by author. December 10, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Munier, Asif (son of martyred intellectual Munier Chowdhury). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 12, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Mustari, Shabnam (daughter-in-law of martyr Nur Mohammad Mullick). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Rahman Chowdhury, Hamidur (son of martyr Gisaur Rahman Chowdhury). Interview by author. Mirpur, Dhaka. August 8, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Reza Noor, Tawheed (erstwhile student of Dhaka University and son of martyred journalist Serajuddin Hossain). Telephone interview by author. November 7, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Talukdar, Mizan (son of martyr Prof Abdul Wahab Talukdar). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 9, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Zakaria, Saymon (Bangladeshi folk researcher and Deputy Director of the Department of Culture in the Bangla Academy, Dhaka). Interview by author. Dhaka. August 11, 2022. Transcript, with author.

Unpublished interviews in Bangladesh

Begum, Raushanara (daughter of martyr Johorjan Begum). Interview with Satyajit Ray Majumdar. Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur, Dhaka. April 11, 2008. Transcript in archives of the Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site.

Published interviews in Bangladesh

Lahiri, Nira (elder sister of martyr Nipa Lahiri). Interview with Afsan Chowdhury. *Narider Ekattor* [The 1971 of Women], 23-31. Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 2022.

Original informal conversational interviews in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Bangladesh

Akter Rima, Shamima (IT assistant, Bangladesh National Museum). Conversation with the author. Dhaka. August 7, 2022.²

2. Refer to footnote 1. Akter is the surname and Rima is the nickname followed by Shamima which is the name of the interviewee. Hence the format of the bibliographic entry is surname, nickname, name.

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