

6.3 Looking Further: Martyrs in Northern Ireland

I would like to end this book with a brief discussion of images of the dead in Northern Ireland in order to provide a sketch for further research that could be conducted on images of martyrs in a context that goes beyond Lebanon.

While John Nagle has already linked Beirut and Belfast regarding the simultaneous remembering and forgetting of recent conflicts,⁷⁹² I chose Northern Ireland to demonstrate that the celebration of martyrdom does exist in a solely Christian and a solely European context and to show that notions of martyrdom exceed the so-called 'Middle East'. Although the visual legacy of Northern Ireland is known first and foremost through its murals, I have also seen numerous posters in Belfast and Derry.⁷⁹³ I discuss both media together because their pictorial language and their function of communicating a simple, clear message do not significantly differ from each other.⁷⁹⁴ I first address images of the dead on the walls of Northern Ireland, then I move to a discussion of Richard Hamilton's painting *The Citizen*, which deals with the making of martyrs.

6.3.1 Troubled Northern Ireland: Bobby Sands and Other Christian Sectarian Dead

The walls of Belfast and Derry are full of images of people, mostly men, who died during the so-called Troubles, which officially lasted from 1968 until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. After Ireland's fight for decolonisation from the British Empire, the predominantly Catholic island became its own state in 1921. Only six provinces in the North, which had a slight Protestant majority, stayed part of the United Kingdom.

⁷⁹² Nagle, 'Defying State Amnesia'.

⁷⁹³ The leading scholar on Northern Ireland's murals is the sociologist Bill Rolston. Whereas the Protestant Unionist mural tradition dates to 1908, the Catholic Republicans started to draw wall paintings as part of a larger campaign supporting the hunger strikers in 1981. Posters issued during the Troubles, and now housed in Belfast's Linen Hall Library, the Ulster Museum, and the online CAIN archive, have been addressed in *Troubled Images: Posters and Images of the Northern Ireland Conflict from Belfast's Linen Hall Library*, ed. Yvonne Murphy et al. (Belfast: The Linen Hall Library, 2001) and, more recently, in Michael Welch, 'Signs of Trouble: Semiotics, Streetscapes, and the Republican Struggle in the North of Ireland', *Crime, Media, Culture* 16, no. 1 (2019).

⁷⁹⁴ Gregory Goalwin, 'The Art of War: Instability, Insecurity, and Ideological Imagery in Northern Ireland's Political Murals', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2013): 194–95; Bill Rolston, 'The War of the Walls: Political Murals in Northern Ireland', *Museum International* 56, no. 3 (2004): 44.

The roots of martyrdom in (Northern) Ireland, can be traced back to at least until 1916 and the infamous 'Easter Rising', a violent protest against the British occupation. After the rising failed, sixteen Irish rebels were executed by the British Army. They were immediately labelled as martyrs and remain as such in murals on Northern Ireland's walls until the present day.⁷⁹⁵

A violent sectarian conflict, the so-called Troubles, escalated in Northern Ireland in the 1960s between mostly Protestant Unionist militias, who wished to remain with the UK, and mostly Catholic Republican militias, who wished to join the Republic of Ireland. In 1969, the British Army was sent to Northern Ireland, mostly supporting the Unionists. The conflict grew particularly tense in 1980 and 1981, when members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who were imprisoned in the infamous H Block of the Long Kesh/Maze prison rebelled against their status as ordinary criminals and demanded to be treated as political prisoners. Their protest included wearing only a blanket instead of a prison uniform; refusing to 'slop out', meaning to empty the buckets they used as toilets, instead smearing the walls with excrement; and finally going on a hunger strike, in which ten men died.⁷⁹⁶

Bobby Sands, the first casualty, is the best-known hunger striker.⁷⁹⁷ His face covers the wall of the Belfast headquarters of Sinn Féin, a leftist party that was closely related to the IRA during the Troubles (Fig. 6.1). In the centre of this mural, there is his larger-than-life headshot, painted after a photograph, with the substantially smaller faces of two other hunger strikers, Kieran Doherty and Joe McDonnell, at his left and right.⁷⁹⁸ Quotes from Sands's writing, such as 'OUR REVENGE WILL BE THE LAUGHTER OF OUR CHILDREN', here on his left, often accompanied his images. Two birds, a lark below and a phoenix above, break the chains that surround his headshot. The phoenix is usually associated with re-creation, as it can rise from the ashes and thus symbolises the survival of the cause, whereas the lark refers to one of Sands's stories, in which he compared his struggle for freedom from British occupation to that of an imprisoned lark.⁷⁹⁹

795 See Mark McCarthy, 'Making Irish Martyrs: The Impact and Legacy of the Execution of the Leaders of the Easter Rising, 1916', in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the Present*, eds. Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 165–202.

796 For a more detailed analysis of the conflict, see Goalwin, 'Art of War', 195–97; Kevin Meagher, *What a Bloody Awful Country: Northern Ireland's Century of Division* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2022).

797 Rolston, 'War of the Walls', 41; Bill Rolston, 'Trying to Reach the Future Through the Past': Murals and Memory in Northern Ireland, *Crime, Media, Culture* 6, no. 3 (2010): 300–01.

798 The third face, Sean McCoughey, who was also a member of the IRA, seems to be a later addition and refers to the tradition of IRA hunger strikes. He died in a hunger strike in 1946.

799 Goalwin, 'The Art of War', 206–7, 210.



Fig. 6.1: Bobby Sands, Mural, Belfast – Sinn-Féin Headquarters, December 2022, Photograph AR.

Although Sands was one of ten hunger strikers, his is the image that is most widely distributed, and he is 'at the centre of the narrative', as the famous image just described suggests.⁸⁰⁰ This is also visible in a printed plaque commemorating the fortieth year of the hunger strike (Fig. 6.2). The faces of ten men are uniformly depicted in black circles and they are labelled as 'H BLOCK MARTYRS', which is emphasised by the arrangement of the faces in the form of the letter H. Bobby Sands is placed in the upper left-hand corner of the image, so his face is the first to be met by a European eye that reads a text or a row of images starting from the upper left-hand side.

Sands was proclaimed as a martyr immediately after his death.⁸⁰¹ In this way, as Michael Welch has shown, Sands and the other hunger strikers are often linked to Christian martyrdom.⁸⁰² Fionna Barber writes in a similar vein that while the British media portrayed the hunger strikers as criminals, muralists in Northern Ireland started to paint them in 'depictions of heroic martyrdom derived from the iconography of Catholicism'.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰⁰ Welch, 'Signs of Trouble', 19.

⁸⁰¹ Stephen Hopkins, 'Bobby Sands, Martyrdom and the Politics of Irish Republican Memory', in Outram and Laybourn, *Secular Martyrdom*, 265.

⁸⁰² Welch, 'Signs of Trouble', 19.

⁸⁰³ Fionna Barber, *Art in Ireland Since 1910* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 209.



Fig. 6.2: H Block Martyrs, Plaque, Belfast – Falls Road, December 2022, Photograph AR.

The hunger strikers are not the only deceased who populate the walls in Northern Ireland, however, as the Unionists also venerate their dead. *Figure 6.3* shows a mural that depicts Robert Dougan, a militiaman of the Unionist Ulster Defence Association who was killed by the IRA in 1998. As in the case of Sands, a photograph was transformed into a painting that is accompanied by a slogan. His face is framed in a circle of poppies, the central flower of Unionist remembrance. Inside the poppies, we read 'Lest We Forget'. On Dougan's right, the logo of the Ulster Defence Association is visible. It encompasses a crown, referring to the group's loyalty to the British monarchy, and the red hand of Ulster. This symbol alludes to the myth of two ancient chieftains' boat race, where the land would be won by the man who touches the land first. One of the chieftains anticipated his loss, so he cut off his hand, threw it to the land, and thereby won the race. Because of this, the red hand of Ulster symbolises struggle at all costs.⁸⁰⁴

Except in some Republican images, the few women that appear on Northern Ireland's walls are usually depicted as victims who were killed by bombs or shootings rather than as heroines.⁸⁰⁵ This also applies to children, as the poster of thirteen-year-old Leanne Murray, who was murdered by an IRA bomb in 1993, confirms (*Fig. 6.4*). The image erected by Unionists shows her in a field of poppies, while above her, two bloodied hands are visible. Between them, we read: 'THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENT BY THE BLOOD SOAKED HANDS OF SINN FÉIN/IRA NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN'. This image makes an accusation against the enemy, and there are also other images that also do this, though in a more gruesome way.

804 Coalwin, 'The Art of War', 203–04.

805 Bill Rolston, 'Women on the Walls: Representations of Women in Political Murals in Northern Ireland', *Crime, Media, Culture* 14, no. 3 (2018): 365–80; Welch, 'Signs of Trouble', 22–25.



Fig. 6.3: Robert Dougan, Mural, Belfast – Sandy Row/Blythe Street, December 2022, Photograph AR.



Fig. 6.4: Leanne Murray, Poster, Belfast, December 2022, Photograph AR.

In Derry, I encountered a poster commemorating nineteen-year-old Seamus Bradley (Fig. 6.5), an IRA member who was shot and tortured by the British Army. While a text that narrates the circumstances of his death sits alongside a headshot of him smiling, the left and lower margins of the image show several graphic close-ups of his injuries, including his dead body. In contrast to *Figure 6.4*, which aims to communicate how the life of a happy girl was taken by the IRA, this image documents the cruelties enacted by the British Army. Both images testify to the brutality of the opponent.

The pictures on the walls of Northern Ireland give evidence that the conflict is not past. This is manifested by recent events, such as one reported in *The Guardian* in 2023 under the headline 'Petrol Bombs and Punishment Beatings: Paramilitaries Still Rooted in Northern Ireland',⁸⁰⁶ or the 2019 killing of journalist Lyra McKee by a stray bullet during a street battle in Derry.⁸⁰⁷ Furthermore, between 2022 and 2024, the Democratic Unionist Party refused to take part in the government, since it had to share power with Sinn Féin, which won the elections in Northern Ireland for the first time in 2022.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ Rory Carroll, 'Petrol Bombs and Punishment Beatings: Paramilitaries Still Rooted in Northern Ireland', *The Guardian*, 9 April 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/09/petrol-bombs-and-punishment-beatings-paramilitaries-still-rooted-in-northern-ireland>.

⁸⁰⁷ Colin Coulter et al., *Northern Ireland a Generation After Good Friday: Lost Futures and New Horizons in the 'Long Peace'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 6.

⁸⁰⁸ Tom Edgington, 'Why Does Northern Ireland Need Its Own Brexit Deal?', BBC, 28 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53724381> (last accessed 15 March 2023; site inactive on 29 October 2024). Agreement on a new government took place only in February 2024.

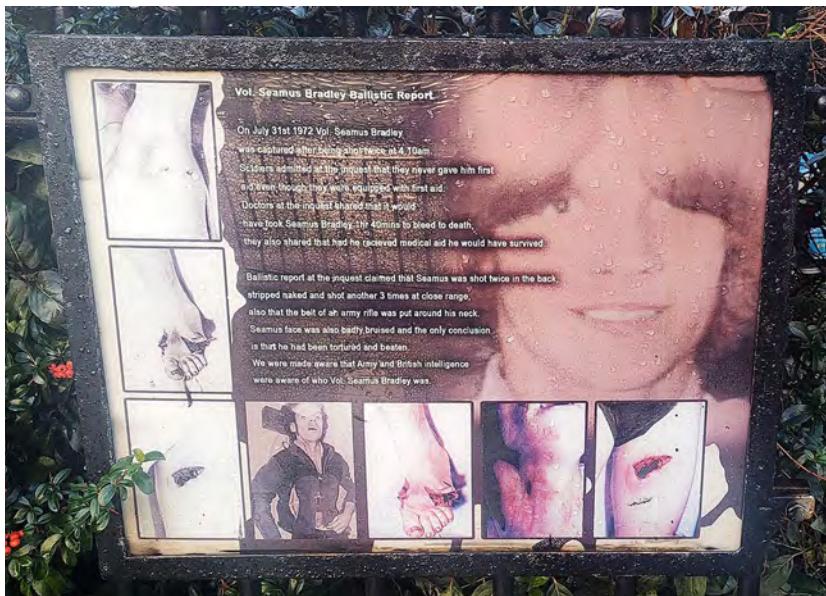


Fig. 6.5: Seamus Bradley, Poster, Derry – Bogside, December 2022, Photograph AR.

The posters and murals that show martyrs act as means by which a group defines itself, mobilises, and recruits. In this way, according to Bill Rolston, the pictures are not 'an innocent expression of identity, but a major part of the problem of continuing violence'.⁸⁰⁹ The Arts Council Programme for Northern Ireland understood this and started to take down or overpaint some political murals due to fears they could incite sectarian strife.⁸¹⁰ While it was obviously not possible to completely remove politics from the walls, the attempt reflects a desire to erase the Troubles from public memory. The surface of central Belfast is, as Rolston writes, a 'conflict-free city, sterile as regards memorialization'. At the same time, in a certain schizophrenic way, sectarian modes of commemoration—such as the murals, many of which have not been taken down, as they are a key tourist attraction—remain.⁸¹¹ The images of the dead are symptoms of the fact that the Troubles still trouble Northern Ireland today. Especially, Bobby Sands's haunting presence can still be felt in art productions decades after his death.

⁸⁰⁹ Rolston, 'Reach the Future', 286.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 297–98.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., 303–04; quote on page 303. There were also ideas of demolishing the Long Kesh/Maze, which closed in 2000, and constructing a sports stadium on its premises instead. These plans were finally abandoned, as was the idea of building a memorial for all entities involved in the conflict. Until today, an official non-sectarian memorial for the Troubles does not exist.

6.3.2 Richard Hamilton's *The Citizen*: Painting the Making of a Martyr

Bobby Sands is the protagonist of Steve McQueen's movie *Hunger* (2008), which tells the story of the hunger strikers and shows us that even decades after his passing—like today—Sands is not forgotten. However, I am more interested in works that pose questions about the usage of martyrdom and go beyond emotional lamentation.⁸¹² Regarding the dead of the Troubles, this happened quite early, and I will limit my discussion here to one example, Richard Hamilton's *The Citizen* (1981–83; *Fig. 6.6*), which is housed in London's Tate Modern.⁸¹³

In 1980, Hamilton watched a broadcast of the prisoners' protest on British TV, which showed IRA members Hugh Rooney and Freddy Toal in a small cell wrapped in prison blankets. The artist then appropriated these televised images into a two-metre-high painted diptych but omitted Toal, thereby creating a lonely figure in the right panel, who is in direct confrontation with the viewer.⁸¹⁴ Because of the depiction of only the long-haired, half-naked man, with a thin body and a thick beard, links with Jesus's martyrdom were immediately drawn. This is further emphasised by the cross dangling from the prisoner's neck,⁸¹⁵ and although visible wounds are absent, Liam Kelly is reminded of the image formula of the Man of Sorrows.⁸¹⁶

In this painting, Hamilton captures a fleeting moment on the TV screen, prompting viewers to question what they see; at the same time Hamilton does not encourage the viewers to honour the IRA members or to emotionally engage with the hunger strikers. Long contends that Hamilton instead examines the politics and transmissions of martyrdom critically.⁸¹⁷ The hunger strikers, and in a wider

812 For a discussion of this movie, see Coulter et al., *Northern Ireland a Generation After Good Friday*, 135–42.

813 For a discussion of art during the Troubles in Northern and Southern Ireland, see Barber, *Art in Ireland*, 168–95 and 207–19, and Long, *Ghosthaunted Land*. Further, the Ulster Museum in Belfast organised an exhibition called *Art of the Troubles* in 2014; this resulted in the Troubles Archive, which includes art produced after and during the Troubles. It can be accessed online at www.troublesarchive.com.

The Citizen is part of a series of three works: *The Subject* (1988–90) shows a Unionist militiaman, and *The State* (1993) depicts a British soldier. All three are housed at Tate Modern.

814 Philipp Spectre, *Richard Hamilton – Introspective* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Koenig, 2019), 312–15; Mark Godfrey, 'Television Delivers People', in *Richard Hamilton*, eds. Mark Godfrey, Paul Schimmel, and Vicente Todolí (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), 243.

815 Terry Riggs, 'Richard Hamilton. The Citizen. 1981–3', *Tate*, last modified January 1998, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-the-citizen-to3980>.

816 Liam Kelly, *Thinking Long: Contemporary Art in the North of Ireland* (Kinsale: Gandon Editions, 1996), 122.

817 Declan Long, 'Visual Art: A Troubles Archive Essay', *The Troubles Archive*, last modified 2009, http://www.troublesarchive.com/resources/visual_art.pdf.

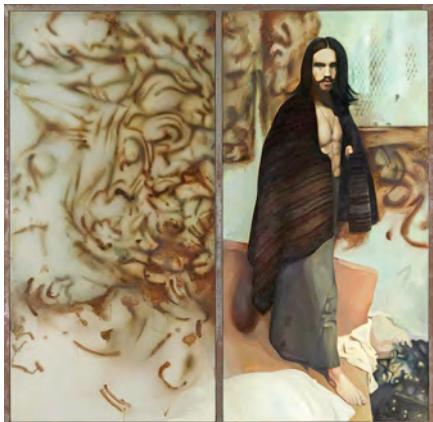


Fig. 6.6: Richard Hamilton, *The Citizen*, 1981–83, Oil Paint on Two Canvases, 217 x 206 cm, Tate Modern London, ©The Estate of Richard Hamilton, Courtesy of Tate Modern, London.

martyr. In other words, the Republicans used British television for 'the creation of an icon'. This seemed to have worked, as the then-prime minister of Britain Margaret Thatcher felt compelled to criticise the BBC's news coverage, arguing that, from her point of view, by being broadcast in such a condition, criminals would receive the 'myth of martyrdom they crave'.⁸¹⁹ The televised martyr-making, combined with the Republicans' evocations of Jesus, were intended to evoke strong emotions from the audience, and consequently to elicit support for the Republicans' political cause.⁸²⁰

With *The Citizen*, Hamilton examines the 'ingredients' for martyrdom: first, the violent (future) death of the hunger striker; second, a medium, British television, that was consciously used by the Republicans to disseminate these deaths; and third, an audience that reacted emotionally to those deaths. If the hunger strikers had died silently in the Long Kesh/Maze prison without televised coverage, they would not have gained the responses needed for the creation of martyrs. Additionally, Hamilton shows us that the martyr is exchangeable. Rooney himself did not die during the Troubles, but as Long argues, this becomes almost secondary. Because

sense the IRA, made conscious use of the visits of journalists to the Long Kesh/Maze. As the open and direct look of the figure and the placement of his right foot as he walks towards the viewer suggest, the hunger strikers deliberately exposed to the camera their chosen living conditions, which are visualised in the left panel that is filled with brown swirls, representing excrement.⁸¹⁸ The choice of suffering was finally extended to starving to death.

The Citizen hints that the hunger strikers wanted to let the public watch them die and to let the audience experience the making of a

⁸¹⁸ In the television clip on which *The Citizen* is based, Rooney indeed steps his foot towards the camera and looks at it self-assuredly, apparently posing, even leading the gaze of the cameraman by his movement. BBC, 'Maze Prison Protest, BBC Newsnight (1980)', BBC, uploaded 8 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p078l4nb>.

⁸¹⁹ Codfrey, 'Television Delivers', 242.

⁸²⁰ Long, 'Visual Art'.

Sands was the face of the hunger strike, he dominates the narrative and Rooney is associated with him simply by being depicted as an H block prisoner.⁸²¹ Martyrdom is about the larger framework of death, in this case the Republican cause, which is first and foremost represented by Sands, rather than by the individual.

6.3.3 The Martyr Is Neither Solely 'Middle Eastern' nor Solely 'Islamic'

The dead of the Easter Rising of 1916 remind us of the men who were executed in Beirut's Martyrs Square in the same year. Both groups of men were killed because they advocated for independence—the former from the British, the latter from the Ottoman empire.

Looking at the images of the dead in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, it becomes clear that they have a similar anatomy. In each country, visuals of martyrs include: a photograph, or a painting after a photograph of the deceased; symbols such as birds and flowers; an emblem that points to the issuer; and slogans, which are often alike. For example, we read 'Lest We Forget' in a Unionist mural in Northern Ireland (Fig. 6.3) and 'We Will Not Forget' in a poster issued during the *Wars* (Fig. 3.57).

Other points of similarity are that pictures are serialised, martyrs are predominantly male, and violent images appear in their function as accusation images. Moreover, certain people are depicted more often than others and can therefore be called celebrity martyrs; examples are Bobby Sands and Bachir Gemayel. Especially with regard to celebrity martyrs, religious myths, in particular those of Jesus (Lebanon and Northern Ireland) and Hussein (Lebanon), are reactivated in posters. And of course, different groups perceive different dead people as martyrs.

Also, violence against images is not restricted to one locality. As mentioned in 2.1, in 1944, the French destroyed Nazi posters after the Germans were pushed back in WWII. In Lebanon, images of Bachir were burned, those of Soleimani were punched, and Brady the Black's installation, which comprised pictures of those killed in the Beirut explosion on 4 August, was violently washed away with water cannons, while in Northern Ireland, the Arts Council overpainted sectarian murals. In general, the city centres of Belfast and Beirut are mostly sanitised, rid of traces of violence.

In Northern Ireland and Lebanon, the posters of the undead martyrs are a part of the Troubles and the *Wars*, respectively, and therefore speak of an officially ended but ongoing conflict. These protracted conflicts manifest themselves in the fact that in both locations, sectarian violence regularly flares up and the sects were unable to form a government—though since early 2024, after a two-year hiatus, the

⁸²¹ Ibid.

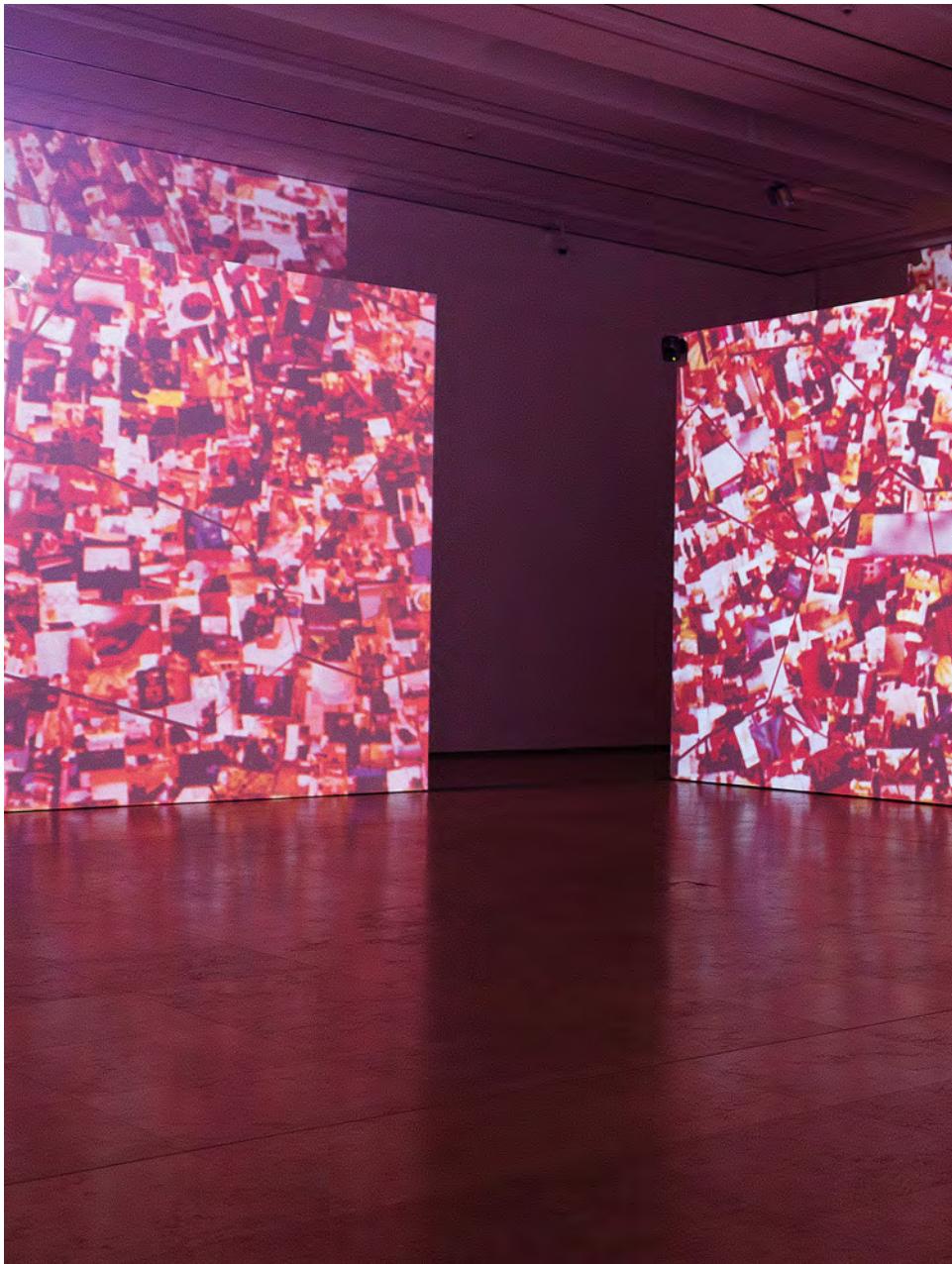
Northern Ireland Assembly is working again. According to Rolston, the problem in Northern Ireland—and also in Lebanon, I would add—is an ‘unnatural obsession with remembering’ that results in a ‘seemingly endless struggle’,⁸²² which is fought—among other means—via images of the dead. Of course, the situation in Northern Ireland is less complex than in Lebanon because there are only two sects and not eighteen, but in both cases, images of the different groups are used to mark sectarian territory and to define a group’s identity.

Artists in both geographies reflect this cult of martyrdom. Richard Hamilton and Rabih Mroué use the visual strategy of appropriation art and engage with images that precede theirs. Hamilton, in *The Citizen*, and Mroué, in *Nancy*, critically reveal the recipe and the transmission of martyrdom, scrutinise how archetypical myths of martyrs are evoked, and expose the fact that martyrdom is less about an individual death and more a part of visual politics.

By including the example of Northern Ireland, I thus showed that martyrdom is also celebrated in Europe and that the figure of the martyr extends the ‘jihadist from the Middle East’. There is no need to travel far to see an artistic reflection on the making of a martyr; one can just go to London’s Tate Modern and view Hamilton’s *Citizen*. Staying in Europe, it would also be worthwhile to explore how Russia’s war on Ukraine, which started while I was working on this book, has provided fertile ground for martyrdom in Ukraine as well as in Russia, and to what extent the findings of my book can also be applied to these geographies.⁸²³ However, my thoughts in 6.3 should be considered not as thorough analyses, but as outlooks for further research. The martyr is not only a figure that escapes a fixed definition or conception, but also a figure that cannot be limited to certain times or geographies.

822 Rolston, ‘Trying to Reach the Future’, 286.

823 For Russia, see Yuliya Minkova, *Making Martyrs: The Language of Sacrifice in Russia from Stalin to Putin* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018). For Ukraine, see Guido Hausmann and Iryna Sklokina (eds.), *The Political Cult of the Dead in Ukraine: Traditions and Dimensions from the First World War to Today* (Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2021). Neither publication touches upon the most recent war. It seems that the dead of the ongoing war are not overtly celebrated in Russia, and that this is because the government tries not to visualise the dead Russian soldiers—doing so would directly show the cost of Russian lives and thus risk support for the war among citizens. In Ukraine, in contrast, soldiers who died in the conflict are visually remembered in public; an example is the so-called ‘Wall of Remembrance of the Fallen for Ukraine’ in Kyiv.



Zad Moultaka, *Ejecta*, 2023, Single-Channel Stereo Sound and Video with Four Projectors, 3 min on Loop, Courtesy of Zad Moultaka, Photograph Alma Moultaka.



It's 26 May 2023. I am again on the esplanade of the Sursock Museum, which is reopening almost three years after it was destroyed by the explosion. The artworks inside the museum look like they did before the blast, but they have lost their tradition, not visibly but immaterially.

The colourful glass windows are restored, and the blue plastic foil has disappeared. The congregation of the sculptures of the dead is still here. They are also part of the opening. While Hoayek's *Martyrs Statue* is illuminated by spotlights, the bench commemorating Gaia Fodoulian and the swing remembering Isaac Oehlers are onlookers in a corner. A DJ is standing with his booth right in front of the swing, while someone else is sitting on the bench.

It's crowded, there are many familiar faces, and it seems like all the art-people who remained in Beirut are here. Conversations flow superficially, and there is still a certain heaviness in the air. Five exhibitions are opening today. One of them is Zad Moultaka's *Ejecta* (2023), a visual-sound installation in which digital images of the works of the museum's collection explode and then move down the frames like lava erupting and streaming down from a volcano. The noise of a blast and of shattering glass is audible simultaneously. A link to 4 August is inevitable. On a wall next to the installation, visitors are invited to write or draw as a 'healing ritual'. According to the accompanying text, the work intends to be cathartic: 'Ejecta—originally defined as volcanic ejected particles—expels the darkness, to form a crater of light'. Moultaka hopes that this installation will 'inspire people to turn their dark thoughts about that day [4 August] into hope for the future', and adds: 'It's important today to take this violence and transform it into something positive'.⁸²⁴ This reminds us of Sadek's critique of those who rush into a future without any consideration of the unresolved past or the dead. Like the two statues in the port, Moultaka's *Ejecta* seems to call on Beirut to rise from the ashes, to bury the memory of the blast and to focus on the future instead of lingering in the now that is inhabited by a past that is not settled. At the same time, *Ejecta* disavows the cancelled future and acts as if the future would still be ahead; standing inside the installation felt like 'dancing to ghost songs', which try to convince us 'that the music of yesteryear', the promise of a future, 'is really the music of today'.⁸²⁵

There will undoubtedly be more artworks to come that deal with the blast, and maybe one day a book will be written about art around 4 August only.⁸²⁶ We will end our journey through roughly forty-five years of Beirut's pictures here, on an evening that, despite Moultaka's installation, does not feel like a future.

824 NEWS WIRES, 'Iconic Museum in Beirut Reopens Three Years After Damages from Port Blast', *France 24*, 27 May 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20230527-iconic-museum-in-beirut-reopens-three-years-after-damages-from-port-blast>.

825 Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 181.

826 Exhibitions that are dealing with the blast that took place after the re-opening of the Sursock Museum are Jad el Khoury's *Soft Shields* in Tanit Gallery (29 November–29 December 2023) and Chérine Yazbeck's *Beirut Blast & Other Stories* in Tabbal Building (15 December 2023– 6 January 2024).