

Grace Owens

Professor Janet McDaniel

LBST 2101

7 May 2022

Zombie

The Cranberries were an alternative rock band originating out of Ireland who made a massive impact on the music industry and the world. The Cranberries rose to popularity after releasing an album called *No Need to Argue*, which contained a song named "Zombie." "Zombie" became the most popular song from that album due to the intense rock music and the lead singer's voice, Dolores O'Riordan. However, many people were unaware of the dark and tragic story that fueled the song's creation. The song has an entirely new meaning through some research and analysis of the music video, lyrics, and music itself.

As the music video begins, the audience sees boys playing around destroyed homes and soldiers walking around with guns. These visuals are not paid actors or green screens, but actual British soldiers and young boys filmed in Ireland. During the period in which the music video was filmed, the conflict between the Irish Republican Army and Britain was ongoing. The Irish Republican Army was created in 1919 after taking up the mantle of an organization called the Irish Volunteers, whose will be to reunite Ireland and end British rule in Northern Ireland (Paul et al. *Irish Republican Army Britannica*.)

As for the young boys seen playing around the destroyed homes, they represented two boys named Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball, who had tragically lost their lives due to an Irish

Republican Army bombing. In fact, the core of the song and music video is centered around protesting the conflict between the Irish Republican Army and Britain. In an interview, Dolores O'Riordan stated, "I wanted it to be a really aggressive song because it was about an aggressive subject: a child's life being taken by violence." (McDonnell *Dolores O'Riordan Transcript*) In another interview, O'Riordan comments, "I remember being on tour and being in the UK at the time when the child died, and just being really sad about it all... It's a tough thing to sing about, but when you're young you don't think twice about things, you just grab it and do it..." (Johnston *The story behind the song: The cranberries - zombie*).

A couple of seconds later, an engrossing scene is revealed, showing the lead singer covered in gold standing in front of a cross surrounded by young boys coated in silver paint dressed as cherubs. The gold and silver coloring of Dolores O'Riordan and the young boys represent Christ-like figures who are supposed to be the good in the world. In an interview, Dolores notes, "Silver and gold symbolize the beauty that we see in the world or that we care to open our eyes to." (McDonnell *Dolores O'Riordan Transcript*) The cross in the background has a deeper meaning, which impacts later as you dive into the music video.

When the lyrics begin to be sung, you hear the words, "Another head hangs lowly Child is slowly taken and the violence, caused such silence Who are we mistaken?" (Genius *The cranberries – zombie*) These lyrics reference the two young boys who lost their lives due to the Irish Republic Army's bombing. The lyrics state if violence is silencing children, then what is wrong with the world? The next series of lyrics goes as follows, "But you see, it's not me It's not my family in your head, in your head, they are fighting With their tanks, and their bombs And their bombs, and their guns In your head, in your head they are crying." (Genius *The cranberries – zombie*) These lyrics fixate on Dolores O'Riordan's anger toward the Irish Republican Army,

especially after they announced they were doing it for the benefit of Ireland (Savage *The tragedy that inspired zombie - the cranberries' biggest hit*). In an interview with the BBC, she confirms, "When it says in the song, 'It's *not me, it's not my family*,' that's what I'm saying. It's not Ireland, it's some idiots living in the past." (Savage *The tragedy that inspired zombie - the cranberries' biggest hit*)

Next comes the chorus where The Cranberries call the Irish Republican Army "zombies" since their actions and behavior are that of a zombie. This mindless, undead creature is only capable of destruction. The chorus resolidifies the anger that Dolores O'Riordan felt by her screaming the lyrics, "In your head, in your head Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie What's in your head, in your head? Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie oh." (Genius *The cranberries – zombie*) The next verse begins with, "Another mother's breakin' Heart is takin' over" (Genius *The cranberries – zombie*.) This refers to one of the grieving mothers who appeared on tv speaking about her son's death due to the bombing. (Savage *The tragedy that inspired zombie - the cranberries' biggest hit*)

As the song continues, a new set of lyrics appears that rewards the audience's ear, "It's the same old theme, since 1916 In your head, in your head, they're still fighting." (Genius *The cranberries – zombie*) Dolores O'Riordan refers to a rebellion the Irish Republican Army (known as the Irish Volunteers) held against the British government in 1916, known as Easter Rising, since the uprising was held on Easter Sunday. (Editors of Britannica *Easter rising*) Dolores O'Riordan establishes that the Irish Republican Army has been fighting the same fight since the organization's creation and that the endless fighting is still constantly in their heads. The world, throughout history, has done the same thing. We have made war a part of culture since wars come down to three basic things revenge, resources, fighting for injustice, and fighting over land,

"War therefore is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will."
(Clausewitz: War as politics by other means).

As the song ends, a guitar riff is played over a scene where four young boys painted in silver are holding hands around the cross and eventually start screaming. They represent Jesus and the suffering he endured even though he was innocent, just like the boys who died in the bombing. Dolores O'Riordan commented on that scene by stating, "Then the screaming and the cross and the real, black-and-white footage symbolize the pain that's there and we close our eyes to: the children that suffer, and the parents and families that suffer." (*Savage The tragedy that inspired zombie - the cranberries' biggest hit*) The images bothered the public so much that the music video was banned in Britain due to the war images that were seen as violent.
(Zombieguide Archives *Breaking: "Zombie" censored from airwaves by British Government*)

"Zombie" made an everlasting impact on the world due to its overwhelming message of fighting against violence. This song is still used as an anthem to fight against unnecessary killing during war. And I have a feeling it will continue to be an anthem for many years to come.

Lyrics and Music Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ejga4kJUts>

Another head hangs lowly

Child is slowly taken

And the violence, caused such silence

Who are we mistaken?

But you see, it's not me

It's not my family

In your head, in your head, they are fighting

With their tanks, and their bombs

And their bombs, and their guns

In your head, in your head they are crying

In your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie

What's in your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie, oh

Do, do, do, do

Do, do, do, do

Do, do, do, do

Do, do, do, do

Another mother's breaking

Heart is taking over

When the violence causes silence

We must be mistaken

It's the same old theme

Since nineteen-sixteen

In your head, in your head, they're still fighting

With their tanks, and their bombs

And their bombs, and their guns

In your head, in your head, they are dying

In your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie

What's in your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie

Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh, ay, oh, ya ya

Works Cited

- BBC. "Breaking: 'Zombie' Censored from Aiwaves by British Government." *Cranberries World*, cranberriesworld.com/2003/03/29/breaking-zombie-censored-from-aiwaves-by-british-government/.

Clausewitz. "Clausewitz: War as Politics by Other Means." *Online Library of Liberty*,
oll.libertyfund.org/page/clausewitz-war-as-politics-by-other-means.

Cowell-Meyers. "Irish Republican Army." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica,
Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/Irish-Republican-Army.

Genius. "The Cranberries – Zombie." *Genius*, genius.com/The-cranberries-zombie-lyrics.

Johnston, Emma. "The Story behind the Song: The Cranberries - Zombie." *Loudersound*,
Louder, 2 Nov. 2017, www.loudersound.com/features/the-story-behind-the-song-the-
cranberries-zombie.

McDonnell, Evelyn. "Dolores O'Riordan Transcript." *Populism*, 19 Jan. 2018,
populismblog.wordpress.com/2018/01/18/dolores-oriordan-transcript/.

Savage, Mark. "The Tragedy That Inspired Zombie - the Cranberries' Biggest Hit." *BBC News*,
BBC, 16 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-42702781.

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Easter Rising." *Encyclopædia Britannica*,
Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/event/Easter-Rising.