

On Sinead O'Conner

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Sinead O'Connor, born in 1966, was an Irish singer/songwriter who attained world-wide, pop-star fame in the early 1990s. She spoke out forcefully against social injustice to women and child abuse. She shared the trauma she herself had endured as a child and her continuing struggles with mental illness. Most famously, or infamously, at the end of a "Saturday Night Live" performance on October 3rd, 1992, she unexpectedly tore up a picture of Pope Paul II, for which she was widely condemned. She later linked the Catholic Church to abuse in families and said the picture was her mother's that she took down from the wall after her mother's death. Her memoir *Rememberings* recounts her mother's horrific physical and emotional abuse of her. I highly recommend the book, beautifully written and deeply moving and most thought-provoking. Though Sinead continued to record and perform, her fame faded after the SNL incident. She died on July 26th, 2023 in London at 56. At this writing, the circumstances of her death are undetermined.

In 1993, Sinead wrote an open letter to the *Irish Times* newspaper.

My name is Sinead O'Connor and I am learning to love myself. I'm deserving. I deserve to be treated with respect, I deserve not to be treated like dirt, I deserve to be listened to. My name is Sinead O'Connor. I am a woman, I have something to offer. I am and have always been carrying a lot of grief from my lost childhood and the effects of its horror and violence on my life. I find it hard to be myself, to show my feelings. To get to the joy, I need to relieve the pain which is blocking me. If I do not do this, I will not survive. I was angry before because I was frightened, but I know if you could really listen, you'd see that we do not know what we are doing when we mock the expression

of human feeling. When we scoff at the sound of our children's keening [expressions of grief and sorrow], there's a mirror into which we are not looking.