

“Take me to church¹” - psychoanalysis of the song².

(2015)

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¹ Written and performed by Andrew Hozier-Byrne.

² There is also Polish, original version of that paper “Take me to church – psychoanaliza utworu”.

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Every time when psychoanalyst has to rebuild, reconstruct the history of the individual expressed through a more or less consciously spoken words, it is a difficult task, sentenced to grace of replacement. This shift every time grabs on the same reference point, which in our case is the life of the unconscious, so any thoughts, feelings, experiences, motives are hidden under the top layer of consciousness⁴. This task is worthy of a mature analyst grounded in theory and also of the result of mutual feedback. Maturity is shaped by the theory and its specific understanding, and this understanding cannot exist without the nucleus of a previously prepared mental maturity. Returning to the topic, commonly known are distortions which make preconscious, large part of our ego. Recently, listening to the radio my ear caught a song. The song, as the so-called pop amazed me with its form, and in particular the intensity of words, substance. And such a huge story was said by language of distortions, creating even poetry artwork. I will try to subject that history to psychoanalysis and tell it accurately as soon as it is possible for me at the moment of my development in psychoanalytic theory. But I am afraid that when I look into this work in a few years, I will recognize it as a preschool fun being dissatisfied with its bitter fruit.

Analyzed song was written by a young man, 24-year-old Irishman (born in 1990), vocalist, guitarist and composer. According to the information commonly available, this man performs music in the style of Indian folk, soul, India, rock, blues, and baroque pop. I do refrain from giving the full name of the author. The reader will ask for information about the song title, otherwise that analysis would have no sense, so the name will not remain long a mystery. Striking is the fact that such a young mind in the modern world, the world of laziness and stupidity, gave the world so heavily encrypted product in the artistic character of the code. Probably the author intended to describe in text, what will be revealed in our analysis as an one option. The way it was encrypted reveals another issue which probably the very author was not fully aware of when writing the song. Therefore, on the one hand, according to footage there is consciously covered one issue, on the other hand, thanks to a deeper, but not the deepest analysis we will reveal another issue. It is interesting how the author would see this analysis. It seems to me that he would be a little surprised, but certainly not shocked by something that he has never known.

Slowly, we should aim to gradually reveal the story. I could write in points elements which have been re-translated into consciousness language, but the analysis of verse after verse would give nothing good. The story written in the text seems to be arranged in a certain order, after the analysis it turns out to be complicated, as if spilled. Gather all of that, I'll try to reconstruct its unconscious run. I doubt whether my ability to express the written word, the ability of eloquence would go hand in hand with beauty and extraordinary⁵ appearing in the

⁴ Writing that I meant another point of references, it was early childhood object relation.

⁵ We remember there is a theory of uncanny in psychoanalysis.

analysis of this history. I have trust in reader, his understanding, his rudimentary knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, some reader's idea of the life of a baby. And especially, I have trust in reader's ability to fully and fantastically imagine the history that I would like to present in one piece. My hand trembles under the pressure of the psychic force at the thought of the fatigue or some form of unconscious ignorance that could damage this wonderful story. At once, I would like to add that the story is as common as common is phenomenon that will be exposed and this story is not just an author's only, but of a large number of other people.

The analysis will be carried in the context of a number of perspectives. First, refers to the very author. Sometimes, individual will be allowed to take the form of child or even infant. Another perspective concerns object relation from the early childhood of individual, its image and the role in whole story. Then we see an incredible transformation of the original object into an object being partner of our individual as an adult. Next perspective, the population, society. On the one hand, it may be a continuation of the original object, but we will assume it as a completely different. The last perspective is the vision of the instrument or specific causes by which the individual will expose his life, and then for the same reason he is going to save it.

This history as the history of every life begins from birth. Before the time of birth there was a pregnant woman and nine months of carrying. We find that the attitude of the pregnant mother, the birth of a child, he was not serious - "got a giggle at the funeral." Or, as we will see, it is possible that it is not the mother's problem, but the people, they do not approve it. Probably close environment (family) of the woman did not accept the idea of pregnancy and child birth. Probably they saw her as immature, irresponsible. Person "lover", which appears here, it is just the memory of his own mother. Calling mother as a lover is a puncture of unconsciously thought of early childhood, when the child literally treats his mother as his mistress.

"Heaven" appearing in the following verses confirms our analysis, it refers to prenatal time, pregnancy. Speaking of the heaven reminds here about the fetus, evokes pure instinctual mother's love to her yet unborn child, a child immersed in her body. The individual says, "I should worship her before," it means that as the older child he moved away from her, did not recognize her love, her efforts. Now as the adult mentions it as a mistake, "she is the last true mouthpiece". For the moment, these words will be completely free of misunderstanding. Later in the text, we find that the child was "poisoned", the pregnancy was poisoned. The baby was born sick. What's going on? What disease? Well pregnancy, which was probably a bust, unplanned, was also recognized by the people (family) as something bad, something bad from the very beginning, condemned to eternal misery. The disease also means a sin, evil deed, something immoral. It is seen this way in the eyes of the people, that's why they are called here as "church". That people filled individual with the disease - "fresh poison every week." We suspect that it was a Sunday mass, community, people. Being with them, meeting them probably was killing mother and the child - "You heard them say it". People (family) knew, or they speculated that the child comes from the sin. The irony of the mother may mean something else, namely, it can be laughing off people stupidity, who don't know what they are doing. After all, she is a mother, she bears a child, and she loves it. How could she get rid of the child, conceal pregnancy, take away sin. We can see here another thought. Mouthpiece, someone who knows a lot, is acquainted with this case, can struggle with this issue, and stand

up for it. The mother was aware of what brings the child - sin, social condemnation, hard life, a nightmare. On the one hand, there is the child conceived in sin, on the other hand, sin can mean a homosexual nature of the child⁶ (as it tells the video clip). Mother probably has long before intuited that her child is different, and sick in the eyes of the people (family). We can guess that mother accepted the homosexual nature of his child.

Even in a deeper perspective of a woman, a lover can mean love in general, partnership love. The individual treats his love, gay love, as an irony. People condemn, disapprove it. More... they find it as a sin that is unforgivable but our individual just loves it.

"Worship in the bedroom" at first blush is about hiding. Apparently, it concerns hiding homosexual love, partner. There is replacement here. To worship means to pray, something that is done in the church, among other people. In this situation, sacrifice is going to be paid and worshipping that love needs to be displaced from social life to a closed, private room. We can see what renunciation meets homosexual love, renunciation of functioning in public, respectable life. Individual at the moment mentions full symbiosis and projects it into the future. It appears as a wish coming from this period of development. Wish that individual desires to come true with his partner as an adult. To be alone with him, full of corporal and mental solidify. This moment is also derived from the prenatal period, related to the only place where we felt safe. Individual wants to escape from the world of reality. Wish of return to the womb of intrauterine is the most momentous sign of fatigue that is caused of life with the sin, sickness. In spite of this intoxication, social pathology we can see that the individual accepts himself, that in the eyes of others is recognized as someone sick, sinful, loser. We can see here the strength of "I". Such a serious impingement, poison implanted, internalized by the child more and more often turns out to be weak in the face of "I". As we can see the psychic apparatus is able to cope with such danger. We can only regret at the fate of those whose "I" renounced their true shape turning into a false image of themselves, so-called false self (Winnicott, 1971).

Meanwhile, we see can see a submission, individual transfer of his power to the people, the church and the family: "command me to be well". We can notice analogy to spells, prayers. Commands are common in the Bible, for example: "at the command of the Lord grew a tree." In the Bible, in magic, in prayers every time the meaning of psychological mechanism of the ego is the same, namely, so-called magical thinking. The immaturity of the ego in early childhood does not allow the child to understand the real causes of phenomena. Child assigns agency to himself, his intentions. Further in development, the child is able to think more advanced, recognize the source of agency. Although in some cases those abilities are taken away in certain areas of life. Returning to our analysis, individual wants to give the opportunity to make the change, repair to the people, society. The word has the power of turnings wishes into facts. On the one hand, it reveals the immaturity of using magic, prayer, on the other reveals helplessness. What one can do with something what is out of his control, only think

⁶ Why the homosexuality appears in the interpretation? The very text of the song does not mention it literally. I was pointed out that I did not deduce that. Writing it I was sure it is obvious. Yet, someone who is not homosexual or has no direct experiences with gay people would not notice it is about that here. Words play: "born sick", "worship in the bedroom" and the context: "church", "absolutes", "sin" point out clearly that is going just about homosexuality.

and say it. Analyzing a bit deeper in the context of that what we know already, we can conclude that it is a power to rip out of the sin. Church, people have the ability or they assign themselves the ability to remove sin from people, to fix them. We can hear it often when religious people say about homosexuals: "it should be healed". Probably very individual thought about it, or someone else proposed it. Although in all context, I think that individual might have been forced to undertake a psychotherapy.

Refrain. Listening to the song we feel how much force it contains, strength and despair, but rather the strength of despair. The individual gives up. Gives his entire existence to the mercy of the church, to the people, to the family, to those who cursed the existence of a child conceived in sin. Once again, symbiosis is invoked. Probably it has a masochistic connotations here. The individual knows that is indulging to the ones <church> who are going to accuse, judge and sentence him to death. We may even discover here the human memory of the Inquisition. Murdered, tortured people were accused of evil, witchcraft, mortal sins. The sin, here, is a conception in sin and the homosexual love. Despite the fact that Inquisition times passed long time ago, the way of functioning and thinking has not change. We wonder why the individual screams "take me to church"? Why does he want to give himself into the hands of his hangmen? As we previously mentioned it is about symbiosis period. Infant is dependent on the caregiver, it is helpless. The child cannot manage by self and is faded to grace of his parents. The parent either take care of a child, or destroys it by his negligence, carelessness. There is clearly seen immature, cruel aspect. Our individual living in this kind of world is doomed as a child in such a symbiotic relation. There is no strength to fight. Aggressor is much stronger. We know how strong society is, how extensive are the legions of Christian people, and we can see here how hard is to live normally, autonomously, freely.

There are some more expressions that should be analyzed in the refrain. What is "the shrine of yours lies"? It is synonym of the church, the place where our individual is going to be sentenced. What does it mean here? Each reader more or less related to the church knows how many secrets and irregularities church hides. I will not discover here America enumerating it. I will tell one of all possible interpretations of this phrase. There are people who have renounced themselves true. Renounced their nature dressing it into habit, tying it all bind up with the celibacy. These people every day make a sacrifice of themselves, of what has been renounced, denied. These people every day must pretend, lie and play the role of decent. Respectable in the eyes of God, that is, in the eyes of a parent. And this is what it is all about – pretending. We can say that there are also those people, including our individual, who maintained, saved themselves. These people are real. However, their happiness does not abide long. Those who killed their nature, now are trying to deprive the nature (life) of those who are still with steadfast. And those true persecuted by their oppressors, also make a sacrifice of themselves, of the truth: "I'll tell you my sins, and you can sharpen your knife". Sin is just the truth, it is that part of human nature that others (Christian people) have lost. And here or elsewhere that sin is love. Every time when we talk about these people (the church), we mean

a renunciation of libidinal energy, which is focused on the object of love and entails a degree of partial drives.⁷

Another beautiful formation, supported by a vast knowledge of our unconscious, is "deathless death". Our consciousness can ask whether it is possible. In the original it is death without death, can death be immortal? This is the paradox of our consciousness, but possible product to our ego as a condensation of opposites. In our unconsciousness opposites seem to be connected, blended into one (Freud, 1910). Relying on the psychoanalytic theory, we might ask what is death? Does such a phenomenon really exist as defined as we know it? Death is the end of life. It is not the place to deliver a theory of death. In a few words, we can say that death is the same as the birthing in point of view our unconsciousness. Both phenomena are like the same thing: the gate that separate one reality from another. On the one hand, there is a signpost with the word "death" and another one with: "birth". Therefore when dying we are being born. Dying forever, it is like couldn't be born. Something what is stifled. Here, the brake is the church that offers eternal infinite death. The sin, mortal sin, is so serious and grave (it is connected with the most sensitive issue, the love) that punishment cannot be ordinary death, it must be eternal death, eternal agony. Those who renounced love are dying forever, now want to sentence the same sever penalty over individual.

There is calling god at the end of the refrain. We need to remember that god is always a fantasmatic transference of caregiver from the period of symbiosis. The god is good, that reveal a positive aspect of the internal object. Escape to the memories, indulging to the good internal object, the same like the wish of the return to the womb before, mention about fatigue of the battle with the external world. There is a period rapprochement- subphase of the separation-individuation process and the child returns to his mother in order to "emotionally refuel" (Mahler, 1975). There is similar situation here. Individual wants to go back in time to the period of symbiosis in force of fantasy thinking. It is a regression, individual wants to give his life to the object. As the infant lives in dual individual with the object, our individual wants to fulfill it literally. Give own life back to somebody that means stop living as a separated individual.

Earlier individual wanted to give his live to the aggressors, now he wants to give it to the object. Here appears ambivalence: to live and die at the same time. We already know the meaning of the ambivalence in the life of the unconscious. Two main forces sound here very loudly. The drive of live and the drive of death. The situation in which our individual lives has led or tried to cause a splitting that drives. "If they say that I'm sick, even though I don't feel sick, I must be sick". This pressure, this poison coming from the outward like a wedge is driven into the basic system to split it. For a moment, we have seen that these two drives were flowing two separated fluxes. We know that a healthy personality integrates that drives into one. Psychic aperture makes transformation of aggression, sublimates it, so we are able to create a constructive, *inter alia*, culture. In the situation of our individual splitting of that drives provoked a need to be dominated, possessed and to be submissive in general. Psychic energy, aggression, turned against "I", the individual for a moment gave his life to good object, the

⁷ It is known only to a psychoanalyst what partial drives are. Neither psychology nor sexology does understand sexual driver as a force consisted with partial drives.

mother in order to find refuge, to survive, gain strength, to be able to stand up again to fight for "I". Each of us has good internal objects and always in crisis should resort to them, this is just the remnant of the "safe base", this is the shelter where the "I" can survive any war, even the most tragic one.

Individual describes himself as a pagan of the good times. It is a beautiful condensation, which I will analyze separately and see how one follows from the other. Paganism is an old, forgotten faith. This is a belief based on the phenomena of nature. The time of paganism was replaced by the Christianity. Few of us remember how painful the change was, as people were forced to renounce their faith in the phenomena of nature in favor of faith in a god father. Something that was original was pushed away by something secondary. It is not difficult for a psychoanalyst to see here an analogy to the mental processes taking place in each of us, the analogy to the process of repression. By using paganism our original, spontaneous manifestations of life, our true nature are illustrated here. This nature is further taken from us, as once the belief in the phenomena of nature. Repression is made. Pedagogical activities, cultural activities, church activities replace the true nature by delusions coming from our superego. Individual dares to name himself a pagan, so he is that one who maintained his nature, truth. Paganism means here something another. It is going about those times that are already gone, about childhood memories, something that has been taken away and lost forever. And the good times, it is just a carefree childhood, when the child was free from any worries. The child was not aware of suffering, of what is now experiencing as "sinner", as "sick". Further the issue only verifies our speculation. We know for a long time that "sunlight" is nothing other than parental care.

Next individual mentions something called "goddess". We could give here the interpretation that it is a mother as we interpreted before, but here the object is evolving. There is beautiful evolution that only few of us could see in daily life. Now we can see that the object becomes a mature partner, mature man. But it is about love in general, homosexual love, which is doomed to concealment, to eternal damnation. That love makes demands. The individual is forced to sacrifice something, to sacrifice themselves. Now, going forward, the analysis reveals that there is something expensive, something decent, and something important. Something that individual under the pressure of love must find. "Draining the Sea", "main course" probably unconscious tossed here a desire to have a child, being a parent. Probably that requirement of the love is the fruit in the form of another life. Someone might wonder about a child of a homosexual couple. Psychoanalysis cannot see nothing strange here. Two libidinal instincts (drives) are fated this way to continue the life regardless of any circumstances.

It is not difficult to connect the above analysis of the formation of another "high horse and stable". In a literal sense, it is going about the genitalia (male), in another sense it is powerful energy of libido, the same that powers the individual and his relation to the current object of love. Unfortunately, this horse is kept in a stable, closed. It is unknown for how long is it there and how long it will be there. We feel only hope that one day it will be disclosed, its value will be revealed to the world.

"A lot of starving faithful", it is not about people from the church that we were talking about before. They are the same, similar to our individual. Their hunger is love, what in this world is so difficult. This feeling is here fused with oral period, the child's world revolves around food, experiencing either satiety or hunger. Then the emotional bond between him and the caregiver is tied, it is first love, the primal love. Adult person who is denied of love or someone who renounced the love, is someone who is eternally starving. Those mentioned, "starving faithful," are full of hope that the food will come one day, they will be allowed to eat, they'll be allowed to love, just as our hero, with the same degree of courage and strength. Every living organism willy-nilly met the primal love, now remember consciously or unconsciously, hence there is "this is hungry work".

There is one more thing that should be explained. It seems that it will be the most beautiful part of this whole tragic history. As we saw previously the sin is the love, the gay love, so in that part we will be talking about just that love. There is some ritual exposed here, some activity that we should associate with something sacred. The ritual is always a sacred act for the doer. Again, there is a paradox. We know that the ritual is usually lead by someone, by someone "over". There is a wish to remove such person and more... such people. According to our theory, it refers to parents, to the authorities (of church), to the people (the ones that judge), and, above all it refers to the superego. During the ritual individual wants to be free from the power of all these forces. This ritual is unique, only for certain people. There is no place for the rest, for something unnecessary. In this situation, the supremacy of anything is superfluous. Sin, which provoked the death sentence, now is demoted to innocence. The individual cannot find anything better than it. Sweetness, innocence, tenderness are associated with the childhood, where the law of sin did not play such a role. The child is not aware of sin, is unconscious of it. Our individual this way removes what has been called the sin, all evil from it. He remains fully conscious. Madness, meaning the forbidden love. Seen in this way by the people, church. Madness, which is also an altered state of consciousness, a specific moment associated with experiencing intensive sensations. The world we live in is not a happy place, the major role plays sadness. Making ritual, we can see that something unusual is done. The individual has already lost the right to live, under the pressure of the force of aggressors gave back the right to existence, indulge himself to death. Participation in the ritual, or better would be said making the ritual, allows our individual to recover himself. To clean, which means free of dirt, free from falsity and lies. In one moment we will literally get to know what this ritual is, now we can say that it contains of the love and its power. Love saved our individual. The individual is now able to be called a human, before he was called sick ("you heard them say it"). Returning now to the ritual, we learn that is was a sexual intercourse. The ritual is making love (homosexual) hidden under the guise of the disease, sin and folly contrasted with the earthly scene. Madness takes another meaning, elation and otherworldly experience. Being in the womb we were not in this world, we were in another world. The author unwittingly showed us what the gap is between love, mental connection, back to the womb and the earthly living in the realm of sins, lies and delusions. Sexual intercourse made in ecstasy of love, is nothing else but a mental return to the mother's womb.

In the whole song there is twice three calls "amen". This way it takes a form of prayer. We have already mentioned what prayer is, a form of magical thinking. This is not a typical prayer, it is a special prayer. Certainly it is not addressed to God or any other deity. I think

that, in accordance with the text and our analysis we can assume and we believe that this deity is just love, and more a free love. We could even make fantasies of interpretation such that this prayer would have the power to change the world. Showing the suffering and martyrdom of existence of the homosexual individuals⁸, or generally people saddled with the imaginary sin, disease. Psychoanalytic maturity leads us to dispose of such illusions also in this case, as in the case of all religious practices. The illusion will never fulfill itself, and therefore never the same word becomes flesh. Calling "Amen" meaning "so be it" is only an illusion, in which our ego may wallow. The reality is so cruel, that there is nothing else to do, it remains the words thrown to the wind. The words of this song are not empty, but their reception is frighteningly empty, devoid of humanity, devoid of depth. It is enough to look at the comments in the Internet, and attempts to block and remove the video clip. More and more people knowingly utters a prayers⁹ like the one, and even though the word itself does not make a miracle, that the actions and gestures that behind this are likely to bring salvation which our hero could not get from the church.

Watching the video clip we can see the gist of our analysis, homosexuality led to execution. There appears additional elements, e.g. burial casket. Probably this is the funeral which is mentioned in the song. We can see two happy men, but their happiness does not last long. Then we can see a herd approaching, their intentions. They're going to destroy. They start from the individual's home and then one of these two men is beaten, dragged somewhere into the woods. We can see a fire over there. This fire occurred at the beginning of clip too. Torturers try to open the casket, they cannot do it, it's closed too hard. They throw it all into the fire. The executioners delude themselves that they are able to destroy what is closed in the box. In the recording we cannot see what's inside the box, we can only rely on our analysis. There was closed, like a horse in a stable, homosexual love of these men. Fire is a sign of destruction, but also the strength of libido, strength of love. We can very clearly see the force of aggression, it materialized in the form of the perpetrators. We remember those perpetrators are people who have renounced love dressing it into sin¹⁰. We can ask the rhetorical question whether the captors would be able to destroy the power of love?

⁸ Martyrdom refers to the refrain.

⁹ It suggests some film based on a true story about boy who committed a suicide. Parents tried to cure him of homosexuality. Just the death of a child opened deep believing mother's eyes. The mother, Mary Griffith, said one time: "Before you echo 'Amen' in your home or place of worship, think and remember... a child is listening." The film "Prayers for Bobby", director: Russell Mulcahy, 2009 on the book: *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son* by Leroya F. Aaronsa.

¹⁰ It would be unacceptable to cite a research of experimental psychology in psychoanalytical essay, yet, I would like to mention something. Some researchers invited heterosexual men who recognize themselves as a homophobic and neutral in that case. They were divided in two groups because of that feature. Next they were shown the pornographic films: gay, lesbian and straight. Circumference of penis and erection was measured by special apparatus. It turned out that homophobic men in contrast to neutral men revealed high sexual arousal to gay stimuli. The authors of research explain it referring to psychoanalytic theory as a denial of real sexual orientation or repression it. (Henry E. Adams, Lester W. Wright, Jr., and Bethany A. Lohr. Is homophobia associated with homosexual arousal? University of Georgia, 1996. *Journal of abnormal psychology*. Vol. 105, No. 3, 440-445.) I noticed it by a chance.

The transformation that the perpetrators have undergone is interesting. The song tells about the church, and in the footage we can see the hooligans. It would be unnecessary to explain the relation of one to the other. Basing on the psychoanalytic theory we can say that both of that phenomena are the same. The transference of church into hooligans was made because of the identification mechanism (Freud, 1921). Further analysis of the video clip would be a repetition of the analysis of the text. At this point we can finish our arguments and allow the reader to watch the material once again, now with a deeper perspective than the one we can see on the screen and hear in the words of the text.

In conclusion, I would like to point how often during the analysis appears a period of symbiosis. The only time in our lives when we were totally dependent on others. This period as we can notice never passes. Even though in the spirit of development at some point we begin to separate from the object, we begin to acquire our own individuality, as said, Donald Winnicott (1971), we never become fully independent, "we aim (only) towards independence". This psychoanalytical truth appears in our analysis, in our daily lives. And whether we want or not to face the truth, we are always dependent on someone or something. In every situation we find some aspect of early childhood object. Sometimes it can be aspect of the loss (caregiver, love), and sometimes we can be fixated in some aspect of object, for example: strict parent, whose role takes then the religion and its doctrine and dogma.

The analysis of this song, so far, does not develop psychoanalytic theory, but it shows its ability to explain the hidden transformations and phenomena that are not only found in the life of dreams, neurotic life, and psychotic products. These wonderful formations can be found in the life of each of us. As has been said elsewhere, by surrendering to the deep psychoanalysis we find poetry in our own lives. Each of us has own poetry.

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