

**Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTAU7ILDZYU>

**[Verse 1]**

Dreamers  
They never learn  
They never learn  
Beyond the point  
Of no return  
Of no return  
Then it's too late  
The damage is done  
The damage is done

**[Verse 2]**

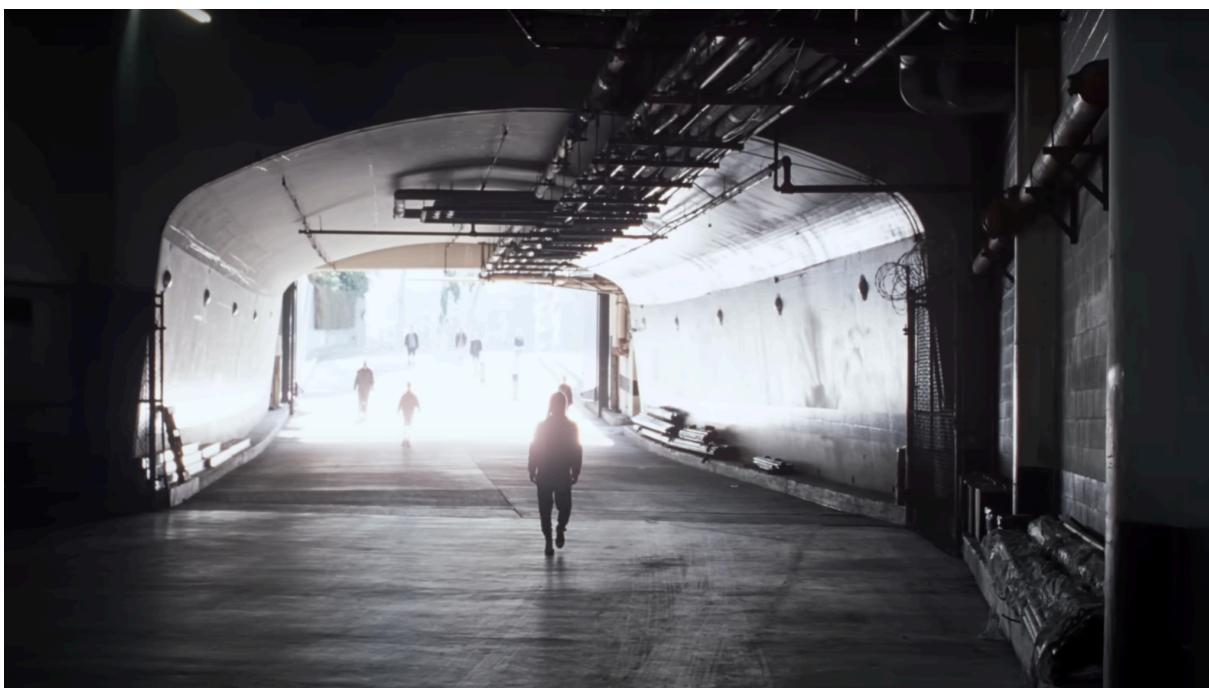
This goes  
Beyond me  
Beyond you  
A white room  
By a window  
Where the sun comes  
Through  
We are  
Just happy to serve  
Just happy to serve  
You

**[Outro]**

efil ym fo flaH  
efil ym fo flaH

At first glance, Radiohead's music videos might seem random and nonsensical, but under the surface, these videos hold a lot more meaning than they might seem to. One such video is Radiohead's music video for the song "Daydreaming" which is the second song off their latest record "A Moon Shaped Pool" released May 6th, 2016. The "Daydreaming" music video was directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, for whom Radiohead guitarist Johnny Greenwood has composed several film scores. The music video follows lead singer Thom Yorke walking through a series of doors, visiting new places as he passes through. The music video explores themes such as existentialism, memory, identity, alienation, and the human experience. Although this music video seems to at first be nonsensical and shallow, Radiohead often contains deeper meanings within its music and videos.

#### Doors meaning (the general meaning of the video)



**Figure 1:** Opening scene

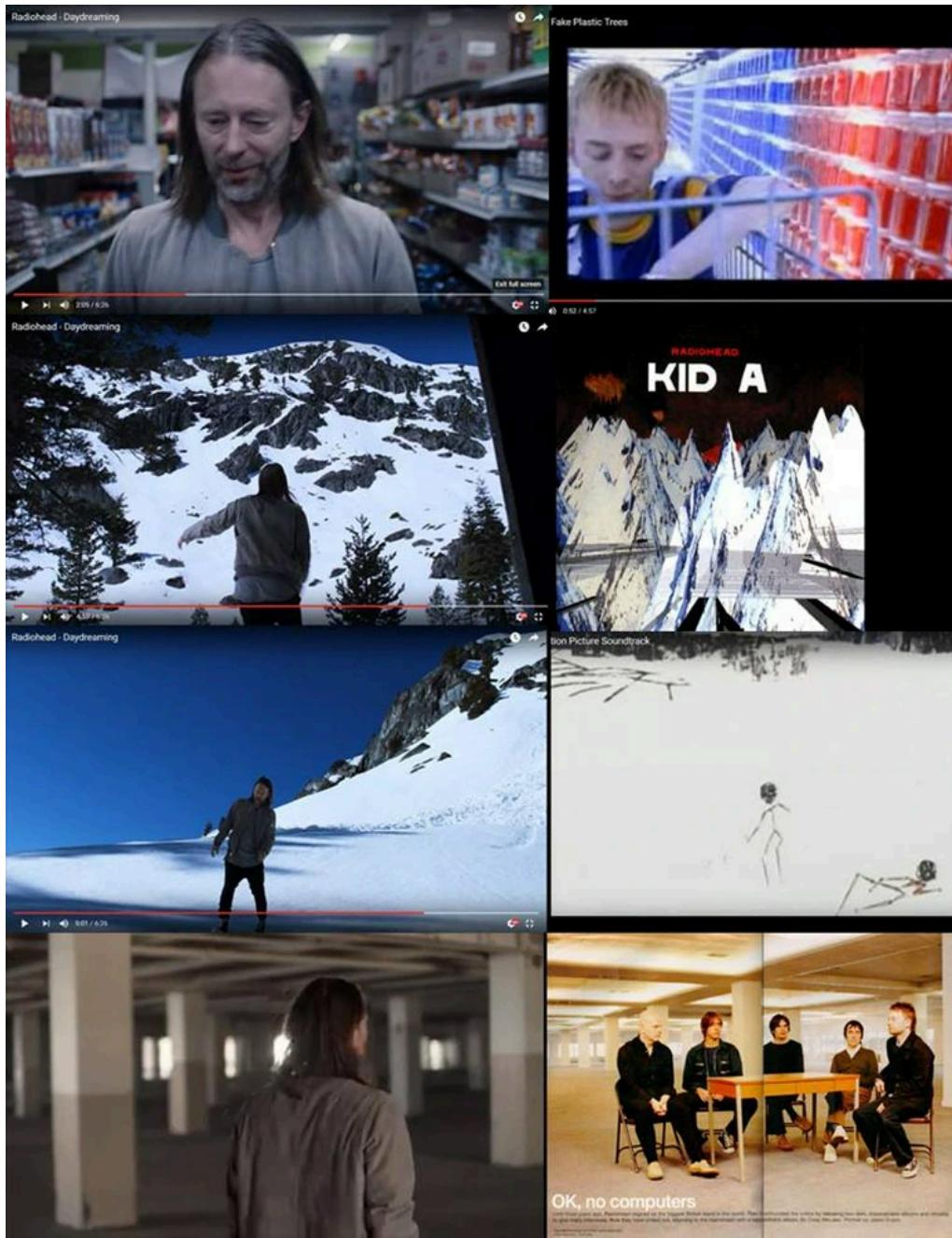
The music video for "Daydreaming" opens with Thom Yorke, the lead singer of Radiohead, emerging from the distance, walking through a tunnel illuminated by overexposed lighting that obscures the silhouettes of other people, isolating him from others (See Figure 1). This initial sequence sets the tone for the enigmatic journey that unfolds throughout the video. As Yorke steps into an ordinary-looking building, the soft melancholic melody of the song gradually fades in, signaling the beginning of the story being told. As Thom navigates through a series of doors, each leading to a different environment or landscape. Paul Thomas Anderson employs long tracking shots and match cuts to emphasize the continuity of Yorke's journey, effectively conveying the sense of a continuous, uninterrupted passage through the corridors of time and memory. Yorke's journey through a wide range of settings acts as a visual metaphor for the diversity of experiences that make up the human condition. From the confines of a hospital

corridor to the vast expanse of a snow-covered mountain, each setting reflects a different facet of existence, showcasing the breadth and depth of the human experience. The doors symbolize the choices and opportunities that shape our lives. As the video progresses, the pace quickens and Yorke's movements become increasingly frantic, mirroring the frenetic search for identity and meaning amidst the cacophony of modern life. It is as though Yorke is desperately seeking refuge from the noise and chaos of the world, yearning for a sense of belonging and purpose. Amidst the turmoil and confusion, there are moments of quiet contemplation and introspection. As Yorke ventures deep into the wilderness or to desolate locations, the cuts lengthen, allowing for moments of respite and reflection. These locations are contrasted with the urban environments, offering a sense of solace and tranquility amidst the chaos. It is here, that Yorke finds solace and peace, a moment of clarity in the world around him. Throughout the video, Thom walks in and out of other people's lives, searching for a sense of connection and belonging, only to find himself alienated and disconnected. His solitary journey serves as a poignant reflection of the universal human experience, a quest for meaning and purpose in a world fraught with uncertainty and despair, showing how the only way to find meaning is to find it through self-introspection. The haunting melody of the music, paired with the enigmatic visuals, creates an atmosphere of melancholy and introspection, allowing the viewer to contemplate the complexities of existence and the search for self-identity. Paul Thomas Anderson uses a variety of visual metaphors and editing choices to help convey these ideas of identity and meaning to the viewer.

#### **Connection to the human condition and his experiences (Relation to himself)**



**Figure 2:** Wheel in hospital



**Figure 3:** Jonny Greenwood's post

Although much of Radiohead's music and art is known to be up for interpretation, this music video in particular has many connections to Thom Yorke's own life. In the music video, Thom Yorke walks through exactly 23 doors, the exact number of years since the release of their first album up until the release of the music video. Many of the scenes within the music video also have connections to parts of Thom's life, for instance, the presence of a wheel in the hospital scene, a reference to Radiohead's 1997 track "Airbag," inspired by Yorke's own experience of surviving a car crash. Jonny Greenwood, lead guitarist of Radiohead, posted a series of pictures (See Figure 3) that show connections between scenes in the music video and significant parts

of their lives, such as connections to different songs and albums, or magazine photoshoots. This shows us that this music video is a story of Thom's life and the 23 years Radiohead had been together. As the music video progresses, we see Thom more frantically searching for something, a purpose to his own life and experiences. He starts off by searching through doors, into other people's lives, but as he matures, symbolized in the video through Thom traveling upwards, we see Thom connect more with nature, going on a journey in the wilderness, through mountains to find himself. He realizes that to find himself he has to look within. In much of Radiohead's music, we get references to Thom Yorke's struggle with mental health such as in his 1997 album "OK Computer". By intertwining Thom's own personal experience within the music video, he allows the viewer to more deeply understand and connect with what is being told and the idea the video presents. By showcasing Thom's own personal struggles with finding meaning and fulfillment in his own life, viewers are able to connect similar parts of their own lives with Thom's. The meticulous attention to detail suggests a deliberate intertwining of personal history and artistic expression, showing Thom embarking on a symbolic journey through the annals of his own life and creative evolution. As Thom searches for meaning in the chaos of existence, the video becomes a testament to the power of art to illuminate the darkest corners of the human soul. Paul Thomas Anderson uses a series of visual metaphors and symbolism to intertwine Thom Yorke's own personal journey with the broader themes explored in the music and lyrics of Radiohead.

#### His wife



**Figure 4:** Virgo vs Pisces

The connection between the "Daydreaming" music video and Thom Yorke's personal life deepens even further with references to his recent divorce from his wife, Rachel Owen. Throughout the video, many references to Rachel are found, such as Thom's attire, wearing clothes designed by Rick Owens, a designer whose name resembles Thom's wife, Rachel Owen. Furthermore, the number of doors he passes through, 23, is also the number of years he and Rachel spent together. The music video reflects on the profound impact she had on his life and creative journey. The release of the song on Mother's Day weekend adds another layer of poignancy, honoring Rachel's role as a mother and partner in Thom's life. Additionally, the presence of women and mothers within the video serves as a reminder of Rachel's enduring influence on Thom's life. As Yorke navigates through the various environments and landscapes, encountering mothers of all ages and backgrounds, he is reminded of the love and nurturing spirit that defined his relationship with Rachel. The music video serves to showcase the dual life Thom lives, having to be there for his wife and kids, while also being there for Radiohead. It shows how everything he did with Rachel, was also surrounded by Radiohead. There's a struggle between dreamer and realist, artist and husband. In one of the scenes, we see two paintings on the wall (See Figure 4), one being of the star sign Pisces (left) and the other being of a Virgo (right). These two signs lie on opposite sides of the astrological wheel. Virgo represents reality, being practical, while Pisces represents fantasies and the dreamer. The music video shows Thom reflecting on his decisions between his wife and the band, reflecting on the choices he made throughout his life. Paul Thomas Anderson deliberately combines these two major ideas and themes within the music video, displaying how they've been interwoven together in Thom's life, and how perhaps he's been forced to pick one over the other, ultimately choosing to be the dreamer.

## Lyrics

The lyrics for this song only contain 2 verses, with the second half of the song only having Thom singing "Half of my life, Half of my love" in reverse. This is a reference to the duality of Thom's life, balancing Radiohead with his domestic life. It could also be a reference to the fact that these two major parts of his life have taken up half of his life, 23 years out of 47. The fact that these lyrics have been reversed could show how he's looking back on his life, reflecting on the decisions he's made that got him where he is, or possibly representing the cyclical or recursive nature of life. The start of the first verse talks about how dreamers never learn, talking about how Thom, stuck in his own imagination and thoughts, causes him more pain than it removes, and how he never learns from his mistakes. Thom sings about it's too late, and that he's gone beyond the point of return. In the music video, we notice how Thom always seems to be walking away from the exit, signifying how he's stuck in this loop, unable to get out, feeling trapped. This could be a connection to how he doesn't know what to do with his life, and that the different parts of his life are pressuring him, and he doesn't know what to do except push forward, into the doorway, not knowing what lies ahead. He talks about how "the damage is done", referring to how his actions have consequences, and possibly specifically referring to splitting up with his wife. The second verse hints at how Thom has decided to simply submit to the pressures

around him, with lyrics such as “Just happy to serve you”. This is paired with visuals of Thom in a desolate parking lot, escaping from society. This juxtaposition of agreeing to serve someone else while being alone hints at how there's a disconnect between Thom's desires and his actions. Throughout the music video, there are strong connections between the video and the lyrics, both heavily using symbolism to help tell Thom's story, with many of these connections not being apparent at first. The use of symbolism adds to the ambiguity of the music video, allowing for different interpretations of the video and for deeper meanings that can't be found at the surface level.

Radiohead's music videos, particularly "Daydreaming," aren't as nonsensical as they might seem, containing much deeper meanings under the surface. The music video for "Daydreaming" tackles topics such as the human condition, identity, possibility, and existentialism in a way that is up for interpretation for the viewer. Through Paul Thomas Anderson's direction and Thom Yorke's personal experiences, the video dives deep into themes of the human condition, identity, and existentialism. The use of symbolism and visual metaphors allows for a variety of interpretations, letting the viewer contemplate the meaning of existence in a way that is personal to themselves. By including Thom's personal struggles, such as his divorce and the balance between his domestic life and artistic pursuits, the video becomes not just a narrative but also an exploration of Thom's personal journey through life. Ultimately, the music video for "Daydreaming" serves to demonstrate the power of art to illuminate the human experience. The video shows us how even in moments of chaos and uncertainty, we can still find clarity and meaning. Through the use of enigmatic storytelling and symbolism, "Daydreaming" is more than just a music video, offering a reflection on life, love, and the pursuit of self and identity.

## Sources

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