



## How International Women's Day Is Solely a Reminder

### The Work of Women's Equality Isn't Finished

BY SUMEYYE OZTEK

Sometimes I pause when I sit down to write for our student newspaper.

Not because writing itself is difficult, but because I know that for most of history, women were never given the chance to do it at all. The simple act of publishing an opinion, questioning power, or contributing to public conversation was largely denied to women.

Even writers like Emily Dickinson lived in a world where their voices struggled to be heard. Dickinson published very little during her lifetime. Many of her poems were shared with the public only after her death, by friends who preserved her work.

So, when I write today, I am aware that this opportunity is not something I should take for granted. Having my words appear in a newspaper, even a student newspaper, is something generations of women before me never had the chance to experience.

I also think about the fact that I have the option to pursue an education at all. For much of history, many girls were denied that opportunity entirely. Some were expected to marry young; others were never given the chance to imagine a future



beyond the roles society assigned them.

That perspective made this year's International Women's Day feel different to me.

International Women's Day, celebrated each March, traces its origins to 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York City, demanding shorter working hours, better pay, and the right to vote. What began as a protest would eventually grow into a global day recognizing women's achievements and advocating for gender equality.

More than a century later, the progress women have made is unde-

niable. Women leading classrooms, laboratories, governments, and businesses around the world.

But while watching a recent discussion from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, I was reminded that the story of women's equality is still unfinished.

Sarah Hendricks of UN Women described a reality that many people rarely think about.

"There are women who choose not to report the violence that they experience because they fear they won't be believed, let alone protected," she explained. "There are women who are paid less than their

male counterparts for the very same work in places where the law does not actually require equal pay."

She continued with statistics that are difficult to ignore.

"No country in the world right now has achieved full legal equality between men and women." More than half of the world's countries still do not define rape by law based on consent. Nearly three-quarters of countries—about 74 percent—still allow child marriage under certain legal conditions. In 44 percent of countries, the law does not require equal pay for work of equal value.

At first, statistics like these can feel distant. They sound like policy debates happening somewhere far away. But for me, the conversation about women's rights has never felt entirely distant.

Turkey, where my family is from, has long had a complicated relationship with women's rights. It is a country where women are professors, doctors, journalists, and leaders in public life. Yet debates about women's safety and autonomy remain deeply political.

In 2021, the Turkish government withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty designed to combat violence against

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women. Watching women protest in the streets made something clear to me: progress is never permanent. Rights that take decades to secure can disappear much faster than we expect.

At our own college, we are fortunate to learn from extraordinary women who dedicate their lives to education, mentorship, and leadership. Every day, they step into classrooms and challenge students

to think critically about the world around them. Their presence reflects how much society has changed.

But it also reminds us that progress did not happen automatically. It happened because generations of women demanded it. International Women's Day is often celebrated as a moment to recognize how far we have come. We should celebrate that progress.

But it should also remind us

how far there is still to go. Women continue to earn less than men on average. Legal protections vary dramatically depending on where someone is born. Millions of girls around the world still grow up without the same opportunities many of us take for granted.

So, if you celebrated your mother, your sister, a friend, or a professor this week, that recognition matters.

But maybe International Women's Day should also make us pause and ask a harder question: What kind of world are we helping build for the next generation of girls?

The women who marched through New York City in 1908 were imagining a future they might never personally see. More than a century later, their progress is undeniable. But their work is not finished.

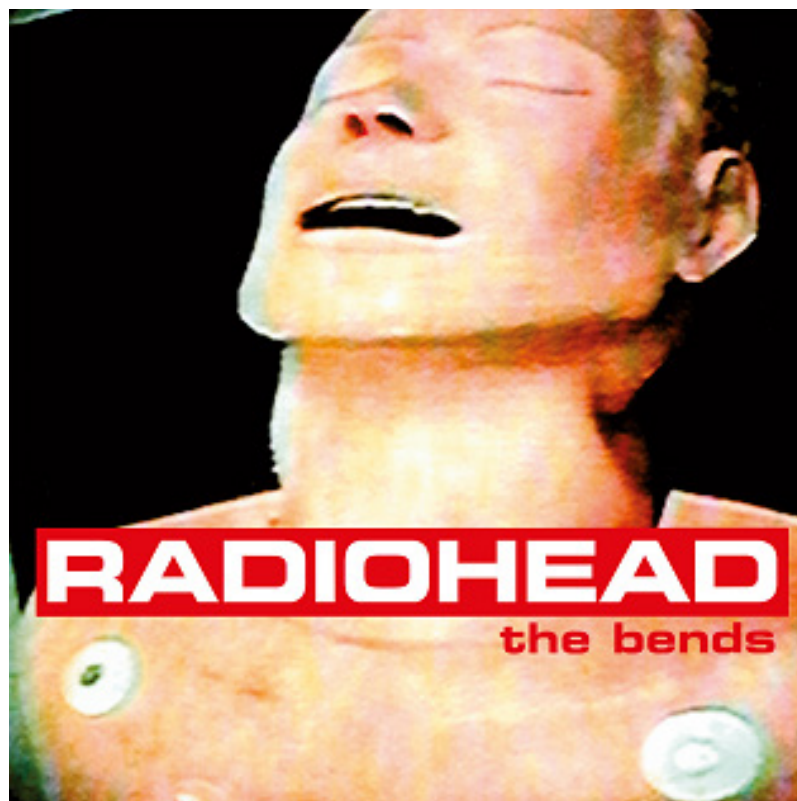
# The Bends

## Revisiting Radiohead's sophomore album

BY SARA LIM

There is something exquisitely unique about witnessing a band's first masterpiece, a clear promise of future masterwork while retaining the freshness of artists just pushed out of the nest. Radiohead's sophomore album, *The Bends*, released on March 13, 1995, achieves just that, standing as a pivotal moment in the band's evolution and marking their transition from potential one-hit wonders {following the release of their world-renowned and historically band-detested single "Creep"} to art-rock innovators. This record not only solidified Radiohead's rightful place in the pantheon of British rock but also laid the groundwork for their future sonic explorations, glimmering with details that seasoned veterans of their work look to with great fondness. *The Bends* showcases a remarkable leap in Radiohead's songwriting and musicianship, turning towards lyrically and musically intriguing horizons. The album's sound is a rich tapestry of alternative and indie rock, infused with elements of art rock that hint at the band's future direction, holding sentimental value to many diehard Radiohead admirers {myself included} and remaining one of their most beloved albums.

The album's sonic palette is expansive, ranging from the shimmering, effects-laden soundscapes of "Planet Telex" to the raw, emotional acoustics of "Fake Plastic Trees." This diversity in texture and tone reflects the band's growing confidence and willingness to experiment. The



introduction of Nigel Godrich as engineer {and producer on "Black Star"} marks the beginning of a crucial creative partnership that would shape Radiohead's sound for years to come. Thom Yorke's writing is both introspective and outward-looking, capturing the zeitgeist of mid-90s Britain while exploring deeply personal anxieties. The album title itself is a metaphor for the disorienting effects of rapid ascent—both in terms of the band's career and as a broader commentary on modern life. Songs like "Fake Plastic Trees" offer a scathing critique of artificiality and

consumerism wrapped in a hauntingly beautiful melody. "My Iron Lung," with its sardonic take on the band's parasitic relationship with their hit "Creep," demonstrates Radiohead's self-awareness and willingness to bite the hand that fed them. The production on *The Bends* strikes a delicate balance between raw energy and polished sophistication. John Leckie's production, along with Godrich's engineering, allows the band's performances to breathe while adding subtle layers of depth and atmosphere. The string arrangements, particularly notable on tracks like "Fake Plastic

Trees" and "(Nice Dream)," add a cinematic quality that elevates the emotional impact of the songs.

Lyricaly, *The Bends* delves into themes of alienation, consumerism, and personal struggle, reflecting the band's rapid rise to fame and the disorienting effects of modern life. The album's title, a reference to decompression sickness, serves as a metaphor for the pressures of sudden success. Historically, *The Bends* represents a crucial transition in British rock music. Released in the wake of grunge's decline and at the height of Britpop, the album charted a unique course that diverged from both movements. It anticipated the more emotionally engaging and sonically adventurous music that would emerge in the UK in the following years, paving the way for Radiohead's own groundbreaking album *OK Computer* {released in 1997} and influencing a generation of artists. The album's exploration of alienation in an increasingly digital world feels prescient, perhaps even more relevant today than when it was released, demonstrating the band's characteristic "fraught, compassionate, violently disturbed rock."

*The Bends* represents a band at a creative crossroads, shedding the skin of their early sound while not yet fully embracing the experimental tendencies that would define their later work. It is a perfectly balanced album that captures Radiohead at their most human while hinting at the sonic explorations to come, drunk on

# From Head to Heart

## A renewed lease, and the 12 inches that separate death and life

BY AUSTIN NIEVES

**F**braced for impact — collision was inevitable. Then everything went black. As the light flooded back in, ringing pierced my eardrums, shards of glass scintillated on my lap, and the smell of burning fluid singed my nostrils. I was alive. Once the confusion had subsided enough, I raised my hanging head, and that's when I saw it: the back corner of the box truck I had just careened into protruding through my windshield into the cabin, no more than a foot from my face. The front end of my car was wrapped underneath the chassis of the truck, but the difference of 12 inches was all that separated my life from my death.

By every other standard measure my Monday morning had been unfolding exactly how I had come to expect— up by 7, out by 8:30, be at work by 9. At this point I was in my car and on the way, taking the same route I always did, drinking coffee, singing Hector Lavoe. It was my routine. That abruptly changed when someone came in hot into an intersection...swerve, crash. I had avoided being hit by them only to end up wedged under someone else.

Instead of arriving to work, like every other morning, I found myself

climbing out of the passenger side door with my life. The box truck driver was already standing near, mouth agape, just as incredulous about the situation as I was. By grace of God alone the truck driver and I were both totally unscathed. Neither of our mornings were going according to plan, but we were whole. After exchanging information with him and giving a statement to the police, I watched the tow truck ferry off my mangled car. This was my reality now. My brother arrived shortly thereafter to take me home. The car ride was silent. I didn't want to talk.

Back in my room, my conversation with the Lord was a different story. At first it was silent too, until it wasn't. Tears poured from my contorted face. I wept loudly. My mind replayed the recent chain of events, reflecting on what had went wrong. How could this happen? Why did it happen? Where was I going to go from here? Who was truly responsible? Me? Puffy and exhausted I uttered the last and most vital question "Lord, what are you trying to teach me?" My answer arrived in the form of another tear. I watched as it hit my palms, aware of its wet warmth seeping through my fingers. I could feel. I was alive...I was alive.

My revelation was not that I had just lost my car in an accident, not that I could have been disabled, not even that I had nearly died. My revelation was that I had been taking my life for granted. Every moment that I had experienced prior to the crash had been lived on autopilot, things I expected to happen. I reflected deeper on the days past and could not distinguish one from another. That was not an issue with the life I was living, but one with how I was living my life. Change was necessary. What if I had died under that truck, what then? I trembled at the thought of not being able to honestly tell God that I was appreciating the most of every day. It was a mercy He kept me, a gift that I was also without a scratch. It was a gift that I had woken up at all that day. In many ways I did pass that morning, but more importantly, I was born anew.

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). Every morning I wake up I say thank you. I make decisions consciously. I take pleasure all things like my feet touching the ground, the aroma of my new car, arriving anywhere safely, my interactions with everyone. Life still has its challenges, but even in those I take

pleasure, because they're invitations to better know my God. As often as possible I make myself aware of exactly where I am and hold on to the moment as long as it will allow. Once that moment has passed, it has passed—the fragility of life.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin famously wrote "We are not humans having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience." In what he calls "The Omega Point," we are prompted to discover God in all things. Every experience can draw your soul closer to Him, more sanctified as a result, or keep it detached and stuck, depending on what you allow. Before, I knew that life was to be cherished, but I didn't feel it. Now, I believe it, I embody it; that's the key difference. When I catch myself lapsing I reflect on those 12 inches that could have killed me and recalibrate. It always reminds me of something my therapist said once "What will it take for your thoughts to make the 12 inch drop from your head to your heart to become belief?" Turns out, for me, it was staring head on with the back of that truck. The same 12 inches that could have brought death from life God redeemed, to instead, bring life from death.

exploring the gruesome fallibility of humankind, a searing indictment of capitalistic cynicism, and ultimately a celebration of the complexities of existence. This dichotomy between the depression of modernity {as personally witnessed by humankind} and the technological advancements that propelled this response forward is best reflected in the album's artwork, depicting a CPR mannequin's "facial expression like that of an android discovering for the first time the sensations of ecstasy and agony, simultaneously," as described by artist and long-time collaborator Stanley Donwood. Perhaps, through placing the listener in the position of a com-

puter witnessing the world around it for the very first time {and thus being introduced to the beauty and horror of existence on a visceral level}, the band attempted to recognize and appreciate the true complexity of living, or perhaps this served as a representation of the humanity of algorithms and the machinery of humans, both equally terrifying... we shall never know for certain.

Ultimately, *The Bends* remains a fan favorite and a critical darling, frequently appearing on "best albums of all time" lists. Its enduring appeal lies in its perfect balance of accessibility and innovation, raw emotion and musical sophistication. It stands as a

testament to Radiohead's artistic vision and their ability to create music that is both of its time and timeless. In the words of NME, "*The Bends*' just wouldn't be Radiohead without a mass of contradictions and an unfathomable mystery at its centre." Beginning as an attempt to construct and solidify the band's creative psyche, forty-eight astonishing minutes later, Radiohead had done just that, demonstrating to the world that their talent, ambition, and ability to execute were far greater than just about anyone had imagined. Radiating an exquisite tension between vulnerability and defiance, *The Bends* by Radiohead encapsulates a moment of existential

reckoning—a visceral cry for connection amidst the suffocating alienation of fame and modernity. The record's intricate structure mirrors the fragmented psyche it explores, oscillating between roaring crescendos and plaintive lulls as if to embody the ebb and flow of human despair and yearning. Thom Yorke's lyrics, simultaneously cryptic and searingly candid, evoke a landscape where identity dissolves under the weight of societal expectations yet still clings to the fragile hope of rediscovery. *The Bends* remains an enduring classic, celebrated for its emotional depth and its role in shaping Radiohead's distinctive voice in the music world.

# 2014's Whiplash: A Decade-Strong Masterclass in Tension and Tempo

BY ANDREW KIM

Let's get one thing straight. The 2014 film "Whiplash" is not a feel-good movie. Nobody walks out of this humming a cheerful tune, skipping to their car. You walk out slightly shaken, a little emotionally bruised, and here's the kicker, weirdly grateful for the experience. That's rare. That's the mark of a film that actually did something to you rather than just flickering in front of your eyes for 106 minutes.

Directed by Damien Chazelle, who went on to direct "La La Land" (2016), "Whiplash" is the story of Andrew Neiman (Miles Teller), a 19-year-old jazz drummer clawing his way through the fictional Shaffer Conservatory, a thinly veiled stand-in for Juilliard, a private performing arts conservatory in New York City.

Andrew wants to be one of the greats. Charlie Parker-level great-

ness. The kind of greatness that gets you talked about long after you're dead. He gets noticed by Terence Fletcher (J.K. Simmons), the school's most feared conductor, and from that moment on, Andrew's life becomes something that resembles a war zone more than a music education. Like 2017's "Thank You for Your Service," which also starred Miles Teller, that title felt appropriate. But this film, winner of Academy Awards, BAFTAs, Critics' Choice Awards, and many others, is more than just a jazz ensemble piece.

### What Whiplash Is Really About- Spoilers Ahead

On the surface, this looks like a standard underdog story. Kid meets terrifying mentor. The kid suffers. The kid triumphs. Roll credits, the

end.

But "Whiplash" isn't that simple, and that's precisely why it works. Chazelle isn't asking you whether Andrew wins or loses. He's asking you something far more uncomfortable: Was any of this worth it?

Fletcher operates on the belief that the two most dangerous words in the English language are "good job."

He doesn't nurture. He demolishes. He throws chairs. He reduces grown young men to tears in public, all in the name of pushing them toward something extraordinary. And the film refuses to give you an easy answer about whether he's right.

That moral ambiguity is what separates this film from every other music drama you've ever seen. It's not fame. It's not a triumphant montage set to an inspirational pop song. It's closer to 1987's "Full Metal Jacket," except the boot camp is a rehearsal room and the weapon of choice is a snare drum.

### J.K. Simmons Delivers One of the Best Performances

Let's talk about J.K. Simmons, because frankly, not talking about him would be a disservice to cinema. Fletcher is not a villain in the traditional sense. He doesn't twirl a mustache. He doesn't monologue about his evil plans.

He's scarier than that.

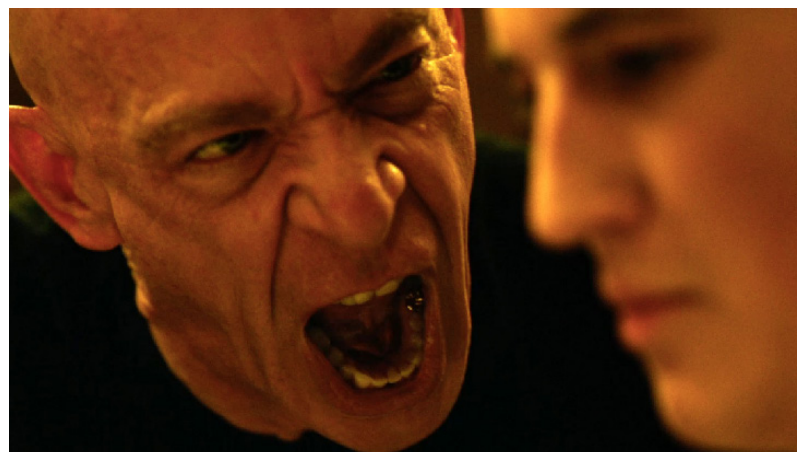
He's a man who believes, with



absolute conviction, that cruelty is the price of greatness, and Simmons plays him with such physical authority and cold precision that you find yourself dreading his entrance every single time he walks on screen.

There's a scene where Fletcher shares the story of a former brilliant student who died. He gets emotional. His voice cracks. And you sit there, genuinely unsure whether you're watching a moment of authentic grief or a calculated manipulation. That uncertainty, that discomfort, is the whole film in a single beat.

Simmons earned his Oscar for this role and deservedly so. His arms alone carry the weight of every scene he's in. The man conducts like he's conducting a military operation, and somehow that's exactly right.



**The Youngtown Edition**

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**Miles Teller Literally Bleeds For This Role**

Here's something you should know before watching this movie: Miles Teller actually plays the drums in this film. He trained. He practiced. The blood on the drum kit during those grueling rehearsal scenes? That's real, he's been playing the kit ever since he was 15.

That physical commitment translates directly onto the screen. Andrew is not a character you particularly like, which is a bold, creative gamble. He dumps his girlfriend with an almost sociopathic coldness. He isolates himself from everyone who cares about him.

The drummer searching for greatness becomes so consumed by the pursuit of perfection that he stops functioning as a human being and starts functioning as a machine that exists purely to keep time.

But here's the thing: in a way, it is relatable.

You don't admire every choice he makes, but you understand the obsession. You've seen it in people. Maybe you've felt a version of it yourself. That tension between ambition and humanity is something Teller captures without ever needing to explain it in dialogue.

**Chazelle's Direction Turns Drumming Into a Thriller**

Damien Chazelle was 28 years

old when he made this film. Which is either inspiring or slightly annoying, depending on where you are in your own life.

His direction is precise without being cold. He shoots the rehearsal scenes with an urgency that mirrors the emotional intensity happening inside them. Cinematographer Sharon Meir's camera moves like it has somewhere to be, sweeping around the rehearsal room with an energy that makes you feel every off-tempo moment as a physical threat.

The editing by Tom Cross, who also won an Oscar, deserves its own conversation. The cuts are rhythmic, almost musical. The film feels like jazz even when you're not watching anyone play.

And when you are watching someone play, the editing makes those drum solos more tense than most action sequences. That's not a small achievement. That's genuinely remarkable filmmaking.

**The Questions Whiplash Refuses to Answer**

The most honest thing this film does is refuse to package its central moral question into a neat conclusion. Does Fletcher's abuse justify the outcome? Does surviving the crucible make Andrew a better musician, or just a damaged one who hap-



pened to survive?

The Charlie Parker story haunts the film's edges. Legend goes that jazz drummer Jo Jones threw a cymbal at a young Charlie Parker for losing the beat, and that humiliation lit a fire under Parker that made him one of the greatest musicians who ever lived. Fletcher clings to that story the way a man clings to an ideology. It justifies everything.

But legends are convenient. They flatten the people who didn't survive the same treatment. They ignore the ones who were broken rather than forged.

"Whiplash" asks you to sit with that discomfort rather than resolving it for you. Some audiences find that unsatisfying. Those are the same people who want their movies to tell them what to think. The rest of us find it genuinely refreshing.

**Is Whiplash Perfect?**

No. Nothing is perfect, and the film has a few moments where the plot mechanics are more visible than they should be. A car accident arrives on cue, but with the way the film was going, it wasn't unpredictable. A few coincidences stack up a little too conveniently in the third act. The film is also, at its structural core, a fairly familiar arc: student struggles, student breaks, student reassembles.

What elevates it beyond that skeleton is everything Chazelle and his two leads bring to the material. The filmmaking amplifies the story told, which is not as layered plot-wise. But the performances make up for it.

**Final Verdict on Whiplash More Than a Decade Later**

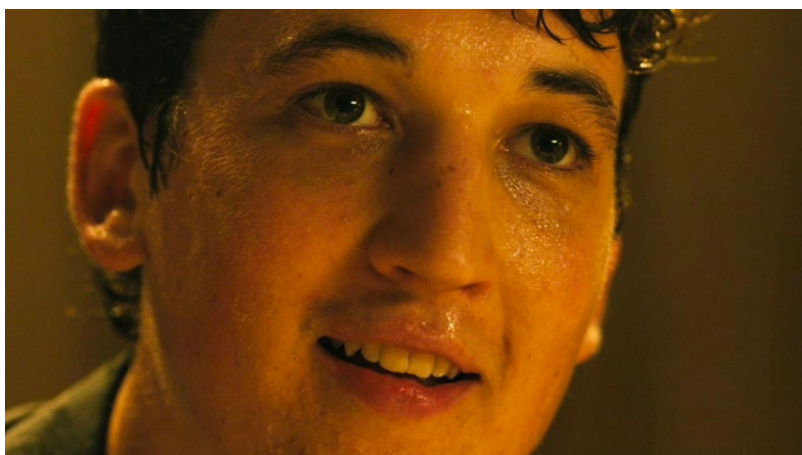
"Whiplash" is the kind of film that reminds you what movies can do when they're operating at their best. It's visceral, morally complex, brilliantly performed, and technically precise.

It takes a subject, jazz drumming, that most people would rank somewhere between "mildly interesting" and "not for me," and turns it into something that gets your pulse up like a countdown to an explosion.

You'll leave this "experience" with your mind unsettled and will likely think about it the next day.

You'll find yourself wondering what you would do if someone pushed you that hard, and whether the person you'd become would be someone you'd actually want to meet.

That's not something most movies do. That's not something most art does. But this does and, weirdly, is an inspiration to me while giving me self-awareness, enough to write about it as a drummer myself.



# POETRY

## The Second Season

BY ISABEL STEARNS

**D**rowsy shades of white and grey surround me  
As if the world is just sleeping, waiting for Persephone's soft touch to spring into joyful song  
An ode to nature, rebirth, light, colour!  
What a wonderful thing is spring, it is love and music in return for nothing.  
The flowers bloom like jovial fireworks on a midsummer night's even, and the rain falls with quiet passion and determination as if duty and debt calls a loyal soldier  
So is the nature of the second season

## Purpose

BY DHARTI PATEL

**W**hy do you fear the perishable things?  
Rather fear the one who made all these.  
Why do you say you are weak?  
When he said his strength he gives.  
Why do you say you are insignificant?  
When he made you for this very work.  
Why do you question in which way to serve?  
When he forms you in the depths you suffer.  
Why do you look away and stumble in the dark?  
When his word is the light that makes straight your path.  
Why do you give ear to hearing vanities?  
When he is the truth, the missing puzzle piece.  
Why are you led by the nose by your appetites?  
When only the bread of life satisfies.

There is a way that seems right, the path everyone takes.  
But the way he leads you, for sure is the better way.  
Put off all that you know, that has defined you this far.  
Put on the Christ, who formed you and knows you from before the fall.  
Trust in him for he knows you better than you know yourself,  
For every bit that makes you, is plain before his gaze.  
He made you for his pleasure, every little cell, in his likeness to partake in his eternal rest.  
Your life you think you manage and lead,  
But every breath of yours is written in his books, before you ever came to be.  
Your purpose in your life is not vanities and lies, but a spark that knows him and is known by him in time.  
So rejoice in him daily, always giving thanks,  
For he delivers you from your troubles and gives you peace in return.  
He will use all that you suffer, for his loving purpose,  
To lead many that are lost in their own listless struggles.  
Oh taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed are you when you trust in him

## The Call

BY DHARTI PATEL

**H**e who made the nose can smell the odor of transgressions.  
He who made the eyes can see the innocent lives that suffer in perpetuity.  
He who made the ears can hear the thoughts of the hearts.  
He who made the mouth now speaks, so take heed and turn and return to him.

How long will you strive, when striving does not satisfy.  
How long will you fight alone, when the battle was never yours.  
How long will you ignore his voice, when he alone is the way.  
How long will you choose to war, when he has set his bow above.

In mercy he promised never again to flood the earth, and redeemed you on the cross.  
His voice again calls out in the quiet, so hear, observe and respond in kind.  
Time is short, so be quick to receive his instruction, guidance, forgiveness and mercy.  
He will equip and guide you all your days, so trust him and walk by faith in humility and his righteousness.

Before the wrath of the Lamb is poured out on the earth, go out and warn the world.  
In grace and humility deem everyone worthy, to receive his love, grace and forgiveness for eternity.  
Consider not only yourself but be ready to give, the hope within you, the gospel of peace.  
For a life fulfilling and meaningful, one that knows him and is known by him, surrendered in true identity.

## When you fall, get up

BY DHARTI PATEL

**A**s long as you have breath, get up.  
As long as you have strength, get up.  
As long as you open your eyes, get up.  
As long as it is called today, get up.

Don't listen to the lies, it's not too late, get up  
Don't throw in the towel, you're not too far gone, get up.  
Don't give up on this walk, because he still calls, get up.  
Don't think you're not enough, for he made you unique, get up.

The battle is long overdue, get up.  
The warrior king calls you, get up.  
The war rages around you, get up.  
The prince of peace is with you, get up.

Take a stand in him, with prayers, get up.  
Take the helmet of salvation, your assurance, get up.  
Take the armor of righteousness, none greater, get up.  
Take the belt of truth, he is the one, get up.

Take the sword of the spirit, his word, get up.  
Take the shield of faith, your defense, get up.  
Take the shoes fit for the gospel of peace, get up.  
Take the battle before you, in the way he leads, get up.

He will keep you in him, get up.  
He will provide for you, get up.  
He will give you the victory, get up.  
He will redeem his people, get up.

# Cinematic Impressions: Hamnet

## Between Stage and Shadow

BY SARA LIM

"We are in an ancient forest of Britain. The overwhelming soundscape begins to merge with the opera, as if the thick canopy has swallowed the mournful singer. Her voice cries to us through the patterns of the forest—bending, contorting, flowing in an never-ending circle of life and death. Is this a dream? It doesn't feel completely real, yet it seems more substantial and potent than reality. The heavens shine through the trees, but we don't linger there. We descent, slowly, like a fallen leaf, towards a hole in the wet forest floor, a dark, mysterious, bottomless void."

In this world of lush greens, warm soil, and the smell of impending rain, *Hamnet* unfurls. Poetic, visceral honesty permeates the film, allowing the camera to take in the world and its characters with ease under the careful hand of Chloé Zhao, the film's director. Hamlet (or *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*) was penned by the great William Shakespeare four hundred years ago, yet it continues to inspire, fascinate, and devastate readers and audiences around the world. The tragedy of the piece is palpable, raising many questions about its origin. The answer, perhaps, lies in the figure of Hamnet, William Shakespeare's son, who died at only eleven years old. What is the story of this child and his family? How did his life and death affect the work of his father? In pursuit of an answer, director Chloé Zhao and novelist Maggie O'Farrell conjure a richly vivid portrayal of love, loss, and art, transforming a grief long dismissed as a mere footnote in literary lore into something luminous and profoundly human.

### Characters

At the center point of the film is Agnes. The script of *Hamnet* introduces her as follows: "Her stand is strong. Her eyes reveal fragility. A thought ripples through her mind, a distant memory that makes her breath shallow. She slowly takes off her glove, rolls up her sleeve, and exposes her bare hand to the sky instead. She waits. Her hand trembles. She wants this. She yearns for this. SHE WANTS TO FEEL EV-



The opening shots of *Hamnet*, directed by Chloé Zhao

ERYTHING." Agnes functions as the emotional center of the film, the beating heart of the narrative, and an integral pillar of its strength. This is mirrored in her costuming and color palette; she begins the film wearing a rich red that serves to both identify her and reflect the beautiful complexity of her character. She is a raw, vibrant force of nature, untethered by societal expectation, treading through the world with endless, child-like curiosity. In the film's opening shot, she is depicted in a fetal position, cradled by the enormous roots of an ancient tree. In the words of the film's costume director, Malgosia Turzanska, the vibrancy of her costuming was meant to represent "the essence of womanhood and humanity." Agnes is one with the natural world, another creation that it protects

and nurtures. Yet, when tragedy befalls her, Agnes' color palettes transition into rusts, cool browns, and greys as if something within her has wilted. If previously the richness of her costuming was reminiscent of a bloodstream, the latter half of the film presents an Agnes emptied of her lifeblood, a scab of her past self. It is only at the film's conclusion that the viewer is reintroduced to her original color palette, as her sorrow evolves and she begins to heal.

"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,

Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;

Then have I reason to be fond of grief?"

—Constance, *King John*, act 3, scene 4, lines 95–99.

### Themes

*Hamnet* offers his mother one last luminous smile before turning to face the infinite dark. It receives him not with violence but with the unhurried grace of a velvet embrace. Agnes watches him go, her gaze steady even as her heart splinters beneath the weight of what she cannot undo. Tears fall slowly down her face, carrying within them the full breadth of human grief: the raw anguish of a broken heart, the quiet surrender of a love that has finally let go, and the hard-won stillness of acceptance. Yet the void does not leave with him—it lingers at the threshold, vast and patient, holding Agnes in its gaze, holding us in its gaze, reminding us, without a word, that it has always been here—waiting at the edges of every light we have ever loved. While his corporeal form is forever lost, heartlessly wrenched from his mother's arms, Hamnet's soul continues to haunt the family, a constant reminder of how much has been lost.

Questions of fate, legacy, and mortality plague the characters in *Hamnet*. Agnes—who has a particular sensitivity towards people and prophecies—reads futures. Interlocking fingers, she traces the lives of the people she loves most, bearing the weight of powerlessness before the inevitability of fate. When she hears that her husband is writing a tragedy, she is infuriated. This will not bring back her son, and she fears that her husband's actions will desecrate the memory of her child. But when she sees the play in the final scene, Agnes is overcome by emotion; she feels unbelievably close to her lost child, reaching out to him in a wordless lament. Fate, which she once trusted and honored, works in strange and beautiful ways.

Yet, while her heart must accept both the kindness and barbarity of destiny, the rebellious spirit that her son Hamnet inherits foredooms him. Persuaded that he can trick Death, Hamnet

“switches places” with his twin sister, the sickly Judith. It is a child’s spell, born of pure love and innocence—a desperate barter whispered into the trembling quiet of their house. In that moment, light fractures across the room like a broken promise; the air itself seems to pause, watching. Death, ever curious, listens. A soft wind moves through the window as if to seal the exchange. Judith’s fever recedes, her breathing steadies, and for a fleeting instant, the world feels merciful. But mercy is never without cost. Death pardons Judith, yet Hamnet’s life is cut tragically short, leaving behind the echo of laughter that once filled the garden—now hollowed into silence.

“Death is violent. Death is a struggle. The body clings to life, as ivy to a wall and will not easily let go.”

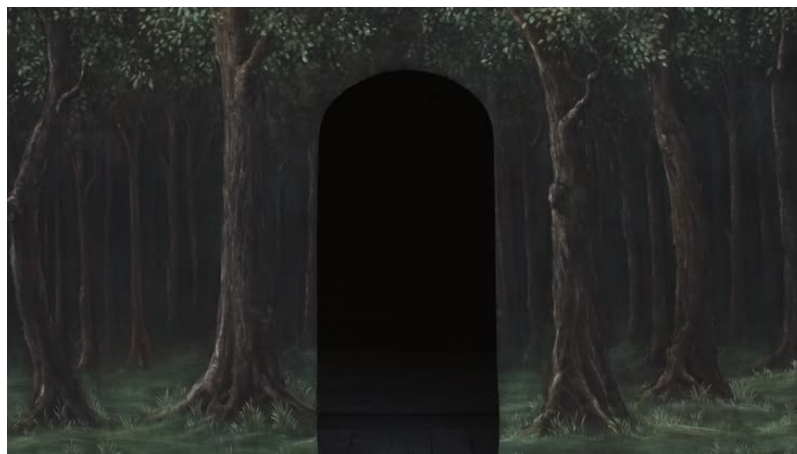
Nature, which shielded and protected, now heartlessly steals Hamnet from this world. No herbal medicine nor prayers protect him now, and as Agnes becomes more and more frantic, a sudden realization reflects in her eyes... nothing will save him now. She is a mere mortal, and she is doomed to watch her beloved child wither away.

**Cinematography**

*Hamnet’s* art direction and cinematography tell a fascinating story—Łukasz Żal (the film’s cinematographer) employs characteristically theatrical flourishes to emphasize the core of the film. The stagnant camera allows for a theatrical acting style, distancing the audience from the action while also enabling them to comprehend the entirety of the space on a flat, linear level. This lends an almost fable-like texture to the direction, permitting the actors the space and time to breathe through the scene while delivering their story.

“All the world’s a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players”  
—Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. 1599. Act 2, sc. 7, lines 139–166

Each of the figures in *Hamnet* exists within the intersection of history, fiction, and the particular mystery of beautiful cinema. Thus, the audience witnesses them existing within the narrative and also outside of it, as real figures that were largely forgotten by history. Life is represented on stage—death waits behind the curtain, silent and patient. And yet, in Zhao’s rendering, that curtain is never fully drawn. The boundaries between art



the chasm // backstage // eternity

and mourning dissolve, between parent and child, actor and ghost. The camera lingers on dust motes suspended in afternoon light, on trembling fingers that recall the pulse of a vanished world. Through these details, *Hamnet* be-

comes more than a story—it becomes a requiem, a meditation on how creation itself might serve as resurrection. In every frame, we sense the eternal return of love: reimagined, re-enacted, reborn through art’s fragile promise to remember.

As the final image fades—a field whispering beneath the English sky—the film leaves us suspended between mourning and renewal. It asks us, gently, what Shakespeare himself might have asked: how does one hold the living and the dead in the same breath? *Hamnet* answers not with certainty, but with grace—with the quiet assurance that in all things lost, there remains a pulse, faint but insistent, still beating beneath the soil.

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