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MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Manufacturing consent in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*: The visual aesthetics of tragedy, vulnerability, and triumph

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Abstract: This article examines Stephen Daldry's film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011), based on Jonathan Safran Foer, 2005 novel, as a media model to demonstrate how the Hollywood film industry fashioned tragedy and vulnerability in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. As hegemonic propaganda, this film offers a specific case study to examine how the media engages in ideological battles over meaning to establish and promote the optimism of neoliberal policies and Western commercial interests. I proffer that Daldry's visual narration follows an Aristotelian story structure from innocence to tragedy, which arouses pity and fear in the audience to provide a national catharsis, while at the same time reestablishing a corporate vision of globalized interconnectivity and renegotiated democratic space.

Subjects: Aesthetics; Arts; Cultural Studies; Film Genre; Filmmaking and Postproduction; Humanities; Literature; Media & Film Studies; Philosophy; Terrorism

Keywords: Sept. 11, 2001; tragedy; vulnerability; visual aesthetics; commodification; Hollywood; *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*; terrorism; post 9/11; manufacturing consent

1. Introduction

The events of September 11, 2001 have been more often than not referred to as a historical tragedy evoking the precarious nature of our American society and geopolitical institutions. The attack on the Twin Towers and its iconic symbolism exposed the permeability of US borders and inspired many filmmakers to articulate this unimaginable fall of economic privilege. Confronted with the emergence of "the beast" from the disgruntled multitudes, Americans had to make sense of their "shattered paradise" and intensified global vulnerability (Gray, 2011, p. 143). Filmmakers responded to the presumptive fall from grace and innocence by capturing this bewildering "new period in history"

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Through a close explication of Stephen Daldry's film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, this essay seeks to contribute to media studies to show how the Hollywood film industry produces powerful ideological images to shape and influence cultural values. I demonstrate that the deployment of facial close-ups and images of the falling man binds the relationship between representation and death, and commercially exploits the depth of our wounded psyche. From tragedy to optimism, this post 9/11 cinematic propaganda resurrects Corporate America to its global space of economic privilege.

in which the real and the representational are hauntingly blurred to amplify the descent into the unknown (Hirsch, 2003, p. 85). In many Hollywood films, we see the imagination rebound from traumatic crisis by retreating to the traditional storyline of tragic loss and heroic redemption in what Berry (2003) refers to as “new world order” and a “new economy” that would “grow” on and on, bringing a prosperity of “which every new increment would be ‘unprecedented’” (quoted in Hauerwas & Lentricchia, p. 38).

In this essay, I examine Stephen Daldry’s film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011), based on Jonathan Safran Foer’s, 2005 novel, as an example of how the Hollywood film industry fashions tragedy and vulnerability as hegemonic propaganda to further and “increase” the strength and optimism of free trade and Western commercial interests. Through the bombardment of tragic images of vulnerability and heart-wrenching suffering, Stephen Daldry provides a hierarchical discourse resurrecting America’s privileged fantasy as the “city on the hill” and the indomitable exceptionalism of the American spirit. I proffer that Daldry’s visual narration follows an Aristotelian story structure from innocence to tragedy, which arouses pity and fear in the audience to provide a national catharsis, while at the same time reinforcing the corporate vision of globalized interconnectivity and renegotiated democratic space.

2. Visual aesthetics

The aesthetic quality of tragedy in film carries with it the Aristotelian imprint of “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of certain magnitude” (2012, VI, I). It is this serious magnitude of September 11, 2001 that Daldry exploits in his Hollywoodization of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.¹ From the first image, we, as audience spectators, relive the pity and fear of a representational image along with historical footage of a real-life event; however, in the reliving and re-experiencing of this tragedy, we are now privy to the rewriting of this historical marker in a neatly packaged five-part story structure, which carries with it the Western metaphysical premise that good will conquer evil, and more importantly capitalist notions of democracy and free market trade will conquer its aggressors. The resolution, of course, has young nine-year-old protagonist Oskar Schell embracing the death and memory of his father and jumping from a Central Park playground swing—a pre-9/11 activity he previously could not do. Free and triumphant, Oskar realizes the great American myth that he as a young man can do anything, overcome anything. The result is that we, as spectators, are purged of the shock and horror of the tragedy and directed to re-imagine a space of possibility and of hope, as long as we dedicate ourselves to do whatever it takes to combat all evil that threatens core democratic free market principles and neoliberal policies.

The commanding and expressive Artaudian imagination ran far and wide on September 11, 2001. Over 4,000 people perished inside the Twin Towers (Artaud, 1958). The fictional Schell family represents the common men and women and its collective tragic victims, reinforcing Miller’s (1949) declaration that “The common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense” (p. 1).² Daldry structures the narration around the impact of the tragedy on the most vulnerable of common men: a young grief-stricken nine-year-old child who just lost his father in the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attacks. Similar to Homer’s Telemachus, the young protagonist of this visual *bildungsroman* struggles to become a man and to accept his father’s death in an absurd post 9/11 world.³

From the opening scene, young Oskar tries to make sense of the burial of an empty casket, since his father’s body turned to ashes during the destruction of the Twin Towers.⁴ The tear-jerking opening scene sets the melancholic tone for the rest of the film. Daldry juxtaposes sentimental father/son flashbacks with Oskar’s retreat into a shelf closet, a living altar to his father where he pays daily homage and relives his memories. These memories include horrific images of 9/11 news footage as well as representational images, creating a manufactured and contrived disorientation.⁵ Oskar’s motivation throughout his journey is to imagine a life without his father and work through the empty space of his psyche. Armored with a knapsack, a tambourine and sometimes a gas mask, he is “ready to lay down his life” and overcome his (inferred) Asperger fears to secure “his sense of personal dignity” for himself, and more importantly the Americans who have fallen (Rudin & Daldry,

2011). As the collective archetype of America's suffering, Oskar must struggle to gain understanding of what happened and "to gain his rightful position in his society" (Miller, 1949, p. 1).

3. Representing historical time

Similar to yet another classic tragedy, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (429 BC) who tries to lift the plague from Thebes to purge the pollution from its lands, Oskar travels on a similar fact-finding "reconnaissance expedition" through New York's five Burroughs to connect to his paternal roots, implying a similar cinematic resolution in which the roots of terrorism will be exorcised not from Thebes, but from American soil (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). Daldry captures the American struggle to understand why the tragedy happened in the first place, as he places Oskar against "the seemingly stable cosmos from this total examination of the unchangeable environment" into a world of classic tragedy and destruction (Miller, 1949, p. 1).

The film's first-person narrative dimension manipulates the first-person cultural framework and the "telling of what really happened on September 11" (Butler, 2004, p. 5). After finding an envelope with a key in a blue vase in his father's closet, Oskar tries to gain some understanding by searching for the right lock, as he believes that this key will expose some deeper meaning and connection with his father. The name Black written on the envelope provides the only clue for him. Layered into this reconnaissance expedition is a controlling construction of time and Oskar's belief that he will be able to stretch "eight minutes with him (his father) and maybe stretch them forever" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). Oskar ponders that, "If the sun were to explode you wouldn't know for eight minutes" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). Somewhere between the effect and the result is a suspension of time and eternity, an unknowing comprehensibility that eludes binaries, "because for eight minutes, the world would still be bright and still feel warm" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). The allusion to Stephen Hawking's (2011) *A Brief History of Time* adds not only an element of urgency in the telling of the story, but a sensitive intensity and metaphysical inquiry into the nature of time, as Oskar tries to hold onto the past of the pre-terrorist innocent America and try to "stretch forever," this untainted image vowing never to "not stop looking" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011).

In a tear-jerking scene appealing to pathos, Oskar asks his sleeping mother, "Are you sure you love me?" followed by, "Put me in a mosque above the ground," referencing his fear of being buried alive with the fallen 9/11 victims (Rudin & Daldry, 2011).⁶ Oskar grapples to try to make sense of the tragic incident when he says, "You buried an empty box" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). Relentless in his metaphysical observations, Oskar points out that his father is now "in the lungs of people who breathe him in every time they breathe," positing that his father's ashes might even be part of the "dog shit" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). The film ponders the inter-being of global existence and matter with a curious metaphysical inquiry in terms of understanding the nature of the cosmos (and, according to the film, maybe its tragedy).

In another appeal to pathos and metaphysical challenge to the universe, Oskar storms the kitchen in an attempt perhaps to answer Hawking's question as to "Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing" especially after a tragedy? (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). His mother responds, that "Not everything makes sense," trying to convince him that there isn't an answer to everything (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). She, too, cannot make sense of the tragedy and screams, she "doesn't know why a man flew a plane through a building. I don't know" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). To the protagonists, the tragedy doesn't make sense. The dialogue, the sentimental acoustic piano soundtrack, and the crosscutting of the "shock and awe" of the disintegrating towers create tension and dynamic sensations in the audience to experience the impact and yield to their humanity despite little hope of ever understanding it. Daldry reinforces this incomprehensibility because, as David Thompson explains, the coping mechanism for events beyond comprehension requires human, social, and political endurance (1990, p. 235). The camera submits to this sense of helplessness, enduring all that "happens in front of it" (Thompson, 1990, p. 235). As spectator codependents of Hollywood's corporate lens, we must all "helplessly" endure this film and other exploitive 9/11 films, in spite of the manipulative attack on our collective psyches. In so doing, the visual and narrative ethics "generate(s) support,

compliance and just plain confusion,” fostering a collective vindication and an ideology of consensus (Herman & Chomsky, 2011, loc. 7659). We, as Americans, cannot be politically nor socially responsible for something we cannot comprehend.

At least this is what Fortune 500 Media conglomerate Time Warner would like its audiences to believe. A semiotic analysis of the visual literacy of this film demonstrates that the terrorists attacked not the Statue of Liberty, but the symbols of Western capitalism, debilitating neoliberal policies, and Third-World exploitation. This story, this perspective, are absent from the telling of the tragedy. If Miller’s construction of a tragedy as “the consequence of a man’s total compulsion to evaluate himself justly” is true, then I question the “total questioning of what has been previously unquestioned” (Miller, 1949, p. 1). It is true that the collective victims of 9/11 dramatized by the Schell family were shaken asunder from their cultural and social roots of impermeable orientation and First-World entitlement. What “shakes us, however, derives from the underlying fear of being displaced and the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world” (Miller, 1949, p. 2).

Oskar’s mission to find his father and a place in the world without him is outfitted with a corporate compass to guide him to discover his love, his strength, and his interconnectedness to all beings—which is a “thrust for freedom”(and implied rationale for operation “Iraqi Freedom”) that “tragedy exalts” (Miller, 1949, p. 1). Yet, even with scenes of Oskar’s cutting himself in his closet shelf, hiding under his bed, locking himself in the bathroom, or listening to the replay of his father’s last words—the possibility of victory always exists. The collective Schell family, just like the globalized collective “superior force,” is always capable of “grappling” with the incomprehensible (Miller, 1949, p. 3). No matter how many times Oskar covers his ears from the “*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*” noise that assaults his senses, the cacophony of individualism and capitalism drowns out all other variant perspectives.

The aesthetic structure of the film creates its own ethical composition of mores, conflicts, and resolutions—all devoted to the justification of its own existence (in this case Warner Brothers and all its auxiliaries). According to Anzaldúa (1987) “Ethnocentrism is the tyranny of Western aesthetics” and it’s a tyranny perpetuated by the Hollywoodization of human suffering (p. 90).

The first-person narration plays a pivotal role in perpetrating the dominant Western discourse, while purposefully silencing the pre-historical events that led up to the tragedy.⁷ By isolating the first person POV under the form of the “narrative I,” Daldry not only “absolves us of the necessity of coming up with broader explanations for the event” but reinforces the Lockean political culture and its “discourse of individualism” (Butler, 2004, p. 15). To narrate the film from the perspective of the “other” does nothing to reinforce US unilateralism and nation-building and “might involve a decentering of the narrative ‘I’ within the international political domain” (Butler, 2004, p. 7). The decentering of cultural imperialism is exactly what the terrorists had in mind, which according to Arundhati Roy has been “sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid waste by America’s foreign policy” (quoted in Butler, 2004, p. 10). Synthesizing counter-hegemony might imply a position “complicitous with the presumed enemy” (Butler, 2004, p. 15). The globalized transmission of nation-building imagery in this film effectively perpetrates Time Warner’s corporate vision: The imitation of First-World ideology including its cultural values, language and consumption habits, and its pursuit of affluence.⁸

According to Shin and Namkung (2008), “The United States has effectively used film genre as a means of propaganda, public relations, and control, not only domestically but also externally” (p. 129). Yet, Miller (1949) points out that “tragedy requires a nicer balance between what is possible and impossible”; therein, lies the resolute belief in social optimism and “the perfectibility of man” (p. 3). From Daldry’s cinematic POV, Oskar, as well as the other victims of the attack on the World Trade Center, is the “only fixed star, and whatever it is that hedges his nature and lowers it is ripe for attack and examination” (Miller, 1949, p. 3). This certainly holds true for the Hollywood bankrolled big-business ending of this film in which Oskar reunites the key with its rightful owner—a successful

American Stock Trader who deals in foreign markets. Here, we witness how Hollywood films “propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them” (Herman & Chomsky, 2011, p. 73). Although in the cinematic articulation of this politically correct film, the face of the Investment banker/trader is now Black, just like his surname. This is a material alteration from Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel (2005) in which the female Mrs. Black photographed in the text is a young white woman with a high pony tail and dangling leaf earrings (p. 98) and Mr. Black is a young white male (p. 294).

Daldry’s switching of ethnic identities from White privilege to “underrepresented” African-American reinforces a fabricated hegemony of equality in which all races and ethnicities have equal opportunity and access to free market trading systems. Mr. Black is the new self-made ethnic man erasing racial inequalities to further Western notions of individualism and progress. Moreover, casting the fallen investment banker as an African-American inaccurately posits that racial inequalities in America have been ameliorated, as here is a prime example of Western entrepreneurial spirit, which transcends racial and ethnic barriers.⁹ In Daldry’s post-9/11 version, African-American banker Mr. Black has achieved the American dream, even if his domestic life is a mess. He is the “symbol of successfully exported cultural progress” (Butler, 2004, p. 142). This certainly held true for the box office, where the film garnished two academic nominations, and, according to Hollywood Box Office, attained revenues of \$31,827, 881 domestic dollars and \$16,000,000 foreign dollars for a worldwide net turnover of \$47,837,881.

The film further fosters the false image of a regenerating melting pot, where, as Crevecoeur suggested in the beginning of the twentieth century, “individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world” (1904, p. 48). Daldry tries hard to prove that this land of opportunity extends to the “other” non-Europeans by using extensive racialized images of blacks, Asians, Puerto Ricans, and other collective brown-skinned, dislocated, hyphenated Third-World/First-World hybrids, representative of our seemingly multicultural society. The varied ethnic faces live across different segments of Manhattan’s Five Burroughs, suggesting an interesting commentary on the multicultural politics of place and social relations. A 2011 *NY Times* article, reports that NYC has “evolved into a greater crucible of race and ethnicity today than it was back then, but the city also remains very much a mosaic—a variegated montage of neighborhoods in which certain groups predominate” (Fessenden & Roberts, 2011).¹⁰ In Daldry’s construction of place, doormen, locksmiths, and investment bankers collectively sing to Whitman’s (1991) “melodious songs” of America. Now, however, he imagines that these “varied carols” embrace white, black, brown and all the shades of colors in-between. Daldry posits that the “darker brother” has risen from a dehumanized worker of the kitchen quarters to a high-powered investment banker in a financial institution. Positioned in a skyscraper, he too can proclaim: “I, Too Sing America” (Hughes, 1970).

The positioning of “our darker brother,” Mr. Black, as a voice in this “varied carol” of racialized workers suggests that the non-European is vital to the national story of American history and culture, as long as it exalts the dominant cultural discourse. Other stories are not voiced in this film because they are supplanted by a universal vision of what it means to be American, which serves well to reinforce our pluralistic national myth that—“America has witnessed the disappearance of the boundary between the ‘center’ and the ‘margins’” (Gray, 2011, pp. 455–458). While Daldry does concede the changing face of America since Crevecoeur’s time, he does not give literary voice to the competing stories of hyphenated Americans and borderland peoples whom more often than not have been denied access to material and social fruition. Absent is the narrative as to why Western universalist mythic notions were challenged in the first place. The voice of the other, the personhood of the other, the “disowned parts” and the “constant changing of forms” of America’s history have been silenced in the film’s construction of meaning, unless it is to aid in Oskar’s journey of self-discovery and First-World Privilege and US Supremacy (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 110).

The obvious political motives of this film to reinforce American exceptionalism and dominating superpower perspectives are further buttressed by a very brief historical allusion to the Bombing of Dresden. Grandmother and Grandfather Schell are living casualties of the strategic 1945 bombing and firebombing of Dresden in which American/British forces unleashed 2,600 tons of incendiary bombs and explosives that fire stormed and destroyed Germany's aesthetic hub of culture and architecture.¹¹ The military maneuver resulted in the death of 135,000 civilians.¹² Because Dresden was a civilian city with no military outposts and offered no incitement for aerial attack, Winston Churchill condemned the bombings as acts of "terror" and destruction (Taylor, 2005, p. 430).¹³ What we are led to believe is a faulty argument by analogy between the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Bombing of Dresden. The analogy of these two incidents developed in the plot and subplot suggests a fallacious similarity between these two historical events. This is precisely because it presumes that the Trade Centers were not iconic symbols of first world exploitation and therefore no socioeconomic and political reasons existed for the attacks.¹⁴

In this respect, we must consider how the US did or did not contribute to the making of the historical event, just as we must consider how American policies did or did not contribute to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers. Daldry chooses not to examine these issues; instead his focus is on the human vulnerability and suffering caused by these catastrophic acts of violence. Daldry relentlessly exploits this vulnerability in scene after scene, starting with innocent Oskar calmly eating his yogurt as he watches the inhumane Baudrillardian television images of the attack. The humane innocence juxtaposed against the inhumane evil that exists in the world manipulates the good vs. evil Western binary. The images of the tall buildings stretching forever in a panoramic shot almost suffocates Oskar, as he sits on top of one of the few green open spaces in New York City: a boulder in Central Park. Oskar reminds us that "Central Park used to have a PH balance" (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). Not now, of course, after the toxic impact of the fallen towers. The vulnerability of nature's open spaces to the cementified ashen forces of civilization swiftly merges into a narrative montage of disorienting, rapid fire-like images of "papers flying, old people, running people, airplanes, tall things you can get stuck in, loud things, screaming people, children without parents," bombarding together to arouse audience pity before resting on a close-up of Oskar's face (Rudin & Daldry, 2011).

4. Manufacturing consent

The emotional freight train of images followed by a close-up facial image produces an ethical demand on the audience, calling them to sympathetic and moral contemplation of the effects of the terrorist attacks on innocent children. Daldry's shifting images construct reality shifts in the before and after of 9/11, positioning the audience in the center of this precarious world to play God with its characters. It is an immediate charge to the audience to enter into the discourse of action, inaction, or reaction. The terrorists annihilated Oskar's family. He is fatherless, his mother a teary-eyed, disheveled emotional wreck. Daldry's camera insists that we intently look at Oskar's grief and suffering, his vulnerability so palatable it questions our humanity. Do we view the image with our mind, our body, or our soul? Do we empathize, feel compassion, or outrage? More importantly, how does the camera determine what and how we feel?

The extensive use of facial close-ups of the suffering human face further shows the limitations of dialogue and words to evoke emotion. Daldry knows this as he exploits the pain of both Oskar and his mother. The overwrought Sandra Bullock, who even in her pre-9/11 scenes teeter-totter on the verge of an emotional breakdown, appears to have been commissioned by the producers to do one thing: cry at the camera. The mother's depiction of a helpless victim re-chains women to subordinate positions of feminine weakness and, as Susan Faludi (2007) observes, "rein[s] in a liberated female population" by drowning them in their tears of sorrow (p. 25). Her face is understood as raw human suffering, representing the fragility of humanity and the "demeaning of the female voice and general shrinkage of the female profile" (Faludi, 2007, p. 25). In some "murky way," Faludi observes how "women's independence" outside the hearth and home was implicated in America's inability to shelter its children from outside intruders (Faludi, 2007, p. 25).

The mother's face, Oskar's face, his grandfather's face—all provoke aspects of human vulnerability, which has become big business in Hollywood. Butler points out that “the face, if we are to put words to its meaning, will be that for which no words really work; the face seems to be a kind of sound, the sound of language evacuating its sens(e) ...” (Butler, 2004, p. 134). The camera close-up brings us face to face with not only human vulnerability, but with the precarious nature of human existence and what it truly means to be human. Daldry employs the camera to expose his audience to life's truth—it entails suffering, and suffering is commodifiable, both locally and globally for the face “make various utterances at once: it bespeaks an agony, an injurability (Butler, 2004, p. 134).” Daldry's close-up manufactures the emotional intimacy and identification with the American victims of 9/11. As a result, the hyperbolic images of the fictional Schells' grief tap into the national recognition of the unimaginable reality of the terrorist attack. The intense close-up of Oskar's expressive grief serves to fortify and intensify America's emotional and political fury at the enemy of democratic principles. Oskar's pain itself becomes almost hyperbolic because of his Asperger-like symptoms, inferring that if he can make the human connections with all multi-ethnic Blacks in his New York community and get past the tragic event after a year, so can other sociable humans not afflicted with this anxiety disorder. If we are unable to transform the grief and become less vulnerable, like Mrs. Black's photo of an elephant (“since only humans can cry tears”), the cinematic charge is that there is something wrong with us as Americans (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). The close-up facial images “either represent American triumph, or provide an incitement for American military triumph in the future” (Butler, 2004, p. 143).

The repetition of images of human vulnerability is almost unbearable at times, overwhelming the psychology of the narration. This is especially true when Oskar shows the picture of a man falling from a building, “an image that perhaps more than any other, epitomizes the tragedy and the horror of the Sept. 11 catastrophe in Western cultural memory” (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 84). The imagery of the falling man binds the relationship between representation and death and exploits the depth of our wounded psyche. When Oskar shows his grandfather the photo of this image of a man falling from the sky, captured in a frozen representational moment and suspended in time, the grandfather, like the audience viewers, is stuck in the psychic moment of the event. “This is probably him. Probably other kids see their dad too,” Oskar tells his grandfather who is speechless (Rudin & Daldry, 2011). The image has now become inclusive of all the fathers who fell from the towers, creating a mutual vulnerability and rationality between viewer and viewed. In this aesthetic transaction, the “self is irrevocably transformed, if not also shattered, by the loss of the other, a situation [in which] ‘one finds oneself fallen’” (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 8). The singular photographic image of a falling body and the cinematic images that dominate the visual literacy of the event symbolize the collective fall of Western Man.

As if this isn't enough, Oskar must also replicate his own image of the event in an interactive moving tab picture book, which shows a man falling from the sky with one pull of a red string. The multimedia presentations and intersubjectivity of the image from all these visual perspectives exact an ethical inquiry as to how to rise from the ashes of the terror. The repetitive replaying of his father's final words, “Are you there?” on the answering machine, cross-cut with the vulnerability and fear in Oskar's face, demands ethical response from the viewing public: “Are you there?”

This repetitious call to arms urges America to wake up? “Are you there?”
Will you be there for Corporate America?
For each Other?

5. Conclusion

Through a close explication of Stephen Daldry's film, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, this essay hopes to contribute to a greater understanding as to how the Hollywood film industry produces powerful ideological images to shape and influence cultural values and frame political agendas and public discourse. I have proffered that close-up facial images of human suffering and the image of

the falling man, played over and over again in national media, capture the horror of the tragedy, bind the relationship between representation and death, and commercially exploit the depth of our wounded psyche. Daldry's cinematic spectacle constructs a stabilized and transformed post-9/11 world that repositions corporate America back to its global space of economic privilege—a position that reasserts itself as media capital every time the film is played.

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Notes

1. I refer to Hollywoodization as to how the Hollywood film industry takes and translates historical markers and events into grand spectacles for mass consumption.
2. The dramatization of the foibles and exploits of Miller's "common man" from 1995 to 2012 grossed \$33,621,012,632, with a 17.63 market share.
3. I use the German literary term *Buldingsroman* to signify Oskar's coming of age journey.
4. Thomas Horn delivers an emotional performance as the young Oskar Schell.
5. A question not explored here is whether the contrived fragmentation of the film is a strategy similar to the narrative and syntactic structure of Kurt Vonnegut's 1969 dystopian novel *Slaughterhouse Five* about World War II and the Dresden bombing.
6. Sandra Bullock plays the exhausted, weepy Mrs. Schell.
7. In Jonathan Safran Foer's novel, the story is told from three perspectives: those of the grandmother, the grandfather, and the young Oskar. From the grandmother and grandfather's point of view (POV), we are informed of the historical displacement of the civilian population after the bombing of Dresden.
8. Former Journalist for Daily Variety, David L. Robb exposes Hollywood's film connections to the Pentagon in his 2004 book, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon shapes and censors the movies*. Financial connections between Hollywood and the US Government is further explored in "MBC Special: Warn on Silver Screen: Hollywood and the Pentagon" (Shin & Namkung, 2008, p. 129).
9. A July 23 *Chicago Sun Times* article by Thomas Frisbie (2012) reports that "African Americans are more likely to be unemployed long-term and less likely to get unemployment insurance benefits, according to a study out today by the Urban Institute" (Retrieved from: http://blogs.suntimes.com/backtalk/2012/07/study_unemployment_hits_blacks.html, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/01/23/nyregion/20110123-nyc-ethnic-neighborhoods-map.html>).
10. A century ago, Israel Zangwill popularized the term in his play, "The Melting Pot." The *NY Times* (2011) reports, "Traditional ethnic enclaves sprawled amoeba-like into adjacent communities. Once monolithic tracts of white and black and native-born residents have

become bespeckled with newcomers." It has taken a century for Israel Zangwill's "melting pot," to include more diversity (Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/01/23/nyregion/20110123-nyc-ethnic-neighborhoods-map.html>).

11. Grandfather Schell acts as a foil to heighten Oskar's loss and suffering.
12. See Addison and Crang (2006) *Firestorm: The Bombing of Dresden* for a detailed history of the event.
13. See McKee (1984) and Taylor (2005) concerning the connection between military bombings and grabbing maneuvers.
14. Churchill had second thoughts about the Dresden Bombing, saying the moment had come when the use of bombing to incite terror "under other pretexts should be reviewed" (Coady, 2008, p. 163).

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