

# “Today is Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>”

Representation of Trauma in the Film EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE



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## Summary

This thesis examines the representation of trauma by means of cinematic techniques (sound, editing, and cinematography) in the film *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*. The main question for this thesis is: To what extent can the use of cinematic techniques in *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* be associated with the representation of post-9/11 trauma?

The central theory for this thesis is trauma and trauma representation in film, where the works of E. Ann Kaplan and Thomas Elsaesser constitute the central argument. Kaplan offers a strong argument on defining the concept of *trauma*, stating that in order to analyze its representation, one must be aware of its meaning. Elsaesser mainly argues that trauma representation in fiction is condescending towards real victims, and he offers a theory of *parapraxis*, which states that the sense of trauma merely arises when evidence of its presence can be found in the absence of what stays hidden in trauma film and/or literature.

For the analysis, three scenes have been chosen and they will each be analyzed for the use of sound, editing, and cinematography. For each scene, it will be discussed whether the use of these cinematic techniques contributes to the representation of trauma in this film.

By analyzing the scenes in itself, and each time discussing the cinematic techniques again, it will offer a more complete analysis of said scene, because the techniques can also be discussed in relation to each other. In the end, however, it will be made clear that the cinematic techniques in itself cannot represent trauma, and the emotions that are conveyed by the scenes are mostly due to the narrative elements: the cinematic techniques only emphasize these emotions.

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## Introduction

After September 11, 2001, many Americans were gravely impacted by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. Stephen Daldry directed the cinematic adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's 2005 novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, in which the traumatic aftermath of 9/11 is seen through the eyes of, and narrated by, nine-year-old Oskar Schell (Thomas Horn). Oskar lost his father (Tom Hanks) in the attacks on the Twin Towers, and processing this loss is very difficult for him. So when Oskar finds an envelope, containing a key and with the name "Black" written on it, in his father's wardrobe one year after what he calls "The Worst Day," Oskar assumes his father had set out another quest for him along the lines of the Reconnaissance Expeditions they used to do together. In an attempt to find closure about his father's death, Oskar is very determined to find the lock on which the key fits.

In this story, Oskar's quest is his way of dealing with the trauma, and as S. Todd Atchison explains: "Trauma literature depicts a survivor's personal struggle in responding to and representing the mass atrocities suffered through the threats to individual, cultural and inhuman eradication."<sup>1</sup> The story that is told in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is about one single person's trauma. Oskar's personal trauma is caused by his father's death, the traumatic moment being his father's last message on the answering machine that Oskar so desperately holds onto. However, as his father died during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an event that affected the entire nation, Oskar's trauma could also be explained as part of *collective trauma*. As Ann Kaplan elaborates in *Trauma Culture*, in America, and New York in particular, "the trauma produced a new collective subject within the city; it created a kind of togetherness such as perhaps the city had never experienced before."<sup>2</sup>

Thus an important question remains: what exactly can be understood as trauma? Having its origins in the ancient Greek language, *trauma* (τραῦμα), or "wound," originally referred to an injury inflicted on the body.<sup>3</sup> However, as Cathy Caruth mentions, the term *trauma* in its later usage "is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind."<sup>4</sup> These ideas regarding the concept of trauma will be further elaborated on in the theoretical framework section. The importance of this thesis lies not in merely analyzing this film, but can be found in

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<sup>1</sup> S. Todd Atchison, "'Why I Am Writing from Where You Are Not': Absence and Presence in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46 (2010): 359–368, 360.

<sup>2</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

the attempt to contribute to the larger historical context regarding trauma representation in film, and post-9/11 trauma in particular.

Therefore, this thesis will focus on trauma, specifically the cinematic representation of trauma. Its case study is the cinematic adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. By looking at the cinematic techniques that are used in the film EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE, such as the use of sound, editing, and cinematography, this thesis will try to show whether trauma can be visualized, or represented, in film. This leads to the main question for this thesis: To what extent can the use of cinematic techniques in EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE be associated with the representation of post-9/11 trauma? The thesis will consist of four chapters that will each answer a sub question in order to define an answer for the main question. These sub questions are: (1) What are the conventions regarding the cinematic representation of trauma? (2) To what extent does sound contribute to the representation of trauma in EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE? (3) To what extent does editing contribute to the representation of trauma in EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE? (4) To what extent does cinematography contribute to the representation of trauma in EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE?

Earlier in this introduction, the distinction between personal trauma and collective trauma was mentioned. While not being a main point in this thesis, the distinction between personal and collective trauma will be acknowledged, as the trauma that is represented in this film is based on the personal experience of one individual human being, which must be understood correctly. 9/11 created a collective trauma throughout the whole United States of America, and New York in particular. However, the event has also caused a personal trauma for all individuals who were, directly or indirectly, affected by the terrorist attacks. Thus the trauma caused by 9/11 blurs the boundaries between personal and collective trauma.<sup>5</sup> In the film Oskar makes a journey trying to extend his 'eight minutes' with his father,<sup>6</sup> which is clearly his way to deal with his personal trauma. As Kaplan states:

Trauma can never be 'healed' in the sense of a return to how things were before a catastrophe took place, or before one witnessed a catastrophe; but if the wound of trauma

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<sup>5</sup> Kaplan, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Oskar Schell, EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE: "If the sun were to explode, you wouldn't even know about it for eight minutes because that's how long it takes for light to travel to us. For eight minutes, the world would still be bright and it would still feel warm. It was a year since my dad died and I could feel my eight minutes with him... were running out."

remains open, its pains may be worked through in the process of its being ‘translated’ via art.<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, Oskar’s journey is his “translation via art,” for which he keeps a notebook in which he sticks the photos, and other memories, taken throughout his journey. This is how Oskar experiences and deals with the trauma in his own way, which is caused first and foremost by the aforementioned message on the answering machine. However, Francisco Collado-Rodríguez describes the character of Oskar Schell as “activated as a powerful metaphor for the United States, young Oskar’s condition is obviously post-traumatic and therefore susceptible of departing from normal behavior,”<sup>8</sup> suggesting that Oskar’s actions fit the larger picture of the collective trauma as well. That is a blunt statement, as it is difficult to say whether Oskar’s experience of the event can really be seen as part of the collective trauma, since his is not a first-hand experience of the event. His trauma is caused by the message on the answering machine *suggesting* that his father is in the tower during its collapse. This does not necessarily mean that his trauma is caused by the event itself, but merely by losing his father in that event. That is why one cannot bluntly assume that Oskar’s trauma is directly part of the collective trauma surrounding the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Whether in film or literature, E. Ann Kaplan notes that an important aspect when writing about trauma representation, “is how one defines [trauma]. Trauma studies originated in the context of research about the Holocaust.”<sup>9</sup> Film historian Thomas Elsaesser, who wanted to examine the trauma and terror caused by the Holocaust, wrote the book *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945*. The relevance for writing about the Holocaust, and films about it in particular, arises, according to Elsaesser, because:

Although films are often cited alongside works of literature, theory and history, cinema and television are rarely discussed (as opposed to accused) concerning their role as root causes for the slippages between history, memory, trauma (and the proliferation of competing terminologies).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kaplan, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Francisco Collado-Rodríguez, “Trauma, Ethics and Myth-Oriented Literary Tradition in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*,” *Journal of English Studies* 5–6 (2008): 47–62, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 24.

With one of the main arguments in his book, Elsaesser advocates the need for “parapractic memory,” alongside the notion of “prosthetic memory,” when it comes to examining the “memory frames” that are provided by films about the Holocaust.<sup>11</sup> This argument will be further explained in the theoretical framework, where other authors contributing to the discussion regarding the conventions of trauma representation in film will be taken into account as well.

The analysis of the film will be done according to the principles of a neoformalist film analysis. Neoformalist film analysis was coined by Kristin Thompson, who based her work on the early Russian formalists. A neoformalist film analysis is about making an inventory of a film’s style and its motivations, aiming to issue a statement: which principle of form decides the film style’s organization (and thus its effect)?<sup>12</sup> This thesis focuses on three principles of film style: cinematography, editing, and sound. In order to properly analyze those aspects, one of the central books used for film analysis, *Film Art: An Introduction*, will be the main work of reference. Particularly the chapters “The Shot: Cinematography;” “The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing;” and “Sound in the Cinema” will be of great importance.

The object of research is the movie *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*, directed by Stephen Daldry (2011). The scenes that will be analyzed are chosen by their capability of answering the question regarding a specific cinematic technique. There were three scenes that particularly stood out regarding their use of cinematic techniques. These scenes are: (1) the scene where Oskar begins his quest and lists the things that make him panicky; (2) the scene in which Oskar locks himself in the bathroom; and (3) the scene in which Oskar meets ‘the Renter’ and tells him his story. As it appeared that for each cinematic technique these same three scenes seemed to stand out, I decided to structure the thesis per scene rather than per technique. Thus, each chapter will analyze the three cinematic techniques for the chosen scene. By doing so, connections between the use of the different techniques in that specific scene can be made as well.

One final aspect that needs explanation is the potential relationship between cinematic techniques and trauma. As mentioned before, I made the assumption that trauma is represented in this film and that it is transmitted to the audience by using certain cinematic techniques in order to make the audience empathize with Oskar. In other words, the trauma that Oskar experiences results in him behaving in specific ways, for example him getting panicky and

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<sup>11</sup> Elsaesser, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 43.

anxious as a result of this trauma. While watching this film, I noticed that cinematic techniques are used to represent his trauma by putting emphasis on his post-traumatic anxiety. In this thesis I will be using the scenes that use cinematic techniques to put emphasis on the feelings and behavior of Oskar that is caused by or can be related to his trauma.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. The first chapter will focus on the first sub question, providing a theoretical framework regarding conventions for trauma representation in film. Then three analytical chapters will follow, each chapter providing the analysis of three cinematic techniques for one scene. Finally, I will summarize the results of the analysis in a conclusion, where I will answer the main question and make a suggestion for further research.



## Conventions for Trauma Representation

In the introduction, the origin of the word *trauma* was mentioned, as well as the difference between personal and collective trauma, and trauma literature. This chapter will further elaborate on the aspects of trauma representation, summarizing a discussion regarding cinematic representation of trauma. This chapter will focus on the first sub question, “what are the conventions regarding the cinematic representation of trauma?” When that question has been answered, the film *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* can be analyzed in order to decide whether or not the conventions apply to this film as well.

As mentioned in the introduction, Cathy Caruth describes trauma as “a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind.”<sup>13</sup> Additionally, she argues that trauma literature is “the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is otherwise not available.”<sup>14</sup> The novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* has been closely read by a variety of scholars, one of them describing the “strategies and motifs [of the book] belonging to such tradition to a context that fulfills the premises of contemporary trauma fiction.”<sup>15</sup> However, it is not the premises of trauma literature that this thesis focuses on, although a connection between trauma representation in film and literature may exist.

Trauma studies originated in the context of research about the Holocaust, as E. Ann Kaplan notes. Film scholar Joshua Hirsch examines documentaries dealing with the Holocaust, where his main point of interest is demonstrating the “role of the cinema in the transmission of an historical trauma from eyewitnesses to the public,” using that to theorize post-traumatic cinema.<sup>16</sup> Hirsch’s article, however, is mainly about trauma being caused by film, making some points about the discourse of trauma. Hirsch argues that “vicarious trauma” results from the viewing of atrocity films.<sup>17</sup>

According to Hirsch, the discourse of trauma “gives one a language with which to begin to represent the failure of representation that one has experienced.”<sup>18</sup> By analyzing some early Holocaust documentaries, Hirsch noted that there are three factors that make the spectator believe that the action on the screen takes place in the present, thus enhancing the trauma. The

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<sup>13</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Collado-Rodriguez, 47.

<sup>16</sup> Joshua Hirsch, “Post-traumatic Cinema and the Holocaust Documentary,” in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, ed. E. A. Kaplan and B. Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2004): 93-121, 93-94.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, 99.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, 101.

first one is the sense of presence permanently existing in the cinematic image, eliminating anything that suggests it happened in the past rather than in the present. Secondly, to strengthen the sense of presence, the commentary is in present tense as well, suggesting that what is happening, happens at that very moment. Thirdly, the use of editing and cinematography “creates an ease of viewing which is conducive to a fantasy of presence.”<sup>19</sup>

Hirsch’s second point is refined by Ban Wang, who introduces the radical potential of traumatic visuality, which assumes that there is a literal reaction of the body and emotions as the spectator is affected by the images on screen. However, unlike the other authors that have been discussed, Wang does not specifically focus on Holocaust films. He analyzes more generally the “links between traumatic visuality and the representation of history in filmmaking and film discourse.”<sup>20</sup> Wang’s main argument is that “history is not approached on the register of narrative and generalizations, but on the level of experience, pain and pleasure.”<sup>21</sup> With this statement, Wang criticizes Hollywood films, where the individual story is aesthetically appealing.<sup>22</sup> Aside from that, Wang does note the importance of montage in films, stating that montage and the long take are not simply cinematic devices. He argues that they play an important role in striving to approach actual referents in history, without which the tragic or traumatic story would “simply be another fictional piece of entertainment.”<sup>23</sup>

Advancing on the notion of the rather radical visualization of historical events, Janet Walker writes in her essay “The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Film” about Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*, a movie that is known to have caused World War II veterans to relive their trauma when watching the iconic Omaha Beach scene. This confirms the impact that a film can have when representing trauma or a traumatic event. However, it must be taken into account that the film is a fictionalization of reality. As Walker notes about the main character in *Saving Private Ryan*, Captain Miller:

(...) Miller is fictional after all, so, although I do believe he is being portrayed as a PTSD sufferer, that diagnosis is finally less important than the fact that, above and beyond

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<sup>19</sup> Hirsch, 108.

<sup>20</sup> Ban Wang, “Trauma, Visuality, and History in Chinese Literature and Film,” in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, ed. E. A. Kaplan and B. Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2004): 217-239, 224.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, 221.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, 231.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, 239.

Miller's characterization, it is the film's aesthetic register itself that mimics the mental landscape of traumatic memory in the Normandy landing sequence.<sup>24</sup>

This has to be realized as well when analyzing *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*. Many points that have been made so far about the conventions of trauma representation in film refer to documentary films, most of them being about the Holocaust. It is true that much of the discussion about trauma is found within the documentary genre, while this thesis analyzes a fiction film. However, as there are many similarities between the two when it comes to conventions regarding trauma representation, it will not be of great importance to distinguish between them.

Walker emphasizes that the film's aesthetic is most important when representing the trauma or the traumatic memory, which directly points back to Wang's argument about film aesthetics and montage being of great importance. In addition to aesthetics being of great importance, I would like to briefly mention an article by Neil Narine, "Film Sound and American Cultural Memory: Resounding Trauma in *SOPHIE'S CHOICE*." Narine argues that the human experience of sound can be related to memory and fantasy. Sound can be experienced as a technique in order to support the narrative, possibly strengthening the emotions that are displayed, but as Narine argues, "sounds can trigger memories, powerfully re-encode them in less traumatic or nostalgic fantasy terms, or even repress them."<sup>25</sup> Thus, according to Narine, sound can trigger certain memories, enhancing traumatic experiences, as well as repress said experiences, soothing the mind.

Memory is an important aspect of trauma, and in *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* this plays an important role. In his book *Terror and Trauma*, Thomas Elsaesser reevaluates the meaning of the Holocaust for post-war German films and culture, taking trauma theory into consideration. One of Elsaesser's arguments is that remembering the Holocaust through film has posed "major epistemic and ethical dilemmas regarding cultural memory as a concept and the legacy of communicative memories," as well as having "implied another special burden of representation," by which he means the positions of both filmmaker and spectator.<sup>26</sup> Elsaesser continues to criticize Holocaust films by stating that "fictional narratives

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<sup>24</sup> Janet Walker, "The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Film," in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, ed. E. A. Kaplan and B. Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2004): 123-144, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Neil Narine, "Film Sound and American Cultural Memory: Resounding Trauma in *SOPHIE'S CHOICE*," *Memory Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 33-54, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Elsaesser, 62.

desecrated the victims twice over, by suggesting that the experience of persecution, torture, humiliation and murder could be ‘represented.’”<sup>27</sup> Elsaesser then proposes what resources and strategies can be used to contribute to or constitute that ‘memory’ in film; “distinct modes (of address, of presence and of witnessing) (...): the forensic mode, the testimony mode and the involved bystander mode, and contrast it to a participatory mode of ‘being there.’”<sup>28</sup> He further elaborates on that by mentioning this paradox on the cinematic legacy of the Hitler years: “No matter how many books are written, how many drama series and documentaries, compilation films or fiction films, (...) something stays hidden, repressed, buried, unexplained, and therefore unexpiated.”<sup>29</sup> Within such absence, it is that evidence of presence can be found, namely *trauma*. However, a situation where (different kinds of) “victims” and (several generations of) “perpetrators” are being dealt with, “other forms of being active and passive, of absence and presence are also crucial.” Elsaesser brings these multi-layered manifestations of agency under the single notion of *parapraxis*.<sup>30</sup>

Parapraxis is more commonly known as a “Freudian slip,” although Elsaesser prefers to use the term “parapraxis” as it also implies effort, however voluntary or involuntary, leading to unexpected or unintended results.<sup>31</sup> Parapraxis, or parapractic memory, forges from memory a “usable past.”<sup>32</sup> The memory, Elsaesser paraphrases Nietzsche, is not only selective, “it is *choosy*: it has to see the necessity or the benefit of recall.”<sup>33</sup> Elsaesser introduces the notion of *parapractic memory*, which stands for “a more conflicted, but also unpredictable relation between remembering and forgetting, between past and present, but above all, between subjective remembrance and public commemoration.”<sup>34</sup> Parapraxis is a critique of performativity and it is aware of the intermission within every kind of (self-)evidence. Thus, parapraxis points at the possibilities of future events that cannot be predicted with certainty which is attached to any kind of performativity, including one’s own.<sup>35</sup> These possibilities and uncertainties can be explained through the notion of “absence as presence,” where something can be absent, although its absence puts emphasis on that what is missed, thus making sure the concept of the absence is present. Shared under the notion of parapraxis, absence as presence is a way of dealing with trauma and the way that message is conveyed to the spectator when

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<sup>27</sup> Elsaesser, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, 94.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, 101.

<sup>31</sup> Idem, 102.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, 108.

showing trauma in film. Parapraxis is thus a convention for trauma representation in film, as it is a strategy that is not only used in some of the New German Cinema films, but may also “apply to other films, directors and other national cinemas, where similarly traumatic histories have to be negotiated.”<sup>36</sup>

Traumatic history implies trauma that is caused by something that gravely impacted a larger group of society, but, as mentioned before, there is a difference between personal and collective trauma. Walker states that “we must read screen representations of historical subjects always with reference to outside sources.”<sup>37</sup> Even though films have represented a personal memory that is part of a public history, one must understand the “inevitability and intrinsic worth of imaginative constructions in memory.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, it is highly significant to acknowledge the distinction between the main character’s personal trauma and the collective trauma as part of public history. Kaplan, for example, describes 9/11 as “a paradigmatic recent example of a national trauma that was at the same time deeply personal and individual.”<sup>39</sup> Although Kaplan acknowledges that separating individual and collective trauma is difficult, she notes that she calls “the impact of a major public event on relatives indirectly involved in terror (...) ‘family’ or ‘quiet trauma.’”<sup>40</sup> In her book *Trauma Culture*, Kaplan writes about how 9/11 affected her day-to-day life even though she personally had not lost someone in the terrorist attacks. She states that different types of trauma can be distinguished, and analyzes different ways people relate to traumatic events.<sup>41</sup>

The main character of *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*, Oskar, suffers from a personal trauma, which is part of a larger, collective trauma. Trauma emerges as a *crisis of truth*, which, according to Collado-Rodríguez, “may extend beyond the individual to affect the whole community if it is reported or accessed at a cultural level.”<sup>42</sup> Oskar’s individual trauma is central in this story, which Anke Geerstma explains by saying that “despite its public character, September 11 was to a large extent a personal trauma, which, for many, unequivocally started a new period of time.”<sup>43</sup> However, the contrast between his individual trauma and the collective trauma is made clear as Oskar talks to many New Yorkers along his quest for understanding, which, according to Collado-Rodríguez “makes us ponder about the

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<sup>36</sup> Elsaesser, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Walker, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> Kaplan, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Collado-Rodríguez, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Anke Geertsma, “Redefining Trauma Post 9-11: Freud’s Talking Cure and Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*,” *Aspeers* 4 (2011): 91-108, 93.

ways they have responded to the collective trauma generated by the 9/11 attacks.”<sup>44</sup> Geerstma then rightfully questions, whether individual or collective, how “the traumatic ‘Real’ can be translated into our symbolic realm of words and images?”<sup>45</sup>

Film is an image. Film is a moving image. In this thesis I will analyze how trauma can be translated into images in the film *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*. Throughout this chapter I summarized various conventions regarding trauma representation in film. Multiple times the difference between personal and collective trauma came forward. I would like to identify this as a convention for trauma representation in film, because it can make a difference in how a film is set up and practically determines the tone of a film, apart from taking into consideration whether a film is fictional or not, or perhaps a combination of fiction and non-fiction.

Another point that stood out was the use of cinematic techniques, especially editing and cinematography, in order to convey the trauma to the audience. As the use of cinematic techniques returned multiple times, that will be the main guideline throughout the analysis, which will be done according to the principles of a neoformalist film analysis. The hypothesis is that these techniques are prominently used in the film, trying to express the trauma in a remarkable way. In the final conclusion, it will come forward whether the film fits the conventions, and whether that means the cinematic techniques do represent trauma in film.

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<sup>44</sup> Collado-Rodríguez, 59-60.

<sup>45</sup> Geertsma, 93.

## **“I always had a hard time doing certain things”**

Oskar has decided that, in order to find closure about his father's passing, he needs to go on a quest to find the lock that fits the key. Assuming the key Oskar found in his father's closet, a year after he had died, fits a lock which is part of one of their Reconnaissance Expeditions, Oskar finds all possible information about the Blacks in New York. The first scene that will be analyzed, is the scene where Oskar leaves for this expedition. Closing the apartment door behind him, leaving his scared mother behind, this nine-year-old boy enters the busy streets of New York City, looking for the first person on his list of Black's who happens to reside in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. In order to get there, Oskar has to cross the Brooklyn Bridge; bridges being the last and most severe thing on the list of things that make him panicky.

Firstly, I will describe a few remarkable ways in which sound has been used in this scene, explaining when and how sound has a great impact in strengthening the narration. To analyze this scene, it is important to understand sound in film. Sound in film is very flexible and wide-ranging, as the sound and the image are constructed separately, which means that sound can be manipulated independently. As sight first and foremost determines the information the spectator gets about the color, texture and layout of the surroundings, sound becomes merely a background noise for our visual attention. “Similarly, we speak of *watching* a film and of being movie *viewers* or *spectators* – all terms implying that the sound track is a secondary factor.”<sup>46</sup> Sound is, however, a powerful film technique. Sound can shape our understanding of images, as well as direct our attention. This makes sound an interesting object of research, and thus provides a reason for examining it.

This scene consists almost entirely of a monologue, as Oskar is on his own and we hear nobody else speaking, except during the flashbacks. This sound, coming from inside the mind of the character, is defined as internal diegetic sound.<sup>47</sup> The internal monologue provides a lot of information about Oskar. He explains that this journey is a difficult one for him, but that “nothing, nothing was going to stop” him; “not even me.” Then Oskar provides a list of things that make him panicky, explaining that he “always had a hard time doing certain things, (...) but The Worst Day made the list of things a lot longer,” after which Oskar proceeds to list numerous things that make him panicky, continuously speaking louder and faster. The list of things is as follows:

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<sup>46</sup> D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 267.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, 288.

Old people, running people, airplanes, tall things, things you can get stuck in. Loud things. Screaming, crying, people with bad teeth. Bags without owners, shoes without owners, children without parents. Ringing things. Smoking things. People eating meat. People looking up. Towers, tunnels, speeding things. Loud things, things with lights, things with wings.<sup>48</sup>

Oskar concludes with the words “bridges make me especially panicky.” This list immediately gives an idea of where Oskar’s fears come from, as some of the things can be related directly to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the fear of another attack happening. As it is an internal monologue, it both informs the spectator of this without Oskar having to explicitly tell anybody – especially since in the beginning of the film, when talking about the Reconnaissance Expeditions, Oskar explains that his father designed these so that he would have to talk to people, “something I always had a hard time doing – and subconsciously shows us that Oskar’s mind is always extraordinarily busy.

Another striking aspect of sound in this scene is the loudness of certain diegetic sounds, and how they get louder and the tempo rises. The things on the list of things that make Oskar panicky are accompanied by their respective sounds. When Oskar jumps over a storm drain, it hisses loudly. Clearly audible footsteps (running); loud noise from a departing airplane; the drilling noise of a jackhammer (loud things); screaming and crying children; the shrill noise of a ringing telephone; the disgusting noise of someone munching meat off a bone (people eating meat), are examples of notable sounds in this scene, clearly louder than these sounds would usually be when they function as background noise. When Oskar stands on the Brooklyn Bridge after having summed up his list of things, the cables are creaking loudly. Triggered by the loud creaking, a flashback to one of Oskar’s memories ensues, where Oskar and his father are at the swings in a park. Oskar’s father tries the swing, and Oskar looks up to where the swing is bolted to the frame. The creaking noise of the swing is similar to that of the bridge. Finally, while running across the bridge alongside a raging train, Oskar violently shakes his tambourine, as the sound of the tambourine calms him down.

Finally, there is the nondiegetic music, a type of sound coming from a source outside the story world.<sup>49</sup> At the beginning of the scene, the loudness of the music rises, and it is hard to distinguish whether the rumbling sound is part of the music or part of the diegetic sound announcing the incoming bad weather. When the scene moves on to Oskar walking the busy

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<sup>48</sup> EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE, DVD, dir. Stephen Daldry, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Bordwell and Thompson, 284.



streets of New York, the bustle is emphasized by indistinguishable (diegetic) sounds. However, as the focus shifts towards Oskar as an individual in these streets again, the noises are overruled by the nondiegetic music, building suspense. Only when things on the list are not accompanied by their respective sounds, the nondiegetic music gets louder. As the scene moves along, and Oskar's talking gets faster and louder, the nondiegetic music does so too. Suspense and excitement are built up greatly in this scene and the tempo, loudness and rhythm of these sounds contribute to that, emphasizing the struggles that Oskar has to deal with.

The next cinematic technique that stood out in this scene, is the use of editing. Editing is a very powerful technique, as its decisions can build the film's overall form.<sup>50</sup> The filmmaker can manipulate time, space, and pictorial qualities in ways that shape the viewer's experience of the film, as well as shape the response to individual scenes.<sup>51</sup> Filmmakers are offered four basic areas of basic choice and control: graphic, rhythmic, spatial, and temporal relations between two shots.<sup>52</sup> With a total of 1525 shots, this film has an average shot length of 4.8 seconds. The editing in the opening of the scene is very slow: the first shot lasts four seconds, followed by a shot lasting eighteen seconds, which is far beyond the average, confirming that there is a lot of creativity put in the editing. When Oskar lists his fears, the editing takes up the tempo with which the situations on the list are said, thus creating an odd rhythmic relation between the shots. The beginning of the scene starts off rather slowly, which results in even more emphasis on Oskar's fears with the fast editing. These shots are mostly only one or two seconds, and some of them last even less than one second. The pace slows down again when Oskar stands on the Brooklyn Bridge.

Remarkable as well is the way in which the shots are joined. The most common join is a cut,<sup>53</sup> which is also the case in this film.<sup>54</sup> However, most of the shots showing one of Oskar's fears are joined together with a dissolve, briefly blending two shots together during the transition from one shot to another.<sup>55</sup> This insinuates that there are vague boundaries between Oskar's thoughts and fears, creating a flow that connects each of the fears with each other, as if mentioning one of them reminded him of the next one on the list, or maybe even helped actualizing the next fear.

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<sup>50</sup> Bordwell and Thompson, 218.

<sup>51</sup> Idem, 218-219.

<sup>52</sup> Idem, 221-222.

<sup>53</sup> Idem, 219.

<sup>54</sup> *Appendix I: Scene Table* includes one column that is devoted to the shot duration throughout the entire film. The column shows the length of a shot as well as the way the next shot is joined to it.

<sup>55</sup> Bordwell and Thompson, 219.

Editing can also control the time of the action presented in the film. Editing contributes to the plot's manipulation of story time. The order of events taking place can be manipulated.<sup>56</sup> One common technique that is used to control the chronology is the flashback. Flashbacks especially have to do with the temporal relations between two shots. When Oskar stands on the Brooklyn Bridge, the sound of its creaking activates a flashback. The flashback is about his father wanting him to try the swing, but Oskar does not want to swing, because it is dangerous. As mentioned before, the focus is on the place where the swing is bolted to the frame, which is similar to the creaking sound of the bridge. It subtly points to his trauma, Oskar missing his dad, and emphasizes the fear that his "last eight minutes with him are running out." After the flashback, Oskar realizes that the only way to move on is to cross the bridge. The only way to find closure, to stretch his "last eight minutes," is for him to cross that bridge.

Finally, I would like to discuss the cinematography in this scene. When we speak of framing, we can differentiate between camera position and mobile framing. Remarkable was the use of (medium) long shots versus (extreme) close-ups and the camera movement. The long take at the beginning of the scene was a medium long shot taken from a slightly lower angle, tracking Oskar as he walks (see *Image 1*).



*Image 1*

There is a shift from the medium long shot, to a medium shot where Oskar says he walks rather than taking public transportation, as if zooming into the situation. In *Image A.1 (Appendix II)*, it can be seen that the focus in the frame is on Oskar and the surroundings are visibly blurred.

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<sup>56</sup> Bordwell and Thompson, 228.

Blurring the people around Oskar reinforces the statement of avoiding public transportation, as it implies that he tries to shut out – and thus avoid – these people too.

Twice, Oskar's feet are shot in a close-up frame (see *Image A.2* and *A.3* in *Appendix II: Screenshots*). The first close-up of his feet marks the beginning of his journey, as he has just left his house and walks in the park. The camera tracks his steps, zooming out as well. The second one is a close-up of his feet jumping over a storm drain, which marks the unsettling feeling that the crowded city gives him, as well as how he avoids things that panic him. Here, the surroundings are blurred, focusing on what is framed in the center of the shot, and the camera remains stationary. This second close-up leads to a series of close-ups and extreme close-ups; the list of things that make Oskar panicky, zooming in every time one of his fears is portrayed in the frame, centering said fear and blurring the surroundings.<sup>57</sup> The camera seems to be filming from Oskar's point of view, for example, when Oskar looks up, the camera is behind him, filming from a lower angle. In the end of the scene, the framing shifts back to a medium close-up, and eventually even a crane shot that zooms out, producing an extreme long shot.

As has become clear by now, Oskar has to deal with a lot of difficulties, many of them having occurred after his father's death. Thus, since Oskar's trauma is caused by the death of his father, these difficulties are a direct result from the trauma Oskar is experiencing. This is a key scene in this phase of the film, as it tells the audience a lot about Oskar's character. The way the cinematic techniques are used in this scene to visualize Oskar's fears enhances the sense of emotion and emphasizes the importance of these fears in the story.

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<sup>57</sup> *Images A.4 – A.15 in Appendix II: Screenshots*; (only) a handful of screenshots from this particular sequence in order to give an idea of the cinematography in this scene.

## **“Today is Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>”**

In the next sequence I will discuss, Oskar has locked himself in the bathroom after his visit to Abby Black in Fort Greene. This sequence contains a major flashback that has some very interesting points regarding the cinematic techniques itself, so that it can almost be entirely discussed on its own. However, the two parts of the sequence really belong together, which is why they will be discussed as one scene. Though in order to keep the chapter organized and clearly structured, they will be discussed separately for the cinematic techniques. In the beginning of the scene, Oskar sits in the bathroom when his mother asks him if she can come in. Oskar is clearly upset by the first encounter (Abby Black) on his journey and I will discuss how the cinematic techniques convey these upset feelings.

At night, Oskar listens to the messages on the answering machine again, after which a flashback to “The Worst Day” starts. On The Worst Day, Oskar gets home and listens to the messages on the answering machine. He hides under the bed when his grandmother comes over to their apartment to check if he is okay. When his mother comes home, he lies to her when she asks whether there are messages on the answering machine. At night, Oskar sneaks out to buy a replacement answering machine, hiding the one with his father’s messages on it in his closet.

In the first part of the sequence, diegetic sound and nondiegetic music make their way through the conversation between Oskar and his mom. The diegetic sounds seem to be amplified as they appear quite loud regarding the circumstances. This is especially the case with water dripping from the faucet. Each drop seems to echo through the bathroom. As the scene advances, the echoing gets louder and louder, as Oskar gets more and more uncomfortable. Then, when his mother knocks on the bathroom door and tries moving the doorknob to open the door, those sounds are both loud and echoing as well. At its peak, the focus is entirely on the dripping water, while the voice of Oskar’s mother is muffled in the background. These minor sounds being amplified like that, clearly bothering Oskar, generate the idea that these sounds are actually what they sound like to Oskar when he is facing such difficulties. At this point, the volume of the nondiegetic music, which was softly playing in the background, has been greatly increased. Oskar, covering his ears, has a ‘vision’ where he sees a falling man, which is an important aspect of how Oskar’s trauma has incurred. Then the music calms down again, as well as Oskar himself. It is striking, however, that the music continues to sound somewhat exciting, as if it is low-key still building suspense. This part ends with a sound bridge to the flashback; as Oskar is lying in bed, clearly struggling and feeling bad, we hear sirens in the streets, after which the flashback starts. This implies that Oskar is suffering so badly from

the trauma, that when he has a bad episode and thinks about or has a flashback to The Worst Day, he is reliving it in such a way that he actually hears the sirens in his head again.

The editing in this scene is at first not really outstanding. However, upon taking a closer look, little disturbances can be found. The scene starts with a point-of-view shot of Oskar looking at the picture he took of Abby Black. Then follows a medium shot of Oskar sitting on the edge of the bathtub. Although not surpassing the axis of action when crosscutting between Oskar and his mother standing at the door, the 180° system is not applied here either. This makes for a strange spatial relation in this particular part of the scene. When looking at *Image 2*, one would expect the next shot, which cuts to his mother knocking on the door, to feature Oskar's mother as seen from the front, making a 180° turn. However, as can be seen in *Image 3*, this is not the case; it is a close-up shot of the side of her face.



*Image 2*



*Image 3*

This spatial discontinuity perhaps suggests that the world inside the bathroom is different from the world outside the bathroom, and it is a safe haven where Oskar can lock himself up and shut out the outside world.

The cinematography in this scene has a more outstanding feature; the speed of motion. In this scene, there are two instances where slow-motion effects particularly stand out. The first one has already been named in the sound section, namely the dripping water. The moment where the suspense in the scene is reaching its peak, and the music is getting louder, the dripping of the faucet slows down terrible. It echoes louder than before and in the frame, the water is falling slowly, trickling down the drain. Then Oskar envisions a falling man, when he looks out the small bathroom window. The flowerpot dissolves into an extremely blurred clip of a man falling, referring to people falling down or jumping out of the World Trade Center. These shots have been enclosed in *Appendix II: Screenshots* (Images A.16 – A.22).

As the scene continues, the framing distance significantly changes as well. Where the opening shot is a point-of-view shot where Oskar looks at a picture in his lap, the next shot is a medium shot. As mentioned in the editing section, crosscutting marks the interaction between Oskar and his mother. However, every time the camera cuts back to Oskar, he appears much closer in the frame. The camera does not zoom in or out, it simply cuts from a medium shot, to a close-up of the mother, to a medium close-up, to the closed bathroom door, back to a medium close-up and then to an extreme close-up (*Appendix II: Screenshots*, Images A.23 – A.29).

As mentioned before, a sound bridge smoothly bridges the transition from the first part of the sequence to the flashback. On the one hand, the flashback shows the chaos that came with everything that happened on The Worst Day, while on the other hand there is a sense of calmness or quietness surrounding the scene. This contrast is partially due to the way the different cinematic techniques have been performed in the scene.

First of all, one major factor in creating this contrast is the use of sound, especially loudness versus quietness. Throughout this part of the scene, sirens from outside of the apartment building are constantly audible in the background, depicting the chaos of what is going on in the streets. In the meantime, Oskar hid under the bed, and is absentmindedly scratching and ticking on the surface of the wooden floor with his fingernail, the sound of which is amplified in such a manner that indicates a certain level of silence in the room, creating a calm atmosphere. This marks the apartment as a safe space, where all the bad things happening in the outside world cannot reach him.

Another contrast is generated when Oskar sneaks out at night to buy a new answering machine. There is no background noise at all, not even nondiegetic music. This moment in itself already sketches a contrast between the two parts of the scene; going from a lot of noise and fuss, to total silence. Having successfully sneaked out of the apartment, Oskar checks the entrance hall of the apartment building to see whether the coast is clear, only to run down the

marble staircase so noisily that anyone would have heard him by then anyway. Nondiegetic background music does not occur until Oskar is back at the quiet apartment, having stood in the middle of an intersection, looking completely lost, surrounded by traffic noise, police sirens, and cars honking their horns. These large contrasts between the noises outside and the silence inside generate the idea that the apartment really is a safe haven where the chaos that is happening outside can be shut out.

A flashback is in itself a way of editing that can be used by the filmmaker to manipulate story chronology. In this case, the bridging that connects the first part of this sequence is particularly interesting. As mentioned before, Oskar lies in bed at night and by means of a sound bridge, the plot flows into the flashback. A few moments earlier, however, an instance of crosscutting indicates the upcoming flashback. A close-up shot of Oskar's hand scratching the floor ties together the moment where Oskar is giving himself bruises and where he is lying in bed, after which the flashback really begins (*Appendix II: Screenshots*, Images A.30 – A.34).

Another aspect of editing is the way it can influence the rhythm and tempo of a film. In the previous chapter, it was said that this film counts 1525 shots, averaging 4.8 seconds per shot. In this whole sequence (including the first part in which Oskar hid in the bathroom), most shots are above the average shot length. In fact, when measuring the average shot length for just this sequence, it is 6.5 seconds. The sequence includes multiple long takes, as opposed to the scene from the previous chapter that used fast editing to build suspense. In this scene, a different kind of suspense is being built. The long takes emphasize what happens at that moment. Because of the long-lasting shots, it seems as though less happens and it takes longer before the story continues. Oskar, his mother, and his grandmother are still uninformed about the situation, although deep down they already know the truth. Stretching the time in this scene, stalling the moment of truth, underlines the heavy doubt the family is going through. Subconsciously, this also points to Oskar dreading to listen to the last message on the answering machine, not wanting to know the truth and enforcing the trauma.

Interesting about the cinematography in this scene is that multiple times, there is a shift of the focus within in the same shot. This happens on four different occasions. The first one is an establishing shot of the living room, at the beginning of the flashback. The image is completely blurred, after which the lens focuses and the image sharpens (*Appendix II: Screenshots*, Images A.35 and A.36). Secondly, when Oskar lies underneath his bed, the focus shifts from his hand (A.37) to his face (A.38), and when he lies in bed at night the camera tilts from his grandmother sleeping at his footboard to Oskar launching in upright position, as the focus shifts from the footboard to Oskar himself (A.40 – A.42). Lastly, when Oskar sneaks out

of the apartment, the focus shifts from the entrance hall in the background, to Oskar in the front, and back to the entrance hall in the background (A.43 – A.45).

Oskar's discomfort is emphasized by amplifying sounds in the bathroom. When these sounds reach their peak we see the image of the falling man, directly linking the discomfort to the idea of a falling man and indirectly to Oskar's trauma itself. This is strengthened by the flashback to the day of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, because it confirms that the memory of that specific day is triggered by experiencing utter discomfort and visioning a falling man. Additionally, Oskar replaces the answering machine, desperately trying to protect the ones he loves, literally saying that "now no one will ever have to listen to them like I did." This scene builds up to that moment, revealing that the actual cause of Oskar's trauma is the message on the answering machine, rather than the event of airplanes crashing into the buildings itself. The way the cinematic techniques are used in this scene helps build tension as well as emphasize the strong discomfort that Oskar experiences. The memory to The Worst Day and the messages on the answering machine feed the trauma and the use of these cinematic techniques clarifies and emphasizes this.



## **“Can I tell you my story?”**

The third and final scene that will be discussed, is the scene in which Oskar goes over to his grandmother’s apartment while she is not at home and he meets the Renter. It appears that the Renter does not and cannot talk, something that later in the story turns out to be the result of a traumatic experience. The Renter does not want to tell Oskar his story, and claims that “My story is my story.” Oskar, being quite the opposite of the Renter, takes this opportunity to tell his story, because “I had to tell someone. I couldn’t keep it a secret anymore.” Then he proceeds to sum up his journey so far, as well as ramble about other related things.

The discussion about the use of sound will be separated in the diegetic sound and the nondiegetic sound. The most outstanding aspect of diegetic sound in this scene is simply Oskar’s monologue, of which a transcript is included in *Appendix III: Monologue*. At the beginning of his monologue, Oskar speaks rather slowly and in a low voice. As he continues his story, not only does he speak faster and faster, but also louder. Sometimes during the monologue, words, or even whole sentences, overlap each other, depicting the chaos that is undoubtedly going on inside Oskar’s head. During the monologue, Oskar visibly gets more and more frustrated and upset about the whole situation. The monologue clarifies how Oskar’s mind has been occupied by the quest and his father all the time, and indicates that it has become an obsession. The way he tells the story, in such a chaotic manner, is also a literal rendition of how his mind works: everything that happens or has happened makes no sense to him, which is why the way he tells it almost makes no sense. Other diegetic sounds in this scene are Oskar’s tambourine, which he jingles while crossing the street and entering the apartment of his grandmother. Additionally, during the monologue, visual fragments of the things he mentions flash by, in which sometimes the sounds can be heard (e.g. when he kicks a shed door, that sound is heard, as well as when he mentions “people who don’t speak English,” who are noisily eating a bowl of noodles). However, the main focus is on the speech.

The use of nondiegetic sound is very limited in this scene. As Oskar leaves his apartment and crosses the street, soft music plays at an insignificant volume, only to stop as Oskar enters his grandmother’s apartment. During the monologue, the music plays as well, varying in volume. The loudness of the music depends on the loudness with which Oskar is speaking: constantly it is only just loud enough to notice. When the monologue is near the end, the music is considerably louder, although it stops playing at all when Oskar finishes his monologue.

The editing in this scene is highly significant, as it supports the monologue by fast editing, cutting to different visualizations of the things Oskar mentions in his story. Nearly all

things Oskar names, are accompanied by a visualization of said thing. This part of the scene is set up by a lot of short flashbacks that are narrated by Oskar, many of the shots lasting just a second. Most of the flashback shots are included in *Appendix II: Screenshots*, Images A.48 to A.82. Including all these short flashbacks strengthens the argument about Oskar's chaotic mind, yet the visualization of the flashbacks helps him, but also the spectator, to make sense of things. Occasionally, however, the sound and the talking do not match the image, because the cutting is so fast. This entire scene is a cluster of organized chaos, and even after watching the scene ten times, new things seem to occur.

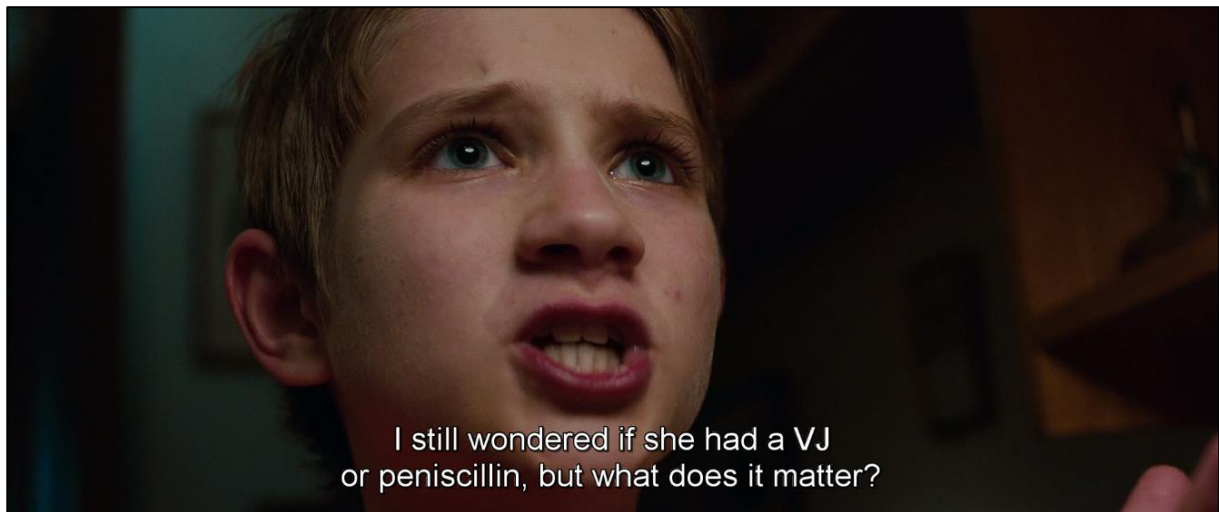
As for the cinematography, two aspects stand out in particular. First, the focus in the shot. In all shots representing (part of) a flashback, the focus is on the middle of the frame and the edges are blurred. This way, the flashback images can be very well distinguished from those representing the present. While talking, Oskar gets more and more upset; the first shot of him talking is rather relaxed, yet the more the scene advances, he gets frustrated. This is heard in his speech, but also visible in the image. Each shot where Oskar gets more upset and emotional, the distance between Oskar and the camera gets smaller. Gradually changing from a medium close-up to a close-up, each time only slightly adjusting the distance and even the camera position, the framing certainly adds to the tension that is being built.



*Image 4*



*Image 5*



*Image 6*

This is immediately the second aspect of the cinematography that stands out as well: the framing of the image. In the apartment, it varies mostly between medium close-ups and close-ups of Oskar and the Renter. Within the flashbacks, however, there is a lot of variety. The shots mostly alternate between close-ups and medium close-ups when introducing the people that Oskar met. Although in a few instances an extreme close-up is used, these are mostly used for framing Oskar's hands while working on his plan. Three times, the camera was positioned at a high angle, although these instances do not really relate in a way (they are when Oskar climbs upon the large case to fetch the camera, when Oskar is at Hazelle Black and they bless him, and when Oskar is at Astrid Black, where the high angle camera position gives an overview of all the drawings lying in the room. In this last frame, the camera zooms out as well in order to show even more drawings).

This scene marks the contrast of how people deal with trauma differently. Oskar deals with his trauma to talk about it as much as possible, explaining every little detail and trying to make sense of everything; things cannot be left unexplained. That has always been his way of dealing with almost everything, as scenes about the Reconnaissance Expeditions with his father explained to the viewer. The way Oskar deals with his trauma significantly differs from the way in which the Renter deals with his trauma, who stopped talking about it and evades as much as possible in general, seeing as he simply walks out after Oskar is done, “telling” him (by writing a note) that he is tired and goes to bed. In this scene, the cinematic techniques emphasize the way Oskar’s chaotic mind works and how he deals with his trauma.

## Conclusion

This thesis's main goal was to discuss whether there are conventions for representing trauma in film and whether cinematic techniques could represent trauma in film, according to the main question "To what extent can the use of cinematic techniques in *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* be associated with the representation of post-9/11 trauma?"

It turned out that there was less written about conventions regarding the representation of trauma in film than one would expect. Cinematic techniques are said to emphasize emotions, although that does not necessarily mean that the use of those techniques represents trauma itself. I believe that the film *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* better fits Thomas Elsaesser's parapractic memory, as Elsaesser implies that representation arises at the interaction between the filmmaker and the spectator. Thus, the product in itself does not represent a subject, in this case post-9/11 trauma.

Elsaesser also said that one paradox in cinema is that something always stays hidden, and that trauma can be found within that absence. According to that statement, it can be argued that Oskar, indeed, has a trauma, namely that which has been explained in the introduction; for a long time, the last message on the answering machine stayed hidden, marking that as a trauma. The absence of knowing what exactly happened is what causes the trauma here, or as Elsaesser argues, subjects it to parapraxis. In addition to this statement, one of the questions was whether trauma can be visualized, but precisely because the trauma is based on something that is not really there, the trauma cannot be visualized. The absence of this visualization of trauma strengthens the presumption that this film is not a trauma film, but rather portrays parapractic memory.

One other point that has been discussed is whether Oskar's trauma was a personal trauma, or that it could be seen as part of collective trauma as well. The way the trauma is portrayed in this film, definitely conveys it as personal trauma. Especially since Oskar was not a first-hand victim of the attack, and his trauma is incurred by a message on an answering machine, thus implying the trauma is based on something that is not really there. It cannot be argued as part of collective trauma, because the story is a fictional story, which would be condescending towards actual victims, as if their trauma could be visualized. The film is about how someone deals with losing his father in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which is the only connection between main character and the attacks. Oskar's trauma is based on losing his father in the attacks, but he himself has not experienced that and therefore cannot be traumatized directly by it, which is why his trauma will be defined as a personal, or individual, trauma.

The sub questions have been answered shortly at the end of each chapter, which I will summarize here. Reviewing the literature clarified that the assumption about cinematic techniques representing trauma was not correct. Cinematic techniques have been named, but they were never, in itself, representing the trauma. The only thing that came forward regarding actual trauma, was the instance where Neil Narine argued that sound can trigger traumatic memories, as well as repress the experience and soothe the mind. Oskar uses his tambourine a lot because it calms him down, which confirms Narine's statement.

Furthermore, the conclusion for the remaining sub questions, each asking to what extent said cinematic technique would attribute to the representation of trauma, is that trauma in itself is not represented by the cinematic techniques. It appeared that the ways in which the cinematic techniques were used seemed more remarkable at the moments in the narrative that pointed to Oskar's trauma. In other words: the story of a trauma is told by the narrative, and not by the cinematic techniques. However, the techniques certainly attribute to the portrayal of Oskar's emotions, that are due to his trauma, and how they are conveyed to the spectator. This is why my suggestion for further research is to analyze this film from the perspective of affect studies in order to examine the ways in which cinematic techniques can be used to convey certain emotions to the spectator.

The film for this thesis was analyzed by using a neoformalist film analysis, which is a standard method for analyzing cinematic techniques. However, it also has its limitations. Upon discovering that the trauma is merely depicted by the narrative, and the cinematic techniques merely served as a way to convey emotions to the audience, the method was limited in not only one, but two ways. Firstly, by using this method, I would be unable to properly connect the use of the techniques to the narrative, which in hindsight would have offered a more complete analysis. Secondly, this method would not allow me to make proper arguments about how the use of these techniques is able to elicit certain emotions from the audience. Hence the suggestion above that the next step would be to analyze such a film from the perspective of affect studies.

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## Appendix I: Scene Table

**Abbreviations:** O: Oskar; FB: Flashback; RE: Reconnaissance Expedition; TWD: The Worst Day; CP: Central Park.

**Shot duration:** *xs/c*, *d*, *w*, *f.i.*, *f.o.*: the shot is *x* seconds, followed by a cut, dissolve, wipe, fade-in, or fade-out.

Scene	Short description	Sound	Shot duration	Cinematography
00:00:20	O's bedroom imagination: his father falling.	Piano music	60s/d. 44s/d.	Image of falling man slightly blurred
00:02:04	O's father's funeral. (FB)		4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 12s/c. 4s/c. 10s/c.	
00:02:52	Series of FB's to the "RE" O used to do with his dad.	Voice over/narration by O. Or conversations that happened at those moments. → diegetic or non-diegetic sound	4s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 4s/d. 4s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 13s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 13s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 17s/c. 5s/c. 14s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 9s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 12s/c. 11s/c. 10s/c. 7s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 9s/c.	
00:09:45	FB to the morning of "TWD," O walking home. O listening to the messages on the answering machine.		10s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 41s/c. 5s/c. 11s/c. 4s/c. 27s/d.	



00:11:51	O's bedroom, one year after TWD. Proceeds to search his dad's closet. Finds the key. With the Walkie-Talkie he calls his grandmother to ask about the. Then he asks about the renter.	No music, just the noises made by O. It is narrated by O; he is not speaking at that moment. Unnerving melody that builds up when he grabs the camera and the vase drops.	2s/c. 13s/c. 14s/c. 16s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 8s/c. 13s/c. 8s/c. 9s/c. 27s/c. 22s/c. 9s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 30s/c. 16s/c. 14s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c.	
00:17:08	FB to a moment where O is at his grandmother's apartment. They play piano. He asks about the renter.		3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c.	
00:17:49	Back in the room. Next, O goes to locksmith, asks about key. Includes FB to that morning where O convinces his mom that he is sick, so he can go and look for the lock that fits the key.		5s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 10s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c.	
00:19:21	O looks for all Blacks in NYC, puts expedition together. Includes FB to one of the RE's with his dad.	A lot of voice over narration by O.	4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c.	

			2s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 9s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c.	
00:22:53	O begins his expedition. List of things that make him panicky. Fast editing. Brooklyn Bridge. FB to swings with his dad (dissolve at 00:24:37)	Increased volume of sounds. Tambourine shaking. Narration gets louder.	4s/c. 18s/c. 2s/c 9s/c. 5s/c. 2s/w/d/. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/d. 1s/w. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 2s/d. 1s/c. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/d. 0s/c. 1s/d. 1s/d. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/d. 2s/c. 5s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 5s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 18s/d. 9s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 19s/c.	Surroundings blurred, focus on O.
00:26:46	Visiting the first house: Abby Black.		4s/c. 16s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 0s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 8s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 0s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c.	
00:31:29	O is in the bathroom; his mother is worried. Emphasis	Amplified sounds; water dripping,	3s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c.	Zoomed in on O's face, only see his

	on sounds. Slow motion. Includes “illusion” of a man falling (O thinks it is his father). O listens to the messages on the answering machine, left by his father on TWD. Gives himself bruises. Hides under his bed (FB to TWD) gets up at night to buy new answering machine.	nail scratching surface of the wooden floor. Music. Loud traffic noises on the intersection (in the FB).	4s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3/d. 10/d. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 12s/c. 1s/c. 9s/c. 6s/c. 22s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 11s/c. 21s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 12s/c. 17s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 12s/c. 18s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 14s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 19s/c. 15s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 31s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 12s/c.	eyes – he looks panicky. The vision where the man is falling is very blurry. Under his bed: focus shifts from finger to O’s face.
00:40:06	O continues expedition. Has a moment with his mother, when he wants to leave. Visits Hazelle Black.		24s/c. 9s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 10s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 10s/c. 7s/c. 14s/c. 14s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c.	
00:43:09	Working further on the expedition map. Visits more people. Explains that it is taking longer than it should. O has a fight with his mother. Then there is a FB to TWD where O’s mother and father have phone call.	In the FB lots of sirens.	4s/d. 5s/d. 3s/c. 3s/d. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/d. 2s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 11s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c/ 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 8s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c.	Lots of close-ups.

			8s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 9s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 6s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 12s/c. 13s/c. 15s/c. 8s/c. 12s/c. 23s/c. 7s/c. 11s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 30s/c. 10s/c. 7s/c. 17s/c. 37s/c. 6s/c. 10s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c.	
00:53:23	<p>O gives himself bruises again. Calls grandmother with Walkie-Talkie. She does not answer. The Renter signals in Morse code with light. O goes over to the apartment. Demands to know his story, but he writes “my story is <u>my</u> story.” O then proceeds to talk to Renter about expedition.</p>	<p>A lot of tambourine sounds. Then completely silent except when O talks. When he tells his story; sad music. O speaks rapidly. More and more loudly.</p>	4s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 18s/c. 3s/c. 15s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 24s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 1s/c. 5s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 8s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 9s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c.	<p>In the FB’s that flash by, only the center of the image is focused, rest is blurred.</p>

			1s/c. 1s/c. 0s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 0s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 0s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 0s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 32s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 9s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 10s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 15s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c.	
01:02:02	O continues expedition, grandfather/Renter joins him. Includes FB to oxymoron war. They travel by train.		1s/c. 4s/c. 10s/c. 1s/c. 19s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 19s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 15s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 18s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 14s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 21s/c.	
01:06:19	First house they go to. They sit down, O asks why the Renter does not speak. Tells about extensive research on not speaking. In a bar, the Renter 'tells' his story, about a bombing.	When they are walking, O shakes the tambourine.	33s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 40s/c. 7s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 13s/c. 21s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c.	

			3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 46s/c.	
01:12:58	Updating the progress of the journey. Continue looking for Blacks.	Piano music. Not a lot of talking.	7s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 0s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c.	
01:15:57	O is at home, uses binoculars to look at the Renter's room, who shuts his curtains. O loses it at some kind of company/ warehouse. They decide to abandon the journey. O wants to show the Renter something. Shows pictures of falling man as well as the answering machine. Renter wants to stop looking.		10s/c. 6s/c. 16s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 11s/c. 12s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 18s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 11s/c. 3s/c. 14s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c.	

			3s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 28s/c. 7s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 12s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 6s/c. 10s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 10s/c. 9s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 8s/c. 7s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 16s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 12s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 17s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c.	
01:27:04	Renter is leaving. O gets angry, yells at him. Then sums up why his father was so good.	Quiet music in the background.	9s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 9s/c. 5s/c. 10s/c. 9s/c.	
01:28:58	O finds out a phone number is circled as well in the article he keeps with him. It turns out to be Abby Black, he visits her. They go to her ex-husband's office. O finds out what the key is for. However, not at all what he had hoped.		12s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 19s/c. 27s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 9s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 11s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 13s/c. 14s/c. 2s/c. 10s/c. 11s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 8s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c.	

			8s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 12s/c. 3s/c. 12s/c. 4s/c. 11s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 17s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 9s/c. 10s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 11s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 13s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 9s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 17s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 7s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 24s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 8s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 5s/c. 6s/c. 13s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 3s/c. 16s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 6s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 8s/c. 12s/d. 4s/c.	
01:45:12	O goes home, tears his entire project apart. Angry. Mother calms him down. Then		2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 9s/c. 14s/c. 10s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c.	



	explains that she had known what he was up to all along.		4s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 1s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 10s/c. 8s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 7s/c. 17s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 1s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 6s/c. 4s/c. 1s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 8s/c. 4s/c. 13s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 10s/c. 3s/c. 2s/c. 7s/c. 9s/c. 13s/c. 14s/c. 9s/c. 7s/c. 16/f.o.	
01:53:43	O writes a letter to everybody he visited. Then goes to the swings in CP and finally tries them. Finds a note his dad left him there. He also writes a letter to the Renter to ask him to come home.		2s/f.i. 9s/c. 2s/c. 9s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 9s/c. 11s/c. 7s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 3s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 14s/c. 15s/c. 4s/c. 5s/c. 9s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 7s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 7s/c. 7s/c. 7s/c. 16s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 10s/c. 3s/c. 5s/c. 7s/c. 18s/c. 20s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 4s/c. 2s/c. 19s/c. 3s/c.	

			14s/c. 6s/c. 5s/c. 2s/c. 24s/c. 2s/c. 8s/c. 5s/c. 3s/c. 10s/c. 4s/c. 6s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 2s/c. 5s/c. 4s/c. 11s/c. 9s/c. 7s/c. 12s/c. 9s/f.o.	
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## Appendix II: Screenshots



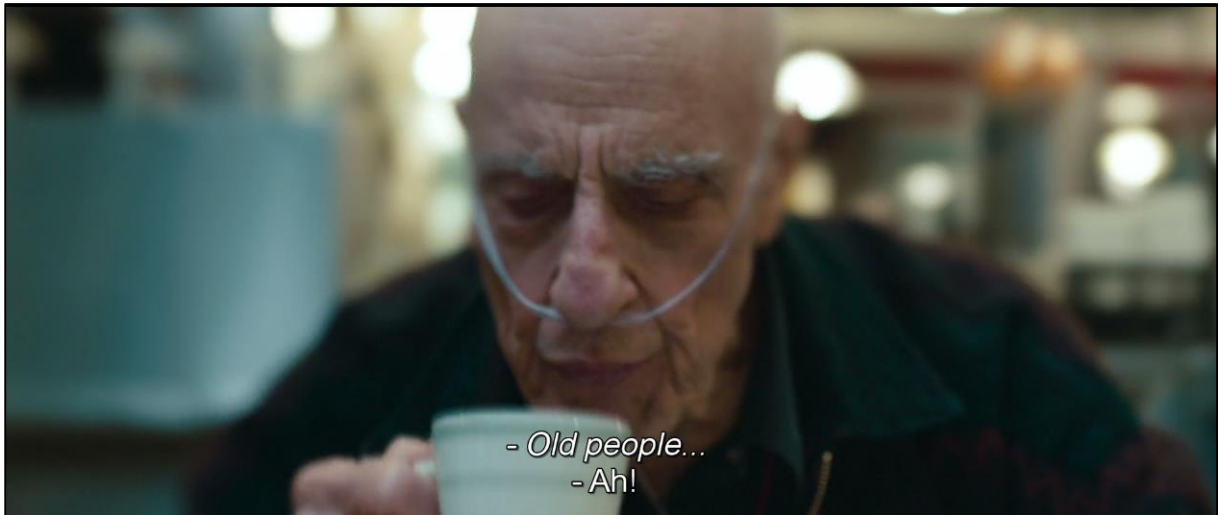
*Image A.1*



*Image A.2*



*Image A.3*



*Image A.4*



*Image A.5*



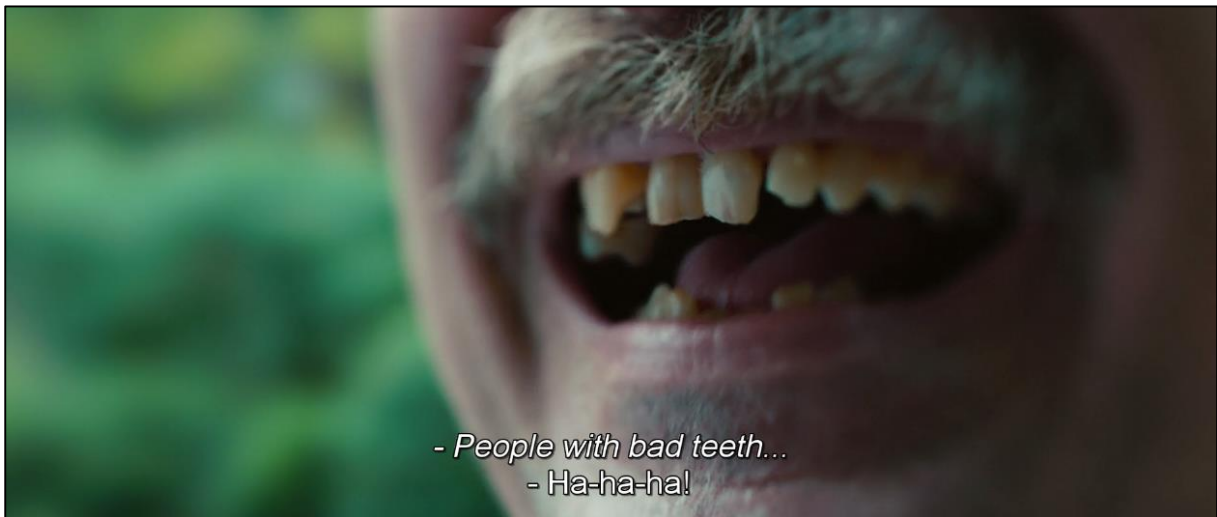
*Image A.6*





*Loud things.*

*Image A.7*



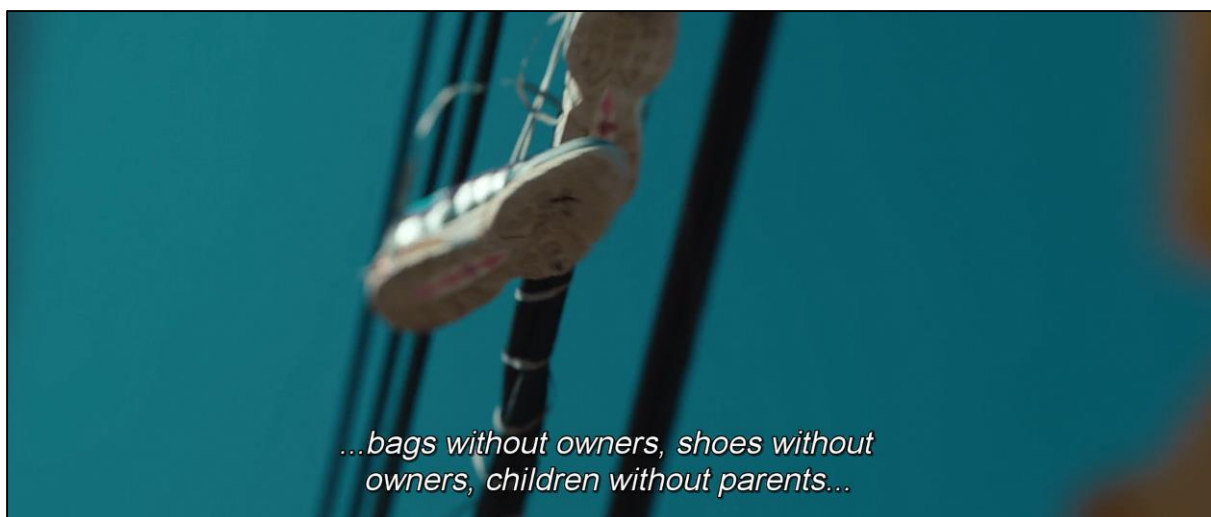
*- People with bad teeth...  
- Ha-ha-ha!*

*Image A.8*

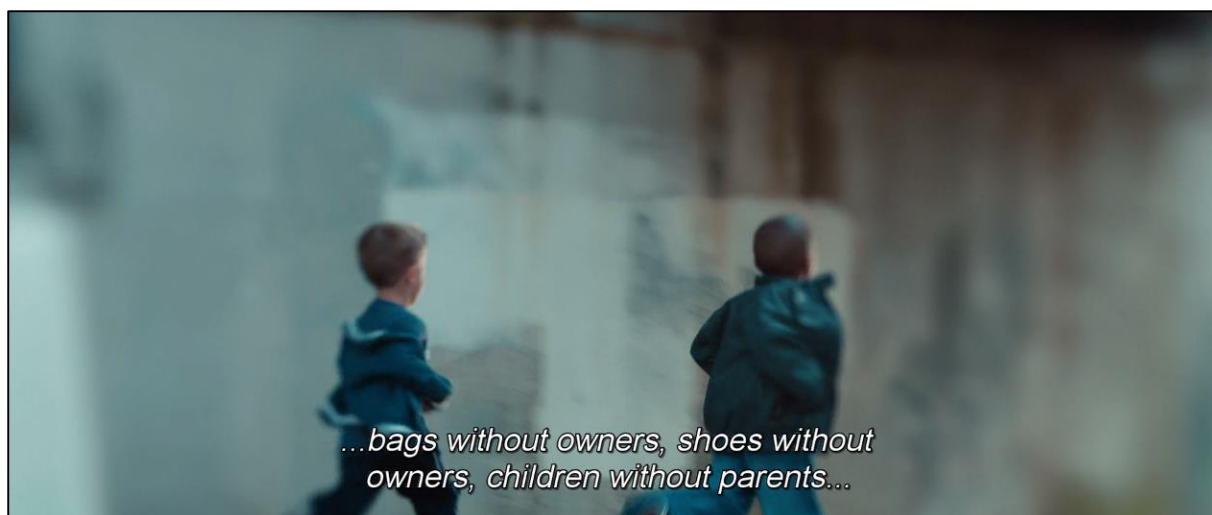


*...bags without owners, shoes without  
owners, children without parents...*

*Image A.9*



*Image A.10*



*Image A.11*



*Image A.12*



*Image A.13*



*Image A.14*

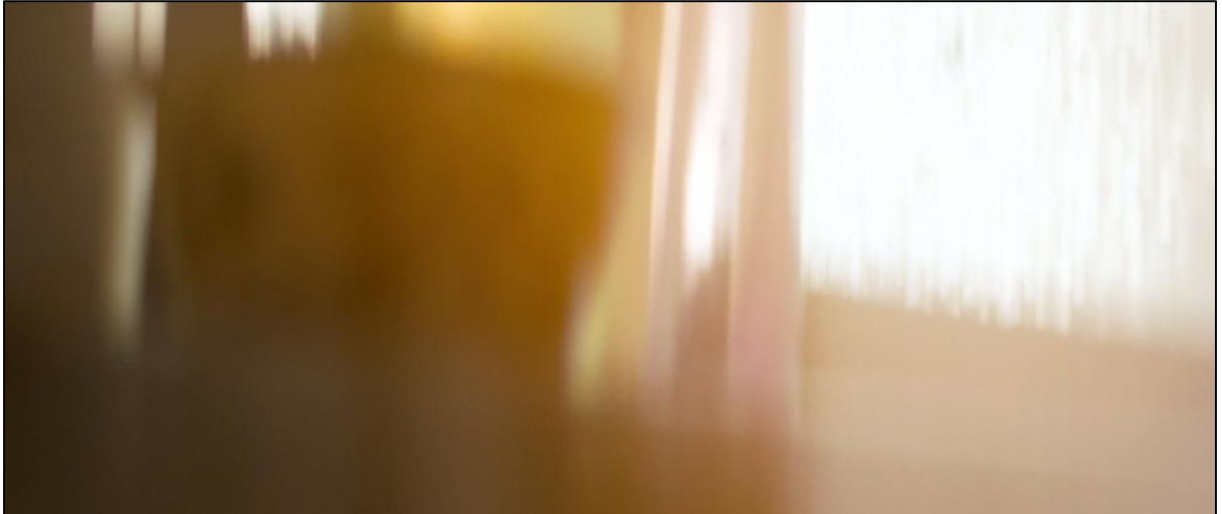


*Image A.15*

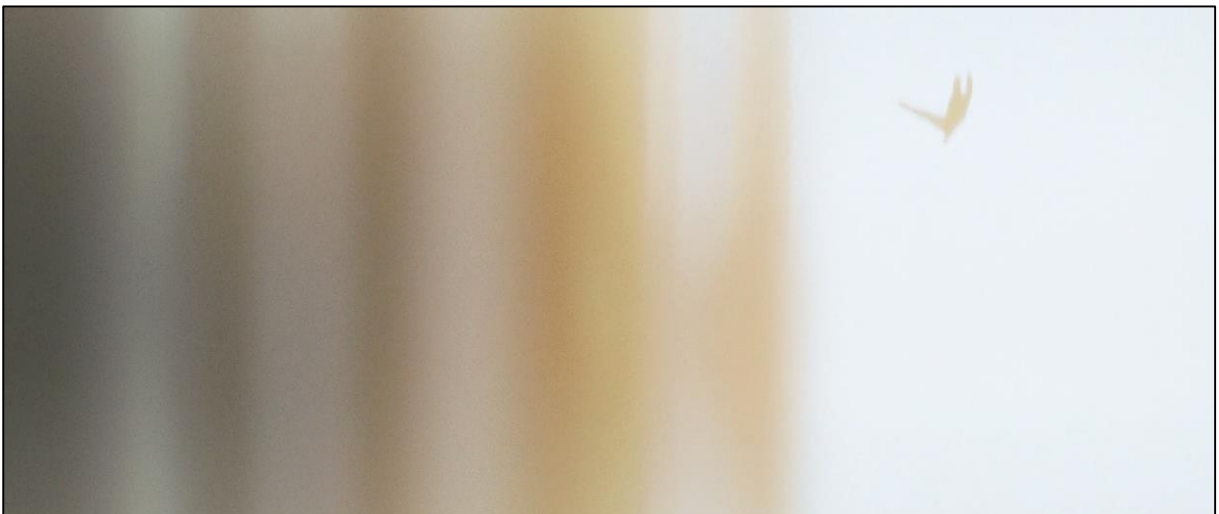




*Image A.16*



*Image A.17*

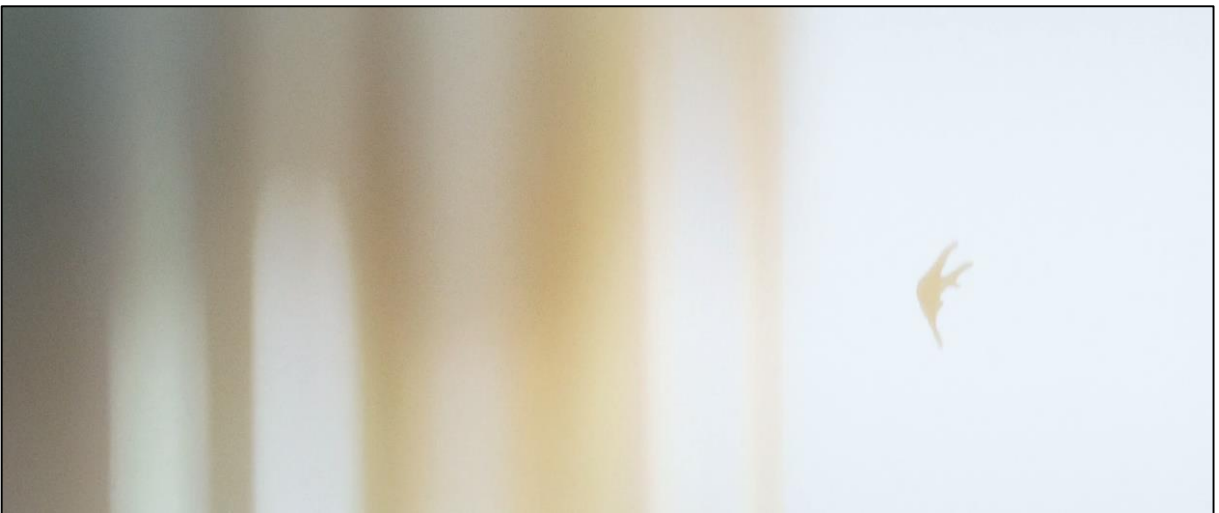


*Image A.18*

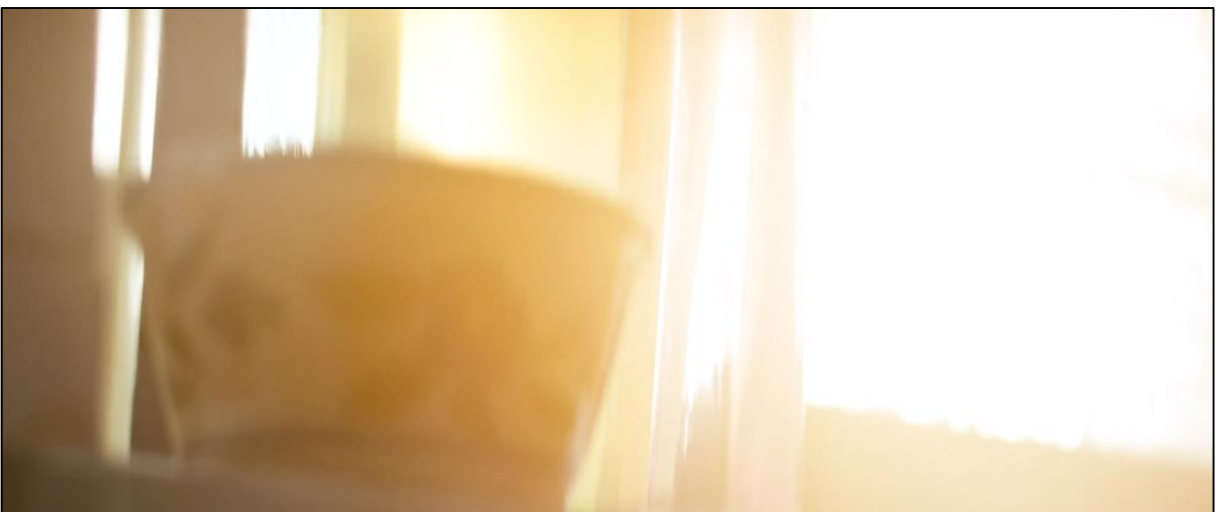




*Image A.19*



*Image A.20*



*Image A.21*



*Image A.22*



*Image A.23*



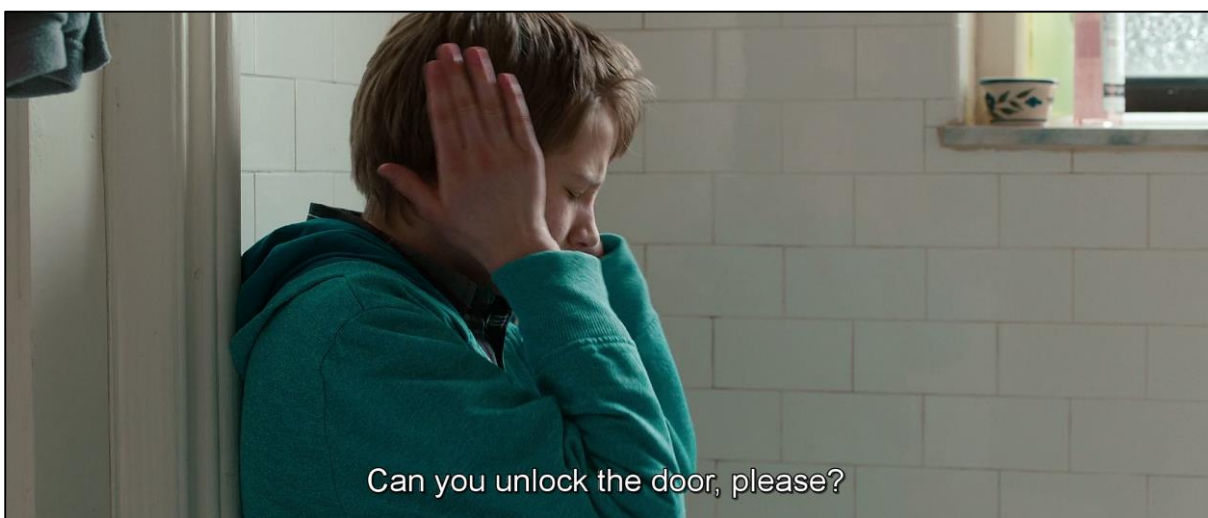
*Image A.24*



*Image A.25*



*Image A.26*



*Image A.27*





*Image A.28*



*Image A.29*



*Image A.30*



*Image A.31*



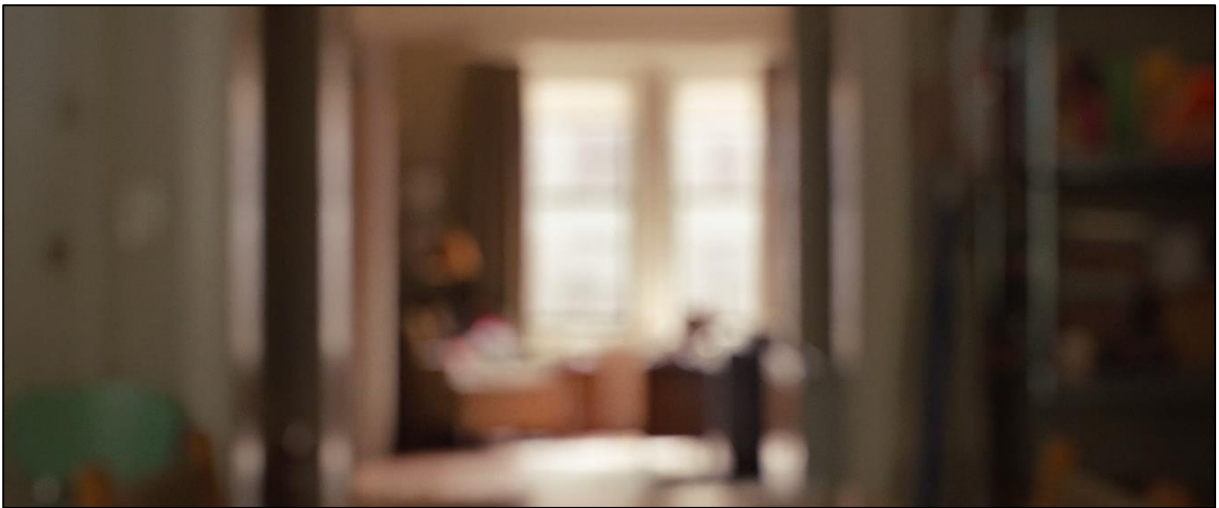
*Image A.32*



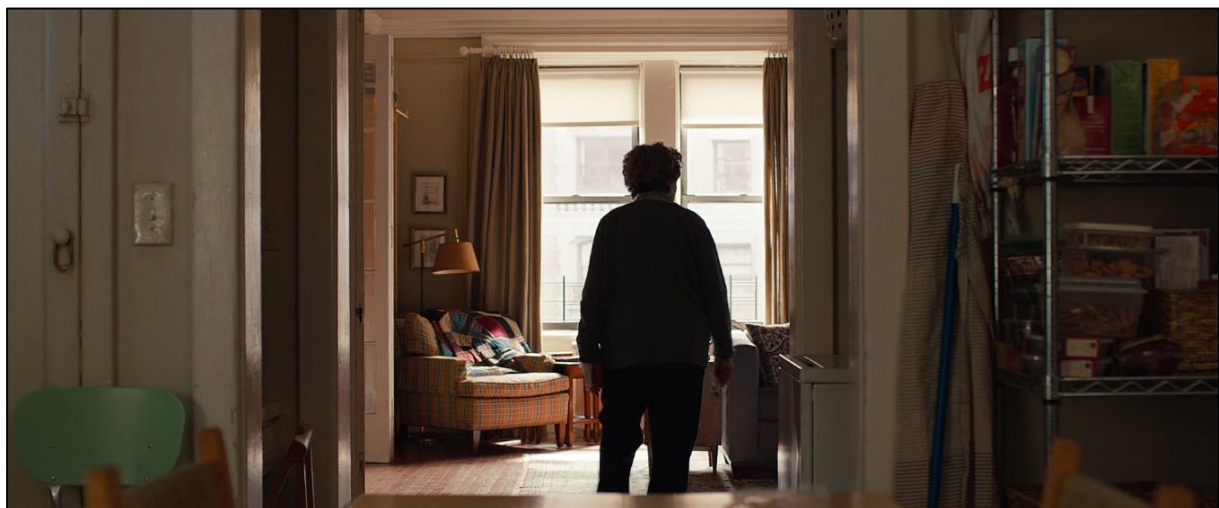
*Image A.33*



*Image A.34*



*Image A.35*



*Image A.36*





*Image A.37*



*Image A.38*



*Image A.39*



*Image A.40*



*Image A.41*



*Image A.42*





*Image A.43*



*Image A.44*



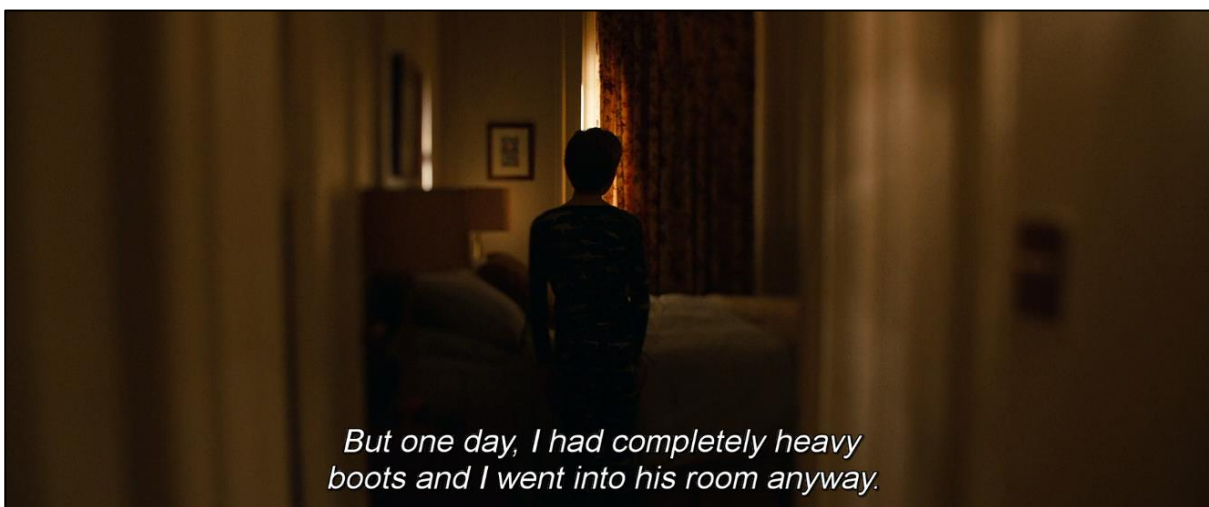
*Image A.45*



*Image A.46*



*Image A.47*



*Image A.48*





*Image A.49*



...I reached up to get his old camera  
with the brown case...

*Image A.50*

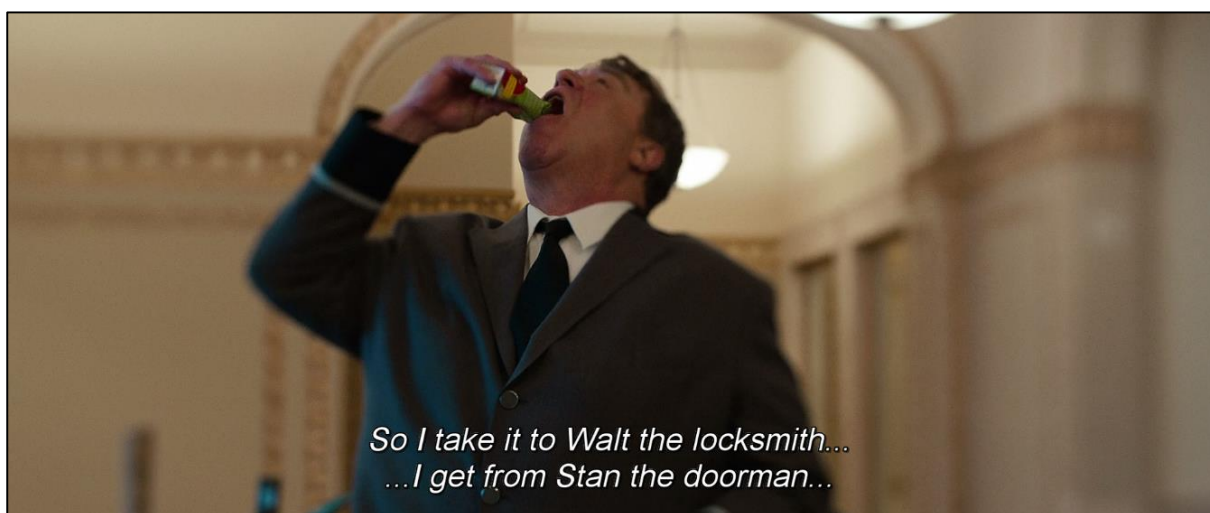


...and I broke a blue vase.

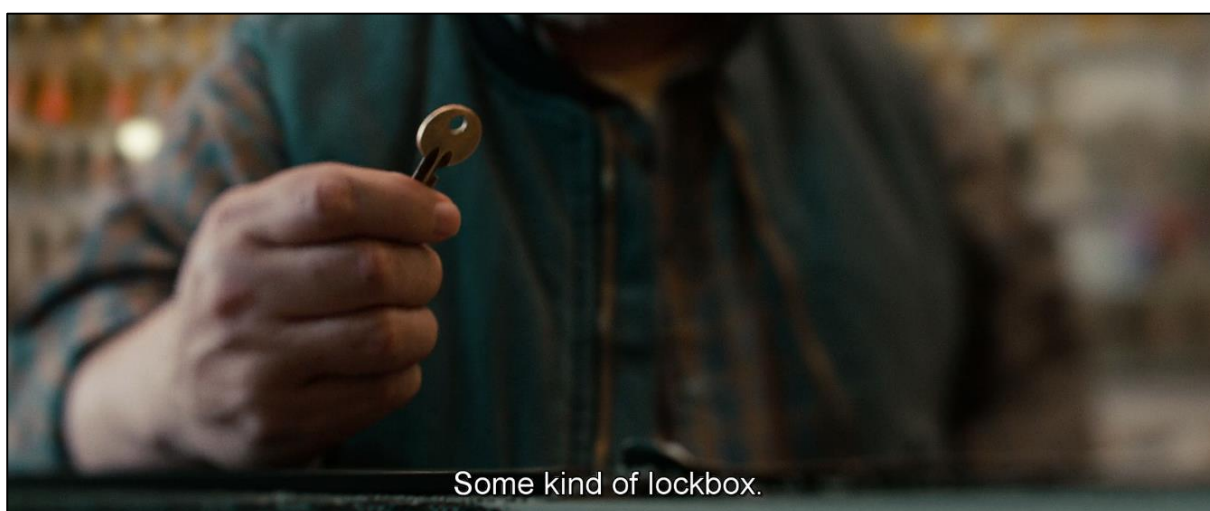
*Image A.51*



*Image A.52*



*Image A.53*



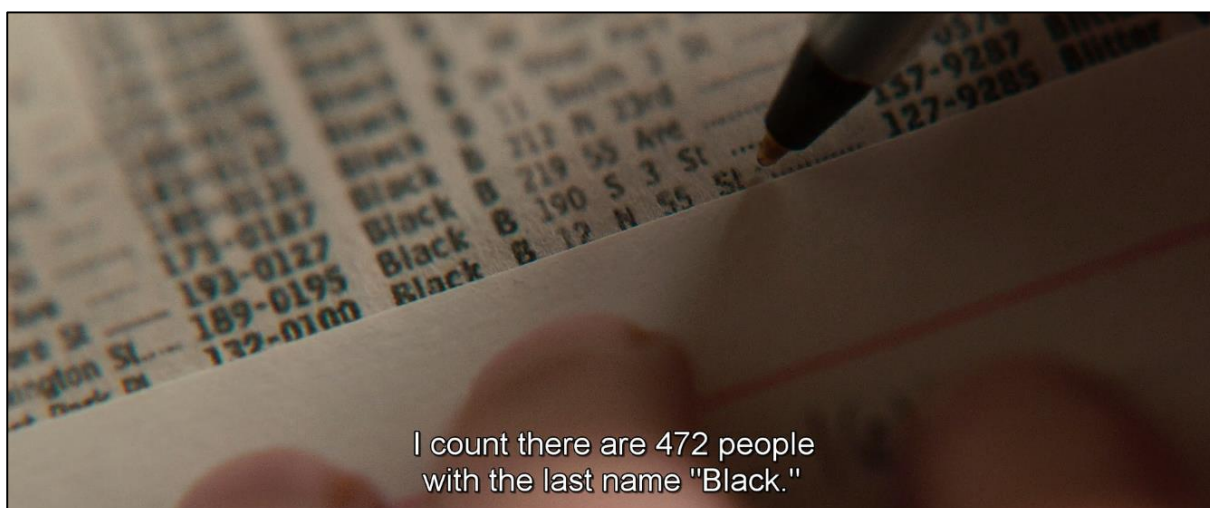
*Image A.54*





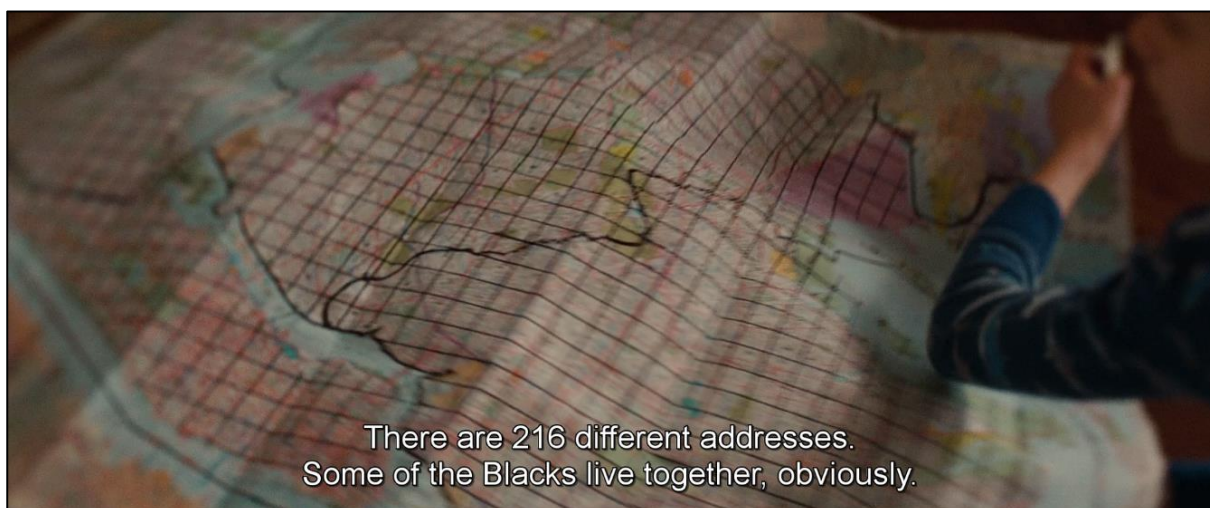
...For all the five boroughs.

Image A.55



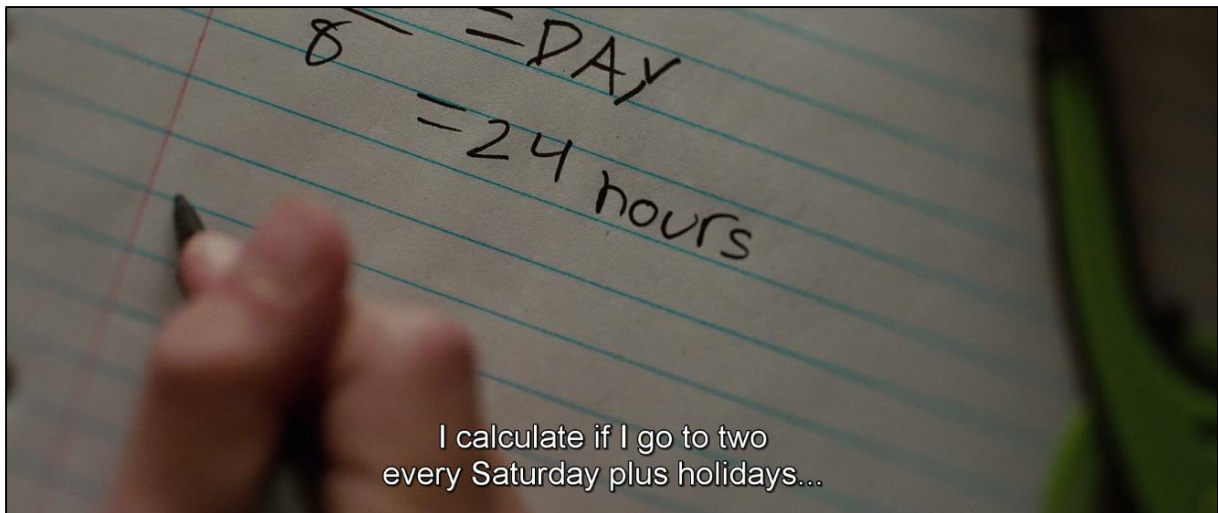
I count there are 472 people with the last name "Black."

Image A.56



There are 216 different addresses. Some of the Blacks live together, obviously.

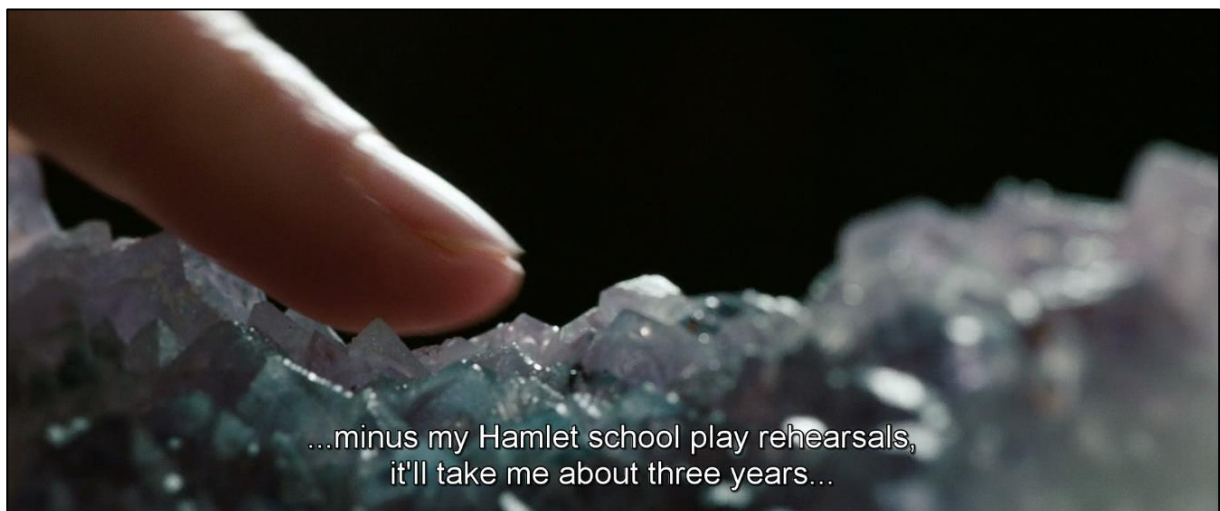
Image A.57



*Image A.58*

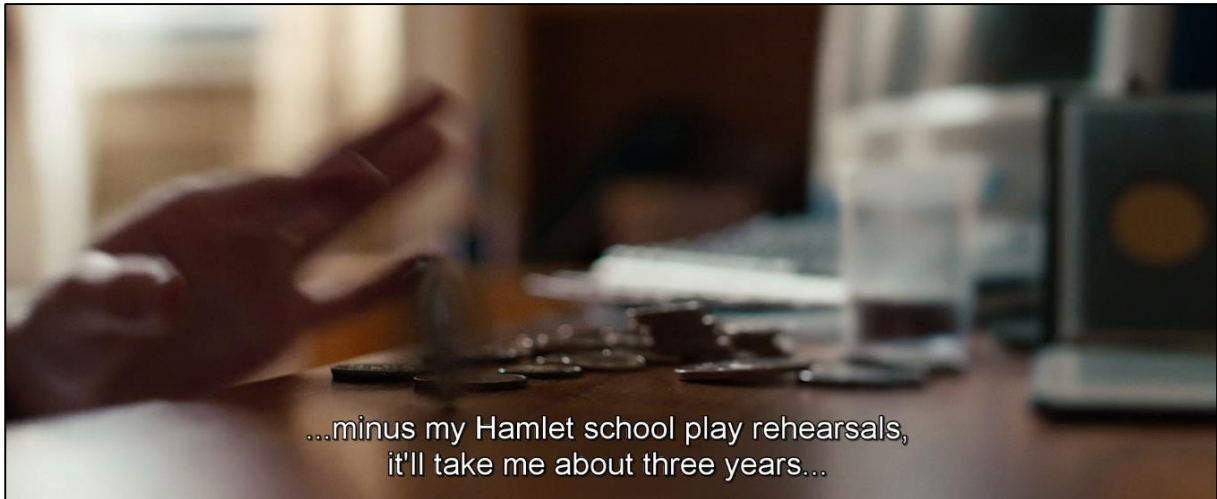


*Image A.59*



*Image A.60*





*Image A.61*



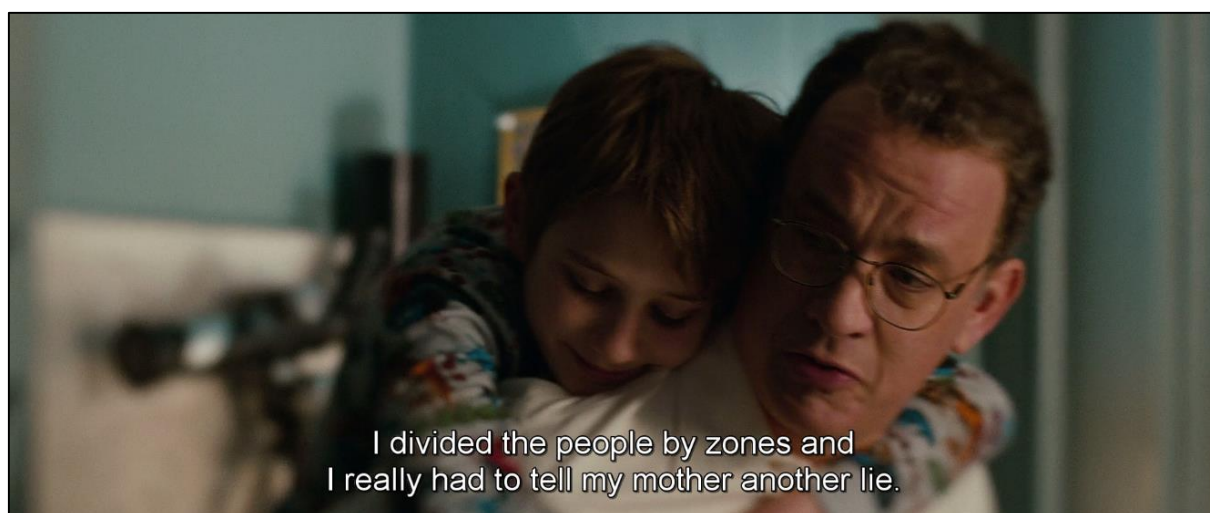
*Image A.62*



*Image A.63*



*Image A.64*



*Image A.65*



*Image A.66*





Hazelle Black, who's all prayed up  
and spoke to God.

*Image A.67*



I didn't wanna get near him/her,  
because she/he scared me...

*Image A.68*



What would this place be like  
if everybody had the same haircut?

*Image A.69*



*Image A.70*



*Image A.71*



*Image A.72*





Image A.73



Image A.74

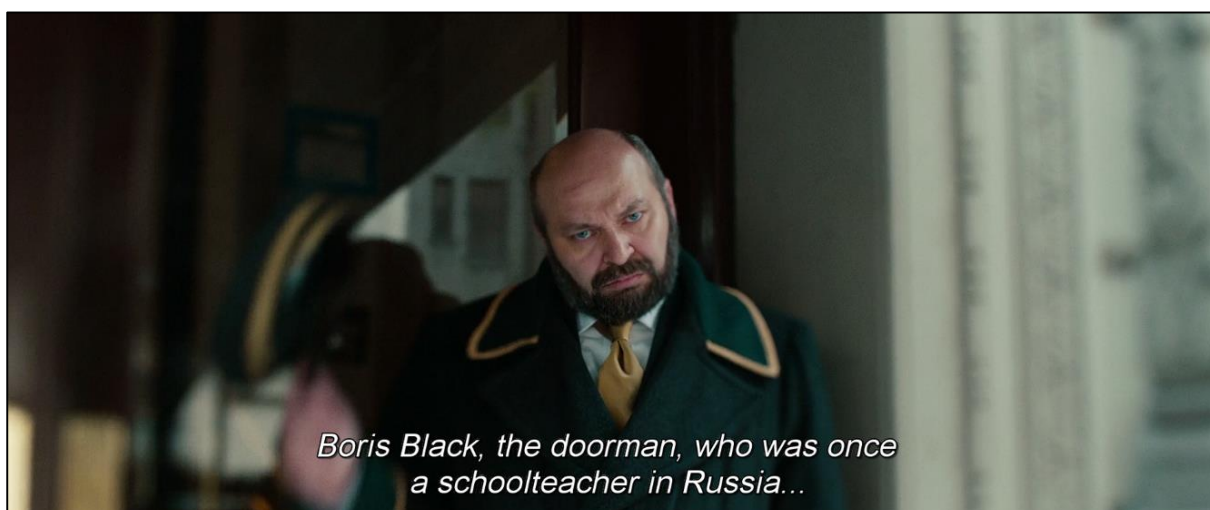


Image A.75

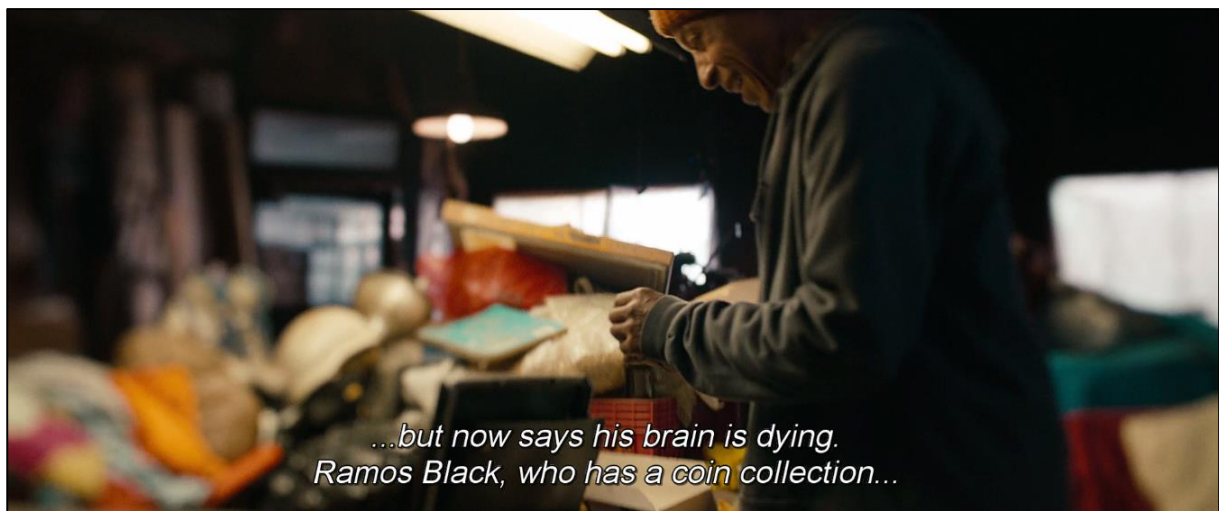


Image A.76

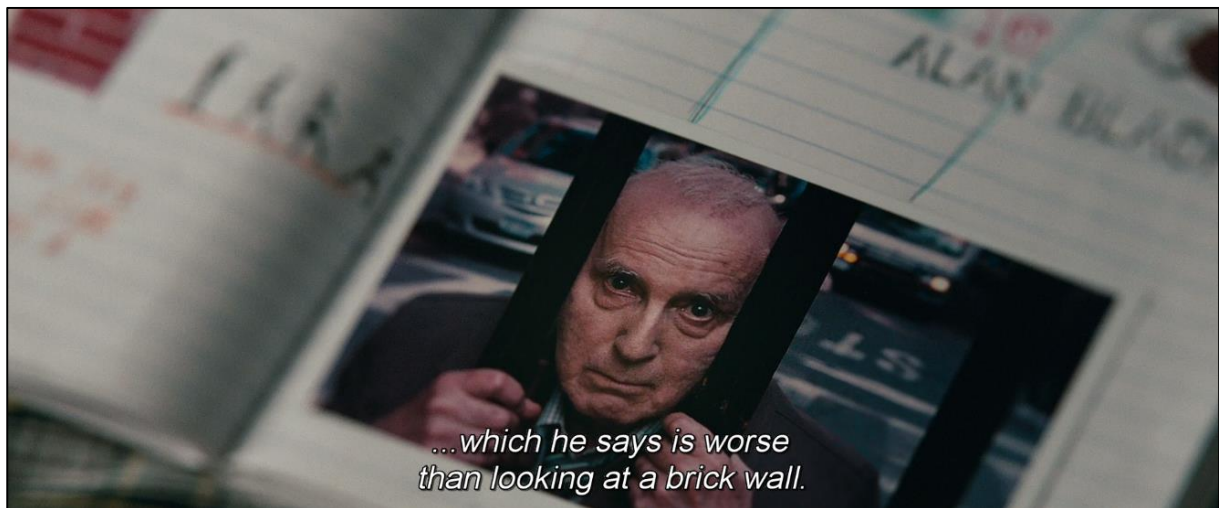


Image A.77



Image A.78





*Image A.79*



*Image A.80*



*Image A.81*



*Image A.82*

### Appendix III: Monologue

Can I tell you my story? My father died at 9/11. After he died, I wouldn't go into his room for a year because it was too hard and it always made me want to cry. But one day, I had completely heavy boots and I went into his room anyway. I miss doing Tae Kwon Do with him because it made me laugh. When I went into his closet where his clothes and stuff were, I reached up to get his old camera with the brown case and I broke a blue vase. Inside was an envelope with "Black" written on it. And I knew that Dad had left something somewhere for me that the key opened and I had to find. So I take it to Walk the Locksmith who I get from Stan the Doorman who tells me the key fits on some kind of lockbox. For all the five boroughs I count there are 472 people with the last name "Black." There are 216 different addresses. Some of the Blacks live together, obviously. I calculate that if I go to two every Saturday plus holidays, minus my Hamlet school play rehearsals, minerals, coin collection and comic book conventions, it'll take me about three years to go through all of them. But that's what I'll do. Go to every single person named Black, and find out what the key fits and what Dad needed me to find. The very best possible plan. I divided the people by zones and I really had to tell my mother another lie, because she wouldn't understand how I need to find what the key fit that would help me make sense of things like him being killed in the building by people who didn't even know him at all! And I see some people who don't speak English. (...) Hazelle Black, who's all prayed up and spoke to God. If she spoke to God, how come she didn't tell him not to kill her son, not to let people fly planes into buildings. Maybe she spoke to a different God than them! And I meet a man, who is a woman who is a man, a woman all at the same time and I didn't wanna get near him/her because she/he scared me, because she/he was so different. Though I still wondered if she had a VJ or a peniscillin, but what does it matter? [Oskar's Dad: "What would this place be like if everybody had the same haircut?"] and I see Mr. Black, who hasn't heard a sound in 24 years. Which I can understand because I miss Dad's voice that much. Like when he would say: "Are you up yet?" or ["Let's go do something."] I see the twin brothers who paint together. And there's a shed that just has to be a clue, but it's just a shed! And Astrid Black, who has the same drawing of the same person over and over and over again! Boris Black, the doorman, who was once a schoolteacher in Russia, but now says his brain is dying. Ramos Black, who has a coin collection, but doesn't have enough money to eat every day! Alan Black has a view of Gramercy Park but not a key to it, which he says is worse than looking at a brick wall. I feel like I'm looking at a brick wall, because I tried the key in 148 different places, but the key didn't fit and open anything Dad needed me to find, so that I'd know without him everything is

gonna be all right. ["Then let's leave it there."] I still feel scared every time I go into a strange place. I'm so scared I have to hold myself around my waist or I think I'll just break all apart! But I'll never forget what I heard him tell Mom about the Sixth Borough: That if things were easy to find, ["They wouldn't be worth finding."] But I'm still scared every time I leave, every time I hear a door open. And I don't know a single thing that I didn't know when I started! Except that I miss my dad more than ever, even though the whole point was to stop missing him at all! It hurts too much. Sometimes I think I might do something really bad.