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The Representation of Trauma via Remediation: Digitality in Jonathan Safran Foer's Print Novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

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Abstract

This article addresses the question of how the contemporary novel evolved, modified, and adjusted to media-rich environments and how it engaged in confabulation with electronic textuality. This inquiry is part of a larger study that recognizes an interdependent exchange of literature and other media, which complement one another in a dynamic and vitalizing process of remediation (Bolter and Grusin 11) while emphasizing intermedial reflexivity from screen to paper. The focus of this study is on the influence of the digital culture on print media in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), in which the author experiments with printed textuality by incorporating the textual, the visual, the graphic, and even the kinetic by using digital affordances that are possible in print. The paper argues that as the mediums in Foers's novel interpenetrate in a synergistic interplay between language, visual elements, and codes, they capture the unspeakability of trauma. To this end, it explores intricate ways in which attention-grabbing reproductions of photographs, unconventional typesetting, and other graphic devices made possible via digital technologies augment the comprehension of trauma tied to the 9/11 catastrophe recounted in the novel.

Keywords: Remediation, trauma, digitality, Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly* Close, 9/11

The last two decades have generated groundbreaking research in intermediation (the interplay between speech, code, writing, and human and machine cognition), adaptation (the interaction between literature and cinema), multimodality (multiple modes of communication in a text, including music, color, language, and vision), and remediation (open-ended influences and interrelationships between media). This article takes interest in the fourth category, taking as its starting point Jonathan Safran Foer's rhetorical question: "What if novelists were . . . willing to borrow [from other media]?" (qtd. in Hudson). It analyzes how print literature is informed and reshaped by new media technologies by focusing on the representation of trauma in Foer's print novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), marked by an ingenious blending of language and graphic images. My argument is formulated around the idea that, since this novel spotlights a highly visual catastrophe, Foer's mixture of textual, visual, and graphic configurations offers a much better insight into trauma than each of these modes would do separately.

This paper acknowledges Marshall McLuhan's postulate that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (7). The study is grounded in Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of media interaction, according to which all media partake in reciprocal remediation by honoring, rivaling, and revamping other media, whereby modern mass media do not dispose of earlier media forms but instead reshape and animate them (Bolter and Grusin 15). Moreover, Samuel Weber's and Katherine Hayles's concepts of media as dynamic processes in relentless relation among themselves expose the indeterminable divisibility of media, for they are continually combining, mutating, and reappearing in different forms (Weber 29; Hayles, *Electronic* 160). Multimodality theories underline the importance of communicative practice and interactivity, as well (see also Kress and Van Leeuwen; Bateman). In the same vein, W. J. T. Mitchell's "picture theory"

established that "all media are mixed media," as there are always other sensory and cognitive mechanisms involved in decoding various semiotic modes in a single act of communication or representation (monomodal artefacts) so that multimodality is a "natural" cognitive act of meaning-making (*Picture Theory* 5; 94–95). All these theories corroborate the idea that media are in permanent transmutation and interaction as "the boundaries of all kinds have become permeable to the supposed other" (Hayles, My Mother 242) and "the image/text problem is not just something constructed 'between' the arts, the media, or different forms of representation, but an unavoidable issue within the individual arts and media" (Hallet 27), while the constantly morphing digital medium and its widespread accessibility make it an exemplary model for rethinking about textuality at large (see also McGann; Manovich; Stefans; Hayles). Accordingly, these theories expose "the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies" (Pressman 465).

The rise of digitality and the pronouncements about the end of print have had a paradoxical consequence for they have provoked a pervasive interest in the history of the book, "proclaiming the power of these bound bundles of print and paper" (Pressman 465), proving that "digitality has not endangered print books" (Hayles, *Postprint* 5). Electronic textuality has become a part of modern reality, engaging various users with "its flexibility, variability, nonlinearity, interactivity, and indeterminacy" (Sandor 144). It features animated texts that could alter the visual with just one click or is programmed by an invisible code-text to change, which could perform other maneuvers impossible for print novels. Thus, one of the responses to the attractiveness of digital affordances has been the interest of young authors to experiment with various forms of digital technologies in their printed textualities. A number of novelists, such as Mark Danielewski, Salvador Plascencia, Dave Eggers, W. G. Seabald, Jonathan Safran Foer, Steven

Hall, and Graham Rawle took a leap of faith and experimented with various forms of electronic textualities, applicable through comparable devices in print, creating compelling verbal-visual constellations in their print novels.

This analysis focuses on Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* to demonstrate how the print novel has profited from digital contexts and how nonverbal forms of meaning-making such as photographs, flipbooks, images made of words, die-cut holes, colors, handwritten letters, diagrams, etc. support the representations of trauma in literature. Psychologists and neuroscientists tell us that the strategies employed for expressing and understanding emotional responses to trauma are often compromised and restrictive, meaning that trauma's trials and tribulations are generally beyond description (see Stamm and Friedman; Foa et al.), which is why representations of trauma should be as unsettling as the events in question. As Walter Ben Michaels argues, when traumatic (historical) events are conceptualized in a written form, the representation can distort the unspeakability of trauma, which "requires a way of transmitting not only the normalizing knowledge of the horror but the horror itself" (141). This is why visual elements in combination with linguistic skillfulness and other multimodal practices work so well in this novel.

Laura Mulvey explains that "(t)rauma leaves a mark on the unconscious, a kind of index of the psyche that parallels the photograph's trace of an original event," linking the photograph as an affordance of the unspeakable (65). Foer drew from digital technologies, molding the graphic surface of his texts (visible also in his novel *Tree of Codes*), "struggling to find the words for an experience so complex that it mocks the black and white simplicity of printed paper" (Baer, "Introduction" 2), as he tried to represent something as "inarticulable and unrepresentable" as trauma and attempted to expose "that which continues to exist as unresolved trauma just beyond the reach of mean-

ing" (Young 667). If it is true that to be traumatized means to be "possessed by an image" (Codde 5) and if, rather than with respectful silence towards horrifying events such as 9/11, the Holocaust, and the firebombing of Dresden, the traumatized choose to share their experiences with empathic audiences (LaCapra, *Writing History* 47), then the possibility of expressing trauma via graphic rather than solely verbal articulation should be validated as a constructive possibility in narrative expression. The psychological fragmentation of the subject can certainly be expressed in language "through ellipsis, indirection and detour, or fragmentation and deformation" (Schwab 107), but adding arresting visual elements delivers the traumatic memories more accurately, rendering the subject's (and possibly the reader's) exposure more embodied, allowing for a reenactment of the experience.

Foer's novel depicts the protagonists that navigate through trauma of a profoundly visual tragedy, so that its subject matter already entails visuality. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is one of the first fictional responses to the catastrophe of 9/11, featuring graphic elements as fully integrated visual items which articulate what words alone could not, displaying remediation, particularly the mark of the digital in print textuality. Foer explained in two interviews that "to speak about what happened on September 11 requires a visual language" (qtd. in Hudson); "[s]o [he] really wanted to explicitly look at those things in the book, not only through the writing, which [he] tried to make as visual and direct as [he] could, but also through these images" (qtd. in Mudge). Thus, the author tackled mental and visual "snapshots" of trauma and the progression of anguish of several characters, drawing attention to the limitations of language in portraying and documenting trauma in the aftermath of an extremely violent and disruptive event.

9/11 has received extensive media coverage, featuring constant repetitions of the Towers being struck and memories/images thereof

haunting the public. The extent of such a visual catastrophe is substantiated by recent theories in trauma studies that show how cataclysmic experiences register as photographic images, whereby moments experienced empirically by the distressed psyche and those captured mechanically by photography are correlated (see also Baer, *Spectral*). Mulvey acknowledges how both "the mark of trauma" and "the mark of light" (cinema and photography) inscribe "an unprecedented reality into its representations of the past," pointing to an original event that "needs to be deciphered retrospectively across delayed time," so that "[t]his literal link between trauma and the photograph enable[s] an element of the unspeakable" (9; 66). Accordingly, to capture the tragic event and communicate the unspeakability of trauma as effectively as possible, Foer drew from the affordances of digital technologies by using attention-grabbing reproductions of photographs, unconventional typesetting, and other graphic devices.

Not all the critics have responded to these visual elements with enthusiasm. Some of them even labeled them as "gimmickry" (Meyers) or "gimmicks" (Upchurch), to which Foer responded that "September 11 had such a strong visual component, [as] the most visually documented event in human history," which is why he "really just wanted to tell the story as forcefully as [he] could," using "flamboyant" images that parallel the main character's imagination (qtd. in Whitney). Foer's "borrowing" from other media is necessary to express trauma's peculiar visuality, the urgency of the image to engage in acts of signification beyond solely verbal expression. Ross Watkins explains how Foer "incorporate[d] the image as an integrated element, contributing meaning over mere 'gimmickry'" (Watkins 107).

In this particular novel, remediation practices are visible in various forms as one medium is represented in another. For example, the mark of the digital is featured through a gradual reduction of text, using Photoshop, where lines are crunched closer together until the last

page is almost solid black (Foer 280–84), and when Oskar's grandfather, Thomas, who does not speak due to trauma he experienced during Dresden bombing, uses numerical code—a performance of digital computers—to communicate (Foer 269–71), and it is clearly detectable in the fuzzy resolution of the falling man images, which Oskar complains about (Foer 257), and on the distorted photograph on page 246, which exposes surrealistic photomontage, all of which indicates that the novel is duplicating digital images and imitating electronic text (Hayles, *Electronic* 170–71). For the first two examples, Katherine Hayles notes how they imply "that language has broken down under the weight of trauma and become inaccessible not only to Thomas but the reader as well" (*Electronic* 166). Complementing verbalization with visualization, the author was able to do what Alan Gibbs deems as necessary "to transmit rather than represent" trauma because "as readers of trauma texts we desire affect and emotional response" (28), which is precisely what those images provoked.

The overpowering influence of images, specifically the ones that allude to 9/11 and archetypal angst, is visible as the main protagonist, a nine-year-old boy Oskar, whose father died when the Twin Towers collapsed, experiences the world via various forms of media. He keeps a "scrapbook of everything that happened" (Foer 42) to him that consists of assorted photographs, sheets with colored signatures, the reproduction of his fingerprints, a paper plane design he made with his father, etc., which are included as digital reproductions of photographs in the novel. Some of the alarming images do not appear visually in the text, but the boy still mentions them: ". . . a shark attacking a girl, someone walking on a tightrope between the Twin Towers, that actress getting a blowjob from her normal boyfriend, a soldier getting his head cut off in Iraq, the place on the wall where a famous stolen painting used to hang" (Foer 42). Most of the images are contextualized and in direct relation with Oskar's story, which supports the

reader's sensation of direct witnessing as visual counterparts create an analogy with real events of 9/11. We must keep in mind that the 9/11 attack was an exceptionally visual incident, and Oskar was born into a highly visual culture, which makes him susceptible to manipulation from various actors via mass media, shaping the way he makes sense of the world. He keeps his pictures in a booklet that he named "*Stuff That Happened To Me*" (Foer 42), which bespeaks not only that "in the age of the spectacle, the consumption of images counts as experience" (Gleich 168) but also "the passive manner in which Americans allow images to colonize [their] daily lives" (Gleich 168).

The image of a falling man, which Foer narrates through Oskar and launches via full page photographs (Foer 59; 62; 205) and as a flipbook at the end of the book, was widely used by the media and has become an archetype of the 9/11 attack, which changed the way we perceive the world. What before the crash of the Towers would have been an innocent photograph of a falling/jumping cat, or a descending rollercoaster cart, or an airplane design (Foer 191; 148; 56)—"ambiguously evocative of both a child's craft and the craft involved in executing the twin towers attack" (Watkins 111)—and even of birds flying (Foer 166–67), which the author implemented as images within his novel, now alludes to the catastrophe, indicating the still-lingering presence of 9/11. A digital black and white image of a flock of birds features on the cover of the 2006 Penguin Books edition of the novel, as a second frontispiece photograph, and as a double page spread to emphasize powerful emotional associations with the falling man and post-traumatic stress. These blurry images are highly engaging digital reproductions connected to the trauma narrated in the story.

A particularly captivating effect of the oversized double page spread of birds is felt when Oskar and his elderly neighbor, Mr. Black, who has just turned on his hearing aids (after a long silence) experience a close encounter with a flock of birds. The scene is narrated as,

"out of nowhere, a flock of birds flew by the window, extremely fast and incredibly close" (Foer 165), after which comes the birds' image to stress the visual effect of the event. This is the first mention of the "loud and close" analogy in the story, emphasized in the title of the novel, and the old man starts crying promptly. He has not been outside of his building in twenty-four years and has now decided to accompany Oskar across New York in the boy's search for the other Blacks (one of whom Oskar hopes has the lock that matches the key he discovered in his father's closet). Mr. Black's weeping (Foer 168) is connected to his ability to finally hear the voices and noises of his surroundings after the self-inflicted silence, which sheltered him both from the cacophony and agonies of the world and from a human sense of hearing the world's subtler or sublime sounds and movements. His unwillingness to experience or hear the world around him echoes Oskar's trauma due to 9/11 exposure and the loss of his father as well as the grandfather's agony and muteness as a consequence of the loss of his fiancé, Anna, during the fire-bombing of Dresden, and now the death of his son in the 9/11 attacks. In the midst of this narrative, the blurred black and white visual of the swirling birds engages the reader with the imagery of the falling man from the Northern Tower via unmistakable associative linkage. The author underlines this connection at the beginning of the novel when Oskar considers flying as a means of rescue via his invention, a birdseed shirt, for "there are so many times when you need to make a quick escape, but humans don't have their own wings, or not yet, anyway, so what about a birdseed shirt?" (Foer 2).

The carnage of monumental proportions is again associated through the birds' death imagery when Oskar talks to Ruth Black, disclosing how "'[t]en thousand birds die every year from smashing into windows,' because [he]'d accidentally found that fact when [he] was doing some research about the windows in the Twin Towers" (Foer

250). The same quote reveals how exposed Oskar is to the Internet and what miscellaneous facts and photos he can find, including inappropriate, distressing, and violent materials. Searching for information about his father's death, Oskar learns that a lot of facts can be found on foreign sites, so he had "to go to a translator program and find out how to say things in different languages" because "there was all sorts of stuff they weren't showing here, even though it happened here" (Foer 256). Foer draws attention to how the American media, due to public complaints about the *Falling Man* photograph by Richard Drew in Associated Press (Junod) and mobilized by government authorities (Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* 6), modified collective opinions and imageries by eliminating certain visual contents from circulation and steering the public to what they deemed acceptable or legitimate materials and in tune with their political agendas, which makes Oskar "incredibly angry . . . because it happened *here*, and happened to *me*, so shouldn't it be *mine*?" (Foer 256). As Michell notes, "images have always played a key role in politics, warfare, and the shape of history," which is particularly striking in our age, with the availability of digital media in almost every corner of the world, "especially the combination of digital imaging and the spread of the Internet . . . along with the speed of their circulation" (*Cloning Terror* 2). But Foer's observation about how Oskar needs to "translate" information in order to understand what happened "to him" also speaks of the fallibility of language to express trauma and how individual reactions to and perceptions of trauma are different, as are interpretations, translations, and representations thereof. The visual medium is maybe more truthful than the verbal, even though the visual is also manipulated by whoever is behind the camera as s/he decides on camera shot angles and can project the subject's vulnerability, supremacy, and any specific point of view, thus making the image of reality subjective. According to Mitchell, in the era of the War on Terror, "the accelerated production and circulation

of images in a host of new media . . . ushered a 'pictorial turn' into public consciousness" (*Cloning Terror* 2). It is beyond doubt that "9/11 was a seismic cultural event with far-reaching cultural implications" (McSweeney 5), and Richard Drew's photograph of the falling man, "perhaps the most powerful image of despair at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Thompson 63), was represented and reproduced by numerous authors and artists to serve as a spectrum through which prevailing perspectives of the event are revealed and naturalized.

This exposure to or omnipresence of images in the digital age, and the reason why Foer chose multimodal narration through remediation of digital media, is further problematized in the novel when Oskar finds a video of the falling man on a Portuguese site (as it could not be found on sites in the USA). He "print[s] out the frames and examine[s] them extremely closely" to check if they contain an image of his father as he needs "to know how he died" so he "can stop inventing how he died" (Foer 257; 256). Unable to identify his father because the photo's resolution is very poor, Oskar magnifies the pixels until they are "so big that [the figure in the photo] stops looking like a person" (Foer 257). Drawing on Mitchell's view of images as vital, animated signs, Gleich observes that "[d]espite the lifelike attributes of the image, . . . the digital medium cannot tell Oskar anything new about the details of his father's death" (168). Similarly, Oskar's grandmother wishes to locate her son and watches the footage from 9/11 repeatedly, coming to a dead end as she observes: "The same pictures over and over. / Planes going into buildings. / Bodies falling. / People waving shirts out of high windows" (Foer 230). The same lines (with a few variations of the fourth sentence) are repeated on the same page five times, one sentence beneath another as written transcript, echoing dreadful images she observes as if in trance and in vain for the footage will not tell her anything about her son. Gleich indi-

cates that the viewer's compulsion to watch bodies and buildings falling "highlight[s] the neurotic nature of the repetitive instinct" (170). In the same way, Foer's photographs of the falling man and birds flying revoke the trauma associated with the event. The remediation of photography, television, film, and the digital medium makes the trauma more operational, visible, or experiential for the reader, but it does not illuminate the event itself in the sense of meaning-making.

However, the grandmother's and the public's recurrent watching may also be the sign of incredulity as if they/we wanted to confirm that the cataclysm actually happened. The event seems unreal in its apparently filmic ambiance as if it were the spectacle of terrorism on film. Hathaway draws attention to "the irony inherent in this juxtaposition of cinematic display and genuine tragedy," in which the aesthetics of the image and the terror "form the foundation of the standard narrative for those who 'experienced' the events only via television" (48). But apart from seemingly unreal images of the actual destruction of the towers, the looped TV-sequences of 9/11 included the moment they were in one piece, making space for an illusion that the "intact" moment can be consecrated indefinitely. Hathaway notes how "[o]nly in the realm of the visual—where images can be recycled and replayed in a continuous loop—is the fantasy of turning back time possible" (44). A similar idea is presented by Foer on page 246, where the readers are shown a photograph of people in a building, which demonstrates how digital technology allows editing, special effects, and manipulation of photography. The photograph in question does not just use cropping or lighting adjustments but it also illuminates people as shadows, adding one transparent image of a man blurred and superimposed over another. Even though the pages around the photograph describe Oskar's adventure at the Empire State Building, it is clear to the reader that this image is hinting at the towers and what they used to be, with crowded corridors and offices that are now destroyed, il-

luminating ghost-like images of people that once walked these hallways.

Graphic details of horror were immediately broadcast and repeatedly aired across America and in many countries, which provoked identification with the victims, heightened anxiety, and caused a large-scale stress response. The whole world was shocked as the "fantasmatic screen apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality" as if the Hollywood disaster movies from the nineties came true (Žižek 16). Žižek's take on how the real and the fantastic or fictional merge corresponds to the effect of intermediation, for media mirror our world as much as our reality has become the reflection of the media; only the images of 9/11 were real, and they shook and transformed the world. Foer's novel demonstrates how media and various forms of remediation of 9/11 images try to keep intact what Baudrillard and Valentin call "the unforgettable fulguration of images" and "the gigantic abreaction to the event itself and people's fascination with it" (403-404). This is discernible in the grandmother's inability to turn away from the TV screen, mirroring millions of actual viewers, and in the reproduction of digital images scattered throughout the novel to demonstrate how 9/11 still lingers from the shadows, including the film-like progression of photos of the falling man, remediated by the flipbook—an old paper-based technique.

The World Trade Center was the epicenter of capitalist macrocosm and technological development, and the Twins were among the tallest buildings in the world; as a result, its destruction meant visibility and received unprecedented media coverage as it was aired in real time. Real-life footage acquired almost fictional dimensions via live and repetitious streaming, previously experienced only through Hollywood disaster movies, as "[t]he unthinkable" (Žižek 16) was now happening in the USA and thus became even more "traumatic be-

cause it confront[ed] spectators with a new definition of the possible—the sudden and dramatic reversal of the safety-danger space-times. The West [was] now a sufferer and a witness of suffering" (Chouliaraki 175). This duality of the real and the fictive is also problematized through remediation as the infiltration of Oskar's amateur and unfocused photographs of people and places in New York (scattered throughout the novel) is associated with the documentary footage from 9/11, when materials were unframed and uncorrected, often taken with an unsteady camera.

Turning back to the spectators who were unable to switch off their televisions on the day of the tragedy, "frozen" in the repetitive looping of the event, we should have in mind that the differentiation between the embodied and the virtual reality is no longer viable. In Tanner's words, "As technology enables us to inhabit preestablished networks of connection regardless of the physical space our bodies occupy, the grafting of digital imagery onto sensuous apprehension extends and destabilizes our experience of embodiment" (63). Tanner acknowledges that in contemporary image culture, the immediacy of digital affordances enables the disintegration of phenomenological differentiation between the virtual and the real, between immediate experience, "bodily proximity," and the mediated, remote experience, so that secondhand spectators experience trauma they did not personally endure (62). This is what Foer aimed to accomplish with his falling man photos and other graphic affordances, "[i]nvoking the cinematic, captured through the photographic, accessed on the Internet" (Tanner 61) because visual language helps to represent the unspeakability of trauma and enables "an experience for a reader to imaginatively suffer" (Kowalewski 203).

Suffering and other symptoms of trauma, such as paralysis, are represented via grandmother's reluctance to turn away from the screen, with grandfather's incapacity to speak, and through Oskar's

inability to answer the phone when his father is calling from the burning Tower. Michell notes that "[t]error is a form of affect that tends to express itself as paralysis, the 'deer in the headlights' syndrome" (*Cloning Terror* 6), which is exactly what happened to Oskar. He came home earlier from school on "the worst day" (Foer 68) and found four messages on the answering machine, all from his father, who attempted to hear from his family. When the phone rings again, Oskar is so traumatized with what is happening, as he heard in previous recordings "people in the background screaming and crying. And you can hear glass breaking" (Foer 301), that he is paralyzed and unable to answer the phone, even though his father assumes that Oskar is home and addresses him in particular: "It's . . . dad. . . . You hear me?" (Foer 280). Later, Oskar re-plays the fifth message to his grandmother's tenant, not knowing at the time that Thomas is his grandfather. The readers observe a block of imperfect, capital letter text with irregular spacing (Foer 280), which imitates the flawed and noisy answering machine, the last recording of Oskar's father. At that point, the readers observe how Thomas's narration becomes infused with trauma, clearly visible in graphic changes in the text, which run for several pages (Foer 281–84). According to Watkins, by condensing leading and tracking, Foer manipulates typographical elements to the point where "the legibility (perception) and readability (comprehension) of the words and what they are generally understood to signify are obliterated, instead signifying collectively as one image" (110). The critic further argues "that words can prove inadequate in their communicative and expressive purposes particularly in the articulation of traumatic memory," which is why Foer "incorporat[ed] the image as an integrated element" (Watkins 110; 107). The lines appear on top of one another, and there is less and less space between them. "Crunched closer and closer together," they are illegible, and the last page is almost entirely black, demonstrating "[t]he recursive dynamic between

print and digital technologies" as Foer engages "digital technologies on multiple levels while still insisting on [the novel's] performance as print text" (Hayles, *Electronic* 170; 163).

Katherine Hayles has done an elaborate study of how this and some other novels profited from digital technologies. She used specific theoretical strategies of *imitation* (of the digital techniques) and *intensification* (of print-based materiality) to explain how electronic textuality affects print textuality (*Electronic* 162). As Hayles explains, in this particular scene, when Oskar and Thomas listen to the recording from the answering machine,

> The text, moving from imitation of a noisy machine to an intensification of ink marks durably impressed on paper, uses this print-specific characteristic as a visible indication of the trauma associated with the scene, as if the marks as well as the language were breaking down under the weight of the characters' emotions. At the same time, the overlapping lines are an effect difficult to achieve with letter press printing or a typewriter but a snap with Photoshop, so digital technology leaves its mark on these pages as well. (*Electronic* 169)

The next example of how the representation of trauma is strengthened via remediation—using the numeric representations of electronic text in print—is the scene when Thomas arrives in New York and calls his wife, whom he has not talked to for forty years. He left her when she was pregnant, unwilling to witness the birth of his child into a world that brought him so much pain, and he never met his son, who now died in the 9/11 attack. Thomas lost his speech due to trauma when his fiancé, Anna, (who was the grandmother's sister) and their unborn child, died in Dresden during the fire-bombing. After the event, he married Anna's sister and they moved to the USA, but when she got pregnant, he returned to Germany. Four decades later, mesmerized with grief and guilt, Thomas comes for his son's funeral, seeking some kind of atonement and reconciliation with his wife (Foer 269). Since Thomas does not speak, he breaks his "life down into let-

ters," meaning that he uses the telephone's keypad where each digit from two through nine stands for any one of three alphabetical letters, and presses keys to create words and sentences that his wife cannot understand, for she only hears "beeps" (Foer 269).

Hayles explains that Thomas applied a "one-way algorithm" code, which is rather easy to construct, but challenging and at times impossible to decrypt as the reader can easily get lost with the possibility of combinations, especially if the message is lengthy and this one is (*Electronic* 166). The question is why Foer used this incomprehensible code because previously, even when Thomas could not speak, the reader knew what he was thinking as the narrative revealed it. With two and a half pages of numbers and occasional exclamation marks or question marks, the reader is helpless to decipher the meaning; we just know that Thomas laid bare his soul. The connotations of this episode are quite clear; trauma cannot be faithfully enlightened. It is a lasting and incomprehensible process. Symptomatic of deeply traumatized people is that "the injury cannot be healed: it extends through time," and some survivors "have returned mute," as Primo Levi acknowledges in relation to the Holocaust survivors (14; 70), which could apply to the Dresden fire-bombing and the 9/11 tragedy as equally atrocious experiences that include silence, denial, and evasion. Thomas feels burdened with pain, remorse, and culpability; he is unable to communicate his trauma person to person so he makes a phone call and uses a code that he knows his wife would not understand for she does not even know who is calling, but he is "trying to try again" (Foer 269). LaCapra explains that "giving testimony may itself be crucial to working through trauma and its symptoms," as telling one's story to emphatic audience should be healing ("Trauma" 381). Thomas is finally willing to share his feelings, but the traumatic emotional response to the horrendous experience is so intense that he chose indirect communication. The numerical code thus represents the inca-

pacity of language to express trauma, and "what initially appears as imitation of the numerical representation of language, the modus operandi of the digital computer, turns into intensification of techniques native to the print novel" (Hayles, *Electronic* 168). Although there is a move toward network aesthetics, opportune in the age where digitality has become a culturally dominant mode, underneath this emergent electronic textuality, the readers observe a nostalgic gesture toward print-based trajectory, intensified by these remediations.

The last pages of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* disclose remediation via a series of illustrations made into a flipbook, "so that an illusion of movement can be imparted by flipping them rapidly" ("Flip-book"), revealing an animated scene and extending a spirit of corporeal performance. Morley argues that "the September 11 terrorist attacks engendered a new form of narrative realism, a form of realism born of a frustration with the limits of language as an effective and representative tool" (295). This is the reason why Foer experimented in his printed novel by incorporating the visual and even the kinetic with the flipbook trajectory. Kinetic interaction is anticipated for the reader needs to flip the last fifteen pages to produce the meaning. Consequently, the meaning-making demands corporeal interaction, which is particularly distressing since it involves the photo of the falling man in the reader's hands, and we know there were real people jumping from the Towers. However, after printing out the images from the video of the falling man, Oskar reversed the order so that the man appears to ascend. Astonishingly, the flipbook reverses the man's actual death: "Finally, I found the pictures of the falling body. Was it Dad? Maybe. Whoever it was, it was somebody. I ripped the pages out of the book. I reversed the order, so that the last one was first, and the first was last. When I flipped through them, it looked like the man was floating up through the sky" (Foer 325).

This scene reverses time and negates the tragedy. Huehls argues that "[w]hile this reversal is clearly just so much wishful thinking, its temporal form—the flip-book's cinematic, real-time performance of motion—proves crucial to Oskar's healing process. He must relegate the event to the past by embracing time's forward progress into the future" (43). The flipbook's visual execution associates with the video footage from 9/11 and reminds us of (or equates the readers with) the spectators who watched it over and over again in the aftermath of the attack. Ann Kaplan speculates that this repetitive mediatization of the event strips the viewers of identification and makes it more "manageable" so they can work through the never-closing wound of trauma (17). In a similar manner, Oskar is no longer haunted to diagnosticate the image as his father; he is no longer trapped and "can move beyond melancholia" (Gleich 171), engaging with trauma more effectively, even if through fiction. Gleich notes how Foer employs the final pages to carry out the subversion of the spectacle as instead of "the primitive repetition compulsion of the spectacle, Oskar creates his reverse flipbook . . . to achieve a form of mourning that until now has eluded him" (171). By reenacting the falling man incident in his own way, Oskar has sabotaged the man's fall, implicating fantasy but also demonstrating his willingness to work through the trauma via his own artistic articulation for "fiction plays an important role as a healing factor in trauma resolution" (Buráková 94).

To demonstrate the importance of confronting such a highly visual traumatic event via artistic creation, in "an attempt to make 'real' what [one] could barely comprehend," as the wound could never be closed (Kaplan 19; 2), Foer chose un unanticipated technique, adding the flipbook trajectory. Hayles notes how "[t]he novel remediates the backward-running video in fifteen pages," and the fuzzy resolution suggests the book is reproducing digital images and imitating electronic text (*Electronic* 170–71). Analyzing the flipbook technique within a

different novel, Kiene Brillenburg Wurth acknowledges that "[b]ecause one never flips these pages in quite the same way, the inscriptions emerge differently with each reading which mimics the instability of electronic textuality" (90). However, with this imitation of digital techniques, the specific traditions of print are intensified—trauma in particular—and the sentimental gesture towards print is authenticated. Foer makes use of digital technologies but underlines his inclination toward print-based trajectory, demonstrating "a remediation of the instability of electronic textuality" and acknowledging print "as more authentic and more intimate than its digital counterparts" (Brillenburg Wurth 90; 87).

To conclude, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a print-based novel with digital influences that displays textual, visual, and graphic aspects which combine and reverberate, foregrounding a story about trauma. Foer's novel disseminates an explosion of creativity, illustrating how print-based medium is refashioned in the era of computationally intensive environments as he molds the graphic surface of his text with pictorial, haptic, textual, and even kinaesthetic elements, using digital affordances that are possible in print. In conjunction with narrative expression, the author extends visual reverberation and tactile sensations to illuminate how the remediation of the digital medium takes the readers back to print-based traditions, underlining the instability of electronic textuality, and demonstrating how trauma and visceral feelings of loss are best expressed via synergistic interplay between various mediums. Combining linguistic proficiency with miscellaneous typography, using irregular spacing, handwritten text, photographs, cutting, and other visual and multimodal elements as literary devices, Foer conceptualizes and accomplishes an ethos of corporeal performance so that allegedly "fixed" pages activate, become dynamic, while expressing the inescapable pathos of tragedy and insisting on the book's performance as a print text.

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