

**Technique and Trauma in Post-9/11 Fiction: A Postmodernist Critique
of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Don
DeLillo's *Falling Man***



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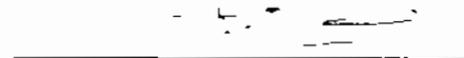
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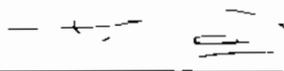
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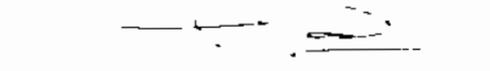
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ABSTRACT

Title: Technique and Trauma in Post-9/11 Fiction: A Postmodernist Critique of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

The 9/11 attacks are taken as a turning point in history and the literature that appeared after the attacks is considered as a new genre. As post-9/11 novelists, both Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and DeLillo in *Falling Man* have focused on the event of September 11 as a traumatic event for its survivors. However, for making the psychological trauma of the attacks presentable, the selected authors like other postmodern fiction writers challenged the established literary conventions by undermining the traditional pecking order of discourse for rendering the devastation of September 11 attacks into narration. For narrating the trauma of the attacks, the authors employ a number of creative and artistic techniques and other modes of communication, especially when language fails to fathom the depth of trauma. With the help of these techniques, the authors have also generalized trauma beyond the cultural differences and political complexities as its effects remain the same for the victims. This research has made a critique of the creative, artistic and postmodern elements/techniques of the novels, which are deliberately used for capturing the effects and after-effects of trauma on the survivors of September 11 attacks. It concludes that the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening in the after-days, which may, however, not be healed the way other physical injuries are healed.

DECLARATION

I, **Taj Nabi S/o Rahman-ud-din, Registration No. 190-FLL/MSENG/F10**, student of MS, in the discipline of English Literature, do hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis "**Technique and Trauma in Post-9/11 Fiction: A Postmodernist Critique of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man***" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MS degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked. This work is carried out and completed at International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.



Signatures of Deponent

TAJ NABI

Dated 04/04/2014

DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS AND TEACHERS
WHOSE TRUST HAS BEEN MY STRENGTH

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Fiction, Trauma and 9/11

The 9/11 attacks have left indelible marks, social, political, and psychological, on almost everyone in the world. It has been regarded as one of the biggest traumas of the 21st Century until now as a global event (Verbestel, 2010). These are also one of the most documented events in history, which have not only affected the Americans but rather the whole world considerably. Judith Butler (2004-05) investigates in *Precarious Life: the Power of Mourning and Violence* and *Giving an Account of Oneself* that in response to the 9/11 attacks, the world has changed into mourning process. One aspect and reason for the American nation to go into mourning was due to the loss of invincibility of the United States as a superpower. Van der Klok and McFarlane (1996), in *Traumatic Stress: the Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society*, describes that traumatic experiences are not only affecting the psyche but also leaving indelible marks on the psyche of the victim(s).

Versluys (2007), in *9/11 as a European Event: the Novels*, argues that the September 11 attacks have an immense impact on the American culture, it is the most filmed event after the Holocaust. Many will remember the dreadful images of people either falling or jumping from the burning buildings. The attacks on the Twin Towers caused such a devastating shock for the people that it has already been called the defining tragedy of our time (p. 65). In an interview (J. Freeman, 'How Sept 11 2001 Affected Writing, both

within and outside the US. August 19, 2011) aired by The World, literary editor John Freeman argues that the 9/11 trauma is “too big” for the United States of America and it has changed fiction in the West. The American authors still do not fully understand the meaning of the events and even American fiction has not yet worked through trauma. The attacks were a trauma not only for the Americans but also for the global community. The victims and survivors, who experienced the attacks, carried the burden of memory of the attacks, in which 2,752 people died. The 9/11 literature represents the trauma and raises a new basic question about the nature of human existence. The survivors of the attacks struggle with their memories. They turn towards each others to share and give meaning to the unspeakable loss. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth explains, “The problem of survival, in trauma, thus emerges specifically as the question: What does it mean for consciousness to survive?” (p. 61)

The traumatic attacks of September 11 have taken place in an era where big event(s) cannot be left unnoticed due to the availability of advanced technology. But in spite of that, the events are wrapped in mystery and a lot of uncertainty still prevails. This uncertainty has given birth to creative writings of fiction so as to fill the blanks. However, literature occupies a different place as compared to journalism or mass media. Literature is not under the same kind of scrutiny as the media. Moreover, literature is looked for answers as Doris Lessing (1919) said, “Literature is analysis after the event.”

Literature that has appeared since the 9/11 attacks, is considered as a new genre. There is a considerable list of novels that deal directly or indirectly with the aftermath of the attacks. As Jay McInerney (2005) said, “Most novelists I know went through a period of intense self-examination and self-loathing after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade

Center” and Martin Amis (2002) further said, "After a couple of hours at their desks, on September 12, 2001, all the writers on earth were reluctantly considering a change of occupation" (www.guardian.co.uk/books)

1.2. Post-9/11 Novels

A number of American fiction writers have responded to the 9/11 attacks and represented it as a collective trauma for the Americans. The fiction, I have selected for discussion, focuses on the event as a traumatic experience and its effects and after-effects on the survivors. The primary work includes two famous post-9/11 novels i.e., *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Falling Man* by two different authors, each has differently presented the traumatic event of September 11 attacks.

Jonathan Safran Foer's Post-9/11 novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, was published in 2005. He effectively presents the attacks of September 11, 2001 as a traumatic event. The characters of the novel are directly or indirectly traumatized by the event. The story of the novel is a typical account of traumatic experiences at different levels. The novel appeared after four years of the attacks on the World Trade Centre, in which Foer depicts the traumatized mind and visualization of the traumatic experiences of a nine-year-old boy. In addition to this, the novel focuses on the resurgence of long buried traumatic memories, which demand to be mourned, which are often intimately associated with the body.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close deals with the way a family is directly affected by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. The story of the novel begins after

the fateful day of 9/11 and narrated by Oskar Schell, who is the son of one of the victims of attacks. The exchange of letters from Oskar's grandfather to his son, Thomas and from Oskar's grandmother to Oskar narrated the history of their family and the way they undergo through pain and sufferings caused by various historical traumatic events. Furthermore, the novel also reflects the horrors and wounds of the 9/11 attacks (Greer, 2005).

Moreover, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* is also another post-9/11 novel, which was published in 2007. This novel is a vivid personalization of the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. The book reveals the human drama of the great tragedy through juxtaposing emotions. The *Falling Man* captures the collapse of the Twin Towers on September 11. The characters, Keith and Lianne, try to recognize the effects that has had on them and on their family after a few months of the attacks (Sandy, 2008). The novel also depicts the September 11 attacks as the most traumatic accident for survivors. The omnipresence of smoke and ashes allow no one to forget the event, even for a moment. Heller McAlpin (2007) argues in his review of the novel that the *Falling Man* captures the fraught numbness that followed the World Trade Center attacks and DeLillo evokes images that are still fresh in our minds.

Both Jonathan Safran Foer and Don DeLillo have explored the horror of September 11 attacks in their respective novels. They tend to portray the effects and after-effects of trauma on the survivors and their traumatic memories while employing different postmodern techniques.

1.3. Thesis Statement

Since the events of 9/11, a number of works of fiction have been produced that document the traumatic experiences of the survivors. This research attempts to study the nature of trauma, its psycho-social impact on the fictional representation of 9/11 survivors, and the postmodern fiction writing techniques that are employed by the selected writers to capture the after-lives of 9/11 survivors.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What creative techniques have been employed by the selected writers to depict the traumatic effects of 9/11 events on individuals and families?
2. How were these techniques employed by the selected writers in the traumatic narration of the novels?
3. To what extent is it possible to depict trauma through language? And what artistic techniques Foer and DeLillo have employed to capture the traumatic experiences wherever language failed to fathom the depth of trauma?

1.5. Research Methodology

This research aims to explore both the postmodern techniques employed by the selected authors of the novels and the psycho-social impact of trauma on the survivors of September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre (WTC) in their fictional representation. The task of presenting the unrepresentable is central to the recent genre of fiction called the post-9/11 novels. Moreover, the selected writers on one hand employ various postmodern techniques and techniques specific to arts and media. And on the other, the authors also

incorporate different genres of literature and make its deliberate use for creating a new narrative voice for trauma narration in the fictional representation of 9/11 attacks

These different techniques of psychological trauma are employed for making the narration of traumatic experiences possible. Furthermore, the purpose to these techniques is to familiarize the audience with the unfamiliar experiences of trauma. The understudy research critically analyzes and discusses the narrative techniques used for trauma expression in the post-9/11 fictional representation and other postmodern techniques/elements in the selected novels.

Furthermore, trauma theory, which is the psychological study of trauma, is the most suitable theory available for the purpose of exploring how the survivors are traumatized and experience the traumatic event of September 11 attacks again and again through remembrance. This research is qualitative analysis of both the traumatized characters and postmodern techniques that are employed for the narration of trauma.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

The novels, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Falling Man*, are critically analyzed in the frameworks of postmodernism and trauma theory. The major postmodernist techniques for communicating the traumatic experiences of 9/11 are outlined for analyses and further discussion. According to Hassan (1987), the term postmodernism does not mean merely a literary phenomenon. It is rather considered to represent a broad cultural response to the most vital issues of current time, which like artistic products may also likely to be emerged in social practices (p 2)

While referring to M H Abrams, Bakır (2010) states that usually the postmodern authors do not follow the notion of normal discourse, and make the use of pastiche, in which no certain model is followed. However, in postmodern fiction, eclecticism is used, which represents the relations between different narrators and texts. The same story is usually narrated from different perspectives in order to divulge the functionality of the text. For this purpose, various discourses are usually incorporated in the same text from the subjects such as history, drama, poetry, calligraphy, architecture, and science without disturbing the structure of the text (p 173-74)

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the Oskar's story not only represents the collective trauma of 9/11 but also develops a transnational theme of trauma across the borders. Foer refers to the trauma of World War-II in the form of Oskar's grandparents' memory (Dawes, 2007, p 529). The novel also focuses on the tragic event of Hiroshima through presenting a recorded interview which Oskar brings to class, in which a survivor of Hiroshima narrates the story of the tragic death of her daughter. These traumatic stories of Dresden and Hiroshima tend to complement the boy's experience of 9/11 trauma. However, it seems that beyond the cultural differences and political complexities, the effects of trauma are the same for its victims.

It is usually considered that the trauma narrative is impossible. However, while discussing the "trauma fiction", Whitehead (2005-2008) points out in *Trauma, Ethics and Myth-oriented Literary Tradition in Jonathon Safran Foer's Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, that literary strategies and conditions make the communication of traumatic experience possible. While elaborating the application of trauma theory on the contemporary fiction, she states that Caruth's work suggests that if trauma is not possible

to formulate narrative then it may require an unconventional literary sequence and interruption of one time into another. Furthermore, critics refer to such fiction as “experimental fiction”, which uses experimental devices/techniques in its fictional representation. This novel is also considered as a very rich in terms of experimental techniques.

1.6.1 Trauma Theory

Cathy Caruth (1996) defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (p 181). She argues that the surprising impact of traumatic experiences is for more important than mere definitions of trauma.

The event is overwhelming for the victim because his/her mind is not prepared for the devastating experience. In Freud’s terms ‘Angstbereitschaft’—the victim is not ready to feel pain or anxiety. At the time of the traumatic event, the effects may not be fully realized by the victim. This consciousness of the occurrence is realized later when the event starts repeating in the mind of the survivor. So, the survivor is repeatedly traumatized by possessing the image of the event. Caruth (1996) argues that the delayed reaction of trauma is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on which most writers agree that there is response (sometimes delayed) to overwhelming event(s), which may take the form of dreams, repeated intrusive hallucinations, thoughts and behaviors produced by the event along with sad feelings created by the experience during or after

the event, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (p 4, 11)

According to common understanding, traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter individual or collective sense of well-being of the victim(s). The power to shatter---the "trauma" tends to emerge from events experienced by the victim. The response to such shattering events ---"being traumatized" ---is felt and thought to be an immediate and unreflexive response. Trauma is not only constituted by the destructive force of event(s) but also the very acts of its survivors demonstrate trauma. The victims also remember the memories and fear of the experienced event(s) through images and symbols, which Cathy Caruth names as 'speechless terror'. The traumatized victims may never be fully integrated as they consider themselves lost in the event and they may never remain the same. Therefore, it is said that the trauma victim is not living in the present.

During the 20th Century, people have often referred to traumatic experiences, events, acts of violence, harassment and abrupt changes by experiencing them. For this purpose, the language of trauma has been employed to explain the effects of traumatic event(s) on individuals and collective groups.

1.6.2. Trauma in literature

Anne Whitehead (2004), while discussing trauma, novels and trauma critics in *Trauma Fiction*, states that multiple literary devices are employed for depicting trauma and the novels related to trauma as an "emerging genre" (p 4). Moreover, trauma novels are distinct category and a recent literary critical task. The development of trauma theory has introduced new techniques for novelists to conceptualize trauma. The rise of trauma

theory has shifted the attention from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered. Different specific historical events of trauma have been made visible through numerous works of postmodern fiction. A traumatic event may sometime affect a large number of people rather than an individual or a few individuals. So, in this case, literature can be a suitable medium to tackle the traumatic happening(s) by representing victims as characters. This may make the readers able to get inside to the mind of the victims, in this way they may be able to have a microscopic vision of the traumatic events, the way trauma is experienced, felt and the ways victims are affected by it. The trauma literature can also play therapeutic function and helps the community to work through collective trauma. The trauma literature has been remained important as it draws attention towards the essential aspects of life, which are 'fear and love'.

Moreover, personal trauma is considered as one of the key features of contemporary literature, which creates shared experiences among the survivors/victims. And, hence the survivors are connected by sharing their traumatic experiences, where they can narrate their stories of trauma to one another in order to make a sense of their surroundings and gain hope in life (Tucker, 2011).

According to Foer, creating an art out of tragedy is not an inherently good thing. However, a distinction has to be made in trauma theory and historiography. The application of trauma theory in literature refers to the emphasis on various traumatic experiences, their history, how they affect the victims and change their course of life, and the ways they actually feel. On the other hand, historiography refers only to the hard facts of past life. Therefore, trauma theory is more suitable to be applied in literature in order

to meet the purpose of detailed representation of the victims and the ways they experience trauma

1.6.3 Postmodernism

The term “Postmodernism also post-modernism” entered into philosophical lexicon as it was first employed by Jean-François Lyotard in his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). However, in the term ‘postmodernism’, the prefix ‘post’ is not necessarily used in a temporal sense rather it is considered as a reaction to modernism. Lyotard characterizes postmodernism as incredulous towards “metanarratives” by which he means the kind of stories about the world, which try to recapitulate all in one account. Postmodern approach tends to find such stories unsuitable for the world. Instead, Lyotard argues that postmodern temperament favors the world in more rhetorical terms where people make smaller narratives (points of view and interests) supreme and more convincing. Postmodernism is also faulted for not taking stand on issues related to value rather it considers all values as topics for debate and debate will continue forever. Moreover, Eagleton (2003) states that postmodernism is also considered as one of the contemporary modes of thought, which on one hand, tends to reject the possibility of objective knowledge and on the other, it is also skeptical towards truth, unity and progress. However, postmodernism is not considered unified movement or a systematic theory rather it is a loose umbrella term which incorporates different trends of reactions against modernism. One of the most common features of postmodernism is the pluralistic perception (multiple perspectives), in terms of recognition of the validity of same thing and by encouraging the eclectic ways of thinking, besides blending elements from different cultural traditions. Postmodernism tends to develop a sense for blurring

and flexible boundaries. Another important feature of postmodernism is anti-essentialism, which means that it may not be applied to individual words or messages but rather it focuses on the entire text in a broader sense like any significant structure. Furthermore, there is no essential meaning of a text, as a text may be open to a number of interpretations (Leicester, 2000)

The notion of postmodernism is not only problematic but also diverse in its use in academia as well as in popular discourse. The concept of postmodernism has also been applied to a number of areas such as economic, social and cultural phenomena. The commentators of postmodernism may not necessarily be focusing/referring to the same things. However, on one hand, the epithet of postmodernism refers to the aesthetic and socio-cultural features of contemporary life and on the other it gives birth to various forms of theorization, which are considered suitable for creating a sense of the “postmodern conditions” (Hill, 1998). The term ‘postmodernism’ is also employed in three different types of debates such as philosophical, socio-cultural and aesthetic. These debates are considered distinct, although these may not be unconnected.

1.6.4. Postmodernism and Literature

According to *Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* (2009), the term ‘postmodernism’ is generally considered significant in many academic disciplines but it remains necessary in the literary-studies lexicon. Moreover, Linda Hutcheon (1986-1987), a major theorist of postmodern fiction, suggests and argues that now in the 21st Century, ‘postmodernism is a thing of the past’ as it has fully institutionalized, besides having canonized texts, anthologies, readers, dictionaries and histories (p 165, 207)

According to *Cambridge Companion of Postmodernism* (2004, p 62) literature is usually considered as an important laboratory for postmodernism. During 1970s and 1980s, like other disciplines such as cultural studies, film studies, architecture and women's studies, a great number of literary studies were also carried out. These literary studies in the formative decades tend to frame the ideas of postmodernism. In the area of literary postmodernism, the narrative genre of fiction is more dominantly focused.

The postmodern American fiction is usually considered to begin with the works of authors such as John Hawks' *The Cannibal* (1949), William Gaddis' *The Recognitions* (1955), Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), John Barth's *The Floating Opera* (1956) and William Burrough's *Naked Lunch* (1959) and fully developed in 1960's. These writers employed different postmodern techniques in their works of fiction, including fragmentation, overlapping/mixing of facts and fiction, fantasy and dreams. They have also used, on one hand, black humor, metafictional elements, radical irony and parody and on the other, the formerly considered tabooed themes such as artistic and aesthetic forms of works as a social protest. The themes of mixing of genres, deviant sexuality, drugs, alcohol addiction and using other arts and media devices were also thought to be postmodern (Bertens, 2010, p 61, 62).

Furthermore, in 1960's, the postmodern American fiction was marked by some of the key techniques such as experimentation with language and language play, besides intertextuality and referential function of the language. The postmodern writers also employ techniques and conventions, which are typical to other genres such as arts and media. However, on one hand, the postmodern American fiction writers of 1960's were influenced by both the linguistic and philosophical theories of post-structuralism and

deconstructionism (expressing skeptical views) and on the other, writers such as Borges, Marquez and Asturias by the playful magic of realist narratives, emphasized both the story-telling techniques and imagination as liberating forces. These authors were also influenced by the idea of constructing meanings and active participation of the readers, which was supported by Barthes, who announced the death of the author and Michael Foucault, who claimed the death of the subject. These authors also showed the stimulating and manipulative effects of media and popular culture and the ways it affects the people's perception of the world (Bertens, 2010, p. 63, 64).

1.6.5. Postmodern Techniques

In *Plotting against America: 9/11 and the spectacle of terror in contemporary American fiction* (2008), Morley focuses on the visual/imagistic aspects of both the understudy novels as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). He argues that both of the novels emphasize on visuals but Foer combines the written communication with visuals for narrating the accounts of traumatic loss of the victims (traumatized characters of the novel). These authors concentrate on images/visuals in their fictional representation, as in the case of DeLillo, it is the performing artist while in the case of Foer, it is the actual photographs that are melding with the text of the novel. Postmodernism is characterized by relativism as Mondrian foresaw, cited in Christopher Nash, *World-Games: The Tradition of Anti-Realist Revolt* (1930) that one tends to become more and more relative in everything by rejecting the idea of single truth and the concept of fixed laws. Postmodern fiction writers challenged the established literary conventions by undermining the traditional pecking order of discourse.

Usually, postmodern novels do not profess to any objective representation of life but rather these tend to portray individual human experiences, the subjective nature of human consciousness, feature metafiction, flagrant shifts in narrative and use a nonlinear timeline. The constant bombardments of advertisements, visuals and exposure to media have also influenced many postmodern fiction writers where they usually place their characters in actual situation of the advertisement. The postmodern techniques such as the art of story-telling, the recurrence of certain scenes, the disrupted chronology and open ending of the novel, which can be resembled to the symptoms of traumatized character. Moreover, one of the main features of the contemporary stories is that they usually do not follow chronological order (Watyjes, 2007-08)

Postmodern literary text, on one hand, tends to undermine originality, authenticity and single authorship while on the other, it is also closely connected with the advanced use of communication technologies such as television, film, CD-ROMs, DVD's, videos, audios, computer, internet and mobile phones etc. Moreover, the postmodern literary texts employ various postmodern narrative techniques such as plurality, fragmentation, relativism (manifestation of open ending novels and postmodern literary narrative devices such as metafiction, intertextuality, parody, pastiche, radical irony, collage and language instability temporal disorder which gives space to readers to create new meanings), multiple perspectives, simulacrum, hypertextual narrative strategies, nonlinear narratives, active reader participation, hypermedia and multimedia strategies, playfulness, subjectivism, eclecticism, alternative and overlapping narrative voices, overlapping of reality with fiction, overlapping of dreams with reality, hallucination, fantasies, and the deliberate use of mixing of different genres such as "detective story, pornography, love

story, essay, diary, cookery book, receipt, letter, newspaper clip" (p 32) Postmodern literary texts like modernist literary texts also employ the narrative devices such aesthetic principles, arts and media including "the camera-eye technique, insertion of the newsreels in the narrative, cuts, rapid sequence of images, impressionist depiction of reality emphasizing visuality and subjective experience"(p 44) However, the use and functions of these techniques differ in the postmodern literary texts, as these tend to show depthlessness, artificiality of experience, and superficiality. These techniques also focus that semiotic nature of reality and textuality is perceived as mediated realities through internet, television, videos, cinema or virtual reality (www.pulib.sk/elpub). Brian Mc Hale (1987) argues

Postmodernist fiction at its most mimetic holds the mirror up to everyday life in advanced industrial societies, where reality is pervaded by the 'miniature escape fantasies' of television and the movies [] Instead of serving as a repertoire of representational techniques, the movies and television appear in postmodern writing as an ontological level – a world-within-the-world, often one in competition with the primary diegetic world of the text. (p 128)

Both DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* employ different postmodern techniques in their fictional representation of the novels. In order to depict trauma, Foer employs a number of postmodern techniques i.e. structural, linguistic and visual elements, including multiperspectivity, pictures, photographs, typographic elements, reconnaissance expedition, anti-illusionism, metaphors, intertextuality, intermediality, individual style and metafictional elements etc.

DeLillo also employs different postmodern techniques for developing traumatic narrative in the fictional representation of his novel. He uses various artistic devices, interwoven

flashbacks, forward jumps in time, visuals and exposure to images, figures in the window, symbolic references, nonlinear timeline, disjointed dialogues, intertextuality, portraits, haunting image of death---the falling bodies, burnt friends, unconventional plot---the circular form of the novel---moving the reader around and around a central point and then ending up where he started, and no clear sense of closure

1.7. Chapter Division

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces background of the study, the theoretical framework, introduction to the novels and significance of the study. In addition to this, an attempt has been made to explore how trauma is presented through literature and its psycho-social impact on fictional representation.

2. Literature Review

This chapter consists of the available material on trauma theory, its relation to literature and its depiction in the Post-9/11 Fiction.

3. Narrating Trauma Through Visual Techniques in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

This chapter contains a detailed analysis of the techniques being employed for the depiction of trauma in the novel and the way different characters were traumatized during and after the attacks.

4. Technique and Trauma in *Falling Man*

This chapter consists of a detailed analysis of the traumatized characters of the novel, their experiences, and the ways different techniques were employed for the representation of trauma

5. Conclusion

In this final chapter, a short summary of findings of the study has been discussed in the light of data analysis

1.8. Significance of the Study

The psychological damage caused by the terrible events of life and its after-effects on the survivors has become one of the main concerns of 21st Century psychology. Moreover, experiencing trauma has also been remained as an essential part of human history. The human mind usually gets traumatized when he/she experiences/undergoes an unexpected shock of traumatic accident (s) for which he/she is not mentally ready to cope with. The fictional representation of various traumatic events and their psycho-social effects on the survivors is a significant study.

The psychological trauma is unlike the wounding of the body, which is usually in most of the cases healable. However, the wounding of the mind (psychological damage) is much deeper and complex as it is not experienced in real time. Consequently, it seems harder for the mind to register it for our consciousness. Both of the selected post-9/11 novels focus on the attacks of September 11 as a traumatic incident for the survivors. However, trauma and its impacts on the survivors transcend the specific event of September 11.

attacks by generalizing the pattern of trauma and its after-effects on the victims. Similarly, the novels also discuss some other major historical traumatic events of the 20th Century and some individual traumatic accidents. The research also focuses to generalize the effects of such events on the survivors in the after-days.

The selected writers employ various postmodernist techniques/devices in order to make possible the narration of trauma, which usually considered as unrepresentable. For this purpose, the writers tend to challenge the established literary conventions and introduce various devices such as structural, linguistic, symbolic and visual elements in the form of images, icons, pictures, etc. The area of trauma theory is comparatively new, however, its application on the most tragic incident of September 11, 2001 attacks on the WTC further exposes the fictional representation of the trauma of 9/11, its effects and after-effects on the survivors. Moreover, this research not only focuses on the mentioned novels related to trauma but also answers what trauma is, what traumatic knowledge consists of and how trauma knowledge travels from experience to narration.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Trauma and arts

The collection of fifteen essays in the book, *Trauma, Media, Art New Perspectives* (2010) are based on diversity of arts and media forms, including literature, memorials, visual arts, films, music, videos and journalism. It also discusses the application of dominant theories related to trauma and its limitations, methodologies, the analysis of traumatic experiences and its artistic and media depiction. The constant global hostility, violence and thereafter sufferings, led to theoretical concern and hence developed the relationship between trauma theory and its representation.

For about a century, the depiction of trauma in the form of historical events and its experiences has become the recurrent theme in the works of both the media professionals and artists. However, including other forms of writings, greater attentions were focused on literature, theatre, television, visual arts, architecture and cinema for depicting trauma and its effects. This greater attention of the writers from diverse fields, including arts, media and journalism, has developed the interests of both the critics and academics in the area of trauma. As a result, a number of theories and ideas from across the disciplines accumulated. However, as compared to the traumatic depiction of third-world countries, relatively more attentions have been focused by writers and theorists in the analysis and representation of European and US traumas.

2.2. Trauma and post-9/11 fiction

Luckhurst (2008) argues in *The Trauma question* that it is generally considered that the canon of trauma fiction begins with Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), which says, "The murderous legacies of slavery in America intended to give some inner consciousness and humanity to the historical record of atrocities inflicted against African and African-American people as a consequence of institutional slavery" (p 87, 90) The trauma novels can be clustered after the clinical elaboration of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the late 1980s and 1990s

Originally, the word 'trauma' is taken from Greek language, which means an injury inflicted on the body. Initially, the term was used for physical injury but in the late 18th Century, with the emergence of psychology as a separate discipline, trauma has become a psychological term and now referring to mental conditions (Caruth, 1996) The term 'trauma' also refers to extreme violence and the ways it affects the bodies and minds, however, in some cases it leaves permanent marks on the victim(s) even after the recovery. Moreover, many scholars from across the disciplines approach to study the traumatic experiences of violence and its aftermath. However, the notion of trauma covers a number of situations and various individuals and collective responses. In addition, "trauma can be seen at once as a sociopolitical event, a psycho-physiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering" (Kirmayer, 2007, p 1-5)

Kolk, in *Psychological Trauma* (1987), provides basic understanding about trauma and the psychological consequences of overwhelming experiences and trauma responses

Bessel A Van der Kolk, Alexander C McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth in the *Traumatic stress the effects of overwhelming experience on mind, body, and society* (1996), discuss a great number of authors, who presented the historical development and current approaches towards trauma, traumatic effects and the nature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Herman (1997) states that the traumatic experiences may not change the victim physically to the extent that he/she may no longer feel himself/herself as the member of the human race. However, it usually causes the victims to detach from the society and feel themselves isolated from everyone else, as Herman explains, "Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion"(p 24). Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition A Report on Knowledge* (1979) contends that the postmodern work struggles continuously to find ways to present the unrepresentable. He further maintains that there are some situations, which by their very nature cannot be thought about or articulated.

For making the unrepresentable trauma of 9/11 as representable, the selected writers employ various postmodern techniques to capture the effects of trauma. Prete (2006) states that corporal manifestations and the representation of trauma consider the body as the central sign. He further argues that body is the site of paradox as the way loss is made visible through presence and the narration of trauma cannot rule out corporeality, as it is one of the essential figures for trauma narration. In addition to that, according to Vickroy

(2002), accessibility to the event of trauma may be created through the narrative power of symbolization as “an audience needs assistance in translating unfamiliar experience in order to empathize with it” (p 11) In the literary representation of postmodern fiction, the boundaries between verifiable, actual, fantastic, imaginary, mimetic, truth and lie are erased deliberately and the aesthetics of multiplicity, plurality and uncertainty is produced Various modes and styles of representation play different roles not only in the depiction of reality, but especially in the creation of meaning and the representation of the variety of human experiences (Kroes, 1992)

Nicol (2009), in *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, discusses various techniques and works of different postmodern fiction writers Furthermore, this book emphasizes that reading of postmodern fiction is a challenge for its readers Instead of enjoying it passively, the readers have to work to understand its meanings, to think about what fiction is, and to question their own responses Verbestel (2010) also discusses trauma from the perspective of 9/11 in his thesis, *Trauma and Post-9/11 novels Foer, McEwan and McInerney* He focuses on three novels as *The Good Life*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Saturday* Laura Bruneel has also discussed trauma in his thesis, *A comparison of Jonathan Safran Foer's Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close and Joseph O'Neill Netherland* (2010)

Versluys (2007) discusses 9/11 and considers it as a European event He divides the novels dealing with the 9/11 attacks into four categories such as the novel of recuperation, the novel of first-hand witnessing, the great New York novel, and the novel of the outsider In *Out of the Blue September 11 and the Novel* (2009), Versluys focuses

on the novels of 9/11 that provides new insight into the emotional and ethical impact of these traumatic events and its depiction. He also discusses works done by Jonathan Safran, Ian McEwan, Anita Shreve, Martin Amis, and Michael Cunningham, arguing for the novel's distinct power in rendering the devastation of 9/11 into narration.

Hartman (2004), in *On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies*, describes two different forms of trauma knowledge as the traumatic event, which is registered rather than experienced and the memory of the event. He also states that figurative and literal language may correspond to the cognition of these two types. Moreover, Caruth (1996), in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, argues that the traumatic experience entails an unprocessed and literal re-exposure of the referent and the story of trauma, its narrativization is inescapably bound to a referential return. However, the survivors of the trauma constitute themselves as unique communities and they bear witnesses to the traumatic experiences. The survivors of the trauma themselves write literature by telling and retelling the traumatic experiences in order to make it real to the victim, community and public (Tal, 1996). While referring to 9/11, Baudrillard (2003) says, "The whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event" (p. 4).

Kaplan (2005) argues that a bulk of writing, which refers to 9/11, concentrates more on individual experiences, personal losses and over-personalization in the aftermath of the event. The post-9/11 novels make an attempt of interpretation, which is considered as using a private angle in the narration of 9/11 stories. Many critics describe this approach too "sentimental" (p. 22, 147). However, the immediate shift of judgment from domestic and inward-looking to sentimentality seems to classify "all discussion of emotion [as]

part of the same negative sentimentality” (p 22) In addition, most of the critics, while criticizing the post-9/11 novels, tend to look for a more contextualized and historicized viewpoints in order to see more diverse reflections about the event in terms of geo-political outlook

2.3. Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

2.3.1. Language, Trauma and Visuals

Most of the fiction writers were disillusioned while making an attempt to describe the traumatic events of September 11 attacks and hence the post-9/11 and its aftermath saw a “crisis for fiction and writing” due to the traumatic nature of the event”(Houen, 2004,p 421) However, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is considered one of the first and most widely read novels, which directly deals with the issue of trauma of September 11(Geertsma, 2011)

Bradford (2012) states in *Reading for the Body Reinforcing Somatic Reality in the Study of Trauma* that language seems a problematic tool for trauma expression as it is almost impossible for language to capture the effects of trauma or express traumatic experiences in words He argues that the verbal articulation may describe an event but, however, in face of trauma, the very vehicle of language breaks down Moreover, some of the writers tend to represent “the experience of 9/11 through experimental literary techniques and the introduction of images to capture the horror of the traumatic experience without simplifying it” (Baelo-Allué 2012 p 66) Herman (1997) in *Trauma and Recovery* argues that one of the most significant features of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is its visual aspect In addition, the per-textual elements of the novel itself show the symptoms

of post-traumatic state. The arrangement of visuals, words on the page, large spaces and breaking out in capital letters manifest the hyperarousal elements and the alertness of the text.

Throughout the novel, Foer uses the body as a tool of traumatic expression either Oskar gives bruises to himself when he is too much emotionally distressed and sometimes it is the absence of his father's body, which makes him obsessed with memories of the event. "Dad isn't even there!" "Excuse me?" "His body was destroyed" [] "It's just an empty box" (p 169). When investigating his father's wardrobe, Oskar observes "Even though Dad's coffin was empty, his closet was full [] it made my boots lighter to be around his things" (p 36). The content of the wardrobe manifests, on one hand, the absence of his father's body but on the other, contrary to the fact, it shows bodily presence of his father, which gives him comfort. Oskar's grandfather, Thomas' body also reflects trauma, the way he shows the tattoo on his hands ("YES" and "NO") and signifying book by peeling and clapping and using hands for covering the face of Oskar's grandmother and touching her chest (p 111,135). In fact, Sr. Thomas does not seem communicatively silent rather instead of using language, his body becomes a tool of expression (Bradford, 2012).

Geertsma (2011) contends that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is one of the first novels, which directly deals with the traumatic event of September 11. The experimental form of the novel not only exposes trauma but also urges the readers to participate in order to understand the traumatic experiences of the event. It is the active involvement of the readers, who 'connect the dots' and its temporal form brings them to witness the event themselves. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is considered as one of the key representative novels of the new generation of American fiction writers and reflecting the

psychoanalytic notion of trauma. Furthermore, the 9/11 is not only described as one of the traumatic events of the contemporary period but also considered as a national trauma. Geertsma, while referring to Versluys' *Arts*, states, "There was a consensus to describe September 11 as an event that was 'beyond words', beyond the limits of linguistic representation" (p 986).

Throughout *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the characters are confronted with the problems of communication of trauma: the notebook and tattooed hands of Thomas Sir, ribbonless typewriter of Grandma, the bracelets that Oskar makes for his mother while translating the last message of his father into Morse code and the grandparents' places of "Something" and "Nothing" in their apartment (Geertsma 2001). These elements seem to suggest that the characters are unable to articulate their traumas, however, they make an attempt to express themselves in the symbolic realm. In the novel, a bodily manifestation of trauma has been made as the Grandma can only realize the death of his son, when she sees that she is bleeding through her shirt. "That was when I knew that I knew" (p 224).

2.3.2. Trauma and Techniques

Codde (2007) states that Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* handles a number of historical traumas of the 20th Century, which were left untouched by his first novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*. In addition, the novel on one hand focuses on 9/11 as the main text of the story while on the other, the bombing of Dresden and Hiroshima as subtexts. However, this novel deviates from other customary form of novels as it employs multiple pictures and plays with typography. Apart from the debate of suitability and

accuracy of the novel as the traumatic history, Foer makes an attempt to access and represent traumas, which by definition seems inaccessible (p 241-254)

Bjerre contends that the story of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is one of the examples of postmodern story. It is a story about a 9-year old boy, Oskar, who lost his father in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The story of the novel also focuses on another historical trauma of Dresden firebombing which was experienced by Oskar's grandparents in the World War-II in 1945(p 48-61). The novel also employs a number of visual devices such as photographs, colored doodles, red underlining (indicating grammatical, orthographical mistakes and emphasizing on information). On one hand, the blank pages in the novel refer to the situations when characters under the effects of trauma lost for words while on the other hand, the shaded pages refer to the situation when characters want to say so many things at once. In addition, the business cards and files also appear in the novel when characters look at them. Siegel (2007) refers to SeinUytterschout and Philippe Codde and states that the images convey the inability of the traumatized characters to express their traumatic experiences of 9/11 and other historical traumas such as firebombing in Dresden and Hiroshima. In one of the interviews, Foer said that the visuals were consciously employed in the novel.

I [] think using images makes sense for this particular book [] because September 11 was the most visually documented event in human history. When we think of those events, we remember certain images – planes going into the buildings, people falling, the towers collapsing. That's how we experience it, that's how we remember it. And I want to be true to that experience. (Siegel, 2009, p. 1)

Foer argues that an event is remembered in the form of images. While referring to the use of images in the novel, he says it reflects the national trauma, besides highlighting the

construction of collective memory Siegel further states, "That graphic images in Foer's novel are neither distracting nor random gimmickry but, to the contrary, indispensable for the novel's verbal narrative," (p 2) and this technique tends to make *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as one of the examples of historiographic metafiction This genre assumes that past has always been mediated through some kind of representation, which thereby examines the construction of past through historiography The protagonist, Oskar, holds a visual diary "*Stuff That Happened to Me*," for recording graphic images These visuals are an attempt to document all those experiences where he fails to use words

Moreover, Oskar does not seem to find peace unless he gets some clue about his father's death in the WTC Apart from that, he also feels guilty for not attending the last phone call of his father on September 11 When Oskar discovers a key in his father's belongings, he takes it as a last puzzle and message left by his father Oskar thinks if he can get the matching lock, it will help him to answer many burning questions He starts searching for the matching lock in the whole city of New York The novel includes two more homodiegetic narrators, who also share their traumatic experiences These narrators are Oskar's parental grandparents, who lost their families in World War II in their hometown, Dresden Furthermore, they also narrate their memories of traumatic loss in the form of letters and thus major portion of the novels deals with the trauma related issues (Ibid)

Geertsma (2011) argues that almost all the characters of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* seem to suffer from melancholia As on one hand, Sr Thomas as a survivor of the

World War II, lost the ability of speaking after the death of his wife in the Dresden firebombing, while on the other, Grandma is suffering from the feeling of guilt and emotional detachment Oskar feels insecure in the post-9/11 world and strives for giving meaning to his father's death This makes him to conceive risk-free elevators and taxis, besides bruising himself and playing tambourine, and "[zip] up the sleeping bag of [him] self" (p 6)

2.3.3. A Visual Rethinking of Literary Conventions

Jonathan Safran Foer, in his novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, develops a new convention in terms of visual images/iconic reading Moreover, a number of other novels including *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* have also deviated from the contemporary conventions in terms of literary structures, physical forms, connotations and references having visual associations Paton (2010) states, "My reading of Foer's 'exploded' novel finds parallels with these visual associations (both structural and literary)" (p 4-22)

The novel also presents an unconventional form as the three narrators of the novel Oskar, Thomas Sr and Grandma, who are using letters, notebook entries, several pictures, blank and unreadable pages, full color pages, index cards, names and correction with red ink in the text of the novel On one hand, in Grandma's chapter, there are a number of short sentences having unusual spacing while on the other the letters of Thomas Sr almost becomes unreadable due to lack of spacing However, Oskar's chapters seem livelier, colorful as it has incorporated images and color ink (Geertsma, 2011, p 92-107)

2.3.4. Visual Reading and Depiction of Trauma

Uytterschout and Versluys (2008) argues in *Melancholy and mourning in Jonathan Safran Foer's Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* the second novel of Jonathon Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, is both conceptually and visually a masterpiece. The story of the novel revolves around the traumatic experiences/loss of three protagonists, who are affected to such an extent that they almost seem unable to work/stay in a conventional society. Initially, the grandfather, Thomas Schell, and thereafter the grandma and later the grandson, Oskar Schell, are survived by the trauma of loss. On one hand, the grandfather survived the allied fire-bombings in Dresden in 1945 but he initially lost Anna, his love, his unborn baby, and later his son, Thomas Schell in the 9/11 attacks whom, he was supposedly never met. Thereafter, the grandma both experienced the Dresden bombings and the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and later the grandson lost his father in the 9/11 incident (Paton, 2010, p 10)

Moreover, Foer makes a conscious attempt for blending written communication with the visuals as a method for the expression of trauma. The presentation of various images, including keys, a number of locked doors and photographs of New York City, besides a series of pictures of both places and people, Oskar comes across during the course of his journey. Almost each photograph, a page from the "*Stuff That Has Happened to Me*" (Oskar's journal) represents the moments when Oskar is feeling extremely depressed either in the form of emotional crisis, reflection of painful memory, or the moments of fear and loneliness (Morley, 2008). Throughout the novel, the nine-year-old Oskar Schell, who is affected by the traumatic loss of his father in the World Trade Center, has started

literal and psychological expedition to discover the connection of the key left by his father in an envelope, titled "Black" (Mullins, 2008, p 298)

After "The Worst Day" (instead of 9/11, Oskar calls it 'the worst day') Oskar continues his journey about the missing lock. During this quest, he comes across a number of people, who were each survivors in their own unique way. However, he is looking for all those unseen connections that can lead him to uncover something for his missing father, for his far away mother and the whole noisy world, which surrounds him.

2.3.5. Postmodern Techniques

Collado-Rodriguez (2007) argues that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is very rich in terms of both experimental strategies and techniques as on one hand, it confuses temporality but on the other, it employs more visual possibilities. Moreover, it is not only Oskar, whose story is narrated in the novel by employing different devices, but also a substantial part of it consists of devices such as a large number of images, photographs, blank pages, pages having few words, fragmented narratives and some other visual experimentations. It reflects the postmodernist view of literature, where Foer blends together new technologies such as TV, internet and video games and the ways these blur the contemporary perceptions of time and reality. Thus, under the influence of new technologies, life has been presented as video or DVD, which can be re-winded or re-experienced when and if necessary (p 52-57)

2.3.6. Dreams and Concept of Time

On one hand, Oskar's grandmother in her recurrent dreams anticipates the attacks on the WTC and on the other, after living in the United States for such a long time, she also shares the concept of time with her grandson, who has developed a technologically simulated concept of time as we can see at the end of the novel

A knocking woke me up in the middle of the night. I had been dreaming about where I came from [] In my dream, all of the collapsed ceilings re-formed above us. The fire went back into bombs, which rose up and into the bellies of planes whose propellers turned backwards, like the second hands of the clocks across Dresden, only faster (p 306)

This dream of Oskar's grandmother develops the same perception of time about the action-play-back technique (reverse order of actions), that Oskar has about the anti-clockwise movement of time (going back in time) as we can see the photographs in the last fifteen pages of the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig No 43, p 156), the reverse action of the falling man in the visuals shows his upward movement to the Tower. Oskar in his fantasy with the help of visual manifestation establishes that time is flying back and his reference to both Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (One of Oskar's favorite books) and modern theories prove that time may not necessarily follow the human logic (Rodriguez, 2007, p 53-54)

2.4. *Falling Man*

2.4.1. *Falling Man* Photography

Tom Junod (2011) says about the image of 'Falling Man', "In the picture, he departs from this earth like an arrow. Although, he has not chosen his fate, he appears to have, in his last instants of life, embraced it. If he were not falling, he might very well be flying"(Junod 2011). Kroes (2011) raises question in the *Ascent of the Falling Man: Establishing a Picture's Iconicity*, "Why is it that some photographs have a power of epic concentration, condensing larger moments in history into one iconic image?"(p 1-3), while answering the question, he says that it is the ability of human mind to store the arresting moments in the form of photographs in the memories. However, psychologists, while making a comparison between medium of photography and pictures of the mind – photographs, they use a metaphor of "flashbulb memories" and considering the iconic photographs in the mind as memory. Moreover, irrespective of time and distance, these photographs have a similar impact on our mind as these have on our eyes, making us witnesses of the traumatic events. Furthermore, it is the picture of falling man, which does not only provide the title of the novel for Don DeLillo on the catastrophic event of 9/11 but it also makes its haunting presence throughout the novel in the form of performance artist.

The photographs of those persons, who fell to their deaths from the Twin Towers on September 11, are unprecedented as the victims led to the action by the circumstances. These photographs, however, are not something new to photojournalism. Nevertheless, the images become traumatically imprinted in the people's minds, which urgently need

focus in terms of studies, analyses and contextualization in the field of visual culture (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p 85)

2.4.2. Trauma and *Falling Man*

Thomas Bjerre (2009), in the *American Literature after September 11*, says that the title of the novel, "*Falling Man*", refers to the performance artist, who in the streets of New York suspends himself from the tall buildings to imitate and re-stages the falling actions of the falling images of the Twin Towers of WTC. But the title of the novel may also refer to the protagonist, Keith Neudecker, who also reflects the term 'falling'. Furthermore, DeLillo begins the story of the novel soon after the Twin Towers' collapse and presents a chaotic situation of the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. DeLillo centralizes a few characters, out of many New Yorkers, who are not only traumatized by the attacks but also remained stuck in the aftermath of 9/11. Moreover, these characters seem unable to cope with the situation (p 48-61). He furthermore adds that "*Falling Man* is a post-traumatic snapshot of a nation living in the shadows of no towers". In addition, Keith becomes emotionally collapsed and traumatized by the 9/11 attacks. However, his active engagement in poker and working makes him escape from the memories of the attacks. While his wife Lianne is also working with a group of old patients, who are suffering from Alzheimer. In fact, this is an effort of Lianne to decrease the fear about her inherited disease (Lianne thinks that she inherited her father's Alzheimer).

The *Falling Man* is the best and most ambitious novel about 9/11 and its aftermath in the American culture. The novel focuses on a divorced couple, who wants to be reunited after

the catastrophe of the attacks. However, in the last pages of the novel, DeLillo describes the scene of plane hitting the Twin Towers from Hamad's point of view (ibid, p 58)

2.4.3. Postmodern Techniques and *Falling Man*

The story of *Falling Man* begins after the collapse of the Twin Towers, where Keith comes out of the debris of the collapsed building and walks towards the door of his ex-wife, Lianne. The couple tries to once again emotionally attach to each other for the sake of their son, who is terrified by the attacks and searching skies intending to see the signs of a man, named by the media as Bill Lawton. The novel juxtaposes the national tragedy by focusing the personal trauma of the couple (ibid, p 48-61). James Wood, in his review of the novel *Black Noise* (2007), argues that the marriage and emotional attachment of the couple must not only accommodate the inexpressible memories of Keith and his trauma but also the time that he spends at Florence Givens apartment (Wood, 2007)

The *Falling Man* begins with the disaster, its whole story revolves in a circular structure and then it ends with the disaster. It seems as if there is no getaway for any character to escape from the tragedy, which has been enforced by the recurrent and vivid description of 9/11 throughout the novel. The repetition of such description, as a comment, may possibly be the effects of media images, which were repeatedly shown soon after the attacks on the Twin Towers. Through the image of 'Falling Man', DeLillo shows that the memories of the event are recalled recurrently, which impose itself repeatedly on both real and fictional audiences. However, this may also illustrate the inability of the characters, the way they are stuck in the structure of the text and find no way out to

escape from the disaster (Ibid, p 48-61) As Laura Frost (2007), in her review, states that the actual attack is experienced but as she says about the end of the novel "A narrative move that imitates the structure of psychological trauma numbness in the moment itself followed only later by delayed understanding "

Jen Bartlett (2009), in *Cultivated Tragedy Art, Aesthetics, And Terrorism in Don DeLillo's Falling Man*, states that DeLillo employs the iconic images of "Falling Man" in order to make it possible for the world, outside of New York, to experience the trauma In addition, for most of the people, however, passing through the catastrophic event of 9/11 is a postmodern experience Nonetheless, the world has greatly changed after the event and now the memories are left The experience of the attacks is mediated through media in the form of reports, films, clips, photographs, dramatic reviews and television images However, print media artistically composed the 9/11 iconography, which were supposed to create a shock among the viewers In the figure of 'Falling Man', David Janiak, in the novel, mimics the actual 'Falling Man', who jumped from the North Tower, a photograph taken by the photojournalist of Associated Press, Richard Drew The terror-inducing technique, where Janiak performs the arts of jumping from high buildings, is a method which DeLillo considers as an art by visualizing terror In fact, the physical presence of the images of 'Falling Man' in the novel reassures the recurrent nightmares of the falling towers, burning buildings and falling people in the memories of the viewers The fictional physicality of Janiak in the novel brings more distressing effects to the viewers than those of media images The Falling Man's photograph seems to present a perfect artistry and also conveys a sense of calm as Junod (2003) says, "The man in the picture is perfectly vertical, and so is in accord with the lines of the buildings behind him He splits

them, bisects them. Everything to the left of him in the picture is the North Tower, everything to the right, the South. Though oblivious to the geometric balance, he has achieved, he is the essential element in the creation of a new flag, and a banner composed entirely of steel bars shining in the sun.”

Moreover, DeLillo's writing of *Falling Man* makes his work a literary art where he combines both memory and vision for creating an art of terror. As DeLillo said in a 1991 interview, “True terror has language and vision” (qtd. in Passero 77) and *Falling Man* is the language of a vision. The novel combines the new tragic narrative of “midair explosions and crumbled buildings” (Mao-II, 1991, p 157). The very front page of the novel confronts us with the memories of the event. While reading the text of the novel, we are also confronted with the fears of the attacks. However, DeLillo through his novel makes an attempt to mimic the event of 9/11 (Bartlett, 2009). In addition, in the first fifteen pages of the novel, instead of the protagonist name, ambiguous pronouns such as “he” or “his” are employed for him, it is, however, the page sixteen, where for the first time, Keith's actions and body refers to Keith, when splinters are taken out of “Keith's face” (p 16). DeLillo's unique approach to the protagonist introduces a chaotic atmosphere of suspicion in the novel, which almost reflects the American society immediately after the 9/11 attacks on the WTC. In addition, the reader, like an artist needs to follow the characters in a mechanical way through the pages of the novel (Bartlett, 2009).

In order to capture the actual scene of the 9/11 attacks, a number of fiction writers employ visual images in their work of fiction in immediate response to the event. Furthermore, as many writers in the months after the attacks were frozen to watch

television and visuals and hence too much visibility of the event made it “too real” (DeLillo, “In the Ruins of the Future”) While, on the other hand, the post-9/11 fiction writers are also confronted with the problem of how to narrate the story of the event, which seems to challenge the very logic of traditional narrative realism However, almost the whole world has already gotten some familiarity with the visuals of the event through television and other mass media In order to represent the new realities of post-9/11 scenario, personal trauma and socio-political conditions, the two novels employ new realism through written and visual communication (Morley, 2008) Moreover, Laist (2011) states in *Apocalyptic Nostalgia in the Prologue of Don DeLillo’s Underworld that the Falling Man* depicts the 9/11 attacks not as a discrete event but as a continuous condition in history, which marks the survivors’ memory and identity

Many novelists such as Jonathan Safran Foer and Don DeLillo from the US make an attempt in their fiction to confront the effects and after-effects of the 9/11 attacks DeLillo as a novelist has been considered as “the most relevant author of the postmodern American literature of the last decades and the pre-eminent analyst of the age of spectacle, the poet laureate of the simulacrum, of the depthless image floating above a social vacuum” (Panzani, 2011, p 77) More specifically, *Falling Man* focuses on the “after days” of 9/11 (DeLillo 2007, p 294), the characters such as Keith Neudecker, his wife Lianne, his son Justin and the way they are affected by the event The protagonist seems unable to bear the effects of trauma and thus, he starts looking for other activities such as poker playing, so that he may forget the traumatic event of 9/11 (Ibid, 2011) DeLillo explains in an interview, “you have to give the game total concentration, and for

that reason, a game of poker helps you forget, for a couple of hours, all the problems you've got" (Amend & Diez, 2008, p 78)

The footage of the event seems as if it enters into the body and runs beneath the skin of the characters, as when Lianne watches on television the collapse of WTC, and every time she presses the button of remote for videotape and watching the planes hitting the buildings. In fact, the footages of the attacks enter into both the psyche and body of the viewer as DeLillo points out in his essay, *The Power of History* (1997), that the continuous repetition of visuals usually blurs the connection between the viewer and the reality that exists outside the tape. It seems as if Lianne has absorbed the images of the catastrophe of 9/11 through the performance of David Janiak, assuming the name of 'Falling Man', which also becomes the title of the novel. Janiak performs the arts of falling from various buildings of New York during the weeks followed by the attacks. The artist wears a blue suit and the safety harness helps him stop "headfirst, arms at his sides, one leg bent, a man set forever in free fall against the looming background of the column panels", in a position that is probably "intended to reflect the body posture of a particular man, who was photographed falling from the north tower of the World Trade Center" (p 281-282)

Morley, while referring to David Janiak, a performing artist in the novel, states that DeLillo makes an attempt to aestheticize mass trauma by imitating the real victim, who falls down from the North Tower during the attacks (2008-09, p 92). However, at the end of the novel, when Lianne gets more information about the life of the artist, she does not seem to view it as a mere photograph rather she feels as if "she was the photograph, the

photosensitive surface The nameless body coming down, this was hers to record and absorb” (DeLillo 2007, p 284) As Panzani(2011) in *The insistent realism of Don DeLillo's 'Falling Man' and Paul Auster's 'Man in the Dark* argues that “The mimetic representation of the human fall from the Towers triggers a sort of deep and intimate sharing of the experience”(p 85)

CHAPTER 3

NARRATING TRAUMA THROUGH VISUAL TECHNIQUES IN *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*

3.1. Postmodern Narrative Techniques

Foer employs a number of postmodern narrative techniques in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* for representing the after-effects of major traumas of the 20th Century in general and that of September 11 in particular in post-9/11 scenario. The story of the novel is narrated from multiple perspectives and narrative techniques, which are considered as one of the main features of postmodern fiction. On one hand, these techniques ascertain the absence of a single truth and reality and on the other these create a problematic relation between fiction and reality (Baktır, 2009, p 172). Oskar, his grandfather and grandmother reflect upon the same traumatic event of 9/11 in the form of their letters. Oskar's grandparents were also the survivors of World War-II. They also share their traumatic experiences in the form of letters about the same traumatic event(s) of Allied firebombing of Dresden.

The novel is an artistic representation of the terror caused by the 9/11 attacks. Foer employs different techniques in the fictional representation of the attacks and their effects on the survivors as a main text and the tragic events of Dresden bombing and Hiroshima of 1945 as subtexts in the novel. Baktır (2009) argues that postmodern authors do not consider anything outside of the text (p 172) as the novel mainly consists of introductory cards, images, pictures, mails, major letters, minor letters, newspaper reports, blank pages, shaded pages, pages with single words, pages with single sentence, pages with

name of colours and signatures, highlighted mistakes with red colors, digits and telephone calls converted into written messages etc

Foer while making an attempt to capture the effects of trauma, he tends to assist the characters with a number of other postmodern techniques for their personal expression and fictional representation of the event. He represents almost all of the major traumatic events of the 20th Century with the help of using various postmodern techniques, including pictures/images which in most cases coordinate with the written text of the novel. Moreover, the major characters of the novel write letters to each other about their retrospection and personal feelings as survivors and traumatized individuals of various historical traumatic events as Codde (2007) argues that Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* makes an attempt to represent and record the traumatic history, which is commonly considered as inaccessible and unrepresentable. However, for this purpose, the writer deviates from the traditional ways of fiction writing and introduces certain postmodern elements in the text (p 241)

Merchan (1992), while referring to Foer, argues that narrative techniques and postmodernism are closely linked with each other. On the one hand, postmodernism is critical towards grand narratives and the possibility of cosmopolitan discourse while on the other, it tends to believe more in local narratives such as autobiographies, novels and tales. The postmodern literary texts seem to produce multiplicity of meanings and manifold realities, and for this purpose, these use different sorts of narrative techniques (p 28). Foer also projects mini-narratives of the individual characters, their retrospection, perception and construction about different events. Furthermore, he also speaks from the mind of the characters and the way they construct realities.

The narration of the novel is fragmented and temporally distorted. The author casually begins the novel with interrogative sentences about the teakettle as “What about a teakettle?” (p 1). Oskar, a nine-year-old protagonist of the novel, after some retrospection about the death of his father, begins discussion with his grandmother and the limousine’s driver when he is on way to the graveyard for his father’s funeral, who was killed in the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers. The text of the novel is not logically connected. The author presents many emails and letters out of place as fragmented pieces of writing. Throughout the novel, the narrators jump from time to time as Codde (2007) states that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* on formal level is deviated from the customary form of novels (p 241). Initially, he discusses and highlights the funeral ceremony of his father and later the causes of his death. Foer also focuses on the World War-II from the perspectives of Oskar’s grandparents in 1945 and then suddenly switches over to 9/11 as the main tragic event, about which Safer (2006) states that these sub-stories of Oskar’s grandparents in the novel are also a kind of digression in the main quest of his search (p 115).

The novel is mainly based on the real historical event of 9/11 attacks on the WTC as the main story and the World War-II (Dresden firebombing and Hiroshima tragedy) as sub-stories. Moreover, it also contains a number of historical names of writers, scientists, books and real images of the September 11 attacks. And the spoken messages of the voice mails, that Oskar receives from his father on the fateful day, have also been converted into written language and Morse codes in the novel.

3.1.1. Postmodern Text and Reader's Participation

Foer has also developed a complicated plot of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by using different elements and narrative devices in the construction and development of the story such as blank pages, pages with single words, pages with single question, pages with single sentence, pages with dark color, pages with overwriting/shading, and display of the mails sent and received are also shown in the novel as part of the literary text. The novel also contains personal letters of some traumatized characters, cards, images, pictures, figures and numbers, extract of a newspaper, certain words are circled, others highlighted, recorded voice converted into written language, certain words are rewritten after crossing it, finger prints, signatures and name of colors written with different colors of markers on blank pages, fragmented narratives, certain words are italicized others capitalized, unusual spaces between the sentences, asking frequent questions and a number of dialogues in the unconventional form in the narration. Personal stories in the form of letters are also incorporated in the text, besides temporal distortion, casual beginning and ending of the novel. Baktır (2009) states that in order to understand the postmodern literary text, the reader is required to be actively involved in the process of reading. Moreover, the readers are usually participating either in the form of making comment on the text or fill the blank pages, which makes the reader a textual element within the narrative (p 174).

Some words are also taken from French language and others are crossed and corrected in the novel. These elements make the novel difficult to understand unless the reader is actively involved in the process of reading. The uses of these techniques not only force the reader to concentrate on the experience of trauma but also to take decision on the very

old question of whether the trauma can be treated or not (Remetr, 2011, p 110, 111) In addition, the postmodern writers usually expect from the readers to participate in the text by putting together the fragmented parts for constructing a meaningful story The dialogues in the text do not follow literary conventions as in most cases, these dialogues are included in the same paragraph without marking off or separating the speakers such as "he said" or "she said" This makes the text more demanding for the readers to understand who said what to whom

"What do you mean I sound just like Dad?" "He used to say things like that" "Like what?" "Oh, like nothing is so-and-so Or everything is so-and-so Or obviously" She laughed "He was always very definitive" "What's 'definitive'?" "It means certain It comes from 'definite'" "What's wrong with definitively?" "Dad sometimes missed he forest for the trees" "What forest?" "Nothing" (p 43)

Here Oskar is talking with his grandmother about his deceased father, however, the dialogic form of the text throughout the novel lacks the conventional rules of dialogue It does not become clear from the dialogue that who is speaking to whom Hence the task of reading becomes more demanding for the reader in terms of understanding

3.1.2. Techno Culture, Virtual and Media Saturated World

Foer also attempts to represent the information drenched society and techno culture of the 21st Century in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* The protagonist, Oskar Schell, a highly gifted and innovative nine-year old boy represents the postmodern American society, which is technologically advanced He is taking help of modern technology (Internet) for collecting the exact details of his father's death in the WTC on September 11 Oskar, for this purpose, googles certain words, and translates them from

different languages into English in order to know more about the event. But time and again, it makes him extremely angry as why he does not know about everything related to the 9/11. He argues that he himself and the Americans should know each and everything related to the accident as they are the direct victims of the attacks. Furthermore, Oskar says that he will stop searching about his father's death, if he can get exact information in this regard. While using internet to search various websites, he watches different videos of 9/11 victims and the ways they died in the WTC. These videos make him more curious to know the exact details about the death of his father. He will stop inventing, if he can exactly know which way his father died. As he states

If I could know how he died, exactly how he died, I wouldn't have to invent him dying inside an elevator that was stuck between floors, which happened to some people, and I wouldn't have to imagine him trying to crawl down the outside of the building, which I saw a video of one person doing on a Polish site, or trying to use a tablecloth as a parachute, like some of the people who were in Windows on the World actually did. There were so many different ways to die, and I just need to know which was his (p 257)

The uses of television, internet, and video games are not only affecting the perception of reality (blurring the difference between fiction and reality) but the actions of the past may also be re-experienced/revisited when and where it is wanted. Moreover, the life seems to have been turned into a DVD player in contemporary age. Foer through the use of contemporary media creates psychological effects on the readers as Morley (2008) argues, "Foer recognizes the need to adapt literary realism to describe and present a new world order in which, thanks to the omnipresence of the media, the boundaries between what is real and what is unreal are no longer clear"(p 310)

Furthermore, it is due to the new technologies that makes Oskar able to watch again and again the tragic event of 9/11, falling bodies from the Twin Towers, listening the recorded sound of his father on the answering machine and listening the recorded interview of Hiroshima bombing Oskar time and again takes help from internet in order to learn more and more about the 9/11 in general and about the death of his father in particular For this purpose, he visits different websites and translates certain words from other languages in order to get the relevant information

Whenever I want to try to learn about how Dad died, I have to go to a translator program and find out how to say things in different languages, like 'September,' which is 'Wrzesień,' or 'people jumping from burning buildings' which is 'Menschen, die ausbrennendenGebäudenspringen' Then I Google those words It makes me incredibly angry that people all over the world can know things that I can't, because it happened here, and happened to me, so shouldn't it be mine? (p 256)

However, this makes him extremely angry that why the whole world knows about those things related to 9/11 which he does not know Moreover, he considers that he as an American is directly affected by the attacks and he should know each and everything related to it and for this purpose, he translates information available on various websites in different languages into English

3.1.3. Non-linear Narratives, Fragmentation and Temporal Distortion

Foer's second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also uses non-linear narratives techniques through spoken and written communication across both time and history The protagonist and other characters quite often switch over from present to past and future while representing their respective experiences of traumatic incidents Postmodern novelists usually follow the idea of fragmentation, which means that the

concept of wholeness is being disappearing from the postmodern fiction. The fragmented text of fiction is usually constructed with the help of elements such as images, wordplay and metaphors. "In Foer's novel, fragmentation takes the form of multiple narrators instead of the narrative being told in a single voice, the narrative is split into three, that of the 9-year-old Oskar Schell, his grandmother, and his grandfather" (Remetr, 2011, p 111). The letter of Oskar's grandmother, on one hand, like her other letters in the novel also contains unusual spaces among the sentences, while on the other, her thoughts are also fragmented and temporally distorted. As she states in the letter, while addressing Oskar, "My thoughts are wandering, Oskar" (p 181). She switches from past to present and from present to past, which makes the text of the letter temporally distorted as she states that "The laughter sent my thoughts to our kitchen table, where we should laugh and laugh"(p 179), "My thoughts are going to my childhood, Oskar. To when I was a girl"(p 181). She also avoids using of any connectives or linking words in almost all of her letters. Thus, the texts of these letters seem to demonstrate most of the postmodern features of writing.

Oskar's grandfather is writing his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell (See Appendix-B Major Letter No.7, p 166-79) on the day of his death in the WTC. This time, he is addressing him as "my child." This letter is also temporally distorted and in some parts, it is in a reverse order. First he discusses about the later events such as his arrival at the house of his wife, and then he narrates about the starting point of his journey from Dresden.

Moreover, in the last letter of the novel to Oskar, his grandmother tries to present her retrospection about the past traumatic events of her life in fragmented thoughts and

temporally distorted writing. She also tends to show anti-clockwise movement of time in her dreams, which is also an effort to show the possibility to put the traumatic accident of her past in a reverse play order.

A knocking woke me up in the middle of the night. I had been dreaming about where I came from [. . .] In my dream, all of the collapsed ceilings re-formed above us. The fire went back into the bombs, which rose up and into the bellies of planes whose propellers turned backwards, like the second hands of the clock across Dresden, only faster (p. 306)

In this letter while writing about her dreams under the title, "*MY FEELINGS*", and about her past tragic accidents of Dresden firebombing, the grandmother reverses the whole course of action by making anti-clockwise movement of actions across both the time and space. Foer also displays the images of falling man from the building of WTC in a reverse play order in the last fifteen pages of the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig No 43, p. 156).

3.1.4. Trauma, Time and Rewinding Actions

Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* shows the possibility to rewind the very concept of time with the help of photographs taken from internet in the last fifteen pages of the novel where the falling man from the Twin Towers instead of coming down is floating up (See the photograph in Appendix-A Fig 43, p. 156). The reverse action of the falling man was shown through photographs, which may actually be displayed with the help of technology such as DVD or CD. The subjective sense of representation of the moment of the attacks on the WTC in the post-9/11 fiction is actually considered as an effort of the writers to narrate the documentary and subjective experiences of the event (Morley, 2008, p. 296). Moreover, the protagonist also thinks in terms of images and

creates the possibility to rescue the victims of 9/11 attacks "Oskar's imagined rescue by means of a birdseed suit" (Codde, 2007, p 248)

Oskar's grandmother like Oskar also shows the same technologically simulated concept of time where she is dreaming about the reverse play of the tragic event of Dresden bombing. The reverse actions are considered as a departure from the reality. The postmodern theorists, Žižek and Baudrillard, while discussing the blurring difference between fiction and reality, suggest that the greatest loss of the 9/11 attacks is the loss of the sense of reality. Moreover, factual images of the attacks present a sense of fiction at least momentarily due to its medium and instant replay and raptures (Morley, 2008, p 297). However, the reverse actions may also represent the tragic feelings of Oskar and his grandmother, who wish to reverse the whole traumatic course of action and to have a normal life once again as it was before.

The readers have also been given an impression that the flow of time may not necessarily follow the human logic. As time and again, the reference of Oskar to Stephen Hawking's book, *A Brief History of Time*, also represents the modern scientific theory of time, which does not match with the human logic of time. Under the traumatic conditions, the normal flow of time tends to become disturbed as time stands still for Oskar when Abbey Black comes close to him as he says that when "She leaned in to look at the key, her face came incredibly close to my face. We were frozen here for a long time. It was like time was stopped. I thought about the falling body" (p 97). Frequently the normal flow of time gets disturbed for the survivors as Cathy Caruth (1996) states that the wound, which is inflicted upon the mind of the victim(s) due to the psychic trauma, breaks the experience of time, self and world, besides creating an emotional anguish in the individual (p 3-4).

3.1.5. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as a Dialogic Text

The text of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* mainly consists of dialogues. However, the dialogic text of the novel does not follow the literary conventions as in most of the cases, these dialogues are included in the same paragraph without marking off the speakers such as "he said" or "she said". The dialogues of different speakers are usually put in different quotation marks for making it clear that who is speaking to whom (Brown, 2011, p 10). But like a postmodern writer, here too, Foer does not follow the literary conventions for writing dialogues among different characters.

"Dad?" "Yeah?" "Could you tell me a story?" "Sure." "A good one?" "As opposed to all the boring ones I tell." "Right." "I tucked my body incredibly close into his, so my nose pushed into his armpit." "And you won't interrupt me?" "I'll try not to." "Because it makes it hard to tell a story." "And it's annoying." "And it's annoying" (p 13)

Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* shows that the authoritative voice of narrating a story in the form of monologues may not succeed to convey the meaning (Paton, 2009, p 27). Therefore, Oskar tends to become the most inquisitive character throughout the novel by asking questions about each and everything. The tragic death of his father in the 9/11 attacks has further developed the quest for collecting information related to the event. As a traumatized child, Oskar's high-sounded words are heard and also tend to make echoes in the minds of the readers. Bakhtin (1986) argues that "Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation, the word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth" (p 127). The third letter which Oskar's grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell writes to his unborn child, Jr. Thomas Schell, about the self-formulated rules which governs his life and the life of his wife. In

this letter, there are also many pages having one sentence on each, in most cases, these are interrogative sentences. These sentences show that the novel is written in the form of dialogues.

Moreover, there are a number of questions that are posed by different characters throughout the novel. The text of the novel also consists of introductory cards, mails, major letters, minor letters, newspaper reports, blank pages, shaded pages, pages with single words, pages with single sentence, pages with name of colors and signatures, highlighted mistakes with red colors, digits and telephone calls converted into written messages etc. The text of the novel shows that almost all of the characters are in a continuous dialogue with each other.

"Oskar? Over " "I'm OK. Over " "What's wrong, darling? Over "
"What do you mean what's wrong? Over " "What's wrong? Over " "I
miss Dad. Over " "I miss him, too. Over " "I miss him a lot. Over "
"So do I. Over " "All the time. Over " (p 71)

While referring to Bakhtin, Paton (2009) states, "The fiction writer is always directing his/her writing towards the possible responses of readers, and is always finding more things to say, more ways to say it, so that readers can understand the message(s)"(p 27). The traumatized characters for narrating the experiences of their traumas tend to use single words, interrogative sentences, overwriting, shaded pages, blank pages, images, pictures, digits etc. It is also evident that Foer seems to make deliberate attempts in combining the written text with visuals in order to articulate trauma and grief of the survivors.

In the beginning of the novel, Oskar neither introduces himself nor his father as such but rather poses questions to the readers such as "What about a teakettle? [] I could invent

a teakettle that reads in Dad's voice, so I could fall asleep" and "What about little microphones? What if [] they played the sounds of our hearts through little speakers []?" (p 1) Moreover, almost all of the major characters throughout the novel tend to use different means for developing dialogues with each other. Oskar, in his journey for the matching lock in the New York City and before that, tends to develop the dialogic form of the narrative. He with his father, mother, grandparents, limousine driver, Stephen Hawking, Blacks and all other characters of the novel develops either the direct form of dialogues (interacting them directly) or the indirect form of dialogue (communicating through letters, emails and cards etc)

3.2. Multiple Narratives, Multiple Perspectives and 9/11

One of the key features of postmodern fiction is to challenge the authority of single perspective/narrative. The story of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is narrated from three main narrators/characters from alternative and overlapping narrative voices at various points in the novel. But more particularly, it is the event of 9/11 and its aftermaths, which are focused on and narrated from three different perspectives with the help of mixing genres such as visuals (media images and personal pictures) and written communication of letters, emails, cards, diary, newspaper clips, envelopes, and dialogues etc

Any one moment in cultural history provides, in terms of memory, influence, and orientation toward both past and future, multiple experiences of time and therefore complex modes of representing and recounting experience. Multiple narratives, from oral culture to archival record, are therefore generated (Winders, 1993, p 2)

The stories of 9/11 and Dresden attacks, their traumatic experiences and the after-days have been narrated from different perspectives – firstly, the event of September 11 is described

from the perspective of Oskar Schell, the protagonist narrator, then by his grandfather and grandmother as first person narrators in the form of letters. In addition, the grandparents of Oskar also narrate the same event of Dresden attacks from different perspectives. However, the writing of all the three narrators can easily be distinguished from each others in terms of their tone, style, expression, grammar and selection of words etc , (Brown & Penrod, 2011, p 8). Moreover, the voices of the narrators are not only mixed but, time and again, overlapping with each other also.

In Foer's novel, fragmentation takes the form of multiple narrators instead of the narrative being told in a single voice, the narrative is split into three, that of the nine-year-old Oskar Schell, his grandmother, and his grandfather (Remetr, 2011, p 111)

The event of September 11 is first narrated by Oskar Schell, the protagonist narrator from his perspective. Later the same story is also narrated from the perspectives of his grandmother and grandfather in the form of letters. Moreover, the event of Dresden firebombing is initially narrated by Oskar's grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell and later by his wife while writing letters to each others.

3.2.1. Oskar Schell

The event of 9/11 is first narrated from the perspective of Oskar Schell as first person narrator of the story. He first narrates the story of the funeral ceremony of his father, then his emotional attachment with him and later the causes of his death. In fact, Oskar on one hand narrates the attacks of September 11 from the perspectives of his father, both from the last messages of his father and from media. The transcription of the five recorded messages (For details see the transcription of the five recorded messages in

Appendix-B p 182) of his father from the voice box of telephone shows the description of the attacks from inside of the building of WTC on the day of 9/11

Oskar's father called home from the WTC soon after the attacks Oskar could not make courage to attend the call, which throughout the novel becomes a continuous source of guilt and trauma for him Moreover, from the voice messages, it is also evident that Oskar's father knows that Oskar is there but lacking courage to attend the call as Thomas Schell introduces himself "Its Dad" (p 15) in the fourth voice message and he also said that "*When you get this, give Grandma a call*" (p 69)

It is, however, in the very first voice message that something happened in the WTC, yet it was not clear, when Oskar's father said, "Listen, something's happened I'm OK They're telling us to stay where we are and wait for the firemen"(p 15) In the second message, Oskar's father felt the smoke and fire inside the building as he said, "*It's getting a bit Smoky*"(p 69) It becomes more evident from the fourth message that Oskar's father was in emergency like situation and it becomes quite difficult for him to face the situation as he said, "I'm underneath a table Hello? Sorry I have a wet napkin wrapped around my face Hello? No Try the other Hello? Sorry People are getting crazy There's a helicopter circling around, and. I think we're going to go up onto the roof" (p 204)

It is the last and fifth message, which was spoken in the form of words and had pauses after each word (Oskar transcribes it in capital letters) as he said, "MUCH HAPPENS, REMEMBER" (p 280), which seems to suggest that these were the last words of Oskar's father before his death on September 11 Furthermore, Oskar states that while listening to these messages, "you can hear people in the background screaming and crying And you

can hear glass breaking, which is part of what makes me wonder if people were jumping”
(p 301)

3.2.2. Grandfather

Secondly, the event of September 11 has also been narrated from the perspective of Oskar’s grandfather, while writing his last letter to Oskar’s father, Jr Thomas Schell (See Appendix-B Major Letter No 7, p 166-179) on the day of his death in the WTC. This time, he addresses him as “my child.” He saw the images of the September 11 attacks while watching television at the Dresden train’s station. Later, while reading the newspaper, he comes across the list of dead people and thus he comes across the name of [“ Thomas Schell, my first thought was that I had died. “He leaves behind a wife and son,” I thought, my son, I thought, my grandson, I thought and thought and thought, and then I stopped thinking.] (p 273). He also narrates the story of his meeting with his grandson and wife in New York City as a third person narrator.

The same story of Oskar’s grandfather and grandmother (when they were living together) has also been narrated from their perspectives. Initially, Sr Thomas Schell reflects upon his past life and describes it from his perspective while he was living in Dresden. He also writes about his wife, Anna, his home, his family life and his feelings after leaving his wife under the traumatic circumstances of WW-II in (Major Letter No 3). Later on, his wife narrates the same story from her point of view in (Major Letter No 4), which she writes to her grandson, Oskar Schell and the kind of feelings she was undergoing when she was left pregnant during the WW-II.

Sr Thomas Schell writes (Major Letter No 3) to his unborn child with isolated words and sentences on each single page, as reproduced in the novel. These sentences are also reproduced by Oskar's grandmother while responding to Sr Thomas Schell during the departure on the airport. It shows that the same story has been narrated two times from the perspectives of Sr Thomas Schell and then by his wife. "Excuse me, do you know what time it is?" (p 112), "Do you know what time it is?" (p 118), then there are three blank pages in the middle of the letter i e (p 121), (p 122), (p 123). Again there are single sentences, in most cases, interrogative sentence on each single page such as "Do you know what time it is?" (p 125), "Do you know what time it is?" (p 129), "Excuse me, where do you get tickets?" (p 131), "I want to buy ticket to Dresden" (p 136), "what are you doing here?" (p 137), "you have to go home. You should be in bed" (p 138), "Let me take you home" (p 139), "you're being crazy. You're going to catch a cold" (p 140), "you're going to catch a colder" (p 141).

3.2.3. Grandmother

Thirdly, the event of September 11 has also been narrated from the perspective of Oskar's grandmother. She writes another letter to Oskar (Major Letter No 6) again on the same title of "My Feelings" about narrating the same traumatic story of September 11 attacks, which has already been narrated by Oskar Schell in the first part of the novel. However, in this letter, she combines events from her tragic past with the present trauma of 9/11. She narrates how she was looking for Oskar soon after the attacks on the WTC, and then she found him under the bed and started interacting with him. Meanwhile, she is also watching the video of falling buildings on the television and the same pictures are repeatedly shown.

When you fell asleep with your head on my lap, I turned on the television I lowered the volume until it was silent The same pictures over and over Planes going into buildings Bodies falling People waving shirts of the high windows Planes going into buildings Bodies falling Planes going into buildings People covered in gray dust Bodies falling Buildings falling Planes going into buildings Planes going into buildings Buildings falling People waving shirts of the high windows Bodies falling Planes going into buildings (p 230)

Moreover, she also narrates about the limousine, Oskar's talking with the driver, empty coffin and grave of her son, Jr Thomas Schell She describes his condition while lowering the empty coffin to the grave as [“.. you let out a noise like an animal I had never heard anything like it You were a wounded animal The noise is still in my ears ”] (p 232)

In the last letter of the novel to Oskar (Major Letter No 8), his grandmother tries to present her retrospection about the past traumatic events of her life in fragmented thoughts and temporally distorted writing She also writes about her husband, who came back for digging the grave of his son and found nothing except an empty coffin Furthermore, she narrates that her husband also buried the unsent letters and the key of the apartment in the grave of Jr Thomas Schell

3.3. Depiction of Trauma and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Oskar Schell, after the death of his father in the tragedy of World Trade Center (WTC), starts thinking about *raison d'être* (the reason of being) The boy consistently raises questions about life and death after the 9/11 attacks He states, “Isn't it so weird how the number of dead people is increasing even though the earth stays the same size, so that one day there isn't going to be room to bury anyone anymore?”(p 3) While reading the three adjoining stories of the novel, it becomes evident that Oskar suffers the

trauma of the tragic death of his father and his grandparents suffer the trauma of the memory of Dresden fire-bombings (Remetir, 2011, p 111)

Moreover, after not attending the last phone call of his father from the WTC on “the worst day,” the protagonist develops a sense of guilt and trauma. Thereafter, listening to the voice messages of his father on the answering machine becomes a continuous source of trauma for him. The commitment to keep the messages secret further increases the trauma of his father’s death for him.

I looked at my watch. It was 10:22:21. I thought about running away and never talking to anyone again. I thought about hiding under my bed. I thought about rushing downtown to see if I could somehow rescue him myself. And then the phone rang. I looked at my watch. It was 10:22:27. I knew I could never let mom hear the messages, because protecting her is one of my most important *raison d'être*. [] (p 68)

Oskar has remained the most inquisitive character throughout the novel by asking questions about each and everything. But the tragic death of his father further develops the quest for collecting all related information to the 9/11 incident, his father’s death and the meaning of his very existence in the post-9/11 scenario. After an year of his father’s death, one day he finds a mysterious key in his father’s closet inside an envelope with the name of ‘*Black*’. Oskar takes the key as the last message of his father for him. With the help of this clue, he tries to understand the 9/11 attacks and his father’s death.

Oskar soon starts searching for the matching locks in the New York City. The number of locks, which he calculates in the city, is probably about 162 million “a crevasse-load of locks” (p 41). He continues this struggle for eight months, on every weekend and during the search, he comes across almost every Black person in the city. Almost all of the

characters, that he comes across, have undergone through some kind of a traumatic event or accident. First it was Abby Black, who takes Oskar to her kitchen where she starts crying with tears in her eyes. Though Oskar does not know about the cause of her crying, yet he says it may be due to a desperate person, who was calling her from the room behind. Later, Oskar visits Mr. Black, the strange old man who had been a war correspondent and has been living in the same apartment for the last twenty four years without leaving it ever. He shares all of his tragic memories with Oskar such as about the death of his wife and the horrible sight of the artist under the Stalinist regime. Mr. Black said that the world is not that horrible “but it’s filled with a lot of horrible people!”(p 156) At the end, Oskar visits William Black, ex-husband of Abby Black after listening her recorded voice message after eight months (For details see Appendix-B recorded voice message, p 182) William Black also narrates the tragic memories of the last days of his father, who died of cancer. He says that two months before his death, his father came to know about the cancer and started writing letters obsessively to almost everyone, whom he knew. “He wrote about how happy he was, and how sad he was, and all of the things he wanted to do but never did, and all of the things he did but didn't want to do”(p 297)

Finally, Oskar gets some information related to the key left by his father. However, throughout the search, the hope to find the owner of the key remains a source of comfort for him and all the time he feels closer to his father. As stated by Oskar, “Every time I left our apartment to go searching for the lock, I became a little lighter, because I was getting closer to Dad. But I also became a little heavier, because I was getting farther from Momi” (p 52)

It transpires at the end of the novel that Oskar finds the empty coffin of his father after digging his grave (Oskar's father was one of those, whose bodies were not recovered after the 9/11 attacks) It makes him surprised by how incredibly empty it was He feels as if "he was looking into the dictionary definition of emptiness" (p 321) Moreover, the protagonist seems to carry almost all the symptoms of a traumatized child Time and again, he is wishing to fall asleep during nights, but he fails to sleep Rather he starts inventing black boxes, yellow pages, postage stamps and training bomb-sniffing dogs in his imagination before going to sleep, as he states, "I counted off seven minutes that night, and then fourteen minutes, and then thirty I know I'd never be able to fall asleep, because I was so excited that the next day I'd be able to search for the lock " And on the same page again, he says, "I was getting further and further from sleep" (p 193) as Remetr (2011) argues that Oskar also demonstrates certain traumatic behaviors such as wearing all in white obsessively, browsing foreign websites for information about the WTC, acting against and partially listening the conversation held between the psychiatrist and his mother about his possible hospitalization (p 112-13)

Dr Fein, Oskar's psychiatrist, holds a discussion with him while making the diagnosis of his mental conditions After the tragic death of his father, Oskar seems emotionally and psychologically disturbed and extremely confused when Dr Fein asked him, "What emotions are you feeling?" Oskar answered, "All of them " "Like " "Right now I am feeling sadness, happiness, anger, love, guilt, joy, shame, and a little bit of humor, because part of brain is remembering something hilarious that Toothpaste once did that I can't talk about it" (p 201) Furthermore, the mental agony and the feelings of loneliness that Oskar is going through after the death of his father, is also evident from his

discussion with the psychiatrist, as he states, "I end up crying a lot, usually in private. It is extremely hard for me to go to school. I can't sleep over at friends' apartments, because I get panicky about being away from Mom. "I feel too much. That is what's going on" (p. 201). After forty-five minutes of discussion during the diagnosis, Oskar gets agree to go to school, to be good to people, to be nicer to Mom and may not be getting emotional to ruin things. Dr. Fein asked that how could you accomplish the mentioned things? Oskar answered:

I'm gonna bury my feelings deep inside me. "What do you mean, bury your feelings?" "No matter how much I feel, I'm not going to let it out. If I have to cry, I am gonna cry on the inside. If I have to bleed, I'll bruise. If my heart starts going crazy, I am not gonna tell everyone in the world about it. It doesn't help anything. It just makes everyone's life worse (p. 203).

It is evident from the above extract that Oskar is extremely disturbed, if he lets out his emotions, there are chances to harm others, including his mother. If he holds emotions inside, he bleeds and makes bruises on his body. In both the cases, he is in a terrible condition. Moreover, he is also suffering from nightmares as he states:

I could tell that Mom was dreaming, but I didn't want to know what she was dreaming about, because I had enough of my own nightmares, and if she had been dreaming something happy, I would have been angry at her for dreaming something happy (p. 107).

Throughout the novel, Oskar is continuously injuring his body. Whenever he gets emotional shocks by any unwanted or unexpected scene, he starts bruising different parts of his body. When he is extremely traumatized, he makes a bigger bruise. The number of bruises on his body makes the physical manifestation of his inner psychological trauma, sadism, and mental agony that he is passing through during the whole course of action.

while searching for the matching lock of the key left by his father. The bruises on his body also symbolize the hard times that he is undergoing as a traumatized child. Oskar narrates that once he was sleeping on the floor, (For details see Appendix-B under the title of "INREDIBLY ALONE", p 184-85) my mother while pulling my shirt must have seen the bruises on my body which I counted last time in the mirror as forty-one – "Some of them have gotten big, but most of them are small" (p 172). Some of the common words and phrases, employed by Oskar in his writing of the text, also convey the kind of traumatic feelings that he is passing through: "Raison d'être", "which I know about, but wish I didn't", "Heavy Boots", "Jose!", "Extremely", "Incredibly", "I'm OK."

3.3.1 Language and Communicating Trauma

While communicating any traumatic accident, words usually fail to represent the traumatic experiences of victims and survivors. However, Foer, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, employs a number of postmodern devices and narrative techniques such as images and letters for narrating the traumatic story of Oskar Schell, whose father died in attacks on the WTC on September 11. Oskar cannot directly refer to the 9/11 rather he calls it "the worst day" as he is unable to speak out its name or does not want to mention it. On the other hand, he lacks courage to bear witness to his failure in making response to his father's last phone call. However, Foer attempts to present the unrepresentable experiences of trauma with the help of unconventional and postmodern techniques as Morley (2008) states that in order to represent the subject of trauma, some of the post 9/11 fiction carries different modes of communication. In addition, the situation of 9/11 attacks has introduced a new narrative form of realism, which is born out of the frustration that language is not an effective tool of representation. For this purpose,

written communication is merged with visuals in order to cope with the new post-9/11 realities of trauma and loss (p 295)

Furthermore, Oskar's grandfather has also been affected by the traumatic experiences of Dresden bombing in the World War-II (1945), and as a result, he continuously loses the ability of speaking. And noticeably, first he loses the name of his girlfriend, Anna, who was killed in the attack on Dresden, while she was pregnant. Later on, when he contacts Oskar's grandmother (his wife), instead of speaking, he continuously presses the numbers on phone (For details see the Appendix-B Major Letter No 7, p 166-79). This is another form of coded communication, however, it is almost impossible for his wife to make meaning of the message, which he wants to convey. Moreover, "His wife, in turn, can only testify to her traumatic loss in the form of blank pages, as a dramatic reversal of Thomas's equally illegible black pages" (Codde, 2007, p 247)

Under the effects of trauma, Sr Thomas Schell, the grandfather who is also one of the survivors of Dresden bombing, seems as if he has lost for words and faced difficulty to use language whenever making an attempt to express his traumatic experience(s) as Codde (2007) contends that the traumatic events in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* not only affect the characters but also fracture their lives especially, when they are looking for other forms of communication, which in most cases to no avail. Besides making other attempts for communicating trauma, Oskar also translates the last words of his father into Morse code, which is further converted into a bead chain as a gift for his mother. The words seem empty to carry the burden of trauma or represent the traumatic experience of the protagonist (p 245). Furthermore, he, in letters to his son Jr Thomas Schell, refers to the inadequacy of language and his failure to communicate under the

effects of trauma For him, “Words simply fail to capture the shattering experiences, and verbal testimonies therefore tend to be extremely circuitous and oblique” (Ibid p 242) In addition, Sr Thomas Schell also states, “There won’t be enough pages in this book for me to tell you what I need to tell you, I could write smaller, I could slice the pages down their edges to make two pages, I could write over my own writing, but then what?” (p 276)

Thomas Schell was also an eye-witness of the terrible trauma of Dresden bombing in 1945, and as a result of which, he stops speaking He lost Anna, his first love, and consequently he becomes unable to communicate or unwilling to use spoken words Instead, he uses notebook, tattooed words and “YES” and “NO” on the palms as the art of communication The words seem to be insufficient for him and his attempts to communicate through words are inadequate It also seems the spoken words neither offer him solace nor any comfort In addition, Thomas destroys his letters and writes over them in order to make their reading impossible However, for him, on one hand, it is the use of visual images in the form of tactile art (sculpture) and on the other, it is the use of “YES” and “NO” on his palms, through which he attempts to express and intimates his sorrow (Ibid p 245)

3.3.2. Trauma and Silence

In the first major letter, Oskar’s grandfather addresses his unborn son Jr Thomas Schell (Major Letter No 1) In the letter, he confesses the loss of language under the effects of trauma The very first word, that he lost, is the name of his beloved, “Anna” Later on, he loses many other words such as “fine,” “shame” and “carry” The traumatic

events not only fracture the lives of the three main characters of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* but also mute them forever. However, these characters make attempts to express their respective traumatic experiences while using other forms of communication (Codde, 2007, p 247). He also loses the things he carries such as “daybook,” “pencil,” “pocket change” and “wallet.” He further says, “I even lost loss” (p 17). Then Sr. Thomas goes to tattoo parlor to write “YES” on left hand palm and “NO” on right hand palm in order to make life possible by having a limited communication through showing palms instead of speaking as Morley (2008) states that the inadequacy of language not only makes the traumatic loss difficult for articulation but also makes it impossible for the readers to understand it (p 300).

After losing the ability of speaking under the effects of trauma, the grandfather starts carrying blank books for writing whatever he needed to ask for. Moreover, writing becomes the source of communication as he states that if “I want two rolls,” “Help,” or laugh “Ha, ha ha!,” “I would write these words on the blank page.” Following this letter, Sr. Thomas Schell writes the isolated sentences and words on blank pages for conveying the messages through written language such as “I want two rolls” (p 19), “And I wouldn’t say no to something sweet” (p 20), “I’m sorry, this is the smallest I’ve got” (p 21), “Start speaking the news” (22), “The regular, please” (p 23), “Thank you, but I’m about to burst” (p 24), “I’m not sure, but its late” (p 25), “Help” (p 26), “Ha ha ha!” (p 27).

Oskar’s grandmother writes that at the end of the letter (Major Letter No 2), she states that when she met Sr. Thomas Schell after seven years, he was unable to speak and cope with his trauma. “He opened his right hand, which had “NO” tattooed on it” and “He

showed me his left hand, which had "YES" tattooed on it" (p 81, 82) Sr Thomas Schell is trying to present the unrepresentable trauma in the form of writing a personal letter to his unborn child (Major Letter No 3) in which on one hand, he takes the help of blank pages to communicate the traumatic experiences, while on the other, he uses different objects for writing, but in both the cases, he fails to cope with the experience of trauma. In this letter, for Sr Thomas Schell, language seems inefficient in face of traumatic experiences. In such a situation, he rather prefers to use/present blank pages instead of making useless efforts to communicate the traumatic experiences in the form of words. As a traumatized character, Oskar's grandfather, Sr Thomas Schell, wants to express everything and write everywhere but the space becomes insufficient for the expression of his trauma. Earlier, in the letter, Thomas Schell says that his wife has been trying to write 'Noting' and now I am trying to write 'Nothing', which means that the efforts of writing seem worthless for Oskar's grandparents in the face of traumatic experiences. The more they try to express their feelings about their traumatic past, the less they get satisfaction. Sr Thomas Schell confesses, on one hand, his inability to explain anything and on the other, his failure to make any point despite writing too much like that of his wife. In addition, through his writing, he wants to express so many things and yet he fails to say anything.

I have so much to tell you, the problem isn't that I am running out of time, I'm running out of room, this book is filling up, there couldn't be enough pages, I looked around the apartment this morning for one last time and there was writing everywhere, filling the walls and mirrors, I'd rolled up the rugs so I could write on the floors, I'd written on the windows and around the bottles of wine we were given but never drank, I wear only short sleeves, even when it's cold, because my arms are books, too. But there's too much to express. I'm sorry. That's what I've been trying to say to you, I'm sorry for everything. For having said goodbye to Anna when maybe I could have saved her and our idea, or at least died with them. I'm sorry for my inability to let the unimportant things go, for my inability to hold on to the important things. I'm sorry for what I'm about to do to your mother and to you. I'm sorry I'll never get to see your face, and feed you, and tell you bedtime stories. I've

tried in my own way to explain myself, but when I think of your mother's life story, I know that I haven't explained a thing, she and I are no different, I've writing Nothing, too (p 132)

Oskar's grandfather writes his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr Thomas Schell (See Appendix-B Major Letter No 7, p 166-79) on the day of his death in the WTC This time, he addresses him as "my child " He also brings back all the letters, which he has written to his son but could not send them While opening the suitcase to the guards for checking, [" That's a lot of paper," he said, I showed him my left palm, "I mean, that's a whole lot of paper " I wrote, "They're letters to my son I wasn't able to send them to him while he was alive Now he's dead I don't speak I'm sorry"] (p 268) Then he calls again and again from a pay phone to his wife, she attends his call but instead of speaking, Sr Thomas Schell kept on dialing the digits Though, he recognizes his wife but fails to communicate with her

Oskar's grandfather in his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr Thomas Schell, (See Appendix-B Major Letter No 7, p 166-79) wants to express and share almost all of his traumatic memories But he has rather run out of space, as he states, [" I want an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time] (p 279) It also shows the peak of trauma when Oskar asks his grandfather, "I want to dig up his grave" (p 281) Following this, the writing of the letter gets condensed to the extent that it becomes impossible for the reader to understand the text, and the last pages shaded with black color (See Appendix-B for shaded pages, p 176-79) As he wants to express so many things but even then not sure to convey what he intends to convey ["There won't be enough pages in this book for me to tell you what I need to tell you, I could write smaller, I could slice the pages down

their edges to make two pages. I could write over my own writing but then what?"](p 276)

3.3.3. Images as a Literary Technique and Depiction of Trauma

Foer makes an attempt not only to undermine the authority of conventional narrative mode of communication but also introduces new forms of communication. In order to capture the effects of trauma, Foer employs different postmodern devices and techniques for narrating the story of the survivors of 9/11. The novel contains almost all of the major historical traumatic events of the 20th Century such as the traumas of Hiroshima, Dresden and September 11 and their effects and after-effects on the survivors. Moreover, on one hand, language is usually considered as an inefficient source of communication for representing the traumatic experience(s) or accident(s). And, on the other, language also becomes inaccessible to represent the past trauma related events. However, Foer succeeds to introduce a new form or altered form of realism by blending written text of the novel with visual images, for the post-9/11 cultural scenes (Morley 2008, p 309-10). Some of the images and pictures appear in the novel in the middle of the text without having any relevant information.

During the Oskar's journey for the matching lock, the photograph of lock appears four times in the novel at different points (For details see Appendix-A Fig 1.2.3&4, p 148) without having said anything about it. The photographs tend to drop out of nowhere in the middle of the text, which also becomes a source of deviation from the main story. Furthermore, the four photographs of names of different colors appear when Oskar visits the art supply store for knowing about the word "Black" (apparently name of someone)

written on the envelope of the key in red color, which was left by his father. The lady in the store shows a pad of paper having the names of different colors, signatures, names and doodles on it (For details see Appendix-A Fig 5,6,7&8, p 148-49)

Later while planning for searching the matching lock, Oskar calculates the number of locks in the New York City and the time he needed for its search. Following this, he starts thinking before going to sleep that night, where the photograph of a number of keys hanging from the wall appears in the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig . 9, p 149). This photograph is followed by thirteen more photographs such as the photograph of front side, a human skull in the dark surroundings and a person holding a skull in his hand and looking at it (the skulls have appeared in the text earlier, but later Oskar speaks on behalf of the dead while acting in *Hamlet* and gets emotional that nothing makes any sense. He wants to smash the skull of Ron against the skull of his mother for having relations with each other, to smash the skull of his father for dying, to smash the skull of grandmother for embarrassing him, to smash the skull of Dr. Fein, the psychiatrist, for asking questions regarding his father's death and to smash the skull of everyone that he came across), structure of a building, turtles jumping at each other, a jewelry box having diamonds of different colors, a figure flying from the tower which seems to suggest that "Oskar's imagined rescue by means of a birdseed suit" (Codde, 2007, p 248), the image of New York City, a flying animal, name of purple color, image of a man in falling position while holding a racket in a playground, a number of finger prints on a page, a couple of monkeys walking (For details see the photographs in Appendix-A Fig 10,11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20&21, p 149-51)

Throughout his journey for the search of the matching lock, Oskar is consistently terrified by the heights of building, bridges, and stairs etc, the image of a bridge appears in the text when he is crossing it in the search of the matching lock (For details see Appendix-A Fig 23, p 151) Furthermore, the photograph of the front door and window of a house appears when Oskar visits the apartment of Abbey Black and later during the discussion with his grandmother (For details see Appendix-A Fig 24, p 151) Most of these photographs are taken from various sources as Paton (2010) argues that Foer in his self-reflexive writing of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* incorporates several pictorial elements and collected visual elements such as “real-time reportage ‘from the field’ by CNN, SKY News or Al Jazeera, montages of digital imagery seen in New York’s Times Square, media flattened to ‘sameness’ no matter whether what is shown is commercial desire or spectacles of terror” (p 10)

When Oskar visits the kitchen of Abbey Black, he takes a picture of a photograph of an elephant from the wall of the kitchen of her apartment, which has also been displayed in the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig 26, p 152) Moreover, on this point, Abbey and Oskar also discuss some of the unique characteristics of elephants However, in the photograph, the elephant is weeping and later Abbey Black also starts shedding tears, while Oskar says, “I thought, *I’m the one who’s supposed to be crying*” (p 96) At the end, Oskar asks Abbey Blake for taking a picture of her but when he focuses his Grandpa’s camera, she hides her face with her hands However, Oskar does not force her and takes a picture from her back side (For details see Appendix-A Fig 25.p 152)

Moreover, the picture of window also appears in the text when Oskar is talking with his grandmother Probably, it is the window of his grandmother’s apartment (For details see

Appendix-A Fig 28, p 152) which he is usually looking at while talking with her on telephone. The picture of a roller coaster in the cyclone appears (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 27, p 152) when Abe (Mr Black) asks Oskar to ride with him in the coaster. Although during the movement of the roller coaster, Oskar calculates all the forces, which put the coaster on the tracks such as gravitational and centrifugal forces, momentum, friction of the wheels and wind resistance.

Later Abe introduces himself to Oskar in his apartment while standing in the kitchen, he says, "My wife and I renovated this kitchen ourselves! With these hands!", "He showed me his hands" (p 154), the picture of a hand appears on the next page (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 31, p 153), which looks like a skeleton of the hand. Furthermore, the picture of a flock of birds appears (For details see Appendix-A Fig 29,30, p 152) when Oskar and Mr Black are standing near the window of his apartment, where a flock of birds fly by out of nowhere, which also suggests that at this point, both of the characters are mentally stirred and emotionally disturbed.

The photograph of a cat appears when Oskar takes a cat to his school for demonstrating its free fall from a high building into a free space (For details see Appendix-A Fig 34, p 153). Oskar, after the demonstration, argues that there are more chances of the survival of a cat if it is dropped from the twentieth floor than the eighth, because it adopts the shape of a parachute before reaching the eighth floor. The photograph of the door of a building appears when Oskar meets Allen Black, who works as a doorman (For details see Appendix-A Fig 33, p 153) for a building on Central Park South.

Later, again the image of a falling man from the WTC appears (For details see Appendix-A Fig 32, p 153) when Oskar is partially listening to the dialogue held between his mother and Dr Fein. In addition, the media image, which is probably taken from CNN, appears in the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig 35, p 153) when Oskar and Mr Black visit the Staten Island Ferry for searching the matching lock. Moreover, this media image also carries President Georg W Bush's statement as "Fall of Saddam Hussein is good radiance" (p 241). Furthermore, the photograph of an office appears when Oskar looks at the window of an office from the Empire State Building where the movement of people is also shown (For details see Appendix-A Fig 37, p 154). Another photograph of the whole of New York City appears in the text, which is taken from the observation deck of the Empire State Building during the night (For details see Appendix-A Fig 36, p 153). Ruth correlates the story of her husband with this image when she says that her husband, who was door-to-door sales man, used to direct the spotlight towards the sky during the night in order to show me his location in the New York City.

Similarly, Oskar takes the photographs of his grandfather's hands (whom he calls the renter) with the camera of his deceased father. In the photograph, the right hand is tattooed with "YES" and the left with "NO" (For details see Appendix-A Fig 38, 39, p 154). This photograph is taken under the extreme traumatic conditions when his grandfather fails to communicate his trauma, especially after listening to the last five recorded messages on the answering machine of his deceased son just a few moments before his death on September 11. As Codde (2007) states, "Traumatic experiences, in other words, are stored in memory in the form of icons or images, rather than as words" (p 249). The meeting with his grandfather further triggers Oskar's trauma as that night he

cannot sleep rather he invents parachutes, subways, and long ambulances and then stuck with the idea of digging the empty coffin of his father

The obsession with pictures is taken to the extreme in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, which graphically reproduces images that are imprinted on the nine-year-old's mind during the traumatic years following his father's death. As Foer emphasizes, "To speak about what happened on September 11 requires a visual language [] And also because September 11 was the most visually documented event in human history(Codde, 2007, p. 249-50)

Again the photograph of the back side of a man head appears (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 40, p. 155) during the discussion of Oskar Schell and William Black, ex-husband of Abbey Black, who is also found as the owner of the key. However, it is difficult to recognize the person in the photograph. Moreover, at the end of discussion, the photograph of a key with string appears on the next page (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 42, p. 155), which Oskar takes off from his neck and puts it around the neck of William Black.

At the end of the novel, Oskar and his grandfather decide to dig out the grave of Jr. Thomas Schell, and for this purpose, they hire a limousine during the night. On the way, Oskar opens the sunroof of the limousine and takes a picture of the stars and sky which also appears in the novel (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 41, p. 155). Moreover, the last fifteen pages of the novel show the images of a falling man. However, the body of the falling man instead of coming down is going up (For details see Appendix-A Fig. 43, p. 156) in reverse movement as Codde(2007) suggests that the protagonist thinks in terms of images to create the possibility of rescuing the victims of 9/11 attacks (p. 248).

3.4. Intertextuality

Intense self-reflexivity and periodic intertextuality are usually considered as the key features of postmodern literature. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also consists of some other elements such as introductory cards, mails, major letters, minor letters (major part of the text is in the form of letters), newspaper reports, figures and numbers, a scene of Shakespearean's tragedy, *Hamlet*, finger prints, historical names of scientists, blank pages, shaded pages, pages with one word, pages with single sentence, pages with name of colors, and words from French language. The novel also contains several pictures and images taken from various sources during the 9/11 attacks and in the following years as Glenn(2001), while referring to Hutcheon, argues, "Books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told"(p 79)

It is not just literature and history, however that form the discourses of postmodernism. Everything from comic books and fairytales to almanacs and newspapers provide historiographic metafiction with culturally significant intertexts (Hutcheon, 1989, p 15)

Moreover, Foer also incorporates a number of other elements having cultural significance such as images, which are included in the main text of the novel as Hutcheon (1989) argues that the literary work is no more considered as original, and the original work may not carry the meaning for its readers without using the prior discourses and texts for deriving meanings and significance (p 3-7). Most of these images are taken from the contemporary electronic media, besides a newspaper extract, which is taken from *The New York Times*. The text also incorporates a scene of *Hamlet* play, which is taken from one of the Shakespearean tragedies.

3.4.1. Display of Letters

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close also combines various postmodern techniques in its fictional representation and story development. The individual traumas of the survivors of Dresden, Hiroshima and 9/11 are expressed in the form of letters. For the sake of convenience in analysis, the letters of the novel have been divided in two categories of major and minor letters. The novel contains eight major letters, which also become a considerable part of the novel. On one hand, these letters contribute as a technique to reflect upon the individual traumas, while on other develop the overall story of the novel. The major portion of the novel consists of these eight letters, out of which four are written by Oskar's grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell, while addressing his unborn son, Jr. Thomas Schell. The remaining four letters are written by Oskar's grandmother, while addressing her grandson.

The technique of using letters in the literary text, on one hand, suggests the concept of multiple narratives/perspectives and on the other gives sufficient space to individual characters to express their most private thoughts and experiences of life. The technique of multiple perspectives is considered as one of the most important postmodern techniques in fiction writing. The novel also contains nine minor letters and emails, which reflect the inquisitive nature of the protagonist. Oskar receives these minor letters from friends, scientists, researchers and other organizations or sends to them. Some of these letters appear in the novel out of place (out of context) and without any explanation.

3.4.2. Major Letters

In the first major letter, Oskar's grandfather addresses his unborn son, Jr Thomas Schell, in which he confesses the loss of language under the effects of trauma. The very first word that he lost is the name of his beloved, "Anna." Later on, he loses many other words such as "fine," "shame" and "carry." He also seems to lose the things he carries such as "daybook," "pencil," "pocket change" and "wallet." He further says, "I even lost loss" (p 17)

In the second letter, Oskar's grandmother writes to Oskar from the airport about her feelings, which consists of five sub-letters, one each is received from Turkish Labor Camp, her father, a prisoner who had killed his brother and her grandmother, and one from Sr Thomas Schell when he was in love with Anna, her elder sister. The letter of the prisoner and his story is also a manifestation of traumatic accidents. The collection of these letters from the prisoner drives her grandmother's uncle to commit suicide. She states that she received letters almost from everyone she knows. She regrets, "Sometimes I would think about those hundred letters laid across my bedroom floor. If I had not collected them, would our house have burned less brightly?" (p 83)

Oskar's grandmother states in the second letter that one day when she was quite young, she received a censored letter from the Turkish Labor Camp. The letter contained many missing words. Although the letter was not addressing her but she took it to her room. She put that letter under her mattress without showing it to anyone and started thinking about it. The letter was written fifteen years back. In fact, she was making connections and wanted to understand the letter. This letter, which she puts under mattress, becomes a

continuous source of trauma for his grandmother as the voice mails on the answering machine become a continuous source of trauma for Oskar

The third letter is again written by Oskar's grandfather, Sr Thomas Schell in the name of his unborn child, Jr Thomas Schell, in which he describes the self-formulated rules which governed his life and that of his wife Oskar's grandfather wants to forget Anna but it is almost impossible to avoid thinking about her As he says, [" I'm thinking of Anna, I would give everything never to think about her again, I can only hold on to the things I want to lose The harder I tried not to think about her, the more I thought about her, the more impossible it becomes to explain "] (p 113, 116) While narrating the story about the writing of his wife on the typewriter, he states that she had given almost all of her time to write her life story And then after years of work, one day she took her husband to show him something It was thousands of pages that she had written about her life story, he was looking at the pages when she was born, her first love, when she saw her parents for the last time But suddenly, Thomas started looking for Anna in these pages and he saw her kissing somebody, and that was all he saw After this episode in the letter, three blank pages are given in the novel, which seems to demonstrate the failure of communication probably for holding the past experience of love and trauma However, Sr Thomas Schell tries to present the unrepresentable trauma in the form writing personal letters while addressing his unborn child as Sr Thomas Schell manifests

I wanted to cry but I didn't cry, I probably should have cried, I should have drowned us there in the room, ended our suffering, they would have found us floating face-down in two thousand white pages, or buried under the salt of my evaporated tears, I remembered, just then and far too late, that years before I had pulled the ribbon from the machine, it had been an act of revenge against the typewriter and against myself, I'd pulled it into one long thread, unwinding the negative it held – the future homes I had created for Anna, the letters I wrote without response – as if it would protect me from my actual life. But worse – it's unspeakable, write it! – I realized that your mother couldn't see the emptiness, she couldn't see anything (p 124)

For Sr Thomas Schell, there seems no difference between his writing and that of his wife. He also feels sorry for whatever he had done to his wife and his unborn child during the WW-II. He makes efforts to present his case and explains his stance of leaving his family under the traumatic circumstances of war.

Oskar's grandmother writes this letter to Oskar (Major Letter No. 4) about her personal feelings. The letter is a reflection of her personal feelings about Oskar and her husband. This letter, on one hand, like her other letters in the novel also contains unusual spaces among the sentences, while on the other her thoughts are also fragmented and temporally distorted. Moreover, her life story seems to consist of many blank spaces, which she tries to reflect in her writing. And which, however, she also confesses in the same letter that "My life story was spaces" (p 176). She also avoids using of any connectives or linking words in almost all of her letters. Thus, the texts of these letters demonstrate most of the postmodern features of writing.

Oskar's grandfather again writes a letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell (See Appendix-B Major Letter No. 5, p 158-65) addressing him as "unborn child" and narrating him the traumatic story of Dresden bombing, Germany during the World War-II as a survivor and an eye-witness account of the attacks. Moreover, Sr. Thomas Schell

confesses that he lost almost everything, including his pregnant wife and beloved Anna, his parents and house in the attacks in a very short time, as he states that [“ One hundred years of joy can be erased in one second ”] (p 215), and it was the joy for his baby, the child of Anna, who was not born yet. It was the thinking of the Dresden attacks that kept on traumatizing Sr. Thomas Schell. It is almost impossible for him to stop thinking about whatever he had witnessed to and experienced during the attacks. Moreover, the dreadful thinking of that tragic accident haunts him over and over. However, it is the thinking that makes him alive but thinking only about the traumatic event is worse than death. In such a situation, life for him becomes scarier than death. As he states in the letter

Thinking would keep me alive. But now I am alive, and thinking is killing me. I think and think and think. I can't stop thinking about that night, the clusters of red flares, the sky that was like black water and how only hours before I lost everything, I had lost everything (p 215)

Sr. Thomas Schell also makes some justification to his unborn child about why he is not there with his wife instead living in Dresden. As he states, “I lost a baby, I am so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything, maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it, I had buried too much too deeply inside me. And here I am, instead of there” (p 216). Furthermore, in this letter, many words and lines are encircled with red color, in some cases it is for highlighting the grammatical mistakes such as wrong use of punctuation marks (comma, full stop, hyphen, dash, semicolon, colon and apostrophe etc.) and other parts of speech (wrong use of nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and conjunctions etc.) in the text. The spelling mistakes and capitalization are also encircled for highlighting the mistakes—their incorrect use in the

letter. Some phrases and sentences are encircled with red color for highlighting their importance in the letter and trauma narration.

The grandmother writes another letter to Oskar (Major Letter No. 6) again on the same title of "My Feelings" about narrating the same traumatic story of September 11 attacks, which has already been narrated by Oskar Schell in the first part of the novel. However, in this letter, she combines events from her tragic past with the present traumatic accident of 9/11. She says that for forty years, he (Sr. Thomas Schell) kept on sending empty envelopes but on the day of Jr. Thomas Schell's funeral, for the first time I received his letter containing only two words, i.e. "I'm sorry. He had come back" (p. 233).

Oskar's grandfather writes his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell (See Appendix-B Major Letter No. 7, 166-79) on the day of his death. This time, he again addresses him as "my child." The letter is also temporally distorted, and in some parts, it is in a reverse order. First he discusses about the later events such as his arrival at the house of his wife, and then he narrates about the starting point of his journey from Dresden. Sr. Thomas Schell comes back to his family after forty years. During this time, he struggled not to remember his past life but he could not forget it either as he states, "I rode the elevator up, the door was open, the smell brought back to me what for forty years I had struggled not to remember but couldn't forget" (P. 268). In order to meet his wife, Sr. Thomas Schell writes notes and gives it to the doorman, exchange messages with her, and throwing pebbles at her apartment. However, he seems to avoid meeting her directly but nonetheless, he gets first note from her that "Don't go away" (p. 267). And thus they started their second life together.

At the end of the letter, while addressing his deceased son, Jr Thomas Schell, he narrates him the traumatic story of Oskar. However, it seems as if Sr Thomas Schell wants to express and share almost all of his traumatic memories with his dead son. But he runs out of space, as he states, [“ I want an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time ”] (p 279). Following this, the writing of the letter gets condensed to the extent that it becomes impossible to read, and the last pages are shaded with black color. As he wants to express so many things all at once but even then, he is not sure to convey what he intends to convey. In the last letter of the novel, which Oskar’s grandmother writes to him (Major Letter No 8), she tried to present her retrospection about the past traumatic events of her life in fragmented thoughts.

3.4.3. Minor Letters

A few days after the 9/11 attacks, the protagonist starts writing lots of letters and emails under the traumatic condition of his father’s death in the WTC. The very first letter he writes to Stephen Hawking, in which he requests him that he wants to become his student “Can I please be your protégé?” (p 11) (See Appendix-B Minor Letter No 1, p, 180). However, Oskar Schell does not hope for any response from Stephen Hawking. But one day, he receives a typed letter from him, which was a great news for Oskar. Stephen Hawking, in the letter, expresses his inability to give proper response to the large volume of letters. However, he says that one day he will get time for the deserved response to each letter that he has received. This letter has been displayed four times in the novel (For details see Appendix B Minor Letter No 2, p 180). The same letter appears for the second time in the novel (p 106), which he has received from Stephen Hawking earlier. However, the protagonist, this time, does not mention anything about

the letter in the text, neither before nor after its display. It seems as if he drops this letter out of nowhere and without any logic. The letter is again presented for the third time in the novel (p 200) without any logical connection with the rest of the text. For the last (fourth) time, the same letter from the Hawking's appears (p 242) during the discussion on visiting different houses in the search for the matching lock. This time also, it appears without having mentioned anything about it.

Oskar Schell receives a letter from Stephen Hawking, in which he discusses almost all the matters related to Oskar's previous letters in detail (For details see Appendix-B Minor Letter No. 3, p 180). Hawking also invites Oskar to join him in Cambridge for a few days. He also shares some of his personal thoughts with Oskar and encourages him for having a bright future in science. Furthermore, Hawking discusses the inability of man to understand some of the secrets of the universe as he states, "Albert Einstein, a hero of mine, once wrote, "Our situation is the following. We are standing in front of a closed box which we cannot open"(p 305).

After taking the key as a clue, Oskar calculates the number of days for searching the lock in the New York City. It will take him almost three years to search for the matching lock. But it is almost impossible for him to survive for three years without knowing the whereabouts of the lock. In order to get leave from the French language classes, he writes a letter to his teacher on behalf of his mother. In this letter, he makes an excuse for not attending the classes on Sundays (For details see Appendix B Minor Letter No. 4 p 180-81).

Oskar Schell brings forth another letter in the novel, which he receives from *American Diabetes Foundation* in response to his contribution to the organization. However, Oskar does not co-relate any discussion to the letter, neither before nor after it. This letter is also displayed out of place by the protagonist while referring to Saturday as more depressing for him. He also makes his mind to visit the next Black, who lives in the same building where the protagonist also lives. But during this discussion, out of nowhere the letter appears which makes this part of the novel more fragmented and disorganized (For details see Appendix-B, Minor letter No. 5 p 181)

Moreover, Oskar receives a mail in response to the payment of fare to the cab driver. During the search for the lock, he hires a cab for visiting the house of one of the Blacks. He does not have money to pay, so he promises the cab driver for the payment of the fare. So, in response to the payment, he receives this letter (For details see Appendix-B Minor Letter No. 6 p 181). In most of the cases, Oskar does not mention anything related to the mails, which he has received from various sources. This is another example of such letter, which is displayed in the novel without any explanation (For details see Appendix-B Minor Letter No. 7, p 181). However, Jane Goodwill writes this letter in response to Oskar Schell's letter, in which he invites Oskar for scientific and otherwise explorations.

Oskar also receives a letter from his friend Ringo in response to his letter (For details see Appendix B Minor Letter No. 8 p 181). In this letter, Ringo expresses thanks for Oskar's glorious letter and the bulletproof drumsticks, and he also signs a T-shirt for Oskar. Moreover, another letter appears in the novel about which Oskar says nothing (For details see Appendix-B, Minor Letter No. 9 p 181). However, the letter seems a response to Oskar about his interest in the research and scientific work of Dr. Kaley. It is also

apparent from the letter that Oskar proposed to work with Dr Kaley as an assistant For this purpose, Oskar is guided in the letter to send his resume, transcripts, research experience and two recommendation letters.

3.4.4. Introductory Cards

For the first time, Oskar introduces himself to the limousine's driver when he begins discussion with his grandmother and the driver, while they were on way to the graveyard for the funeral of his father, who was killed in the Twin Towers on September 11 When he asks the driver for his name, in response, he gets the driver's card and in return, he exchanges his own card The driver's card has also been displayed in the novel (For details see Appendix-B Fig 49, p 157) While during the search for the matching lock of the key, which was left by Oskar's father, one day Oskar Schell visits the house of Abby Black After having a long discussion on various topics, Oskar gives his card to her for future contacts This card has also been displayed in the novel (For details see Appendix-B Fig 48, p 157)

Later during the search, Oskar visits Mr Black, who was living in the upper portion of his building He introduces him as a very strange personality Mr Black was born on January 1, 1900 He has been a war correspondent and his apartment is also filled with the stuff, which he collected during wars from different countries Mr Black has also developed a biographical index from his early age This index contains the biographic cards with name and profession of the people, whom he met in his life According to Mr Black, "Everyone gets boiled down to one word!"(p 157) so, the biographical details on the card contain only one word of profession Oskar asks for the card of "Stephen

Hawking”, the old man shows him the card on which “STEPHEN HAWKING ASTROGRAPHICS” was written (For details see Appendix-B Fig 45, p 157) Then Oskar asks, “Do you have a card for yourself?”(p 151) He shows his card (For details see Appendix-B Fig 46, p 157)

Oskar also asks for the card of his father But Mr Black cannot get any card in his record with the name of “Thomas Schell” despite checking it two times Then Oskar asks for the card of “Mohammad Atta ” He shows the card (For details see Appendix-B Fig 44, p 157). After some days, while searching the biographical index for cards in Mr Black’s apartment, Oskar finds the card naming, Oskar Schell It is Oskar’s card, which Mr Black includes in his record with the title of “OSKAR SCHELL SON” (For details see Appendix-B Fig 47, p 157)

3.4.5. Transcription of Voice Messages

Jr Thomas Schell just a few seconds before his death in the World Trade Center sends five voice messages to his family from his mobile phone The voice of the deceased was recorded in the voice box of the telephone Oskar repeatedly listens to the voice messages privately and keeps it as a secret He later transcribes all of the voice messages, including the voice mail of Abby Black These messages are also one of the major sources of traumas for Oskar Schell throughout his journey for searching the lock However, he does not want to share the messages with anyone, especially with his mother Soon after coming back from the school on the worst day, Oskar listens to the messages, though he has failed to pick up the phone It is also this guilt, which makes him traumatized throughout his journey As Oskar states that during listening to these

messages, “You can hear people in the background screaming and crying And you can hear glass breaking, which is part of what makes me wonder if people were jumping” (p 301)

Message one 8 52 A M
Message two 9 12 A M
Message three 9 31 A M
Message four 9 46 A M
Message five 10 04 A M (p 68)

In the very first voice message (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Message one, p 182) of Jr Thomas Schell, who calls from the World Trade Center, asks in a tone of emergency for anybody at home to attend the phone call Jr Thomas Schell also introduces himself as “Its Dad” (p 15), which suggests that Oskar’s father knows about the presence of Oskar, and is also aware of the fact that he (Oskar) may be lacking courage to pick up the phone The voice message shows that Oskar’s father is yet not sure about what has happened outside of the building But he keeps on repeating that he is fine and will soon call again when he gets time

Oskar’s father calls again for the second time (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Message two, p 182) from the WTC, asking for someone to attend the call But this time, it is getting a bit smoky in the building He is hoping for Oskar to be at home, but he is not sure about whether the family knows about the event or not He calls for the third time (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Message three, p 182) from the building but cannot speak more except repeating “hello” for three times

While calling for the fourth time, (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Message four, p 182) he starts speaking as “It’s Dad Thomas Schell It’s Thomas Schell”(p 204)

Now he is under the table, has covered his face with a wet napkin and tells about the people, who are getting crazy and helicopters, which are circling around the building. He also tells that there is some kind of evacuation and “I think we're going to go up onto the roof” (p 204). The fifth attempt, and probably the last voice message, (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Message five, p 182) from Oskar's father shows that he is trapped in the building. This very message is coded in capital letters and having spaces among the letters. It seems that he died after making this last attempt to talk to Oskar.

Later on, Oskar counts that for eleven times his father repeatedly asked in all transcribed messages “Are you there?”(p 301). Oskar hears these last words but is not brave enough to pick up the phone. He states, “Sometimes I think he knew I was there. Maybe he kept saying it to give me time to get brave enough to pick up.”(p 301)

Are you there? Are you there? Are you there? Are you
there? Are you there? Are you there? Are you there? Are
you there? Are you there? Are you there? Are you there?
(p 301)

Later, Oskar reveals the secret of five messages to the husband of Abby Black, which he receives from his father just before his death on September 11. After listening to the messages, the answering machine goes on and he hears his own voice (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Oskar's voice, p 182). One day when there is no one in the room, Oskar presses the message play button of the old phone and starts converting the voice mail of Abby Black into written language (For details see Appendix-B Transcription of Abby Black voice mail, p 182). It is the first time since the worst day that he touches the old phone. Eight months have lapsed since the receipt of the message, as Oskar wandered in the search of the lock. He also transcribes the discussion that was

held between his mother and the psychiatrist after partially listening to them outside of the room. The blank spaces left due to the missing words in the dialogue between the psychiatrist and his mother. The spaces also suggest that he cannot properly hear many words during the discussion due to standing outside of the room's door.

3.4.6. Newspaper Extract

Foer also includes an extract of the newspaper, *The New York Times*, which is also significant to motivate the protagonist to continue his efforts for finding out the matching lock and the owner of the key. Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell, while reading a news story about the hope of a father related to his missing daughter Chandra, uses his red pen for highlighting the mistakes and circling the words "not stop looking" (p. 10).

In fact, Oskar follows the idea of "not stop looking" (p. 10) throughout his journey for searching the matching lock as he continuously hopes that one day he will find the owner of the key. Moreover, he does not consider the highlighted words as a mistake; he rather takes them as an important message from his father to continue the journey. (See Appendix-B: Newspaper extract, p. 184)

3.4.7. Display a Scene of *Hamlet* Play

Oskar Schell also takes part in the performance of *Hamlet*, one of the most famous Shakespearean plays. Moreover, his mother, Ron, and grandmother are also there to watch the play, which makes him more special. A lot of blacks are also there to whom Oskar has met during his search for the matching lock in the New York City. The extract of the play has also been displayed in the novel. (For details see Appendix-B: A modified

scene of *Hamlet Play*, p.183) Oskar is also depressed and acting crazy like that of Prince Hamlet due the tragic death of his father and her mother's indifferent behavior towards him in the after-days of 9/11 attacks. He also reacts against the friendship of his mother with Ron soon after the death of his father as Oskar says, "I asked her if she was in love with Ron"(p 35), but instead of saying yes or no, she says, "Ron is a great person,"(p 35). Oskar also criticizes his mother's behaviors of playing scrabble and board games with Ron, spending most of her time with him, laughing too much, looking into the mirror, and listening loud music as he says, "It wasn't fair to Dad, and it wasn't fair to me"(p 35).

CHAPTER 4

TECHNIQUE AND TRAUMA IN *FALLING MAN*

4.1. Circular Narrative Techniques

The *Falling Man*, a 246-page novel ends exactly where it begins. The whole novel revolves around the tragic event of September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre (WTC). The story begins just after the collapse of the Twin Towers. In other words, the first chapter of the novel presents the post-collapse scene of the Towers while the last chapter presents the pre-collapse scene. The writer keeps on moving around the tragic event throughout the novel. The protagonist of the novel, Keith Neudecker, who was working as a lawyer in the North Tower, is one of the survivors of the attacks.

Like any other postmodern novel, the protagonist has been introduced in very casual terms as a third person pronoun "He" without properly naming him as DeLillo in most cases avoids naming out the characters in general and the name of the protagonist in particular. The novel opens with a chaotic situation after the fall of the Twin Towers on September 11. The survivors are running and falling in rubbles and holding towels to their faces for avoiding heat and dust. The debris of the towers are still falling, people are confusedly running and taking shelter under the cars. The protagonist is facing an emergency like situation where the world is shown on the verge of collapse as DeLillo states, "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (p 3). He comes out of the debris of the WTC, having signs of blood and wounds on his face and other parts of the body. There are also some broken pieces of glasses in

his hair and face while holding a briefcase in his hand and walking through the rubbles of the building, finding his way but having no idea about his destination

He was walking north through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands, a woman with shoes in each hand, running past him. They ran and fell, some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down around them, and there were people taking shelters under cars" (p. 3)

Keith Neudecker also watches the falling figures, dropping into free space from the windows thousand feet up, a man sitting on the sidewalk coughing up blood, the discarded shoes, handbags, and laptops, veering of police vans and sounds of sirens. DeLillo also depicts a very deserted scene of the surrounding area of the building after the collapse of the Towers. Adam Begley (2007) states in *The New York Observer*, "The new novel is about falling -- falling through space, through time, through memory, being tugged down or forward or back -- and about how some of us try to slow or speed the motion () (B)eautifully crafted, endlessly quotable "

The last chapter of the *Falling Man* presents the scene of the Towers just a few moments before their fall on the fateful day. DeLillo makes an attempt to describe the pre-collapse and during the collapse scenes from the inside of the building in this chapter. The survivor of 9/11 attacks and the protagonist, Keith Neudecker, has faced the terrible moments when the hijacked aircraft crashed into the building.

A bottle fell off the counter in the galley, on the other side of the aisle, and he watched it roll this way and that, a water bottle, empty, making an arc one way and rolling back the other, and he watched it spin more quickly and then skitter across the floor an instant before the aircraft struck the tower, heat, then fuel, then fire, and a blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall. He found himself walking into a wall. He didn't drop the telephone until he hit the wall. The floor began to slide beneath him and he lost his balance and eased along the wall to the floor (p. 239)

After the collapse of the Towers, the survivors come out to the streets from the debris and start looking at the chaotic scenes, with destruction all around. Soon after, they start running here and there without any direction as if their minds are spinning under the effects of the tragic accident. The last pages of the novel show the beginning of the novel. This is how the whole novel revolves around the accident of 9/11. After looking into the burning towers, the survivors start running here and there. The same falling figures from the building, the running and falling of the survivors, smoke, ashes, discarded shoes, deserted streets, falling away street signs and smashed matter are described. Moreover, in the last two sentences of the novel, the falling shirt from the building symbolically manifests the emptiness of life. "Then he saw a shirt come down out of the sky. He walked and saw it fall, arms waving like nothing in this life" (p. 246). The waving arms of the shirt may also mean the meaninglessness of life after the tragic event.

4.1.2. Non-linear Narratives, Fragmentation and Temporal Distortion

The chapters of *Falling Man* are not logically connected as each one of them seems to present a separate story. DeLillo tends to employ the technique of jump-cut transition among the different scenes. By mixing past and present, he develops an

achronological narrative. The whole text is found temporally distorted and structurally disjointed as the time overlaps from present to past and from past to future during the course of narrating various traumas of the survivors. According to Sonia Baelo-Allué (2012), "Psychic trauma is anti-narrative since victims cannot put into words what happened to them", and "the literary techniques that tend to recur in trauma narratives mirror, at a formal level, the effects of trauma and include intertextuality, repetition and fragmentation" (p 66, 69). The voices of the narrators make overlapping while describing the event of 9/11 from their own perspectives.

The use of vague pronouns and elliptical construct of conversation also demand more participation of the readers to understand the novel. Like any other postmodern writer, DeLillo begins the direct narration of the events without giving any background knowledge to the readers. In most of the cases, he even avoids to name out the characters. He rather prefers to use "third person pronouns" for them. The disjointed sentences and paragraphs tend to show the self-reflections of the characters without having any coherence or organization.

[He heard the voice in his headset saying that the next sequence of noise would last seven minutes

She saw the face in the newspaper, the man from Flight 11 driver's license

She got a call from Carol Shoup, an executive editor with a large who edited books freelance, working usually at home or in the library] (p 19)

The text also contains a number of unusual spaces among the paragraphs and the sentences, and as a result, it seems as if the fragmented thoughts are scattered on the blank pages without having any logical connection in major part of the novel. Most of the

paragraphs and sentences are disoriented, which tend to present separate thoughts without showing any connection or organization. As Rosellen, a character of the novel, forgets even about the place where she had been living, and in such a situation, for her, as Prete(2005) argues, the language seems to “collapse into a heap of obscure, impenetrable, merely juxtaposed fragments” (p 495), “*Do we say goodbye, yes, going, am going, will be going, the last time go. will go*” (p 156). The language that Roselle uses, also fails to follow the logic of linear narrative – that is from past to present and from present to future. Cathy Caruth (1996) argues that the wound, which is inflicted upon the mind of the victim(s) due to the psychic trauma, breaks the experience of time, self and world, besides creating an emotional anguish in the individual (p 3-4). Rosellen under the traumatic past loses her memory, personality and identity as she becomes “less combative over time, less clearly defined, speech beginning to drag” (p 125).

The narration of the story is also found temporally distorted and fragmented as the events that took place first, described later and vice versa as Sonia Baelo-Allué (2012) states, “The traumatic event cannot be assimilated into a coherently organised narrative of the past” (p 74). First DeLillo describes the after-collapse scene of the WTC and later the pre-collapse scene of the building. DeLillo in the very first chapter of the novel describes the scene of collapsed building of the Twin Towers, fallings figures, rubbles and ashes while focusing on the protagonist who survives the attacks of September 11. The second chapter describes the arrival of Neudecker at the apartment of his estranged wife, who is living with her son and mother and the way he is taken to hospital for medical treatment. However, again Lianne refers to his arrival in chapter six when Keith Neudecker appears in the doorway of the apartment soon after the attacks. his appearance is in fact so

shocking for Lianne, that she does not even know the exact medical term to describe his situation

4.1.3. Looking Inward and Self-consciousness of Characters

On one hand, the 9/11 causes thousands of deaths and on the other it leaves thousands to mourn over. In the after-days, most of the survivors suffer from the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). DeLillo, however, in most cases turns the inside out of the survivors and shows the psychological traumas caused by the major traumatic accident and others experienced by some characters due to minor and domestic traumatic events. He also exposes the psychological damage and consequently the kind of sufferings the characters are being faced with in the after-days of September 11. Actually, the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening with the passage of time in the days following the attacks.

It was Keith as well who was going slow, easing inward. He used to want to fly out of self-awareness, day and night, a body in raw motion. Now he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience. (p. 66)

Keith cannot get out the image of a man from his mind, who was flinging from one of the broken windows on the fateful-day. The author also shows different ways to deal with the issue of psychological trauma – the characters either change their lives or start participating in different activities in order to avoid the effects of trauma. DeLillo usually speaks from the mind of the characters as Thurschwell (2007) states that most of the characters in DeLillo's recent novels "Hear their own words repeated back to them before they are spoken." (p. 278-79)

Lianne, while conducting storyline sessions for the Alzheimer patients, asks the patients to write about their experiences of traumas. However, this practice brings her a kind of unwariness and memories of the tragic death of her father. She also thinks on the way about Rosellen S. while looking at the list of the names and the activities displayed on the sign board of the temple. She also remembers the conversation, when Rosellen tells Dr. Apter that she could not remember the place where she had been living. "This was an occasion that haunted Lianne, the breathless moment when things fall away, streets, names, all sense of direction and location, every fixed grid of memory"(156). Lianne also gets an understanding about the presence of Rosellen in the street. She thinks that Rosellen is here for taking refuge and assistance in the temple naming hallelujah shout. She also thinks about the last storyline session where Rosellen expresses the lack of security, protection and comments on the miserable condition of the survivors such as [" even even the deepest moan may not be grief but only moan"] (p 156)

4.2. Multiple Narratives/Multiple Perspectives and 9/11

The *Falling Man* has also described the event of 9/11 from multiple perspectives. The narrators of the event may be broadly divided into two categories – the first category includes those, who directly experienced the attacks and then describe it as survivors from their own perspectives and the second consists of those, who were either eye-witnesses or describe the attacks from the perspective of media. However, the traumatic and psychic responses of those, who directly experienced the 9/11 attacks, either from outside or inside of the Towers, were different from those, who had watched it on TV (Baelo-Allué, 2012, p 64)

In the first category, survivors Keith Neudecker and Florence Givens are included, who after experiencing the attacks describe them. Firstly, it is from the perspective of Keith Neudecker, survivor-narrator, that the event of falling Towers has been described, both from inside and outside of the building. Later, the accident has also been described from the perspective of Florence Given, another survivor-narrator. The second category includes Lianne Glenn, Justin and the Siblings – Katie and Robert, who are either eye-witnesses of the 9/11 attacks or describe it from the perspectives of media images. Sonia Baelo-Allué (2012) states that DeLillo in *Falling Man* highlights the chaotic aspects of trauma through shifts in time and memory, besides employing a number of voices, shifting viewpoints, repetitions, visual images, textual gaps and subject positioning, which makes the reader more disoriented (p. 69-70).

4.2.1. Keith Neudecker

DeLillo first narrates the accident of September 11 attacks from the perspective of Keith as a third person narrator of the story. He experiences the trauma of the attacks and later lives in the same tragic memory as a survivor. While sharing the trauma of 9/11 attacks with another survivor Florence Givens, a light-skinned black woman (who escaped from the North Tower), Keith said that when the first plane hit the Tower, he thought it was an accident. And later on, even in the after-days of the event, he was thinking that it was an accident like a camera showing surprise. But it was only the first plane, however, “The second plane, by the time the second plane appears,” he said, “we’re all a little older and wiser”(135). It was the strike of the second plane which made him realize that it was not an accident but rather a planned attack.

He saw the smoke. He drove east a ways and looked again and there was only one tower. One tower made no sense. Then he turned uptown because that's where he was going and finally he saw me and picked me up. By this time the second tower was gone (p 21)

Keith also describes the post-collapse scene of the WTC as a survivor-protagonist of the 9/11 attacks. As after coming out of the rubbles, Keith is shocked to look at one Tower and found the other missing. The second Tower is no more there while one Tower does not make any sense to him. Keith later describes the pre-collapse scene when he is inside the Tower and thus the story revolves around the accident.

4.2.2. Florence Givens

DeLillo also narrates the same story of falling Towers from the perspective of another narrator and survivor of the attacks, Florence Givens. When Keith visits her, she recalls the scene of falling Towers and her traumatic experiences during the accident. She kept on talking about the traumatic memories of the tragic event and Neudecker does not want to interrupt her, "an hour later they were still talking" (p 54). In fact, she wants to share every bit of information that she experienced in the burning Towers, "she wanted to tell him everything" (p.55). Florence Givens seems terrified and has become unable to think clearly in the after-effects of 9/11 as a survivor, "she was dazed and had no sense of time" (p 55). She also behaves like a psychologically imbalanced patient while recalling the incident of September 11.

She went through it slowly remembering as she spoke, often pausing to look into space, to see things again, the collapsed ceilings and blocked stairwells, the smoke, always, and the fallen wall, the drywall, and she paused to search for the word and he waited, watching (p 55)

Moreover, while sharing almost everything related to the incident, especially about the burning figure of a woman in the Tower. However, it becomes undistinguishable for her whether she saw her burning or someone told her about the woman. In addition, the traumatic memories visit her over and over and she tends to experience the same event of burning Towers again and again as she states, "I feel like I'm still on the stairs. I wanted my mother. If I live to be a hundred I'll still be on the stairs" (p 57) Florence Givens, while sharing the memories of the traumatic accident with Keith Neudecker, describes the details so precisely that he finds himself in the same crowd of the attacks, "she was going through it again and he was ready to listen again. He listened carefully, noting every detail, trying to find himself in the crowd"(p 59). She also describes and narrates the exact scene of the aircraft when it thrashed into the building of the Twin Towers

This was different, a clear sky that carried human terror in those streaking aircraft, first one, then the other, the force of men's intent. He watched with her. Every helpless desperation set against the sky, human voices crying to God and how awful to imagine this, God's name on the tongues of killers and victims both, first one plane and then the other, the one that was nearly cartoon human, with flashing eyes and teeth, the second plane, the south tower(p 134)

For Florence Givens, it is also terrible to imagine the tragic event and the killing of both the victims and attackers. It is also very strange for her to see that both the victims and killers are asking for God's help. It is also evident from her description that how helpless is human in face of such a traumatic accident.

4.2.3. Lianne Glenn

The event of September 11 attacks has also been described from the perspective of Keith Neudecker's wife, Lianne Glenn. She is standing by the window and becomes an

eyewitness of the falling building on that day “Watching those buildings fall ” “First one, then the other” (p 11) Furthermore, she also thinks soon after the event that “When this happened ” “I know ” “I thought he was dead” (p 11)

Almost all the minor characters of the *Falling Man* are also affected by the 9/11 attacks It becomes more evident during the storyline sessions of Lianne, which she used to conduct for the Alzheimer patients and other traumatized individuals For all of them, one subject becomes more prominent and that is the subject of thrashing planes into the WTC building All the patients want to write the description of the attacks “There was one subject the members wanted to write about, insistently, all of them but Omar H It made Omar nervous but he agreed in the end They wanted to write about the planes” (p 31)

4.2.4. The Siblings and Justin

The scene of collapsed Towers has also been described from the perspective of Isabel’s daughter, Katie, who while standing in the window on September 11 becomes another eye-witness of the event “Katie claims she saw the plane that hit Tower One She says she was home from school, sick, standing at the window when the plane flew by”(p 71)

In addition to that, Justin and his two best friends Katie and Robert, Isabel’s kids, whom Lianna also called the Siblings, are usually standing at the window of Katie’s room and searching the sky for more planes day and night and most probably they are “waiting for it to happen again”(p 72) Moreover, they are also whispering and talking in codes about the mythical figure of bin Laden as “Bill Lawton ”Lianne when asks from Justin about the attacks, he states, “The towers did not collapse”(p 72)

4.3. Depiction of Trauma and Terror in *Falling Man*

DeLillo presents the unrepresentable trauma of 9/11 through the experience of his major character and survivor, Keith Neudecker, and later its after-effects on his psyche and relations. Thirty-nine year old Keith Neudecker has been working as a lawyer in the North Tower for a decade which collapsed at 9:59 a.m., while the South Tower collapsed at 10:28 a.m. due to the terrorist attack on the WTC on September 11. While walking in the rubbles of the collapsed building as a survivor, he confusedly makes efforts to find a way out in the chaotic situation. However, he suddenly stops walking after realizing that he cannot move any more. "It hit him quickly, the knowledge that he couldn't go any farther" (p. 5).

Moreover, under the effects of extreme traumatic situation, soon after the fall of the building, he keeps on ensuring that he is alive. However, this very idea is no more meaningful to him as "He tried to tell himself he was alive but the idea was too obscure to take hold" (p. 6). "In a traumatic crisis, DeLillo suggests, the body knows about the truth of an experience long before the mind can process it" (Laura Di Prete, 2005, p. 501). The protagonist is not aware of his location and direction until he is taken by a truck driver from the rubbles of the building. Instead of going to hospital, Neudecker visits the nearest apartment of his estranged wife, Lianne Glenn, who is living with her son, Justin, and her mother, Nina Bartos. Lianne refers to his arrival when he appears in the doorway of the apartment soon after the attacks, his appearance is in fact so shocking for Lianne that she does not even know the exact medical term that can describe his situation. "When he appeared at the door it was not possible, a man come out of an ash storm, all blood and slag, reeking of burnt matter, with pinpoint glints of slivered glass in his

face”(p 87) Neudecker appears in the doorway of the apartment in a traumatic condition while holding a briefcase in his hand about which he does not know why he has taken it out of the building. He carries numerous marks of wounds as a survivor, who comes out of the debris of the North Tower as Lianne describes the scene of his arrival to her mother

It was not possible, up from the dead, there he was in the doorway. It's so lucky Justin was there with you. Because it would have been awful for him to see his father like that. Like gray soot head to toe, I don't know, like smoke, standing there, with blood on his face and clothes”
(p 8)

One of Keith's best friends, Rumsey died in his arms in the falling building and actually the marks of blood on his clothes that his wife notices on his arrival, also come from his body. After making close observation of his wounds, Lianne realizes that the cuts and abrasions on his body does not seem that much severe which can cause this much blood. She states, “It was not his blood. Most of it came from somebody else”(p 88). Lianne accompanies Neudecker to the hospital where they come across a number of other survivors of the attacks. The doctors are busy in checking for various reactions of the injuries and other possible effects caused by the accident. The volunteers, doctors and relatives of the victims are also affected by the trauma caused by the attacks. DeLillo makes its manifestation when Neudecker is taken to the hospital.

The person, who helps Neudecker in extracting small fragments of glasses from his face, is also affected by the trauma of the event as he keeps on talking and cannot stop it. The survivors of the attacks again visit the ruins of the Towers while the doctors are waiting for them to come for their medical checkup. Neudecker also develops the habit of talking more than usual after experiencing the trauma as Lianne states, “He didn't seem to sleep

He lay on his bed and talked but mostly listened and this was alright” (p 18) The survivors are also expected to develop different psychological complexities such as PTSD and many others long after the incident. Furthermore, the traumatic effects of such tragic events are usually considered long-lasting, which may not be healed the way other physical injuries are healed.

“In those places where it happens, the survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of a better term, and it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber’s body. The bomber is blown to bits, literally bits and pieces, and fragments of flesh and bone come flying outward with such force and velocity that they get wedged, they get trapped in the body of anyone who’s in striking range. Do you believe it? A student is sitting in a cafe. She survives the attack. Then, months later, they find these little, like, pellets of flesh, human flesh that got driven into the skin. They call this organic shrapnel.”(p 16)

But nonetheless, physical injuries are also severe and having longer physical effects on the victims as DeLillo describes the effects and after-effects of the attacks on the survivors. Usually, due to lack of care, months later, the survivors develop various physical issues along with psychological complexities.

4.3.1. Depiction of Post-9/11 Scenario and a Looming Fear

The *Falling Man* actually depicts the terror caused by the accident in the days followed by it. The survivors and those, who witness the accident directly or through media, tend to apprehend the possibility of similar attacks in future as well. Keith Neudecker’s son, Justin, and his two friends have also been terrified by the attacks and consequently in the days after it. Justin’s friends are a brother and a sister. Lianne cannot remember their names, so she calls them Siblings. The kids usually stand at the corner, talking and whispering in some kind of coded language. Sometimes, they stand at the

window of Katie's room for sky watching and searching planes. Lianne asks the kids about name of the person they usually talk about. In response, they are more scared, confused, and avoid sharing the name. "Is he still out there, somewhere, making you search the skies? The man whose name maybe we all know even if some of us are not supposed to know" (p 152-53). Lianne asks the kids to stop searching the planes and avoid talking about that man. Moreover, the images of attacks still return in the form of flashes to the victims, survivors and those, who witness the accident. Lianne, while coming down in the elevator from the twenty-seventh floor, all the way down, she only thinks about the mythical figure:

She was ready to leave, that's why, and all the way down on the elevator, twenty-seventh floor to lobby, she thought of the mythical figure who'd said the planes were coming back, the man whose name they all knew. But she'd forgotten it.(p 153)

The *Falling Man* also represents the sense of uncertainty and insecurity of the New Yorkers in days following the accident. The common people tend to fail in rationalizing the 9/11 event, besides having no idea about their enemies. Martin makes argument with Nina, stating that "First they kill you, then you try to understand them. Maybe, eventually, you'll learn their names. But they have to kill you first" (p 113).

4.3.2. Traumatic Memories of 9/11 and Survivors

In one way or the other, most of the characters of *Falling Man* are haunted by the tragic memories of their past experiences. Keith, the protagonist survivor, is haunted by the tragic memories of his crushed and burnt friends, destruction, falling buildings and bodies, and the ever-present image of death in his mind. The images of the attacks, time and again, visit the survivors in the form of flashes as Florence Givens, while suffering

from the tragic memories of 9/11, lives in the shades of terror Lianne seems preoccupied with the tragic memories of her father's death for the last 19 years She also suffers from the trauma of 9/11 as an eye-witness, which is further increased by the after-effects of the attacks on her husband In addition to that, Lianne's psychological trauma has also been triggered by the traumatic stories of the Alzheimer patients in the storyline sessions The traumatic memories of various tragic events also visit the Alzheimer patients in different forms, which they have expressed while holding storyline sessions of writing with Lianne

Neudecker is in the hospital for the diagnosis of psychological trauma as the memories of the 9/11 tragic event make him disturbed DeLillo also makes manifestation of the fact that the memories of the traumatic incident frequently hunt the survivors in the form of images in the after-days The doctors use substance containing memory suppressant for Neudecker during his diagnosis but due to its ineffectiveness, he thinks about Rumsey (a friend of Neudecker, who was burnt in the North Tower) and whose image instantly appears in smoke of the burning building with falling objects before him while he is partially conscious DeLillo here tends to expose the inner psychological condition of the survivor and the way he is suffering under the effects of the trauma

On the table he thought of his buddy Rumsey, briefly, just before or after he lost sensation The doctor, the anesthetist, injected him with a heavy sedative or other agent, a substance containing a memory suppressant, or maybe there were two shots, but there was Rumsey in his chair by the window, which meant the memory was not suppressed or the substance hadn't taken effect yet, a dream a waking image, whatever it was, Rumsey in the smoke, things coming down (p 22)

Neudecker visits the collapsed building of twin towers after the tragic event in order to feed the cats, which were left in the apartment. But before proceeding to the apartment, he stands for a while at the National Rent-A-Fence barrier and sees “the dead were everywhere, in the air, in the rubble, on rooftops nearby, in the breezes that carried from the river. They were settled in ash and drizzled on windows all along the streets, in his hair and on his clothes” (p 25). Later he finds no cat there in the apartment and starts collecting some of the required objects such as trousers, shirts, boots, checkbooks, passport, birth certificate and papers of identity in a single briefcase. But when he looks at the poker table, he feels that “he wouldn’t need the table, two players dead, one badly injured” (p 27). Furthermore, Lianne one night asks Neudecker about his lost friends such as Rumsey, Hovanand and the other, whose name she has forgotten, badly burned on September 11. In response, Neudecker tells her about their qualities, personalities, children, married and single life, which she does not want to listen anymore.

Lianne Glenn is also haunted by the traumatic memory of her father’s mysterious death. Her father, Jack Glenn, fails to cope with senile dementia (a serious mental disorder in old people that causes loss of memory and loss of control over the body) and as a result, he commits suicide. This accident happens when she was twenty-two but she does not want to collect the detail about the event. Moreover, Lianne still attached to the deepest memories of the tragic death of her father, who shot himself dead. After passing 19-year of his death, she lives in the deep shadow of his memories, which she also remembers periodically and refers to the same tragic accident as “Died by his own hand” (p 169).

Jack Glenn, her father, did not want to submit to the long course of senile dementia. He made a couple of phone calls from his cabin in northern New Hampshire and then used an old sporting rifle to kill himself (p 40)

Lianne remembers the two words of her father once he told her that [“The shorter the barrel, the stronger the muzzle blast” (p 41)] “The force of that term, *muzzle blast*, carried through the years” (p 41). Throughout the years, she remembers the two words, which in fact finally becomes the cause of his death. The effects of the trauma has become too much deep rooted in the survivors as in the case of Florence Givens, a survivor of September 11, it becomes a lifetime memory which haunts her time and again. While sharing her traumatic memories of the event with Neudecker, she states, “I feel like I’m still on the stairs. I wanted my mother. If I live to be a hundred I’ll still be on the stairs” (p 57).

The traumatic memories quite often visit the survivors in different forms. They either visit the ruins of the building or refer to the same incident through which they have undergone. They again and again experience the effects of the same tragic accident. While listening to Florence Givens, who shares the memories of the 9/11, Neudecker finds himself in the same crowd of the incident. “She was going through it again and he was ready to listen again. He listened carefully, noting every detail, trying to find himself in the crowd”(59). The memories of Lianne’s patients are depicted as the “living breath” of trauma and tragedy throughout the novel.

Other than the major traumatic accident of September 11, most of the characters also face some minor traumas of domestic accidents and their tragic memories. Florence Givens, also the owner of the briefcase, suffers from the traumatic memories of her past life. The

short period of her married life left its deep marks on her personality. A few months after the marriage, her husband died in a car crash for which her mother-in-law blamed her. Moreover, throughout the novel, she carries the traumatic memories of lifelong loss and injuries, however, sometimes her laughter makes her able to escape momentarily from her worries.

There was an element in Florence that was always close to some emotional distress, a memory of bearing injury or sustaining loss, possibly lifelong, and the laughter was a kind of shedding, a physical deliverance from old woe, dead skin, if only for a moment (p 90)

Furthermore, Florence sometimes makes a monologue –“She was talking to the room, to herself, she thought, talking back in time to some version of herself, a person who might confirm the grim familiarity of the moment” (p 91). She also wants to express her feelings in the exact possible words.

4.3.3. Post-9/11 Activities and PTSD

Keith, as a survivor of the attacks, is frequently haunted by the tragic thoughts of 9/11. In the after-days of September 11, he wants to engage in different activities in order to avoid the thinking of the accident. Once while looking at the waterfall, he seems to concentrate on the falling water and “this was better than closing his eyes. If he closed his eyes, he’d see something” (p 205). After experiencing the tragedy of September 11 attacks and other severe traumas, the victims and survivors usually get together in East Harlem for making certain activities in order to heal their psychological wounds. Lianne Glenn, who is also depicted as a traumatized character in the novel, plays an important role in conducting various exercises for the trauma affected individuals. Both Lianne Glenn and

Keith Neudecker show commitment to their concerned groups and related activities in the post-9/11 scenario

Keith is usually busy in playing poker games and Lianne is conducting storyline sessions for Alzheimer's patients. She suggests certain topics to the patients to write about the events of their past life. After writing their reflections for twenty minutes, they read their stories loudly and share their experiences of failures, traumas and other serious segments of life, which sometimes scare Lianne and other members of the group. The character of Rosellen S. has been depicted as someone, who always feels alone and separated. She also has the deepest fears of her childhood memories. It makes her more disturbed that she does not remember from where she comes. She seems all the time surrounded by distance and silence. Moreover, while reflecting upon her life, she describes the traumatic scene of her father, who comes home after four years of disappearance. She was ten-year-old when this happened to her father. Rosellen writes this episode with vivid physical description from her memories without making any connection between the sentences and paragraphs.

[He was bearded now, head shaved, one arm missing. She was ten when this happened and she described the event in a run-on convergence, an intimacy of clean physical detail and dreamy reminiscence that had no seeming connection (p 30)]

There is one subject, which is more prominent about which every member of the session is curious to write about. It is the event of thrashing planes into the building of WTC, which has traumatized them to the extent that at the end, all of them agree for writing its description. Lianne, while talking in kitchen with Martin Ridnour about the current issues, says that poetry due to the beauty of its language is also read as a source of comfort for

psychological healing and soothing effects. However, she instead reads newspapers, which makes her more angry and crazy.

Moreover, in the after-effects of the attacks, the New Yorkers become more sensitive and critical towards many things. They look to many things with an eye of suspicion. For example, Lianne gets disturbed while listening to the loud music of Arabic songs played by Elena, who lives next to Lianne's apartment. Elena listens to loud music day and night and confesses that it gives her peace of mind. But she ignores the awakening sensitive nature of the New Yorkers in the days after September 11. Lianne criticizes the loud music under the circumstances the New York is passing through and says, "The whole city is ultrasensitive right now" (120). In her medical reports, Lianne at the age of forty-one is normal for her age except that she is suffering from some memory lapses, which run in her family blood line.

4.3.4. Trauma, Psychotherapy and Physiotherapy

Most of the characters of *Falling Man* undergo through a number of medical tests, psychotherapy and physical exercises in the days following the attacks of September 11. Keith as a survivor suffers both physically and psychologically in the aftermath of the accident. In order to recover from both physical injuries and mental agony, he has undergone through a number of physical exercises and psychological treatment. The survivors of 9/11 also take part in physical exercises for their physical therapy, and for this purpose, they also join fitness centers. Keith, while standing in the fitness center, observes a number of other people, who are here for physical exercises in the after-days of September 11. He knows most of them, and this aspect gives him the feelings of

kinship and trust. However, Keith needs serious gym work if he wants to join back his job. In order to avoid any physical problem in the future, he has to follow a disciplined life of physical exercises.

Keith also follows the instruction sheet of rehabilitation center for physical therapy and while usually sitting alongside the table, he repeats the exercise four times a day. He finds these exercises restorative for his health. "These were the true countermeasures to the damage he'd suffered in the tower, in the descending chaos" (p. 40). He continuously consults therapists for getting guidance from them about the physical exercises.

There were the dead and maimed. His injury was slight but it wasn't the torn cartilage that was the subject of this effort. It was the chaos, the levitation of ceilings and floors, the voices choking in smoke. He did not adjust his splint without consulting the therapist (p. 40).

Keith daily takes part in physical exercises as he has developed some problems in wrist and some other bones in the days following the accident. He closely follows the instruction sheet for various exercises, applying pressure on the hand and repeating it for several times every day. He usually comes across a number of other survivors of the attacks having busy in various flexing exercises for physical fitness. Once he hardly recognizes Terry Cheng carrying out different physical exercises.

He placed his left forearm along the near edge of the table, hand dangling from the adjoining edge. This was the tenth day of twice-a-day, the wrist extensions, the ulnar deviations. He counted the days, the times per day (p. 235, 36).

Keith repeats the restorative physical exercises several times a day, besides counting their numbers. He considers these exercises more helpful for his health than MRI and surgery.

Keith does not only suffer from the physical injuries of 9/11, rather he also suffers from the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the days after the attacks as Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (1995) argue that the survivors of personal traumatic experiences are usually suffering from the PTSD in the form of delayed response of repeated hallucinations, nightmares, flashbacks, somatic reactions, behaviours stemming from the event and general numbing (p 173) It is the haunting memories of falling building, smoke, and choking voices that make his life almost unbearable

4.3.5. Sharing Experiences of Trauma

Keith picks a briefcase unintentionally (he did not know why he had taken it from the building) from the rubbles of the collapsed building of twin towers on September 11. He later finds the owner of the briefcase, Florence Givens, one of the survivors of the attacks. Both Keith and Florence survive the tragic event and hence they start sharing their traumatic memories and develop friendship. Florence also considers Keith as the one, who saves her life as she barely left with any friend after the 9/11. She also keeps on sharing the whole traumatic experience of the incident and its after-effects. Initially, soon after the attacks, she loses the very hope and meaning of her existences. She neither wants to see people nor wants to talk to anyone as she has been passing through a terrible stage of life, wakening at the middle of the nights and dialing contacts number of her missing friends. Florence also claims that Keith takes the briefcase from the building and brings it to her. And now it is Keith, who keeps her alive.

"I can't explain it but no, you saved my life After what happened, so many gone, friends gone, people I worked with, I was nearly gone, nearly dead, in another way I couldn't see people, talk to people, go from here to there without forcing myself up off the chair Then you walked in the door I kept calling the number of a friend, missing, she's one of the photographs on the walls and windows everywhere, Davia, officially missing, I can barely say her name, in the middle of the night, dial the number, let it ring I was afraid, in the daytime, other people would be there to pick up the phone, somebody who knew something I didn't want to hear Then you walked in the door You ask yourself why you took the briefcase out of the building That's why So you could bring it here So we could get to know each other That's why you took it and that's why you brought it here, to keep me alive"(p 108-9)

Keith develops a desultory relationship with Florence Givens on the basis of having shared experience of the same traumatic accident, "The timeless drift of the long spiral down" (137) in the post-9/11 scenario Prete (2005), while referring to the essay "*Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling,*" where Roberta Culbertson argues that the traumatized individual (s) usually share the story of their traumas for establishing relationship with the world However, in order to avoid the problematic task of telling the story in words, usually the trauma story is told in depicting the body He wants to disclose the perilous truth to Lianne and imagines her possible reactions He also wants to justify the relations on the grounds of having similar experience of the same traumatic event of September 11 The relation has an uncommon nature with its roots in fire and smoke of the collapsed building The survivors of the attacks, Keith and Florence, develop a kind of reciprocal relations of love and trust after sharing their traumatic stories of the accident Keith imagines that this relation may either become a cause of suffering for Lianne or she may kill him Moreover, Keith thinks that this relation may not be called an affair in that sense as it lacks romance and the sex is also generated by the

external conditions, which of course he fails to control. He also justifies the relations with Florence on the grounds of its crucial circumstances and the brevity of its happening.

4.3.6. Trauma, Language and Communication

After experiencing the traumatic incident of September 11, Keith Neudecker as a survivor fails to give meaning to anything. Sometimes in the after-days, he momentarily feels meaninglessness about almost everything. Even very simple words and objects, that he comes across, lack meaning for him. "What has happened to the meaning of things, to tree, street, stone, wind, simple words lost in the falling ash" (p 103). The burning Towers and falling ash has made Keith unable to give meaning to anything and hence this perception makes his life more unbearable. Barthes argues, "Trauma is just what suspends language and blocks signification" (1985, p 19).

Keith spends most of his time for taking various exercises of physical therapy in the after-days of September 11 for the recovery of his health. He once again starts his normal routine life and time and again he feels an urge to express something. However, he does not have words to express how he spends the after-days and nights. It seems on one hand that he does not have any language to express the traumatic feelings that he has undergone on the fateful day of September 11. On the other, he cannot express the traumatic feelings that he is passing through the tragic memories in the days following the accident. Keith in this regard manifests the inability of language as a source of communication in face of such a traumatic event.

He was also going home periodically, three or four days, love, sex, fatherhood, home-cooked food, but was lost at times for something to say. There was no language, it seemed, to tell them how he spent his days and nights (p 197)

It is not long before the separation that Keith always uses to be on the verge to express something in the form of sentence fragments, which may possibly put an end to everything, including the lingering drifts of love between him and his wife. But, however, it almost seems impossible for Keith to express such feelings with the help of language as a source of communication. "But he did not put into words whatever it was that lay there, something so surely and recklessly cruel that it scared her, spoken or not" (p 103-4). Moreover, other than language as a medium of communication, DeLillo also employs a number of other creative and artistic techniques in order to capture the effects of the traumatic accident of September 11. The bodily representation of the performance artist, David Janiak, the description of his photographs and falling man in the print and electronic media, the post-9/11 activities of the major characters, the description of painting and the trauma narration in the storyline session, the stillness of the time and calmness of the faces of some characters etc. are all the various techniques that are employed for the depiction of trauma where language fails to communicate its effects on the survivors. "What one sees in the photograph (a living body, the exertion of life) and what one now knows to be true (the subsequent death) makes linguistic categorization deeply problematic" (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p 91).

In addition, the language that Rosellen writes in the last sessions with Lianne there she develops the extended version of a single word, which manifests that it is almost impossible for her to express her feelings under the extreme traumatic effects. As a result,

she forgets even about the place where she has been living, and in such a situation, for her, as Prete (2005) argues, the language seems to “collapse into a heap of obscure, impenetrable, merely juxtaposed fragments” (p 495) “*Do we say goodbye, yes, going, am going, will be going, the last time go, will go*” (p 156) The language that Rosellen uses also fails to follow the logic of linear narrative – that is from past to present and from present to future

4.3.7. Trauma, Silence and Unintended Actions

For Keith, trauma becomes eternalized outside of the boundary of time. He refers to the eternity of trauma with reference to the character of Florence Givens – another survivor of the attacks in the form of her bodily depiction and stillness of her face. Keith while taking exercise in the park after having a meeting with Florence, he tends to avoid thinking about her – especially the last half hour when she was “Talking into her silence” (157). Keith is also usually talking in silence in the days following the accident. “He was speaking into the breeze, not quite to Justin”(p 157)

Similarly, Florence Givens also likes the calmness in Keith’s personality. And she is grateful to Keith for understanding the levels of her distress and psychological trauma. But, nonetheless, for Florence, Keith is in the same a “still figure, watching, ever attentive, saying little. This is what she wanted to cling to” (158). However, Florence after looking carefully at Keith’s personality, “She was the one who would not speak, watching him by the window, hearing the soft voice that tells her it is ended now”(158)

The survivors happen to commit certain actions after the major traumatic accident of September 11 and some minor domestic accidents. Later, they realize these actions and

confess them as “unintended acts” In a narrow escape, Keith after coming out of the rubbles of the collapsed building, soon after the attacks, in a dazed state of mind, unintentionally visits the apartment of his estranged wife He also holds a briefcase in his hand, which does not belong to him When Lianne asks about the briefcase, Keith says, “ It wasn’t his and he didn’t know why he’d taken it out of the building” (105)

Similarly, Lianne, while washing the clothes of her husband, unintentionally puts the clothes in a separate load “She had no idea why she did this It was like he was dead” (104) She walks west on Street 116th without any plan However, when passing by fruit markets, she counts bakery shops, “She thought at once of Rosellen S but didn’t know why” (156) Lianne also reads the newspaper profiles of the dead of 9/11, but she does not know the reason of her reading the same It may be out of some need or whatever the reason, but she had to read it “She read newspaper profiles of the dead, every one that was printed But she also read them because she had to, out of some need she did not try to interpret” (p 106)

4.4. The Falling Man’s Photograph, 9/11 and Collective Trauma

The title of the novel is based on the photograph of “Falling Man” The man in the photograph shows either jumping or falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Centre on September 11 soon after the building catches fire The photograph of the falling man is taken by Richard Drew, a photographer of Associated Press just before a few moments of his death, which was published in a number of newspapers across the world This image of the falling body holds the gaze of the whole world and it also reflects the post-9/11 collective trauma as Fitzpatrick (2007) states, “The images of those

who fell from the Towers became traumatically imprinted in the people's minds" (p 85)

The name, *Falling Man*, also represents the concept of falling and collapsing, which is also one of the recurrent themes and key images of the novel falling through time, memory and space, besides containing a number of descriptive scenes about things kept on falling such as figures, scorched objects, trailing lines of fires, shirt and ashes, etc from the Twin Towers and other buildings

There is smoke and ash, office paper flashing past, shoes discarded in the street, paper cups , the focus is on visual images, rather than narrative, which is the way traumatic memory works since traumatized individuals are possessed by images. One such image is that of a shirt that comes down out of the smoke. It is first mentioned on page four but it keeps returning (88, 246) as a substitute for what Keith really saw but could not integrate in his mind a falling person (Baelo-Allué 2012, p 72)

DeLillo starts narrating the story while describing the falling scene of the Towers as "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (p 3) Moreover, when the Towers catch fire soon after slamming the planes into it, the dropping and falling of figures from thousand feet up windows into free space, have been recorded by the media. One of the falling figures is a "Falling Man", whose image of falling head-down into free space is captured by the media just a few moments before his death. The image represents the trauma of the attacks as Sonia Baelo-Allué (2012) states, "Images play an important role in the trauma process and in its representation in trauma novels" (p 71). However, while defending his work of photojournalism, Drew (2001) claims, "We record history. This was the history of that day. I didn't photograph his death. I photographed part of his life"(21). Keith Neudecker also sees a shirt coming down out of the sky, which symbolically suggests the meaninglessness of life in the post-

9/11 scenario The change from the verbal to visual culture has been witnessed in the contemporary world due to the change from the age of print to that of television (Schneck, 2007, p 106)

DeLillo also uses the name of "Falling Man" for the performing artist, David Janiak, 39, who appears several times in the novel in different parts of the city dangling from the high building and mimics, "Those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump" (p 33) It seems an effort of the author to recreate once again the image of terror in the minds of the viewers through the performing artist as Anne Kaplan (2005) argues that trauma can be translated and understood only with the help of art (p 19) Likewise, Dennis Cauchon and Martha Moore (2002) while referring to Mark D Thompson in *Desperation forced a horrific decision* states that in terms of social and cultural significance, the novel *Falling Man* represents the most powerful image of despair at the beginning of the 21st Century due to its single photograph of the figure of a "falling man"

DeLillo describes the photograph of the falling man, on one hand, as the most horrific one and on the other, he considers it as an ideal one It represents the body of a falling man from the North Tower just before a few moments of his death The free fall of the body makes an ideal motion due to the gravitational force of earth in the open atmosphere "Headlong, free fall, she thought, and this picture burned a hole in her mind and heart, dear God, he was a falling angel and his beauty was horrific" (p 222) Kroes (2011) argues that the image of falling man, which captures the fleeting moment of the falling body from the Towers, "condensing larger moments in history into one iconic

image” (p 1-3), continuously haunts us. The falling man also makes his haunting presence in the story of the novel.

Free fall is the fall of a body within the atmosphere without a drag-producing device such as a parachute. It is the ideal falling motion of a body that is subject only to the earth's gravitational field (p 221)

When reporters asked about the photograph of the falling man from the North Tower from David Janiak (If any elements were taken from the photograph), he made no comments. When asked about the death of any close relative in the WTC, again he made no comments on the subject. The use of the very basic equipment has made his falls more dangerous and painful. However, people start shouting and getting outraged at the spectacle of falling man, who acts as a performing artist in the novel. The figure of “Falling Man” and its dangling position and free falls from various high buildings of the New York City, also represents the looming fear and the collective trauma of the 9/11 attacks. Schneck (2007) refers to DeLillo and states that images are integral part of his imagination (p 104). Lianne also describes the body of the falling man as a looming figure in the after-days of 9/11. It may also mean a looming fear, which is imprinted on the minds of the survivors.

Lianne stops walking near the temple, while observing kids in the schoolyard across the tracks. They (kids) are taking pause in their games and looking upward for taking a better view of the figure of falling man. Lianne witnesses the falling man, which suddenly appears from nowhere. She watches the body of the falling man and thinks that how one can manage to make access to the track area. The kids are looking upward from the schoolyard to the faces at the windows and the body of the falling man. “White male, she

thought White shirt, dark jacket The immediate street was quiet People passing looked and walked and a few stopped, briefly, and others, younger, lingered" (p 159)

The upper part of the body of the falling man appears on one side of protective fence of the track Lianne sees the chest of the figure where the school children call each other to look at the free fall of the body She also observes the faces in the windows looking at the fall of the figure "Why is he doing this, she thought" (p 160) The students advance from the schoolyard for watching the falling man, who attaches the safety harness to the rail of the platform For a while she believes that it is some kind of absurdist drama that only attracts people for creating an understanding of this irrationality She, however, becomes spell bound for watching the scene of falling man and cannot move from there Lianne gets an idea why the falling man is showing his art here at this place After sometime, she gets an idea about selecting this particular location for the art of performance She thinks that his target audience is not the people, who are standing at the high windows but the passengers of the train, who are in motion Actually, "DeLillo makes the reader aware that what is actually described is not the event as such but its representation by the visual media"(Schneck, 2007, p 107) She thinks that on one hand, the sudden fall into the free space of the figure creates a shock among the onboard passengers as they don't see the attached safety harness, and on the other, it will continue reminding them of the falling man from the Twin Towers, whose image was repeatedly shown on the media on September 11 A woman from the high building window asks the falling man time and again with an increasing tone of voice that "You don't be here"(164)

The rail had a broad flat top and he stood there, blue suit, white shirt, blue tie, black shoes. He loomed over the sidewalk, legs spread slightly, arms out from his body and bent at the elbows, asymmetrically, man in fear, looking out of some deep pool of concentration into lost space, dead space (p 164)

Lianne vividly describes the figure of the performing artist, who is dangling on the sidewalk of the railway station. The looming figure of the artist tends to recreate the image of the falling man, which Mark D. Thompson considers as one of the most powerful images of despair of the 21st Century. The image of the falling man was also shown repeatedly on the media on September 11.

4.4.1. Techno culture, Trauma and Media Saturated World

The *Falling Man* discusses the details of some of the photographs and television images taken of the falling building of WTC. The photograph of the falling man was taken by Richard Drew (Photographer of Associated Press) at 9:41:15 a.m. just before a few moments of his death on September 11 (Singer & Numeroff, 2006). Next day the photograph was published in *The New York Times* and several other newspapers across the world. With the help of the image, DeLillo tries to recreate the event of 9/11 as time and again, while recalling it, he refers to those images of the 9/11, which are almost in everyone's mind. He also considers that the images are indispensable for understanding the present human conditions, as he explains, "I don't think any attempt to understand the way we live and the way we think and the way we feel about ourselves can proceed without a deep consideration of the power of the image" (DePietro, 2005, p 125). It is also evident from his fictional work that the concepts of simulation and

hyperreality "seem to have been conceived with Don DeLillo in mind"(Cowart, 2003, p 12)

Lianne makes advanced research on the falling man to know more details about him. She also imagines the moments when she stood beneath the figure of the falling man three years back. However, there was no photograph of that particular fall, so here she herself becomes the photograph. "She was the photograph, the photosensitive surface. That nameless body coming down, this was hers to record and absorb" (223) Florence Givens, whenever sees the videotape, keeps on watching the video of falling Towers. After watching the video for a number of times, the accident, which she also experienced, enters into her skin and body. The effects of the psychological trauma caused by the event are further triggered due to its repeated display on the media.

Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers(p 134)

Keith Neudecker takes the real scene of waterfalls as simulated one and quite often it becomes difficult for him to realize the difference between the two. DeLillo usually takes the real scenes as simulated and the simulated images as real. And it is due to this approach that many readers and critics consider him as the literary founding father of postmodern media theory. The concepts of simulation and hyperreality "seem to have been conceived with Don DeLillo in mind"(Cowart, 2003, p 12). The blurring effect, which is probably taken from the media, is quite dominant in the fictional work of DeLillo.

Keith stared into the waterfall, forty yards away. He realized he didn't know whether it was real or simulated. The flow was unruffled and the sound of falling water might easily be a digital effect like the waterfall itself. He said, "Rumsey was cigars." "Rumsey was cigars. You're probably right" (pp. 203-4)

It is evident that DeLillo quite often in his writings turns human communication into "a mere simulation caught in the endless loop of media system" (Schneck, p. 104). In the after-days of 9/11, one late night, Lianne reads an obituary in the six days old newspaper. Keith looks at her and states, "They die every day, Keith said once. There's no news in that" (p. 218). For Keith, there is no news in the newspapers except that of the death stories of the attacks and it may also mean that death is no more a news in the post-9/11 scenario. Lianne actually looks for a complete report on the previous day performances of the falling man, David Janiak, in the newspaper. However, she finds a very short and sketchy account about his life and death. Although, no photograph of the man and his acts were given in the paper, however, he was described in a single sentence as "The performance artist known as Falling Man" (219). Lianne after reading the newspaper, switches off the lights and wants to sleep but "Sleep was out there somewhere over the curve of the earth" (p. 219). She cannot sleep and turns the light on and starts looking for five-day old newspaper, but cannot get it. Then she starts advanced searching about the falling man on the internet. She watches the figure of the falling man at different dangling positions from various buildings and reads some of his history available on the internet. Someone described "Falling Man as Heartless Exhibitionist or Brave New Chronicler of the Age of Terror" (p. 220). She watches some more photographs about the falling positions of the man.

On the internet, she reads that Janiak is suffering from heart disease and high blood pressure. However, during jumping from the buildings, he neither uses any pulleys, cables or wires nor bungee cord for absorbing shocks of longer falls. He only uses safety harness and straps under the shirt. In most of the jumps, his brother, Roman Janiak, a software engineer, helps him but he only becomes visible when it is unavoidable. There is a dispute over the position of the body that he assumes during the fall and maintains it as long as he is suspended. Lianne states that Janiak tends to imitate the body posture of the man, who was photographed during falling from the North Tower. The photograph, “headfirst, arms at his sides, one leg bent, a man set forever in free fall against the looming background of the column panels in the tower” (221). She stops reading because she knows about the photograph of the falling man. Moreover, this photograph also disturbs her a lot when she saw it for the first time in the newspaper on the day following September 11.

4.4.2. Time, Trauma and 9/11

DeLillo describes the attacks on the WTC as a turning point in history, besides measuring time from the day of 9/11. Throughout the novel, temporal references are made and connected with that day - such as six, ten, fifteen, thirty-six days, and three years after the planes hit the Towers (p. 34, 44, 69, 170, 229). The days, weeks, months and years following the accident are also depicted more extended than normal time, “This was all, a lost moment on the Friday of the lifelong week, three days after the planes” (p. 8). Moreover, the *Falling Man* depicts the days and nights after the 9/11 attacks as standing still for the survivors as time and again DeLillo refers to the days following the attacks as the “after-days” [he may have come upon in these long strange days and

still nights, these after-days](p 137) In addition, the event is also considered as a turning point in history Most of the events are measured or looked at from the perspective of 9/11 "These are the days after Everything now is measured by after" (p 138)

Most of the characters frequently refer to the number of days passed by the tragic event They count the days, weeks and months following the attacks Lianne and Keith watch the figure of the falling man while looking for each other in the crowd Lianne raises her hand in the mass of faces for Justin and Keith, who were coming towards her DeLillo refers to the number of days passed by the event as "thirty-six days after the planes" (170) Keith thinks that his life is divided by the 9/11 accident in "before and after" When Lianne asks him, "You can't go back to the job you had"(215) He says the job is the same as it was before the attacks "But that was before, this is after "(215) For Keith Neudecker, in the post-9/11 scenario, most of the things make no sense

DeLillo again refers to the time after the event when Keith is playing cards with Terry Cheng in a hotel and does not want to hear Terry Cheng "Three years after the planes" (p 229) Likewise after experiencing the traumatic accident, it becomes difficult for Florence Givens to think clearly, as if "she was dazed and had no sense of time" (p 55) DeLillo describes both physical and psychological sufferings caused by the event and its after-effects on the survivors in the days and years following the attacks He also focuses on the helplessness and miserable conditions of the survivors in face of such a traumatic incident

These were the days after and now the years a thousand
heaving dreams, the trapped man, the fixed limbs, the
dream of paralysis, the gasping man, the dream of
asphyxiation, the dream of helplessness (p 230)

While taking the kid from school, Lianne feels a kind of separation and distance from her father even amid the crowd. Even the crowd does not give any sense of belonging to her. For Lianne the nights soon after the 9/11 attacks become an endless waking chain of psychological trauma as she thinks in the solitary nights only about the same traumatic accident and its effects on the survivors. "These three years past, since that day in September, all life had become public. The stricken community pours forth voices and the solitary night mind is shaped by the outcry" (p 182)

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary and Findings

Both Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and DeLillo's *Falling Man* deviate from the customary form of novel for representing the effects and after-effects of the psychological trauma of 9/11 attacks on the survivors as the main text. However, Foer also discusses the World War-II in the novel as another major and historical traumatic event of the 20th Century (Dresden firebombing and Hiroshima tragedy) as subtexts from individual perspectives in the form of letters and recorded interviews.

The understudy authors in most cases turn the inside out and show the psychological traumas of the survivors. After reading the three adjoining stories of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, it becomes evident that Oskar suffers the trauma of the tragic death of his father, while his grandparents suffer the trauma of Dresden fire bombings. DeLillo also exposes the inner psychological conditions of the survivors (Keith Neudecker, Florence Givens and Lianne Glenn) and consequently the kind of sufferings they are being faced with in the after-days of September 11 attacks.

The trauma narrative is usually considered impossible, however, the literary strategies and conditions in the novels make the communication of traumatic experiences possible through postmodern and experimental devices and techniques. Both the authors employ various techniques for representing the unrepresentable area of psychological trauma caused by the 9/11 attacks and other domestic and historical traumatic events such as

Dresden and Hiroshima bombings in the World War-II from individual perspectives in the form of personal and autobiographical letters and notebook entries. The authors like other postmodern writers, also consider nothing outside of the text. And thus they incorporate various discourses in the text from the subjects such as history, drama, poetry, media and science.

The first and second research questions are proved as both the writers employ various creative, artistic and postmodern techniques, literary strategies and conditions for representing the traumatic effects on the survivors and their families in the after-days of 9/11. For making the trauma narrative accessible and presentable, Foer employs structural, linguistic and visual elements, including multiperspectivity, pictures, photographs, typographic elements, dialogic narratives, reconnaissance expeditions, anti-illusionism, metaphors, intertextuality, intermediality, individual style and metafictional elements, anti-clockwise movement of time, and reverse play order of past actions, overlapping/mixing of facts and fiction, fantasy and dreams, experimentations with language and language play, introductory cards, images, pictures, mails, major letters, minor letters, newspaper reports, blank pages, shaded pages, pages with single words, pages with single sentence, digits and telephone calls converted into written messages, colored doodles, red underlined/encircled words for indicating grammatical, orthographical mistakes and emphasizing on specific information.

For capturing the effects of 9/11 attacks, DeLillo in the *Falling Man* also employs various techniques and artistic devices such as interwoven flashbacks, forward jumps in time, visuals and exposure to images, figures in the window, symbolic references, nonlinear timeline, disjointed dialogues, intertextuality, using third person pronouns

instead of naming the characters, portraits, stillness of time, calmness of faces, haunting image of death---the falling bodies, unconventional plot, the technique of jump-cut transition between different scenes of the novel and by mixing past and present, achronological narrative, circular form of the novel, and no clear sense of closure, narration of the same event from multiple perspectives and other techniques and conventions, which are typical to the genres of arts and media etc. The text of the novel is also found temporally distorted and structurally disjointed as time gets overlap from present to past and from past to future during the course of narrating the 9/11 as a major trauma and other minor traumas of the survivors.

The protagonist of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also demonstrates certain traumatic behaviors such as wearing all in white obsessively, browsing foreign websites for information about the WTC, acting against and partially listening to the conversation held between the psychiatrist, Dr. Fein, and his mother about his possible hospitalization. The mental agony and the feelings of loneliness, which Oskar is going through after the death of his father, are also evident from his discussion with the psychiatrist. The psychological trauma of Oskar becomes more evident from the actions that he performed in *Hamlet* on behalf of the dead in the school when he gets emotional for nothing makes any sense to him after the death of his father. He wants to smash the skull of Ron against the skull of his mother for having relations with each other, to smash the skull of his father for dying, to smash the skull of grandmother for embarrassing him, to smash the skull of the psychiatrist for asking question regarding his father's death and to smash the skull of everyone that he comes across.

DeLillo's unique approach to the protagonist introduces a chaotic atmosphere of suspicion in the novel, which almost reflects the American society immediately after the 9/11 attacks. The novel also discusses a number of other subjects such as religion, death, meaning of life, fate, west, capitalism, and terrorism etc. in the context of post-9/11 scenario.

The terror-inducing technique, where Janiak performs the arts of jumping from high buildings, is a method which DeLillo considers as an art by visualizing terror. In fact, the physical presence of the images of 'Falling Man' in the novel reassures the recurrent nightmares of the falling Towers, burning buildings and falling people in the memories of the viewers. Through the image of the 'Falling Man', DeLillo shows that the memories of the events are recalled recurrently and the 9/11 imposes itself repeatedly on both real and fictional audiences. However, this may also illustrate the inability of the characters, the way they are stuck in the structure of the text and find no way out for them to escape from the disaster, which has been enforced by the recurrent and vivid description of 9/11 attacks throughout the novel. With the help of the images, DeLillo tries to recreate the event of 9/11 as time and again he refers to those images of 9/11, which are almost in everyone's mind when recalling the event. In addition, he also considers that images are indispensable for understanding the present human conditions.

The survivors and those, who witness the accident directly or through media, tend to apprehend the possibility of similar attacks in future as well. The *Falling Man* also represents the sense of uncertainty and insecurity of the New Yorkers in days following the attacks. The common people tend to fail in rationalizing the tragic event, besides having no idea about their enemies. In the last two sentences of the novel, the falling shirt

from the building symbolically manifests the emptiness of life. The waving arms of the shirt may also mean the meaninglessness of life after the tragic event.

The novels also represent the 21st Century technologically advanced media saturated America in the post-9/11 scenario, besides representing the advanced use of communication technologies such as television, film, CD-ROMs, DVD's, video games, videos, audios, computer, internet and mobile phones. The uses of television, internet, and video games have not only affected the perception of reality (blurring the difference between fiction and reality) but the past actions have also been re-experienced/revisited in the understudy novels. The authors attempt to turn life into a DVD player through the use of contemporary media for creating psychological effects on the readers.

It is due to the new technologies that makes Oskar able to watch again and again the tragic event of 9/11, falling bodies from the Twin Towers, listening to the recorded sound of his father on the answering machine and listening the recorded interview of Hiroshima bombing. In the *Falling Man*, Lianne Glenn also uses internet for making advanced search in order to know more about the details of the performing artist, his history, cause of jumping and various dangling positions from different high buildings of the New York City.

5.2. Effects of Trauma and PTSD

The 9/11 attacks are taken as a turning point in history and the literature that appeared after them, is considered as a new genre for presenting the traumatic effects and after-effects on the survivors with the help of various creative, artistic, and postmodern

techniques. The authors in the understudy novels have also presented the 9/11 attacks as one of the biggest traumas of the 21st Century and a turning point in history.

The novels have also generalized trauma beyond the cultural differences and political complexities as the effects of trauma remain the same for its victims and survivors. Both the novels develop a transnational theme of trauma across the borders as the tragic 9/11 attacks, Dresden firebombing and Hiroshima bombings have left indelible marks on the psyche of the survivors beyond the cultural and geographical differences. For developing trauma narrative, the authors do not follow the notions of normal discourse and instead make the use of pastiche in which no certain model is followed.

Almost all of the characters in one way or the other in the novels are passing through the psychological traumas and mourning and consequently many develop the PTSD in the after-days of the attacks. The survivors develop the delayed reaction of traumatic experience in the forms of dreams, repeated intrusive hallucinations, thoughts and behaviors produced by the event along with sad feelings created by the experience during and after the event. Moreover, the dreadful images of falling and jumping men from the burning buildings are haunting the people – those who directly watched it or viewed it through the media.

The novels also describe the typical accounts of traumatic experiences at different levels and focus on the resurgence of long buried traumatic memories, which need to be mourned and are intimately associated with the body. In fact, the novels make emphasis on visuals as Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* combines written communication with visuals for narrating the accounts of the traumatic loss of the

survivors. The writers also focus on images/visuals in their fictional representation. DeLillo focuses on the performing artist while in the case of Foer, it is the actual photographs that are melding with the text. They attempt to access and represent the psychological trauma which by definition does not seem to be accessible. For making the trauma presentable in their fictional representation, both Foer and DeLillo employ various postmodern techniques by challenging the established literary conventions and undermining the traditional pecking order of discourse for rendering the devastation of 9/11 into narration.

5.3. Failure of Language in Face of Trauma

The third research question is also proved as language in most cases fails to cope with the narration of trauma in general and that of the 9/11 attacks in particular. It almost becomes impossible for the selected authors to represent the psychological trauma through the use of language as a tool of trauma expression. They employ other creative, artistic and postmodern techniques, strategies and devices for making trauma and its effects on the survivors presentable and accessible. For example, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, when survivors get frustration for being unable to represent their inner trauma, there appear blank pages, which refer to the situations when survivors under the effects of trauma lost for words. However, the shaded pages in novel refer to the situation when the survivors want to say so many things (all at once) yet they fail to say anything. The verbal articulation may describe an event. However, in face of trauma, the very vehicle of language breaks down. The attacks also remain beyond the limits of linguistic representation. In the novels, language remains a problematic tool for representing the

trauma expression as it is almost impossible to capture the effects of trauma or to express the traumatic experiences in words

The traumatic event not only affects the characters of the novels but it also fractures their very lives especially, when they look for other forms of communication. While communicating various traumatic accidents, including that of 9/11, words simply fail to represent the traumatic experiences of the survivors. Frustrating with the use of language in face of trauma, the authors make an attempt to present the unrepresentable experiences of trauma with the help of unconventional and postmodern techniques. For articulating the grief and psychological trauma of the survivors caused by the attacks, the writers make a deliberate attempt to combine written communication with visuals/images mostly taken from media soon after the attacks. For representing various psychological traumas of the characters in general and that of the September 11 survivors in particular, both the writers take the body as a tool of traumatic expression. However, in case of Foer, it is Oskar, who gives bruises to himself when he gets too much emotionally distressed, which makes physical manifestation of his inner psychological trauma, sadism, and mental agony that he is passing through after the tragic death of his father in 9/11 attacks. Likewise, Sr. Thomas Schell does not seem communicatively silent as instead of using language his body becomes a tool of expression. In case of DeLillo, it is the body of the falling man, who represents the looming fear and psychological trauma of the attacks in the New York City in the after-days.

The inadequacy of language not only makes the traumatic loss difficult for articulation but makes it impossible for the readers also to understand it. In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the traumatized characters want to express each and everything and

write everywhere yet they fail to communicate anything. Similarly, coded communication either in the form of dialing numbers on the phone, shaded pages, condensed writings, blank pages, tattooed words, Oskar's translation of last words of his father into Morse code and beads chain etc. also makes it difficult for the readers to understand the text.

5.4. Conclusion

The traumatized individuals may never be fully integrated as they consider themselves lost in the event and they may never remain the same. Keith cannot get out the image of a man from his mind, who was flinging from one of the broken windows on the fateful day of 9/11. The traumatic effects of such tragic events are usually considered long-lasting. Actually, the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening with the passage of time in the days following the attacks and it also becomes evident that how helpless is human in face of such a traumatic accident.

Soon after the attacks, most of the survivors lost the very hope and meaning of their existences. The nine-year-old protagonist, Oskar Schell, after the death of his father in the WTC tragedy, starts thinking about *raison d'être* (the reason of being). The boy consistently raises questions about life and death after the attacks. After experiencing the 9/11 event, Keith Neudecker as a survivor fails to give meaning to anything. Sometimes, in the after-effects, he momentarily feels meaninglessness about almost everything. Even very simple words and objects that he comes across, lack meaning for him.

Likewise, Florence Givens is also traumatized to such an extent in the days following the attacks as a survivor that she neither wants to see people nor talks to anyone while passing through a terrible stage of life, waking up at the middle of the nights and dialing

contacts number of her missing friends. Moreover, Oskar also carries almost all the symptoms of a traumatized child in the after-days of the attacks as time and again, he wishes to fall asleep during the nights but he fails to do so. He rather starts inventing black boxes, yellow pages, postage stamps and training bomb-sniffing dogs in his imagination before going to sleep.

However, DeLillo shows different ways to deal with the issue of psychological trauma in order to avoid its effects. For this purpose, the survivors either change their lives in the form of developing relations, making socialization with other survivors or participating in different activities such as playing poker games (in case of Keith Neudecker), attending storyline sessions for Alzheimer's patients (in case of Lianne Glenn), taking part in physical exercises (physical therapy and psycho therapy) etc. They also take part in various activities in order to avoid thinking about their past traumatic experiences. It is in the after-days, that the survivors on the basis of either shared experiences of the psychological trauma of the attacks or some other minor traumatic accidents in their lifetime develop relations with each other. Both Keith Neudecker and Florence Givens survive the attacks and after sharing the memories of the psychological trauma, they develop a desultory relationship on the basis of having shared experience of the accident, besides developing a reciprocal response of love and trust towards each other. Later, Keith Neudecker also wants to justify the relations to Lianna on the grounds of having similar experience of the same traumatic event as the relations, though of uncommon nature, have roots in the fire and smoke of the collapsed building.

Soon after the attacks, Keith Neudecker instead going to hospital visits the nearest apartment of his estranged wife, Lianne Glenn, who lives with her son, Justin, and her

mother, Nina Bartos and starts living with her in order to cope with the trauma of the attacks in the after-days. The couple once again tries to attach to each other emotionally for the sake of their son, who is also terrified by the attacks and searching skies intending to see the signs of a man, who was named by the media as Bill Lawton. Besides 9/11 attacks, Lianne Glenn also suffers the trauma of her father's death and she needs the company of Keith Neudecker. While at the end of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Sr. Thomas Schell returns to New York to the apartment of his wife and once again they start a new life together (which Sr. Thomas Schell also calls it "a second life"). Both Oskar and his grandfather at the end, however, attach to each other emotionally as they both pass through the same kind of psychological trauma related to the tragic death of Jr. Thomas Schell in the WTC. They also develop relationship on the basis of their shared memories of trauma and mourning of 9/11 attacks. This study also highlights the psychological trauma, its effects and after-effects on the victims/survivors of different traumatic events in general and that of 9/11 attacks in particular in fictional representation of Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and DeLillo's *Falling Man*. It also explores various creative, artistic and postmodern techniques in the selected novels, which are deliberately used for making fictional representation of trauma on the survivors. The study finds that the effects of 9/11 as a traumatic event remain long-lasting for its victims and survivors.

The study also finds that the traumatized individuals of 9/11 attacks or any other psychological trauma should be taken as a specific community for dealing with them under different circumstances in the after-days of such accidents/events. Moreover, in order to survive the wounds of the traumatic experience(s), the survivors need to go

through intensive and consistent exercises of physical therapy and psycho therapy The study also finds that the wounding of the mind (psychological damage) is much deeper and complex as it is not experienced in real time Consequently, it is harder for the mind to register it to human consciousness

The trauma victims and survivors are haunted by their tragic memories in the form of images and flashes, and as a result they go through the same experience of psychological trauma again and again Under such a situation, the abnormal behaviors of the victims may also be generalized across cultural and geographical borders as its effects remain the same for them The study also finds that the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening in the after-days of tragic events/accidents, which may, however, not be healed the way other physical injuries are healed

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APPENDICES

Fig No 7 (p 48)

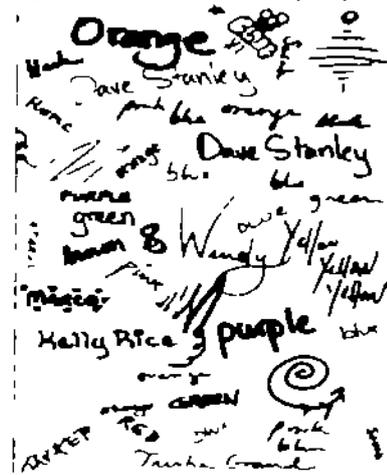


Fig No 8 (p 49)

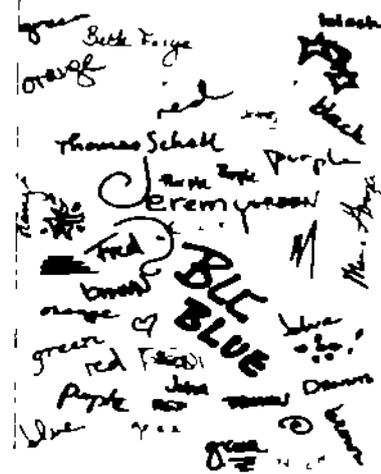


Fig No 9 (p 53)



Fig No.10 (p 55)



Fig No 11 (p 54)



Fig No 12 (p 56)

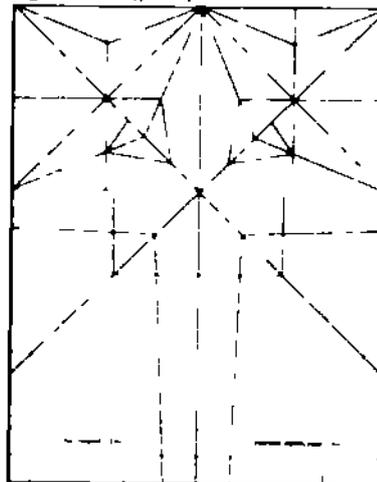


Fig No 13 (p 57)



Fig No 14 (p 58)



Fig No 15 (p 60-61)

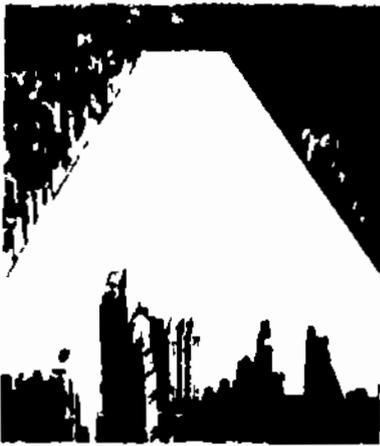


Fig No 16 (p 59)



Fig No 17 (p 62)



Fig No 18 (p 63)

Purple

Fig No 19 (p 64)



Fig No 20 (p 65)



Fig No 21 (p 66)



Fig No 22 (p 67)



Fig No.23 (p 89)



Fig No 24 (p 92)



Fig No 25 (p 98)



Fig No 26 (p 95)



Fig No 27 (p 148)



Fig No 28 (p 103)

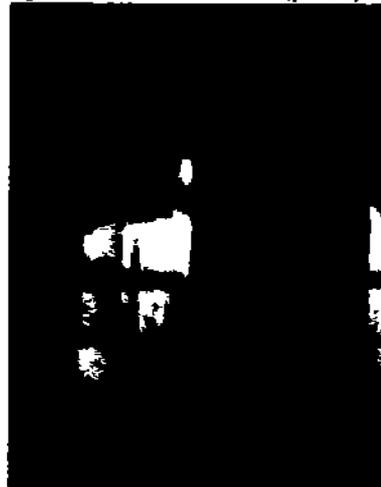


Fig No 29 (p 166)



Fig No 30 (p 167)



Fig No 31 (p 155)



Fig No 32 (p 205)



Fig No 33 (p 198)



Fig No 34 (p 191)



Fig No 35 (p 241)



Fig No 36 (p 253)



Fig No.37

(p 246)



Fig No.38

(p 260)



Fig No 39

(p 261)



Fig No 40

(p 294)



Fig No 41

(p 318)



Fig No 42

(p 303)



Fig No 43

(p 327-341) (The last fifteen pages of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*)



Fig No 44 (p 159)

MUHAMMAD ALI BAKR

Fig No 45 (p 158)

STEPHEN HAWKING, ASTROPHYSICS

Fig No 46 (p 158)

CLIFF BUCK ~~BAK~~
HUSBAND

Fig No 47 (p 286)

OSKAR SCHELL SON

Fig No 48 (p 99)

☞ OSKAR SCHELL ☞

INVENTOR, JEWELRY DESIGNER, JEWELRY FABRICATOR, AMATEUR ENTOMOLOGIST, FRANCOPHILE, VEGAN, ORIGAMIST, PACIFIST, PERCUSSIONIST, AMATEUR ASTRONOMER, COMPUTER CONSULTANT, AMATEUR ARCHEOLOGIST, COLLECTOR OF: *rare coins, butterflies that died natural deaths, miniature cacti, Beatles memorabilia, semiprecious stones, and other things*

E-MAIL OSKAR_SCHELL@HOTMAIL.COM

HOME PHONE: PRIVATE / CELL PHONE: PRIVATE

FAX MACHINE: I DON'T HAVE A FAX MACHINE YET

Fig No 49 (p 04)

GERALD THOMPSON
Sunshine Limousine
Serving the five boroughs
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APPENDIX-B

Major Letter No.5

WHY I'M NOT WHERE YOU ARE

4/12/78

To my child: I'm writing this from where your mother's father's shed used to stand, the shed is no longer here, no carpets cover no floors, no windows in no walls, everything has been replaced. This is a library now, that would have made your grandfather happy, as if all of his buried books were seeds, from each book came one hundred. I'm sitting at the end of a long table surrounded by encyclopedias, sometimes I take one down and read about other people's lives, kings, actresses, assassins, judges, anthropologists, tennis champions, tycoons, politicians, just because you haven't received any letters from me don't think I haven't written any. Every day I write a letter to you. Sometimes I think if I could tell you what happened to me that night, I could leave that night behind me, maybe I could come home to you, but that night has no beginning or end, it started before I was born and it's still happening. I'm writing in Dresden, and your mother is writing in the Nothing guest room, or I assume she is, I hope she is, sometimes my hand starts to burn and I am convinced we are writing the same word at the same moment. Anna gave me the typewriter your mother used to write her life story on. She gave it to me only a few weeks before the bombings, I thanked her, she said, "Why are you thanking me? It's a gift for me." "A gift for you?" "You never write to me." "But I'm with you." "So?" "You write to someone you can't be with." "You never sculpt me, but at least you could write to me." It's the tragedy of loving, you can't love anything more than something you miss. I told her, "You never write to me." She said, "You've never given me a typewriter." I started to invent future homes for us, I'd type through the night and give them to her the next day I imagined dozens of homes, some were magical (a clock

tower with a stopped clock in a city where time stood still), some were mundane (a bourgeois estate in the country with rose gardens and peacocks), each felt possible and perfect, I wonder if your mother ever saw them "Dear Anna, We will live in a home built at the top of the world's tallest ladder." "Dear Anna, We will live in a cave in a hillside in Turkey." "Dear Anna, We will live in a home with no walls, so that everywhere we go will be our home." I wasn't trying to invent better and better homes, but to show her that homes didn't matter, we could live in any home, in any city, in any country, in any century, and be happy, as if the world were just what we lived in. The night before I lost everything, I typed our last future home "Dear Anna, We will live in a series of homes, which will climb the alps, and we'll never sleep in the same one twice. Each morning after breakfast, we'll sled down to the next home. And when we open its front door, the previous home will be destroyed and rebuilt as a new home. When we get to the bottom, we'll take a lift to the top and start again at the beginning." I went to bring it to her the next day, on my way to your mother's house, I heard a noise from the shed, from where I'm now writing this to you. I suspected it was Simon Goldberg. I knew that Anna's father had been hiding him, I had heard them talking in there some nights when Anna and I tiptoed into the fields, they were always whispering, I had seen his charcoal stained shirt on their clothesline. I didn't want to make myself known, so I quietly slid a book from the wall. Anna's father, your grandfather, was sitting in his chair with his face in his hands, he was my hero. When I think back on that moment, I never see him with his face in his hands, I won't let myself see him that way, I see the book in my hands, it was an illustrated edition of Ovid's Metamorphosis. I used to look for the edition in the States, as if by finding it I could slide it back in the shed's wall, block the image of my hero's face in his hands, stop my life and history at that moment, I asked after it in every bookshop in New York, but I never was able to find. Light poured into the room through the hole in the wall, your grandfather lifted his head, he came to the shelf and we looked at each other through the missing Metamorphosis. I asked him if something was wrong, he didn't say anything, I could see only a sliver of his face, the spine of a book of his face, we looked at each

other until it felt like everything would burst into flames, it was the silence of my life. I found Anna in her room. "Hi." "Hi." "I just saw your father." "In the shed?" "He seems upset." "He doesn't want to be part of it anymore." I told her, "It will all be over soon." "How do you know?" "Everyone says so." "Everyone has always been wrong." "It will be over, and life will go back to how it was." She said, "Don't be a child." "Don't turn away from me." She wouldn't look at me. I asked, "What's happened?" I'd never seen her cry before. I told her, "Don't cry." She said, "Don't touch me." I asked, "What is it?" She said, "Will you please shut up!" We sat on her bed in silence. The silence pressed down on us like a hand. I said, "Whatever it is—" She said, "I'm pregnant." I can't write what we said to each other then. Before I left, she said, "Please be overjoyed." I told her I was, of course I was, I kissed her, I kissed her stomach, that was the last time I ever saw her. At 9.30 that night, the air-raid sirens sounded, everyone went to the shelters, but no one hurried, we were used to the alarms, we assumed they were false, why would anyone want to bomb Dresden? The families on our street turned off the lights in their houses and filed into the shelter, I waited on the steps. I was thinking of Anna. It was silent and still and I couldn't see my own hands in the darkness. One hundred planes flew overhead, massive, heavy planes, pushing through the night like one hundred whales through water, they dropped clusters of red flares to light up the blackness for whatever was to come next. I was alone on the street, the red flares fell around me, thousands of them, I knew that something unimaginable was about to happen, I was thinking of Anna, I was overjoyed. I ran downstairs four steps at a time, they saw the look on my face, before I had time to say anything—what would I have said?—we heard a horrible noise, rapid, approaching explosions, like an applauding audience running toward us, then they were atop us, we were thrown to the corners, our cellar filled with fire and smoke, more powerful explosions, the walls lifted from the floor and separated just long enough to let light flood in before banging back to the ground, orange and blue explosions, violet and white. I later read that the first bombing lasted less than half an hour, but it felt like days and weeks, like the world was going to end, the bombing stopped as a matter of factly as it

had began, "Are you OK?" "Are you OK?" "Are you OK?" We ran out of the cellar, which was flooded with yellow-gray smoke, we didn't recognize anything, I had been on the stoop just half an hour before, and now there was no stoop in front of no house on no street, only fire in every direction, all that remained of our house was a patch of the facade that stubbornly held up the front door, a horse on fire galloped past, there were burning vehicles and carts with burning refuges people were screaming, I told my parents I had to go find Anna, my mother told me to stay with them, I said I would meet them back at our front door, my father begged me to stay, I grabbed the doorknob and it took the skin off my hand, I saw the muscles of my palm, red and pulsing, why did I grab it with my other hand? My father shouted at me, it was the first time he had ever shouted at me, I can't write what he shouted, I told them I would meet them back at our door, he struck me across the face, it was the first time he had ever struck me, that was the last time I saw my parents. On my way to Anna's house, the second raid began, I threw myself into the nearest cellar, it was hit, it filled with pink smoke and gold flames, so I fled into the next cellar, it caught fire, I ran from cellar to cellar as each previous cellar was destroyed, burning monkeys screamed from the trees, birds with their wings on fire sang from the telephone wires over which desperate calls traveled, I found another shelter, it was filled to the walls, brown smoke pressed down from the ceiling like a hand, it became more and more difficult to breathe, my lungs were trying to pull the room in through my mouth, there was a silver explosion, all of us tried to leave the cellar at once, dead and dying people were trampled, I walked over an old man, I walked over children, everyone was losing everyone, the bombs were like a waterfall, I ran through the streets, from cellar to cellar, and saw terrible things: legs and necks, I saw a woman whose blond hair and green dress were on fire, running with a silent baby in her arms, I saw humans melted into thick pools of liquid, three or four feet deep in places, I saw bodies crackling like embers, laughing, and the remains of masses of people who had tried to escape the firestorm by jumping head first into the lakes and ponds, the parts of their bodies that were submerged in the water were still intact, while the parts that protruded above water were

charred beyond recognition, the bombs kept falling, purple, orange and white, I kept running, my hands kept bleeding through the sounds of collapsing buildings I heard the roar of that baby's silence. I passed the zoo, the cages had been ripped open, everything was everywhere, dazed animals cried in pain and confusion, one of the keepers was calling out for help, he was a strong man, his eyes had been burnt closed, he grabbed my arm and asked me if I knew how to fire a gun, I told him I had to get to someone, he handed me his rifle and said, "You've got to find the carnivores," I told him I wasn't a good shot, I told him I didn't know which were carnivores and which weren't, he said, "Shoot everything, I don't know how many animals I killed, I killed an elephant, it had been thrown twenty yards from its cage, I pressed the rifle to the back of its head and wondered, as I squeezed the trigger, Is it necessary to kill this animal? I killed an ape that was perched on the stump of a fallen tree, pulling its hair as it surveyed the destruction, I killed two lions, they were standing side by side facing west, were they related, were they friends, mates, can lions love? I killed a cub that was climbing atop a massive dead bear, was it climbing atop its parent? I killed a camel with twelve bullets, I suspected it wasn't a carnivore, but I was killing everything, everything had to be killed, a rhinoceros was banging its head against a rock, again and again, as if to put itself out of its suffering, or to make itself suffer, I fired at it, it kept banging its head, I fired again, it banged harder, I walked up to it and pressed the gun between its eyes, I killed it, I killed a zebra, I killed a giraffe, I turned the water of the sea lion's tank red, an ape approached me, it was the ape I had shot before, I'd thought I'd killed it, it walked up to me slowly, its hands covering its ears, what did it want from me, I screamed, "What do you want from me?" I shot it again, where I thought its heart was, it looked at me, in its eyes I was sure I saw some form of understanding, but I didn't see forgiveness, I tried to shoot the vultures, but I wasn't a good enough shot, later I saw vultures fattening themselves on the human carnage, and I blamed myself for everything. The second bombing halted as suddenly and totally as it had began, with burnt hair, with black arms and black fingers, I walked, dazed, to the base of the Loschwitz Bridge, I submerged my black hands in the black water, and

saw my reflection, I was terrified of my own image, my blood-matted hair, my split and bleeding lips, my red, pulsing palms, which, even as I write this, thirty-five years later, don't look like they should be at the ends of my arms. I remember losing my balance, I remember a single thought in my head: *Keep thinking. As long as I am thinking, I am alive,* but at some point I stopped thinking, the next thing I remember is feeling terribly cold, I realized I was lying on the ground, the pain was complete, it let me know I hadn't died, I started moving my legs and arms, my movements must have been noticed by one of the soldiers that had been put into action all over the city, looking for survivors, later learned that there had been more than 220 bodies taken from the foot of the bridge, and I came back to life, I was one of them. They loaded us onto trucks and took us out of Dresden, I looked out from the flaps of canvas that covered the sides of the truck, the buildings were burning, the trees burning, the asphalt, I saw and heard humans trapped, I smelled them, standing in the molten, burning streets like living torches, screaming for help that was impossible to give, the air itself was burning, the truck had to make a number of detours to get beyond the chaos, planes bore down on us once more, we were pulled off the truck and placed under it, the planes dove, more machine guns, more bombs. yellow, red, green, blue, brown, I lost consciousness again, when I awoke I was in a white hospital bed, I couldn't move my arms or legs, I wondered if I had lost them, but I couldn't summon the energy to look for myself, hours passed, or days, when I finally looked down, I saw that I was strapped to the bed, a nurse was standing beside me, I asked, "Why have you done this to me?" She told me I had been trying to hurt myself, I asked her to free me, she said she couldn't, she said I would hurt myself, I begged her to free me, I told her I wouldn't hurt myself, I promised, she apologized and touched me, doctors operated on me, they gave me injections and bandaged my body, but it was her touch that saved my life. In the days and weeks after my release, I looked for my parents and for Anna and for you. Everyone was looking for everyone in the rubble of every building, but all of the searching was in vain, I found our old house, the door was still stubbornly standing, a few of our belongings survived, the typewriter survived, I carried it in my arms

like a baby, before I was evacuated I wrote on the door that I was alive, and the address of the refugee camp in Oschatz, I waited for a letter, but no letter ever came. Because there were so many bodies, and because so many of the bodies had been destroyed there was never a list of the dead, thousands of people were left to suffer hope. When I had thought I was dying at the base of the Loschwitz Bridge, there was a single thought in my head: *Keep thinking* Thinking would keep me alive. But now I am alive, and thinking is killing me. I think and think and think. I can't stop thinking about that night, the clusters of red flares, the sky that was like black water, and how only hours before I lost everything, I had everything. Your aunt had told me she was pregnant, I was overjoyed, I should have known not to trust it, one hundred years of joy can be erased in one second, I kissed her belly, even though there was nothing yet to kiss, I told her, "I love our baby." That made her laugh. I hadn't heard her laugh like that since the day we walked into each other halfway between our houses, she said, "You love an idea." I told her, "I love our idea." That was the point, we were having an idea together. She asked, "Are you afraid?" "Afraid of what?" She said, "Life is scarier than death." I took the future home from my pocket and gave it to her. I kissed her, I kissed her stomach, that was the last time I ever saw her. I was at the end of the path when I heard her father. He came out of the shed. "I almost forgot!" he called to me. "There's a letter here for you. It was delivered yesterday. I almost forgot." He ran into the house and came back out with an envelope. "I almost forgot," he said, his eyes were red, his knuckles were white. I later learned that he survived the bombing and then killed himself. Did your mother tell you that? Does she know it herself? He handed a letter to me. It was from Simon Goldberg. The letter had been posted from Westerbork transit camp in Holland, that's where the Jews from our region were sent, from there they went either to work or to their deaths. "Dear Thomas Schell, It was a pleasure meeting you, however briefly. For reasons that need not be explained, you made a strong impression on me. It is my great hope that our paths, however long and winding, will cross again. Until that day, I wish the best for you in these difficult times. Yours most sincerely, Simon Goldberg." I put the letter back in the envelope and the enve-

lope in my pocket, where the future home had been, I heard your grandfather's voice as I walked away, he was still at the door, "I almost forgot." When your mother found me in the bakery on Broadway, I wanted to tell her everything, maybe if I'd been able to, we could have lived differently, maybe I'd be there with you now instead of here. Maybe if I had said, "I lost a baby," if I'd said, "I'm so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything," maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it, I had hurried too much too deeply inside me. And here I am, instead of there. I'm sitting in this library, thousands of miles from my life, writing another letter I know I won't be able to send, no matter how hard I try and how much I want to. How did that boy making love behind that shed become this man writing this letter at this table?

I love you,
Your father

(Foer, 2005, p 208-216)

Major Letter No.7

WHY I'M NOT WHERE YOU ARE 9/11/03

I don't speak, I'm sorry(p 262) My name is Thomas (p 263) I'm sorry (p 264) (," (The image of lock appears on p 265 for detail see appendix- A, Fig 1 on Page No) I'm still sorry (p 266)

To my child I wrote my last letter on the day you died, and I assumed I'd never write another word o you, I've been so wrong about so much that I've assumed, why am I surprised o feel he pen in my hand tonight? I'm writing as I wait o meet Oskar, in a little less than an hour, I'll close his book and find him under the streetlight, we'll be on our way o he cemetery, o you, your father and your son, his is how it happened I gave a note o your mother's doorman almost two years ago I watched from across the street as he limousine pulled up, she got out, she touched the door, she'd changed somuch but I still knew her, her hands had changed but he way she touched was the same, she went into the building with a boy, I couldn't see if he doorman gave her my note, I couldn't see her reaction, he boy came out and went into the building across the street I watched her hat night as she stood with her palms against the window, I left another note with the doorman, "Do you want o see me again, or should I go away?" The next morning here was a note written on the window, "Don't go away," which meant something, but it didn't mean "I want o see you again " I gathered a handful of pebbles and tossed them at her window, nothing happened, I tossed some more, but she didn't come o he window, I wrote a note in my daybook—"Do you want o see me again?"—I ripped it out and gave it o the doorman, he next morning I went back, I didn't want o make her life any harder than it was, but I didn't want o give up either, here was a note on the window, "I don't want o want o see you again," which meant something, but it didn't mean yes I gathered pebbles from the street and threw them at her window, hoping she would hear me and know what I meant, I waited, she didn't come o he window, I wrote a note—"What should I do?"—and gave it o the doorman, he said, "I'll make sure she gets it," I couldn't say, "Thank you " The next morning I went back, here was a note on her window, he first note, "Don't go away," I gathered pebbles, I threw them, hey tapped like fingers against the glass, I wrote a note, "Yes or no?" for how long could it go on? The next day I found a market on Broadway and bought an apple, if she didn't want me I would leave, I didn't know where I would go, but I would turn around and walk away, here was no note on her window, so I threw he apple, anticipating he glass hat would rain down on me, I wasn't afraid of the shards, he apple went through her window and into her apartment, he doorman was standing in front of the building, he said, "You're lucky hat was open, pal," but I knew I wasn't lucky, he handed me a key I rode the elevator up, he door was open, and the smell brought back o me what for forty years I had struggled not to remember but couldn't forget I put the key in my pocket, "Only the guest room!" she called from our bedroom, he room in which we used o sleep and dream and make love That was how we began our second life together When I got off the plane, after eleven hours of ravel and forty years away, he man took my passport and asked me he purpose of my visit, I wrote in my daybook, "To mourn," and hen, "To mourn try o live." he gave me a look and asked if I would consider hat business or pleasure, I wrote, "Neither " "For how long do

you plan o mourn and try o live?" I wrote, "For the rest of my life " "So you're going o stay?" "For as long as I can " "Are we talking about a weekend or a year?" I didn't write anything The man said, "Next." I watched he bags go around the carousel, each one held a person's belongings, I saw babies going around and around, possible lives, I followed he arrows for those with nothing o declare, and that made me want o laugh, but I was silent One of the guards asked me o come o he side, "That's a lot of suitcases for someone with nothing o declare," he said, I nodded, knowing that people with nothing o declare carry he most, I opened he suitcases for him, "That's a lot of paper," he said, I showed him my left palm, "I mean, that's a whole lot of paper " I wrote, "They're letters o my son I wasn't able o send hem o him while he was alive Now he's dead I don't speak I'm sorry " The guard looked at the other guard and they shared a smile, I don't mind if smiles come at my expense, I'm a small price to pay, hey let me through, not because they believed me but because they didn't want to try to understand me. I found a pay phone and called your mother, hat was as far as my plan went, I assumed so much, hat she was still alive, hat she was in the same apartment I'd left forty years before, I assumed she would come pick me up and everything would begin o make sense, we would mourn and try o live, he phone rang Wand rang, we would forgive ourselves, it rang, a woman answered, "Hello?" I knew it was her, he voice had changed but the breath was the same, he spaces between the words were the same, I pressed "4, 3, 5, 5, 6," she said, "Hello?" I asked, "4, 7, 4, 8, 7, 3, 2, 5, 5, 9, 9, 6, 8?" She said, "Your phone isn't one hundred dollars Hello?" I wanted o reach my hand through the mouthpiece, down the line, and into her room, I wanted o reach YES, I asked, "4, 7,4, 8, 7, 3, 2, 5, 5, 9, 9, 6, 8?" She said, "Hello?" I told her, "4, 3, 5, 7!" "Listen," she said, "I don't know what's wrong with your phone, but all I hear is beeps Why don't you hang up and try again " Try again? I was trying to try again, that's what I was doing! I knew it wouldn't help, I knew no good would come of it, but I stood here in the middle of the airport, at the beginning of the century, at the end of my life, and I told her everything why I'd left, where I'd gone, how I'd found out about your death, why I'd come back, and what I needed o do with the time I had left I told her because I wanted her o believe me and understand, and because I thought I owed it o her, and o myself, and o you, or was it just more selfishness? I broke my life down into letters, for love I pressed "5, 6, 8, 3," for death, "3, 3, 2, 8, 4," when he suffering is subtracted from the joy, what remains? What, I wondered, is the sum of my life? "6, 9, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 7, 3, 5, 4, 3, 2, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7, 8, 2, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 3, 2, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 3, 3, 3, 8, 6, 3, 4, 6, 3, 6, 7, 3, 4, 6, 5, 3, 5, 7¹ 6, 4, 3, 2, 2, 6, 7, 4, 2, 5, 6, 3, 8, 7, 2, 6, 3, 4, 3² 5, 7, 6, 3, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7, 8, 2, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 9, 2, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 3, 3, 3, 8¹ 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4¹ 6, 3, 3, 3, 8, 6, 3, 9, 6, 3, 6, 6, 3, 4, 6, 5, 3, 5, 7¹ 6, 4, 3, 2, 2, 6, 7, 4, 2, 5, 6, 3, 8, 7, 2, 6, 3, 4, 3² 5, 7, 6, 3, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7, 8, 2, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 3, 2, 8, 3, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 6, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 8, 3, 8, 8, 6, 3, 4, 6, 3, 6, 7, 3, 4, 6, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 3, 9, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 4, 5, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 3, 5, 5, 2, 6, 9, 4, 6, 5, 6, 7, 5, 4, 6¹ 5, 2, 6, 2, 6, 5, 9, 5, 2² 6, 9, 6, 2, 6, 5, 4, 7, 5, 5, 4, 5, 2, 5, 2, 6, 4, 6, 2, 4, 5, 2, 7, 2, 2, 7, 7, 4, 2, 5, 5, 2, 9, 2, 4, 5, 2, 6¹ 4, 2, 2, 6, 5, 4, 2, 5, 7, 4, 5, 2, 5, 2, 6, 2, 6, 5, 4, 5, 2, 7, 2, 2, 7, 7, 4, 2, 5, 5, 2, 2, 2, 4, 5, 2¹ 7, 2, 2, 7, 7, 4, 2, 5, 5, 2, 2, 4, 5, 2¹ 7, 2, 2, 7, 7, 4, 2, 5, 5, 2, 2, 4, 5, 2, 4, 7, 2, 2, 7, 2, 4, 6, 5, 5, 5, 2, 6, 5, 4, 6, 5, 6, 7, 5, 4¹ 4, 3, 2, 4, 3, 3, 6, 3, 8, 4¹ 6, 3, 3, 3, 8, 6, 3, 9, 6, 3, 6, 6, 3, 4, 6, 5, 3, 5, 3¹ 2, 2, 3, 3, 2, 6, 3, 4, 2, 5, 6, 3, 8, 3, 2, 6, 3, 4, 3² 5, 6, 8, 3² 5, 3, 6, 3, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 3, 8, 2, 3, 4, 8, 3, 3, 2, 8¹ 3, 3, 4, 8, 3, 3, 2, 8, 3, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 6, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 8, 3, 8, 8, 6, 3, 4, 6, 8, 3, 8, 8, 6, 3, 4, 6, 3¹ 2, 2, 7, 7, 4, 2, 5, 5, 2, 9, 2, 4, 5, 2,

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entrepreneur, waitress, grandfather of fourteen, registered nurse, accountant, intern, jazz saxophonist, doting uncle, army reservist, late-night poet, sister, window washer, Scrabble player, volunteer fireman, father, father, elevator repairman, wine aficionado, office manager, secretary, cook, financier, executive vice president, bird watcher, father, dishwasher, Vietnam veteran, new mother, avid reader, only child, competitive chess player, soccer coach, brother, analyst, maitre d', black belt, CEO, bridge partner, architect, plumber, public relations executive, father, artist in residence, urban planner, newlywed, investment banker, chef, electrical engineer, new father who had a cold hat morning and thought about calling in sick and then one day I saw it, Thomas Schell, my first thought was that I had died "He leaves behind a wife and son," I thought, my son, I thought, my grandson, I thought and thought and thought, and then I stopped thinking When he plane descended and I saw Manhattan for the first time in forty years, I didn't know if I was going up or down, the lights were stars, I didn't recognize any of the buildings, I old he man, "To mourn try o live," I declared nothing, I called your mother but I couldn't explain myself, I called again, she thought it was a joke, I called again, she asked, "Oskar?" I went o he magazine stand and got more quarters, I tried again, it rang and rang, I tried again, it rang. I waited and tried again, I sat on the ground, not knowing what would happen next, not even knowing what I wanted to happen next, I tried once more, "Hello, you have reached he Schell residence I am speaking like an answering message, even though it's really me on the phone If you'd like to talk o me or Grandma, please begin at the beep sound I'm about o make Beeeeep Hello?" It was a child's voice, a boy's "It's really me I'm here Bonjour?" I hung up Grandma? I needed time to think, a taxi would be too quick, as would a bus, what was I afraid of? I put the suitcases on a pushcart and started walking, I was amazed that no one tried o stop me, not even as I pushed he cart onto the street, not even as I pushed it onto the side of the highway, with each step it became brighter and hotter, after only a few minutes it was clear I wouldn't be able o manage, I opened one of the suitcases and took out a stack of letters, "To my child," hey were from 1977, "To my child," "To my child," I thought about laying hem on the road beside me, creating a rail of things I wasn't able o tell you, it might have made my load possible, but I couldn't, I needed o get hem o you, o my child I hailed a cab, by the time we reached your mother's apartment it was already getting late, I needed o find a hotel, I needed food and a shower and time to think, I ripped a page from the daybook and wrote, "I'm sorry." I handed it to the doorman, he said, "Who's his for?" I wrote, "Mrs Schell," he said, "There is no Mrs Schell," I wrote, "There is," he said, "Believe me, I'd know if here was a Mrs Schell in his building," but I'd heard her voice on the phone, could she have moved and kept he number, how would I find her, I needed a phonebook I wrote "3D" and showed it to the doorman He said, "Ms Schmidt," I took back my book and wrote, "That was her maiden name " I lived in the guest room, she left me meals by the door, I could hear her footsteps and sometimes I thought I heard he rim of a glass against the door, was it a glass I once drank water from, had it ever touched your lips? I found my daybooks from before I left, they were in the body of the grandfather clock, I'd have thought she would have thrown hem away, but she kept them, many were empty and many were filled, I wandered through hem, I found he book from the afternoon we met and he book from the day after we got married. I found our first Nothing Place, and he last time we walked around the reservoir. I found pictures of banisters and sinks and fireplaces, on top of one of the stacks was he book

from the first time I tried to leave, "I haven't always been silent, I used to talk and talk and talk and talk " I don't know if she began to feel sorry for me, or sorry for herself, but she started paying me short visits, she wouldn't say anything at first, only tidy up the room, brush cobwebs from the corners, vacuum the carpet, straighten the picture frames, and then one day, as she dusted the bedside table, she said, "I can forgive you for leaving, but not for coming back," she walked out and closed the door behind her, I didn't see her again for three days, and then it was as if nothing had been said, she replaced a light bulb that had worked fine, she picked things up and put them down, she said, "I'm not going to share his grief with you," she closed the door behind her, was I the prisoner or the guard? Her visits became longer, we never had conversations, and she didn't like to look at me, but something was happening, we were getting closer, or farther apart, I took a chance, I asked if she would pose for me, like when we first met, she opened her mouth and nothing came out, she touched my left hand, which I hadn't realized was in a fist, was that how she said yes, or was that how she touched me? I went to the art supply store to buy some clay, I couldn't keep my hands to myself, the pastels in long boxes, the palette knives, the handmade papers hanging on rolls, I tested every sample, I wrote my name in blue pen and in green oil stick, in orange crayon and in charcoal, it felt like I was signing the contract of my life I was here for more than an hour, although I bought only a simple block of clay, when I came home she was waiting for me in the guest room, she was in a robe, standing beside the bed, "Did you make any sculptures while you were away?" I wrote that I had tried but couldn't, "Not even one?" I showed her my right hand, "Did you think about sculptures? Did you make them in your head?" I showed her my left hand, she took off her robe and went onto the sofa, I couldn't look at her, I took the clay from the bag and set it up on the card table, "Did you ever make a sculpture of me in your head?" I wrote, "How do you want to pose?" She said the whole point was that I should choose, I asked if the carpeting was new, she said, "Look at me," I tried but I couldn't, she said, "Look at me or leave me But don't stay and look at anything else " I asked her to lie on her back, but that wasn't right, I asked her to sit, it wasn't right, cross your arms, turn your head away from me, nothing was right, she said, "Show me how," I went over to her, I undid her hair, I pressed down on her shoulders, I wanted to touch her across all of those distances, she said, "I haven't been touched since you left Not in that way " I pulled back my hand, she took it into hers and pressed it against her shoulder, I didn't know what to say, she asked, "Have you?" What's the point of a lie that doesn't protect anything? I showed her my left hand "Who touched you?" My daybook was filled, so I wrote on the wall, "I wanted so much to have a life " "Who?" I couldn't believe the honesty as it traveled down my arm and came out my pen, "I paid for it " She didn't lose her pose, "Were they pretty?" "That wasn't the point " "But were they?" "Some of them " "So you just gave them money and that was it?" "I liked to talk to them I talked about you " "Is that supposed to make me feel good?" I looked at the clay "Did you tell them that I was pregnant when you left?" I showed her my left hand "Did you tell them about Anna?" I showed her my left hand "Did you care for any of them?" I looked at the clay, she said, "I love that you are telling me the truth," and she took my hand from her shoulder and pressed it between her legs, she didn't turn her head to the side, she didn't close her eyes, she stared at our hands between her legs, I felt like I was killing something, she undid my belt and unzipped my pants, she reached her hand under my underpants, "I'm nervous," I said, by smiling, "It's OK," she said, "I'm sorry," I said, by smiling, "It's OK," she said,

she closed the door behind her, then opened it and asked, "Did you ever make a sculpture of me in your head?" There won't be enough pages in his book for me to tell you what I need to tell you, I could write smaller, I could slice the pages down their edges to make two pages, I could write over my own writing, but then what? Every afternoon someone would come to the apartment, I could hear the door opening, and the footsteps, little footsteps, I heard talking, a child's voice, almost a song, it was the voice I'd heard when I called from the airport, the two of them would talk for hours, I asked her one evening, when she came to pose, who paid her all of those visits, she said, "My grandson " "I have a grandson " "No," she said, "I have a grandson " "What's his name?" We tried again, we took off each other's clothes with the slowness of people who know how easy it is to be proven wrong, she lay face-down on the bed, her waist was irritated from pants that hadn't fit her in years, her thighs were scarred, I kneaded them with YES and NO, she said, "Don't look at anything else," I spread her legs, she inhaled, I could stare into the most private part of her and she couldn't see me looking, I slid my hand under her, she bent her knees, I closed my eyes, she said, "Lie on top of me," here was nowhere to write that I was nervous, she said, "Lie on top of me " I was afraid I'd crush her, she said, "All of you on all of me," I let myself sink into her, she said, "That's what I've wanted," why couldn't I have left it like that, why did I have to write anything else, I should have broken my fingers, I took a pen from the bedside table and wrote "Can I see him?" on my arm She turned over, spilling my body next to her, "No " I begged with my hands "No " "Please ""Please " "I won't let him know who I am I just want to see him " "No " "Why not?" "Because " "Because why?" "Because I changed his diapers And I couldn't sleep on my stomach for two years And I taught him how to speak And I cried when he cried And when he was unreasonable, he yelled at me " "I'll hide in the coat closet and look through the keyhole " I thought she would say no, she said, "If he ever sees you, you will have betrayed me " Did she feel pity for me, did she want me to suffer? The next morning, she led me to the coat closet, which faces the living room, she went in with me, we were in here all day, although she knew he wouldn't come until the afternoon, it was too small, we needed more space between us, we needed Nothing Places, she said, "This is what it's felt like, except you weren't here " We looked at each other in silence for hours. When the bell rang, she went to let him in, I was on my hands and knees so my eye would be at the right level, through the keyhole I saw the door open, his white shoes, "Oskar!" she said, lifting him from the ground, "I'm OK," he said, that song, in his voice I heard my own voice, and my father's and grandfather's, and it was the first time I'd heard your voice, "Oskar!" she said again, lifting him again, I saw his face, Anna's eyes, "I'm OK," he said again, he asked her where she had been, "I was talking to the renter," she said The renter? "Is he still here?" he asked, "No," she said, "he had to go run some errands " "But how did he get out of the apartment?" "He left right before you came " "But you said you were just talking to him " He knew about me, he didn't know who I was, but he knew someone was here, and he knew she wasn't telling the truth, I could hear it in his voice, in my voice, in your voice, I needed to talk to him, but what did I need to say? I'm your grandfather, I love you, I'm sorry? Maybe I needed to tell him the things I couldn't tell you, give him all the letters that were supposed to be for your eyes But she would never give me her permission, and I wouldn't betray her, so I started to think about other ways

What am I going to do, I need more room, I have things I need to say, my words are pushing at the walls of the paper's edge, the next day, your mother came to the guest room

and posed for me, I worked the clay with YES and NO, I made it soft, I pressed my thumbs into her cheeks, bringing her nose forward, leaving my thumbprints, I carved out pupils, I strengthened her brow, I hollowed out the space between her bottom lip and chin, I picked up a daybook and went over to her. I started to write about where I'd been and what I'd done since I left, how I'd made my living, whom I'd spent my time with, what I'd thought about and listened to and eaten, but she ripped the page from the book, "I don't care," she said, I don't know if she really didn't care or if it was something else, on the next blank page I wrote, "If here's anything you want to know, I'll tell you," she said, "I know it will make your life easier to tell me, but I don't want to know anything." How could that be? I asked her to tell me about you, she said, "Not our son, my son," I asked her to tell me about her son, she said, "Every Thanksgiving I made a turkey and pumpkin pie. I would go to the schoolyard and ask the children what toys they liked. I bought those for him. I wouldn't let anyone speak a foreign language in the apartment. But he still became you." "He became me?" "Everything was yes and no." "Did he go to college?" "I begged him to stay close, but he went to California. In that way he was also like you." "What did he study?" "He was going to be a lawyer, but he took over the business. He hated jewelry." "Why didn't you sell it?" "I begged him. I begged him to be a lawyer." "Then why?" "He wanted to be his own father." I'm sorry, if that's true, the last thing I would have wanted was for you to be like me, I left so you could be you. She said, "He tried to find you once. I gave him that only letter you ever sent. He was obsessed with it, always reading it. I don't know what you wrote, but it made him go and look for you." On the next blank page I wrote, "I opened the door one day and here he was." "He found you?" "We talked about nothing." "I didn't know he found you." "He wouldn't tell me who he was. He must have become nervous. Or he must have hated me once he saw me. He pretended to be a journalist. It was so terrible. He said he was doing a story about the survivors of Dresden." "Did you tell him what happened to you that night?" "It was in the letter." "What did you write?" "You didn't read it?" "You didn't send it to me." "It was terrible. All of the things we couldn't share. The room was filled with conversations we weren't having." I didn't tell her that after you left, I stopped eating, I got so skinny that the bathwater would collect between my bones, why didn't anyone ask me why I was so skinny? If someone had asked, I never would have eaten another bite. "But if he didn't tell you he was your son, how did you know?" "I knew because he was my son." She put her hand on my chest, over my heart, I put my hands on her hips, I put my hands around her, she undid my pants, "I'm nervous," despite everything I wanted, the sculpture was looking more and more like Anna, she closed the door behind her, I'm running out of room. I spent most of my days walking around the city, getting to know it again, I went to the old Columbian Bakery but it wasn't there anymore, in its place was a ninety-nine-cent store where everything cost more than ninety-nine cents. I went by the tailor shop where I used to get my pants taken in, but here was a bank, you needed a card just to open the door, I walked for hours, down one side of Broadway and up the other, where there had been a watch repairman there was a video store, where there had been a flower market there was a store for video games, where there had been a butcher there was sushi, what's sushi, and what happens to all of the broken watches? I spent hours at the dog run on the side of the natural history museum, a pit bull, a Labrador, a golden retriever, I was the only person without a dog, I thought and thought, how could I be close to Oskar from far away, how could I be fair to you and fair to your mother and fair to myself, I wanted to

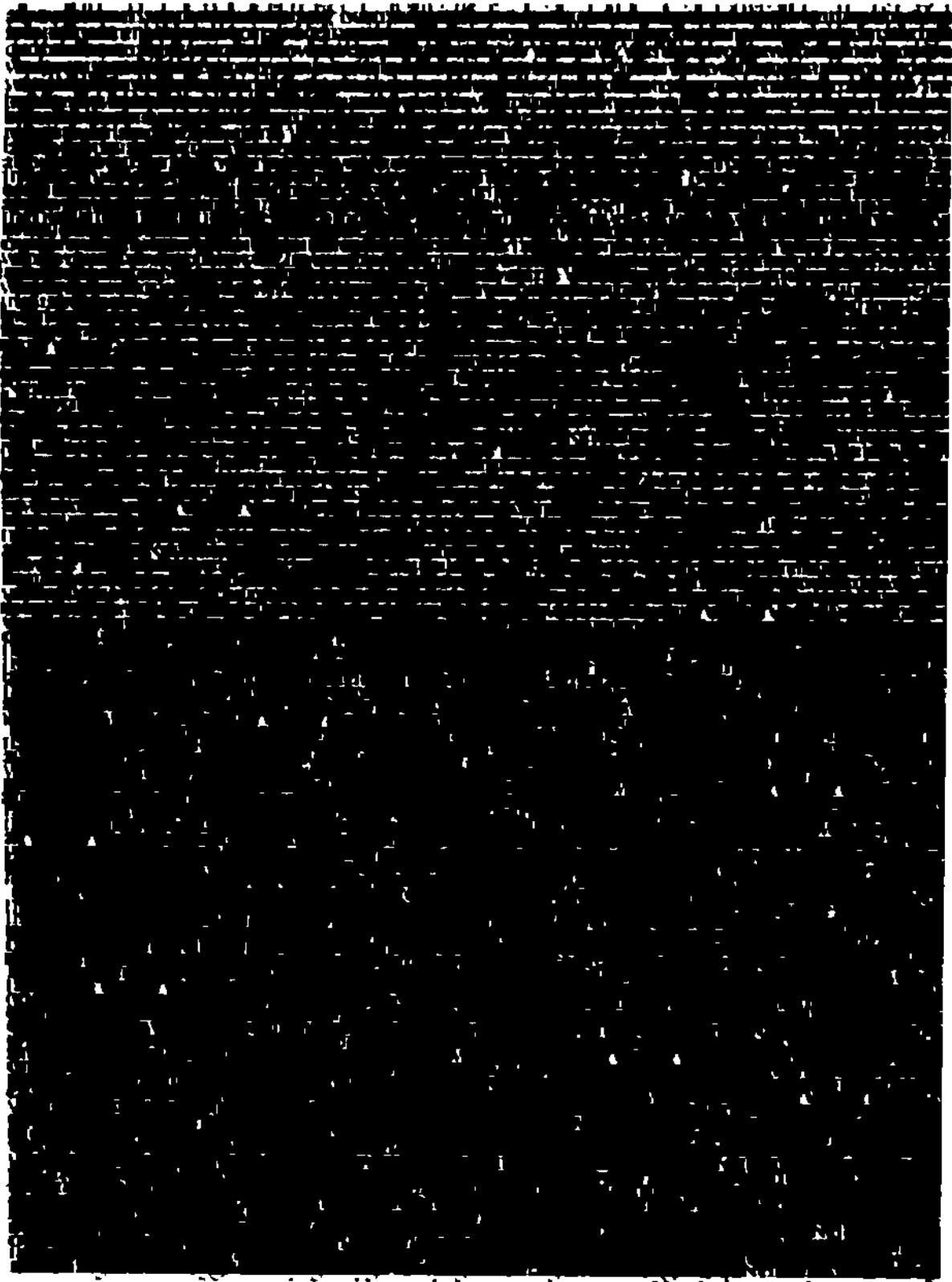
carry the closet door with me so I could always look at him through the keyhole, I did the next best thing I learned his life from a distance, when he went to school, when he came home, where his friends lived, what stores he liked to go to, I followed him all over the city, but I didn't betray your mother, because I never let him know I was here I thought it could go on like that forever, and yet here I am, once again I was proven wrong I don't remember when the strangeness of it first occurred to me, how much he was out, how many neighborhoods he went to, why I was the only one watching him, how his mother could let him wander so far so alone Every weekend morning, he left the building with an old man and went knocking on doors around the city, I made a map of where they went, but I couldn't make sense of it, it made no sense, what were they doing? And who was the old man, a friend, a teacher, a replacement for a missing grandfather? And why did they stay for only a few minutes at each apartment, were they selling something, collecting information? And what did his grandmother know, was I the only one worried about him? After they left one house, on Staten Island, I waited around and knocked on the door. "I can't believe it," the woman said, "another visitor!" "I'm sorry," I wrote, "I don't speak That was my grandson who just left Could you tell me what he was doing here?" The woman told me, "What a strange family you are " I thought, Family we are "I just got off the phone with his mother " I wrote, "Why was he here?" She said, "For the key " I asked, "What key?" She said, "For the lock " "What lock?" "Don't you know?" For eight months I followed him and talked to the people he talked to, I tried to learn about him as he tried to learn about you, he was trying to find you, just as you'd tried to find me, it broke my heart into more pieces than my heart was made of, why can't people say what they mean at the time? One afternoon I followed him downtown, we sat across from each other on the subway, the old man looked at me, was I staring, was I reaching my arms out in front of me, did he know that I should have been the one sitting next to Oskar? They went into a coffee store, on the way back I lost him, it happened all the time, it's hard to stay close without making yourself known, and I wouldn't betray her When I got back to the Upper West Side I went into a bookstore, I couldn't go to the apartment yet, I needed time to think, at the end of the aisle I saw a man who I thought might be Simon Goldberg, he was also in the children's section, the more I looked at him, the more unsure I was, the more I wanted it to be him, had he gone to work instead of to his death? My hands shook against the change in my pockets, I tried not to stare, I tried not to reach my arms out in front of me, could it be, did he recognize me, he'd written, "It is my great hope that our paths, however long and winding, will cross again " Fifty years later he wore the same thick glasses, I'd never seen a white shirt, he had a hard time letting go of books, I went up to him. "I don't speak," I wrote, "I'm sorry " He wrapped his arms around me and squeezed, I could feel his heart beating against my heart, they were trying to beat in unison, without saying a word he turned around and rushed away from me, out of the store, into the street, I'm almost sure it wasn't him, I want an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time . The next day, Oskar and the old man went to the Empire State Building, I waited for them on the street I kept looking up, trying to see him, my neck was burning, was he looking down at me, were we sharing something without either of us knowing it? After an hour, the elevator doors opened and the old man came out, was he going to leave Oskar up here, so high up, so alone, who would keep him safe? I hated him I started to write something, he came up to me and grabbed me by the collar "Listen," he said, "I don't know who you are, but I've seen you following us, and I don't like it Not a

bit This is the only time I'm going to tell you to stay away " My book had fallen on the floor, so I couldn't say anything "If I ever see you again, anywhere near that boy—" I pointed at the floor, he let go of my collar, I picked up the book and wrote, "I'm Oskar's grandfather I don't speak I'm sorry " "His grandfather?" I flipped back and pointed at what I'd been writing, "Where is he?" "Oskar doesn't have a grandfather " I pointed at the page "He's walking down the stairs " I quickly explained everything as best I could, my handwriting was becoming illegible, he said, "Oskar wouldn't lie to me " I wrote, "He didn't lie He doesn't know " The old man took a necklace from under his shirt and looked at it, he said, "Oskar is my friend I have to tell him " "He's my grandson Please don't " "You're the one who should be going around with him " "I have been " "And what about his mother?" "What about his mother?" We heard Oskar singing from around the corner, his voice was getting louder, the old man said, "He's a good boy," and walked away I went straight home, the apartment was empty I thought about packing my bags, I thought about jumping out a window, I sat on the bed and thought, I thought about you What kind of food did you like, what was your favorite song, who was the first girl you kissed, and where, and how, I'm running out of room, I want an infinitely long blank book and forever, I don't know how much time passed, it didn't matter, I'd lost all of my reasons to keep track Someone rang the bell, I didn't get up, I didn't care who it was, I wanted to be alone, on the other side of the window I heard the door open and I heard his voice, my reason, "Grandma?" He was in the apartment, it was just the two of us, grandfather and grandson I heard him going from room to room, moving things, opening and closing, what was he looking for, why was he always looking? He came to my door, "Grandma?" I didn't want to betray her, I turned off the lights, what was I so afraid of? "Grandma?" He started crying, my grandson was crying "Please I really need help. If you're in here, please come out " I turned on the light, why wasn't I more afraid? "Please " I opened the door and we faced each other, I faced myself, "Are you the renter?" I went back into the room and got his daybook from the closet, his book that is nearly out of pages, I brought it to him and wrote, "I don't speak I'm sorry " I was so grateful to have him looking at me, he asked me who I was, I didn't know what to tell him, I invited him into the room, he asked me if I was a stranger, I didn't know what to tell him, he was still crying, I didn't know how to hold him, I'm running out of room I brought him over to the bed, he sat down, I didn't ask him any questions or tell him what I already knew, we didn't talk about unimportant things, we didn't become friends, I could have been anyone, he began at the beginning, he vase, he key, Brooklyn, Queens, I knew the lines by heart Poor child, telling everything to a stranger, I wanted to build walls around him, I wanted to separate inside from outside, I wanted to give him an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time, he told me how he'd just gone up to the top of the Empire State Building, how his friend had told him he was finished, it wasn't what I'd wanted, but if it was necessary to bring my grandson face to face with me, it was worth it, anything would have been I wanted to touch him, to tell him that even if everyone left everyone, I would never leave him, he talked and talked, his words fell through him, trying to find the floor of his sadness, "My dad," he said, "My dad," he ran across the street and came back with a phone, "These are his last words "

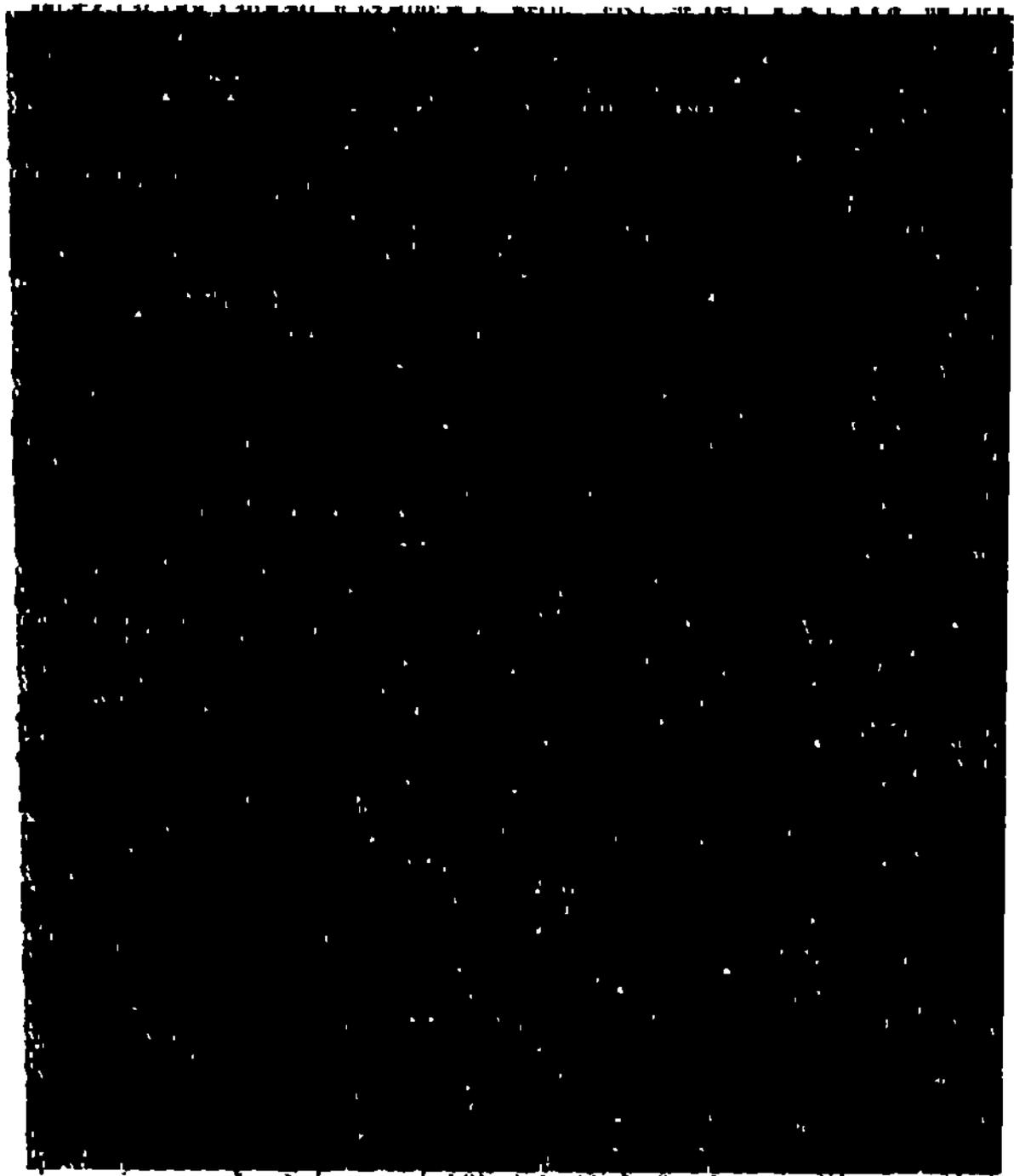
MESSAGE FIVE 10 22 A M. IT'S DA S DAD HEL S DAD KNOW IF EAR
ANY THIS I'M HELLO? YOU HEAR ME? WE TO THE ROOF EVERYTHING OK
FINE SOON SORRY HEAR ME MUCH HAPPENS, REMEMBER—(p 267-280)



(p 282)



(p 283)



(Foer 2005, p 262-84)

Minor Letter No. 1

*Dear Stephen Hawking,
Can I please be your protege?
Thanks
Oskar Schell (p 11)*

Minor Letter No 2

*Thank you for your letter. Because of the large volume of mail I receive I am unable to write personal responses. Nevertheless, know that I read and save every letter, with the hope of one day being able to give each the proper response it deserves. Until that day,
Most sincerely,
Stephen Hawking (p 12)*

Note The same letter is displayed four times in the novel on (p 12, 106, 200 and 242) without any discussion

Minor Letter No. 3

Dear Oskar Schell,

I've read every letter that you've sent me these past two years. In return, I've sent you many form letters with the hope of one day being able to give you the proper response you deserve. But the more letters you wrote to me, and the more of yourself you gave, the more daunting my task became. I'm sitting beneath a pear tree as I dictate this to you overlooking the orchards of friend's estate. I've spent the past few days here, recovering from some medical treatment that has left me physically and emotionally depleted. As I moped about this morning, feeling sorry for myself, it occurred to me, like a simple solution to an impossible problem today is the day I've been waiting for. You asked me in your first letter if you could be my protégé. I don't know about that, but I would be happy to have you join me in Cambridge for a few days. I could introduce you to my colleagues, treat you to the best curry outside India, and show you just how boring the life of an astrophysicist can be. You can have a bright future in the science, Oskar. I would be happy to do anything possible to facilitate such a path. It's wonderful to think what would happen if you put your imagination towards scientific ends. But Oskar, intelligent people write to me all the time. In your fifth letter you asked, "What if never stop writing?" That question has stuck with me. I wish I were a poet. I've never confessed that to anyone, and I am confessing it to you, because you have given me reason to feel that I can trust you. I've spent my life observing the universe mostly in mind's eye. It's been a tremendously rewarding life, a wonderful life. I've able to explore the origins of time and space with some of the great living thinkers. But I wish I were a poet. Albert Einstein, a hero of mine, once wrote, "Our situation is the following. We are standing in front of a closed box which we cannot open." I am sure I don't have to tell you that the vast majority of the universe is composed of dark matter. The fragile balance depends on things we'll never be able to see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. Life itself depends on them. What's real? Maybe those aren't the right questions to be asking. What does life depend on? I wish I had made things for life to depend on. What if you never stop inventing? Maybe you're not inventing at all. I'm being called in for breakfast, so I'll have to end this letter here. There are more I want to tell you, and more I want to hear from you. It's a shame we live on different continents. One shame of many. It's so beautiful at this hour. The sun is low, the shadows are long, the air is cold and clean. You won't be awake for another five hours but I can't help feeling that we're sharing this clear and beautiful morning.

*Your friend,
Stephen Hawking (p 304-05)*

Minor Letter No. 4

Cher Marcel,

Allo I am Oskar's mom. I have thought about it a ton, and I have decided that it isn't obvious why Oskar should go to French lessons, so he will no longer be going to go to see you on Sundays like he used to. I want to thank you very much for everything you have taught Oskar particularly the conditional tense, which is weird. Obviously, there's no need to call me when Oskar doesn't come to his lessons because I

already know, because this was my decision Also, I will keep sending you checks, because you are a nice guy

*Votre amie devouee,
Mademoiselle Schell (p 51)*

Minor Letter No. 5

Dear Oskar Schell,

Thank you for your contribution to the American Diabetes Foundation Every dollar – or, in your case, fifty cents – counts I have enclosed some additional literature about the Foundation, including our mission statement, a brochure featuring past activities and success, as well as some information about our future goals both short- and long-term Thank you, once more, for contributing to this urgent cause You are saving lives

*With gratitude,
Patricia Roxbury
President, New York Chapter (p 151)*

Minor Letter No 6

Dear Oskar,

Thanks for mailing me the \$76.50 you owed me To tell the truth I never thought I'd see that money Now I will believe everyone

*(Cab driver) Marty Mahaltra
P S No tip? (p 193)*

Minor Letter No 7

Dear Oskar,

While you certainly express yourself like an intelligent young man without ever having met you, and knowing nothing of your experience with scientific research, I'd have a hard time writing a recommendation Thanks for the kind words about my work, and best of luck with your explorations, scientific and otherwise

*Most sincerely
Jane Goodall
(p 199)*

Minor Letter No 8

Dear Osk,

Hello, lad! Thanks for your glorious letter and the bulletproof drumsticks, which I hope I'll never have to use! I have to confess, I've never thought too much about giving lessons I hope you like the enclosed T-shirt, which I took the liberty of signing for you

*Your ma
Ringo (p 40)*

Minor Letter No. 9

Dear Oskar Schell,

I am responding on behalf of Dr Koley, who is currently in the Congo on research expedition She asked that I pass on her appreciation for your enthusiasm about her work with elephants Given that I am already her assistant – and budget limitations being what they are, and I'm sure you've experienced – she isn't now able to take on anyone else But she did want me to tell you that should your interest and availability remain, there might a project next fall in Sudan that she will need help with (The grant proposals are just now going through) Please forward us your resume, including previous research experience, graduate and postgraduate transcripts, and two letters of recommendation

*Best,
Gary Franklin (p 197)*

Voice Messages Transcription

"There were four more messages from him one at 9 12, one at 9 31, one at 9 46, and one at 10 04 I listened to them, and listened to them again, and then before I had time to figure out what to do, or even what to think or feel, the phone started ringing It was 10 22 27 I looked at the caller ID and saw that it was him "(15)

Message one: 8:52 A.M.

Message one Tuesday, 8 52 A.M. *Is anybody there? Hello? It's Dad. If you're there, pick up. I just tried the office, but no one was picking up. Listen, something's happened. I'm OK. They're telling us to stay where we are and wait for the firemen. I'm sure it's fine. I'll give you another call when I have a better idea of what's going on. Just wanted to let you know that I'm OK, and not to worry. I'll call again soon. (15)*

Message two: 9:12 A.M.

Message two 9 12 A.M. *It's me again. Are you there? Hello? Sorry if it's getting a bit smoky. I was hoping you would be home. I don't know if you've heard about what's happened. But I just wanted you to know that I'm OK. Everything is fine. When you get this, give Grandma a call. Let her know that I'm OK. I'll call again in a few minutes. Hopefully the firemen will be up here by then. I'll call. (69)*

Message three 9:31 A.M.

Message three 9 31 A.M. *Hello? Hello? Hello? (168)*

Message four: 9:46 A.M.

Message four 9 46 A.M. *It's Dad. Thomas Schell. It's Thomas Schell. Hello? Can you hear me? Are you there? Pick up. Please! Pick up. I'm underneath a table. Hello? Sorry. I have a wet napkin wrapped around my face. Hello? No. Try the other. Hello? Sorry. People are getting crazy. There's a helicopter circling around, and I think we're going to go up onto the roof. They say there's going to be some sort of evacuation—I don't know, try that one—they say there's going to be some sort of evacuation from up there, which makes sense if the helicopters can get close enough. It makes sense. Please pick up. I don't know. Yeah, that one. Are you there? Try that one. (204)*

Message five 10:04 A.M.

MESSAGE FIVE 10 22 A.M. *IT'S DA S DAD HEL SDAD KNOW IF EAR ANY THIS I'M
HELLO? YOU HEAR ME? WE TO THEROOF EVERYTHING OK FINE
SOONSORRY HEAR ME MUCHHAPPENS, REMEMBER
-(280)*

Oskar's voice: He recorded his own message

Hi, you've reached the Schell residence. Here is today's fact of the day—it's so cold in Yukatla, which is in Siberia, that breath instantly freezes with crackling noise that they call the whispering of the stars. On extremely cold days, the towns are covered in fog caused by the breath of humans and animals. Please leave a message. (Foer 2005 301)

Abby Black voice mail

Message one Saturday, 11 52 A.M. Hi, this is a message for Oskar Shell. Oskar, this is Abby Black. You were just over at my apartment asking about the key. I wasn't completely honest with you, and I think I might be able to help. Please give - (Foer 2005 288)

Display of *Hamlet* Play

MARGIE CARSON Hey, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

JIMMY SNYDER At supper

MARGIE CARSON At supper! Where?

JIMMY SNYDER Not where he eats, but where he's eaten

MARGIE CARSON Wow!

JIMMY SNYDER A king can end up going through the guts of a beggar

I felt, that night, on that stage, under that skull, incredibly close to everything in the universe, but also extremely alone I wondered, for the first time in my life, if life was worth all the work it took to live What *exactly* made it worth it? What's so horrible about being dead forever, and not feeling anything, and not even dreaming? What's so great about feeling and dreaming?

Jimmy put his hand under my face "This is where his lips were that I used to kiss a lot Where are your jokes now, your games, your songs?"

Maybe it was because of everything that had happened in those twelve weeks Or maybe it was because I felt so close and alone that night I just couldn't be dead any longer

ME Alas, poor Hamlet [*I take JIMMY SNYDER's face into my hand*], I knew him, Horatio

JIMMY SNYDER But Yorick you're only a skull

ME So what? I don't care Screw you

JIMMY SNYDER [*whispers*] This is not in the play [*He looks for help from MRS RIGLEY, who is in the front row, slipping through the script She draws circles in the air with her right hand which is the universal sign for "improvise"*]

ME I knew him, Horatio, a jerk of infinite stupidity, a most excellent masturbator in the second-floor boys' bathroom—I have proof Also, he's dyslexic

JIMMY SNYDER [*Can't think of anything to say*]

ME Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs?

JIMMY SNYDER What are you talking about?

ME [*Raises hand to scoreboard*] Succotash my cocker spaniel, you fudging crevasse-hole dipshitake!

JIMMY SNYDER Huh?

ME You are guilty of having abused those less strong than you of making the lives of nerds like me and Toothpaste and The Minch almost impossible, of imitating mental retards, of prank-calling people who get almost no phone calls anyway, of terrorizing domesticated animals and old people—who, by the way, are smarter and more knowledgeable than you—of making fun of me just because I have apussy And I've seen you litter, too

JIMMY SNYDER I never prank-called any retards

ME You were adopted

JIMMY SNYDER [*Searches audience for his parents*]

ME And nobody loves you

JIMMY SNYDER [*His eyes fill with tears*]

ME And you have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

JIMMY SNYDER Huh?

ME *On behalf of the dead* [*I pull the skull off my head Even though it's made of papier-mache it's really hard I smash it against JIMMY SNYDER's head and I smash it again He falls to the ground, because he is unconscious, and I can't believe how strong I actually am I smash his head again with all my force and blood starts to come out of his nose and ears But I still don't feel any sympathy for him I want him to bleed, because he deserves it And nothing else makes any sense DAD doesn't make sense MOM doesn't make sense THE AUDIENCE doesn't make sense The folding chairs and fog-machine*

Fog doesn't make sense Shakespeare doesn't make sense The stars that I know are on the other side of the gym ceiling don't make sense The only thing that makes any sense right then is my smashing

JIMMYSNYDER's face His blood I knock a bunch of his teeth into his mouth, and I think they go down his throat There is blood everywhere, covering everything I keep smashing the skull against his skull, which is also RON's skull (for letting MOM get on with life) and MOM's skull (for getting on with life) and Dad's skull (for dying) and GRANDMA's skull (for embarrassing me so much) and DR FEIN's skull (for asking if any good could come out of DAD's death) and the skulls of everyone else I know THE AUDIENCE is applauding, all of them, because I am making so much sense They are giving me a standing ovation as I hit him again and again I hear them call]

Newspaper Extract

statement, read to the hundreds of gathered press from a makeshift media center off the back of the family home, Levy's father adamantly restated his confidence that his daughter would be found. "We will not stop looking until we are given a definitive reason to stop looking, namely, Chandra's return." During the brief question and answer period that followed, a reporter from *El Pais* asked Mr. Levy if by "return" he meant "safe return." Overcome with emotion, Mr. Levy was unable to speak, and his lawyer took the microphone. "We continue to hope and pray for Chandra's safety, and will do everything within statement, read to the hundreds of gathered press from a makeshift

(p 10)

I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP ON THE FLOOR WHEN I WOKE UP, MOM WAS PULLING MY SHIRT OFF TO HELP ME GET INTO MY PJS, WHICH MEANS SHE MUST HAVE SEEN ALL OF MY BRUISES I COUNTED THEM LAST NIGHT IN THE MIRROR AND THERE WERE FORTY-ONE SOME OF THEM HAVE GOTTEN BIG, BUT MOST OF THEM ARE SMALL I DON'T PUT THEM THERE FOR HER, BUT STILL I WANT HER TO ASK ME HOW I GOT THEM (EVENTHOUGH SHE PROBABLY KNOWS), AND TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME (BECAUSE SHE SHOULD REALIZE HOW HARD THINGS ARE FOR ME), AND TO FEEL TERRIBLE (BECAUSE SOME OF IT IS HER FAULT), AND TO PROMISE ME THAT SHE WON'T DIE AND LEAVE ME ALONE BUT SHE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING I COULDN'T EVEN SEE THE LOOK IN HER EYES WHEN SHE SAW THE BRUISES, BECAUSE MY SHIRT

WAS OVER MY HEAD, COVERING MY FACE LIKE A
POCKET, OR A SKULL (p 172-73)

~~INCREDIBLY ALONE~~