The Trauma Novel of 9/11
A study of the word-and-image relations

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Preface

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I. Introduction

1.1. A Reading of 9/11 Through a Trauma Framework

In the immediate aftermath of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there was a great effort within literature to come to terms with these catastrophic events. In the past several years, a considerable amount of American as well as European writers have been compelled to represent 9/11 in literature. Novels that draw upon real history are held to a different and more demanding standard, especially when that history is recent, traumatic and unresolved. The creation of such novels naturally comes with straining demands concerning the interpretation and representation of the event – a difficult task considering the inherent incomprehensibility of trauma. The terrorist attacks of September 11 have been widely described as “a sight without reference, as falling outside the bounds of language and as being out of joints with a normal world image” (Uytterschout 61). When writing about 9/11 authors should take into account the traumatic event’s “essential incomprehensibility, the force of its affront to understanding” (Caruth, Explorations in Memory 154). And yet, despite the common saying that trauma inherently defies language and that it can not be represented by any sort of discourse, literature has dared to take on the challenge.

As literature aims to express what remains “unrepresentable” about 9/11, it also raises questions about how one should interpret and represent the event. The symbolic suggestiveness of the WTC and its destruction on that fatal morning appear to be central points present in the majority of literary texts written in the aftermath of 9/11. Each of these novels deals with the traumatic subject matter of 9/11 according to their own representational strategies, emphasizing the meaning of the event and dramatizing its ongoing resonance in the
collective lives of New York citizens and beyond. It is hard not to notice the rise of novel hybrid forms generated by the events on 9/11, such as The New York Times’s “Portraits of Grief” and the use of new kind of images and iconography in narrative, graphic novels and comic books. This visualization of 9/11 in literature corresponds to Cathy Caruth’s call for modes of representation that are as unsettling as the traumatic event itself (qtd. in Uytterschout 64). In other words, an event that defies all representation will be best represented by a failure of representation. Given the extreme complexity of traumatic realities and the fact that they resist normal modes of representation, post-9/11 literature had to go looking for less traditional forms of expression to come as close as possible to the disruptive nature of trauma. Conventional narratives tend to aspire to closure, promising a movement away from the past and towards a future that is not implicated in the events of the past thus failing to capture the unique specificity of a traumatic history. In his essay “In the Ruins of the Future,” which was published just months after the attacks, Don DeLillo also acknowledges the complicated relationship between trauma and representation: after the first tower was hit, it gradually “became possible for us to absorb this, barely. But when the towers fell, when the rolling smoke began moving downward, floor to floor, this was so vast and terrible that it was outside imagining even as it happened. We could not catch up with it” (39).

Warning against certain representational modes, such as analogy or simile, that could reduce the temporal experience of the event, DeLillo recommends a representation that stays true to the inherent nature of trauma.

Trauma is often defined as “a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (Caruth, Unclaimed Experience 4). This wound entails a rupture in the mind’s experience of the world caused by an overwhelming experience of a sudden and traumatic event that can never be fully known and therefore “is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (Caruth,
The event is thus only experienced belatedly since it the victim doesn’t have full realization at the time. This belatedness continues to interrupt and undermine the simple telling of the story of the traumatic event. Many trauma theorists have insisted that a traumatized victim is literally possessed by an image or event and that it is this possession and its constant return which thus constitutes trauma. Trauma refuses to be simply located and appears to be situated outside the boundaries of any time or place. According to Caruth it is this fundamental dislocation that “is both its testimony to the event and to the impossibility of its direct access” (Exploitations in Memory 9). The translation of trauma into literature brings with it a crisis of representational models that conceive of reference in terms of a direct connection between event and comprehension. Over the years novelists have waged efforts to find an adequate mode of representation when dealing with traumatic subject matter, attempting to transmit the truth through the refusal to adopt a certain framework of understanding. The conventional modes of representation had to make place for formal innovations and modernist, experimental textual strategies. More than any other event, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York provoked the need for a translation of traumatic historical events into collective imagery. Since 9/11 was probably the most visually documented traumatic event in human history, it comes as no surprise that the visual element quickly found its way into novelistic representation. The dominant images – of the planes crashing into the two towers, the buildings imploding, the grey smoke overshadowing the city, and the wreckage afterward – through which the majority of people witnessed the event have made 9/11 into a uniquely visual and visualized traumatic event. Without privileging the 9/11 attacks, they were a prime example of a traumatic historical event that was witnessed through the image in all its forms. The repeated return on television of the planes’ initial impact followed by the collapse of the towers can be seen as a form of traumatic repetition compulsion. Next to video footage, photography also played a crucial role
in the reporting of the event. Photographs identifying the missing, the *New York Times* “Portraits of Grief”, the *Here is New York* project which anonymously mixed professional and amateur photographs of the event, all played an important role in the mastering of the traumatic event.

As said before, traditional modes of representation were not adequate to represent trauma, especially not in the case of 9/11. Several novels reached for alternative forms of representation that would be possible to give a more direct access to the traumatic subject matter taking into consideration the visual nature of traumatic experiences. Precisely because words fail to capture or represent the “inexpressible” traumatic past, novelists started using images to come as close as possible to rendering the condition of the traumatized victim’s mind. Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart elucidate this failure of language from the point of view of the mental condition:

When people are exposed to trauma, that is, a frightening event outside of ordinary human experience, they experience “speechless terror.” The experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level (*Unclaimed Experience* 172).

This falls back on the distinction, made by psychologist named Pierre Janet, between ordinary “narrative” memory on the one hand and fragmentary and visual “traumatic” memory on the other. Whereas “narrative” memories order the experiences into a rational, linear, causal story that is placed in past time with a beginning, a middle and an ending, “traumatic” memories are stored in a different location in the brain to which the victim has no conscious access. These memories are also stored in a different form than “narrative” memories, namely a
visual form. As Judith Herman asserts, the use of images in novels dealing with traumatic subject matter, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, may represent the “most effective initial approach to these ‘indelible images’” given the iconic or visual nature of traumatic memories (qtd. in Codde: unpag.). This combination of word and image is precisely what makes these novels an interesting and convincing representation of trauma. The disruptive character of trauma is represented in the narrative and, at the same time, in the formal and overtly visual structure of the novels thus most adequately rendering the mental condition of the traumatized mind.

1.2. Research Question

During the course of the twentieth century the various relationships between the verbal and the visual have become increasingly important within humanities in general and transdisciplinary fields of study in particular. Our contemporary world is saturated by mass media and this has consequently led to an increase of images in non-fictional as well as fictional texts. The noted word-and-image researcher W. J. T. Mitchell has coined the term “pictorial turn” for this increasing presence of images in contemporary communication, replacing the “linguistic turn” of the 1960s and 1970s.\(^1\) However, one mustn’t assume that this “visualistic turn” (Sachs-Hombach) entails that the study of images should outrange the field of literary studies in importance. This newly emerging field of visual studies rather intends to bring together the verbal and the visual arts, considering them as mutually interdependent. The substantial rise of literary works that combine word and image also testifies to this paradigm shift, in turn raising questions about the way in which these novels

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\(^1\) Mitchell takes up the American philosopher Richard Rorty’s division of the history of philosophy in a series of paradigm changes or as he prefers “turns.” According to Rorty, medieval philosophy was mainly concerned with things, the philosophy of the seventeenth through the nineteenth century with ideas and the twentieth century’s philosophical scene with words.
should be analyzed. Naturally, novels which incorporate images can never be analyzed in the same way as traditional texts in which none appear. This particular type of fiction calls for a different type of analysis which bears in mind the intermediality of word and image. The relationship between word and image becomes even more compelling in fictional works with a traumatic content. The relation of visuality to the experience and the transmission of “unspeakable” personal or cultural trauma becomes clear as these novels brilliantly succeed in emotionally communicating the character’s traumatic experiences through the alternative cognitive structures of the visual. The first modern theories of trauma were developed in the second half of the nineteenth century and remain influential still. In these theories, trauma is generally described as the wounding of the mind by the accurate imprinting of an overwhelming traumatic reality which was not fully experienced at the time. This results in a deformation of memory. Just as the photograph mechanically repeats what has occurred only once, as French critic Roland Barthes remarks in Camera Lucida, trauma results from experiences which are not integrated in narrative memory and therefore repeatedly come back under the form of flashbacks to haunt the victims. According to the noted trauma researcher, Cathy Caruth, trauma is characterized not by the event itself but it “consists, rather, solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (Explorations in Memory 4).

As I will argue in this master thesis, the strategy of combining word and image is perfectly suited for traumatic representation given the visual nature of trauma. This is even more so in the case of the 9/11 attacks, an event in which the media constituted an active part of what happened. As Mitchell states in his essay The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror: “the main weapon of terror is the violent spectacle, the image of destruction, or the destruction of an image, or both, as in the mightiest spectacle of
them all, the destruction of the World Trade Center” (298). This particular act of terrorism was fully carried by the mass media, needing to be mediated in order to destroy the symbol of American power and capitalism. The visual played a crucial role in the terrorist attacks on September 11 and consequentially will continue to be of importance in the representation of the event in literature. In the light of contemporary discussions of recovered memories and the limits of representing such catastrophes as the Holocaust and 9/11, I intend to analyze novels which visualize the inherent incomprehensibility of trauma. The formal organization of these novels and their interplay between the verbal and the visual allows for an accurate reproduction of all that most resists representation. Drawing on the recent work in trauma studies and word-and-image studies, I shall investigate how this mode of representation is an adequate means to render the workings of the traumatized mind. I shall interpret the use of images which attempt to express what cannot be verbally articulated and will further investigate the interplay between word and image. Multiple questions shall be raised concerning issues such as the function of the images in the text, their relation to the narrative, how they insert themselves into the consciousness of the reader, and what is the signifying structure of both representational forms. For this study, I shall be looking into two types of novels that deal with the tragic events of 9/11, consequentially the graphic novel and the so-called photo-texts.

Before the search for the relationship between word and image in these novels begins, I shall start with a thorough overview of the wider field of text-and-image studies in the humanities in general and trauma studies in particular. In the second section I shall focus on the graphic novel In the Shadow of No Towers by Art Spiegelman and its use of a combination of word and image in an attempt to adequately represent the traumatic events of 9/11. In the Shadow of No Towers is a hectic, fragmented and outsized work of visual witnessing. Art Spiegelman, who lives in downtown Manhattan, was a direct eyewitness to
the traumatic events of 9/11. Finally, in the third section I shall centre my attention on the photo-text novels *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer and *Windows on the World* by Frédéric Beigbeder. The latter novel is based on *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers* which is a journalistic reconstruction by Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn of events from within the towers. The novel combines two narrative voices: a minute-by-minute fictional experience of a father and his two sons who are all trapped in the restaurant Windows on the World on that fatal September 11 morning and a record of Beigbeder himself occasionally intervening as an indirect virtual witness who watched the events on television. Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel is formally more innovative than the chronologically conservative *Windows on the World*. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a touching account of the precocious nine year old Oskar Schell’s quest for the lock to match a mysterious key he found in his father’s closet. Oskar believes that finding the matching lock to the key will help him understand his father’s death.

II. Word-and-Image Relations: a Transdisciplinary Study

In the last couple of years the study of the multiple and varying relations between word and image seem to have become a hot topic in the humanities. This has consequently led to the creation of new inter- or transdisciplinary fields of study in which literary scholars, such as Mieke Bal, Wendy Steiner, W. J. T. Mitchell, Manfred Muckenaupt and many others, started applying their insights to the domain of the visual arts. Because of this multidisciplinary research in the study of word-and-image relations, the field is characterized by a variety of methodologies (e.g., semiotics, linguistics, aesthetics) and topics of interests
(e.g., literature and painting, literature and photography, graphic novels, calligraphy, visual poetry and so forth). Although this “crossing of boundaries” has given rise to a new and critical interdisciplinary discourse one should also stress that there doesn’t yet exist any consensus as to the precise delimitation of the field of text-and-image studies. The critic Áron Kibédi Varga has already expressed the need for the formation of some general categories which would provide a clear classification of the various phenomena with which text-and-image studies deal. The problem, however, is where to start: should the classification be based on the style or the theme of the work or rather on mixed forms or the artist for that matter? Some theorists narrowly focus on the similarity of words and images claiming that we need to stop thinking of the verbal as a temporal art and the visual as a spatial art whilst others continue to stress their distinct nature. The latter are of the opinion that there are various forms of combination between words and images in which they nevertheless always remain distinct. Among those who stress the incompatibility of the two media is Gottfried Boehm who believes that “image and text may be translated into each other, but they cannot fuse into an intermedial image- or iconotext” (qtd. in Horstkotte and Pedri 6). The former theorists rather declare the mutual compatibility of the two arts which come together in iconotexts forming one whole. Peter Wagner, author of *Reading Iconotexts: From Swift to the French Revolution*, attempts to push beyond the word-image opposition basing himself on theories of intertextuality, discourse analysis, semiotics and deconstruction to break down the barriers between literature and art. According to Horstkotte and Pedri, Wagner has been “particularly influential in arguing that in ‘iconotexts’ text and image are mutually interdependent in their ways of producing meaning” (5). Even as early as the 1970s, Roland Barthes urged his readers to overcome the old dichotomy of word and image, arguing that one should better regard both literary and visual works as texts. One shouldn’t regard the word-and-image relation as some sort of master method for dissolving these boundaries between art and
literature or for preserving them as forever fixed borders. W. J. T. Mitchell argues that it is rather the “name of a problem and a problematic – a description of the irregular, heterogeneous, and often improvised boundaries between ‘institutions of the visible’ (visual arts, visual media, practices of display and spectatorship) and ‘institutions of the verbal’ (literature, language, discourse, practices of speech and writing, audition and reading)” (“Word and Image” 53). This problematic relationship between word and image has been present in both Eastern and Western aesthetics since antiquity. From the Roman poet Horace’s statement “ut pictura poesis” to Aristotle’s theory of drama underlining the importance of speech and spectacle in tragedy, many different doctrines have already stressed the relation of words and images.

The field of word-and-image relations studies departs from the recognition that images always incorporate some form of speech or writing (be it in the form of a caption, a title, or a verbal interpretation) and that writing and speech in their turn always conjure up images from the moment they are printed or written in visual form. In today’s world of mass communications it appears that the linguistic message is indeed present in every image, be it in the form of a caption, a title, an accompanying press article, a film dialogue or a comic strip balloon. Most scholarship therefore continues to focus on these various forms of intersection between the two “sister arts” in transmedial artefacts. The relation between word and image is fundamentally dialectical; each term simultaneously contrasts itself with and incorporates the other. It seems that this dialectical word/image difference actually consists of at least two “differences”, the first being on the level of signs and symbols, the second on the level of the senses. According to W. J. T. Mitchell:

[W]ord and image names two fields of relationship that intersect one another in logical space: 1) semiotic relations such as Peirce’s symbol/icon (signs by
convention and by resemblance, with the indexical sign by cause and effect forming the third space), and 2) sensory relations between the auditory and the visible (“The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable” 292).

One should, however, always bear in mind that the categories of the visual and the verbal are never entirely equal, especially not when it concerns their sensory reception. Since the invention of writing, the word has belonged to two different domains as it can be heard and seen. Modern research in word-and-image studies, however, hardly ever considers the word that is heard. They study two visual phenomena limiting themselves to the written words as visible marks on a page with specific shapes, sizes and locations and omitting the auditory sense.

While recognizing the dual possibility of the word to be both heard and seen, W. J. T. Mitchell and Áron Kibédi Varga choose to limit themselves to the written word in their attempts at formulating a comprehensive taxonomy of image and text relations in order to not further complicate this already very complex matter. W. J. T. Mitchell explains that much of the power of the relationship between word and image comes from its deceptive simplicity. He clarifies this by focusing on the apparently straightforward distinction between the word “tree” and an image of a tree. One can easily make out which is the word and which is the image on the basis of the difference in sensory reception. We are familiar with the fact that a word is a phonetic sign which is meant to be read whilst the image is a visual sign which represents an object. This takes us back to Ferdinand de Saussure’s famous theory on the linguistic sign. In his diagram he explains the dual structure of the linguistic sign thus illustrating the concept of two separate yet related planes which Saussure dubbed the signifier and the signified. In the example with the tree, the word stands for the signifier while the image stands for the signified or the concept and the relation between the two facets is
completely arbitrary. Mitchell explains that the so-called clarity of this distinction between word and image, however, is far less fixed than it might appear at first:

[T]he difference between words and images is not built into our sensory apparatus or inherent in different kinds of symbolic forms, but has to do with different ways of coordinating signs with what they stand for. Images, we might say, signify by virtue of resemblance or imitation: the image of a tree looks like a tree. Words, by contrast, are arbitrary signs that signify by virtue of custom or convention. This [word/image difference] has the added virtue of explaining why images are not necessarily visual.[...] Resemblance is an extraordinarily general relation, one that can function in any sensory channel and connect any number of perceptual experiences (“Word and Image” 56).

Mitchell further explains that in order for images to signify by resemblance, they always have to intersect with the domain of language. The image is a visual form which has meaning because of a social convention that has established that how one should “read” a sign. The image of a tree signifies a tree not only because of its resemblance to the real thing but also because of the social agreement that we should read this sign as a tree. It quickly becomes clear that the “straightforward” distinction between the word and the image I mentioned earlier is not so uncomplicated after all. It seems that the word/image difference shouldn’t be interpreted in terms of binary opposition but rather as a “dialectical trope [...] of a whole set of relations and distinctions, that crops up in aesthetics, semiotics, accounts of perception, cognition and communication, and analyses of media (which are characteristically ‘mixed’ forms, ‘imagetexts’ that combine words and images)” (Mitchell, “Word and Image” 57). The
difference between word and image is not as black and white as originally thought but is characterized by dialectical relations of contrariety and identity.

It is precisely on these dialectical relations between word and image that Áron Kibédi Varga based his detailed taxonomy of word-and-image relations. While W. J. T. Mitchell only seems to focus on visual and verbal artefacts, Kibédi Varga also looks in to the meta-level of discourse which is concerned with the comments that deal with these artefacts. In his survey of word-and-image relations Kibédi Varga thus makes a first distinction between the relations between word and image at an object level, on the one hand, and at a meta-level of discourse, on the other. Since the meta-level generally uses words and only rarely uses images, this category of word/image relations won’t be of much importance for this Master thesis. Kibédi Varga’s survey of the different relations on the object level, however, appears to be very interesting for the research in transmedial novels.

On the object level, Kibédi Varga firstly distinguishes on the basis of the criterion of time between primary and secondary relations between word and image. In primary relations the word and the image appear simultaneously so that the reader/beholder perceives both at the same time whilst in secondary relations they appear consecutively. The latter relation we find in the illustration or in ekphrasis, the former in comics. This distinction between primary and secondary relations is based on a point of view of reception rather than production.

Primary relations can be further divided on the basis of quantity into a single object and a series of objects. A good example of the former would be an advertising poster while the latter is typical for a comic strip. The first problem arises with the reader’s understanding of the meaning of the word “series”. According to Kibédi Varga:

[I]t is the socially determined place of appearance which influences the decision of the reader-beholder, whether he wants to consider an object single
or part of a series. […] The place is related to meaning; the location has a semantic value. It has long been recognized that the more the place is ideologically fixed, the less the meaning of the object has to be explicitly stated, and vice versa (35).

In the case of the objects which appear as series a further distinction should also be made between fixed and moving series. The word and image in comics are fixed, it is the reader who moves his gaze from one panel to another and from the visual to the verbal. In cartoons, however, we are dealing with a moving series of objects while the spectator remains more or less still. Kibédi Varga argues that this distinction on the basis of quantity has very interesting consequences for the interpretation of transmedial artefacts:

Ever since the Greeks, European civilization has tended to separate *argumentation* from *narration*, the first being a vehicle of rationally accepted knowledge, the second a source of undefinable and general wisdom. The point for word-and-image relations is that a single object mostly has the first function and a series mostly the second (35).

In single objects, the words have the tendency of restricting the possibilities of the object’s interpretation by imposing a meaning on the image so that the argument becomes clear to the observer. On the other hand, we appear to interpret series of objects in a chronological, narrative order.\(^2\)

A third division is based on the criterion of form thus further subdividing the visual-verbal object according to spatial disposition and composition. Kibédi Varga parallels these

\(^2\) Kibédi Varga emphasizes that these remarks are merely tendencies. They do not imply that a single image always is an argumentation nor that always have a strictly narrative character.
terms respectively to the linguistic concepts of morphology and syntax. The latter has to do with the compositional rules of the image which extend to transverbal and transvisual situations. The most important problem which comes to mind is one of hierarchy: is the word subordinate to the image or is it the other way around? To answer this question, Kibédi Varga takes up the criterion of quantity:

In single verbal-visual objects, image dominates only in the exceptional case when the given image is so well known to the beholder that he or she does not need any words to identify it or to grasp its meaning and message; in all other cases, image is subordinate to the word. In emblems as well as in image-title relation, the word explains the image; it restricts its possibilities and fixes its meaning. In a series, the dominance of the word is less obvious. Successive images can “explain” each other; words can be either functional and indispensable or simply ornamental. Narrative sequences in comics can be divided into two categories: those which cannot be understood without reading the words in the balloons and those where our eye can move quickly from one image to the other because the balloons contain only stereotyped words (a yell, a sigh, a curse) characteristic of a given personage (43).

In what Kibédi Varga calls the spatial disposition of verbal-visual objects he makes a first subdivision according to identity and separateness. In a relation of identity there is a complete fusion of word and image in contrast to a relation of separateness in which both parts remain distinguishable from one another. In the category of complete union between the visual and the verbal, Kibédi Varga provides the examples of calligraphy and visual poetry. In

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3 This applies only to traditional objects since in modern art there have been several successful attempts to free the image of verbal dominance by establishing a relation of coordination. In these cases, the words add to the meaning of the image instead of restricting it.
calligraphy, the art of writing in which the letter becomes an image or the image a letter, the characteristics of the visual art blend into the verbal and vice versa. In visual poetry we can also determine a complete fusion, although the difference in this case is that it is always the verbal which imitates the visual and never the other way around. In the case of complete fusion between the image and the word one perceives in two different ways at the same time: seeing and reading constitute one action. However, when it comes to illustrations or emblems which display a relation of separateness one usually switches alternatively from the image to the text and vice versa. When word and image are in a relation of separateness, Kibédi Varga distinguishes three categories according to the decrease in union. The first category is one of coexistence, in which word and image cohabit the same space. This is the case with advertising posters. In the second category, word and image are in a relation of interreference: separated although they still refer to one another due to their presence on the same page. Numerous examples of transmedial artefacts which present this relation can be found. To name a few: emblems, illustrations, posters, but also the relation between a painting and its title or a text and its illustration. The serial mediums of comic strips or graphic novels also represent the same relations of coexistence and interreference. In the final category, word and image independently refer to the same event or object. Although they denote the same subject, word and image are not depicted on the same page and consequentially are said to be in a relation of coreference. Kibédi Varga explains that this third category of coreference is a borderline case in at least two respects:

First, it transcends the domain of morphology and enters that of pragmatics; the artists have worked separately, and the verbal-visual relation between their works exists only in the mind of the reader-beholder. […] Secondly, it is not
always easy to determine whether the two works belong to the category of simultaneous or subsequent appearance (42).

When we turn to secondary relations in which word and image appear subsequently, we can make a distinction between artefacts in which the word precedes the image and the ones in which the image precedes the word. When word and image are in a secondary relation with each other there are only two criteria to keep in mind for analysis, respectively which part comes first and whether the objects in question are of a single or serial nature. If the word precedes the image we speak of an illustration. Illustrations can vary according to the text, period and semantic content in which they appear, ranging from documents (such as bills, maps or written pages) to pictures of paintings or photographs. Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is an example of a novel which combines prose with documentary materials and photographs. Traditionally, photographic and other visual illustrations have been classified as strictly subordinate to the dominant text but more recent integrative theories of word-and-image relations, such as those by W. J. T. Mitchell and Kibédi Varga, are of the opinion that illustrations have a supplementary status to the dominant narrative. They argue that “the illustrations add something to the narrative without being themselves integral to it” (Horstkotte, “Photo-Text Topographies” 51). Kibédi Varga states that the “part which appears later [that] dominates the original part; it is in every way a statement about and thus a reduction of the older object (43). When the image precedes the word, we have to deal with ekphrasis: the narrative describes the essence and form of the image. What comes first is unique while what comes after can always be multiplied. In other words: “one image can be the source of many texts, and one text can inspire many painters” (Kibédi Varga 44).
Although Kibédi Varga is praised for his very useful and clarifying taxonomy of word/image relations, one should mention that the categories he distinguishes are not always so clear-cut, particularly when it comes to the photograph-in-text. If, for example, we apply Kibédi Varga’s categories on Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, we can argue this iconotext represents both primary and secondary relations. The reader is struck by words and images simultaneously which are in a relation of interreference. Thus, morphologically, the word/image relation is of the primary type. However, semantically and chronologically, narrative and photo belong to two different times. One can therefore argue that their relation is also of the secondary type. The narrative precedes the photo that is inserted in the text, but chronologically it is the photo which precedes the text by referring to a past time, a time before the writing of the text. This reference to a past time is what Roland Barthes calls the *noeme* of the photograph. Pictures reveal the “that-has-been,” which is for Barthes the essence of photography.

Quite similarly to Kibédi Varga’s distinction between coexistence, interreference and coreference, Silke Horstkotte considers the role of layout in intermedial photo-texts. She argues that the relation between word and image is defined by the precise positioning of the photographs in the verbal narrative. According to Horstkotte, the relation between the image and the text differs if the photographs are delegated to a specific section in the book or if they are inserted into the body of the text, as in Jonathan Safran Foer’s fiction. She also considers questions such as whether or not the photographs take up whole pages and how the printed text is arranged around the photograph. When photographs are sectioned off from the narrative, Horstkotte interprets them as supplementary to the dominant narrative. But if the reproduced photographs are integrated into the narrative she regards them as equal parts which should not be separated because they form a unity. In regard to the non-captioning of the integrated photographs, Horstkotte defends that “when the caption goes, photograph,
written text and layout each take on a new significance in relation to each other, and the increased visual autonomy of both photograph and layout affect the reader’s engagement with and interpretation of the text” (“Photo-Text Topographies” 52).

Although photography in literature has only very recently emerged as a distinct field of research within word-and-image studies, it is now widely recognized as one of the most important branches within the field. The study of photo-texts tackles the same concerns as the word/image studies but additionally it also has its own distinct set of topics related to the specificity of the photographic image. Like the scholars at work in the field of word/image studies, the researchers of photography in text are just as much interested in a whole variety of different topics ranging from the relationship of the photograph to the narrative to the emergence of a “photo-poetics” (Horstkotte and Pedri 8). The study of photography in narrative mainly focuses on fictional writing but also pays attention to the classic genres of biography, historiography, and memoirs. In order to analyse the relation between the incorporated photographs and the narrative in fictional texts, one must pay attention as to the photograph’s function in the text. Photographs can be used for a whole range of different narrative purposes, from documentary evidence to illustration of the character’s thoughts. Silke Horstkotte and Nancy Pedri ask themselves why there was such a sudden interest in the study of photography in fiction as a topic on its own apart from the more general word-and-image studies. They claim that it is mostly “the photograph’s mechanical production and its supposed indexicality which have set the study of photographic images as well as their use in literature apart from other images” (12). It is this indexicality – the photograph being a physical trace of that which existed as a particular object in the real world – which is responsible for the characterization of photographs in fiction as documentary evidence. Photography is also often linked with the notion of memory which explains its use in narratives that deal with traumatic topics such as postmemory or traumatic memory. In
Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma, Ulrich Baer investigates the connection between the experience of trauma and the photographic image. He notices the striking parallel between those moments arrested mechanically by photography and those arrested experientially by the traumatized psyche which bypass normal cognition and memory:

This possibility that photographs capture unexperienced events creates a striking parallel between the workings of the camera and the structure of traumatic memory. [...] Just as the photograph “mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially”, as Roland Barthes writes, trauma results from experiences that are registered as “reality imprints” or, as psychiatrists have phrased it, recorded “photographically, without integration into a semantic memory” (8).

In this regard, one could also mention Pierre Janet’s distinction between ordinary “narrative” memory on the one hand and fragmentary and visual “traumatic” memory on the other. Whereas “narrative” memories orders one’s experiences into a rational, linear, causal story placed in past time, “traumatic” memories are stored in a different location in the brain to which the victims have no conscious access. Not only are these memories stored in a different location, they also appear in a different form, namely a visual form. As Judith Herman asserts, the use of pictures in novels dealing with traumatic subject matter may represent the “most effective initial approach to these ‘indelible images’” given the iconic or visual nature of traumatic memories (qtd. in Codde: 7). The photograph superimposes two temporalities of past and present just as the traumatic flashback brings back a past event with a force of the present. Another feature of photography which resembles the traumatic flashback can be found in Roland Barthes’s final work Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography in which
he mentions that “what the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially” (4). Just like the photograph, the traumatic flashback keeps repeating the traumatic event which has occurred only once.

Concerning photography’s relationship to language, hence to fiction, critics agree that a photograph always entails a virtual discourse that is waiting to be read. The photograph contains a message which is meant to be read by the spectator. According to Roland Barthes, there is a co-existence of two messages in the same photograph, “the one without a code (the photographic analogue), the other with a code (the ‘art’, or the treatment, or the ‘writing’, or the rhetoric, of the photograph)” (Image, Music, Text 19). In its identical representation of its referent, the photograph is originally uncoded, but when the spectator starts interpreting the photograph on the basis of his/her cultural knowledge, it acquires a connoted function. Susan Sontag agrees that photography is always inextricably bound to language:

Whether the photograph is understood as a naïve object or the work of an experienced artificer, its meaning –and the viewer’s response –depends on how the picture is identified or misidentified; that is on words. [...] What a photograph ‘says’ can be read in several ways. Eventually one reads into the photograph what it should be saying (25-26).

Apart from the study of language within a photograph, critics also focus on the relation between photograph and text in fiction. Firstly, one should distinguish between narrated photographs and manifest photographs. When the photograph is visually present in the narrative, a whole range of combinations is possible. The inclusion of a photograph

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4 For the various combinations between photograph and text, we refer back to the various relations between image and text in the taxonomy of Kibédi Varga described earlier on.
within a text changes its generic status and it is necessary that this particular type of fiction is analyzed through the concept of intermediality. Roland Barthes distinguishes two possible functions of the linguistic message with regard to iconic message: anchorage and relay. The function of anchorage is most common, in a relation of identification “the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others” (*Image, Music, Text* 40). The function of relay, on the contrary, is less frequent:

[I]t can be seen particularly in cartoons and comic strips. Here text (most often a snatch of dialogue) and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis (which is ample confirmation that the diegesis must be treated as an autonomous system). While rare in the fixed image, this relay-text becomes very important in film, where dialogue functions not simply as elucidation but really does advance the action by setting out, in the sequences of messages, meanings that are not to be found in the image itself (41).

The specific characteristics of photography have definitely left their mark upon contemporary fiction, generating new ways of seeing and consequentially of reading these hybrid novels.
III. Representing 9/11 in Literature: The Graphic Novel

3.1. Introduction

Over the years the graphic novel has become part of an expanding literary field concerned with the study of hybrid novels combining words and images. It has taken quite some time for scholars to realize that the graphic novel is fully worthy of academic attention within literary studies. Despite of its growing popularity, one can’t help but notice the scarcity of academic book-length publications on the topic. The most important literary anthologies on contemporary comics are Ann Magnussen’s *Comics and Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics* (2000), Jan Baetens’s *The Graphic Novel* (2001) and Robin Varnum and Christina Gibbon’s *The Language of Comics* (2001). Although there are some important historical precedents, which lay on the foundation of the studies of word and image relations, it was Art Spiegelman’s absolutely brilliant and groundbreaking novel *Maus: a Survivor’s Tale* (1986) that was responsible for putting the medium of comics on the academic agenda. *Maus*, a two-volume personal story about Vladek Spiegelman’s experiences of the Holocaust and his son’s struggle to record his father’s testimony, was an immediate bestseller which inspired academics to consider the complexity of serious comics. *Maus* was “said to be like comic strips in some respects, but considered a graphic novel none the less. For instance, it uses comic strip conventions for representing character subjectivity. […] It is considered a graphic novel because it deals with a serious theme, based on a true story (Tan 39). With the publication of more and more brilliant graphic novels such as Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* (2001), Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2003), Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* and Art Spiegelman’s second graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*, it seems that the critical apparatus for comics will only be growing in the future.
The graphic novel is a hybrid project in its obvious combination of graphic art with prose fiction, but also in the following sense: comics are multigeneric, composed from many different genres, they also draw on both high and low arts and are cross-discursive by their composition of verbal and visual narratives that do not simply synthesize (Chute and DeKoven 769). Because of its inherent hybrid nature, it is difficult to separate the word and image relationships. Word and image need to be analyzed as a unified whole with one single language which contains both the verbal and the visual representational modes and finally one also has to regard their interaction on the page. Comics’ hybrid form shatters any clear differentiation between word and image. Words often function as images and vice versa images should be read as well as seen. According to Libbie McQuillan:

[0]ne of the most striking features of the reading process of a BD is, that we, as readers, are deprived of the process of visualizing the textual world, inherent in the reception of a traditional novel. However, one of the greatest pleasures of reading a BD is, of course, the often graphically stunning representations of the textual world that are proposed to us (157).

A few lines later she also mentions that images have a dual function in la Bande Dessinée since they simultaneously are a representation of the textual word and the empirical world. BD albums are composed of a visualized textual world which also consists of visual elements that exist in the real empirical world (164).

Two concepts which are both extremely important within the graphic novel are the constructs of time and space. Time is usually associated with narrative whilst space mostly is associated with visual images. With the graphic novel’s combination of word and image it is only natural that time as well as space will be vital elements in the construction of these
graphic novels. However, one should not regard this classification quite so black and white since visual images can also be connected with time as well as narrative can with space. Like Sue Vice remarks “[b]ecause of its form, the graphic novel has a unique potential for spatializing time within each frame” (47). The subjects of *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers* are two prime examples that demand such spatialization. In both novels “locations are just as significant as the time-scale in which it occurred” (Vice 48). This unique quality of the graphic novel for spatializing time is also one of the various reasons why the graphic novel is so adequately suited for the representation of trauma. In the same panel it is possible for the spaces of the past and the present, respectively memory time and chronological time, to collide. One of the most typical characteristics of trauma is the victim’s peculiar experience of time. Trauma is not experienced at the time of the event, but only belatedly. The traumatic past intrudes the present in the form of repeating nightmares or flashbacks. The images of the traumatic past come back to haunt their victims in the present, which is exactly what can be represented visually by the graphic novel.

In the case of the traumatic events of 9/11, graphic novels – with their distinctive representational strategies and composition – make very interesting subjects for literal analysis and study. The post 9/11 world of New York shared some striking resemblances with the comic universe of Good fighting against Evil. In political terms, Bush and his fellow Americans were the “good” guys who are fighting the “bad” terrorists. The images of destruction at Ground Zero after the implosion of the twin towers looked all to familiar to comic book readers. It is very interesting to study how comics tackled the subject of September 11 and its aftermath considering that the events very much resembled their own fantasized constructions. Both Susan Sontag and Slavoj Žižek have emphasized that the attack on the World Trade Center was universally described as “unreal”, “surreal”, or “like a movie”. Sien Uytterschout also signals that “September 11, for one, has been described as
[...] being out of joints with a normal world image” (61). The sight of 9/11 did not seem real and much more resembled the fantasy world of comics or Hollywood disaster movies.

In the following chapters I shall examine the central themes in a graphic novel which takes the traumatic attacks of 9/11 as its subject, namely Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*. I shall argue that the genre of the graphic novel is a perfect fit for the representation of traumatic realities and their inherent structure. The unique combination of narrative and drawn images adequately succeeds in evoking traumatic memory. *In the Shadow of No Towers* shows its traumatic content through the use of a number of genre-specific innovative formal and structural features. It is these strategies which make *In the Shadow of No Towers* a work of visual witnessing which represents the attempts of a direct witness to work through the trauma of September 11. It is the cooperation between the verbal and the visual dimensions that carries the meaning of the traumatic story. This interplay between word and image is precisely what makes the graphic novel such a powerful vehicle for the representation of trauma, providing an interpretation that is only available to this genre.

3.2. *In the Shadow of No Towers*

*In the Shadow of No Towers* is an intimate graphic memoir about the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11 by the American comics artist Art Spiegelman. Spiegelman currently is one of the most famous and influential cartoonists whose graphic work has been printed all over the world. He was a key figure in San Francisco’s underground comics movement of the 1970s, co-founded two significant magazines of avant-garde comics and graphics *Arcade* and *RAW* and for ten years worked as a staff artist and writer for *The New Yorker*. However, it is his graphical masterpiece *Maus, a Survivor’s Tale* which gained him international acclaim. *Maus* was first serialized in *RAW* but eventually it was collected
and published in two book volumes by Pantheon. The first volume was printed in 1986 under the title *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* and the second volume, *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*, followed some five years later. *Maus* attracted a huge amount of critical attention and was quickly translated into eighteen different languages. This groundbreaking graphic novel changed the course of comics history when it was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award in the category of Biography in 1986 and later received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992.

Exactly a decade after the publication of the second part of *Maus*, Spiegelman was directly confronted with his own Holocaust when Al Qaeda flew two airplanes into the World Trade Center on September 11. Living in Lower Manhattan, Spiegelman first saw the traumatic events “all live – unmediated” (*In the Shadow of No Towers* 1). He says in this introduction to *In the Shadow of No Towers* that “[he] made a vow that morning to return to making comix full-time” (Introduction). Spiegelman started his artistic response to the traumatic events with his design for the cover of *The New Yorker’s* September 24, 2001 issue which shows a black image of the twin towers silhouetted against a black background and he also designed the cover of Ulrich Baer’s collection *101 Stories: New York writes after September 11* which depicts the towers draped by a black cloth. Spiegelman later used his cover drawing for *The New Yorker* for his graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (See Figure 1). It went down in human history as one of the most memorable covers, marking the towers’ absence by portraying them as shadows on a dark background. According to Richard Glejzer, this image “posits an inability to give coherence to the very object of trauma: all that remains are shadows” (107).

*In the Shadow of No Towers* is a work of visual witnessing in which Spiegelman tries to grapple with the traumatic events of September 11 and their aftermath. It tells about his
fears, panics, his urge to testify and attempts to move on: “It is the record of a psychologically wounded survivor, trying to make sense of an event that overwhelmed and destroyed his normal psychic defences” (Versluys 982). In the wake of September 11, Spiegelman had some difficulties in getting his work published. While he was currently working at The New Yorker, they reluctantly refused to publish his strips. After some time, Spiegelman approached The Forward, a Jewish newspaper, which agreed to serialize his comic strips because of his Jewish background and his earlier work on the Holocaust. Around the same time, the strips were also published in Germany’s Die Zeit and Britain’s The London Review of Books. In her essay on Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers, Hilary Chute actually suggests that “the publication of ‘No Towers’ as a serial comic strip, appearing in print at irregular intervals, reflects the traumatic temporality Spiegelman experienced after 9/11, in which a normative, ongoing sense of time stopped or shattered” (230). In 2004, the graphic novel was eventually published in book form by American publishing house Pantheon Books. The book consists of ten broadsheet compositions which deal with the Spiegelmans’ reaction to the catastrophic events and a further seven plates of reprints from old newspaper comics which at first sight seem to have little to do with the 9/11 attacks. The book is composed in an oversized, two-page-spread format, very much like the earliest newspaper funnies. In his introduction to In the Shadow of No Towers, Spiegelman asserts that the enormous size of the two-page spread color newsprint plates fits a narrative involving “oversized skyscrapers and outsized events” (qtd. in Versluys: 989).

3.2.1. Traumatic Temporality
In this masterful graphic novel, Spiegelman again resorts to the genre of comics for the representation of a traumatic subject matter. In comparison to *Maus*, his second graphic novel looks rather chaotic and fragmentary in appearance. At first sight, the panels give the impression of a large and chaotic collage which generates the idea of an “all-at-onceness that was the overwhelming feeling of September 11th” (Kuhlman 850). Linear chronology quickly goes out the window and black-and-white drawings give way to a mix of coloured hand-drawn and computer-rendered images. *In the Shadow of No Towers* uses even more complicated and defamiliarizing techniques to express its author’s traumatic state of mind in the aftermath of 9/11. Whereas *Maus* offered him distance because of the time lag and the fact that it is actually his father’s story he describes, *In the Shadow of No Towers* is a text fundamentally about the very failure to achieve such distance. Spiegelman lived very close to the twin towers and experienced the attacks live and unmediated. *In the Shadow of No Towers* adequately succeeds in representing Spiegelman’s traumatic state of mind by refusing to place his unmediated experiences into a clarifying, narrative context and only focusing on the raw images of that day. Although *Maus* also has moments in which the narrative breaks down, it is still ultimately a text that attempts to tackle its trauma narratively in a more or less chronological order. *In the Shadow of No Towers* demonstrates a failure of context which results in a different sense of testimony. The main focus is on “the moment of witness before testimony, in which any movement toward understanding or knowing cannot bear the burden of the act of seeing, since the object of vision defies all previous contexts” (Glejzer 101). Trauma persists in the temporal disruption itself, as Cathy Caruth says: “the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (*Explorations in Memory* 4). This also recalls Dori Laub’s description of the traumatic event as a phenomenon that has “no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after” (qtd. in Kuhlman: 851). Trauma is thus not of a moment, but
instead constitutes a victim’s past, present and future. Spiegelman formally renders this skewed notion of traumatic time without attempting to construct a knowledge or a history of the event: “[a]t that moment time seemed to stop for me, and when it started up again it was out of joint. Time was aiming backwards as well as forwards” (qtd. in Kuhlman 851). As Hilary Chute says:

Spiegelman’s book is deeply informed by a serial context, but it works to refigure a traditional notion of seriality for a text registering the crisis of witnessing a traumatic world event. The inaugural strip in *No Towers* offers an angled, jutting box of text, unmoored at the top right of the page, providing the following synopsis: “In our last episode, as you might remember, the world ended.” Since the strip is Spiegelman’s first in the collection, of course, there was no last episode; Spiegelman here demonstrates the perpetuity of trauma, and also how it places stress on the notion of the serial (231).

*In the Shadow of No Towers* reflects an overall traumatic temporality in which time does not follow its usual chronological and linear course. Spiegelman effectively puts to use the hybridity of the graphic novel in his representation of his traumatic sense of time. The combination of narrative and images reflect his state of mind in the aftermath of September 11. From the very first episode, Spiegelman foregrounds the non-chronological, fragmented traumatic structure of his narrative by referring to the gap in time between 9/11 and the composition of his graphic memoir. Although the image also plays a substantial role in conveying Spiegelman’s traumatic state of mind, here, it is the verbal which takes up the biggest part of the task. In the column on the extreme right of the page, we see a series of text balloons which are superimposed on a computer-rendered image of the falling towers (See
Figure 2). The first text refers to the past moment of the attacks, “Synopsis: In our last episode, as you remember, the world ended,” while the second one initiates the story in present time with Spiegelman saying “My wife, my daughter and I are rushing from the bomb site, we hear a roar, like a waterfall and look back. The air smells of death…” (1). However, Spiegelman quickly shifts to yet another temporal level: “Many months have passed. It’s time to move on… I am finally up to about September 20,” followed by “Okay! Let’s say it’s NOT September anymore… I’m hunched over the drawing table in my Lower Manhattan Studio, with my fingers tightly crossed…” (1). Here, Spiegelman gives us a first-person meta-artistic story about In the Shadow of No Towers’s production, addressing the reader and acknowledging that the events he is representing are already a few months distant in time. Through this experimental layering of different temporalities in his narrative as well as in his drawings, Spiegelman brilliantly succeeds in rendering the traumatic mind’s skewed experience of time. As Hilary Chute says: “No Towers is explicitly about the intersection of past and present, both thematically and formally. And as with Maus, In the Shadow of No Towers makes interlacing temporalities part of the text’s very structure” (230). Formally, this juxtaposition of multiple traumatic temporalities and disruption of a linear, chronological and logical context is seen in the unusual page layouts. The layout of the pages is fragmented into various panels which contain their own subnarratives. The reader’s view is destabilized since there is no chronological order and a variety of different voices telling their own stories. Up to six narratives unfold on the same page, each one competing for the reader’s attention. There is no linear, left-to-right order in which to read these strips which registers trauma’s “inability to conform to the logic of linear and temporal progression” (Chute 232). When we observe, for instance, the second episode of In the Shadow of No Towers, we see that there are six different narratives which are formally ordered in different boxes (See Figure 3). Firstly there is

5 Unlike most comics in newspapers or magazines that serialized in weekly episodes, Spiegelman’s strips about 9/11 took months to create. This initial episode took him four months to finish. He did not begin to write until November 19 and completed the page only on February 15, 2002.
Spiegelman’s first-person account explaining his urge to testify and his feeling of time standing still after the 9/11 attacks. This narrative begins on the top left corner of the page and consists of six panels which gradually transform into three-dimensional twin towers casting a long diagonal shadow behind the other panels on the page. Hilary Chute also mentions this gradual visualization of the panels as twin towers, linking it to Spiegelman’s perception of comics panels as architecturally constructed buildings:

In his 1977 collection Breakdowns […], Spiegelman writes, “My dictionary defines COMIC STRIP as ‘a narrative series of cartoons…’ A NARRATIVE is defined as ‘a story.’ Most definitions of STORY leave me cold… Except for the one that says ‘A complete horizontal division of a building… [which is] (From [the] Medieval Latin HISTORIA… a row of windows with pictures on them).’” The fundamental form of comics, then, is like a building, composed of rows of windows, or frames (235).

She feels that by this experimental transformation of the comics panels into “those arrogant boxes” which represent the twin towers, Spiegelman is trying to show that the medium of the graphic novel is uniquely equipped to register the fragmented structure of trauma (In the Shadow of No Towers 2). The shadow that the twin tower boxes cast diagonally over the page should be analyzed in the light of the title of the graphic novel. Through the use of his experimental layout and carefully chosen images, Spiegelman is formally projecting the book’s title on to the page. The two flipped comics panels representing the twin towers are already hit by the hijacked planes. The shadow that the towers cast on the page visually links the first narrative with the final one which starts in the lower left corner of the page. The latter consists of seven rectangular plates which visually convey a narrative about the collapse of
the burning towers. While the first narrative on the page shows us the burning towers that were just hit by the planes, the final narrative continues this story by showing their gradual collapse. In the final plate, the towers are gone and since that day we are living in the shadow of no towers. The second subnarrative we find on plate two is a third-person account of Spiegelman’s reaction when the planes hit the twin towers on September 11. It is a series of eight plates that start on the right-hand side with two rows of two plates and continue with one final horizontal row of four images from the left to the right side. In this series, we notice that two panels represent digitalized images of the burning twin towers and that another two are based on Rudolf Dirks’s Katzenjammer Kids. We notice that the Katzenjammer Kids are both wearing a twin tower on their heads and are running away in panic and that the panels are actually mirror images of one another. The third subnarrative shows Art Spiegelman, who is wearing his Maus face, sitting at his drawing table while on his right a terrorist is holding a bloody knife over his head, and on his left, George W. Bush is pointing a gun at him. Again Spiegelman succeeds in layering a whole series of different aspects and stories in just one panel. If we can call it a panel that is, considering that this drawing has no frame. In her essay about the representation of space in W. G. Sebald and Monica Maron’s work, Silke Horstkotte mentions this same phenomenon in Sebald’s fiction. Most of Sebald’s photographs are not enclosed by a frame and thus have the tendency of easily fading into the white background of the surrounding page. She sees this as a “suggestion that photos are both integral and a discriminate part of the fictional discourse rather than an illustration or a supplement of it”, continuing that at the same time “the seamless insertion of photographs into the narrative makes for an unsettling reading experience” (“Photo-Text Topographies” 57). When we turn back to the drawing in Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers, we see that the framed narrative text accompanying the drawing reads that Spiegelman feels “equally terrorized by Al-Qaeda and by his own government” (2). On the white background there is also a poster
saying “MISSING. A. SPIEGELMAN’S BRAIN. Last seen in Lower Manhattan, mid-
September 2001” (2). Spiegelman does not know by which of the two he is more terrorized,
by the terrorists or by his own government and their implication in the attacks. Spiegelman is
not afraid of making a political statement by placing George W. Bush and the American
government on the same foot as Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Throughout the novel, he
attacks the way the Bush administration handled the terrorist attacks in the aftermath of 9/11.
In the introduction to In the Shadow of No Towers, Spiegelman acknowledges his
disconformities with the US government on number of topics such as their possible
complicity in the attacks and their rapid and aggressive response with wars in Afghanistan
and Iraq: “I had anticipated that the shadows of the towers might fade while I was slowly
sorting through my grief and putting it into boxes. I hadn’t anticipated that the hijackings of
September 11 would themselves be hijacked by the Bush cabal that reduced it all to a war
recruitment poster” (Introduction). Next to making a political statement, the missing poster
also portrays Spiegelman’s inability to think beyond the moment of the attacks since it claims
that his brain was last seen on September 11. In this third narrative we also find the fourth
one, which is a visual mise-en-abyme in the comics pages in Spiegelman’s hand. Layered
above the same panel of Spiegelman sleeping at his drawing table, we find the fifth
subnarrative which is a first person account of Spiegelman’s commentary as he is
contemplating himself in the mirror.

The second part of In the Shadow of No Towers, which Spiegelman calls “The Comic
Supplement”, consists of seven reproductions of old newspaper comics from early last
century. This unconventional division of the graphic novel in two parts calls attention to “the
disruption of linear temporality and duration […] structurally offer[ing] no ‘end’ that implies
healing or transcendence: time moves backwards, skipping in the movement of the strips from
2001 (“In the Shadow of No Towers”) to 1921 (George McManus’s Bringing up Father)
Spiegelman describes the intrusion of these old cartoon characters into his own work:

The only cultural artifacts that could get past my defense to flood my eyes and brain with something other than images of burning towers were old comic strips; vital, unpretentious ephemera from the optimistic dawn of the 20th century. That they were made with so much skill and verve but never intended to last past the day they appeared in the newspaper gave them poignancy; they were just right for an end-of-the-world moment (In the Shadow of No Towers, The Comic Supplement).

The graphic novel has an overall non-linear and anachronistic structure due to incorporation of these old comics. They represent the past that comes back into the present. What links them to the towers is their mortality since neither were meant last. The old comics stories often explicitly refer to New York City and express a critique towards the government of their time. Besides from those characteristics, however, nothing really connects them to the events of September 11. Glejzer does, however, note that they “do provide a certain context for their reappearance in his own work” (113). In the Shadow of No Towers displays a brilliant intertextuality as the old cartoon characters from the second part of the novel reappear in Spiegelman’s representations of 9/11. On the eighth page of the first section, Spiegelman draws a series of old cartoon characters falling through the sky after being kicked by a goat wearing a turban (See Figure 4).

This image is also used on the graphic novel’s front cover where it is placed upon the shadow of the two absent towers. The shadows of the World Trade Center function as a background for the old comics characters falling from the sky. Spiegelman uses the visual to
make clear in a traumatic state of mind the past superimposes itself on the present. Last century’s comics figures come back to haunt the present. The drawing is accompanied by the following caption which reappears afterwards in “The Comic Supplement”: “The blast that disintegrated those Lower Manhattan towers also disinterred the ghosts of some Sunday supplement stars born on nearby Park Row. They came back to haunt one denizen of the neighbourhood, addled by all that’s happened since” (8). From this text we can deduce that the goat, who shares a striking resemblance with Osama Bin Laden, is the cause of the towers’ collapse as well as of the comics’ return. As said before, the past overtakes the present. Throughout the book, Spiegelman visually represents this traumatic experience of time characterized by the past superimposing on the present. The most powerful example is found in Spiegelman’s use of the Katzenjammer Kids as the “Tower Twins”. In the first part of the book, Spiegelman represents the Katzenjammer Kids as “Towers Twins” wearing the twin towers on their heads. The “Tower Twins” firstly appear in the second comic plate where they are cast within the black shadow of the burning twin towers of the top of the page (See Figure 3). Just like the front cover and the second plate have the World Trade Center’s shadow as a backdrop, the fourth comic plate turns the tables around and puts the “Tower Twins” in the background (See Figure 5). On the next page, Spiegelman draws this relation between the representation of the towers and the “Tower Twins” even further as he fades one image into another in the same panel. In the first panels it is difficult to see which image is fore grounded. But over the panels we gradually see that it is the old cartoon character’s face that plays up. Time aims backwards instead of forwards. Through his experimentation with the layout of the page and his use of image Spiegelman adequately succeeds in expressing his traumatic temporalities.
Next to the technique of superimposing one image on another, Spiegelman also resorts to the replacement of characters. In “Foer, Spiegelman, and 9/11’s Timely Traumas”, Mitchum Huehls explains this replacing of the Spiegelman character with old comic cartoons:

Occurring most frequently in scenes of intense emotional distress, he asks them to live through events in his life that he, stuck and fixated on the moment of trauma, does not have the time to experience. […] While Spiegelman’s mind remains lost in the suspended timelessness of his post-9/11 world, these historical cartoon characters intervene to embody and personify his experiences (57).

In a few cases Spiegelman replaces his own representation with the Happy Hooligan character from the old comics. In the final broadsheet of his ten-plate series, Spiegelman and his wife are represented in Happy Hooligan fashion discussing that Tom Brokaw has sent a fax asking Spiegelman if he can interview him on national television (See Figure 6). Spiegelman’s wife pushes her husband into going to the television station to be interviewed, although he clearly does not feel like it. In the panel where Spiegelman leaves to go to the studio, the following caption is included: “Note: Though Happy Hooligan is a fictional character borrowed from the first Sunday comics, the following interview is 100% nonfiction” (10). The layout of the page visualizes the traumatic temporalities of time standing still and of the past imposing on the present. On the broadsheet, which is spread over two pages, Spiegelman draws two large panels representing the twin towers. On the background we see a clear blue sky and fire engulfing the towers. We also see a plane souring in the sky that is just about to hit the north tower. The “twin towers” are both subdivided in various panels and in each of them a different story is told. The left tower tells the story of Spiegelman, portrayed as Happy
Hooligan, who is invited to go to an interview with Tom Brokaw. Spiegelman draws himself as Happy Hooligan to express that the past is overtaking the present. The right tower represents Spiegelman’s meditation on how time has evolved in New York City since it stood still on 9/11/2001. According to Hilary Chute it is “through [Spiegelman’s] play of internal and external space [that] the architecture of the page splinters and enmeshes temporalities, showing how in a state of trauma, time is no longer able to be simply understood and chronologized” (238). It is through Spiegelman’s experimental use of visual space combined with the captions which accompany the images that the traumatic temporalities are represented. He actually uses the image of the huge twin towers to construct two different traumatic temporalities within them. In the left tower, Spiegelman uses the image to represent the past taking over the present as he replaces his own representation by that of last century’s Happy Hooligan. In the right tower, on the other hand, he uses narrative to represent time as frozen. The computer-rendered image of the burning towers represents Spiegelman’s traumatic memory that continues to haunt him in the present. The image vividly comes back on every page, but on the last page it gradually fades away into a darkening background, but not all the way: “The towers have come to loom larger than life…but they seem to get smaller every day…Happy Anniversary” (10). Since time stopped on 9/11, Spiegelman keeps reliving the moment of the burning tower just before its collapse. His traumatic mind has frozen the image in time. Through the use of image, Spiegelman brilliantly succeeds in conveying his traumatic temporal state of mind. The image of the burning tower keeps popping up, but as he is working through his trauma, his mind seems to gradually push it into the background where it still remains.

Time in the graphic novel is largely indicated by the sequence of the panels and for a smaller part by explicit narrative comments. *In the Shadow of No Towers* uses this convention of comics to represent traumatic temporalities of Spiegelman’s mind. Through the original
interplay of image and layout with the narrative captions, Spiegelman succeeds in conveying
the structure of traumatic memory with its different temporalities. Not a single episode in the
book is composed of a chronological left-to-right ordering of panels as we mostly get various
subnarratives on the same page. Spiegelman constantly superimposes images on other images
and allows the characters to step out the frame. The sequence of the panels is fragmented thus
adequately representing a traumatic state of mind. In the same way as he uses images to
convey traumatic temporalities, Spiegelman also resorts to narrative. The words are also put
to use to help convey a representation of the traumatic mind. On the first page, a layering of
different grammatical tenses serves to render Spiegelman’s skewed experience of time. Some
other examples can be found on pages four, eight, nine and ten. In each example, the text is
imposed on a background image of the collapsing tower thus conveying that both image and
text work together to give an adequate representation of Spiegelman’s post-9/11 state of mind.
On the fourth broadsheet’s extreme right, the artist has drawn one column representing the
burning tower with the following captions: “Our hero is trapped reliving the traumas of
September 11, 2001 […] His memories swirl and events fade, but he still sees that glowing
tower when he closes his eyes. Meanwhile, an anniversary came and went…Many happy
returns! (Amazing how time flies when it stands still.)” (4). Richard Glejzer also discusses
this image saying that “[t]he image here isn’t even considered a memory for Spiegelman: it
persists even as “memories swirl” (106). In the same panel, we notice that the text in the
initial caption is separated from the image by a frame (See Figure 5). According to Simon
Cooper and Paul Atkinson, this separation between text and image is a typical feature of the
comic book (66). However, in this example we notice that the frame of the following captions
gradually disappears until in the end it finally emerges with the image. At other times,
Spiegelman does not even draw a frame around the text and just lets the text and the image
flow into each other thus forming one structure. In this particular plate on the fourth page, it
becomes clear that word and image are in a close relation and work together towards the representation of trauma in *In the Shadow of No Towers*.

3.2.2. **The Image of the Glowing North Tower**

As a direct witness of the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, the Spiegelman character in the graphic novel keeps being haunted by his traumatic experience. In the novel, this is symbolized through the use of the image of the burning North Tower just before its collapse. The protagonist of *In the Shadow of No Towers* is literally possessed by this image as it keeps returning to haunt him in the present. The importance of this image in representing Spiegelman’s traumatic state of mind is highlighted throughout the entire novel. The pixelated image of the glowing tower finds its way into every one of the volume’s ten broadsheets and is also superimposed on the title page. The image is frozen in time and Spiegelman is “trapped reliving the traumas of September 11, 2001” (*In The Shadow of No Towers* 4). In his introduction to the first series, Spiegelman insists that the image of the glowing tower moments before its collapse is one he himself witnessed, one the media never captured:

The pivotal image from my 9/11 morning – one that didn’t get photographed or videotaped into public memory but still remains burned onto the inside of my eyelids several years later – was the image of the looming North Tower’s glowing bones just before it vaporized. […] I managed to place some sequences of my most vivid memories around that central image but never got to draw others (Introduction).
In the novel, the image is connected to captions expressing the passage of time and traumatic re-enactment. In every plate that reproduces this traumatic image, text and image are of equal importance in their contribution to a representation of traumatic memory. Traumatic memory is stored in the brain in a visual form refusing to be integrated into a linguistic order. The captions accompanying the image tell a story which could convey the idea that Spiegelman is working through and converting his traumatic visual memories into narrative memory. However, one of the characteristics of narrative memory is that it gives a rational, linear, and causal story that is placed in past time. It quickly becomes clear that this is not the case in the narrative captions accompanying the image of the North Tower. The very first caption to accompany the image of the tower on the first plate is in a present tense, meaning that he is still stuck reliving his past in the present. The story that the plates representing the glowing tower tell is not chronological but rather fragmented. The images systematically appear on every page, but mostly they pop up randomly between the images of one of the subnarratives on the page. On the fourth broadsheet, the first of the three plates representing the burning tower, shows the following caption: “An elderly couple with suitcases run past. Nondescript from the front, their backs are white with ash. Then…” (4). Spiegelman again resorts to the present tense and fragmented page layout to represent the uncontrolled re-enactment of his traumatic memory. On the same page, we see another image representing the glowing tower framing the entire length of the left side (See Figure 5). On the image, Spiegelman imposes three captions in past tense explaining to the reader that even after a year, the traumatic image of the burning tower still keeps haunting him. As said before, the frames separating the captions from the image gradually disappear until, at the foot of the tower, image and text fade into one another. As the image interrupts Spiegelman’s narrative, the text explicitly marks the literal return of the event. The “events fade” and “memory swirls” but the glowing tower remains and keeps randomly popping up to haunt him. The
image is not integrated into memory and thus it keeps coming back, disrupting Spiegelman’s sense of the passage of time.

If we apply Áron Kibédi Varga’s taxonomy of word and image relations on the object level to *In the Shadow of No Towers*, we can classify the relationship between image and text as a primary one where both appear simultaneously to the reader. Comic strips or graphic novels are characterized as a fixed series of words and images. As explained in the first chapter, Kibédi Varga connects single objects and series respectively with the concepts of argumentation and narration. Consequentially, he argues that series appear to be interpreted in a chronological and narrative order. However, this is not the case with the experimental *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which presents a fragmented, non-chronological structure in order to represent a traumatic state of mind. In his taxonomy, Kibédi Varga posits an interesting question concerning hierarchy: is the word subordinate to the image or is it the other way around? He argues that in series both scenarios are possible: “successive images can ‘explain’ each other; words can be either functional and indispensable or simply ornamental” (43). Consequentially, comics can display both cases of hierarchy: the narrative can either dominate the image or can be subordinate to it. *In the Shadow of No Towers* mostly demonstrates a hierarchy in which the image is subordinate to the text. There are only a few examples in this graphic novel in which the captions contain only stereotyped words such as a yell, a sigh or a curse. On the second plate, we can see two examples where the image dominates: In the first panel demonstrating a computer-rendered image of the burning towers, two text balloons contain the words “MON DIEU!” and “HOLY SHIT!” (2). However, it is still the image of the burning towers that dominates our sight (See Figure 3). The second example is found on the very top right-hand side of the broadsheet where two panels have become images themselves, architecturally rendering the twin tower buildings. Words disappear and it is the image which gains importance.
When considering the spatial disposition in comics, word and image display a relation of separateness. The two parts remain distinguishable as the reader switches alternatively from image to text and vice versa. Kibédi Varga further subdivided the relation of separateness in three categories: coexistence, interreference, and coreference. He argues that graphic novels can represent relations of coexistence as well as interreference. If we analyse *In the Shadow of No Towers* in the light of a word/image relation of coexistence, we see that word and image cohabit the same space. Comic panels frame the image on which the words are inscribed. However, due to its experimental and fragmented structure, *In the Shadow of No Towers* often shows captions and images breaking through their frames. For example, at the end of the second episode, the caption exceeds the frame, crossing over into the next panel (See Figure 3). And on the eighth broadsheet, we see an image of Spiegelman drilling a hole accompanied by the following caption: “I’ve consumed “news” till my brain aches. The papers have confirmed that the towers I saw fall really did fall…” (8). Also in this case, the frame can’t seem to maintain the image as a large representation of Spiegelman’s head breaks into the panel (See Figure 4). It is actually in this much larger drawing of his own head that the Spiegelman character is drilling a hole. As to the relation of interreference between word and image in the graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman takes things a bit further by composing various relations of interreference on the same page, but between images. On the second plate, the two panels that have become three-dimensional twin towers cast a diagonal shadow behind the other panels on the page (See Figure 3). The shadow ends in the lower left corner of the page from where a series of seven plates progressively represents the towers fall. The shadow of the towers provides a visual link between the first subnarrative, in which Spiegelman verbally explains that he is traumatically haunted by the image of “that awesome tower glowing as it collapses”, and the final one which visually shows his mental image of the burning tower. In other words, the text in the first subnarrative,
next to being in a relationship of coexistence with the image in its panel, is also in a relationship of interreference with the image of the final subnarrative. The separate sections return to the common object of the image of the glowing tower which keeps haunting Spiegelman’s traumatic mind, and are visually linked by the shadows of the tower panels.

The image of the burning tower is also superimposed on the graphic novel’s title page which reproduces the front page of a newspaper from September 11, 1901 (See Figure 7). The newspaper shows headlines which assist to the idea of history repeating itself: “President’s Wound Reopened” and “Emma Goldman in Jail Charged with Conspiracy” (Figure). Written across the reproduction is Spiegelman’s title along with the same recurring image of the tumbling North Tower. The title of the old newspaper brings to mind Cathy Caruth’s idea of trauma as wound inflicted upon the mind. The text of the title and the image of the molten skeleton of the tower are in a dialectical relationship, representing the Spiegelman’s traumatic state of mind. The title, next to referring to the idea of history repeating itself, also makes an allusion to Spiegelman’s traumatic wound that was inflicted by the Holocaust. Trauma piles upon trauma, as this old wound is reopened by the traumatic experience of September 11. On the title page, Spiegelman superimposes his traumatic present on the past. This is made clear by the relation shared between the brightly coloured image of the glowing tower and the headlines of the old, faded newspaper.

The back cover reproduces the same old newspaper reprint this time superimposing contemporary newspaper headlines describing the aftermath of 9/11 (See Figure 8). The headlines include the Time’s “Fire! The World Trade Center Is on Fire!” (9/11/01), “The Age of Irony Comes to an End” (9/24/01), and the New York Times’s “Traumatic Moments End but Reminders Still Linger” (16/06/01). Here, Spiegelman is, yet again, placing his present onto the past. Traumatic wounds are not of a moment, but instead constitute a victim’s past, present and future. In the Shadow of No Towers is explicitly about the intersection of the
present and the past, both formally and thematically. Through the use of a hybrid medium which combines word and image, Spiegelman succeeded in giving an accurate representation of the traumatic mind. Putting the visual and the verbal to use to make the past and the present collide in the very same frame makes for a worthy representation of the temporal layering of the traumatic mind. Spiegelman creatively plays with word and image, making them work together towards an adequate traumatic testimony of his experiences on September 11. The work, visually and verbally, displays the fragmented and non-chronological structure of the traumatic mind. Words and images constantly interact, either in a relationship of coexistence or in one of interreference, to give a worthy, yet original representation of Spiegelman’s 9/11 trauma.

IV. Representing 9/11 in Literature: The Photo-Text Novel

4.1. Introduction

Over the years, there has been a substantial increase within the general field of world/image relations of studies concerning photography-in-text. Currently, it is even considered one of the most important branches within the field. Although photography has found its way into a whole variety of narrative genres, we shall only focus on the study of photography in fictional writing. More specifically, fiction on the traumatic subject of 9/11.

As said before, the translation of trauma into literature brings with it a crisis of representation. Post-9/11 literature had to search for less traditional modes of representation to adequately render trauma’s inherent disruptive nature. Since 9/11 was such a uniquely visual traumatic event, many novelists began to experiment with the incorporation of images. This combination of word and image has proved to give an interesting and convincing representation of trauma.
In the previous chapter, we discussed the relationship between the word and the image in the graphic novel and now we shall look more deeply into the photo-text novel. My main focus will be on Jonathan Safran Foer’s widely acclaimed novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, but I shall also discuss Frédéric Beigbeder’s more conventional *Windows on the World*. The function of the word/image combination in Foer’s novel is very similar to Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* in its attempt to adequately render the victim’s traumatized state of mind. However, in analyzing the relationship between photograph and text one should take into account the specific nature of the photographic image.

4.2. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Three years after the publication of his widely acclaimed debut novel *Everything is Illuminated*, New York author Jonathan Safran Foer strikes again with the masterful *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Whereas his first novel dealt with the historical trauma of the Holocaust, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* tackles the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* tells the story of a highly intelligent nine-year-old boy named Oskar Schell who is struggling with the loss of his father in the 9/11 attacks. About one year after the attacks, Oskar finds a vase in his father’s closet containing a mysterious key in a small envelope labelled “Black”. With the key in his hand, Oskar sets out on a quest through the five boroughs of New York City in search for the matching lock. Oskar is convinced that revealing this mystery will somehow give him access to the past and make him understand his father’s death. However, by the end of the novel, it becomes clear to Oskar that he has been following a false lead and that the key doesn’t

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6 To a lesser extent, the novel also refers to the traumatic bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima.
provide him the answers that he had so fervently hoped to find. The plot emphasizes the inaccessibility of Oskar’s traumatic past, which is also visually symbolized by the included photograph of a door that is missing a keyhole (See Figure 9).

*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* approaches its traumatic subject matter through a highly innovative and playful use of typography and photographs. Because of the use of this “avant-garde tool kit” (Huehls 49), the novel was met with mixed reviews as some book reviewers found these formal experiments to be completely inappropriate for representing 9/11. Others also condemned the incorporated photographs of contributing nothing to the story. Meanwhile, many literary critics have already made clear that there is more to the concept of trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* than initially meets the eye.

Applying trauma theory, Sien Uytterschout interprets the use of photographs as a means to replace that what remains unsaid or unwritten. In the same fashion, Philippe Codde argues that the formal experiments provide an adequate representation since “words fail to capture the past in the wake of trauma” (“Philomela Revisited” unpag.). Just as in Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*, images and layout are used to visually represent the traumatized victim’s mind. As we already explained, traumatic memory is stored under a visual form in a different location of the brain to which the victim has no conscious access. As most photographs incorporated in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* seem to represent mental snapshots of Oskar’s mind that randomly pop up throughout the novel, interrupting his narrative account, we can argue that Foer brilliantly succeeds in giving an adequate representation of the boy’s traumatized mind. It is through the connection of the visual with the verbal that this brilliant photo-text novel becomes a successful representation of trauma.

Photographs are scattered throughout the novel, some of which Oskar did not take himself, others which represent mental snapshots depicting persons or scenes he encountered
on his quest for the lock. In her essay “Still Life: 9/11’s Falling Bodies”, Laura Frost remarks that:

[Foer] includes photographs that are tangential to or irrelevant to the plot (e. g., stuffed early humanoids at the Museum of Natural History and a box full of gems), those that elliptically allude to the drama of 9/11 (a cat falling, birds flying, a Staten Island ferry crashing), and others that represent puzzles that must be solved: a keyhole that needs to be unlocked, a person [Oskar] interviews, a notepad with [Oskar’s] father’s name scrawled on it, and photographs of a falling man (186).

Applying Kibédi Varga’s word/image taxonomy, we can classify the images found in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close according to two categories. The first category includes photographs which are in a secondary relationship with the narrative in which the word precedes the image. Thus the photographs function as illustrations to the narrative, some of which have a purely documentary function while others aim at a deeper truth. Traditionally, photographic illustrations were classified as subordinate to the dominant text, but more recent theories, such as those of W. J. T. Mitchell and Kibédi Varga, argue that the photographs supplement the narrative. Silke Horstkotte also considers the role of layout in intermedial photo-texts, arguing that the relationship between word and image is defined by the precise positioning of the photographs. According to her classification, the photographs in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close form a unity with the narrative and consequentially both should be interpreted as equal. In the case of Foer’s novel, I would agree that word and image are indeed in a relation of identity considering that they both work together towards an accurate

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7 Oskar’s pictures only appear in the chapters of which he is the narrator, not in those narrated by his grandparents.
representation of the traumatized mind. The second category we encounter in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is one in which the images are in a primary relation to the narrative. The novel incorporates a few reprints of personal cards which appear on the same page in a relation of interreference.

Besides the position of the photographs in relation to the narrative, there are some other factors that determine the relationship between the two media. Silke Horstkotte mentions that we should also look at the formatting of the photographs as well as the ways in which they are set off from the narrative ("Photo-Text Topographies" 57). The images used in Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are mostly not enclosed by a frame. In relation to these kind of images, Silke Horstkotte argues that there is “no visual border between photography and text […] [which] reinforces the suggestion that photos are both an integral and indiscriminate part of the fictional discourse […]” ("Photo-Text Topographies" 57). These unframed photographs claim to be the thing that we are reading about, the actual pages of Oskar or grandfather’s book which are incorporated in the novel. This appears to be the case with the photographs taken from grandfather’s daybook. For example, on page 18, Thomas Schell explains the daybook’s function in a letter to his unborn child: “[A]t the end of each day I would take the book to bed with me and read through the pages of my life.” In the following nine pages, the grandfather gives examples of what he would read. The nine pages incorporated in the novel actually claim to be the very same pages from his daybook. They are unframed reproductions which constitute an integral part of the fictional discourse. The visual link between the photograph and the text is much tighter than what would be the case with the framed photographs.

Contrary to the unframed photographs, those that are framed don’t appear to fulfil the same function. Instead of claiming to be the actual photograph, they merely represent it. For example, when Oskar meets Abby Black, he leaves his business card, which is reproduced in
the text on page 99. The reproduced card is just a square with text in it – some words are italicized, others are capitalized – but the front on the card is identical to the novel’s. The framed photographs merely represent the object which is visually separated from the narrative.

About one fifth of the novel is composed of photographs, which are inserted into the text with variable frequency. Mostly the narrative refers directly to a photograph which is then reproduced on the following page. Consequentially, these photographs integrate easily into the fictional text than photographs which are not directly referred to.

Now that we have determined that the photographs incorporated in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close are in a secondary relationship of illustration to the narrative, we shall look more deeply into their function within the fictional text. As said before, not all the photographs incorporated in the novel are Oskar’s. After the war his paternal grandfather, Thomas Schell senior, started taking pictures of everything he owned, down to the doorknobs in his apartment. Some of these pictures are also incorporated in the chapters narrated by the grandfather. Both photographic styles have a documentary function, but according to Mitchum Huehls “Oskar’s pictures aim at a deeper truth” while “the grandfather’s pictures have no meaning beyond the object they represent” as “[i]hey are, in effect, ontological substitutes – proof of existence for a hypothetical insurance adjuster of the future” (48). The photographs included in the chapters narrated by Oskar, can be classified according to two narrative purposes. The photographs with an ostensibly documentary status represent the actual photos, which Oskar himself is said to have seen, taken or possessed. However, there are other photographs that represent Oskar’s mental images, thoughts and emotions. A picture that keeps recurring throughout the novel is the one of a man falling from the WTC (Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close 59, 62, 205; and the flipbook at the end of the novel).
Sien Uytterschout is of the opinion that “the arbitrary recurrence of the falling man symbolizes Oskar’s uncontrollable flashes of imagination, visualizing his father’s death” (72).

The interaction between the photograph reproduced on page 205 and the narrative appears to be an adequate visual performance of the workings of Oskar’s traumatized mind. Oskar’s tells about his Tuesday afternoon sessions with Dr. Fein and in the passage surrounding the photograph we read that he is trying to eavesdrop the conversation between his mum and the doctor (See Figure 10). The text’s typography visually shows the fragmented conversation as Oskar hears it since he can only understand bits and pieces of what they are saying. As the narrative flow is suddenly interrupted by an unreferenced image of a man falling of the WTC, we should interpret this photo as traumatic flash of Oskar’s imagination in which he visualizes his father’s death. Through the brilliant visual interplay between word and image, Foer succeeds to give a more than adequate representation of the workings of Oskar’s traumatized mind.

The documentary status of the photographs in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is not only determined on the basis of the relationship between word and image but also by the characteristics of the photograph. As mentioned before, a photograph is inherently indexical since it is literally a physical trace of that which existed as a particular object in the real world. When used in literary texts, this indexical quality of the photograph suggests its authenticity as documentary evidence. Some photographs in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* refer to real life people, whilst others refer to fictional characters in the novel. In the latter case, the photograph’s indexicality declines as “real” photographs are used in “fake” contexts (Horstkotte, “Photo-Text Topographies” 53). Within the fictional *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the photograph should not be regarded separately, but in a relation of unity with the fictional discourse that frames it. Since there is no extra-narrative reference to the photographs, one should regard them as an integral part of the fictional narrative. In
similar terms, Silke Horstkotte also refers to this interaction of the photograph with the text saying that the photograph’s indexicality is “diminished since their referents are part of imaginative discourse, hence not real. What the photos do instead is performatively suggest reality and authenticity to the reader” (“Pictorial and Verbal Discourse” 35). The relationship between text and image is one of equality in which the photographs influence the narrative just as much as the narrative shapes the meaning and function of the photograph.

The photographs Oskar collects in his scrapbook “Stuff That Happened to Me” are crucial to his understanding of September 11. Next to images of a rack full of keys, fingerprints, mating tortoises, a flock of birds and Abby Black’s house, there is one image that appears several times: a photograph of a man falling from one of the WTC towers. Oskar’s trauma is centred around his father’s death. Not knowing how he died and having to bury him in an empty coffin since his body was never retrieved, left Oskar continuously reliving his trauma without the possibility of closure. Sien Uytterschout hits the nail on the head by arguing that “Oskar is obviously plagued by symptoms of PTSD. Apart from having unspecified nightmares, he keeps reliving the ‘Worst Day,’ and invents things that might have prevented his father from dying”. (72). When he finds the picture of the falling man on the internet, he wants to believe that the man in the picture is his father so that he can finally have closure and work through his trauma:

“I printed out the frames from the Portuguese videos and examined them extremely closely. There’s one body that could be him. It’s dressed like he was, and when I magnify it until the pixels are so big that it stops looking like a person, sometimes I can see glasses. Or I think I can. But I know I probably can’t. It’s just me wanting it to be him.”

“You want him to have jumped?”
“I want to stop inventing. 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 […] and I wouldn’t have to image him trying to crawl down the outside of the building […] or trying to use a tablecloth as a parachute, like some 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.” (Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close 257).

Oskar’s turn to photography to help him understand his father’s death is reminiscent of the critical debate on photography’s role in the representation of trauma. As said before, there appears to be a striking connection between photography and the inherent structure of traumatic memory. The temporality of photography shares some striking resemblances with the time of trauma. As Cathy Caruth has pointed out, the traumatic event is not consciously experienced at the time it occurs, which results in a deformation of memory as the event is only experienced belatedly in its repeated possession of the traumatized victim. Very much like the photograph, traumatic memory mechanically repeats what has only occurred once, this way making present that which is absent. Extending the findings of trauma theory on visual studies, many critics, such as Susan Sontag, Marianne Hirsch, Ulrich Baer, and Barbie Zelizer, have pointed out photography’s therapeutic function in managing trauma. Zelizer proposes that photography “help[s] dislodge people from the initial shock of trauma and coax them into a post-traumatic space, offering a vehicle by which they can see and continue to see until the shock and the trauma associated with disbelieving can be worked through” (49). However, in Oskar’s case, the photograph of the falling man does not seem to function this way. In the end the picture does not help him understand his father’s death. Although Susan Sontag believes that photography provides a quick way for apprehending a traumatic event,
she does argue that “[photographs] are not much help if the task is to understand. Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us” (80). Ultimately, photography functions in a similar way to the traumatic mind. Victims are haunted by traumatic flashbacks. In order to work through trauma, one needs to confront these returning flashbacks and convert them into a “narrative memory” that is fully integrated in the past (Caruth, Trauma: Explorations in Memory 153). Foer brilliantly illustrates this complex relationship between photography and traumatic memory by ending his novel with a transition from discontinuous still time to narrative time.

In the final pages of the novel, Oskar flips through his scrapbook “Stuff That Happened to Me” pausing at the photographs of the falling man:

Was it Dad?

Maybe.

Whoever it was, it was somebody.

I ripped the pages out of the book.

I reversed the order, so that the last one was first, and the first was last.

When I flipped through them, it looked like the man was floating up through the sky. And, if I’d had more pictures, he would’ve flown through a window, back into the building […], and the plane would’ve flown backward away from him […] [and] he would’ve […] walked home backward (325-6).
Oskar’s desire to reverse time so that “[they] would have been safe”, is visually expressed by a flipbook sequence of fifteen images of the falling man. The images are in reversed order so that the figure appears to be moving upwards into the sky.

*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is not the only novel that uses the falling people to represent the trauma of 9/11. Novels such as Frédéric Beigbeder’s *Windows on the World*, Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* and Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, all explore the centrality of the falling people in literary representations of 9/11.

Many critics have applauded Foer for ending the novel with this reversed visual flipbook. Philippe Codde finds that it “emphasizes not only the radical inaccessibility of the past, but also the impossibility of closure” (“Philomela Revisited” unpag.). Laura Frost notes that “[t]he novel’s conclusion gives way to those images entirely, suggesting that for all the linguistic arabesques around the question of his father’s death, Oskar’s emotional understanding of the matter ultimately rests not in words but in images and is unresolved (194). However, one could also argue that Foer wanted to emphasize the flipbook’s creation of narrative time. Unlike the still photograph which expresses traumatic discontinuous time, the sequences of images creates a story with a narrative flow. This transition to narrative, linear time could also be Foer’s way of showing that Oskar has worked through his trauma since he now has converted his traumatic flashbacks into a narrative account. But since we have already established that there is a complex cooperation between the visual and the verbal throughout the novel, we mustn’t only reside to one of the media for explaining the end. Although the sequence of images, creating a narrative time, could suggest that Oskar has worked through his trauma, the accompanying narrative shows us that he has not. The final sentences of the novel are written in the past unreal conditional mood indicating the imaginary nature of the situation. The flipbook does not give a solution to the novel, but merely appears to be another invention of Oskar’s. Narrative and visual imagery reinstate
trauma in the novel’s conclusion illustrating that Oskar is still caught in discontinuous traumatic time. The narrative flow of the flipbook thus is best regarded as a repetition compulsion rather than narrative development.

The inexpressibility of trauma is a recurrent and important theme in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The various attempts of Oskar, grandpa and grandma to testify don’t succeed in linguistically recording their traumatic experiences. Words fail in the wake of trauma which is why the characters go looking for alternative ways of communication. One huge aspect of Oskar’s trauma is that he was home when his father phoned from Windows on the World, leaving six messages on the answering machine. As he hears the phone ringing and sees it is his dad, he is too paralyzed to pick up the phone:

He needed me, and I just couldn’t pick up. I just couldn’t. Are you there? He asked eleven times. I know, because I’ve counted. It’s one more time than I can count on my fingers. Why did he keep asking? […] Sometimes I think he knew I was there. Maybe he kept saying it to give me time to get brave enough to pick up (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 301).

Afterwards, Oskar is ashamed of his failure to answer his father’s last call and so he hides the machine with the messages on it and buys a new one to replace the one he hid. Oskar is unable to talk about this trauma to his mother or grandmother, but instead he resorts to alternative means of expression weaving his father’s final message into a bead chain for his mother. There is, however, no one but Oskar who can decipher the symbolical meaning of this code. Similarly, Oskar’s grandfather, Thomas Sr., is unable to testify to his traumatic past because he suffers from aphasia or loss of speech. After having survived the Dresden bombing, he looses his speech which prevents him from talking about his traumatic
experiences with others. Thomas Sr. resided to the visual as a means of expressing himself in everyday life. He always keeps a notebook and a pen, so that he can write down the words whenever he needs to communicate. He also has the words “yes” and “no” tattooed on his hands. Although writing may seem an adequate compromise for his loss of speech, his attempts to write down his life story also fail as he runs out of paper. Gradually, the space between the sentences becomes smaller and smaller until the letters become illegible and all that remains are black pages (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 281-4). Earlier on in the novel, grandfather’s first attempts at conversation with his wife as he returns to New York is also incomprehensible to grandma, as well as to the reader:

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 there in the middle of the airport, at the beginning of the century, at the end of my life, and I told her everything. […] I broke my life down into letters, for love I pressed “5, 6, 8, 3,” for death, “3, 3, 2, 8, 4, […]” (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 269).

Just as in Oskar’s case, the person for whom the message is intended cannot make sense of it. Mrs. Schell only hears beeps, which to her have no meaning whatsoever. Finally, Oskar’s grandmother also attempts to write down her life history but it only results in the production of thousands of blank pages, some of which are incorporated in the novel. Grandma cannot bring herself to expressing her traumatic past thus she only pretends to be writing by continuously hitting the space bar.
*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* visually renders the inexpressibility of trauma through the incorporation of photographs and use of experimental typography. In the section told by Oskar’s grandfather, some pages from his daybook are visually reproduced. These include pages with convenient sentences written on them, as well as documentary photographs of various doorknobs in his apartment. After the war, Oskar’s grandfather began photographing everything he owned as a proof that they existed. The novel includes six pictures of doorknobs randomly interspersed within grandfather’s story. Unlike Oskar’s photographs, they don’t illustrate some aspect of adjacent text. In none of the six cases, the text refers directly to the photograph. One could say that grandfather’s photos function more or less in the same way as the picture of the falling man which represents an uncontrollable flash of imagination.

The photographs of the doorknobs have an important symbolic function in the novel, symbolizing the unlocking of trauma. Oskar’s quest for the lock to match the key he found in his father’s closet, refers to his attempts at unlocking his traumatic experiences. Although Oskar eventually finds the lock to the key, it doesn’t provide him with the answers he had hoped for. This doesn’t only apply to Oskar, but also to his grandfather. The inaccessibility of the traumatic past is reinforced by the image of a door without a keyhole (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 212). This particular photograph has a very important metaphorical function in the novel, both symbolizing Oskar’s inaccessibility to his past as well as grandfather’s. The photograph’s place in the novel is certainly not coincidental. The image of the inaccessible door appears when grandfather is writing down, for the first time, his story of what happened during the allied bombings of Dresden. This reliving of a profoundly traumatic experience is connected to the image of the inaccessible door emphasizing Thomas Sr.’s inability to bear witness. Thus the incomprehensibility of trauma is not only expressed textually but is also reinforced on a visual level through the use of symbolical photography.
4.3. *Windows on the World*

Frédéric Beigbeder’s 2004 novel *Windows on the World* was an immediate bestseller in France and has enjoyed critical success around Europe. In 2005, Beigbeder was awarded the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize for this controversial 9/11 novel. Based on *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*, Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn’s journalistic reconstruction of the events in and around the towers as they occurred on September 11, *Windows on the World* also adopts a moment-by-moment narrative. Starting at 8.30 AM, each chapter occupies one minute until the moment of the North Tower’s collapse at 10.29 AM. The novel combines two alternating narratives: in the odd-numbered chapters, we read the fictional account of Carthew Yorston and his two sons who find themselves trapped in the restaurant Windows on the World on that fateful morning of September 11, 2001, and in the even-numbered chapters, the focus shifts to a self-reflexive memoir of Beigbeder’s own reactions to the events in their aftermath.

*Windows on the World*, while chronologically conservative, is formally innovative because of its combination of multiple viewpoints, self-reflexive meta-narratives and incorporation of a series of unidentified photographs. Beigbeder also incorporates the theme of 9/11’s falling bodies, when he makes Carthew and his two sons jump into their death at the end of the novel. Similar to Jonathan Safran Foer’s inversed flip-book creation, Beigbeder’s jumping characters imagine themselves as “flying” upward.

The novel had to endure a considerable amount of criticism for various reasons. These criticisms were mainly aimed at his imaginative recreation of the events at the top of the North Tower. Josh Lacey accused Beigbeder of being “simply incapable of writing a conventional narrative or creating autonomous fictional characters.” With regard to the ending
of the novel, he wonders why, if the author attempts to “show the invisible, speak the unspeakable”, he gives up at the vital moment, “failing to practice his own theory” (“Minute by minute,” The Guardian). James Francken goes even further by stating that “[the] book doesn’t grapple with the grim truth of 9/11 – it recounts its terrible events in a shamefully reassuring and pious tone” (“Dangerous debris,” The Telegraph). But, the book also received a great deal of positive reviews applauding Beigbeder for not being afraid to “shed light on the more tragically horrifying aspects of the attacks, at least as far as he can imagine them” (“Windows on the World,” Kirkus Reviews). Professor Kristiaan Versluys acclaims the novel for its treatment of 9/11 as an event that has intensified a feeling of unity between America and Europe:

Unlike its predecessors in the 19th century, this new international novel does not play off American innocence versus European corruption, but emphasizes the connections between the continents, which are the cultural product of globalization, of the universal media and frequent and cheap travel. Most of all, the new-found unity is the product of shared trauma: 9/11 is not exclusively an American tragedy, but a condition shared by all of the advanced nations (“9/11 as a European Event” 75).

Beigbeder emphasizes a whole range of similarities between America and France, starting with the fact that in the self-reflective chapters, Beigbeder doubles space as he makes his character take his morning coffee every morning in Le Ciel de Paris, the restaurant on the top of the Tour Montparnasse.

Time has figured prominently in nearly all narratives of 9/11. This is also true for Windows on the World. Much like a journalistic account of the events, the novel’s chapters
unfold the events on a timeline from 8:30 to 10:29 AM. Pointing out at the beginning of his novel that “[h]ell lasts an hour and three-quarters. As does this book,” Beigbeder makes the ticking of the clock drive the novel’s storyline ahead. Some chapters are brief, while others are elongated. 8:44, the minute before flight American Airlines 11 flew into the North Tower, presents a sense of longing for “still time” as Beigbeder writes: “Welcome to the minute before. The point at which everything is still possible. They could decide to leave on the spur of the moment. But Carthew thinks they still have time, they should make the most of their New York jaunt;” (52). Although, in this chapter, Beigbeder expresses his longing for photographic, discontinuous “still” time, he proceeds to describe the events in narrative, linear time. With reference to the treatment of the falling bodies, Laura Frost mentions that Beigbeder’s decision to “delve fully into narrative time, the time beyond the frame of the still image, […] [is] something few authors are willing to do in their fiction even as they constantly circle around it” (196). *Windows on the World* references a photograph of people jumping from the Word Trade Center with tablecloths used as parachutes and proceeds to describe this fall in narrative, linear time.

In the self-reflective chapters, Beigbeder makes several comments which are reminiscent of Jean Baudrillard’s *The Spirit of Terrorism* and Slavoj Žižek’s *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*. Eight pages into the novel, Beigbeder asserts that “[s]ince September 11, 2001, reality has outstripped fiction, it’s destroying it. It’s impossible to write about this subject, and yet impossible to write about anything else. Nothing else touches us. Similarly, Jean Baudrillard notes that reality has outstripped fiction because “it has absorbed fiction’s energy, and has itself become fiction” (28). Both Baudrillard and Žižek critique statements of the incommensurability of September 11, 2001 taking into account the omnipresence of similar disasters in Hollywood films. In 10:04, Beigbeder also ponders about 9/11’s resemblance to a Hollywood disaster movie:
The killer cloud moved like a tidal wave at fifty miles an hour through the alleys onto Fulton Street, and this, too, is an image lifted from disaster movies: we’ve seen this same scene in *The Blob, Godzilla, Independence Day, Armageddon*, in *Die Hard 2* and in *Deep Impact*: that morning, reality contented itself with imitating special effects. Some bystanders didn’t run for cover, so convinced were they that they’d seen it all before (270).

The attacks on the World Trade Center were, without any doubt, an all-consuming media event. The acts of the terrorists deliberately brought about a spectacle, as Slavoj Žižek says: “the ‘terrorists’ themselves did not do it primarily to provoke real material damage, but for the spectacular effect of it” (11). As the media appropriated the events of September 11, they routinely made the events conform to the conventions of a spectacle. In chapter 10:01, Beigbeder criticizes this media adaptation of 9/11:

Fife minutes after the first plane crashed into our tower, the tragedy was already taken hostage to fortune in a media war. […] Knee-jerk patriotism made the American press swagger about, censor our suffering, edit our shots of the jumpers, the photographs of those burn victims, the body parts. […] It’s important to put up a good show, it’s part of the propaganda (266).

Frédéric Beigbeder also takes up the important theme of Good and Evil, which we also find in Jean Baudrillard’s *The Spirit of Terrorism*. There is, however, a peculiar twist in Beigbeder’s approach since he uses a combination of word and image to reflect on the relation between Good and Evil.
Windows on the World incorporates three photographs, all of which were taken by Beigbeder himself. The first photograph shows the sculpture of “le génie du mal” in the Montparnasse cemetery (See Figure 11). The moment was made in honour of Baudelaire and shares some striking resemblances to Auguste Rodin’s statue “The Thinker.” The second photograph appears on the subsequent page and shows what the statue of Baudelaire surveys (See Figure 12). Regarding the picture, our attention is immediately drawn to the Tour de Montparnasse. A far end further into the novel, we find the third and final photograph which represents a sculpture of St. George slaying a dragon (See Figure 13). All of these photographs portray the relationship between Good and Evil either in an implicit or explicit way.

Firstly, we shall discuss the formal composition of text and image in the novel. Applying Kibédi Varga’s taxonomy, the relation between the text and the images can be categorized as being of a primary nature. Word and image appear simultaneously, allowing the reader to perceive both at the same time. Based on a further division, all three photographs should be analyzed as single verbal-visual objects in which the image is in a subordinate relation to the word. The text explains the image, restraining its possibilities and fixing its meaning. Further on, one could say that word and image are in a relation of separateness, belonging to the second category of interreference: “[They] are separated but presented on the same page” (Kibédi Varga 39). They refer to each other. Considering novel’s layout, we notice that the photographs are inserted in the body of the text instead of being delegated to a separate section.

They don’t take up full pages and the printed text is neatly arranged around the photograph. According to Silke Horstkotte’s theories, the reproduced photographs in Windows on the
World are integral to the novel and thus both should be regarded as equal parts since they form a unity. We should, however, notice that the first two photographs are captioned.

The first photograph shows Baudelaire’s statue in the Montparnasse cemetery, accompanied by the following caption: “The Genius of Evil…” (117). The next page shows a second photograph, registering the sight contemplated by the French author, which is captioned “… and what he surveys” (118). The photographs are further more accompanied by a verbal commentary in which the narrator/protagonist, Frédéric Beigbeder, closely describes the objects of the photographs. He informs us that he was walking through the cemetery when suddenly he paused at the sight of the monument honouring 19th century French writer Baudelaire. Intrigued by the statue of “the ‘génie du mal’ [who] is perched sculpted in stone, leaning on a balustrade like Rodin’s Thinker” (117), Beigbeder takes out his camera to take a picture of the statue and of the landscape it faces. The caption determines our interpretation of the photograph and determines the relationship between the photograph and the written text. Beigbeder clearly wants his readers to interpret the brooding Baudelaire as Evil while regarding the Tour Montparnasse as Good. We already established that the Tour Montparnasse in Paris serves as a kind of ‘sister site’ of the World Trade Center in New York since Beigbeder mentions a whole range of similarities between both buildings and their histories (Versluys, “9/11 as a European Event” 73). The treatment of the photograph consequentially functions as a simile or analogy to the World Trade Center event on 9/11.

The third photograph has a more explicit reference to the symbolic battle of Good versus Evil. It shows a sculpture, created by Zurab Tsereteli, representing St. George slaying a dragon. Entitled Good defeats Evil, the art work was a gift to the United Nations from the USSR in 1990 on occasion of the UN’s 45th anniversary. The sculpture combines bronze work with material from two missiles, a Soviet SS-20 and a United States Pershing nuclear missile that were destroyed under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987. “Good” is
represented by the figure of St. George on a rearing horse, holding an enormous spear in his right hand with which he is about to slay “Evil”, represented by the dragon. In honour of the end of the Cold War, Zurab Tsereteli dedicated his work of art to “the victory of peace over war” and sees it as a symbol of “our fighting for peace and safety for future generations” (“Russian Academy of Arts”). In the adjacent text referring to the photograph, Beigbeder notes that, at the time the photograph was taken, the members of the Security Council were gathered in the buildings of the United Nations to vote on a resolution about the war in Iraq. He continues by referring to something President Bush said during a press conference the day before: “Since September Eleventh, our home is a battlefield” (250). The direct reference to the events of 9/11 places the photograph in a different context. The verbal commentary firmly places the photograph in a 9/11 context of Good versus Evil. Frédéric Beigbeder is of the opinion that the United Nations inspire nations to believe that justice exists, and that in the end Good always conquers Evil, which, according to him, is far from true. He agrees with critic Jean Baudrillard, who encourages his reader to look beyond Good and Evil:

We believe naively that the progress of Good, its advance in all fields (the sciences, technology, democracy, human rights), corresponds to a defeat of Evil. No one seems to have understood that Good and Evil advance together, as part of the same movement. […] Evil is regarded as an accidental mishap, but this axiom, from which all the Manichaean forms of the struggle of Good against Evil derive, is illusory. Good does not conquer Evil, nor indeed does the reverse happen: they are at once both irreducible to each other and inextricably interrelated (13).
In the present case of 9/11, the Islam clearly emerged as the new “Evil” enemy of the United States. In this light, the photograph of Good defeats Evil can be interpreted as the United States waging war against and defeating Terrorism. On this subject, Jean Baudrillard says that “[i]n the traditional universe, there was still a balance between Good and Evil […]. As soon as there was a total extrapolation of Good […], that balance was upset. From this point on, the equilibrium was gone, and it was as though Evil regained an invisible autonomy, henceforward developing exponentially” (14). He continues that “a ghostly enemy emerged, infiltrating itself throughout the whole planet, slipping in everywhere like a virus, welling up from all the interstices of power: Islam” (15). Regarding the final photograph in the light of the other incorporated photographs, the United States, represented through the symbol of the Twin Towers, personify Good, while the Islamic terrorists are regarded as Evil.

Unlike Jonathan Safran Foer’s body of photographs incorporated in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Frédéric Beigbeder’s pictures are not part of the fictional discourse. This is because Windows on the World is a novel that combines a fictional narrative with an autobiographical account of the author’s own personal thoughts concerning 9/11 and its aftermath. All of the pictures are inserted into chapters that belong to the non-fictional account. Therefore, the images do not contribute in any way to the plot of the fictional story about Carthew Yorston and his two sons who are trapped in the restaurant on top of the North Tower on September 11, 2001. Despite of the photograph’s inherent indexicality, which literally makes it a physical trace of the real object that once stood before the camera, the photographs in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close often refer to fictional characters in the novel. This can be accounted for since the photograph’s relation to the text is such that they should be regarded as a unity. In the case of Beigbeder’s Windows on the World, however, the discourse that frames the photographs is not fictional. The photograph’s indexicality, their position, as well as their narrative framing, reveal the notion of authenticity and of their
function as documentary material. The text focuses the photo’s meaning as an authentic, revealing document by referring to the history of the object which it represents. Beigbeder does, however, incorporate the pictures into a story. But an autobiographical one non the less.

One final formal feature that I would like to mention is Beigbeder’s visualization of the Twin Towers in the penultimate chapter of the novel. The text is arranged in two separate columns representing the towers of the World Trade Center. The chapter’s title is placed vertically on the extreme top of the left column, visualizing the North Tower’s antenna. The combination of text and image is not coincidental in this case: 10:28 is the exact time at which the final tower collapsed, after burning for approximately 102 minutes. In this chapter, Beigbeder makes a final attempt at remembering the structures of the two buildings as he walks by the site of the World Trade Center one year and a half after the tragedy. The towers are gone, but their shadows still remain, and passers-by will always remember the tragedy and the people that died in it. In this chapter of the visualized Twin Towers, word and image are in a primary relation of identity: the reader is struck by word and image simultaneously since there is a complete union between both media. The image is constituted by the text, which is visually arranged to represent the towers of the Word Trade Center. As Kibédi Varga explains: “[W]e cannot switch from one way of perceiving to another; we in fact perceive in two different ways at the same time” (37). The narrative does not refer to the image, but instead suggests it visually.

V. Conclusion

As post-9/11 literature aimed to represent the September 11 attacks in a way that stays true to the inherent nature of trauma, it gave rise to novel hybrid forms and a use of new kinds of images and iconography in narrative, graphic novels and photo-text novels. Given the
the extreme complexity of traumatic realities, literature had to go looking for formally inventive representational strategies to come as close as possible to trauma’s disruptive nature. Despite trauma’s physical expression, it primarily resides in a fundamental distortion of the mind. Trauma is never fully experienced at the time, but only belatedly in a repeated possession of the victim’s mind “traumatic” memories. In the brain, “traumatic” memory is organized on a different level than “narrative” memory. It is stored in a visual or iconic form due to the fact that the experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level. The novels under discussion in this master thesis aim to give a more direct access to the traumatized mind taking into consideration the visual nature of trauma. Art Spiegelman and Jonathan Safran Foer incorporate images to come as close as possible to an accurate rendering of the condition of the traumatized victim’s mind. Their combination of word and image visualizes the inherent incomprehensibility of trauma. However, the use of images is not only indebted to the visual structure of the traumatized mind, but also to the visual nature of the events. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center were probably the most visually documented historical event in human history. Since video footage and photography played a crucial role in the reporting of the event, it is only natural that literature took up the visual in its novelistic representation. Frédéric Beigbeder’s *Windows on the World*, based on a journalistic reconstruction of the events by Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn, also provides a combination of photography and narrative. Beigbeder’s symbolic photographs stay true to the event’s unique visual nature as the attacks were witnessed through the image in all its forms.

Over the course of this master thesis, we have analyzed the three novels bearing in mind the intermediality of word an image. After taking a more close look into the field of word-and-image studies, we applied various theories by critics such as Áron Kibédi Varga, W. J. T. Mitchell and Silke Horstkotte to define the image and text relations within the intermedial novels. With regard to the photo-text novels, we consider issues such as the role
of layout, position, caption and the narrative function of the photograph. We also determine the connection between the experience of trauma and the photographic image. Naturally, the graphic novel is analyzed in a slightly different way because of its inherent hybrid nature. It is difficult to separate the word and image relationships, therefore word and image need to be analyzed as a unified whole with one single language which contains both the verbal and the visual representational modes. In graphic novels, the words often function as images and vice versa images should be read as well as seen. In the graphic novel, as well as in the photo-text novel, we shall also consider two important constructs which are used to represent the workings of trauma: time and space.

*In the Shadow of No Towers* is a work of visual witnessing in which the psychologically wounded Spiegelman tries to make sense of the September 11 attacks and their aftermath. The work gives the impression of a large, chaotic and fragmentary collage which constitutes an adequate representation of the author’s traumatic state of mind in the aftermath of 9/11. Spiegelman brilliantly reflects the skewed notion of traumatic time by putting to work the hybridity of the genre. He experimentally juxtaposes multiple traumatic temporalities in his narrative as well as in his drawings and layout which reflect a disruption of linear, chronological and logical context. The fact that there is no linear, left-to-right order in which to read the strips, registers trauma’s “inability to conform to the logic of linear and temporal progression” (Chute 232). Spiegelman’s division of his graphic novel in two parts also reflects the traumatic disruption of time since it implies that time moves backwards while the novel ends without healing or transcendence. The old comics represent the past that comes back to haunt the present while Spiegelman is unable to think beyond the moment of the attacks. Throughout the novel, the visual and the verbal work together in giving an adequate representation of Spiegelman’s traumatic experience of time in which the past superimposes on the present. It is through the experimental use of visual space combined with the text that
accompanies the image that Spiegelman succeeds in conveying the structure of traumatic memory with its different temporalities. As a result of his traumatic experience, the Spiegelman character keeps being haunted by the image of incandescent North Tower. He is literally possessed by this image which randomly keeps coming back to haunt him throughout the novel. Since the visual and the verbal are of equal importance in their contribution to a representation of traumatic memory, the image is always connected to captions that express the passage of time and the uncontrolled traumatic re-enactment of memory. Applying Kibédi Varga’s taxonomy of word and image relations, we classified the relationship between the text and the images as being of a primary nature, in which both appear simultaneously to the reader. In the Shadow of No Towers mostly demonstrates a hierarchal relation in which the image is subordinate to the text. When considering the spatial disposition of the graphic novel, word and image are in a relation of separateness since the reader alternatively switches from image to text and vice versa. Word and image are in a relation of coexistence, but Spiegelman also experiments with interreference between the images. Spiegelman creatively plays with word and image, making them interact to give a worthy, yet original representation of the workings of the traumatic mind.

The function of the word and image combination in Jonathan Safran Foer’s photo-text novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is similar to Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Word and image interconnect in their attempt to adequately represent the victim’s traumatized state of mind. The relation between word and image is, however, not only to be analyzed according to its function in the novel, but one should also take in mind the specificity of the photographic image. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* chooses a different way of approaching the traumatic events of September 11, 2001, using experimental typography and photographs. The story focuses on Oskar Schell, who has lost his father in the 9/11 attacks, and his struggle
to grapple with this loss. Most of the photographs incorporated in the novel represent mental snapshots depicting persons or scenes he encountered on his quest through New York. The traumatic mind works differently, storing memories under a visual form and in a location to which to victim has no conscious access. Foer adequately visualizes this through the use of photographs, representing mental snapshots, which keep randomly popping up throughout the novel, interrupting Oskar’s narrative account. Other photographs include the ones Oskar did not take himself. These can be irrelevant to the plot, elliptically allude to the trauma of 9/11 or represent puzzles that need to be solved. Oskar’s photographs can be classified according to two narrative purposes: those which have a purely documentary status and those that represent his mental images, thoughts and emotions. An example of the latter, is the picture of the falling man which keeps reappearing through the novel. The arbitrary recurrence of this image symbolizes Oskar’s uncontrollable traumatic flashes in which he visualizes his father’s death.

On the basis of Kibédi Varga’s word/image taxonomy, we argued that the photographs in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* can be divided in two categories. The first category incorporates photographs which are in a secondary relationship with the narrative in which the word precedes the image. Some of the illustrations function as documentation while others seem to aim at a deeper truth. Although illustrations are oftentimes classified as subordinate to the narrative, we found that both should be interpreted as equal due to their precise positioning. The second category includes the images which are in a primary relation to the narrative since they appear on the same page in a relation of interreference, such as the reprints of personal cards.

Most photographs are not enclosed by a frame, which, according to Silke Horstkotte, suggests that they constitute an integral part of the fictional discourse. Those pictures claim to be the actual pages out of Oskar or grandfather’s scrapbook, therefore the visual link between the image and the text is much tighter than what would be the case with framed photographs.
The framed photographs, on the other hand, merely represent the object which is visually separated from the narrative.

After establishing the photograph’s inherent indexicality, we analyzed this quality in the light of the fictional discourse. Some pictures incorporated in the novel refer to fictional characters or events. This, consequentially, declines their authenticity as documentary evidence and therefore the photographs should be regarded as being in relation of unity with the fictional discourse that frames them.

Oskar’s turn to the photograph of the falling man to help him understand his father’s death is linked to photography’s supposed role in the representation of trauma. We established a striking connection between photography and the inherent structure of traumatic memory and pointed out photography’s therapeutic function in managing trauma. However, in Oskar’s case, the picture of the falling man does help him work through his trauma. The novel rather suggests a transition from discontinuous, photographic still time to narrative time, which is brilliantly illustrated through the incorporation of the flipbook. In order to work through his trauma, Oskar has to confront the returning flashbacks and fully integrate them in the past by converting them into “narrative” memory. However, in discussing the relation between word and image, we must look at the cooperation between both media in conveying meaning. The novel’s final words are in past unreal conditional mood which indicates the imaginary nature of the flipbook, thus claiming its status as just another one of Oskar’s inventions. Narrative and visual imagery reinstate trauma in the novel’s conclusion. Finally we also established Foer’s visual rendering of trauma’s inexpressibility through the incorporation of photographs and experimental typography, applying it especially to the case of Oskar’s grandfather.

The chronologically conservative *Windows on the Word* adopts a moment-by-moment narrative, combining a fictional story with a self-reflexive memoir of the author’s own reactions to the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. It is, however, a formally innovative novel
because of its combination of multiple viewpoints, self-reflexive meta-narratives and incorporation of a series of unidentified photographs. The photographs occur in Beigbeder’s self-reflexive narrative and not in the fictional chapters, which crucially determines their relation to the text. While the meta-narrative offers a wide variety of interesting ideas concerning the events of September 11, the photographs do not refer directly to the attacks. However, they are highly symbolical in conveying the relationship between Good and Evil. A reading of Jean Baudrillard’s *The Spirit of Terrorism* helped us determine the connection between what the photographs represent and the events of 9/11. The photographs symbolize the various theories formulated by Beigbeder in his self-reflexive accounts. The photographs do not take up full pages, but instead they are present on the same page as the text that accompanies them. The text does, however, refer directly to the photographs, explaining the image and fixing its meaning. Consequentially, the photograph’s indexicality, its position, as well as their narrative framing accounts for its function as an authentic, revealing document.

Through a detailed analysis of three intermedial novels, we can conclude that there is an intense cooperation between image and text. This mode of representation shows to be an adequate means to convey the workings of trauma. It is the formal organization of these novels and their interplay between the verbal and the visual which accounts for an accurate reproduction of a traumatic subject matter, which is known for its resistance to traditional forms of representation.
VI. Works Cited


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