

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

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### Abstract

*The 9/11 attacks are turning point in history and the literature that appeared afterwards is considered as a new genre. Jonathan Safran Foer, in his Post-9/11 novel, Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (EL&IC) has focused on September 11 as a traumatic event for its survivors. Therefore, in order to make the psychological trauma of the attacks presentable, the author like other postmodern fiction writers has challenged the established literary conventions by undermining the traditional pecking order of discourse for rendering the devastation of the attacks into narration. For this purpose, Foer employs a number of creative and artistic techniques and other modes of communication in the novel, especially when language fails to fathom the depth of trauma. It is with the help of these techniques that the author has generalized trauma beyond cultural and political differences as its effects remain the same for the victims. The novel has also discussed almost all of the major traumatic events of 20<sup>th</sup> century in the post-9/11 scenario representing the silent ordeal of suffering and after-effects on the survivors (WW-II, Holocaust, Hiroshima, and 9/11). Moreover, as a postmodern writer, for Foer too, nothing is outside of the text as he incorporated almost everything in the novel that he exposed to in the 21<sup>st</sup> century media saturated world with virtual realities: visiting cards, images, emails, letters, newspaper cuttings, blank pages, shaded pages, pages with single words, pages with single sentence, pages with name of colours and signatures, highlighting mistakes with red colors, writing digits and transcription of telephone calls/messages, fragmented/dialogic text, multiple narratives/perspectives, temporal distortion, inter-textuality, rewinding action through images, certain words were italicized others capitalized, unusual spaces were left among the sentences, frequent questions were asked and a number of*

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*dialogues were made in the unconventional form in the narration etc. Foer in EL&IC also makes an attempt to represent and record the traumatic history, which is commonly considered as inaccessible and un-presentable. Thus at times it also seems as if the whole text of the novel is suffering from trauma. This research makes a critique of the creative, artistic and postmodern elements/techniques of the novel, which are deliberately used for capturing the effects and after-effects of trauma on the survivors of September 11 attacks. The research also shows that the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening up in the after-days of the tragic event(s). However, the psychological injuries could not be healed the way physical injuries are healed as the process of its recovery is very slow and painful not only for the victim survivors as in case Oskar Schell, a nine-year-old protagonist of the novel but also for the entire family.*

**Keywords:** Techniques, Trauma Literature, Postmodern Critique, Post-9/11 Fiction.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Fiction, Trauma and 9/11**

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

Versluys (2007), in *9/11 as a European Event: the Novels*, argues that the September 11 attacks have an immense impact on the American culture; it is the most filmed event after the Holocaust. Many will remember the dreadful images of people either falling or jumping from the burning

buildings. The attacks on the Twin Towers caused such a devastating shock for the people that it has already been called the defining tragedy of our time (p.65). In an interview (J. Freeman, "How Sept 11, 2001 Affected Writing, both within and outside the US", August 19, 2011) aired by The World, literary editor John Freeman argues that the 9/11 trauma is —too big for the United States of America and it has changed fiction in the West. The American authors still do not fully understand the meaning of the events and even American Fiction has not yet worked through trauma. The attacks were a trauma not only for the Americans but also for the global community. The victims and survivors, who experienced the attacks, carried the burden of memory of the attacks, in which 2,752 people died.

The 9/11 literature represents trauma and raises a new basic question about the nature of human existence. The survivors of the attacks struggle with their memories. They turn towards each others to share and give meaning to the unspeakable loss. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth explains, "The problem of survival, in trauma, thus emerges specifically as the question: What does it mean for consciousness to survive" (p.61). The traumatic attacks of September 11 have taken place in an era where big event(s) cannot be left unnoticed due to the availability of advanced technology. But in spite of that, the events are wrapped in mystery and a lot of uncertainty still prevails. This uncertainty has given birth to creative writings of fiction so as to fill the blanks. However, literature occupies a different place as compared to journalism or mass media. Literature is not under the same kind of scrutiny as the media. Moreover, literature is looked for answers as Doris Lessing (1919) said; "Literature is analysis after the event."

Literature that has appeared since the 9/11 attacks, is considered as a new genre. There is a considerable list of novels that deal directly or indirectly with the aftermath of the attacks. As Jay McInerney (2005) said, "most novelists I know ... went through a period of intense self-examination and self-loathing after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center" and Martin Amis (2002) further said, "After a couple of hours at their desks, on September 12, 2001, all the writers on earth were reluctantly considering a change of occupation".

## 1.2. Post-9/11 Novels

A number of American fiction writers have responded to the 9/11 attacks and represented it as a collective trauma for the Americans. The novel, I have selected for discussion, focuses on the event as a traumatic experience and its effects and after-effects on the survivors. The primary work includes one of the famous post-9/11 novels i.e., *EL&IC* presenting the traumatic event of September 11 attacks. Jonathan Safran Foer's Post-9/11 novel, *EL&IC*, was published in 2005. He effectively presents the attacks of September 11, 2001 as a traumatic event.

The characters of the novel are directly or indirectly traumatized by the event. The story of the novel is a typical account of traumatic experiences at different levels. The novel appeared after four years of the attacks on the World Trade Centre, in which Foer depicts the traumatized mind and visualization of the traumatic experiences of a nine-year-old boy. In addition to this, the novel focuses on the resurgence of long buried traumatic memories, which demand to be mourned, which are often intimately associated with the body.

*EL&IC* deals with the way a family is directly affected by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. The story of the novel begins after the fateful day of 9/11 and narrated by Oskar Schell, who is the son of one of the victims of attacks. The exchange of letters from Oskar's grandfather to his son, Thomas and from Oskar's grandmother to Oskar narrated the history of their family and the way they undergo through pain and sufferings caused by various historical traumatic events. Furthermore, the novel also reflects the horrors and wounds of the 9/11 attacks (Greer, 2005).

## 1.3. Research Statement

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

## 1.4. Research Questions

1. What creative techniques have been employed by the selected writer to depict the traumatic effects of 9/11 events on individuals and families?

2. How were these techniques employed by the selected writer in the traumatic narration of the novels?
3. To what extent is it possible to depict trauma through language? And what artistic techniques Foer has employed to capture the traumatic experiences wherever language failed to fathom the depth of trauma?

### **1.5. Research Methodology**

This research article aims to explore both the postmodern techniques employed in the novel and the psycho-social impact of trauma on the survivors of September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre (WTC) in their fictional representation. The task of presenting the un-presentable is central to the recent genre of fiction called the post-9/11 novels. Moreover, the writer on one hand employs various postmodern techniques and techniques specific to arts and media. And on the other, the author also incorporates different genres of literature and make its deliberate use for creating a new narrative voice for trauma narration in the fictional representation of 9/11 attacks. These different techniques of psychological trauma are employed for making the narration of traumatic experiences possible.

Furthermore, the purpose to these techniques is to familiarize the audience with the unfamiliar experiences of trauma. The understudy research critically analyzes and discusses the narrative techniques used for trauma expression in the post-9/11 fictional representation and other postmodern techniques/elements in the selected novel. Furthermore, trauma theory, which is the psychological study of trauma, is the most suitable theory available for the purpose of exploring how the survivors are traumatized and experience the traumatic event of September 11 attacks again and again through remembrance. This research is qualitative analysis of both the traumatized characters and postmodern techniques that are employed for the narration of trauma.

### **1.6. Theoretical Framework**

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

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

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

It is usually considered that the trauma narrative is impossible. However, while discussing the trauma fiction, Whitehead (2005-2008) points out in *Trauma, Ethics and Myth-oriented Literary Tradition in Jonathon Safran Foer's EL&IC*, that literary strategies and conditions make the communication of traumatic experience possible. While elaborating the application of trauma theory on the contemporary fiction, she states that Caruth's work suggests that if trauma is not possible to formulate narrative then it may require an unconventional literary sequence and irruption of one time into another. Furthermore, critics refer to such fiction as — experimental fiction, which uses experimental devices/techniques in its fictional representation. This novel is also considered as a very rich in terms of experimental techniques.

### **1.7. Trauma Theory**

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

of traumatic experiences is for more important than mere definitions of trauma. The event is overwhelming for the victim because his/her mind is not prepared for the devastating experience. In Freud's terms 'Angstbereitschaft'—the victim is not ready to feel pain or anxiety. At the time of the traumatic event, the effects may not be fully realized by the victim. This consciousness of the occurrence is realized later when the event starts repeating in the mind of the survivor. So, the survivor is repeatedly traumatized by possessing the image of the event.

Caruth (1996) argues that the delayed reaction of trauma is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on which most writers agree that there is response (sometimes delayed) to overwhelming event(s), which may take the form of dreams, repeated intrusive hallucinations, thoughts and behaviors produced by the event along with sad feelings created by the experience during or after the event, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (p.4, 11).

According to common understanding, traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter individual or collective sense of well-being of the victim(s). The power to shatter—the trauma tends to emerge from events experienced by the victim. The response to such shattering events—being traumatized is felt and thought to be an immediate and unreflexive response. Trauma is not only constituted by the destructive force of event(s) but also the very acts of its survivors demonstrate trauma.

The victims also remember the memories and fear of the experienced event(s) through images and symbols, which Cathy Caruth names as 'speechless terror'. The traumatized victims may never be fully integrated as they consider themselves lost in the event and they may never remain the same. Therefore, it is said that the trauma victim is not living in the present. During the 20th Century, people have often referred to traumatic experiences, events, acts of violence, harassment and abrupt changes by experiencing them. For this purpose, the language of trauma has been employed to explain the effects of traumatic event(s) on individuals and collective groups.

### **1.8. Postmodern Literary Techniques**

Postmodern literary text, on one hand, tends to undermine originality, authenticity and single authorship while on the other, it is also closely connected with the advanced use of communication technologies such as

television, film, CD-ROMs, DVD's, videos, audios, computer, internet and mobile phones etc.

Moreover, the postmodern literary texts employ various postmodern narrative techniques such as plurality, fragmentation, relativism (manifestation of open ending novels and postmodern literary narrative devices such as metafiction, intertextuality, parody, pastiche, radical irony, collage and language instability temporal disorder which gives space to readers to create new meanings), multiple perspectives, simulacrum, hypertextual narrative strategies, nonlinear narratives, active reader participation, hypermedia and multimedia strategies, playfulness, subjectivism, eclecticism, alternative and overlapping narrative voices, overlapping of reality with fiction, overlapping of dreams with reality, hallucination, fantasies, and the deliberate use of mixing of different genres such as “detective story, pornography, love story, essay, diary, cookery book, receipt, letter, newspaper clip” (p.32).

Postmodern literary texts like modernist literary texts also employ the narrative devices such aesthetic principles, arts and media including “the camera-eye technique, insertion of the newsreels in the narrative, cuts, rapid sequence of images, impressionist depiction of reality emphasizing visuality and subjective experience” (p.44). However, the use and functions of these techniques differ in the postmodern literary texts, as these tend to show depthlessness, artificiality of experience, and superficiality. These techniques also focus that semiotic nature of reality and textuality is perceived as mediated realities through internet, television, videos, cinema or virtual reality ([www.pulib.sk/elpub](http://www.pulib.sk/elpub)).

In order to depict trauma, Foer in *EL&IC* employs a number of postmodern techniques i.e. structural, linguistic and visual elements, including multiperspectivity, pictures, photographs, typographic elements, reconnaissance expedition, anti-illusionism, metaphors, intertextuality, intermediality, individual style and metafictional elements etc.

### **1.9. Significance of the Study**

The psychological damage caused by the terrible events of life and its after-effects on the survivors has become one of the main concerns of 21st Century psychology. Moreover, experiencing trauma has also been remained as an essential part of human history. The human mind usually gets traumatized when he/she experiences/undergoes an unexpected shock



of traumatic accident (s) for which he/she is not mentally ready to cope with. The fictional representation of various traumatic events and their psycho-social effects on the survivors is a significant study.

The psychological trauma is unlike the wounding of the body, which is usually in most of the cases healable. However, the wounding of the mind (psychological damage) is much deeper and complex as it is not experienced in real time. Consequently, it seems harder for the mind to register it for our consciousness.

The selected post-9/11 novel focuses on the attacks of September 11 as a traumatic incident for the survivors. However, trauma and its impacts on the survivors transcend the specific event of September 11 attacks by generalizing the pattern of trauma and its after-effects on the victims. Similarly, the novel also discusses some other major historical traumatic events of the 20th Century and some individual traumatic accidents. The research also focuses to generalize the effects of such events on the survivors in the after-days. The selected writer employs various postmodernist techniques/devices in order to make possible the narration of trauma, which usually considered as un-presentable.

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

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Trauma and Arts**

The collection of fifteen essays in the book, *Trauma, Media, Art: New Perspectives* (2010) are based on diversity of arts and media forms, including literature, memorials, visual arts, films, music, videos and journalism. It also discusses the application of dominant theories related to trauma and its limitations, methodologies, the analysis of traumatic experiences and its artistic and media depiction. The constant global

hostility, violence and thereafter sufferings, led to theoretical concern and hence developed the relationship between trauma theory and its representation.

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

## **2.2. Trauma and Post-9/11 Fiction**

Luckhurst (2008) argues in *The Trauma question* that it is generally considered that the canon of trauma fiction begins with Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), which says, —The murderous legacies of slavery in America intended to give some inner consciousness and humanity to the historical record of atrocities inflicted against African and African-American people as a consequence of institutional slavery|| (p.87, 90). The trauma novels can be clustered after the clinical elaboration of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the late 1980s and 1990s. Originally, the word trauma is taken from Greek language, which means an injury inflicted on the body. Initially, the term was used for physical injury but in the late 18th Century, with the emergence of psychology as a separate discipline, trauma has become a psychological term and now referring to mental conditions (Caruth, 1996).

The term trauma also refers to extreme violence and the ways it affects the bodies and minds; however, in some cases, it leaves permanent marks on the victim(s) even after the recovery. Moreover, many scholars from across the disciplines approach to study the traumatic experiences of violence and its aftermath. However, the notion of trauma covers a number of situations and various individuals and collective responses. In addition, trauma can be seen at once as a sociopolitical event, a psycho-physiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a

narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering (Kirmayer, 2007, p.1-5).

Kolk, in *Psychological Trauma* (1987), provides basic understanding about trauma and the psychological consequences of overwhelming experiences and trauma responses. Bessel A. Van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth in the *Traumatic stress: the effects of overwhelming experience on mind, body, and society* (1996), discuss a great number of authors, who presented the historical development and current approaches towards trauma, traumatic effects and the nature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Herman (1997) states that the traumatic experiences may not change the victim physically to the extent that he/she may no longer feel himself/herself as the member of the human race. However, it usually causes the victims to detach from the society and feel themselves isolated from everyone else, as Herman explains, "Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life.

Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion (p.24). Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) contends that the postmodern work struggles continuously to find ways to present the unrepresentable. He further maintains that there are some situations, which by their very nature cannot be thought about or articulated.

In the literary representation of postmodern fiction, the boundaries between verifiable, actual, fantastic, imaginary, mimetic, truth and lie are erased deliberately and the aesthetics of multiplicity, plurality and uncertainty is produced. Various modes and styles of representation play different roles not only in the depiction of reality, but especially in the creation of meaning and the representation of the variety of human experiences (Kroes, 1992).

### **2.3. Language, Trauma and Visuals**

Most of the fiction writers were disillusioned while making an attempt to describe the traumatic events of September 11 attacks and hence the post-9/11 and its aftermath saw "a crisis for fiction and writing due to the traumatic nature of the event" (Houen, 2004, p.421). However, *EL&IC* is considered one of the first and most widely read novels, which directly

deals with the issue of trauma of September 11 (Geertsma, 2011). Bradford (2012) states in *Reading for the Body: Reinforcing Somatic Reality in the Study of Trauma* that language seems a problematic tool for trauma expression as it is almost impossible for language to capture the effects of trauma or express traumatic experiences in words. He argues that the verbal articulation may describe an event but, however, in face of trauma, the very vehicle of language breaks down. Moreover, some of the writers tend to represent “the experience of 9/11 through experimental literary techniques and the introduction of images to capture the horror of the traumatic experience without simplifying it” (Baelo-Allué 2012 p.66).

Herman (1997) in *Trauma and Recovery* argues that one of the most significant features of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is its visual aspect. In addition, the per-textual elements of the novel itself show the symptoms of post-traumatic state. The arrangement of visuals, words on the page, large spaces and breaking out in capital letters manifest the hyperarousal elements and the alertness of the text.

Throughout the novel, Foer uses the body as a tool of traumatic expression either Oskar gives bruises to himself when he is too much emotionally distressed and sometimes it is the absence of his father’s body, which makes him obsessed with memories of the event: “Dad isn't even there!—Excuse me—His body was destroyed. [...] “It's just an empty box” (p.169). When investigating his father's wardrobe, Oskar observes: 'Even though Dad's coffin was empty, his closet was full. [...] it made my boots lighter to be around his things'(p.36).

The content of the wardrobe manifests, on one hand, the absence of his father’s body but on the other, contrary to the fact, it shows bodily presence of his father, which gives him comfort. Oskar’s grandfather, Thomas’ body also reflects trauma, the way he shows the tattoo on his hands (YES! and NO!) and signifying book by peeling and clapping and using hands for covering the face of Oskar’s grandmother and touching her chest (p.111,135). In fact, Sr. Thomas does not seem communicatively silent rather instead of using language; his body becomes a tool of expression (Bradford, 2012).

#### **2.4. Trauma and Techniques**

Codde (2007) states that Foer’s *EL&IC* handles a number of historical traumas of the 20th Century, which were left untouched by his first novel,

*Everything Is Illuminated*. In addition, the novel on one hand focuses on 9/11 as the main text of the story while on the other, the bombing of Dresden and Hiroshima as subtexts. However, this novel deviates from other customary form of novels as it employs multiple pictures and plays with typography. Apart from the debate of suitability and accuracy of the novel as the traumatic history, Foer makes an attempt to access and represent traumas, which by definition seems inaccessible (p.241-254). Bjerre contends that the story of *EL&IC* is one of the examples of postmodern story. It is a story about a 9-year old boy, Oskar, who lost his father in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The story of the novel also focuses on another historical trauma of Dresden firebombing which was experienced by Oskar's grandparents in the World War-II in 1945 (p.48-61).

The novel also employs a number of visual devices such as photographs, colored doodles, red underlining (indicating grammatical, orthographical mistakes and emphasizing on information). On one hand, the blank pages in the novel refer to the situations when characters under the effects of trauma lost for words while on the other hand, the shaded pages refer to the situation when characters want to say so many things at once. In addition, the business cards and files also appear in the novel when characters look at them. Siegel (2007) refers to SeinUytterschout and Philippe Codde and states that the images convey the inability of the traumatized characters to express their traumatic experiences of 9/11 and other historical traumas such as firebombing in Dresden and Hiroshima. In one of the interviews, Foer said that the visuals were consciously employed in the novel:

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

Foer argues that an event is remembered in the form of images. While referring to the use of images in the novel, he says it reflects the national trauma, besides highlighting the construction of collective memory. Siegel further states, "That graphic images in Foer's novel are neither distracting nor random gimmickry but, to the contrary, indispensable for the novel's verbal narrative," (p.2) and this technique tends to make *EL&IC* as one of

the examples of historiographic metafiction. This genre assumes that past has always been mediated through some kind of representation, which thereby examines the construction of past through historiography. The protagonist, Oskar, holds a visual diary "*Stuff That Happened to Me,*" for recording graphic images. These visuals are an attempt to document all those experiences where he fails to use words.

### **2.5. Visual Reading and Depiction of Trauma**

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

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

Throughout the novel, the nine-year-old Oskar Schell, who is affected by the traumatic loss of his father in the World Trade Center, has started literal and psychological expedition to discover the connection of the key left by his father in an envelope, titled "Black" (Mullins, 2008, p.298). After "The Worst Day" (instead of 9/11, Oskar calls it (the worst day) Oskar continues his journey about the missing lock. During this quest, he

comes across a number of people, who were each survivors in their own unique way. However, he is looking for all those unseen connections that can lead him to uncover something for his missing father, for his far away mother and the whole noisy world, which surrounds him.

### **3. Textual Analysis of *EL&IC***

#### **3.1. Postmodern Narrative Techniques**

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

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

The major characters of the novel write letters to each other about their retrospection and personal feelings as survivors and traumatized individuals of various historical traumatic events as Codde (2007) argues that Foer in *EL&IC* makes an attempt to represent and record the traumatic history, which is commonly considered as inaccessible and unrepresentable. However, for this purpose, the writer deviates from the traditional ways of

fiction writing and introduces certain postmodern elements in the text (p.241).

Merchan (1992), while referring to Foer, argues that narrative techniques and postmodernism are closely linked with each other. On the one hand, postmodernism is critical towards grand narratives and the possibility of cosmopolitan discourse while on the other, it tends to believe more in local narratives such as autobiographies, novels and tales. The postmodern literary texts seem to produce multiplicity of meanings and manifold realities, and for this purpose, these use different sorts of narrative techniques (p.28).

Foer also projects mini-narratives of the individual characters, their retrospection, perception and construction about different events. Furthermore, he also speaks from the mind of the characters and the way they construct realities. The narration of the novel is fragmented and temporally distorted. The author casually begins the novel with interrogative sentences about the teakettle as “What about a teakettle?” (p.1). Oskar, a nine-year-old protagonist of the novel, after some retrospection about the death of his father, begins discussion with his grandmother and the limousine’s driver when he is on way to the graveyard for his father’s funeral, who was killed in the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers. The text of the novel is not logically connected. The author presents many emails and letters out of place as fragmented pieces of writing.

Throughout the novel, the narrators jump from time to time as Codde (2007) states that *EL&IC* on formal level is deviated from the customary form of novels (p.241). Initially, he discusses and highlights the funeral ceremony of his father and later the causes of his death. Foer also focuses on the World War-II from the perspectives of Oskar’s grandparents in 1945 and then suddenly switches over to 9/11 as the main tragic event, about which Safer (2006) states that these sub-stories of Oskar’s grandparents in the novel are also a kind of digression in the main quest of his search (p.115). The novel is mainly based on the real historical event of 9/11 attacks on the WTC as the main story and the World War-II (Dresden firebombing and Hiroshima tragedy) as sub-stories. Moreover, it also contains a number of historical names of writers, scientists, books and real images of the September 11 attacks. And the spoken messages of the



voice mails, that Oskar receives from his father on the fateful day, have also been converted into written language and Morse codes in the novel.

### **3.2. Postmodern Text and Reader's Participation**

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

Some words are also taken from French language and others are crossed and corrected in the novel. These elements make the novel difficult to understand unless the reader is actively involved in the process of reading. The uses of these techniques not only force the reader to concentrate on the experience of trauma but also to take decision on the very old question of whether the trauma can be treated or not (Remetir, 2011, p.110, 111).

In addition, the postmodern writers usually expect from the readers to participate in the text by putting together the fragmented parts for constructing a meaningful story. The dialogues in the text do not follow literary conventions as in most cases, these dialogues are included in the same paragraph without marking off or separating the speakers such as

“he said or she said”. This makes the text more demanding for the readers to understand who said what to whom.

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

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

### **3.3. Techno Culture, Virtual and Media Saturated World**

Foer also attempts to represent the information drenched society and techno culture of the 21st Century in *EL&IC*. The protagonist, Oskar Schell, a highly gifted and innovative nine-year old boy represents the postmodern American society, which is technologically advanced. He is taking help of modern technology (Internet) for collecting the exact details of his father's death in the WTC on September 11.

Oskar, for this purpose, googles certain words, and translates them from different languages into English in order to know more about the event. But time and again, it makes him extremely angry as why he does not know about everything related to the 9/11. He argues that he himself and the Americans should know each and everything related to the accident as they are the direct victims of the attacks. Furthermore, Oskar says that he will stop searching about his father's death, if he can get exact information in this regard. While using internet to search various websites, he watches different videos of 9/11 victims and the ways they died in the WTC. These videos make him more curious to know the exact details about the death of his father. He will stop inventing, if he can exactly know which way his father died. The uses of television, internet, and video games are not only affecting the perception of reality (blurring the difference between fiction and reality) but the actions of the past may also be re-experienced/revisited when and where it is wanted. Moreover, the life seems to have been turned into a DVD player in contemporary age.

Foer through the use of contemporary media creates psychological effects on the readers as Morley (2008) argues, “Foer recognizes the need to adapt literary realism to describe and present a new world order in which, thanks to the omnipresence of the media, the boundaries between what is real and what is unreal are no longer clear”(p.310). Furthermore, it is due to the new technologies that makes Oskar able to watch again and again the tragic event of 9/11, falling bodies from the Twin Towers, listening the recorded sound of his father on the answering machine and listening the recorded interview of Hiroshima bombing. Oskar time and again takes help from internet in order to learn more and more about the 9/11 in general and about the death of his father in particular. For this purpose, he visits different websites and translates certain words from other languages in order to get the relevant information.

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

#### **3.4. Non-linear Narratives, Fragmentation and Temporal Distortion**

Foer’s second novel, *EL&IC* also uses non-linear narratives techniques through spoken and written communication across both time and history. The protagonist and other characters quite often switch over from present to past and future while representing their respective experiences of traumatic incidents. Postmodern novelists usually follow the idea of fragmentation, which means that the concept of wholeness is being disappearing from the postmodern fiction. The fragmented text of fiction is usually constructed with the help of elements such as images, wordplay and metaphors. “In Foer’s novel, fragmentation takes the form of multiple narrators: instead of the narrative being told in a single voice, the narrative is split into three, that of the 9-year-old Oskar Schell, his grandmother, and his grandfather” (Remetir, 2011, p.111).

The letter of Oskar’s grandmother, on one hand, like her other letters in the novel also contains unusual spaces among the sentences; while on the other, her thoughts are also fragmented and temporally distorted. As she states in the letter, while addressing Oskar, “My thoughts are wandering, Oskar” (p.181). She switches from past to present and from present to

past, which makes the text of the letter temporally distorted as she states that “The laughter sent my thoughts to our kitchen table, where we should laugh and laugh”(p.179), “My thoughts are going to my childhood, Oskar. To when I was a girl” (p.181). She also avoids using of any connectives or linking words in almost all of her letters.

Thus, the texts of these letters seem to demonstrate most of the postmodern features of writing. Oskar’s grandfather is writing his last letter to Oskar’s father, Jr. Thomas Schell on the day of his death in the WTC. This time, he is addressing him as “my child.” This letter is also temporally distorted and in some parts, it is in a reverse order. First he discusses about the later events such as his arrival at the house of his wife, and then he narrates about the starting point of his journey from Dresden.

Moreover, in the last letter of the novel to Oskar, his grandmother tries to present her retrospection about the past traumatic events of her life in fragmented thoughts and temporally distorted writing. She also tends to show anti-clockwise movement of time in her dreams, which is also an effort to show the possibility to put the traumatic accident of her past in a reverse play order. “A knocking woke me up in the middle of the night. I had been dreaming about where I came from. [ ... ]In my dream, all of the collapsed ceilings re-formed above us. The fire went back into the bombs, which rose up and into the bellies of planes whose propellers turned backwards, like the second hands of the clock across Dresden, only faster” (p.306). In this letter while writing about her dreams under the title, “*MY FEELINGS*”, and about her past tragic accidents of Dresden firebombing, the grandmother reverses the whole course of action by making anti-clockwise movement of actions across both the time and space. Foer also displays the images of falling man from the building of WTC in a reverse play order in the last fifteen pages of the novel.

### **3.5. Trauma, Time and Rewinding Actions**

Foer in *EL&IC* shows the possibility to rewind the very concept of time with the help of photographs taken from internet in the last fifteen pages of the novel where the falling man from the Twin Towers instead of coming down is floating up. The reverse action of the falling man was shown through photographs, which may actually be displayed with the help of technology such as DVD or CD. The subjective sense of representation of the moment of the attacks on the WTC in the post-9/11 fiction is actually considered as an effort of the writers to narrate the

documentary and subjective experiences of the event (Morley, 2008, p.296). Moreover, the protagonist also thinks in terms of images and creates the possibility to rescue the victims of 9/11 attacks: “Oskar’s imagined rescue by means of a birdseed suit” (Codde, 2007, p.248).

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

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

### **3.6. EL&IC as a Dialogic Text**

The text of the novel mainly consists of dialogues. However, the dialogic text of the novel does not follow the literary conventions as in most of the cases, these dialogues are included in the same paragraph without marking off the speakers such as “he said” or “she said”. The dialogues of different speakers are usually put in different quotation marks for making it clear that who is speaking to whom (Brown, 2011, p.10). But like a postmodern

writer, here too, Foer does not follow the literary conventions for writing dialogues among different characters.

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

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

The third letter which Oskar's grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell writes to his unborn child, Jr. Thomas Schell, about the self-formulated rules which govern his life and the life of his wife. In this letter, there are also many pages having one sentence on each, in most cases, these are interrogative sentences. These sentences show that the novel is written in the form of dialogues. Moreover, there are a number of questions that are posed by different characters throughout the novel.

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

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

attempts in combining the written text with visuals in order to articulate trauma and grief of the survivors.

In the beginning of the novel, Oskar neither introduces himself nor his father as such but rather poses questions to the readers such as “What about a teakettle? [...] I could invent a teakettle that reads in Dad’s voice, so I could fall asleep and “What about little microphones? What if [...] they played the sounds of our hearts through little speakers [...]?” (p.1). Moreover, almost all of the major characters throughout the novel tend to use different means for developing dialogues with each other. Oskar, in his journey for the matching lock in the New York City and before that, tends to develop the dialogic form of the narrative. He with his father, mother, grandparents, limousine driver, Stephen Hawking, Blacks and all other characters of the novel develops either the direct form of dialogues (interacting them directly) or the indirect form of dialogue (communicating through letters, emails and cards etc.).

### **3.7. Multiple Narratives, Multiple Perspectives and 9/11**

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

The stories of 9/11 and Dresden attacks, their traumatic experiences and the after-days have been narrated from different perspectives – firstly, the event of September 11 is described from the perspective of Oskar Schell, the protagonist narrator, then by his grandfather and grandmother as first person narrators in the form of letters. In addition, the grandparents of Oskar also narrate the same event of Dresden attacks from different perspectives. However, the writing of all the three narrators can easily be distinguished from each others in terms of their tone, style, expression, grammar and selection of words etc., (Brown & Penrod, 2011, p.8). Moreover, the voices of the narrators are not only mixed but, time and again, overlapping with each other also.

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

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

### 3.7.1. Oskar Schell

The event of 9/11 is first narrated from the perspective of Oskar Schell as first person narrator of the story. He first narrates the story of the funeral ceremony of his father, then his emotional attachment with him and later the causes of his death. In fact, Oskar on one hand narrates the attacks of September 11 from the perspectives of his father, both from the last messages of his father and from media. The transcription of the five recorded messages (p.182) of his father from the voice box of telephone shows the description of the attacks from inside of the building of WTC on the day of 9/11. Oskar's father called home from the WTC soon after the attacks. Oskar could not make courage to attend the call, which throughout the novel becomes a continuous source of guilt and trauma for him. Moreover, from the voice messages, it is also evident that Oskar's father knows that Oskar is there but lacking courage to attend the call as Thomas Schell introduces himself "Its Dad" (p.15) in the fourth voice message and he also said that "*When you get this, give Grandma a call*" (p.69).

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



Hello? Sorry. People are getting crazy. There's a helicopter circling around, and. I think we're going to go up onto the roof" (p.204).

It is the last and fifth message, which was spoken in the form of words and had pauses after each word (Oskar transcribes it in capital letters) as he said, "MUCH HAPPENS, REMEMBER" (p.280), which seems to suggest that these were the last words of Oskar's father before his death on September 11. Furthermore, Oskar states that while listening to these messages, "you can hear people in the background screaming and crying. And you can hear glass breaking, which is part of what makes me wonder if people were jumping" (p. 301).

### **3.7.2. Grandfather**

Secondly, the event of September 11 has also been narrated from the perspective of Oskar's grandfather, while writing his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell (P.166-179) on the day of his death in the WTC. This time, he addresses him as "my child." He saw the images of the September 11 attacks while watching television at the Dresden train's station. Later, while reading the newspaper, he comes across the list of dead people and thus he comes across the name of [...Thomas Schell, my first thought was that I had died. He leaves behind a wife and son," I thought, my son, I thought, my grandson, I thought and thought and thought, and then I stopped thinking ...] (p.273). He also narrates the story of his meeting with his grandson and wife in New York City as a third person narrator.

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

These sentences are also reproduced by Oskar's grandmother while responding to Sr. Thomas Schell during the departure on the airport. It

shows that the same story has been narrated two times from the perspectives of Sr. Thomas Schell and then by his wife. “Excuse me, do you know what time it is?” (p. 112), “Do you know what time it is?” (p.118), then there are three blank pages in the middle of the letter i.e. (p.121), (p.122), (p.123). Again there are single sentences, in most cases, interrogative sentence on each single page such as: “Do you know what time it is?” (p.125), “Do you know what time it is?” (p.129), “Excuse me, where do you get tickets?” (p.131), “I want to buy ticket to Dresden” (p.136), “what are you doing here?” (p.137), “you have to go home. You should be in bed” (p.138), “Let me take you home” (p.139), “you’re being crazy. You’re going to catch a cold” (p.140), “you’re going to catch a colder” (p.141).

### **3.7.3. Grandmother**

Thirdly, the event of September 11 has also been narrated from the perspective of Oskar’s grandmother. She writes another letter to Oskar again on the same title of “My Feelings” about narrating the same traumatic story of September 11 attacks, which has already been narrated by Oskar Schell in the first part of the novel. However, in this letter, she combines events from her tragic past with the present trauma of 9/11. She narrates how she was looking for Oskar soon after the attacks on the WTC, and then she found him under the bed and started interacting with him. Meanwhile, she is also watching the video of falling buildings on the television and the same pictures are repeatedly shown.

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

In the last letter of the novel to Oskar, his grandmother tries to present her retrospection about the past traumatic events of her life in fragmented thoughts and temporally distorted writing. She also writes about her husband, who came back for digging the grave of his son and found nothing except an empty coffin. Furthermore, she narrates that her husband also buried the unsent letters and the key of the apartment in the grave of Jr. Thomas Schell.

### 3.8. Depiction of Trauma and *EL&IC*

Oskar Schell, after the death of his father in the tragedy of World Trade Center (WTC), starts thinking about *raison d'être* (the reason of being). The boy consistently raises questions about life and death after the 9/11 attacks. He states, "Isn't it so weird how the number of dead people is increasing even though the earth stays the same size, so that one day there isn't going to be room to bury anyone anymore?" (p.3). While reading the three adjoining stories of the novel, it becomes evident that Oskar suffers the trauma of the tragic death of his father and his grandparents suffer the trauma of the memory of Dresden fire-bombings (Remetir, 2011, p. 111).

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

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

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

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

that he comes across, have undergone through some kind of a traumatic event or accident. First it was Abby Black, who takes Oskar to her kitchen where she starts crying with tears in her eyes. Though Oskar does not know about the cause of her crying, yet he says it may be due to a desperate person, who was calling her from the room behind. Later, Oskar visits Mr. Black, the strange old man who had been a war correspondent and has been living in the same apartment for the last twenty four years without leaving it ever. He shares all of his tragic memories with Oskar such as about the death of his wife and the horrible sight of the artist under the Stalinist regime. Mr. Black said that the world is not that horrible “but it’s filled with a lot of horrible people!”(p.156).

At the end, Oskar visits William Black, ex-husband of Abby Black after listening her recorded voice message after eight months (p.182). William Black also narrates the tragic memories of the last days of his father, who died of cancer. He says that two months before his death, his father came to know about the cancer and started writing letters obsessively to almost everyone, whom he knew. “He wrote about how happy he was, and how sad he was, and all of the things he wanted to do but never did, and all of the things he did but didn't want to do”(p.297).

Furthermore, the mental agony and the feelings of loneliness that Oskar is going through after the death of his father, is also evident from his discussion with the psychiatrist, as he states, “I end up crying a lot, usually in private. It is extremely hard for me to go to school. I can’t sleep over at friends’ apartments, because I get panicky about being away from Mom ... “I feel too much. That is what’s going on” (p. 201).After forty-five minutes of discussion during the diagnosis, Oskar gets agree to go to school, to be good to people, to be nicer to Mom and may not be getting emotional to ruin things.

Throughout the novel, Oskar is continuously injuring his body. Whenever he gets emotional shocks by any unwanted or unexpected scene, he starts bruising different parts of his body. When he is extremely traumatized, he makes a bigger bruise. The number of bruises on his body makes the physical manifestation of his inner psychological trauma, sadism, and mental agony that he is passing through during the whole course of action while searching for the matching lock of the key left by his father. The bruises on his body also symbolize the hard times that he is undergoing as a traumatized child. Oskar narrates that once he was sleeping on the floor,

(p.184-85) my mother while pulling my shirt must have seen the bruises on my body which I counted last time in the mirror as forty-one “Some of them have gotten big, but most of them are small” (p.172). Some of the common words and phrases, employed by Oskar in his writing of the text, also convey the kind of traumatic feelings that he is passing through: “Raison d’être”, “...which I know about, but wish I didn’t”, “Heavy Boots”, “Jose!”, “Extremely”, “Incredibly”, “I’m OK.”

### 3.9. Language and Communicating Trauma

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

For this purpose, written communication is merged with visuals in order to cope with the new post-9/11 realities of trauma and loss (p.295). Furthermore, Oskar’s grandfather has also been affected by the traumatic experiences of Dresden bombing in the World War-II (1945), and as a result, he continuously loses the ability of speaking. And noticeably, first he loses the name of his girlfriend, Anna, who was killed in the attack on Dresden, while she was pregnant. Later on, when he contacts Oskar’s grandmother (his wife), instead of speaking, he continuously presses the numbers on phone (p 166-79.). This is another form of coded communication; however, it is almost impossible for his wife to make meaning of the message, which he wants to convey. Moreover, “His wife, in turn, can only testify to her traumatic loss in the form of blank pages, as a dramatic reversal of Thomas’s equally illegible black pages” (Codde, 2007, p.247).

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

Furthermore, he, in letters to his son Jr. Thomas Schell, refers to the inadequacy of language and his failure to communicate under the effects of trauma. For him, “Words simply fail to capture the shattering experiences, and verbal testimonies therefore tend to be extremely circuitous and oblique” (ibid. p.242). In addition, Sr. Thomas Schell also states, “There won’t be enough pages in this book for me to tell you what I need to tell you, I could write smaller, I could slice the pages down their edges to make two pages, I could write over my own writing, but then what?” (p.276). Thomas Schell was also an eye-witness of the terrible trauma of Dresden bombing in 1945, and as a result of which, he stops speaking. He lost Anna, his first love, and consequently he becomes unable to communicate or unwilling to use spoken words. Instead, he uses notebook, tattooed words and “YES” and “NO” on the palms as the art of communication. The words seem to be insufficient for him and his attempts to communicate through words are inadequate. It also seems the spoken words neither offer him solace nor any comfort. In addition, Thomas destroys his letters and writes over them in order to make their reading impossible. However, for him, on one hand, it is the use of visual images in the form of tactile art (sculpture) and on the other, it is the use of “YES” and “NO” on his palms, through which he attempts to express and intimates his sorrow (ibid. p. 245).

### **3.10. Trauma and Silence**

In the first major letter, Oskar’s grandfather addresses his unborn son Jr. Thomas Schell (Major Letter No.1). In the letter, he confesses the loss of language under the effects of trauma. The very first word, that he lost, is the name of his beloved, “Anna”. Later on, he loses many other words such as “fine,” “shame” and “carry”. The traumatic events not only

fracture the lives of the three main characters of *EL&IC* but also mute them forever. However, these characters make attempts to express their respective traumatic experiences while using other forms of communication (Codde, 2007, p.247). He also loses the things he carries such as “daybook,” “pencil,” “pocket change” and “wallet”. He further says, “I even lost loss” (p.17).

Then Sr. Thomas goes to tattoo parlor to write “YES” on left hand palm and “NO” on right hand palm in order to make life possible by having a limited communication through showing palms instead of speaking as Morley (2008) states that the inadequacy of language not only makes the traumatic loss difficult for articulation but also makes it impossible for the readers to understand it (p.300). After losing the ability of speaking under the effects of trauma, the grandfather starts carrying blank books for writing whatever he needed to ask for. Moreover, writing becomes the source of communication as he states that if “I want two rolls,” “Help,” or laugh “Ha, ha ha!,” “I would write these words on the blank page”. Following this letter, Sr. Thomas Schell writes the isolated sentences and words on blank pages for conveying the messages through written language such as “I want two rolls” (p.19), “And I wouldn’t say no to something sweet” (p.20), “I’m sorry, this is the smallest I’ve got” (p.21), “Start speaking the news ...” (22), “The regular, please” (p.23), “Thank you, but I’m about to burst” (p.24), “I’m not sure, but its late” (p.25), “Help” (p.26), “Ha ha ha!”(p.27).

Oskar’s grandmother writes that at the end of the letter (Major Letter No.2), she states that when she met Sr. Thomas Schell after seven years, he was unable to speak and cope with his trauma. “He opened his right hand, which had “NO tattooed on it” and “He showed me his left hand, which had YES tattooed on it” (p. 81, 82). Sr. Thomas Schell is trying to present the un-presentable trauma in the form of writing a personal letter to his unborn child in which on one hand, he takes the help of blank pages to communicate the traumatic experiences, while on the other, he uses different objects for writing, but in both the cases, he fails to cope with the experience of trauma. In this letter, for Sr. Thomas Schell, language seems inefficient in face of traumatic experiences. In such a situation, he rather prefers to use/present blank pages instead of making useless efforts to communicate the traumatic experiences in the form of words. As a traumatized character, Oskar’s grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell, wants to express everything and write everywhere but the space becomes

insufficient for the expression of his trauma. Earlier, in the letter, Thomas Schell says that his wife has been trying to write 'Noting' and now I am trying to write 'Nothing', which means that the efforts of writing seem worthless for Oskar's grandparents in the face of traumatic experiences.

Oskar's grandfather writes his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell (p. 166-79) on the day of his death in the WTC. This time, he addresses him as "my child." He also brings back all the letters, which he has written to his son but could not send them. While opening the suitcase to the guards for checking, ["... That's a lot of paper," he said, I showed him my left palm, "I mean, that's a whole lot of paper." I wrote, "They're letters to my son. I wasn't able to send them to him while he was alive. Now he's dead. I don't speak. I'm sorry"....] (p.268). Then he calls again and again from a pay phone to his wife, she attends his call but instead of speaking, Sr. Thomas Schell kept on dialing the digits. Though, he recognizes his wife but fails to communicate with her.

Oskar's grandfather in his last letter to Oskar's father, Jr. Thomas Schell, (p. 166-79) wants to express and share almost all of his traumatic memories. But he has rather run out of space, as he states, ["... I want an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time"....] (p.279). It also shows the peak of trauma when Oskar asks his grandfather, "I want to dig up his grave" (p.281). Following this, the writing of the letter gets condensed to the extent that it becomes impossible for the reader to understand the text, and the last pages shaded with black color (p. 176-79).As he wants to express so many things but even then not sure to convey what he intends to convey. [ ... "There won't be enough pages in this book for me to tell you what I need to tell you, I could write smaller, I could slice the pages down their edges to make two pages, I could write over my own writing but then what?"] (p. 276).

### **3.11. Images as a Literary Technique and Depiction of Trauma**

Foer makes an attempt not only to undermine the authority of conventional narrative mode of communication but also introduces new forms of communication. In order to capture the effects of trauma, Foer employs different postmodern devices and techniques for narrating the story of the survivors of 9/11. The novel contains almost all of the major historical traumatic events of the 20th Century such as the traumas of Hiroshima, Dresden and September 11 and their effects and after-effects on the survivors. Moreover, on one hand, language is usually considered



as an inefficient source of communication for representing the traumatic experience(s) or accident(s). And, on the other, language also becomes inaccessible to represent the past trauma related events. However, Foer succeeds to introduce a new form or altered form of realism by blending written text of the novel with visual images, for the post-9/11 cultural scenes (Morley 2008, p. 309-10). Some of the images and pictures appear in the novel in the middle of the text without having any relevant information.

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

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

Similarly, Oskar takes the photographs of his grandfather's hands (whom he calls the renter) with the camera of his deceased father. In the photograph, the right hand is tattooed with "YES" and the left with "NO" (Fig. 38, 39, p. 154). This photograph is taken under the extreme traumatic conditions when his grandfather fails to communicate his trauma, especially after listening to the last five recorded messages on the answering machine of his deceased son just a few moments before his death on September 11 as Codde (2007) states, "Traumatic experiences, in other words, are stored in memory in the form of icons or images, rather than as words" (p. 249). The meeting with his grandfather further triggers Oskar's trauma as that night he cannot sleep rather he invents parachutes, subways, and long ambulances and then stuck with the idea of digging the empty coffin of his father.

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

### 3.12. Intertextuality

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

It is not just literature and history; however that form the discourses of postmodernism. Everything from comic books and fairytales to

almanacs and newspapers provide historiographic metafiction with culturally significant Intertexts (Hutcheon, 1989, p.15).

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

### 3.13. Display of Letters

*EL&IC* also combines various postmodern techniques in its fictional representation and story development. The individual traumas of the survivors of Dresden, Hiroshima and 9/11 are expressed in the form of letters. For the sake of convenience in analysis, the letters of the novel have been divided in two categories of major and minor letters.

The novel contains eight major letters, which also become a considerable part of the novel. On one hand, these letters contribute as a technique to reflect upon the individual traumas, while on other develop the overall story of the novel. The major portion of the novel consists of these eight letters, out of which four are written by Oskar's grandfather, Sr. Thomas Schell, while addressing his unborn son, Jr. Thomas Schell. The remaining four letters are written by Oskar's grandmother, while addressing her grandson.

The technique of using letters in the literary text, on one hand, suggests the concept of multiple narratives/perspectives and on the other gives sufficient space to individual characters to express their most private thoughts and experiences of life. The technique of multiple perspectives is considered as one of the most important postmodern techniques in fiction writing.

The novel also contains nine minor letters and emails, which reflect the inquisitive nature of the protagonist. Oskar receives these minor letters from friends, scientists, researchers and other organizations or sends to

them. Some of these letters appear in the novel out of place (out of context) and without any explanation.

### **3.14. Display of Introductory Cards**

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

Later during the search, Oskar visits Mr. Black, who was living in the upper portion of his building. He introduces him as a very strange personality. Mr. Black was born on January 1, 1900. He has been a war correspondent and his apartment is also filled with the stuff, which he collected during wars from different countries. Mr. Black has also developed a biographical index from his early age. This index contains the biographic cards with name and profession of the people, whom he met in his life. According to Mr. Black, "Everyone gets boiled down to one word!"(p.157) so, the biographical details on the card contain only one word of profession. Oskar asks for the card of "Stephen Hawking", the old man shows him the card on which "STEPHEN HAWKING: ASTROGRAPHICS" was written (p. 157). Then Oskar asks, "Do you have a card for yourself?"(p.151). He shows his card (p. 157).

Oskar also asks for the card of his father. But Mr. Black cannot get any card in his record with the name of "Thomas Schell" despite checking it two times. Then Oskar asks for the card of "Mohammad Atta." He shows the card (p. 157). After some days, while searching the biographical index for cards in Mr. Black's apartment, Oskar finds the card naming, Oskar Schell. It is Oskar's card, which Mr. Black includes in his record with the title of "OSKAR SCHELL: SON" (p. 157).

### **3.15. Transcription of Voice Messages**

Jr. Thomas Schell just a few seconds before his death in the World Trade Center sends five voice messages to his family from his mobile phone.

The voice of the deceased was recorded in the voice box of the telephone. Oskar repeatedly listens to the voice messages privately and keeps it as a secret. He later transcribes all of the voice messages, including the voice mail of Abby Black. These messages are also one of the major sources of traumas for Oskar Schell throughout his journey for searching the lock.

However, he does not want to share the messages with anyone, especially with his mother. Soon after coming back from the school on the worst day, Oskar listens to the messages, though he has failed to pick up the phone. It is also this guilt, which makes him traumatized throughout his journey. As Oskar states that during listening to these messages, “You can hear people in the background screaming and crying. And you can hear glass breaking, which is part of what makes me wonder if people were jumping” (p. 301). *Message one: 8:52A.M. Message two: 9:12 A.M. Message three: 9:31 A.M. Message four: 9:46 A.M. Message five: 10:04 A.M.*(p.68) In the very first voice message (p. 182) of Jr. Thomas Schell, who calls from the World Trade Center, asks in a tone of emergency for anybody at home to attend the phone call. Jr. Thomas Schell also introduces himself as “Its Dad” (p.15), which suggests that Oskar’s father knows about the presence of Oskar, and is also aware of the fact that he (Oskar) may be lacking courage to pick up the phone.

The voice message shows that Oskar’s father is yet not sure about what has happened outside of the building. But he keeps on repeating that he is fine and will soon call again when he gets time. Oskar’s father calls again for the second time (p.182) from the WTC, asking for someone to attend the call. But this time, it is getting a bit smoky in the building. He is hoping for Oskar to be at home, but he is not sure about whether the family knows about the event or not. He calls for the third time (p. 182) from the building but cannot speak more except repeating “hello” for three times. Later on, Oskar counts that for eleven times his father repeatedly asked in all transcribed messages “Are you there?”(p.301). Oskar hears these last words but is not brave enough to pick up the phone. He states, “Sometimes I think he knew I was there. Maybe he kept saying it to give me time to get brave enough to pick up.”(p. 301).

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

It is the first time since the worst day that he touches the old phone. Eight months have lapsed since the receipt of the message, as Oskar wandered in the search of the lock. He also transcribes the discussion that was held between his mother and the psychiatrist after partially listening to them outside of the room. The blank spaces left due to the missing words in the dialogue between the psychiatrist and his mother. The spaces also suggest that he cannot properly hear many words during the discussion due to standing outside of the room's door.

### **3.16. Display of Newspaper Cutting**

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

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

### **3.17. Display of *Hamlet* Play**

Oskar Schell also takes part in the performance of *Hamlet*, one of the most famous Shakespearian plays. Moreover, his mother, Ron, and grandmother are also there to watch the play, which makes him more special. A lot of blacks are also there to whom Oskar has met during his search for the matching lock in the New York City.

The extract of the play has also been displayed in the novel (p.183). Oskar is also depressed and acting crazy like that of Prince Hamlet due the tragic death of his father and her mother's indifferent behavior towards him in the after-days of 9/11 attacks. He also reacts against the friendship of his mother with Ron soon after the death of his father as Oskar says, "I asked her if she was in love with Ron" (p.35), but instead of saying yes or no, she says, "Ron is a great person,"(p.35).

Oskar also criticizes his mother's behaviors of playing scrabble and board games with Ron, spending most of her time with him, laughing too much,

looking into the mirror, and listening loud music as he says, “It wasn't fair to Dad, and it wasn't fair to me”(p.35).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Foer in *EL&IC* turns the inside out by showing psychological traumas of the survivor characters in the after-days of September 11 attacks. After reading the three adjoining stories of the novel, it becomes evident that Oskar suffers the trauma of the tragic death of his father. The trauma narrative is usually considered impossible; however, the literary strategies and conditions in the novel make the communication of traumatic experiences possible through postmodern and experimental devices and techniques.

For this purpose, the author employs various techniques for representing the un-presentable area of psychological trauma caused by 9/11 attacks and other historical traumatic events such as Dresden and Hiroshima bombings in the World War-II from individual perspectives in the form of personal and autobiographical letters and notebook entries. The author like other postmodern writers, also consider nothing outside of the text. And thus he incorporates various discourses in the text from the subjects such as history, drama, poetry, media and science.

The traumatized individuals may never be fully integrated as they consider themselves lost in the event who may never remain the same as the traumatic effects of such tragic events are always long-lasting for the survivors. The psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening with the passage of time in the days following the attacks and it also becomes evident that how helpless is human in face of such a traumatic accident.

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

Moreover, Oskar also carries almost all the symptoms of a traumatized child in the after-days of the attacks as time and again, he wishes to fall

asleep during the nights but he fails to do so. He rather starts inventing black boxes, yellow pages, postage stamps and training bomb-sniffing dogs in his imagination before going to sleep. However, Foer shows different ways to deal with the issue of psychological trauma in order to avoid its effects. For this purpose, the survivors either change their lives in the form of developing relations, making socialization with other survivors as at the end of the novel, Sr. Thomas Schell returns to New York to the apartment of his wife and once again they start a new life together (which Sr. Thomas Schell also calls it “a second life”). Both Oskar and his grandfather at the end, however, attach to each other emotionally as they both pass through the same kind of psychological trauma related to the tragic death of Jr. Thomas Schell in the WTC. They also develop relationship on the basis of their shared memories of trauma and mourning of 9/11 attacks.

This study also highlights the psychological trauma, its effects and after-effects on the victims/survivors of different traumatic events in general and that of 9/11 attacks in particular in fictional representation *EL&IC*. The study explores various creative, artistic and postmodern techniques in the selected novel, which are deliberately used for making fictional representation of trauma on the survivors. The study also finds that the traumatized individuals of 9/11 attacks or any other psychological trauma should be taken as a specific community for dealing with them under different circumstances in the after-days of such accidents/events.

Moreover, in order to survive the wounds of the traumatic experience(s), the survivors need to go through intensive and consistent exercises of physical therapy and psycho therapy. The study showed that the wounding of the mind (psychological damage) is much deeper and complex as it is not experienced in real time. Consequently, it is harder for the mind to register it to human consciousness. However, the trauma victims and survivors are haunted by their tragic memories in the form of images and flashes, and as a result they go through the same experience of psychological trauma again and again. Under such a situation, the abnormal behaviors of the victims may also be generalized across cultural and geographical borders as its effects remain the same for them. The study also finds that the psychological scars of the survivors are slowly opening in the after-days of tragic events/accidents, which may, however, not be healed the way other physical injuries are healed.



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