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**Visualised Incomprehensibility of Trauma
in Jonathan Safran Foer's
*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close***

Abstract: In the wake of massive trauma, the purpose of literature is to constantly work against a smoothing-over of the painfully disruptive character of the event. With his latest novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Jonathan Safran Foer has ventured to represent the traumatic events of September 11 and to interlace them with those of the Allied firebombing of Dresden in 1945. Combining linguistic virtuosity with typographical and other visual elements, Foer attempts to come as close to the disruptive nature of trauma (representation) as possible, and achieves what Ulrich Baer has described as “mock[ing] the black and white simplicity of printing paper” (Baer 2002, 2). In this contribution I argue that, contrary to what certain critics have maintained, Foer's use of visual interludes betrays no inability on his part to adequately convey his story by means of language. Instead of treating these elements as a meagre and unconvincing surrogate for language, they should be seen as complementary to the narrative. Sometimes the visualisation of trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* even goes beyond what language can convey.