Reading Images:

The Effects of Illustrations and other Visuals in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*

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Abstract

Both Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* engage with a large variety of visual deviations from text. These visuals do not just illustrate the story, but help tell the narrative, without them a part of the story would be lost. These visual deviations create a different reading experience for its readers, through the illustrations, images, photographs and other visuals the reader gets pulled into the text in a different way than if they were not there. The reader's personal engagement with the images through their own references, culture, and memories create a unique reading of the novels.

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<u>Introduction</u>

When Zadie Smith illustrates the name 'Iqbal' not in typed letters but in a shaky handwriting on page 504 of her book *White Teeth*, she deviates from the formatting standard set in her book, and she deviates from the standard set in most pre-twenty-first-century English fiction. Only eight other times in the novel does she deviate from plain text. In contrast to Smith's relatively few deviations is Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, a novel that uses an abundance of visual interruptions in many shapes and forms: pages are filled with pictures, the layout of the text sometimes reflects Oskar's grandfather's mental state (see figure 1), and the novel ends in the now (in)famous flipbook of the man falling upwards. Both are examples, though on different sides of a spectrum, of what some call the 'pictorial turn'.

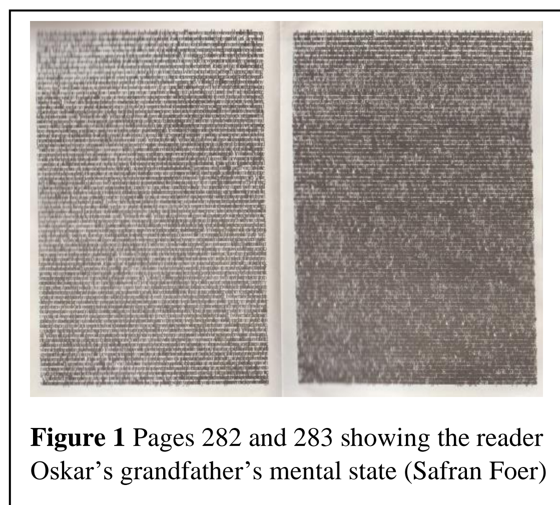


Figure 1 Pages 282 and 283 showing the reader Oskar's grandfather's mental state (Safran Foer)

In contemporary literature, with technological advances allowing for the greatest ease of printing images and other visuals in (printed) literature we have ever seen, visually depicted images seem to have become more and more common, and seem to have become more important. Due to this change in printing some critics, such as W. J. T. Mitchell, argue that for decades there has been a correlative *fear* of the rise of images within literature. What was once a "fantasy of the pictorial turn, of a culture dominated by images, has now become a real technical possibility on a global scale," Mitchell writes in *Picture Theory* (15). They fear this possibility, of the image taking over from the written word. "Iconophobia, the fear of images, has a long history in Western culture" (Somerstein 116). Throughout history the importance of images, especially as evidence for wrongdoings, has been proven, often fuelled by "a fear of what these evidentiary images might be used *for*" often within a political context (117).

However, iconophobia also pertains to those who are afraid the image hiding within text will spoil the mental image of said literature. They wonder whether readers will not "inevitably [find themselves] preferring the artist's vivid image to [their] own vaguer, poorer, under-exposed negative" of that image formed in the mind (Fletcher 389)? They argue that when we, as readers, "find an artist making a convenient image for us, spare ourselves the trouble of trying to form one for ourselves" (390).

To be scared of a pictorial turn within our society one first has to think about what pictures really are, when is a typed word still a typed word, and when does it morph into a picture? Are the lines blurry within this distinction, and does it make a difference through *whose* eyes the word is seen when determining its visual or textual status? To me, a person who does not speak Japanese, a tattoo of some Japanese characters might sooner look like an image rather than text; the opposite is true for someone who speaks no English but will read the word 'love' on a t-shirt in Tokyo. If the word **ANGER** is printed in red, bold, larger than the black, visually unremarkable text around it, is it still just a word to the reader? When on page 281 of his novel Foer moves the sentences closer and closer together, until finally the pages are filled with black and the words unreadable, at what point do the words stop being words, and enter the definition of a picture (see figure 1)? And could it be argued that in these instances the differences are so minimal that they are both image and text? Mitchell suggests that what is really important is not the contrast between the text and the visual, but rather the difference this contrast makes to the text (91).

There is, of course, a long history of the inclusion of images within texts. J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* books start with maps, and some editions of Jane Austen novels show the reader what the protagonists look like in small illustrations. William Blake employed a very time-consuming process to etch images into and around his poems, as seen in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. Many old manuscripts feature numerous, rich

illustrations. However, these examples of images could largely, except perhaps in Blake's case, be said to show the reader an illustrator's interpretation of the text. They represent the story as it is being told in the narrative. They do not demand a lot of imagination from the reader, and those who fear the pictorial turn also might argue they make for lazier readers. These pictures, after all, show what is happening in the story in a fairly literal way. However, since the printing process has become easier, cheaper, and more accessible, authors have started to take a more active role, and reflect their greater freedom, with the images, typography and layout used within their novels. The images used are often different from the ones described earlier, as these images do not just *show* the story, but they seem to crucially contribute to *telling* the story.

In his article Pascal Lefèvre claims that these works, although they may "share some characteristics with better known models (as those of comics or picture books for children)," (35) are in fact "a separate but cohesive body of works" (35). He explains that often these special works "use their own characteristic devices such as typographic manipulations, often page-filling pictures, experiments with the material carrier (the broadsheet, the book) and many more." (36) In other words, Lefèvre argues that although this emerging genre has some overlap with comics, picture books, artist's books, and illustrated novels, they are in fact their own genre (see figure 2). He calls this genre 'image and word narratives'. These narratives set themselves

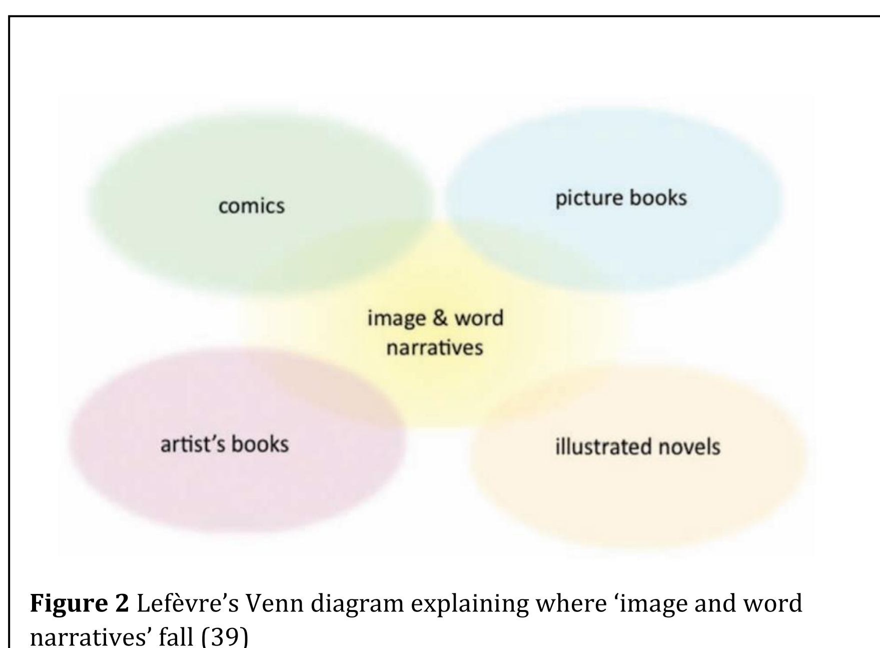


Figure 2 Lefèvre's Venn diagram explaining where 'image and word narratives' fall (39)

apart from other books because “the visual side does far more than just illustrate, decorate, document or comment on a verbal story” (36). For it to be an ‘image and word narrative’, the works need to be more than texts with illustrations, they must have “images [that] form a crucial part in the creation of meanings and sensations” within the narration (41). Within these texts “the presence of illustrations can influence the interpretation of the work considerably” (41). Without these illustrations, images, or other variations on text, Lefèvre argues some meaning within the narrative, it depends on the work and the amount of content that is not direct text on how much, will get lost to the reader. Especially when rather unexpected, like in a novel, instead of in a comic, visual deviations from the text can startle the reader. “[T]his is what we might call the “effect of interpellation”” (Mitchell 75), this is “the sense that the image greets or hails or addresses us, that it takes the beholder into the game, enfolds the observer” (75) into the narrative. In his essay on *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* Watkins explains that “the space or narrative gap opened between […] word and image, becomes an active site of meaning-making dependent on context and subjectivities” (12) of the reader. In novels that include deviations from the text, Watkins claims that “the text is understood according to the reader’s negotiation of tensions and harmonies between visual and verbal signifiers. (12)

In this thesis I will further examine and interrogate this particular category of visual writing, “the image and word narrative,” through a comparative study of Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Smith’s *White Teeth*. The novels are brought together for a multitude of reasons. First, they are close contemporaries of each other: *White Teeth* was first published in 2000, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* in 2005. Both can be considered postmodernist novels, and although the fear of imagery within literature is not only a postmodern one, Mitchells explains that the postmodern, and all that has come with it, has made the fear of the pictorial turn become a possible reality (15). This has led to a

postmodern tradition in which many writers explore the boundaries between text and image, for example: Kurt Vonnegut uses a few illustrations in his *Slaughterhouse Five*, most notably the image of the necklace hanging between Montana Wildhack's neck showing the inscription, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference" (209) only there, and not in the text. More recently, Jennifer Egan dedicated a whole chapter of *A Visit From the Goon Squad* to this exploration: it is entirely told through a PowerPoint presentation, with each slide as a different page. The first chapter of Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* shows the reader a chart displaying different emotions, and continues with visuals throughout the rest of the text.

One could also argue that Smith and Safran Foer's novels also share a particular writing style. In a review of the novel, James Wood classifies *White Teeth* as an example of "hysterical realism" and explains that "[s]torytelling has become a kind of grammar in these novels; it is how they structure and drive themselves on. The conventions of realism are not being abolished but, on the contrary, exhausted, and overworked". This description of hysterical realism certainly also applies to Safran Foer's work, especially *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Zimmer, Brosky); with its close relationship with the telling of facts through the main character Oskar. One could even argue that the conventions of realism are even more overworked in this novel, because of the real photographs printed on its pages. As Somerstein wrote: "[o]ne reason photographs provoke iconophobia and iconoclasm is because of their intrinsic qualities. […] They represent a trace of the real, something that was really present in front of the camera" (116-117).

It's important to note, however, that both novels deal with the deviations from the text in markedly different ways: whereas *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is filled to the brim with things other than text, *White Teeth* only includes nine deviations within its 541 pages.

This suggests to me that even if we can call both texts “image and word narratives,” the mode of reading they demand from the reader varies, as might their ultimate affects. What happens when writers start blurring the line between image and text? What is, in the end, the effect it has on the reader’s experience? Through a comparative close-reading of both of the novels, and especially the visual deviations within them I will attempt to answer this question.

<u>Reading visual deviations from text in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*</u>

As previously discussed, Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* displays many deviations from conventionally published literary text. The range in the nature and character of these deviations is broad. Some images, or versions of images, are repeated, while some stand alone. Some feature colour, whilst most are in black and white. Many of the deviations involve pictures, while some involve both text and image, such as the inclusion of illustrations around text, implying someone has made handwritten comments or notes. Others are far more simple,

and merely show an outline around some text

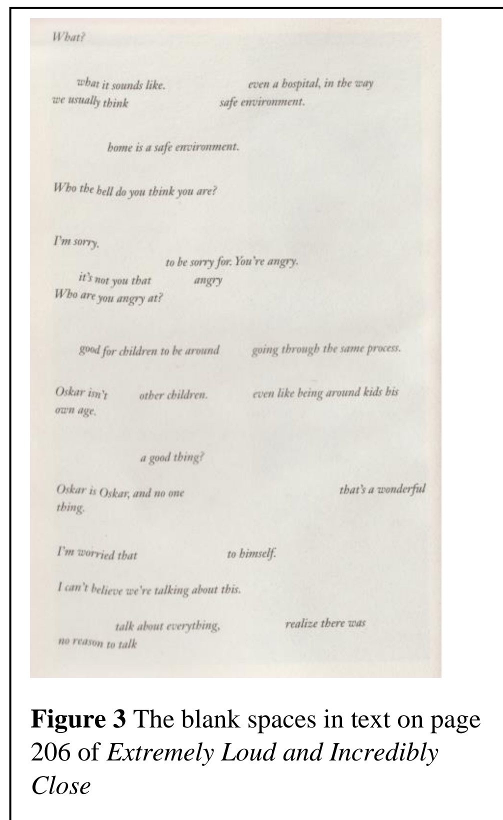
to indicate the shape of someone's business card (4, 99, 158, 159). Throughout the novel Safran Foer uses text in a way that clearly deviates from normal stylistic practices in publishing literature on 109 different pages. For this total, I did not include the eleven pages within the novel that are completely empty.

In a way, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a 9/11 novel, showing the atrocities through the second-hand experiences of a child. Watkins argues that through the use of visual deviations Safran Foer must try to

> articulate the experience or witnessing of disaster via the creation of spaces (effective, ethical) between words and images. Such spaces are not only fundamental to the functionality of illustrated books, the 'closure' required by the reader in the act of interpreting these spaces is central to representing the 'unrepresentable'. (11)

These spaces between words and images are to be interpreted by the reader, and may, according to Watson, in the case of a 9/11 novel, create closure for the reader. By inserting their own experiences of that day within the blank spaces between the image and the text, the reader might have a more personal reading experience. They are not just reading that day through Oskar's narration anymore, but, through the visuals, remembering the many images they have seen of the towers falling.

Throughout *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, one can make nine distinctions within the deviations Safran Foer uses. He uses an outline around text to illustrate a card six times within the novel; the lines are simple, and, I will come back to this in a later chapter, very similar to some of the deviations used in *White Teeth*. These deviations merely hint towards actual business cards. Here, the reader is asked to involve their own fantasy to form a mental image: they must create a version of the card out of the thin lines and regular font within their own mind. 23 times he produces deviations from the norm by using plain text. Nonetheless, these deviations are very different from one another: when Oskar can't hear the conversation happening between his mother and his therapist, the gaps in what he cannot hear are visualized by blank spaces (206, see figure 3), whereas later on, the text gets placed closer and closer together, in the end becoming unreadable (281- 284, see figure 1). Here, Oskar's grandfather's mental state is literally shown to the reader using words that become image. The blank space between the two is no longer imaginary, instead it is there for the reader to see and interpret. Interpreting these spaces with the reader's own


What?

what it sounds like. even a hospital, in the way we usually think safe environment.

home is a safe environment.

Who the hell do you think you are?

I'm sorry.
to be sorry for. You're angry.
it's not you that angry
Who are you angry at?

good for children to be around going through the same process.

Oskar isn't other children. even like being around kids his own age.

a good thing?

Oskar is Oskar, and no one that's a wonderful thing.

I'm worried that to himself.

I can't believe we're talking about this.

talk about everything, realize there was no reason to talk

Figure 3 The blank spaces in text on page 206 of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

memories, understandings, culture and personhood is what can make the relationship between word and image tense. The reader who has experienced a panic attack will perhaps visualise that as what is happening when the text becomes so black it is no longer readable, those who have never experienced anything like that will have to fill in the blank spaces in another way. Nine pages include lines that have been crossed out. These straight lines are made not by hand, but clearly by a word processor. In contrast, on 13 different pages there are 'handwritten' red circles around and about the text (Safran Foer 10, 208-216). Apparently, then, it would have been possible for the text to be crossed out 'by hand', but Safran Foer chose not to.

26 pages only include one line, the question

“Do you know what time it is?”

This line is within the narrative, again, supposed to be handwritten, yet in the novel it is printed. Only once is a page filled with actual handwritten words (47). The difference between these two methods of portraying written script is striking. Perhaps the reasoning behind the difference is purely practical: printing text is still easier than illustrating it. But perhaps the reasoning lies deeper: the page filled with the names of colours is an imitation of, or the exact page (the reader is never made certain) that Oskar is looking at, searching for his father's handwriting. The two pages before this page, and the next two after are blank, the reader will never be aware of what happens to Oskar there. This makes the significance of the 'hand'written script even bigger. The reader gets pulled into this search through the visuality of the words, they become invited to look for the last traces of Oskar's father, too.

By far the most pages that have a deviation from plain text are filled with full-page photographs: 38 of them are filled with pictures ranging from a picture of Stephen Hawking (54), a scene of Hamlet (55), a bird's eye picture of New York, but with Central Park whited out (60- 61), inked fingerprints (65), and an astronaut returning to earth (67). One returning subject is the close-up picture of ornate door handles (29, 115, 134, 212, and 265; see figure 4. Before the novel's text even begins, the reader is shown a zoomed-in picture of a handle, with the focus on the keyhole, literally inviting the

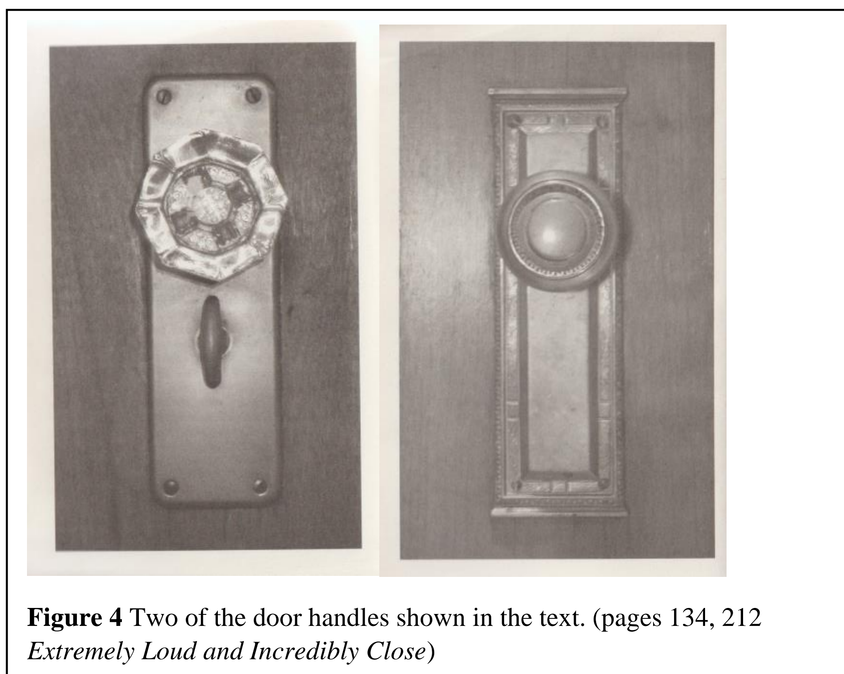


Figure 4 Two of the door handles shown in the text. (pages 134, 212 *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*)

reader into the story. The door handle represents one of the possible doors Oskar has found the key for, but it is also a metaphor for what Oskar is trying to find out. If only he could open the door behind which his father's secrets are hidden, he would not be able to find his father, but at least he would find the way in which his father passed away. Through the keyhole he can see the last slivers of hope he can still feel.

The other, major, recurring motif is a remediated picture of a person falling from the Twin Towers just before they collapsed; it's worth noting that the identity of this person has never been officially confirmed. This image, commonly referred to as "The Falling Man," is known by many, having become an iconic representation of 9/11. Amidst images of planes and burning towers it provides a vision of a victim who was all alone in their humanity during that disaster. Throughout the novel this image keeps reappearing; the novel ends with a sequence of the fall, but this time the order of the sequence is reversed, they are falling upwards, towards where hope is perhaps still a possibility (see figure 5). This sequence creates the (infamous) flipbook with which the novel ends. The use of this image, the photograph of the Falling Man, has been controversial since it was first taken. A day after the attacks it was published in *The New York Times* and other newspapers. This photograph, and others like it, "of the so-called jumpers have been rendered taboo, vilified as an insult to the

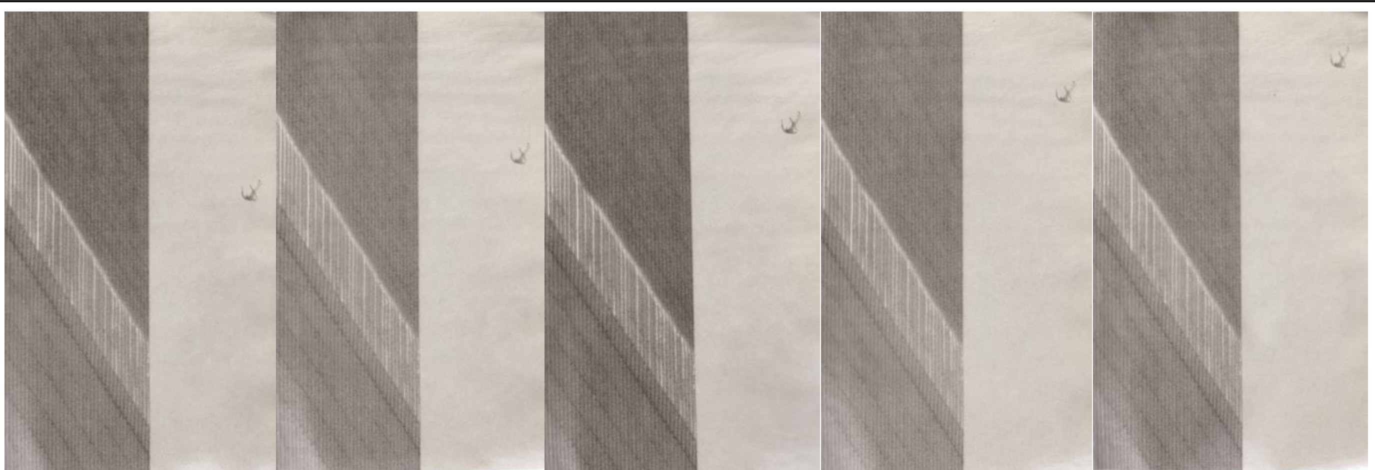


Figure 5 A part of the flipbook of 'the falling man', this time he is falling upwards. (Safran Foer 341-353)

dead and an unbearably brutal shock to the living" (Linfield).The use of the photograph of the falling man has attracted a lot of criticism for Safran Foer (Watkins 11).

The significance of these visual deviations for the novel differs from particular deviation to deviation. The different pictures of keyholes show the character's obsession with the key his father left him, and its matching door. The red circles around words illustrate notes characters made in news articles and letters. The many photographs represent things that Oskar thinks about or talks about, and are suggested to be the pictures he collects in his book *Stuff That Happened to Me*. The deviations within text, like the blank spaces, the larger font, or the pages where the text moves in on itself until it is no longer readable, either illustrate Oskar's situation (unable to hear the conversation), or the state of mind of characters (see figure 1).

The deviations from text do not only represent a version of the told narrative, but they seem to be a "crucial part in the creation of meanings and sensations. [...] [T]he presence of

illustrations can influence the interpretation of the work considerably" (Lefèvre 41). The deviations seem to introduce more meaning to the narrative through the gaps between the images and the text in which the reader fills in parts of their own experiences through their associations with the image. However, some might say that they also introduce some confusion for the reader, as the visual deviations mean that the choices authors make regarding the use and layout of these visuals will be something that catches the reader's attention and perhaps causes a distraction from the writing itself. For instance, when Safran Foer chose to depict the business cards on the pages of the novel, he chose a very simple design: an outline in thin black lines and a font and font size that is the same as is used throughout the novel. The design of these cards could have been made with any word processor, and by any person. In direct contrast is the page filled with the names of people and of colours (Safran Foer 47) (see figure 6). These words, though they seem to have been written with a physical pen, have been made using an electronic drawing pad and an illustration programme. The pages filled with just one line are pages made to reflect the notebook of Oskar's grandfather, in the novel it is described that these short sentences are handwritten, yet Safran Foer chose not to depict the sentences in Oskar's grandfather's handwriting but in the regular font. The words that have been striped through are striped through not by 'hand', but again clearly by using a word processor. One can imagine that these deviations can get a reader to wonder why Safran Foer chose for a more realistic 'hand'written approach one time, and a more conventional approach at other times? Was it, as suggested earlier in this chapter,

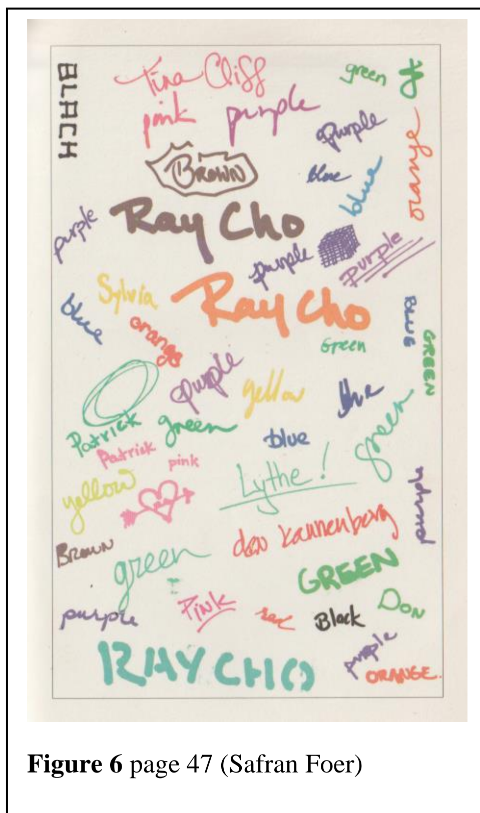


Figure 6 page 47 (Safran Foer)

merely because of practical reasons? Or should the reader wonder whether difference in printing implies that in one line of text there is more meaning to be found than in another?

The photographs presented within the novel can complicate things even further. These are real pictures, of a real rollercoaster (Safran Foer 148), real front doors (289), a real CNN screen still (241), a real Stephen Hawking (54), and, especially, a real pair of hands (260, 261) (see figure 7). These objects and these people exist outside of the realm of the novel. The reader will recognise them as part of their own world, rather than emerging from a fictional world. The photographs of two hands, spread out over two pages, with the words "YES" and "NO" handwritten on them are photographs of two real hands, belonging to a real person. The hands in the photograph are old and wrinkled, the nails are long. These are the real hands of a real person who has a life outside of this novel, but now, within the narrative, they are made to be a picture of the hands of Oskar's grandfather. One must wonder whether these photographs, more than any of the other deviations, take the reader out of the arc of the story.

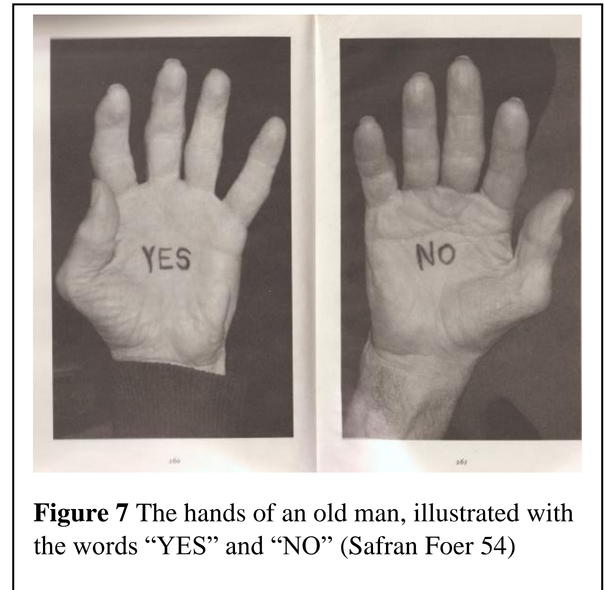


Figure 7 The hands of an old man, illustrated with the words "YES" and "NO" (Safran Foer 54)

Oskar's own notebook *Stuff That Happened to Me* ends with the flipbook:

I found the pictures of the falling body.

Was it dad?

Maybe.

Whoever it was it was somebody.

I ripped the pages out of the book.

> I reversed the order, so the last one was first, and the first one was last. When I flipped through them, it looked like the man was floating up through the sky. (Safran Foer 325)

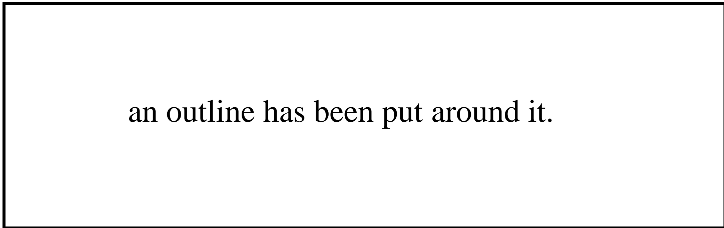
This is the note of hope that the novel's text ends with. Not often within the novel is the visual deviation first described, and then shown to the reader, but here it is. The reader is first allowed to imagine the image of the man. This is an image most readers will already be familiar with. They will see it in their mind's eye, visualize the man and think of where they saw it: in a newspaper, during a documentary, on YouTube? But then the novel ends with the same flipbook of the same pictures, only this time not taped into a notebook, but bound into a novel. The pictures are grainy black and white, and the figure is tiny. When flipped one way it does indeed look like the man is not falling anymore, but instead going up. However, the intrinsic part about a flipbook is that one can flip it the other way around as well. Through the image of the falling man the reader becomes a part of the novel: they decide whether the man is falling upwards, like Oskar is describing, or downwards, like the videos most readers will have seen.

Mitchell has explained that even when an image does not directly address the watcher, it still greets the reader, "it takes the beholder into the game, enfolds the observer as object for the 'gaze' of the picture" (75) Though Foer uses an abundance of visual deviations there is a great multitude of different visual deviations in his novel. Through this diversity it could be argued that this hailing of the reader still holds up despite the reader expecting the visuals. According to Lefèvre those images that fall within his 'image and word narratives' "influence the interpretation of the work considerably" (41). From the overview of deviations used in Foer's novel most, if not all, of the images used would appear to do more "than just illustrate, decorate, document or comment on a verbal story" (36). The images of keyholes are, after all, not just keyholes, but also metaphors for Oskar's mental state. The photographs printed show

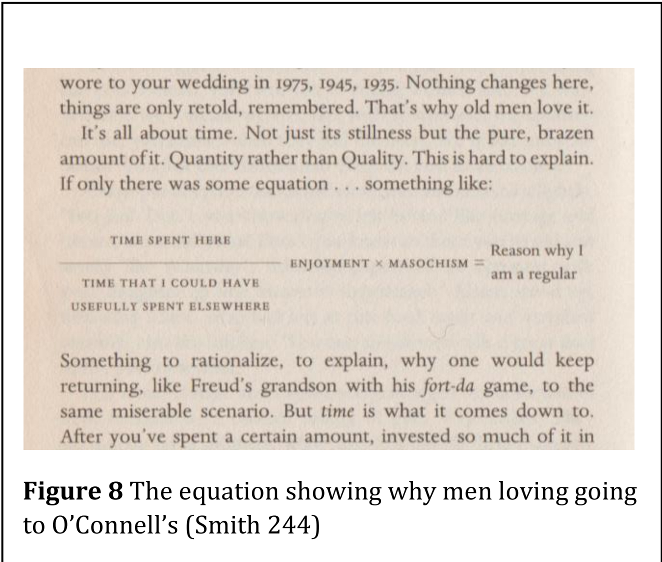
things that Oskar is mentally occupied with, and are likely pictures he tapes into his notebook *Things That Happened To Me*, although that is never expressly made clear to the reader. The flipbook at the end does not just illustrate the flipbook Oskar made at the end of his notebook, but manages to also include the reader as part of the book, they have gained an agency that they have not gained through simply reading the text. These visual deviations then, are not just important parallel to the text they are surrounded with, but are important on their own. They seem to convey a part of the narrative to the reader that would otherwise not be conveyed. Watkins wonders "[h]ow does a reader construct meaning from Foer's combination of words and images?" (11). He explains that "Foer's selection and sequencing of word and image purposefully creates a space in which readers are invited to construct their own interpretive meaning" (11). One possible downside to the creation of extra meaning through a novel that uses visual deviations is the discrepancy between the images. For instance, as previously mentioned within this chapter, this novel includes many parts of text that are described to be handwritten, yet are not displayed as such. This discrepancy might create a confusing experience for the reader, in which they have to wonder about certain stylistic choices instead of about the actual story.

<u>Reading visual deviations from text in *White Teeth*</u>

While Safran Foer employs many deviations from conventional text formatting in his novel, in *White Teeth* Zadie Smith chose to deviate only eight times within her novel's 542 pages. Although the amount of deviations is much smaller than that of Safran Foer, they do differ in sort. The first time a deviation from conventional text appears, on page 58, it is a simple one: the sentence is in the same font and font size as the rest of the text, only to make the text look more like the "sign, a large white placard" (Smith 58) described,


an outline has been put around it.

The lines are thin and simple and the image is very alike the outline often used in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The second time a deviation is used is a quarter of the novel further, on page 244. To give an explanation as to why men love going to the Irish pub O'Connell's, a visual of an equation is used (see figure 8). Interestingly, in a metafictional mode, the narrator announces it: "[i]t's all about time. Not just its stillness but the pure, brazen amount of it. Quantity rather than quality. This is hard to explain. If only there was some equation… something


wore to your wedding in 1975, 1945, 1935. Nothing changes here, things are only retold, remembered. That's why old men love it.
It's all about time. Not just its stillness but the pure, brazen amount of it. Quantity rather than Quality. This is hard to explain. If only there was some equation . . . something like:

$$\frac{\text{TIME SPENT HERE}}{\text{TIME THAT I COULD HAVE USEFULLY SPENT ELSEWHERE}} \text{ ENJOYMENT} \times \text{MASOCHISM} = \text{Reason why I am a regular}$$

Something to rationalize, to explain, why one would keep returning, like Freud's grandson with his *fort-da* game, to the same miserable scenario. But *time* is what it comes down to. After you've spent a certain amount, invested so much of it in

Figure 8 The equation showing why men loving going to O'Connell's (Smith 244)

like:” (244). The visual of the equation is small, and again the text is very similar to the regular text. What truly makes it stand out here is the fact that it is announced to the reader. The narrator wants the reader to pay attention here, to notice that the equation is something else than the regular text they have been reading.

Only a few pages along is the next deviation: a list showing who thinks Mangal Pande, Samad’s great-grandfather, is either “[a]n unrecognized hero [or] [a] palaver over nuffin’” (250). Again, Smith employs an understated design: only an outline around the text sets it apart from the rest. Interestingly, no suggestion is made in the text to the list being a physical, rather than a mental one. From the description given by the narrator, actually, it seems most likely the list is a mental one. It might be confusing for readers that Smith has chosen to depict the list within an outline, when an outline has previously in the novel suggested the visual is written down or printed on paper.

The next deviation is again a frame, only this time it sets itself apart from the regular text a fair bit more: both the font and size are vastly different from the regular text. The deviation shows “a small, handmade advert which was sellotaped round [the lamppost’s] girth at eye level” (265) (see figure 9). By using a different font and size the text does look more like an advert than if it were the same as the regular text of the novel. By deviating from the standard set in the novel so far the advert is even more eye catching this way. Not just Irie’s attention is grabbed, the reader’s is as well. One can fully understand that the advert “was *speaking* to her. LOSE WEIGHT (it was saying) TO EARN MONEY. You, you, *you*, Miss Jones” (265). The message never leaves her mind. “The mantra of the make-over junkie, sucking it in, letting it

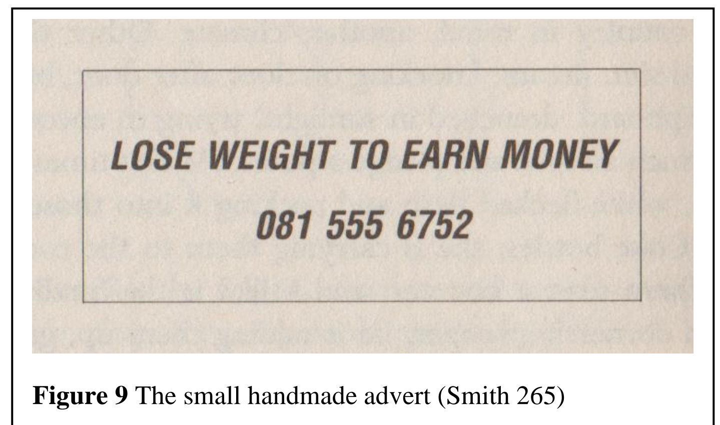


Figure 9 The small handmade advert (Smith 265)

out; unwilling to settle for genetic fate" (266) stays with her. The advert makes her long for a transformation from "Jamaican hourglass heavy [...] to *English Rose*" (267). Just after this description the reader is shown a doodle of this desired *before* and *after* which Irie draws in class (see figure 8). The lines are thin and squiggly, clearly, and possibly rather distractingly, made with a computer programme (267). The lines are obvious to the reader not drawn by Irie's hand.

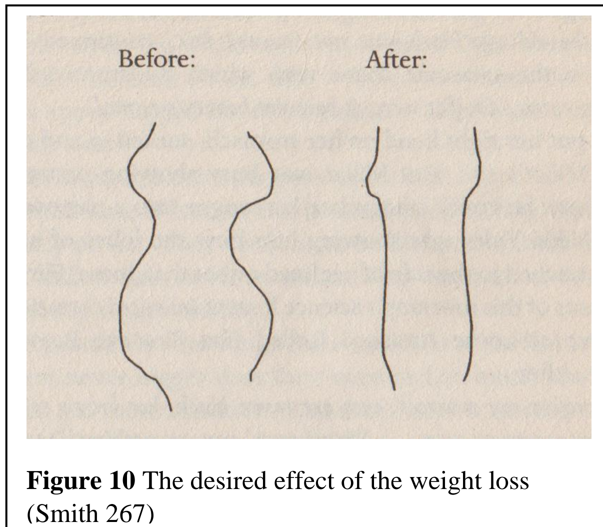


Figure 10 The desired effect of the weight loss (Smith 267)

Further along in the novel appears an illustration of the name "Iqbal" (see figure 11). It is in a shaky 'hand'-writing, again clearly made with a computer programme, like the illustration of the *before* and *after*. The name is described by the narrator to be in "[f]ive inch letters, between one leg of the bench and the other. IQBAL. It wasn't clear, and the colour of it was murky rust, but it was there" (505). In the story the name was written years ago, by Samad, his finger was bleeding, and "with the dribbling blood, he wrote IQBAL from one chair leg to the next. Then, in an attempt to make it more permanent, he had gone over it again with a pen knife, scratching it into the stone" (505). These printed letters in the visual are clearly not letters written in blood, there is no rusty colour, and the lines seem too neat for it to be scratched into stone by a pen knife. Curiously, the name 'Iqbal' is typed out when describing the image etched into the bench twice after the illustration.

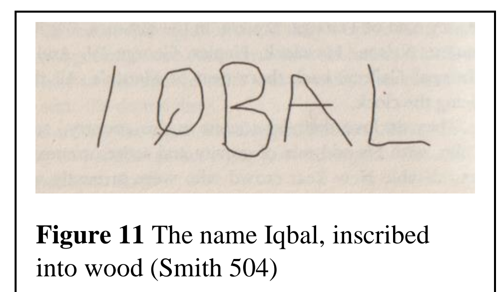


Figure 11 The name Iqbal, inscribed into wood (Smith 504)

Only two pages later is there another visual: again a very simple outline around the page for the December 31st 1992 page of the "Lambeth Kingdom Hall's *Thoughts for the Day* desk calendar for 1992" (507). The text on the pages of the calendar has a different, quite

flowy, font and is printed in bold. One page further Archibald is described as reading a bus ticket, the text on the ticket is displayed on the page. The letters are in bold and centred in the middle, yet there is no framework around it (510).

The visual deviations in *White Teeth* are not as plentiful as they are in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. They are rare within the story, yet when they do appear they stand out. The effect of interpellation does not seem to get lost by the rarity, nor of the simplicity of the visuals. Especially the little illustrations create observers out of the reader, and seem to, as Mitchell argues, engage the onlooker. The visuals too, seem to fall into Lefèvre's category of 'image and word narratives'. The one major criterium, whether the visual adds something to the story that is not told through the text holds up for at least the illustrations shown in the novel. The handwriting of the name IQBAL (see figure 11) makes it a more personal image than if it were 'just' printed letters. The name, all in capital letters, shown in that shaky handwriting, seems to claim more ownership over that bench than if had just been described to the reader. Samad claims it, with his own hands, as truly his, an important metaphor within a story that partly centres around finding your place in a different country than the one you were born into. The same seems to hold true for the illustration of the desired before and after image that Irie draws (see figure 10), through the simple lines the reader is shown, and not just told, of Irie's insecurities. The lines seem to make it feel more private than a novel, the image has diary-like qualities to it, and one can imagine the reader will feel closer to Irie's story for it. As Watkins explained, at the same time the reader is invited to interpret these doodles in their own way, and create more meaning for themselves through their own personal memories. When coming across the visual, one can easily imagine interpreting them with their own memory of writing their name down on an object (school desk, toilet door, tree trunk, etc) and claiming ownership, or with the negative thoughts they themselves have had about their body, and the ways in which they fantasized about changing it. As with *Extremely*

Loud and Incredibly Close, White Teeth displays some discrepancy regarding the use of the visuals within its text: the illustrations in which something is written or drawn 'by hand' are not as realistic as they could be, sometimes the choice has been made for a different font and style to portray an advertisement, other times not, and sometimes parts of text that are explained to be on physical cards are outlined with a frame, whilst other times they are not.

Conclusion

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are both novels that divert from the publishing standard set in most of English fiction. They do this in sometimes very different ways (such as the photographs used by Safran Foer contrasting with the more schematic illustrations that appear in Smith's novel) and sometimes very similar ways (such as how both authors employ some kind of the framework around text, to suggest the appearance of a business card, for example). Lefèvre suggests that the image that helps to tell the narrative, instead of just illustrate said narrative, falls within the genre 'image and word narratives' (41). As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the deviations from text used within the two novels do far more "than just illustrate, decorate, document or comment" (36). Without these images, visuals, illustrations, and textual deviations, the text would not have been the same, they really do seem to "form a crucial part in the creation of meanings and sensations" (41).

What I would like to suggest is that the inclusion of visual deviations into literature creates a different reading experience for its readers. The appearance of anything else than text can be quite startling to a reader, through such visual "interpellation" the reader is now not just an observer any more. No longer are they just standing by, letting the story unfold, they have become a part of the narrative (Mitchell 75). The reader's presence within the narrative allows for the story to become even more personal for its audience, it allows the story to gain more meaning, geared towards the individual reader. This creation of meaning is partly to do with what Watkins calls the empty "space [...] between words and images" (11). Interpreting these spaces with the reader's own memories, understandings, culture and personhood is what can create more personal significance for the reader. In my case, as the reader, I found that the illustration of the before and after Irie had envisioned for herself in

White Teeth (see figure 10) greatly reminded me of my own relationship with my body and the way broader society looks at the female body. Because of the image I emphasised more with the character of Irie than I perhaps would have because in the drawing I recognised a hardship that many, especially young, people go through. To me, it felt like I was invited into her personal diary, the narrator was absent as Irie and I compared our shared struggles. Equally personal to me felt some of the passages from Foer's novel, the pages showing the lines getting closer and closer together as Oskar's grandfather remembers things that his mind cannot handle (see figure 1) feel especially personal. The image of the sentences coming closer together until it is an unreadable black mass remind me of past panic attacks in which my mind felt like what Foer illustrated on those pages. When I, as the reader, read those words for the first time I could feel my heart beating faster and my breath quickening. Through its familiarity the visual enhanced the feelings of Oskar's grandfather.

One can imagine that some deviations grab the attention of the readers more so than others. The frameworks around text suggesting business cards in both novels are certainly a change from normal text, but not much interpretation through the reader's personal understandings can be expected. One illustration in Smith's novel stands out: the before and after doodle Irie draws in her notebook (see figure 10). The thin lines will show many readers not just a wish for a change in physique, but an underlying unhappiness with Irie's body that for many readers might feel very familiar. This illustration is one in which the gap between the image and the text creates an area for personal meaning-making of the reader. Depending on their personal (past) relationship with their body, each reader will interpret this visual deviation in a slightly different way, and will therefore read Irie, as a character, in a slightly different way. *Their* Irie will now be slightly different from anyone else's Irie.

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* there seem to be more visuals that can be more personally interpreted by the reader than in *White Teeth*. The many pictures that are

included within the novel are *real* pictures of *real* objects, now printed within a fictional world, literally merging the two. It is up to the reader to merge their personal perspective on the images with the fictional world they are immersed in. The reader's meaning-making of a picture of Stephen Hawking (Safran Foer 54), or of the astronaut returning to earth (67) will likely be rather limited, but still tangible. It will still make the narrative, with its recognition of the picture, and the personal memories that it brings, slightly more personal for the reader. The pictures that form the sequence of the falling man will likely have a much more of an effect on the reader. One can hardly imagine a reader who can observe the flipbook and not think of their own experience of that day. In this way, the trauma described by Oskar of his experience of 9/11 is not just his trauma, but is being merged with the reader's personal trauma of that day.

One possible downside to the use of visual deviations within literature is that rather because the reader is engaged with the combination of text and image, and pulled in towards the image, it can be rather distracting when the image differs from the expectation set either in the rest of the novel or in the reader's mind. This can for instance be the case with the squiggly lines of the illustration of the name Iqbal (see figure 11), where instead the illustration could easily have looked much more *real*, and less computer-made. Or, similarly, with the typed out notes representing Oskar's grandfather's notebook, instead of the handwriting that is used elsewhere in the novel. The use of images certainly does not seem to warrant any fear of the image, but it can, perhaps, expect its readers to stretch the suspense of disbelief a little thin. The use of visual deviations within the two novels has created a literary setting in which the reading experience can become more personal for the reader, for them, the meaning-making through their memories and culture, through their personhood and associations, creates a unique narrative of the novel.

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