JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S *TREE OF CODES*: BOOK DESIGN AND DIGITAL SCULPTURING

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ABSTRACT   *The intricate literary experiment* Tree of Codes, *in which American author Jonathan Safran Foer reworks a story originally written by Jewish-Polish writer Bruno Schulz, enforces a haptic as well as textual experience of the destruction caused during the Shoah. At the same time, it re-evaluates processes of writing, book-making, and reading, showing the interactive traits and possibilities of the 'classic' material book as it inserts itself in a medial context determined by digital and computational techniques.*

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010) is a book that stands in-between past and future book-making practices and literary traditions. Based on Bruno Schulz's collections of stories *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934), Foer's book takes book-making as well as the writing and reading of stories to a different level due

to the use of the die-cutting technique.[1] The print and digital design employed here reveals an intricate patterning of both language and the book form, which has led to a far more in-depth appreciation of the experience conveyed with matter and words constructively brought together for the creation of an enhanced textual as well as bookish experience. It is not the amount of text that has been transferred from Schulz's short story collection to Foer's work that matters here; the intricate relationships that are established in *Tree of Codes* between materials, typography, language, media and readers lead to a reconsideration of the printing practices employed when it comes to the publication of fiction works in addition to a re-appreciation of the literary experience itself.

With *Tree of Codes* being the outcome of a series of experimentations with the die-cutting technique, one comes to realize the amount of craftsmanship, both digital and material, that goes into the molding of stories, even though the content of the stories narrated here derives partially from Schulz's pre-existing narrative work that Foer has modified, exhumed or erased in his recent publication.[2] Michel Faber, the book reviewer for *The Guardian Online* describes *Tree of Codes* as an "*objet d'art*, composed substantially of empty spaces, […] a conceptual must-have" (italics in original), while Steven Heller from *New York Times Online* talks about "a text of cutout pages, with text peeking through windows as the tale unfolds." Certainly, the question that emerges here has to do with the kind of tale narrated. Could it be that *Tree of Codes* strives towards a multilayering and simultaneously carved-out effect if one considers the preceding text Foer's project draws on, or could it be that *Tree of Codes* tells the story of an enhanced and reconceptualized book form? If we wish to view *Tree of Codes* as an example of bookishness,[3] as this notion derives from Jessica Pressman's argumentation, this

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1   Due to its innovative printing, *Tree of Codes* won in 2011 the prestigious D & AD (Design and Art Direction) award in the Book Award, Book Design category. The whole endeavor is described as follows: "In 'Tree of Codes,' author Jonathan Safran Foer wrote a new narrative by carving it out of an existing book. The design brief was to make the die-cut text obvious, workable and readable, while maintaining an element of surprise to draw in literary, design and art audiences. Sara De Bondt worked closely with Foer to create a book that has the familiarity of a typical paperback, yet allows for a unique, tactile, and almost sculptural reading experience" ("Tree of Codes / D & AD").

2   Jonathan Safran Foer writes in the "Author's Afterword: This Book and the Book": "For years I had wanted to create a die-cut book by erasure, a book whose meaning was exhumed from another book. I had thought of trying the technique with the dictionary, the encyclopedia, the phone book, various works of fiction and non-fiction, and with my own novels. But any of those options would have merely spoken to the process. The book would have been an exercise. I was in search of a text whose erasure would somehow be a continuation of its creation" (138).

3   Jessica Pressman in her article "The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature" talks about the "trend in novels published since 2000 […] it is an emergent literary strategy that speaks to our cultural moment. These novels exploit the power of the print page in ways that draw attention to the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies" (465).

means that it should be seen as part of an emerging aesthetic that "unites novels that pursue a thematic interest in depicting books as characters and focal points of narrative actions" (466). This brings to mind Ólafur Elíasson's, a Danish-Islandic artist's, comment, as marked on the backside of the *Tree of Codes* book cover, that Foer "deftly deploys sculptural means to craft a truly compelling story. In our world of screens, he welds narrative, materiality, and our reading experience into a book that remembers that it actually has a body." This further intensifies the fact that the remembrance of the material substance of the book is not a mere expression of nostalgia for an endangered material book form, but the remark for an alternative way of narrative interaction and textual navigation enabled by a re-envisioned bookish presence.

In this manner, Foer's book and the story contained in it has been carved out of Schulz's narrative, creating not simply another version of Schulz's stories but a tangible object within which language, working jointly with the die-cut formatting of the pages, reaches another level of physicality and visuality due to the print and digital technologies intervening in its typographical presence. Approaching it as a transmedial object, Foer's book invites readers to re-evaluate the semantic, material and technological significance of the book form not as a mere container of texts but as a generative mechanism that triggers different writing and reading patterns as well as variable textual formations that encourage a much more interactive engagement with the book medium itself. In her article "Old and New Medialities in Foer's *Tree of Codes*," Kiene Brillenburg Wurth says that "*Tree of Codes* sculpts the text by Schulz anew and in doing so expresses something essential about it: in its visual form—at a glance—it expresses themes of timelessness, time, dreaming and remembering that recur persistently in *Street of Crocodiles*" (2011: 4). Consequently, Foer's book is concerned with the activation of a much deeper effect that moves beyond the mere telling or retelling of a story—if we take into consideration Schulz's writings—that draws our attention to the poetic sensation created by the strong imagistic effect of the words used as well as their arrangement on the page due to the holed-out spaces crafted as a result of its die-cut format. This highlights what Steve McCaffery and bpNichol comment on in "The Book as Machine" where they claim that "only in poetry occurs this bridging point […] to a new way of perceiving in which the visuality becomes, not the end product of an interior psychological process, but rather the beginning of a whole *new* method of perception" (2000: 19, italics in original). If we take from *Tree of Codes*, for example, the following words—with the slash indicating the holed-out or die-cut spaces between them—such as, "the garden/ turned/ in its sleep, its/ back rising and falling as it breathed" or "August had expanded into enormous/ tongues of/ greenery" (12), we will notice that our eye does not only rest on the intensified visual or figurative effect that all the words simultaneously create but on the multiple sensations each one of them triggers in conjunction with the material qualities of the book page itself. In this case, perception is guided both

by concepts and matter, as is stimulated by the literary and digitally enhanced functions of language that prompt multiple allusions and connotations as well as multiple contexts of meaning.

Schulz in his essay "The Mythologizing of Reality" (1936), available online, talks about poetry as being "this tendency of the word to return to its nursery, its yearning to revert to its origins, to its verbal homeland," and about the poet as the person who "restores conductivity to words through new short-circuits, which arise out of their fusions. The image is also an offshoot of the original word, the word which was not yet a sign, but a myth, a story, or a meaning." It is this attitude, as it emerges from Schulz's own comments, towards the flexibility and plasticity in addition to the branching out potential of language that Foer attempts to explore in *Tree of Codes*. Besides, Schulz's attention to the poetic quality of words, as this derives from their animating and invigorating energy, finds direct application in the 3-dimensional material and narrative experience *Tree of Codes* spawns. With this work functioning as a semantic, visual and tactile mechanism, it enables readers to immerse into the experience it activates by directing their attention to particular punctuation marks, individual or clusters of words, as for instance in the line "the room grew enormous / ,filled with whispers, / a conspiracy of / winking / eyes / opening up among the flowers on the wall" (27).[4] This brings to mind Johanna Drucker's observation that "even in its most conventional format, the book is a sculptural object. It has spatial dimensions, material qualities and a complex structure" (qtd. in Vogler 2000: 457). Equally to the image of a room growing in size or to the eyes opening up like flowers on a wall, as indicated in the example cited above, *Tree of Codes* transforms into a relief mural painting full of figures, shapes and colors conceptually drawing on the ones Schulz would create[5] or even on his illustrative descriptions found in stories such as "The Book"[6] or on the illustrations themselves appearing throughout his short story collection *Sana-*

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4   The slashes are used to indicate spaces or die-cut holes in the original text.

5   "Felix Landau, a Gestapo officer in charge of the Jewish labor force in Drohobycz, became aware of Schulz's talents as a draftsman. He directed Schulz to paint murals on the walls of his child's playroom. […] [A] documentary filmmaker, Benjamin Geissler, […] was able to find someone who had been in [Landau's] house […]. This person led Geissler to what was once Landau's child's room […]. Geissler rubbed at one of the walls with the butt of his palm, and colors surfaced. He rubbed more, and forms were released. He rubbed more, like doing the rubbing of a grave, and could make out figures: fairies and nymphs, mushrooms, animals, and royalty …" (Foer, Foreword vii–viii).

6   "And as the windswept pages were turned, merging colors and shapes, a shiver runs through the columns of the text, freeing from among the letters flocks of swallows and larks. Page after page floated in the air and gently saturated the landscape with brightness. At other times, The Book lay still and the wind opened it softly like the huge cabbage rose; the petals, one by one, eyelid under eyelid, all blind, velvety, and dreamy, slowly disclosed a blue pupil, a colored peacock's heart, or a chattering nest of hummingbirds" (Schulz 2008: 116).

torium Under the Sign of the Hourglass (1937),[7] with each one of them suggesting an alternative narrative thread.

This is the exact feel Foer's book title, *Tree of Codes*, creates while at the same time it highlights a branching out effect of intermediated causalities, juxtapositions and interrelations ignited due to the die-cut design, typography and textured quality of the book.[8] This echoes N. Katherine Hayles' claims in her study *My Mother Was a Computer* where she talks about "systems of representation […] particularly analog and digital" and "interfaces connecting humans with intelligent machines that are our collaborators in making, storing, and transmitting informational process, and objects" (2005: 33). What she proposes here is a completely different way of looking at books, no longer as mere containers of stories, but as nodes of "multiple causalities" (ibid.), with emphasis placed on the multiple loops they generate between the visual, verbal and digital inscribing mechanisms employed, and the readers' own embodied actions alongside the materials used. As a result, the malleable quality of *Tree of Codes* is further enhanced due to its ability to fuse linguistic and conceptual elements with material and physical actions extenuated by its die-cut format that allows for multiple entry and exit textual points to be crafted, as suggested by the variable sized die-cut grids created on each one of the pages.

What this reveals is the construction of an intricate network of various media, material and bodily interventions that bring to mind Jay David Bolter's words in *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* when he talks about hypertext which he describes "as a printed book that the author has attacked with a pair of scissors and into convenient verbal sizes […] but it [does not] simply dissolve into a disordered heap [but] […] a scheme of electronic connections [that] […] indicate relationships among the slips" (2001: 35); this comment could also be pointing towards relationships that can develop among the tools used and the initiator of the action as well, bringing them all together within an extended communication loop. In the case of Foer's book, Bolter's met-

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7   The stories from both Bruno Schulz's collections, *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, were published in 1977 by Penguin Books in one volume with the title *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories.* The 2008 edition contains a foreword by Jonathan Safran Foer and an introduction by David A. Goldfarb. Both editions use Celina Wieniewska's translation from Polish into English.

8   It is quite interesting that each one of the words of the book title, *Tree of Codes*, is often found in different formations embedded in the die-cut text itself. This further reinforces the feel of another visual, verbal or even tactile sensation seeping through each one of the pages of Foer's book that calls for a different engagement both with the story and the book itself as a material and generative mechanism, as shown for instance in the lines "/we/ find ourselves/ part of the/ /tree/ /of/ / cod/ /es/" (92); "/our city/ is/ reduced/ to/ the/ /tree/ /of/ /cod/ /es./ " (94); "/the last secret of/ / /the/ tree/ /of/ /cod/ /es/ / /is/ that/ /nothing can ever reach a definite conclusion" (95); "/The/ /tree/ /of/ /cod/ /es was/ /better than a paper imitation" (96).

aphorical scissors change into a die-cut mechanism that intervenes in each one of the book pages morphing them with a different pattern, a process which in the long run can alter the readers' responses to and interactions with the content and the material substance of the book itself. Therefore, the way in which such material is and can be handled will gradually lead both to the enhancement and the alteration of the readers' understanding and appreciation of such printed documents that do not adhere to any of the recognizable conventional book formats employed by the book printing industry as far as the die-cut shape of the pages and the carved text printed on them are concerned.

Based on Alan Liu's argument about the digital text being a deformational document,[9] Hayles in her article "Combining Close and Distant Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* and the Aesthetic of Bookishness" talks about the materially deformed status of the latter work due to its material fragility that sets obstacles to the turning or scanning of its pages along with any further digital or material manipulation (2013: 230). The complex and to an extent paradoxical relationship that grows between the digital and print here on the basis of Liu's and Hayles's argumentations leads us to a different appreciation of the constraints and possibilities each medium generates, which brings to mind Schulz's observation in "The Mythologization of Reality" about the "great and daring short-cuts and approximations" or the "new short-circuits, which arise out of their fusions" that lead to a variable understanding of language and the reality that is crafted out of it. In the case of *Tree of Codes*, the interplays that are triggered between mediums and media of expression activate an ongoing mechanism of interplays and de-formations that leads to even more synthesizing effects that derive from the die-cut typographical interventions that engineer linkages and seams between words, materials and media, an activity further enhanced by the readers' own choices, movements and explorations of and through the text. Consequently, everyone and everything is caught up into a process of *poesis* or making that molds and is molded by thoughts, responses and stimuli that derive from and are fed back into Foer's work every time the readers interact with it.

This practice bridges together a number of techniques, such as book design, printing, digitality and machine coding, that affect the way we think, read, and interact with language by enhancing and animating the connotative meanings of words, their sentential combinations, and the variable contexts and realities they build both literally and figuratively due to the die-cut format of the book. For

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9   Alan Liu in the online version of his article "The End of the End of the Book: Dead Books, Lively Margins, and Social Computing" claims that "[d]ocuments are *deformational forms*. On the one hand, documents *con*form to strict rhetorical and technical protocol— standard salutations ('To,' 'From,' 'Re,' 'cc'), paper sizes, data or transmission formats, and so on. On the other hand, documents are *de*formational because they atomize molar structures into modular, remixable components geared to industrial efficiency and postindustrial flexibility" (2009; italics in original).

instance, we read in one of its die-cut pages: "It was a dialogue/ / /swollen with/ / /darkness/ / / ./ / I heard my father's voice/ / / .I heard the windows shake/ /" (29). If we try to read this page again by letting it rest on the die-cut page lying beneath it, we will view the following text: "It was a dialogue/ /Mother/ /swollen with/ / / darkness/ /and cobwebs, his eyes/ wept into a corner, waiting to be taken/ **ents**/ /in/ ./ I heard my father's voice/ / was almost overcome/ for many days/ / **ple**/ .I heard the window shake/" (29; 30, bolds mine). The animating potential of language we have already commented on lies exactly not in the kind of words printed on the page but in the augmented sensation the interlacing text in these two pages creates due to the embossed feel of the intersecting die-cut grids that gain depth by the holed geometrical incisions that appear at certain points on the material page. As for the letters I note in bold in the example above, they create a riddling or even playful effect as we cannot see or read them clearly through the holed-out page. This attracts the readers' attention, prompting them to guess the missing letters or syllables on the basis of the context(s) or meaning(s) they wish to formulate. This kind of reading activity demands from readers a different kind of textual or linguistic engagement that resorts to or combines a number of skills that result both from the understanding of the digital die-cut and holed-out patterning of the pages in addition to the words brought together along with the rhetorical, figurative, allusive and contextual relations that are created amongst them. This brings to mind Hayles's argumentation in her article "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine" where she talks about a "disciplinary shift to a broader sense of reading strategies and their interrelation. […] [with] close, hyper, and machine reading each hav[ing] distinctive advantages and limitations; nevertheless, they also overlap and can be made to interact synergistically with one another" (2010: 65; 75). Seeing these comments in relation to *Tree of Codes*, one can claim that this book constitutes a multi-generational and ongoing feedback mechanism that places readers in the midst of artistic, literary, technological, and media action, while combining methodologies and disciplines that conceptually and materially sculpt alternative thinking circuitries and literacy abilities.

The various die-cut grid patterns adopted for each one of the pages in *Tree of Codes* somehow personalize the experience conveyed, which hence leads us to reconsider mass book production.[10] The treatment Foer's novel receives per page, as the video made available testifies, is indicative of the craftmanship opportunities offered even when printing in great numbers; it is still possible for literary

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10 The online video "*Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran Foer: Making Of" made available via the Visual Editions website offers a brief overview of the die-cut design and printing processing used in the making of this particular book. Die Keure Printing & Publishing company in Belgium used a different die cut for each one of the pages of *Tree of Codes*. As for the book and cover designs, these were executed by London-based Sara de Bondt Studio and John Grey respectively. http://visual-editions.com/tree-of-codes-by-jonathan-safran-foer. 29 Nov. 2016.

practice, digital design, and skilled labor to compliment one another when it comes to fine artistic productions. If we consider the final stages of the making of *Tree of Codes*, that is not fully revealed in the available video but not totally invisible, we see that the writer's material transforms into narrative variants that guide the die-cutting machines in their page-carving activity, which is what creates the multiple narrative pathways Foer's novel opens up to. As a result, machines and digital coding in their interaction with textual material achieve a different level of narrative complexity to be further enhanced due to the intervention of the readers themselves when they get the final book in their hands. This step in the process adds another variant to the whole book and reading experience with the readers attempting to navigate through its die-cut pages. In another video entitled "*Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran Foer," also available via the Visual Editions website, the writer himself talks about what is possible in literature and what is possible using paper nowadays along with the comment about his book functioning as an interface where literature and visual arts intersect. What this brings to mind though is Drucker's comment in her article "Reading Interface" where she argues that "[w]e have to understand interface as a constitutive boundary space, not just a place of mechanistic negotiation […] [but] as a border zone between cultural systems, with all the complexity and emergent relations that suggests" (2013: 216). Assessing this observation in relation to *Tree of Codes*, one can claim that Foer's book marks a transition in the way we think and read, which may also generate further changes as to the way we perceive and respond both to the realities the book constructs plus our own external reality. The alternating die-cut grids on each page and their intertwining with the nestings created by the holed-out pages make our eyes drift from page to page as we try to make out our own story through the lines and words printed on them. It is this kind of confrontation with what looks familiar but is not, with what is expected to be structured but is not that takes us by surprise and gears us towards the development and adoption of new reading, thinking and interaction habits.[11] Let us take a look at the following example from *Tree of Codes*: " "lifelessness is only a disguise/ / / ./ / / / "/ / / his voice sank/ / / pressed/ / against the wall,/ / / /'We have lived for too long/" (50).[12] The open-ended citations that emerge here due to the placement of the double quotation marks on the page, owning to the die-cut carvings and spaces left and simultaneously created between words and punctuation marks, as indicated by the multiple slashes seen in the example above, accentuate the crafting quality of

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11 "Reading has always been constituted through complex and diverse practices. Now it is time to rethink what reading is and how it works in the rich mixtures of words and images, sounds and animations, graphics and letters that constitute the environments of twenty-first-century literacies" (Drucker 2013: 78).

12 The double quotation marks that appear in the cited text also appear in the original and follow its intricate die-cut formatting. That is the reason why they have been kept intact here.

the text and the design that emerges if we look at the page both on its own right and in conjunction with the other die-cut pages preceding or following it. The effect that emerges is quite different, with the die-cut technique playing a crucial role in how the text transforms visually, verbally and materially in terms of its aesthetic and interface design, to use Drucker's term. What this makes us aware of, in addition to the presence of a book body, is that of the presence of the die-cutter and the die-cutting machine, since both of them are responsible not only for the production process, but also for the co-creation of the whole book endeavor with regard to the inscription method employed that also involves the book designers and the textual material providers, in this case Schulz and Foer. Hayles in her article "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext" sheds light on "[t]he *embodied* work of production [that] naturally results in enhanced appreciation for the works materiality," which she goes on to characterize as "open works" (2001: 23, italics in original). As a result, in *Tree of Codes* die-cutting transforms the book pages literally into embodied open works, in other words in expanded spaces of exploration whose making, writing and reading mechanisms bring production workers, designers, writers and readers together as they are all participants in the spatial, temporal, visual, verbal and tactile experience this book instigates. This marks a point of transition towards a re-evaluation of what a book is or what a book can do if seen not in isolation but as part of a network of embodied interactions within a broader trajectory of media development and reconceptualization.[13] This leads us back to Drucker's arguments about interface design where she comments on the "desire to expose interpretation rather than display its results" (2013: 218), which signals a major shift in the way a book should be regarded, conceptualized, handled and designed.

Roland Barthes, quite early on in his essay "From Work to Text" included in his work *Image Music Text* (1977), talked about the network abilities that the text has, since it can extend itself due to its combinatory, in other words, organic qualities: "the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory systematic (an image, moreover, close to current biological conceptions of the living being)" (161, emphasis in original). This comment, in addition to all the argumentation that has preceded it in the present paper, turns its attention to the holistic and animating energy a text has with each one of its composite parts contributing to the shaping of the experience it brings forth. This kind of shaping takes spatial dimensions as shown, for example, in the following line from *Tree of Codes*: "/ /saw that resistance would be useless/ / /./ / / /The walls/ /disappeared/ / / .The interior/ /formed itself into the panorama of a/ /landscape, full of/ /distance./ / i/ / wandered among/the folds/ /

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13 In this light, it is also worth reading the commentary N. Katherine Hayles provides about the reactions triggered against the use of hypertext technology due to the fact that it was seen in isolation and not as part of a network of media developments. For more information, see Hayles 2010: 67–69.

,/ / /the land/" (117). Interlacing with the die-cutting spaces created on the page, the words used here create a particular reading but also spatial effect. In particular, the words "walls," "interior," "formed," "folds" and "land" almost work as material fissures that together with the words "disappear," "landscape," "distance" and "wondered" create an ebbing and flowing effect that alters and transforms the spatiality of the textual landscape on the material page. What visually works as multiple die-cut spaces also works as contracting and expanding mental spaces that morph, enhance, and sculpt each other. This mental and material sculpturing brings to mind the connection Hayles draws in her article "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext" between cognitive systems, materiality and art so as to shed light on how the transference between mediums affects the way we understand, process, and materially represent space. Specifically, she talks about sketching and the way it "enters actively into the cognitive process of artistic creation. As the artist works with the sketch, erasing lines, drawing arrows, rearranging objects and so forth, the external object becomes part of [the artist's] extended mind, not just recording but *transforming* [the artist's] thoughts" (2001: 31, italics in original). In a similar manner, *Tree of Codes* functions as a networked and transformative landscape for everyone who has worked cognitively for its formulation and construction. This has led to multiple textual arrangements, but also various linking structures that challenge conventional narrative sequence and architecture to their core, since it is this very core of their inner mechanisms that the *Tree of Codes* discloses, which at the same time reveals the perplexity of Foer's undertaking.[14] Moreover, the sculpted mental and spatial topographies that the *Tree of Codes* generates also allow for the performative qualities of the words themselves, with regard to their role, to emerge, as shown in the following example: "Only a few people noticed/ / the/ / lack of color,/ / / as in black-and-white photographs/ / /. This/ / was real rather than metaphorical/ / / / -a/ / / colorless/ / /sky/ / ,/ / / an enormous/ / / geometry of emptiness,/ / / a watery/" (90). What we find in these textual linkages are adjectives (such as "few," "black-and-white," "metaphorical," "colorless," "enormous," "watery"), nouns (such as "people," "sky," "geometry," "emptiness") and a verb ("noticed"), each one activating its own associations. The die-cutting shaped spaces that intervene between the words, phrases and punctuation marks diffuse sequentiality so as to direct our attention not only to the visual, tactile, verbal and material functions words perform but also to their elemental ability to craft meaning. This echoes Schulz's remarks in "The Mythologization of Reality" where he writes that when words "relax their strictures, when the word, released from such coercion, is left to its own devices and restored to its

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14 "At times I felt that I was making a gravestone rubbing of *The Street of Crocodiles*, and at times that I was transcribing a dream that *The Street of Crocodiles* might have had. I have never read another book so intensely or so many times. I've never memorized so many phrases, or, as the act of erasure progressed, forgotten so many phrases" (Foer, "Author's Afterword: This Book and The Book", 139).

own laws, then a regression takes place within it, a backflow, and the word returns to its former connections and becomes again complete in meaning." This kind of return to the elemental power words in themselves have is facilitated in *Tree of Codes* by the die-cut format of the pages that energizes and extends the thinking process beyond the frame of the page through the exploration of the material flexibility of language itself that allows other combinations, such as semantic, verbal or syntactic to emerge.

Through all the arguments and examples that have been presented so far, Foer's richly textured and sculpted text does so much more than merely provide us with another intricate book object. It actually invites us to re-evaluate how the book medium is not simply transformed or subsumed by the cultural and technological forces that surround it but how its potentials can be enhanced. The movements the die-cutting machines perform on it, which are triggered by the coded language that is fed into the machines as this is patterned on the language the literary text employs, somehow choreograph our own reading movements caught up into a different kind of bodily and mental sculpturing. Moving beyond the boundaries set by conventional attitudes as to what a book is or what it can do, Foer here invites us to become part of its ever expanding material reality by setting in motion all the mechanisms that are stored in it. With *Tree of Codes* we are taking a step closer to a much more haptic engagement with literary practice. Such an active engagement with the materiality of books and languages enriches our perception, enhances our reading and learning skills, encourages energetic and creative thinking and makes us receptive to stimuli that strive towards an alternative, heightened, and certainly embodied mode of communication and artistic practice.

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