Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* : Memorial, Fetish, Bookishness

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"*On the brink of the end of paper, I was attracted to the idea of a book that can't forget it has a body.*"[1] *This is how* JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER *describes his motivation for* Tree of Codes *(2010), a work of experimental literature that revels in what I call "bookishness." I use the term "bookishness" to describe an aesthetic practice and cultural phenomenon that figures the book as artifact rather than as just a medium for information transmission and, in so doing, presents the book as a fetish for our digital age. Bookishness proliferates in twenty-first-century culture, presenting numerous and varied sites through which to calibrate and consider medial change as well as to critique digital culture, especially end-time narratives* about the death of the book. Tree of Codes *is one such site: an example of literary bookishness that is both a memorial and a fetish.*

Tree of Codes is full of holes, literally. Rectangular gaps of various sizes puncture its pages, leaving behind a latticework of paper upon which words or strings of words form little islands around the gaping holes. The reader circumnavigates these holes in order to tease out meaning from the fragmented narrative they comprise. To produce this visual, physical text, Foer employed a

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digitally enhanced process of die-cutting to carve into a book by Polish-Jewish author Bruno Schulz: *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934).[2] Schulz was murdered by the Nazis, and his writing was largely lost to history.[3] The sense of loss—the loss of people, books, and cultural memory—permeates *Tree of Codes* figuratively and formally, most notably in the gaping holes in its carved-out pages. Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* is a poetic and surreal collection of short stories about a family in a small European town experiencing changes due to increased urbanization and modernization.[4] The feeling of a changing world encroaching on an intimate, local place permeates Schulz's writing and carries over to Foer's adaptation, rendering *Tree of Codes* an allegory for a contemporary moment of cultural and medial transformation. [5]

MEMORIAL

The holes on the pages of *Tree of Codes* signify loss and prompt remembrance. The pages containing these holes are memorials. I use the term "memorial" as opposed to "monument" because, as Melissa Sodeman explains, "memorial stands for a mode of commemoration that admits the inevitability of forgetting and that seeks to preserve not what has been lost, but rather its remembered image."[6] The relationship between *Tree of Codes* and *The Street of Crocodiles* is not one of veracity and archiving but of representing and remixing "its remembered image" or after-effect. What is remembered here is multiple: Schulz's texts, the People of the Book lost in the Shoah, the artifactuality of the codex in a culture of digitization, and concerns about the fate of the book in the digital age. Schulz's stories are devoted to the artifactual; the text renders objects and places as deeply material, indeed, as agents (in a Latourian sense) that impact and affect human characters.[7] This focus on the material in Schulz's source text provides a foundation for Foer's own making of literature as bookish memorial.[8] In the early years of the twenty-first century, in the face of tremendous changes to our relationships and "attachments" (as Rita Felski might say)[9] to books, *Tree of Codes* repurposes an important older text in ways that focus attention not only on the particular content of that text (the data that has been lost or saved) but also on the media supporting this engagement. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth describes *Tree of Codes* as "the trace, the history of a reading."[10] Understood this way, Foer's writing-as-cutting produces a memorial to Foer's reading of Schulz's text. I extend this point to show how *Tree of Codes* uses the format of the codex to serve as a monument, memorial, and fetish object for the book medium in an age when it is supposedly under

threat due to digital technologies and reading practices. *Tree of Codes* exemplifies a larger contemporary artistic practice in contemporary culture that preemptively mourns books as a testament to—and recognition of—their status as a medium.

Published in 2010, a decade after Y2K and hyperbolic laments about the death of the book,[11] *Tree of Codes* captures and aestheticizes fear, loss, and the longing for books. Such feelings need not be based upon publishing statistics or on any other seemingly objective means of calibration, for books are actually doing just fine in our digital age. In the years leading up to the new millennium, however, concerns about what e-readers and Web 2.0 would bring was palpable and real for those who associated reading with codexical media.[12] *Tree of Codes* memorializes these fears and the historical, cultural moment associated with them as a function of the medium itself. The gaping holes in the pages of *Tree of Codes* also suggest the genre of book-inspired memorials to the Holocaust, of which Micha

Figure 1.

Micha Ullman, Library *(1995), a memorial to books burned in the Holocaust, located in Berlin's Bebelplatz, the site of public burning of tens of thousands of books on May 10, 1933. Photo by author.*

Ullman's *Library* (1995) is exemplary (Fig. 1). Located in Berlin's Bebelplatz, the subterranean memorial depicts an illusion of endless empty bookshelves that reach into the earth to unknown depths.

This poignant memorial suggests a parallel between the bodies of books and the bodies of people, both of which burned in the flames of the Shoah on the very spot of *Library*. As we know from Heinrich Heine, whose famous words mark the simple plaque in Bebelplatz denoting the spot of the otherwise-missable monument, a society that burns books will also burn people.[13] The parallel between the bodies of books and the bodies of people persists in *Tree of Codes* not only in rhetorical ways, which Amy Hungerford argues can be ideologically dangerous, but in deeply material, physical, and embodied ways that present reading-by-feeling as an ethical act of remembrance.[14] *Tree of Codes* operates in this context of associations between books, memory, archiving, and memorials in ways that address a twenty-first-century condition and concern: the symbolic and historical connections between books, bodies, and memory seem under threat due to digital technologies and reading practices. What we see in *Tree of Codes* and in bookishness more generally is not simply an alarmist response to fears that books are becoming obsolete but something more complex: a recalibration of ways of thinking about books. Rather than harkening to the post-book, such a recalibration involves reconciling the history of the book with the post-digital, as we will see in what follows—a project that requires recognizing how the use of the codex is predicated on its memorial function as a medium for archiving, as well as on its history as a sacred object. In this essay, I read *Tree of Codes* as a tutor text of bookishness because it demonstrates how contemporary literature confronts our changing relationship to books through an aesthetic memorial to this situation.

BOOKWORK

Tree of Codes is not alone in its formal practice of cutting up an older book to make a new art object in ways that turn our attention to the materiality of codexical media. There is a long history of such practice and scholarship on it, as Dieter Roth's oeuvre and Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books* illustrate. Nor is Foer alone in adapting this artists' book practice to serve contemporary concerns about the state and fate of books in our digital ecology. Elsewhere, I have examined twenty-first-century works of book-based experimental literature

that engage the potential of the page and codex by such writer-designers as Mark Z. Danielewski, Graham Rawle, and Steven Hall.[15] *Tree of Codes* is usually read in relation to such experimental novels and readable texts; however, *Tree of Codes* is also a book-ish object that can be read in relation other bookish things.[16] From laptop covers in the shape of leather-bound books to sculptures carved out of a codex, stop-animation videos depicting books coming to life to a diverse array of kitsch objects—dresses, handbags, curtains, and bedsheets printed with the covers of famous books as well furni-ture, jewelry, and vases all made from books—the presence of the book abounds in twenty-first-century culture, often with a purpose different than as a medium for reading. Considering *Tree of Codes* in relation to this type of bookishness, we see it as a physical thing and not just as a text to be read, which opens ways for us to recognize it as a kind of bookish sculpture, albeit a mass-produced one, and to consider its relationship to contemporary altered-book sculpture more broadly.

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The last two decades have seen the proliferation of what literary scholar Garrett Stewart calls "bookwork," a genre of book-based sculpture that uses books as the material substance for sculpture. Bookwork sculpture—made famous by such artists as Doug Beube, Brian Dettmer, Guy Laramée, Cara Barer, Su Blackwell, and Long-Bin Chen—is also called "altered book," or "carved book" art.[17] Stewart describes bookwork as having "demediated" the codex,[18] for such art takes away the ability to read the textual content and thus deconstructs the medial function of the book. We can't read the words contained in Pamela Paulsrud's *Touchstones* (books altered to look like stones) or Brian Dettmer's dictionary series (for example, his *New Funk Standards*" (2017) [Fig. 2]), because pieces of the pages have been cut away, shellacked, and otherwise altered.

In both of these artists' bookworks, we see the book as a physical, material, and aesthetic thing rather than just as a storage container for text. Such art makes us see books differently, prompting us to contemplate how these objects serve various cultural roles including medium, sacred object, archive, and memorial. Brian Dettmer explains, "My work is about reading books in new ways and
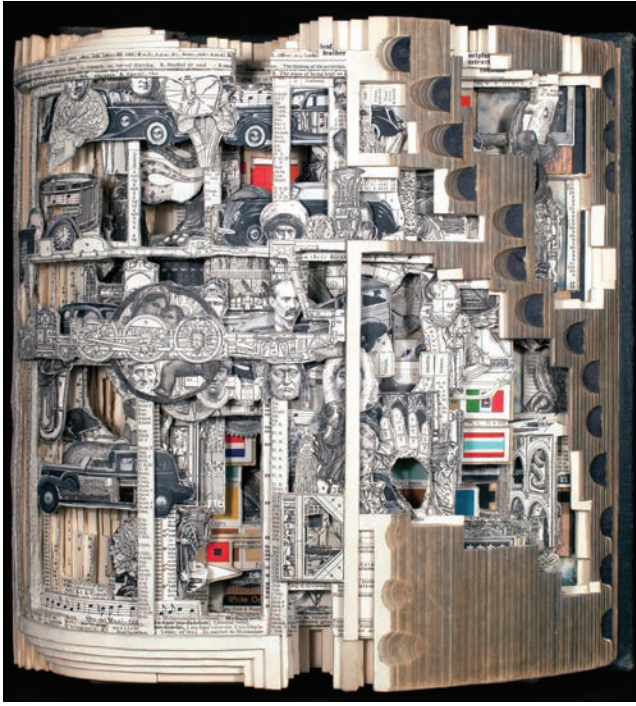
Figure 2.
Brian Dettmer, New Funk Standards *(2017). Hardcover book, acrylic varnish, 12-3/4" x 12" x 5-3/4". Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.*

about teaching us to think differently about the media we use."[19] Stewart identifies bookwork as part of the genealogy of conceptual and readymade art, which presents "the book itself as 'study' rather than as functional object."[20] Such art exposes the book object as shifting in its traditional use-value, demonstrating that "the idea of the codex survives its use."[21] It is no coincidence that bookwork (and bookishness) emerge now, in this digital moment, for "[t]he book in a museum is what all books may become."[22]

Tree of Codes might not qualify as bookwork, since it is not handcrafted and singular, but it does nonetheless "simultaneously celebrate and forewarn the viewers of the fine line between monuments and ruins," as curator Karen Ann Myers writes.[23] Indeed, this mass-produced bookwork is both memorial and ruin, sculpture and literature, while also circulating widely as a digitally produced book-bound remix. It challenges categorization, which might explain why it is left out of recent author bios in Foer's book-bound novels and also why it inspired a cross-media experimentation in the form of a contemporary ballet.[24] Director and choreographer Wayne McGregor collaborated with artist Olafur Eliasson and composer Jamie xx to create "Tree of Codes" (2015), a ballet for the Manchester International Festival. McGregor calls the ballet "a translation" from "a book that has a body" into an artform comprised of human bodies.[25] Recognizing that *Tree of Codes* creates and participates in constellations of creative influence, acts of translation, and repurposing across media forms demands that we adopt a media-attuned critical practice in order to approach it. Only then can we understand the importance

of this work for twenty-first-century culture, wherein we seem to be, in Foer's words, "[o]n the brink of the end of paper. . . ."[26]

READING THE BOOK

You read this book, as you read all books, by isolating a page from those behind it. This is where similarities end. Here, you must carefully extricate each page from those behind it without ripping it. This is because the die-cut process leaves the pages as a fragile latticework, and words from pages behind the one at-hand appear through holes, so you must carefully hold the paper in order to isolate the text on that particular page. Only then does the page at-hand appear as a tool we can recognize and use.[27] We see the page as an interface that matters, to crib the title of Bonnie Mak's book *How the Page Matters*. Since words on the page only appear—or, more precisely, the words from other pages only disappear—when you turn the page, you come to notice the physical action involved in turning pages and see how, once turned, the very familiar act of interacting with a book takes on new meaning. In *Tree of Codes*, the act of turning pages, which media theorist Espen Aarseth used as the cornerstone example of trivial interaction—in contradistinction to interactivity—becomes a highly interactive and meaningful activity.[28] The verso side of the page is always blank, but as the reader moves through the book, the page's backside emerges as a meaningful space. Foer uses the architecture of the codex to build rectangular shapes on the backside of the page, displaying mutating and sculptural cavities that increase in depth and shape and appear as caves or rooms that seem to reference the shadow-laden, mysterious rooms in Schulz's stories (Fig. 3).

As layers of paper accumulate, the diegetic spaces from the recto side of the text-splotched page attain visual figuration in the shadow-filled cavities on the verso side. And this is just a description of the physical appearance and affective performance of this bookish object; we haven't yet even approached its textual content.
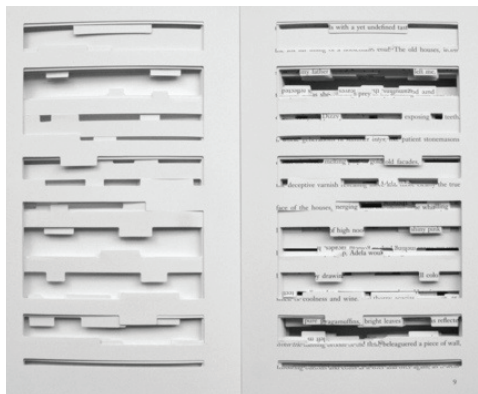
Figure 3.
Image of die-cut pages showing verso and recto sides of Jonathan Safran Foer's Tree of Codes *(2010). Courtesy of the publisher, Visual Editions.*

The first page of *Tree of Codes* contains no text, just holes. Vertical columns of gaps are piled atop each other. The reader faces a wall of empty bricks but not blankness. The book opens by exposing its bones, or paper skeleton, and the codified schema used to cover its pages in text. At the top of this first page, above the stack of excisions that marks the absence of previously readable paragraphs, there are two small boxes: a small rectangular hole below which a single square is cut out, both center-justified. We know what goes here: a chapter or story title. This gap is an indexical sign, a silent monument testifying to the presence of lost elements. This detail calls attention to relation between, in Jerome McGann's words, "the linguistic code" (literature's content) and "the bibliographic code" (literature's physical structure) that combine to produce "the textual condition" of printed surfaces that shape the ways in which we read them.[29] Foer begins his book, whose title invokes the codes that shape the codex, by illuminating the media that shape readerly practices. Drawing our attention to the presence of print's protocols, the media-specific systems for arranging information on the page that are always present but often ignored, *Tree of Codes* makes us see the book medium as thing and artifact. We appreciate the thingly and artifactual aspects of the book that would be lost should this book be digitized. In fact, *Tree of Codes* cannot be digitized, at least not without losing its power, and this is the aesthetic of bookishness at work.

The irony here is that this bookish object is decisively dependent upon digital technologies. To carve his codex, Foer employed a digitally enhanced process of die-cutting that required intricate technical production and a rather elaborate partnership between a London-based publishing house, Visual Editions, and expert printers in Brugge.[30] A short video released by Visual Editions, "Making *Tree of Codes*: 3 Months in 3 Minutes," depicts the use of industrial machines programmed to produce the fragile pages and artisanal aesthetic of Foer's product.[31] As a result, a mass-produced paperback looks like an artist's book. The digital enables the analog, which is true of most books these days, but here the digital realities of twenty-first-century publishing are employed to produce an aesthetic that prompts consideration of this very situation.[32] When we watch the movie about making the book, we do not see the author writing or painstakingly carving out single words. We get a very different sense of production from that which Foer, in his afterword to *Tree of Codes*, describes: "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."[33] The

video shows no hands gingerly rubbing, no fingers feverishly writing. What we see instead are large machines programmed to perform an encoded digital sequence operating mechanically and quickly. What we see is a post-digital scene of publishing.

The term "post-digital" is useful for situating bookishness as a twenty-first century phenomenon. Since the turn of the millennium, we have experienced not only the extremely fast uptake of digital tools (Google, Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, the Cloud, etc.) but also an acceptance of this fact. Florian Cramer uses the term "post-digital" to describe a cultural moment wherein "'digital' has become a meaningless attribute because almost all media are electronic and based on digital information processing," and also "a contemporary disenchantment with digital information systems and media gadgets, or a period in which our fascination with these systems and gadgets has become historical."[34] We can see both of these cultural and affective aspects of the post-digital in *Tree of Codes*' reception. Most critics and readers don't know what to make of it. They see it as a failed experiment in book art or conceptual poetics or complain that its cut-from-another-source idea is a gimmick. Michel Faber's review for *The Guardian* is one example: "Snip seven letters from the title *Street of Crocodiles* and you get *Tree of Codes*—and so on, for 134 intricately scissored pages"; and later, "All very interesting, but I suspect that this book will be appraised more as an artefact than as a story." [35] A rip-off (pardon the pun) of Oulipo procedural poetics or Burrough's cut-up method, perhaps, but there is something else going on in Foer's book. *Tree of Codes* strives not for allegiance to a conceptual poetics (think Georges Perec's *La Disparition* [The Disappearance], 1969), but instead toward illuminating the artifactuality of the post-digital book in ways that promote an appreciation and even fetishization of it. This is its bookishness, and Foer's gimmick serves this purpose, rendering it purposeful. Sianne Ngai takes the gimmick seriously as an aesthetic category, identifying the gimmick as an act of saving labor through a short cut or a cheat: "both admiringly as a labor-saving 'trick' and also disparagingly as a labor-avoiding 'dodge.'"[36] "Making *Tree of Codes*: 3 Months in 3 Minutes," whose title references such labor-saving activities, foregrounds materiality over content, procedure over product. This focus illuminates how the analog medium of the book is not just a thing but also a program, as Johanna Drucker argues: "Instead of reading a book as a formal structure, then, we should understand it in terms of what is known in the architecture profession as a 'program' constituted by the activities that arise from a

response to the formal structures."[37] Recognizing the book as both material object and structural program helps explain why the book is the fetish object par excellence of contemporary digital culture. Fetishism, as we will see, involves attributing to an object the ability to possess and exert powers rather than seeing that object as part of a larger system of programmatic operations. *Tree of Codes* invites consideration of the tangled relationship between fetish and medium through the very object that has historically been part of the complicated production and translation of the sacred into the thing.

> *This bookish object demonstrates the inseparability of digital and analog through its highly corporeal medial presence, which promotes embodied reading practices and new avenues of thinking about, with, and through books.*

Thinking of the book as a program and this book in particular as a post-digital object that is part sculpture, part literature, part gimmick, and part memorial might explain why *Tree of Codes* is left largely untouched by literary critics. *Tree of Codes* is a bookish object that can be read in relation to other bookish things, yet it is still also a book. Although it is often mentioned in surveys of contemporary digitally inflected literature, few scholars actually engage it in a serious interpretative manner. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth and N. Katherine Hayles are exceptions, with Wurth pursuing an intermedial reading that presents *Tree of Codes* as a history of a reading and Hayles approaching *Tree of Codes* as stimulating new kinds of computer-assisted reading practices. Hayles digitizes Foer's text and then uses data analytics to compare its content to the translated version of Schulz's stories that inspired Foer's adaptation. Her process of "comparison of word frequency in the two texts reveals patterns Foer used to decide which words to erase."[38] Her findings ("Gone are all the minor characters, an especially important erasure in the case of Adela, a maid who in Schulz's text is the real power in the narrator's household"; and "Even more striking are the erasures Foer performed to reattach the boy's mother to the father") are less interesting, I think, than the claim she makes through this practice: that *Tree of Codes* exposes a need to read differently and *with* digital technologies.[39] This bookish object demonstrates the inseparability of digital and analog through its highly corporeal medial presence, which promotes embodied reading practices and new avenues of thinking about, with, and through books. Yet *Tree of Codes* is also a book that deserves

to be read and interpreted by humans because its text is actually quite beautiful and meaningful.

ALLEGORY

The textual content of *Tree of Codes* contains a contemporary allegory. It takes place in an apocalyptic moment: "An enormous—/ last—day—of—life" (11).[40] The specific date and place is not given, nor are characters' names, and this refusal to locate enables the poetic and fragmented content to unfold with a sense of the allegorical. The story opens to a fairytale-like, somnambulist moment when "whole generations/ had/ fallen asleep" (9) and "The passersby—/ had their eyes half-closed" (8), but the novel's formal die-cut technique jars the reader awake. We prick our fingers on the sharp edges of its cut paper and are made physically aware of the materiality of this thing we hold and read. To put it differently, the gaps in *Tree of Code*s make present the material but non-medial aspects that we usually cease attending to when using the book as a medium for reading. We see the color of paper, feel its texture, and register its fragility. Noticing such mediation is rare, as the text points out: "Only a few people noticed—/ the—lack of color, —/ —as in black-and-white photographs—" in the sky (90). The unobservant others are too "exhausted by—/ —passivity—" (91) and "—,—/ —the poses and postures—/—,—/— the—/ —shifting— weight from foot to foot" (92) to see the color behind the colorless sky or to recognize their own stasis. The narrator observes that the sky was an "anonymous gray" because it has a "—, a screen— placed to hide the true/ meaning of things—,—/ a façade behind which there was an—/ overintense coloring—" (91). Like the narrator, we learn to see anew the elements that comprise the material world, specifically that of book-bound literature. *Tree of Codes* functions as allegory, operating both through textual content and medial arrangement in ways that support our acknowledgment of the book as the location for literature and also, in a gesture of prolepsis, as the site of its remembrance.

The text begins with the narrator and his mother walking through the streets of their town, where "children—greeted each other with—masks—painted/on their faces" (8). These imitations of life and normalcy reflect a deeper lack, a "growing in this emptiness" (9), that is represented by actual gaps on the page. "Apart from them—mother and I ambled" (10). Set apart, these two "passed—houses" (100) that are "sinking, window and all, into—/ their—gardens" (11).

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Their walk occurs on "an endless day, An enormous—/ last—day—of—life" (11). The text thus begins with a sense of ending: this is the last day of life, but it is also an endless day. The threat of death permeates: "Hours pass—in—/ coughs" (13). Time is measured by the physical symptoms of sickness until "that ghost of a /smile—/ fell away—and—receded—/ and—finally faded" (21). This first loss is probably the mother's death, although "those—distant, unseeing eyes" (21) are not identified, and the fragmented nature of the text makes it extremely difficult to summarize a coherent plot. But neither coherence nor narrative is the point.

Reading this text is not just about making sense of linguistic signifiers or about comparing content between Schulz's source material and Foer's adaptation of it, but it's also about how we approach this physical artifact. *Tree of Codes* is often considered in relation to Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (1973), which alters the pages of the Victorian novel, *A Human Document* (1892) by W. H. Mallock, in order to produce a new work of book-bound visual art.[41] But there is an important distinction between *Tree of Codes* and *A Humument*. Whereas Phillips "treats" the pages of a Victorian book, adding sketches to them in order to produce a visual palimpsest, Foer extracts from the page to expose the material skeleton that comprises literature's body. Foer's *Tree of Codes* more closely resembles the carved bookwork of book sculptor (or "book surgeon")[42] Brian Dettmer than of the overpainted pages of Phillips's artist's book; it illuminates and aestheticizes the role of presence and absence, the digital concept in a very bookish, analog object.

These gaps produce pregnant pauses that denote meaningful absence and inform reading pace. We can consider these gaps using N. Katherine Hayles's seminal reconfiguration of the binary structuring of informatics from presence/absence to pattern/randomness. Distinguishing digital information structures in this way, she writes, "Like the human body, the book is a form of information

transmission and storage, and like the human body, the book incorporates its encodings in a durable material substrate."[43] These absences are white spaces and visual caesurae that invite comparison to pre-print manuscript textuality. Pursuing such a comparative textual media studies route of reading *Tree of Codes* in relation to medieval manuscripts rather than, say, formal comparisons to more contemporary artists' books, illuminates the relationship between literature and its media: specifically the long material history of the book and practices of reading it.[44] Historians of the book have shown that blank spaces emerge in the evolution of the page interface along with and in order to support silent reading practices.[45] "Unmarked zones of the page are purposeful, and participate critically in the communication of ideas."[46] This is true in *Tree of Codes*, but for different reasons. Here, the blank spaces—both the holes on the page and the white spaces left on the paper between words—result not in readerly ease but in challenge and confusion. The blank spaces are too extreme to support reading for comprehension of content. They function not to provide rest for the eyes and support for a regular pace of silent reading, but rather to disrupt this now-normalized reading practice. This disruption turns our attention to the presence of gaps and how they encourage a reading practice that returns to vocalization, the sort associated with *scripta continua* from pre-print manuscript textuality. Indeed, when read aloud, a narrative emerges easily from the text fragments on the die-cut pages.

Consider an example from a page just before the death of the narrator's mother. The word "her" occurs five times (out of twenty-five words) on this page and in four different lines on it; so its presence is significant. Yet it is only when the page's text is read aloud that the word's reoccurrence becomes rhythmic, inescapable, and even hypnotic. In an oral performance of the page, "her" takes on an aspiratic quality, sounding like breath and demanding the exhalation of it.[47] "Her" emerges as central to the narrative action rather than merely as a descriptor in it. The embodied performance illuminates the importance of the signified "mother" in the text (and supports Hayles's computationally derived conclusion). The page confirms this affective reading experience at its bottom, where the single word "her" sits alone, centered in an otherwise carved-out block. The word is the sole occupier of space and meaning. The presentation of "her" turns the signifier for the ailing mother into a physical signified. The importance of vocalization is made all the more poignant by the repetition of language about silence appearing on the preceding pages: "the silence talked"

(14); "the bright silence" (15); "the/ secret of—private time" (15); and "the silent/ —sighs" (16). The words describe silence but demand sound, even alliteration.[48] The reader is reminded of the physicality involved in reading the page at the very moment when the narrator sees his mother as a surface or interface to be read: "her—eyes reflected—the garden" (17).

To the extent that there is a story here, *Tree of Codes* tells of a son witnessing the slow decay of his father. The old world is on the verge of slipping away while the younger generation comes into its own; the son awakens into his own identity as a writer. It is only with the death of his father that the narrator begins to identify as a writer. The narrative within *Tree of Codes* might be read as depicting a Bloomian "anxiety of influence" story, a son who emerges as a writer only with the death of his father.[49] In stunning prose, made all the more so when one considers the constraints that produced it, Foer describes the coming into awareness of a writer: "Something stirred in—me" (67), our narrator explains, "i/ loosened one of the planks/ —, opening a window to—/ a new, wider world" (68). The windows open out into the world and allow our narrator to see it anew. The narrator's response: "I—/ —wrote—/ in a notebook, —added it all up—" (73). He becomes aware of himself in a new way: "the only living and— knowing thing—/— was—/— me—" (74); and experiences being "—shaken— into consciousness—, my/— sense of smell and— hearing sharpened/ extraordinarily" (75). The reader experiences a parallel awakening, realizing an ability to make sense of the holey pages as she recognizes her own senses as having been "sharpened extraordinarily." The narrator states, "—i—/— would rise from the table —and peer/ through the keyhole—" (76). There is an analogy here to the reader's experience of peering through holes in the page of this book. The reader is placed in the position of the narrator/writer/son and is provided with an allegorical lesson in reading with a focus on materiality, on keyholes, and not just what is seen through them.

Tree of Codes also expresses another "anxiety of influence": the story of Foer engaging with his literary forefather Bruno Schulz. In his afterword to *Tree of Codes*, Foer identifies Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* as his favorite book, expressing such reverence for Schulz's prose that he claims to have suffered a kind of paralysis in the face in attempting to engage with Schulz's text: "so many of Schulz's sentences feel elemental, unbreakdownable. And his writing is so unbelievably good, so much better than anything that could conceivably

be done with it, that my first instinct was always to leave it alone."[50] Foer does not leave it alone. He chips away at *The Street of Crocodiles* to create *Tree of Codes*; and if we recall that the word "codex" comes from the Latin word for "wood" (which described the wooden planks used as covers to soothe and straighten the parchment or vellum pages of ancient books), we see Foer carving his *Tree* from Schulz's codex in both a material and figural sense. Inspiration is here depicted not just as transcendent (as in a Romantic sensibility that figured the Muse as fleeting) or as psychological (as in an internalized Bloomian anxiety of influence), or as textual association (as in the Derridean sense of writing as the trace of an always-already absent presence), but as material, embodied, and book-bound.

When we look at the material actualities of this book-bound work, we see something remarkable: Foer lied, or at least cheated a little. *Tree of Codes* is *not* actually carved out of Schulz's book. Foer's authorial claim—which centers (and sells) this work and upon which most readings of it are based—is deceptive. Foer claims, "Working on this book was extraordinarily difficult," because "[u]nlike novel writing, which is the quintessence of freedom, here I had my hands tightly bound. . . . every choice I made was dependent on a choice Schulz had made."[51] However, Foer's claim elides certain material truths. First, he neglects to tell us that his book, "whose meaning was exhumed from another book," was actually mediated by a third book: the English-language edition by Celina Wieniewska, published by Penguin in 1963.[52] "Foer remembers Schulz," Rebecca L. Walkowitz writes, "but, like most anglophone writers, he forgets about Polish, and thus he allows his readers to forget about Polish, too."[53] However, we can understand Foer's project as serving less to memorialize Schulz or Polish literature than the medium in which he and Schulz publish. *Tree of Codes* is a memorial to books, and we can see how this works by considering the second occlusion suggested by Foer's claim to have carved his text directly from his source material. Foer fails to tell us that before die-cutting the book, he (and his design-publishing team) fundamentally treated Schulz's book and translated it in a material sense, turning Schulz's pages from double-sided displays for textual content to single-sided textual interfaces. As I have already explained, the textual content in *Tree of Codes* does not continue across the front and back (recto and verso) of the page but instead appears only on the recto side. This simple detail has great significance: it registers an act of material translation that dramatically alters the page and allows the paper-formed layers

of deepening cavities and mutating geometrical shapes to emerge on the verso side. In this way, Foer works against the grain (to continue with the wood-ish puns) of Schulz's codex, using it not just to present textual content but also to draw attention to the flexibility and power of the book as medium, artifact, and memorial.

I have been suggesting that *Tree of Codes* is an allegory that serves our contemporary moment because it is about the intertwined relationships between media and textual figurations of loss. These losses include Schulz and other bodies lost in the Holocaust but also an experience of loss in our on contemporary cultural situation wherein digital technologies (exemplified by the ethereal Cloud) seem to replace the analog, material, and embodied. The diegetic allegory in *Tree of Codes* ends with apocalypse averted: the narrative text turns inward in a recursive gesture of a Möbius strip to illuminate the medial and show how the book remains present in the seemingly apocalyptic digital age. Near the end, we learn, "the world was to/ end" (130). Rather than depict people in a state of panic and lamentation, this apocalyptic promise instead bestows meaning and significance on the lives of those living in awareness of impending change: "Something— had entered our lives/—. An importance permeated our—/ sighs—" (130-31). Like the movie-goers at the end of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Foer's citizens await the end, in this case an approaching "fatal comet" (132). The diegetic characters prepare for a "simply incredible chance—/—, an honorable end" (130). The end comes when the comet that had been approaching Earth and threatening destruction simply passes by; "life returned to its normal course" (134). If we take the comet as a metonym for the doomsday scenario described in polemics about the impending death of the book and all that it signifies (the end of reading, knowledge, etc.), then Foer's narrative ends by commenting on such cultural narratives, showing that fears about the end of books—and the end of the world as we know it—are unfounded. Before the comet spurts its last fiery and fearful promise, the narrative asks, "What was there to save us?" (132). The next line offers a response. The all-powerful father figure, the archetypal giver of life and poetic inspiration, is resurrected in this moment, and the narrator states, "my father— was the only one who/ knew a secret escape—/— his eyes closed" (133). The escape is a refusal to engage in fear: "Father saw/ no/ comet, leaving the comet behind" (133). When "Left to itself, it —withered away amid —/ indifference" (134). The threat of destruction withers from inattention. What remains? The text's last line returns to the father as a means of

concluding: "my father alone was awake, wandering silently/ through the rooms" (134). A gaping hole follows this last sentence. This rectangular space, a physical room on the page, provides a place for the reader to wander after the text has run its course. It is a material figure and presence, a place and memorial. *Tree of Codes* ends by showing how paper pages and holes punched into them produce meaning even after the last word of the text is long gone.

> *Reading across the gaps in the pages of* **Tree of Codes** *is an act of encountering loss and making something productive from that encounter.*

BOOKISHNESS FETISHISM

Reading across the gaps in the pages of *Tree of Codes* is an act of encountering loss and making something productive from that encounter. As such, the reading process here operates through a kind of fetishistic logic. The connection between memorial and fetish is deeply intertwined, as Emily Apter explains, "fetishism fixes in time and place—commemorating a founding moment in the etiology of consciousness, harking back as a 'memorial' (Freud's expression) to an unrepeatable first form."[54] *Tree of Codes* may be a partial archive of Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles*,[55] and it may also be a memorial to the past (to Schulz, Polish literature, the Holocaust, and more), but it is certainly, as I have been arguing, a memorial that serves a fetish function for the analog book in the post-digital situation. If we remember that the etymological origins of "fetish" come from "making," then we can see Foer remaking *The Street of Crocodiles*—a work that is itself very much about the effects of manufacturing and the making of a modern literary aesthetic—into a bookish object that memorializes both a literary past and also literature's codexical media. *Tree of Codes* exemplifies bookishness fetishism.

Not only does *Tree of Codes* operate through fetishism—both by fetishizing the book as object and also by turning its die-cut holes into synecdochic fetishes—but it also adapts a work by a famous fetishist. Bruno Schulz had a fetish for women's feet, particularly when encased in high-heeled shoes.[56] More importantly for our purposes, Schulz's writing and visual art is full of book fetishism. Foer titles his afterword to *Tree of Codes* "This Book and The Book." The title substitutes and equates "This Book" (*Tree of Codes*) with "The Book," which not only references the book medium and Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* but

also the book as fetish object in Schulz's work. The book is an important symbol and obsession—even a fetish—throughout Schulz's writing. One need only to read the powerful short story "The Book," wherein the young narrator is compelled and obsessed by one of his father's books, which is identified as "The Book."[57] Jerzy Ficowski, Schulz's biographer (though this title only captures an inkling of Ficowski's gift to literary history) sees "The Book" as trope and symbol for understanding Schulz's larger oeuvre: "The creative reconstruction of that 'Book' is Schulz's major literary postulate."[58] The focus on the book also references the figure of the book (actually five books) of Torah associated with "the people of the book." The title of Schulz's book of drawings, *The Booke of Idolatry*, signifies book fetishism. David A. Goldfarb writes, "When Schulz writes of books, which are both sources of myth and myths in themselves, he calls them *księgi*" because "a *księga* is a great sacred ancient book, like the books of the Bible."[59]

Foer titles his afterword to *Tree of Codes* "This Book and The Book," which situates his book in a constellation of book fetishism that includes Schulz and Jewish tradition. The afterword opens with "Jewish folklore tells the story like this:."[60] Foer then goes on to tell about the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a remnant of the destroyed ancient Second Temple, into whose cracks, for centuries, Jews have placed written prayers. Foer describes this wall of massive boulders as a *synecdoche for the* larger temple, but also as a kind of book. These written notes "form a kind of magical, unbound book."[61] The Wall becomes The Book, and the corollary is that Schulz's book, which was presumably "The Book" from Foer's title, acquires the significance of serving as an icon and fetish object of Jewish culture, history, and memory. Foer then takes this fetish object, Schulz's book, the one before which he trembled with anxiety before cutting it in order to build a new wall with die-cut blocks. As a result, Foer's work of bookishness fetishism becomes part of the history of Jewish fetish objects that includes the Torah, *The Street of Crocodiles*, and the Western Wall. In his final piece of writing from the book *Tree of Codes*, "This Book and The Book," Foer presents his book as a fetish object and memorial. Indeed, it is both at the same time. *Tree of Codes* memorializes the very value it fetishizes—the book as sacred object. The book has served for centuries as the symbol of knowledge, class, the Enlightenment, Western power, and the Humanities. In an age wherein claims about the death of the book still echo, e-readers proliferate, and Amazon.com grows mightily, works of bookishness like *Tree of Codes* turn the aesthetic aspects of the book

into an art of the present. Foer's mass-produced bookwork carries the history of erasure, the Holocaust, sacred books, and digital obsolescence by way of its use of a media-specific gimmick. It is a version of bookishness fetishism that memorializes the book by promoting awareness of the allegorical paradoxes that render books always on the verge of loss, erasure, and obsolescence. That is part of the history of the book, which *Tree of Codes* memorializes and, yes, fetishizes. *Tree of Codes* and other works of bookishness render the book as aesthetic artifact in ways that ensure that books will not only remain present ("book was there") but will also continue to matter.[62]

Notes

[1] Qtd. in Steven Heller, "Jonathan Safran Foer's Book as Art Object," *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 2010, https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/jonathan-safran-foers-book-as-art-object/.

[2] Hence, Schulz's title contains the letters the comprise Foer's. *The Street of Crocodiles* was originally published in Polish in 1934 as *Sklepy cynamonowe*, meaning "Cinnamon Shops," but was renamed when was published in English in a translation by Celina Wieniewska in 1963.

[3] In an interview, Jerzy Ficowski, the foremost scholar responsible for the recovery of Schulz's writing, reminds us, "we need to remember that what we have is but a drop in the ocean of material. Whatever miraculously survived the war or was rescued and later discovered, is but a tiny, miniscule part of Schulz's correspondence because Schulz was, first and foremost, the author of many letters, long before he decided to do more, to write a book." Quoted in *Bruno Schulz*: *New Documents and Interpretations*, ed. Czesław Prokopczyk (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 61.

[4] Colleen M. Taylor writes, "Schulz experienced this [modernization] directly when oil was discovered in his native Drohobycz in 1901, turning the quiet provincial town into a 'wild Klondike.'" "Childhood Revisited: The Writings of Bruno Schulz," *Slavic and East European Journal* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 457. Also, Celina Wieniewska writes, "The old dignity of the Cinnamon Shops, with their aroma of spices and distant countries, changed into something brash, second rate, questionable, slightly suspect." "Translator's Preface," in *The Complete Fiction of Bruno Schulz*, 1st ed. (New York: Walker & Company, 1989), x.

[5] There is also a spatial logic to Schulz's stories, wherein characters move around cramped spaces (town, store, house, room) and objects take on attributes of life that extends to the bookbound collection *The Street of Crocodiles* and to Foer's engagement with it in *Tree of Codes*. The placement of stories in Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* creates complexity rather than cohesion, as individual stories often contradict each other and

derail a linear narrative or depiction of space. *The Street of Crocodiles* is a labyrinth that spirals in on itself, inspiring readers to constantly reread and revise interpretations, which is perhaps why Schulz's stories have inspired artistic adaptations across media forms. A signal example is The Brothers Quay's lauded stop-motion animation film *The Street of Crocodiles* (1986), which shares a fetishistic logic with Foer's *Tree of Codes*. The film depicts objects coming to life in stop-motion animation, a genre that formally enacts that process. The film also shares with Foer's die-cut book a conceit of the hole as aperture for viewing Schulz's stories. In the film, a man spits into the eyepiece—a hole—of an old Kinetoscope machine, setting the machine and the surreal world of puppets it and objects that it seems to contain to life. Thanks to ASAP's reviewers for drawing my attention to the film.

⁶ Melissa Sodeman*, Sentimental Memorials: Women and the Novel in Literary History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 14.

⁷ See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸ I thank Jonathan Erburne and the anonymous reviewers for *ASAP* for helping me tease out this and other points in my essay.

⁹ See Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, "Old and New Medialities in Foer's *Tree of Codes*," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 13, no. 3 (September 2011): 4.

¹¹ For an exemplary instance of such discourse, see Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). For a different genre with similar tenor about the digital threat, see the report by the National Endowment for the Arts titled *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (2004), which claimed that literary reading was on the decline in America. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ReadingAtRisk.pdf.

¹² To cite just one example, consider the title of Motoko Rich's *New York Times* article from 2008: "Literacy Debate: Online, R U Really Reading?," July 27, 2008,http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/books/27reading.html.

¹³ In his 1820-1821 play *Almansor*, Heine wrote, "Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen" [Where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people].

¹⁴ See Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁵ I read these novels as part of bookishness, for they depict books as central characters or objects of adoration that drive the plot or fetishize paper thematically and formally. See Jessica Pressman, "The *Aesthetic of Bookishness* in Twenty-First-Century Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (2009): 465-82.

¹⁶ Kiene Brillenburg Wurth pursues this path, arguing that "Foer adds something

significant to a current of contemporary book art that converges in the work of Doug Beube and Brian Dettmer." Wurth, "Old and New Medialities," 3.

[17] Artist Doug Beube explains, "An important distinction between bookwork and artists' books is that artists' books still function as books; you open them and interact with them by flipping pages, there are exceptions but for the most part they function like a book. In contrast, in my work, I challenge the way we interact with and think of these objects. My work is not about binding but about context and how the book sits in space." Quoted in Jessica Pressman, "Bookwork and Bookishness: An Interview with Doug Beube and Brian Dettmer," in *Book Presence in a Digital Age*, ed. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, Kári Driscoll, and Jessica Pressman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), n.p.

[18] Garrett Stewart, *Bookwork: Medium to Object to Concept to Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[19] Quoted in Pressman, "Bookwork and Bookishness," n.p.

[20] Stewart, *Bookwork*, xiv.

[21] Ibid., xiii.

[22] Ibid., xviii.

[23] Karen Ann Myers, "Curatorial Statement," *Rebound: Dissections and Excavations in Book Art*, Exhibition Catalog (Charleston, SC: Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, 2013), n.p.

[24] See the inside cover of *Here I Am* (2016), which does not list the book's title under the heading "Also by Jonathan Safran Foer."

[25] See "*Tree of Codes* rehearsals, June 2015," 3:07, *Studio Wayne McGregor*, http://waynemcgregor.com/productions/tree-of-codes.

[26] Qtd. in Steven Heller, "Jonathan Safran Foer's Book as Art Object," *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 2010, https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/jonathan-safran-foers-book-as-art-object/.

[27] In the Heideggerian sense, a page is a tool at-hand and ready for use if we know how to use it. *Tree of Codes* defamiliarizes the action of reading and turning a page and thus draws attention to the pageness and bookness of the very tools we use. See Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 3–35.

[28] In *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), Espen Aarseth introduces the term "ergodic" (from the Greek *ergon* [work] and *hodos* [path]) to distinguish between works that require interaction to operate and those that do not. His taxonomy became the foundation for ludology, or game studies.

[29] Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[30] Aaron Mauro describes the geographically distributed network that produced the book in "Versioning Loss: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* and the Materiality of

Digital Publishing," *DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8, no 4 (2014): para. 4, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/8/4/000192/000192.html.

[31] "Making *Tree of Codes*: 3 Months in 3 Minutes," *Visual Editions*, Mar. 10, 2011, https://vimeo.com//20869635.

[32] N. Katherine Hayles reminds us that all contemporary printed books are shaped in some way by digital production processes. See *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[33] Jonathan Safran Foer, "This Book and The Book," in *Tree of Codes* (London: Visual Editions, 2010), 139.

[34] Florian Cramer, "Post-Digital Writing," *electronic book review*, Dec. 12, 2012, http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/postal; Cramer, "What is 'Post-digital'?," *APRJA* 3, no. 1 (2014), http://www.aprja.net/what-is-post-digital/.

[35] Michel Faber, "*Tree of Codes* by Jonathan Safran Foer—Review," *The Guardian* Dec. 17, 2010: n.p. Boris Kachka writes of *Tree of Codes*: "Inventive, for sure, but verging on Gimmicks 101." "Reinventing the Book: Jonathan Safran Foer's Object of Anti-Technology," *New York Magazine*, Nov. 21, 2010, http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/69635/

[36] Sianne Ngai, "Theory of the Gimmick," in "Comedy: An Issue," ed. Lauren Berlant and Sianne Ngai, special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 474.

[37] Johanna Drucker writes, "Instead of reading a book as a formal structure, then, we should understand it in terms of what is known in the architecture profession as a 'program' constituted by the activities that arise from a response to the formal structures." "The Virtual Codex from Page Space to E-space," *BookArtsWeb*, Apr. 25, 2003, http://www.philobiblon.com/drucker/.

[38] N. Katherine Hayles, "Combining Close and Distant Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* and the Aesthetic of Bookishness," *PMLA* 128, no. 1 (2013): 227. One example of Hayles's word comparison finds that Foer uses the word "mother" far more often, percentage-wise, than does Schulz; "In Foer 'mother' appears four times more frequently than in the original, making up 0.42% of the words." Hayles, "Combining Close and Distant Reading," 227.

[39] Ibid. Hayles writes, "Understanding these embodied texts requires not only close reading and hermeneutical interpretation but also (since these texts tend to be patterned) digitization and textual analysis, as well as consideration of the embodied senses involved in producing meaning." "Combining Close and Distant Reading," 231.

[40] Transcribing the content of the page into a linear format obviously transforms its meaning, but I attempt denote the poetic presentation of text by using the backslash to indicate a line break and the em dash to denote the presence of a hole on the page.

[41] See Wurth, "Old and New Medialities."

[42] Dettmer's book surgery has gone viral, spreading online throughout curated blogsites and Pinterest sites; for an example, see Dovas, "'Book Surgeon' Uses Surgical

Tools To Make Incredible Book Sculptures," *Bored Panda*, 2014, http://www.boredpanda.com/paper-sculpture-book-surgeon-brian-dettmer/.

[43] See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 28. The gaps in *Tree of Codes* suggest the connection between book and human body not only in symbolic or visual ways but also by connecting both to a historical pattern of embodied reading practices. These absences are visual caesurae that invite a reading practice akin to that of pre-print manuscript textuality.

[44] With "comparative textual media studies," I am referencing the argument N. Katherine Hayles and I make in "Making, Critique: A Media Framework," the introduction to *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era*, ed. N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), vii–xxxiii.

[45] Bonnie Mak explains that "[b]lank space is crucial to the activity of reading, and especially silent reading, because it enhances the legibility and comprehensibility of the page." *How the Page Matters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 17. See also Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[46] Mak, 16.

[47] Mauro writes, "I have found that the whisper is the most salient metaphor to describe the experience of reading this book." "Versioning Loss," para 9.

[48] For more on the relation between sound and text in reading literature, see Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[49] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[50] Foer, "This Book and The Book," 138.

[51] Quoted in Heller, n.p.

[52] Foer, "This Book and The Book," 138.

[53] Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 233. Walkowitz writes, "nowhere in the text or paratext . . . does the name of the translator or the language of composition appear. So, while Foer's project may emphasize the production, materiality, and history of 'the book' in some substantial ways, it occludes the production, materiality, and history of the book in translation." *Born Translated*, 232–33.

[54] Emily Apter, introduction to *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, ed. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 4.

[55] To see *Tree of Codes* as an archival project that aims to present Schulz to a new generation of Anglophone readers, we need only to consider the fact that Foer, a popular and award-winning writer of contemporary fiction but not a scholar of Slavic literature,

wrote the preface to the recent Penguin republication of *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories* (2008). This choice signals that the publishers intend for readers of Foer's fiction and also of *Tree of Codes* (published two years after the Penguin edition of Schulz's text) to turn from the author's creative literature to the republished edition of Schulz's older work and vice versa.

[56] S. D. Chrostowska writes of "[t]he centrality of the foot" and "the decidedly *pedi-centric* universe of Schulz's drawings, etchings, and sketches" wherein women's feet, pointed and powerful in heels, appear throughout, but particularly in *The Booke of Idolatry*, which Chrostowska describes as "profusely depict[ing] masochistic scenes." S. D. Chrostowska, "'Masochistic Art of Fantasy': The Literary Works of Bruno Schulz in the Context of Modern Masochism," *Russian Literature* 55, no. 4 (2004): 477, 474. See also Rolando Perez, *The Divine Duty of Servants: A Book of Worship (Based on the Artwork of Bruno Schulz)* (Brooklyn, NY: Cool Grove Press, 1999); and Taylor., "Childhood Revisited."

[57] Schulz's story "The Book" appears in the collection *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* (1937).

[58] Jerzy Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy: Bruno Schulz, A Biographical Portrait*, trans. and ed. Theodosia Robertson (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992), 27. Ficowski dedicated his professional life to locating lost or hidden fragments of Schulz's work and to preserving the legacy of Bruno Schulz. As he recounts in this book, "I became a disciple, the biographer, and a passionate researcher of the works of Bruno Schulz." Ficowski, *Regions*, 155.

[59] David A. Goldfarb, introduction to Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), xix.

[60] Foer, "This Book and The Book," 137.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Andrew Piper adapts Gertrude Stein's line "book was there" for the title and thesis of his brilliant book *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2012). "It is this thereness that is both essential for understanding the medium of the book (that books exist as finite objects in the world) and also for reminding us that we cannot think about our electronic future without contending with its antecedent, the bookish past" (ix). This is exactly right. On the dual meaning of "matter" in relation to codexical media, I follow Bonnie Mak's insightful recognition in *How the Page Matters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): "To matter is not only to be of importance, to signify, to mean, but also to claim a certain physical space, to have a particular presence, to be uniquely embodied" (3).