



# Deconstructing the Tropes of Communication in Jonathan Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

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**Abstract**— This study is an attempt to examine Jonathan Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) that is supposed to represent contemporary moments of Jewish identity in the American context. Scrutinizing identity features of the young generations of Anglophone Jewish fiction from a social and psychological perspectives is a recommended trend. This social psychological scrutiny, conducted throughout Breakwell's Identity Process Theory (IPT) (1986), of eliciting contemporary Jewish identity attributes is to be realized through the application of a deconstructive theoretical framework based on a neoreading of Derrida's master conception: *différance*. It is noticeable that the novel reflects a tendency towards overcoming traumatic moments that hinder communication among the American Jews and between them and other nations.

**Keywords**— American Jewish identity, communication, *différance*, Jewish Fiction

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Jewish Identity in general

The different circumstances the Jews passed throughout their long heritage of diaspora (Shulvass, 1971; Rutland, 2005; Kenny, 2013; Rubinstein et al., 2002; Gartner, 2001; & Lupovitch, 2010) has marked their identity formation to the extent that Jewish identity is described as a mosaic/geologically-structured identity (Almasiri, 2002). One of the largest and most influential Jewish groups is the Anglophone Jewish diaspora that stretches throughout British dominating territories to America (Mendelsohn, 2007 & Sarna, 2006). Among these contexts, the focus, in this study, is shed on the American Jewish diaspora as the most context that provides more assimilating circumstances for the Jews to settle and practice their Jewishness freely and according to their various perspectives.

### 1.2 21<sup>st</sup> -century Jewish Identity in American Literature

The American-Jews comprise the biggest diasporic Jewish group and the most influential around the world. Eliezer

Ben-Rafael (2002, p. 82) comments “the United States [...] has been the foremost Jewish community for several decades.” Saleh (2005) supports Ben-Raphael's views that the American Jews comprise the most significant and influential group in diaspora as they own “the strongest Jewish institutions, organizations, and enterprises anywhere outside of Israel” (Ben-Rafael, 2002, p. 82). Besides, according to Saleh, due to their economic power which mainly relies on “light industries and information,” they obtain the necessary hold of other sectors as politics, press and cinema industry (Hollywood).

### 1.3 American Jewish Literature

The American Jewish writers leave their thumbprint in American literature. Cornin and Berger (2009) comment that the key issues discussed by American Jewish writers in the 20th century are “Judaism in the American context” (p. xix), the influence of the Holocaust and “the subsequent theological crisis concerning the role of God in history” (p. xxii), and the Jewish tradition in relation to the American collective culture. They argue that the richness

of such issues in current American Jewish literature emphasizes that their assimilation in the American society does not dilute the urge of their identity from whichever perspective they consider it. Some of the most important American Jewish writers are Saul Bellow, Eva Hoffman, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamoud, Gary Shteyngart, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Myla Goldberg.

Among the aforementioned names, Jonathan Safran Foer is considered among the representatives of the postmodern American Jewish writers, i.e., novelists of the third and fourth generations of the Jewish migrants in America who are the focal concern in the present study. According to Britannica.com, Jonathan Safran Foer was born of a Jewish family and graduated from the philosophy department from Princeton University in 1999. To support his talent, he studied creative writing. Foer has been influenced by a multicultural group of writers and artists from Germany, Israel, and Poland. The major themes that mark his novels are “the importance of family, the relationships between individuals, and most significantly the essence of Jewishness.” Jonathan Safran Foer wrote four novels. *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) and *Here I Am* (2016) address the Holocaust and autobiographical elements respectively, *Tree of Codes* (2010) is a visual book that requires a separate effort to be analyzed. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close's* (2005) complexity and the well-knot plot and characters reveals a lot through the text and behind the lines about communication and its significance in marking and influencing Jewish identity today. All these features make the novel suitable in meeting the overall criteria of text selection make in this article.

Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) is summarized as

Nine-year-old Oskar Schell is an inventor, amateur entomologist, Francophile, letter writer, pacifist, natural historian, percussionist, romantic, Great Explorer, jeweller, detective, vegan, and collector of butterflies. When his father is killed in the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Centre, Oskar sets out to solve the mystery of a key he discovers in his father's closet. It is a search which leads him into the lives of strangers, through the five boroughs of New York, into history, to the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima. (Goodreads.com)

So, this article aims at scrutinizing identity features as portrayed in contemporary American Jewish fiction analyzing the selected text from a social and psychological identity perspective to examine the tropes of communication as significant indicators to contemporary

Jewish identity. This social psychological scrutiny of eliciting contemporary Jewish identity attributes is to be conducted in light of Breakwell's Identity Process Theory - IPT- (1986) and to be realized through the application of a deconstructive theoretical framework based on my modification of Derrida's master conception: *différance* (Badurais, 2021b). Therefore, further explanations of these theoretical pivots of the article are due.

## II. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Breakwell's Identity Process Theory -IPT- (1986)

Among the numerous attempts to theorize identity, Breakwell (1986) is adopted as being a holistic perspective that considers the internal structure of identity: content and values, processes of assimilation-accommodation and evaluation and the principles within the temporal frame. Breakwell's Identity Process Theory attempts to approach identity black-box in the light of its social psychological roots. The fusion between social and psychological processes provides insights about the individual in the group. This perspective meets the ever-changing fluid Jewish identity (Herman, 1989 & Tapper, 2016). The enigmatic Jewish identity is reflected through the persistent debate about “Who is the Jew?” (Tapper, 2016; Gerson, 2018; Moore, 2008; & Almasiri, 2002). This enigma is -in its turn- reflected in Jewish literature (Meyers, 2011; Whitfield, 2008; Brook, 2006; Most, 2006; Burstein, 2006; Cheyette, 2007; & Budick 2007). As the focus is on American Jewish literature, the present article benefits from the perspectives of Cheyette & Groß, Hezser, Lenta, La Vall, Glaap, Alkalay-Gut in Stähler (2007) as the foundation for the suggested in-depth arguments of Anglophone Jewish novelists (males and females) in 21<sup>st</sup> -century with more focus on the American contexts.

### 2.2 The Modification of Derrida's *Différance*

In relation to the aforementioned arguments regarding selecting deconstruction here, the project meets the enigmatic nature of the contemporary era (Royle, 2003). Besides, using the notion of *différance* corresponds with the ambivalence of Jewish identity which is always in a persistent play between past, present, and future in search for a satisfying Self! Moreover, the pivotal concerns of previous studies conducted in the field of American Jewish fiction (Gwyer, 2018; Coakly, 2019; Dogan, 2018; Alves, 2015; Bryla, 2018; & Bullen, 2018) have been to anatomize contemporary Jewish identity in fiction with special reference to the traumatic memory, its roots, and consequences from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Also, studies like Gohar (2016), Newlin (2012), Banbaji (2013), Ploeg (2012), Nitta (2011), & Hammerschlag

(2008), apply deconstructive concepts but in general. A clearer application of Derrida's deconstruction, especially the concept of *différance*, has been conducted in other contexts, not Jewish! (Gurses, 2012; Mishra, 2011; & Clausson, 2007).

My reading and application of *différance* is like the perspective explained theoretically by Nicholas Royle (2003) and applied by Badurais & Abdullah (2020), Hesse Gurses (2012) and Nil Clausson (2007). *Différance*, according to Derrida, is an endless process of search for meaning identity through a persistent play of traces within the temporal dimension; between past and future in the present/ absent context.

Another significant point I want to highlight is the relationship between the text and its author under the deconstructive lens, Royle links deconstruction reading to the author of the text defending Derrida against denying the author's role in his/ her texts. Badurais & Abdullah (2020), Gurses (2012) and Clausson (2007) prove Royle's point through deconstructing (using the concepts of difference and supplement) the character of Shylock, Lawrence's "The Blind Man" and three selected novels by Orhan Pamuk, respectively.

Therefore, the concept of *différance* here is the process of meaning generation which creates traces that can lead to some common implications which are not final or hegemonic; on the contrary, these implications are in persistent process of further meaning and trace creation. The analysis focal concern is the textual elements from which binaries are elicited and the zones in between these binaries are highlighted and from which indicative traces are generated. Again, the analysis is similar to Clausson's and Gurses' along with Badurais and Abdullah (2020) which has been professionally applied in Barbara Johnson's *Critical Difference* (1980) (See Badurais, 2021a)

### III. ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

Throughout the novel, Foer employs techniques of fragmentary flashbacks through epistolary style to provide accounts about the past of the Schells starting from the peaceful days of Thomas S. in Dresden to the tragic consequences of the attacks on Dresden during WW II and how his life is turned dramatically since then.

Thomas Schell, the grandfather, who is a normal person but lives traumatic experiences during and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, decides not to communicate with others by speech but by writing. He tattoos "Yes" and "No" on his left and right hands, respectively. Whenever he needs to contact others, he writes in notebooks or any suitable surface. Sometimes when he wants to communicate

quickly, he just turns pages of old notebooks and points to the closest expression. The significance here is how writing replaces speaking. Even in the narration, between saying "Yes" or "No," it is interchangeable between left/right hand or pointing at/ showing the tattoo: "He crossed his arms and held his hands in his armpits, which for him was like putting his hands over his mouth" (146), "I worked the clay with YES and NO" (156). Even Oskar starts to use his grandfather's way, "I opened my left hand [though empty] because I knew if I tried to say something I would just start crying again" (178).

His wife, Thomas J.'s mother, is not the lady of his life. He neither loves her nor wants to marry her. He loves her sister, Anna, during their teenage in Dresden. When Anna was killed in the attack on Dresden during WWII, she was pregnant at the age of 17. Anna's sister comes across Thomas S. in New York and 'makes' him marry her. But they live a typical abnormal life. She is the model of his sculpture but not the lady of his heart. They might live as a married couple but the areas of nonexistence they invented in the house (for which they even make a blueprint!) and the endless rules they put to control their life prove the traumatic relationship between the two. When she 'makes' herself pregnant, he leaves her after trying to abort her. He leaves for forty years traveling between airports and countries, but finally, he returns to her after the death of his son. The circle of presence/absence continues; hence the inability to communicate normally with all due to the post-war trauma prevails too.

The return after forty years of diaspora, which is the same period of his son's life proves his traumatic epic/ circle of loss and search. Even his relationship with Oskar represents the presence/absence binary. They meet and talk, but Oskar does not know that this man is his grandfather. However, the boy notices an unexplained similarity between his grandfather and his father: the parting between his teeth and the shrugging of his shoulders. The grandfather, too, cannot reveal his real character to his grandson in whom he hears his and his ancestors' tone of voice, "that song, in his voice I heard my own voice, and my father's and grandfather's" (156). Their relationship of being close yet far away is typically rendered in Oskar's comment on their first meeting: "He was on one kind of carpet, I was on another. The line where they came together reminded me of a place that wasn't in any borough" (p. 226). The continuity of the process of *différance* is signified through the words written by Thomas S. to Thomas J. (the dead son): "I tried to learn about him as he tried to learn about you, he was trying to find you, just as you'd tried to find me, it broke my heart into more pieces than my heart was made of, why can't people say what they mean at the time?" (157).

some common rhetorical and semantic peculiarities are spotted in the text. These are the analogy between WWII and 9/11 which implies the binary peace/war, the means of communication: speech/ writing on papers/ on the body, the analogy/ metaphor of the books/ trees bodies, Hamlet, and the character of Yorick.

The narration of the novel is fragmentary; this juxtaposes the temporal and spatial dimensions that the reader/ critic should reread the text and rebuild the pieces of the puzzle to get the traditional chronology. Among these rebuilt events are the disastrous moments and consequences of two world incidents that change the face of the modern era in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. During the air attacks on Dresden in Germany, the massive destruction and the massacre are described by Thomas S. in a letter to his son, Thomas J. who never reads it like the other letters. The attack happened at night

One hundred planes flew overhead, massive, heavy planes, pushing through the night [...] they dropped clusters of red flares to light up the blackness for whatever was to come next. (115)

The family members keep inquiring about each other, the narrator just quotes the direct, “Are you OK?” three times (corresponding with the number of his family members). The outcome of this first attack is, “I had been on the stoop just half an hour before, and now there was no stoop in front of no house on no street, only fire in every direction” (115). The darkness of the night is a synonym for silence, isolation, and loneliness; in general, it carries some unpleasant connotations. People wait for the light to remove this darkness and spread hope. However, this image (night/ light) is shaken when the darkness becomes peaceful in comparison to the fatal lights of the flames.

Thomas S. has been anxious to know about Anna, so he leaves his house and his family to check about her. He leaves promising his parents to “meet them back at our front door” (115). He couldn't reach Anna's house, stuck in the area in-between. When he returns to the scene after weeks, he finds his house “the door was still stubbornly standing,” and before he leaves the house, he writes “I was alive” on the door on the wreckage! The loss and traumatic memory resulting from this experience make thinking a synonym of *suffering* rather than *being*:

When I had thought I was dying at the base of the Loschwitz Bridge, there was a single thought in my head: Keep thinking. Thinking would keep me alive. But now I am alive, and thinking is killing me. I think and think and think. I can't stop thinking about that night, the clusters of red flares, the sky that was like black water, and how

only hours before I lost everything, I had everything. (117)

On the other side, the récit of 9/11 is told by Oskar. He has not been in the middle of the accident, it has been his father, Thomas J. Oskar, who gets the effects of what his father has been experiencing through several recorded voice calls from the father to assure his family he is 'Ok.':

Message one. Tuesday, 8:52 A.M.

Is anybody there? Hello? It's Dad. If you're there, pick up. I just tried the office,

but no one was picking up. Listen, something's happened. I'm OK. They're

telling us to stay in here we are and wait for the firemen. I'm sure it's fine. I'll

give you another call when I have a better idea of what's going on. Just wanted

to let you know that I'm OK, and not to worry. I'll call again soon.

There were four more messages from him: one at 9:12, one at 9:31, one at 9:46,

and one at 10:04. I listened to them, and listened to them again, and then before I

had time to figure out what to do, or even what to think or feel, the phone started

ringing.

It was 10:22:27.

I looked at the caller ID and saw that it was him. (12)

In these messages and the previous explanation of the WWII attacks, the use of the word “Ok” is repeated. Semantically, it carries a positive indication of satisfaction. However, in the contexts, people are not really satisfied or in an acceptable position. It seems to be an attempt to paradoxically be optimistic when the expectation is that the situation is deteriorating. Considering the last message from Thomas J., the significance of the white space (after the sentence: “I looked at the caller ID and saw that it was him.”) represents the silence of the death and feeling of guilt: the death of the father because it has been his last call, and the guilt of the son because he unexpectedly refrains from answering the last call.

These two traumatic incidents in the life of the main family in the novel, who are themselves fragmented, are supplemented by a subsidiary narration of the Japanese disaster of the two nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is mentioned by Oskar as a school oral assignment. It is a story of a mother who has lost her

daughter in the bomb attacks (98). The three incidents have happened in three different positions of the world, but the consequences have been similar. There are two other important analogies between the three incidents, i.e., the air attacks and the iterability of number two (II). The attacks of Dresden were by planes, the bombs on Japan were from air/ by planes, the 9/11 attacks were by planes. The attack or the danger that comes from the sky/ from above alludes to the common idea of secularism emphasized by the main family (Oskar's) being atheist. It hints at a hidden/ implied/ covert argument of dissatisfied people with their God/ destiny marking an inability of spiritual communication.

This idea is emphasized throughout the novel, especially in the flashbacks about WW II; for example, in Thomas S.'s comment, "I can't stop thinking that night, the clusters of red flares, the sky that was like black water" (117). This expression is a reflection of a previous one

I submerged my black hands in the black water and saw my reflection, I was terrified of my own image, my blood-matted hair, my split and bleeding lips, my red, pulsing palms. (116)

The water symbolizes life; however, collocating it with the word "black" contaminates its purity, thus "water" represents fear, fluidity, instability, and death. The darkness of the black color might indicate the time; it was night, or/ and this pool is not really of water but blood, thick red blood of the casualties of the massacre. The horrible situation on the land corresponds with that of the sky which is turned into a source of instability and death. Truly, here, the image of the complaining human being with his/ her God recalls the unstable relation of presence and absence between the fathers and their sons as explained before and as shown throughout the novel.

The other significant notice is the repetition of duality. It is suggested that the image of (II/ 11) visually portrays the binary togetherness/separation. Two world wars led to the destruction of many areas around the world (Like Dresden, Hiroshima, Nagasaki) and the separation of many families and lovers. This idea is clarified further by the figure of the Twin towers whose togetherness give a positive impact and whose destruction leaves two big ambiguous holes of death, as described by Oskar in dark humor

So what about skyscrapers for dead people that were built down? They could be underneath the skyscrapers for living people that are built up. You could bury people one hundred floors down, and a whole dead world could be underneath the living one. Sometimes I think it would be weird if there were a skyscraper that moved up and down while its elevator stayed in place. So if you

wanted to go to the ninety-fifth floor, you'd just press the 95 button and the ninety-fifth floor would come to you. Also, that could be extremely useful, because if you're on the ninety-fifth floor, and a plane hits below you, the building could take you to the ground, and everyone could be safe, even if you left your birdseed shirt at home that day. (4)

Moreover, togetherness connotes communication, but one of the prevailing problems in the novel is the inability to communicate regardless of the so many languages employed in it. In addition to English, German, and French, there is the language in which writing/ tattooing on the body or any suitable surface is the means of communication. It is possibly used by Thomas S. as a silent expression of his rejection of all circumstances he has passed.

In addition to the points about the substitution of spoken language by the written, on the body, papers, sheets, walls, and whatever surface that can be inscribed, Thomas S. uses numbers instead of speech to communicate via phone. The phone number of his apartment in which the grandmother stayed devotedly functions as the means that revives their 'communication.' When he returns to New York after his 'forty-years wandering,' he wants to apologize, expecting her to keep everything intact.

He recognizes her voice on the phone, and he relies on her love for him to understand his numbers of communication. Unfortunately, her answer is, "[...] all I hear is beeps. Why don't you hang up and try again?" (151). "Try again" is a key expression in this situation as Thomas silently confesses: "I was trying to try again, that's what I was doing!" The two mean different things. She is welcoming the call and searches calmly for another chance; he realizes he comes late: "I knew it wouldn't help, I knew no good would come of it, but I stood there in the middle of the airport, at the beginning of the century, at the end of my life." Trying another call is an easy task, but the "trying again" of rebuilding the life of a family, especially after the death of the only son who was the reason the father abandoned the mother, is of a never questionable complexity if not an impossibility. Deciphering the words meant by the numbers is a riddle of numbers and letters. He explains some of its tricks, "for love I pressed '5,6,8,3,' for death, '3,3,2,8,4'."

5 6 8 3
J M T D
K N U E
<u>L</u> <u>O</u> <u>V</u> <u>F</u>

3 3 2 8 4
<u>D</u> <u>D</u> <u>A</u> <u>T</u> <u>G</u>
<u>E</u> <u>E</u> <u>B</u> <u>U</u> <u>H</u>
F F C U I

It seems somehow easy and interesting, but with longer texts supposed to compose sentences or paragraphs, the task is devastating. How does he expect her to understand all this complexity? Or is it a way to hide and defer his shame and sorrow? He comments, “[...] when the suffering is subtracted from the joy, what remains? What, I wondered, is the sum of my life?” The tropes of mathematics overwhelm his expressions and behavior/ language translated into numbers.

4	7	4	8	7	3	2	5	5	9	9	6	8
G	P	G	T	P	D	A	J	J	X	X	M	T
H	Q	H	U	Q	E	B	K	K	Y	Y	N	U
I	R	I	V	R	F	C	L	L	Z	Z	O	V

In correspondence with mathematics, the novel contains expressions of measurements that reflect the focus on, on the one hand, the minute details of their lives, and on the other hand, the exaggeration of other matters. Such words are like “millimeters.” It is associated mainly with the marriage of Thomas S. and Anna's sister

We've wandered in place, our arms outstretched, but not toward each other, they're marking off distance, everything between us has been a rule to govern our life together, everything a measurement, a marriage of millimeters, of rules, when she gets up to go to the shower, I feed the animals -that's a rule- so she doesn't have to be self-conscious, she finds things to keep herself busy when I undress at night – rule – she goes to the door to make sure it's locked, she double-checks the oven, she tends to her collections in the China cabinet, she checks, again, the curlers that she hasn't used since we met, and when she gets undressed, I've never been so busy in my life. (56)

The fact he insists on imposing these rules on their life, making it suffocating and impossible is to show Anna's sister, now his wife, that she is only a supplement to her sister and will never take her place. She submits to him showing great love and life devotion. Later her commitment touches his heart, but he never confesses it in time; on the contrary, he abandons her pregnant, just because she is pregnant. He imposes the obstacles and artificiality in their life. When he leaves, he complains this “I was about to leave her behind without saying goodbye, to turn my back on a marriage of millimeters and rules” (64).

The relation (of millimeters) between Thomas S. and his wife along with the shadowy role of Oskar's mother directs the attention to the role of the women (as one pole in the binary Man/Woman and as the previous arguments focus on the roles of men mainly) in the novel who are not given names except Anna. The mother and the grandmother (of Oskar Schell) are the real powers that play behind the scenes though marginalized/ neglected/ deferred because of the love and preference of someone else always absent. The grandmother's commitment to her husband and her son results in keeping the line of the whole family and even keeping their business, jewelry, although she wished her son to study law, he clings to what might make him close to his absent father, and forefathers.

The mother, Oskar's mother, is also marginalized by her son who prefers his father to her and offensively tells her he wished her dead instead of him. She tries her best to keep his privacy and give him the same space and confidence as the days of his father. She secretly keeps things under control while he thinks she selfishly neglects him.

The other noticeable point is the relationship between these two women. They deal with each other well, but they never exchange intimate conversations until Thomas J.'s death.

To continue the general line of communication, the frequent employment of the “writing” (of course with its binary reading) as a mark for identity is signified throughout the novel by the iterative use of papers and the interchangeability between books/ trees along with their relation to life.

A relevant trope here is the typewriter. It is the typewriter Thomas S. has saved from the wreckage of his family house after the attack. It is used by his wife (Oskar's grandmother): “[...] now writing her life story, she's typing while I'm leaving, unaware of the chapters to come” (p. 60) alluding to the analogy between life and books, continuing, “she put her hands on the typewriter, like a blind person feeling someone's face for the first time” (p. 60), she is devoted for this task

[...] was I worried about her, putting all of her life into her life story, no, I was so happy for her, I remembered the feeling she was feeling, the exhilaration of building the world anew, I heard from behind the door the sounds of creation, the letters pressing into the paper. (p. 60)

When she finishes “after years of working in solitude,” she shows him a stack of papers calling it “My life.” The papers, thousands of papers, are empty because the typewriter does not contain the strip of ink and she is almost blind, and he does not know about her suffering.

Their communication depends on his writings, she does not complain and continues communicating with him; he realizes how he has failed her: extremely close, yet incredibly far.

Relatively, in Thomas S.'s remarks: "the meaning of my thoughts started to float away from me, like leaves that fall from a tree into a river, I was the tree, the world was the river" (p. 22) and "She was the tree and the river flowing away from the tree" (p. 25) the two rhetorical images, the tree and the river, and the cancer are contradictory. The tree and the water are symbols of life whereas in the text they indicate loss and traumatic memory which -in its turn- is equalled to cancer. The cancer is to "know"/ "not to let go." these images lead to the doubtful conclusion, "is ignorance bless" which recalls the binary bless/ curse!! However, he reverses this image later when recalling the memory of his wife stating, "She was the tree and also the river flowing away from the tree." The "was," "the tree" and "the river" plus the previous phrase "to my unborn child" show that after leaving her, he not only keeps thinking about her but also, he realizes her pivotal value in his life. The supposed implication here is that the lack/inability/ hesitation of communication at the right time "closeness."

From a morphosyntactic perspective, there are many moments in the novel in which deconstructing this factor is significant. For example, the employment of some seemingly interrogative structures and the morphological indications of some expressions.

"What the?" The syntactic structure of this question is fragmented! It is guessed that it is an interrogative statement because it begins with the question word "what" and is punctuated by the question mark at the end. The only content is not a content word; the definite article does not indicate/ express anything clearly! The multiplied enigma of this structure as an incomplete wh-question is primarily mentioned relative to the game "Reconnaissance Expedition." It is a process of searching for something unknown especially the last time when the father does not give Oskar any clues; it becomes a nihilistic quest for nothing definite, thus it yields no satisfying results. Another "game" indicated in this part is what Oskar calls so referring to the ceremony of his father's funeral: "And I would be watching the game right now." (3). Plus, the known literal meaning of the word, it might informally indicate, "a secret or a clever plan or trick," "to manipulate (a situation) typically in a way that is unfair or unscrupulous." The 'fake' funeral ceremony was made to help Oskar believe/ realize the truth of his father's death. However, he understands the reality of the whole matter "game." ---mirage. Some doubts stick in his mind about

the reality of this, so later he decides to dig up his father's grave. Another relevant matter here is Oskar's statement about not being atheist anymore: "Even though I'm not anymore, I used to be an atheist, which means I didn't believe in things that couldn't be observed [...] It's that I believe that things are extremely complicated. And anyway, it's not like we were actually burying him, anyway" (3). He does not believe his father's death, but he can't see the corpse. He follows his atheist view, but he knows that his father had gone forever. Things are complex; it is not a simple matter of life and death; it is an ambivalent plane between them. Moreover, the last time Oskar plays this game with his father, it "never finished, he gave me a map of Central Park. I said, 'And?'" it was without any clues. He keeps searching/ excavating literally for nothing. He searched in the park digging up lots of old unwanted materials which mean nothing. He finally spreads the map marking the positions of the things he collects linking the marks and "Chines eyes," he forms word: Fragile, Door, Porte, Cyborg, Platypus, Boobs, Oskar ... but "wasn't closer to anything."

Between the first and second parts/ sections of the novel ("What the?" and "WHY I'M NOT WHERE YOU ARE"), the opening narration is by Oskar summarizing his trauma/ bewilderment during and after his father's death in which Foer employs the flashback technique whereas the deeper flashback/ deeper temporal dimension (dated 5/21/63 more like an official record number) is by Thomas Schell, Oskar's grandfather. Another remark is that Thomas S. addressed his letter "To my unborn child" thinking he lost him/her after he attempted to abort his wife (Oskar's grandmother), i.e., to Thomas J./Oskar's father. The third point here is that the two subtitles start with a question word, but they are not questions. The first contains only the question (word+the+?). Both do not reflect any clear meaning. The second is an indirect question addressed from the father to his dead son as the letter is addressed to the unborn child. This suggests that the subtitle reflects the father's feelings which change from the thoughts his child was unborn to the realization that he, this unborn child, had been born and lived for 40 years which is the time of his father's absence/ diaspora, and then died really in 9/11. Again it is the problem of timing the communication when we can do it/ when we are close enough, we should communicate/ exploit the moment for communication and reveal the depths of our feelings to those around us.

And from a semantic perspective, the circularity of definitions is meaningless. Nonetheless, examples like: "A bullet is a bullet is a bullet," "Is a rock a rock?" "a rose is not a rose is not a rose," "Great hopes are great hopes are great hopes," or "Your father's mother's mother's mother," imply deep meanings that identity might appear in

different shapes, but death is the same all the time and that one might tend to repeat the same expression not to be misunderstood!

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In all, the previous persistent ambivalence between the discussed binaries and ternaries like war/ peace, grandfather/father/grandson, man/woman, husband/wife, black/light, speech/writing...etc. represent several common issues like the refusal of massacres of any kind since they are against humanity. The repetitions of the attacks of Dresden, Japan, New York supplement the absent depths of the latent memory of another incident that accompanies the first two; the Holocaust. As if Foer attempts to universalize the suffering of human beings whoever the criminals are (The west in WWII, and Al-Qaeda in 9/11). The lack of communication although the distance is close is a mistake among the Jews themselves because the main family in the novel is a Jewish family, and this is mentioned only once in the whole novel. The dissemination of the word "Black," whatever it reflects, is a symbol of the rejection and humiliation of one race without logical reasons. The so many employed languages of communication with some strange inventions by the author reflect a diaspora and inability to communicate due to the lack of true and sincere intentions. However, Oskar, regardless of his handicap, is a vivid portrayal of the pure and sincere attempt to overcome any obstacle and contact simply with all: members of his family and people outside including scientists and scholars from around the world (like Stephen Hawkins). Foer reflects a hopeful openness to the other and the possibility of overcoming the webs of the past for better chances of coexistence in the future. Futurity is a current tendency in the philosophies of contemporary and potential Jewish identity.

Therefore, Foer, through deconstructing the relations of *différance* in his novel, is still haunted by the latent traumatic memories of the Jewish past (though he himself does not live them) (the Holocaust, the persecution, Otherness...etc.), however, he expresses implicitly an openness towards the future to manage to / intend to communicate in today's small global village whose fragile stability is threatened continuously by the hesitation of all nations to communicate. To sum up, Foer's Jewishness is towards a secular universality and communication between all human beings shedding out the complexities of the past.

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