

## Northrop Frye's Approach to Symbolism in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*

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### Abstract:

This paper is a study of symbolism in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). The study aims to investigate the nature of symbolism through Herman Northrop Frye's theory of literary symbolism within a postmodern background. The study is significant in both fields of postmodern literature as a framework and the Holocaust literature collectively. Theoretically, Frye's theory of symbols is applied to Foer's novel that is a literary masterpiece about the mass genocide of the European Jews, i.e. the Holocaust. The study will answer the following questions: What is Frye's theoretical approach to literary symbolism? What is the impact of symbolism on Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*? What are the specific symbols used in the novel? What is their significance and what do they stand for according to Frye's theory? How does the writer contribute to them within the context of the novel? How do the symbols relate to themselves and outside world according to Frye's theory? The findings of this study would be beneficial and valuable for students and researchers of the literary studies about symbolism, the Holocaust literature, English literature and postmodern American novels.

**Keywords:** The Holocaust, Symbolism, Literary Symbols, Motif, Imagery.

### الملخص:

يتطرق هذا البحث إلى دراسة الرمزية في رواية (*Everything is Illuminated* -وضح كل شيء) لجوناثان سافران فور (Jonathan Safran Foer) التي صدرت عام ٢٠٠٢، تحاول الباحثة ان يعرض طبيعة الرمزية في إطار نظرية هيرمان نورثروب فري (Herman Northrop Frye) في عصر ما بعد الحادثة، ولهذا البحث أهميته في أدب عصر ما بعد الحادثة وأدب هولوكوست (حرقة اليهود) حيث تناول المؤلف النظرية المذكورة لشرح وتحليل الرموز في روايته. الرواية عبارة عن ملحمة أدبية تتنمي إلى أدب ما بعد الحادثة حول الإبادة الجماعية لليهود القانطين في أوروبا فترة الحرب العالمية الثانية والتي عرفت بحرقة اليهود (هولوكوست). يحبيب هذا البحث عن الأسئلة الآتية: ما هي المبادئ الفكرية لفري حول النظرية الرمزية؟ وما هي آثار تأثيرها على الرواية؟ ما هي هذه الرموز التي استخدمت في الرواية؟ وما أهميتها بحسب المبادئ الفكرية لنظرية الرمزية عند فري؟ وكيف عبر عنهم الكاتب في روايته؟ ما العلاقة التي تربط الرموز داخل الرواية مع خارج الرواية؟ النتائج الذي توصل إليها البحث تفيد الطلبة والباحثين في مجال التراث والادب الإنكليزي و مجال الرمزية وادب الهولوكوست والروايات الأمريكية التي تتنمي إلى عصر ما بعد الحادثة.

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** حرقة اليهود (هولوكوست)، الرمزية، الرموز الأدبية، الحافز، التصوير الادبي.

**پوخته:**

ئەم تۆیزىنەوەيە لىكولىنەوەيەكە دەربارەي ھىماگەرى لە رۆمانى ( *Everything is Illuminated* ) -ھەموو شىتىك رۇونكراوەتتۇوه) ئى جۇناسان سافران فۇوەر (Jonathan Safran Foer) ( ۲۰۰۲ ) كە ھەول دەدات سروشىتى ھىماگەرى لە چوارچىتىوەي پەنسىپەكانى ھىرمان نورسەرۇپ فرای (Herman Northrop Frye) لە سەرەتەمى پۇستمۇدىرىندا بخاتەرەوو. ئەم لىكولىنەوەيە لە بوارى ئەدەبى پۇستمۇدىرىنە و ئەدەبى ھۆلۆكۆست دا گىنگى خۇرى ھېبى. لە رەۋوی تېۋرىيەو ھىماگەرى لە چوارچىتىوەي پەنسىپەكانى ھىرمان نورسەرۇپ فرای بۇ راڭىردىن و شىكىردىنە ھىماكەن لەم رۆمانەدا بەكارەتتۇوه. رۆمانەكەمەش شاكارىيەكى ئەدەبى ئى پۇستمۇدىرىنە لە بوارى كۆمەلکۈزۈي جولەكەكانى ئەوروپا لە سەرەتەمى جەنگى جىهانىي دووەم كە بە ھۆلۆكۆست ناسراوه. ئەم تۆیزىنەوەيە و ھامى ئەم پېرسىيەرەن دەداتتۇوه: بىنەما فيكىرىيەكانى فرای لە بوارى ھىماگەرى چى بۇون؟ چ كارىگەرمىكىان ھېبى لە رۆمانەكەمى قۇوەر دا؟ ئەم ھىمەيانە كامانان كە لە رۆمانەكەدا بەكارەتتۇون و گىنگىان چىپىي بەپىنى بىنەما فىكىرىيەكانى تېۋرىي ھىماگەرى لای فرای؟ ئايا نوسەر چۈن ئامازەيان بىندەكەن لە رۆمانەكەمى دا؟ چ پەيپەندىمەك ھېبى لە نىتىوان ھىماكەن ئاو رۆمانەكەمە خۇياندا ئەنچامەكانى ئەم تۆیزىنەوەيە بۇ خۇينىدەكاران و تۆيىزەرانى بوارى خۇينىنى كولتۇرى و ئەدەبى ئىنگلىزى و بوارى ھىماگەرى و ئەدەبى ھۆلۆكۆست و رۆمانى ئەمەرىكىي پۇستمۇدىرىنە بەسۇدن.

**كلىلە ووشە:** ھۆلۆكۆست، ھىماگەرى، ھىمای ئەدەبى، مۆتىف، رىدانى ئەدەبى.

## Introduction:

Symbolism is one of the significant literary devices that are used by a writer to represent something else. It is the use of an object, person, situation, or word to represent another thing, such as an idea, in literature (Thomas). According to Sandamali, a symbol means more than what it is. The etymology of the word has originated from the Greek word “symballein” meaning “to throw together” and Latin term “symbolon” meaning “token of sign” (Sandamali). In this section, the significance and functions of literary symbols in general have been discussed, and those functions on a modern and a postmodern novel as examples afterwards will be explained.

In his first novel, Foer wonderfully explores the journey of a young Jewish American man to find the origin of his family and their past in the Ukraine during different times between the late nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth century. In 1997, Foer himself visited the Ukraine to find about the past memories of his own family, and most specifically to find a woman called Augustine who saved his grandfather. The book was inspired by a real story for the same purpose. In *Everything is Illuminated*, Zosha, Safran's first wife died during the Holocaust. He met his second wife in a camp for displaced people before he immigrated to the US. He died shortly after his immigration. Jonathan's grandmother had given Jonathan a photograph of Augustine. Jonathan decides to travel to Trachimbrod and find Augustine in their shtetl (their village where the Jews lived).

In the course of the discussion, some important points are introduced. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is a theoretical background of Frye's symbolism focusing on the second essay of his *Anatomy of Criticism*, that is 'Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols'. The second section introduces a critical analysis of Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*. This part of the study will introduce a summary of the plot overview of the novel. The next section studies the literary symbols that Foer uses to represent different meanings. In this part, I will present possible interpretations to the writer's symbols in the novel according to Frye's theory of symbolism within a postmodern framework that will be applied as a method to examine the symbols in Foer's fiction. In doing so, I will apply the formal phase of symbolism as images which correlates to interpretive literary criticism

for subsequent findings of this paper. The work will conclude in the final section explaining the findings of the study. In this part, I will conclude the presentation of various symbolic meanings of items, words, ideas, and situations in the novel considering the way they were used.

## 1. Frye's Theory of Symbolism

Herman Northrop Frye (1912-1991) was a Canadian educator and literary critic who became known as one of the most important literary theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1947 he published *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, that was regarded as a thoughtful revision of Blake's visionary symbolism which later set up a foundation for his engagement with literary theory. Later, in his *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957) he focused on the visionary patterns from which literary masterpieces were constructed via stressing on the theory of meaning through an extended discussion of symbols. He addresses modes, symbols, myths and genres referring to historical, ethical, archetypal and rhetorical aspects of literature (*Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*). In this part of the paper, my discussion will have two dimensions: first, I will discuss how Frye lays out his claim for the study of literary criticism. Second, I will focus on the second essay of his *Anatomy of Criticism*, that is 'Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols'. Therefore, I am going to be implementing the main theoretical foundations of literary symbols Frye established in his *Anatomy of Criticism*.

*Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* is regarded as Frye's manuscript in which he presents the principles of literary criticism putting down from the theoretical background of literature from Homer to Joyce. He lays out the study of criticism in a scientific way. In doing so, he offers four theories to identify the categories of literature and how literary criticism should be studied. The four essays in the book relate to the historical, ethical, archetypal and rhetorical criticism. These will respectively induct us into the theory of modes, symbols, methods, and genres. (Brooks 63).

In the first chapter of *Critical Path*, Frye describes his logical history from Blake's study to establish his ideas in *Anatomy of Criticism*. In doing so, he explains that his philosophy of literature is established from an attempt to respond to a couple of questions: How do literary scholars define the poetic connotations and what is the function of learning that part of criticism? His second essay, *Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols*, responds to the last query. In the beginning, Frye attempts to acknowledge the concept of "polysemous" meaning. This is an account of a four-fold structure of explanation by Dante (Denham, 73-79). According to Robert D. Denham (1975), the principle of polysemous interpretation can be defined as a recognized fact due to distinctive schools of contemporary criticism, each creating an alternative of symbols in their examination of symbols. Once the theory is approved, as Frye points out, there are a couple of options: "—we can either stop with a purely relative and pluralistic position, or we can go on to consider the possibility of a finite number of critical methods, and that they can be contained within a single theory" (Denham 100). Once the theory is approved, symbols either halt with a moderate and pluralistic situation, or they can proceed to the probability that there is a fixed number of crucial procedures and that all of them can be confined in a single principle.

Ethical Criticism, according to Frye, refers to a “consciousness of the presence of society. . . .” Frye describes that via ‘phases’ literature can be interpreted. Phases are methods for analyzing symbolic meaning (Denham). The theory of symbols involves five phases: “Literal, Descriptive, Formal, Mythical and Anagogic”. Each of these phases has the following types of symbols: respectively “motif, signs, image, archetype and monad.” This means that, Literal and Descriptive phases as motif and as sign, Formal phase: as image, Mythical phase: as archetype and Anagogic phase as monad (Brooks 169).

The literal phase symbol is the motif. Frye indicates that a symbol refers to as how texts assimilate importance in linkage to one another. Symbolism is centripetal suggesting that is intrinsic which comes into its own and incorporates the rhythms of its language rather than stating to meanings exterior of the text (Kastrati 6). According to Frye, in literal phase, the motif is centripetal dealing with how a string of words sound instead of what they represent or mean outside of the text, like objects, people or the society. He indicates that a motif is the most primitive kind of symbols for it refers to the sound and rhythms of the word, rather to its meaning outside the text (Kastrati 6). The meaning of a word is variable when applied to a literary context. For instance, as Frye uses an example of a motif; the word ‘wit’ when employed in Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*, it has nine different senses for their own. Each of the senses indicates a range of meaning for its own rather than to any meaning outside of the text. This variation produces semantic confusion. However, in Poetry it points to a variety of meanings and contexts the word has (*Anatomy of Criticism: Symbols, Allegory and Motifs*). Therefore, theoretically, Frye has a couple of perceptions concerning a motif as a literal phase of symbols. First, in the assertive writings of literary texts; with a motif, the poet does not associate a word with only one sense. Second, a motif refers to senses of the word in the context of using that word within a literary work (*Anatomy of Criticism: Symbols, Allegory and Motifs*). That sense does not refer to things outside the text; it refers to the rhythms and the sounds of that word. Accordingly, this makes a motif to have a lowest type of a symbol.

Contrastingly, the descriptive phase is a sign. It is centrifugal and refers to elements outside the words. For instance, when the word “tree” is described, one is defining something external of the text, i.e., trees as objects. (Brooks 101). Frye explains “when we look at the symbols of a poem as verbal signs, the poem appears in a different context altogether, and so do its narrative and meaning. Descriptively, a poem is not primarily a work of art, but primarily a verbal structure or set of representative words, to be classed with other verbal structures like books on gardening. In this context narrative means the relation of the order of words to events resembling the events in “life” outside; meaning means the relation of its pattern to a body of assertive propositions, and the conception of symbolism involved is the one which literature has in common, not with the arts, but with other structures in words” (Frye 78). This means a sign relates to the outside world, “resembling the events in “life” outside”. As an instance, we can make a difference between a word, such as “tree” perceived as a motif and a sign. In doing so, when we regard the tree as a word; how it sounds and how that sound has effects on the rhythm and the flow of a poem, we are looking at the word as a motif. However, when the same word makes us think of a tree in the real world, we will bring to our mind an image of a tree in the real “life” (*Anatomy of Criticism Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2*). In this way, we regard the tree as a sign. Therefore, according to Frye, a motif is a symbol with

literal phase. It is centripetal, making towards itself -i.e. inward within the sounds and rhythms of its own. However, a sign is a symbol with descriptive phase. It is centrifugal, making towards itself -i.e. outward within an image outside of the context- i.e. real life.

The formal phase symbol is the image and this does not simply relate to something in the universe. That is the disparity between a tree as an image and a tree as a sign. When we think of a tree as an image, we will raise specific feelings such as a sense of renewal and hope. It does not easily define a tree or denote real-world trees. Rather, it controls the feeling and tone of the word tree, i.e. its connotation. Frye explains this in the realm of an allegory. He states:

“A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying "by this I also mean that." If this seems to be done continuously, we may say, cautiously, that what he is writing "is" an allegory. In *The Faerie Queene*, for instance, the narrative systematically refers to historical examples and the meaning to moral precepts, besides doing their own work in the poem. Allegory, then, is a contrapuntal technique...even continuous allegory is still a structure of images...and commentary has to proceed with it exactly as it does with all other literature, trying to see what precepts and examples are suggested by the imagery as a whole" (Frye 90).

This type of explanation allies with imagery is interpretive criticism, offering explanations of a text in regards to what hidden meanings it possesses. Additionally, as Denham puts, all other poetic imagery related to the ironic and the paradoxical realm would include a kind of metaphysical thought. Other than this, we will have indirect symbolic techniques that are privately associated with the poet, and it can carry an almost infinite number of interpretations (Denham 104). That is to say, Frye, within the formal phase of symbolism perceives the word as an image, by attaching a certain feeling to it. He then redefines this as an allegory not only to refer to the term as a literary element; he expands the word into a universal principle of literature. We, also, engage in a number of infinite allegorical interpretations, whenever we relate the events of a narrative to the terms we use in a literary context. This involves the process of including the word within a metaphysical realm which correlates to interpretive literary criticism.

The mythical phase symbol is the archetype and this is how symbolism works in several artworks. For example, the tree functioning as an archetype provides life in several literary works starting from the *Book of Genesis* up to Johnny Appleseed (*Anatomy of Criticism Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2*). When we contemplate the tree as an archetype deliberating how it operates across various texts, we will depict networks among them, or an “analogy”. The word ‘myth’ in this context corresponds to a collection of archetypes that go together. This symbolism phase, in turn, is linked with archetypal criticism and that implores to criticism dealing with traditions, genres, and conventions in literature. According to A. J. Landa, Frye argues that in the case of archetypes, we pursue of genre and conventions. Historical criticism is alien to genre (they tend to see historical influence or individual poems). Genres rest on conventions (Landa 2020). Also, Denham adds, the study of conventions is based on analogies. “To see Moby Dick, for example, as an archetype is to recognize an analogy between Melville’s whale and other —leviathans and dragons of the deep from the Old Testament onward... He is but one of a recurring tradition of such creatures clustered together in our experience

of literature; such [archetypes] come together in our imaginative experience...simply because they are similar" (Frye 93). Frye adds that both symbols as signs and archetypes depend on the conventional associations. The difference between them is that archetypes are more complex variables (Denham 104). That is to say, a given archetype may symbolize multiple objects, ideas or emotions. Therefore, one can state that the mythical phase symbol functions as an archetype which appeals to genres, traditions, and conventions. As the study of conventions is based on analogies, this type of symbol is recognized as a recurring archetype in various works of literature.

The monad is the symbol of the anagogic phase, and anagogic denotes anything with a mystical or a spiritual understanding while the monad represents everything as one element or the whole of every being (Ramveer). Hence, we proceed to advance in the hierarchy, as we began with the individual text in the motif through the text genres in archetypes and now the entire universe in the monad. Frye wants to put this as "universal meaning" by means of the study of human nature (*Anatomy of Criticism Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2*). Rather than a criticism of genres, there is a reproach of the development of man, society aspirations as well as human desires. Thus, Frye corresponds the monad to spiritual/religious type of literary criticism and it has the highest level of categorization.

In general, within the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye argues for thinking literary criticism as a branch of science, underlying all the categories of literature. Each essay of *Anatomy of Criticism* facilitates a different kind of criticism. In the second essay, the system is symbolism. For Frye a symbol is "anything that a literary critic isolates to study" (*Anatomy of Criticism Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2*). For this system, he puts five symbolic phases: literal, descriptive, formal, mystical, and anagogic; each of them correlates with the five types of symbols respectively: motif, sign, image, archetype, and monad. Each of these types, also, corresponds to the following types of literary criticism respectively: textual, historical, interpretive, conventional/generic, and spiritual/religious (*Anatomy of Criticism Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2*). Within this systematic categorization of symbolism, Frye, also, gives different levels to each facet of them. He goes from the most inwardly focused to the most outwardly defined. Therefore, the different level of symbolism transcends from a symbol that refers to itself within a text, i.e. a motif, all the way to a symbol that refers to the totality of human nature and the universe, i.e. a monad. Apparently, this categorization of the symbols goes in a hierarchy; from the lowest level to the highest.

I find significant convergence between the application of Frye's theory of symbolism as to analyze and the symbols in Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*. In doing so, the formal phase of Frye's theory of symbolism as images will be applied which correlates to interpretive literary criticism for subsequent findings of this paper.

## **2. Symbolism in Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* from Frye's Standpoint**

Apropos to what I have already noted down regarding Frye's theory of Symbolism mentioned before, I am going to highlight some important symbols in the novel and apply Frye's theory of symbolism within a postmodern framework to examine them. In doing so, I will apply Frye's formal phase of symbolism as images which correlates to interpretive literary criticism for subsequent findings of this paper. According to Frye's theory, each of the symbols I interpreted in the novel is

privately associated with the writer, and they carry an infinite number of interpretations to the outside world. The interpretation could be universal. Also, they are ironically related to themselves. The symbols I choose in the novel are: The River Brod, butterflies, the bead necklace, carcasses, certain colors, Safran's teeth and dead arm, Shalom's statue (the Dial).

### **a. The River Brod**

In *Everything is Illuminated*, a newborn baby is found in a crashed wagon in The River Brod located in Trachimbord. This newborn baby will later be called Brod in a lottery. The town inhabitants put that name in the lottery derived from the River Brod. Here, apparently both her name and Brod's existence come from the river. Some scholars suggest that rivers symbolize life and the power of nature. It centers around its nature as a moving body of water. According to Joseph Panek (2009), it is important to separate the two distinct essences of a river: the river and its water. He argues that these are two distinct principles. He says: "Water is the Feminine Essence which gives birth and nourishes. The River, on the other hand, is the Masculine Principle which impregnates the soil of Mother Earth with its Water." (Panek). These two principles of a river, more specifically the River Brod, are symbolically related to Brod. Apparently, she comes from the water of the river. That is to say, the water of the River Brod gives birth to her and nourishes her (Foer 8). Also, it is the River Brod that symbolically impregnates her with its water. This is for, Shalom, the Kolker will find the golden sac in the River Brod on the day of parade whom she will eventually marries and gets pregnant with his children.

Another point regarding moving water has been signified to find its own way to mingle with other rivers until it reaches to the oceans (*What Does a River Symbolize?*). Also, a river's movement has been regarded as a symbol of life. This is for in life, cities, towns and villages are built on riverbanks. That is to say, they are brought to life by the river's movement (*What Does a River Symbolize?*). Without doubt, this coincides well with the first important event in Brod's life, how she was brought to life, typically through the river as a symbol to the beginning of her life.

Moreover, in his novel, Foer symbolically names the newborn baby found in the river Brod. She holds this name after the name of the River Brod. In his *Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (1999), Michael Ferber draws us back to the classical literature naming a place, a city or a region after its rivers. He states "A poet might then be identified as the poet of River X, as we occasionally call Shakespeare the Bard of Avon" (Ferber 179). Therefore, we can put that to a great extent Foer might have used a classical reference symbolically identifying the name of his hero after a river. This is for apparently Brod came from the River Brod, that is why she was named after the name of the river.

### **b. Butterflies**

Butterflies is another prominent symbol used in *Everything is Illuminated*. They have various symbolic references as a new beginning, transformation, the soul and death. In the psychoanalytical interpretation of dreams, butterflies symbolize a new beginning (Becker 50). Foer writes "The Trachimbord float was covered in blue butterflies. Brod sat on a raised platform in the middle, surrounded by the young float princesses of the shtetl, dressed in blue lace..." (Foer 93). This is symbolical in the sense that it points to the transformation of Brod's life to a new stage. She will have

a new beginning in her life, for she has already met the Kolker whom she will get married and complete her next adventure.

Moreover, butterflies symbolically refer to the soul. According to Udo Becker (2000), a butterfly symbolically refers to the soul which cannot be destroyed by physical death. This is because of its metamorphosis process from an egg to a caterpillar and a pupa encapsulated from a “rigor mortis state” to a colorful insect (Becker 50). Similarly, Ann Bengtsson states that blue butterflies often symbolize the soul after death. She writes “The soul symbolism often appears as bright blue butterflies flying. If you read the auto-biography of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross [a Swiss-born American psychiatrist, pioneered the concept of providing psychological counseling to the dying (*Dr. Elizabeth-Kubler-Ross: Biography*)], you hear her speak about all the butterflies the children in the concentration camp drew. They knew that they were going to die, and perhaps their souls were ready to leave- symbolized by the butterfly” (Bengtsson 217). This ironically foreshadows what happens to Brod later, after she goes back to her house finding Yankel dead in his library. “She found him in the library. But he was not asleep in his favorite chair, as she suspected he might be, with the wings of a half-finished book spread across his chest...He died with crumpled slip of paper clutched in one hand and the abacus bead in the other” (Foer 97). Here, Foer uses butterflies to symbolize an occurrence of death, and, thus, Yankel’s death will happen with a reference to his soul that is ready to leave.

### c. The Bead Necklace

A necklace is a form of jewelry worn around the neck. It is usually worn as a piece of ornament or as a way of communication for the person. As a valued piece of accessories, necklaces communicate numerous cultural values, among them elements of identity and a source of motivation. According to Susan J. Thorntore necklaces refer to the person’s identity to symbolize his affiliation [connection], prestige and identity elements (Thorntore). In some cultures, a necklace is worn by some people when they get married [change their status] or to denote their identity. In the novel, Yankel wears a bead necklace after his wife left him for another man. He also left the shtetl and changed his name from Safran to Yankel. Yankel wears the bead necklace to symbolize his connection to the love of his wife, his shtetl and Brod as a new born baby belonging to him. He wears the bead necklace to symbolize his affiliation to his first love. “But his wife was his first and only love, and it was the nature of those from the tiny shtetl to forgive their first and only loves, so he forced himself to understand, or pretend to understand...She wanted to be without Yankel” (Foer 44-45). He wanted to commit suicide, but he could not. He could not bear to live, but he could not bear to die either “I should probably kill myself” he thought (45). Also, he wore the necklace pointing to his new identity as a symbol of shame and his connection to his birthplace, his shtetl. “After three years he returned to the shtetl – I am the final piece of proof that all citizens who leave eventually return- and lived a quiet life like a Sloucher fringe, sewn to the sleeve of Trachimbrod, forced to wear that horrible bead around his neck as a mark of his shame” (47). Apparently, Yankel wore the necklace to refer to his current identity: someone whose wife left him for another man. Both the necklace and changing his name correspond to his new identity, someone with such a shameful story. This is because after his wife leaves him, he will leave the shtetl. He returns back after three years with a new name deciding to wear the necklace. Furthermore, he wears the bead necklace and gives Brod a string necklace as a form of

belonging, “He...gave her a string necklace of her own, with a tiny abacus bead of her own, so she could never feel out of place in what would be her family” (48). It is clear that, Yankel wants to create a new identity for his own, someone who can lead a family like a father. This new necklace symbolically stands for a new bond he makes between himself and Brod. So that she would feel she has a family and a loving father.

Another symbolic meaning of the bead necklace is both strength and motivation as a source of healing for Yankel. He wears the bead necklace to show that, no matter what happened to him, he is still strong. According to William D. Whitney and Benjamin E. Smith, some beads of certain standards indicate strength (Whitney & Smith 486). Yankel, though now lacks passion in his life, is emotionally strong. He is trying his best to defeat what he missed in his life, that is the love of his wife to him. Besides, some beads are made of certain precious stones with certain positive energy. The energy released from the stones can create a healing emotion and a relaxing effect on the wearer (Simmons& Ahsian 48). It could be stated that Yankel wears the necklace for he wants to be healed from his emotional trauma. He also repeats to himself positive affirmations “I am not sad...I am not sad...” (Foer 47) to stimulate positive energy and maintain healing. Therefore, the bead necklace he is wearing is a symbol of strength and the power of healing.

#### **d. Carcasses**

Carcasses are bodies of dead animals or the dressed body of a meat animal (Webster). On the day of the parade, one of the flows from the neighboring shtetl is covered with red and orange butterflies. Carcasses are symbolically associated with death and terror of death in literature. In an essay entitled ‘A Carcass’ Interpretation of a Poem of Charles Baudelaire’, Sam Thurman indicates that a carcass is a symbol of death in the poem *A Carcass: Interpretation of a Poem of Charles Baudelaire* (Thurman). He not only indicates that carcasses symbolize death; he states that they are often associated with the terror of death. Similarly, Renata Ingbrant confirms the use of a carcass in the poetry of Anna Świrszczyńska “as an ultimate symbol of death” (Ingbrant 204). Therefore, in *Everything is Illuminated*, Foer symbolically uses carcasses to foreshadow Yankel’s death in the future. This foreshadowing had been previously shown via blue butterflies and now is repeated via carcasses. Eventually, Yankel is found dead in his chair once Brod returns home.

#### **e. Colors**

Foer uses various colors symbolically in his fiction to represent different motions. Most specifically, he uses blue and red to give symbolic correspondences about the life of some characters. Once, Brod wears blue on the day of the parade, her float is filled with blue butterflies (Foer 93). He uses red color when Yankel jokes with Brod when she spends her afternoon staring at their front door (79), and when she is asked by the men of the shtetl to help her in the garden when red flowers bloomed (80). Some claim that blue color attributes to restfulness, mystery, intellectuality, poetic worth, innocence, religious feeling, stubbornness, sadness and feeling depressed. Whereas red is symbolically associated with passion and love.

According to John Cage (1999), nineteenth century literature and early modern periods developed symbolic values for colors differently. He brings to light how Arnold Bocklin and his younger temporary, Franz Stuck, exploited the connotations of colors [most specifically blue] in paintings. On one hand, for Bocklin blue corresponds to restfulness (Cage 191). Similarly, Kendra Chelly in her article associates blue color with serenity, calmness, and peacefulness (*Color Symbolism: Meaning of Blue, The Color Psychology of Blue*). Accordingly, Brod had a restful and peaceful life with Yankel. "This was the world in which she grew and aged. They made for themselves a sanctuary from Trachimbrod, a habitat completely unlike the rest of the world. No hateful words were ever spoken, no hands raised. More than that, no angry words were ever spoken, and nothing was denied" (Foer 82). They both had a peaceful and quiet life together. Therefore, the use of blue color, as mentioned above on the day of parade, symbolically attributes to the quiet life they both had.

On the other hand, for Franz Stuck blue color symbolizes mystery, intellectuality and poetic worth (Cage 191). As Brod is dressed in blue on the day of parade, there will be a symbolic attribution of this color on her life. Firstly, the way Brod came to life in *Everything is Illuminated* is mysterious. Foer tells how Jonathan's grand-grand-grand-grand-grand grandmother came to life mysteriously through the river Brod. "It was March 18, 1791, when Trachim B's double-axle wagon either did or did not pin him against the bottom of the Brod river...In the middle of the string and feathers, surrounded by candles and soaked matches, prawns, pawns, and silk tassels that curtsied like jelly-fish, was a baby girl" (Foer 8-13). All the habitants of Trachimbrod gathered around the wagon crash when they found her as a baby. This mysterious accident was another reason she was seen as a stranger in the shtetl (82). That is why Yankel was trying hard to prevent her from feeling like a stranger.

Another point regarding the symbolic value of blue color in *Everything is Illuminated* is that Foer uses this color to stand for religion, innocence and stability of mind. According to what J. E. Cirlot touches upon regarding the symbolic meaning of blue color religiously, he refers to classical allusions of Jupiter and Juno. He states: "blue (the attribute of Jupiter and Juno as god and goddess of heaven stands for religious feeling, devotion and innocence" (Cirlot 54). Not only attributed to the classical gods and goddesses, color symbolism is found in some religions. For example, in Christianity, blue color stands for religious devotion and innocence. As Pipps et al states when describing the symbolic values of a statue of the Child Christ: "blue is associated with the Virgin" (Pipps et al 273). Similarly, Belinda Recio and Catherine Kouts (1996) state that blue is symbolic of purity, devotion, and virtue. They associate blue with the Virgin's cloak (Recio & Kots 21). In association to blue color and Brod, we notice that Brod is apparently an innocent woman who refuses to have romantic affairs with men without marriage. They all desired her. They favored to offer her help when gardening and going for a stroll. However, she was perfectly in control of herself. This control appears to be like a religious devotion for her own chastity. "She maintained a careful balance by her window, never allowing men to come too close, never allowing them to stray too far. She needed them desperately, not only for the favors, not only for the things that they could get for Yankel and her that Yankel couldn't afford, but because...she didn't love life. There was no convincing reason to live" (Foer 80-81). Therefore, seemingly, for her, marriage is the only reason of happiness and feeling alive.

The previous points regarding symbolic meaning of blue color brings us to another point that is its association with sadness and melancholy. This attribution has references to Greek mythology, and human's emotions. According to some resources of Greek mythology, blue color is associated with sadness and crying, i.e. rain. "In Greek mythology, Zeus made it rain [shedding tears] when he was sad" (Wolchover). This is for the symbolism of blue color is associated with water and rain. In addition, Veronica L. Zammitto, in her paper entitled *Expression of Colours*, makes associations between colors and emotions. She categorizes different colors with their widely shared symbolism, among them blue which stands for depression, sadness and loneliness (Zammitto 4). Apropos to what we have previously mentioned regarding the symbolic meaning of blue color with Brod, we notice that blue has an effective association on her life. She is obsessed with sadness and loneliness. Foer writes: "She was a genius of sadness, appreciating its subtle nuances. She was a prism through which sadness could be divided into its infinite spectrum...Brod discovered 613 sadnesses, each perfectly unique, each a singular emotion, no more similar to any other sadness than to anger, ecstasy, guilt, or frustration. Mirror Sadness. Sadness of Domesticated Birds. Sadness of Being Sad in Front of One's Parent. Humor Sadness. Sadness of Love without Release" (Foer 78-79). Here, we can feel Brod has can feel no emotions other than sadness, loneliness and melancholy. This is for she seems to be a fountain from which different kinds of sadness flow. As Foer indicates, she is sad because of "Love without Release".

Further, Foer symbolically uses red color to indicate the need of passion and love in the life of Brod and Yankel. Throughout history, red color had been given different roles in early cultures and religions. For example, the ancient Greek wore red robes to symbolize sacrifice and love. Also, in Chines culture, the bride wore red dress indicating happiness. Whereas, the Hindus associated red with fire (Bondi & Altman 176). The Hindus symbolism of red color closely relates to Raja (passion) which is associated with human blood, fire and love (T. & S. Mukhrejee 38). In addition to what is mentioned, the red color has a close association to our emotions. As stated by Veronica L. Zammitto, red indicates particular states of human emotions; among them love, passion and affection (Zammitto 5). Therefore, in the fiction, Foer, through the symbolic values of red, directly points to, not only the significance, but to the need of love and passion in the life of his characters, i.e. Brod and Yankel. Both of them lack love and passion. Yankel loved his wife, but she left him. One evening, while Brod was staring at the front door, he asked her if she was waiting for someone. She answered: "What color is this? He stood very close to the door, letting the end of his nose touch the peephole. He licked the wood and joked, [answered] It certainly tastes like red...She buried her head in her hands. But couldn't it be just a bit more red?" (Foer 79). Brod cared for Yankel, but never loved him. She is the object of everyman's affection, but her life lacks of affection. She cannot feel love. She falls in love for the idea of love. Until the day of the parade, before her float begins, there be a float from Kolki, the neighboring village, which is adorned with thousands of red butterflies (93). This foreshadows the appearance of Shalom, the Kolker [from Kolki] in the future, who finds the golden sack in the river and eventually gets married with her. Therefore, Foer symbolically associated red color with the lack of passion and the existence of it.

## f. Safran's Teeth and Dead Arm

Safran is Jonathan's grandfather. He was born with teeth for this his mother did not give him enough milk as a baby. He has a lame arm that woman find attractive. He had sex with almost fifty-two women but never had orgasm. Although he is in love with a Gypsy girl, he gets married with Zosha. On the day of his wedding with Zosha, Safran makes love with Zosha's sister (Foer 256). He is apparently irresistible to women. Therefore, the fact that he was born with teeth made his mother stop feeding him enough milk as a baby which caused his arm become dead. His dead arm, eventually, made him attracted to women.

In literature, body parts indicate different symbolic associations. For example, a hand indicates power and authority (Huffman), the head is believed to contain the vital energy of the whole individual (*Head Symbolism and Ritual Use*). In *Everything is Illuminated*, Foer gives different symbolic associations to Safran's body parts: his teeth and arm. He was born with teeth which made his mother's nipples sore and red. "It was because of those teeth...that my great-grandparents stopped making love and had only one child" (Foer 165). She stopped giving him milk for which his body never received nutrition. "It was because of his teeth that he got no milk, and it was because he got no milk that his right arm died" (166). It can be stated that both his teeth and arm hold sexual symbolic values. Theodore Ziolkowski in his *The Telltale Teeth: Psychodontia to Sociodontia* (1978) presents an intensive survey of dental symbolism that indicate sex. He traces back to the cultural contexts of teeth symbolizing sexual potency (Ziolkowski 11). He states that both in myth and folklore, teeth had symbolized sexual vigor. For instance, in Greek mythology, Cadmus planted the hardened teeth of the dragon he killed. Then, the Spartoi men grew from which the city of Thebes came to be. Thus, the sexual symbolism of the sharp teeth is implicit (Wilkinson 108). Ziolkowski adds, in the age of Chaucer, to have a "coltes tooth" was a proverbial expression implying youthful sexual vigor (Ziolkowski 11). Thus, we can come to the point that there are some symbolic references of teeth throughout mythology and folklore to indicate sexual potency and sexual vigor.

Hand and arm symbolically refer to the divine preeminent dignity and sexual potency. On one hand, the difference between the left and the right hand had been culturally and Biblically recognized as highlighted by David L. Jeffrey, in his *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*. He shows that, as a cultural recognition of both hands, people rather recognize the right hand is "stronger and more adept than the left hand" (Jeffrey 442). He continues that the same notion had been reflected in the Bible to compare the right hand "as the place of God, i.e. the place of preeminent dignity and favor" (442). No doubt, recognition human being's recognition of the right hand to be more powerful, more authoritative is culturally widespread. On the other, in some literary texts, we find that a hand or an arm is a symbol of sexual potency. This notion is supported by Lev Hakak, stating that hands and arms are sexually important in S. Y. Agnon's short story, *Another Face*. In his paper, *Sexual Symbols in Another Face by S. Y. Agnon*, he mentions that Sigmund Freud takes the male organ to be represented by "his hand or foot, the female's by mouth, ear, or even an eye" (Hakak 98). To focus on some body parts, specifically on a hand, is sexually significant.

Safran's teeth and arm in the novel hold symbolic values. As mentioned above, both his teeth and arm symbolize excessive sexual vigor and power. However, he still lacks something. We need to remember that he has a dead arm caused by his teeth. This symbolizes his state of inability and loneliness. Despite of his lustful desire, as he is irresistible to women, he still feels alone. "To feel alone is to be alone. That is what it is" (Foer 237). He still finds himself powerless for he is still not sexually satisfied. The only time he has orgasm is on his wedding night with Zosha, the moment the Nazi's bomb the shtetl (257). Therefore, in Safran's case, his teeth (symbolizing sexual potency and power) caused him to have a dead arm which eventually leaves him powerless, lonely and unsatisfied.

### **g. Shalom's Statue (the Dial)**

Statues carry their power of symbolism for what they honor and keep in the memories of the public. Dona Avery in her article points out the significance of statues, apart from their beauty, to evoke a specific emotion, i.e. violence, past memory and honor someone's leadership. For instance, she states "a statue of a slave provokes thought of America's past sins, and a vow to never repeat them" (*Symbolism of Statues Matter*). Also, statues represent the past glory and independence of a nation. As Brandon Young states, "Symbolism sculptures have symbolic meaning. For example, the Statue of Liberty represents/ stands as a symbol of freedom and independence of Americans" (Young). Therefore, statues are given significant values. Some people display them as a way for remembering an important event in their lives.

Shalom's statue, the Dial, is another entity in Foer's fiction which has a significant symbolic value. Shalom, the Kolker is the young man who wins the golden sack on the day of the parade. He then marries with Brod. He will work in a flour mill. One day, when he is halfway of his second month at work, he was eating a cheese sandwich on a stool of stacked floor sacks. Suddenly, a disc-saw blade from the chaff splitter of the mill spun off its bearing and hopped off an iron rod, vertically stuck in his skull (Foer 125). Two men from the flour mill knock on Brod's door, telling her what happened. Brod screams "Leave me...Go" beating her chest. (126). He did not die, but became violent day by day. He was often hitting her with his fists, swearing at her and running after her in the house to beat her. He began to lose his mind. He saw every doctor in the surrounding villages (128-129). He broke the nose of the young doctor of Lutsk, the neighboring village, who suggested they should sleep in separate beds. Everyone agreed the only possible cure for him was to remove the blade from his head, which would certainly kill him. His condition worsened. Therefore, Brod had to separate themselves by a wall and cut a small hole in the wall to allow him to talk to her (136). They lived with the hole- Brod watched the hole as her still-young husband withered away who was like a tree. After he died, the men in the mill bronzed his body and asked the government council to put the statue in the center of the shtetl square as a symbol of "strength and vigilance" (139). Therefore, through the Dial, the residents of the shtetl honor him and remember his memory among them.

Apart from its symbolic significance for remembrance, Shalom's statue, the Dial, turns out to be a symbol of the power of luck. Shalom was lucky, for he won the golden sack on the day of Parade, then married to Brod after Yankel died. Also, "it was luck that had put that blade on his head, and luck that kept it there, and luck that timed up his passing to coincide with the birth of his child" (139). Most importantly, he was lucky enough when his body was turned into a statue by the men in the mill

after he died. This was because they desperately wanted to do something kind for Brod; something that might make her love them for they loved her. Their loving attitude towards Brod after Shalom's death became a favor for him. His statue turns out to be like a shrine where people from distant shtetls visited and touched it to give them good luck. Babies were brought before it, to be protected. Unmarried women kissed his lips and prayed for love (140). Also, one day before his wedding, Safran visits the Dial to give him good luck (233). It had to be re-bronzed every month. Therefore, the Dial became a changing God. It became a symbol of the power of luck, though destroyed and recreated by its believers.

## Conclusion

Through the symbols interpreted according to Frye's theoretical background, it can be concluded that Foer intensifies some repressed emotions with his characters to give a deeper meaning and more vitality to them. In some of them the feeling is ironic. On one hand, The River Brod not only has the power to identify Brod, symbolically it has a natural power to give life, and cause someone to be alive. Similarly, this is juxtaposed to Yankel's bead necklace symbolizing his identity and a source to give him a healing power to cure him from his trauma. On the other, the carcasses imply Yankel's death. The repeated combination of life and death is reinforced with butterflies symbolizing a new beginning, life transformation, soul and death. Moreover, there are certain colors that symbolize different emotions. Red color symbolizes passion, and love, whereas ironically most of the characters in the novel are desperate to have it. Also, blue symbolizes mystery and intellectuality. Such color is more connected with Brod. Further, Safran's teeth and arm (hand) symbolize his sexual potency and power. However, most ironically, we conclude that he lacks satisfaction. In his case, he is powerless, sad and lonely. Finally, Shalom's statue, the Dial, similar to Yankel's bead necklace, symbolically holds a spiritual power of luck to the characters. It indicates hope and a positive force in the novel.

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