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Hyperglossia in Olga Tokarczuk’s
Flights

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Abstract: Using Édouard Glissant’s vision of ‘poetics of relation,’ I intent to demonstrate how Olga Tokarczuk’s novel Flights (2007; 2017) turns significantly responsive to what I have termed ‘hyperglossia.’ Hyperglossia proposes a magnification of Bakhtin’s heteroglossia, in recognition that today’s world is informed by discourses that not only complete and complement each other, but also exceed the individual’s capacity to assemble one reality. If heteroglossia encompasses another's speech in another's language (Bakhtin), hyperglossia appeals to both the form that speech acquires and its precedence as utterance (the polyphonic aspect), as it is processed by the writer. Hyperglossia is rhizomatic, hypertextual, and exponential. It is a continuum of fluidity and indeterminacy that challenges Western patterns of reading and thought. On the light of this, I propose a reading of Tokarczuk’s Flights as a hyperglossic text in functions determined by the fragmentation of the narrative voice(s).

Keywords: hyperglossia, hypertext, heteroglossia, assemblage, rhizome, bodies without organs

Introduction

Olga Tokarczuk’s Flights (2017) is a work of art comprised by 116 vignettes freely interconnected by the sense of nomadism as creative act. Of course, a reading journey manifests motion, but in this novel, we encounter with a kinesis of desire and its shadow, which is stillness. Stasis. The stagnant. Or the dead. Tokarczuk’s use of fragmentation in the novel is not innovative in itself and lacks the ergodic challenges of, say, Julio Cortázar’s Rayuela or Mark Danielewski’s House of Leaves, but it instills and resignifies the brokenness of the novel in the twenty-first century. Flights discards the self-contained narrative puzzles that distinguish Cortazar’s and Danielewski’s aforementioned works and, in its place, creates an outward narrative movement that, as a whole, expands on the notion of depth. Such notion of profundity suggests that the novel as a genre might have morphed into a new artifact which is characterized by its multilinear possibilities where, as Michel Foucault stated in The Archeology of Knowledge, the boundaries of the text are “never clear-cut,” because it is a nodal network of other books, texts, and discourses in general.

Within the text itself, however, as an inherent characteristic of the novelistic language, Mikhail Bakhtin refers to the capacity of the signifier to exist separately but in continuous dialectics with other signifiers in an orchestrated polyphony as a distinctive trait of the novel, as seen in “Epic and Novel.” In Flights, the polyphonic aspect of the novel is not restrained to the operations of language, but also adapts to particular blocks of texts that simulate the electronic hypertext. Flights, the material novel, is a product of traditional book media, not electronic. Yet, it mimics the multilinear non-sequentiality of hypertext and processes it as what I will call hyperglossia, or the semantic mapping and structural scaffolding of Tokarczuk’s novel. Thus, departing from Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia and Landow’s hypertext, I propose to interpret the granularity of Tokarczuk’s novel as textual reproduction that exceeds the limits of the text itself, allowing multiple reading paths that reflect the way we construct knowledge in the Internet era: rhizomatically.

In Flights, Tokarczuk levels the diegesis of the novel with an autopoietic system, which, according to Hans Dieter Huber’s “Internet Theory,” produces the components out of which it exists out of the components of which it consists. The components are single communication units, and they produce further communications.
Tokarczuk ultimately attains what Derrida announced in *Dissemination* as a new, freer, richer form of text, one truer to our potential experience, perhaps to our actual if unrecognized experience that would be dependable on discrete reading units.

Now, our occidental reading pattern (left to right, top to bottom) and the book-artifact bracket where the novel begins and where it ends. Although the operations within are not so linear, the text provides a departure point from the first vignette, titled “Here I Am,” which sounds like prophecy fulfilled. It is the locus of the novel and it takes the reader to a commonplace, stated with anguish: “I realize that I am trapped.” This is the matrix of the nodal system. “I would like to go out, but I have nowhere to go,” the narrator adds. And immediately she discovers the truth: “There is nothing to do, I exist, here I am.” We should be looking at this “I,” this self that cannot or does not want to be contained in these brief notes that vary in theme and length as a textual form of nomadism. In fact, the narrative paces through the awakening of the narrator’s self-awareness as a series of movements comparable to a mystical pilgrimage, which invites the notion of Bakhtin’s chronotope as well. However, my concern with this virtual splitting of the diegesis will pertain as to the abstractions of time rather than the specificities of place. Tokarczuk’s novel, it should be regarded, is not conceived as an electronic text. Instead, it simulates more what the author herself calls “a cabinet of curiosities.”

Therefore, the reader might approach the novel without a particular reading scheme just as one would open the drawers of a cabinet to discover its contents. Moreover, non-digital literary works might contain elements of hypertextuality, which at times might be self-evident, as is the case with Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (whose chapters can be read following two different paths suggested by the author), but also as with the case of Macedonio Fernández’s *Museo de la Novela Eterna* or James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, whose paths are not that obviously forked, but still depend on the ergodic role of the reader. From a Derridean perspective, I could say there is assemblage of textuality that marks or foregrounds the writing process and therefore rejects a deceptive transparency.

My first step towards my reading of *Flights* will be to visit Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia before I enter the hyperglossic realm.

**The artistic system in the novel**

In his seminal *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Mikhail Bakhtin introduces the concept of polyphony as a “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices” (5). The engagement and merging of voices emerge then as a unique characteristic of prose novels as they represent a variety of ideological positions. Voices—consciousness and characters—exist separately as they engage in dialectical interexchange. Therefore, there is an imperative socialism that equalizes the characters and their speech, creates tensions, and does not privilege a particular point of view. Polyphony yields to the universal, which prioritizes the multiplicity of voices where the authorial presence is merely one component of a vast network of enunciating instances. Polyphony, then, is of dialogic nature just as the novel is multiform in speech and style. Polyphonic plurality is inherent to how language is used or applied. It can be defined as diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized (262). This many-languagedness creates what Bakhtin denominates as polyglossia, the system of another’s speech in another’s language.

The adhesion and deformation of languages within this dialogism that sparks from such friction permeate all human communication in different levels of social exchange. Language cannot exist in isolation, and neither do the writers of literary works. The implied elasticity and scope of communicational environments inform the meaning of words without a sense of closure and without a hierarchical center or overruling voice. Bakhtin says:
The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times comprised of different languages) into the higher unity of the work as a whole where the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its "languages." (262)

The idea of heteroglossia, or how a language is dialogized from within, blooms from the separate elements of a novel’s language, which is determined by the stylistic unity of the work. Whereas polyglossia dialogizes language from without, the internal stratification of heteroglossia, present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence, is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin contends that:

The linguistic and stylistic profile of a given element (lexical, semantic, syntactic) is shaped by that subordinated unity to which it is most immediately proximate. At the same time this element, together with its most immediate unity, figures into the style of the whole, itself supports the accent of the whole and participates in the process whereby the unified meaning of the whole is structured and revealed. (262)

Heteroglossia enters the novel through fundamental compositional unities, such as authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters, dialogized with each other. These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types and its dialogization is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel (“Discourse in the Novel” 263). The language of a text is never neutral. On the contrary, it is a moving, living thing. In heteroglossia, the meanings are generated by the primacy of the context over the text.

Heteroglossia favors multiplicity over unitary meanings. Flights combines essayistic reflections, fictional stories, and fictionalized histories, varying in length from thirty-odd pages to a paragraph or two, interwoven around two main themes: travel and the preservation of the human body. We hear the narrator’s reflections as she travels through an endless succession of airports, which she considers a new human habitat (Gasper Bye 64).

Flights is bigger than the sum of its parts. This is the mark of hyperglossia.

Bigger than the sum of its parts: hyperglossia

Bieguni, in its original Polish edition, was published in Poland in 2007 and translated into English as Flights by Jennifer Croft in 2017. In the Spanish speaking world, however, the novel had been around almost simultaneously with the original publication and it was released as Los errantes, as translated by Agata Orzeszek in 2007. As paratext, the translation of the title insinuates a particular scenography of speech. Agnieska Piotrowska, Polish academic and writer herself, asserts that:

‘Bieguni’ is not a proper word in Polish, or at least not a word anybody would know in Poland (Tokarczuk explains in the novel that ‘bieguni’ is the name of an ancient nomadic tribe, which may or may not be the case, but in any event, I have never heard of it and neither has anybody I have spoken to). ‘Bieguni’ sounds as if, etymologically, it has something to do with ‘running’ (‘biegac’) but also with the word ‘poles’ as in ‘the North Pole’ (‘bieguny’ would be the plural of ‘the Pole’). The title therefore sounds strangely uncanny, foreign, exotic, and yes, evokes a sense travel of the kind Tokarczuk writes about that is not easily definable. (163)

If the title Flights evokes the notion of modernity, of moving from one place to another through a specific means of air transportation, in Spanish the word “errante” incites nomadism. It is, literally, a wanderer or globetrotter, which connotes walking over solid ground. The reason why I observe this
issue is because translations move into cultural contextualizations that trigger a heteroglossia in the operation. Moreover, the paratext is: “[T]he means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public. Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a threshold, or—the term Borges used about preface—with a ‘vestibule’ which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back” (Genette 261).

As with any translation process, the case of Bieguni is paradoxical. Flights in English and Los errantes in Spanish do not portent a substitute for the original, and yet they do. Flights is to air as Los errantes is to earth. In a novel that structures movement as information, this is significant. Air travel, denoted in the English title, suggests what Deleuze and Guattari identify in A Thousand Plateaus as striated space: it is limited in its parts, which are assigned specific directions, oriented in relation to one another and limited by boundaries (382). Striated space suggests sedentariness, while, on the other hand, smooth space serves the deterriorialization of the nomad, the “errantes” who have no points, paths, or land (381). Smooth space is the ontological extension of Olga Tokarczuk’s novel to the assemblage field that permits heteroglossia and polyglossia fuse into the rhizomatic realm of hyperglossia.

I define hyperglossia as a spill-over of the text. Uncontainable data that moves beyond mere speech and other languagedness. Thus, the language of a text cannot remain idle or neutral. If heteroglossia happens when the language of a character or the narrator changes from its normal discourse, speech, registries as, for example, in social position, class, or nationality, hyperglossia enters the operative materialism of the contextual culture(s) of the text and amplifies its languages. If in heteroglossia the meanings of a text are generated by the primacy of the context over the text, hyperglossia is textual reproduction in parallel to contextual data. The result is a text that moves from within and from without simultaneously, recreating a notion of conscious endlessness, or a sign network of semiological value. If heteroglossia polarizes monologic and dialogic discourses within one rhetorical instance, hyperglossia reproduces rhetorical instances and breaks them down in monologic and dialogic discourses, thus yielding to the notion of hyper, as in hyperbole, the magnification of reality through exaggeration. Hyperglossia enters the novel through the strident silence of de-compositional unities, or compositional instabilities.

One example of hyperglossia in Flights deals with one of the threading concepts of the novel, which is the body, both literal and textual. Early in the novel, the narrator moves between perceptible, verifiable data and less obvious information that can only be accessed through magnification itself, which is, after all, what a clinical laboratory does.

I have a practical build. I’m petite, compact. My stomach is tight, small, undemanding. My lungs and my shoulders are strong. I’m not on any prescriptions—not even the pill—and I don’t wear glasses. I cut my hair with clippers, once every three months, and I use almost no make-up. My teeth are healthy, perhaps a bit uneven, but intact, and I have just one old filling, which I believe is located in my lower left canine. My liver function is within the normal range. As is my pancreas. Both my right and left kidneys are in great shape. My abdominal aorta is normal. My bladder works. Haemoglobin 12.7. Leukocytes 4.5. Haematocrit 41.6. Platelets 228. Cholesterol 204. Creatinine 1.0. Bilirubin 4.2. And so on. My IQ—if you put any stock in that kind of thing—is 121; it’s passable. My spatial reasoning is particularly advanced, almost eidetic, though my laterality is lousy. Personality unstable, or not entirely reliable. Age all in your mind. Gender grammatical. (7)

In the passage, the narrative voice moves from the physical outlook of the self to the internal organicity of the body. It pendulates from parts to particles and back. She reads and translates the messages her own body transmits and goes from habitual twice-behaved behaviors to the biological. She is a whole complex entity, but her deliberate atomization makes her bigger than what she seems in the liminal dimension of existence. As she dives into her own bloodstream, one realizes that the
information she provides on haematocrit, platelets, cholesterol, and the like, means nothing unless one is knowledgeable of the relevant reference values required to understand the numbers. Unless one is acquainted with the interpretation of numbers and/or statistics (which are facts) in lab tests, there is no immediate understanding of the clinical language. Moreover, one needs a test to reach those statistical truths. And one needs an interpreter of the results to actually brag about the internal functions of one’s body, a reality which not even the testee might be aware of. The whole sequence, it could be argued, is nothing but an impressionistic account of the biological body, but, in a novel about the displacement of the body, this is how hyperglossia works: it relates the obvious with the inconspicuous.

Similarly, there are other instances in Flights where knowledges are at work induced by hyperglossia. The next passage, titled “In Pursuit of the Night,” appeals to a wider spectrum of knowledges that are necessary to make sense of such fragmented narrative work:

On the bedside table there was a light blue pack of condoms. Right by the bed there was a Bible and the Teachings of the Buddha. Unfortunately, the plug for my electric kettle didn’t fit into the socket – so I would have to do without tea. Although perhaps it was coffee I should be drinking at this hour? My body was in no state to interpret the numbers on the clock built into the radio on the bedside table, although it would appear that numerals are international, despite being known as Arabic. Was the yellow glow out the window the onset of dawn, or was it a dusk that had already largely condensed into night? It was hard to determine whether this part of the world – over which the sun was about to appear or else had just vanished – was the East or the West. I concentrated on counting up the hours I’d spent on the plane, employing as an aid an image I’d once seen on the internet of a globe with a nocturnal bar that moves from east to west like a giant mouth that systematically devours the world. (98)

Here we move as a nomad from within and without different bodies of wisdom. The narrator is in a hotel room for a night and there are three artifacts: a pack of condoms, a Bible, and the Teachings of Buddha. The three elements function as individual prophylactic discourses but with different ends. Condoms are practical in protecting the individual against sexually transmitted diseases that might corrode the body; the Bible is the sacred book of the Christian religions, and it is the only religion that offers eternal life and resurrection of the body; and the teachings of the Buddha preach the body as mindfulness of the dharma, a transient shelter that one must renounce to attain Nirvana. Again, what is at play here might seem detached from other parts of the narrative, but ultimately the novel is not groping with random scenarios. It works as systematically as the human body, a cohesive theme in the book. It is the operation of hyperglossia what ultimately makes sense of this constant unfolding of signifiers in an experience similar to this one: “What you do is get under the covers and turn on the TV – volume down, let it grumble, flicker, whine. You hold the remote out like a weapon, and you take shots at the very centre of the screen. Each shot kills one channel, but then another follows directly on its heels as the notion of channel surfing with a TV remote control” (99).

A metaphor cocoons within the familiarity of the act. While the narrator is busy “killing” channels, one must be aware that there are other realities isolated by the other channels she is not watching. It is a hyperglossic operation where, as in Borges’ Aleph, all realities flow simultaneously and escape the capacity of language to mediate those realities. Hyperglossia, therefore, develops in smooth space. It is not about the narrative voices but about the narratives themselves.

What I am presenting here is not just a renaming of a non-linear narrative structure which has no beginning or end; it is about a series of conceptual links that lead the narrative (as followed by an alert reader) to other conceptual links, growing and moving through hyperglossia in artistic ways. Indeed, hyperglossia is based on qualia: the voicelessness of voice and the narrativeness of narratives. It is perceptual and subjective, because it requires the reader “to know,” to be aware and recognize the operations that might or might not be obvious to the reader.
Hyperglossia is not discreet; as in Bakhtin’s polyphony, it conveys an aural condition of the text. In hyperglossia, all is language that meshes rhizomatic narratives. Deleuze and Guattari explain the concept of rhizome:

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. (7)

Therefore, ‘rhizome’ in hyperglossia means that a narrative structure is exponential and posits an indefinite chain of signifiers that become not only a metaphor of how the *homo technologicus* thinks, but also of how we construct reality in the twenty-first century. As it breaks down our ways of understanding and experiencing the text, hyperglossia in *Flights* is propelled by textual assemblage, an increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections (Deleuze and Guattari 8). Tokarczuk’s text assumes that, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also, lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification, which, corresponding with Deleuze and Guattari: “[P]roduce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don’t know yet what the multiple entails” (4).

The philosophers contend that all we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure (4). At this point, it is clear that assemblage in *Flights* transcends the linear, bounded and fixed qualities of the traditional reading. As a bound book, its form might appear static, but its hyperglossic capacities unleash possibilities that challenge the traditional ways of the novel and the way we read them. More specifically, what Olga Tokarczuk ultimately achieves is a reenactment of what she envisions as a constellation and ends up calling a “cabinet of curiosities.” Indeed, Tokarczuk’s narrative cosmos is assembled as such, which she articulates thus: “[T]he mind is so occupied with its own act, a play staged by the self for the self in a hasty, makeshift cabinet of curiosities peopled by author and character, narrator and reader, the person describing and the person being described, that feet, shoes, heels, and faces become, sooner or later, mere components of that act” (13).

The passage—more specifically, the phrase “cabinet of curiosities”—functions as a hyperlink to another section titled “Cabinet of Curiosities,” where the narrator states that: “I’ve never been a big fan of art museums, which I would happily exchange for cabinets of curiosities, where collections are comprised of the rare, the unique, the bizarre, the freakish. The things that exist in the shadows of consciousness, and that, when you do take a look, dart out of your field of vision” (17).

There is, indeed, a method in the madness. Unlike the static form of the book, a hypertext can be composed and decoded non-sequentially; it is a variable structure, composed of blocks of text and the electronic links that join them. George Landow specifies that hypertext: “[d]enotes text composed of blocks of text, what Barthes terms a lexia—and the electronic links that join them... [i]t links one passage of verbal discourse to images, maps, diagrams, and sound as easily as to another verbal passage, expands the notion of text beyond the solely verbal” (3).

Hypertext, an information technology consisting of individual blocks of text, or lexias (as Roland Barthes tagged them), denotes an information medium that links verbal and nonverbal information. What bridges the verbal and nonverbal also links what is enounced with the chain of signifiers not present in the text but invoked in the discourse. Therefore, what makes hypertext work in *Flights* is not
the mechanical architectural operation, but its hyperglossia. Landow comments that “the very idea of hypertextuality, like poststructuralism, grows out of dissatisfaction with the related phenomena of the printed book and hierarchical thought” (1). Hyperglossia overcomes this. It is a dispositive of enunciation.

Tokarczuk manages, in the end, to unite a series of tales that shape the novel into a cabinet of curiosities, that eccentric ancestor of what later became known as a museum where to have a central plot, it would be the sum of its parts and its motley array of stories. She describes the book as a constellation novel, in reference to its complex, nonlinear structure. To put it Bhaktin’s language: “The whole of the novel and the specific tasks involved in constructing this whole out of heteroglot, multi-voiced, multi-styled and often multi-languaged elements remain outside the boundaries of such a study. In the majority of cases the style of the novel is subsumed under the concept of ‘epic style’” (“Discourse in the Novel” 265). Here, the novel divorces from epic.

The novel as “Poetics of Relation”

When the narrator in Flights says: “only what is different will survive” (“Cabinet of Curiosities” 18), she seems to hail that which becomes the Other, which includes those “freaks of nature that are owed immortality” in the Western world and with whom she identifies. Difference is opaque, not transparent, where transparency, as in Byung Chul Han’s concept, is normalcy, sameness, stability, and the root. In The Expulsion of the Other, as Srinivas Lankala has contended, Han:

aligns this expulsion of the Other with the repression of migrants, refugees, and other dejected minorities who jeopardize the idea of a universal sameness. He sees the centralized surveillance regimes represented by the old Panopticon now replaced by an exclusionary “banopticon” (12), that operates through the violent enforcements of closed borders and the prevention of the Other from entering the territory of the Self. (117)

What is transparent cannot be seen. It equates in silence: “I’ve become invisible, see-through. I am able to move around like a ghost, look over people’s shoulders, listen in on their arguments and watch them sleep with their heads on their backpacks or talking to themselves, unaware of my presence, moving just their lips, forming words that I will soon pronounce for them” (19). The antinomy enclosed in the quoted passage is that those who stand out in difference are the ones who become unseen; those who repeat themselves in others become visible. Therefore, the narrator in Flights becomes visible by opposing transparency with her skeptical, nomadic, and rootless movement.

In Poetics of Relation, Édouard Glissant proposes the concept of opacity to juxtapose the idea of transparency. He says:

Transparency no longer seems like the bottom of the mirror in which Western humanity reflected the world in its own image. There is opacity now at the bottom of the mirror, a whole alluvium deposited by populations, silt that is fertile but, in actual fact, indistinct and unexplored even today, denied or insulted more often than not, and with an insistent presence that we are incapable of not experiencing. (111)

Glissant conceives errantry as a poetics. Errantry suggests what the Martinican philosopher calls “poetics of relation,” a concept I will borrow from his homonymous book to describe how hyperglossia activates narratives and discourses within Flights. “Mobility is reality,” the narrator says at some point (226). A tale of errantry, Glissant says, is the tale of relation (18). Indeed, a poetics of relations is rhizomatic because, as he states: “The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I
call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (1).

A poetics of relation is how hyperglossia works: a systemic network of lexemes unleashed through endless layers of meaning that multiply and create a vast polysemic webbing of objective and affective meanings. At this point, it should be more than obvious that the driving forces in Tokarczuk’s narrative scheme are those progressions and sequences that make up her rhizomatic storytelling. The rhizome, through hyperglossia, then drives the text into hypertextual realm. Additionally, the hypertextual character of the novel highlights the calculated repetition of concepts, themes, phrases, and words that point to other contexts applied to those themes, phrases, and words that are present within the text. Such is the ecology of the novel. For instance, the phrase “Seeing is Knowing” is the title of the sixth section or vignette (19). The phrase is echoed in “The Achilles Tendon” on page 182 (“Seeing, after all, means knowing”; in “Letter to the Amputated Leg,” on page 209 (“...because it is said: seeing is knowing”); and in “Final Timetable,” on page 399 (“Seeing is knowing, we had no doubt about that”). These repetitions work as mock hyperlinks between sections in an attempt to provide a principle of formal unity to the text.

Similarly, there are more than 200 references to the body, a ratio of one mention every two pages, approximately, dispersed in 116 vignettes, out of which 111 are composed around the idea of a shattered body as they delve into topics such as the nature of existence, religion, time, or immortality, all as perceived through the body (the five initial vignettes present the narrator’s mental state that postulates writing as salvation, the fabric of breath, or a way of staying sane). Amid this conscious effort for unity, Tokarczuk’s novel is a severed body that needs to be conjoined through language. As a matter of fact, Flights is built around the persistence of body preservations (200) and the idea of consequent immortality.

In “The Bodhi Tree,” the narrator meets a man who works for a company that makes “quite complicated electronic devices allowing blood to be conserved longer-term and allowing organs to be safely transported” (168). In “The Achilles Tendon,” the Flemish surgeon and anatomist Philip Verheyen receives a visit from Willem Van Holssen, one of his students, and who “unintentionally walks up to the printed sheets of paper – all of them show muscles and blood vessels, tendons and nerves” (182). Later on, Van Holssen himself will appear as speaker in “The History of Philip Verheyen, Written by his Student and Confidant Willem Van Horssen,” where he provides an account of his mentor’s severed leg, “this scrap of the human body” that now lived “its own life as a specimen” (194). Verheyen will eventually affirm: “The body is something absolutely mysterious” (209).

The novel predicates on the structural, and as a body without organs, Van Holsen resumes: “Of course the dead body is not alive; what I mean is more the fact of it remaining in its form. Form is in its way alive” (202).

These are bodies without organs, literally and metaphorically. On the literal level, the novel echoes the notions of taxidermy, anatomy, autopsies, mummification and other forms of retracing the geography of the body from the inside and the outside; but on the figurative level, the concept echoes Deleuze and Guattari:

A body without organs is not an empty body stripped of organs, but a body upon which that which serves as organs (wolves, wolf eyes, wolf jaws?) is distributed according to crowd phenomena, in Brownian motion, in the form of molecular multiplicities. The desert is populous. Thus the body without organs is opposed less to organs as such than to the organization of the organs insofar as it composes an organism. The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization. Lice hopping on the beach. Skin colonies. The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities. (30)
The “Body without Organs,” a term Deleuze and Guattari borrowed from poet Antonin Artaud, consists of an assemblage or body with no underlying organizational principles, and hence no organs within it. It conveys the notion that it is a body but not an organism. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define the term:

You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit. People ask, So what is this BwO?—But you're already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic; desert traveler and nomad of the steppes. On it we sleep, live our waking lives, fight—fight and are fought—seek our place, experience untold happiness and fabulous defeats; on it we penetrate and are penetrated; on it we love...The BwO: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them. (150)

Body without Organs stands as a philosophical concept and is played out as a "plane of consistency, which, concretely ties together heterogeneous or disparate elements" (Deleuze and Guattari 507). It is also a metaphor that refers to bodies located outside the norm, and that all that is learned could indeed melt in the air. In other words, a body without organs moves through smooth space. Similarly, Olga Tokarczuk’s novel drifts into the wide open with the spirit of a Kerouac’s *On the Road.*

The body is severed across the pages of the book as the narrator of *Flights*, who remains unnamed, feels imprisoned in her life and, ironically, when she finds herself shrouded in the darkness of the night, she begins to find herself. The night locks her up. A hoarding body encrypts the limits of her world: “The body is something absolutely mysterious” (209). The body references are spread all over pages, like “[s]kulls with growths of all conceivable structures” (20), or “embryos which you can barely see at all...like little fish” (21), images that metaphorize the nature of the novel itself. The whole novel is a body one finds and must recompose.

As Philip Verheyen addresses his own amputated leg, “as though talking to a living, independent person,” Van Horsen says:

Separated from him, it took on some sort of demonic autonomy, simultaneously maintaining with him a painful relationship. I also confess that these are the most unsettling portions of his letters. But at the same time I have no doubt that this is just a metaphor, a kind of mental shortcut. He was thinking that what once formed a whole but was then broken down into parts is still powerfully connected, in an invisible way that is difficult to investigate. (210)

This passage resonates with the novel’s architecture as the creative principle or poetics in *Flights*. What connects the novel in an invisible way is, precisely, hyperglossia.

**Conclusions**

The characters of Tokarczuk, in their constant journey, embrace movement as they seek a life free of obstacles, be they mental, physical, or spiritual. The novel, therefore, emphasizes the nomad body, the stateless individual who is constantly reinventing their identity as displaced figures or opaque bodies. Sean Garper Bye says that, “[i]t is a search that leads *Flights*’ characters and its narrator into an endless, restless probing of humankind’s external and interior worlds, rejecting the Cartesian division between body and soul” (65). The polarization of binary opposites tenses in the novel through the deliberate fragmentary structure of the novel, the juxtaposition of its parts, and the consequential hyperglossic effect: the narrative’s centripetal and centrifugal impulses, at force with each other, magnify the reaches of meaning through hypertextual relations that synthesize Tokarczuk’s work as a bricoleur and as an engineer, to lend Levi-Strauss terms for the construction of narratives.
It is clear that in *Flights* the constituent parts are not necessarily subservient to the whole, but that, in fact, the parts do expand their meaning in relation to the whole. The semantic mapping and structural scaffolding of Tokarczuk’s novel create a particular granularity in the text which exceeds its own limits, yielding to multiple reading paths that reflect the way we construct knowledge in the Internet era: rhizomatically. In conclusion, hyperglossia ends up as a destabilized system the pulses organically toward moving meanings. Hyperglossia in *Flights* is rhizomatic, hypertextual, and exponential. It is a continuum of fluidity and indeterminacy that challenges Western patterns of reading and thought since, as identities evolve from their self-containment, and as cultural fencing vanishes, the world becomes a hypertext, borrowing Ted Nelson’s phrase, more “deeply intertwingled” (45), providing a non-linear, non-hierarchical structure that leans toward the way we construct our reality in present day, hyper-mediated society. Hyperglossia has turned into a facsimile of the way we think and experience life. Such is the truth in these delectable antinomies.
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