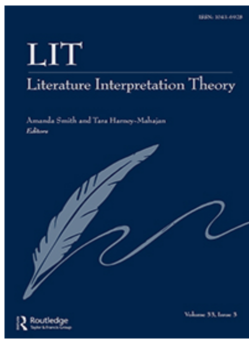

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Penny Simpson

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"Breaking the Frame:" The Role of Artmaking in Narratives of Migration and Diaspora

Penny Simpson

Introduction

In this article, I examine two works of literature that re-imagine the narrative of migration through establishing a symbiosis between artmaking and the act of writing. My analysis of Leonora Carrington's *Down Below* (1944) and Dubravka Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain* (2006) will be developed by theorizing across the disciplines of literary criticism, the visual arts, and the field of transnational migration studies. This cross-disciplinary perspective focuses on a core theme: the re-imagining of human movement and its social, political, and cultural relationalities.

I will demonstrate how Carrington and Ugrešić create a lexicon of migration, which resonates with Gayle Munro's concept of migratory life as an evolving life, subject to "multi-layered affiliations" across geographical, cultural, and state boundaries (108). The literary works under discussion draw heavily on the visual imagination and the creation of complex textual montages to present this idea of the migrant's evolving life, across time and space. It is a process that dovetails with a key tenet of transnational social field theory: the emphasis put on what Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller describe as the simultaneity of connection, which exists for migrants who combine "ways of being and ways of belonging" differently in specific contexts (1008). The perspective achieved is of migratory life as a kind of work-in-progress, open to more expansive interpretation than that found in much contemporary public discourse, which conflates issues of immigration, race, status, and asylum to the detriment of those living migratory lives.

In my analysis, I will draw on the montage aesthetics developed by the writer and philosopher Walter Benjamin in the early part of the 20th century, in particular his use of Denkbilder, "thought-images." Historically, as Gerhard Richter states, the Denkbild was conceived as a "brief, aphoristic prose text" (7). In the 1920s and 1930s, Benjamin transformed its narrative potential to examine the cultural and political processes of a world challenged by the rise of fascism. As Susan Buck-Morss argues, he foregrounds the interpretive power of images through his use of Denkbilder in order to "make conceptual points concretely [and] with reference to the world outside the text" (6). The

Penny Simpson is an author and Visiting Fellow in the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies, University of Essex. Her current research focuses on the relationship between montage, narrative, and migration.

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Denkbilder encapsulate more than one dimension of experience, allowing for an oscillation between past, present, and future, captured in the process of what Benjamin describes in his essay on Proust as "purposive remembering" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 198). He compares the act of remembrance to the weaving of a web, delivering up "intricate arabesques," which capture the multi-dimensionality of a recalled event (198). Benjamin states, "An experienced event is finite—at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it" (198). Accordingly, by weaving patterns of Denkbilder into a written text, it is possible to achieve a more fluid reading of temporal and spatial boundaries. Instead of a linear narrative situated in a specific environment, the reader becomes immersed in the narrator's phenomenological and psychic worlds, which transcend the limitations of a particular time and space.

Benjamin's experiment with the genre of Denkbild is influenced by the artistic composition of montage, in particular the style of photomontage developed by Dada artists in early 20th-century Berlin. Artists, such as John Heartfield and Hannah Höch, turned photomontage into a highly disruptive medium, engaging in social and political critique through startling juxtapositions of different pictures and letters, cut from newspapers, illustrated magazines, and other printed materials. On the surface, the elements of montage might appear to be randomly selected, but, as Jean-Jacques Thomas notes, they possess a "hidden regulating system that generates . . . significance" (101). This organizing principle is one Benjamin experiments with in his novel *One-Way Street* (1928), made up of a series of sixty short prose pieces. These fragmentary pieces combine to create a highly original topography built from constellations of transient sights, smells, and sounds, filtered through a hidden organizing principle—a walk through a city, shadowed by the phantom figure of the author's lover, the Soviet dramatist Asja Lacis. The book's epigraph reveals the interplay of body and street:

> This street is named
> Asja Lacis Street
> after her who
> as engineer
> cut it through the author. (21)

In Benjamin's textual city, the street acts as a central Denkbild and the character of Asja Lacis a composite image of modernity—she is, at one and the same time, lover, engineer, and street builder. One-Way Street does not exist as a geographical reality; the author gives expression to his experience in such a way that he transforms the reader from being a recipient of information into a more collaborative actor and, as Patrizia C. McBride states, positioning them as "an integral part of the unfolding story recounted by the storyteller"

(54). This bond between the storyteller and reader is a re-imagining of the traditional relationship between storytellers and their tight-knit communities of listeners, a re-imagining that is rooted in a "rhetoric of the body," which puts emphasis on the physical experience of producing and receiving a story (59). In his montage narrative, Benjamin presents a narrator walking through a street, an action that is transformed into a heightened sensory experience, delivered by a seemingly disjointed narrative. The reader or listener must discover the hidden, organizing principle behind the assemblage of sensory experiences. The body in movement, the receptivity of the senses, a porous reading of time: these are the raw materials Benjamin uses to create a montage narrative built out of perception patterns, rather than the relay of a chronological series of events.

Arguably, the story of migration is like a vast montage, one of multiple overlays and temporal oscillations, and the migrant well-positioned to engage with the act of "purposive remembering" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 198). As Gayle Munro states, "a mosaic of motivations" underpin migratory lives (13). These many motivations are catalyst for complex journeys across borders, languages, and generations. Benjamin's montage paradigm has, I argue, rich potential for re-imagining such narratives, interwoven with contemporary theoretical concerns in transnational migration studies. Carrington and Ugrešić's texts are both constructed according to the montage principle; the hidden regulatory system is the writers' own bodies written into the narrative using recurring bodily and somatic imagery. Both narratives explore the authors' migratory experiences. The wider significance of their applying the principle of montage to the act of writing is to prioritize the migrant's sensory experience of remaking their world, and, in so doing, turn the process of art-making into a mode of storytelling that gives expression to the "simultaneity of connection" underpinning migratory lives.

Carrington's *Down Below* is, in part, an account of the visual artist's flight from war-torn Europe in 1940. I will discuss how this hybrid narrative interlaces the imagined and sensory worlds, transforming the narrator-witness into self-archivist—her body transformed into a form of portable archive. I demonstrate how key parts of the narrative are conveyed through the artist's improvizing artworks out of transient materials during her migration across different geographies and between different mental states. These strategies are further developed in Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*, an essayistic novel published over sixty years later. Its narrator is a young academic who grows up in the former Yugoslavia but is forced into exile after the country's collapse into civil war in the early 1990s. I will explore how the novel's trajectory is delivered through a montage framework, built out of an interplay of pivotal images inspired by Vermeer's painting *The Girl with the Pearl Earring* and by the creation of an improvized artwork, a virtual museum.

Down Below is quite literally a migratory text—a constantly evolving text that migrated, like its author, between languages and countries before reaching publication. Whitney Chadwick states it is "shaped and reshaped by the passage of time, loss, recovery and the vicissitudes of memory" (Chadwick, *Militant* 98). In her introduction to *Down Below*, Marina Warner outlines the publishing history of this migratory text, noting the original (in English) was lost when Leonora Carrington moved to Mexico; in 1943, she began to reconstruct the text whilst camping in the abandoned Russian Embassy alongside other refugees in Mexico City (Warner, *House of Fear* 16–17). The artist's friend Jeanne Megnen organized the first published version in French. This version of *Down Below* was translated back into English and published in the Surrealist journal *VVV* in February 1944. The key events in the narrative of *Down Below* trace the writer's early migratory experiences. In 1937, Carrington left her home in England to live in Paris, and later France, with her lover, the German artist Max Ernst. In 1940, Ernst was interned by the French authorities for a second time, and Carrington fled to Spain when German forces occupied France. In Madrid, she was abducted on the orders of her family and confined against her will in a sanatorium in Santander. *Down Below* ends with the narrator about to embark on her escape from the sanatorium.

Ugrešić shares with Carrington the experience of being displaced multiple times. She was born and raised in the former Yugoslavia. In the early 1990s, she was driven into exile from Zagreb by the newly independent Croatian regime, which targeted her for criticizing its nationalist rhetoric. Initially, she lived in Germany before moving on to Amsterdam, where she still lives. In her novel *The Ministry of Pain*, the narrator Tanja Lucić follows a trajectory of migration like that undertaken by the author. In writing her thumbnail autobiography, Tanja hesitates: "Even the most basic questions gave me pause. Where was I born? In Yugoslavia? In the former Yugoslavia? In Croatia? Shit! Do I have any biography?" (24–25). It is a complicated question because her identity is aligned with a nationality that is no longer recognized. In exploring these works by Carrington and Ugrešić, I will assess to what extent a writer unanchored from the expectations of national literature might help forge a contemporary lexicon of migration that advocates transnational being and belonging.

"The Sites of Our Intimate Lives"

In her cross-generational study of migrants to the UK from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Gayle Munro identifies the difficulties of capturing migratory and diasporic experiences in a measurable way. She underlines the importance of creating a definition of migrant that encompasses a range of migration experiences. Accordingly, she defines migrant as "someone who has

made his/her home—either permanently or temporarily—in a country other than the one in which he/she was born" (3). I now turn to discuss how Carrington and Ugrešić's creative writing processes expand on Munro's definition of migrant through the idea of the migrant as self-archivist and guardian of a legacy written in and on the body. Both writers represent migration and diasporic lives in a very particular way. They do not present a linear biography, situated in a detailed environment conforming to known spatial co-ordinates; instead, the reader is immersed in the narrator's phenomenological and psychic worlds, rather like the reader of Benjamin's *One-Way Street*. As discussed earlier, Benjamin expanded the form of Denkbild to develop a highly original means of representing a rapidly changing world—one marked out by experiences of displacement, loss, and trauma that followed in the wake of Hitler's rise to power. He transforms the act of storytelling through his use of the montage aesthetic—built out of Denkbilder—to create what McBride defines as "flexible and capacious narrative forms [that] allow for presenting complex social processes" (46).

In these narratives, the distinction between disciplines breaks down—the visual arts practice of montage seeps into the creation of composite images that traverse time and space. One-Way Street is not a geographical reality, but a concept of space, which can be further interpreted through application of Gaston Bachelard's theory of topoanalysis from his work *The Poetics of Space*, the "systematic, psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (30). In Benjamin's work *One-Way Street*, we see that the site of "Asja Lacis street" is a space that is about the intimacy of lives lived, re-imagined in images that dispense with the notion of a biographical reality. Asja Lacis is the engineer of this transformed street, which mutates into Bachelard's idea of space as a "geometry of echoes" (81). It is a space further transformed through the concept of Sinnbild, or the sensuous image, which navigates between intuition and reflection. The tactile dimension introduced by the Sinnbild enables a performative aspect to be introduced into the process of decoding One-Way Street as a geometry of echoes. The perception is of the body as testimony, or co-witness, in a re-imagined narrative of another's life; the writer-narrator performs that life through presenting it in what Gerhard Richter describes as a "sensually graspable form" (17).

A more poetic re-imagining is achieved, one which brings together, as Richard Kearney states in his Introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, "powers of memory, perception and fantasy that time-cross in all kinds of surprising ways, sounding previously untapped reverberations" (xx). In the work of Carrington and Ugrešić, these reverberations are carried across time and space by the translation of key images into a textual montage. It is a process of poetics that is governed by the tactile and the sensory: "Poetics is about hearing and feeling as well as crafting and shaping. It is the double play of re-creation" (xix). In the works under discussion,

landscape, feeling, and artifact collide in complex chains of imagery, set into train by the movements of a narrator who performs this double play of creation.

Chadwick describes *Down Below* as a "psychic odyssey" (Chadwick, *Militant* 99). I argue the work might also be regarded as autofiction, a fictionalized autobiography, its raw material shaped using montage. Carrington creates a disturbing landscape where real incidents and people are viewed through a cracked lens, the fissures between real and imaginary horrifyingly convincing. As narrator, she is self-aware, but she does not claim to write testimony: "I am afraid I am going to drift into fiction, truthful but incomplete" (175). In writing of her experiences in *Down Below*, she gives vivid representation to the idea of the migratory life as one that is constantly evolving, subject to a myriad of emotional, cultural, and geographical influences—as well as to happenstance and bad timing.

In both her painting and her fiction writing, Carrington produces meaning "through the dense overlay of multiple sources," a creative methodology inspired by montage technique, which enables her to re-imagine migratory experience through an interdisciplinary lens (Chadwick, *Pilgrimage* 30). Reading *Down Below* is like entering one of the artist's paintings in which a tale is told "in a journey across the image" (Warner, "Leonora Carrington's Spirit Bestiary" 16). Images and enigmas are worked into the text, along with religious and animal symbolism, underlining the author's belief in the interdependence of the phenomenological and psychic worlds.

Ugrešić's novel *The Ministry of Pain* is another shape-shifting narrative, its axis centered around a creative act of rebellion, which sees a group of young exiles make "a catalogue of everyday life in Yugoslavia," their former homeland (49). The catalog, or the "Yugonostalgic museum," is, like a montage, composed of "found" objects, memories, storytelling, and the detritus of everyday life (49). The novel's protagonist Tanja Lucić, a professor of literature at the University of Amsterdam, is also a Yugoslavian exile. She encourages each of her students to contribute a story or an item to the virtual museum, which takes the form of a symbolic white, red, and blue-striped plastic bag. The multi-colored bag is, as one student states, a ubiquitous possession of the world's nomadic and refugee populations. The students write essays and tell their stories, extracts of which form part of the novel. For example, there is a recipe for a Bosnian hotpot, a memory of a meeting with Yugoslavia's ailing President Tito, and the story of how one student receives their childhood nickname.

In effect, the students are co-constructors of the story, builders of the virtual Yugonostalgic museum, which transcends borders and nationalities. This process of making an artwork within the novel serves as both narrative device and allegorical motif. The plastic bag becomes a potent symbol for the transnational social field theory discussed earlier, with its emphasis upon

achieving a "simultaneity of connection" that transcends territorial boundaries. The students have arrived in exile from different starting points; they express identification with a Serbian or Bosnian heritage, for example. What they share are their stories, filtered through the languages spoken in their new country, Dutch and English. Nevena even tells her teacher that she feels "more comfortable in Dutch … as if Dutch were a sleeping bag" (37). It is Nevena who reveals how language itself overturns the idea of a literary norm; languages, like people, cross borders, forging an oral assemblage or montage made up of many possibilities of being: "She'd start a sentence in a South Serbian dialect, move on to an imitation of Zagreb speech, [then] launch into the Bosnian drawl" (37).

In *The Ministry of Pain*, the narrator Tanja Lucić describes her walks through the city of Amsterdam, cutting through the city like a latter-day Asja Lacis. Her movements across the cityscape can be interpreted through Bachelard's process of topoanalysis. Amsterdam is presented as a site in which reality, dream, and memory become interwoven. Tanja's journey through this space reveals an exile's fractured sense of self, as she describes:

> I drew my internal map on the finest of tracing paper, but the moment I separated it from the real map I saw to my surprise that it was blank … My internal map was the outcome of an amnesiac's attempt to plot his co-ordinates … My map was a dreamer's guide. Virtually nothing on it coincided with reality. (32)

The writer switches from first to third person throughout the novel, a technique that underlines the constantly shifting viewpoint of the narrator. Discussing the experiences of those she recognizes in a bar, Tanja segues effortlessly from the intimacy of the first-person anecdote to a more detached tone, like a voice-over in a documentary program: "Through the glass I could see 'our people' mutely playing cards … In the cities of Europe they vainly sought the co-ordinates of space they had left behind them, their spatial contours" (17–18).

The students' project of filling the virtual plastic bag is an attempt to salvage what must not be forgotten: "a territory that belonged equally to us all … our common past" (51). The right to remember is foregrounded—a right that has been taken from Tanja and her students. Memory, like time, has collapsed. The witnesses of Tanja's old life are gone. What is a life without the shared knowledge of those she knew before the war began? "Place as well as time had divided into *before* and *after*, their lives *here* and *there*. They were suddenly without witnesses, parents, family, friends, without even the daily acquaintances with whom we constantly reconstitute our lives" (105).

Amsterdam is described by Tanja as "an exhibition space of absence" (78). The past is like an installation within it—one which literally takes shape with the filling of the plastic bag: "Each of us is curator in his own museum" (137). Tanja is unable to rely on her old sense of self, or the possibility of finding

a new self in a city that acts like a giant distorting mirror: "And who are 'we' anyway? Aren't we all smashed to bits and forced to wander the earth picking up the pieces?" (183). The recurring image of a woman walking through the city suggests the writing of a more complex legacy of transmission. Tanja is a character-witness who intervenes and comments on her own story. This is not a narrative about a migrant dreaming of a better life and being thwarted by fate or political expediency; it is not a rags-to-riches fairy tale, although elements of fantasy are found in the text. Tanja is fleeing from a civil war that had devastated her homeland, the former Yugoslavia. She is hired to teach a language that no longer exists—"our language, *servo-kroatisch*"—to a group of traumatized students, still caught in the slipstream of war and its aftermath (34). Arguably, there has been no transition between a state of war and a state of peace. The exile will live like a "stowaway" slipping between their life of before and after (42).

Ugrešić shapes her characters in a very particular way; she provides the reader with a very real sense of the body as witness, physically and psychologically immersed in the landscape. There are no easy readings of that individual's situation; it deepens inquiry from the minimal information listed in a passport to a more profound need to understand the different motivations behind human movement. What model of society will accommodate the migrant's feeling of guilt at what has been left behind, or the need for an emotional reconciliation with the new spatial and human co-ordinates discovered by those who live like stowaways in their own lives?

To develop these ideas further, I turn to examine themes of portability, transmission, and trauma in Carrington's *Down Below*. As discussed, the text reflects key events in the writer's flight from Occupied France in 1940. As she embarks on a highly traumatic road journey through war-torn Europe, Carrington's style of writing changes. Events, thoughts, locations and objects shuffle around seemingly at random. In effect, the writer maps her inner collapse against a background of war in the form of a series of highly charged Denkbilder. For example, as she goes over the border to Franco's Spain, "I thought it was my kingdom; that the red earth was the dried blood of the Civil War. I was choked by the dead, by their thick presence in their lacerated countryside" (170). It is a way of writing an image that conveys the layered topography found in Bachelard's concept of a reverberation. The kingdom of the imagination and the physical scars of conflict are still visible in the landscape, embodied in the words "lacerated countryside." The dead keep a choking hold on the living but maintain a "thick presence" that will not abate, a concept that brings the past and the present together in the manner of a Denkbild.

When the writer is abducted on the orders of her family and confined in a sanatorium in Santander, the autobiographical memoir transforms into a text of topoanalysis. The writer re-imagines her experiences as witness to

her own degrading treatment, walking the reader through the grounds of the sanatorium, which she also draws in a map depicting places such as “a desert scene,” “Covagonda cemetery,” “Don Mariano’s place,” “Outside World,” “Bower and Cave” (189). It is both index and hallucinatory topography. *Down Below* is named after one of the buildings in the sanatorium, and it becomes the narrator’s objective to enter it and so begin her liberation. She starts to make other maps detailing a complex cosmology of her own invention using her few possessions: “My nail buff, shaped like a boat, evoked for my journey into the Unknown, and also the talisman protecting that journey: the song El barco velero” (196).

It is an imaginative montage, like Ugrešić’s virtual museum-in-a-bag. It forges fact and fiction into a compelling artifact that pushes testimony out of its familiar legal (and narrative) contours into a space richly responsive to the writer’s multi-layered state of personal transition between sanity and breakdown and between war and exile. The framework of medical diagnosis is broken apart, and the image as Denkbild marks the transmission of the traces of a personal history of the body into the text. It is a process that reflects a new kind of witnessing or archiving practice, built from a methodology that includes moments of spontaneity, self-reflexivity, and the “found” object.

As Carolyn Steedman states, the archive is not a keeper of “the original experience to which we may return” (7). In looking back at the traumatic events of 1940, Carrington does not serve as steadfast witness, giving testimony in a court of law about her enforced captivity and the physical and psychological abuse she has experienced. Instead, she transforms her exilic body into a portable archive; a force field like the house in Bachelard’s poetics, which is presented as a site of compressed time. And it is the detail that reveals the whole. The body-as-archive echoes the archive as defined by Carolyn Steedman “where a whole world, a social order, may be imagined by the recurrence of a name in a register, through a scrap of paper, or some other little piece of flotsam” (81). Carrington’s account of her incarceration in the sanatorium is an act of self-archiving. Literally stripped bare and without her possessions, the artist assembles a series of artworks from objects and detritus found on site to navigate her way to recovery. She travels through key sites in the grounds, organizing her defenses by gathering up talismanic objects, such as a stick and a lemon, and, later, by creating an assemblage of objects, which she finds in her handbag when it is finally returned to her. This assemblage is reminiscent of Tanja Lucić’s experiment transforming a migrant’s plastic bag into a virtual museum.

While recalling highly disturbing psychotic episodes—induced by being forcibly injected with Cardiazol—Carrington is able to harness her visual imagination and her process of artmaking to traverse the limitations around her. At one point, she assembles a sculpture in her room using furniture and objects as an act of exorcism. Earlier, she recorded the fact she believes herself

to be a reincarnation of Queen Elizabeth I, but in making her sculpture out of "found" objects, the narrator alludes to a more lucid objective: to extract from herself all the different manifestations of her sick being. She says, "I had to get rid of everything my illness had brought me, to cast out these personalities and thus begin my liberation" (204). She sets about constructing Elizabeth's image: " . . . a small, three-legged round table represented her legs; for a body, I placed a chair on top of the table and on that chair a decanter which represented her head . . . then I dressed her up in my own clothes" (203–04). In *Down Below*, Carrington anticipates Ugrešić's representation of the character as witness, self-archivist, and art maker. Carrington re-interprets the genre of autobiography to create a highly original literature of testimony. Shoshana Felman and Doris Laub state that a "radical historical crisis of witnessing" followed on from the horrors of the Shoah, the Holocaust (xvii). Such a crisis, they argue, must be met by a "radical re-inscribing of biography and history" (xv). Carrington's response is to shape an elliptical story-telling process about migration foregrounding the visual imagination and the process of artmaking.

The Somatic Voice

As discussed, Ugrešić and Carrington's writing is influenced by the visual imagination and carried out in dialogue with the creative methodologies of visual artists, in particular, the technique of montage. They develop hybrid narrative forms in which the body—its physical, tactile, and emotional memory—becomes the key component. I now turn to explore how this effect is achieved through an expanded use of ekphrasis. In the two works under discussion, this device is interpreted rather differently; it becomes a means by which the writer can explore the slippage between text and image, a richly ambiguous space that allows for more nuanced representations of migratory life. In her study of visual artworks created by second-generation Holocaust survivors, art historian and cultural analyst Griselda Pollock states the viewer should focus on what an image is *doing* rather than what it is about. Emphasis falls on the making encounter, encouraging "reflexive contemplation" on the part of the spectator who engages with the "traces" of trauma revealed in the work (143). Arguably, it is a method that can be applied to reading literary works like *The Ministry of Pain* and *Down Below*. These are enigmatic works that traverse fiction, history, and autobiography. This is achieved through the construction of complex constellations of word and image—Denkbilder—centering on the memory of the senses. For example, in Ugrešić's *The Ministry of Pain*, a key constellation is formed around two people viewing Vermeer's painting *Girl with the Pearl Earring* in the Mauritshuis in The Hague.

In her novel, Ugrešić experiments with form to tell the story of a character who subversively questions her relationship with history. Tanja Lucić is not unanchored from her past; her history exists within her and is not separate from her. Her questioning of that history is revealed in a particular narrative strand made up of a tightly woven web of images, spanning a human fish, a pearl earring, and a "natural bracelet" created by three scars on her wrist (215). These pivotal images are scattered across the text, acting like guides to the secret connections waiting to be uncovered. The interplay between pivotal images is a key structuring device in a novel that reads like a fictionalized set of reminiscences, interrupted by set-piece scenes. These include the scene in the art gallery and a series of increasingly tense and violent confrontations between Tanja and her renegade pupil Igor. What is at stake is language and its seeming inability to frame the multi-layered narrative of flight and exile.

Visiting The Hague, Tanja is accompanied by her student Igor. Their first destination is the trial of an alleged war criminal at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It is a wretched experience: "We had expected a criminal and what we got was a man, a man with an eminently forgettable face" (140). The defendant is the father of another of Tanja's students, who committed suicide earlier in the novel. The courtroom is a space where the truth is supposed to be unearthed, but instead Tanja must listen to an "endless, tedious stringing together of details that made no sense whatever" (141). She and Igor leave the courtroom and move on to the city's gallery. Here, Tanja encounters a painting that unexpectedly becomes a catalyst for a reckoning with her own past. Igor tells Tanja she looks like the girl in the painting and that the girl in the painting reminds him of the "human fish" (146). The human fish really does exist. It is a species of aquatic salamander, which Tanja has seen on a school trip to its natural habitat in the Postojna caves in Croatia. The fish's name derives from its flesh-colored skin. It is blind, but its senses of smell and hearing are highly developed.

The dialogue between Tanja and Igor builds out of a series of interconnecting images linked to these traits of the human fish. The images coalesce to form a highly sensory narrative about the recovery of the past, which contrasts to that presented in the courtroom where prosecutors are stringing together details to try and determine the facts of a war crime. The human fish undergoes metamorphosis from painted portrait to the features of a real woman standing in the gallery: "There's something unfinished about her [Vermeer's model]. She's like the human fish in that way too . . . My girl's a beautiful larva waiting for metamorphosis" (148). It is unclear at this point if Igor is talking about the painted portrait or Tanja, who is standing next to him. Igor then expands on the theme of metamorphosis by discussing the pearl earring worn by Vermeer's model. He claims the earring contains a reflection of the artist, the model's father: "The painter, her creator, in the pearl in her ear" (149). Tanja buys a paperweight at the gallery depicting Vermeer's painting. As she

turns it over in her hands, she remembers her own father. She knows very little about him, other than he committed suicide when she was three years old: "Mother refused to talk about him . . . Not only did I know nothing about him; I didn't have his name: she had further erased his traces by giving me hers . . . She was absolutely certain she had 'saved' me by excluding my father from my biography" (152). The hidden layers of Tanja's biography start to unfold with an image of a pearl earring as the catalyst. Supposedly, the earring reflects the sitter's father, the artist. Tanja's father has been erased from her life by her mother: "The invisible pearl in my ear was empty" (152). But it is provocation enough; Tanja starts to remember. She imagines herself peering "at the turbid surface [of the pearl] in search of a magic picture" (152). She remembers being carried shoulder-high by a man who might have been her father. Tanja describes the scene, how it will emerge "from a deep, dense darkness into my memory" (152). Before she can expand on her memory, she is interrupted by Igor, who observes she is scratching her ear. An image of the past is recovered by unearthing this "deep, dense darkness" lying behind memory. It is experiential evidence, absent from the court record, but contained in the body's archive. It is evidence that is transmitted through gesture and through shape-shifting images, such as the translucent pearl, which transforms into the skin of a woman. The images combine to form a textual montage that speaks against the darkness of loss and erasure through emphasizing the memory of the senses.

These sensory images and gestures recur later but in a context of violence and repression. Igor visits Tanja in her apartment. There is underlying tension because Tanja believes he has complained about her teaching methods to the university authorities. She has failed his paper for her course. While Igor condemns Tanja for trying to assimilate and hide behind history, a failed history, piled into a symbolic plastic bag. In his eyes, she is the one who has failed: "Nobody comes out of a war unscathed. Nobody who's sane. And you looked so shiny and bright. Like a porcelain teacup. Of course, I wanted to break you" (212).

Igor ties Tanja up and gags her before making three incisions with a razor blade in her wrist. Later, Tanja describes the incisions as representing a pair of "invisible handcuffs," a bond between "me and my pupil" (215). She personifies that bond using gesture and language that takes us back to the scene in the gallery. The scars will inspire a "newly acquired gesture, a kind of tic I would long be unable to shake off," like the unconscious tugging of her ear when she is thinking about the past (215). Tanja imagines pressing her lips against her scars and kissing them: "and finally raising the wrist slowly and holding it up to the light so that the stripes, now moist with salvia, glistened like mother-of-pearl" (215).

Earlier, Tanja had played with an invisible earring in her ear, a gesture that released a childhood memory of her father since erased from her history by her mother. After Igor's attack, she is left with scars, which when moistened will take on the sheen of that pearl earring. Unlike the memory of her father, her scars will serve as a reminder of what cannot be erased, a memory literally cut into her body. This overlap of image and physical gesture sets up reverberations between different sections of the novel in accordance with the technique of montage discussed earlier. After the visit to the gallery, teacher and pupil return to class. Igor challenges her openly. Uncertain how to respond and aware of her growing attachment to Igor, Tanja compares herself to the human fish, a mutant creature stuck half-way through its evolutionary history in a dark cave. Toward the end of the novel, Tanja and Igor start a relationship. Describing their new life together in Amsterdam, Tanja offers up another intricate constellation of image, gesture, and physical intimacy: "I breathe through his skin like a fish through its gills. I set my pulse to his, I course through his veins" (254). This is body-as-archive, narrated through constellations of words and images which bring together the phenomenological and psychic worlds. In mapping these constellations, the reader is actively engaged with a highly complex act of storytelling.

Drawing on the montage principle, Ugrešić creates a capacious narrative form in which she simultaneously narrates Tanja's story and probes the social and political processes that help shape her migratory experience. The events in Tanja's life cohere through this application of montage to the narrating of migration; through montage, the narrative form expands, its many layers conducive to expressing the idea of the narrator as character-witness-archivist. The archive is created from historical realities (a civil war) but, as crucially, from these realities' synthesis with the body's sensory and tactile memories.

It is a process that is also evident in *Down Below*, another text which foregrounds the somatic voice in a lexicon of migration. The story appears to be a recollection of events, described over different periods of time. Events overlap rather than unfold sequentially, threaded together by the narrator's use of recurring metaphors and images relating to the body, primarily the stomach and the digestive system. These recurring patterns suggest a text that has been developed and edited drawing on the principle of montage. The narrative begins in the village of Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche where Carrington's partner Max Ernst has been taken away to Les Milles, an internment camp located near Aix-en-Provence. She is distraught and intentionally makes herself sick through drinking orange blossom water. The narrator describes what she does as a process to cleanse herself of the injustices of the society around her: "My stomach was the seat of that society . . . It was the mirror of the earth . . . That mirror—my stomach—had to be rid of the thick layers of filth (the accepted formulas) in order properly, clearly and faithfully to reflect

the earth" (164). Events in the real world are briefly summarized—including the collapse of Belgium and the advance of the Germans into France—but the focus comes on the narrator's efforts to achieve this cleansing of mind and body in a bid to return to a pure state of being and away from a world corrupted by war. This endeavor is given powerful expression in a text that translates the narrator's somatic pain into interconnecting chains of visual images. Escaping from the village by car, all motion is suddenly suspended when the brakes jam. The narrator identifies with the stalled car: "I, too, was jammed within, by forces foreign to my conscious will, which were also paralysing the mechanism of the car" (167).

This seepage between the body and the outside world becomes more acute as the journey continues. In Andorra, the narrator finds herself physically unable to move while trying to climb a mountain. Motion returns when she acknowledges the world "through the skin, by means of a sort of 'touch' language" (169). She embraces a herd of horses and seeks accord between the mountains and her mind. Throughout the journey, the narrator segues between moments of self-reflexivity and deeply disturbing episodes in which the outside world appears to penetrate her physical body: "Madrid was the world's stomach and ... I had been chosen for the task of restoring this digestive organ to health. I believed that all anguish had accumulated in me and would dissolve in the end, and this explained the force of my emotions" (170).

Carrington's image evokes Benjamin's description of One-Way Street, how his lover Asja Lacis had cut it through him like an engineer. The city of Madrid as a space of intimacy is horribly corrupted when the narrator is raped by a group of Requeté officers. This crime is not described in detail, only its aftermath: the narrator's descent into psychosis and committal against her will to a sanatorium. Her time here is presented as both recollection and testimony; it is also given a visceral immediacy through descriptions of her physical and psychological maltreatment by the nurses and doctors as the narrator is stripped naked and strapped to her bed; she is also given an injection in her thigh that impedes her walking: "The bump grew to the size of a small melon" (182).

This part of Carrington's story is intercut with observations made by the narrator later, possibly when the writer began the process of reconstructing her original text. Again, she senses the world has come to a halt, that it has "congealed," and that she must vanquish the sanatorium's staff "in order to set it into motion again" (186). Her methods include creating works of art from the furniture in her room and the possessions in her handbag. She also creates rituals and performances as she moves through the grounds. When she finally gains entry to Down Below, she keeps with her a lemon she has been given by an old woman: "a talisman with which to carry out my perilous mission" (197). On the third floor of Down Below, she finds herself

inside a circular room lit by stained glass windows. There she finds a table filled with objects, which she reorders into a cosmology of her own invention: a small pink box filled with gold powder, glass laboratory saucers, and an oblong tin stamped with labels "bearing the name of Franco" (198). By putting the objects in order, she sets into motion once again "the cogs of the human machinery which, immobilized, kept the world in anguish, war, want, and ignorance" (198).

Conclusion

In my analysis, I have identified the key creative strategies used by Ugrešić and Carrington to re-imagine narratives of transnational being and belonging. These strategies are the application of the visual art technique of montage to the writing of literary texts and the prioritizing of the somatic voice in narrating stories about characters who serve as both witness and archivist of migratory experiences. Ugrešić and Carrington interweave metaphor, (auto) biography, and politics into highly visual and somatic narratives, an approach that opens new possibilities for framing the story of the migrant as an evolving story.

Both writers reflect on their state of being and their sense of belonging through the act of writing; by breaking the frame of witness testimony and survivor's autobiography, they create hybrid, expansive works of literature where in-between-ness is given full expression. Earlier, I discussed these writers' tangled sense of identity. Released from the ties of nationality, it is possible to see how both writers choose to express their multiple identities through adapting the principle of montage to their creative process. The narrators turn archivist to tell multi-layered stories, which are quite literarily experienced through and on the moving body, situated in physical and geographical sites, which, in turn, garner meaning and context through a close interweaving of personal histories and patterns of visual and somatic imagery.

Finally, by positioning the literary experiments of Ugrešić and Carrington within the context of transnational migration studies, it becomes possible to generate new ways of recording and archiving trajectories of contemporary human movement. The creation of a symbiosis between artmaking and the act of writing expands the literature of migration into a force field of possibilities, deploying intricate constellations of word and image to re-imagine narratives of migration.

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