Life writing through text and image in children's literature

A multimodal analysis of authenticity and dual address in autobiographical picture books

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There is no future without the path made to it by the past.
'This is all', Aidan Chambers (2005).

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Abstract

This study analyzes how artists construct the past and the self in autobiographical picture books through the interplay of text and image, and how this interplay affects both the authenticity of their life story and the intended audience of the book. Whereas textual life writing in children's literature has been studied earlier, this is barely the case for life writing in both text and image. Key theoretical issues in this study are conceptualizations of the terms 'life narrative' and 'picture book', motives for creating autobiographical picture books (misery and nostalgia), concepts of self and identity, and double or dual address of autobiographical picture books and their possible crossover appeal. Attention is paid to the impossibility of recalling the past and constructing the self objectively, since constructing a life narrative based on memory is a socially, culturally and historically influenced practice that involves individual meaning-making. Since the reader nevertheless reads the life narrative as 'authentic', the concept of authenticity is essential in this study.

In this study, a methodology of close multimodal textual and visual analysis is applied. The analysis uses concepts of transmediation and modality to study how the interplay of text and image relates to the elements involved in the model for analysis. This model consists of six elements, which are divided into sets of analytical research questions: the historical period addressed in the book, the construction of self and the presentation of identities, the process of remembering the artist went through, the deduced motive for creating the book, the authenticity of the life story, and its intended audience. The model for analysis is applied to four autobiographical picture books: *War boy* (Michael Foreman, 1989), *Tomi: a childhood under the nazi's* (Tomi Ungerer, 1998), *The wall* (Peter Sís, 2007) and *The house Baba built* (Ed Young, 2011).

The analysis shows that the construction of the past and the self is achieved by applying various forms of interplay, from simpler to more complex forms. Simpler interplay occurs in two nostalgic life narratives, which present the past in a simple, uncomplex way in a local and safe setting. It causes the constructed self to remain artificially separated in a past and present self and shows little development of the self. More complex interplay occurs in two misery life narratives, which provide readers with a broader, more subtle view on the past. It can show development of the self and can cause the past self and present self to merge into the single conceptual self that constitutes the autobiographical subject in time.

This study further results in an extended definition of authenticity. For textual life narratives, authenticity is determined by the author's demonstrated authority to tell the story, by the verifiability of historical information, and by how the past and present self relate: the past self must be credible and recognizable to enable the reader to identify with it, and the present self must reflect openly on the construction of the past and the past self. For life narratives that involve both text and image, authenticity is further determined by visual authenticity: images which straightforward refer to or represent reality (and thus can be interpreted mimetically), lead to a high degree of authenticity, but this does not mean that authenticity is decreased by images that cannot be interpreted mimetically. The case studies have shown that precisely because the interplay of text and image leads to an adjusted interpretation of the story, these particular images also contribute to narrating the artist's life story in an authentic way.

The picture books considered here can all be read by both (somewhat older) children and adults, though not every artist addresses child readers equally to adult readers. The determination of authenticity seems to work differently for child and adult readers: demontrated authority to tell te story functions alike, but the verifiability of historical facts and the adult narrator reflecting on the gap between the past self and the present self does not. The new concept of visual authenticity this study proposes, may also work differently for these audiences because child and adult readers can come to different interpretations of the interplay of text and image. All in all, autobiographical picture books prove to tell life stories in an extraordinary, profound way. Within the broad spectrum of life writing, they should be considered a genre of their own.

Abstract in Dutch

Dit onderzoek analyseert hoe in autobiografische prentenboeken het verleden en het zelf wordt geconstrueerd door tekst/beeld-interactie, en hoe dit de authenticiteit van het levensverhaal en het geïntendeerde publiek van het boek beïnvloedt. Waar tekstuele 'life writing' in jeugdliteratuur eerder is bestudeerd, geldt dit nauwelijks voor life writing in zowel tekst als beeld. De theoretische achtergrond van dit onderzoek wordt gevormd door de conceptualisering van de termen 'life narrative' en prentenboek, motieven om autobiografische prentenboeken te creëren (leed en nostalgie), de concepten zelf en identiteit, en dubbele of duale geadresseerdheid van autobiografische prentenboeken en hun eventuele aantrekkingskracht als 'crossover'-boeken. Er wordt daarnaast aandacht besteed aan de onmogelijkheid om zich het verleden objectief te herinneren en om het zelf objectief te construeren, omdat het creëren van een op herinneringen gebaseerd levensverhaal sociaal, cultureel en historisch is bepaald en individuele betekenistoekenning behelst. Hoewel objectiviteit onmogelijk is, wordt een levensverhaal toch gelezen als 'authentiek'. Het begrip 'authenticiteit' is daarom essentieel in dit onderzoek.

Er wordt een methode van multimodale (tekstuele en visuele) analyse toegepast. Door middel van een analyse van het transmediatieproces en een modaliteitsanalyse wordt onderzocht hoe tekst/beeld-interactie zich verhoudt tot de elementen in het analysemodel. Dit model omvat zes elementen, met elk een set analytische onderzoeksvragen: de historische periode in het boek, de constructie van het zelf en de presentatie van identiteiten, het herinneringsproces dat de kunstenaar heeft ervaren, het motief om het boek te maken, de authenticiteit van het levensverhaal, en het geïntendeerde publiek. Het model is toegepast op vier autobiografische prentenboeken, namelijk *War boy* (Michael Foreman, 1989), *Tomi: a childhood under the nazi's* (Tomi Ungerer, 1998), *The wall* (Peter Sís, 2007) en *The house Baba built* (Ed Young, 2011).

De analyse toont aan dat het verleden en het zelf worden geconstrueerd door diverse vormen van interactie toe te passen, van eenvoudige tot complexere vormen. Eenvoudige interactie zien we in twee nostalgische levensverhalen, die het verleden presenteren op een simpele, niet-complexe wijze, in een locale, veilige setting. Door deze interactie blijft er een kunstmatige scheiding in een vroeger en een huidig zelf, en is er weinig ontwikkeling van het zelf. Complexere interactie zien we in twee levensverhalen die op ervaren leed zijn gebaseerd. Deze levensverhalen bieden lezers een bredere, genuanceerdere kijk op het verleden. Het kan zelfontwikkeling tot stand brengen en kan het vroegere en huidige zelf doen samensmelten tot het enkele conceptuele zelf dat het autobiografisch subject eigenlijk is.

Daarnaast biedt dit onderzoek een nieuwe definitie van authenticiteit. In tekstuele levensverhalen wordt authenticiteit bepaald door de gedemonstreerde autoriteit om het verhaal te vertellen, de verifieerbaarheid van de historische informatie, en door de relatie van het verleden en het vroegere zelf: het vroegere zelf moet geloofwaardig en herkenbaar zijn zodat de lezer zich ermee kan identificeren, en het huidige zelf moet openlijk reflecteren op de constructie van het vroegere zelf en huidige zelf. In levensverhalen met tekst én beeld wordt authenticiteit daarnaast ook bepaald door visuele authenticiteit. Beelden die direct naar de werkelijkheid verwijzen (en dus mimetisch geïnterpreteerd worden), leiden tot een hoge mate van authenticiteit. Dat betekent niet dat beelden die niet mimetisch kunnen worden geïnterpreteerd de authenticiteit verminderen. De analyse laat zien dat in deze prentenboeken juist de interactie tussen tekst en beeld leidt tot een aangepaste interpretatie van het verhaal, waardoor deze specifieke beelden eveneens kunnen bijdragen aan de authenticiteit van het levensverhaal.

De bestudeerde boeken kunnen worden gelezen door (wat oudere) kinderen en volwassenen, hoewel niet elk boek kindlezers adresseert als gelijken aan volwassenen. Wat betreft authenticiteit lijkt de autoriteit om het verhaal te vertellen even belangrijk voor kinderen en volwassenen. Dat geldt niet voor de verifieerbaarheid van historische feiten en het reflecteren op de kloof tussen het vroegere en huidige zelf. Ook het nieuw voorgestelde concept van visuele authenticiteit kan verschillend werken omdat volwassenen en kinderen de tekst/beeld- interactie op verschillende manieren kunnen interpreteren. In het algemeen blijken autobiografische prentenboeken hun verhaal op bijzondere, diepgaande wijze te vertellen. Binnen het brede spectrum van life writing zouden ze daarom als een eigen genre moeten worden beschouwd.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Why study life narratives in picture books?

The research area of life narratives is highly relevant in the contemporary world. Societies seem to have become more and more individualistic in the past decades. Simultaneously, however, there are more shared life events in the public sphere than ever before, by (reality) television, magazines, social media, blogs and so on. At the same time, in this fast digital age, many of us seem to experience a longing to the past. We watch costume drama's on television, buy vinyls instead of mp3-files and surf the internet to find (images of) vintage clothing or accessoires. A striking example of this longing to our personal past and the desire to share this in public, was seen on the 16th and 17th of October, 2012, on the social media platform Twitter: hashtag '#mijnjeugd' ('my childhood') spontaneously became a trending topic in the Netherlands, which means in a short amount of time thousands of people shared short personal childhood memories in public via the internet.

Life narratives have an extensive tradition in the cultural field. Ever since ancient times, authors have been writing about their own lives and have recorded the lives of others. Religious documents such as the Bible and the Koran contain life stories, and St. Augustine's *Confessions*, written in 398 A.D., is the first known autobiography in Western society. From the nineteenth century onwards, literary research was directed to autobiography, studying for instance Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) and Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-1833) (Gusdorf, 1956). In contemporary society, the general accepted umbrella term for this phenomenon is 'life writing' (Eakin, 2004). Life writing takes place in a wide range of (artistic) disciplines, such as literature, documentaries, cinema, music lyrics, and blogs and other social media. The study of life writing combines this interesting tendency of telling the personal stories of our past to a public in contemporary society.

One medium through which life stories are told, is the picture book. Picture books combine the semiotic codes of text and image (Sipe, 1998; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001), thereby creating a story through the interplay of textual and visual elements. Since children's literature, and thereby the picture book, conveys all sorts of knowledge to an audience of young readers (Reynolds, 2007; Stephens, 1992; Hunt, 1990), I would argue it can also convey what is remembered by individuals in a particular society and how it is remembered (Smith & Watson, 2010). In this study, therefore, the act of life writing in picture books is examined by studying how an artist creates the past and the self through the interplay of text and image and how this affects the authenticity and the audience of the picture book. Creating a picture book based on memories of (an event in) one's own life seems a relatively simple process, but when we look closer at the process of creating it, it entails many problematic aspects. In order to unravel the act of life writing in relation to the interplay of text and image which characterizes picture books, we first need to make some distinctions, which enable us to define several important concepts in this study.

1.2 Some distinctions in life writing studies

The first distinction that has to be made, is a genre-based one. Smith and Watson (2001) make a useful and quite clear distinction between the genres of life writing, life narrative and autobiography. They consider *life writing* as a 'general term for writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject' (p. 3). Whereas life writing thus can include writing about someone else's life, *life narrative* is regarded as 'a somewhat narrower term that includes many kinds of self-referential writing, including autobiography [...]. [It] may be best approached as a moving target, a set of ever-shifting self-referential practives that engage the past in order to reflect on identity in the present' (p. 3). In the common sense of readers, this definition is usually applied to autobiography. Smith and Watson consider *autobiography* 'a particular practice of life narrative that emerged in the Enlightenment and has become canonical in the West.' It is privileged as the 'definitive achievement of a mode of life narrative', which celebrates the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story. Gusdorf (1956), for instance, emphasizes

the 'sovereign self' that is explored in autobiography. Postmodern and postcolonial criticism, however, rejected this hierarchy, since autobiography is placed above other types of life narrative by this canonization. In contemporary literature criticism, the term is therefore often seen as too narrow to capture all sorts of life narrative that exist in the world.

In a more recent edition of their book, Smith and Watson (2010) still emphasize this rejection of the traditional term 'autobiography'; they only use the adjective *autobiographical* to refer to self-referential writing. However, the further distinctions they make in the new edition are far from clear, as this contradiction shows: '[...] throughout we use the terms *life writing* and *life narrative* as more inclusive of the heterogeneity of self-referential practices. We understand *life writing* as a general term for writing that takes a life, one's own or another's, as its subject' (p. 4). The autobiographical form of this is what they call *self life writing*, but this term is immediately rejected because of its 'clumsiness' (p. 4). *Life narrative*, Smith and Watson proceed, is understood as 'a general term for acts of self-representation of all kinds and in diverse media that take the producer's life as their subject, whether written, performative, visual, filmic, or digital' (p. 4). Whereas this latter understanding of the term *life narrative* is clear, the description of *life writing* is far from clear. Does the term describe only self-referential writing, or does it also include non-self-referential writing? After stumbling over these definitions, Smith and Watson (2010) try to make things clearer by distinguishing 'autobiographical writing' from other genres of life writing: biography, the novel, and history – although the expected clarity is again decreased immediately by titling the next section '*Life Writing* and Biography' (p. 5, my italics). When we regard 'life writing' here indeed as 'self life writing', the distintions are nonetheless useful, because these three genres are common sense and widely used as marketing instruments. They can help us to get a grip on what 'self life writing' is, which is inportant since this study considers picture books in which the *own* life story is told. I will therefore discuss them briefly in what follows.

First, Smith and Watson (2010) emphasize the difference between self life writing[1] and *biography*. This is useful, since telling the own life usually also inevitably means to tell about the life of someone else, for example, of family members. Smith and Watson provide tools to characterize such a writing as self life writing *or* as biography. As Spender (1980, in Smith & Watson, 2010) states, self life writing confronts not one, but two interacting lives: the life (or as Spender says: the self) that others see, and the life that only is experienced by the narrator him- or herself. Biography, on the other hand, is characterized by the confrontation of only one life: Spender suggeststs the biographer can never truly get access to the self of the subject, but only sees his or her outer life. However, this may be nuanced a little: by using letters, diary entries and so on, the biographer at least attempts to get access to the subject's inner life. Next, time and timing differentiate biography and self life writing. Whereas self life writing must be written during the author's life, biography can be written when the subject has already passed away. Furthermore, self life writers and biographers base their stories on different kinds of evidence. A biography is based on multiple kinds of evidence, which can be and usually is evaluated for its validity. Self life writing, on the other hand, is based on personal memory. Of course other evidence can be used in self life writing, but merely to support, supplement or comment on the remembering. Self life writers are trying to persuade their readers of their version of experience, which is not externally verifiable, but is asserted on the authority of the self life writer. Finally, a narratological distinction can be made between biography and self life writing: whereas biography usually is written in the third person, a self life writer often uses the first person. Self life writing surely can also be written in the second or third person, but the difference here is that biography never can be written in the first person.

Second, Smith and Watson (2010) make a distinction between self life writing and the *novel*. These genres have many shared features, such as a plot, the use of dialogue, characterization and setting. These features are often ascribed to fictional writing, which makes it difficult to distinguish

[1] To be clear, Smith and Watson (2010) do not speak of 'self life writing' because of it assumed 'clumsiness'. However, I indeed use this term (and the term 'self life writer') consequently in this section, to distinguish self-referential writing from biography, the novel and history.

between self life writing and fiction. The interest of contemporary authors to blur the boundaries between the two complicates the matter even further. Smith and Watson consider 'the identification of authorial signature with the narrator' (p. 11) as the distinguishing mark of a self life writing, as Lejeune (1989) has pointed out. Lejeune regards the relationship between the author and reader in autobiographical writing as a contract, which he calls the *autobiographical pact*. In his famous definition of autobiography, Lejeune states it is written by 'a real person', which is defined as 'a person whose existence is certified by vital statistics and is verifiable' (Eakin, 1999, p. 2). These vital statistics, such as date of birth, are identical to those of the narrator. The person who claims the authorship – the narrator – is therefore recognized as the protagonist. If the reader acknowledges that such an autobiographical pact is claimed by the author (who is thus also recognized as the narrator and protagonist), the story is read as reflexive or autobiographical. Therefore, Smith and Watson state, we 'assess the narrative as making truth claims' (p. 11), which we do not when the text is considered fictional. However, Lejeunes theory is controversial in today's literature studies. This is because it degrades autobiography in its complexity, since it makes a too sharp distinction between the author and the narrative the author has written. As Eakin (1999) points out, it is not that simple: a life narrator has a 'narrative identity', which leads to an interaction between 'identity', or 'self', and 'narrative'. The self constructs the narrative, but the creation of the narrative also influences the self. Writing autobiography is not a process which simply results in the narrative as output: rather, 'we are always writing our lives in the act of living them, [and] we perform this life writing in narrative terms' (p. 123). In his dichotomy of author, narrator and protagonist on the one hand, and the narrative that is presented to the reader on the other hand, Lejeune does not reflect on the idea that 'narrative is not merely an appropriate form for the expression of identity [but that] it is an identity form' (p. 100). Nonetheless, the idea of the autobiographical pact is useful, but as a mere heuristic instrument. In this study, the concept is therefore used in a pragmatic way: it refers to the relationship of trust between author and reader, without making a too sharp distinction between the author and the narrative that is created. Next, Smith and Watson (2010) mention a temporal distinction between the novel and self life writing. Novelists are not bound to historical time, whereas self life writers 'have to anchor their narratives in the world of their own temporal, geographical and cultural milieu' (p. 11-12). In sum, Smith and Watson observe that novelists only have to meet the reader's expectation of a fictional world that is internally consistent. Self life writers, however, make references to the world outside the text and thus are bound to the world the reader is familiar with. We should be aware that, although this distinction is useful in general, it is also quite crude, for realist, historical and even fantasy novels also refer to a certain extent to the world outside the text, though they are all considered fictional.

Third, Smith and Watson (2010) distinguish between self life writing and *history*. They state that self life writing is no historical record: whereas it may contain controllable facts, it is not factual history about a specific time, person or event. Rather, it offers the reader a 'subjective truth' (p. 13). Self life writing, as Popkin (1999, in Smith & Watson, 2010) states, 'privilege[s] a temporal framework based on the individual's lifespan, whereas historical narrative takes place in collective time' (p. 13). The concrete, personal time is arbitrary and therefore does not have to address particular moments of shared experience that are important in the 'collective time' of a society. Next, self life writers and historians differ in their use of personal narrative. Historians try to achieve objectivity by keeping distance from their material: they avoid references to themselves in the narrative. Self life writers, on the other hand, are in the middle of the history that is told, and are interested in how larger forces, conditions or events influence their life stories. As Smith and Watson state: 'in the details and the immediacy of the lived lives of such autobiographical narrators [i.e. self life writers, *M.S.*], the political and cultural contexts of the historical past become vivid and memorable' (p. 14).

By considering the distinctions Smith and Watson (2010) make, we can conclude that self life writing creates different expectations for the reader than are created in fiction, which is actually based on a willing suspension of disbelief (a term first used by Coleridge in the early 19th century; Schaper, 1978) or by the controllable evidence on which biography and history writing are based. This implies, because the same person is both the narrator and the protagonist in the text, that we can never decide

whether 'the truth' is told in the text. Smith and Watson therefore distinguish *autobiographical claims* (like date of birth, which is verifiable) from *autobiographical truth,* which can be understood as an intersubjective exchange between the narrator and reader, in order to achieve a shared understanding of the meaning of a life. As far as self life writing is concerned, a story never can be 'true' or 'false'. When this genre is examined, then, the main question is not about assessing and verifying knowledge, but rather about observing how this shared understanding between author and reader is achieved.

1.3 Conceptualizations

It may be clear by now that, although some very useful distinctions can be made, there is still overlap or even disarray between the various terms that are used within the study of life writing in general. Even though Smith and Watson (2010) try to make some distinctions, the themselves use several terms interchangeably and are not completely clear in what they mean by them. Moreover, whereas Smith and Watson (2010) focus on distinguishing between genres of life writing, we could also regard these genres not in terms of distinctions, but in terms of overlap. Kokkola (2003), for instance, emphasizes that is is hardly possible to make sharp distinctions in the genre of life writing and presents three subgenres of life writing (fiction, biography and biography) in a Venn-diagram. Partly, these subgenres are separate, but there are also books in which these subgenres overlap each other (p. 91). In short, it is not easy nor completely conventional to stick to only one term when studying the genre of life writing. In this study, the overlap of subgenres is however of little interest: the focus is on texts that can be fairly unproblematically classified as autobiographical texts. In Kokkola's Venn-diagram, they would fall into the section that represents 'autobiography'. I prefer to use the term *life narrative*, since this regards not only written forms of life writing (Smith & Watson, 2010): picture books ask for a term which also includes the visual mode. I will alternate this term with the somewhat more common term *life story*. Both terms refer in this study to the *self-referential* practice of writing and drawing the own life, since there are no picture books included in the corpus that are, in the traditional sense of the word, biographical. Like Smith and Watson, I will use the common adjective *autobiographical* to refer to this self-referentiality, as the title of this study already indicated. It may be clear by now that I use *life writing* as a broad genre term, to refer to the category of writing that takes someone's life as its subject matter.

A similar definition problem is encountered in this study with the term 'authenticity'. This concepts is often used in critical literature, but is seldom formally defined. As Bal (2002) points out by using the notion of 'travelling concepts', concepts can operate in various disciplines because they are elastic and can have several meanings. As the research field of life writing is truly an interdisciplinairy area – drawing on insights of history, narratology, psychoanalytics, cognitive research, traumatology, cultural studies and many others – concepts are transferred from one discipline to another, which can complicate the meaning and the use of certain concepts. In this study, this applies not only to the term 'authenticity', but also to 'nostalgia'. This latter concept has different meanings when considered in various perspectives – nostalgia in a psychological sense differs from nostalgia as a commodity. To forestall confusion about important terms used in this study, a pragmatic working definition of any significant concept will be given as soon as it is introduced in the theoretical framework in chapter 2.

Before turning to the outline of this study, there is one main concept left that needs to be defined. Since picture books are considered, the term 'texts' in this study refers to documents that contain both the textual and the visual mode. Picture books are characterized here, following Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), as books with a more or less equal amount of images and text (the images may even dominate), in which both these modes work together to tell the story. Jalongo (2004) mentions the conventional length of the picture book, usually containing 32 pages. The picture book is distinguished from the illustrated book, in which the text plays the largest role in telling the story and in which the images are literally 'illustrative'. Compared to the difficulties of defining the genre and subgenres of life writing, the characterization of the term 'picture books' seems relatively simple. We will see, however, that the genre of picture books still is very broad, that it often contains surprizing and innovative techniques

resulting from hybridization with other literary genres and art disciplines, and that it can be far from the prejudiced notion of an 'easy' book containing a straightforward story for the so-called average five-year-old.

1.4 Outline of the study

In this study, the focus lays on picture books created by an individual artist, who is telling the own life story. The primary works that will be analyzed, are *War boy* by Michael Foreman (1989), *Tomi: a childhood under the nazi's* by Tomi Ungerer (1998; first published in 1991), *The wall* by Peter Sís (2007) and *The house Baba built* by Ed Young (2011). The main research question addressed in this study, is:

How do artists construct the past and the self in autobiographical picture books through the interplay of text and image, and how does this interplay determine the authenticity of their life story, and the intended audience of the book?

As the concept of life narrative is already defined in this introduction, the theoretical framework in chapter 2 will start with addressing the motives for creating a life narrative. In section 2.1, the focus will therefore be on creating life narratives based on experienced misery and creating them based on nostalgia. In section 2.2, there will be considered to which extent the life narrator is able to recall the past objectively. Since this relates to a 'self in the past' and a 'self in the present', in section 2.3 the concepts of the 'autobiographical subject', 'self' and 'identity' will be defined. Section 2.4 reflects on the self being merely a construction rather than a reconstruction. Regardless this constructedness, the reader seems to read a life story as an *authentic* account of life. To examine this phenomenon, a working definition of the concept of 'authenticity' will be provided in section 2.5. In section 2.6, the concept of 'address' in relation to picture books will be considered, since picture books are constructed by adults and are likely to be co-read by adults.

After having introduced and defined the theoretical concepts, chapter 3 regards 'methodology and material'. First, this chapter addresses the general method applied in this study, focussing on theories on the interaction between text and image (Sipe, 1998) and modality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). In section 3.2, the model for analysis is provided, derived from the topics addressed in chapter 2. The model contains six elements, which are divided into sets of analytical research questions: the historical period addressed in the picture book, the construction of self and identities, the artist's reflection on the process of remembering, the deduced motive for creating the picture book, the authenticity of the life story, and the concept of address. In section 3.3, the primary literature is introduced by focussing on why these books can be regarded picture books and life narratives. Chapter 4, then, analyzes each primary work in terms of the research questions provided in the model for analysis. Chapter 5, finally, forms the conclusion and discussion and will therefore connect the theoretical notions addressed in chapter 2 to the results of the analysis.

Chapter 2. Theorizing autobiographical picture books

2.1 Motives for creating life narratives

What motives do authors have for creating a life narrative? Gusdorf (1956) states the autobiographer has traditionally seen it as his task to bring out the most hidden aspects of the individual human being. Since people have known they themselves, rather than the cosmic cycles or the hand of God, are to a certain extent responsible for history, they have started to investigate and reflect on their intentions, their motivations, their actions and the consequences of these actions. This exploration of self-consciousness is still an important motive for writing autobiographies today. It is however not limited to the contemporary self-consciousness; an autobiographer is likely to reflect also on the past self and its development toward the current self. As Lathey (1999) states: 'Autobiography is a natural site for [...] exploration of the younger self' (p. 19). In addition to this rather general motive for exploring the self, we can discern more specific motivations for telling one's own life story. These motives can roughly be divided into two categories.

The first category of motive would be the recalling of a traumatic event. We could think of, amongst others, war or genocide autobiography, ethnic minority autobiography, disability or illness autobiography, and autobiography with themes such as the loss of a loved one, drug addiction, abuse, incest, and so on, as texts where this motivation is central. Rothe (2011) captures narratives about traumatic events in the term 'misery literature' or 'mis lit'. In this study, I will transform Rothe's term into 'misery autobiography', since autobiography, rather than 'literature' in general, is the object that is investigated here. Misery autobiography has several functions for the author, the reader and for society in general. First, it can function as therapeutic intervention for the author, who tries to cope with what has happened to him or her. This type of writing is also called 'scriptotherapy' (Henke, in Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 29). Second, it is a way to honor and respect the people who have lived through or are living through the same events and to offer them recognition. Furthermore, misery autobiography can be written to contribute to the preservation of the collective memory. This mainly counts for autobiographies about traumatic events which affected many people, such as war, genocide, Apartheid and 9/11, to give a few examples. These types of misery autobiography can also function as a warning for the future, because readers are likely to think: 'we cannot let this happen ever again'. We could take Primo Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* (*If this is a man*, 1947) as just one of the many striking examples. In children's literature, examples are – although it is a diary and not an autobiography – Anne Frank's *The diary of a young girl* (first published as *Het Achterhuis* in 1947), Johanna Reiss's *The upstairs room* (1990) and *No pretty pictures: a child of war* by Anita Lobel (2000). What is interesting here is that the authors of most misery autobiographies tend to speak not just for themselves, but for a larger group of people. Sommer (1988) gives several examples of women's testimonials, in which the authors emphasize that not only their own life story is told, but thereby also the story of other people. By declaring to represent other members of a certain group, autobiography is no longer only a means to show how history influenced a specific life, but it can also become a powerful act of resistance against an established order (Beard, 2010). Finally, the various forms of misery autobiography show the reader a counter story, opposite to the story which is usually presented to them. In our daily life, we mostly see the perspective of the majority of people in society; we are less often confronted with the experiences of, for example, ill or disabled persons or ethnic minorities. Autobiography, then, can give readers an inside glimpse of a life that is different from their own, which may broaden their vision on society and the world we all live in, as in the case of, for instance, disability and ethnic autobiography; see for example Frank (2004) on disability life writing, and Gullestad (2004) on ethnic minority life writing.

The second type of motive for writing an autobiography would be nostalgia. The term 'nostalgia' is composed from the Greek 'nostos', which means 'returning home', and 'algia', which means 'longing' (Boym, 2001, p. xiii). This longing may go hand in hand with feelings of dissatisfaction in the present, which can address both the individual life and society in general. Writing an autobiography, then, can

function as a flight out of the present society and recreate and bring a tribute to one's childhood and the events, the people and the atmosphere in that time. Nostalgia may also, as Hutcheon (1998) points out, not actually refer to 'returning home', but rather depend on 'the *irrecoverable* nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal. It is the very pastness of the past, its inaccessibility, that likely accounts for a large part of nostalgia's power [...]. This is rarely the past as actually experienced, of course; it is the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire. In this sense, however, nostalgia is less about the past than about the present' (p. 19-20). In Hutcheon's terms, then, nostalgia is characterized by projecting present longings on the past. Urban (2007) emphasizes that nostalgia is in current research understood as a sentimental longing for a *fictionalized* past. It is not the true past: 'the nostalgic mind gazes uncritically back at its past and longs for that moment to return. It does so because the present lacks the simplicity, the values, the opportunities – a set of indeterminate qualities that make the past so desirable' (p. 325). In this study, which investigates the phenomenon of sharing personal life stories in public, the paradox of nostalgia is interesting. Longing, Boym argues, increases our empathy toward other human beings and is the part of nostalgia that we share. 'Nostos', however, returning home, 'is what divides us' (p. xvi). How, then, would a life narrator try to achieve mutual understanding about his or her personal life story?

Boym (2001) divides the concept of nostalgia into two types: restorative and reflective nostalgia. She argues that restorative nostalgia aims at a reconstruction of the past (which is, I would argue, symbolized by the 'lost home'). Restorative nostalgia aims at telling the truth and forming a tradition. When one practices restorative nostalgia, one focuses on the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition. There is 'no use for the signs of historical time – patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections' (p. 45). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, 'is not on recovery of what is peceived to be an absolute truth, but on the meditation on history and the passage of time' (p. 49). It is based on the longing to the past itself, but it does not recover a part of the past for the present. Rather, it is an experiment with time and space. Whereas restorative nostalgia 'ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space' (p. 49). Restorative nostalgia is seen as a very serious act, Boym argues, whereas reflective nostalgia can be ironic and humorous. Furthermore, reflective nostalgia is based on 'shared social frameworks of memory' (p. 52), frameworks based on our cultural memory, which we encounter in everyday life. These frameworks allow us to see that individual memories can suggest multiple narratives. Various persons will remember a certain social-cultural event all in a different way. If we are practicing restorative nostalgia, we will try to seek the resemblance in their memories, in order to form a continuous sort of 'truth' about the event. From the reflective nostalgic perspective, however, we acknowledge that the different memories suggest multiple narratives, which are all influenced by different social contexts.

Especially in the case of autobiography for children, these two forms of nostalgia are of particular interest. Lathey (1999) mentions nostalgia originally is a Romantic tradition, in which childhood is idealized. This idealization of childhood also has been been specific to children's literature for a long time. Until around the 1970s, the idea of the 'heile Kinderwelt' was central in many children's books, which literally means 'intact children's world': traditionally, children's literature conveys the message of the existence of a good, beautiful and safe world (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008). This, I would argue, conveys a sort of oneness rather than multiple views on society and mankind. Therefore, restorative nostalgia shows a striking similarity with the notion of the 'heile Kinderwelt'. However, since the 1970s, the 'heile Kinderwelt' had to make way for realism in children's literature. The 'heile Kinderwelt' in its original form is seldom seen in contemporary children's literature, although it still has a strong inheritance (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008, p. 175). In most misery literature for children, a message of hope is conveyed. Usually, possibilities for change and improvement are elaborated and complete skepticism and disillusion are avoided. Because of the heritage of the idea of the 'heile Kinderwelt' as suitable for child readers, we may expect that autobiographical picture books for children also contain some of these idyllic elements. This study explores whether this indeed is the case, and if so, whether one type of nostalgia – restorative or reflective – is dominant in contemporary autobiographical

picture books. Attention will also be paid to how nostalgia, if at all, can be combined with elements of misery that may be present in the life narratives analyzed in this study?

In terms of nostalgia, remembering seems to be regarded as an active process. Even though nostalgia is defined as a longing for a fictionalized past, the distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia implies that the life narrator has full control over what is remembered and how this memory is used to create a narrative. An objective recalling of the past, however, is considered impossible, as will be elaborated in the next section.

2.2 The impossibility of recalling the past

Is it possible to remember everything from one's past exactly as it was? In current research, it is widely accepted that it is not. It is simply impossible to remember every event, every conversation and every detail of our life: we lack the cognitive capacity to do so. Moreover, our memories are always deformed by the subconscious, as Freud has argued (De Bloois & Peeren, 2010). This subconscious deformation is determined by factors that are beyond our grasp.

Nelson (1993, in Smith & Watson, 2010) argues that we learn what to remember in our early childhood. What we remember and what we do not, is determined by the people around us, and therefore by our society and culture. Certain ways of remembering, Smith and Watson state, are 'elicited, acknowledged, [and] valued' (p. 22). Memory is thus socially and culturally charged. Memory is also, by extension, historically charged. In this context, Olney (1998) states there are two models of memory which show us how the process of remembering can change over time. First, he distinguishes the archaeological model of memory, which is spatial. By 'digging down' in his memory, the life narrator recovers memories which he believes are 'unchanged'. This model of memory seems to relate to the act of restorative nostalgia and contrasts with the second model Olney distinguishes: the processual model of memory. This model is temporal and results in memories that are constantly deformed and newly shaped. Remembering is then considered a process of 'weaving', in which new forms of memories are constructed. Related thereto, Smith and Watson argue it is historically specific *how* people remember, *what* they remember and *who* does the remembering. Since memory is historically inflected, it is also affected by its situational context. Smith and Watson argue that 'the memory evoked in autobiographical narrative is specific to the time and the contexts of telling. It is never isolatable fact, but situated association' (p. 24). Rosenfield (1988) states convincingly: 'Every context will alter the nature of what is recalled' (as cited in Eakin, 1999, p. 19). Because these contexts are politically charged, 'remembering also has a politics' (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 24). These politics of remembering determine what is remembered and what is forgotten, and who is allowed to do this remembering. This leads to cultural production of knowledge about the past. Remembering, then, is never truly individual, autonomous and objective. Not only are the personal memories and sources of memory (photographs, objects, family stories) of life narrators shaped by social, cultural, historical, situational and political influences, they also make use of public sources that are affected by these influences, such as documents or recordings of historical events. The act of personal remembering, as Smith and Watson conclude, is therefore always social and collective. Life narratives, thus, are 'records of acts of interpretation by subjects inescapably in historical time, and in their relation to their own ever-moving pasts' (p. 30).

While memory is the physical dimension of the autobiographical subject, 'experience' is the temporal dimension. Experience, Smith and Watson (2010) argue, is mediated through memory and language and is therefore already 'an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present' (p. 31). Gusdorf (1956) already stated that an autobiography is never an objective reproduction of the past, but is always a representation of it: it retraces a development over time and 'it recomposes and interprets a life in its totality' (in Broughton, 2007, p. 85). An autobiography is first and foremost an interpretation of the past. Gusdorf (1956) and later on Olney (1972) assumed autobiography is a fixation of the uniqueness of an individual, as Lathey (1999) points out. Even though it is accepted that emotional development and a change in the social-historical

environment occurs, Olney states there always is an underlying 'oneness' of the self: 'there is [...] an internal harmony that holds together the multiplicity and continual transformations of being' (as cited in Lathey, 1999, p. 6). However, this point of view is no longer valid in contemporary autobiographical criticism. Since the origination of (post-)structuralist perspectives on literature, it is widely accepted that social forces and semiotic codes shape a text. It is therefore no longer possible to see the life narrator as a unique, unchanging self (Lathey, 1999). Furthermore, Smith and Watson (2010) state, following Scott (1992), that meaningful experience is socially produced. Experience, then, is the ongoing process that forms a person as a subject, which owns socially constructed and changing identities. For these reasons, we can no longer hold on to Gusdorfs (1956) and Olneys (1972) notions of the sovereign, coherent self. Eakin (1999) speaks in this context about 'the myth of autonomy' (p. 43).

Notice that the terms 'subject', 'self' and 'identity' are closely related here. In critical literature on autobiography, the concepts often are used interchangeably. In the next section, therefore, we will take a closer look on these concepts and the way they are used and can be defined.

2.3 The autobiographical subject: self and identity

Smith and Watson (2010) use the term 'autobiographical subject', but do not explicitly define it. Implicitly, they seem to refer with this term to the person who does the autobiographical writing, and therefore becomes the subject of his or her own writing. So, the life narrator or autobiographer is the writing agent who tells the story about the own life, and the autobiographical subject is the one *the autobiography is about*. This is, by definition, the same person.

Since autobiography is usually written in retrospective, the autobiographer is interpreting a distant past. As Lejeune (1989) mentions, in the mean time he or she has become another human being than the person who actually lived through the described events. History in general is, as White (1975; 1990, in De Bloois & Peeren, 2010) states, a narrative by definition. It is not neutral, transparent or objective, but is rather formed by the narration itself: it is subject to literary techniques like selection, narrative perspective, style, and so on. This also counts for personal history which is made public through a life narrative: not only is there a *self in the present* who selects and interprets memories, but the narrative itself links the *self in the past* to this present self. This refers to what Eakin (1999) calls 'narrative identity': the self narrates, but is also formed by the narration (note again the confusion between the terms 'self' and 'identity' here, on which I will say more in a moment). As Rosenfield (1992) states: 'Every recollection refers not only to the remembered event or person or object but to the person who is remembering' (as cited in Eakin, 1999, p. 19). The self, then, is a constructed entity which is based on the narrative of one's own life.

The autobiographical subject, thus, consist of a past self and a present self. We should keep in mind that these categories, although formally distinguished in life narratives, have no clear boundaries. Depending on the range of the past period that is described in the narrative, the past self changes: the self of a five-year-old is different from the self of a ten-year-old. Neisser (1988) even distinguishes five kinds of self-knowledge, which establish various aspects of the self based on the cognitive and psychosocial development during childhood. In this study, the fifth self is central: the conceptual self. This self seems to involve all the previous forms of selfhood distinguished by Neisser, and is by Eakin (1999) characterized as a sort of receptacle of various kinds of self-information that form the self as a category, such as social roles and personal traits. This conceptual self changes and evolves as life goes on, and, as Eakin argues, is shaped by the fact that we regard our own lives in terms of narrative. As the conceptual self evolves from the age of five or six and this process proceeds during our lives, this self is the most 'changing' one of the selves Neisser distinguishes.

In reality, we cannot make the distinction between Neisser's (1988) five selves as strictly as he does theoretically. Neisser himself emphasizes that they are 'not generally experienced as separate and distinct' (p. 36). The concept of 'self', then, is most certainly not a united, fixed entity. In this study, 'self' refers to the conceptual self, which can best be seen as a fluid, narrative-based concept that changes during life, enabling us to reflect on our thoughts, feelings, actions, social interactions, bodies,

and so on. However, regardless the fluency of the concept of self, in this study it is useful to make a pragmatic distinction between the past self and the present self. This namely enables us to analyze a communicative situation specific to children's literature: it is likely that for the life narrator an intended child reader resembles the own past self. How, then, does the adult narrator (the present self) tell about an event he or she (as the past self) experienced during childhood to this specific audience?

Whereas the self may consist of various stages and, in life narrative, can be formally divided into a past self and a present self, the reader is nonetheless able to *identify* the selves as referring to the same person (Lejeune, 1989). This is exactly what the life narrator wants to achieve: he or she tries to persuade the reader that the life story being told is *his or her own* life story. How does the life narrator accomplish this? Smith and Watson (2010) state that 'autobiographical acts involve narrators in 'identifying' themselves to the reader. [They] make themselves known by acts of identification' (p. 38). Identities are socially constructed, based on categories such as gender, ethnic background, class, generation, sexuality and nationality. They are always based on a continuum between two poles: girl-boy, child-adult, homosexual-heterosexual, and so on. Identities are provisional and thus changing over time. I would argue identities are more or less parallell to the 'diverse forms of self-information' which establish the conceptual self (Eakin, 1999, p. 23). Our conceptual self consists of multiple identities, shown to the outer world by the social roles we take. Even in one day, we identify ourselves in the social roles of, for instance, a woman, a roommate, a daughter, a customer, a student and an employee. Moreover, some of our identities can change over time. Identities partly based on 'embodiment', such as gender and ethnicity, usually do not change, but socially constructed identities do: one can identify him- or herself as a student, but only for a relatively small period of time. Thus, not only do the past self and the present self both consist of multiple identities, these identities are also changing over time.

We thus cannot deny that identities are productions which are always in process, as Hall (1994, in Smith & Watson, 2010) argues. Identities often are hybrid and intersectional, and are shaped by movement through time and space. Regardless these multiple, changing identities, we still are able to recognize someone as a specific person. We could think of Michael Jackson, whose identities changed radically during his life: in an embodied sense, he got a different skincolor, but also his social identities changed. At first sight it would almost be impossible to identify the Michael Jackson of the 1970s and the Michael Jackson of the 2000s as the same person. The life narrative is essential here: only by having knowledge of Michael Jackson's life narrative, we can identify these two apparently completely different persons as one and the same person. The life narrative, then, is the glue that sticks the various identities together in the form of one autobiographical subject with a present self and a past self. Because of the life narrative, the reader of an autobiography identifies this present self and past self as belonging to one and the same autobiographical subject.

2.4 The construction of self in life narratives

The past self and the present self in a life narrative, identified as one autobiographical subject, have a complex relationship with each other. Past identities have shaped and may still shape present identities. The present self, therefore, is in a sense the result of the past self. Yet at the same time, the present self reflects in retrospect on the past self. In this context, Usher (1998) calls what is created in a life narrative a *presentation* rather than a *re*presentation of the past. She states: 'it is now [...] generally accepted that an autobiography is not immediately referential of a life but is instead a work of [...] fabrication that involves a re-constructing or 'presentation' (rather than a representation) of the self through the process of textual inscription' (p. 19). As we have already seen, remembering is a process of meaning-making, even if the event that is remembered may have had several meanings on the moment it happened, or indeed had no meaning at all. This process of the present self giving meaning to events in the past, is 'not only recalling the past, but recreating it' (p. 20). It leads to discovering and re-inventing the self: 'the meaning of the self and of the past are not recoverable in

their original, unmediated form' (p. 20). Usher states both the past and the self are 'decentred', which means the life narrator reflects on both from another time and place and as another human being.

Even though her notion of 'decentration' is useful to understanding what happens in remembering and how the past self and the present self relate to each other, Usher (1998) leaves out the fact that the self and the past are socially constructed concepts. Van Lierop (1997) does make a distinction between the individual and the social context. She states there are four layers of time in autobiographical narratives: 'the time then and now of the individual, and the time then and now of the social context' (p. 410). This distinction between four layers of time shows that, when writing a life narrative, the present self of the narrator grants meaning to the past self and to the social context of the past, in turn influenced by the social context of the present. Because (much) time has gone by between the moment of experience and the moment of recalling, 'repetition of *past and self* is always repetition with a difference', as Eakin (1999, p. 104, my italics) notes. Thus, both the social context and the flow of time determine our notion of self. The influence of 'time' can be seen in the notion of self being indeed a notion of our life narrative, as was pointed out in the previous section. We do not have a notion of self in bits and pieces, but rather think of ourselves *in time*: we create an evolving narrative on which our notion of self is based. The concepts of self and time are therefore strongly related. The act of creating a life narrative by an adult belongs, as Eakin (1999) notes, to a continuous, lifelong trajectory of self-narration, which starts from childhood on the moment language evokes.

As we have seen, it is impossible to recall our complete personal past in a truly objective way. Not only do we lack sufficient cognitive capacities to do so, we also inevitably give meaning to past events as we narrate them. Narrative *constructs* the past, and therefore constructs the past self and the present self. Memory, experience and identity are discursive: they are constructed in language (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 32). Miller (2004) expresses this from the autobiographer's perspective: 'when I sit down to reconstruct my past, I call on memory; but when memory fails, I let language lead. The words take me where I need to go' (p. 150). The above discussion, then, has shown that concepts of self, narrative, time and social context are strongly interwoven and constantly influence each other. Our 'self' is not free-standing and consciously accessible, and autobiography is therefore also no longer seen as the 'master narrative' serving a sovereign, autonomous self.

This view on the genre of autobiography is widely acknowledged in current research, not in the least as a result of the rise of postmodernist views on literature and life narratives. Postmodernism is characterized by, amongst other things, the impossibility of a fixed meaning of a cultural phenomenon, the finishing of universal perspectives on events, and a fragmentary understanding of identity (De Bloois & Peeren, 2010, p. 229). Postmodernism therefore acknowledges there are numerous stories which portray the past, and every story in itself has numerous meanings. Here, we see that Boym's (2001) notion of reflective nostalgia strongly relates to postmodernism, since this form of nostalgia also acknowledges the multiplicity of memories of the past. Since postmodernism has become the standard in literary criticism, it is accepted that personal history can only be put into words by interpreting the past events and crediting meaning to them, that this interpretation differs from person to person, and that we never can interpret our personal past in a fully conscious, autonomous way. In terms of nostalgic remembering of the past, reflective nostalgia therefore seems to be the most 'accepted' form. Postmodernism counteracts the ideas of wholeness, continuity and one 'truth' that characterize restorative nostalgia.

All this, however, does not mean that 'anything goes'. By establishing an autobiographical pact (Lejeune, 1989), there is a relationship of trust between the life narrator and the reader. Based on this pact, the reader reads the life narrative as an *authentic* personal story. In the next paragraph, therefore, the concept of authenticity will be explored.

2.5 Authenticity

In the previous section, we have seen that the construction of the past and the self in a life narrative does not happen in a sovereign, autonomous way. There is, however, a discrepancy in the way a life

narrative is created and the way the reader conceives it. Usher (1998) states that a life narrative is read as a referential of life, as if it is indeed an account of a 'centred' self and past. That is: the reader reads autobiography 'through the need for a 'human' presence in the writing' (p. 21). When this human presence is discovered, Usher argues, the reader gets a feeling of sincerity and authenticity. Usher seems to follow Lejeune (1989) here, who claims the autobiographical subject is referential to the world beyond the text. Sprinker (1981), on the other hand, emphasizes the subject being a fiction, as in autobiography 'concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text' (as cited in Eakin, 1999, p. 2). This opposition shows what Eakin calls 'the conceptual impasse that confronts theorists of autobiography in the age of postmodernism' (p. 3). It is because of this impasse that Eakin suggests we should no longer try to decide which of the perspectives is the most legimate. Rather, we should '[ask] what such texts can teach us about the ways in which individuals in a particular culture experience their sense of being 'I'' (p. 4). In this study, this point of view is taken one step further: here is investigated *how* life narrators capture that sense of being 'I', that sense of self, in such a text consisting of words and images.

Smith and Watson (2010) state that '[the reader expects] particular kinds of stories to be told by those who have a direct and personal knowledge of that experience' (p. 236). This brings us back to the autobiographical pact: the reader always has certain expectations of a life narrative. Because of the pact between the life narrator and the reader, the reader reads a life narrative not as fiction, but as referring to the past life of the author whose name is on the book cover. As the autobiographical pact is established and there is thus a relation of trust between the reader and the author, the reader reads the life narrative as *authentic*. It is, however, not quite clear what the term 'authentic' means.

In most critical literature on autobiography, the term 'authenticity' is widely used but seldomly defined. Everyone seems to have a gut feeling about what authenticity is, but at the same time the term seems very broad. Because of the lack for a useful definition of 'authenticity' in the literature, I unraveled the term here based on definitions in the Oxford Dictionary. 'Authentic' is defined there as: 'based on facts; accurate or reliable'. This raises a new question: what do the concepts 'accurate' and 'reliable' mean? These terms are defined as 'correct in al details; exact', respectively 'consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted'. Authenticity thus seems to have to do with the right details, but also with being able to trust someone – the author as well as the narrator and the protagonist, in case of a life narrative. When is one trustworthy, then? The Oxford Dictionary defines 'trustworthy' as 'able to be relied on as honest or truthful', in other words: one is trustworthy when someone assumes he or she is telling the truth. In sum, authenticity implies accuracy and reliability, concepts which imply giving the correct details and being trustworthy. The latter, in turn, implies telling what is assumed to be true.

Having somewhat unraveled the term 'authenticity', it is hardly surprising it is barely defined in literature on autobiography. Authenticity is used as an umbrella term, referring to different concepts. Literary scholars mostly seem to consider authenticity as referring to human experience. As Smith and Watson (2010) mention, authenticity often is linked to authority. Does the narrator have personal knowledge of an experience and does he or she, therefore, have the right to tell a certain story? For historians, authenticity appears to be a different concept. As we saw in the introduction of this study, historians are focussed on the verifiability of historical facts and try to keep their personal story out of the historical narrative. Authenticity in the historical sense, then, seems to refer to what is as close to an objective historical fact as is possible. In a historical novel, for instance, the depiction of clothing, habits, living spaces and objects has to be 'authentic' in order to accurately reflect the historical period. For scholars in social sciences, authenticity may mostly relate to people's behaviour. Authenticity could in this sense reflect sincerity and honesty in social interactions with others, and can be opposed to hypocritic and disingenuous behavior. Finally, from a (socio)linguistic perspective, the concepts of authenticity may be deployed to reflect on one's use of language. Does, for instance, a child's tone of voice and vocabulary meet the use of language of an average child? Literary, television and film critics all can refer to authenticity in this (socio)linguistic sense.

In all of these cases, the concept of authenticity seems to oppose to 'constructedness', which means the 'real experience' is contrasted to the story that is constructed based on this experience. Moreover, authenticity is connected to diverse notions of 'truth'. That is, to avoid being entangled in a philosophical discussion, the notions of what *the public regards to be true.* Since poststructuralism is the standard in literary criticism, it is acknowledged 'truth' is different for each of us; a text does not consist of several pieces which form one fixed meaning together. The reader also gives a particular meaning to the text, and therefore we accept that a text has different meanings and various 'truths' for its readers. As was briefly outlined in the introduction, Smith and Watson (2010) mention that life narratives do make truth claims, but that we cannot regard these texts in terms of 'true' and 'false'. 'Authenticity', then, cannot be based on a reader's judgement about the assumed 'truth' of the life narrative. Following Eakin (1999), it is far more interesting to investigate *how* the assumed authenticity is established. How does a life narrator present his or her story *as being authentic*? As a life narrative is embedded in a social context, it cannot be considered from a literary perspective alone. The historical perspective is of importance as well, as is the linguistic perspective, since a life narrative is transferred in language.

The working definition of a life narrative presented as being authentic, then, is that it is (1a) created by someone who, based on his or her own experiences, has the authority to do so and also in the narrative (1b) demonstrates to have this authority. Further, there needs to be (2) the possibility to verify the factual claims, that are made in the narrative about described historical events (such as dates, actions, locations and uses of material), in external sources. Finally, (3) the constructed self in the life narrative has to resemble an average person in terms of behavior and use of language, in order to be recognizable for the reader and to enable the reader to identify with the self in the story. In short, authenticity is in this working definition thus based on three aspects: (demonstrated) authority, verifiability of historical facts, and recognizability of the constructed self and the possibility to identify with it.

The analysis in chapter 4 will examine to which extent this working definition is applicable when authenticity is actually considered in relation to life narratives in picture books. It may be that authenticity works differently for text and images. Would images that, for instance, do not reflect reality in a straightforward way detract from the degree of authenticity? Or does an artistic depiction of experienced events in the past precisely strengthen the authenticity of the life narrative? It may also be that the concept of authenticity works differently for child and adult readers. It is acknowledged that picture books are created for and enjoyed by both children and adults, but the concept of authenticity may affect the way they are addressed and may be of unequal importance for both audiences. In the discussion in chapter 5 I will reflect on how the analysis of the primary literature confirms or challenges the working definition of 'authenticity' in terms of text and image, and in terms of a dual audience. This latter concept will first be further explained in the following section.

2.6 Autobiographical picture books: a dual audience

The genre of picture books is traditionally intended for young readers (Nodelman, 1988). In bookstores and libraries, picture books are usually found in the children's section. Most of these books are indeed created for a young audience. However, as Scott (2005) states, picture books are often enjoyed by a dual audience: adults and children are reading them together, as young children cannot read by themselves yet. According to Shavit (1999), in children's literature the adult is an additional addressee beside the child. Nikolajeva (2005) states that 'authors [of children's literature, *M.S.*] can hardly help addressing the adult co-reader alongside the child [...] consciously or subconsciously' (p. 262). Based on an assumed asymmetrical power position of children and adults – adults having more reading and life experience than children – Nikolajeva distinguishes two ways of addressing the adult co-reader: double address, when the author/illustrator speaks to the adult co-reader over the child's head and therefore does not completely respect the child reader, and dual (or equal) address, when child and adult co-reader are addressed on the same level, in their own rights (p. 263). Dual address

acknowledges that a story has different levels of interpretation. From this point of view, it does not matter if a child does not understand all the elements in a book: he or she will simply construct another interpretation than an adult reader.

Dual address respects the child reader's capacities and is therefore preferred over double address by contemporary scholars and critics. A dual address picture book can be interpreted on multiple levels by young and adult readers. This does not imply that a child interprets a story in an 'inferior' way. As Scott (1999; 2005) states, modern children often have better visual literacy skills than adults. This leads to an empowerment of younger readers, who may not yet be able to decode verbal texts, but who can nonetheless interpret stories in surprising and innovative ways because of the visual texts, as a reader response experiment by Sipe (2008) demonstrated. For this reason, picture books may neutralize the asymmetrical power position of child and adult readers. We could, therefore, refer to the genre of picture books as a crossover genre *par excellence* (Beckett, 2012). Publishers are increasingly willing to acknowledge that picture books are often enjoyed by children as well as adults: the presupposition that picture books are exclusively for young children who cannot read yet, no longer holds. But why do some picture books appeal to readers of all ages? An analysis of visual and textual elements shows which elements in a picture book contribute to 'dual address'.

Beckett (2012) gives two main reasons for adults enjoying (co-)reading picture books. The first reason is that picture books show a complex interplay of visual and verbal text, which makes them exciting and innovative. How, then, do we construct an interpretation of a picture book 'in our head' by means of a combination of this verbal and visual information? Sipe (1998) bases his theory of 'how picture books work' on semiotics. He shows that picture books contain a synergy of the two sign systems of text and image. Verbal text predominantly has a sequential character (words follow each other), whereas visual text predominantly has a simultaneous character: when we are looking at a visual artwork, we create one image of it in our mind. This does not mean images lack narrativity; rather does tension arise because the narrative lust evoked by the text is 'interrupted' by a narrative established in a picture. We have separate cognitive structures for decoding verbal and visual information and therefore, we form two semiotic triads: one of an interpretation of the text and one of an interpretation of the pictures. By going back and forward between the two sign systems, we compare both triads and form a new, combined one. This is the process of 'transmediation': we adjust our interpretation of the pictures in terms of the words, and the other way around (p. 103). If little adjustment needs to be done, that is, if visual and verbal text mostly tell the same story, it might be easier to interpret a story than if more adjustment needs to be done because there are 'gaps' between the verbal and visual text.

The second reason for the crossover appeal of contemporary picture books is that they are often classified as 'postmodern', as Beckett (2012) states. This term captures, firstly, the element of a 'profound, often controversial content' (p. 2). Beckett speaks of 'cross-generational themes' to refer to the content of picture books (p. 209). These themes include: stages of life and family relationships, love stories, nudity and sexuality, violence, and death. All of these themes can be addressed in autobiographical picture books as well. A second characteristic of a postmodern picture book is the hybridization of genres (Beckett, 2012). Evans (2011) reports an increasing number of so-called 'fusion texts': works of art which are not really picture books in the classical sense of the word, nor illustrated novels, nor graphic novels. They fit into a 'hybrid genre', because they show various ways of the interplay of text and image in the same work, as well as various literary and visual techniques which originate from different genres. Autobiographical picture books, of course, can also make use of this hybridization of genres. A third aspect of postmodern picture books mentioned by Beckett (2012, p. 2), which also applies to autobiographical picture books, is polyfocalization. Polyfocalization is regarded a complex narrative strategy which refers to 'who is telling and/or watching'. This applies to both text ('focalization') and image ('point of view'). The focalization and the point of view can switch and can contradict each other. This gives the creator of an autobiographical picture book the possibility to shift between the time then and the time now, as well as between the self then and the self now. The complexity of postmodern picture books may influence the authenticity of the story told in the picture

book. If authenticity is indeed opposed to constructedness, a postmodern autobiographical picture book may be too 'constructed' in order to be authentic. To reflect on this in more depth, the analysis will address to which extent the primary literature can be regarded as 'postmodern'.

Autobiographical picture books are a form of life writing expected to appeal to children as well as to adults. It is not yet clear, however, whether the autobiographical picture books investigated in this study have a dual or a double address. Whereas dual address is required to consider a picture book as an actual crossover book, it may be the case that the adult reader is not so much addressed as a reader for his or her own pleasure but rather as a mediator between the text and the child reader. As we have seen, the child reader is in this case not addressed in respect of the own capacities: he or she is expected to need help from an adult reader and is not allowed to interpret the story in a different way than the adult reader does.

In the analysis of the primary literature, this theme of dual or double audience will be addressed, alongside various other themes introduced in this theoretical chapter, such as misery and (restorative or reflective) nostalgia, the construction of the self and the techniques used by the life narrator to construct an authentic life narrative in a picture book. A model for analyzing the primary literature on these and other topics, will be presented in chapter 3.

Chapter 3. Methodology and material

3.1 General method: close multimodal textual and visual analysis

Analyzing picture books asks for a different method than analyzing books that only contain text, since they are multimodal: the story is told by the text as well as by the pictures. By going through a process of *transmediation* (Sipe, 1998), as was mentioned in section 2.6, we combine our interpretation of text and image to form a single adjusted interpretation of a particular part of the story. This explains why we do not interpret the textual mode and the visual mode as telling two separate stories. The process of transmediation will be taken as a starting point in approaching the primary literature in this study. Text and image are indeed seen as different semiotic codes, but the focus is not so much on their differences; rather it will be analyzed how they work together in order to present a life story. There are several ways in which the visual and textual mode can work together in order to create a general interpretation. As Joosen and Vloeberghs (2008) state, commenting on the framework provided by Nikolajeva and Scott (2001), a symmetrical relation between words and images does not exist. The image is always more detailed and more specific than the text: when the text mentions a car, the image shows for instance a red car with the steering wheel on the right. The image is, in other words, always complementary. Within this complementary relation, words and images can enhance or reinforce each other, or they can contrast with each other (counterpoint) (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008, p. 203-204). In both cases, the reader forms a new, general interpretation by going back and forward between text and image (Sipe, 1998). The artist can even take this one step further by explicitly transferring the role of 'storyteller' from text to image or the other way around. For instance, the text may come to an end and in order to 'read on' and to understand how the story evolves, the reader has to see that the images take over the storytelling.

Furthermore, the concept of *modality* will be central in analyzing the primary literature. In theories on (partly) visual communication in general and picture books in particular, this concept is used to investigate to which extent the visual elements refer to reality. In their analysis of pictures Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, p. 165-167) distinguish up to eight markers for 'naturalistic modality', including color saturation, brightness, depth and contextualization. From their perspective, a full-color photograph has the highest degree of naturalistic modality: this visualization is as close to reality as possible. Whereas Kress and Van Leeuwen only consider pictures, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) argue that text and image together can create a more complex modality situation. The text, for instance, may present the events as true, whereas the pictures suggest that the events only happen in the protagonist's imagination (p. 174). Nikolajeva and Scott make a general distinction between indicative modality and symbolic modality. Indicative modality means that a story is interpreted mimetically: the reader decodes the communication as true and thus believes that the story actually has happened. Nikolajeva and Scott emphasize here that this happens *within the fictional frames*: a picture book can be interpreted mimetically even when the events cannot happen in reality, like the appearance of a talking animal. The second possibility is that the communication in a picture book can be interpreted in a non-mimetic, symbolic way, to indicate, for instance, a dream, a fantasy, a wish, or a fear. The assumption with respect to life writing is that a life narrator applies certain features in text and image to direct the reader towards a mimetic interpretation. The life narrator, after all, wants to signal that the life story indeed refers to events that have actually happened in the past, and that it should not, as a whole, be interpreted as a dream or a fantasy. Of course, some of the elements in the book may be the representation of a fantasy or a dream, creating complex modality situations (for examples of various modality situations in picture books, see Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, pp. 175-209), but in general, the reader of an autobiographical picture book is expected to be directed towards a mimetic interpretation. In the analysis, the concept of modality will be used to analyze, for instance, the construction of the setting and of the self, and the authenticity of the life story.

3.2 Model for analysis

In this section, the model for analyzing the primary literature is presented. This model will consider the topics addressed in chapter 2 in an interrogative way, in relation to the primary literature. The model for analysis consists of six elements:

a. The historical period addressed in the life narrative;
b. The construction of self, related to the presented identities;
c. The process of remembering;
d. The motive(s) for creating the life narrative: misery and/or nostalgia;
e. The techniques to present the life narrative as authentic;
f. The audience addressed in the life narrative.

In what follows, these elements will be elaborated upon, in order to create a framework of relevant analytical research questions. The question in italics is the main research question about the topic, which is accompanied by several subquestions.

a. Historical period: theme and setting
Which historical period is addressed in the autobiographical picture book and how do text and image together establish this historical period?
The historical period addressed in a picture book can be established both in theme and setting. The analysis will first focus on whether the historical period is the most important theme in the book, or whether it is merely a background theme. How much 'factual' information is given about the historical period, and in what way? This question is related to the amount of background knowledge about the historical period that is required from the reader. With regard to setting, Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) state: 'The setting of a picturebook establishes the situation and the nature of the world in which the events of the story takes place' (p. 61). The analysis will pay attention to what the setting tells us about the particular historical period that is referred to in the book. Is the setting mainly indoors or outdoors? Is it changing, and what does this (potential) change mean? Is it a domestic setting, or is it perhaps positively adventurous or poignantly detached from the familiar surroundings? Moreover, attention will be paid to whether the setting is conveyed by words, images or both (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 61), and in case of the latter possibility, how text and image work together. The analysis of the historical period that is addressed in the book, will be used to analyze the motive(s) for creating the autobiographical picture book and to analyze the construction of the past self and present self of the autobiographical subject.

b. The construction of the self and the presentation of identities
How are the present self and the past self constructed in the book?
In this section, it will first be analyzed which identities (past identities, present identities, and identities that are present in both the past and in the here and now) the autobiographical subject establishes to construct the present self and the past self, and how this is done by the interplay of text and image. We will see whether these identities are (partly) determined by social and historical circumstances. Next, the relation between the past self (the child protagonist) and the present self (the adult narrator) will be explored. In order to do this, it will be analyzed to which extent the present self gives the reader access to the consciousness of the past self, and thus how the present self and the past self relate to each other. Instruments that are applied here are the analysis of voice and telling modes (such as the use of the cited monologue, the autonomous monologue or the diary form; Nikolajeva, 2002) and analysis of point of view (Doonan, 1993). Do we see a scene from the child protagonist's point of view or from the point of view of the adult narrator? And who is telling this scene: the child or the adult? Are there images for which it is undecidable 'who is watching'? Is the point of view switching, and is there maybe a difference between the point of view in the pictures and the

focalization in the text? The analysis of the construction of self will be related to the motive(s) for creating the book and to the artist's reflection on the process of remembering.

c. The proces of remembering

What do we know about the process of remembering the artist has gone through in order to create the book?

As was pointed out in section 2.4, creating a life narrative is merely an act of construction and presentation rather than reconstruction and representation. In this section, the analysis concentrates on whether the artist comments explicitly on the process of remembering and whether this is done in the story itself or in the paratexts. The focus will be on whether the artist acknowledges that we cannot recall our personal past precisely as it has been. This section will also analyze whether there are any textual or visual elements in the book that support the process of remembering, such as photographs, maps or diary fragments. The artist's possible reflection on the process of remembering and on supporting textual and visual elements will be related to the authenticity of the life story being told.

d. Motives: misery and nostalgia

Which motive(s) for creating the autobiographical picture book can be deduced by a close reading of the book?

In this section the analysis will first pay attention to the question of whether there is anything in the text or the paratexts surrounding it – such as the cover, the back cover, the author's note, the prologue, the epilogue, et cetera – that explicitly states a motive for creating the autobiographical picture book. If not, close reading and viewing will lead to the deduction of a motive for creating the picture book. Text-external sources such as interviews with the artist will not be taken into account, because what artists in public say they do is not always what they really do when they create a book. This relates to the 'intentional fallacy'; Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) argued we should not consider literary works in terms of the author's intention (examples of the poetics of authors for children can be found in Bekkering, 1985, and Peters, 1995). Is the book an account of traumatic events and is it therefore created out of a motive of misery? This suggestion is not unthinkable, since all books in the corpus address a war. How do text and image together convey the sense of misery? On the other hand, does the picture book signal towards a nostalgic motive, and how do text and image together establish this? If so, which type of nostalgia – restorative or reflective (Boym, 2001) – do we recognize? Are restorative and reflective nostalgia perhaps combined or alternated, and how is this established? Does this nostalgic account of childhood present a world that resembles a so-called 'heile Kinderwelt' (Joosen & Vloeberghs 2008)? Finally, the author may have had ambivalent motives for creating the picture book. That is: is the book an account of misery, but at the same time a nostalgic story? How does the interplay of text and image show this?

e. Authenticity

How is the authenticity of the autobiographical picture book determined by the interplay of text and image?

The analysis of the authenticity of the life story will first be based on the provisionary definition of authenticity that was proposed in section 2.5: first, does the artist have the authority to tell the story, and how is this authority demonstrated in text and image? Second, which textual and visual elements does the artist provide to make historical facts verifiable? And third, how recognizable is the constructed self? Is the child protagonist a credible character, and how does the adult narrator act in the narrative? How is this established in text and image? As the definition of authenticity that is used here is a provisionary one, it is likely that other elements affect the authenticity of a life story as well. How does, for instance, the possible reflection on the process of remembering affect the authenticity of the life story, and is there a relation between the motive(s) for creating the book and its degree of authenticity? Or would perhaps visual elements in the picture book affect its authenticity: does, for example, a lower degree of naturalistic modality in the images decrease the authenticity of the story?

f. Address

Does the autobiographical picture book address both children and adults, and in what way are these audiences addressed?

As it is acknowledged in contemporary criticism that picture books can appeal to both child and adult readers, this last section will analyze to which audience the autobiographical picture book is addressed. First, the analysis looks for any comments on the intended audience in the text or the paratext, made by the artist himself or by external institutions such as the publisher or a reviewer who is cited to recommend the book to the reader. The next question that will be answered is whether the book can be appealing for both child and adult readers. Beckett (2012) states that the true 'crossover picture book' is a postmodern one. Using her criteria it will be analyzed to which extent the picture book can be characterized as 'postmodern'. Moreover, the required background knowledge about the historical period and the motive for creating the picture book will also be taken into account to determine the implied audience of the book. Does a nostalgic motive, for instance, imply an adult audience? Or does a misery motive perhaps imply a warning for the future for a younger audience? Attention will also be paid to how the construction of the past self and the present self is related to the implied audience of the picture book. Can we expect child and adult readers to identify with the constructed past self and present self, based on the credibility and recognizability of the constructed selves? Would, for instance, child readers more likely identify with the past (child) self, and adult readers with both the past self (as they have been children themselves) and the present (adult) self? Does the adult narrator address children and adults equally in the book (dual address), or are the abilities of the child reader not fully acknowledged and is the adult reader therefore addressed as a mediator (double address)?

3.3 Introduction of the primary literature

In this section, the primary literature will be introduced. Besides some general information about the artists and the books, there will be shown which features make the primary works autobiographical, and what kind of life narratives they are. Moreover, the books will be characterized as picture books, which are defined by Nodelman (1988) as books that 'communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no text at all' (p. vii). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) emphasize that a genuine picture book distinguished itself from illustrated books, because text and image *together* tell a story. In the illustrated book, the story is mainly told by the text and the images are literally 'illustrative', which is the simplest form of interplay of text and image. In a picture book, there are more or less equal amounts of images (the images may even dominate) and the story is usually conveyed by a more complex interplay. I would however argue that the border between a picture book and an illustrated book is still very thin. Even without more complex interplay of text and image, the images can still convey the setting, comment upon characters, or effectuate a certain atmosphere in a book. This introduction will show that this is the case for several of the primary works considered in this study. Finally, Jalongo (2004) mentions the conventional length of picture books as another characteristic of the genre: usually, picture books contain 32 pages. In this sense, the corpus of this study is a set of unconventional picture books, since all of the books considered here contain (much) more than 32 pages.

***War boy: a country childhood* (Michael Foreman, 1989)**

War boy is created by the British artist Michael Foreman, who was born in 1938. Early in the 1960s, he started as an illustrator. Over the years, he has illustrated many books but has also created his own picture books. He has won several Kate Greenaway Medals and a Nestlé Smarties Book Prize for *War game* (1993), the sequel on *War boy* (British Literature Council, n.d.). *War boy* was published in 1989 and was awarded a Kate Greenaway Medal that same year. The book addresses Foreman's childhood in the British coastal village of Pakefield, near the town of Lowestoft, during the Second World War.

War boy can be characterized as a picture book, even though it is with 92 pages slightly thicker than conventional picture books (Jalongo, 2004). Quantitatively, there is about an equal amount of

text and image in the book. When looking in close detail to the visual mode, *War boy* contains three types of images: larger pictures which cover almost a page or more than one page; smaller, sketchy, freestanding images without background; and images that are copies of documents from the period of the Second World War, such as cigarette cards, posters and a painting. Qualitatively, we might in general say that the images are complementary to the text: mostly, they show in closer detail what is told in the text (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008, p. 204).

The book is marketed online as a memoir (www.amazon.com; www.books.google.com) and as an autobiography (The Guardian, 2010). Publisher Puffin Books (n.d.) states that the book '[draws] on Michael's own experience of World War Two' (n.p.). The paratext on the back cover of *War boy* states: 'Foreman's book is what books of non-fiction could far more often be like.' This indicates that *War boy* is published as non-fiction, as an accurate account of actual history. When reading the story, we notice that Michael Foreman chooses an interesting alternation of sections that provide objective, historical information, and sections that address personal experiences which specifically refer to the life narrator himself. This shows that *War boy* is partly a life narrative, but also a historical non-fiction picture book.

***Tomi: a childhood under the Nazi's* (Tomi Ungerer, 1998)**

Tomi is created by Tomi Ungerer, a bilingual French artist born in 1931. Ungerer grew up during the Second World War, in the German-occupied French region of Alsace. Ungerer has created more than one hundred and forty books for children and adults, as is mentioned on his website, and he won in 1998 the Hans Christian Andersen Award for his lifetime contribution to children's literature as an illustrator (paratext *Tomi*, n.p.). *Tomi* was first published in French, as *À la guerre comme à la guerre: dessins et souvenirs d'enfance*, which can be translated as 'What a lovely war! Drawings and memories of childhood' (Lathey, 2003). In 1993, Ungerer wrote a German version of the book, with additional material, titled *Die Gedanken sind frei: meine Kindheit im Elzass* ('Thoughts are free', or: 'I think what I like: my childhood in Alsace'; Lathey, 2003). After publishing these books, Ungerer was 'showered with boxes full of documents and books concerning this period' (p. vii). He created an English edition, extended with many documents selected from the donations, which was published in 1998. It is this English edition that is considered in this study.

Tomi contains 175 pages with a lot of text, and is at first sight too extensive to be a picture book (Jalongo, 2004). It does, however, contains a lot of images: the book is full of drawings Tomi Ungerer made as a child, (family) photographs and images of German propaganda. On the other hand, there are no images that are drawn by Tomi Ungerer as an adult. The book therefore does not truly meet the conventions of a picture book; indeed, in the paratext, it is described as a 'unique visual memoir' (inside front cover, n.p.). Nonetheless, both semiotic codes do work together in order to tell the story, the criterion emphasized by Nikolajeva and Scott (2001). Thus, regardless what we may call it, it is clear that the story in *Tomi* is conveyed through both text and image, even though this does not happen in a conventional way. By using only one of the semiotic codes, the book would loose a lot of its power to convey Tomi Ungerer's life story.

The paratexts leave no doubt about the fact that Tomi Ungerer is telling his own life narrative in the book: '[…] the young Tomi recorded his impressions in drawings, paintings and diary entries troughout the War […], and these form the basis for this unique visual memoir'. At the end of the book, the inside of the loose cover once more confirms 'Tomi Ungerer was born in Strasbourg, Alsace, in 1931'. On Tomi Ungerer's own website, the first French version of the book is also characterized as a memoir ('Biography', n.d.). Yet the book is, in terms of Smith and Watson (2001), also a historical document, mainly because many of the images refer to the shared experience that is important in the 'collective time' of a society, which regard Smith and Watson as essential for the genre of history. Ungerer uses images of acts of propaganda and of propaganda material to refer to objective, accurate historical events. *Tomi* is thus a life narrative that also strongly focuses on history, which is elaborated in both text and image.

***The wall: growing up behind the Iron Curtain* (Peter Sís, 2007)**

Peter Sís was born in Czechoslovakia in 1949 and grew up in Prague during the Cold War. He is an awarded artist of children's books, which include *Komodo!* (1993), *Tibet through the red box* (1998) and, recently, *The conference of birds* (2011). Peter Sís has won many awards for his work as an illustrator, including six New York Times Book Review Best Illustrated Book of the Year, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Award, a Caldecott Honor Award and, in 2012, the Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration (Vidor, 2012). In *The wall*, he describes his childhood in the communist side of the Iron Curtain.

This book, containing 56 pages, can be characterized as a picture book since the quantitative amount of images is larger than the amount of text, but also since the images often take over the story. Sís himself mentions in the afterword: '[…] since I have always drawn everything, I have tried to draw my life' (n.p.). This implies that drawing is essential for him, and that the words are there to support the drawings. The quotation also shows that this picture book indeed can be characterized as a life narrative. In other paratexts, it states: 'In his graphic memoir, Peter Sís tells what life was like for a boy who loved to draw and make music, […], secretly read banned books, listened to jammed radio […]', 'Peter Sís's story of growing up under a totalitarian regime […]', and 'Peter Sís draws us into the world that shaped him – Czechoslovakia during the Cold War.' At the end of the book, on the inside of the loose cover, there is a short biography of Peter Sís, accompanied by small photographs, showing that he indeed grew up in Czechoslovakia and stating that 'he and his sister were Young Pioneers during the Cold War'. Moreover, in the introduction, Peter Sís tells in his own voice: 'I was born at the beginning of it all, on the Red side – the Communist side – of the Iron Curtain', signed with the initials 'P.S.' The artist, then, leaves no doubt he is telling his own life story in the book.

As is the case with *War boy* and *Tomi*, also *The wall* touches upon the genre of history. This is shown in the paratexts: the texts on the back cover and the inside of the cover mention characteristics of the Cold War, and in the introduction, Sís tells about the course of history of Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century. Throughout the book, he constantly mixes personal experiences with objective historical facts. *The wall* is therefore both a life narrative and a historical account.

***The house Baba built. An artist's childhood in China* (Ed Young, 2011)**

Ed Young (1931) has illustrated more than eighty books for children. For various books, he has also written the text himself. He was awarded the Caldecott Medal for *Lon Po Po* (1989), and *The Emperor and the kite* (1967) and *Seven blind mice* (1992) were Caldecott Honor Books. Moreover, Ed Young was nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1992 and 2000. Ed Young was born in Tianjin, China, and grew up in Shanghai. In *The house Baba built*, he tells the story of his childhood in Shanghai during the Japanese invasion, which was a result of the Second World War. This book, containing 48 pages, is a fold-out picture book with full-color double spreads that are filled with photographs, drawings and collage techniques. Whereas the text in principle is enough to understand the described events, the images play the largest role in conveying the setting and the atmosphere. Would Ed Young not have included photographs, maps and a floorplan of his father's house, the book would not convey personal memories in the powerful way as it does now.

The house Baba built won the 2012 Norman A. Sugarman Children's Biography Award, an award given biennially to honor excellence in the field of biography for children (Cleveland Public Library, 2012). Online, the picture book is marketed as an 'illustrated memoir' (www.thehousebababuilt.com; www.amazon.com). The paratext on the inside flap of the loose cover of the book contains the phrases: 'In Ed Young's childhood home in Shanghai […] The house his father built […]'. The text ends with the phrase: 'This […] is the story of one of our most beloved children's book illustrators and the house his *baba* built' (italics in original). By reading this paratext, the reader acknowledges that Ed Young tells the story of his own childhood in this book. Remarkably, the title page inside the book conveys a textual addition which is not on the cover: above Ed Young's name, we read: 'text as told to Libby Koponen' (n.p.). The author's note at the end of the book explains this: as Ed Young struggled to create the book, his editor suggested 'inviting author Libby Koponen to help shape the book' (n.p.). However,

as the term 'author's note' and the initials 'E.Y.' on this page suggests, as well as the abscense of Koponen's name on the cover, she seems to have had a supporting background role, rather than a role equal to Ed Young's. Libby Koponen's presence as a sort of co-author, then, does not derogate this story in being Ed Young's life narrative.

The house Baba built also touches upon the genre of biography. The title of the book already points out that Young is also telling the life story of his father. In the author's note and in the acknowledgments, he indicates that he has created this book as a tribute to his father. The time line at the end of the book supports this, by mentioning several important years in 'Baba's' life, such as his graduations, his marriage, the birth of his five children and the building of the house. This picture book, to conclude, is both a life narrative and a biography.

Chapter 4. Analysis

4.1 *War boy: a country childhood* (Michael Foreman, 1989)

a. Historical period: theme and setting

In *War Boy*, the influence of the Second World War on local, daily life is the most important theme. The term 'Second World War' is not mentioned, but on page 17, the town of Lowestoft is located as 'Britain's nearest town to Germany, and after the fall of Holland the Germans had airfields only ninety miles away.' This information shows that the story is set in the period of the Second World War. Most of Michael Foreman's childhood memories are influenced by the war: he and his friends do not only play 'cowboys and Indians', but after a while also 'British and Germans' (p. 48), they play ping-pong on the Morrison shelter (p. 15), and they have to hide under the trees when German planes fly over as they are playing football (p. 54). Further, the village and the shop of Michael's mother are crowded with sailors and soldiers (p. 26-27). These examples show that ordinary events in the life of a child are influenced by the historical circumstances: the impact of the war is seen everywhere in young Michael's life.

Foreman switches between informational and personal sections in the book. An example of this switching is on page 29 and 30. On page 29, it is described that the loo of the Foreman family was in the back yard, near the bus stop, and that Michael tried to go there when the bus stopped in the street, so the noise of the bus would cover his 'noises'. This clearly is a very personal memory. After this, the story suddenly switches to a more explaining tone of voice. The text here is indeed more informational:

> 'More than sixty thousand sailors moved into Lowestoft as the naval base grew. The base was sited in a little wooded park called Sparrow's Nest. [...] Adding to the congestion were the thousands of soldiers who did their final assault training along the cliffs before going overseas. As well as the British troops there were Free French, Poles and Czechs' (p. 30).

By applying such switches, Foreman tells both about 'larger events' which affected the whole society, as well as about personal events which only affected himself and the people near him. He thus combines the genre of history, based on the 'collective time' of society, and the genre of the life narrative, based on concrete, personal and arbitrary time which does not include events that are shared by society (Smith & Watson, 2010). Whereas the informative sections give a lot of factual information about the war, the personal sections help the reader to imagine what it was like living during a war and to identify with young Michael.

The factual information is kept close to what Michael Foreman has experienced himself: he provides information about what happened in Pakefield and Lowestoft, but never focuses on the Second World War in general. Nothing is said about the Holocaust, about the inducement for the war, about D-Day or Pearl Harbor, which are events that are anchored in collective memory. The local information Foreman provides is accompanied by dates and numbers: the reader is for instance informed about the evacuation of 2.969 children out of Lowestoft and its surroundings on June 2, 1940, about how many sailors and soldiers were coming to the frontline, and about the amount of houses that were destroyed (125 percent in 1944 – some houses were destroyed twice). The detailed numbers and the dates show to the reader that Foreman must have done very thorough research. In the images he also gives factual information, by applying detailed, technical drawings which are copied from original sources (Lathey, 1999), such as drawings of bombes, planes and a zeppelin. These images have a high degree of naturalistic modality: even though they are not 'realistic' in the strict sense of the word, they offer an accurate technical representation of an object. In short, the factual information about the war is provided through both the textual and the visual mode.

The setting of the picture book reflects the historical circumstances in text and image. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) state: 'The setting of a picturebook establishes the situation and the nature of the world in which the events of the story takes place' (p. 61). The setting, they argue, also evokes genre

expectations: a realist picture book, for instance, has a different setting than a fairy tale picture book, and therefore creates a different set of expectations. Autobiographical picture books are likely to evoke expectations that belong to the genre of realism, by referring in text and image to the world outside the text. *War boy* indeed signals toward a mimetic interpretation, as there is nothing described or depicted that cannot happen or exist in the world outside the text. When looking in close detail to the visual mode, *War boy* contains three types of images: larger images which cover almost a page or more than one page, usually with background; smaller, sketchy images without a background; and the already mentioned copies of documents and commodities from the period of the Second World War, such as cigarette cards, posters and a painting. Figure 4.1.1 shows these three types of images combined on one double spread (p. 32-33).

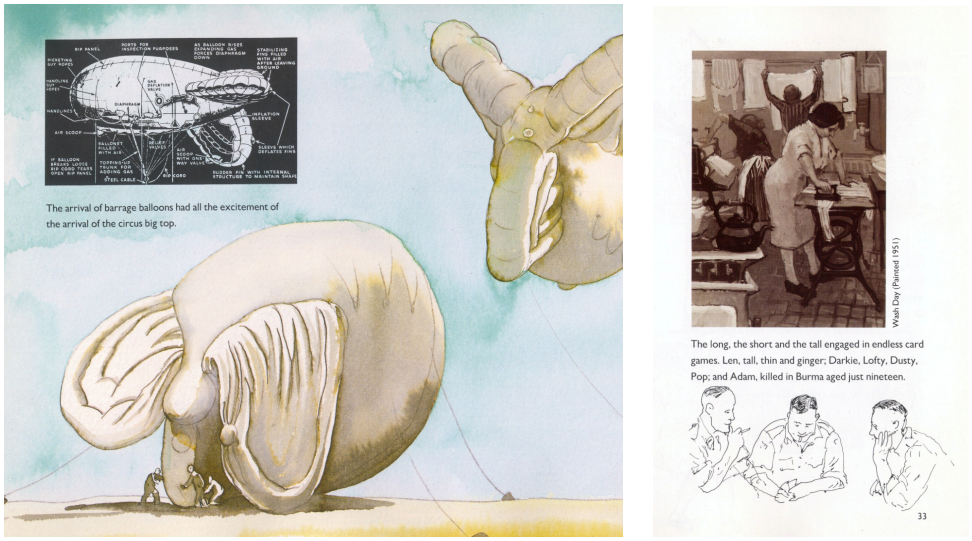

Figure 4.1.1 *War boy*, p. 32-33

In terms of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), the images do not convey a very high degree of naturalistic modality, compared to photographical realism. Nevertheless, we do interpret them mimetically. The copies offer accurate and detailed (technical) representations of reality. The black and white sketches are realistic in their recognizability: they may not reflect reality in a direct way, but nor are they all too abstract. They do convey naturalistic body shapes, postures and facial expressions. The same goes for the watercolors, which are again somewhat closer to a direct reflection of reality, because they contain lots of color and are more detailed than the sketches (see the other figures in this section for more examples). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) regard modality as determined by the interplay of text and image. In *War boy*, both the images and the text – which only refer to events that happened in the actual past – direct the reader toward a mimetic interpretation. By going back and forth between text and images (Sipe, 1998), the reader is constantly confronted with this realistic presentation of the past: the textual and visual mode equally refer to factuality in the world outside the text.

Furthermore, the setting can provide 'a pervasive affective climate that sets the reader's emotional response in a particular register' (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 61). They mention this register can be 'grotesque, nostalgic [or] everyday'. Foreman chooses a very personal, small and local setting. We mainly see depictions of the daily events he lives through and persons he encounters regularly: the shop full of soldiers, playing football or 'Indian' with his friends, his teacher in school and the trips to farms on the countryside. The setting hardly changes throughout the book. This sets the reader's emotional response in an 'everyday register' and in a nostalgic register. Because of the 'everyday register', the setting is recognizable to the reader, as opposed to a setting which contains all sorts of elements which we do not encounter in daily life: in the context of war stories, we could think of deportations, concentration camps and famine. I will return to the nostalgic register in section d.

Finally, the setting can function as a comment upon a character. In *War Boy*, the local, everyday setting depicts Michael as an average, normal child. Young Michael is depicted more than once in the countryside, playing with his friends and going on 'expeditions'. In the picture on page 46-47, we see two young boys dressed as Indians, who 'besiege' the Hill Green Gang. These outdoor settings in Pakefield and its surroundings dominate the book; Michael is more often outdoors than indoors. This depicts him as an adventurous, playful boy who is, despite the war, in the midst of his childhood and is exploring everything in his close surroundings.

Does the book require little or much background knowledge? On a local scale, *War boy* gives the reader a detailed and complete view of what happened in Lowestoft and its surroundings. In this sense, there is little background knowledge required, as the narrator explains a lot explicitly. However, the book requires general background knowledge about the war to situate it in the mondial context and to understand the full implications of the Germans and the British fighting a war. A concrete example is a description of the puppets that are burned on Guy Fawkes night and VJ Day, shortly after the war: 'We burned Hitlers again, and a lot of yellow Guys with big teeth and glasses' (p. 88). The unexplained reference to Hitler is presumably familiar to an audience of child readers, who are expected to have knowledge of the main events and the most important persons in the Second World War. The implicit reference to the Japanese is much less clear – can we expect (western) European child readers, for whom this book is marketed, to know that the Japanese also had a share in the war?

In sum, Foreman makes clear that he grew up during the Second World War, although he does not mention this explicitly. By choosing the form of autobiographical writing, he informs the reader about the consequences of the war for a little town, from the local, reassuring point of view of the village and the countryside. Foreman does not tell the 'bigger' story of the Second World War, but rather addresses the war from a local perspective. He does this by referring to objective reality outside the text in both the textual and the visual mode: in the text by giving much factual information, and in the images by depicting recognizable local scenes and including copies of historical documents.

b. The construction of the self and the presentation of identities

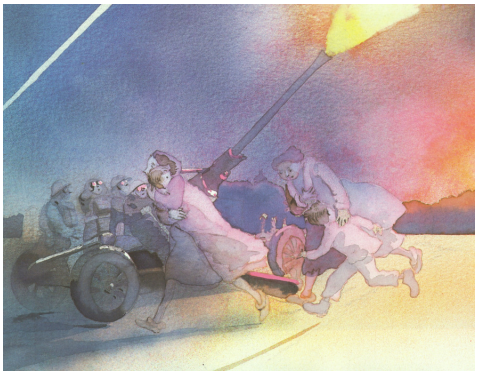

Figure 4.2.1 *War boy*, p. 10-11

War boy covers a period from June 1940, which is the earliest date to be found in the book (p. 22) until the celebration of the end of the Second World War in August 1945. In this period, the past self consists of several identities, of which the three most developed ones are the identity of being an adventurous, playful young boy, the identity of being a son, and the nationalist identity of being British. Also the identities of being a brother and being a pupil are present in the story, but to a smaller extent than the three main identities mentioned above. Foreman first identifies his past self as a young boy, as many events relate to playing with his friends in Pakefield and its surroundings. Second, he emphasizes his identity as his mother's son. This starts with the image on page 10-11, on which we see his mother grabbing him from the bed and thereby saving him, by running for cover in a bombardment (see figure 4.1.2). Mrs. Foreman is not depicted elsewhere in the story, but the shop she runs is an important and recurring part of the setting. Third, throughout the story the national identity of being British persists. As was mentioned above, Foreman gives a local perspective on the Second World War. From this perspective, the British Allies represent the 'goodies' and all the Germans and Japanese the 'baddies'. As a young boy, Michael identifies with the British soldiers: he admires and imitates them,

Figure 4.1.3. *War boy*, p. 28

as we can see on the drawing on page 28 (see figure 4.1.3). In the text he states that he and his friends never wanted to be the 'bad' Germans (p. 48): he identifies with the group of British soldiers, and distinguishes himself from the Germans.

Michael Foreman's present self is elaborated by two main identities. First, his present self contains the identity of being a brother and a son, as the dedication says, with Foreman's adult voice, 'to my brothers and our mum'. The letter at the end of the story, written in 1982 by a member of the K.O.S.B. (the King's Own Scottish Borderers; soldiers) as a reaction on the passing of Michael Foreman's mother (p. 92), is also sent to the adult Michael Foreman, and therefore emphasizes his identity as a son even when he is an adult and his mother has passed away. Second, and most important in this analysis, Foreman strongly identifies his present self as being British. As an adult narrator in the present time, he reflects on the war uncritically and continuously presents the British as the 'goodies' and the German as the 'baddies'. This strengthens the national identity of his present self as a British citizen. It would have been a different case if the adult voice of Foreman would have nuanced his childhood memories of war, by critically reflecting on the complex, worldwide situation of the Second World War. As he in the present time has chosen not to do this, this strengthens the national identity of his present self. Especially this national identity is determined by the social and historical circumstances in Foreman's childhood. He grew up in a time of dichotomy between the Germans and their confederates, and the Allies. Being at the side of the Allies and being constantly confronted with German attacks, the coastline of eastern Britain clearly took a very patriotic attitude. These social and historical circumstances are likely to have directed Foreman towards creating a patriotic and barely nuanced picture book about his own childhood in wartime. In sections e. and f., I will come back to how this affects the authenticity of the life story for the audience.

In *War boy*, the present self of Michael Foreman is the dominant self in the book, which is shown in three ways. First, the reader does not have much access to the consciousness of the past self. There are no telling modes which give us access to the thoughts and feelings of the child protagonist, such as the cited monologue, the autonomous monologue or more complex forms of representation of consciousness of a child protagonist distinguished by Nikolajeva (2002). The emphasis is on what young Michael experiences, and not so much on what he thinks or how he feels about these events. Whenever his emotions are addressed, this is not shown to the reader, but the voice of the adult narrator is telling it, by the use of language that is not typical for a child:

'I had a horror of being trapped under voluminous dark skirts' (p. 24).

'Although the fields and woods teamed with butterflies and birds, our skies and minds were full of planes' (p. 55).

'I dreamed that if I ran behind enough trucks they would spot me as the new Mickey Rooney and we would all go to Hollywood' (p. 66).

Second, young Michael's emotions and thoughts are most of the time not expressed at all. This is obvious in the informative sections in the book, but it also happens in the personal sections. The reader might expect an emotional response from Michael as a young child to some experiences, such as being scared, ashamed, shocked or happy. Often, the text does not convey these feelings. Third, the voice of the present self often explicitly comments on his own experiences in past, by applying knowledge from the present time. An example of this direct interpretation is: 'That the shop was perpetually full of soldiers and sailors seemed quite normal to me' (p. 28). Textually, the past self does not really have an own voice, but is overruled by the voice of the present self.

Some of the images, on the other hand, do convey emotions. An example is when Michael is taken fishing in a boat on the river: 'He showed me how to put a worm on a hook and then I fell in' (p. 34). This passage lacks any textual emotional response to what must have been a scary experience for a young boy: falling into the river. In the image, we see Michael getting out of the water with a startled expression on his face. Here, the image conveys what the text does not: the text is reinterpreted

because of the image that follows, as Sipe (1998) points out. The same happens on page 54, where the text describes how Michael and his friends run for shelter when German planes come over. In the image, we see by their facial expressions that they indeed must have been anxious. Not all images have this role in conveying emotions, however. In the chapter called 'Life's early disappointments' (p. 72), for instance, neither text nor image conveys any emotion. Only by means of the title, we know that young Michael is disappointed by an experience with banana's: '[...] inside, instead of the five foot long banana I expected, were rows of little yellow hands with green fingertips.'

When we remember our childhood, we 'see' our memories in they way we saw the event on the moment it happened. We do not remember scenes as if we are looking at them from a distance or from above; rather, I would say we 're-look' through the eyes of our past self. In *War boy*, however, most of the time it is as if the present self of Michael Foreman has 'stepped out' of his own memories and therefore depicts his past self from a distance. He is not re-looking at the events that happened to him through the eyes of his past self. The images, therefore, take the external point of view of the adult narrator, and not the internal point of view of the past self. Thereby, the present self has constructed a clear depiction of his past self, based on the reality outside the text: there are two photographs of Michael as a toddler on the title page of the book, which convey a high degree of naturalistic modality, and the drawn images of his younger self throughout the book show clear resemblances with the boy on the photographs. The hair and the form of the face are quite alike. In depicting the protagonist recognizably as the particular child on the photographs – himself – Foreman emphasizes that this indeed is his story and that these are the experiences he encountered as a child.

Interestingly, there is an exception on what I just described: there is one picture in the book that takes the past self's point of view. On page 36 and 37, the text describes how Michael is carried to bed by his mother and that he sees a lot of faces in the room. In the image, the eyes of several characters are directed at the reader, showing that the reader is literally looking 'through Michael's eyes' (see figure 4.1.4). This gives the reader a glimpse into young Michael's consciousness, which even more strongly emphasizes that this indeed is his story. It is as if Foreman wants to say: 'I was there, and this is what I saw'. Thus, whereas the text does not give the reader much access to the consciousness and the feelings of young Michael, the visual mode does draw the reader's attention to the constructed past self: at one moment, we even look through his eyes.

Figure 4.1.4 *War boy*, p. 37

In sum, most of the time we can hardly access the consciousness of the past self through text, but the images do give us some access thereto. In general, the present self of Michael Foreman is in full control. Textually, the past self does not speak for himself, but is merely staged by the present self in an ongoing retrospect on childhood during wartime. The voice of the present self has the larger share in the story, constantly and explicitly interpreting the experiences of the child protagonist.

c. The process of remembering

Although the perspective of the present self of Michael Foreman dominates the story and he often explicitly comments on the childhood memories, he seldom reflects on the process of remembering. There is no paratext with comments on this process. The first explicit reference to his own memory is in the story itself, on page 36:

'Christmas night, 1942, *I remember* looking back into the room as Mother carried me to the stairs. A sea of faces in the smoke [...] Other father's boys, sitting round our table wishing it was their little boy they had just kissed goodnight' (my italics).

The explicit memory is strengthened by the image (see figure 4.1.4 in section b.), on which we see the faces in the room from the point of view of young Michael himself, as was mentioned above. The interplay of text and image, thus, conveys the explicitness of this childhood memory. As this is the only image in the book taking this aberrant point of view, it seems to indicate that Foreman, for some reason on which he does not reflect, was very much impressed by this scene and remembers it particularly well. Other textual explicit references to the process of remembering are on page 50 ('I *remember* one bike bouncing down the slope', my italics) and on page 70, where Foreman tells about being send to the 'horrific' wife of the Headmaster in school:

> 'We were sure to be taken down to his wife's torture chamber. What actually happened, *I don't remember*. Perhaps it was so horrific *I have blotted it from my memory*. But probably it was just the old ruler again' (my italics).

Here, Foreman acknowledges that he does not remember everything from his childhood, and that he may have repressed certain memories, especially the horrific ones. The lack of an image depicting this memory strengthens this suggestion: as Foreman cannot remember what exactly happened, he has not depicted it. This shows that not only the interplay of text and image, but also the absence of an image can inform us about the process of remembering.

In *War boy*, there are two elements which may have supported the process of remembering, one visual and one textual. First, there are two photographs of Michael Foreman as a toddler on the title page of the book. These photographs may have evoked memories of his childhood, but we cannot be sure since Foreman does not reflect on this. The same goes for the letter that ends the story, written in 1982 by a member of the K.O.S.B., as a reaction on the passing of Michael Foreman's mother (p. 92). It is highly probable that the death of his mother and receiving such a letter have evoked Foreman's memories of his childhood, inducing him to tell his life narrative in public. This may be as a tribute to his mother, as the dedication in the beginning of the book also indicates. The indication of time – his mother's passing in 1982, and the publishing of the book in 1989 – supports this idea. However, Foreman does not reflect on this text-internally.

The reader, in sum, is mostly left in the dark about how Foreman experienced the process of remembering when he created the book. In case of frightening events, he sometimes mentions that he has repressed memories of those events. Further, however, he barely reflects on possible cracks or gaps in his memories: the past is presented as continuing story in which he approaches memories as static, unchanging entities.

d. Motives: misery and nostalgia

In *War Boy,* no explicite motive is given for creating the book. The text on the back cover does mention this book 'shows how marvellously possible it is for history to be a compulsive read', but since this is stated by 'Books for Keeps' and not by the artist himself, we cannot be sure that conveying history was Foreman's motive for creating the book. In paragraph 2.1, two main motives for creating autobiography are identified: experienced misery and a nostalgic longing to the past. Which of these two motives for creating *War boy* can be deduced from a close reading of the book?

There are some memories of experienced misery in *War boy*. Michael Foreman mentions bombings, devastations and hiding in shelters. He tells about his family being a substitute family for many soldiers, as 'the last family they would know', and about a soldier killed in Burma at the age of nineteen (p. 33). These experiences, as well as the constant threat of German attacks, will surely have had an impact on Michael Foreman. However, compared to what we may encounter in other war stories – for instance exclusion, betrayal, famine, deportation, lost or killed family members, or the existence of concentration camps – the misery that Michael Foreman has experienced during his childhood is relatively limited. We have seen that he acknowledges that memories can be repressed, but apart from that, we cannot know for sure whether or not the war experiences were traumatic for Michael Foreman as a child: as was mentioned above, the reader barely has access to the thoughts and feelings of the past self. We have to rely on the adult narrator, scarcely making references to responses

of shock, fear or grief. The two references made to these emotions – when falling out of the boat, and when being punished in school – have nothing to do with the Second World War. This indicates that the book is not created as a form of scriptotherapy (Henke, in Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 29). Finally, the fact that Foreman does not elaborate about the Second World War in general and its implications, suggests that his book functions not as the telling of the story of many war victims, or as a warning for the future. It may function as a tribute to his mother, as was mentioned, as well as to the fallen soldiers and sailors, but not from a truly traumatic point of view. Rather, it seems as if Foreman wants to honor these people for keeping him safe, carefree and happy during his childhood.

We can, opposite to the misery motive, identify elements of nostalgia in *War boy*. First, the setting is small and secure, thereby creating an everyday register, as was seen in section a. Lathey (1999) states: 'a mood of innocent nostalgia predominates in [the] scenes, as Foreman's wartime adventures take place in the context of a loving and secure domestic setting' (p. 144) – although I would argue her use of the term 'domestic' is not entirely correct, since this refers to an indoor setting which hardly applies to *War boy*. Second, Foreman presents the ideology of the British Allies uncritically: they were the good ones, and the Germans the bad ones. This strict, oversimplified separation of good and bad reflects the nationalist ideas that prevailed during wartime and as Foreman does not criticize or nuance this point of view, he shows to be naive in his construction of the past. He mainly tells about his own happy memories, without placing them reflectively in the broader – and less idyllic – context of the Second World War. A third sign of nostalgia is that what Foreman remembers are mainly feelings of joy and excitement, for instance, in recalling an attack with doodlebugs (unmanned bombing planes) as a 'spectacular show' to which most of the citizens would come to watch (p. 84). Another example is the description of his associations as he tells about one of the bombings: he does not reflect on the seventy people who got killed – he only briefly mentions this – or on the ones who are injured or left homeless, but remembers:

> 'One result of the bombing was that millions of seeds would be blown out of gardens and showered all around the district. The following spring and summer, piles of rubble burst into bloom' (p. 56; see figure 4.1.5).

Figure 4.1.5 *War boy*, p. 56

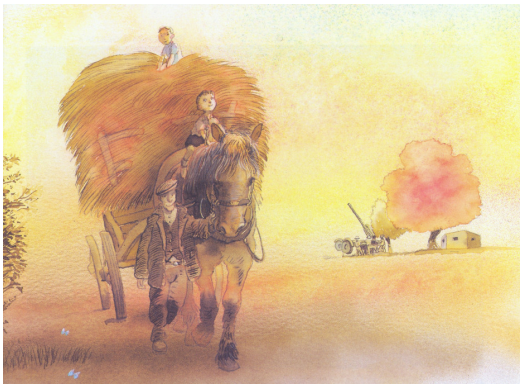

Figure 4.1.6 *War boy*, p. 78-79

Next, the images convey feelings of nostalgia by the use of gentle, lively watercolors. Foreman uses soft pastel shades, alternated with warm, intense colors, for example in depicting the countryside and the corn field on pages 74-75 and 78-79 (see figure 4.1.6). Even when images depict some of the more frightening events, they still are beautiful to look at and do not quite convey the shock and the terror that the experience must have given to many of the citizens of Lowestoft and Pakefield. The burning down of the church, for example, is depicted in fluid, warm shades of red, orange, pink and purple, in a somewhat vague and granular way (p. 12-13). The same goes for the result of a bombing, when half a street is ruined: this is depicted in light shades of blue and purple, with a whiff of pink on the horizon where the sun will rise soon (p. 52-53). As was mentioned earlier, the watercolors do reflect reality in a recognizable way, but the use of color and the softness conveyed by this particular technique seems to

take off the sharp edges of the scenes. This somewhat decreases the naturalistic modality of the images and increases feelings of idyll and nostalgia.

Finally, the end of the book also carries strong proof of nostalgia, as Lathey (1999) justly mentions. *War boy* not only has a happy end, but a remarkably reassuring one. Michael's kite, that gets lost and is brought back, symbols freedom and homecoming. The second last passage of the story reflects not only the uncritical view of a happy child, but also symbolizes strong feelings of nationalism by referring to the patriotic song 'There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover':

> 'So it was true, all the things the grown ups had said during the dark days. Now the war was over everything would be all right, there'll be blue birds over the white cliffs, not barrage balloons. And men with rainbows on their chests would, like my kite, come home' (p. 91).

The nostalgic motive for creating this picture book is undeniable. Is Michael Foreman, then, a restorative or a reflective nostalgic (Boym, 2001)? It seems as if these two types of nostalgia go hand in hand in *War boy*. On the one hand, Foreman emerges as a restorative nostalgic in his informative sections, where he reconstructs a continuing story of what has happened in Pakefield and Lowestoft. His tone of voice is mainly serious in these sections and the many dates and numbers indicate that his main goal here is telling the truth. The copies of visual elements from the past strengthen this impression. Also in the personal sections Foreman tries to create the town and its scenery in a restorative way. Even though they do not have the highest degree of naturalistic modality, the watercolors do reflect reality in a direct and recognizable way. Foreman does not use, for instance, symbolic or surrealist techniques: rather, he uses impressionist techniques, thereby focusing on giving an impression of his childhood surroundings 'as it was'. By his focus on happy memories, he clearly shows the 'intact' world he experienced during childhood. On the other hand, the personal sections in *War boy* also show Foreman as a reflective nostalgic. He is most surely humorous, for example in the scenes about two soldiers seeking shelter from an attack and landing in a pigsty (p. 44), about the underwear of his teacher (p. 68) and about he and his friends pinching apples: 'My mother had a shop full of apples. Why was I trying to pinch these?' (p. 82). Furthermore, as we saw, Foreman consciously leaves out more general information about the war. This indicates that he does not want to tell a universally known story about the war, but merely that he acknowledges the existence of various, socially influenced narratives like his own.

In the idyllic rendition of Foreman's happy memories and the presentation of an 'intact' childhood world, we see the legacy of the 'heile Kinderwelt' (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008). In this sense the local story about the war is ambivalent: the personal sections emphasize that Foreman's story is just *one* individual account of the war, but *War boy* conveys in these sections also a sort of oneness of Michael Foreman's own world, as the story does not reflect on multiple views on society, war and mankind. To see this ambivalence, one needs background knowledge about the war. If the reader does not know the war also left many victims traumatized, one could possibly take *War boy* as a general account of war, as if every survivor experienced the war in this way.

In conclusion, the nostalgic motive for creating *War boy* becomes clear by a close reading of the story, even though there are some notions of misery in it. This motive derives from how Michael Foreman remembers his childhood: it was a happy, exciting and idyllic time, despite the fact that it was in wartime. As he is an Englishman, who grew up under a very patriotic climate of the eventual victorious Allies, this idyllic perspective on the war also strongly connects to his national British identity. We have seen that, because of Foreman's nostalgic remembering of his childhood, he presents a fairly 'intact' childhood world. As this may say more about Michael Foreman's adult view on childhood than about his own memories, I will return to this matter when discussing the intended audience of the narrative in section f.

e. Authenticity

The observations in the previous sections enable us to analyze how the authenticity of Michael Foreman's life story is determined. How does the story fit into the working definition of authenticity

that was created in paragraph 2.5? First, by the established pact between the artist and the reader, the reader acknowledges that this life story is indeed Foreman's own story. As a young boy, he grew up in Pakefield: he was there in the time of war, so he has the authority to tell the story. The letter at the end of the book strengthens this authority, indicating that Michael's mother indeed had a shop and that she is remembered by many soldiers that came there. Second, the book is authentic in the historical sense. It provides a lot of factual information in the text and images. The images do reflect reality in a direct, recognizable way: by the use of visual elements, Foreman clearly refers to a past reality outside the text, even though the sketchy black-and-white drawings and the impressionistic watercolors do not convey the highest degree of naturalistic modality.

Third, the story is authentic in terms of the past self: in his playfulness and naughtiness, Michael is a somewhat stereotypical boy, which makes him a recognizable and credible child protagonist. The fact that Foreman left out much information about the war elsewhere and about how other people have experienced it, strengthens the authenticity of the past self: it is likely that Michael, as a child, had no knowledge of all this. The soldiers in Pakefield mainly interested and amused him, and his past self is not yet fully conscious of the possibility of soldiers or fellow citizens being killed in the war. In terms of the present self, the reflection on the process of remembering affects the authenticity of the story. As an adult narrator, Foreman seldom reflects explicitly on the process of remembering. At first sight, this may indicate a high degree of authenticity; he presents his life narrative without a doubt, being completely sure of what he experienced as a child. Below the surface, however, we must acknowledge that his present self does not reflect on the way his memories are influenced by the social and historical circumstances and the resulting nationalist thinking. For the readers who have knowledge of the war, the perspective Foreman takes as an adult, can be too unilateral. In that sense, the narrative is not that authentic after all.

Concluding, there seem to be two types of authenticity at stake in *War boy*. On the one hand, the book *is* an authentic account of Foreman's childhood. Foreman has the authority to tell the story, is authentic in the historical sense, and constructs an authentic child character because of the somewhat unilateral perspective on the war and the idyllic setting. The related nostalgic motive for creating the book also influences its authenticity: the view on Pakefield as a cosy, safe village and the emphasis on the war as a spectacular adventure increase the authenticity of the past self. Foreman consequently sticks to the child's perspective. Yet the present self, in the form of the adult narrator, is very visible in the narrative and dominates the past self in both text and image. This present self does not critically reflect on the construction of the past self as a socially influenced process. The present self of Michael Foreman is not reflecting on the patriotic, nationalist views that influenced him as a child, does not look at the war in a broader perspective, and does not reflect on the idyllic, nostalgic presentation of childhood. So, whereas Foreman succeeds in providing an authentic account of his childhood during wartime, the lack of nuance makes his present self, the self that is telling the narrative, somewhat less authentic.

f. Address

We have seen that *War boy* conveys an authentic account of childhood during wartime, with an authentic child character, but that the clear intervention of the non-reflective present self somewhat reduces the authenticity of the story. What does this mean for the way the intended audience is addressed? In order to analyze this, we first need to examine for which audience(s) – children, adults, or both – this book is intended.

There are no verbal comments on the intended audience in the text or paratexts. On the front cover, there is a Kate Greenaway Medal, visually indicating that the book is marketed as a children's book. However, this does not explicitly state something about the intended audience Michael Foreman envisioned. When applying Beckett's (2012) characteristics of a picture book that is appealing to both children and adults, *War boy* is not a true crossover book. Its form is quite traditional and does not contain many postmodern elements. First, the interplay of text and image in the book is not that complex. The watercolors convey the nostalgic, idyllic atmosphere, the technical drawings provide

additional factual information, and sometimes the text is reinterpreted after looking at the images, but all this does not happen in a very challenging way: the visual mode does not, for instance, take over the telling of the story (as does happen for example, as we will see, in *The wall*). Second, the theme of war is cross-generational, as violence and death are not far away when this theme is addressed. In this sense, *War boy* is not just a children's book, but may also appeal to adults. However, Foreman seldom addresses these traumatic events of the war, and if he does, he does so in a quite confined way. This leads to considering the idea that for Foreman, traumatic events should be presented to child readers in a careful, not too shocking way. Third, we cannot consider *War boy* as a fusion text; although it combines the genres of autobiography and history, this does not lead to various, innovative interplays of text and image. It does lead to using visual techniques originating from different genres – the watercolors and the technical drawings – but, as was mentioned, not in a complex way. Finally, Beckett (2012) mentions polyfocalization as a characteristic of a crossover picture book. As was analyzed in the section b., this is rarely done in *War boy*. Foreman is consistently putting forward the present self's perspective as it comes to focalization in the text and taking a point of view in the images, apart from the one image on which we are looking through the past self's eyes. The book, then, does not fit into Beckett's (2012) characterization of a postmodern, crossover picture book, but rather is a fairly traditional picture book with the main focus on an intended audience of child readers.

To understand the story in its local perspective, little background knowledge about the war is needed. This means that we may expect child readers, up from a certain age, to be able to understand the story without any problems. Child readers are likely to have at least some knowledge about the war: they will probably know who Hitler was and that the British were Allies trying to free Europe from German occupation. Foreman provides a lot of historical information for the reader to understand the specific situation around Lowestoft. However, because the voice of the present self dominates the story and does not nuance the experiences of the past self, the reader must have more background knowledge about the war in a global perspective. Only with this background knowledge, the reader will see that Foreman as an adult provides not a mondial contextualized wartime story, but a local story with a somewhat unilateral perspective on what happened during the Second World War. Moreover, the reader must understand that the patriotic climate of the war partly causes him to present his childhood experiences in this particular, blunt way. It is likely that his British national identity is still very important for Michael Foreman and that this identity is determinative for the way he presents his past. That this somewhat oversimplified and patriotic account of his wartime childhood decreases the authenticity of Foreman's present self, may not be obvious to child readers, because they have less knowledge about the war and less life experience.

As we have seen, *War boy* barely confronts the reader with terrifying and horrible facts about the war. Out of nostalgic motives and as a result from his national identity, Foreman emphasizes the happy experiences he had in his childhood in an idyllic way. This is in line with the legacy of the 'heile Kinderwelt'. The adult reader is likely to know that most survivors of the war will have more horrifying memories than Foreman shows in this book, and is expected to see that this story is quite patriotic, but we cannot expect child readers to have the same knowledge. To them, this book presents the world as a happy, 'intact' place to grow up, even during wartime. Of course, Foreman's nostalgic and nationalistic perspective is equally legitimate as a traumatic perspective. What is at stake here, however, is the unequal address of child readers and adult readers, as Foreman does not provide child readers with the same detailed and subtle knowledge that adult readers are likely to have. Because child readers of *War boy* are not text-internally provided with a mondial, less unilateral and more traumatic perspective on the war, it seems as if Foreman – consciously or subconsciously – does not address them as equals to adult readers.

4.2 *Tomi: a childhood under the Nazi's* (Tomi Ungerer, 1998)

a. Historical period: theme and setting

The historical period that is addressed in *Tomi* is, as in *War boy*, the Second World War. In this book, however, the region of Alsace is central. The inside of the cover states:

> 'Artist and author Tomi Ungerer was eight years old in 1940 when the Nazis crossed the Rhine and marched into his native Alsace, at that time part of France. [...] all remaining citizens – men, women and children – were forced into various branches of the Nazi party'.

In the preface (p. vii), Ungerer writes that he and his family 'were spared the worst effects of the war' and that they 'lived a fairly normal everyday life in spite of the Nazi regime'. This is indeed the main theme of the book: Ungerer shows throughout his story how the Nazi regime and their propaganda machine influenced the everyday life of the Alsatians that were not deported elsewhere. In this sense *Tomi* is very different from *War boy*: whereas Michael Foreman grew up on the side of the British Allies, thereby only experiencing their perspective on the war, Tomi Ungerer was directly confronted with the Nazis occupying his native region.

Ungerer gives much factual information about the historical period and about his native region Alsace. This starts in the introduction, in which he describes the history of Alsace from the Roman time until after the Second World War. In the actual story, Ungerer starts with describing the first years of his life, mainly focusing on family life and on his daily activities. When describing that war is declared in 1939, Ungerer uses more factual, informative sentences, such as: 'On September 1, 1939, three hundred and eighty thousand Alsatians, of which one hundred thousand were in Strasbourg, were ordered to pack a suitcase, a blanket and enough food for four days within twenty-four hours' (p. 18). This factual information is visually accompanied by a poster or a letter about the 'Evacuation de Strasbourg; instructions pour la population' and a photograph of deserted streets in Strasbourg (p. 19). These documents are historically accurate, as are all documents and objects in this book: they are not copied as a drawing (as in *War boy*), but photographed or scanned. Factual or numerical information is further often interwoven in the story, for instance: 'According to statistics established after the war, only 3.5 percent of the population of Alsace actively collaborated' (p. 63) and: 'June 21, 1941 remains a date of infamy, when France – under Pétain's Vichy – with servile cowardice officially agreed to the annexation of Alsace to the German reich' (p. 100). Most of the time, however, Ungerer tells in the text about ordinary life, about he and his family living under German occupation. Ungerer involves many memories of his school, his friends, his family and their daily activities. Much of the factual information comes from the images, like pamphlets, stamps and postcards with Nazi propaganda and photographs of propaganda activities, which objectively show the events and objects young Tomi was confronted with.

The book requires quite some background knowledge about the war, as Ungerer simply mentions: 'War was declared in September 1939' (p. 18). He does not explicitly state something about who the Nazis were and how their ideology originated. At some points he refers to particular persons (Nazi leaders Goering and Goebbels, for instance) without explaining who they were. In general, however, Ungerer is very informative: he tells about evacuations, closed public schools, shortages in food, about the term 'Sitzkrieg' (the sitting war), and further on in the book he explains in detail how the German propaganda was everywhere. Therefore, in order to understand this main theme – the influence of the German propaganda on the everyday life of Alsatians – not that much background knowledge is required.

The setting strongly reflects the historical period. War and propaganda were everywhere, and Ungerer shows how the Nazis dominated what is a quite local setting: they intervene in schools, in the village, in unions, in nearby towns, in sports; in basically everything. The setting also evokes genre expectations; the setting indeed conveys a strong sense of realism, as locations are described using factual information (names of locations) and as they are depicted with a high degree of naturalistic modality, as is established by the use of photographs, maps and childhood drawings made by young

Tomi himself. I will say more on the authenticity of these documents in section e., as their high degree of naturalistic modality seems to work in rather different ways. The setting does not change because Tomi and his family never left Alsace in time of occupation. Ungerer does describe how he left for New York in 1956 (p. 42). New York, however, is not elaborated as a setting in the book, as this happens years after the Second World War is over. Finally, the setting can function as comment upon character (Nikolajeva & Smith, 2002). I would argue in *Tomi* it is not so much the setting doing this, but rather the theme of the book. The German propaganda is reflected in Tomi's character: first he is tractable and pleasing the Nazis by, for example, drawing Jews and swastika's in school (p. 42; p. 73), but later on he also undermines their authority in secret, for instance by drawing a caricature of a Nazi officer (p. 103).

In sum, the historical period is the main theme in the book and determines the setting completely. Indeed, the book is based on the setting of Alsace, where Tomi Ungerer grew up. Factual information about the historical period is provided both by visual elements and their subscriptions, as well as in the main text, in which Ungerer tells about how his everyday family life was influenced by the Nazi propaganda.

b. The construction of the self and the presentation of identities

Tomi Ungerer was eight years old on the moment the war began. His story, however, begins when he is three years old. On page 1 he describes: 'The center of my world was my family [...] I was constantly encouraged to draw and write by my mother, brother, and sisters.' The past self is identified mainly as a member of a close, warm family, and as an artistic boy. The latter identity persists throughout the book: Ungerers identity as an artist is strongly emphasized. Next, it is clear that 'national identity' is a strongly shifting concept for the past self. The Alsatian identity has always been a difficult one, as Ungerer states, for example, in this remark: 'Alsatian village names were literally unpronounceable by the French, creating puddles of confusion reflecting the problematic nature of our identity' (p. 56). For young Tomi, identity is not stable and he feels he does not have *one* national identity: 'I did well switching identities: German in school, French at home, and Alsatian with my friends' (p. 130). The development of a stable Alsatian identity is constantly impeded, even after the war:

> 'It was forbidden to speak Alsatian or German [in school, *M.S.*]. [...] Alsatian would still be forbidden twenty-five years after the war – a deep blow to our identity. Alsatian is a German dialect. With our heavy accents we passed for *sales boches*, dirty Krauts – deeply insulting to us, who did not carry the Germans in our hearts. We had suffered as much, if not more than the others. Again we were branded' (p. 168-169, italics in original).

Interestingly, Ungerer describes a particular moment on which he transformed from a child into an adult: the moment that he lied for the first time in his life. He reflects on his 'sadist teacher' who caught him lying about his homework – Tomi acted as if he could not write because of a cut in his finger – and mentions: 'So I was put on a blacklist, my very own: when I ripped off my bandage I ripped away my childhood' (p. 171). This scene marks his transition from having a child or teenager identity into being an adult.

The present self of Tomi Ungerer is explicitly characterized in the preface and the introduction. In the preface, he shows himself as a humble, relativistic war survivor:

> 'Living through those times, however, has had a profound effect on me in my adult life and I have become, in my own way, a passionate advocate of peace and nonviolence' (p. vii).

In the introduction, his chameleonic identity as an Alsatian is emphasized:

> 'Having to adapt ourselves to constant changes has given Alsatians a great sense of insecurity. To whom do we belong? We turned into chameleons, changing colours – or languages – to survive' (p. x).

Further, he states Alsatians are 'born Europeans' (p. x) and identifies them as pacifists pre-eminently. Ungerer, then, identifies his present self as an Alsatian and does this in these paratexts in a far more explicit way than Michael Foreman presents himself as an Englishman in *War boy*. As was mentioned above, Ungerer's identity as an artist is essential in the narrative and explicitly links his past and present self. His past self already enjoyed the talent for drawing and painting, and Ungerer has never stopped doing so. The next quotation shows how he emphasizes his identity as an artist for both the past self and the present self:

'Much later in life, I realized that when Papa died, he left me all of his talents, and I can still feel his presence, especially when I work' (p. 2).

Most of the identities that construct the past self and the present self of Tomi Ungerer, are directly influenced by the historical circumstances. It goes without questioning that his identity as an Alsatian is so strongly emphasized because Alsace was alternately claimed by the Germans and the French. Living through the war and being directly confronted with the Nazis in his own life has caused Tomi Ungerer to identify himself as a pacifist. As he is aware of the fact that wartime experiences can be much worse than his own, as he mentions in the preface, this leads him to be humble and relativistic.

How, then, do the past self and the present self relate to each other? In *Tomi,* the story is clearly told by the voice of the present self. The text is punctuated with sentences or phrases in which the present self is speaking, indicated by references to life after the war, and by characterizations and observations that the past self is unlikely to have made in his youth. Some examples are:

'Many years later, in 1956, I landed in New York with sixty dollars in my pocket and two trunks of drawings and manuscripts' (p. 42).

'Grunewald has without a doubt exercised the greatest influence of any painter in my artistic career. I still identify with St. Anthony confronted by temptations' (p. 87).

'I spent most of my time reading, and books have remained for the rest of my life my greatest passion' (p. 136).

'The tank is gone now, times have changed, but the harm done cannot be undone' (p. 166).

Only in the letter to his brother on page 151, the reader actually hears the voice of the past self. Mainly, however, the present self is dominant as a narrator, and Tomi Ungerer presents his life story thereby in the form of an ongoing retrospect. It is as if the reader sits down and listens to the adult Tomi Ungerer telling about his past.

Whereas the present self is dominant as a textual narrator, in the images it is the past self that dominates. Most of the drawings in the book are Tomi Ungerer's childhood drawings. Of course, Ungerer as an adult selects and explains the childhood drawings, but in the drawings themselves we literally see the hand of the past self. The objects that are depicted are objects that Tomi Ungerer has seen or played with as a child, and the family photographs give the reader an exact representation of the past self in that time. Some other photographs form a bridge between the time then and the present time, because their subscription mentions that they were taken decades after the war. The subscription of a photograph of trees behind the Ungerer's house states: 'The chestnut trees behind our house in Logelbach were still there when I took this photograph thirty years after the war' (p. 38-39). Towards the end of the book, we also see some paintings made by Ungerer when he was older, several years after the war. The development in drawing and painting techniques shows Ungerer's development as an artist, thereby clearly linking the past self and the present self.

Concluding, in *Tomi* we see the past self mainly in the images, whereas the present self dominates the textual part of the life story – although these borders should not be taken too strictly. There is not that much actual interplay of text and image, but in order to construct one self (in which the past self and the present self merge), we can state that both the textual and the visual mode are deployed.

c. The process of remembering

In the preface of *Tomi,* Tomi Ungerer reflects on the process of remembering. He states:

> 'History is a matter of facts. Many historians are out to prove something. My book doesn't prove anything; it only tells what I witnessed as a child with no prejudice. Historians can argue about opinions, but no one can deny what I saw with my own eyes' (p. vii).

On the one hand, Ungerer acknowledges here that childhood experiences are not fixed historical facts. On the other hand, he does not doubt his own perceptions at all: he is sure of 'what he saw with his own eyes'. He does, however, reflect on the fact that his memories may be completely different than someone else's, by stating:

> '[…] this book, on the surface, might appear to be a trivialization of the great dramas of misery, torture, and violence. But if I speak of this period in the way one would speak of a summer vacation, it is because as a young boy it seemed, with the detachment of childhood, as if I was watching a spectacle, in the same way, perhaps, that my children watch television today' (p. vii).

The difference between *War boy* and *Tomi* is obvious: Ungerer does reflect on other experiences of war and thereby reflects on his own perceptions and memories, whereas Foreman does not.

The book is full of textual and visual elements that have supported the process of remembering: childhood drawings, family photographs, toys, written school exercises, propaganda pamphlets, post stamps, and photographs of Hitler, to mention only a few. The images are accompanied by explanatory subscriptions. At the beginning of the main text, Tomi Ungerer reflects on the functioning of much of the material that was preserved:

> 'My mother kept everything, and so did I. Nothing was thrown away. […] Thus, all of my early drawings, scrapbooks, schoolbooks and reports, and newspaper clippings remain as a testament to what I witnessed as a child. Thanks to this accumulation of material, I am able to recreate and chronicle those absurd and tragic times that were to mark my life to this day' (p. 1).

In the story itself, Ungerer now and then also reflects on the process of remembering. On pages 30-31, for instance, we see a childhood drawing and a photograph of the German invasion in Alsace. Both the images directly reflect how Tomi Ungerer has experienced it, as the subscriptions state: 'The arrival of the *Wehrmacht*, the German Army, as I saw it in 1940' (under the drawing, p. 30, italics in original) and 'This is exactly how I remember the German army – marching and singing' (under the photograph, p. 31). Another example is on p. 103: 'This event was to mark me deeply, and I can say that I remember every gesture, every word with absolute clarity'.

The narrative in its totality, then, is partly based on the personal documents that have remained from Ungerer's childhood and partly on the historical documents and objects he has collected and that were sent to him after publishing the French and German version of *Tomi*. Ungerer does reflect on how the documents were preserved or sent to him, as well as on how he uses them in the book and what they mean to him.

d. Motives: misery and nostalgia

Tomi can be characterized as being written out of a motive of misery. Although Ungerer states that he lived a relatively normal life during the Second World War, he also mentions that this period had a 'profound effect' on him in his adult life. He describes the historical period in which he grew up as 'absurd and tragic times' (p. 1). Especially in the last part of the book, the misery is worked out. For example, Ungerer tells: '[…] I saw entire villages that had been wiped out. In Siegolsheim I saw an old woman step on a mine and land on bloody stumps' (p. 161). On the next pages, he tells that he and his family became 'fully aware of the horrors of the concentration camps' (p. 163). The spread shows a gallow, an oven and barbed wire from the concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof (p. 163), next to a drawing Ungerer made three years after the war, depicting the camps of Dachau-Buchenwald and

Auschwitz. Also other drawings that are included in the book show signs of *Weltschmerz* – the German term for a pessimist vision on all the trouble in the world (see figures 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

Figure 4.2.1 *Tomi*, p. 170

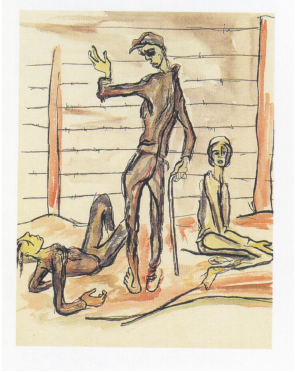

Figure 4.2.2 *Tomi*, p. 169

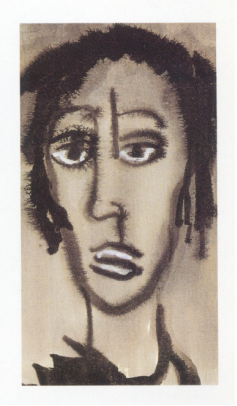

Figure 4.2.3 *Tomi*, p. 173

At the very end of the story, Ungerer explicitly states a motive in the sentence:

> 'I learned to transfuse my fear, insecurity, and anger into my work – trauma can fuel talent, if you have any' (p. 175).

For Ungerer, drawing, painting and writing thus functions as scriptotherapy (Henke, in Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 29): it helps him to cope with his experiences in the past. His identity as an artist draws on childhood traumas, although we have seen that his artistic talents were already present before the war began and his traumas developed. Compared to *War boy*, I would argue that for Ungerer the identity as an artist is more important than the national identity; whereas Michael Foreman uses his art to proudly show his nationalist identity, for Tomi Ungerer his art is the only way of coping with his fragmented, traumatized identity as an Alsatian.

Furthermore, Ungerer now and then takes a collective voice, thereby speaking for all the Alsatians. An example is: 'the Americans fought and many died on *our* soil, for which *we* are eternally grateful' (p. 163, my italics). With this kind of statements, Ungerer clearly assumes that many more Alsatians feel the way he feels. He thereby attempts to tell the story of a whole group, and not just his own. The indications of trauma and scriptotherapy and of speaking also for others, then, surely signal towards a misery motive for creating this autobiography. This is even strengthened by a sentence towards the end of the books, uttered by the voice of the present self: 'I still identify with Dr. Rieux in *The Plague* and, accordingly, I devised my own motto in life: Don't hope, cope' (p. 173, italics in original).

There are, of course, also happy childhood memories in the narrative, with references to playing with friends and growing up in a warm family. An example is on page 119, which contains ordinary, cheerful family photographs (see figure 4.2.4). However, the propaganda, the brainwashing, the suppression, the bombardments and the Alsatian identity taken over dominate the narrative. There is no sign of nostalgia at all: Ungerer prefers leaving his childhood behind him and does not nostalgically

Figure 4.2.4 *Tomi*, p. 119

long for it. This is illustrated by a scene at the end of the book, when Ungerer's family travels to Normandy to attend his sister Edith's wedding:

'There, as I began sorting out my wartime experiences, I made a discovery that would change me forever: the ocean. I was *elated, transported, uplifted* – it was the greatest moment of my life. Up to that time I had never seen the horizon line. My *jagged past* suddenly seemed to be leveled. The sea, a vast expanse with no factories, no churches, no trenches, and no borders – with enough water to *rinse my despair, wash out the past, drown my rancor* – was an endless space in which to raft and drift' (p. 174, my italics).

Ungerer, then, leaves no doubt that the war has left him with trauma. His life narrative is not nostalgic and does not show the childhood world as intact and idyllic as is done in *War boy*. Ungerer has tried to recreate his past as complete as possible, in order to cope with everything he experienced back then.

e. Authenticity

The authenticity of the life story in *Tomi* is first determined by Tomi Ungerer demonstrating that he has the authority to tell the story. Not only is it obvious that Ungerer has experienced the Second World War himself, but almost all the visual elements in the book also date from that historical period: childhood drawings, propaganda objects, family photographs, and many more. Since these objects and documents are not copied but directly photographed or scanned, they are very accurate in a historical sense. In these visual elements, Ungerer provides many historical facts that are perfectly verifiable: the images show a high degree of factuality and controllability because of their high degree of naturalistic modality. They all refer directly to reality outside the text and thereby strengthen the authenticity of the book as a historical but also as a personal document. The information in the text is also perfectly verifiable, because Ungerer accompanies the historical facts with names, numbers and dates.

Tomi Ungerer constructs a truly authentic self. His past self is authentic because he is recognizable and credible as a child character. Young Tomi is an honest and good child, but he is not too decent: on page 41, his respect for nature and all living things is described, immediately followed by Ungerer admitting that he, as a boy, also squashed mosquitoes, caught flies and kept June bugs in matchboxes. This relativism makes him a credible child. The same happens on page 61: here, Ungerer tells about being jealous on other children who were obliged to join the Hitler Youth, whereas his mother managed to keep him home: 'And yet is was with some envy that I watched my school pals in splendid uniforms marching off for fun and sports. […] And what I coveted the most was the Hitler Youth dagger that came with it' (p. 61). His desire to belong to the bigger group is credible and recognizable. Compared to *War boy*, Michael Foreman's past self is evenly reflective (for instance, when he is pinching apples and wonders why he is doing that) and also wants to belong to the group, which is not only shown by Michael following his friends pinching apples, but mostly in his identification with the soldiers. The difference between the two narratives is Tomi Ungerer's reflectiveness about it: his relativism and longing for being part of a group are more explicitly expressed than in Michael Foreman's book.

In the images, too, the past self of Tomi Ungerer is authentic. In the photographs, the reader sees precisely who Tomi Ungerer is and what he looked like as a boy, because of the high degree of naturalistic modality of the photographs. His childhood drawings also strengthen the authenticity of the past self. For example, the Mickey Mouse on page 11 is clearly drawn by a young child, but we also see artistic development in the drawings as the story goes on.

The present self that is constructed in the book can be characterized as honest, nuanced and reflective. All this seems to increase the authenticity of the present self. The reflectiveness of the present self emerges in many scenes in the story. On page 28, for example, Ungerer tells:

'I would have been totally terrified had I not been convinced of French infallibility. […] I had been completely brainwashed in school and at home. I was blinded with patriotism […]. And, of course, the French were all good, the Germans all bad, and the rest of the world not as bad'.

As Foreman does in *War boy*, Ungerer conveys the prevailing ideology he was confronted with as a boy. Opposite to Foreman, however, his present self reflects on this in terms of 'brainwashing' and 'patriotism'. Ungerer therefore acknowledges the ideology back then was very rigid and unambiguous.

The nuanced, reflective present self is also established because Ungerer has no problem showing how ambiguous his memories of the past are to him. For example, he admits that Nazi songs evoked positive feelings in him, and continue to do so (p. 64), and he describes honestly how he felt when the Allies came to liberate the Alsatians:

> 'We were disenchanted with the Americans. They seemed to behave like well-fed babies [...]. Our celebrations and enthusiasm left them cold. [...] To me they were like amateurs. They weren't really arrogant, just aloof' (p. 161).

On the next page, he relativizes this impression: 'But impressions do not make history – the Americans fought and many died on our soil, for which we are eternally grateful' (p. 162). Nevertheless, Ungerer is not afraid to show the less positive side of the Allies and the French. He includes a memory of how the French behaved after the war:

> 'I visited it [the school library filled with German literature, *M.S.*] with a television crew in 1982, and found it the way it had been left in 1945, vandalized by patriotism [...]' (p. 168).

In terms of 'visual authenticity', *Tomi* is highly authentic, as most of the images are photographs, either of events in the past or of collected objects. We should however keep in mind that, except for the family photographs, most of the photographs are German propaganda. Although they have a high degree of naturalistic modality and therefore directly reflect reality, they convey reality only in the way the Germans *wanted* at that time. Yet, the photographic material obliges a mimetic interpretation and shows us how Alsatians were brainwashed by the Nazis. The drawings and paintings made by young Tomi himself, in terms of modality, do reflect directly what he drew when he was a child. However, the scenes he depicts on these drawings should not be interpreted mimetically. Ungerer himself emphasizes this in a very analytical comment on his own narrative, by stating:

> 'The documentation I used in my book is quite unique, depicting in detail the finicky aspect of a huge propaganda machine. On the other hand, the pictures that I drew at a crucial age, at the price of my innocence, constitute an opposing view, equally distorted' (p. vii).

Ungerer here emphasizes that he made drawings based on the way of thinking that was imposed to him. An example is the image on p. 42 (see figure 4.2.5), which shows Tomi's first homework assignment: drawing a Jew. The image shows a man with 'dark hair, wearing glasses, a big nose, thick lips and smoking a cigar' (p. 42), exactly as Tomi's mother explained to him. He could not know what a Jew looked like in reality, because 'at school [their] depiction was [...] exaggerated' and 'no Jews lived in our suburb.' In the next paragraph, he tells about his time in New York as an adult, where he met many Jews: 'I discovered these new friends were like me and my family, not the caricatures portrayed in Nazi schoolbooks' (p. 42).

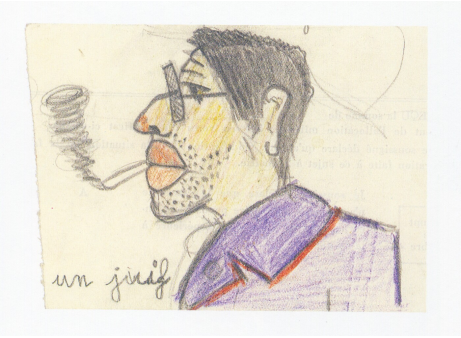

Figure 4.2.5 *Tomi*, p. 42

Ungerer further acknowledges that many of his drawings were exaggerated. On page 35, there is a propaganda image as well as two of Tomi's drawings of German soldiers. The text states: 'The image of the German soldier in propaganda was totally different from the way I drew them. They were both studies in extremes'. Authenticity is increased here, because the present self of Tomi Ungerer explicitly reflects in the text on both images and characterizes them in the same way: neither one is 'better' or

'worse', and both are 'extreme'. Another example is on page 57. Here, a childhood drawing of a plundering is accompanied by the subscription: 'The actual plundering was much more discrete'. In these examples, the text shows that the pictures Tomi Ungerer drew as a child were strongly influenced by the Nazi occupation and that they should not be interpreted mimetically. The actual interplay of text and image, thus, establishes nuance and honesty, and thereby conveys a high sense of authenticity.

All of these examples show that dichotomies as 'good' and 'bad', 'positive' and 'negative' do not really exist for Tomi Ungerer. He was confronted with severe exaggeration by the German propaganda, but also by the French patriotism, and he is the first to admit that his own drawings often also showed exaggerated scenes. Ungerer presents several perspectives on war events, thereby presenting an authentic relativism which is once more emphasized in the last sentences of the book:

> 'The pragmatic vision that I developed, concerning good and evil in myself and in others, has no definitive borderlines. I learned from relativity, which is food for doubt, and doubt is a virtue with enough living space for every imperfect, sin-ridden, life-loving creature on Earth' (p. 175).

f. Address

On the back cover of *Tomi*, there is an explicit statement by the French newspaper *Le Monde* about the intended audience of the book: 'Is this a book for adults? Is this a book for children? It is a book of childhood and it is for all'. This statement actually regards the German and French language editions of *Tomi*. We should be aware that the translation of a book can be very influential on its content and reception (see for example Lathey, 2006). However, Ungerer states that he himself has created an English version after the two previous versions. Hence, with *Tomi*, there is not that much intervention of a translator as would be the case had Ungerer not created the English version himself. I would argue that the comment on the intended audience can therefore also be applied to the version studied here. In the preface, Tomi Ungerer himself also explicitly comments on the intended audience of the two previous editions of *Tomi*: 'It was meant to be read by both adults and children, and I was given the nicest compliment by a mother who told me that her six-year-old boy slept with it under his pillow' (p. vii). Both an external institution and the author himself, then, emphasize that this new version of *Tomi* is, as the previous versions, a book for both child and adult readers.

In the case of *Tomi*, it is hardly possible to apply Beckett's (2012) theory of crossover picture books, since *Tomi* is, as was already mentioned, not a picture book in the strict sense: it is too extensive, contains much text and does not include illustrations made by the artist as an adult. Nevertheless, it is clear that *Tomi* addresses cross-generational themes of war, propaganda, family life and childhood. As we have seen, the historical period could have never been conveyed so effectively by the use of only one of both modes, and the self in the book is constructed in both text and image – the past self is constructed mainly in the images and the present self mainly in the text, so indeed both modes are required to convey a complete sense of self. In this respect, *Tomi* shows an unconventional, but profound and complex interplay of text and image. The present self, in the form of the adult narrator, is dominant in the text, which gives adult readers the opportunity to identify themselves with the present self. For these reasons, the book is likely to appeal to adult readers.

Would *Tomi* also truly appeal to child readers, then? The book may attract somewhat older child readers who are interested in historical narratives, although the anecdote about the six-year-old sleeping with *Tomi* under his pillow suggests that also younger children may be attracted by the book, even though they probably cannot read it by themselves yet. An indication for the book to have (at least partly) an intended audience of child readers is, in my opinion, the fact that the reader sometimes is directly addressed. Examples are: 'Here you can already see the effects of German propaganda on me in 1940' (p. 45) and: 'I still have all of my copybooks. In the first one you can see…' (p. 74). In contemporary adult literature, the reader is hardly ever addressed in such a direct manner. Some references in the book, nevertheless, may be difficult for child readers, as they are in need of background knowledge in order to be fully understood. There are, for instance, references to St. Anthony (p. 87), to the Nazi leaders Goering (p. 62-63) and Goebbels (p. 94), and to Doktor Hirt, who 'was supplied with plenty of bodies – live and dead – on which to perform his research' (p. 163). Some

of the references are humorous or ironic, for example when young Tomi's aunt and uncle call their pig Hermann Goering. In order to understand why it was funny but also dangerous to do so, the reader must know who Hermann Goering was. Tomi Ungerer is sometimes caustic, for instance by stating: 'Yet Hitler was a [...] vegetarian. His carnivorousness was channeled into mass graves' (p. 138). Can we expect child readers to recognize this kind of sarcasm and the anger beneath it? Other difficulties may be references to surrealism (p. 132) and existentialism (p. 173) without explanation, and the metaphor of Tomi ripping the bandage off his finger and thereby ripping away his childhood. In these scenes, the text does not really seem to address an audience of child readers. The childhood drawings and the historical images, on the other hand, may indeed attract child readers.

This book, in sum, is perhaps not very easy to consume for child readers. However, it is impossible to decide whether child readers actually will or will not understand the references, sarcasm and metaphors; in section 5.3, I will therefore reflect on the non-existence of the 'average child reader' and on the undesirability of strict age demarcation in children's literature. It is certainly not unthinkable that *Tomi* may appeal to a selection of child readers who like a challenge in reading – for them, the literary encounter with a young boy influenced by Nazi propaganda can be a valuable reading experience. *Tomi* may also be the kind of book that one wants to return to at different ages; one can find something new in it each time reading it. Moreover, the book shows that besides words, also images are a powerful way to convey a life story to adult readers as well. *Tomi* shows that visual elements, which are traditionally reserved to children's literature, also perfectly can find their way in books that appeal to adult readers.

4.3 *The wall: growing up behind the Iron Curtain* (Peter Sís, 2007)

a. Historical period: theme and setting

The wall is a picture book about the Cold War, as is stated to the reader in the paratext on the inside of the cover. This historical period is established in both theme and setting. As in *War boy* and *Tomi*, the most important theme is growing up under difficult circumstances: the historical period influences the thoughts and actions of the autobiographical subject. In *The wall*, Peter Sís tells about 'growing up behind the Iron Curtain', as the subtitle states, and his childhood is strongly influenced by the suppression of a totalitarian regime. The book, capturing the era of the Cold War, can be roughly divided into three parts, which all have their own spread with diary entries: 1954 – 1963, which was 'a time of brainwashing' (n.p.), 1965 – spring 1968, a period characterized by the Iron Curtain opening up and Western influences coming into the Eastern Bloc, leading to the Prague Spring, and August 1968 – 1977, in which the Soviet Union invades Czechoslovakia and the Soviet regime is reinstalled in its most powerful form. After 1977, the book jumps to 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell and Eastern countries eventually freed themselves of communist influences. In the afterword, Peter Sís tells about the intermediate period to which is not referred in the story: in 1984, he was in the United States and refused to return to Czechoslovakia when he was called back.

Peter Sís provides a lot of factual information about the historical era of the Cold War throughout the book. *The wall* starts with an introduction in which he briefly presents the history of the country in which he grew up: he informs the reader about Czechoslovakia since the Communist revolution in 1917, about the Second World War, about the division of Europe in an Eastern and a Western Bloc after the war and about the Cold War that originated from this division. On the first page of the actual story, the book contains a didactic, factual textbook discourse, because Sís gives definitions of three terms that are central to interpret the historical period, as figure 4.3.1 in Appendix I shows.[2] The terms ('Iron Curtain', 'Cold War' and 'Communism') are printed in red and their definition is printed in black thereafter: 'Iron curtain. The boundary that symbolically, ideologically, and physically divided Europe into two separate areas after World War II' (n.p.). This historical information is provided around the image of a baby with a red pencil in his hand, with the subscription: 'As long as he could remember, he had loved to draw' (n.p.). The reader sees on this page already how factual information and the personal story of Peter Sís relate to each other in the rest of the book: the historical information is textually provided around and next to the images in italics (for instance: 'The Iron Curtain separating East and West is strengthened, and the Cold War escalates', n.p.), whereas the personal story is presented in the text *under* the images in a normal type (for instance: 'The dreams could be kept to himself, but the drawings could be used against him', n.p.; see figure 4.3.2 in Appendix II).

The factual information is given both by the images and in the texts beside the images. These texts often refer to events in the Eastern Bloc in general; the images make the textual information more specific and personal, by showing how people resist against the regime. An example is the image of the house in which the reader can look through the various rooms (see figure 4.3.3 in Appendix III). The text next to this image mentions: 'Display of Western flags – **PROHIBITED**. Only the official art, Socialist Realism, is permitted' (n.p., typography in original). In the image, however, we see the British and American flags hanging in the attic of the house, and one floor below, an artist is enthusiastically painting abstract forms which may resemble fruits, but certainly do not belong to Socialist Realism. In this way, the image is the mode in which the actual undermining of the regime is depicted: by contrasting each other, text and image express the influence of the historical circumstances together. Applying Sipe's (1998) transmediation theory, we here certainly reinterpret the text based on the image, and vice versa. In general, the text that is printed beside the images is mainly historical and factual, the text printed under the images is merely personal, and the images themselves are both

[2] Since some of the images from *The wall* are too large to show here, they are provided in appendixes. Smaller images are shown in this section.

factual and personal, as they literally show how the life of Peter Sís and others is influenced by the historical circumstances.

Although some definitions are explicitly offered to the reader, there is quite some historical background knowledge needed in order to fully understand and interpret *The wall*. Sís indeed gives much information in the introduction, and the reader can therefore place the act of suppression by the Soviets in the right context. However, it may be difficult to understand all references to historical events without background knowledge. For example, Sís refers to J.F. Kennedy's famous statement 'Ich bin ein Berliner' (n.p.), but without background knowledge, Kennedy's role in the Cold War that is implicitly referred to here is hardly understandable. Next, Vietnam is mentioned in passing, but this reference to factual history is not explained either. Another example is on a double spread that shows depictions of Stalin, Lenin and Khrushchev. Sís depicts their names in the images, but does not explain at all who they are.

The setting of *The wall* reflects the historical era of the Cold War. The book is mainly set in Prague, where Peter Sís grew up. The setting is mainly outdoor: in the streets and other public places, such as in school, it becomes clear how everyday public life is dominated by the Soviet regime. Now and then, the setting changes, for example when there is a 'popular uprising' in Hungary in 1956, when the Berlin Wall is erected in 1961 and when president Kennedy is shot in Dallas, Texas, in 1963. The setting is therefore not very local, as in *War boy* and *Tomi*: whereas Michael Foreman and Tomi Ungerer depict what happened in the villages and their surroundings where they grew up, Peter Sís also depicts what happens elsewhere in the world. This change in setting leads to a representation of the Cold War from a global perspective.

Most of the images have a low degree of naturalistic modality: the scenes are depicted in black lines against a white background. The same technique is applied by Michael Foreman on some images in *War boy*, but the difference in naturalistic modality is that Foreman's sketchy characters are more detailed and less abstract than Sís' characters. Foreman's characters all have differently shaped faces and noses, lines on their faces and lively body postures, whereas Sís' characters are a bit more like cartoon characters: their noses are simple dots, their eyes are very round, and most of the time their body postures are more straight and static than in *War boy*. In contrast to *War boy*, the use of color in the images in *The wall* symbolizes the ideological influences of the historical period. At first, whenever any color is used, it is red to emphasize Communist symbols. As Peter grows older, more colors are involved to symbolize the Western free thinking. Eventually, the colors are bursting out in a full colored double spread with references to travelling, art, theater, music and poetry, symbolizing the Prague Spring (see figure 4.3.4 for the right half of the spread). On the previous page, the text mentions: 'It was the Prague Spring of 1968!' The exclamation mark shows a bit of the joy and enthusiasm caused by the Prague Spring, but only after seeing the full-color double spread that follows, the reader will reinterpret the text (Sipe, 1998). Then, the full meaning of happiness about the Prague Spring is conveyed. At the same time, this spread is a very clear reflection of the historical period, as it is similar to psychedelic pop art on, for instance, record covers of The Beatles.

Figure 4.3.4 *The wall*, n.p.

Furthermore, the three consecutive historical periods in the era of the Cold War – of brainwashing, of hope for freedom and the Prague Spring, and of harsh suppression after the Soviet invasion of August 1968 – are reflected in the backgrounds of the spreads with diary fragments, in the selected drawings, paintings and photographs and in the use of color. On the first spread, the childhood drawings are mainly in red and black and show many symbols of

Communism. On the second spread, we see vivid colors with symbols of hope and freedom such as butterflies, birds and representations of Western musicians. The third spread, representing the time after the 1968 invasion, shows sober and dark colored paintings, for instance of pained faces, with a sense of *Weltschmerz*.

In sum, the historical period and the influence of the totalitarian circumstances on everyday life are expressed in *The wall* by using several literary as well as various visual techniques. This happens in an innovative way through the interplay of text and image: the images often make the information in the text more specific and personal. In terms of Sipe (1998), the text is reinterpreted after looking at the image, for example when the text mentions that many actions are prohibited, whereas the image shows that some people are actually undermining these interdictions. Moreover, the visual element of color informs the reader in a symbolic way about how free thinking evolves in the Eastern Block. Text and image together present both a personal and a global perspective on the Cold War, by mentioning and depicting personal, local events but also events that happened elsewhere in the world. However, without background knowledge it may be hard to understand all the historical references that are made through text and image.

b. The construction of the self and the presentation of identities

Peter Sís identifies his self mainly in two ways. First, he identifies his past self and present self both as an artist. For the past self, this is done by depicting him drawing all the time and by the constant textual reference to the act of drawing, for instance: 'He drew tanks. He drew wars' (n.p.), and: 'But he had to draw. Sharing his dreams gave him hope' (n.p.). For his present self, his identity as an artist is emphasized in the afterword: 'It's hard to put it into words, and since I have always drawn everything, I have tried to draw my life […]' (n.p.). The page next to the afterword shows Peter Sís as an older man, in the same pose as the baby on the first image of the book, still with a pencil in his hand, accompanied by the subscription: 'As long as he can remember, he will continue to draw' (n.p.), indicating that drawing is his only way to truly express his feelings about the past. Note the switch here between the use of 'I' and 'he': this technique will also be analyzed in this section. Compared to Tomi Ungerer, the established identity as an artist of the present self is similar: both artists need to draw, paint and write to cope with their war experiences. I will return to this motive in section d. For their past selves, Sís is more explicit about his identity as an artist, literally stating that he 'had to draw' (n.p.). At the end of the book, we even see in an image how his artwork becomes for his past self a way of being free, when he depicts his drawings and paintings as his own wings (see also figure 4.3.7 in section d.). Tomi Ungerer is not this explicit about his artwork functioning as a way of escapism for his past self.

Second, Peter Sís identifies himself as a victim of the historical circumstances and as a – secret – protester against it, trying to escape the Soviet regime. Visually, this is done by depicting the Soviet officials as pig-like figures with big, round noses, whereas the Czech citizens are depicted as ordinary people. In this way, Sís emphasizes the opposition between the beastlike Soviet suppressors and the civilized oppressed citizens: he identifies with the latter group, and strongly disidentifies with the Soviet officials. In identifying himself as one of the oppressed, Sís emphasizes the development of his past self: from an unquestioning, brainwashed young boy he grows into a teenager who did question the Communist system and was inspired by the little bits of information, art and music that came from the West into the East. In the afterword, the resistant, self-conscious identity of the present self is emphasized, referring to the fact that Sís decided to stay in the United States when he was called back to Prague in 1984: '[…] but after a lifetime of being brainwashed, it was not an easy decision. I was afraid I might never see my family again. I thought the Soviets would be in power forever' (n.p.).

How do the past self and the present self, then, relate to each other in this book? A remarkable literary technique, which was already shown in the quotations above, is Peter Sís telling his personal story – in the text at the bottom of the pages – in the third person. He refers to his past self as 'he'. Only in the introduction and the afterword, we hear the voice of his present self speaking for himself, referring to himself as 'I'. It is as if Peter Sís' present self, the self creating the life narrative in the 2000s, takes a certain distance to his past self, or at least to the past experiences that have shaped his

self. This implies that Peter Sís expresses a fragmented identity: he indeed is a Czechoslovakian who decided not to return to his homeland but to stay in the U.S., the country he was always told being 'the most capitalistic and decadent of all' (diary entry November 1962, n.p.). Because Sís tells his personal story in the third person, the reader does barely get access to the consciousness of the child protagonist. Some of his feelings are expressed to the reader by the explicit detour of the adult narrator. For example, when Sís' past self starts to doubt the Soviet principles, the adult narrator simply mentions: 'Then he found out there were things he wasn't told' (n.p.) and 'Slowly he started to question' (n.p.). The reader is not textually involved in any way in feeling those doubts. Visually, however, Peter's feelings of doubt and distrust are expressed. The image on the spread that is between the pages with the quotations above, shows Peter walking, with a large red thinking cloud above his head (see figure 4.3.5 for the left and right side of the double spread). In the thinking cloud, we read: 'This was the time of brainwashing'. Lenin, Stalin and other Soviet rulers are depicted: Lenin with a gun in his hand, and Stalin with his left hand deformed into the barrels of cannons and with medals on his chest, on which we see little children depicted. By the process of transmediation (Sipe, 1998) we reinterpret what we have read – that people are 'brainwashed' – by looking at the images. Brainwashing usually is a process one is not aware of, but because of the image, we reinterpret the concept of brainwashing in Peter's particular situation: we see that he is already aware of the fact that he is influenced and intimidated by the Soviet officials and his facial expression shows us that this makes him feel dejected.

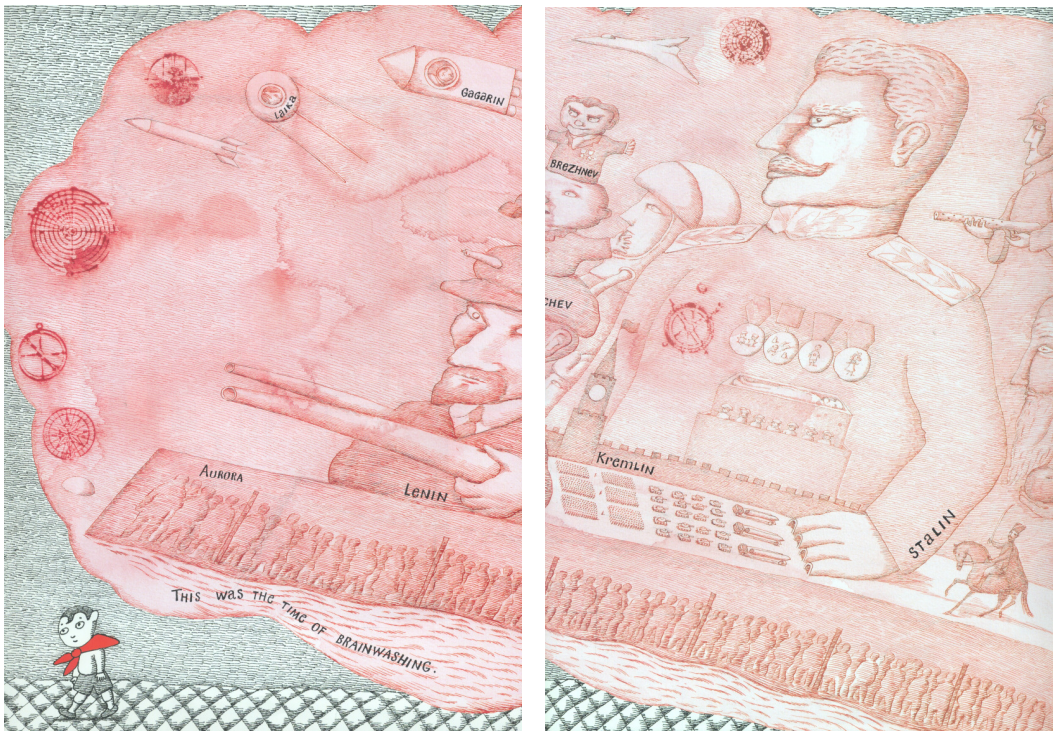

Figure 4.3.5 *The wall*, n.p.

In the diary entries, we do get a textual inside glimpse in the thoughts and feelings of young Peter. As the dates of these diary fragments show, they are written by Peter Sís' past self and are therefore historically authentic. The use of diary fragments is very different from the usual retrospective autobiographical writing, because the elements of retrospect and recalling are reduced. The diary fragments are indeed written in the past by the past self, giving an exact representation of how the past self thought and wrote in that time. However, the present self still interferes: as an adult narrator, Peter Sís has selected certain fragments and must have translated them into English. We do hear the voice of the past self, but what this voice tells us is also to a certain extent determined by the present

self. Nevertheless, the diary fragments do show the development of the past self. Nikolajeva (2002) mentions that the diary telling mode can provide several degrees of representation of consciousness, from merely describing events to an exact representation of thoughts and emotions. In *The wall*, the diary entries on the first two spreads merely describe events. On the last spread, the fragments give more access to Peter's consciousness, for example when he states in the very last fragment:

> 'Rumors, rumors, rumors. Everyone suspects everyone else of being an informer. Can we hope things are ever going to be better?' (n.p.)

This development may reflect the development of the past self, from a boy focused on what is happening around him, to a young adult who reflects on his fears and hopes. However, it may also be a result of Peter Sís' present self selecting relevant diary fragments, that is, the development is created by the narrative itself. Based on the text-internal analysis offered here, this remains inconclusive.

In the images, the past self of Peter Sís is recognizably depicted. As in *War boy*, the reader is looking through the eyes of the present self, remembering how his past self acted in the past. The black-and-white images of his past self, with a low degree of naturalistic modality, do not resemble his photographs, which are on the diary spreads and on the inside of the back cover. Nevertheless, Sís has depicted his past self in a very recognizable way, because of the characterizing lock of hair on his forehead. We can identify the past self easily on almost every image. The images never take the child protagonist's point of view. We do see his dreams and fantasies depicted: this happens particularly towards the end of the book, as Peter fantasizes about the most innovative ways to escape the Eastern Bloc.

The development of the past self is innovatively symbolized in a visual detail on the spreads with diary fragments. The three spreads show a head with a brain on the left upper side (see figure 4.3.6 for the left upper parts of the diary spreads). The first brain, related to diary fragments in the period 1954 – 1963, is depicted in red, effectively symbolizing the Communist brainwashing that Peter experienced. The second brain, representing 1965 – 1968, is variously colored and symbolizes Western influences on Peter's thinking: he starts to think for himself in this period and the various colors seem to reflect both joy and happiness, but also the fact that he is confronted with many new views on his life and the society he lives in. The last brain, related to the dark period of 1969 – 1977, is sober green, symbolizing that Peter now is mature in his thinking, but not naively happy since the Soviet suppression is worse than ever before. The brain has one color again, which can be interpreted as a signal of the Western free thinking to have become the standard in Peter Sís' life: the various new views that came to him in the former period, have merged into one single, 'Western' point of view Peter Sís has adopted. The past self, to conclude, is by the present self not only depicted as a recognizable person in the black-and-white drawings, but also symbolically on the diary spreads.

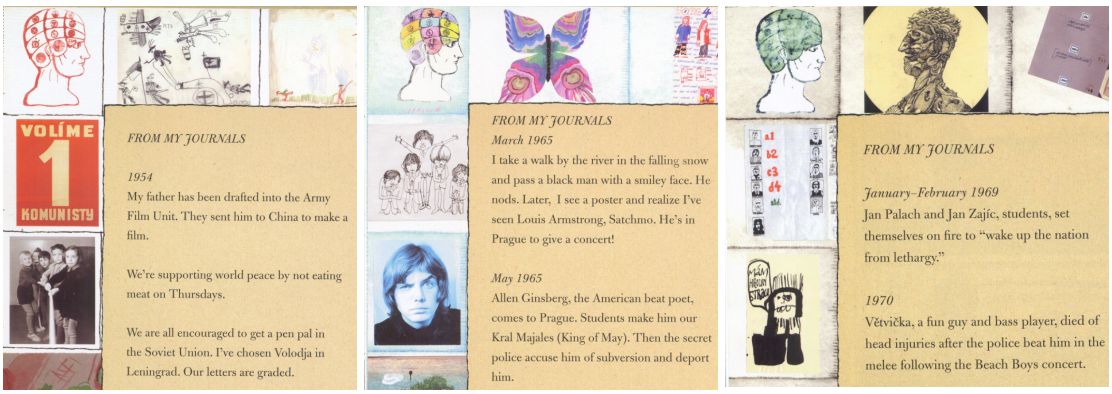

Figure 4.3.6 *The wall*, n.p.

c. The process of remembering

Sís does not tell the reader how he remembers certain things or how his memories were evoked before and during the creation of *The wall*. There are two explicit references to the act of remembering in the book, at the beginning ('As long as he could remember, he had loved to draw', n.p.) and in the end as an expectation for the future: 'As long as he can remember, he will continue to draw' (n.p.), in which we also again recognize his established identity as an artist. Nowhere else in the book are there references to the process of remembering. Sís does therefore not refer to any possible cracks or gaps in his memory: he presents an ongoing life story without showing any doubt about his memories. He does not reflect in any way on the act of recalling as not being a one-to-one representation of the past in the way it was experienced.

There are visual elements that seem to support the process of remembering. The endpaper shows a stylized map of the world, in which the countries under Communist regime are depicted in red. Also the childhood drawings, the photographs and the diary fragments seem to support the process of remembering. The reader is likely to assume that Peter Sís based the presentation of his life story on the journals he wrote in his childhood, at least partly. We can imagine that, on the moments memory failed, he could rely on the diary notes he made in the past. However, the diary fragments are included as a way to present the past and to establish the past self, and not so much as artefacts that supported Peter Sís' process of remembering – he does at least not reflect on such a function of the diary fragments. Just as in *War boy*, the reader of *The wall* is mainly left in the dark about how the process of remembering has unfolded. It could be that this non-reflectiveness reduces the authenticity of the present self. I will return in section e. to the question of whether this indeed is the case.

d. Motives: misery and nostalgia

What motive for creating *The wall* could be deduced from a close reading of the book? At the end of the afterword, Peter Sís explicitly tells why he created the book:

> 'Now when my American family goes to visit my Czech family in the colorful city of Prague, it is hard to convince them it was ever a dark place full of fear, suspicion, and lies. I find it difficult to explain my childhood; it's hard to put it into words, and since I have always drawn everything, I have tried to draw my life – before America – for them. Any resemblance to the story in this book is intentional' (n.p.).

From these sentences, we can deduce a clear motive for creating the book. For Sís it was difficult to tell about the 'dark' period of his childhood. Telling his life story in a picture book is for him the only way to fully share his story with his loved ones. This indicates that *The wall* is a misery autobiography. Features of misery can be found throughout the book, for instance the constantly repeated word 'compulsory', the threat of nuclear war, the pig-like figures who symbolize the Soviet regime at almost every page, the highly stylized tank depicted when Czechoslovakia is invaded, the intervisual reference to Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream,* and the use of mainly black and white – this all creates a threatening, sober, mirthless atmosphere.

However, not the whole period of Peter Sís' youth is miserable. There are two elements in the book which could, at the first sight, be interpreted as 'nostalgic'. First, there is the happiness that is depicted in bright, flower-power colors towards and during the Prague spring. Second, Sís seems to reflect somewhat uncritically on his past, or at least unsubtle, in particular when it comes to the 'good' and 'bad' side. This is, for instance, shown in one of the last images, in which the two sides of the Iron Curtain are characterized: the upper part is colored in bright orange and is covered in words like 'freedom', 'virtue', 'honor', 'equality', 'respect' and 'wisdom', whereas the lower part is depicted in shades of grey and dark blue and shows terms like 'stupidity', 'injustice', 'terror' and 'fear' (see figure 4.3.7 for the left half of the spread). Reality, however, is never so dichotomous as it is presented here, but is rather more complex. Above, I mentioned that these two elements could *at the first sight* be interpreted as nostalgic. Compared to *War boy*, an actual nostalgic autobiographical picture book about wartime, the signals in *The wall* namely do not convey an idyllic view on growing up in wartime. This is first because *The wall* shows happiness – and the accompanying colors – only as a way of

resistance and escapism. Second, the dichotomous and uncritical presentation of good and bad results from feelings of fear, anger and protest – the uncritical reflection on the past has a cause that is based on traumatic experiences, and not on the positive feelings of patriotism as in *War boy*. The elements of happiness and the lack of critical reflection, then, do not refer to a desire for the lost past. The world is certainly not presented as intact and idyllic, but is shown in all its darkness, threat and complexity. Even the elements in *The wall* that seem to be nostalgic at first sight, are based on feelings of misery.

Figure 4.3.7 *The wall*, n.p.

e. Authenticity

How is authenticity determined in *The wall*? In the autobiographical pact that is established in the book, Peter Sís demonstrates he has the authority to tell the story of the Soviet regime at the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. This is done in the paratexts, for example on the inside of the front cover ('Peter Sís draws us into the world that shaped him – Czechoslovakia during the Cold War') and on the back cover:

> 'He was born in the middle of Europe in the middle of the twentieth century at the starts of the Cold War. In his graphic memoir, Peter Sís tells us what life was like for a boy who loved to draw and make music [...].'

In the introduction, Sís emphasizes again he indeed grew up under the Soviet regime: 'I was born at the beginning of it all, on the Red Side – the Communist Side – of the Iron Curtain'. The images on the spreads with journal fragments support his demonstrated authority to tell this story, as his childhood drawings are clearly inspired by the threatening atmosphere and the indoctrination: as a boy, Peter Sís drew red Communist symbols, tanks, bombardments and army members.

The authenticity is further determined by the verifiability of the historical facts that are presented in the book. Peter Sís accompanies his factual information by years, dates and numbers, just as Michael Foreman and Tomi Ungerer. This is done in the story itself, when he refers to, for instance, the Cuba crisis or the concert of the Beach Boys in Prague in 1969. Also the information in the diary fragments is often perfectly verifiable, as this example shows:

> *'April 12, 1961*
> The Soviet Union launched the first man into space, Yuri Gagarin. When he returned, he landed safely in Siberia' (n.p., italics in original).

Although most of the images have a low degree of naturalistic modality, some images nevertheless show a high degree of factuality and verifiablity. Images of the Berlin Wall, of J.F. Kennedy being shot in his open car, and the highly stylized image of Jan Palach who set himself on fire as a protest against the Soviet regime, are imprinted in Europe's collective memory. Whereas authenticity may be reduced by the low degree of modality of the images – they do not look 'real' – it is on the other hand strengthened by the recognizability of some of the scenes.

The constructed self is most likely recognizable to many readers. They will understand Peter Sís' desire to be free and in the same time will share his fear to be discovered making forbidden drawings and music. In terms of telling modes, the past self does not have an actual voice in most of the story. The fact that the adult narrator speaks in the third person about his past self, may reduce authenticity; one could wonder why the author is using such an artifice. On the other hand, it is also possible that

this technique indeed increases authenticity, because Peter Sís clearly shows that his past self was a very different person from who he is now. The diary fragments convey a similar ambiguity in relation to authenticity. As we do hear the voice of the past self at the same moment he experienced certain events, these fragments may increase the authenticity of the self. On the other hand, they may also reduce it, when we are aware of the fact that the present self has selected several fragments and has consciously left out others. Further, authenticity is strengthened by the development of the past self. Peter Sís does not give himself the role of a hero or, on the other hand, a terribly treated victim. He constructs his past self as an artist and whereas drawing is at first something that he just does without questioning it, influenced by the Soviet brainwashing, it later on becomes an act of cautious resistance against the regime and a way of being free. This credible development in thinking and creating art makes the past self 'real' and recognizable. In the images, the past self is not depicted with a high degree of naturalistic modality, but as was mentioned in section b., the self is always recognizable in the images and fits well in his surroundings – towards the Prague Spring, his hair grows longer and his trouser legs get wider as was the fashion in those days. The constructed self, in sum, is recognizable in both his actions, dreams and desires, and in his visual depiction in the life narrative.

As Sís does not in any way reflect on the process of remembering in order to create this book, he ignores the fact that memories of past experiences and the experiences themselves are not identical. For the reader who is aware of this, this may reduce the authenticity of the story. However, most readers who simply go along with the story, will not be aware of the fact that remembering is such a complex process. Therefore, for these readers the absence of reflection on the process of remembering will most likely not affect the authenticity of the life narrative. The presence of documents that may have supported the process of remembering, such as the photographs, childhood drawings and diary fragments, will then even strengthen the authenticity of the book. Sís does not reflect on their function in the process of remembering, but the reader who is willing to go along with the story is likely to approach these objects as entities on which he has based his life story. For example, these readers are likely to interpret the diary fragments as personal sources of information which Peter Sís has consulted on moments when his memories of a certain period have failed. However, readers who are more critical, may be more skeptical about the authenticity of the story. For them, the absence of reflection on the process of remembering may be a serious problem. They notice the 'constructedness' of the story, for instance in the selection of diary fragments, but the fact that they are not further informed about how Peter Sís actually constructed his life story, why he did it in this particular way and how the documents included in the book have helped him doing it, may decrease the authenticity of the story.

The wall was identified above as misery autobiography, as giving expression to traumatic experiences in the past. We have already seen in section d. that Sís' uncritical reflection on the past seems to be caused by these traumatic experiences. The reader is likely to acknowledge that Peter Sís tells the story as he has experienced it, because he indeed belonged to the suppressed group. However, the analysis of *Tomi* has showed us that it is nevertheless possible for an artist to subtly reflect on the past and on the constructedness of a life story. Tomi Ungerer's present self authentically reflects on how the past self was shaped by the experiences of war, and on the way he has constructed his life story. Just as Michael Foreman, Peter Sís does not do this. In this sense Sís' present self is not as authentic as Ungerer's, but rather resembles Foreman's present self.

Text and image truly work together in *The wall*. An example is at the end of the book. The text only mentions: 'He dreamed of being free. Wild dreams…' (see figure 4.3.8, n.p.). The image, a double spread, takes over and shows us Peter on a bike, with his drawings under his arm, fleeing for Soviet police officers. He rides on a winding road alongside a landscape in which his dreams are depicted, dreams which all show innovative ways to escape to the West: Peter as a pole vaulter to jump over the border, Peter disguised as a tree walking towards the border, Peter with a fake duck on his head swimming over the river to reach the West. Finally, without any words, the next spread shows how he jumps with his bike off a cliff into the West, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty in New York. In this image, his drawings become his wings, symbolizing that his art has always been his way to be free. In a surprising, innovative and complex way, the images completely take over the story. Even though the

images have, in terms of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), a low degree of naturalistic modality, the interplay of text and image increases the authenticity of the life story. On the image, we see things happening that cannot happen in real life – cycling through a landscape of dreams; flying with paper wings to the West – but this does not at all cause us to feel that Peter Sís in lying or that he is untrustworthy. Looking at the spread, the reader might think that what is shown is impossible, but by reading the text, the meaning of the image is reinterpreted (Sipe, 1998). Moreover, by depicting his dreams, the image enables us to put ourselves into the feelings, emotions and desires of Peter Sís' past self. The interplay of text and image, thus, reinforces the authenticity of the life story being told.

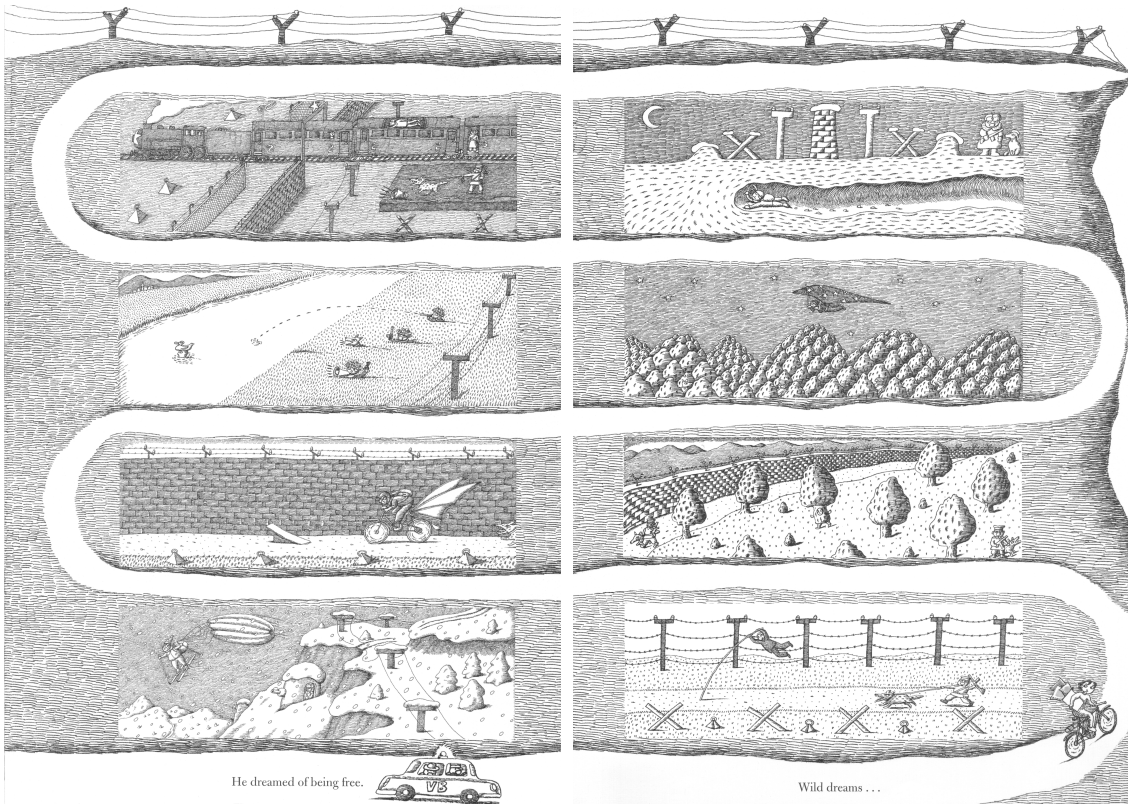

Figure 4.3.8 *The wall,* n.p.

In sum, the authenticity in *The wall* is positively determined through the demonstrated authority of Sís to tell the story, the verifiablility of historical facts that are presented in text and image, the recognizablility of the past self and the innovative interplay of text and image, which truly take the reader along with the dreams that young Peter Sís has had. On the other hand, authenticity is reduced in a way similar to *War boy,* because just as with Michael Foreman, Peter Sís' present self does not reflect on the way he constructed his life narrative and the strict opposition between 'good' and 'bad'. He does not acknowledge that this construction is influenced by his traumatic experiences. As we have seen, this may lead critical readers to be skeptical about the life story's authenticity.

f. Address

Is *The wall*, based on the analysis so far, a picture book for children or for adults, or both? And how is the audience addressed? The texts on the covers do not comment on the intended audience. The two medals on the front cover, however, do indicate that the book is marketed as a children's book: *The wall* is a Caldecott honor book, which is an award for the most distinguished picture book for children in the United States, and has won the Robert F. Sibert Medal, which is the award for the most

distinguished informational book for children. Moreover, the name of the website of the publisher, www.fsgkidsbooks.com, also labels *The wall* as a children's book.

The wall, however, can also be characterized as a crossover book, based on the criteria that Beckett (2012) mentions. First, the theme of war and suppression is a cross-generational one. Second, the book has profound characteristics of a postmodern picture book, which resembles, according to Beckett, the true crossover book. The interplay of text and image in *The wall* is very complex. The images are not merely complementary to the story, as is mainly the case in *War boy*, but regularly take over the story. An example was already given in the previous section (see figure 4.3.8), but also the example of the house in which people perform acts of resistance (see figure 4.3.3 in Appendix III) does show how the text is reinterpreted based on the image and vice versa, as Sipe (1998) has suggested. Another characteristic of the postmodern, crossover picture book is its hybrid form. Because *The wall* uses both text and image in various ways, it is obviously a hybridization of genres, because it combines various ways to tell the story: personal information in third-person texts, textual historical information, textual diary fragments, symbolic drawings, depictions of well-known historical scenes, actual childhood drawings and photographs. On many pages, the images are ordered as in a comic book or storyboard form, with smaller, framed images fitted into a rectangular shape. *The wall*, in short, is a hybrid form of a history textbook, a diary, a comic book and a film. The characteristics mentioned – the cross-generational theme, the complex interplay of text and image, and the hybridization of genres in the book – show that *The wall* is a true crossover picture book which, according to Beckett (2012), appeals to both child and adult readers.

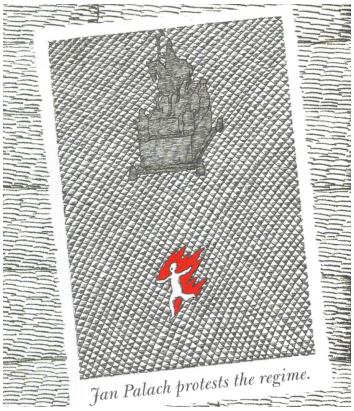

Figure 4.3.9 *The wall*, n.p.

The book requires quite some background knowledge in order to fully understand it: without knowledge of the Soviet regime it may be difficult to understand, for example, the depiction of Jan Palach who set himself on fire (see figure 4.3.9), or the symbolic image of the Soviet functionary who is depicted as a marionette behind his desk, with a bigger, higher-ranked figure pulling the strings (see figure 4.3.10). However, even if a child reader does not have the knowledge to understand all of such references, Peter Sís' life story of being under a totalitarian regime and his desire to be free is – in a less specific way – still understandable to child readers, because the misery motive for creating the narrative is as undeniable for them as it is for adult readers. As the past self is constructed in different phases of life, there are multiple options for readers to identify with the self in *The wall*. Moreover, Sís is never pedantically warning a younger audience for the future, thereby addressing them equally to adult readers. As adult readers are likely to have more life and reading experience than child readers, they however may be somewhat more critical and skeptical about Peter Sís' present self and the absence of this self reflecting on the way the life narrative was constructed.

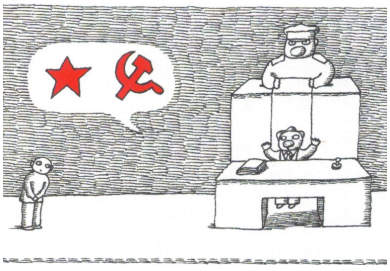

Figure 4.3.10 *The wall*, n.p.

In conclusion, there is a story in this book that readers can interpret in their own way – in all the complexities of the Communism and the Cold War, or in a less specific manner as a more general story of being under a totalitarian regime. Both interpretations are equally powerful. *The wall*, therefore, is indeed a crossover autobiographical picture book that appeals to both a younger and an adult audience, addressing them equally and in their own rights, although we should keep in mind that child readers may be less critical on the constructedness of the narrative than adult readers.

4.4 *The house Baba built. An artist's childhood in China* (Ed Young, 2011)

a. Historical period: theme and setting

The historical period that is addressed in *The house Baba built* is the Second World War, but not from the European perspective that was present in *War boy* and *Tomi. The house Baba built* is set in Shanghai, where Ed Young grew up. This is told on the inside flap of the loose cover: 'In Ed Young's childhood home in Shanghai, [...] For outside the home's walls, China was at war.' It is at this point not clear which war and thus, which historical period is addressed. The foreword tells us: 'I was born in 1931' (n.p.), so the reader with enough background knowledge about history can tell that Ed Young grew up during the Second World War. The foreword also mentions: 'China was invaded, leaving unknown numbers of people homeless' (n.p.). Only by reading the time line at the very end of the book, the reader knows that Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931.

In *The house Baba built*, war functions more like a background theme than in the three other primary works. The main theme in the book is family life. Ed Young is not telling just his own life story, but rather the 'collective' life story of his family during the years of war. He thereby especially focuses on his 'Baba', his father, who has built a house to keep his family safe during the war. This theme of family life is related to how the war influenced the Young family and others around them, for example when Ed Young tells:

> 'Baba made an apartment for a German refugee family in what had been our bedrooms, and we were scattered to make room for the Luedeckes' (n.p.).

Figure 4.4.1 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

Figure 4.4.2 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

The page is filled with a photograph of 'Mrs. and Mr. Luedecke' (see figure 4.4.1). The next page, however, is more like a family album, with a collage of photographs of the Luedecke's daughter Jean (see figure 4.4.2), accompanied by text that tells us that she soon became like the new baby sister of the Young children. Another reference to the war is at the end of the book: 'Only toward the very end of the war did we hear bombs' (n.p.). The image shows a collage of Shanghai, bombing planes and the Young children hiding with their heads covered. Ed Young tells: '[...] the bombs [...] didn't frighten me anyway. I knew nothing could happen to us within those walls, in the house Baba built' (n.p.). The next page describes how 'suddenly and unbelievably, the war was over' (n.p.), soon followed by the description of a party for family and friends, shown on a light blue spread with dancing characters on it. In all of these examples, any reference to the war is immediately followed by a more extensive reference to the safety of being with family. The influence of the war on the daily life, then, is even

smaller than in *War boy*: the war is kept at a distance, effectively conveying the feelings of safety and happiness the Young children must have experienced during that period. That 'family life' and not 'the influence of war' is the main theme in the book is also evident in the interplay of text and image. The picture book resembles a family album: many images have a very high naturalistic modality, since they are actual photographs, collages made out of photographs or portrait drawings that highly resemble real photographs. When the text mentions the war, the images in general cause a reinterpretation (Sipe, 1998) since they emphasize the warm and joyful family life.

In the story itself, Young gives little factual information about the Japanese invasion in China and the Second World War. Unlike Foreman, Ungerer and Sís, he does not accompany information in the story itself with dates, years or factual numbers. He does make small references to the war, as the examples above demonstrate, and this is also apparent elsewhere in sentences such as: 'But when the Allies joined the war in Asia, building construction halted, and Baba's engineering work did, too' (n.p.). However, primarily the factual information is given in the paratexts, such as the time line at the end of the book. Whenever historical facts are mentioned in the story itself, they do require quite some background knowledge. At the beginning, it is only mentioned that 'war was spreading to Shanghai' (n.p.), and five spreads later, Young mentions: 'After Nanking fell to the Japanese, my aunt, uncle, and grown-up cousins Wilbur and Sonny fled to Shanghai' (n.p.). It is hard to understand such a reference without background knowledge – it is the first time in the story that Japan is mentioned as the invading party, in a very incidental way.

The setting of *The house Baba built* does not tell the reader that much about the historical period. Rather, the setting shapes the main theme of the book: family life. It is a domestic indoor setting; apart from school and the nearby street life, the setting is bound to 'the house Baba built'. As the title suggests, the house functions as an important motive in the book. Both text and image give the reader much information about the house. The text mainly describes events going on in and near the house, for example:

> 'I turned a rocking chair into a horse. It squeaked and thumped along the floors, leaving tracks in the house Baba built' (n.p.).

> 'We four older ones roller-skated on the roof, […]. They rolled and rumbled on the concrete […]' (n.p.).

> 'Off all the picnics we ever had, that was my favorite: the whole family, including our dog, Jolly, by the pool behind the house Baba built' (n.p.).

The images actually show the house to the reader, on a collage spread at the beginning and as an architectural floor plan at the end. Thus, by combining text and image into one interpretation, as Sipe (1998) suggests, the reader gets the most complete view of what the house looked like in Ed Young's childhood. The setting does not change, and is very local; whereas Foreman and Ungerer keep their settings to the villages where they lived, Young's setting is even smaller and truly domestic, because it is limited to the house in which he grew up. The clause 'the house Baba built' comes back in the book over and over again, emphasizing that the house functions as the most important setting. This safe, warm, domestic setting sets the reader's emotional response in an everyday, but also nostalgic register (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). The elements of nostalgia will be studied further when the motives for creating this book are addressed in section d.

Concluding, in *The house Baba built*, the historical war setting is not the most important theme. Compared to the other primary works, there are few references to factual, historical events, in particular in the story itself. The Japanese invasion and the Second World War influencing daily life mainly function as a background theme to tell about family life in the safe house that Ed Young's father built.

b. The construction of the self and the presentation of identities

In *The house Baba built* Ed Young identifies his past self first and foremost as a son and brother, in short: as a member of his family. Young does not only tell his own life story, but also the life story of his whole family. Often the voice is a 'collective' one, using the plural form and representing Young and his siblings or even his complete family: '*we* saw them next time at diner', 'the Lings came to *us*', '*we* made paper origami boxes' (n.p., my italics). We may interpret this as an indication of how important family is in the collective Chinese society, opposed to Western society. On the second spread, we see a chalk drawing of the five Young children, like a family portrait, with their names and short characterizations. Ed Young characterizes himself as 'a dreamer, quiet and shy' (n.p.). His shy character is elaborated later on in the story: 'With strangers, my tongue wouldn't work properly, and my words got jumbled. I was already shy – being tongue-tied made it worse. So I remained silent' (n.p.). Furthermore, he identifies his past self as a creative boy, by repeatedly emphasizing that he liked to draw as a child, which is depicted in the scene where he tries to draw a cowboy (see figure 4.4.3). In this, we see already his identity as an artist.

Figure 4.4.3 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

Ed Young identifies his present self mainly in the paratexts. In the foreword, the author's note and the acknowledgments, he all refers to his father:

'As Baba said, "Crisis does carry a blessing within its curse." It's up to us to find it' (foreword, n.p.).

'But I hope Baba is in agreement with me that it [this book, *M.S.*] has all turned out well' (author's note, n.p.).

'This bridge from past to future, my tribute to my father, is finally realized' (acknowledgments, n.p.).

This shows how Ed Young as an adult still strongly identifies himself as a family member and as a son. This idea is reinforced by the photograph of Ed's daughters on the page of the afterword: family is important to him, and being a father himself, he is grateful for his own father keeping him and his siblings safe during the war. He therefore honors his 'Baba' in this book. Apart from the identity of a son and family member, the present self of Ed Young also strongly identifies himself as an artist. Although all four life narrators considered in this study were already artists before they created a life narrative, Ed Young is the only one who states his profession explicitly in the subtitle of his book: 'An artist's childhood in China.' His identity as a family member and as an artist, then, are identities that are shared by the past self and present self. As the historical period is not the main theme in the book, historical events do not influence Ed Young's established identities that much. Rather, the main theme of the book – family life – is in line with Young's identity as a son and a brother, as a family member. In this book, the collective identity of a family is more central than the historical circumstances influencing their lives. This collective identity also means that Ed Young has not just constructed his own, individual self, but also draws on the genre of biography; he characterizes not only his past self, but also his family members. Compared to the other books, Tomi Ungerer is the only one who also characterizes his family members, though he does not use a plural, collective voice. Michael Foreman does refer to his family, but does not actually characterize his mother and brothers, and Peter Sís does hardly refer to his family at all in the story itself – he only mentions the fear of never seeing his family again in the afterword. Ed Young, then, is the artist whose identity is most interwoven with his family's collective identity.

As identity and selfhood are central in this book, the present self grants the reader quite some access to the consciousness of his past self. Repeatedly, the reader can imagine how Ed thought and

felt as a young boy, for instance in the example of his shyness given above. Some other examples are: 'I looked at my drawing and felt very frustrated' (n.p.), 'I loved and looked up to Sonny' (n.p.), 'The help Fifi got became my favorite part of the day [...] I hung around, listening [to Baba explaining English stories in Chinese, *M.S.*] and looking at the luscious illustrations' (n.p.), and '[...] I thought about how many of her people's homes in Germany had been devoured by the war as well' (n.p.). Many of Ed's thoughts and feelings are related to other people. This again shows how important 'collectiveness' must have been in constructing his identity, something that is much less obvious in the other primary works. By the use of the autonomous monologue (Nikolajeva, 2002), readers do get access to what young Ed thinks and feels – opposite to, for instance, Michael Foreman's past self in *War boy*. In this telling mode in fiction, it is difficult to distinguish who precisely is telling the story. In case of a life narrative, we know it is the present self, the adult narrator, who is telling. The use of the autonomous monologue here functions in giving the past self an own voice.

The images in *The house Baba built* may be quite hard to interpret in relation to the constructed self. This is because the images highly vary in their degree of naturalistic modality. There are many photographs in the book, either freestanding or as part of a collage, drawings that resemble photographs, more sketchy drawings, and characters depicted by the highly stylized use of paper in a collage technique (see figure 4.4.4). Ed Young constructs his past self and his relatives, thus, in various visual ways.

Figure 4.4.4 *The house Baba built*, parts of various pages, n.p.

Most of the time, it is as if the present self is looking back on (adaptations of) photographs. In these cases, the past self is clearly portrayed through the eyes of the present self. On other moments, it is not clear whether we are looking through the eyes of the present or past self. For example, when the text states: 'The first time we visited the Ling family, the boys ran upstairs' (n.p.), we see a collage technique which depicts boys running upstairs (see figure 4.4.5). The picture shows what the past self has seen in that time. However, it is always the present self who is creating the images. Therefore, it is impossible to decide whose point of view we take here. This clearly shows how interwoven the past self and the present self can be in an autobiographical picture book.

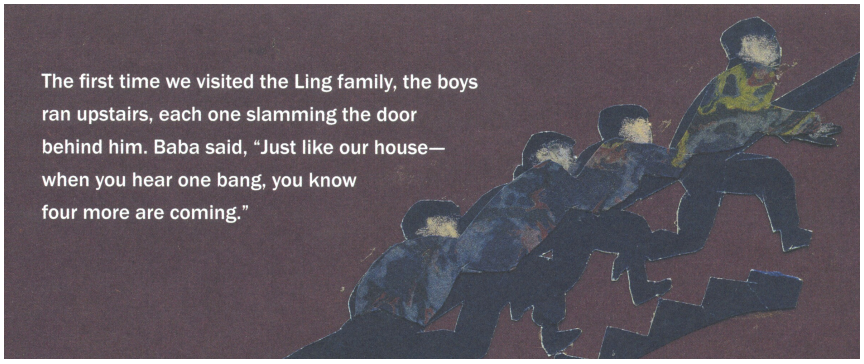

Figure 4.4.5 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

c. The process of remembering

In the author's note at the end of *The house Baba built*, Ed Young reflects extensively on the process of remembering that he went through in order to create this book. In 1990, he went with one of his sisters back to their childhood house in Shanghai, which 'triggered long-forgotten memories' (n.p.). He then started to put images in his journal. In 2002, he took his children to Shanghai. Since his sister had passed away, Ed Young mentions: 'I found myself quite alone in recalling those bygone days and felt an urge to paint and describe them for future generations' (n.p.).

The author's note explains to the reader that putting memories in a picture book was not an easy thing to do for Ed Young. He describes how he did two attempts before his editor suggested to ask the help of author Libby Koponen for shaping the book. In his next statement, Ed Young explicitly acknowledges that it is impossible to precisely recreate reality as it was in the past – he is the only artist discussed in this study who explicitly states this. In section e., I will return to what this means for authenticity.

> 'Gradually and unbelievably, the book took shape. Meanwhile, I also learned to come to terms with the limits of human effort in re-creating reality – any human creation, no matter its completeness or point of view, is at best a mere fragment of life itself' (n.p.).

In *The house Baba built*, there are many elements that have supported Ed Young's process of remembering. The story itself, as was mentioned, is accompanied by many family photographs, parts of such photographs in collage techniques, or drawings which highly resemble portrait photographs. Many of the photographs are supported by names of the ones depicted. The end of the book shows a double spread representation of a part of a letter that 'Baba' wrote to his children in 1963, combined with stamps and a drawing of Ed Young's father writing the letter (see figure 4.4.6).

Figure 4.4.6 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

The next spread, the afterword, shows two pictures of the house itself, two pictures of the house's metal fencing with curly details – in which we recognize the cover of the book – and two maps: one old looking map of Shanghai, and one 2010 Google Maps image, which shows the exact location of the house. The next page contains textual support for the process of remembering, namely the time line

with birth years of Ed Young and his siblings, and other important events that are described in the story. The time line and the author's note next to it can be folded out and reveal two large, pencil drawn floorplans of the house. The indication that Ed Young really needed all of these elements to support his memories and to create the book, comes from the author's note, in which he states that creating the book was:

> '[...] like an eternal series of struggles: first to reconstruct the three-story house without an existing blueprint of my father's original floor plans, and then to find and collect lost photographs and old maps of Shanghai, all from friends and relatives' (n.p.).

Moreover, this quotation shows that Young has based his story not only on his own memories, but that he also draws on supporting elements provided by others. In this sense, not only the story *in* the book is a collective one, but also the creation *of* the book clearly has been a collective process.

Ed Young, in sum, reflects as an artist extensively on the process he went through. He exemplifies his use of photographs, maps and the floor plan, partly provided by others. He thereby acknowledges that, even with the use of all this material from the past, it is impossible to recreate that past exactly as he experienced it as a child.

d. Motives: misery and nostalgia

As was already mentioned in section b., Ed Young explicitly states a motive at the very end of the book, in the acknowledgments: he has created it as a tribute to his father. How does this explicit motive fit into the motives identified in chapter 2, misery and nostalgia? Even though Young 'felt an urge to paint and describe [the bygone days, *M.S.*] for future generations', *The house Baba built* is not a misery life narrative. To any reader, it will be obvious why this is the case: the book does not warn 'future generations' for the consequences of war, but is rather full of happy childhood memories, with very little misery in it. Whenever any reference is made to the war, it is immediately emphasized that the family is safe in the house and that war is not frightening them, as, for example, in this extract: 'One day I saw two fighter planes far, far away swooping and circling around each other [...]. It was exciting, but less real than the pictures in the stories Baba read us' (n.p.). The image strengthens this: the page has a warm yellow background, and we see a cut out photograph of the children, relaxed and laughing. The planes are depicted above their heads, but very small and far away (see figure 4.4.7). The same goes for the description of the bombardment, at the end of the book. Although the collage shows dark colors and fierce lines which give the spread a threatening atmosphere, the text reduces this threat (see section a. for the quotation).

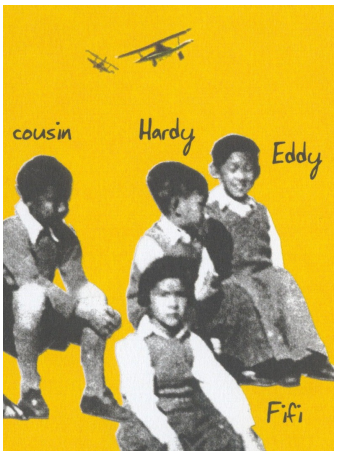

Figure 4.4.7 *The house Baba built*, n.p.

The fact that almost exclusively happy childhood memories are included in *The house Baba built*, implies Ed Young has had a nostalgic motive for creating this book. He remembers swimming in the pool, roller-skating on the roof, sliding down the banister of the stairs, having a picnic, playing with toddler Jean – all in the warm nest his parents created, with the company of his brothers, sisters, cousins and friends. Second, as was already mentioned in section a., the local, domestic setting directs towards a nostalgic register. All of Ed Young's childhood memories relate to the house in which he grew up. In the story itself, this is mentioned literally up to nine times, in sentences like: 'it was our favorite place in the house Baba built' (n.p.) and 'we danced the conga [...] through the whole downstairs of the house Baba built' (n.p.). A third sign of nostalgia is the characterization of 'Baba', Ed Young's father, as almost a Romantic character. He is depicted as a wise, protective, but also cheerful and funny man who would do anything for his family. Young gives descriptions of his father's behavior, such as: 'Baba charmed the guests with his stories and teasing until even the shiest and most stoic couldn't stop laughing' (n.p.), '[...] at dinner Baba's jokes and tales brought everyone together' (n.p.)

and 'We gathered in the hallway [...] – the safest part of the house, Baba said' (n.p.). Moreover, Ed Young gives the last word of the story itself to his father, by a reproduction of a letter 'Baba' wrote in 1963, as was mentioned in section c. (see also figure 4.4.6). The letter – which again emphasizes the importance of relationships to others in the life of the Young family – characterizes him as a wise, sensible man:

> 'Dear children,
> ... You may put down as rule No. 1 that life is not rich not real unless you partake life with your fellow man. A succesful life and a happy life is one as measured by how much you have accomplished for others and not as measured by how much you've done for yourself. Love Dad' (n.p.)

In the images, nostalgia lies in the use of the many photographs. Even though Young acknowledges that it is impossible to recreate reality in its totality, he tries to depict his childhood family life as complete as possible by using a large number of (adaptations of) family photographs. It is as browsing through an artistic family album – and our only reason to create family albums would be to go back to when we were young, to see our parents and siblings again, to relive the days of our childhood. In *The house Baba built*, then, the motive of nostalgia is obvious.

Especially the use of this many photographs indicates that Ed Young is a restorative nostalgic. In all its facets, he tries to recreate his warm childhood home. He is not a restorative nostalgic in the most rigid sense, though: in the author's note, he does acknowledge that it is not possible to recreate reality, but at the same time he does sound somewhat disappointed that he was unable to do that. The restorative nostalgia is also reflected in Young's collective voice in the book. As Boym (2002) states, the restorative nostalgic will try to seek resemblances in multiple memories. By speaking also for his siblings and his other family members, Ed Young assumes that the memories of his relatives resemble his own memories. As was mentioned in section 2.1, restorative nostalgia shows similarities with the inheritage of the 'heile Kinderwelt'. This is also the case in *The house Baba built*: the world is presented to the reader as a safe intact world, in which fun is important but family values and helping others are the greatest goods.

e. Authenticity

With all of the photographs, Ed Young demonstrates that he has the authority to tell the story. In his story, he emphasizes the importance of family relationships and helping others, and the described events – for example housing the Luedecke family – demonstrate these indeed are two things he experienced during his childhood. He gives not that much historical facts, but the information he does give is clearly summarized in the time line at the end, accompanied by years, and is therefore verifiable: we are able to find, for instance, information about the Japanese invasion in external historical sources. The book is therefore authentic in the historical sense. The constructed self, thirdly, is a credible, recognizable child character: happy and playful, but also quiet, dreamy and shy, with barely any awareness of the seriousness of the war. The past self of Ed Young is recognizably depicted in the many photographs that he uses in the book. In this sense, because of the high degree of naturalistic modality, his self in the images is more authentic than, for instance, the depiction of Peter Sís' past self in *The wall*. In *The house Baba built*, we do not only recognize who of the characters in the images is Ed Young, but we also know precisely what he looked like as a boy.

There are historical elements in the book that support the process of remembering, such as photographs and the timeline. This, along with Ed Young's relativistic comments on the process, strengthens the authenticity of the book. He acknowledges that he is a human being, who cannot remember everything, and that it has been a struggle to create the book. This honesty and openness increase his authenticity as an adult narrator who looks back on his childhood. Next, as we have just seen, the book was created out of restorative nostalgic motives: Ed Young has tried to recapture the reality of the past in an artistic way. Because of the resemblances to a family album, Ed Young does not only textually *tell* about his childhood, he also does a serious attempt to *show* what his childhood looked like. This leads to the life narrative having also a high degree of visual authenticity. The

nostalgia, however, may also somewhat decrease the authenticity of the narrative. Ed Young only shows certain, mainly happy, memories of his childhood. I would argue this does not bother readers who simply go along with the story, but in the case of more critical readers it may affect the authenticity of the life story. The opinion on authenticity that these critical readers form during reading the story may, however, be extenuated by reading the paratexts at the end of the book. In the afterword, Ed Young's present self not explicitly admits that he is nostalgic, but at least he clearly acknowledges the limits of re-creating reality. In the acknowledgments, he states that the book is a tribute to his father, which, I would say, more or less justifies the nostalgia, since a tribute full of unhappy childhood memories would hardly make sense.

In sum, we cannot deny that *The house Baba built* shows clear signs of selectiveness, leading to a sense of nostalgia. Nevertheless, the book is an authentic life narrative in general: Ed Young has the authority to tell the story, does this in a historically authentic way, and constructs an authentic past self and present self. The selectiveness and nostalgia may affect the judgments of critical readers about authenticity, but it is likely that their judgment is extenuated by the paratexts at the end of the book.

f. Address

There are no explicit comments on the intended audience in the book, apart from the publisher's website, www.lb-kids.com, which is on the inside of the back cover. This indicates that the book is published as a children's book. Does this book, then, also appeal to adult readers because of postmodern characteristics (Beckett, 2012)? The theme of the book, family relationships, is most certainly cross-generational: the story of a childhood in a warm, happy family will appeal to both child and adult readers. Next, the book is a hybridization of genres: it combines the picture book, the family album and, because of the many collage techniques, the scrapbook. As was mentioned in section b., it is not always clear whose point of view we take in the story. This indicates polyfocalization, but as it is undetermined 'who is watching', it is a mild form of polyfocalization. The interplay of text and image, which can also be a characteristic of postmodernism, may be not all that profound in this book, but is certainly present. Text and image function in a quite traditional way: the image is complementary to the text. There are not any parts where the images would take over the text, and thus the two modes do not truly tell the story together, unlike *The wall*. The story in itself is understandable by the text alone. Nonetheless, the interplay of text and image is indispensable for conveying the authenticity of the life story: it demonstrates Ed Young's authority to tell the story, shows parts of the process of remembering to the reader, and constructs an authentic self. Based on the theme, the hybridization, the polyfocalization and the interplay of text and image, then, the book can be characterized as a postmodern picture book.

In *The house Baba built*, there is no background knowledge needed to understand the main theme of family relationships. The reader does need more background knowledge to place the references to the war in the right context, as Ed Young in the story itself does not explicitly mention during which war he grew up. The reader who does have this background knowledge, will understand a sentence like 'After Nanking fell to the Japanese […]' (n.p.), but for the reader who does not have this knowledge, there also is enough to enjoy: a story of a happy, joyful childhood. In this sense, Young addresses both readers with more and less reading and life experience, each in their own rights. The restorative nostalgic motive, on the other hand, is more likely something that only adult readers will discover. As Foreman does in *War boy*, Ed Young emphasizes his childhood memories in an idyllic way. From this respect, he does not present the world to child readers in a truly realistic way and therefore does not address them on an equal level with adult readers. The construction of the self, in turn, does address an audience of both child and adult readers. The past self is credible and recognizable for child readers, whereas adult readers may also identify with the nostalgic but thoughtful Ed Young as an adult narrator.

The house Baba built, in sum, is a postmodern picture book with a dual address. Especially the profound, unique form of the fold-out book full of collage techniques will intrigue an equal audience of both child and adult readers. Whereas adult readers will probably discover the nostalgic feelings of the

author and may understand historical references to the Second World War, for child readers there is also a powerful, enjoyable story in this book, though we cannot deny that the world is presented to them in a very domestic and idyllic way.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and discussion

In this chapter, the results of the analysis in chapter 4 will be summarized and interpreted in terms of the theoretical concepts that are introduced in chapter 2. Thereby, the main research question of this study will be answered:

How do artists construct the past and the self in autobiographical picture books through the interplay of text and image, and how does this interplay determine the authenticity of their life story, and the intended audience of the book?

Since this research question actually focuses on three topics, this chapter is divided into three sections: section 5.1 discusses how text and image together tell the life stories of the artists considered in this study, section 5.2 reflects on the concept of authenticity in terms of life stories in text and images, and section 5.3 considers child and adult audiences reading autobiographical picture books, related to how authenticity is determined. Next, section 5.4 will formulate an answer on the main research question. The chapter will finish with section 5.5, which contains some critical reflections on this study and provides suggestions for further research.

5.1 Creating a life narrative through the interplay of text and image

In this study, Sipe's (1998) theory of transmediation was used as a tool to characterize the 'interplay of text and image'. By going back and forward between the textual and the visual mode, the interpretation of the text and the interpretation of an image is adjusted, leading to merge these reinterpretations into one interpretation. There are several ways in which the visual and textual mode can work together in order to create a general interpretation: text and image are always complementary in a certain way. The image may provide some more specific details that are absent from the text, which is the simplest form of interplay. It seems a sort of one-way-traffic, whereas the interplay can become much more complex when words and images enhance and reinforce each other, contrast with each other (Joosen and Vloeberghs, 2008; based on Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001), or when, for instance, the text comes to an end and the images take over the telling of the story, as the analysis of *The wall* has shown. Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, what can be concluded about how the various ways of interplay of text and image create a life narrative?

The autobiographical picture books considered in this study all address a historical period characterized by a war, albeit in case of *The house Baba built* not as directly as in the other books. This last book differs in its theme from the others, since it is not primarily based on war experiences influencing daily life, but rather on family life. In the other three books, factual information about the historical period of war is given through both text and image. In *War boy*, we encounter the simplest form of interplay of text and image: the images are mostly somewhat more specific and detailed than the text. Text and image barely enhance or reinforce each other, and do not contrast with each other. In *Tomi*, we see a different form of interplay which is more complex. Based on the main text and the subscriptions under the images, we reinterpret the visual elements – for example Tomi's childhood drawings. In this book, however, text and image still are two separate entities: they do not really alternate to tell the story, a technique which is applied by Peter Sís in *The wall*. Here, we see how the image takes over the text at certain points, and how the image tells a different story than the text. Development of the historical period is also symbolized by the use of color. In *The house Baba built*, there is again a less complex form of interplay of text and image in terms of the historical information that is given. The text plays the largest role in giving information (e.g. in the timeline), whereas the images evoke the feeling of a family album and a scrapbook. The effect of these differences in interplay of text and image is seen in the presented complexity of the historical period. In the two books that show a less complex form of interplay – *War boy* and *The house Baba built* – the historical period is not presented in all its complexities, but rather in an easily manageable story with a very local setting.

Tomi and *The wall*, containing more complex forms of interplay, do show the past in a broader setting and include complex, challenging references to the historical period – we could think here of the exaggerated scenes depicted on Tomi Ungerer's childhood drawings, and of the metaphor of art as a form of freedom in *The wall*. It seems, therefore, that a more complex interplay of text and image enables the artist to convey the past in a broader setting and in a more complex way than a simpler interplay of text and image can achieve. This may be the case because a more complex interplay opens up the possibility for more diverse interpretations of the work as a whole.

In section 2.3, we have seen that the autobiographical subject can artificially be split up in a past self and a present self. The analysis of the primary works demonstrates how the artists, by using both text and images, present themselves and how they construct the persons they once were. In this sense *War boy* is the least resemblant of an autobiography: the present self, narrating the story, is dominant, and we do not get access to the inner life of the past self through text. At certain points, we do get access through the images, but in general, Michael Foreman seems to keep a distance to the emotions and feelings of his past self. He does not present himself explicitly as an adult in the book, except as the narrator. Other artists indeed present themselves as adults explicitly: in *Tomi*, Tomi Ungerer is as an adult not only present as the narrator of the main text, but is also explicitly present in the preface and the introduction of the book. In these sections, Ungerer reflects from the present time on the past, which is something Michael Foreman does not do at all. As we have seen, Tomi Ungerer's present self dominates the text, whereas his past self dominates in the images. Both modes are necessary to convey the complete conceptual self of Tomi Ungerer: in this respect, text and image enhance and reinforce each other. In one textual scene, Ungerer explicitly presents the transition from being a child into being an adult, which connects this book to the genre of the Bildungsroman, in which the transition from child into adult is central. This development of the self is also traceable in *The wall*: not in one particular textual scene, but in both text and images. In the text, we read about how Peter Sís starts to question what happens and how he secretly undermines the Soviet regime with his art. The images show us both his embodied self growing up – Peter gets older, but is still recognizable – as well as his 'mental' and social development, symbolized by the colored brain on the spreads with diary fragments. This development relates to the traditional autobiography, which tries to cover the own life as fully as possible. As with *Tomi*, we could also connect Peter's development in *The wall* to the genre of the Bildungsroman. Textually, only in the diary fragments we hear the voice of the past self. In the other texts, the adult narrator is dominant, barely referring to the past self's feelings and emotions. Through the images, we do get access to the past self's inner life: we see emotions, desires and dreams depicted. In *The house Baba built*, it is precisely the opposite. In this book, the inner life of the past self of Ed Young is accessible through the text. Visually, this is less the case: the use of many different styles and the indecision of 'who is watching' does not give us direct access to the past self, but shows how interwoven the past self and the present self actually are. Moreover, Ed Young seems to place his past self every now and then in the background, in favour of the collective identity of the Young family. In the plural form, he tells his own life story and simultaneously the life story of his siblings. The many (adaptations of) family photographs underscore this.

In two of the books considered here, the artists reflect extensively on the process of remembering they went through in order to create their autobiographical picture book. Both Tomi Ungerer and Ed Young reflect textually on how they remember the events they experienced in the past, and how objects and documents helped them to remember their past. Both are critical reflectors: Ungerer notes that his view on the past may be different from memories other war survivors have, and Young acknowledges explicitly that, despite all the material he has collected and presented visually, he is unable to recreate the past. Michael Foreman and Peter Sís, on the other hand, do not reflect on how they experienced their process of remembering. They barely mention the possibility of cracks or gaps in their memories: Foreman does state that he has repressed some memories, but seems to regard his memories further as static, unchanging entities. Sís only mentions 'remembering' as an act referring to both the past and the future, but does not reflect on the process itself. The diary fragments he has included in the book are likely to have evoked certain memories, but he does not reflect on this. Thus, whereas Ungerer and

Young do reflect on the impossibility of truly recalling the past, as was pointed out in section 2.2, Foreman and Sís do hardly acknowledge this difficulty of creating an autobiographical narrative of one's own childhood and youth.

All books address the topic of war, be it directly or indirectly as in *The house Baba built*. The analysis has shown that the topic of war does not necessarily mean the book is created out of trauma motives. *Tomi* and *The wall* are characterized as misery life narratives, but the other two books can be considered nostalgic life narratives. In *War boy*, there is no explicit comment on the motive for creating it. Even though Foreman includes some memories of misery, the textual and visual nostalgic elements in the book dominate: the setting, the uncritical presentation of the past, the memories of joy and excitement, and the warm colored and granular images. The analysis has pointed out that the inheritage of the 'heile Kinderwelt' (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008) is strongly present in this book. *The house Baba built* is, with its focus on family life and happy childhood memories which are established in both the textual scenes and the many family portraits, even more nostalgic than *War boy*. It presents the world to child readers as an intact, safe and happy world with protective adults. Both nostalgic stories have a happy end, which again is a characteristic of an idyllic world and of a romantic image of childhood. *Tomi* and *The wall* also have happy endings – both the Second World War and the Cold War come eventually to an end – but Ungerer and Sís do emphasize how difficult it is for them to cope with their past. Sís mentions in the text that it is hard for him to talk about his life, and the *Weltschmerz* paintings by Tomi Ungerer speak for themselves. Both of these books contain happy memories of their youth, but a close reading reveals these are not signs of nostalgia: Ungerer makes clear he wants to leave his painful childhood behind him, and in Sís' work, the bright, joyful use of color and the somewhat uncritical reflection on the past are direct results of his longing for freedom, and thus of feelings of misery. Whereas it seems as if Foreman and Young would not mind at all to 'revisit' their childhood, this certainly is not the case for Ungerer and Sís.

In short, the complexity of the interplay of text and image strongly relates to the way the life narrative is told. This study shows that whenever the interplay is more complex – that is, the images are not simply more detailed and specific than the text, but text and image enhance, reinforce, contrast or completely take over each other – the historical period also tends to be conveyed in all its complexities, which is not the case when the interplay is less complex. As for the motives to create these books, neither image nor text alone is responsible for the nostalgia in *War boy* and *The house Baba built* and for the misery in *Tomi* and *The wall*. As we have seen, both misery and nostalgia are conveyed by textual as well as visual elements. This section, however, does show a link between the motive for creating the picture book, the way the past is represented and the complexity of the interplay of text and image. The misery life narratives show, in general, a more complex interplay than the nostalgic life narratives, and therefore, they do convey the past in a more complex way than the nostalgic life narratives. Whereas the misery life narratives provide readers with a broader view of the past, the nostalgic life narratives keep the past quite simple in a local, safe setting. The construction of self, however, does not follow this pattern. All the books except *War boy* show a complex interplay of text and image when it comes to the construction of self. The simpler interplay in *War boy* keeps the artificial past self and present self clearly separated and does not show any development of the self. In the other books, the more complex interplay is deployed to show the development of the self (in *Tomi* and *The wall*) and to merge the artificial past self and present self into one conceptual self (in *Tomi* and *The house Baba built*).

5.2 Reflections on the concept of authenticity

Autobiographical truth, as Smith and Watson (2001) argue, can be understood as an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader, which ideally leads to a shared understanding of the meaning of a life. A life story should not be regarded in terms of 'true' or 'false': rather, we should observe how the shared understanding between author and reader is achieved. If the reader discovers a human presence in a narrative (Usher, 1998) and has the same notion of autobiographical truth as the author,

the story is read as an authentic account of life. In chapter 2, based on various theoretical perspectives, I developed a working definition for the concept of authenticity, which in earlier critical literature has not been extensively discussed as a problematic and challenging concept in the field of life writing. What does the analysis of the primary works tell us about the legitimacy of this working definition? Does it indeed work, or are there other elements that need to be considered in order to reflect on the authenticity of a life story told in a picture book?

In the analysis, the working definition has proven to be useful. All life stories could be analyzed in terms of the authority of the one telling the story, the historical verifiability, and the recognizability of the constructed self and the possibility to identify with this self. However, it seems that there indeed are two elements which need further attention in order to reflect profoundly on authenticity. The primary books in this study namely distinguish themselves from one another in terms of their authenticity in regard to the construction of both the past *and* present self, and to what I will call 'visual authenticity'. The working definition does not yet include these elements.

In the working definition, the somewhat artificial but indispensible separation between the past self and the present self is not considered. The relation between the past self and the present self, however, seems to be a determining factor for the authenticity of a life story. This is most clearly shown in the difference between *War boy* and *Tomi*. We have seen that Michael Foreman in *War boy* most surely provides for an authentic account of his childhood and thus of his past self. However, the voice of the past self is dominated by the voice of the present self in the narrative, but neither in the main text nor in any of the paratexts does Michael Foreman present himself as an adult. Therefore, his present, adult self does not in any way reflect on the process of remembering and on his childhood memories being strongly influenced by the patriotic, unilateral climate in which he grew up. Tomi Ungerer, on the other hand, does the opposite: he indeed presents himself as an adult in the preface and the introduction. In these texts, he reflects on how the prevailing ideology and the brainwashing of the Nazis influenced his past self as he grew up, and how it has influenced his present self that is telling the life narrative. Showing the process of remembering and especially the reflection on it is thus highly determinative for authenticity. Again, the interplay of text and image is important here: the artist may include many visual elements that are likely to have supported the process of remembering, but only when the function of these elements can be reinterpreted because of accompanying texts, the reader can know for certain how the elements have supported the process of remembering and in which way they convey the past. Had not Tomi Ungerer's present self, for instance, textually emphasized how exaggerated many of the scenes on his childhood drawings are, the reader would not have known how these visual elements have functioned in the process of remembering. The reflection on the process of remembering, thus, increases the authenticity of the life story. Whether the artist, for instance, states that his memories may be different from the memories others have, or that he admits that he cannot fully remember certain scenes, seems not to matter that much – for authenticity, it is determinative that he *does* reflect on remembering in some way, since this makes him seem more open and honest.

Authenticity in terms of self, then, differs for the past and the present self. The past self indeed needs to be credible and recognizable in terms of behaviour, knowledge and use of language, in order to enable the reader to identify with this self. Of course, the extent to which readers can identify with a child protagonist in the text is likely to vary per reader, because recognizability and credibility are not absolute values. For the present self, characteristics as 'honesty', 'reflectiveness' and 'being nuanced' seem to be most important for determining authenticity. In order to present to the reader an authentic account of life (that is: the past as well as the ways in which this past influenced the artist's present self), the artist needs to show the *process* of creating the life narrative: he needs to show how the present self constructed the narrative about the own past. This implies reflection on remembering and on the construction of the self: the reader must get knowledge about how the historical and social circumstances have shaped the past self and how this in turn, as time has gone by, has influenced the artist in becoming who he is now. This technique bridges the gap in life experience and historical knowledge between the past self and the present self, by which the artist acknowledges what was

theorized in sections 2.2 and 2.4: memories of the past, as well as the self, are constructed rather than reconstructed (Usher, 1998), influenced by increasing knowledge and life experience as time has gone by, and by contextual, social and cultural factors (Rosenfield, 1988, in Eakin, 1999; Smith & Watson, 2001). The present self openly reflecting on the process of remembering and on the construction of the past and the past self, thus, increases the authenticity of the life story.

With this addition, the definition of authenticity is applicable to life narratives in general. In this study, however, picture books in particular have been considered. In these books, the authenticity of the life story seems to be determined also by the use of visual elements. How does this visual authenticity contribute to the authenticity of a life story in general? In particular in *Tomi* and *The house Baba built*, and to a smaller extent in *War boy* and *The wall*, there are visual elements included that directly refer to, or even represent the reality outside the text: photographs of persons, objects or locations, childhood drawings, maps, a floorplan, posters and pamphlets, and so on. As we have already seen, these elements have a high degree of naturalistic modality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996): they resemble reality as optimally as possible, which strengthens authenticity in a historical sense. The artist does not only tell the reader about his past, he also tries to *show* it. For instance, Ed Young does this in *The house Baba built* with the many family photographs, and Michael Foreman presents a setting of the village and the countryside that is highly recognizable – it may not be photographs, but the watercolors still convey a quite high degree of naturalistic modality.

Does this mean that a high degree of naturalistic modality equals a high degree of authenticity? It is not that simple. In *The wall*, for example, we see things happening that cannot happen in real life, and *Tomi* shows us exaggerated scenes on childhood drawings which should not be interpreted mimetically. In the latter case, in terms of authenticity, there seem to be two layers: the content of the childhood drawing, which should not be interpreted mimetically, and the fact that the childhood drawing itself, whatever its contents, *is* an authentic historical document. Even though we cannot interpret all images mimetically, we therefore would not dismiss these works as 'unauthentic' autobiographical picture books. The key here is the interplay of text and image. As Sipe (1998) has suggested, we reinterpret both text and image in the process of transmediation. For visual authenticity, this means we use the information in the textual mode to reinterpret visual elements, which seem, at first sight, to decrease the authenticity. In *The wall*, the text informs the reader about how the images should be interpreted: images can reflect the act of brainwashing, or can depict dreams which should not be interpreted mimetically but symbolically, as Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) suggest when discussing symbolic modality as the opposite of indicative or naturalistic modality. In *Tomi*, the same happens, as the text reflects on how the images should be interpreted: they do indeed reflect propaganda and – also in case of Tomi's own drawings – severe exaggeration of reality. Theoretically, this reinterpretation could also happen the other way around: when the text would state something that reduces authenticity, the image would be able to reinforce it. We can think of a text describing a childhood memory of dressing up like a monster, without mentioning it was all a fantasy. To make this more concrete: a text like 'I am a monster! I have huge teeth and I will eat everyone I see!' should be accompanied by a photograph showing the child dressed up as a monster, chasing a family member or friend, in order to reinforce authenticity. In this study, none of such examples are found: whenever in the primary works fantasy comes in, it is textually signalled as such (for example, Ed Young states 'I turned a rocking chair into a horse' (n.p.), rather than, for instance, 'I rode a horse across the room').

Authenticity, to conclude, is for life writing in general determined by the demonstrated authority of the one telling the story, by the verifiability of the historical information, and by the relation between the past self and present self: is there a credible, recognizable past self constructed, and does the present self reflect on the construction of the past and the past self? For the genre of life writing through text and image in particular, the concept of visual authenticity should also be taken into account. The inclusion of images with a high degree of naturalistic modality seems to indicate a high degree of authenticity. If images cannot be interpreted mimetically, this, however, does not necessarily decrease the authenticity of the life story. By a constant reinterpretation of the interplay of text and

image, the reader may discover that visual elements that do not straightforward refer to or represent reality, can, nevertheless, be a powerful technique to convey a 'real' life story in an authentic manner.

5.3 The intended audience and authenticity

The analysis has shown that the primary works considered in this study are, at least partly, addressed to an audience of child readers. I will not speak in strict age terms here, but it may be clear that the primary works are not intended for toddlers to whom the work is read by parents or caregivers. As 'the' reader does not exist, however, nor does 'the' child reader: it is impossible to decide whether these books will be enjoyed by seven-year-old, ten-year-old or thirteen-year-old children. Due to their subject matter and complexity, some of them are picture books that may also interest teenage audiences and, as the analysis pointed out, adult readers. We have seen that the books addressed here, apart from *Tomi*, do operate in the system of children's literature. As for *Tomi*, the analysis has shown that Tomi Ungerer's statements on the intended audience of the previous versions of the book – both children and adults – can indeed be applied to this version of the book: it has an intended dual audience, although the child audience may in particular consist of children who like being challenged by a book.

We have already seen that two of the artists, Michael Foreman and Ed Young, are somewhat protective towards child readers. This is a direct result of their nostalgic accounts of childhood and, therefore, their presentation of an idyllic, intact and safe world. In both cases, adult (co-)readers are likely to recognize the nostalgia, whereas it may be less visible for child readers. This may have everything to do with the life experience children have: of course they have many memories of the past, but do they also nostalgically long back to a time that will never return? If not, they surely may recognize feelings of happiness and joy, but we cannot expect them to identify these as nostalgic feelings. This, however, does not have to affect the concept of dual address (Nikolajeva, 2005), if the child reader has, based on the narrative and the paratexts, the same opportunities to place the life narrative in the context the adult reader is expected to do. The analysis has shown that only in case of *War boy* I argued that the dual address is at stake, since the artist does not reflect on how he created the autobiographical picture book. He does not tell about how he was shaped by what he lived through and how this influenced his construction of his life story. Based on their life experience and historical knowledge, adult readers may conclude for themselves that Foreman has constructed a nostalgic narrative based on patriotism and his national identity. As child readers have less knowledge and life experience, for them this may be impossible to discover. This means *War boy* has a double rather than a dual address. *The house Baba built* is also nostalgic and Ed Young is also somewhat protective towards child readers. The difference with *War boy* is, though, that he admits that he cannot recreate the past as it was. Moreover, he explicitly states that the book is a tribute to his father. Child readers as well as adult readers are therefore likely to interpret Ed Young's recall of many happy memories as a way to honor his father. Here, child readers have the same information as adult readers to place the story in the suitable context, which is not the case in *War boy*.

In particular *Tomi* and *The wall* may challenge child readers, for these books include several historical and cultural references without explaining them. Both books are expected to appeal to adult readers, as well as child readers who are up to a reading challenge. Ungerer addresses his book to an adult audience, but also to a child audience by providing much explanation, by directly speaking to his audience, and by including many childhood drawings and other visual elements. In Sís' book, the historical references may be seen as 'extras': if a child reader might not understand all of them, there still is a powerful story left about living under a totalitarian regime. This is what Shavit (1978, in Peters & Van Lierop, 1998) calls an ambivalent text. Children and adults can read the text by relying on different literary models. Child readers may read *The wall* as a story of suppression and the longing for freedom, and adult readers may read it also as a history book, embedded in the past reality. Because of this ambivalence, and because *The wall* is characterized as a true postmodern picture book with the

most profound interplay of text and image, this book can best of all be characterized as an autobiographical picture book with a dual audience.

In the previous section, the definition of the concept of authenticity, which is central to life narratives, was extended. What does this extended concept of authenticity mean for the address of a book? Would child readers be concerned with it at all? And what about adult readers? In section 2.5, I showed that we read a life narrative 'as an authentic account of life', most likely without realizing it. So even if readers are not consciously concerned with the concept of authenticity, they do intuitively form a judgment about it. Based on the analysis and the reflections on the concept of authenticity, I would argue that this happens in different ways for child and adult readers. The aspect of authority, first, is likely to work in the same way for child and adult readers: both accept the autobiographical pact and thereby acknowledge the narrator has indeed lived through the narrated events. The aspect of the verifiability of historical facts, second, may differ for child and adult readers in their subconscious judgment about authenticity. As children simply know less about history than adults do (Burton, 1969; in Kokkola, 2003), it is more difficult for them to decide whether historical facts are verifiable or not. It is therefore unlikely that their gut feeling of authenticity is based on the verifiability of historical facts, whereas this is something that may carry weight for adult readers. The third aspect that determines the authenticity of a life story, is the construction of the self. Since the extended definition given in this chapter indicates that the construction of both the past self and the present self determines authenticity, this might have a different importance for child and adult readers. In section 5.2, I concluded that the present self reflecting on the process of remembering and on the construction of self, 'bridges the gap in life experience and historical knowledge between the past self and the present self'. Like the artist himself as a child, the child audience of the book also has less life experience and historical knowledge than the adult narrator. For child readers, I would argue, bridging this gap between the past self and the present self has less value: a child reader is not yet aware of this gap. An adult audience, on the other hand, is aware of it. Therefore, for the child reader the credibility and the recognizability of the past self may be the only aspect of the self that determines the authenticity of the life story, whereas this is for the adult reader *also* determined by whether or not the artist is reflecting on how the past and the self are constructed. The fourth factor determining authenticity that was added to the definition in the previous section is visual authenticity. In the previous section we have seen that visual authenticity strongly connects to the interplay of text and image. In order to judge visual authenticity, the image sometimes asks for a reinterpretation based on the text, or vice versa. As both Scott (2005) and Sipe (2008) have shown that children have very good visual skills and that they interpret visual information in innovative ways, they may go through the same *process* of reinterpretation of text and image as adult readers. However, each audience may eventually come to a different interpretation. We could think of a situation in which adults interpret a certain scene as a dream, whereas child readers may interpret it as referring to reality. The process of interpreting the interplay of text and image is most likely the same, but the outcome – the way visual authenticity is judged – may be different.

In short, as picture books are acknowledged to be read and – if they are actual crossover books – appreciated by both children and adults (Beckett, 2012), both audiences make subconsciously a judgment about the authenticity of the story if this story is a life narrative. Demonstrated authority seems to work in the same way for child and adult readers in forming a judgment about authenticity. On the other hand, it seems as if there is a difference when we regard authenticity in terms of the verifiability of historical facts and in terms of the self that is constructed: the possibility to verify the historical facts, and the adult narrator reflecting on the gap between the child past self and the adult present self, seem to be determinant factors for an adult audience, but not for a child audience. Finally, when encountering visual elements that do not straightforward refer to reality, child and adult readers are likely to go through the same process of transmediation (Sipe, 1998) in order to form a judgment about visual authenticity. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the eventual interpretation, and therefore the judgment about visual authenticity, is the same for both audiences.

5.4 Answering the main research question

This study has shown that artists construct the past and the self in autobiographical picture books by applying the interplay of text and image in various ways. The two misery life narratives have a more complex interplay of text and image and provide readers with a broader, more subtle view on the past; the two nostalgic life narratives presentt the past in a simple, uncomplex way in a local and safe setting by applying simpler forms of interplay. An explanation for this pattern may be that a more complex interplay opens up possibilities for multiple interpretations, whereas a simpler interplay does not; this directs towards a single interpretation an therefore cannot present the past in a more complex, subtle way. In case of relatively simple interplay of text and image, the constructed self remains separated in a past self and a present self and does not show any development. More complex interplay can show development of the constructed self, and it can cause the past and present self to merge into the single conceptual self that constitutes the autobiographical subject in time.

Analyzing authenticity has lead to an extended definition of the concept. This study has shown that in textual life narratives, authenticity is determined by the author's demonstrated authority to tell the story, by the verifiability of historical information, and by how the past and present self relate: the past self must be constructed in a credible, recognizable way to enable the reader to identify with it, and the present self must openly reflect on how the past and the past self are constructed. Whereas the demonstrated authority seems to function equally for child and adult readers in determining authenticity, this is not the case for the verifiability of the historical facts and for the adult narrator reflecting on the gap between the child past self and the adult present self. I have argued that these two factors are most likely determinant for an adult audience, but not for a child audience.

Further, for life writing through text *and* image, the interplay of words and images has shown to be essential for determining authenticity. Images with a high degree of naturalistic modality convey a high degree of authenticity, but this does not mean that images that cannot be interpreted mimetically decrease the authenticity of the life story. Because of the process of transmediation, the reader may come to an adjusted interpretation – which may differ for child and adult readers – in which visual elements that do not straightforward reflect reality nonetheless can be valuable in narrating the artist's life story in an authentic way.

To conclude, life narratives with both text and image tell their story in a very different way compared to life narratives which only involve the textual mode. Not only can artists apply the innovative interplay of text and image in various ways to construct the past and self, the interplay also strongly determines the authenticity of the life narrative and the intended audience of the book. I would therefore argue that, within the broad spectrum of life writing, autobiographical picture books are a profound, exciting genre of their own – a genre certainly worthy of further studies.

5.5 Towards further research

This study has given insight in how life narratives can be constructed through the interplay of text and image. Moreover, it has provided an extended definition of the concept of authenticity, for both textual and multimodal life narratives. All this has been done by applying the method of text-internal analysis. Since the motives for creating autobiographical picture books and the concept of double or dual address have been considered extensively, for future studies it may be wise to also apply text-external methods. Thereby, explicitly stated motives for creating an autobiographical picture book could be taken into account, as well as the artist's poetics with regard to child readers and children's literature. Comparing the text-internal and text-external analysis may lead to a broader view on the motive for creating such a book and its intended audience. Moreover, the books considered in this study all combine the life narrative with other genres, such as history and biography. This mixing of genres may also be worth of further studies, in relation to the artist's motive for creating the book and the intended audience.

The theoretical chapter of this study lead to composing a model for analyzing autobiographical picture books. All in all, the model has proven to be useful. The analysis itself has however shown that the model's section on the process of remembering has very strong links to analyzing the construction of self and to authenticity. For further research, I would recommend not to regard the process of remembering as a specific section, but to integrate it in other sections of the model. It would make the model, and therefore an analysis, somewhat more condensed.

The corpus in this study was limited, as only four autobiographical picture books were analyzed. For future research, a larger number of such books may be taken into account. This may reveal whether the relation between misery or nostalgia, the complexity of the interplay of text and image, and the complexity of the presentation of the past holds if a larger number of picture books is examined. The corpus can be expanded in terms of genre as well, since the genre of life writing not only captures autobiographical texts, but also texts that are not self-referential and thus address the lives of others. We could think here of, for instance, the biographical picture book *Grandfather's journey* (1993) by Allen Say and the wordless picture book *The arrival* (2006) by Shaun Tan. Books in which the lives of others are addressed, will possibly shed new lights on topics considered in this study, such as the motive for creating them, the construction of the self of someone else (which seems an interesting contradiction in terms) and of course the concepts of authenticity and address which were central in this study. The corpus could further be expanded by including another type of books that shows a profound interplay of text and image: the graphic novel. Even though they may not be marketed in the children's literary system, *Maus* (1986) by Art Spiegelman and *Persepolis* (2000) by Marjane Satrapi show that there are life stories, both self-referential and not self-referential, that are told by using the genre of the graphic novel. In children's literature, *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian* (2007) by Sherman Alexie comes, despite the large amount of text, close to a self-referential graphic novel.

In terms of the theoretical perspective, it would be most interesting to apply the extended definition of authenticity to the other forms of multimodal life writing in children's literature that I have mentioned above. Further analysis should reveal whether the extended definition of the concept holds, or whether it should be revised. As I argued that the interplay of text and image is essential for visual authenticity, a wordless life writing picture book such as *The arrival* by Shaun Tan may challenge the definition of authenticity. In this respect, the concept of modality may also be studied in closer detail, in relation to visual authenticity. Whereas modality in this study has merely been used as an instrument, it may very well be the central concept of a particular study. Modality then does not have to be limited to its manifestation in life writing picture books, but can also be studied as a concept in films, documentaries, magazines, paintings, and so on.

Finally, multimodal life writing in children's literature may be regarded in the broader theoretical perspective of Cultural Memory, thereby placing it also in a more practical, social context. The concept of Cultural Memory (Erll, 2011) seems to relate strongly to life writing, since it describes the complex ways in which societies remember their past using a variety of media. This study has shown that life writing through text and image is most certainly a medium through which a society can remember the past. Moreover, considering life writing through text and image in children's literature in the light of Cultural Memory may contribute not only to our knowledge of how societies remember their past, but also specifically to our knowledge of how these memories are conveyed to a younger generation reading graphic novels and picture books.

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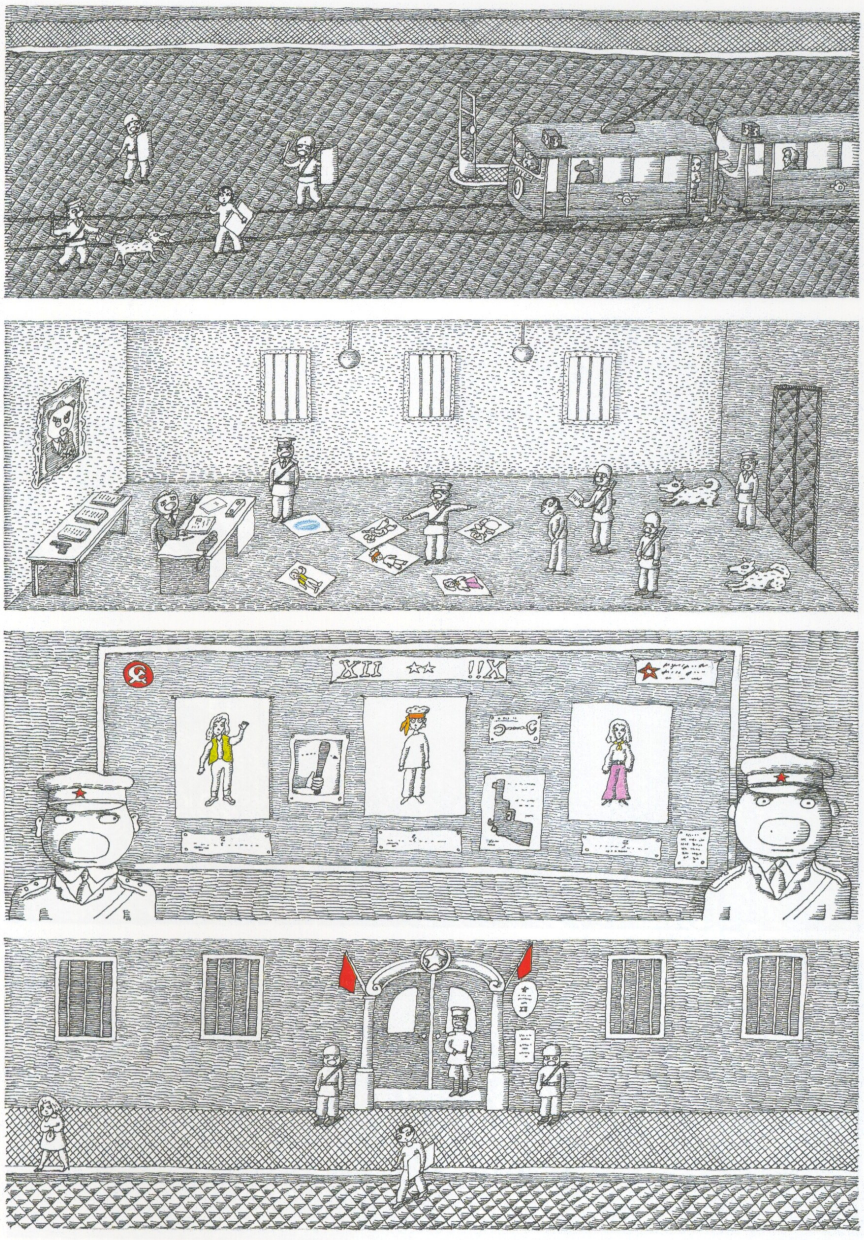
Appendix I

Figure 4.3.1 *The wall*, n.p.

Appendix II

Figure 4.3.2 *The wall*, n.p.



Anyone considered a threat to the new order is interrogated.

but the drawings could be used against him.

Appendix III

Figure 4.3.3 *The wall*, n.p.