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Nostalgia and Propaganda in Picturebooks about German History

Flight from the Nazi Dictatorship, the Idea of Reconstruction, and the Berlin Wall

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This paper investigates the multiple dimensions of picturebooks about flight by analysing six picturebooks that focus on Germany as a place or destination of flight. First, a general script of flight is developed to pinpoint the textual and visual strategies in relation to key issues associated with flight. Second, the paper elaborates on nostalgia as a prominent feature of certain picturebooks on flight. Finally, the paper investigates the procedures employed by picturebook makers to appeal to the readers' empathy to the extent of using propaganda messages. With respect to the selected picturebooks, three refugee movements can be discerned: flight from the National Socialist dictatorship, refugee movements in the postwar years from Eastern Europe to Germany, and escape from East Germany to West Germany after the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Against this backdrop, the paper demonstrates how the interplay of nostalgia and propaganda in these picturebooks is calibrated.

Keywords: Berlin Wall, Children's Refugee Movement, flight, Germany, nostalgia, picturebook, propaganda, reconstruction, script

Like all human actions, flight is framed by a situational script which encapsulates specific actions (Stephens 2011). First, there are reasons for the flight, including war, hunger, natural catastrophes, political or religious oppression. There may be certain

triggers for the flight, for instance the first day of an invasion. Second, refugees prepare their flight, whether hastily or after careful consideration. Third, they leave a specific place or country by crossing borders, whether legally or illegally. Fourth, they adapt to the living conditions in the new place or country. The fifth phase concerns the return to one's home country, for instance after the end of a war (see also Boëthius 2010). However, this final phase is not always applicable, as many refugees remain in the country of destination for whatever reason. Consequently, the question arises whether picturebooks thematising flight generally follow this script or whether some actions are omitted or mitigated altogether.

Previous research on the topic of flight in picturebooks has implicitly or explicitly referred to parts of such a script by addressing various aspects. One key aspect concerns the trauma of the refugees, triggered by the psychological shock evoked by the flight and the losses suffered (Schrijvers 2014; Warnqvist 2018; Österlund 2022; Jagdschian 2024). Apart from that, it has been critically noted that tangible reasons or triggers for the flight are often omitted in picturebooks dealing with migration and flight (Vassiloudi 2019: 38–39). This tendency is obviously based on the pedagogical assumption that children need to be protected from (re-)traumatisation. In addition, de Rijke (2023) elaborates that picturebooks can also suffer from hypomnesia, in the sense of a "poor memory for the past" (159) and refers to Tom Clohosy Cole's *The Wall* (2014) as a telling example (de Rijke 2023: 162).

Another recurrent key concept that shapes many picturebooks about flight and migration is nostalgia as a feeling of loss of the homeland, which is typically related to the fourth phase of the script (Rizzi 2020; Yannicopoulou 2023). With respect to these picturebooks, Marloes Schrijvers (2014) and Angela Yannicopoulou (2023) also point out that nostalgia can be described as a sentimental longing for the past. We would like to add another perspective to this debate by pursuing the question of the extent to which nostalgia – on a scale from all-encompassing to completely absent – goes hand in hand with propaganda, irrespective of whether the authors apply this instrument intentionally or unintentionally. To sharpen this issue, we need to elaborate on our conceptualisations of nostalgia and propaganda.

A general view put forward by scholars such as Svetlana Boym (2001; 2007), Scott Alexander Howard (2012) and Elisabeth Wesseling (2018a) is that nostalgia is based on the presumption that a present situation is compared with a past one, thus evincing a certain fascination with the past, often instigating a sense of loss in the face of change. A typical case is the desire to relive one's own childhood, coined as "childhood nostalgia" (cf. Wesseling 2018b). This may also be interpreted as "restorative nostalgia", following the argumentation by Boym (2001). One idea consists in restoring the past state. Since this is almost impossible, "reflective nostalgia" (Boym 2001; 2007) serves as a kind of contemplation of the past, certainly with a view to the present and the future. The basic distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia has become influential (Wesseling 2018a) but covers only some aspects of the complex concept.

Nostalgia, understood as an emotion driven by memories, reveals a cognitive challenge: the content of a nostalgic emotion refers to a certain episode, object, or setting which has left in the individual a deep impression or was particularly salient. Moreover, nostalgic emotion is characterised by a desire or longing for the respective objects and settings. However, as Howard has pointed out, this feeling involves a "felt difference between past and present: irretrievability of the past is salient in this experience" (2012: 641). In this respect, Howard distinguishes two conditions for nostalgia: the naiveté requirement described as a "particular discrepancy in knowledge between the past and the present" (642) and the "poverty of the present" requirement which involves the "evaluation that the past was preferable to the present" (ibid.). Howard connects the first condition with memories of early childhood which may be linked with ideas of innocence and naïve perceptions about the world. The second condition is premised on the belief that the past was better than the present which is often a projection rather than a fact (Davis 1979). Nostalgia tends to project desirable properties onto the past rather than acknowledging the "true" features of the past recollected. This strategy may ultimately lead to the effect that single objects or events are isolated while annihilating the context (Savsar 2018). Seen in this light, nostalgia can be regarded as a "form of deliberate escapism" (Howard 2012: 468) but there is much more to it than just the sentimentalisation of the past, because memories of the past can be altered by emotional involvement and re-telling over time (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2018). This observation points to the ideological backdrop of nostalgia, since subjective feelings are somehow implicated with ideology (Bonnett 2016).

As for picturebooks on flight and migration, the multiple ways the concept of nostalgia is applied need to be considered. By and large, the target of nostalgia can be directed to one's home country in general or to certain objects, figures, places, and events (Cassin 2016). Nostalgia dovetails with reminiscences of the past, an adherence to one's native culture while adapting to the new one in the present, and aspirations full of hope for the future (Boym 2001: 4–7). In addition, the question arises about why in some cases nostalgia does not seem to play a role at all or is reduced to a minimum. The reasons for this tendency are most likely associated with scepticism toward the concept of nostalgia on the one hand, and the decision to concentrate on the iconic idea of starting a new life rather than looking back to the past on the other hand. Another matter is the significant role of the ideological shifts prominent at the time when the respective picturebooks were published – to the extent of implementing propaganda.

Following the work of Jason Stanley (2015), we understand propaganda to be all non-rational attempts to persuade someone to hold a particular opinion. "Non-rational" means that emotional or affective strategies play an essential role. In this respect, propaganda uses persuasion rather than reason. Moreover, propaganda extends not only to verbal strategies, but it can also be conveyed through images. The political and ideological values supported may be good, bad, or neutral with respect to the moral norms adopted. Consequently, propaganda might undermine or support ideals or values. Thus, Stanley defines (supporting) propaganda as follows (53):

> A contribution to public discourse that is presented as an embodiment of certain ideals, yet is of a kind that tends to increase the realization of those ideals by either emotional or other nonrational means.

The notion of supporting propaganda refers to the standard of rationality. Nevertheless, propaganda is ethically problematic because it includes deception and/or manipulation: "Insofar as a form of propaganda is a kind of manipulation of rational beings towards an end with engaging their rational will, it is a kind of deception" (Stanley 2015: 58). Emotional or non-rational means of supporting propaganda messages can be emotions such as hatred, sadness, or enthusiasm. To date, the relationship between nostalgia and potential propaganda messages as registered in picturebooks on flight and migration has not been fully investigated. This paper might be considered a first step in this direction.

In order to explore the multiple dimensions of flight, nostalgia, and propaganda in picturebooks, this paper focuses on picturebooks that tell stories about Germany as a place or destination of flight in the twentieth century. In this regard, three refugee movements can be discerned: 1) flight from the Nazi dictatorship after 1933 and during World War II; 2) refugee movements in the postwar years (from Eastern Europe to Germany); and 3) escape from East Germany to West Germany after the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In what follows, these refugee movements and the potential influence of nostalgia and propaganda or their mitigation will be explored by presenting two picturebooks that fall into each designated category. It should be noted, however, that we could hardly find any German picturebook – apart from two picturebooks whose topic fits the second category – that deal with flight in relation to the first and third category. This is in stark contrast to the numerous German children's and young adult novels that focus on flight from the Nazi dictatorship or escape attempts after the erection of the Berlin Wall (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2022a).[1] However, we could find corresponding picturebooks in the English-speaking world. Dorrith Sim's and Gerald Fitzgerald's *In My Pocket* (1996) and Tomi Ungerer's *Otto: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear* (1998) depict the consequences of the persecution of Jews during the Nazi dictatorship and the main protagonists' eventual escape from the threat of assassination, while Tom Clohosy Cole's *The Wall* (2014) and Kristen Fulton's and Torben Kuhlmann's *Flight for Freedom: The Wetzel Family's Daring Escape from East Germany* (2020) centre on successful escape attempts across the inner-German border. Ultimately, the two German picturebooks, *Bauer Klaus packt an* [Farmer Klaus Is Lending a Hand] by Bruno Werra and Gerhard Kreische (1947) and *Neue Heimat* [New Home] by Annelise Jahnke and Ursula Wiche (1949), centre on the flight of German people from Eastern Europe to East Germany after the end of World War II. Only the latter two picturebooks were published at the same time as the depicted events took place, while the time span between the historical events and their representations in the other four picturebooks usually covers more than fifty years.

[1] There are some German picturebooks and graphic novels that represent children's everyday life in divided Germany but they do not touch on the subject of flight.

In general, the picturebooks of the first category rely extensively on nostalgia, while the picturebooks that fall into the other two categories rather mitigate references to nostalgia. The question then arises as to why nostalgia is handled so differently and how this is potentially related to propaganda.

Flight from the Nazi dictatorship

The seizing of power by the National Socialists in 1933 instigated a wave of migration, when communists, defamed artists and intellectuals, and Jews threatened by prosecution left Germany. This refugee movement increased with the beginning of World War II, when the German Army (Wehrmacht) occupied countries such as Poland in 1939, and France and the Netherlands in 1940, as a result of which the German emigrants who fled there were once again exposed to persecution. They could only escape arrest by fleeing to neighbouring countries (Mazower 2008). Those endangered people who were still in Germany had little chance of escaping deportation to concentration camps. Jewish children were deeply affected by this threat. In order to save these children, the German Jewish Children's Aid (GJCA), founded in 1934, ensured that many Jewish children were able to enter the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the USA despite restrictive entry requirements. Known under the name of *Kindertransport* or *Children's Refugee Movement*, more than 10,000 Jewish children were sent to the United Kingdom between November 1938 and 1 September 1939 (Fast 2010; Feldman 2020). Since their parents were not allowed to leave the country, the Jewish children were placed in foster families or in foster homes. In addition to the uncertainty about the fate of their parents, these children were confronted with an unknown language and culture which usually led to traumatic experiences.

These disturbing events are at the centre of the autobiographical picturebook *In My Pocket* (1996) by Dorrith Sim (aka Dorrith Oppenheim), with images by Gerald Fitzgerald. Sim belonged to a group of Jewish children who left Germany in 1939 by train when she was eight years old. She left behind her parents who were murdered in a concentration camp. Dorrith was adopted by a childless couple in Scotland where she lived until her death in 2012.

The picturebook story begins on a boat that carries the children to England. The first-person narrator, a little girl, recalls the farewell at the train station in Hamburg and the ensuing train trip to Holland. When the train was about to leave, the girl almost lost her beloved toy dog when she dropped it on the tracks. However, a man caught the toy dog and threw him back to her. From then on, the girl keeps the toy with her all day and all night. When she meets her foster parents for the first time, she is attracted by their real dog. The only English sentence she can say is "I have a handkerchief in my pocket". When she starts learning new words, she always connects them with the expression "I have X in my pocket" ("I have a house in my pocket"; "I have a teacher in my pocket", etc.). While she was not allowed to play with children in Germany due to her Jewish descent, she finds new friends in Scotland. The letter she received from her parents shortly after is her most precious memento which she keeps in her pocket forever.

Fig. 1. A picture by Gerald Fitzgerald from *In My Pocket* (Sim and Fitzgerald 1996). Jewish children leave the ship that brought them to England. Dorrith Sim's original documents verify the documentary character of the picturebook.

Sl. 1. Slika Geralda Fitzgeralda u slikovnici *In My Pocket* [U mom džepu] (Sim i Fitzgerald 1996). Židovska djeca silaze s broda koji ih je dovezao u Englesku. Izvorne isprave Dorrith Sim potvrđuju dokumentarnu narav slikovnice.

In tandem with the images, the poetic text by Sim creates an emotionally charged atmosphere, dominated by traumatic feelings of loss and deep sadness which is later mitigated by feelings of safety related to the new home in Scotland. While the narrative follows the general script of flight by omitting the fifth phase, the reasons for the *Kindertransport* can only be indirectly inferred and additional information is required for the reader to fully grasp the historical background. It is, for instance, not explained why the girl was not allowed to play with other children in Germany. The same applies to the fact that the girl reads the letter from her parents every day, followed by the short expression "Even after the War began" (Sim and Fitzgerald 1996: n.p.). Experienced readers may infer that the parents might not have survived the war, since they had been deported to a concentration camp, while inexperienced readers may need the support of an adult mediator to get the missing information (Kokkola 2003: 39).

The girl continuously longs for her parental home, epitomised by the toy dog, the letter of her parents, and the pocket. This nostalgic attitude is particularly emphasised in the endpapers and the title page that show Dorrith's passport and visa which allowed her entry to the United Kingdom. These documents serve to verify the authenticity

of the story told, additionally stressed by the sepia-toned picture of a children's group leaving the ship (Fig. 1). The pastel colours and the blurred contours in the ensuing images present the children's ambivalent feelings: they are curious and reluctant at the same time, since they have been separated from their parents and enter a country whose language they are not able to speak. The surprising connection of learning a new language with a pocket as part of the girl's clothing portends the girl's longing for a place where she may carry along her belongings, such as the letter, but also the new words she has learnt, thus building a connection between her home country and her new home in Scotland. This intimate bond between toy animal, clothing, and language ingeniously captures the significance of nostalgia in this story: these things refer to the past, play a significant role in the present and point towards the future, for instance with the increasing capacity to speak English. In addition to the feelings of longing and hope that intersperse the text, the book indirectly propagates the ideal of family as a safe haven, which builds a contrast to the charged political situation. While the storyline does not elaborate on the political reasons for the *Kindertransport*, thus representing the rather naïve perspective of the first-person narrator, the text again and again puts emphasis on the young child's attachment to her family, whether her own parents or the new foster family in Scotland.

As *In My Pocket* shows, toys play an eminent role in picturebooks about flight. Leaving beloved toys behind or losing them altogether during the escape is a prominent subject, since this situation mirrors the traumatic feelings which children often experience when being on the run. Another case in point is *Otto* by Tomi Ungerer (1998).[2] The subtitle, *The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear*, appositely refers to the genre and reveals that the main character is a stuffed animal and not a human being. Written in retrospect, Otto recalls that he was given as a birthday present to a Jewish boy named David. From then on, Otto, David, and the neighbour boy Oskar are inseparable. When the boys try to teach Otto to write with ink, a mishap occurs; parts of Otto's head are covered indelibly with ink. When the Nazis come to power, David and his family are deported to a concentration camp. Instead of taking Otto with him, David entrusts the teddy bear to Oskar. During a bombing raid, the air-raid shelter in which Oskar and his family sought refuge is blown up. A black American soldier finds Otto in the ruins. When he presses Otto to his chest, both are hit by a bullet. Since Otto's body deflected the bullet and thus saved the soldier's life, he is hailed as a hero in the newspapers. After the war is over, the soldier gives Otto to his daughter, providing the teddy bear with a new home. This happiness does not last long, because a gang of street boys seize Otto and brutally throw him around until he ends up in a garbage can. An old woman who rummages through the garbage finds Otto and sells him to an antique dealer. Year after year Otto is sitting in the shop window until an elderly tourist who turns out to be Oskar recognises the teddy bear. The story about their former relationship once more makes

[2] This picturebook has been studied with respect to the representation of the Holocaust, while the nostalgic aspects have been disregarded (Tadayuki et al. 2015). Chassagnol (2012) elaborates on the references to other children's books with anthropomorphised teddy bears.

the headlines. This report leads David who lives in New York to contact Oskar so that the three friends are reunited at the end (Fig. 2).

This picturebook deals with postwar migration, since both Otto and David appear to have emigrated to the USA. Whether the final decision of Oskar and David to rent a flat in order to stay together implies that the trio settles in the USA or in Germany is left open. Howsoever the decision was made, it means another (voluntary) emigration for one of the two men. The picturebook story does not strictly follow the script of flight, and events connected to flight and migration are mentioned only in passing. The reader receives no clue about how David survived the deportation to a concentration camp. This observation is related to Otto's naïve point of view. Just like a child, Otto does not see through the political connections. Due to his immobility, he is in the position of a passive bystander. Caused by the multiple changes of ownership, Otto encounters various social, ethnical, and religious groups. Spanning almost seventy years, from the end of the 1920s until the 1990s, the end of Otto's autobiographical story is closely connected to the present, that is, the time when the picturebook came out. The crucial question now is how nostalgia comes into play.

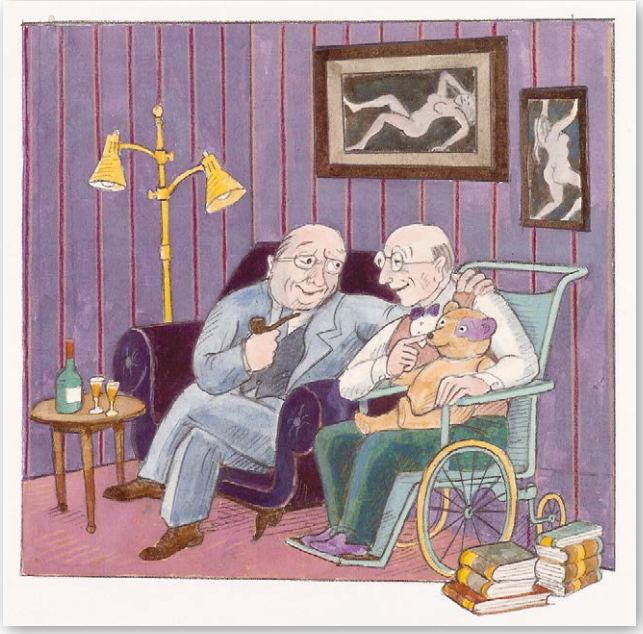

Fig. 2. A picture by Tomi Ungerer from *Otto: Autobiographie eines Teddybären* [*Otto: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear*] (1999). David, Oskar, and Otto are reunited again.
Sl. 2. Slika iz slikovnice Tomija Ungerera *Otto: Autobiographie eines Teddybären* [Otto: autobiografija plišanoga medvjedića] (1999). David, Oskar i Otto ponovno se susreću.

In this book, nostalgia is aligned with the issue of friendship and the perception of age. The friendship of the two boys is consolidated by their shared interest in the teddy bear as a playmate. Due to the political circumstances, both boys lose track of each other. In this respect, the teddy bear serves as a powerful catalyst. Unmistakable because of his ink stain, Otto causes the reunion of David and Oskar who rekindle their friendship by sharing their sad and happy memories. Otto as an earwitness of these recollections preserves these nostalgic memories in his autobiographical writing. Moreover, he takes on another function. While David and Oskar have grown old, Otto is ageless, although the traces of time can be seen on his plush body. Regarded by the antique seller as a precious toy, Otto thus includes multiple facets of nostalgia which are closely related to the passing of time, the recollection of a bygone childhood and peaceful times which came to a sudden end, and the renewal of positive emotions tightly bound to a friendship that is able to transgress borders and time. This idea comes to the fore in the penultimate illustration (Fig. 2). In the German translation, the two paintings on the wall show two female nudes – a sidekick to Tomi Ungerer's erotic illustrations – which may be interpreted as a reference to the past youth of the two elderly men. Quite interestingly, these pictures have been changed in the American edition. Here, two sepia-toned photos show David as a young boy and David and Oskar as young boys who play cheerfully with Otto while sitting on the staircase of their home, thus recalling the happy childhood of the two boys. Again, it is clear that nostalgia is connected to positive feelings, and supporting propaganda as ideals such as friendship and (religious) tolerance take centre stage.

What the two picturebooks dealing with escape from the Nazis have in common are two key aspects: the limited perspective on the events, which points to the naïve attitude of the child protagonists and the intermingling of two feelings or emotions: sadness associated with loss and zest for life associated with hope. Seen in this light, nostalgia is always connected to positive norms, thus highlighting that the protagonists finally find a new home in a safe country, irrespective of the potential loss of family members.

Refugee movements in the postwar years and the idea of reconstruction

With respect to picturebooks focusing on refugee movements caused by the end of World War II, quite a different picture emerges. Some historical background is indispensable: after 1945, about 40 million people were on the move in Europe. This huge number included prisoners of war, evacuees, people expelled from East European countries, and displaced people, who had been imprisoned in concentration camps or conscripted to forced labour. Moreover, children were particularly affected, since they were taken from their familiar surroundings and often suffered the loss of their parents and siblings (Zahra 2011). In 1950, more than 12 million refugees lived in both German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the West, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East (Wehler 2008). Because many German cities had been bombed, there was a large influx of refugees into the countryside. Reconstruction of the

devasted cities and villages was an urgent task which affected the whole population. On top of this, the East German authorities ushered in a land reform in autumn 1945 which led to the expropriation of land from large landowners and the handing over of land and farms to displaced persons, poor agricultural workers, and so-called "new farmers" (*Neubauern*). The latter notion refers to evacuees from Central and Eastern Europe who lived in rural areas. In order to integrate these people, the GDR government provided them with farms and land with an average size of eight hectares. Over 90,000 farms were run by new farmers (Bauerkämper 1996). Despite the large number of refugees among the farmers, their expulsion from Eastern territories to East Germany was a taboo topic (Schwartz 2004).

Fig. 3. Pictures by Ursula Wiche from *Neue Heimat*: *Ein Erstleseheft* [New Home: A First-Reading Booklet] (Jahnke and Wiche 1949: 4–5). Refugees – a mother with two children – arrive at the station of Rimow in East Germany. A close relative picks them up, inviting them to his farmhouse as their new home.

Sl. 3. Slike Ursule Wiche u slikovnici *Neue Heimat: Ein Erstleseheft* [Novi dom: Prva čitanka] (Jahnke i Wiche 1949: 4–5). Izbjeglice – majka s dvoje djece – stižu na postaju u Rimowu u Istočnoj Njemačkoj. Bliski rođak ih dočekuje i poziva na svoje seosko gospodarstvo, njihov novi dom.

Against all expectations, there are two GDR picturebooks that subliminally refer to this subject. Both books, *Neue Heimat* [New Home] by Annelise Jahnke (text) and Ursula Wiche (images) (1949), and *Bauer Klaus packt an* [Farmer Klaus Is Lending a Hand] by Bruno Werra (text) and Gerhard Kreische (images) (1947), tell almost the

same story: after a long journey, a family arrives in the countryside, somewhere in East Germany. They find work on a farm, thus ensuring the food supply for the population. It is not mentioned at all where the families come from and why they have left their former home. That they were on the run is indicated by the few belongings they were able to take with them, as an example from *Neue Heimat* shows (Fig. 3). However, the reader is left in the dark about the possible political circumstances. In addition, in *Neue Heimat*, the father is missing. What happened to him, whether he was killed in battle or is a prisoner of war, remains untold.

Fig. 4. A picture by Gerhard Kreische from *Bauer Klaus packt an* [Farmer Klaus Is Lending a Hand] (Werra and Kreische 1947). A refugee family has arrived at their new home, a farm in the countryside.

Sl. 4. Slika Gerharda Kreischea u slikovnici *Bauer Klaus packt an* [Seljak Klaus pomaže] (Werra i Kreische 1947). Izbjegla obitelj stigla je do novoga doma, seoskoga gospodarstva.

These obvious gaps can be attributed to the taboo topic of flight, but they should also be interpreted against the backdrop of state ideology in the GDR. First and foremost, the main goal was to provide sufficient food for the population, which was suffering from famine and the consequences of war (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2022b). Moreover, the state authorities stressed that all citizens should participate in the construction of the new state. The new farmers had a significant role in this respect, since they stood for a new generation of working people who could autonomously decide on their work.

In these two picturebooks, nostalgia as a longing for the past is only subliminally present, since the focus of the stories is on the present and the future which also concerns children.[3] In *Farmer Klaus Is Lending a Hand*, children are only visualised in three places: on the cover that presents the farmer and his wife, with harvesting equipment on their shoulders, who are accompanied by their two children; on the first spread that depicts the arrival at the new farm; and on the final spread that shows the family sitting together in a cosy living room. The other double spreads focus on the hard labour on the farm, for instance feeding the farm animals, ploughing and sowing the fields, harvesting the corn and the potatoes, and mending the farm equipment. Apart from the cover and the ultimate spread on which the characters have smiling faces or at least relaxed body positions, all other illustrations show the figures from behind or from a distance, as a result of which the reader cannot discern their emotional conditions. In this respect, only the text conveys the farmer's engagement and self-confidence, since he is aware of his responsibility for the food supply for the population. A reference to the past is provided on the first page (Fig. 4). The text clearly states that farmer Klaus was previously a hard-working day labourer on a country estate. This information explains why Klaus and his family do not express any nostalgic feelings towards the past but are focused exclusively on the present.

In *Neue Heimat*, however, the children are shown on each double spread: they are doing household chores, helping with the harvest, and playing with other village children all year round. The final page states that one year has passed since the mother and her two children, Rita and Uli, arrived in the village of Rimow where they are staying on a farm run by the siblings' uncle. Since Uli feels comfortable and at ease with the new living conditions, he confirms that nowhere is as beautiful as Rimow and that he never wants to leave his uncle and his new playmates. The last sentence, however, could be interpreted as a subliminal reference to the past, because the constant wish to "be at home" has now been applied to Rimow which stands for the boy's new home. This information implies that Uli has turned his attention from the old home – wherever this was – to the new one.

The propaganda message in both books is crystal clear: the GDR as a state based on socialist ideology represents the ideal place for displaced people who are eager to start a new life after the devastation caused by World War II. In order to emphasise this goal, the countryside is presented idyllically, which evokes a nostalgic perspective in the sense that everything should be as it was before the war – only without the landowners – and thus aligns with the supporting propaganda of the GDR government. Since villages and farms have also been bombed, the presentation of village life can be interpreted as nostalgic, despite the hard labour to be carried out by the farmers. The watercolour illustrations of the farm and village look as though they have fallen out of time, indicating that the work of farmers has not changed, irrespective of the war. Both books show appreciation for the (new) farmer and the message that the GDR provides a

[3] Macarena García-González (2017) sees similar aspirations realized in Spanish children's literature about flight and migration.

new home for all villagers, including displaced people. Therefore, they do not show any interest in returning to their former home country wherever that might be. As a result, the picturebooks in this section follow the four phases of the script of flight, omitting the fifth one. Against this backdrop, both picturebooks serve as carriers of this message to children by highlighting that a retrospective glance towards the past is less important than an optimistic attitude that leads to progress and a sense of being a prominent part of the new socialist community.

Illegal border crossing: escape from East Germany to West Germany

The third case study deals with picturebooks that centre on the inner-German border which separated West and East Germany until 1989. This border existed from the division of Germany into four zones or sectors in August 1945, detaching the British, French, and US-American zones from the Soviet zone. Likewise, Berlin was divided into four zones as well. From the beginning, this border was guarded but border crossing was not strictly hampered. However, the situation changed in the 1950s when more and more people left the GDR by moving to West Germany for political and economic reasons. As a reaction, the inner-German border was fortified with barbed wire and guard towers, with orders to shoot to prevent illegal flight from the Republic. Since cross-border movements were still possible between East and West Berlin, the GDR regime erected the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 which led to the separation of families and couples (Carter, Palmowski and Schreiter 2019; Wilke 2011).

From then on, it was almost impossible to cross the border legally, while illegal border crossing was related to life-threatening risks. Nevertheless, GDR inhabitants tried again and again to escape. While many were arrested or even shot dead at the border, others managed a successful escape. Numerous books deal with this emotionally charged situation, including children's and young adult novels published in both German states (see Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2022a). At the same time, the stories told therein are shaped by the respective political systems in West and East Germany. For this reason, the authors sometimes express ideological concerns about the use of propaganda directed against the other German state. However, illegal border crossing was not thematised in contemporary picturebooks, probably out of consideration for the younger readership, not wanting to expose them to this emotionally upsetting topic. To date, two picturebooks directed towards an international audience address this historical issue: Tom Clohosy Cole's *Wall* (2014) and Kristen Fulton's and Torben Kuhlmann's *Flight for Freedom: The Wetzel Family's Daring Escape from East Germany* (2020).

In contrast to the picturebooks discussed above, these picturebooks lay emphasis on the issue of border crossing. Although border crossing always comes to the fore in topics related to flight, many German picturebooks just mention this theme in passing or even hardly at all. Cole's *Wall*, by contrast, focuses precisely on this topic. The picturebook story centres on a family with two children who live in East Germany.

Due to the sudden construction of the Wall in Berlin, the father is stuck on the other side of the inner-German border. His son ponders how to breach the Wall and finally decides to dig a tunnel. After some time, he carries out his plan. In the middle of the night, he rushes to the tunnel entrance with his mother and sister but they are caught by a border guard. When he shows the soldier a photo of their father and tells their story, the soldier lets them go, saying that families should not be separated. They arrive just in time, because their father is about to dig a tunnel himself.

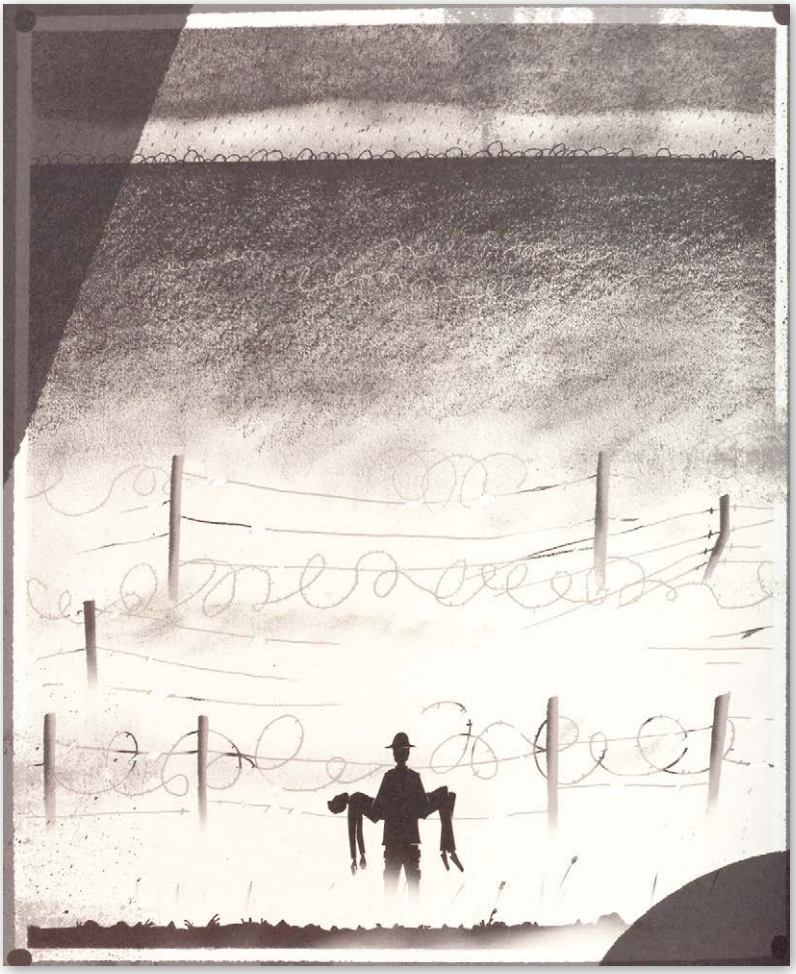

Fig. 5. An image from Tom Clohosy Cole's *Wall* (2014). Used with the kind permission of Tom Clohosy Cole. A guard is carrying the body of a person shot dead at the fortified inner-German border.

Sl. 5. Stranica iz slikovnice Toma Clohosyja Colea *Wall* [Zid] (2014), uvrštena uz autorovu ljubaznu suglasnost. Stražar nosi tijelo osobe koja je poginula na utvrđenoj unutarnjemačkoj granici.

Apart from the fact that some episodes are rather improbable, such as the boy's ability to dig a tunnel under the border all by himself, or the East German soldier's friendly behaviour (he thereby acts as an escape agent, which would have been punished by a heavy prison sentence), the story is emotionally charged and sends ambivalent messages. The Berlin Wall and the fortified border repeatedly appear in the images and stress the danger associated with illegal attempts to cross the border (Fig. 5). In comparison to the Wall whose black giant mass dominates the images, people look like dwarves who can only raise their fists powerlessly. Next to nothing is told about the economic and everyday situation in the GDR since the story centres solely on the family's feelings with respect to the missing father and husband. The boy retreats into a dream world, and the mother sighs over the letters she has received from her husband. The memory of the past time, when they were all still together in the GDR, determines their everyday life. Taking this nostalgic retreat into account, the felt "poverty of the present" (Howard 2012: 42) is foregrounded. The depressed mood is emphasised by the images rendered in dark colours. Since the action takes place mostly at night, the colour black dominates, interrupted only by the glow of lamps. In this way, while showing a happy ending for the family, it also points to the continuing threat of the Wall. The nostalgic reference to the past refers exclusively to the time before the family was separated, while the mother and the siblings obviously do not mourn their former life in East Germany. Instead, they are looking forward to a new life in West Germany. The message of this picturebook is obvious, since the text-picture combination clearly demonstrates that the erection of the Berlin Wall, in addition to the inner-German border being strung with barbed wire, poses an almost insurmountable barrier for the German population, separating families, couples, and friends. The blame for this inhumane situation is put on the GDR regime. In sum, the book conveys a propagandistic message that supports the ideals of liberal democracy as embodied by Western states. The introduction of the figure of a friendly and understanding border guard slightly softens the propaganda. It provides a surprise in the narrative and implies that there was humanity even under conditions of dictatorship.

Flight for Freedom is based on a true story. It focuses on two families who secretly construct a hot-air balloon in which they successfully fly over the inner-German border at night. As in an action movie, the storyline begins with the careful preparation of the escape which culminates in the flight itself. Suspiciously observed by the Secret Service (*Stasi*), the two families succeed in the daring manoeuvre at the very last moment with policemen on their heels. After the balloon lands, they do not know at first whether their escape has been successful. But soon they meet a West German police car. The policemen show them the way to the next place, where the family members shoot flares into the sky showing gratification and gratitude for their rescue.

In this picturebook, nostalgia is again perceived as poverty of the present, epitomised in a double spread that contrasts the conditions of consumption in both German states by opposing two street scenes with shop windows. While the West German street shows an abundance of consumer goods, complemented by neon signs

and ads, the East German street looks rather dull and grey with just a few goods on display. The children on the left are either fascinated by the TV programme to be watched on the screens in the shop window or by the fast food. The children on the right, however, wear pioneer uniforms (it must be stated that these uniforms were only worn on special occasions, not in everyday life) and stand in line with other people before a Konsum shop. They are attracted by a man who is leaving the shop while eating a banana which was expensive and much in demand in East Germany. This juxtaposition, based on stereotypical ideas about everyday life in both German states, points to the boy's longing for specific consumer goods he only knows from television and hearsay. This desire is complemented by the adults' pursuit of freedom which is the prime trigger for their flight. Nostalgia here is most likely directed towards the future in West Germany, symbolised by the luminous candles that shine like stars in the sky in the last spread.

As in the picturebooks in the previous section, references to the past are mitigated, or even omitted. Nostalgia only plays a role in the reminiscences of the boy and the mother about family life before the erection of the Wall in Cole's picturebook. Otherwise, the emotions revealed therein are employed to criticise the fortification of a border that separates people who speak the same language and live on German soil. Both books present the GDR as an oppressive state that ignores the feelings of individuals who suffer from separation from their loved ones. The only exception is the guard in *Wall* who against all the odds empathises with the boy and lets the refugees go. Moreover, the picturebooks by Cole and Fulton focus on the first three phases of the script of flight, whereas the latter two phases are ignored. Both books end with the prospect of a new start in West Germany, apparently taking for granted that the families will easily adapt to the different living conditions. Ultimately, both books clearly show that a return to East Germany was not desirable under the given circumstances.

Conclusion

The analysis of six picturebooks dealing with Germany as a place or destination of flight has shown that the topic of escape is closely related to emotions, nostalgic feelings, and even ideological shifts, often aligned with the use of propaganda messages. In addition, the picturebooks follow the general script of flight, albeit some stages may be skipped or only indirectly referred to. While the picturebooks of the first and second category comply with the four stages of the script of flight, the two picturebooks of the third category follow only the first three phases. It is striking that none of these picturebooks refer to the fifth phase, namely the return to one's home country. In all cases, the refugees remain in the country of destination, because they either feel safe and comfortable there or the return to the former home country is not possible or desirable.

Looking back at the initial discussion of nostalgia, two features are apparent: a naïve perspective rendered by the protagonists' points of view and the affiliation of past, present, and future. Since the protagonists are mostly children (the teddy bear Otto can be regarded as a substitute for a child), they do not fully grasp the political circumstances

and the dangers related to flight, which implies a rather limited understanding, leading to misinterpretations, and even conspicuous gaps. In addition, the concept of helplessness plays a major role, thus evoking the readers' empathy. Very often, the main characters acknowledge that there is something missing, whether a family member, a beloved object or toy, a safe home, the ability to play with other children, or even the sense of freedom. This feeling – denoted as "poverty of the present" by Howard (2012: 42) – is quite surprisingly not directed toward the past, as a potentially better time, but rather toward the future, which implies the promise of having a better life in a new country. The characters maintain an optimistic attitude nonetheless, so that positive emotions prevail which are often closely connected to positive ideological or propaganda messages. To conclude, this cross-linking of nostalgia, emotional appeal, and positive propaganda in picturebooks about flight may contribute to a better understanding of the complicated visual and verbal strategies deployed and thus open new vistas on this multimodal art form.

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Nostalgija i propaganda u slikovnicama o njemačkoj povijesti: bijeg od nacističke diktature, ideja obnove i Berlinski zid

U ovom se radu istražuju višestruke dimenzije slikovnica o bijegu analizom šesterih slikovnica usmjerenih na Njemačku kao mjesto ili odredište bijega. Prvo se razvija opći obrazac bijega kako bi se identificirale tekstualne i vizualne strategije povezane s ključnim pitanjima povezanima uz bijeg. Drugo, proučava se nostalgija kao istaknuto obilježje određenih slikovnica o bijegu. Treće, istražuju se postupci kojima se autori slikovnica služe kako bi privukli čitateljevu empatiju, uključujući i uporabu propagandnih poruka. S obzirom na odabrane slikovnice, razlikuju se tri migracijska pokreta: bijeg od nacističke diktature, izbjeglička kretanja iz istočne Europe u Njemačku tijekom poslijeratnih godina te bijeg iz Istočne u Zapadnu Njemačku nakon izgradnje Berlinskoga zida 1961. godine. U tom se kontekstu pokazuje kako je međuigra nostalgije i propagande u odabranim slikovnicama usklađena s namjerama autora.

Ključne riječi: Berlinski zid, bijeg, Njemačka, spašavanje djece, obnova, nostalgija, slikovnica, propaganda, obrazac