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Verbal and Visual Representations of Nostalgia in Two Contemporary Cypriot Picturebooks: *Savel's Red Dress* and *White Uniform*

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This paper draws on Svetlana Boym's highly influential distinction between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia in order to explore verbal and visual representations of nostalgia in two picturebooks: *Savel's Red Dress* and *White Uniform*, written by Marina Michaelidou-Kadi and illustrated by Daniela Stamatiade and Renia Metallinou, respectively. Savel is forced to relocate to a foreign place. Her strong attachment to a dress, the only item she was able to take with her, exhibits restorative nostalgia. On the other hand, in *White Uniform*, nostalgia arises as reflective nostalgia. The textual and visual elements in both books work together to create an emotional connection with readers and immerse them in a nostalgic journey. As the textual storytelling provides context and depth, the visual narrative enhances the nostalgic experience through evocative imagery. The distinctive way nostalgia manifests itself in the two picturebooks serves different functions in the visual and verbal narrative and effectively conveys the theme of each book. The exploration of the two books in the relatively unexplored area of Cypriot children's literature aims to enhance understanding of nostalgia in picturebooks.

Keywords: reflective nostalgia, restorative nostalgia, Cyprus, scrapbook, visual and verbal synergy, garments

Pieces of clothing from the past often serve as tangible memory keepers, preserving stories and events from bygone eras and commemorating community history. As artifacts invested with experiences, feelings and memories, garments are not only triggers of nostalgia but also bridges between the past and present, tools to navigate and

make sense of life's changes and records of historical changes. The focus of this paper is to explore elements of the restorative and reflective modes of nostalgia as exhibited by the characters of two books. Applying Svetlana Boym's typology of "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia as a theoretical lens, this paper explores the way pieces of clothing in two contemporary Cypriot picturebooks become material memories of times past while also seeking to demonstrate the dynamic, shifting, and changing relationship between these pieces of clothing and their owners. The picturebooks studied, *Savel's Red Dress* (2014) and *White Uniform* (2017), were both written by Marina Michaelidou-Kadi, a well-known Cypriot author of children's literature with a background in psychology and sociocultural anthropology. Her work has won national and international awards. In 2014, *Savel's Red Dress* was featured in the International Youth Library's White Ravens selection and received the Peter Pan Prize from IBBY Sweden in 2016. *White Uniform* was given the National Literature Award for Young People in Cyprus in 2018. *Savel's Red Dress* was illustrated by Daniela Stamatiade¹ and *White Uniform* by Renia Metallinou,² both from Greece. The texts in these picturebooks are written in Standard Modern Greek.

A significant part of Michaelidou-Kadi's stories are themes of migration, uprooting, loneliness and loss. *Savel's Red Dress* tells the story of a girl who is forced to leave her homeland and move to a safer, foreign place. Savel's attachment to a dress, the sole item she manages to take with her, exemplifies the restorative nostalgia that Boym describes; insisting on wearing this garment every day, Savel attempts to reclaim her motherland and symbolically reconstruct the lost home. *White Uniform* tells the story of Sophia, a girl growing up in Cyprus in the 1940s. Sophia's dream was to become a nurse and wear the white uniform. The story is told from the perspective of Sophia's granddaughter who employs photographs, family stories and her own recollections as sources of memory. In this context, nostalgia is reflective, acknowledging the irretrievability of the past and cherishing the moments that have passed.

According to Boym, restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* (return home) while reflective nostalgia thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) (2001: xviii). Restorative nostalgia attempts a "transhistorical reconstruction of a lost home" and thinks of itself as "truth and tradition" (ibid.). In contrast, reflective nostalgia focuses on the passing of time (49), accepting its ambivalences, disruptions and ambiguities (xviii). In particular, restorative nostalgia is fuelled by a deep, emotional attachment to the past, involving a desire to recreate earlier experiences. People engaging in restorative nostalgia often hold on to past symbols, "particular places and spaces – scenes, moments, situations and tableaux" (Letch 2008: 7) which may carry special significance and serve as powerful reminders of an idealised time in the past. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia focuses on stories,

¹ Daniela Stamatiade, a graduate of the Athens School of Fine Arts, is an accomplished painter, illustrator, and visual arts teacher based in Athens, Greece. She has illustrated over 100 children's books and has received numerous prestigious awards.

² Renia Metallinou has a background in graphic and fashion design and since 2014 has worked full time as an illustrator, creating books for both Greek and international publishers.

“the individual resonances of the past” (Horvath 2018: 151), valuing the richness and authenticity of personal experiences. Additionally, reflective nostalgics develop a more complex relation to the past (McKnight 2004: 61), accepting the coexistence of both negative and positive experiences in their recollections. *Savel’s Red Dress* and *White Uniform* exhibit elements of restorative and reflective nostalgia respectively. The different modes of nostalgia explored in this article are seen through the nostalgic attitudes of the main characters of the two books. By exploring the verbal and visual ways *Savel’s Red Dress* and *White Uniform* align with Boym’s theory of restorative and reflective nostalgia, we discuss the similarities and differences between the two books regarding the role nostalgia plays in the stories. Additionally, we examine how the pieces of clothing which are prominently featured in the two books are implicated in the nostalgic narrative.

Throughout history, the displacement of people due to political, social, and economic upheavals has been a recurring phenomenon, with the accompanying feelings of loss and nostalgia being a universal experience among refugees seeking safety and stability. In this context, as Evelyn Arizpe (2021: 265) points out, “The growing publication of, and interest in, picturebooks that portray the experience of migrant and refugee characters in different parts of the world is crucial”. In the analysed picturebooks, nostalgia serves both as a central theme and a stylistic mode, capturing the experiences of the protagonists through narrative and visual elements. These features are capable of conveying the emotional impact and historical significance of their journey.

This paper seeks to contribute to a broader discussion on the themes of nostalgia and memory in picturebooks while exploring these themes in the under-researched area of Cypriot children’s literature, which has received special attention in recent years (Rodosthenous-Balafa and Karatasou 2023). Additionally, it aims to provide valuable insights into the field of Cyprus peace studies by examining how Cyprus’s turbulent recent history is depicted in *White Uniform* and *Savel’s Red Dress*. It explores the dramatic journey of refugee children forced to leave their homes and loved ones, highlighting the ongoing challenges of integration and adaptation they face upon reaching a foreign land. Through this exploration, the paper underscores the significant role of children’s literature in evoking memory and nostalgia, thereby shaping both individual and collective understandings of the past.

Savel’s Red Dress

The first double-page spread in *Savel’s Red Dress* captures tension: Savel and her mom are pictured hand in hand, their bodies moving in one direction while their eyes are looking in another. Conventionally, characters in picturebooks are depicted moving left to right (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001: 31; Nodelman 1988: 21) “since our propensity is to ‘read’ illustrations from left to right” (Sipe 1998: 104). In this instance, however, Savel and her mother are presented moving in the opposite direction, from right to left. As Nikolajeva and Scott (2001: 153) explain, the characters, moving right to left, are heading into the “secure page”, symbolising a return to safety and stability. Having been

forced to leave their country as it was no longer safe, they are moving left, towards a safer place, but while they do so, they cannot help but look back on the home they are leaving behind (Fig. 1). This image succinctly represents nostalgia's embodied "ambiguity and contradiction" (Wilson 2014: 23), combining opposing concepts, as in this case, their bodies are moving left and their eyes are looking right. Emphasising the intricate and multifaceted nature of nostalgia, Boym states that nostalgia is not directed towards the future or towards the past "but rather sideways" (2007: 8), combining different vectors of direction. In other words, nostalgia is neither solely past nor future-oriented but moves in multiple directions simultaneously. The nostalgic experience is a non-linear, dynamic engagement with time, and thus, as Boym explains: "The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space" (9).



Fig. 1. Savel and her mother leave their homeland in *Savel's Red Dress* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade 2014: 1st double-page spread)

Sl. 1. Savel s majkom napušta domovinu u slikovnici *Savel's Red Dress* [Savelina crvena oprava] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Stamatiade 2014: prva dvostranica)

An unspecified disrupting event, a "lapse", in Stuart Tannock's words (1995: 456), is implied in this double-page spread and brings about major changes in Savel's life. The turmoil of that particular moment is visually communicated by the diagonal linear emphasis of the image, which is created by the characters' facial gaze vectors, as they align with the position of the dress Savel carries. According to Molly Bang (2000: 46), diagonals imply motion or tension, while Jane Doonan points out that this particular direction (upper left to lower right) is experienced "as falling, literally and metaphorically" (1993: 27). This unfortunate event is the rupture which segments Savel's life into periods: the

prelapsarian world which is left behind (“the Golden Age, the childhood Home, the Country”) (Tannock 1995: 456) and the postlapsarian world, “a world felt in some way to be lacking, deficient, or oppressive” (457) which becomes her new reality. As depicted in the narrative, upon arriving in the new country, Savel insists on wearing every day the same red dress she brought from home. Despite her peers’ inquisitive questions and her mother’s attempts to persuade her to wear something else, Savel simply responds, “I want the red dress” (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatziade 2014: 3rd double spread, right-hand page). This insistence on the familiar garment suggests that Savel resorts to nostalgia to make sense of the multitude of conflicting emotions that ensue and adjust to the new environment. As Federico Zannoni (2023: 37–38) points out: “nostalgia is, in fact, a defensive mechanism primarily implemented in moments of transition and radical change”.

Savel is able to take one item with her, a red dress, gifted to her by her grandmother who stayed behind. This dress is the only piece of clothing Savel would wear from that point on. Insisting on wearing this garment every day, Savel engages in the type of nostalgia Boym has described as “restorative”, a way of “giving shape and meaning to longing” (2001: 41) by focusing on the desire to reconstruct the lost home. The red dress becomes a shelter after the abrupt displacement, a space between the past and the present in which Savel finds comfort and is supported in times of incomprehensible change. It seems that, by insisting on wearing this particular dress, Savel attempts “a return to the original stasis, to the prelapsarian moment” (Boym 2001: 15), aiming to recover what is now lost. According to Zannoni, restorative nostalgia arises from a desire “to reproduce in the present a past that is not perceived as concluded, left behind, deteriorated but as a constitutive value of the present, always equal to itself, insensitive to the action of time” (2023: 38). Indeed, by wearing a dress imbued with a sense of time, place and people, Savel attempts to reconstruct a home away from home, “a sanctuary of meaning” (cf. Aden 1995: 35) amidst confusing and disorientating times. Roger Aden explains that, albeit temporary, this place functions as a refuge “from contemporary conditions that are perceived to be inhospitable” (1995: 22).

The significance of the dress in the narrative is visually communicated by Stamatziade’s illustrative choices from the very first double-page spread. The red dress is the only colour against a grayscale palette. Indeed, all elements depicted in the illustrations are in black and white except for the dark red dress, indicating the solace an item can offer in what feels like an unwelcoming place. Specifically, on the first double-page spread, apart from standing out from the grayscale surroundings due to its colour (Callow 2016: 11), the dress holds visual salience as its placement on the right-hand page (Fig. 1) gives it visual weight (cf. Doonan 1993: 28). Similarly, its salience is further reinforced by its size, being considerable larger than the other two pieces of clothing in the picture, while the predominantly empty space against it adds to its prominence (Callow 2016: 11; Doonan 1993: 28).

Savel’s overwhelming feeling of sadness and loneliness is effectively captured in the second double-page spread, where she stands against the background of a moving

faceless crowd (Fig. 2). Her facial expression indicates that she is stunned at her surroundings, looking up at the towering buildings: she is standing still as the rain falls and the crowd is moving. The movement of the crowd in the backdrop and the falling rain are juxtaposed by Savel's stasis. In a world in perpetual flux, of fast-moving change, she pauses. This halt is enabled by her cherished garment which becomes a place to inhabit following her involuntary dislocation.



Fig. 2. Savel appears against a faceless crowd in *Savel's Red Dress* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade 2014: 2nd double-page spread)

Sl. 2. Savel se ističe u bezličnoj gomili u slikovnici *Savel's Red Dress* [Savelina crvena oprava] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Stamatiade 2014: druga dvostranica)

Savel's strong attachment to the dress is in accord with Boym's observation that restorative nostalgia focuses on artifacts, objects, tableaux (2001: 49). As Janelle Wilson points out, "objects do not have inherent meaning in themselves" (2014: 107). In this sense, Savel is the one who assigns meaning to the garment. The red dress becomes a physical memory keeper, preserving stories and events from the past. For Savel, the dress is a symbol of the lost homeland.

Savel does not open up or talk about her homeland to enquiring teachers or classmates, yet every night, upon closing her eyes, she takes an imaginary trip to her birthplace. It is at these particular moments that, according to the narrative, Savel feels happy. However, such a return may only take place in the realms of fantasy. As Wilson points out, "even when one returns to a place he or she longs for, neither the individual nor the place is the same as the nostalgic recollection" (2014: 22), especially when the place in question, as hinted at in the story, is a country with an outbreak of hostilities. While nostalgia has long been associated with a longing for home or place, Boym argues

that the yearning is for another time (2007: 8). In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym states (2001: xv):

At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.

Boym suggests that nostalgia is a longing for a time in the past, especially the time of one's childhood, a period when life generally seemed untroubled and unhurried as opposed to the faster-paced adult life. In particular, nostalgia seems to be a yearning for the feelings and experiences tied to a specific period in one's life when time passed more slowly, and dreams had a pronounced place in one's experiences. Savel is not longing for merely a specific location; she yearns for a place associated with that time.

For Savel, the dress is a space where the past is restored as it encapsulates the place and experiences connected with it. Fuelled by the desire to relive precious moments from the past, time is given spatial form as the red textile surface. Indeed, garments can spatialise time for their wearers as they become associated with important past events and, in Savel's case, her life before the abrupt move. The red dress is a visual and tangible marker of the time Savel yearns for. Bygone eras are woven onto the fabric of the dress as Savel's restorative nostalgic engagement attempts to “conquer and spatialize time” (Boym 2007: 15).

On the fourth double spread, on the right-hand page, we see Savel in her dreamscape, back home, hugging a tree. Its branches, trunk and roots are unified by continuous, unbroken thin lines, flowing from the top of the tree downwards, occasionally generating circular or curvy shapes, then heading both left and right, forming Savel's bed cover. The dream seems to be using metaphorical language to communicate Savel's experience and offer us an insight into her emotional state. Savel holds on tightly to the tree similarly to the way she holds on to the dress: in order to feel connected to her homeland the way a tree is connected to the land through its roots. Tannock explains that “nostalgia responds to the experience of discontinuity – to the sense that agency or identity are somehow blocked or threatened, and that this is so because of a separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community” (1995: 456). Wilson has demonstrated that nostalgia contributes to establishing “continuity of identity” (2014: 35) and for Savel the dress becomes the glue that connects the past with the present. The dream seems to hold symbolic meaning for Savel's current circumstances as the gesture of hugging a tree from home may be a metaphor for her need to connect with the past.

The fourth double spread, right-hand page, signals a transition in the emotional atmosphere of the book. The horizontal lines communicate “a sense of stability and calm” (Bang 2000: 42), the vertical lines appear energetic and active (44), while the curved areas exude a feeling of security and protection (71). Savel's gentle gesture shows that she

is at ease with her surroundings and her facial expression shows serenity. Additionally, the horizontal and vertical linear emphasis on the next double-page spread suggests stability (cf. Doonan 1993: 27), maintaining the mood set on the previous spread. The visual narrative, as well as the written text, offers insight into Savel's actions, thoughts and feelings from a third-person omniscient point of view, allowing the reader to fully understand her emotional state. Savel is in a park with her father and grapples with nostalgia's paradoxes, wondering "how it is possible to feel happy and sad at the same time..." (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade 2014: 5th double spread, right-hand page). Elihu Howland explains "nostalgia is a confusing emotion [...]. It is painful and yet in the pain there may be a peculiar sweetness defying description" (1962: 198).



Fig. 3. Savel makes drawings of her life back home in *Savel's Red Dress* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade 2014: 6th double-page spread)

Sl. 3. Savel crta prizore iz života u domovini u slikovnici *Savel's Red Dress* [Savelina crvena oprava] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Stamatiade 2014: šesta dvostranica)

On the sixth double-page spread, a high viewpoint is introduced, contrasting with the eye-level perspective that dominates the rest of the book, creating an equal view between the image and the onlooker. This is the first time in the narrative that the reader/viewer is invited to look down on the subject matter and simultaneously see what the character is seeing. Savel, unable to sleep, is making drawings from her life back home (Fig. 3). Seen from above, Savel is a child in her pyjamas, drawing: the audience feels protective, assuming the role of watching over her. At the same time, the reader/viewer is positioned to experience the image from a point of view similar to that of Savel (cf. Unsworth 2014: 95), taking an unobstructed view into her drawings. Savel who has been reclusive, distant and inaccessible is now in proximity. The social distance is

diminished and the audience establishes an emotional connection and empathises with her. In addition, Savel's drawings are framed, nested images, pictures within a picture, partially obscured by the outer image, creating a multilayered effect. According to Perry Nodelman, frames within a picture "heighten the dramatic focus" and direct readers'/viewers' attention to certain parts of the image (1988: 51). The framed drawings offer the reader/viewer a glimpse into Savel's thoughts and memories, emphasising the emotional state of nostalgic longing for her homeland and the people who stayed behind.

The intimacy with the viewer is maintained on the eighth double-page spread where Savel appears in a close up (face and shoulders), attempting to wear the dress (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 124–129). The close shot renders the audience privy to Savel's predicament that she can no longer fit into the dress: Savel "sat on her bed, tears streaming down her cheeks" (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade, 8th double spread, right-hand page). The liminal space between past and present offered by the dress may no longer be inhabited. As the narrative has progressed, however, Savel manages to channel her sorrow into art, open up to her teacher and classmates, and is eventually able to let go of the dress. Savel is gradually finding new sources of comfort and connection in her current environment. On the ninth double spread, right-hand page, the text reads: "Savel took her red dress and, after giving it a kiss, carefully folded it. She wiped her tears and slowly dressed herself...". Savel is now in position to stop wearing the dress every day, signifying that she is releasing her dependency on a garment which she used as support amidst the uncertainty of her new situation. This shift reflects her growing acceptance of her present life, her willingness to adapt to her surroundings and open up to the people around her. In the bottom right corner on the eighth double-page spread, in a dreamlike scene, bathed in light, Savel's grandmother holds her close, comforting her during this challenging undertaking.

On the left-hand page of the last double-page spread Savel appears in a close up, but this time she is gazing directly at the reader/viewer (Fig. 4) in a demand image (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 124–129). Savel as well as her surroundings are now in colour. All the details that the grayscale colour scheme was omitting are now restored. The earthy, warm colours show that the world is welcoming and safe. The transition from a grayscale to a colour palette signifies a major shift in Savel's emotional state: her original feelings of disorientation, loss and discomfort are gradually fading away and are replaced by a renewed will to live and experience life. By letting go of her reliance on the dress, Savel is now able to experience what the world around her has to offer in full. Savel looks confident and content; she is holding on to another tree, exuding a newfound sense of belonging. Savel's story is a lyrical farewell to the lost home through nostalgic longing and the array of conflicting, paradoxical emotions it entails. The progression in the narrative and the visual change underlines Savel's journey towards acceptance of and integration into her new surroundings. In the end, she comes to terms with letting go and finds peace with her present circumstances by learning to manage her feelings more effectively, demonstrating emotional resilience throughout the process.



Fig. 4. Savel gazes at the reader in *Savel's Red Dress* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Stamatiade 2014: last double-page spread, left-hand page)

Sl. 4. Savel gleda u čitatelja u slikovnici *Savel's Red Dress* [Savelina crvena oprava] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Stamatiade 2014: zadnja dvostranica, lijeva stranica)

White Uniform

White Uniform tells the life story of Grandmother Sophia who grew up in the 1940s in Cyprus, a colony at the time of the British. Cyprus came under British rule in 1878, after three centuries of Ottoman Rule (Papadakis 2008: 130). British colonisation ended in 1960 when Cyprus became independent (Ker-Lindsay 2009: 13). Shortly after independence, the tension between the people of the two major communities of the island, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, intensified (Ker-Lindsay 2009: 13; Polyviou 1976: 582). A series of intercommunal and intracommunal conflicts led in 1974 to a coup instigated by Greek nationalists and supported by the Greek junta government which then triggered a Turkish “military intervention” (Brey 1999: 112; Bryant 2014: 685) that resulted in the division of the island. In the book, Sophia’s life is intertwined with the historical context of the island as the narrative incorporates both personal memories and collective historical references.

The story, based on the life of the writer's own mother, is told from the perspective of the granddaughter who documents the life of Grandmother Sophia through photos and journal-like entries, painting a thorough picture of who she was in what appears to be a scrapbook. Scrapbooking can be described as an "activity in which one creates a photo album to memorialize special events or people" (Fiorito et al. 2021: 99). Scrapbooks, however, do not just include photos and diary entries: they are embellished with drawings, cutouts, stickers, decorative paper, cardstock and daily ephemera (Hof 2006: 365). This artistic choice represents a new form in picturebook illustration where techniques commonly used in scrapbooking are integrated into picturebook creation, reflecting a fusion of creative practices between the two forms. When discussing the crossover influences between artists' books and picturebooks, Johanna Drucker (2018: 300) mentions that the "physical extension" and "thematic reinforcement" of books are crucial aspects of the process; indeed, in this particular case, scrapbooking conventions applied to the picturebook format visually align the book's structure and appearance with its theme, engaging the readers not only through the narrative content but also through the book's form. Scrapbooks, as a mnemonic practice, are in accord with the premises of reflective nostalgia, as they allow individuals to engage with the past in a creative and contemplative way. Tom Robinson explains that "reflective nostalgia bears the potential for a creative challenging of the past, in which traces of memory can be reordered into new and jarring forms" (2016: 116). Therefore, consistent with reflective nostalgia's principles, scrapbooks typically include particular stories, special details and items curated and arranged in a way to showcase the rich tapestry of one's life.

By revisiting and preserving memories in a visual, tangible way in order to commemorate her grandmother Sophia's life as a nurse, her granddaughter engages in what Boym describes as reflective nostalgia, a type of nostalgia which is "concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude" (ibid.). Sophia's granddaughter's account blends both historical and individual time, referring to Sophia's personal experiences and memories within the broader context of the history of Cyprus. Similarly, it does not seek to relive or recreate experiences from earlier times, acknowledging the past's irreversibility and the fleeting nature of human experience. Boym explains: "The focus here is not on the recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth, but on the meditation on history and the passage of time" (2007: 15). Sophia's granddaughter's account, constructed through the lens of inherited memory, does not seek to rediscover an absolute truth about the past, but it rather focuses on an in-depth and introspective exploration of history. Reflective nostalgia, as a thoughtful and contemplative engagement with the past, therefore, manifests itself in the granddaughter's narration.

Indeed, the narrator's account follows the major milestones in Sophia's life, putting in chronological order events from childhood, adulthood, and old age. The granddaughter starts the narration with a firsthand memory, recalling having her grandmother over every time she and her brother were unwell. On the first double spread, on the left-hand page, a white bordered picture is secured with a piece of decorative adhesive tape

onto a patterned background, covering most of the space of what appears to be the first page of a memory scrapbook (Fig. 5). The picture, intended to be a depiction of a photo, features the narrator and her brother sitting on a bed: the boy is blowing his nose into a tissue and the girl has an oral thermometer in her mouth. Grandmother Sophia is checking her granddaughter's temperature by placing her hand on the girl's forehead while a worried mom observes in the background. The style of the clothing of the people portrayed, as well as the overall look and quality of the drawn photo, suggests that the photograph is fairly recent.



Fig. 5. (Left) Grandmother Sophia attends to her ill grandchildren. (Right) Grandmother Sophia is pictured in a photo at a young age in *White Uniform* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Metallinou 2017: 1st double-page spread)

Sl. 5. Baka Sophia posjećuje svoju bolesnu unučad (lijevo). Baka Sophia pojavljuje se na fotografiji iz djetinjstva (desno) u slikovnici *White Uniform* [Bijela odora] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Metallinou 2017: prva dvostranica)

On the right-hand page, a different layout is applied: against a monochromatic backdrop, a piece of white paper is pasted on the upper half of the page, slightly overlapping with the image on the left-hand page. On the bottom right, a branch of vine-like leaves is secured by a piece of tape, and in the centre of the bottom half of the page there is a small drawing of a photo. A young girl is pictured in the photo wearing a brown pinafore over a beige shirt. Apart from the old-fashioned style of clothing of the girl depicted, the picture's deckle edges and yellowish tone suggest that it is dated, thus taking the reader decades before the time suggested on the left-hand page. A handwriting scribble on the right-hand side of the photo reads: "Little Grandmother Sophia"; in this way, the image of grey-haired Grandmother Sophia on the left is put side

the narration is delivered on pieces of cardstock with textured edges while little speech bubbles, drawings and scribbles with the /r/ sound adorn both pages of the second double spread, delivering the sense of a creative, personal touch.

In a similar vein, another anecdote from Sophia's childhood is reported on the third double-page spread, where, on a weathered, yellowish piece of paper the narrative account reads that every day after school Sophia used to accompany her blind grandfather to the village's coffee shop. Right above the piece of paper, a pressed white daisy is secured with a piece of colour tape. When a flower is included as a keepsake in a scrapbook, it could be either because it carries a special meaning, or it may have been part of a meaningful bouquet, or it might be used solely for decorative purposes (cf. Bearnson 2008: 38). As its velvety, fresh petals have turned to dry, withered pieces, the daisy acts as a characteristic token of reflective nostalgia which lends itself to multiple meanings in the setting into which it has been inserted.



Fig. 7. Grandmother Sophia as a nurse at the hospital with colleagues and Dr Chaluk in *White Uniform* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Metallinou 2017: 8th double-page spread)

Sl. 7. Baka Sophia kao medicinska sestra u bolnici s kolegicama i dr. Chalukom u slikovnici *White Uniform* [Bijela odora] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Metallinou 2017: osma dvostranica)

White Uniform's nostalgia opens itself to a net of recollections as the garment is implicated in an array of childhood and coming-of-age stories as opposed to Savel's longing for the past which, as a manifestation of reflective nostalgia, is expressed by fixing on a particular item. Despite the lack of working female role models at the time, Sister, a British nurse, who would at times visit the village, fascinated Sophia and provided her with an example she could emulate; Sophia would always talk to her and

marvel at her white uniform and triangular hat. As Diana Solano and Anne Rafferty remark, British nursing sisters were well-trained nurses appointed to positions across the British Empire to work in government and private posts (2007: 1056). They were recruited to provide healthcare services to the colonial administrators and the local population, as well as “nursing administration in hospitals and other clinical settings and instruction, education, and training to indigenous nurses” (Rafferty and Solano 2007: 152). It has been reported that British nurses improved colonial medical and nursing services, successfully implementing British nursing education and practice standards (cf. Solano and Rafferty 2007: 1056). In Sophia’s eyes, apart from a practical garment that meets the specific needs of the nursing profession, the white uniform seems to be an indicator of special status, denoting authority, competence and expertise; as a “totemic emblem” (Joseph and Alex 1972: 720), it represents a group whose role of providing healthcare services is vital for the community and, as a consequence, elicits reverence. An additional contributory factor to Sophia’s attraction to the nursing profession could be her mother’s work as a midwife in their village and the neighbouring area. Even though Sophia’s mother did not wear the white uniform, she embodied qualities which are linked with the profession, such as dedication to offer care to people.

Society’s barriers to girls’ education are mentioned in the story as very few girls pursued an education and career at the time. Sophia, however, insisted on realising her dream and her perseverance saw her travelling to Britain to study to be a nurse. By the time Sophia returned, Cyprus had attained its independence and was a sovereign state. Cyprus became independent in 1960 after an agreement between Greece and Turkey without the direct involvement of the people of Cyprus (Polyviou 1976: 582). The constitution was a dual governance system with the participation of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots with a 70:30 proportional representation (Adams 1966: 475). As the island gained its independence, British nursing sisters were gradually replaced by fully trained indigenous nurses (Rafferty and Solano 2007: 148). Sophia, now a Sister at the hospital, is pictured in images smiling along with her colleagues (Fig. 7). The text reads that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were working side by side and an anecdote is shared between Sophia and Doctor Chaluk in which the latter shared words of comradeship and kindness: “Remember, Sister, this hospital is our home and every patient is our brother or sister” (Michaelidou-Kadi and Metallinou 2017: 8th double-page spread, left-hand page). These sentiments echo the times when Sophia’s mom would rush to support women in labour regardless of ethnicity. On the fifth double-page spread, right-hand page, the text reads: “Mrs. Anna! My wife, Fatime—her labour pains have started!”. The names of Chaluk and Fatime are intentionally used in the narrative to highlight the co-existence of the two major communities in Cyprus, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots prior to 1974. Invoking an image of a harmonious past, the narrator is subtly critiquing the contemporary situation in divided Cyprus. Additionally, she constructs a nostalgic narrative that is “enabling” (Tannock 1995: 456), encouraging action towards constructing a similar present. Sam Caleb and Niall Ó Cuileagáin, when discussing Boym’s pioneering reading of nostalgia, state that

“nostalgia can and should be mobilized as a force for radical and revolutionary change” (2020: 4). Nevertheless, it seems that Sophia's granddaughter's nostalgic narrative romanticises the past. In her portrayal of the past, longstanding tensions between the two communities fail to be included, therefore posing nostalgia's problematic limitation (cf. Tannock 1995: 460). On the ninth double spread, right-hand page, the text reads: “But the good times did not last for long. Just three years after independence, the people of Cyprus were torn”. In actuality, Greek and Turkish nationalism on the island had risen during the British Colonial period with the Greek-speaking Christian Orthodox inhabitants (80% of the total) coming to identify themselves as Greeks and the Turkish-speaking Muslims as Turks (18%) (Papadakis 2008: 130). Greek Cypriots strove for union with Greece while Turkish Cypriots initially proposed that Cyprus should remain under British rule and later sought partition of the island. The opposed nationalisms of the two major communities of the island led to violent interethnic conflicts until 1960 when a compromise solution was found: the island became independent and was proclaimed a Republic. However, the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus proved unworkable in many of its provisions, whereas the arrangements of the new constitution further fortified and institutionalised ethnic differences (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis and Trigeorgis 1993: 343–344). It was then that the violent intercommunal and intracommunal incidents that the book is referring to broke out. Tannock explains that nostalgia may “mystify or displace the extent to which decline – that is, the changes that are interpreted as decline – is caused by pressures and forces internal to the past” (1995: 460–461). According to Boym, “one is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future” (2001: 351).

Photographs are important parts in *White Uniform's* nostalgic discourse. Taking into account that the artistic direction of illustration was to replicate a scrapbooking effect, photos are fitting material. They appear in the book as copies of the original photographs, drawn reproductions or drawings framed and presented to look like photos. On the fourth double spread, right-hand page, readers come across a picture of Sophia's mother chatting with “Sister”, the British nurse while Sophia looks on in the background. On the wall, enclosed in a wooden frame, there is a copy of a factual family portrait, which is assumed to be Sophia's family (Fig. 8). The similarity of the little girl in the photograph with the drawn version of her is obvious. The appearance of an original photo in the universe of a story may work to remind the reader that the people involved and mentioned in the narrative are real; Marie-Laure Ryan (2018: 37) explains that the use of photos in fictional works can “break the frame of a fictionalized storyworld and assert the real-world reference of the text”. What is more, the inclusion of photographs in the narrative gives the account a sense of historical and autobiographical authenticity. As Jane Wattenberg (2018: 302) points out, “A photograph mirrors truth – what we see, what we know, how we live”. Another way that photos are used in the narrative is by reproducing them in drawings, for instance, the rendition of a portrait of Sophia appearing on the first pages of the book. While the ribbon in the picture is in muted

pink, the other details render it a typical snapshot from the 1940s: small in size, deckled edges, faded colours and minor scratches at the top. Clearly, it is an artefact that has aged with time. The mark left by time is purposefully made obvious, establishing reflective nostalgia's acceptance of the passage and irreversibility of time (cf. Hutton 2013: 5). In Boym's words, "reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time" (2001: 41). The coloured element in what is expected to be a black-and-white photo shows how the 1940s aesthetic has been reimagined and reconfigured in a new setting, a potential harboured by reflective nostalgia (Hutton 2013: 5).



Fig. 8. Sophia's mother chatting with a British nurse, informing her about the number of births in *White Uniform* (Michaelidou-Kadi and Metallinou 2017: 4th double-page spread, right-hand page)

Sl. 8. Sophijina majka razgovara s britanskom medicinskom sestrom i obavještava ju o broju novorođene djece u slikovnici *White Uniform* [Bijela odora] (Michaelidou-Kadi i Metallinou 2017: četvrta dvostranica, desna stranica)

The coexistence of drawn renditions and photograph-like illustrations along with copies of authentic photos creates an interesting dynamic. Both types serve as "technologies of memory" (Cvetkovich 2008: 118), imparting a sense of time and

place that is fundamental in the synthesis of the story. Nevertheless, through this co-occurrence, the granddaughter's second-hand account is subtly interrupted by the first-hand involvement of Sophia and the people who lived through events the granddaughter had no direct experience of. The medium of photography seems to connect Sophia's memory and the granddaughter's "post-memory" (Hirsch 1997: 7–8), a term coined by Marianne Hirsch to describe (2012: para 1):

[...] the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up.

Sophia's granddaughter's narrative of the past as defined by post-memory "is mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch 2012: para 1), demonstrating reflective nostalgia's inherent flexibility. As the narrator reflects on tactile fragments of memory arranged on a two-dimensional surface, she reminisces about memories that are not her own and tells stories about times that well preceded her, thus producing a new account of times past or what Boym describes as the "individual narrative" (2007: 15) of reflective nostalgia.

The flexibility of the nostalgic narrative is assisted and established by the delivery of the account in the form of a scrapbook. Arranging "shattered fragments of memory" (Boym 2001: 49) on the empty pages of a book shows an inventive and personalised engagement with the past, precluding its static and fixed portrayal that restorative nostalgia entails. Furthermore, the overlapping layers, the combination of different textures, the scribbles, the drawings, the photos, newspaper clippings as well as fleeting ephemera included in the story give the narrative a multilayered effect and a material touch. The book feels like a palpable family scrapbook, an artful account which includes tangible pieces of memory, residues of the past celebrating Sophia's life. While restorative nostalgia spatialises time, reflective nostalgia temporalises space (Boym 2007: 15): as paper clips, pieces of tape and adhesive material secure into place remnants of the past, each spread is a temporal experience, moments in time from which the distance is emphasised by placeholders and frames.

Conclusion

In both books, *Savel's Red Dress* and *White Uniform*, a piece of garment, central to the storyline, features in the title and is depicted prominently on the covers. Even though pieces of clothing are integral parts of the plots in both picturebooks, the nostalgia at play in *White Uniform* represents different narrative ways and modes from the nostalgia in *Savel's Red Dress*. In particular, *Savel's Red Dress* seems to exhibit several traits of restorative nostalgia, while *White Uniform* aligns to a great extent with Boym's definition of reflective nostalgia (2001: 41–49). Boym explains that reflective and restorative nostalgia "can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madeleine cookie, but tell different stories about it" (2007: 15). When comparing the two books, Savel's strong yearning to reconstruct the past is juxtaposed with *White Uniform's* inclination to savour it as it was.

Savel's yearning for the past, which manifests as restorative nostalgia, is expressed by fixing on a particular item, the dress gifted to her by the grandmother who stayed behind. Savel's strong emotional attachment to this particular garment represents a longing for a world that can no longer be accessed. *White Uniform's* nostalgia, on the other hand, opens itself to a net of recollections as the garment is implicated in an array of childhood and coming-of-age stories. Woven onto Sophia's white uniform are stories of her assisting her blind grandfather, chatting with Sister, and climbing onto the roof to dream about the day she would wear the uniform. In addition, as a new political reality unfolds in Cyprus, Sophia's white uniform, as the uniform worn by the nursing workforce during the 1960s, is connected with stories from the warzone and is linked with a fraught time in Cyprus' history.

The abrupt and involuntary nature of Savel's removal from her homeland seems to account for the mode of nostalgia she engages in; as restorative nostalgia is driven by a profound emotional attachment to the past and a desire "to recreate it the way it 'used to be'" (Horvath 2018: 149), it corresponds to Savel's inner state and her need to find comfort in the familiar. Savel's attachment to the dress embodies the idea of restoring the past. As expected, the narrative revolves around her longing for her homeland and the efforts of acclimatisation in the new environment. On the other hand, the narrative woven around the white uniform aims to document Sophia's life, from childhood to old age. Reflective nostalgia aligns with the sentiment and intention of the granddaughter's account which is to commemorate Sophia's life and embrace both the joys and sorrows the passage of time brings.

Clearly, the way Savel and Sophia's granddaughter engage with nostalgia is influenced by the proximity or distance they share to the events described. Savel's closer connection to the past can account for her strong drive to restore those experiences. In contrast, Sophia's granddaughter, with her more distant and indirect relationship to the past, reflects on and appreciates it without attempting to restore or recreate it. For Savel, efforts to restore the past serve as a means of reassurance and reassertion during a challenging period; for Sophia's granddaughter, a critical and contemplative engagement with the past may work to inform her current identity and foster a deeper understanding of herself, her heritage, and her community's history.

Additionally, Savel feels nostalgic about a period in the past, a period captured by the red dress. By unwaveringly insisting on wearing the dress, Savel clings to that period: for the dress is not a mere one-piece garment but time-occupying space. The spatialisation of time through the dress is another manifestation of restorative nostalgia in *Savel's Red Dress*. Meanwhile, in *White Uniform*, quite the opposite happens. By employing the scrapbook medium, the book's two-dimensional surface is transformed into temporalised space as traces of the past, carriers of temporal significance, such as photographs, newspaper clippings, and other mementos adhere to the pages. Additionally, the scrapbook's entries are arranged in chronological order, reflecting the passage of time and allowing viewers to follow the timeline of Sophia's life journey while offering glimpses into the historical environment of the period. Therefore, while the red

dress becomes a tangible representation of time and place, the white uniform serves as a guide to Sophia's life and Cyprus's modern history. From a childhood dream and a powerful motivator, the white uniform transforms into an everyday garment in Sophia's life, denoting her professional role and offering a window to the historical context of the story.

The different types of nostalgia exhibited seem to serve the narrative of each book. Savel, in accord with restorative nostalgia, focuses on *nostos* as demonstrated by her fixation on the dress and her unwillingness to engage with her present circumstances. Savel, however, gradually adjusts to the new environment and outgrows the need to wear the dress. Nostalgia seems to have served as a coping mechanism during the trying times that followed Savel's forced relocation. On the other hand, although, overall, *White Uniform* does not elicit a deep sense of pain, it does incorporate elements of *algia*, consistent with Boym's reflective modality of nostalgia. In the context of the book, *algia* manifests itself through the bittersweet emotional tone as Sophia's granddaughter's account acknowledges that the past cannot be recreated and that time brings change and loss. As a "more conscious, complex attitude toward the past" (Horvath 2018: 151), reflective nostalgia acknowledges that the past is a mixture of both joys and sorrows, and instead of attempting to rebuild "the house abandoned long ago" (Zannoni 2023: 38), it appreciates the journey and evolution of one's life. Sophia's granddaughter's account is contemplative and thoughtful: it appreciates the details and understands that the past is contextualised historically. Reflective nostalgia is therefore an appropriate modality to commemorate Sophia's life, capturing the intricacies of her journey and painting the portrait of a woman who, despite obstacles, persevered and achieved her dream to become a nurse who, even in an environment of armed conflict, did not divert from her duty.

It becomes apparent that nostalgia, through the modalities proposed by Boym, is not just a feeling experienced by the protagonists of *Savel's Red Dress* and *White Uniform*, but a significant narrative element contributing to plot development and the ideological content and theme of each book. Apart from acting as Savel's mechanism of adaptation to the new country, nostalgia is an integral part of the narrative which serves to demonstrate that Savel's ordeal does not end when she leaves the unsafe environment; on the contrary, suffering ensues in the country of relocation where she tries to adjust to a new reality. Through this mechanism, nostalgia plays a role in shaping character development and plot progression, forging a deeper connection between the readers and the story's main character. *White Uniform*, drawing on both personal and collective historical references, manages to honour Sophia's life and work and give prominence to a time when the two major communities in Cyprus lived together. In addition, through its reflective, critical perspective, it subtly advocates for an analogous future for the island. It is for this reason that no closure is reached in Sophia's story in the way it is in Savel's story. Sophia remains in a state of *algia*, longing for a time when, as mentioned in the last double-page spread of the book, "there were not barbed wires separating people" (Michaelidou-Kadi and Metallinou, last double spread, right-hand page).

While Sophia's story takes place in Cyprus, Savel's story is set in an undefined temporal and spatial context. The vagueness in *Savel's Red Dress* highlights the universal experience of refugee and migrant children worldwide, regardless of nationality. Arizpe (2021: 265) observes that for children who have lived through similar experiences, "reading and responding to picturebooks can increase engagement in a more positive reconstruction of their own narratives through the story". This shared narrative space may allow children to find connection and healing through the power of storytelling. *White Uniform*, on the other hand, documents Sophia's life events in Cyprus. The fact that the narrative is woven around the island's modern history may offer valuable insights into Cyprus peace studies, such as understanding the impact of nostalgia and historical memory on contemporary identity, fostering dialogue between divided communities, and exploring the role of personal narratives in reconciliation processes.

Savel's Red Dress and *White Uniform* are two books in which garments hold a special significance in the narrative. While *Savel's Red Dress* refers to the ongoing refugee crisis, the complex and multilayered account of *White Uniform* offers an insight into the history, culture, and mentality of the people of Cyprus from the 1940s onward. Nostalgia, in the form of the two different modalities Boym proposes, serves as an important, enriching narrative element in each storyline, adding depth, emotion, and complexity in the stories. The distinct ways these two garments are implicated in the nostalgic narrative offer insights into the tools with which individuals may engage with their own memories and navigate their personal and collective history.

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Sveučilište u Nikoziji, Nikozija, Cipar

Verbalno i vizualno prikazivanje nostalgije u dvjema suvremenim ciperskim slikovnicama: *Savelina crvena oprava* i *Bijela odora*

Ovaj se rad oslanja na iznimno utjecajno razlikovanje „restaurativne“ i „reflektivne“ nostalgije Svetlane Boym kako bi istražio verbalne i vizualne prikaze nostalgije u dvjema slikovnicama za koje je tekst napisala Marina Michaelidou-Kadi, a slike načinile Daniela Stamatiade (*Savelina crvena oprava*, 2014), odnosno Renia Metallinou (*Bijela odora*, 2017). U prvoj slikovnici Savel je prisiljena preseliti se u inozemstvo. Njezina snažna povezanost s opravom, jedinim predmetom koji je mogla ponijeti sa sobom, primjer je restaurativne nostalgije. S druge strane, u *Bijeloj odori* nalazimo reflektivnu nostalgiju. Tekstualni i vizualni elementi u obje knjige zajedno stvaraju emocionalnu povezanost s čitateljima i uranjaju ih u nostalgično putovanje. Dok verbalno pripovijedanje daje kontekst i dubinu, vizualni diskurs snažnim slikama pojačava nostalgično iskustvo. Osobit način na koji se nostalgija manifestira u tim dvjema slikovnicama ima različite funkcije u vizualnom i verbalnom diskursu te učinkovito prenosi temu u obje knjige. Ovo istraživanje pridonosi boljemu razumijevanju pojave nostalgije u slikovnicama u za sada relativno neistraženom području ciperske dječje književnosti.

Ključne riječi: reflektivna nostalgija, restaurativna nostalgija, Cipar, vizualna i verbalna sinergija, odjeća