“My Name is Alice, Not Alicia”: A Non-Fiction Picturebook Biography

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Children’s Literature)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

June 2019

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

“My Name is Alice, Not Alicia”: A Non-Fiction Picturebook Biography.

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Abstract

This hybrid creative thesis consists of two parts. The creative portion is a fully realized printed dummy of *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* my original picturebook biography of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon’s life and work, highlighting the period between 1873-1884 when she lived in Yucatán, México, exploring the Maya ruins. The dummy includes four final illustrations and the final written text.

The academic portion of the thesis begins with a thorough description of the research done in preparation for writing and illustrating the story. It then follows with a detailed explanation of the intentions behind each layout and illustration in *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia.*

The goals of this thesis are to provide insights into the creation of a non-fiction picturebook biography with attention to the affordances of this narrative non-fiction picturebook genre. A further goal is the publication of *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* since it contributes to the body of stories about underrepresented groups. Hopefully its publication will inspire creators and publishers to bring other forgotten lives to light.

*My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* portrays the Yucatecan and Maya culture and its traditions, pays close attention to authenticity and historical accuracy thus offering readers an important book on Mexico and its Pre-Hispanic\(^1\) cultures. Furthermore, the story revendicates Alice Le Plongeon’s

\(^1\) While Pre-Columbian usually denotes the entire history of Indigenous Americas cultures before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492, the term Pre-Hispanic refers particularly to the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, lead by Hernán Cortés, to America in 1521 and is more commonly used in Mexico.
achievements and acknowledges her as an exemplary woman whose passionate interests fueled her ambition to pursue a professional career uncommon for women of that time. Her ideas were far ahead from those of the Victorian Era. She became the first woman to explore the Maya ruins, a prolific, published academic writer, and an active first-wave feminist.
Lay Summary

This hybrid creative thesis consists of an academic and a creative portion. The creative portion is a fully realized printed dummy of My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia my original picturebook biography of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon’s life and work.

The goals of this thesis are to provide insights into the creation of an authentic non-fiction picturebook biography with attention to the affordances of this narrative non-fiction picturebook genre. The academic portion contains these insights. A further goal is the publication of My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia since it contributes to the body of stories about underrepresented groups.
Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work of the author, Verena Selene Rodríguez Saavedra, as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Children’s Literature Program at the University of British Columbia.

This is the academic portion only of a hybrid academic/creative thesis. The creative portion is a fully realized picturebook dummy with four finished illustrations entitled My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia, written, illustrated and designed exclusively by Verena Selene Rodríguez Saavedra.
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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to give my utmost thanks to Kathie Shoemaker, my supervisor, for her kind support and the infinite patience and time she has dedicated since my arrival in Vancouver. This project wouldn’t exist if I had had any other supervisor. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, your delicious food and great conversations in all our meetings.

I owe my gratitude to Eric Meyers, for his valuable comments to the academic portion. Thank you for your support as a member of my committee, and for all the book recommendations you made in your courses.

Special thanks to Maggie de Vries, my third reader, for the opportunity to start my picturebook during your CRWR course and for your useful insights that inspire me to keep creating stories.

Thanks to all my MACL Cohort for all the laughs and joy shared. I’m really glad of the clique we created and I’m excited to see what great things you do next.

Sebastián, thanks for all the patience, for pushing me through my monthly thesis meltdowns and for washing all the dishes.

Last but not less important, to my mom and dad, who have always supported me unconditionally and cheered all of my non-conventional decisions in life, like drawing comics. You are always present.
Dedication

A mi abuela Alice.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origins and interest of motivation

While visiting my grandmother in Yucatan during the summer of 2017 I casually asked her why she was named Alice instead of Alicia, the Spanish version of the name. She replied: “Haven’t I told you? It’s because of an archaeologist named Alice Le Plongeon who came to Yucatán in the nineteenth century and met my grandmother.” Hearing about the “female nineteenth century archaeologist” immediately caught my attention, so I asked for the full history. My grandmother remembers the story her own grandmother, Dionicia Conde, told her:

Dionicia Conde came from a small village close to Chichén Itzá named Espita. One day, Alice Le Plongeon arrived there, and heard the rumor that there was a beautiful little girl with green eyes in the village, so she grew curious and went looking for her. Alice met little Dionicia and became so fond of the girl that she even suggested to Dionicia’s mother that she wanted to adopt the child and take her back to New York with her, but Dionicia’s mother obviously refused. However, she became Dionicia’s benefactress and even after Alice moved back to New York she kept sending Dionicia things like dresses and perfumes till the day she died. Years later, Teodoro Peniche Conde, who lived in Mérida, had to go somewhere far so his father told him to visit Espita and introduce himself to his cousin, Dionicia Conde, who lived there.

The night that Teodoro arrived at Espita there was a ball, and when Dionicia, who had grown up to be beautiful but conceited heard her cousin wanted to meet her she decided to play a little prank on him. When Teodoro approached Dionicia and her friend they swapped names
so Teodoro ended up dancing with the friend instead of his cousin. But at the end of the dance Teodoro asked the fake Dionicia to introduce him to her friend.

The next day he went to the real Dionicia’s house where she received him and he found out about the little prank. Some time later Teodoro and Dionicia married. Teodoro was very religious, so they had to baptize their children after the saint of their birthdays according to the catholic calendar, therefore Dionicia couldn’t name any of her daughters Alice. When Dionicia had her second granddaughter she told everyone that she would baptize the baby and, finally, name her Alice, in dear memory of Alice Le Plongeon.

My grandmother’s story sparked my interest. At home that day I Googled Alice Le Plongeon to find a surprising amount of information about her. Reading about her life fascinated me and the personal connection to my family and homeland fostered a great curiosity and desire to learn more about Alice. As I learned more I began to imagine writing and illustrating the story of how my grandmother got her name. However, it was a few months later during a Creative Writing course with Maggie de Vries, that I finally began writing the text for a picturebook. For me the story was highly visual, but my challenge was to write the text for a narrative picturebook biography along with some drafts for the illustrations (Refer to Chapter Four for my sketches). The next term I began to read narrative picture book biographies to acquaint myself with this newly proliferating genre. Stories about female characters like Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli, by Kyo Maclear and Julie Morstad (2018); Cloth Lullaby by Isabelle Arsenault and Amy Novesky (2016) especially appealed to me. It was at that time that I seriously considered creating My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia as a picturebook for my thesis project; particularly because I had become interested in women forgotten in history.
Finding an intriguing story in my own family that would bring to light a forgotten brilliant woman motivated my ongoing work to delve deeper into the possibility of writing and illustrating this picturebook as a way to recognize and do justice to all the achievements of Alice Le Plongeon. Sadly, in her own time these achievements were undermined and shadowed by her husband’s unpopularity. Finally, she was nearly forgotten after her death in 1910 until she was rediscovered a century later. Although nowadays the figures of Le Plongeons might be perceived as a white European couple meddling in an alien culture, and therefore considered problematic, their intentions were far from the colonialist approach of their time. I have taken this fact in consideration and further explain my reasons in Chapter Three for why, I still consider Alice Le Plongeon’s life a story worth telling.

As mentioned previously, my motivation for taking on this project was two-fold, the opportunity to work on something of deep personal importance to me, as well as the means to share a story about the Mayan and Yucatecan culture. A further motivation was the opportunity to write and illustrate a picturebook on my own since my previous illustration projects were on preexisting texts, short novels and textbooks. Moreover, the hybrid nature of the thesis provides an opportunity to turn my experience into a guide or manual (in Chapters 3 and 4) for others interested in creating non-fiction picturebooks as it provides the rationale for key illustration and content decisions. Lastly, this hybrid project aims to motivate future creators, editors, and publishers to consider producing picturebook biographies of forgotten distinguished diverse people who have contributed to their cultures. There is growing market for this genre, which I will discuss in the next section.
1.1.1 The nature of this inquiry

My intention is to explore the nature of cultural authenticity as it relates to children’s picturebook biographies, an emerging genre that brings the stories of real people to life through stories and illustrations. My research question is: What kind of research is required to create an authentic historical narrative for children? What tools and techniques do authors/illustrators use to compile the historical and cultural resources required to authentically represent the lives of women and visible minorities in history? Thus, my thesis is an aesthetic inquiry, the products of which will be a narrative picturebook biography and reflections on my creative process.

1.2 Significance of this project

Over the last decade widespread awareness of the importance of authenticated texts is transforming multicultural and historical picturebooks. Weimin Mo and Wenju Shen argue that for a book to be considered culturally authentic, is not just a matter of “accuracy or the avoidance of stereotypes, but involves cultural values, facts, and attitudes that members of the culture as a whole consider worthy of acceptance and belief” (Edited by Fox & Short, 198). I wrote and illustrated My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia as culturally and historically authentic as possible by carefully investigating my historical sources and photographic references. I also made use of my own firsthand experience and knowledge of the Yucatecan cultural values. This is an extensive topic which I discuss in depth in the next chapter. Along with the growing general concern to avoid cultural appropriation, there is increasing motivation to promote and publish texts created by members of diverse cultural and socio-economic communities. Wee, Park and Choi assert
that, “In order to create high-quality and authentic multicultural literature, it is vitally important to incorporate a deeper understanding of cultural values and diverse viewpoints that are developmentally appropriate for young readers” (Wee et al., 71). While the children’s literature community has long valued diverse texts, and in fact promoted the publication of multicultural folk tales and stories, many of the works published were inauthentic, often culturally appropriating elements and generally lacking a depth of understanding of the key cultural elements relevant to the story. For example, illustrator Susan Guevara comments on her experience as a Mexican-American with publishers that she has “been asked many times to "tone down" the depiction of non-Anglo cultures: tone down facial features, tone down color, remove iconography that might suggest a religious heritage or belief” (Edited by Fox & Short, 50). This is just an example of how children’s books can end up being inauthentic despite the author’s wish. This is only an anecdotal claim, however. In their study about how Korean culture is portrayed in 33 picturebooks published in the U.S, Wee, Park and Choi found that “Korean children were illustrated realistically in most cases but with some exaggerated Asian features, including small eyes (almost a small dot or a straight line) and round/square faces, as well as having straight black hair with bangs. Contrary to the relatively accurate illustrations of young children, older Koreans were portrayed with inaccurate and stereotypical images, such as always wearing traditional clothing with bun-type hairstyles in everyday life” (80).

Dramatic changes in the social sciences, in literary analysis/criticism, and historical perspectives reveal the well meant but shallow depiction of cultures does not serve the goals of presenting diverse perspectives. Because “Without critical scrutiny, white authors are often unable to transcend their positions of privilege when writing books about people from marginalized
cultures and thus perpetuate subtle forms of racism, even when the more blatant racism and misrepresentations of the past have been eliminated from their writing” (Edited by Fox & Short, 13).

Along with the attention directed at contemporary social issues and problems the importance of authenticity has been widely embraced by educators and librarians. Studies confirm that “cultural authenticity matters because all children have the right to see themselves within a book, to find within a book the truth of their own experiences instead of stereotypes and misrepresentations” (Edited by Fox & Short, 21). Additionally, there is now widespread recognition of the need for publishing authentic voices and images “because they foster the dialogue that is essential to democracy and to the struggle for social justice” (23). My work is in that spirit and service.

A focus on diversity in children’s and young adult literature is important because “Early childhood is the period when prejudices or stereotypes regarding other races or cultures start to form, so that is when multicultural education should begin” (Jin Kim, 25). Thus, diversity in children’s and young adult literature mitigates prejudices about other cultures. Well conceived picturebooks provide a safe space for the urgent conversations affecting underrepresented communities, such as Indigenous groups, diverse (not North American) cultures, LGBTQ and women. In addition, “Teaching students to have multiple perspectives at a young age is likely to reduce problems involving prejudice or discrimination” (Morgan, 2009). As well these books promote understanding and empathy for other cultures and give recognition to these communities. My Name is Alice, Not Alicia, will inspire some interesting questions to debate in the classroom. Students can ponder about the diverse cultures they know and the rights of people
to do work in a culture that is not their own, discuss female rights and equality, and to compare the social values from then to now.

In recent years non-fiction or information picturebooks continue to proliferate and to find receptive markets. According to the AAP’s StatShot program, sales in the children’s/young adult category rose 4.3% in January 2019 compared to the first month of 2018 (Publishers.org, 2019). The growing market encourages publishing houses to produce more picture book biographies. These include many new books about historically important women from different walks of life are now providing young readers with more diverse roles to identify with. Unfortunately, while the picture book market grows more varied, there is still a shortage of books featuring diverse, strong, female characters.

My picturebook biography of Alice presents a role model of a woman pursuing a life of exploration and serious academic study. She was exceptional for the nineteenth century, fighting for women’s rights and subverting the social norms on many occasions such as her wearing men’s clothes and carrying a rifle during her exploration in Yucatán.

By narrating this story through the eyes of a person new to Yucatan, the reader will identify with the protagonist and discover this new place and new people with each page turn. It shows the Mexican culture, particularly that of the region of Yucatan and the Maya people in the late nineteenth century. This is significant because it is vital to preserve the Mexican Indigenous cultures and to share them with the rest of the world.
It is highly likely that this book will be published as a bilingual English-Spanish edition with a possible translation to Yucatec Maya since I have access to people who can translate it in Mexico. According to Semingson “Bilingual and multilingual texts are especially relevant with changing demographics in the United States and internationally; they offer insight into those not from the author’s background” (Semingson, 2). A bilingual publication would be a great bonus for this picturebook. Due to the increasing population of Latins in the United States and Canada publishing houses are looking to publish bilingual picture books that appeal to this ever-growing market. This situation opens possibilities for My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia to be published both in North and South America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, “Hispanics are now the largest (41.3 million), fastest growing, and youngest minority group in the United States” (Quoted by Abellán-Pagnani, & Hébert, 2013). In the same way, Mexican children can also benefit from the bilingual edition which could support their learning of English and/or Maya.

Even though some Mexican publishing houses now publish more books about the Mexican Indigenous cultures, they are rarely translated to other languages. Also, the print runs of less than 2,000 in Mexico limit distribution in such a populated country in spite of critical reception. Ediciones Tecolote, a Mexican publishing house, won the 2018 award for Best Children’s Publisher of the Year for Central and South-America at the Bologna Book Fair and has published some books about myths of different Pre-Hispanic cultures. For example, Juan Palomino won the 8th International Prize for Illustration Children's Book Fair, Fundación SM 2016 in Bologna for his picture book Antes del Primer Día (Before the First Day) about the Maya myth of the creation of men and monkeys.
Fundación Cultural Armella Spitalier (FCAS), Another Mexican Publisher, publishes books about the Mesoamerican Pre-Hispanic cultures ranging from board books to non-fiction and fiction picture books like *La Voz de Malintzin* (Malintzin’s Voice) by Armando Fonseca and Idalia Sauto (2016). Publishers like Conaculta and Artes de México also publish children books about Mexican Pre-Hispanic cultures, some of which are published in both Spanish and an Indigenous language. However, even among these publishers, picturebook biographies are scarce and are often published as information books for older readers. In North America Kids can Press, Tundra and Groundwood books have been publishing interesting narrative picturebook biographies in Canada. In the United States, Abrams Books for Young Readers, Chronicle Books, BeachLane Books, and Viking also publish exemplary picturebook biographies.

*My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* will appeal to anyone interested in reading women biographies and eager to learn about other cultures. It will appeal broadly to the same people who purchased Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli (Maclear & Morstad, 2018); Danza!: Amalia Hernández and El Ballet Folklórico de México (Tonatiuh, 2017), Cloth Lullaby: The Woven Life of Louise Bourgeois (Novesky & Arsenault, 2016) and two new picturebook biographies, published in January and February of 2019 respectively which are *Out of This World: The Surreal Art of Leonora Carrington* (Markel & Hall) which is about a British woman who migrated to Mexico and developed her career as a surrealist painter and *The Bluest of Blues: Anna Atkins and the First Book of Photographs* (Robinson) which curiously relates to Alice Le Plongeon because the protagonist, Anna Atkins, was a friend of Anne Dixon, a photographer who happened to be Alice Dixon Le Plongeon’s great Aunt. *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* will be the first picture book biography about Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, a writer, photographer and
amateur archaeologist from the nineteenth century. In addition to profiling a unique woman who had been forgotten, I believe that *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* will bring something new to the field of picturebook biographies, that is a different perspective on Mexico, its cultural diversity and Indigenous heritage.

In this chapter I explain my interest in creating *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*, particularly my family relationship to the protagonist, my close knowledge of Mayan culture, my connection to the Yucatecan culture and my professional illustration experience, a special asset for the creation of a culturally authentic product. In the second chapter I explore the form of the picturebook, providing definitions and describing key components. Next, I define information picturebooks and then focus on the features of some narrative picturebook biographies by examining a number of the resources creators deploy to display information. I particularly focus on those portraying female protagonists describing close observations of five narrative picturebook biographies. The final section addresses authentication issues and multicultural picturebooks, because at this time with the increase in demand for multicultural texts it is imperative that these books accurately represent their diverse social semiotic origins and contexts. In the third chapter I recount my extensive bibliographic research and field work, from the conception of the idea to my information gathering. This began with a basic Google and library search, ultimately inspiring my visits to the *American Museum of Natural History* archives, the *New York Public Library* and the Maya ruins of Chichen Itzá and Uxmal in Yucatan. Furthermore, in this chapter I explain my writing process and the rationale for the structure of *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* with particular attention to my selection of the relevant
incidents in Alice’s life that best textually and visually tell her story. The fourth chapter sequentially describes and illustrates with images, the rationale for the use of each key element rendered on each page and or double spread. Using early sketches, color proofs and samples of different techniques, I explain the evolution of the storyboard and the final dummy. In the concluding Chapter Five I discuss implications and further endeavors related to this thesis and picturebook.
Chapter 2: The narrative picturebook biography

Within the broad field of children’s literature there are information books and non-fiction books that include biographies. However, these are very different from picturebook biographies. I will approach this chapter from the general to the particular, so I will begin by defining the picturebook. Then I will enumerate the particular features that constitute information or non-fiction picturebooks and focus particularly on narrative information picturebooks. Next, I define the genre of narrative picturebook biographies, in which my proposed work My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia is to be included. I explain the benefits of narrative picturebook biographies for children. Also, using several examples I will show how authors and illustrators construct narrative picturebook biographies featuring female protagonists. Lastly, I will argue for the imperative of cultural authenticity in representing other cultures and analyzing multicultural texts.

2.1 Defining the picturebook

“The unique character of picturebooks as an art form is based on the combination of two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal.” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, 1). Barbara Bader’s famous definition elaborates the form as “text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page” (Bader, 1).
The 20th century literary picturebook has inspired experimentation with its form and format, such as B. J. Novak’s *The Book With No Pictures* (2014) and Suzy Lee’s *Shadow* (2010) both of which cheekily attempt to defy the definition, only to show that a book without images cannot exist without the visual, and one without words is not a book without a narrative. However, a commonality between numerous authors when defining the picturebook is the presence of interdependence of text and image. By interdependence it is understood that the pictures and the text are closely tied, and that if one or the other is taken out, the story would not be fully comprehensible.

Some of the multiple affordances of the picturebook are the layout, composition and physical format of the book itself. Layout and composition are critical resources for constructing meaning. One of the first choices when it comes to illustrating a picturebook is that “artists must choose whether to illustrate single- or double spreads; in other words, they decide whether or not their art will cross the gutter at a particular page opening. The most traditional layout places text on the verso with art on the facing recto” (Dowd Lambert, chapter 3, 28). However, each picturebook can have a combination of single pages, double spreads or vignettes. Eva Gressnich notes that, in picturebooks, the layout of words and pictures is intentional and therefore, the arrangement of both on the page or the double spread is never coincidental because it is a decision that influences the way we read the story (Edited by Kümerling-Meibauer, 2017). Moreover, “the gutter – the vertical seam between the verso and recto, where the pages are bound together – plays a tremendously important role in informing page layout and in helping the reader progress toward, or resist the pull of, Bader’s “drama of the turning of the page.” This production element of the codex impacts the success of each page opening’s layout because it creates an interruption of the picture space (Dowd Lambert, chapter 3, 30).
Besides the gutter and the illustrations, typographic choices are an essential part of creating a seamless picturebook. “Placement of text and typographic features such as the size and weight of the font are layout, use varying typographic choices to denote different levels of text simultaneously at work” (Dowd Lambert, chapter 3, 33). The typographic choices are, on many occasions, based on the age of the target reader. Leonard Marcus recalls that “for new readers, word recognition, not speed, is the point. My editor, Grace Maccarone, and I considered the usual suspects: Gill Sans, Helvetica, Futura” (Marcus, 2012). For some picturebooks, simple is best, but there are many others that play with using different fonts and sizes to influence the story in different ways. A few examples are found in The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales (Scieszka & Smith, 1992) and Virginia Wolf (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012). Thus, “typographic decisions can reinforce character development achieved through illustration and narrative text. (Dowd Lambert, chapter 3, 34).

Other elements like the paratexts, as Maria Nikolajeva describes, includes the cover, titles or endpapers, verso, author biographies, and historical notes. These also convey essential information that support the narrative by giving extra information not included in the story or showing resources such as maps or photographs (241). As for the physical format, Salisbury observes that:

“A children’s picturebook usually comes in the form of 24 or, more usually, 32 pages. This is dictated by the way books are folded and bound in multiples of 8 or 16 pages, called “signatures” (Salisbury, 74).
However, as I explain later on this chapter, multiple picturebook biographies are as long as 48 pages. In summary, “the diversity of the picturebook is the outcome of its flexibility” (Lewis, 62) and instead of constricting its definition, we should consider each picturebook as its own self-contained “miniature ecosystem” (48).

2.2 Components of a narrative non-fiction picturebook biography

Picturebooks can be divided between fiction and non-fiction, and within the non-fiction category there is a variety of formats and genres, such as alphabet, counting, and concept books. Like fiction picturebooks, information books for children also rely heavily on pictures to transmit data. They employ graphics, pictures, maps, labels and other resources “in different forms and functions, often pushing the limits of printing technology and communicative conventions more radically than adult Nonfiction” (Von Merveldt, 232-23) however, unlike fiction picturebooks, many of them do not present interdependence of text and image. This use “of images in knowledge transmission has led to an exciting convergence of informational literature and the picturebook format in the past three decades, resulting in innovative informational picturebooks” (232-23). Some examples include Steve Jenkins’s Who Am I? An Animal Guessing Game (2017) and Actual Size (2004), which are playful and invite the child reader to interact with the illustrations while still including the factual information at the end. The Grand Canyon (2017) by Jason Chin, contains a double narrative only fully understood when simultaneously reading the text and looking at the illustrations. In the illustrations of Grand Canyon (2017), Chin uses die-cuts to make direct correlations between contemporary fossils and ancient sea-bed critters. Meanwhile, the written text tells the story of a girl and her
father who are hiking the canyon where along the way she spots interesting objects. The margins display more scientific data, but it is the interdependency of text and image that gives the reader a full experience of the text as a picturebook. This innovative information picturebook form is evolving into the narrative information picturebook, of which the narrative picturebook biography is a particular genre.

“While many picturebook biographies appear indistinguishable from fictive stories both in text and image, author’s notes, prefaces by authorities or celebrities, bibliographies, documentary photographs, maps, and timelines identify these stories as factual. The main function of this expanded front- and endmatter is to establish the information character of the book, confirm the factuality and accuracy of the information presented in what seems a fictional guise, and build authorial credibility. Timelines and maps organize information visually and situate the information in real time and space, while glossaries, labels, keys, captions, and typographical foregrounding provide readers with basic word knowledge or more advanced terminology” (Von Mervelt, 232-23).

It is within the sub-genre of narrative picturebooks biographies that My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia belongs. These tell the life of a character chronologically from birth to death, like Swan: The Life and Dance of Anna Pavlova (Snyder & Morstad, 2015), with a focus on the childhood of the protagonist or feature a notable event in the life of the character as in Virginia Wolf (Maclear &Arsenault, 2012).

One of the challenges of making a picturebook biography is that “While the picture book format invites creative abbreviation, the biography demands the same documentation required of its longer counterparts” (Ash & Barthelmess, 43). This is especially true when writing about figures from the past because it includes conducting historical research, pictorial references and in some cases requires field work and doing interviews to acquire full detailed information as was the case for My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia. In the article Life Drawings: Some Notes on Children’s
*Picture Book Biographies*, Leonard S. Marcus noted that “in biographies and other books that largely deal with the past, illustrations put a face on the abstraction of pastness, placing this concept more readily within the reach of children whose more familiar experience of time is that of a continuing present (1980).

Another beneficial by-product of this genre is that besides showing children realities different from their own time and space, real-life characters they can identify with or feel inspired by,

> “The lives of real people offer countless varieties of inspiration. Some open a page on a forgotten hero. Others expand appreciation of an iconic figure. By offering varied pictures of achievement, from the personal to the monumental, picture book biographies demonstrate that there are countless avenues to individual success”
> (Ash & Barthelmess, 45)

As previously mentioned in the introduction, fundamental to my research process, prior to writing *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* were meticulous, close visual readings of several narrative picturebook biographies with female protagonists. At the present time, there is an abundance of these, so I use a representative selection of picturebooks that I compared to *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*. My purpose for this close study was to look for key features to include in my own book. Therefore, I chose picturebooks from the last decade about underrecognized women in history that came from diverse backgrounds. In my close reading I looked for page length, visual techniques, information resources, and visual information features such as labels, citations or margin annotations, maps and diagrams as contained in table 1 (Page 31).

I observed some commonalities in this genre such as the physical size of the picturebooks and their page lengths. Notably, every picturebook includes an Author’s Note at the end and all
except one use labels as an information resource. In Chapter Four I will return to this table as I explain my graphic decisions for the illustration and design process of *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*. What I conclude from my close observation is that the creators of picturebook biographies continue to experiment with the form and design of content. However, no matter the form and content design all narrative picturebook biographies must be accurate and authentic particularly in the case of diverse stories offering multicultural perspectives for children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>YEAR/PUBLISHER</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>TECHNIQUE</th>
<th>TYPOGRAPHY</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>INFORMATION RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cloth Lullaby: The woven life of Louise Bourgeois</td>
<td>Amy Novesky &amp; IsabelleArsenault</td>
<td>Abrams/2016</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Vertical 28.5 x 23cm</td>
<td>Mixed media and Photoshop</td>
<td>Handwritten</td>
<td>-Quotations</td>
<td>-Author’s note -Quotes and sources -Photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bluest of blues; Anna Atkins and the first book of photographs</td>
<td>Fiona Robinson</td>
<td>Abrams/2019</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Vertical 28.5 x 23cm</td>
<td>Mixed media, Photoshop and photos</td>
<td>Serif</td>
<td>-Quotations</td>
<td>-Author’s note -Cyanotype tutorial -Bibliography -Acknowledgments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danza! Amalia Hernández and el Ballet Folklórico de México</td>
<td>Duncan Tonatiuh</td>
<td>Abrams/2017</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Vertical 28.5 x 23cm</td>
<td>Digital collage</td>
<td>Sans serif</td>
<td>-Labels</td>
<td>-Author’s note -Glossary -Bibliography -Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom: The Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli</td>
<td>Kyo Maclear and Julie Morstad</td>
<td>Tundra/2018</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Vertical 28.5 x 23cm</td>
<td>Mixed media</td>
<td>Serif and handwritten for quotes</td>
<td>-Quotations</td>
<td>-Author’s note -End notes -Sources and further reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tree Lady</td>
<td>Joseph Hopkins and Jill McElmurry</td>
<td>Beach Lane Books/2013 (Imprint of Simon &amp; Schuster)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Vertical 28.5 x 23cm</td>
<td>Gouache</td>
<td>Serif</td>
<td>-Labels</td>
<td>-Author’s note -Dialogue balloons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparison of key features in narrative picturebook biographies. Author: Verena Rodríguez.
2.3 Authentication issues

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction (Refer to page 17), at the present time there is a growing awareness of the importance of authenticated texts. Fortunately, this has prompted a number of authors and scholars to engage in open discussions and research on the subject of cultural authenticity. Earlier I mentioned that Weimin Mo and Wenju Shen consider a culturally authentic book involves correctly conveyed cultural values, facts, and attitudes (Edited by Fox & Short, 5). Howard argues that in an authentic book "readers from the culture will know that it is true, will identify, and be affirmed, and readers from another culture will feel that it is true, will identify, and learn something of value, sometimes merely that there are more similarities than differences among us" (5).

Cultural authenticity is a complex subject with diverse points of view but, according to Kathy G. Short and Dana L. Fox, based on all the essays gathered in their book Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature (2003), the most common understanding of cultural authenticity is “The reader's sense of truth in how a specific cultural experience has been represented within a book, particularly when the reader is an insider to the culture portrayed in that book, is probably the most common understanding of cultural authenticity” (5). It is important that when dealing with multicultural stories, particularly in the case of picturebook biographies, they are carried out with sufficient research to represent the values of a culture authentically. Undeniably there have been efforts to do this in recent endeavours to create, publish, and disseminate authentic multicultural literature, but it remains work in progress.
One common concern is that picturebooks about other cultures sometimes present inaccurate and stereotypical information. For example, “Common misrepresentations in books about Asian cultures include a confusing admixture of Asian cultures” (72). From personal experience, I can assert that this confusion also happens when outsiders refer to Latin American countries as if these were part of a same set of values and traditions. When speaking about this minority group I prefer to use Latino or Latina over Hispanics. Luisa Abellán-Pagnani, and Thomas P. Hébert explain this distinction:

“Latinos, however, are people of Latin American origin, including those who do not speak Spanish. The term Latino is considered more inclusive, and an attempt to dissociate from Spain, and preferences over usage of these terms vary from person to person. Many Hispanics share a common language and many common traditions, including religious beliefs and practices, family structure, and dietary customs but are nonetheless a very heterogeneous group. This makes generalizations about this group difficult to assume. Hispanic children will differ in attitudes and beliefs as a result of the interaction with their families, their culture of origin, and the American culture”

(Abellán-Pagnani, & Hébert, 49).

Barrera and Quiroa noted that “In many in-print and out-of-print English editions of Latino children's books, the use of Spanish terms is far from natural and genuine, advancing neither the cultural authenticity of the text nor, in some cases, its structure” (248). Additionally, “Commonly used ethnographic terms in Latino children's picture storybooks are piñata, burro, patio, and fiesta. Others include siesta, plaza, adobe, coyote, barrio, sombrero, jaguar, and sarape” (256). Instead of contributing to an authentic view of the Mexican culture, these words reinforce a local stereotype by conflating Mexican costumes such as sarapes and sombreros that may have existed in the northern regions of Mexico but are now only seen in regional festivities. In My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia I decided to only use a few words in Spanish and Maya that were essential for the story such as names of places or animals.
2.3.1 **Representing other cultures**

A key question about the value of multicultural literature is to consider in what ways children benefit from reading them. Hani Morgan notes that “Teaching students to have multiple perspectives at a young age is likely to reduce problems involving prejudice or discrimination and is an important component of early childhood education” (Morgan, 2009). Also, it is important to introduce multicultural texts from an early age because “Early childhood is the period when prejudices or stereotypes regarding other races or cultures start to form, so that is when multicultural education should begin (Brown, 2001; Wham, Barnhart, & Cook, 1996). Children start to recognize differences and similarities based on physical characteristics, clothing, and language around the age of two; the concept of race is solidified between ages three and four; and by age five to six, children start to form racial stereotypes and may display biased behavior (Aboud, 2003; Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Bruce, 2010; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Dunham, Baron, & Banaji, 2006). It has been reported that the prejudices of most children are already fixed by around the age of nine and, once ingrained, they are difficult to change” (Jin Kim, 25).

Including multicultural texts in the classroom and/or home not only helps children reduce cultural bias against diverse cultures, but it promotes a better interaction with their multicultural peers. In order to achieve this “we need to educate both mainstream young children and young children from multicultural families to have better understanding and positive perceptions of other cultures” (Jin Kim, 25). In addition to fighting negative stereotypes and promoting good relations among children from different cultures, “It is important for young learners to feel
appreciated in school and including members of their group through literature that represents their perspectives accurately will help achieve this goal. Knowledge of the contributions of one’s cultural group will enhance one’s self-esteem” (Morgan, 2009). When multicultural students see themselves represented positively, they develop “a positive view of their culture of origin, appreciate their membership to the group, are familiar with its history and culture, and follow cultural practices” (Worrell, 2007 quoted by Abellán-Pagnani, & Hébert, 49).

Although “Hispanics are now the largest (41.3 million), fastest growing, and youngest minority group in the United States” (Abellán-Pagnani, & Hébert, 49), Jin Kim’s observation that “The lack of young children’s multicultural literature has been noted in many studies and, in fact, information books on multicultural topics are even scarcer” (Jin Kim, 40). This also applies to picturebooks that represent Latin American cultures.

In Multicultural literature, “Bilingualism and maintenance of the home language play a very important part in children’s social and emotional development and contribute to the development of resilience” (Oades-Sese & Esquivel, 2006 quoted by Abellán-Pagnani, & Hébert, 49). My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia will contribute to the body of Latin American stories and with the possibility of a bilingual edition will reach a diverse audience.

As a concluding thought on why it is essential to teach multicultural literature to children, Jin Kim performed a study to determine how multicultural information books impact young children in terms of their knowledge, attitudes and positive feelings towards other cultures (23). The results of the study, using fifty-nine five-year-old children, “show that early childhood multicultural education using multicultural informational picture books yields a positive difference in young children’s knowledge and understanding of other cultures” (Jin Kim, 37).
2.3.2 The importance of visually authenticated texts

In the last section I discussed the essential role of authenticity and multicultural representation in picturebooks for children. First, I want to discuss the features of a visually authentic text. These are authentic depictions of the artifacts, architecture, clothing, flora and fauna. Authentic depictions of the social conventions of how people in a culture physically interact, in other words, how they are portrayed in authentic social/cultural configurations. Furthermore, are there physical features, gestures and expressions culturally accurate for the historical time they are being portrayed.

My approach to creating an authentic and accurate text was inspired by the inquiry-based process that Jane Smith and Patricia Wiese (2006) proposed to authenticate multicultural folktales.

“we define authenticity as the extent to which the reteller, adaptor, or illustrator (1) remains reasonably true to the original printed source, (2) accurately and respectfully represents the values and beliefs of the cultural group, and (3) responsibly depicts geographical, historical, and cultural details. […] We also hope that in addition to a thorough analysis of the selected literature, this definition takes into account necessary and/or understandable tailoring of the picture storybook to attract and inform an audience of children. (Smith & Wiese, 72).

The research required to ensure the authenticity of my text is primarily related to its historical accuracy. I was diligent in my research, gathering evidence such as photos, diary and letter excerpts to support the story and to help me create an essential author’s note. For me the author’s note is especially important as, “Evaluating authenticity could thus involve an author's note or some other indication of the process by which a book was created” (Edited by Fox & Short, 16).
2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter I defined a picturebook and the subgenre of the narrative picturebook biography with its unique features and possibilities for variation. Then, I addressed some of the complex issues surrounding authentication and proceeded to explain why multicultural literature is beneficial for children, especially from an early age. Last, I described my inspiration for creating a visually authenticate book. The next chapter is entirely dedicated to my research process, the work that helped me authenticate the story.
Chapter 3: Research process

“In life and especially after their death, Le Plongeon’s achievements have been discredited and forgotten. On more than one occasion, their work mostly photographs, was plagiarized, and their discoveries buried, and the fame given to politicians of the time. What did survive the passage of time were their non-scientific theories, like Queen Moo’s and The Atlantis and the rumor of using dynamite in the sites, which by the way, was completely false”.

(Desmond & Messenger, 1988)

In the previous chapters, I explained the significance of authentic multicultural texts, specifically in narrative picturebook biographies, so chapters 3 and four are dedicated to the creation of *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*. Chapter 3 begins with a summary of Alice Le Plongeon’s life followed by a synopsis of my manuscript for *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*. Furthermore, I describe the research I did to authenticate my grandmother’s story. Also, I explain my approach to writing the text, its structure, and selecting the events and details from Alice’s life to highlight.

3.1 The life of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon

Alice Dixon Le Plongeon (1851-1910) was a prolific writer, photographer, early pioneer on photography and amateur archaeologist who in her lifetime became well known for her lectures and work for women’s rights. Born into a middle-class family in London, Alice was well-educated in music, spiritualism, history and writing. In their book, Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore recollected that “As a girl she was gay-hearted, restless, ambitious and fond of
music. At seventeen she wished to become a singer and actress, but her parents did not encourage that wish” (Willard and Livermore, 458). As Desmond recounted in his books, by the time she was nineteen Alice was working as an assistant to her father, Henry Dixon, at his photographic studio. Her father was well known for his series of photographs commissioned by the Society for Photographing Relics of Old London, of buildings that had been threatened with demolition. In 1871, while running errands, Alice met Augustus Le Plongeon, and fell instantly in love with him. He was 25 years her senior, already an experienced traveler and explorer. His interest in visiting the Maya ruins sparked Alice’s curiosity as she too, was intrigued by ancient civilizations.

In the summer of 1871 Alice and Augustus moved to New York where they then married in October. It took two years to plan their sailing trip to Yucatan, on a steamer named the Cuba. They arrived at the port of Progreso on August 6th, 1873. Despite the poor living conditions of the time, Alice and Augustus stayed in Yucatan for eleven years. At that time only Mérida, capital of Yucatan was developed. They endured tropical weather, insects and exposure to the illnesses abundant in the peninsula. Alice almost died of Yellow Fever soon after their arrival, and years later she contracted Malaria but Augustus nursed her back to health. During that period the Caste War, a Mayan rebellion against the Spanish conquerors, was an ongoing threat so traveling to some parts of the peninsula was frequently dangerous.

Their explorations concentrated mainly in the sites of Uxmal and Chichén Itzá, where they conducted a systematic exploration that included rendering plans of the structures, excavations and photographs. Alice and Augustus cared about the preservation of the archaeological sites.
They made molds from sculptures and decorations in order to preserve the originals and have research material. Alice condemned the actions of the visitors who painted graffiti on some of the walls in Uxmal and other sites. In 1875, at Chichén Itzá, they excavated a structure known as the Platform of the Eagles and Jaguars and unearthed a large statue which they named Chac Mool. This is presumably, their biggest accomplishment. Between 1873-1884 they also visited several other villages and conducted vaccination campaigns as they learned to speak Yucatec Maya. Alice was especially interested in learning about the culture and traditions of Yucatan’s inhabitants and sympathized with the Indigenous cause.

Figure 1: Alice and the Chac Mool. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Le Plongeon B3_93).
After their return to New York in 1884, the Le Plongeons ran out of money and their health seriously declined after their many years abroad. While Alice kept writing for diverse magazines and institutions as well as teaching, Augustus’s reputation kept decreasing. He died in 1908. Two years later on June 8, 1910 Alice died of breast cancer at the Woman’s Hospital in New York City.

3.2 Alice in detail

For a young Victorian lady, Alice was far ahead of the conservative ideas of her era. During field work, she always carried her rifle and a guitar and wore men’s clothing. Lawrence Desmond notes “Despite the heat and humidity Alice dressed in a high neck, full-length Victorian dress, the mode of the day. Later she adopted pants covered by a skirt. The conservative Maya women would have been scandalized by a woman in pants, so she wore the skirt over them when in the presence of the Maya and rolled it up around her waist when working in the ruins” (Desmond & Messenger, 19-20). In her correspondence, she passionately defended Indigenous rights and fought to secure voting and working rights for women. Le Plongeons were an exemplar couple who always supported each other. In the early years of their career, it was partly thanks to Augustus that Alice became known. On a letter to Salisbury Augustus wrote “Please do not forget that the scientific world is as much indebted to Mrs. Le Plongeon as to myself and that I decline receiving all the honors and see her deprived of her part she so richly deserves. So be kind enough not to publish my portrait unless hers is also published (1877b)” (Quoted by Desmond, 1988, 55).
Alice published several books ranging from academic retellings of travels in Yucatan to an epic poem: Here and There in Yucatan, Queen Moo’s Talisman, A Dream of Atlantis, Yucatán in 1873. She was also a prolific writer of articles published in the Magazine of American History, New York Academy of Sciences, Proceedings of The American Antiquarian Society among others. Alice was an established lecturer in the New York Area and a member of Sorosis.

Her significant accomplishments include being a pioneer female explorer of the Maya ruins, extensive field work and systematic rendering of site drawings and photographs of the ruins. The Le Plongeons were the first to do a series of photographs in an almost 180-degree perspective, from the Governor’s Palace to the Nunnery Quadrangle. And last but most important was their discovery of the Chac Mool at Chichén Itzá which is currently exhibited at the Gran Museo del Mundo Maya in Mérida, Yucatan. Sadly, her work and achievements were forgotten, partly due to the erosion of her husband’s academic reputation caused by his wild and controversial belief that Mayas and Egyptians had been in contact.

Although a colonialist mindset was prevalent during the nineteenth century, the Le Plongeons intentions weren’t those of preaching or imposing their culture over the Mayas or pillaging the Maya ruins, in fact, it was quite the opposite. District judge José Maldonado declared that Augustus Le Plongeon “does not wish to appropriate the objects that he discovers in these ruins, and recognizes the dominion that the Nation has over these monuments of the primitive civilization of a grand people.” And he considered Alice “a heroine worthy of the highest praise…a great figure: she works incessantly, and her studies, her investigations, compensate her for the little notice taken of those sites and she appears happy and satisfied: she has formed a collection of molds, which
she herself has manufactured, to faithfully reproduce in all their dimensions many of the most important archaeological pieces.” (Kennedy, 82). This shows that Le Plongeons really cared about the preservation of the ruins and as they mentioned many times in letters and journals, they learnt from the Yucatecos their language, culture and traditions, and so, called them their family.

3.3 *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia: The narrative picturebook biography*

*My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia* narratively documents key events in Alice Le Plongeon’s life and the story of how she met my great-great grandmother. The story begins in her childhood in London, where she learned photography and dreamed of going to exotic lands, like the ones she read about in history books. Then, one afternoon, by chance, she meets Augustus Le Plongeon, a well-travelled archeologist who travelled to all the places she longs to see. They fall in love at first sight and decide to get married. Together they sail to Yucatan, but not without enduring the hardships of the sea. At the Maya ruins, they face intense tropical heat, insects and illnesses but they persevere for many years, first in Uxmal and then in Chichén Itzá, where they discover the sculpture of the Chac Mool. When Alice goes back to a village named Espita she visits the Girl’s Lyceum, where she meets a little girl, Dionicia and instantly they become friends. Alice loves knowing the customs of the Yucatecos and little Dio shows her the village, its market and social life, where they dance at the Vaquería. Alice and Augustus feel at home in Yucatan, but after eleven years they decide to go back to New York City. Goodbyes are hard because the Yucatecos have become their family. Although Dio is sad to say goodbye too, she keeps receiving letters from Alice, and grows up to be a beautiful woman. Many years later, when she is old and has her second granddaughter, she names her Alice.
3.4 Researching for historical accuracy

In this section I review the research sources I used for writing My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia. These include two books by Desmond Lawrence, two of Alice le Plongeon’s books and notes from her diaries and the Getty Archives Online Resources. After I heard my grandmother’s story I followed my instinct and did an Internet search. To my surprise, I found an extensive Wikipedia article about Alice Dixon Le Plongeon. The article refers to two books by Lawrence Desmond, one book written by Alice Le Plongeon (Queen Moo’s Talisman, which is available online as a pdf) and a link to the Getty Archives Online Resources. This article gave me a general idea of Alice’s life and accomplishments as well as the historical context.

At UBC’s Koerner Library I found one of the books by Desmond Lawrence, A Dream of Maya (1988), which is a detailed account of Alice and Augustus’s life and travels that includes original photographs, maps and excerpts from their diaries and correspondence. However, it would not be until later that I acquired a copy of Yucatán Through Her Eyes: Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, Writer & Expeditionary Photographer (2009) which is the exclusive biography of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon. Lawrence Desmond visited all the archives that held information about Le Plongeons and the product of his research was used to carefully put together the aforementioned two books, same that are considered the axis for this research.

With A Dream of Maya (1988), I could picture the historical context in which Le Plongeon’s life happened as well as a general timeline of the important events in their career. A ground-breaking fact about this book for my research was the use of quotations from Alice’s diary and correspondence, which gave me an insight to Alice’s point of view on Yucatan and helped me.
get in character when I was writing the text for my picturebook. Around the same time, I also found online Alice’s book *Here and There in Yucatan* (1886), a compilation of essays and journey entries from her trips To Yucatan and the Caribbean.

In December of 2017, my father gave me a book he found titled *Yucatan en 1873* (2008), which was published in Yucatan, Mexico and is a translation from *Alice’s Notes on Yucatan* (1879) along with some articles and essays that she published in other magazines. Months later I found a complete online version of Alice Le Plongeon’s Notes on Yucatan compiled and arranged by Stephen Salisbury (1879). These books were useful because, with an agile prose not short of humor, Alice describes the things she experienced and lived in Yucatan. Also, it was from these books that I took some quotes to include in *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*.

The last of the resources was The Getty Online Resources, which contains a detailed list of all the existent archives of Le Plongeons that includes letters, diaries and digitalized photographs that were useful as visual reference. Most of Le Plongeon’s work has lost its copyright and several of the books, articles and essays they wrote were easily found online and free to use. Likewise, the photographs and original drawings and other drawings held at the archives, like the Getty and The American Museum of Natural History, can be reproduced as long as one credits them. All these sources proved essential for writing the picturebook text. Next, I will explain how I found the connections between my grandmother’s tale and the historical information about Alice le Plongeon.
3.5 Turning facts into a narrative nonfiction tale

One of my first plot-related challenges was to locate historical evidence to suggest the year in which my great-grandmother met Alice Le Plongeon. My grandmother Alice doesn’t know when her grandmother was born, but my grandmother was born in 1922 so I am assuming there was a 50-60 years age gap between her and Dionicia Conde. For this assumption I had two facts in consideration: first, women married quite young at that time; and second, Alice Le Plongeon was in Yucatan from 1873-1884, therefore, Dionicia Conde must have been born sometime in the 1860’s. Also, she was still a child, but old enough to remember Alice quite well, so probably between the ages of six and twelve.

There are two registered visits to Espita, Dionicia’s hometown, which Desmond mentions on pages 54-56, 58, 76, 78, 79 and 302 (2009). According to Alice’s diaries, their longest stay at Espita was from December 19th, 1874 to January 1875. In her diary she mentions that “One of the first things we did in Espita was visit the girls lyceum” (Desmond, 2009). In my picturebook I decided to make the girls lyceum the place where Alice and Dionicia met for the first time because Dionicia was an upper middle-class girl, which means she probably attended the girl’s Lyceum, making it a likely place for an encounter. Additionally, Alice and Augustus ran a vaccination campaign at the Lyceum, which would increase the possibility of their first meeting. The Le Plongeons arrived at Espita just in time for Christmas preparations, and likely attended the festivities. They left for Tizimín on January 24th, 1875. Later that same year, on April 12, Le Plongeons went back to Espita and where they “Received visitors immediately” (ADLP, 1875).
Quoted by Desmond, 2009). That second time they stayed until May 19th and Alice recalls “Left Espita with some regret- not for the place, but for our good friends there” (ADLP 1875).

Even though Alice didn’t mention any particular girl, years later she wrote two light romances, *A Maiden of Yucatan* and *A Yucatecan Girl*. One of these is about a beautiful mestiza\(^2\) girl with green eyes and tan skin, characteristics shared by Dionicia Conde who had green eyes, a rare feature among Yucatecos at that time. Thus, it is possible that one of those poems referred to my great-great-grandmother.

### 3.6 Museum and location field work

In this section I will elaborate on how these information findings led me to do fieldwork, the places I visited and what I found in each one. After reading all the materials previously mentioned in section 3.1, I found an online catalogue, again, by Lawrence G. Desmond called “A Searchable Catalog of the Nineteenth Century Photographs of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon and Augustus Le Plongeon Photo Collections located at the: American Museum of Natural History, Donald Dixon Album, Getty Research Institute, Peabody Museum at Harvard University, Philosophical Research Society” (2015). After I realized there was material available at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and that the New York Public Library

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\(^2\) The term Mestizo commonly refers to a person of combined European and Indigenous descent.
had a copy of *Yucatán Through Her Eyes: Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, Writer & Expeditionary Photographer* (2009) I decided to plan a trip to New York City. Several factors led me to research at the New York Public Library as opposed to the Getty Archives: 1) I was more familiar with New York, and was able to arrange for free accommodations, saving time and money on an already tight research budget; 2) the resources of the NYPL were more expansive and contained items I felt were essential to my research.

I sent an email to the American Museum of Natural History asking about the archives and was forwarded to the Division of Anthropology Archives where Kristen Mable sent me a “Visiting Researcher Application Form” to fill out for permission to work at the archives. Permission was granted promptly; I was allowed to visit the archives for two days on October 24 and 25 for two hours each day. The Le Plongeon archives available there consisted of three boxes of photographs and a couple of drawings and letters. The majority of the photographs were albumen prints but several were Dry Glass-plate positivces that had to be handled with gloves and extra care due to their fragility as these materials were very old and not in the best condition.

Figure 2: *Boxes of Le Plongeon’s Archives. 2019. Photo by Verena Rodriguez.* Figure 3: *Le Plongeon’s Archives. 2019. Photo by Verena Rodriguez*
I asked for fifteen photographs to be digitized for research purposes and was allowed to take pictures for personal reference with my cellphone as well. The photographs and glass plates were particularly useful for the visual authentication process that I explained on Chapter 2 and also for illustrating the picturebook. It not only helped me visualize how Alice looked and dressed, but how much the city of Mérida and the ruins have changed since then. Among the photographs were some of Progreso port, where they arrived, the city of Mérida, the Maya ruins and portraits of Alice and Augustus as well as some everyday scenes of the Maya and Yucatec society.

On two of the other afternoons I had available I visited the New York Public Library for reading the book of Yucatán Through Her Eyes (2009). Unfortunately, this book could not be taken out of the library, but I had time enough to read it and take notes and photographs of other information that I had not read in the previous sources. This book includes several passages of Alice’s diaries that I hadn’t read anywhere else, for example, anecdotes from her youth. It also contained photographs I hadn’t seen at the archives or in any other book.

In December 2018, I traveled to Yucatan, Mexico to conduct the field work at the archeological sites of Uxmal and Chichén Itzá. Since I was born in Yucatan, I already knew the archeological sites, but my last visit to Uxmal was in 2010 and I hadn’t been in Chichén Itzá since my childhood. It was important for my research to visit all the places that Alice went to, so I could look at them with a new perspective. Additionally, I wanted to photograph the buildings that Le Plongeons photographed in the nineteenth century to compare the condition of the ruins then and now and therefore have more references for creating visually authentic illustrations.

I started by going to downtown Mérida, the Plaza Grande and the Cathedral. Then I visited Izamal, one of the most important villages that Alice and Augustus also visited and
photographed. The pyramid of Kinich Kak Moo is next to the village and among the archives that I saw in New York there was a drawing of the archaeological site.

Figure 4: Cathedral of Merida-Yucatan, Plaza Mayor. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Le Plongeon B2_18). Figure 5: Mérida’s Cathedral and Plaza Grande. 2019. Photo by Verena Rodriguez.

The next place was the ruins of Uxmal, a two-hour drive to the south of Mérida. The archaeological site is well kept with the main difference that now people aren’t allowed to climb any of the pyramids. In Uxmal I paid special attention to The Nuns Quadrangle and The Governor’s Palace; the latter was Le Plongeon’s house during their research at Uxmal.
Figure 6 and Figure 7: *Views from the Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal.* 2019. Photos by Verena Rodriguez.
Since Le Plongeons were at Uxmal and Chichén Itzá the structures were excavated and are now clean of debris and weeds. Unfortunately, some of the ornaments and intaglias carved in the stone have eroded since then, a fact made obvious by comparing the archival photos of Alice and Augustus le Plongeon to the state of the ruins during my visit.
One week after Uxmal I visited Chichén Itzá. I was surprised to see how well-kept Uxmal is in contrast to Chichén Itzá, with its many tourists and street vendors who are allowed to sell inside the archaeological site. The large number of visitors made it hard to take pictures and enjoy the experience. Some of the pyramids look more eroded than the ones at Uxmal even though it is a newer site by a couple hundred years. Chichén Itzá is where Alice and Augustus discovered the Chac Mool, which is now exhibited in Mérida at the Gran Museo del Mundo Maya. Compared to Le Plongeon’s photographs, the sculpture is now missing its nose and the intaglios have faded. A gratifying surprise was to see that the museum gives Augustus Le Plongeon credit for the discovery of the Chac Mool (Fig. 12).
Figure 11: Augustus Le Plongeon after excavating the Chac Mool. 1875. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Le Plongeon B3_91). Figure 12: The Chac Mool at the Museum. 2019. Photo by Verena Rodriguez.

Figure 13: 2019. Photo by Verena Rodriguez.
3.7 Planning and writing the text

In Chapter 1 I recounted my motivations and interest in undertaking this project and mentioned my early drafts of the text for my picturebook. The story evolved with many revisions, most frequently after finding each new piece of information. In spite of the multiple changes, the essence of the story has remained the same after a year and a half. This section is a dissection of that textual evolution and the rationale for my decisions.

My challenge was to tell not one, but two stories in 32 pages, meaning 14 spreads and fewer than 1000 words. I wanted to write about the life and achievements of Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, and I wanted to tell the story of how my grandmother got her name. The more I discovered about Alice’s adventures, the more I wanted to write. Because of the big revelation on the final spread where my grandmother says “And that is why, my name is Alice” professor Maggie De Vries suggested to me that at some point I had to shift the point of view from Alice le Plongeon to Dionicia Conde so both narratives could intertwine. First, I planned to change the point of view in the middle (spread 7 or 8), but that left no space to develop Alice’s life from her childhood to the moment of her explorations in the ruins. Writing a narrative picturebook biography, requires the writer to carefully select events in the individual’s life that dramatically propel the story, provide interesting scene changes and inspire page turns. While the text is best kept spare, it is essential that “this form strives to capture that which is least tangible—the essence of an individual's life” (Lee Stone, 2007); and pictures can convey what the text can’t.
While the big revelation is not the climax, after reading Desmond’s books (1988 and 2009), I realized that the finding of the Chac Mool was Le Plongeon’s biggest achievement and a breakthrough in their careers. Unfortunately, this discovery was detrimental for their career at their time, but in posterity it helped to promote the conservation of archaeological sites and still remains their biggest discovery (Lawrence, D, 1988). Therefore, I had to make that the climax of the text.

In “From Spark to Story”, Tania Lee Stone asks two essential questions for writing a picture book biography, “How can I show the moment, or pivotal event, or unique characteristic that best illuminates who a person truly is? How can I best strike a chord that will excite young readers and inspire them to want to go out and learn more about the subject?” (2007). Following these questions, I started organizing a simple structure for the text.

If finding the Chac Mool was the climax, that meant I only had six spreads to cover Alice’s life from birth until that discovery, thus condense her youth. The key moments I chose were, one spread for Alice’s childhood as a curious and creative girl with many interests. This leads her to be a young apprentice at her father’s photographic studio on spread two. Next, Alice’s fortuitous meeting with Augustus had to be featured because he was the door to her future explorations in Yucatan.

The first three spreads comprise the introduction to the story, so in the intent of storytelling, their travels in Yucatan needed some conflict prior to discovering the Chac Mool.

In her diaries, Alice wrote how horribly seasick she was on that boat and about the intolerable journey from London to Yucatan (Desmond, 2009), so I included a spread about that too. After arriving to Yucatan, there is one spread showing the ride from the beach to the city of
Merida which serves to change the scene and introduce the reader to this new place. The next spreads focus on their exploration at the ruins which finally lead to the discovery of the Chac Mool.

When I storyboarded the first version, the composition looked too busy. The discovery of the Chac Mool occurred too soon to properly show the Maya ruins. By having Le Plongeons arrival to Yucatan and Merida on one spread (5) instead of two. That allowed spreads 6-8 to be entirely dedicated to the Le Plongeons work in the ruins with spread 8 being the climax of the story and the discovery of the Chac Mool. Spread 9 is set at Espita and it’s where Alice meets Dionicia. From this point on, the story centers on Dionicia and her time together with Alice. On spread 11 Alice goes back to New York City so the story can focus on Dionicia as she grows up and brings the reader to the revelation of the final spread.

Perry Nodelman (1988) asserts that “In picture books that tell stories, the texts are characteristically succinct and undetailed. They are always dependent upon the accompanying pictures for their specific meaning and import; they often sound more like plot summaries than like the actual words of a story”. Following Nodelman’s insight, I removed all the physical descriptions in the text, since I could illustrate landscapes and scenes that would take several sentences to describe textually. Although I included the date of Le Plongeon’s arrival in Yucatan so I could place the reader in a moment in history, I decided not to include other dates because I could include them in the author’s note instead of extending the text.

A key storytelling strategy was to include quotations from Alice’s diary. Since it is a way to tell the story in her own words. Also, three of the picturebooks I discussed in Chapter 2.2 use
quotations, which are nice additions to the stories. Additionally, this detail sends a feeling of authenticity to the text. The quotes I decided to include were: On pages 8-9, After Alice meets Augustus she returns to her house and tells her mother: "Mother, while I was out to-day I met him who I know that I shall have to marry by and bye." (from ADLP diary, 1908 quoted by Desmond, 2009). During their travels by boat on pages 10-11 Alice was seasick and says “[As well as indulging in a great many other unphilosophical thoughts that seasickness will induce,] particularly when cockroaches two inches long are wandering over the victim” (Here and There in Yucatan, 1886). When they arrive to Yucatan (12-13): “Indeed no country can surpass Yucatan in the beauty and variety of color of its flowers, insects and birds” (ADLP, Notes on Yucatan, 79). While working at the ruins (16-17): “near starvation, deadly snakes, swarms of insects, [and] intense tropical heat” (from ADLP diary, 1908, quoted by Desmond, 2009). And on pages 18-19 before finding the Chac Mool Augustus says “Here it is, here it will be found” (Augustus le Plongeon, quoted by Desmond, 1988:35). There are other great quotes but there was not enough space on a 32-page picturebook. However, if there was the possibility of publishing it a 48-page picturebook I would definitely include these: During a séance with a medium: “Gusher (the name he had given to me) do you want to be married?” I answered “No! I never want to be married- I will be a great singer.” The reply was a roar of laughter, and when that was ended the voice added “Long before you are twenty you will be married and very far from your own country” [ADLP 1908]. (Quoted by Desmond, 2009).
And then: “There is no solitude here, though far from the abodes of living men. The place swarms with life and perfect silence never reigns, for every tiny insect has something to say for itself” (1881b:1-2) (ADLP Quoted by Desmond, 1988,68).

Although the text tends to be succinct, one advantage of narrative picturebook biographies is the common use of an author’s note at the end to provides additional information. All the picturebooks included in the table include one (Refer to Ch.2.2). I use this feature on pages 30-32, including an author’s note with a longer and historically detailed biography of Alice Le Plongeon, along with my personal connection to the story. I also included a glossary of Mayan words for things that Alice saw during her trips (refer to pages 22-23). These objects are not mentioned in the text but appear in the illustrations as “side notes” or sketches from Alice’s journals.

Page 32 of the picturebook is dedicated to quotes and sources. This information was essential for me to include because it gives credibility to the book and sustains it as a biography and not just a work of fiction.

**Chapter summary**

This chapter is an overview of the main historical sources for my creation of an accurate biography and an authentic story. It includes an explanation of my process for the authentication of my personal family story. Lastly, I describe decisions that shaped *My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia*. Chapter four will be purely dedicated to my visual decisions.
Chapter 4: Creating *My Name is Alice, Not Alicia*: The illustration process

In previous chapters I discussed the genre of the narrative picturebook biography and the importance of cultural authenticity. Then, in Chapter Three, I described the research process necessary to write an authenticate text for *My Name is Alice, Not Alicia*. This chapter is dedicated to the visual development of my picturebook. I begin by explaining some of the key choices I made for my picturebook visuals such as the color palette, rendering techniques, the style, and layout. Also, I dedicate a section to describing my personal authentication test for one illustration and then explain how after completing a final sketch I proceed with the rendering of the final illustration. Lastly, I talk about my use of storyboarding and the printing process I use to produce a printed dummy.

4.1 Choosing a color palette and a rendering technique

“In many ways, color is an obvious place to fix attention in picturebook analysis, for it is not only one of the format’s defining features, but it also appears in nearly every scholarly effort to characterize the format and its workings” (Papazian, 170). As Gretchen Papazian observed, as one of the key features of a picturebook, the color palette and technique can change entirely the atmosphere and mood of it. My style tends to be realistic. Usually I favour black and white techniques such as pencil or ink. I feel more comfortable using black and white because I have more control over these techniques which allows me to render an illustration faster. I wanted the illustrations for *My Name is Alice, Not Alicia* to be a mix of black and white with some elements in color. This was one of my hardest decisions, but I closely observed several picturebooks that
use mixed media such as some by Isabelle Arsenault, so I decided to try it. A mixed media technique requires fine-quality paper, which is usually very expensive, and an especially clean working area. Since I could not afford to experiment and possibly ruin a variety of expensive papers and because I tend not to work in a pristine work space I decided to try a different approach. I drew each element on a different sheet of paper depending on the technique, then scanned it, cut out the backgrounds and assembled items in Photoshop. I chose a mixed technique because I wanted to mix the “old” nineteenth century European feeling with the vibrant colour palette of the Yucatan and its colourful nature. Therefore, I chose black and white for the characters and color for the backgrounds and salient key elements.

First, I rendered the characters in ink because of the fluidity of the material and the hard contrasts it permits. As Nodelman points out, “we commonly associate black and white with uncompromising truth, utter absence of subjective coloring: documentary” (1988, 67). Black and white was fitting for my historical non-fiction story. Additionally, Nodelman notes that the use of black and white in movies as in picturebooks seems to “ask for special responses from their audience-for those that deliberately evoke nostalgia about the way movies once were or for those that work to announce themselves as serious and different, as important as documentaries” (67), or, in the case of My Name is Alice, Not Alicia a moment in history with customs and characters that no longer exists. For the background I chose watercolors because this technique can produce both vibrant colors and diffuse backgrounds and atmospheres as needed.
Choosing a color palette is essential because, along with the style, if colors are consistent throughout the picturebook and look harmonious between each other, they will create a visual cohesion. When observed closely, all picturebooks rendered in color have a carefully chosen color palette. For example, from the picturebooks in the table on Chapter Two, *The Bluest of Blues* (Robinson, 2019) is rendered only in cyan tones with red used for accents. Anna Atkins
learned to use cyanotypes hence, the endpapers are reproductions from Anna Atkins catalogue, cohesive with the cyan tone pervasive throughout the picturebook and directly related to the color of this photographic technique. In *The Tree Lady* (Hopkins & McElmurry, 2013) the color palette is dominated by warm earth tones, with green and brown being dominant as the colors of trees.

Since I am used to painting in black and white, I prefer to work with a limited color palette to maintain visual cohesion. For the color palette I chose rusty reds and warm yellows, reminiscent of the rocks and materials used for building the pyramids and the Yucatecan houses, and blues and greens that reflect the tropical vegetation with its vibrant colors. I found Papazian’s observation to be curiously fitting with my selection of color palette:

“In Latinx American picturebooks, yellow-orange, red, and green dominate brightly. Asian American picturebooks display Asian Americanness as clear-toned, solid blocks of red, yellow, and black. Arab American books work with yellows, blues, and pastel greens. African American picturebooks group themselves together visually through browns, tans, and a range of muted greens and blues”.

(Papazian, 174)

This selection of colors is not purely coincidental, it is a direct reflection of the landscape of a place, which in turn, influences the culture of its inhabitants. Papazian adds that “the general ease with which multicultural picturebooks can be grouped by color palette into representations of distinct racialized cultures suggests that the meaning of color in contemporary multiculturally minded picturebooks is emerging from a shared understanding of color usage. The rough standardization of the color palettes shows that in multicultural picturebooks color can visually define cultures in general, as well as particularize specific cultures” (174). This shared understanding of color codes has a long history. For example, the Mayan codecs used red, green
and blue as their dominant colors mainly because the minerals and plants available in Yucatan yielded those colour pigments. My similar color palette is inspired by the peninsular landscape that gave the Mayans their distinct pigments.

Figure 15: Examples for the color palette.

Once I selected the color palette and watercolor technique for the backgrounds, I changed from ink to pencils for the later revisions of the illustrations. This happened as I adjusted the style of the characters, which I describe later in detail.
4.2 Choosing a style

Finding a style for rendering Alice Le Plongeon was key to visual continuity since she is the recurring character throughout the story. Thus, I needed a style easily reproduced with elements that would create a highly recognizable character across thirteen spreads.

I began sketching realistic versions from photographic portraits of her, and then abstracted particular details. Figure 17 is a direct tracing but with some abstraction from the photo in Figure 18. The face shape is the same, I simplified the lips and made the eyes slightly bigger. I took out the detail of the hair and drew it as one block of color.

Figure 16: Alice Le Plongeon, style proof. Figure 17: Alice Le Plongeon at the ruins of Aka Dzib in Chichén Itzá at the age of 22. Photo contained in: Desmond, 1988:19.

Later, I sketched Alice as a child because that is how she would appear in the first spread. At first, I drew her with braids, but after finding some photos of her at age 10, I realized her hair...
looked completely different, so I changed it to shoulder-length hair, more similar to that of the photos. When I represent Alice as a grownup her hair is down, except when she works at the ruins where she has it done up as documented in some of the archival photos. Her clothes are inspired by the photos and show her as accurately as possible. After having decided the style for the characters, the next step was how to authentically represent the scenarios in which the story took place.

![Figure 18: First and final version of Alice as a child for spread 1.](image)

### 4.3 Visual authentication of an illustration

I will explain the visual authentication process I followed for the picturebook pages 12-13 because it is one of the illustrations that contains a great level of detail and for which I needed many historical references for its accurate rendering. Pages 12-13 represent Alice and Augustus
le Plongeon’s arrival in Yucatan, at the port of Progreso, and their subsequent trip to Mérida, Yucatan’s capital. The illustration required a careful and meticulous synthesis because of the quantity of information needed to accurately represent the events. Thus, my challenge was to construct a composition that incorporated all the relevant information.

Most of the information about their arrival is contained in Alice Le Plongeon’s Notes on Yucatan, compiled and arranged by Stephen Salisbury, Jr. (1879). In it, Alice mentions how they traveled in “an old-fashioned, rickety carriage, that might well have belonged to our great-great grandfathers. Attached to it were three tiny mules” (75). The carriage drove them from the port of Progreso to Mérida. “The road is cut through fields of henequen and it is not in many places that precaution has been taken to make it smooth” (75). Le Plongeon’s arrived at Mérida between seven or eight p.m. “When we passed the principal square all looked polished and beautiful. The shrubs and other plants, that adorn the central garden, seemed to be covered with frost. The cathedral on our left rose grand and gloomy. Opposite to it the arcade of the City Hall, and the ancient mansion of the Fathers of the Company of Jesus, looked imposing and brilliant” (75).
I wanted to represent the passage of time from day to night graphically representing the duration of the journey. To do this I used the gutter as the natural division of the spread to show day on the left and night on the right. I sought photos and drawings of the henequén fields (Agave fourcroydes) as references. The butterflies are a common variety of yellow butterflies I have seen in all my travels in the Yucatán. The carriage is a bolan-coche, described by Alice as “a two-wheeled vehicle resembling a van. A mattress is spread in the bottom, for the passengers to sit or lie upon, as may best please them. It will accommodate six persons seated, or two lying at full length, which is the most common way of travelling in the bolan. Suspended upon leather straps, it is the only conveyance suitable for the roads of Yucatan. Some are four-wheeled, but these are seldom used on account of the bad roads. They are drawn by three mules, which go at a dashing rate, at least for the first few miles” (79).
As a reference for drawing the bolan, I used one of the photographs scanned from the archives at the Natural Museum of American History. I copied the bolán and the way the coach is dressed. As for Alice and Augustus’s clothes, I used their portraits and Internet references of 1860s dresses. For page 13 I used a photograph of the Cathedral by Augustus Le Plongeon as direct reference. Even though the scene is at night without much detail on the ground, the main square in front of the Cathedral is different from what it looks like today (see figures 20 and 21).

I followed a similar process for the remaining illustrations. First, I referred to the historical data found in Lawrence Desmond’s books and in Alice Le Plongeon’s diaries. Second, I sought visual references for all the major elements. For these I used photographs I acquired from the archives.
of The Museum of Natural History, the Getty Collection online resources and photographs I took on my trip to Yucatan.

Figure 21: Cathedral of Merida-Yucatan, Plaza Mayor, Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Le Plongeon B2_18).

Figure 22: Cathedral of Merida, Yucatan, 2019, photo by Verena Rodriguez.
4.4 Composition process

After drawing the first sketches I began drafting final illustrations. For this hybrid thesis I created four final illustrations and detailed sketches of the remaining spreads. Each illustration required rendering several variations of the composition. This work involved playing with the placement of the text and the visual elements until I arranged them into the composition I desired. Next, I traced the sketches into clean, refined line copies. Some spreads required scans to resize and adjust for compositional needs. Then they were printed in tabloid or letter size depending on the illustration. As explained earlier, I did the illustrations as separate pieces that I later scanned and cut out in photoshop. For example, for pages 4-5 (refer to Figure 22) I painted three different Alices, each on a different sheet of smooth, cotton paper. Then I painted the background on Fabriano watercolour paper and scanned it. Afterwards, I pasted all the separate elements in a new Photoshop file to further arrange the composition and adjust the size of each element to match the final sketch.

Figure 22 illustrates the process for an illustration, from its first draft to the eighth and final version. Although the technique and color palette had been selected many decisions remained because the background was not working and the tree and bushes in the foreground did not integrate with the other parts of the image. My experiments are shown in #5-8 as I tried variations for the tree and plants until in #7 the plants at the front integrate with the background rather than demanding attention.
Figure 23: Evolution of spread 1 from sketch to final version.
Initially version #7 was the one I preferred as well as with pages 6-7 and 8-9 (Figures 22 and 23), but after two months, I was no longer happy with the results. What troubled me was the drawing style of the characters. I did not want a highly realistic style, nor one where the characters looked too cartoony or simplified. Furthermore, the black ink outlines of the characters lacked the level of detail I thought they should show for depicting details in clothing or nature. This is specially reflected in the faces of Alice and her mother on spread 3 (Figure 25), where the first version had an exaggerated facial expression. Because I didn’t have a photograph of Alice’s mother, I tried to draw the mother as a more generic Nineteenth Century “mother” that had a level of historical accuracy.

Since I wanted to retain black and white for the characters, I redrew them in pencil with simple cross-hatching and shading, adding additional details to the faces and fabrics. Somehow, the softer tones of the pencil, unlike the strong black of the ink, looked more integrated with the rest of the scene, so I redid the first three spreads in this new style and continued the rest of the sketches with this technique.
As I showed in this section, the illustration process wasn’t linear as I had redo illustrations not once, but several times. One of the greatest challenges of the mixed media and digital collage process I chose was to create the illusion of them having been drawn in one illustration instead of digitally integrated from layers of cut-out pieces. The nuanced shades of the pencil helped to integrate with the backgrounds and, as shown in Figure 22, the final versions worked to my satisfaction.

4.5 Planning the Storyboard

Part of the sketching process is the planning of the storyboard. Even though it is not precisely like a storyboard for a film with indications for lightning and camera movements, it is particularly useful in showing the evolving pictorial flow of a picturebook. As Salisbury
expresses, when planning a picturebook “you need to work out how the story develops over a sequence of pages, and the easiest, if not the only, way to do this is to produce a form of storyboard. For books, this is a two-dimensional plan laid out so that all the pages of the book are visible at the same time.” (Salisbury, 80). By showing the whole picturebook at a glance, storyboards are particularly helpful for authors in determining if the narrative has a good rhythm, if each illustration fits with its predecessor and successor, and if the picturebook feels unified as a whole. However, “Your initial plan need only use the roughest of drawings, paying attention to the design of shapes on the page, more than the format of the page itself. At this stage, your priority is to establish what goes where. What are the key elements of the story and how do they fit into the number of pages? What are the quintessential images? “(Salisbury, 82). As I mentioned in Chapter Three, planning the storyboard made me realize that the initial distribution of the text was too dense in the beginning of the story. Viewing all the spreads together facilitated the process of redistributing the text and expanding the beginning of the story before the finding of the Chac Mool. Once I had all the final sketches and the four finished illustrations for My Name is Alice, Not Alicia, the next step was putting it all together to form a dummy.

4.6 Layout, dummy design and printing

On the first draft for My Name Is Alice, Not Alicia that I created for my Creative Writing course, I used a horizontal layout but when I started the project for my thesis, I realized that a vertical format seemed more appropriate, so I looked at other picturebook biographies and their format. Most of the ones I analyzed in the table in Chapter Two, 2.2 were of a similar size of 28.5 x 23 cm so I decided to choose a format of 28x 22 that would facilitate the printing process for me.
From my observations of the aforementioned table I noticed that numerous picturebook biographies use traditional serif fonts, while others also employ hand-lettering. My first choice was **Ink Free** (Figure 26) because I wanted a less formal appearance. But after printing several pages of the dummy I realized it was not legible enough, so I chose **Century Schoolbook** (Figure 27), a traditional serif font, and chose **Ink Free** for the quotes.

**Figure 27: Ink Free font.**

**Figure 28: Century Schoolbook Regular font.**

I wanted to find a font that looked like hand lettering because “The picture book has a long-standing tradition of hand-lettering, motivated (one assumes) by the basic desire cited by Wade
to connect with young readers in the most intimate way possible. Examples from the 1920s and 1930s include William Nicholson’s *Clever Bill*, Wanda Gág’s *Millions of Cats* (Marcus, 2012). It made sense to use a hand lettered looking font for Alice’s quotes as it set them apart from the rest of the text.

The last spread of the picturebook as well as the final endpapers are dedicated to displaying historical information. I included an Author’s Note, narrating Alice le Plongeon’s life and her connection to my family. Also included are the historical sources for the story and the quotes to give my picturebook credibility as the product of extensive historical research. In the case of future publication, I would also include photographs of Alice le Plongeon working at the ruins. “Striking photographs in biographies can draw in, engage, and inform young readers on a deep level. In addition, they can serve as outstanding primary sources. Whether the photographs are current, colorful, high quality prints, or old, sepia, grainy shots, they reveal much about the subject, the setting, and the social/historical context” (Christina Dorr, The Horn Book Magazine, June 14, 2016).

I chose not to make a special cover for the dummy because as a work to be published it is supposed to be a work in progress. Furthermore, most publishers prefer a dummy that does not look like a finished picturebook. This is because they believe that the author/illustrator will be more flexible when asked to make changes which is highly likely.

After making many decisions, I prepared the file in Illustrator, paginated it, and sent it to print. These are the results, my printed dummy:
Figure 29: Printed dummy for My Name is Alice, Not Alicia.
Chapter summary

As I explained in this chapter, there are numerous steps involved in the creation process necessary for creating a picturebook biography. As I previously mentioned, it wasn’t a linear process because I worked on the first draft of the picturebook in November 2017 but I started working on this project for my thesis in May of 2018. Including the time it took for my research, writing, illustrating the dummy and considering that some months were mostly dedicated to writing the Academic portion of this thesis, completing the picturebook dummy took me around 9 months. There is no “typical” duration for a picturebook creation. A one-year process would be considered average, but the duration depends on many factors to be taken into account. If the illustrator is also writing the story or only illustrating will vary the time and also, a non-fiction picturebook where vast research is necessary for the writing will need more time. The publisher’s budget is another factor that influences the timeline. Some authors have had to finish complete picturebooks in sixth months, others take up to three years.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis looks at the creation process for creating a narrative picturebook biography and to the research an authentic story requires. Throughout the creation process of *My name is Alice, Not Alicia*, I learned several valuable lessons that the reader will find useful for creating a picturebook biography and that I will certainly apply to future picturebook projects. The first one is that the creation of a non-fiction picturebook requires gathering more information than will be included in the 32-page picturebook. Yet, all the information is essential for its creation. Having extensive knowledge on the subject or person, enriches the written and illustrated rendering. My research process wasn’t linear due to different circumstances so even when I had drawn most of the sketches, new pieces of information such as photographs, inspired changes. An excellent resource for gathering information is the Internet. Compared to ten years ago, the amount of readily available online information and images available is extensive. Even if it is not a non-fiction picturebook with realistic illustrations, the illustration process always requires visual references and research to know how to represent certain things. Instead of going to different libraries or archives, the internet now offers a variety of resources.

A second important lesson in structuring the story is to create a storyboard or thumbnails of the whole picturebook so that the whole text is visible before doing the final illustrations. This is also essential to refining the rhythm and pace of the storytelling. In the particular case of a picturebook biography it helps to determine the amount of information the picturebook can utilize and its proper order. Prior to creating the storyboard I wrote down a timeline in chronological order of all the key events in Alice Le Plongeon’s life. Having a display of all the
spreads in the picturebook alongside the timeline was very helpful for arranging the text and selecting the scenes from Alice’s life.

5.1 Implications and further inquiry

This picturebook project inspires me to create illustrated books about important women in the Mexican and Yucatecan history like Elvia Carrillo Puerto, who secured women’s vote in 1923, Alma Reed and Rosario Castellanos. All of them were advocate feminists and although they are known in Mexico, it would be interesting to share their lives in a series of books. The topic of authentication and female representation is of great interest to me and is something I want to study further. The table in Chapter Two inspires me to think about what I could do with a significant selection of biographies about lesser known important women. It would be interesting to gather a multicultural selection and then to analyze how through text and illustrations these biographies promote female empowerment. This work could involve travelling to different Children’s Books collections around the world as there are many picturebooks never translated into English. This could be an ambitious and useful project for future PhD work.

Lastly, creating My Name is Alice, Not Alicia, motivates me to continue working as an illustrator. Even though as a reader I have always been more inclined toward fiction, now after this experience I want to create more non-fiction picturebooks.
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