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## **Is There Such a Place as Far Away?**

“My dear young fellow,” the Old-Green-Grasshopper said gently, ‘there are a whole lot of things in this world of ours you haven’t started wondering about yet.’”

James and the Giant Peach – Roald Dahl

This paper forms the first of two parts spanning a year, and pertaining to the creation and wonderment of new knowledge and ways of looking and seeing in the field of Cartography, Cartographic understanding and Cartographic output, with particular emphasis on Picture Story Books for pre-school and infant children from the point of view and artistic journey of the cartographer as Picture Book Maker in the creation of this art form.

From the perspective of the Picture Book Polymath I look at what the role and understanding of a cartographer and cartography is, whilst discussing practice-based research through the Cartographers eyes and how this relates to the creation of an artefact for such a young age group that encompasses narrative, image and cartography in the picture book as a tool for learning spatial awareness and more developed Geographic understanding. To this end I explore how children read such texts in tandem with illustrations and cartography. I also ask ‘What is a Picture Book’ and question its conventional and unconventional possibilities in terms of format, size, scale and layout.

Paper two will follow in 2020 and discuss and outline the methodology and creative processes employed by the Picture Book Maker on their journey to production of a fictional Story Picture Book based around Cartography, and of the highest quality for young audiences. Children’s reactions to the artefact and digital developments will be documented and results discussed with reference to further elaboration of the ideas outlined in this paper, paper one.

Keywords: Illustration; Cartography; Young Audiences; Picture Books; Picture Book Maker; Maps; Narrative, Pedagogy, Geography, Spatiality.

# Is There Such a Place as Far Away?

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## Far Away – An Introduction

What is the concept of ‘Far Away’ to an under five-year-old and if given a map, how do they relate to it? Young children are known to have little concept of distance and time. Scale is always big and in books for this age range not technically accurate. Indeed, what is Geography to a small child who has a limited concept of time and space let alone trying to get to grips with a map where three centimetres could mean one step or the distance to the moon?

As a child, as far back as I can remember, I was always interested, maybe infatuated some might say in maps! It wasn’t just one map, it was any, many, all sorts of maps and maps that at that time I wasn’t even sure were maps, maps of the world, cities, stars, houses, genetics, electrons, the human body and trees and plants etc. These maps, sometimes called diagrams, charts or plans, fed my lifelong love of story. Airports, railway stations, the London Underground and Paris Metro, motorways, canals and the wide open seas all carried people to and fro, from place to place, all with different stories and adventures and I wanted to know about each and every one of them. Where were the aeroplanes flying above my head and the trains at the bottom of the garden going? Who was on them? Why? Where had they come from, who had they left behind and who were they going to see? They were dreams in those formative years but those thoughts persisted into young adulthood and an imminent career in childhood stories and in particular Picture Books and illustration for young audiences. Those people and their stories, that I would most probably never know from my childhood, became my imaginary characters moving from A to B on the many maps I still treasured and linking me closer still to the practices I came to know and adore, that of text, image and maps, or more notably Picture Book Maker, Illustrator, Cartographer and perhaps most importantly Polymath approached through a map making perspective. Whilst I will continue to use the term Picture Book, in creating the maps alongside and within the narrative, I hope to bring both to life in challenging the whole notion of what a book and map are and how they physically unfold, and in the hands of the youngest of children become a new challenge for me as a mapmaker.

In trying to develop these ideas I found myself looking at Picture Books from a cartographic stance. If there was more than one map in the books I was reading it was very unusual. The Picture Books in particular didn’t really feature the map as a central and notable trait throughout the narrative, although of course there were the exceptions to this, such as *Henry’s Map* by David Elliot along with others. Either the books featured only one map which was central to the narrative as in *Henry’s Map* or there were several maps, as in *The Night Pirates* by Peter Harris that didn’t reflect the cartographic nature of the story, as all pirates know how to read a map don’t they?

## The work of Meunier and Place

Christophe Meunier emphasised the importance of space, spatiality and spatial representations from his viewpoint of a 'cultural geographer'. However, from the point of view of the Children's Picture Book Maker one gives meaning to the notion of place and spatiality that helps the child to understand the organisation of their own space both in terms of characters in the story and in their own immediate location, as well as in the wider world around them. This place and space occupied by maps in children's picture books is of central focus to this paper and research project for several reasons. Unlike Meunier, this research is not about how the text is evoked by the geographic shape of a map, but how the narrative is entwined within the map so that the text and map become one. Secondly, it is not just about the shape, use and functions of the map in terms of its placement in the book or incorporated into a particular image (its use), but more about the space, format, size of the map and text and therefore inciting the question, what is a book? I ask whether there is a different way in which one can inspire a child's sense of space and to read through and empathise with a character whilst discovering new spaces, whilst overcoming obstacles and constructing their own space within a narrative and therefore spatial awareness. Can the material that is fiction therefore be read in a format that is neither book nor map?

Meunier's work is defined by the geographic shape of the map and its placement in a book, therefore its use and function. This study aims to place the map to become the central focus, without which the story will not work whether in a book or alternative format. Barbara Bader's description of a picture book forms the basis of the project, where...

'A Picture Book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical 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 turning the page.'

However, the concept of its display being of two facing pages and the drama of turning the page in a conventional sense is challenged and the difference between my work and Meunier's highlighted again through his approach to his project as a 'Cultural Geographer' which he says is at the heart of his research. I approach my project as a polymath Picture Book Maker with an interest in Cartography, where the integration of text and image and the creative process of 'making' is the catalyst to the research, and to this end, whilst I will continue to call my final output a Picture Book, we are in fact looking at an artifact that may have very different properties to that which we have come to define as the 'Picture Book' as we know it. There are several examples of relevant Picture Books that show how the object of the book emphasises the link between text, spatiality and synergy. French writer/illustrator of Children's Picture Books Francois Place plays with the concept of Children's Picture Books and travel within the French publishing system. Place devoted many years in the 1990's to a project entitled Atlas des Geographes Orbae and then in 2010 La Douane Volante, followed by more of the Atlas des Geographes d'Orbae in 2012.

The notions of temporality and spatiality in these books underpin the development of this original idea for publication through the study of iconotextual processes, that will enable the creation of a fictional land and narrative through to the exploration of spatiality, where the intent is to allow the reader/audience to act on that space and play within that space, the space where they might live, would like to live or imagine they might live. This includes an understanding of geographical forms such as mountains, roads, towns, hills, valleys and cities but also the child's individual space through the space of the Picture Book. In analysing these concepts within the Picture Book, I do not do so through a geographer's eye, but through an illustrator's polymathic understanding of how text, image, cartography and the creative process of engineering a picture book works.

#### Cartography, an Art or a Science, and its Relevance to the Picture Book Maker

The International Cartographic Society defined Cartography as a science in 1949; an art, science and technology in 1973 and neither an art or a science in 1995, (J. B. Krygier, 1995), whilst Dr. Keith Harries in *Mapping Crime: Principle and Practice* states:

In cartography, as in medicine, art and science are inseparable. The perfect map blends art and science into an effective tool of visual communication.

We are very much aware that spatial awareness benefits from visual methodology such as illustration and therefore, one would think, cartography in supporting various processes of understanding and knowledge construction, in shaping and clarifying ideas, and in the different ways in which children come to know and re-know the world in which we live. This process is culturally, historically, socially and politically contingent and ever involving, producing new questions, ideas, and issues which continually confront us. Perhaps the whole argument around the reliance of art or science in its relationship to and with Cartography should be discarded, as after all, is it really of benefit to the production of books for children that this paper wishes to concentrate upon. Is a reliance on the art/science dualism such a problematic issue when as an alternative I would suggest that the process of Cartography is part of the illustrator's role as a polymath and therefore doesn't need to be defined as an art or/and science anyway? There seems no benefit in this. Art, Science, Geography, Design are all part of the illustrators polymathic role, the role of design, aesthetics and visual expression that I intend to apply to the project in hand. The term polymathic illustrator in which cartography or in its simplest terms 'map drawing', is central to the extensive knowledge of the polymath, is surely a much more encompassing title and eliminates much of the confusion discussed above. This is enhanced further by a quote from Rory MacLean:

The earliest maps were 'story' maps. Cartographers were artists who mingled knowledge with supposition, memory and fears. Their maps described both landscapes and the events that had taken place in it, enabling travellers to plot a route as well as to experience a story.

## Project Aims

The books to be developed would be story orientated where many maps or map based illustrations are central to that story, and form the 'hook' for the reader, and without which the story couldn't exist or proceed without an understanding, however simple, of how the map directs the plot. I want to develop a work(s) where the maps I create are the story and the story the map. I want the communication, the need to know where those people were going all those years ago, to work both ways, where the reader feels like they are influencing the story through their reading of the maps and at the same time know the maps I have created is taking them on a journey and story over which they may actually have little control at all, yet ultimately understanding the relationship of the cities, to landscapes to rivers, to mountains and finally streets to the places we live. The children will come to appreciate the complex yet mysterious world in which they live ultimately creating a tangible order yet inviting them to explore further.

The project has three aims, to create a 'work(s)' for young audiences where narrative and cartography are central; to connect character, space and setting through the symbiotic relationship between narrative and cartography where the narrative, image and space of the creation are integrated with each other to the extent that they are intertwined and of equal importance; to create maps where 'spatialness' must be of cartographic value and therefore able to be read as such.

Within these aims are four objectives, to develop imaginative spaces, text, stories, images and therefore maps that are believable to both the targeted child audience, cartographers, geographers, librarians and adults, etc. in their reading of the artifacts produced; to break down and challenge what a 'Picture Book' is and debate how it is read and how it might or could be read in order to deliver the artifact(s), thereby encompassing size, scale, format and layout, whilst debating the physical notion of page turns and facing pages; to question what a book and map are, and finally to develop a sense of story, space and narrative that will engage the child reader, in which they can lose themselves in the story whilst finding their identity through empathy with the hero, protagonist, antagonist of other characters.

## Maps in Books throughout History

Maps, as an illustrative device have been used in Children's Books since the late 1800's when a map was incorporated in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Within Children's Picture Books however, has the notion of the map ever really been seen as important let alone dominant? I would be bold enough to say that because the Picture Book is largely for children in their formative and infant years the map is generally forgotten and only introduced as a means of illustrating text in initial chapter books for the junior, post seven years age group, where they provide a visual aide memoire, supporting and moving the text forward in much the same way pictures in picture books do, whilst increasing the older child's sense of enjoyment and comprehension in adventure, fantasy and 'other world' based books in particular. Books by their very nature are objects of design. Within that design we are considering the highest levels of practice, for why should a book aimed at a young

audience be any less beautiful and interesting than one aimed at a much older adult target market. My work has been devoted to this as I am passionate about the quality of this literature and about the kind of knowing and understanding that can only come from achieving the highest levels of creative practice. It is within this need to develop what seems a forgotten skill in cartography within the Picture Book market that I propose to investigate what books are out there that use maps and for what reason, which books develop a story based on maps that are integral or otherwise to the narrative and whether there is a need to develop books that use cartography as its central focus and not just to complement the text or as a visual reference or frontispiece to a beautiful story, therefore building the narrative around or as a consequence of the map rather than vice versa.

The map in books for slightly older readers is less likely to be drawn by the author/illustrator but more likely by a cartographer, especially in books of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, therefore this sets another hurdle for the picture book maker to overcome in their polymathic role. Children might also be less literate in terms of cartographic recognition, therefore there has to be a simplified way of introducing cartographic referencing and devices, however, I wonder whether the modern child on the other hand brings to their reading a much more sophisticated understanding of aesthetics which makes up for their possible lack of Cartographic signs, symbols and devices. What we think children know and what they might need to know in order to start an early cartographic education may be more than simply spatial awareness. In this instance the map might not be of the form or in the format we have traditionally recognised it.

I need to ask whether any maps I create need to span large areas, geographical parts of the world only, to be objects or images for reference and reinforcement or whether through the use of colour, form, format, detail, shade, style, fore, middle and background and other illustrative devices combined with the more cartographic terms, signs, symbols, scale and line can be a cartographic/artistic device on which to build a narrative. I also need to consider how maps are reflected in children's books of today. These would include fantasy books, books based in reality and then a combination of both of these alongside new ideas I wish to explore.

#### Maps, Cognition and Pedagogy

Exploring the role of maps in picturebooks, Bettina Kummerling-Meibauer and Jorg Meibauer in *Maps in picturebooks: cognitive status and narrative fiction state*:

On one hand, maps in picturebooks are an input for children to develop map knowledge. On the other hand, children need map knowledge in order to be able to interpret maps in picturebooks.

and go on to ask therefore...

How can map learning from picturebooks happen when maps are part of a story? Does the narrative character foster the acquisition of map knowledge and support the child's capacity to create mental maps? Or does it, quite on the contrary, hinder this development?

They continue to distinguish between several picture book ‘types’ that focus on the narrative functions and genres of maps. The category that fits most closely with my aspirations is their classification (h), picturebooks that show maps as essential part of the illustrations. This is further clarified as:

Picture books that show more than one map often insert maps into the pictures. The maps are then either part of the picture or they are separated by black outlines and set apart, usually in the upper corner of the image.

Maps encourage us as readers to be part of the story; we want to join the characters in their adventures and travel to places that we would love to visit, places that we have never heard of and places that just don’t exist, well only on a page and between the covers of a book. I imagine the wonderment children felt when, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century one of the first storybook maps to be published was Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. Maps are the gateway to different lands, stories and people therefore different landscapes, seascapes and cultures and because the maps invite us into the story we as Picture Book makers want to utilise them more and more in our work so that the illustrations that follow don’t just move the text forward but somehow allow the reader to move far beyond the actual text and story itself in a profound and meaningful way, so transporting the reader to a place beyond their own experience whilst encouraging imaginative encounters that form the basis of a lifelong passion for reading, maps and the book.

If we are to convey the joy of story and therefore place, location and period, then maps must allow us to interact with that ‘someplace, sometime and somewhere’ based on how the narrative sits within the book and in the real and imaginary world. Peter Greenaway succinctly states:

A map tells you where you’ve been, where you are, and where you’re going  
— in a sense it’s three tenses in one.

Maps are used not only to show the reader where the story takes place but can also be used as a device to move the plot forward through one or more characters. However, what about books where there is no map. Is the map consciously left out simply to make the reader imagine these lands in their heads, conjuring up their own mountain ranges, woods and forests, rivers and buildings? How does the function of a map manipulate or influence the narrative and illustrations dependent on where and how it is placed within the text and more generally the book itself? Is its use purely decorative or does it have a purpose, and does the reader understand that purpose? As I am particularly interested in maps and Picture Books I also compare the placement and use of the map with

spatialisation and determine its significance in supporting young readers in discerning, mastering and forming, shaping and understanding the notion of space within and outside the map whilst embracing, understanding and championing both text and illustrations. In depicting space I also show place and provide the clues that a cartographer would automatically show in a map, in the same way that I would provide clues within the illustrations to move the narrative forward. The narrative I create must exploit the potential of the maps and vice versa whilst associating the maps with the actual mapping process within the narrative from which they emerge.

### Maps, Books and Cartographic Skills

There are books for younger children where the required aim is to teach map skills. The *Once Upon a Time Map Book* authored by B.G Hennessy and illustrated by Peter Joyce is a good example of this. Authored for an audience of Upper Infant/Junior school age, therefore spanning National Curriculum Key stages one and two it explores well known fairy tales through maps. It navigates its way through Aladdin's kingdom before rising to the top of Jack's beanstalk and then exploring the quirkiness of Alice's Wonderland. Peter Pan's Neverland is surveyed through its physical geography much like the Land of Oz seen through Dorothy's eyes and finally the bewitching landscape that captivated Snow White. All of the maps feature a compass, letters and numbers and given routes to help you navigate your way through six fold out maps with guides and clear, simple directions. It is a fun way in which to introduce maps to children and keeps the story at the heart of the skill set being learned whilst remembering always that the story might ultimately become one of memory and nostalgia and of course, childhood.

'Maps' by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski allows us as readers to imagine. The book opens up possibilities of travel and adventure to places we may only dream of or as young children places we have never seen or heard about, filled with wonder and bringing them closer. We are asked to submerge ourselves into more than fifty sumptuous maps that not only include our cartographic expectations but show us animal and plant life of the region, culture and indigenous peoples, political facts and places of interest all bound in colourful double page spreads celebrating everything that could possibly be construed as cartographic.

Huw Lewis-Jones edited the *Writer's Map* (2018) and looks at maps in terms of the journeys writers make. Each chapter discusses the maps that are actually present in their books but also the way maps have inspired and influenced them in their writing. It exposes the artistry in shaping their ideas to ultimately tell their tale. It discusses the places these writers describe from a geographic stance and also the worlds they inhabit, that come to life on the page yet within where their mind dwells as they write. From Pullman to MacFarlane; Reeve to Mina and Mitchell they all have one thing in common, Cartophily and its importance for each and every one of them in their need to embrace Cartography as a necessity to their writing, drawing and illustration and journey in creating their books and films. The examples of maps and map related images is vast, adventure maps; fantasy maps; the Atlas; Harry Potter's Marauders map, as well as maps from literary and children's classics and fairy-tales, however, we close the cover of this book knowing that the map itself might be the starting point, as in Pullman's story, or

equally the means by which to tell a tale using Cartography as its central theme. The fact this is mentioned more or less within each writer's experience only serves to make tangible the need in my mind for more narratives for younger children that embody the whole cartographic issue as both illustrator, scientist, artist, graphic designer but ultimately the Picture Book Maker Polymath.

Moving back to the idea of spatialisation, there are Picture Books for very young readers that really help them understand their way in the world through direction, distance, time and place and understand the way we describe that 'route' from A to B and the numerous deviations that might challenge us in between. It is these books and those that I wish to explore as Picture Book Maker myself that allow children to picture and understand location and locations of objects, places and their relationship to each other through the pathways they select as they move, literally helping them figure out where places, objects, countries and cities are in relation to one another and how that relates to the child's place in the world. These include...*Henry's Map* by David Elliot; *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins, *Katy and the Big Snow* by Virginia Lee Burton, *Miranda the Explorer* by James Mayhew. Some books are more relevant in examining scenes, landscapes and seascapes from a variety of angles and perspectives, where close attention is needed to the detail on these maps in order to decipher their meaning whether reading aloud or to themselves or being read to by another. These books might include those such as *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* which encourages the child to empathise with the family in retracing their steps home whilst being totally aware of their surroundings such as the 'swishy swashy grass', the 'splash splosh' of the water, 'squelch, squerch' of the mud, 'stumbling' through the forest, the 'swirling and whirling' snowstorm and then 'tiptoeing' into the cave before... well, we all know what happens then! But we can clearly see how retracing ones steps allows children to engage and learn about spatial awareness. Mapping these stories introduces children to map making and consequently map reading. In interpreting maps they are introduced to direction in the form of a compass, scale and distance underpinning a new literacy in Cartography.

Nick Butterworth's 'After the Storm' (1992) and 'The Secret Path' (1994), part of the Percy's Park series, both contain maps that introduce scale at the end of each story in the form of a poster. In 'After the Storm' this takes the form of a tree house where all manner of animals live whilst 'The Secret Path' introduces children to the notion of direction in the form of a large maze. These elements are intrinsic to the story but at the same time are separated from the story as they are pasted to the cover. The story can be read without the 'maps' but equally help the readers understanding of the story when used with it. Would the story and the use of maps, along with the devices inherent in them, be better utilised as a continuous element of the stories rather than a 'final activity'?

Beatrice Alemagna's 'A Lion in Paris' tells the story of, 'as foreigners', being wanted in a new city through the character of the lion. He arrives at the Gare de Lyon, Paris from the 'grasslands' and after wondering around Paris and at times feeling a little homesick he comes to know and love the city through places such as the Tour Eiffel, the Sacre Coeur, the Musee de Louvre, the Ponts des Arts, St Germain des-Pres, Chatelet, Beaubourg, Place Denfert and the Gare de Lyon and decides to stay and call it home. This book represents his journey through a map, the 'Plan de Paris' on the front endpaper. The

'plan' is based around the River Seine although this is not noted and shows the reader the lion's route from his 'arrivee' at the Gare de Lyon to the Place Denfert Rochereau. Would the existence of the map on a more regular basis throughout the book have made a difference to the story for the reader, an interesting dichotomy?

#### Cartography, Distance, Scale and Direction

I decide to read *We're going on a Bear Hunt* as a basis for map work with a class of twenty- four, five year olds. In four groups of six we were able to draw very different 'A0' maps that told the story of the family of five's adventure through the changing environments towards the bear's cave. To my surprise the children had little trouble differentiating distance. It wasn't until we discussed this that they began to think exactly how long the field and forest were, how wide the river was etc. They were able to communicate distance physically, using their arms, linking arms or in comparison to their classroom and playground. Whilst the scale of 30cms (a ruler) to a km was obviously beyond their reach the actual knowledge that the map was smaller than the places they were depicting was generally understood. We also discussed direction before they started. This was more of an issue than distance. However, whilst the maps the children created generally followed a straight or circular line (with good reason) right and left are still difficult concepts to grasp for this age group, therefore north, south, east and west were obviously a difficult notion with which to create the journey on the map. Using a clock and numbers did however, overcome some of these difficulties. Some of the children were more than able to say that the forest was at 'three' from the starting point, the cave at 'eight' and so on and all staff agreed that the stepping stone from this concept to a compass would not be a difficult hurdle to overcome with a few more sessions.

The children also looked at the beautiful book mentioned earlier 'A Lion in Paris', and considered distance and direction in a similar way to the work we had completed with 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'. The map on its endpapers gave us a basis on which to discuss the lion's journey. The children enjoyed this activity but bringing the map into the story on every page and not have to look back helped their understanding of the lions journey and therefore his feelings as he discovered new places and people. A more detailed map may well have induced more cartographic experiences and allowed the children to fully understand the city as opposed to just focusing on the emotions of the lion. Further sessions with five year olds, reception and pre-schoolers will be a welcome experience in creating the books I feel I want to create for these children.

#### Conclusion

However, I want what I do to be somewhat different. I want Cartography to be a way children of very young ages make sense of their worlds...and also believe that with the right picture story book they can do this in infancy to a certain level but certainly as a solid foundation to more intricate and complicated work, ideas and devices in the junior and senior sectors of their education. Most of all this type of Picture Story Book needs to be fun, and it is the combination of everything we have discussed that sets the scene for the Cartographic Picture Book Maker Polymath with skills as a wordsmith, illustrator, map maker, artist, scientist, geographer and graphic designer to create a Picture Story Book with a strong narrative that incorporates maps and mapping as a core element

throughout the narrative. This narrative and the maps that support it and vice versa contains a story that, as some of the earliest maps have done, shows how societies are ordered, how people and objects relate to each other and how the reader can empathise with the complex and, at an early age, mysterious world they are trying to find their way in. The map helps in ordering this information in a way that this audience can understand whilst still stretching them towards attaining further and higher goals. Ultimately, I 'hold all the cards'. As a polymathic Picture Book maker I am able to make all the decisions without being labeled cartographer or illustrator. However, once the story is written and in the child's domain I want the child to feel they are in control of their destiny within the imaginary or everyday land the storybook depicts. Whilst the story and the maps will ask and then lead the reader in different directions, creating various scenarios, the child's curiosity means that they require an ending or conclusion, open or closed, that all those questions asked at the beginning of this paper, when the books were just the essence of an idea in my head, those problems posed so long ago are answered through my imagination and of course the element of story, wonderful story!

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