



Mapping the Passage of Time in Anne Herbauts' *Monday*

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss how Belgian author/illustrator Anne Herbauts (2010) playfully and poetically spatialises the passage of time in *Monday*, a picturebook for younger readers, taking my cue from Deleuzian theory to suggest how the picturebook approximates a rhizomatic map, always folding and unfolding, evoking the book's central themes of presence, absence, movement, and possibility (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987).

Keywords: Book-as-Map, Deleuze, *Monday*, Picturebook, Time

1. Introduction

This article draws on Deleuzian cartographic theory with a close reading of Anne Herbauts' *Monday* to articulate the concept of picturebook-as-map. Using an interpretative and meditative approach to analysis, I show how the iconotext fulfils a particular function as chronotype, "connecting temporal and spatial relations" (Sundmark, 2014, p. 178). Herbauts' narrative does so most playfully, melding specified passages of time where she depicts seasonal change within the course of a week. This unique temporal melding – a moving together in time – is premised on the creatively nuanced blend of both the visual and verbal narrative as well as the materiality of the book itself. This renders time precarious, complex and open-ended, and further invites a reading experience that moves beyond the written word.

Picturebooks that introduce young reader to concepts of time have a less than easy task. As children's literature critic Bryan Appleyard explains:

[...] children organise their world spatially before they can do it temporally... the acquisition of a time sense during the concrete-operational period requires that they de-centre from their dependence on a spatially concrete understanding of the world (Sainsbury, 2005, p. 158).

I press on a particularly compelling definition of "picturebook" to begin: "foremost an experience for the child, as an art form it hinges... on the drama of the turning page" (Graham, 2005, p. 210). This notion of play and performativity is a neat gloss for the creative agency of both map and mapper, as conceived by James Corner (1999) and others (Dodge et al., 2009; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007; Kitchin et

al., 2012). Indeed, maps can be understood as rich narrative forms, suggestive of multiple spatial stories that usher in understanding the world in relational terms; relations which are active, ongoing and processual activities. Like mapping, reading is concerned with making connections and eliciting interpretations. This creative potential of both maps and picturebooks underscores the importance of fostering pedagogies that enhance children's agentic abilities to explore and make sense of their world in ways that are both non-linear and lively. As I outline in this article, such pedagogies are crucial modes of subjectivation; i.e. the continual transference from our being "actual" material selves to entities with virtually "becoming" natures, understood by the Deleuzian (1980/1987) refrain: "being is becoming".

2. Picturebook-as-map: A close reading

Like other writers for children that deal with loneliness and loss, Herbauts chooses to anthropomorphise the central character, the penguin Monday, which provides a degree of distance useful when dealing with such sensitive topics (Reynolds, 2010, p. 95). We encounter the eponymous hero where we first peer through the cutout shape of a little home, shown in Figure 1.

The conflation of interiority and exteriority enacted through the cutout brings Monday into proximity to Deleuzian theory in two key ways. Firstly, by inviting us to peer in at Monday from outside the home, the book assembles itself as rhizomatic map, which is to say "a book exists only through the outside and on the outside... the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world..." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 4). It is the strategy of the rhizome to draw connections, hence its potency: the rhizome both impels and "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains" (*ibid.*, p. 12). The authors develop this point using the model of a "tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive..." (*ibid.*). In the case of *Monday*, the connection drawn in and through the playful tactility of the front cover design is an invitation

to engagement, and the reader's sense of the story begets a sense of intimacy from the outset. This in turn foretells the more intimate meaning (and meaningful intimacy) to be discovered by child and adult as they map the nature of Monday's becoming in time with/in his landscape.



Figure 1. *Monday* frontispiece. Source: Herbauts, 2009.

We next discover a key motif inside Monday's home that portends the mode (or map) of thought throughout the book. In peering through the title page, we find a piece of blue cloth casually folded upon a chair. Upon turning the page – effectively "crossing the threshold" into the private and domestic sphere – we discover Monday cheerfully stitching folds of cloth. Those familiar with Deleuze's (2003, p. 14) work will know that it abounds in "folds" and "folding", and he borrows line mappings of the kind shown in Figure 2 from artist Paul Klee's rendering of the "active line", offering these as interpretative models for the fold.

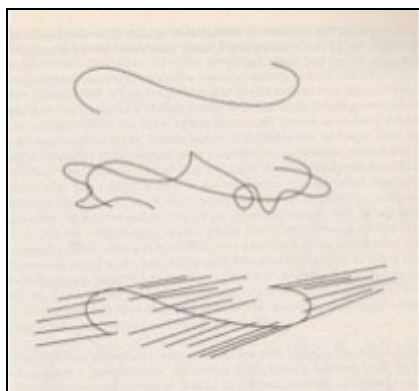


Figure 2. Sketch. Source: Deleuze, 2003, p. 14.

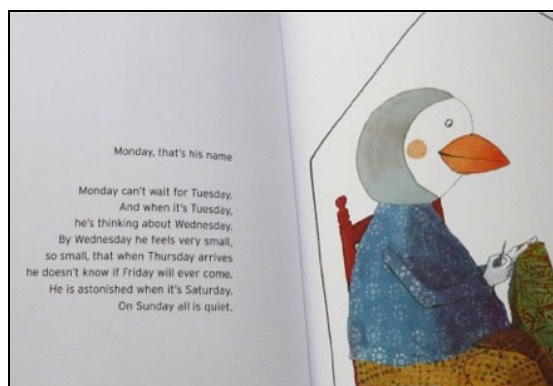


Figure 4. Monday at home. Source: Herbauts, 2009.

Let us look again at the fold upon Monday's chair: see how the shadows accentuate its form, shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The cloth fold (detail). Source: Herbauts, 2009.

As Tom Conley (2005, pp. 172-173) explains, "the fold refers both to a twist of fabric and to the origins of life", given the commingling of "lightness and density" implicit in both. He elucidates in terms of the implicit vitality of the fold: "when a doubling produces and outer and an inner surface... a new relation with being is born" (*ibid.*) Intriguingly, Conley further reveals an etymology of doubling (from the French "doublure"), which can refer to lining stitched into a piece of clothing (*ibid.*, p. 170), akin to that presented at the outset in Monday's tale.

This curious contour has various modalities, from "the fold of our material selves, our bodies to the folding of time, and truth" (O'Sullivan, 2011). Simon O'Sullivan speculates that, "subjectivity might be understood as precisely a topology of these different kinds of folds" (*ibid.*), where the fold posits vectors that direct our relation to ourselves. As Conley (2010, p. 114) explains further, "subjectivity becomes an ongoing negotiation of things perceived, both consciously and unconsciously, within and outside the body". We can understand the fold as akin to a map of the kind that portends "unfolding agency" active within the world (after Corner, 1999, p. 214) – one that renounces simplistic dualities of "interiority and exteriority, appearance and essence, surface and depth", for as O'Sullivan (2011, p. 1) notes: "the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a fold of the outside". This flux of becoming – framed earlier as subjectivation – is ongoing in time. Sense of time and sense of self are indelibly linked: time underpins our changeful lives. This is foregrounded in Herbaut's choice of naming, insofar as *Monday* is derived from the French and Old English "Moon's day" – that pagan symbol of flux and change.

Pressing on the significance of naming, Heidegger proposes that humans are naturally placed "within time", and to understand our place therein, we look to signs (words) like "now" and "then", and indeed "yesterday" and "tomorrow"; that is, Monday's two close friends (Sainsbury, 2005, pp. 156-157). Language helps us acquire time sense. The weekly round

troubles Monday however, and induces fretful reflections linked to embodiment and affect. The passage below narrates a growing sense of disquiet, for example, his feeling “very small” on Wednesday, and his “astonishment” at the arrival of Saturday (Figure 4).

Monday can't wait for Tuesday./And when it's Tuesday./He's thinking of Wednesday./By Wednesday he feels very small,/so small, that when Thursday arrives/he doesn't know if Friday will ever come./He is astonished when it's Saturday./On Sunday all is quiet (Herbauts, 2010, p. 1).

Thereafter, the child reader encounters the seasons: those “tutelary spirits” that append each page, evoking the unity of natural laws: solar cycle; lunar cycle; time and space.



Figure 5. Summer (detail). Source: Herbauts, 2009.

Like Monday, they too are embodied. The seasons move towards Monday, and being thus attuned to their bodies, Monday himself energetically perceives what Deleuzian critic Francois Zourabichvili (1996, p. 197) describes

as “the very force of existence of things, the dynamism of space and time that insists within them and that they affirm...”. Herbauts makes a point of naming these forces (e.g. “wind” and “sun”), as we see in Figures 5-7, and further illustrates how nature’s forces play in synergy with the fold of the self, i.e. Monday as living present (Figures 6 and 7).

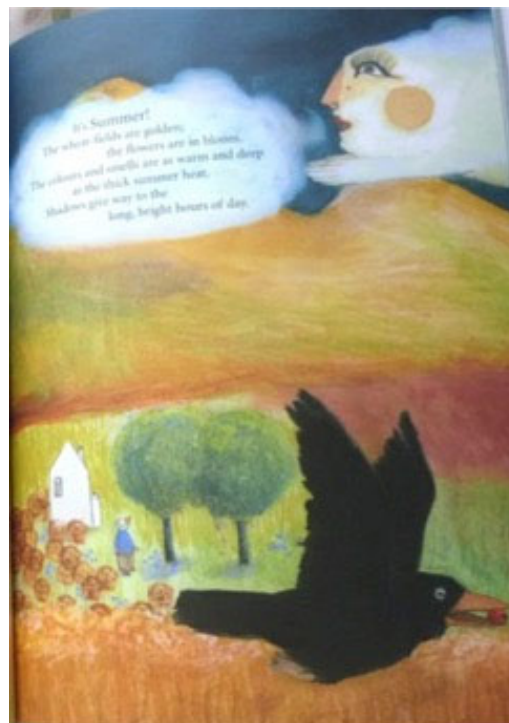


Figure 6. Spring (detail). Source: Herbauts, 2009.

Notice how the season’s breeze past Monday within this literary landscape in fluid linear movement against the backdrop of the vast mountain range, rising and falling in peaks and troughs as shown in Figure 8.

This movement connotes flux: as Aristotle thought, time is measured by comparison with other motions; likewise, other motions are measured by time, like sunrises, sunsets and seasons (Thomas, 1999, p. 308).

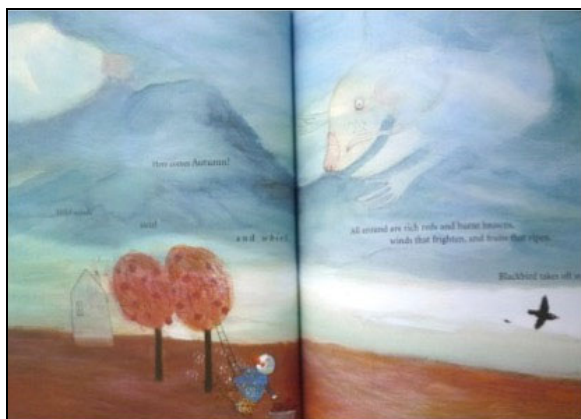


Figure 7. Autumn. Source: Herbauts, 2009.

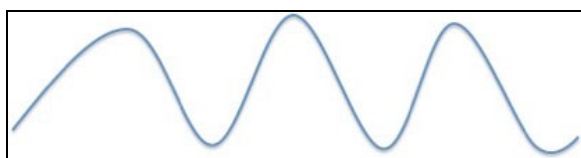


Figure 8. Seasonal movement.
Source: Sketch by the Author.

Monday lives and moves in relation to the seasons, and his daily routine incorporates elements of his changing natural environment—like apple-picking in autumn – allowing the child reader to chart both visual repetitions and differences within these “scenes”. I use the term “scene” deliberately in order to press on James Corner’s (1999, p. 215) notion of the surface of the map that functions akin to a “staging ground” or a “theatre of operations upon which the mapper collects, connects, marks, masks, relates and generally explores”. Monday’s landscape emerges as a similar site of discovery for the child reader/mapper. Eagle-eyed readers might spot that not only does the foliage change in the two trees by Monday’s house, the blackbird – a constant throughout – carries different things in his beak (see Figures 6 and 8). To this end, Monday’s embodied doings in these seasonal scenes (always “home” and yet always different) reminds us that difference and repetition together constitute our existence, which is to say “Life exists only in being differentiated” (Zourabichvili, 1996, p. 195).

When Winter arrives however, Monday’s house blows away. The weight of the subsequent

pages are noticeably thinner compared to those at the beginning of the tale – there are in fact five different weights of paper used in the book as we journey through the heady lushness of spring through muted autumnal browns and into the chill of winter. Herbauts further plays with materiality and tactility where she uses a braille-like paper effect to create an impression of Monday’s presence-as-erasure in a small snow pile: an absent presence made discoverable by touch, where the reader actively feels the passage of the present into the literary landscape, projected from the map surface (Figures 9-11).



Figure 9. Winter. Source: Herbauts, 2009.



Figure 10. Monday in snow (detail).
Source: Herbauts, 2009.



Figure 11. Monday's Disappearance.
Source: Herbauts, 2009.

Corner (1999, p. 215) tells us that “one can put one’s finger on a map and trace out a particular route... the map projecting a mental image onto the spatial imagination”. Yet the book-as-map displaces the child’s dependence on exclusively spatial awareness. These pages effectively become a materialisation of an affect that could not be fully expressed in text or image, leading to further reflection on the predicament of Monday’s own life passage. In Deleuzian terms, Felicity J. Colman (2005, p. 11) explains affect as “the change that occurs when bodies come into contact”. This change explains how the nature of existence emerges across the encounter. When the reader feels Monday’s form in the snow they make an affection of their own body upon the penguin. This affection impels actualisation of the “state of the thing”; i.e. the child’s contemplation (Zourabichvili, 1996, p. 197). The artful form and indeed the tactility of the book is key here: “through art we realise that affects can be detached from their temporal and geographic origins and become independent entities” (Colman, 2005, p. 12). In *Monday*, affect in turn *effects* contemplation on death and the passage across. Where text falls away entirely as in Figure 11 above, time endures *differently*. Although Yesterday and Tomorrow perceive that Monday is lost, through touch the child reader can sense Monday’s proximity to his friends during their sorry search (Figure 11). Hereupon the snow transforms the topography – but the topology is not redundant. Rather, Monday’s presence – hidden but nonetheless

retrievable to the touch – effects a topology of thought, insofar as thinking effects a “fold to double the Outside with a coextensive inside... a topology by which inner and outer spaces are in contact with each other” (Conley, 2005, p. 113). In Monday, these “spaces” connote his being within the landscape – on first sight, empty and silent. Conley remarks further that in terms of knowledge, “to think is to see and to speak”, and in so doing “thinking makes seeing and speaking reach their own limits” (*ibid.*). However in breaking the fourth wall, i.e. communicating the passage of the present by playing with the material plane of the page, Herbauts invites her readers to sense a curious coupling of proximity and distance regarding the passage of life. That is, though Monday’s embodied “being” is so close to the reader, encased in the snowy braille-like mound as it were, his life has moved already towards a distant ending. James Joyce evokes this haunting symmetry of distance and proximity at the close of *Dubliners*: across the city, the snow is “falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead” (p. 96).

We subsequently see Monday disappear entirely. The departure of Yesterday and Tomorrow (Figure 12) probe us to contemplate the memory of their friend, their footprints complementing the contours of the cloud that tears darkly through the sky.



Figure 12. Leaving Monday. Source: Herbauts, 2009.

The appearance of “Next Monday” thereafter, a seeming doppelganger framed within the familiar home (Figure 13), evokes the mesmeric symmetry of Joyce’s snowfall and more: “An inside and an outside and a past (memory) and a present (subjectivity)” as “two sides of a single surface” (Conley, 2005, p. 111).



Figure 13. Next Monday. Source: Herbauts, 2009.

In conceiving the past and present thus, Deleuze was indebted to Foucault’s notion of history, that is, a “doubling of an emergence” (*ibid.*, 110). Next Monday’s striking similarity to his forebearer reminds us how history might shape “the configurations of how people live and act in the present and the future” (*ibid.*) — critical for our process of subjectivation. “Next Monday” becomes *Monday anew*, suggestive of Deleuzian vitalism as Žižek (2004, p. 28) sees it: “‘life’, a ‘new name for becoming’” is “the only true encompassing whole, the One-ness, of Being itself”. Yet it is difficult to easily distinguish one Monday from the next, given how closely they seem to interrelate — neither overwhelms the other. Nor does Herbauts

account for *how* this change may become apparent: she simply discloses that Next Monday feels “a little different”, thus leaving readers questioning what that difference may be; an open if baffling provocation as to the symmetry and specificity of time.

3. Conclusions

In summation: in *Monday*, Herbauts evocatively communicates a concept of time that goes beyond learning a specific vocabulary; i.e. days of the week or months of the year. The picturebook engages reader in question-posing, making full use of the materiality of the book itself — including page weight and texture — to encourage a tactile plotting of change, developing their “capacity for poetic searching” as they journey with Monday through this uncertain terrain (Driggs Wolfenbarger and Sipes, 2007, p. 280). Compellingly, we come to realise that the book-as-map charts more than one passage of time. Within his “week”, Monday has experienced a sweeping across of four seasons: a compression of a yearly cycle within just seven days, made comprehensible by the effect of the cycle on the landscape. Monday’s fictional world of a “week” is thus proven to expand; it is anything *but* small and circumscribed. Next Monday’s emergence further fosters in the reader this sense of expansiveness and potentiality. Perhaps most importantly, through the experience of reading, touching, sensing, the reader comes to question not only their own “being there” in time, but also the nature of *how we come to know*, in terms of seeing, sensing, feeling and being moved: where sense of self is emergent both with/in and beyond language.

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