

MA Contemporary Dialogues
Major Project Report

ME & YOU

Joshua Rush 2022

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WORD COUNT: 5,551

Prologue

The focus of my major final project began within an 'other'. As I grieved for my best friend Dylan and transitioned into a life without him I wondered if the feeling of sadness and pain would ever cease or resolve itself. Growing up as a catholic in Northern Ireland as tradition dictated, I never connected with and doubted these traditions that were given to me by someone else. But, because of this innate Catholic sense I looked for something deeper. I wanted to change or extend the meaning of these ideas about god and death. Where had my friend gone? Where did he go when he passed?

Since his passing, I increasingly appreciate Dylan's continued role in my life. Although not with me physically, my continued dialogue with him shone a different light on what his death meant – a renewal rather than an end. My friend not entirely gone, nor still, only changed as, "people do not exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world. They, too, are incomplete, they also die and are revived and renewed" (Bakhtin, 1984, pg.12).

Renewed through myself, the other, and through connected people, places, and feelings.

The work of M.M. Bakhtin and theories such as Dialogism and the Other has aided my exploration of my friend's death in this way. My encounter with his work has lowered all that is abstract, spiritual and acting as a model to respect to the material level. A level that is experienced and not arbitrarily perceived. Much like the concept of Bakhtin's 'Grotesque

body', it is through the lived experience and social exchange I found genuine meanings that began to resolve Dylan's death. I began to understand the relational self as a sign, one that is always changing, never complete and that can have many signifiers other than physicality.

'Dialogism' and its concepts like, Heteroglossia and Carnivalisation, emphasize 'being', as a shared event. Bakhtin uses the Russian word 'sobytie', 'so', as in 'co', and 'Bytie' as in 'Being', giving 'Co-being' (Holquist and Bakhtin, 2002, pg.25). I appreciated Dylan's essence, heart and soul, was not limited to his individual self rather shared and unfinalised through the ever evolving "fullness of life"; through the 'Co-'of being. (Roth, 2009, pg.215) Dylan is me every time I watch the sport we watched together. He is his mother and the stories she tells of him, he is the blades of grass that he played football on, and he is the smell of the Chinese takeaway religiously ordered every weekend. The passing of his physical body hasn't limited his relational self, which is intertwined in the experience of everything and everyone else he interacted with.

The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed.

(Bakhtin, 1984, pg.12)

As an Illustrator, I wanted to anchor my knowledge and skills with these theories, considering how they could encounter. During the explorative module, I began investigating how I could do this, making abstract mix media works portraying dialogue between two narratives of my conscious self and unconscious other in me. Following this, I developed this

into an animation that focused on my changing relation to a post-Covid world, manipulating sound and image to create a narrative to this effect. This ultimately led me to making a picture book narrative that explored myself as much as the other through Bakhtin's Dialogism and the death of my friend Dylan.

Introduction

I, myself, could have better transitioned through the grief and change that Dylan's death brought if themes like these had been explored more openly with me as a child. I feel I could have built up a resilience or coping mechanisms that connected my imagination, allowing me to look beyond Catholicism to create new meanings. This is why I am making a picture book, to provide an opportunity for at least one child in a similar experience to explore and discuss these themes through an imaginative narrative. In addition, the making of the book is a way for me to reflect on the death of, and the relationship with, my friend.

The book's concept finds its roots in Bakhtinian theory and then explored within the elements of the picture book and its story. The concept is extended to the book as a dialogical object to be experienced, often in dialogue with an adult. I begin by looking at the self as a book, a story to be authored before delving into various of the picturebooks' iconic elements, creating a new 'synergy' between Dialogism and picture book theory.

The story of how the protagonist character comes to find and resolve his friend's death is how the book should be experienced by the learning child reading it; in a relational exchange with the other. Similar to how both image and text are co-dependent in interpreting the picturebook story and creating new meanings, these meanings can be extended with a mutual interaction between child, book and adult. "For Bakhtin, there is no novice to be enculturated into the stagnant reality of the well-meaning adult, but a human being who is deeply engaged with others in a mutual encounter" (White, 2016, pg.4).

Chapter 1

The Dialogic Self

The self or I is much like a book, whether that is a picture book or literary fiction, the make-up and understanding of both have similarities. Both people and books have a story to tell, and people help make books, while books help make people. Just as books are written, we too write our own kind of book, not with pen and paper, but with an 'answerability'. Firstly, we humans are answerable through, and in, dialogue with our environment, how we relate to the world around us, and everything in it that addresses us. Each answer I give builds upon the previous, and begins to form an arrangement. The dialogue and relation I form with being, with living life undertakes the likeness of a book, one that Bakhtin allegorises as a novel (Holquist and Bakhtin, 2002, pg.30).

Kristeva (1980 in Sipe 2000, pg.256) coined the term 'intertextuality', used to refer, "not only to the ways in which written and visual texts were interrelated, but also to the text of one's own life, as a collection of various overlapping experiences". Moreover, each person is author of their novel/s, of their experiences and story. Viewing existence like this, an authored response in the form of dialogue with the other, rather than something that is arbitrary, portrays it as a shared event. Thus, the self is shared, in that what makes it up does not come from a single autonomous answer or definition born within itself, but a

multiplicity of answers addressable through the other. Bakhtin makes a similar claim about that of the novel, in regard to novelists' attempts to standardise the novel itself and the definition of it;

Such statements are not attempts to incorporate all the possible variants of the novel into a single eclectic definition, but are themselves part and parcel of the living evolution of the novel as a genre.

(Bakhtin, Holquist and Emerson, 1981, pg.9)

The genre of the novel cannot be defined with one novel, or one definition of it. More, each novel and definition adds to the whole. This is how life evolves, every novel, every life, taking its position in existence, struggles with other novels/lives and adds to living evolution of the world. In addition, this is how I view the making of my picturebook; I cannot claim absolute autonomy over it. Similar to how neither both picture or text cannot be self-sufficient in telling the story, my intentions for the story's meanings are never free from other external influences, and therefore not defining or dominant. More, like Bakhtin's novel, my books' story does not stop with my definition of it, closed off from growth and creativity, rather it is supplemented with every single reader and the book's meanings are extended. Each reader's intentions create new ways in which the book's story can grow and evolve.

If we delve deeper into the self or 'story' behind the creation of my picture book, into my visual style and process, it is evident I am editing all I interact with, through a subjective response. Before I delve into several of the book's elements that form the verbal and visual narrative, I will look at myself, the illustrator who creates these narratives. What constitutes learning to 'see' and forms what is being looked at and 'read'. Similar to a child's hermeneutic reading of a picture book, it requires a constant back and forth between myself and other people and things. Phillpot (1979 in Salisbury and Styles, 2012. pg.56) hypothesises when attempting to describe the ability to 'see', words such as, "'visuacy' or 'picturacy'", idiocies that couple the phrase 'visual literacy' in an attempt to level the dominance of the verbal over visual culture; the skill of reading over seeing.

Moreover, this 'visuacy' is not simply a style of drawing, of individual faculty and skill, but it's also a way of thinking through drawing. It's about establishing artistic vision through the external other and thinking about the subject/s of the work. The subjects in my picture book range from the themes of it like death and change, to social and personal experience, to stylistic idioms of artists, and to a general symbolic order, which Barthes describes as, "a stock of stereotypes (schemes, colours, graphisms, gestures, expressions, arrangements of elements)" (Barthes, 1977, pg. 18).



Figure 5 – Opening Spread. *ME and You*. J.Rush, 2022.



Figure 6 – Night Sky spread. *Me and You*. J.Rush, 2022.

If we stick with this symbolic order and focus on colour, one could see my developed use of it could be influenced by other artists and cultural conventions like these symbols. In the opening spreads of my book, while following where the characters went and exploring their relationship (Fig 2,5,6), I make use of intense coloured double page backgrounds to communicate how both are feeling and depth and intensity of their friendship. The tones of blue in the night sky spread, a colour associated with depth, trust and imagination, reiterate these feelings among the two boys sitting watching the stars. Also, the arrangement of how the boys are positioned on top of a mountain looking at the stars can exaggerate this imagination within the boy's relationship as star gazing is associated with a long history of astronomy and how the Greeks discovered new things about life.

The treatment of the tones of blue partly came through dialogue with other illustrators work and experiencing other picture books first hand, like Jon Klassen's evocative skies in 'The Rock from the Sky' (Fig.7,8). Klassen's "pictorial voice emerges through a lengthy personal dialogue with the real world" (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, pg.56), which forms a subjective awareness of purpose behind the image-making process. It is this, rather than any conscious pursuit of style that dictates the evolution of how an artist 'sees', which I've come to realise about my own process.

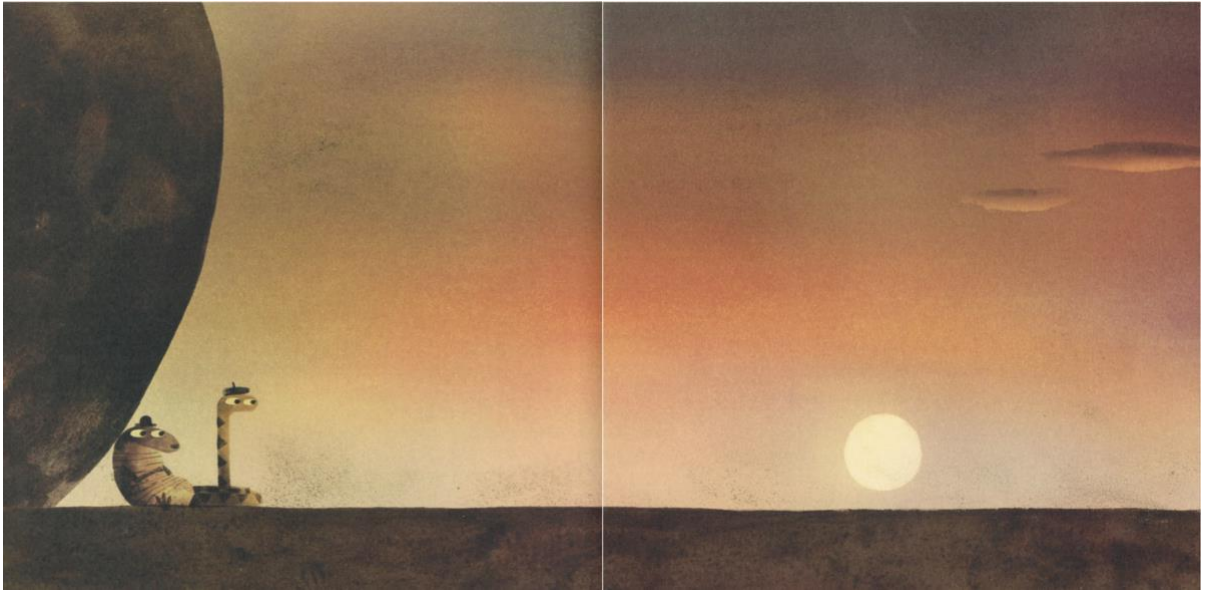


Figure 7 – Klassen, J. *The Rock from the Sky. The Sunset.* Jon Klassen, Candlewick Press, 2021.



Figure 8 – Klassen, J. *The Rock from the Sky. The Night Sky.* Jon Klassen, Candlewick Press, 2021.

Chapter 2

A Dialogic relationship

The picture book has the ability to be extended since it is a multimodal object, in that it combines illustrations and verbal narrative to convey meaning. Bezemer and Kress (2008, in Hassett and Curwood, 2009, pg.272) describe a, “mode as a social and culturally shaped resource for meaning making”, taking formation, for example, in the use of colour, the relative size of image/text, font design and placement, familial and cultural connections, and in the drawings. These can all individually, as well as in combination, be used to express meaning; often communicating on different levels, and to different degrees resulting in what Bakhtin describes as a ‘refracted’ point. Hassett and Curwood (2009) talk of the multimodal nature of the illustrators’ image,

Traditional design elements, such as colour, line, shape, or texture, can be thought of as modes because each design element expresses a level of meaning and a resource for interpretation.

(Hassett and Curwood, 2009)

So, not only are we dealing with these more common modes, we also have this array of visual modes as a means for understanding when ‘reading’ a picture book; and the

potentials are infinite when we think about how every illustrator has a unique way of designing these elements. Each mode is similar to the other Bakhtin conceptualises when talking of the Heteroglossia of dialogism, in that each other (mode) combines with other, others, in a somewhat interconnected web to establish our (the readers') difference, in other words, interpretation. He goes on to state, "the intertwining discourse (ideologies) that build one's own consciousness as internal dialogue. The consciousness is a multiplicity of refractions of discourses with other discourses". (Vaupotic, 2002)

From here we emit, and it is important to realise the dialogic potential of picture books through the multimodal sense in which it is designed, communicated and received. A (child) readers' ability to comprehend and understand can be aided and deepened through a recognition of the multiple elements that can contribute to a more adequate interpretation of the whole image. This interpretation is not just a combination of these interconnecting discourses, but also influenced by temporal and spatial socio-economical views which is most effective in a carnival like state of play.

Bakhtin talks of the Carnival or Carnavalesque, which is essentially a literary mode that 'subverts' and 'liberates' a dominate narrative or norm. However, like everything, it has been conceptualised through the lived experience of the social. It claims a historical & cultural underpinning, as a manifestation of 'folk laughter' and 'folk humour', which embodies a popular folk based culture in the middle ages. Dr Adrian Stevens describes it as "a celebration of freedom[which]enables a new mode of interrelationship between individuals". (Stevens, 2007, pg.1) This can be applied to the relationship between author/illustrator and reader, during and after reading a picture book. Borrowing the

perspective of the other in this act of 'carnavalesque communion', the reader enters this "story space...a fantasy space where the limits of imagination are immeasurable" (Davies, 2022) This allows them to create new meanings from the narrative through subverting and liberating the main narrative of the book.

Moreover, this Carnival or story space has a much wider scope within a picture book narrative compared to more text dominated narratives, because of the "textual gaps...Both words and images leave room for the reader/viewers to fill with their previous knowledge, experience, and expectations" (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, pg.2), resulting in unlimited possibilities for the image-word and text interaction. Recognising this within a picture book or as a consequence of it, could help the reader recognise and play with multiple perspectives which can build on their construction of meanings and understanding. As the (child) reader supplements their own conscious with that of the other, more connections are added to the whole and thus they potentially have a wider vocabulary of meaning to aid their understanding of the things they encounter.



Figure 1 – Birds eye composition. J.Rush, 2022.

If we delve into a particular composition I am working on, we get a better sense of the multi-modal nature of a picture book and the 'carnavalesque' space it creates. Firstly, it is important to recognise the unique set of multi-modal meanings a picture book can offer, due to the dialogic image and text combination, "the co-occurrence of which has the potential to evoke meanings beyond what each mode could signify by itself." (Lysaker and Nie, 2016, pg.42) Thus, the meaning potentials can surpass what a normal mode could signify on its own, due to the negotiation of meaning by the reader not only through modes but across them. This co-operation of the image and text is what opens up these textual gaps that enable the reader's imagination to invent this story space. For example, regarding

the illustration looking down on the boy character lying center composition (Fig 1.). The text reads, "But, still his friend was nowhere to be seen."

There are numerous meaning potentials the reader could choose to start to form the whole picture, beginning with what the words say, and what the picture shows. From the words, it appears the boy is experiencing this loneliness, as he cannot see his friend, amplified by the sad facial and body expression, and the vastness of the space, continuing off page. However, the heart, obvious to particular readers, lingers, shadowing the boy character. This tells a different story, one that seems to "contradict or 'deviate' in feeling from what the words imply", identifying these "'running stories'" (Doonan, 1993, pg.18). This indicates the character may be looking in the wrong place, and looking with the wrong things, while positing the question, is he really alone? The two separate stories of the image and text running in tandem exposes the inadequacy of both by the other. Nodelman (1988) argues that;

When words and pictures combine, irony emerges from the way in which the incompleteness of each is revealed by the differing incompleteness of the other. The theoretically "fierce bad rabbit" in Beatrix Potter's book of that name looks soft and cuddly, anything but the evil creature that the texts refers to.

(cited in Kiefer, 1995, pg.116)

This incompleteness of both is space for the reader to make – up the gap, or as Nicola Davies alludes to, "A space for the child to put themselves". (2022) A space where dialogue happens across modes, between the differing incompleteness of image and text, which "can produce a decisive reply which produces actual changes" (Bakhtin ...), changes that come in

the form of understanding, perspective and relation. This could not be achieved by looking at one element of the composition, the reader needs the other and looks for it in an attempt to achieve the whole image.

What many researchers analysing picture books tend to overlook is the complex nature of aesthetic response, concentrating on cognitive understanding and how meaning is constructed linguistically. They neglect the picture book's most powerful tool, its affective influence on children, how the art within it has the ability to evoke emotions that capture the hearts, as well as the minds of child readers. Exemplification, a term common with picture books, refers to an object that stands for itself, and at the same time, something outside of itself. The reader comes in contact with this in the form of pictorial analogies, which Doonan (1993, pg.42) states, "are the metaphors and similes of painting which enable what is shown to appear as one thing but also carry other meanings." These are found in the ambiguous duplication of lines, shapes and symbols, of parts and patterns in any composition "that give further power through the affinities they make between animate and inanimate objects". (Doonan, 1993, pg.42)

If we take a look at my double spread kite illustration (Fig.2) we can discover the lines of the kite's tail are as chaotically energised, as the sense of movement and velocity natural to the wind. The movement and energy of these details continue the movement of the characters running. The overlapping and intertwining nature of the lines, two of which are held by the two friends, double up to showcase their connectedness, of how they are one in the same, both living through each other. Coupled with the differing opacities of line and deepness of colour and texture, this draws the reader into the background just as it does with the

characters, enhancing this strength and depth of the relationship. These links form meanings that the text does not allude to and they provide psychological links in the reader of the characters' relationship, aiding their understanding of it and the story as a whole.

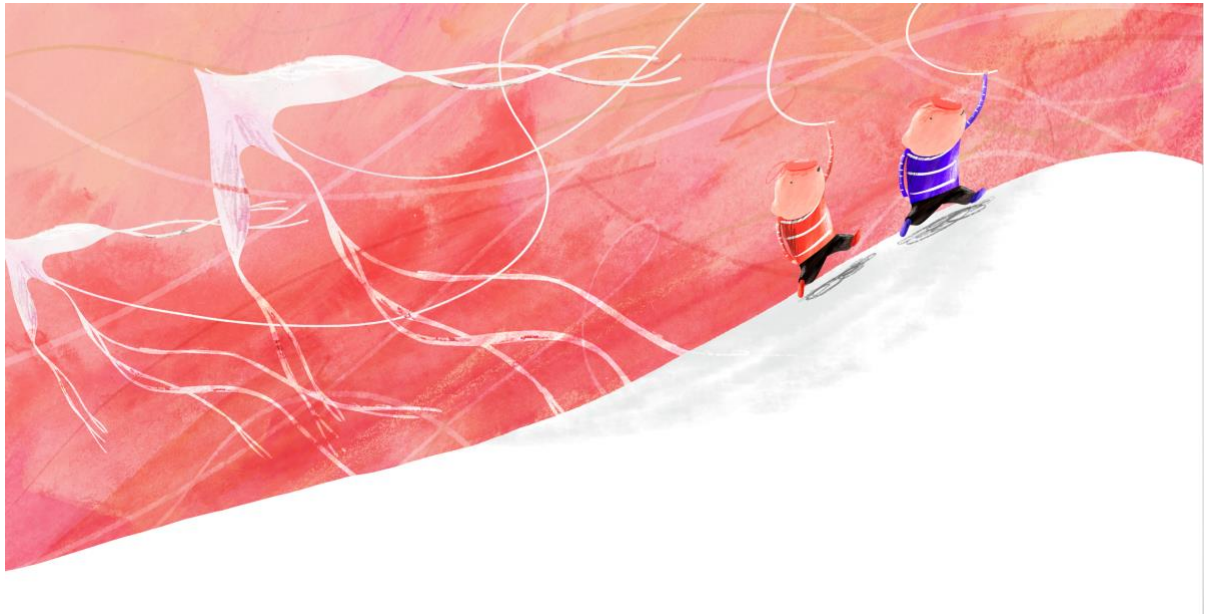


Figure 2 – 'Kite Spread'. *Me and You*. J.Rush, 2022.

These pictorial analogies are just one component in beginning to explore the complexities of aesthetic response. More importantly how these analogies come about and are recognised within the reader is not a concrete, systematic process, especially concerning children. Meaning here is less about how we put words to it, so the reader can organise their feelings, and more how it communicates emotionally on a more intuitive level. This is what an image can do, that a word cannot, as Bakhtin (in Robinson, 2011) states, "the image cannot match the statement function of a text" which is cemented in these metaphors and similes found

within pictures, offering various ways to 'see' or relate. Bakhtin talks of relation as "something that always entails ratio and proportion", emphasising that it "is never static, but always being made or unmade" (Bakhtin and Holquist 2002, pg.29). Moreover, then it is conceivable that how we relate to any picture is never fixed, it is always being made or unmade and these pictorial analogies serve this always oscillating negotiation of meaning.

I attempt to expose these ideas of changeability and differing relation within my book's story, through the search the main boy character begins for his now deceased best friend. What has happened to the friend is not explicitly alluded to and after extensive research that says that this ambiguity around the story's events could cause 'cognitive overload', leading to confusion on the part of the child, I still believe it is the best option in "breaking the conventional and the support of an imaginative perspective" (Burner, 1991). In addition, cognitive building skills and communicating conventionally so that children can decode in a traditional manner isn't what I am focused on with this body of work. More, the sensitive and subtle treatment of my illustrations lends itself to, as Nikolajeva and Scott (2006, pg.21) describe, "tangential pictorial events, (which) are ideally suited to the child's less practiced but perceptive eye".

Furthermore, just like the reader the boy character isn't exactly sure what happened to his friend. The narrative perspective presented to the reader through the counterpoint between textual and iconic narratives, the 'iconotext' actively involves them in the unfolding development of the boy character's search. They have the opportunity to position themselves as the protagonist, another reason influencing my decision to give the characters no names. For example, if we look at two illustrations (Fig. 3,4), the first when

the best friend is alive and the second when he has passed, there is a change in how the protagonist interacts with his friend and therefore how he relates to him. What was once their favourite thing to do, “to talk and tell stories”, is how the protagonist now remembers his friend, a perspective that only comes about through the iconic narrative, between the tension of text and image. This isn’t something that is told to a passive reader by the author but, rather something they could discover in real time through the protagonist character; and more so, a discovery that they could take their own path to.

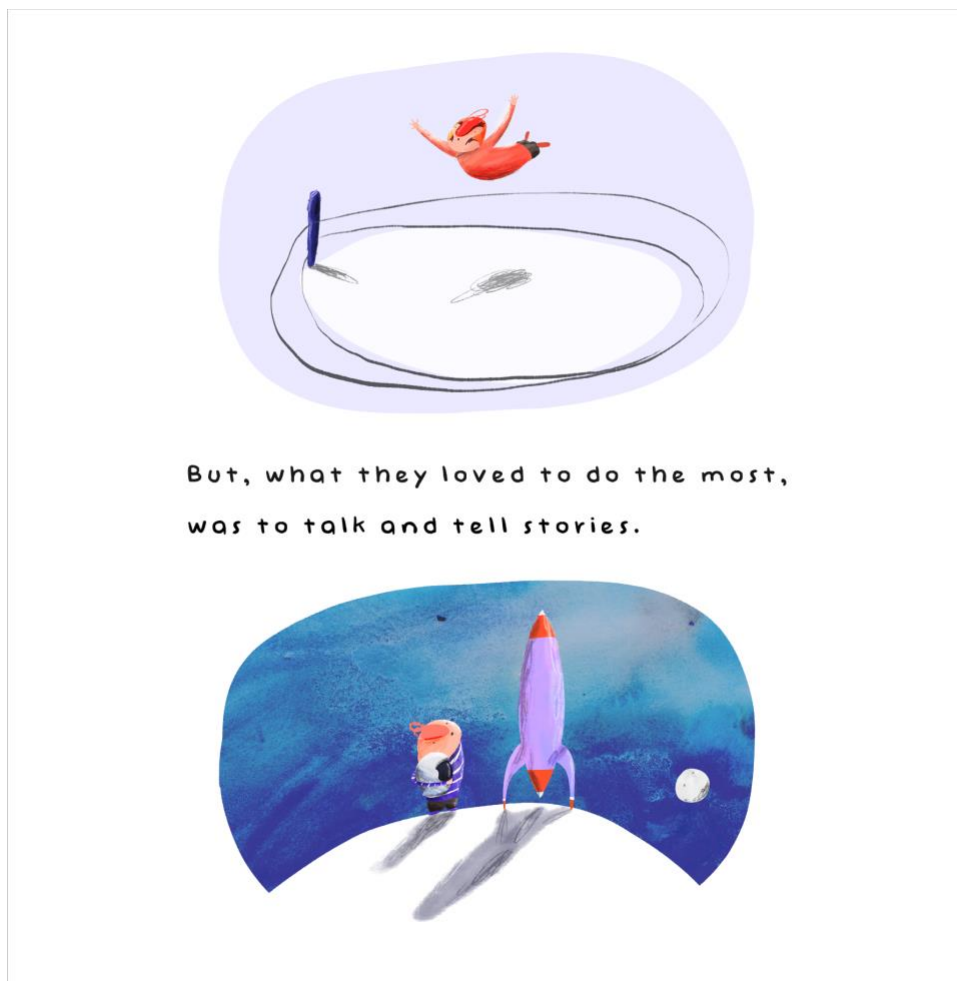


Figure 3 – Separate memories composition. Me and You. J.Rush, 2022.



Figure 4 – Blended memory composition. *Me and You*. J.Rush, 2022.

As the protagonist and the girl character he meets begin sharing stories of their lost friends, this world opens up through their dialogue which is ignored by the text. The visualisation of multiple memories as 'They told stories' (Fig 4.), an abstract blend of illustration, symbol and mark making attempts to communicate that the deceased friends are still alive through the people talking about them. The illustration as a whole could communicate this to a particular reader, or a single detail could help them on that path to discovering this. These memories and stories are separate narratives within the protagonist that make him up, among other things, represented by this blend, how one detail transitions into another.

Bakhtin, (in Vice, 1997, pg.58) regarding an interior monologue by Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, comments, “the consciousness of the solitary Raskolnikov becomes a field of battle for others’ voices and in this dialogue, he tries to “get his thoughts straight””. Just like here, when the protagonist of my book enters a “dialogic communion between consciousnesses”, the various memories he brings alive by talking to the girl gives rise to genuine thought and “it is at ‘that point of contact between voice-consciousness the idea is born and lives””. (Bakhtin in Vice, 1997, pg.58) The idea that helps him find his friend, which applies meaning to where his friend has gone, and now lives, within him. Just like the protagonist the reader comes to this epiphany, or perhaps not, we can’t be too sure as there isn’t one fixed meaning to how the boy resolves his search.

These multiple narratives present within my book is that of Heteroglossia, which contributes to this co-operation of the characters’ consciousness’s, allowing how the reader relates to the book to change. Bakhtin uses Heteroglossia to expose the presence of two or more expressed viewpoints in a text, but if I am to be true to the sense of the word, the theory of the other can be applied to other artistic works also. ‘Skaz’ and its use is one of the forms in which Heteroglossia can enter a text or other artistic work. It is a, “mode of narration that ‘imitates the oral speech of an individualised narrator”” (Vice, 1997, pg.22). Similarly, like Bakhtin, and his shift of emphasis from the oral element of ‘Skaz’ to its “orientation towards *someone else’s speech*”; to its ‘double-voicedness’ (Bakhtin in Vice 1997, pg.22), I am again changing the perspective we will view it from.

Bakhtin’s concentration is directed at speech, here I will extend it to the illustrative image and how it encourages this co-existence of voices within a text; how it extends words and

thus the scope for 'Skaz'. As I have highlighted previously in this report, the picture book offers a unique experience for the reader, through the narrative perspective that the 'synergy' between text and image offers. The reader often needing both to decipher the story being 'told'. So, 'Skaz' in a picture book context, can not only work through the words written, which are, "primarily conveying the narrative voice", but through the pictures also which are, "primarily conveying the point of view" (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2005, pg.117), two distinct voices.

If we return to the memory composition (Fig 4.) I am developing for my book, we can identify the 'representing' voice of the author/narrator and the 'represented' voice, the protagonist's and character's voice. Myself, initially as author/narrator and characters is double voiced with the words on the page, "They told stories...". Upon reading, the reader also doubles up as narrator and characters, as they fill in what these stories could be interpreting the unfolding visuals. This deepens their involvement within the story and its themes as a whole. The illustrations provide a wider range for different voices to enter by extending the already multi-voiced sentence. The '...' provides a "loophole...for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words", (Bakhtin in Vice, 1997, pg.23) which the illustration does; it is directed at the others speech.

The reader then can narrate with their interpretations of the visual elements, and forever supplement the significance of the words, adding more voices. 'They told stories...about their friends, how they raced bikes, built a rocket, and chased butterflies, while planet gazing', to name a few. In this way, the term, "intraiconic text" that is, "words appearing inside pictures and in some way commenting on or contradicting the primary verbal

narrative”, is appropriate (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, Pg.118). Narration can be extended to pictures, and be commanded by the reader often through verbal descriptions. This is where words of the reader then can convey a point of view and the pictures convey the narrative voice.

A child’s reading of a particular picturebook is always changing with every visit and re-reading. Every read by the same child will differ since they happen at different times, the child changed by experience and with a more profound eye for constructing meaning. This widening experience of meaning helps the child go deeper and further into the book’s meaning. Nikoljeva and Scott (2006, pg.2) describe the process of reading a picturebook as a “hermeneutic circle”, which “starts with the whole, proceeds to look at details, goes back to the whole with a better understanding, and so on”. Barbara Z. Kiefer also makes the comment on why children ask for repeated readings, in that, “Their careful scanning of each page may represent a learning technique rather than a lack of maturity”. (Kiefer, 1995, pg.9)

The child is learning through practise and experience of interpretation, and the ‘iconic’ text of the picturebook encourages this, as the interdependence of both verbal text and visual image happens on many levels requiring time and space. In this way, the reader is not a passive receiver but, an active ‘agent’ within the book’s story, as every visit to it shapes and influences the reader’s prior knowledge. This enables them to actively supplement and extend the book’s meanings and ultimately, this makes for a different reader and book with every re-read. Looking at this ‘co-penetration’ of reader and text through a dialogic lens it;

can be understood as a conversation between the reader and text in which the person who is reading selects and responds to voices from a set of meaning potentials present in the text, creating a dialogic encounter with “otherness”.

(Lysaker and Nie, pg.41)

Under this lens, the ability for the reader to select voices, showcases the encouragement of time and space which calls upon the reader’s experience, knowledge, and imagination. This includes ‘social imagination’, of the character’s inner worlds and minds, which is part of what establishes the dialogue between reader and iconic text, allowing for ‘intersubjectivity’ between the reader and the book’s fictive others. This aids their connection of the book’s narratives with their lives, producing changeable interpretations of these narratives. This evolving of knowledge in this hermeneutic way exposes how the self continually negotiates with other external characterisations of their feelings and behaviour, meaning it never reaches its conclusion.

Epilogue

Throughout I have talked about the potential of the picturebook's 'iconic' text and the 'synergy' between visual and written texts. I have explored how a child reader can extend the meaning potentials within these texts, becoming an active agent in the book's narrative. In addition, I have linked the theories of Bakhtin to emphasise the dialogical potential of a picturebook's elements in relation to the child reader. Currently I am here as my exhibition draws near and after the completion of the book I am eager to explore where this project and book will lead.

Moving on from the dialogical potential of my picturebook's narrative and elements, I want to explore the dialogical potential of the book as an object in an educational setting or interaction with an adult, and, or, other children. The concern now is how the child becomes an active agent in their own learning, and as I have demonstrated, the picture book is one of the best devices to assist with this. I currently work with 5-7 year olds in a primary school, and I have made enquiries about using my book, once finished, to construct read-alouds, activities and workshops with the children. These would centre around the dialogical potential of my book and how it can be used in a mutual encounter between child and teacher. Where both contribute to how these read-alouds and activities evolve. White (2016) uses the term 'Dialogic Pedagogy' to;

Advance the idea that teaching is a shared act or deed, and, as such, the learner has a strong agentic role to play in their own learning and even in the learning of the teacher as an event-of-being (that is, *sobytie*).

(White, 2016)

Bakhtin insists on the 'lived' aspect of language, which surpasses the teaching of it, in placing oneself at the centre of learning and not on either side of the teacher/student binary. The "act of reading is multi-layered", which is amplified in an equal interaction between child, book, and teacher. This is often ignored in traditional teacher dominated instruction and "the potential for engaged responsiveness" (Watson in Styles and Drummond 1993) on part of the child is negatively affected. This is how I plan to approach my read-alouds with the children, interacting with them as a social partner, rather than someone who needs to be taught.

Engaging with the child like this suspends any certain outcome from these read-alouds, allowing them to dictate how they interpret the other, which will be recognised and developed by myself through open-ended story discussion. Heath and Wolf (1992) attempted a similar approach with the latter's daughters over an extensive period and established a cooperation, as both parent and child were "partners in analysis" (pg.174), when reading books. As I plan to do, they negotiated meanings and interpretations between themselves about how the various narratives of the book connected with real life. This will aid the child's creativity in deciphering everyday life from a story's perspective, using "stories to interpret, control and cope with life" (Sipe, 2000, pg.257).

“Just as the body is formed initially in the mother’s womb (body), a person’s consciousness awakens wrapped in another’s consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1986, pg.138).

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