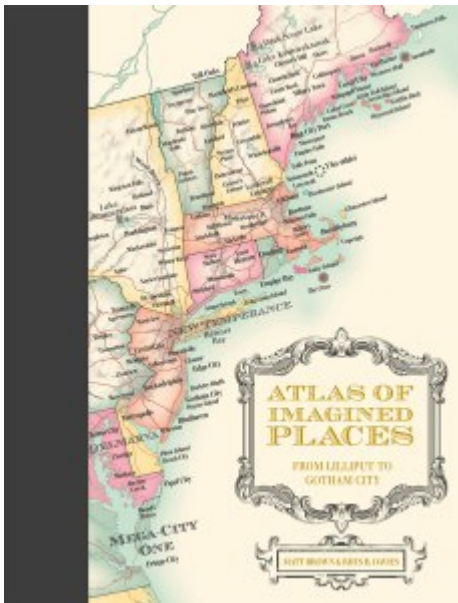




[< issue toc next >>](#)

Book & Geospatial Resources Review of Atlas of Imagined Places: from Lilliput to Gotham City

Review by Sierra Laddusaw



Book cover of Atlas of Imagined Places

Brown, M. & Davies, R.B. Atlas of Imagined Places: from Lilliput to Gotham City. London: Batsford, 2021. 168 p. \$34.99. ISBN: 9781849946414.

Readers who love a map on the end pages of a novel, gamers who pin a video game's map to their wall, and viewers who've wanted to know the geography of the location of a movie or TV show will enjoy *Atlas of Imagined Places*. The *Atlas* grew from a smaller project at Londonist, the Fake Britain map. Fake Britain charted the location of fictional places from literature, film, TV, and other sources - this atlas, by the same creators of the map, applies this principle to fictional places across Earth. In the *Atlas of Imagined Places*, you will find more than 5,000 fictional locations mapped on our real geography.

In structure, the *Atlas* includes an introduction, the world divided into eighteen sections, and a truly impressive index. The authors begin with an explanation of the criteria a fictional place must meet for inclusion. First, the location had to play a



central role in the source material that featured it. Second, the location had to be “reasonably well-anchored” in our real Earth geography. Don’t worry, this also receives a thorough explanation – only fictional locations that are entirely made up but are described as existing on Earth or fictional locations based on real Earth locations are included, fictional locations that do not exist on our real Earth or are simply named after real places are excluded. Next, if the source material includes multiple locations only the most important are included on the maps to avoid a single source overwhelming the map and, lastly, offensive locations are not included. However, the authors include an important note that the defined criteria can be ignored for truly iconic locations.

So, what makes it on the maps? In an attempt to group like source material for the 5,000+ locations, the types of sources fall into the following categories:

- Written stories (novels, short stories, poems),
- Graphic novels, comic books, and manga,
- Film, TV, radio, and music,
- Training exercises (military and mock trials),
- Mythology, folklore, and legends,
- Scams and hoaxes,
- Satire and pranks,
- Games and toys,
- Advertising,
- Performances (music, plays, musicals, performance art),
- Gaffes (or as the author’s call it “unfortunate slips of the tongue”),
- and theme park rides.

Each of the eighteen sections, loosely based on global sub-regions, includes an introduction, a map, essays explaining their reasoning behind the choice of where to map some fictional locations, and a listing of key mapped locations with short descriptions. In the case of the section focused on the United States of America, which is noted as having the most locations mapped, the section has the USA spread across three maps. It is the only section to feature multiple maps, showing the enlarged geography. For most of the other sections, only having one map meets the needs of the number of fictional locations documented, however the section on the UK and Ireland would be improved with similar mapping treatment as the USA received. The map for the UK and Ireland is densely filled with fictional locations, with the map markers overlapping in some spots.



A standout part of the atlas is the index, which appears in two variations. The index work on this atlas elevates it from a fun coffee table book to a reference resource. Using the Location Index, a reader can quickly learn what map the location appears on and the source material the location is from. With the Source Index, the reader can discover all of the locations mapped from a single source. Take the Grand Theft Auto video game franchise as an example, the atlas maps more than 30 locations from the games across all three of the maps of the USA. While the average reader may be able to name a handful of these locations due to them featuring in the titles of the various games across the series, knowing all of these location names to look them up in the Location Index is unlikely. The Source Index makes the discovery of locations easy for source material that span countries and contents, like H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and the settings of the DC Comics Universe.

In addition to the text and maps, the physical design of the atlas is nice. The typography and illustration choices reflect the design of historical atlases, the title appears inside a classic cartouche design on the title page! Thought was also put into the binding of the book, throughout the pages lay flat so that the entire map can be seen; there is no loss of information to the book's gutter. Coming in at 32 cm tall, most of the maps have enough space to show their information while keeping the book at a reasonable size for a home library or library with limited oversized storage.

Readers of all ages will be delighted by this atlas. It would fit well in a variety of library collections, regardless of having a standalone map collection. Collections supporting creative writing, folklore studies, or popular culture studies curriculum would find the atlas as a positive addition. The atlas would find a good home in libraries with dedicated map and atlas collections looking to expand their literary map holdings to include a broader cartography of popular culture.

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[< issue toc next >>](#)