

## THE MANY GRAVEYARD BOOKS: ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS AND POSSIBLE MULTIPLE READINGS IN ILLUSTRATED WORKS

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### Abstract

This article investigates how diverse layers of meanings can be seen in different interactions of the same work, as it is illustrated or adapted by different artists. Starting from a single source material, Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008), we analyze two versions and one adaptation of the text: one novel illustrated by Dave McKean (2008) and another by Chris Riddell (2009); and a graphic novel (2014), adapted by P. Craig Russell. We draw our analysis from authors in the fields of Children's Literature and Comics Studies to discuss the construction of meanings between the interplay of written and visual texts. Such interactions have a range of variation taking into consideration both the format of the work (novel or graphic novel), the choice of a scene to be illustrated, and stylistic approaches.

**Keywords:** Collaboration; Illustration; Comics; Neil Gaiman.

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Visual and written text can construct meanings in different (and sometimes conflicting) ways. As such, different artistic collaborations offer a series of possible readings for the same text, which, in turn, underline the fluidity of authorship in terms of illustrated works. Thus, starting from a single written text, Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008), this article focuses on how diverse layers of meanings can be seen in different interactions of the same work, as it is illustrated or even adapted by different artists. *The Graveyard Book* has been published with three distinct collaborations: two novels, illustrated by Dave McKean (2008) and by Chris Riddell (2009); and a graphic novel, adapted by P. Craig Russell, with a different illustrator for each of the chapters (2014). The written text, produced by Gaiman, is consistent throughout the editions; however, the interactions with the images have a range of variation taking into consideration both the format of the work (novel or graphic novel), the choice of a scene to be illustrated, and stylistic approaches. For the sake of this article, we decided to analyze the same specific scene in each of the works above mentioned to discuss the implications of such collaborations in the construction of meanings and possible readings in them.

When discussing illustrated works, such as comics, for example, most authors agree that there is no supremacy of either visual or textual language in the narrative, which constructs meaning precisely through the interplay of word and image (McCloud; Hatfield). The scholarship on the genre of children's picture books (Nodelman; Anstey and Bull; Kiefer; Desai)<sup>1</sup> tends to support the understanding that words and images are involved in a relationship with each other. In his foundational work on picture books, *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (1988), Perry Nodelman argues that written and visual language invariably inform one another, often in an ironic manner, in a process that affects the meaning of both: "the words tell us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell" (222). Michèle Anstey and Geoff Bull, on their turn, point out the relevance of that interplay between words and images in "an age where access to the visual content of communication is becoming more important" (338). In such a visual age, pictures do not only convey information, but also carry assumptions about cultural positions and ways of representation (Nodelman *Picture Books* 157). The image in illustrated texts is seen as beyond merely supporting the telling of a story; it actually adds to that narrative (Anstey and Bull 328). In sum, Anstey and Bull affirm, "since the illustrative text has a role in the creation of the narrative, it produces a continuous interplay and has the potential to construct multiple narratives" (328). This investigation is, thus, concerned with those potential multiple narratives spawning from different artistic collaborations of the same source material.

In the story of *The Graveyard Book*, Nobody Owens, the protagonist, grows up in a cemetery looked after by the ghosts that inhabit the place. He is alive, even after the attempt against his life when he was just a baby; the same attempt that killed his whole family. In order to survive the pursuit of the man Jack, the murderer who is trying to kill Bod, short for Nobody, he cannot leave the grounds of the graveyard. As much as a cemetery is related to death, for Bod,

this is the only possible way of surviving. In the diegesis of this story, the dead people buried in the ground of a cemetery live as a community in the very same cemetery in which they were buried, without ever being seen by the ones who are alive. Bod, thus, lives at the margins of life and death; he is the only living human who can see, talk and have relationships with the dead. Like the dead ones, Bod's freedom to transit into spaces is limited by the walls and gates of the graveyard.

To *illustrate*—pun intended—the possibilities of construction of meanings in relation to artistic collaborations, we have to look no further than the first page of different editions of the same source text. Gaiman and McKean's *The Graveyard Book* begins as follows: "There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife" (Fig. 1).

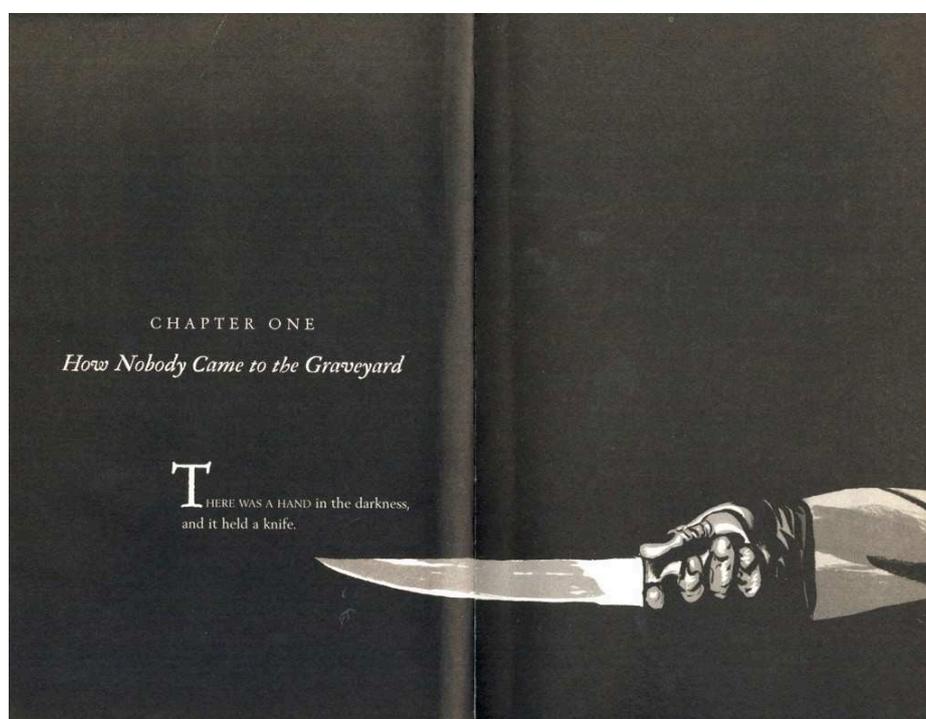


Figura 1.

The double-page spread quotes only the very first sentence of the novel, emphasizing the darkness of the illustration as well as the empty spaces of the pages. As Nodelman argues, the image relates to the text, and vice-versa, both producing meaning based on assumptions and expectations of the other. The reader knows there is a hand and knows there is a knife from the text, but the dense atmosphere and inherent danger of those items are mostly surmised by the illustration. Whose hand and whose knife are those? From the tone of the sentence the reader can assume that neither the hand nor the knife are the narrator's. The knife mentioned by the text cuts through the pages; the illustration already positioning it as central to the story. The image portrays a steak knife, possibly smeared with blood. The alluded darkness acquires supernatural tones in the illustration: it is material enough to envelop everything but the hand with the knife and the little amount of written text in these two pages. The position of

the knife in that particular hand suggests a clear homicidal intent—it is certainly not a grip of someone trying to defend themselves or making a sandwich in the middle of the night.

Gaiman and Riddell's *The Graveyard Book*, on the other hand, begins its narrative in a very different tone (Fig. 2). The image of a man with a knife precedes the page with the first chapter, which means that by the time the reader finds out that there was a hand in the darkness with a knife, she is already aware of a certain “man Jack” connected to it. Despite that, the image itself does not suggest the level of danger that McKean's illustrations indicate. Riddell's knife wielding figure seems menacing as his silhouette double looms at the edge of the frame, larger than him, and by the type of knife he is carrying—a dagger not commonly found in a household, therefore scarcely suitable for sandwiches in the middle of the night either. However, his posture is hardly threatening, as the knife is almost resting at his side, and he is not enveloped in darkness. On the contrary, the silhouette behind him indicates that the man is facing a light source, which directly contradicts the first lines of the text that follow the image. The caption below the image, “The man Jack paused on the landing,” from a few paragraphs further into the first chapter, along with the character's hand tranquilly positioned on the banister, also suggests a calm to the scene, a sense that whichever danger is being portrayed, it is not critical, and the hand behind the knife is decidedly not frantic, quite the opposite. McKean's illustrations of the same scene suggest a frenzied murderer, whereas Riddell's indicate an assassin with composure, cold-blooded, calculated.

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The man Jack paused on the landing.

Figura 2.

While in an illustrated novel the images portray one specific moment of the story, following a comic studies approach of analysis, in comics the illustrations also convey other narrative elements, such as pace, movement, and time. As such, the images in comics have to be seen in a much more dynamic way than those in illustrated prose works, which are more static in relation to the written text. This is not to say that in one form the images are more important than in the other, for they construct meanings in the narrative in whichever genre. In comics, the reader might focus on one frame in isolation, but the frames adjacent to that or even a sequence of frames can provide information that may change how she interprets that one particular image. On the grounds that comics must rely on the interplay between different frames of images, between images in different pages, and between images and texts, Charles Hatfield calls comics an “art of tensions” (32). For him, on theorizing this art form, one must take into consideration four forms of tensions: image vs. text; single image vs. image-in-series; sequence vs. surface; and text as experience vs. text as object.<sup>2</sup> While the illustrated novel can be seen in relation to some of these tensions, such as the tension between image and text, the comics medium has to be analyzed as a part of a specific genre distinct from the former.

Borrowing from Linda Hutcheon’s definition of adaptation, this article argues that the graphic novel of *The Graveyard Book* differs from the illustrated versions of the novel discussed previously due to the specificities of the comics genre, which requires a much larger “transcoding” of the narrative into a different medium other than the source material (Hutcheon 7). According to Hutcheon, an adaptation entails “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work; a creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; and an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8, original emphasis). Undoubtedly the act of illustrating a work, as seen in McKean’s and Riddell’s illustrated versions of the novel, involves a shift from one medium—text—to another—image—as well, but in those instances the source text continues to accompany the visual parts of the narrative and for the most part remains intact. The graphic novel, on the other hand, requires a much more extensive process of adaptation, which, in this instance, was undertaken by P. Craig Russell, who scripted and edited the comics version of *The Graveyard Book*.

P. Craig Russell’s adaptation of *The Graveyard Book* involved the transposition of Gaiman’s source written text into the cross-discursive medium of comics, with the constant and dynamic interplay of image and text. Russell was personally responsible for the creation of a scripted layout of the adaptation, which he then handed out to selected artists who had to work out similar drawing styles in their chapters to maintain the consistency of the overall volume. The fluidity of authorship in this instance is, thus, further complicated. Some character designs, for example, were initially devised by Russell himself, to later gain more distinct authorial contours depending on the artist responsible for that particular chapter—as Russell himself explains, he “did the conceptual drawing of Silas and model sheets for him and sent them to the artists so everyone knew what

he looked like — then everyone [brought] their own take to it” (Russell Talks). Thus, Gaiman’s text is appropriated and adapted by Russell into comics, who then informs as well as participates in the visual depictions of that written narrative, in a complex articulation between writer, adapter, and illustrator.

Russell’s adapted graphic novel begins, in a first chapter illustrated by Kevin Knowlan, with a double page spread that foreshadows the major dramatic tension of the narrative, that of a child immersed in death (Fig. 3). The black and white contrast of the pages immediately catches the eye, as well as the shock of a juxtaposition of an infant’s pacifier and a bloody knife—the layout is suggestive of two realms that should not coexist and that have somehow clashed. The image of the pacifier on the first page suggests movement through a common narrative device of comics: a traced or marked trajectory of an object which doubly implies a frozen moment in time as well as a span of elapsed time. A dropped pacifier in itself usually is no cause for alarm—as anyone who has been around a child will confirm. However, the relation to the facing page of the comic suggests a correlation of events to the reader. Visually the two moments are intertwined in the narrative and one is led to assume a deadly cause and effect relation between bloody knife and dropped pacifier.

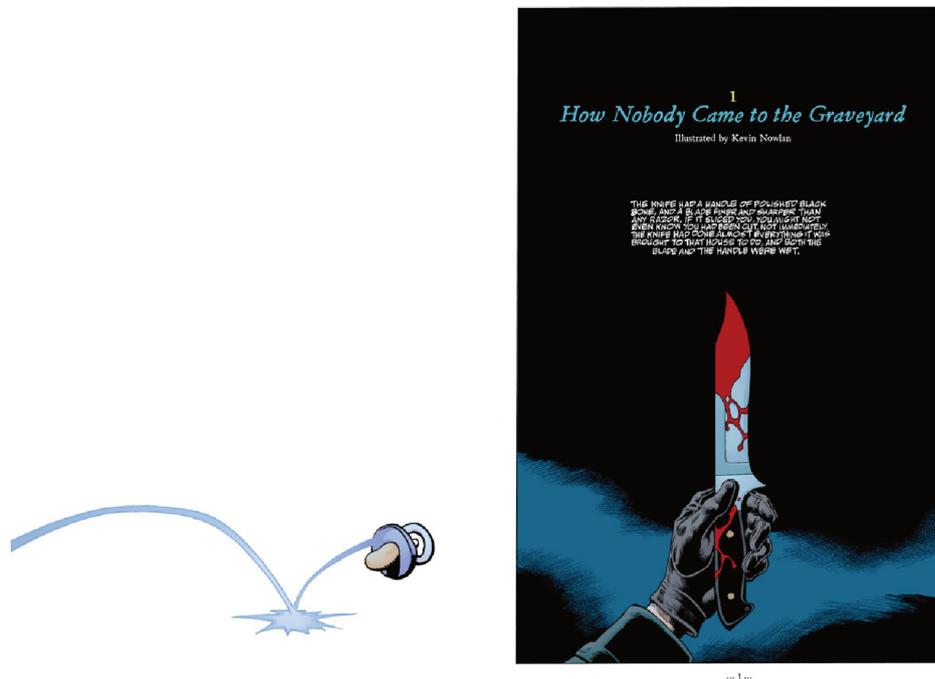


Figura 3.

If McKean’s opening illustration suggests the anxiety of the immediacy of danger, of a knife that is about to drop, and Riddell’s hints at a cold-blooded killer calmly pondering his next move, Russell’s adaptation alludes to a fresh crime scene, a murder committed seconds ago, with the victim’s pacifier still in the air. In this sense, the graphic novel opts at misdirecting the reader into that association—a narrative ploy evidenced by the following pages which clarify that

in fact the toddler is the only member of the family that survives the massacre.

The choice of blade is also revealing of the type of killing taking place in each version of the narrative, as well as the set up for the atmosphere of the story. Unlike McKean's steak knife, common in a number of households, or Riddell's dagger, suggestive of a ritualistic nature to the murders, Russell's graphic novel depicts a hunting knife as the weapon of choice for the villain on its opening pages. The graphic bloodiness of the following page, with the first three frames each portraying a dead member of the family, with throats sliced and chests stabbed, corroborates the idea of a hunter's precision. The position of the blade on the first page, facing upwards, is also somewhat unsettling—a celebration of a hunter's trophies, perhaps—in any case not the expected posture in a stabbing.

In all three versions of the story, the meanings constructed vary according to the illustrations. McKean's suggests an opportunistic killer on the verge of committing a crime, Riddell's seems a creepy calculating villain pondering his next move, and, finally, Russell's appears as a crude hunter, still fresh from butchering a family, insinuates a murder that was never really actualized. All portray different styles of villainy as well as different stages of the narrated events. Demystifying the idea of the sole genius Author, Roland Barthes argues that a "text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (146). *The Graveyard Book*, in its different interactions, is emblematic of such multi-dimensional space, where a number of writings surface throughout the narrative in terms of the distinct meanings constructed by different illustrators, for example, but not restricted to that, as the very source written material is exemplary of this sort of palimpsest. Gaiman's text was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, as the author himself often points out (McStotts 65). The structure of the narrative, a series of short stories that compose a novel, and the basic premise, an orphaned child being "raised by an unorthodox surrogate family," are further indications of the connections between Bod and Mowgli (66). Besides Kipling's work, Gaiman also cites other influences for this text:

[M]y favorite is chapter five, 'Danse Macabre,' partly because it's not quite like the others. And that story is this strange little thing where the dead and the living get together in the middle of the night in this odd, wonderful dance, and then all the living are confused and sort of forget about [it] afterwards. There are two touchstones in terms of authors I've loved for *The Graveyard Book*. The obvious one is Rudyard Kipling, but the less obvious one is P.L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* stories. This chapter is just the sort of thing that would happen in *Mary Poppins*, where everyone in town would be off flying about and then not remember it afterward. (Gaiman Q & A)

Beyond those, one could easily point to a number of other influences of fantasy, gothic, and fairy tales in the succession of stories that compose *The Graveyard Book*. If, as Virginia Woolf reminds us, "books continue each other,"

Gaiman's novel is representative of this process of ongoing appropriation, imitation, and continuation of texts through time. The artistic collaborations that generate the different versions of *The Graveyard Book* analyzed in this article are an extension of this process in which further appropriations produce further meanings. Thus far, we have explored how the construction of those meanings may differ simply by looking at the initial pages of each version of the narrative, setting the stage for the same, and yet different, story. The implications for such different readings go beyond the atmosphere of the narrative or the profile of the villain, though; the ramifications of these possibilities impact the representation of diverse identity markers, such as gender and class, as the following analysis of chapter four underlines.

### **The Many Witches and Unconsecrated Grounds**

In the chapter "The Witch's Headstone," both in the novels and in the graphic novel, Bod comes across the place destined to the ones forbidden in sacred ground. In the beginning of this chapter, the text explains that Bod was "told to keep away from that corner of the world" (Gaiman, 2008 99). The cemetery, already a contradictory place at the margins of our living society,<sup>3</sup> has, within itself, yet another margin—destined to the ones who, both in life and in death, do not fit the imposed rules that construct such communities. The dynamics of the cemetery has its own social functions, its own rites of access, its own system of marginalization, which are also interconnected with the dynamics between life and death, living society and cemetery.

As divisions such as us/them and normal/other are arbitrary, the same goes for the divisions of marginalizations within the cemetery. Bod's guardian, Silas, who is neither alive nor dead, a character that by itself questions such binarisms, explains that the unconsecrated ground is for "suicides, criminals, and witches," at the same time that he reinforces not remembering anyone being "particularly evil" in there (Gaiman, 2008 104). In comparison, when Bod asks one of his teachers, a more conservative member of the graveyard community, about the unconsecrated ground, she answers that "[t]hey aren't our sort of people," to which Bod inquires: "But it *is* the graveyard, isn't it?" (106, original emphasis). The emphasis on "*is*" in the dialogue highlights that the margins are also part of this same place that constructs them as an other. The cemetery is constructed at the margins of the living world and functions under its own rules, which are, despite separate, connected to the so-called normal world. Similarly, the unconsecrated ground is part of the cemetery, even though it is not part of that community; it is at the margins of the cemetery.

The conversation with Liza Hempstock, the witch buried in unconsecrated ground, foregrounds the arbitrariness of the division between us/them, here/there, normal/abnormal, through a gender and class perspective. Hempstock was murdered by the citizens of her village, who accused her of being a witch and of bespelling a man. A fate common to her kind, she was, then,

drowned and burned—to which she responded by cursing all the citizens who participated in her murder. Bod tries to make sense of her story and her place within the cemetery: he concludes that “you weren’t a witch after all” (110), and receives a categorical response: “What a nonsense. Of course I was a witch” (111). She also adds that the man they said was under her spell did not need magic to be attracted to her. In this sense, what destines her to be buried in the unconsecrated ground is not whether she is particularly evil, but the teleological rule that witches should be buried there. The patriarchal society that blames a woman for the corrupted mind of a man not only kills her, it condemns her to live eternally at the margins of the community.

The first image in “The Witch’s Headstone” chapter illustrated by McKean depicts the gates of the graveyard limiting the division between written text and image, right at the margin between one page and the other (100-01), highlighting the separation between codes and spaces. The image is constructed through the use of shadows in greyscale; even though the tombstones are not completely detailed, depicted through the use of pen strokes, they are evident in the image. The gates, also painted in ink, are finished with a brush. The following page brings a parallel depiction of the scene: the style of the image is the same and the movements of the characters are also very similar, giving the impression that it is a repetition of the moment in the previous page, in a mirror-like way, with the gates, again, marking a series of separations (102-03). The second mirrored image is accompanied by a rather abstract picture, on the opposing page (103, Fig. 4). The brushstrokes on top of the image resemble the clouds from the page next to it, and the black and grey painting in this image can be related to the grass on the ground of the graveyard, but, differently from the other pages described here, an extensive part of this one is left blank, creating a vague feeling of emptiness and absence. As very few things in this image are defined, it is kept open for interpretation. One can read it, for example, as a representation of the unrepresentable, as a depiction of the unconsecrated ground which sits beyond the other side of the gates delimiting the normative part of the graveyard. In this sense, this unclear depiction breaks the separation created by the gates and leaks graphical meanings onto a page supposedly destined to textual representations, at the same time that it also breaks the relationship between images and their meanings by creating an open possibility of readings.

In Gaiman and McKean’s *The Graveyard Book*, the actual unconsecrated ground is not clearly depicted in the images that accompany the chapter (100-03), it is only graphically present through a vague possibility open for interpretation, as we have suggested, which reinforces its marginal status by its very absence, its non-presence. The witch Lizzy herself never appears in any of the images in this version. In McKean’s illustrations, it is possible to see Bod talking to his guardian, Silas. The former is pointing at something outside the diegesis of the pages, which the reader can interpret as the unconsecrated ground by the context of their conversation. In these images, the gates are in evidence in the foreground, graphically bringing forth the discursive construction of division and separation that surrounds this

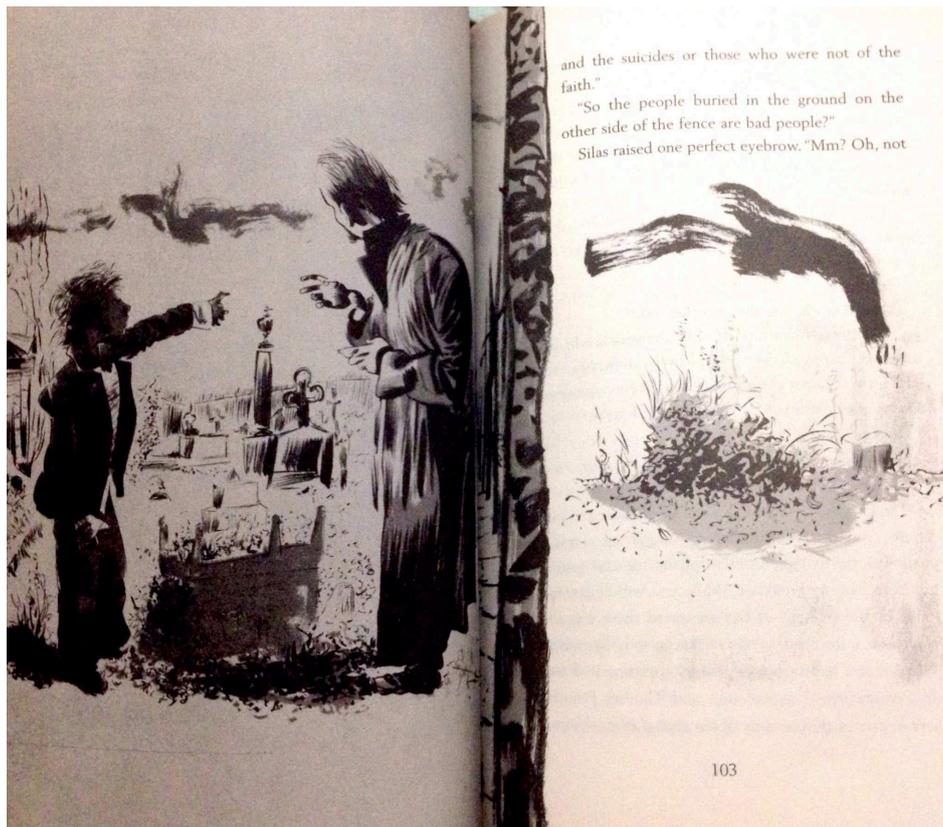


Figura 4.

chapter. Conversely, “there,” the unconsecrated ground, does not merit graphic representation, only “here,” the normative space of the graveyard, is granted the status of being depicted both graphically and textually. Thus, while the text questions the arbitrariness of the binarisms that construct the unconsecrated ground as the other, the images reinforce the existence of divisions, focusing on normality while keeping the other at the margin, a space only suggested by the acting of pointing and by a drawing open to interpretation. The end of the chapter, however, brings a close-up image of a headstone in the unconsecrated ground, the one Bod makes for Lizzy (142). The lack of a headstone is remarked throughout the chapter, by Lizzy, as something that she misses, that she regrets. The headstone, for her, has a sense of identity, of defining who she is, of writing her into history, into existence: “[...] they popped me in a hole in the Potter’s field without so much as a headstone to mark my name” (111), “[g]ot no headstone, [...] [m]ight be anybody” (112). In this sense, it is only when Lizzy gets the bit of normality she desires – the (apparent) triviality of having a headstone – that the unconsecrated soil is given a clear graphic representation, albeit in a tight frame that only allows the reader to see the headstone and the grass around it.

In Gaiman’s and Riddell’s collaboration, on the other hand, the only image in “The Witch’s Headstone” chapter places Lizzy as the protagonist. In delicate black and white ink drawings, this edition has one image in the beginning of each chapter, with a subtitle quoting the chapter it illustrates. In the image from chapter 4, Lizzy is in the center of the page, in the unconsecrated ground, with the subtitle “They say a witch is buried here” (2009 ch. 4, Fig 5). The reader, thus,



‘They say a witch is buried here.’

Figura 5.

is introduced to a graphically represented Lizzy, knowing, since the beginning of the chapter, that the character is a witch – that she is *the* witch from the title. The apples on her hand and in the ground, and the pile of grass on which she kneels are visual references to the situation in which she meets Bod – when he tries to reach the last red and ripe apple from the tree, but the branch breaks and he falls into the other side of the fence, in the unconsecrated ground. In this edition, it is Bod who is only virtually present in the image, through the cues referencing how these two characters met.

The images in Riddell’s illustrations of *The Graveyard Book* portray hardly anything of the cemetery. While Mckean’s images are full of graveyard references, such as crosses, headstones, tombstones, gargoyles, and gates separating “here” and “there,” Riddell’s production does not bring such clear visual cues of the book’s main setting. The phantasmagoric tones of his images are set by the presence of mist in dark backgrounds and/or by the depiction of the characters themselves. Thus, along with these features, the depiction of Lizzy at the beginning of the chapter is in a dark background almost completely under a black shadow, with a mist passing between her and the landscape in the back; her hair gives the

impression of movement, as if she were floating, even though her knees are touching the pile of grass; with her head lightly tilted down, she looks up to the reader, with a grin on her face. It is possible to describe her as a powerful, mischievous girl, in control of the situation.

The written description of Lizzy, however, corroborates this picture only in part. She may be seen as powerful, considering that she is a witch who has bespelled the ones that killed her. Her power and control only go up to the limits of her marginalization, however, since she is forced to remain at the margins of the cemetery. Furthermore, while in the text she is described as having “something of the goblin in her face” and “not even a little bit beautiful” (2009 ch. 4), Riddell’s depiction of Lizzy, on the other hand, cannot be described as monstrous in any level. Even though her odd expression adds a mysterious tone to her characterization, one could easily describe her as “beautiful” at a first glance – certainly not a “goblin”, as the text suggests. In this sense, the image provides information, some of which contradicting the written text, about the character before she appears in the narrative. Her very graphic presence – which contrasts sharply with her absence, in McKean’s illustrations – constructs meanings through the act of giving space in the page and making references to what is not necessarily there. She may be relegated to the margins of the cemetery and compared to a monstrous creature in the written narrative, but the image that introduces her to the reader gives Lizzy a central, good-looking, and powerful position, which were denied to her in life and in death by the societies she lived in.

In a different interaction between images and text, the third analysis of this scene scrutinizes Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* (2014) graphic novel adaptation, organized by P. Craig Russell. In this version, chapter 4, “The Witch’s Headstone,” is illustrated by Galen Showman. While in an illustrated novel the images portray one specific moment, in comics, the illustrations also account for pace, movement, and time of the narrative. As the setting of the graveyard is extremely relevant for this work, how this is depicted also becomes significant. The absence of a clearly depicted unconsecrated ground in McKean’s art and the virtual presence of Bod through the construction of the setting in Riddell’s are just some of meaning-making processes in the other two novels previously analyzed. Thus, the fact that the first image from the chapter in Showman’s and Russell’s work is a depiction of the unconsecrated ground reveals a different set of possible meanings.

The description of a forbidden place, where a witch is buried, is accompanied by twisted leafless trees, which are put into question by Bod, in a speech balloon, at the same time that it appears: “why?” is the only term written in the only white space on a dark page (109, Fig. 6). The interrogative sentence becomes, thus, more prominent than the statements about this forbidden place. Even before knowing this place, the reader is called to question the assertions about it. Right on the next page, two frames are put side by side in the middle of the page, depicting the two sides of the cemetery: on the left frame, the normative side of the graveyard, with a tree in full leaf, and on the right, “a wasteland” – as the narrator says –



Figura 6.

depicted by a leafless tree, “a mess of nestles and weeds” (110). As Hatfield argues, the surface of the page in comics “organizes images into a constellation of discrete units”, and each frame can depict a specific moment in a sequence of event or “an atemporal design” (48). The pages can “be seen and read in both linear and nonlinear, holistic fashion” (Hatfield 48), and their layout impresses not only stylistic features but also meanings. The two frames of the two places do not work as a sequence in the narrative; rather, they function more as a presentation of the settings where the plot is going to take place. By placing this presentation right next to a mostly dark page with a highlighted question mark in the center, its layout may direct us into questioning the assertions about such places. The movement of going back and forth between these two pages, thus, portrays not only how the community of the graveyard perceives the unconsecrated ground but also how the reader should not take such construction for granted. The discursive constitution of the unconsecrated ground re-produces the very same space that it tries to describe. While the image and the narration of the frame depicting the other, abandoned, side of the graveyard seems like a description of the reality of this place, the interrogation about it puts into question the ontological nature of this place as is described.

As in Mckean’s collaboration, Lizzy’s textual appearance in the chapter of the graphic novel only takes place after long debates about the nature of the unconsecrated ground (Fig. 7). However, differently from Mckean’s, in the graphic adaptation, her textual debut comes along her graphical one. She appears standing in front of Bod, who is laid down, for he has just fallen, with her hands on her waist, looking down at him, in an imposing posture. From her perspective, the image suggests, she is the one in control of this situation as she interrogates Bod. Her raggedy clothes, bare feet, and unkempt hair give away her social status

as part of a lower class. This social position becomes even more evident when in comparison with the other dead characters of the story, who always appear in the elegant clothes from their living times, tidied, and combed. In this sense, the very first frame in which she appears advances her social status as a witch, as a woman, as a member of a lower class, and suggests that her exclusion from the unconsecrated ground is her marginalization after death, while at the same time indicating that this position was also part of her in life.

By comparison, in the written text, her social status is only hinted at by pieces of information given throughout her conversation with Bod. Her first textual appearance is a voice coming from behind Bod, which neither the reader nor Bod knows to whom it belongs (2008 108). A few paragraphs later, she is described as “older than him, but not a grown up, and she looked neither friendly nor unfriendly. Wary, mostly. She had a face that was intelligent and not even a little bit beautiful” (109). Other clues about her status from when she was alive are given by her colloquial language and the description of her house as a “little cottage” (110). The mention of her clothes and hair says that “[s]he wore a plain white shift. Her hair was mousy and long, and there was something of the goblin in her face [...]” (109). As a characteristic of the comics adaptation, such descriptions are not present in Russell’s graphic novel, since the artists can put them into image. In a choice of adaptation, instead of giving only pieces of descriptions of her social status for the reader to assemble as if it were a puzzle, the graphic novel states graphically her position from her very first appearance. To a certain extent, it is as if, in the graphic novel, there is no chance for the reader



Figura 7.

to miss any of the pieces, there is no puzzle, the pieces that make the construction of meanings about her social position are already assembled in one frame.

In any genre, which scene is going to be illustrated and how this is going to be depicted is part of a continuous set of choices (author, editor, illustrator, and so forth). As is possible to see in the analyses, the selection of scenes already conveys meanings. In the graphic novel, some descriptions use the aid of both written and visual text (as the graveyard setting), while others dismiss words and are supported mainly by the images (the representation of Lizzy's character, for instance, relies solely on the visual depiction, foregoing textual descriptions—the image is the carrier of meaning). On the other hand, in the illustrated versions of the novel, the images are not expected to tell pieces of the stories that are not present in the text, which does not mean that they do not bring new, sometimes conflicting, or even different information. Although the text, in an illustrated work, may be read without the support of the images, once the visual narrative is present it does bring new possible readings and meanings to the text. If for no other reason, the simple fact that some scenes are considered more relevant to be depicted than others already constructs meanings through an interplay of presence and absence.

As Barthes argues, and Gaiman corroborates when talking about his own works, there is not one single voice of authorship in any work, thus, compelling meanings to be constructed through a myriad of parallels between different works, readers, and readings. And if, as Jack Stillinger argues, literary critics should forego the concept of a single authorship and, instead, adopt a “theory of versions,” in which multiple authorship is at play in a “harmonious or discordant network of many separate intentions,” the fluidity entailed in the different versions of *The Graveyard Book* analyzed in this article seems particularly significant (200). Once an image or a word is added to a work, such signifier cannot leave its signified behind, bringing to an already myriad of readings, a whole other set of meanings and possibilities. Gaiman's text may highlight the marginalizing processes which those buried in the unconsecrated grounds undergo, but McKean's portrayal of this chapter still leaves them at the margin of the discourse. Even the protagonism of Riddell's Lizzy contradicts the textual description of the source material, adding another possibility of reading for this character. Social and gender assumptions, assertions, stereotypifications, and questionings may differ from one version to the other by its relationship with other sources of meaning-making signs. As previously argued in this article, and by so many others before it, “books continue each other,” and, in this instance, different collaborations also continue the unstoppable, ongoing, never-ending constructions of possible meanings of a single text.

### Notes

1. A notable exception would be children's literature theorist Uri Shulevitz, who refers to “story books” as works in which the narrative is told mainly through the written text, with images functioning merely as supplements, a characteristic

that, for him, distinguishes them from “picture books,” in which the visual part is much more relevant in the telling of the story (15-16).

2. The first tension, image vs. text, relates to the interplay of visual and written text, as two types of signs that inform each other in their construction of meaning (Hatfield 37). The second tension, single image vs. image-in-series, is connected to the conveyance of the passing of time in comics and how an author can set the pace of a work or of a scene specifically through the arrangement of frames (41). The third, sequence vs. surface, has to do with the overall layout of a page, which can be “read in both linear and nonlinear, holistic fashion” (48). Finally, the fourth tension, text as experience vs. text as object, is related to stylistic choices that denote certain meanings to the narrative, such as the delineation of images, colors, settings usually associated with specific genres of comics (60).
3. For a detailed analysis of the role of heterotopia and *The Graveyard Book* and its collaboration with different illustrators, see Dalmaso and Madella’s “Queering Space In Neil Gaiman’s Illustrated Works” (forthcoming).
4. Since the three books hereby analyzed have exactly the same name, for the sake of referencing, we are using the year of publication to distinguish the citations.

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