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Construing the Child Reader: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of the Opening to Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*

Marcello Giovanelli[1]

Abstract Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009) charts the story of Nobody Owens, a boy who is adopted by supernatural entities in the local graveyard after his family is murdered. This article draws on the notion of the "construed reader," and combines two cognitive stylistic frameworks to analyse the opening section of the novel. In doing so, the article explores the representation and significance of the family home in relation to what follows in the narrative. The analysis largely draws on Text World Theory (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007), but also integrates some aspects of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008), which allows for a more nuanced discussion of textual features. The article pays particular attention to the way Gaiman frames his narrative and positions his reader to view the fictional events from a distinctive vantage point and subsequently demonstrates that a stylistic analysis of children's literature can lay bare how such writing is designed with a young readership in mind.

Keywords Stylistics · Text World Theory · Cognitive Grammar · Neil Gaiman · *The Graveyard Book*

Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009) tells the story of Nobody Owens (nicknamed Bod), a young boy who escapes from his family home after his parents and sister are killed, and who is adopted by ghosts in the local graveyard. Over the course of the novel, Bod has various experiences that educate him about life. In the

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final chapters, he meets his family's murderer and avenges their deaths. Bod is then sent away from the graveyard towards a new home and life. *The Graveyard Book* has won numerous awards, including the Carnegie Medal and the Newbery Medal, and has recently been published as a graphic novel (Gaiman, 2014).

In this article, I show how the text positions its reader through its representation of a series of terrifying events. I draw on the notion of the "construed reader" (Jaakola et al., 2014) to explain how an analysis of the various stances and perspectives around which the text is organized provides insight into the way that Gaiman requires his reader to "jointly attend the conceptualization from a certain angle" (Jaakola et al., 2014, p. 643). The opening events of the novel are centred on the family home, yet push Bod away from that space towards a new environment. I argue that a close reading of the initial scenes contributes significantly to understanding how the novel represents the broader notions of home and growing up.

Home and Growing Up

The first scenes of *The Graveyard Book* take place in the family home, although the exact location is not revealed until the end of the novel. The symbolic importance of the home as a place where a child ideally grows up, under the loving care and supervision of parents, has been emphasised by various scholars working in children's literature. For example, Virginia Wolf argues that the motif of the mythical home demonstrates "our continued need for the possibilities of unity, certainty, and perfection" (1990, p. 55). Indeed, across children's literature, there is often a "metaplot" (Wilson and Short, 2012, p. 130), which serves to emphasise the relationship of the main (child) character to the places of "'home' and 'not home'" (Stott and Francis, 1993, p. 223). This binary distinction can also operate on the levels of overarching narrative structure and plot design, with home offering both a point of departure for the events of a particular story and a necessary resting place (Bates, 2007). Perry Nodelman (2008) considers a "home-away-home again" pattern to be prevalent in children's literature, where authors promote the adult's authority and superior knowledge by emphasising the safety of home for the implied child reader. Generally, child characters that want to leave home are viewed as too immature to appreciate its comfort and protection; the "away," although attractive, is always represented in ultimately less than favourable terms. However, Nodelman is careful to point out that this binary opposition is complicated by the fact that the home returned to (or home again) cannot be the same as the one from which the character started; a new sense of home will arise due to the protagonist's experiences (Nodelman, 2008, p. 65).

Melissa Wilson and Kathy Short (2012) argue that postmodern children's literature dispels the nostalgic myth of home as a safe and comforting place. Home should then be understood as "failed or absent," and a point of departure for the transformation into a better self. In such fictional works,

the child leaves from a place the child doesn't (or can't) consider home to go on a journey, psychological or literal, to a new home that the child has constructed. The children don't return to the same home, if they return home at all. The child protagonist constructs a new home because of an absence of home at the beginning or because the home is untenable. (Wilson and Short, 2012, p. 134)

At the beginning of *The Graveyard Book*, the family home is violated by a murderer called Jack. It represents an example of an untenable home and, therefore, a point of departure for Bod. The graveyard replaces the family home to become a physical and emotional nurturing space, which offers safety. Consequently Bod is able to pass his childhood and early teenage years there, before leaving to find an identity of his own. In fact, Gaiman reconfigures the home-away-home again pattern, since at the end of the novel Bod is not "home again" but rather homeless. About the graveyard, he states: "If I come back, it will be a place, but it won't be home any longer" (Gaiman, 2009, p. 286). The "home again" for Bod is as yet unspecified; it rests as a series of potential pathways, beyond the fictional world of the novel itself.

The "home-away-home again" pattern implies an individual's growth towards a mature identity. Victor Watson (2003, p. 1) argues that maturation "saturates children's stories and colours narratives of every kind." Growth may refer to the characters within the fictional world with their concerns and experiences, and to young readers who are developing their own knowledge of the world more generally. For the latter, particular texts can generate moments of intense self-discovery and meta-reflection (see Spufford, 2002; Tatar, 2009).

The Graveyard Book can be viewed as a novel about growth on many levels, most obviously in the linear narrative that marks Bod's journey from orphaned toddler to a teenager on the verge of adulthood. Arguing that *The Graveyard Book* operates as a tale that fuses numerous gothic and fairy-tale motifs, Joseph Abbruscato (2014, p. 81) suggests that the novel represents "the search for and actualisation of an identity," starting with Bod's acquired status as a displaced orphan (see also Mattix, 2012), and ending with his need to move beyond the world of the graveyard in his early teenage years. Other studies have described the novel as a feral child narrative (McStotts, 2015) and as a morality tale (Seyford Hrezo, 2015). All of these readings demonstrate how the individual chapters of the book act as stages of transition and markers of growth. The influence of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) is also apparent, most obviously in the parallels between the two texts' narrative structures, various similarities between characters (for example, Bod/Mowgli and Silas/Bagheera), and the overarching thematic concerns with identity and what it means to be human. Gaiman himself has acknowledged these intertextual links several times (Gaiman, 2009, 2012).[1] In the sections that follow, I argue that the novel's concern with growth offers an opportunity for a systematic analysis of its language. In doing so, I first outline some principles of

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[1] For a detailed analysis of the intertextual relationship between *The Jungle Book* and *The Graveyard Book*, see Christine Robertson (2011).

stylistics before concentrating on Text World Theory, which is my method of analysis.

Stylistics and the Analysis of Children's Literature

Stylistics can be viewed both as a discipline in the field of applied linguistics and as a research methodology for textual analysis.[2] Work in stylistics starts from the assumption that the best way to analyse texts is to focus carefully on linguistic patterns, the relationships between those patterns and certain interpretative effects that they may yield. Since stylistics is rooted in the careful exploration of language choices within various social, cognitive and literary contexts, analyses typically not only suggest interpretations, but also describe *how* these interpretations might emerge.

In recent years, advances in cognitive science, cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology have influenced stylistics, leading to the interdisciplinary field known as cognitive stylistics (Semino and Culpeper, 2002) or cognitive poetics (Stockwell, 2002; Gavins and Steen, 2003). There, textual analysis is framed within a broader view of language and cognition, for example drawing on schema theory (Schank and Abelson, 1977), deictic shifting and the encoding of point of view (Zubin and Hewitt, 1995), and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008). Although this type of research is inherently interdisciplinary, it retains both a strong linguistic focus and conforms to the underpinning principles of stylistic scholarship. In contrast, as an alternative form of study, cognitive literary studies emerges largely from empirical studies on the psychology of reading, empathy, and theory of mind, and is less focused on the analysis of linguistic content per se (Zunshine, 2006; Keen, 2010; Vermeule, 2010).

Research on children's literature is largely absent in contemporary mainstream stylistics, with some notable exceptions that study specific texts (for example, Walsh, 2007; Jeffries, 2009) and a few more wide-ranging studies (such as Hunt, 1988; Stephens, 1992; Knowles and Malmkjær, 1992). This is surprising, given how readily stylistics has been applied to other literary genres and texts from a wide range of periods and movements. Some scholars have adapted cognitive approaches to textual study (Stephens, 2011; Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Marecki, 2015), but more extended studies by scholars working within children's literature (Nikolejeva, 2014; Trites, 2014) have tended to be grounded in cognitive literary studies rather than cognitive stylistics. The potential gains, however, for further work involving the stylistic analysis of literature for children are compelling. Although the term "child reader" is notoriously difficult to define and may incorporate readers of different ages and varying degrees of literary competence (Culler, 1975), children's literature is by its very essence written for a different audience than adult fiction (Hunt, 2005, p. 3). This suggests that the language used will, to some extent, also be different. Children are distinct from adults in the ways they see the world, and in terms of their life experiences, cognitive processes, and their ability to manage emotions

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[2] See Peter Stockwell and Sara Whiteley (2014) for a good overview of its scope.

(Goswami, 2007). Consequently, adult authors write "to children" (Wall, 1991, p. 2) in order to present ideas, issues and themes in ways that are meaningful for the young, taking into account their cognitive and emotional abilities (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 227). As Wall (1991, p. 2) further argues, "it is not what is said, but the way it is said, and to whom it is said, which marks a book for children."[3]

Paying attention to aspects of style can thus help to understand children's literature as a field, as well as interpret individual titles. As stylistics is an applied linguistic practice, stylisticians are interested in the production and the various interpretations and evaluations of texts. Moreover, they are sensitive to the social contexts in which language is used, together with its relationship to culture and ideology. Adult authors both construct fictional worlds through their language choices that cohere to form "ideological positions" (Stephens, 1992, p. 3) and promote cognitive stances from which the world can be viewed. These stances, in turn, are part of complex and dynamic discourses concerned with constructing and reconstructing notions of childhood (James and Prout, 2015). Peter Hollindale (1997) uses the term "childness" to refer to how both adults and children conceive what it means to be a child. For the adult author, this notion is built on various experiences of childhood together with a retrospective evaluation of those experiences and a series of expectations about child behaviour (Hollindale, 1997, p. 49). Hollindale argues that a children's literature text represents a site of interaction between an adult author and a child reader, and consequently between potentially different conceptions of childness. The "event of children's literature" (Hollindale, 1997, p. 49) is therefore enacted through the reader responding to textual cues that construct what it means to be a child in a particular way. If this is the case, then a stylistic analysis might help to explain just *how* readers are positioned to adopt various stances.

The term "implied reader" (Iser, 1978) has been widely used to refer to the entity that an author has in mind when writing. An implied reader has a particular ontological status, being different from a real reader (the person who picks up a book and reads in the real world), and also from the audience of the narrative (the actual stance a reader takes when reading) and the narratee (the specific addressee of a fictional narrator) (Phelan, 2004, pp. 631–632). Reconfiguring the notion of the implied reader from a cognitive linguistic perspective, Jaakola et al. (2014, p. 640) use the term the "construed reader." The authors adopt Ronald Langacker's "dimensions of construal" (Langacker, 2008, pp. 55–89) to emphasise how writers offer ways of viewing sequences of events and build textual worlds specifically through linguistic choices. This term derives from the central cognitive linguistic premise that grammatical forms are in themselves carriers of meaning in the ways they allow events to be organised. Moreover, in literary discourse, they are designed with readers in mind. Importantly, grammar is viewed not just as an aspect of style; rather, grammar *is* style.

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[3] This model of difference, however, is critiqued by some scholars. For example, Marah Gubar (2013) proposes a kinship model of childhood that emphasises relatedness and connections. Where differences do exist, she views them as a matter of degree. The distinction between child and adult is therefore never absolute.

The notion of the construed reader can be used to explore textual cues in order to show how language represents fictional events, which in turn establish larger thematic and ethical concerns; it also permits close scrutiny of the ways in which the reader is positioned to respond to these concerns. Indeed particular construals of events in children's literature may offer fairly prototypical examples of how texts will usually give rise to "preferred" rather than "dispreferred" responses (Stockwell, 2013). My analysis of the opening of *The Graveyard Book* therefore uses the notion of the construed reader as part of a systematic stylistic analysis. Since I largely draw on Text World Theory for my analysis, the following section outlines its basic parameters.

Text World Theory

Text World Theory (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007) is a cognitive discourse grammar that offers a coherent framework for analysing a range of texts and communicative acts. Text World Theory emphasises that reading is a highly creative enterprise in which readers draw on a range of background resources to build rich mental configurations of fictional worlds. In Text World Theory terms, a writer and reader come together to build a "discourse-world," a representation of the context in which speaking/writing and listening/reading take place. In face-to-face communication, participants normally share the same spatio-temporal context. However, when reading a literary text, typically a reader's immediate context is different to that of the writer (the acts of writing and reading are separated in both time and space). Text World Theory acknowledges this distance through the notion of a "split discourse-world" (Gavins, 2007, p. 26).

In the discourse-world, participants' physical surroundings, individual and culturally dependent ideologies, memories and desires, and shared and idiosyncratic bundles of knowledge in the form of frames (Werth, 1999, pp. 103–113) play an integral role in the construction of "text-worlds." Text-worlds are rich mental representations that rely both on "world-building elements" (aspects of time, place and characters) and "function-advancing propositions" (processes and events that drive the narrative and modify the contents of the original world). For example, when readers encounter the paragraph introducing the character Stella Saxby in David Walliams' novel *Awful Auntie*, they have to complete a sophisticated process of text-world construction:

> The little girl realised that she was lying in her own bed. Her bedroom was just one of countless in this vast country house. To her right side stood her wardrobe, on her left sat a tiny dressing table, framed by a tall window. (Walliams, 2014, p. 1)

The reader will typically construct a text-world that is situated in the past (the use of the past tense sets up the world's temporal parameters) and contains a character "little girl," located in a specific space ("in her own bed") in a larger context, the "vast country house." Further world-builders in the form of locative prepositional phrases, "to her right" and "on her left," position the character deictically,

orientating the reader to assume a similar vantage point to the girl at the centre of the narrative. In addition, pre-modified noun phrases, such as "her wardrobe," "a tiny dressing table," and "a tall window" all provide specific details of the objects in the room. These act as triggers for activating background encyclopaedic knowledge to build the fictional world. Typically, that knowledge may relate to the nature of a bedroom and its furniture, and specifically to what a young girl's room might look like. The passage further draws on knowledge of what a "country house" might be (perhaps secluded, set in grounds, grand, old-fashioned), and so on.

Clearly, since experience varies from reader to reader, text-worlds will differ in some respects from person to person, although we do not expect big differences in readers of similar ages and backgrounds. In addition, the so-called "principle of minimal departure" (Ryan, 1991, pp. 48–60) dictates that unless we are told otherwise, we assume that any text-world operates under the same conditions as the actual world. The "principle of text-drivenness" (Werth, 1999, p. 103) also places constraints on the background knowledge that is likely to be used in the construction of text-worlds. So, in the example above, only frames of knowledge relating to bedrooms and country houses, as well as more literary and genre-specific frames, are expected to be activated to build the fictional world.

Finally, "world-switches" (Gavins, 2007, p. 74) occur when the reader's attention moves away from the original text-world. This may be due to a shift in time or place, the introduction of a different narrative point of view, or any instances of metaphor, negation or hypotheticals, all of which represent alternative states of affairs. In these cases, a reader's attention focuses on the switched world, which in itself has the potential to be built up in the same way as the original text-world. The process by which readers navigate these conceptual structures, and which can account for the interpretative effects of moving between different mental representations, is known as "toggling" (Gavins, 2007, p. 152).

World-Building, Scope and Profiling

The opening of any novel is of particular interest, since it occupies what Peter Rabinowitz (2002, p. 300) calls one of several "privileged positions" in a text, the others being titles and endings. Readers must hence treat it as a type of large-scale foregrounding. In *The Graveyard Book*, the beginning acts as an attention-seeking device in its own right.

> There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife. The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know that you had been cut, not immediately. (Gaiman, 2009, p. 3)

One of the most striking features of this opening is the fact that the text specifies very few world-building elements. It provides no indication of the location of the fictional events, except that they take place "in the darkness," and a time is not specified, although the past tense does suggest a temporal frame prior to the act of narrating. The sole objects described are "a hand" and "a knife," both of which are

referenced through the use of the indefinite article "a," so that they seem at a distance from the reader's knowledge. Function-advancing propositions in this opening paragraph are also kept to a minimum: descriptive detail is related to the relationship between the hand and the knife (the former is holding the latter), and to aspects of its physical nature, "polished black bone" and "a blade sharper than any razor." It is also significant that there is no mention of a human agent; the text-world, in the absence of conventional world-building elements, is dominated by a single image of a knife and what initially appears to be a disembodied hand. In short, it constructs a scene that is potentially unsettling, inviting the reader to draw on KNIFE and DARKNESS schemas, which are likely to evoke feelings of fear and anxiety.

The framing of narrative events can be examined in greater detail by integrating the concepts of "scope" and "profiling" from Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008). In Cognitive Grammar, scope refers to the limits of what humans can and need to mentally focus on at one time. Any expression entails both a maximal scope, a larger domain of knowledge selected by that expression, and an immediate scope, a smaller and more relevant part (Langacker, 2008, pp. 62–63). So "foot" selects the larger domain of the human body that acts as its maximal scope but is also conceptualised as a part of a more focused domain of a leg, which is the more local and relevant viewing frame, or immediate scope. In this example, "foot" is profiled, which means that it is identified as the "specific focus of attention within its immediate scope" (Langacker, 2008, p. 66). Other parts of the leg, for example the ankle, shin and knee, are not profiled but remain understood as forming the background conceptual content; in short, in comprehending "foot," we most likely conceptualise it within its immediate scope as part of a leg and its maximal scope as part of a human body.

The opening to *The Graveyard Book* has an interesting and significant conceptual profile. Within the deictically minimal text-world, "hand" is profiled and evokes the immediate scope of an arm. In contrast to an expression such as "the man" or "Jack," whose immediate scope would be an entire human body, this choice downplays human involvement to the point where it foregrounds an unnatural kind of agency. Furthermore, the shift to the "knife" profiles the weapon and draws attention to it even though the immediate scope remains the same; in this instance, the hand is backgrounded as a result of the new profile, further emphasising non-human agency. Finally, a kind of attentional zoom-in occurs with the references to "handle" and then "blade" which have the same immediate scope (the knife) and maximal scope (understood as an arm holding the knife). These shift agency from the body part (hand) to the instrument itself (knife).

The technique of a body part standing in for a whole person as an agent in a clause is an example of a "meronymic" (Kennedy, 1982; Simpson, 2014) as opposed to "holonymic" (whole person) construal (Nash, 1990). In this section of the novel, the reader is positioned in a way that draws attention to embodiment and (lack of) human agency. These indications are significant in the context of a novel that, immediately after the opening chapter, moves into temporal-spatial locations where characters have varying degrees of corporeality and where various kinds of agency are examined. This particular scene, with its focus on disembodiment and its

overtly sinister construal, might also serve to prime the reader for certain aspects of the supernatural that occur in subsequent parts of the book. These include the various points where Bod's mentors, Silas and Miss Lupescu, demonstrate abilities beyond the conventions of a normal body, and episodes involving the Indigo Man and the Sleer, who reside in a tomb at the graveyard, and Elizabeth Hempstock, the ghost of a witch. Bod's own ability to fade, haunt and dream-walk relies on a disassociation of mind and body, and it is only at the end of the novel, when he moves away from the graveyard, that he is able to re-inhabit a completely mortal human form.

World-Switches and Edgework: Hypothetical and Negation Worlds

In addition to preparing the reader for a supernatural narrative, the world-switches in the opening paragraph of *The Graveyard Book* operate to construct a particular vantage point from which the violent events are shown: "If it sliced you, you might not even know that you had been cut, not immediately" (Gaiman, 2009, p. 1). In Text World Theory, a hypothetical if-clause serves as a trigger for a world-switch to an unspecified hypothetical situation. In this instance it depicts a scene in which the narratee has been "sliced" by the knife. The use of the second-person pronoun "you" and the direct address, positions the narratee as an entity in the fictional world or "text-world enactor" (Gavins, 2007, p. 41). Moreover, as David Herman (1994) has demonstrated, the use of "you" may also be responsible for making the real-world reader feel part of the fictional world. Here, the pronoun "you" functions deictically to refer to the fictionalised narratee (text-world enactor) and the real reader (discourse-world participant) at the same time. In fact, this "double deixis" acts to at least momentarily blur the boundary between discourse and text-worlds so as to give the impression that a reader is immersed as an actual embodied participant. As Herman (1994, p. 348) argues, double deixis means that readers "might find themselves to be oddly non-virtual participants in discourses from which they are nevertheless spatiotemporally removed."[4]

This use of "you" acts in conjunction with the world-navigation that the if-clause demands of the reader. As I have previously described, a reader may toggle between text-worlds as a narrative develops. Here, the first world-switch to a hypothetical world means that the reader is repositioned deictically from the parameters set up in the text-world. World-switches also involve the reconfiguration of discourse attention so that the switched-world is now foregrounded and the original text-world relegated to the background. In line with the principles of figure-ground configuration (Stockwell, 2002) that only permit a single locus of attention, the hypothetical world now achieves cognitive prominence.

Further navigation is required through the negated multi-clause structure that follows the if-clause, "you might not even know that you had been cut, not

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[4] In fact, the phenomenon of double deixis can account for the many responses on online book-group fora where readers (both young and old) explain their feelings of terror when reading the opening of the novel. In these instances, "you" clearly acts to make the reading experience seem very "real." See, for example, responses at https://www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/the-graveyard-book/user-reviews.

immediately," which demands another shift of attention, this time through a negation world-switch. In cognitive linguistics, negation is understood as an act of comparison between an imaginary situation that contains a particular element and the real situation where that element is lacking (Lawler, 2010). Here, "not" acts as an explicit marker of syntactic negation (Givón, 1993) that requires a reader to first conceptualise the positive counterpart, and then understand this as being backgrounded in favour of the conceptually prominent negated version.[5] In this instance, a text-world in which the reader/narratee/text-world enactor is aware of being cut is negated to foreground this lack of knowledge. The inference that such awareness will follow, suggested through "not immediately," imposes a specific and constraining viewing position from which the reader is asked to imagine the state of affairs. The narrator's suggestion implies a further text-world (although this is never textually realised) in which the full horror of the violence is understood, but where this awareness comes too late.

My discussion makes clear that toggling between conceptual spaces involves more than just a simple switching of attention from one state to another. In fact, the felt transition that can occur when readers move across world edges can be understood as "edgework" (Segal, 1995; see also McIntyre, 2006). In my book *Text World Theory and Keats' Poetry* (Giovanelli 2013, p. 95), I argue that this term, originally used in Deictic Shift Theory (Zubin and Hewitt, 1995), can be integrated into Text World Theory to describe how a reader moves between different text-worlds, recognising the explicit boundaries (or edges) that are distinguished as part of the textural quality of these text-worlds. This movement also involves a constant re-positioning of the reading self. In the opening lines of *The Graveyard Book*, the reader is a text-world enactor, and the edgework also involves updating versions of the reader-enactor. The construed reader becomes part of a dynamic schema of different text-world enactors: narratee—target of knife attack—unknowing victim—knowledgeable victim. All of these roles are triggered and handled linguistically by movements towards, across and away from world edges, and all combine to produce subtle and unnerving effects. The construed child reader is asked to conceptualise this scene from a number of disconcerting viewpoints via the use of meronymic, non-human agency and the hypothetical world in which the reader is positioned as an enactor in the imagined violence. Drawing on standard diagrammatic representation (see Werth, 1999, pp. xvi–xvii), this edgework can be visualised as in Fig. 1.

The Expanding Fictional World

The final part of the extract chosen for analysis involves a series of temporal and spatial world-switches that expand the fictional world.

> The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet.

[5] See Marcello Giovanelli (2013, pp. 125–138) for a detailed explanation of negation in Text World Theory.
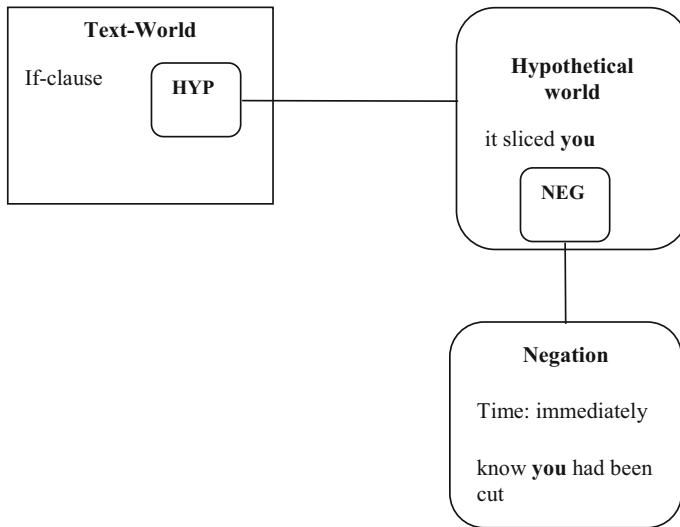
Fig. 1 Edgework via hypothetical and negation world-switches

The street door was still open, just a little, where the knife and the man who held it had slipped in, and wisps of night-time mist slithered and twined into the house through the open door.

The man Jack paused on the landing. With his left hand he pulled a large white handkerchief from the pocket of his black coat, and with it he wiped off the knife and his gloved white hand which had been holding it; then he put the handkerchief away. The hunt was almost over. He had left the woman in her bed, the man on the bedroom floor, the older child in her brightly coloured bedroom, surrounded by toys and half-finished models. That only left the little one, a baby, barely a toddler, to take care of. One more and his task would be done. (Gaiman, 2009, p. 1)

There are clear continuities here with the initial section of the novel: the knife retains subject position and agency in the clause, the conceptual profile remains the same, and there is still a lack of world-building with only implied actions stated. We might infer that three murders have already been carried out, with another to follow. The use of the demonstrative "that" identifies the family home, which continues to remain undefined and devoid of any specific descriptive detail; the failed or disrupted home is thus designed to be terrifying. However, the pattern of spatial indefiniteness and the profiling of non-human agency disappear further into the extract. Specificity increases as the definite article ("the street door," "the house" and "the open door") is now used almost exclusively. The use of the definite article highlights that the nouns that follow are specific and "actual instances" (at least in the fictional world) of their referents rather than imagined or "virtual" ones (Langacker, 2008, pp. 289–290). In these examples, they function to build up a more defined and recognisable family space.
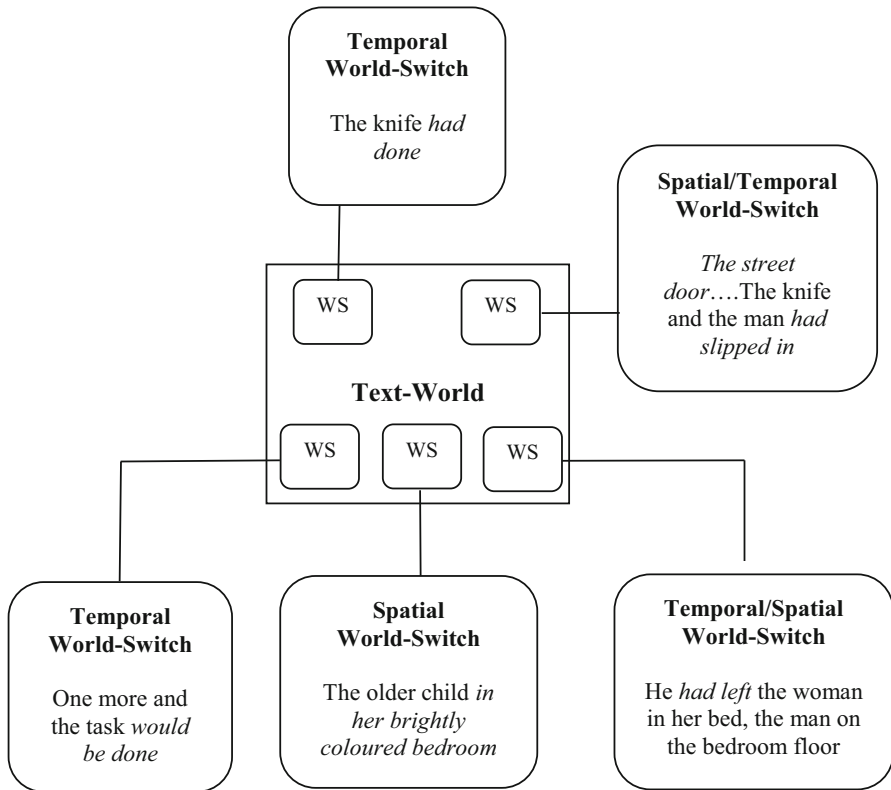
Fig. 2 Edgework and the expanding conceptualisation of the opening of *The Graveyard Book*

The concentrated use of the definite article is echoed stylistically in the more substantive world-building that takes place across this section. For the first time, attention shifts to a human entity, named "Jack," who is grammatically foregrounded as the clausal agent. In addition, the use of "the man," "the woman," and "the older child" encodes the action from Jack's perspective. Indeed this perspective is also evident in the use of the noun phrase "the hunt," which casts the event from Jack's perceptual vantage point. The murders and their aftermath are now also described with far richer deictic detail. Bod's family members are presented through determiner-noun-prepositional phrase structures, for example "the man on the bedroom floor," which identify them as actual story world instances and provide a sense of spatial orientation. In fact, the edgework required of the reader in this part of the novel involves moving very quickly across numerous temporal and spatial structures that build up the story world and destabilise the home by foregrounding its untenable nature as a site of violence. The narrative emphasises Bod's need to move away from "home" until it can be refashioned as a safer space by the end of the novel. Thus, temporal world-switches triggered by "the knife had done" and "the man who held it had slipped in" fleetingly point back to the time frame of the murders and the moments leading up to them. In the updated

text-world of Jack at the top of the stairs, further world-switches, both temporal ("had been holding it," "had left the woman") and spatial ("in her bed," "on the bedroom floor," "in her brightly coloured bedroom") occur. The focus on the murder of Bod's sister is magnified through the adverbial "surrounded by toys and half-finished models," which emphasises her childhood and innocence. The final temporal world-switch to a future event, triggered by "his task would be done," is not only conceptualised as the last world-switch in the edgework chain but also captures the shocking brutality of the crimes, evident in the rich deictic detail, with its three apposite noun phrases "the little one, a baby, barely a toddler." Together, the effects of this chain deictically re-centre the reader's point of view at every world-switch, and the crossing of various world-edges lead the construed reader to survey the events in the family home in a particular and cumulative way. This deictic patterning (perceptual, spatial, temporal, relational), or what Peter Stockwell (2009, p. 128) terms "deictic braiding," gives the extract its final sense of vastness, and emphasizes the horror of the events that have taken place. Figure 2 shows, in visual form, the section's evident textural quality.

Conclusion

In this article, I have demonstrated how a cognitive stylistic analysis can provide insights into how a text operates. Specifically, I have focused on the representation of events centred on the family home at the beginning of *The Graveyard Book* as a way of explaining how the grammatical patterns and conceptual structures construe the reader as the fictional world unfolds. Since a reader's access to fictional events is largely constrained by how these events are presented, the reader is positioned to adopt the narrator's deictic perspective, and this construal has the potential to yield interesting and subtle interpretative effects. Moreover, the representations of the home and childhood in this book are not verisimilar, but rather projections of how an adult author wishes them to be seen largely for aesthetic and dramatic reasons. I would therefore argue that there are good reasons for wanting to explore these projections in detail.

Cognitive stylistics as a literary methodology, and specifically Text World Theory, can offer much to the analysis of children's literature. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of horror fiction written for children is that it has a noticeable, felt impact on the discourse-world participants; that is, text-worlds created by the reader are responsible for discourse-world effects (Brandon, 2015). This bi-directionality of influence means, as Kimberly Reynolds suggests, that reading horror fiction can provide young people with "textual forums for acting out, completing, and so helping to dislodge areas of cultural uncertainty" (2001, p. 17). This provides a clear justification for wanting to explore in as much detail as possible "how the text's imagined minds and the reader's actually situated mind have arrived at a certain place" (Stockwell, 2013, p. 274).

My analysis also hints at some wider implications for Text World Theory and the study of children as readers. This article has been concerned with the description and analysis of text-immanent cues, and as such, has worked with the notion of the

construed reader rather than focusing on the responses of a real flesh-and-blood entity. Text World Theory, however, provides useful tools for detailed analyses of what actual readers do when they engage in the immersive act of reading and subsequently report their experiences.[6] The model therefore offers the potential to support a more empirically-informed study of how readers react to fictional events that are presented to them.

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[6] See, for example, Gavins (2013) and Whiteley (2011).

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