

# Brought up by the Other: Quasi-parents and Orphans in *The Jungle Book*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *The Boy and the Beast*

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## Abstract

In this article, Neil Richard Gaiman (1960- )'s *The Graveyard Book* (2008), which for the first time in the history of Children's Literature in English won the Newbery Medal and the Carnegie Medal, is compared with *The Jungle Book* (1894-5), written by Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), because according to the author himself the former was based on the latter. Since there are a lot of similarities between *The Graveyard Book* and *The Jungle Book*, some aspects that concern the plot and the characterisation are analysed. During the analysis, another children's fiction that also appears to be indebted to *The Jungle Book*, the Japanese anime titled *The Boy and the Beast* (2015), directed by Mamoru Hosoda (1967- ), is also examined.

The result of the whole discussion is an exploration of what these coming-of-age narratives of human child protagonists brought up by non-human beings suggest. Just like the ideal relationship between parents and children, the relationship between quasi-parents and orphans described in children's fiction represents temporal as well as eternal support for children growing up to leave their parents.

〈他者〉に育てられる  
——『ジャングルブック』、『墓場の少年』、  
『バケモノの子』における擬似親と孤児 ——

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Neil Richard Gaiman (1960- ) の *The Graveyard Book* (2008) は、作家自身も明言しているように、19世紀に誕生したノーベル賞作家 Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) の *The Jungle Book* (1894-5) に着想を得て書かれた作品である。Gaiman は多くのファンタジーおよび SF 作品を手がけてきたイギリスの作家で、アメリカのグラフィックノベル *The Sandman* (1990-2) の作者として最もよく知られているが、*The Graveyard Book* では 2009 年に Newbery Medal、2010 年に Carnegie Medal という英米二大児童文学賞を受賞した。1つの作品が両方の賞を受賞したのは史上初めてのことである。

異種族である〈他者〉が人間の幼子を育てることになるプロット、主人公以外は人間よりも〈他者〉の方が多い登場人物、人間と〈他者〉との対比等、*The Graveyard Book* と *The Jungle Book* には、多くの共通項が見られる。本論では、*The Jungle Book* から影響を受けたと言われるもう1つの作品、2015年に公開された、細田守 (1967-) 監督作品である日本のアニメーション『バケモノの子』を加えた3作品について、人間の幼子と〈他者〉との関係の始まり、擬似親と息子、敵対者と保護者、人間界とのつながり等の分析を通して、人間の幼子を育てる〈他者〉の物語について考察する。

## Introduction

As the author himself mentions, Neil Richard Gaiman (1960- )'s *The Graveyard Book* (2008) was based on the two volumes of *The Jungle Book* (1894-5), written by Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), one of the greatest British writers of the 19th century to win the Nobel Prize.<sup>1</sup> Gaiman is a British fantasist and science fiction novelist, who is best-known as the author of the original work of the American graphic novel *The Sandman* (1990-2). Gaiman was awarded the Newbery Medal in 2009 and the Carnegie Medal in 2010. It is unparalleled in the history of children's literature awards that the greatest awards in the US and in the UK were given to the same book.

There are many similarities between *The Graveyard Book* and *The Jungle Book*: the plot where the other, who are non-human, bring up human infants, the mostly non-human characters except child protagonists, comparisons between human beings and the other, and so on. In this article, another children's fiction that is obviously affected by *The Jungle Book*, that is, the Japanese animated film work titled *The Boy and the Beast* (2015), directed by Mamoru Hosoda (1967- ), is also included in the primary sources to be examined.<sup>2</sup> I shall discuss these three works through the analysis of the outset of the relationship between human children and the other, the description of the quasi-parents and sons, the function of antagonists and protectors in these works, and the presentation of the connection to the human world, in order to explore what these narratives of human child protagonists brought up by non-human beings convey.

### 1. The Outset of the Relationship

At the beginning of each of these fictional works, the encounter of human boys and the other is led by the others' awareness of children abandoned after the death of their parents. In *The Jungle Book*, parental wolves notice that a human infant is approaching them:

‘Man!’ he snapped. ‘A man’s cub. Look!’

Directly in front of him, holding on by a low branch, stood a naked brown baby who could just walk — as soft and as dimpled a little atom as ever came to a wolf’s cave at night. He looked up into Father Wolf’s face, and laughed.

‘Is that a man’s cub?’ said Mother Wolf. ‘I have never seen one . . . How little! How naked, and — how bold!’ said Mother Wolf, softly.<sup>3</sup>

Although neither of them had ever seen a human being, they realise their ability to love it when the infant laughs at them. Likewise, in *The Graveyard Book*, Mr. and Mrs. Owens, the Victorian couple

who have been buried in a graveyard, find a baby boy one night:

“Owens!’ called the pale woman, in a voice that might have been the rustle of the wind through the long grass. ‘Owens! Come and look at this!’”

. . . at that moment the thing he [Mr. Owens] was inspecting seemed to catch sight of Mrs. Owens, for it opened its mouth, letting the rubber nipple it was sucking fall to the ground, and it reached out a small, chubby first, as if it were trying for all the world to hold on to Mrs. Owens’s pale finger.

“Strike me silly,” said Mr. Owens, “if that isn’t a baby.”

“Of course it’s a baby,” said his wife. “And the question is, what is to be done with it?”<sup>4</sup>

Mrs Owens is also fascinated with the baby’s smile because it is “the sweetest of smiles”.<sup>5</sup> In both stories, human infants captivate female characters at first among the other.<sup>6</sup> However, unlike these stories, in *The Boy and the Beast*, there is no other playing the role of mother. A boy protagonist who is alone after his mother’s death encounters a male, bear-like monster, who invites him to be the beast’s apprentice. The common aspect of these three works seems to be the fact that the human children need help in their isolation.

Both in *The Jungle Book* and *The Graveyard Book*, the boy protagonist is in peril of his life because he is being hunted by a killer. Shere Khan, a tiger who tries in vain to kill the boy’s parents and decides to kill him instead, insists that the human baby is his prey. Then, Mother Wolf, who is already attracted to the cute human children, makes up her mind to bring him up as well as her own cubs to protect him from Shere Khan. In *The Graveyard Book*, the baby’s family is killed by a man named Jack, and the baby escapes through an open door to reach the graveyard, though he is totally unconscious about the danger he is in. Since the ghost of his mother asks Mr. and Mrs. Owens to protect him, after she reveals the fact before she goes to the other graveyard where she belongs, they decide to raise the boy in the graveyard and keep him safe.

The acceptance of a human boy is expressed through the other giving a name to him. In *The Jungle Book*, Mother Wolf names the infant, ‘Lie still, little frog. O thou Mowgli — for Mowgli the Frog I will call thee’<sup>7</sup>. The baby boy in *The Graveyard Book* is named Nobody (the nickname becomes Bod). Because all the inhabitants in the graveyard start to insist that the baby is similar to somebody else, Mrs. Owens claims:

“He looks like nobody but himself,” said Mrs. Owens, firmly.

“He looks like nobody.”

“Then Nobody it is,” said Silas. “Nobody Owens.”

It was then that, as if responding to the name, the child opened its eyes wide in wakefulness. It stared around it, taking in the faces of the dead, and the mist, and the moon.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, though the nine-year-old boy in *The Boy and the Beast*, who is called Ren in the human world, is given a new name by Kumatetsu when he follows him to the world of beasts: ‘From here on out, you’re “Kyuta”, ’cause you’re nine.’<sup>9</sup> However, the protagonist appears not to be fond of his new name at first, unlike the babies in the other two works. Thus, naming functions to establish the relationship at the outset of all of three works.

And the final process to accept a human child to the world of the other is the discussion in the meeting in *The Jungle Book* and *The Graveyard Book*. However, the final decision is taken by the Supreme Master in *The Boy and the Beast*, different from the other two. The process is described as the simplest one and nobody except a beast seems to find any dispute in accepting a human being. Only Iouzen, who is a boar-like beast and a rival to Kumatetsu, shows his anxiety towards human beings because they are possibly taken into the darkness.

## 2. Quasi-Parents and Sons

All three works are coming-of-age stories of child protagonists. Quasi-parents protect and bring them up till they obtain enough strength to be independent. Since all of them are orphans or temporarily orphaned, quasi-parents are indispensable to them.

Some assist quasi-parents to teach the human infant how to survive in the world of the other. In all three works, such characters function as masters for the boys.<sup>10</sup> In *The Jungle Book*, as well as all the wolves of the jungle, ‘Baloo, the sleepy Bear’<sup>11</sup> and ‘Bagheera the Black Panther’<sup>12</sup> attend the Pack Council. Akela<sup>13</sup>, the head of the Wolves at that time, Baloo, Bagheera, and Mowgli’s wolf family are on the side of Mowgli. Bagheera even provides the bull he has just killed that night to save the human infant’s life. After Mowgli is accepted, Baloo, who also teaches the wolves’ cubs, and Bagheera become Mowgli’s teachers and protectors. As Akela insists<sup>14</sup>, Mowgli is wise enough to memorise the Law of the Jungle, which Baloo soon tells him.

In *The Graveyard Book*, there are also teachers for Bod: Silas and Miss Lupescu. Silas is a mysterious guardian of Bod, a position he volunteers for during the debate about whether they should keep the human infant or not. Everyone in the graveyard pays a high respect to Silas: ‘Silas was regarded with a certain wary awe by the graveyard folk, existing as he did on the borderland between their world and the world they had left.’<sup>15</sup> The debate is soon resolved because not only the respected

Mr. and Mrs. Owens, as well as Silas, but also the Lady of Grey, who is apparently the observer of the whole graveyard, are on the side of Bod. Miss Lepescu is brought in by Silas to take care of Bod during Silas's absence. She also teaches him various things, including the languages of different species in the graveyard, which later help Bod when he is in danger.

In *The Boy and the Beast*, Hyakushubo, a pig-like beast, assists and complements Kumatetsu, who teaches only the martial arts, to teach Kyuta how to complete daily routines, including household chores.<sup>16</sup> Because Hyakushubo is a calm and kind priest, he functions to cover a shortcoming in Kumatetsu, who is rather childish and rough.

All these adult assistants can be regarded as quasi-parents of orphan protagonists because they also play important roles in the child's growth. Unlike *The Jungle Book* and *The Graveyard Book*, a quasi-mother does not appear in *The Boy and the Beast*. Nonetheless, there is a strange but cute creature called Chiko, which is always with Kyuta after he goes out because it is small enough to hide itself in Kyuta's shirt pocket. It is not clearly mentioned, but Chiko seems to be a stand-in for Kyuta's mother. The possible connection between his mother and Chiko is indicated in the scene when Kyuta thinks of learning through imitating every one of Kumatetsu's actions and listens to his mother's voice:

— *Pretend. As if you really were.* —

“?”

I [Kyuta] snapped my head up. I thought the voice sounded like my mom's.

I sat up and looked around the hut. Of course, no one was there except for Chiko and me — only the raindrops dripping quietly outside the window.

“... Was that you just now?” I asked Chiko.

“Squeak!” Chiko replied with a blink.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Antagonists and Protectors

All the adult characters among the other, who are examined in the previous section, are without exception protectors of the human boys. They protect their children against antagonists at the peril of their own lives.<sup>18</sup> The antagonists are slightly different within the stories, that is, the creatures that disregard the Law of Jungle in *The Jungle Book*, such as the Bandar-log (the Monkey-People)<sup>19</sup>, the species different from the inhabitants of the graveyard, such as the ghouls and the human killers in *The Graveyard Book*, or the other in the world for the other, just like the human beings who inhabit *Juten-gai* in *The Boy and the Beast*.

In *The Jungle Book*, Baloo and Bagheera, helped by Kaa the Rock Snake<sup>20</sup>, fight to save Mowgli whose life is at risk when he is taken by the *Bandar-log* (the Monkey-People).

In *The Graveyard Book*, Miss Lupescu, who is actually a Hound of God, saves Bod when ghouls take him away in spite of his being injured. Moreover, she and Silas fight together to distract ‘an order of Jacks of All Trades’, which is a group of murderers, and they succeed in exchange for Miss Lupescu’s life. In *The Boy and the Beast*, Kumatetsu, who becomes the Supreme Master, uses his right to reincarnate to be a god of the sword (*tsukumo-gami*) to provide his quasi-son the mightiest weapon: the sword in his heart to fill the darkness all human beings possess in their minds.

As has been explained, all these protectors in the three works are also masters of the child protagonists. Thus, they are protected not only by their masters themselves but also by what they have learned from their masters. In *The Jungle Book*, since Mowgli obtains enough knowledge of the Law of Jungle, as well as the languages of the other, he is able to ask his masters for help and is assisted by the other animals in the jungle when he is in danger after he is kidnapped. Likewise, in *The Graveyard Book*, Bod asks Night-Gaunt to tell Miss Lupescu to help him because he has learned how to say ‘S-O-S’ in the language (or sound) used among Night-Gaunts through her language lessons. In addition, in the final confrontation with Jack, Bod beats his nemesis by using his knowledge of Sleer, which has been demanding since ancient times to find its master ‘to hold him in its coil forever’ to protect him perfectly.<sup>21</sup> During the final confrontation with Ichirohiko, Kyuta uses the art of the sword he has learned from Kumatetsu. It can be argued that their victories stand for the growth of these boy protagonists.

## Conclusion

Since the three boys in these fictions are merely others in the world of the other, they need to return to the world they originally belong to. Unlike Mowgli and Bod, who make up their mind to say farewell to the jungle or the graveyard after a lot of hesitation and encouragement from their masters, Kyuta goes back to his own world just before becoming a university student totally of his own volition. It might be because of the difference of the boundary between the human world and the world of the other. Kyuta seems to be easily able to visit the world of beasts whenever he wishes, as is described in the ending, whereas it might not be so easy for Mowgli and Bod.

Nevertheless, it is a commonality among all these narratives of the other and human orphans, in other words, quasi-parents and their quasi-sons, that the farewell is presupposed from the outset because the human children return to their own world when they grow up. However, the other cherish affection toward their quasi-children even if their relationship is temporal. In *The Graveyard Book* in particular, the humane feelings of non-human beings that try to protect their quasi-sons at the peril

of their own lives are highlighted in comparison to human beings, who are villains. Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer point out that the narratives of orphans indicate the children's future necessity of independence.<sup>22</sup> In these stories, orphans are encouraged to be independent by their quasi-parents when they are finally ready to return to where they belong. Moreover, Gaiman mentions that all parents realise that they have done their job perfectly when their children leave them.<sup>23</sup>

As a consequence, it can be argued that these coming-of-age narratives of human child protagonists brought up by non-human beings suggest the ideal relationship between parents and children. The relationship between quasi-parents and orphans described in children's fiction represents temporal as well as eternal support for children who grow up to leave their parents.

## Notes

- 1 Neil Gaiman pays homage to *The Jungle Book* as follows in the acknowledgements of *The Graveyard Book* :

I owe an enormous debt, conscious and, I have no doubt, unconscious to Rudyard Kipling and the two volumes of his remarkable work *The Jungle Book*. I read them as a child, excited and impressed, and I've read and reread them many times since. If you are only familiar with the Disney cartoon, you should read the stories. (2008 311)

- 2 It is pointed out that *The Boy and the Beast* is strongly influenced by *The Jungle Book* in reviews in *The New York Times*, *Variety*, and so on. Peter Debruge also points out Kumatetsu (Koji Yakusho) is reminiscent of Baloo (Bill Murray) in the latest Disney version of *The Jungle Book*. (*Variety*, 23 September, 2015)
- 3 Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p.38. Emphasis is added.
- 4 Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2008), p.13.
- 5 *Ibid*, p.14.
- 6 This situation is reminiscent of the scene in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), written by James Matthew Barrie (1860 - 1937). When Peter first arrives at Kensington Gardens, female fairies are struck with admiration instead of attacking him as soon as they realise that the stranger is a human baby. Male fairies just follow their behaviour (1999 27). In *Mothers in Children's Literature* (2016), Lisa Rowe Fraustino and Karen Coats point out the significant roles of mothers in children's fiction. (pp.3-4)
- 7 Kipling, p.40. As is explained in the note of the Penguin version, this name is coined by Kipling: "a name I made up. It does not mean frog in any language that I know of. It is pronounced *Mowglee* (accent on the *Mow*)". (350)
- 8 Gaiman, p.25. Emphasis is added.
- 9 Mamoru Hosoda, (New York: Yen On, 2016), p.29. *Kyu* means nine in Japanese.
- 10 Ryusuke Hikawa claims that the relationship between Kyuta and his quasi-family connotes the master-apprentice relationship, which indicates the connection with the other in *The Boy and the Beast* (2015 249-50). Likewise, Shino Sugimura describes families portrayed in Hosoda's animation films as "New Nostalgia".

- 11 According to the notes of the Penguin version, Baloo “is Hindustani for Bear which is pronounced Bar-looo (accent on Bar)”. (Kipling 350)
- 12 In Kipling’s account, Bagheera is “Hindustani for a panther or leopard. It is a sort of diminutive of *bagh*, which is Hindustani for tiger, and Bagheera is pronounced *bug-eer-a* (accent on the *eer*)”. (*Ibid*)
- 13 It is explained in the notes that “Akela means alone and is pronounced *uk-kay-la* (accent on *kay*)”. (*Ibid*)
- 14 Akela says when they accept Mowgli that human beings “and their cubs are very wise. He may be a help in time”. Bagheera agrees and says, “Truly, a help in time of need; for none can hope to lead the Pack forever”. (*Ibid* 43) Their utterances become true in the future.
- 15 Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, p.29. In the scene where Silas gets rid of Jack, the human murderer of Bod’s family, the darkness, the height, and the mysteriousness of Silas are emphasised:

The man Jack was tall. This man was taller. The man Jack wore dark clothes. This man’s clothes were darker. People who noticed the man Jack when he was about his business — and he did not like to be noticed — were troubled, or made uncomfortable, or found themselves unaccountably scared. The man Jack looked up at the stranger, and it was the man Jack who was troubled. (18)

It should be mentioned that not only his role but also Silas’s appearance seem to show a similarity to Bagheera.

- 16 Another friend of Kumatetsu, Tatara, a monkey-like beast, seems to function not as a teacher but the narrator of the whole story.
- 17 Hosoda, p.76. In the film, Kyuta actually sees his mother for a moment just as a phantasm. In a dialogue between three critics, Yoshiharu Ishioka, Sayawaka, and Kentaro Nakata, which appeared in a special issue of *EUREKA : Poetry and Criticism* (September, 2015), all of them agree that Chiko represents Kyuta’s mother (130-2).
- 18 These characters appear to subordinate their actions in Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan’s words according to narratology. Their role can be labelled ‘the helper’ against ‘the villain’, which is suggested by Vladimir Propp as one of the functions of folkloric characters according to their actions, or ‘helpers’ against ‘opponents’, which is categorised by A. J. Greimas as one of the six ‘actants’ (Greimas’s words) of folk-tale characters. (1993 24-5)
- 19 Kipling writes that Bandar is pronounced “*bunder and log* — always pronounced *logue* . . . meaning people”. (349, 352)
- 20 According to the notes of the Penguin version, Kaa is later called a ‘Rock-python’, one of the names for the Indian python. However, it is more suitable to regard him as the Malay python because of his great length and brilliant colouring after changing his skin. (*Ibid* 353)
- 21 Gaiman, pp.284-5. The shape of Sleer is nothing more than that of a python. The chapter describing Bod’s final fight with Jack is full of allusions to *The Jungle Book*.
- 22 Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, *The Pleasure of Children’s Literature* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), p.197.
- 23 Gaiman says to the interviewer when he received his Carnegie Medal, “The glorious tragedy of parenting — that if you do your job right you wind up with a person, a wonderful person who you love, and now because you’ve done your job right they are going to leave, and it hurts”. (*The Guardian*, 24 June 2010)

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