Last stop: this town.
Sameness, suburbs and spectrality
in Daniel Clowes's *Ghost World*

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Ghost World, first published as a graphic novel by Fantagraphics in 1997, is to date the most famous and successful work by Daniel Clowes[1].

It recounts a key, yet consistently mundane, moment in the life of two teenagers, Enid Coleslaw and Rebecca Doppelmeier[2]. It is the summer after the end of high school and the two self-proclaimed witty, cynical, *different* girls have to confront with the passage their coming of age involves towards an adult life, consider moving to a new town, and face the possible dissolution of their friendship[3].

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[1] The book won the Ignatz Award (1997) and was considered by the magazines *Times* and *Paste* to be among the ten best graphic novels of all time.

[2] Significantly, both names mirror and redouble the identity of the author: Enid Coleslaw is anagram of Daniel Clowes, and Doppelmeier alludes to a pun with *doppelgänger* that will be explicitly made in the course of the story. Clowes even inserts in the story a third alter ego of himself, a creepy cartoonist called David Clowes.

[3] On the first paperback edition's back cover, Clowes includes a brief synopsis: "Ghost World is the story of Enid and Rebecca, teenage friends facing the unwelcome prospect of adulthood and the uncertain future of their complicated relationship" (2001).

Enid and Rebecca live this liminal state in an anonymous 1990s American suburb that Clowes reportedly distilled by merging Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles, realizing a hypostasis of America scattered with and haunted by non-places: diners and snack bars that stage trite 1950s pastiches, both unlikely and extremely plausible in their being uniformly deprived of every sense of history; shopping malls and urban sprawl; sex shops, vinyl and comic stores; and of course the bedrooms and living rooms of the teenagers' houses, where the two friends spend their time sifting, with the sharpest postmodern sarcasm, through the fatuity of US pop culture - a fetish subject of Northern American alternative comics[4]. «Their artfully contrived dialogue», observes Venezia, "«emphasises their attempts to construct some kind of critical distance from their environment and the banal mass of consumer choices on offer, a distance that fails to materialize» (2012: 60).

This contribution aims to discuss space from three main perspectives: investigating the physical book, asking what the specifics of *Ghost World* as a graphic novel are; analyzing the visual level, with a stress on framing, page layout and colors; and exploring the diegetic universe, interrogating the representation and role of spaces inside the story, highlighting the sense of sameness given by living in the suburbs and the heterotopic possibilities opened by the graffiti the story features. Particular attention will be given to the idea of spectrality that repeatedly resurfaces in *Ghost World* (the title itself is in this sense quite significant), and that will be put in relation to Fisher's reworking of the concept of *hauntology*.

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[4] It must be noted, on the other side, that the criticism of the status quo is never deepened to a radical extent in the 100% white periphery that Clowes builds: issues of class and race are completely overshadowed in this and other works by the American author.

Material world: a very peculiar kind of graphic novel

Ghost World was not meant to be a graphic novel from the beginning. It was instead serially published on Clowes' fanzine *Eightball*, a series comprising 23 installments from 1989 to 2004, fully published by Fantagraphics. The first issues were mainly composed by short stories, very sharp, always auto-conclusive. Schneider defines them as

> a rather chaotic miscellanea of short or serialized stories, essays, interviews, adaptations, and non-sequitur pages drawn in different styles and shooting in various directions as, for example, the banalization of violence, sex, teen angst, consumerism, corporatization, and industry of entertainment — in a cynic and one-dimensional critique of modern boredom. This thematic anarchy is followed by an aesthetic of randomness, fragmentation and excess, overload of themes, an overwhelming profusion of plot twists, overly crowded panels, and wordy captions. (2015: 198)

Then, starting from number 11, most stories would be serialized, and since number 19 each *Eightball* issue would be devoted to a single storyline. Almost every work by Clowes first appeared on *Eightball*: *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* (issues 1-10, published as a book by Fantagraphics in 1993); *Pussey!: The Complete Saga of Young Dan Pussey* (issues 1, 3-5, 8-10, 12, 14, book version by Fantagraphics in 1995); *David Boring* (issues 19-21, book version by Pantheon, 200); *Ice Haven* (issue 22, book version by Pantheon 2005); *The Death Ray* (issue 23, book version by Drawn and Quarterly, 2011)[5].

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[5] Non-*Eightball* works are instead called *Wilson* (Drawn and Quarterly 2010, Clowes' first non-serialized graphic novel, which is ironic considering that its appearance mimics a collection of strips), *Mister Wonderful* (originally serialized on *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, then published as a book by Pantheon in 2011) and the most recent *Patience* (Fantagraphics, 2016).

Ghost World hence appeared originally in eight chapters on *Eightball*, from 1993 (issue 11) to 1997 (issue 18). Chapters are not particularly long, ranging from 6 pages to 16, for a total amount of 80 pages, an unusually short length for a graphic novel. The first phantasmal aspect one can notice in *Ghost World* is then related to this serial structure, which Clowes chooses not to alter or expand, keeping the chapters divided, and marking each beginning with a page adorned by the words "ghost world".

Fig.1 a and b: The first pages of the eight issues of Ghost World: chapters 1 (6 pages), 2, (6 pp), 3 (12 pp.), 4 (6 pp), 5 (8 pp), 6 (6 pp), 7 (10 pp) and 8 (16 pp).

The serial publication ends up in an «episodic plotless drift of the narrative» (Venezia 2012: 58) that manages nevertheless to convey a very vivid portrait of the spectrality and the repetition compulsion of American suburbs (as underlined by the periodic comparison of the

anonymous mural that only says "ghost world"). The result is an impressionist but most effective *bildungsroman* reflecting on and nourished by the 1990s zeitgeist of the United States. «What we think of Generation X», assert Baetens and Frey, «is as much indebted to what we have seen in *Ghost World* as what we have read in Douglas Coupland» (2015: 176-77); and the same comparison can be made with the vast cinematographic production devoted to the figure of the *slacker*, from Todd Solondz' *Welcome to the Dollhouse* to Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, from Richard Linklater's *Slacker* to Jefery Levy's *SFW*.

The story thus carries in the spine of its books structure «the mark of a fragmentation, of an episodic structure full of discontinuities» (Labarre 2013: 3). Yet, despite the episodes being auto-conclusive and relatively autonomous, their succession effectively manages to shape a clear narrative arc that describes the evolution and dissolution of the friendship between Rebecca and Enid.

Throughout all the story, in fact, Enid fights to stay the same, both consciously and unconsciously avoiding the frightening future that might await her, and possibly relegating herself to the role of the eternal misfit (the same destiny shared by many secondary characters of the book). On the opposite, Rebecca eventually conforms to adulthood, beginning a relationship with Josh and potentially fulfilling her WASP destiny. Enid will instead close her narrative arc while symbolically moving away from young girls going to school (that is, both from her past and her possible future as a Middle American mother and wife), before leaving town for an unknown future.

Fig. 2. Enid symbolically moving away from her past

"Look at us!": direct gaze and thresholds

If, as Michael Chaney affirmed in his analysis of the *March* trilogy, "graphic novels are books you can judge by their covers" (forthcoming), it would be worthwhile to discuss the covers of the various editions of *Ghost World*.

Fig. 3. Main US editions of Ghost World (2000 edition recto/verso; 2008 edition; 2011 special edition)

Most of the covers for the US market present a similar scene: Enid and Rebecca occupy and dominate the space as the sole distinguishable human figures, with a clear predominance of Enid's figure and face. Either the latter or both gaze toward the reader, a strategy that in the case of the 2011 special edition is accentuated by Enid's utterance saying "Look at us! We're totally special!".

The common element is the breaking of the fourth wall via the interpellation of the reader through what Mikkonen defines 'direct gaze' (2017: 167), which enhances the viewer's involvement, inviting her to traverse the threshold of the story. Similarly, Hescher remarks how «in a social semiotics approach, frontal views are usually connected with maximum involvement on the viewer's side» (Hescher 2016: 139).

Fig. 4. Other Ghost World-related covers (Italian edition; German edition; screenplay; DVD cover)

The device is even more evident if considering the covers conceived for the foreign market and the paratextual apparatuses (the graphic novel has seen an independent, critically successful movie adaptation of the same name[6], whose covers are drawn by Clowes himself). Here Enid clearly stares at the reader while framed in a close up aimed at her face,

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[6] *Ghost World* (2001), by Terry Zwigoff. The movie's scenario, co-written by Clowes himself, does not simply adapt the story of the graphic novel, but expands it adding characters and events.

while Rebecca is shown by her profile half the times, suggesting she will eventually take a different path from that of her friend.

Architectural elements correlate with the staticity of the image, symbolically enclosing the space behind the protagonists in half of the covers[7]. Alternatively, the two adolescents fluctuate in the void (on a white or dark background), with the notable exception of the Earth's globe seen by the space in the back cover of the original edition, possibly with the function of augmenting the contrast between the world itself and the far smaller "world" the two will inhabit in the course of those eighty pages.

If, then, on the one hand, the "ghost world" seems to be the outer one, surrounding and isolating the two cynical, witty teenagers, on the other they do very little more than inhabiting – or maybe haunting – the small surface of their habitual territory like they inhabit and haunt the «no man's land between adolescence and adulthood» (Bouchard 2011), before having to realize they are not 'different' or 'special', because even their difference (like that of their surrounding) was nothing but a citation, a re-proposition, an imitation of something already happened. What the covers suggest, eventually, is that the two adolescents are organic, not opposed, to the invariable sameness of the environment that surrounds them; they are constrained by the surroundings the same way they are metaphorically condemned not to escape their anonymous destiny.

As seen on TV: page layout, framing, and color

The same considerations can be done when dealing with Clowes' visual choices throughout the graphic novel.

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[7] In this sense Labio interestingly suggests that "there is an architectural unconscious of the comics page, an extradiegetic mirroring of domestic architecture that gives the page its basic structure and accounts in significant measure for the readability, emotional power, and popularity of the genre" (2015: 317).

To begin with, *Ghost World*'s layout is quite consistent, presenting three rows with one to three panels per row, in a steady rhythm. The regularity of page composition reinforces the key themes of the story: the existential staticity, the monotony of everyday life and the pervasiveness of social conventions with which the story deals.

More subtly, framing has a very active role in the composition of the image; the observation point leads us very close to the protagonists, isolating them visually from the rest of the characters, who are almost always shown in the background or laterally divided from the two. If we accept the division between ocularization and focalization, we should therefore see this kind of composition as an indication that the story is cognitively focalized on Enid - or, with what Kai Mikkonen defines 'shared subjective perspective' (2012: 86), on Enid and Rebecca[8].

As Hescher remarks,

> the great majority of the images are half-subjective and POV images, and what I get to know as a reader is all filtered through Enid and Rebecca's consciousness; nothing is withheld from my perception as I see (that is I know) the world through the minds of the two teenage girls. (2016: 176)

The round traits of faces and balloons heighten the contrast with the severe geometry of the squared landscape, normally aligned with the borders of panel, reinforcing the sense of containment every panel exercises on its characters and, symbolically, the repetition compulsion effect that the "ghost world" that surrounds Enid and Rebecca exercises on them.

In this sense, Clowes, as already mentioned when talking about the covers, maximizes the role of thresholds, constantly interpolating transparent or semi-transparent surfaces between his protagonists and

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[8] Hescher acutely notices on this purpose that more exactly "the single episodes are dominated by internal focalization, which will narrow down from Enid and Rebecca's to only Enid's focalization toward the end of the narrative" (2016: 176).

us. This has the double effect of narratively framing the story, continuously reminding us of its artificial nature, and (again) encapsulating the two adolescents into an environment they unsuccessfully try to escape from. In this sense, the frequently recurring scene of the two watching television represents a *mise en abyme* of the very structure through which the reader is confronted with the narration.

Fig. 5. The first panel that show Enid and Rebecca ('s legs). The TV is on, a window interposes between us and the scene, and the panel constraints the characters on the inside of its closed space.

But this framing effect also sharpens the contrast of the border between the outer "ghost world" and the inside, «self-centered world» (Hescher 2016: 140) that the two adolescents experience and project, sublimating «a tendency to kill boredom by converting their ordinary surroundings into something extraordinary» (Schneider 2015: 200). It is precisely to escape from this claustrophobic sameness that the two try to convert the most mundane kitsch into something iconic and peculiar, managing to

find interest in inhospitable locations, like a tacky '50's diner and sex-shops; and creat[ing] fully extravagant back-stories for

common people in the street. Enid's town is inhabited by serial killers, mass murderers, Satanists, weird waiters, and a psychic. (2015: 200)

Boredom and strangeness are then truly for the two teenagers «the two main forces of everyday life» (Highmore 2002, in Schneider 2016: 62). Yet this «oscillatory dynamic that orchestrates boredom and interest, the marvelous and the ordinary, as complementary forces rather than opposing incompatible ones» (Schneider 2016: 63) and that seems so peculiar of the two adolescents is, on the other hand, nothing but the very postmodern capacity to convert camp into pop, absorbing and recycling its own past, no matter the weirdness, into a slightly different, *new* form.

The fourth chapter is the only exception to the regularity of the composition, presenting a series of pages where the first narrative level (that sees Enid chatting on the phone with Rebecca) opens up on a second, projected level, where Enid recounts of having met their common friend Naomi and having told her about her own first time[9]. This framed level is based on four rows instead of three, from which starts a third narrative level, the story of Enid's first time, that presents two pages with six unframed, de-contoured panels divided along three rows.

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[9] En passant, sexual curiosity and frustration is a common theme through all *Ghost World*.

Fig. 6. The regular layout composition adopted through most of the graphic novel and the two variations in chapter 4.

According to Benoît Peeters' repartition of the types of page layout (2007), Clowes adopts here a narrative dominant[10], oscillating between rhetorical and conventional mode, but with a clear preference for the conventional mode. That is to say, the structure of the page layout is based on «the systematic repetition of the same structure and form of tiers and panels, independent of any content [or] style» (Baetens and Frey 2015: 108). It's a fixed system that leaves little to experimentation, giving much attention to the narrative; nevertheless, since the grid is a given element and remains consistent in spite of the content, «the relationship between the two dimensions is one of independence» (Baetens – Frey 2015: 108-09).

In the fourth chapter of the graphic novel, though, we see the resurfacing of the rhetorical mode: panel and page «are no longer autonomous elements; they are subordinated to a narrative which their primary function is to serve. The size of the images, their distribution,

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[10] Peeters' envisions two kinds of dominants (narrative and composition) and two types of interaction between the two levels (interdependence or autonomy), giving birth to four different conceptions of page layout. For a full explanation, see Peeters (2007).

the general pace of the page, all must come to support the narration» (Peeters 2007: 19), slowing down and accelerating the rhythm while we deepen the narrative levels until reaching the story of Enid's first time – not casually, one of the few true "events" of the narration.

The recurring layout adopted throughout the rest of the works gives instead steadiness to the rhythm of the action unfolding, encouraging repetitions (often, if not always, with few variations of perspective and composition) and enhancing the involvement in the storyworld of a reader who «feels that there is 'room' for him or for her in the development of the story» and that she «is really invited to join the fictional universe of the characters» (Baetens and Frey 2015: 110).

Another element that can be noted in all those examples is the peculiar, phantasmatic presence of color. Furthermore, considering Clowes' full production, there is a striking difference towards his usual resource either to b/w or to full colors. In this case, instead, he opts for the trichromy white/black/light blue, with the third nuance originally changing in every *Eightball* episode and eventually uniformed in the graphic novel version. The pale, ghostly appeal of the green-blue shades is equally reminiscent of the melancholy of twilight and of the greenish light flickering TVs project on the rooms they are in:

> There has always been a feeling of jittery unease underscoring Clowes' work, but in *Ghost World*, the sense of dread and horror emanates more from the real world than from the supernatural one. The creepy disquiet of *Ghost World* is nourished by television, suburbia and the soul-sucking banality of both. The serial's panels are cast in the eerie blue light of the television -- which is always on, always talking, never saying anything. (Chocano 2000)

I'm not here:
diegetic spaces, non-places, and hauntology

As Fisher efficaciously sums up, in contemporary times

> The erosion of spatiality has been amplified by the rise of what Marc Augé calls the ''non-place'': airports, retail parks, and chain stores which resemble one another more than they resemble the particular spaces in which they are located, and whose ominous proliferation is the most visible sign of the implacable spread of capitalist globalization. (Fisher 2012: 19).

The non-places of *Ghost World*'s settings, already evoked in the course of this analysis, are everywhere the two adolescents go: «an anonymous (sub)urban sprawl of fast food joints with ersatz décor and second-hand ambience, out of town shopping malls, and blank expanses of low rise blocks» (Venezia 2012: 59). Conversely, the only proper place of *Ghost World* is that of home, of which we are given three examples: Enid's house with her parents, Rebecca's with her grandmother and Josh's (a friend of Enid and Rebecca). Mostly, we see the two adolescents in their bedrooms or living rooms, talking to each other on the phone and/or watching TV and caustically commenting on US pop culture.

The list of non-places in the story is impressively long, not limited to the already mentioned franchises, capable of conjugating anonymity and ubiquity and accentuating the perception of the events taking place anywhere – or rather, in the middle of nowhere. Another recurrent feature of the book is the display of subcultural niches for collectors of ephemera: a vinyl store, a comics shop, a sex shop. As the unlikely - but absolutely believable - gray *pastiche* of a 1950s diner, those settings are typical of 1990s US fiction (from literature to films, from comics to other arts), deriving from and commenting on the very tendency of late capitalism to wallow in its own popular culture. In this sense, pastiche in Jameson's view, as John Storey sums it, «recaptures and represents the atmosphere and stylistic features of the past; and/or it recaptures and represents certain styles of viewing of the past» (Storey 2015: 204). In Jameson's perspective, pastiche always works towards nostalgia, limiting itself to a sterile blank imitation of the surface appearance of past works (1991: 279-96). As Fisher remarks, then, what happens here is that «the disappearance of space goes alongside the disappearance of time: there are non-times as well as non-places» (2012: 19).

Now, as Hagglund sums up, in Derrida's construction of the figure of the specter what is more important is "that it cannot be fully present: it has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet" (Hagglund 2008, in Fisher 2012). Furthermore, Fisher, in his taking over the Derridian concept of *hantologie* (a neologism that the French thinker created to oppose to the stable idea of ontology), distinguishes then two directions of hauntology. On one side, it refers to «that which is (in actuality is) no longer, but which is still effective as a virtuality», that he calls the traumatic «compulsion to repeat» (2012: 19). On the other, hauntology refers to «that which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behavior)» (2012: 19).

More clearly, then, (non-)places in *Ghost World* have to do with what Bernardelli, in his reading of Bachtin, called *chronotopical function* (forthcoming), in which space and time are in communication and metonymically hint at the transition period that the two adolescents are undergoing, to the changes that result and to the phantasmatic presence of a problematic and alienating past counterposed to an uncertain and threatening future.

To follow this reasoning, it is helpful to consider some apparently secondary events in the course of the story.

Fig. 7. Two panels from the sequence set at the amusement park.

Most micro-narratives in *Ghost World*, in fact, refer to the past, marking its signs of decay. The first good example is the small sequence set in the abandoned theme park in which Enid and Rebecca go play, that they discover being remarkably less impressive than they remembered it was. Another signal is the deteriorating sign of one of the diner the two girls meet to chat that reads "BREAKFA T" and "BREAKF T" some pages later, a metaphor subtly inscribed in a peripheral angle of the image, that the eye of the spectator should not notice until a second reading.

In fact, the "ghost world" of the graphic novel seems to be itself a *non-world* whose boundaries, except for this small sequence, are never successfully trespassed by the two adolescents, at least until the open ending that leaves Enid's fate unclear (fans' speculations went from deducing she left the town and finally changed her life to assuming she was about to commit suicide, having realized the faint vanity of her existence).
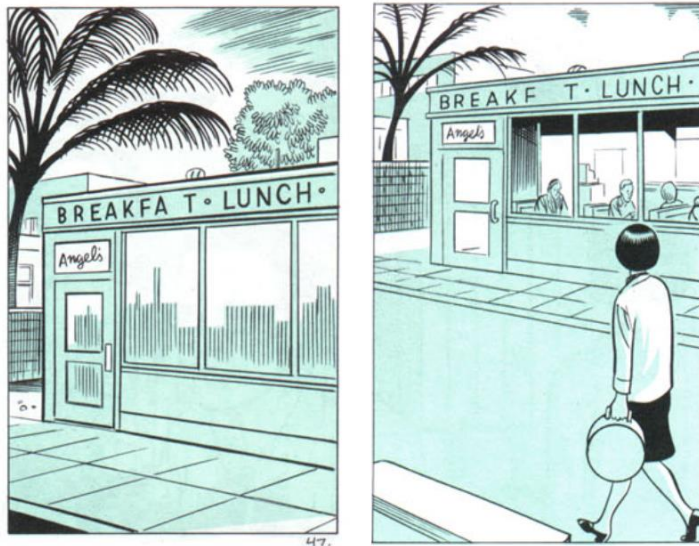

Fig. 8. The two panels showing the deteriorating "BREAKFAST" sign.

Others hint at the possibility of change (for better or worse) in the future. An example in this sense is "Norman", that is, the person who

waits in vain for a bus line that is not served anymore, and whose name (given to him by the two adolescents) derives from an inscription on the concrete next to him. Towards the end of the graphic novel, Norman is not there anymore, having taken the bus of the restored line (we can see his silhouette inside the bus in the last page of the graphic novel).

Analogously to those micro-events, the relationship between Enid and Rebecca remains stable and functioning for most of graphic novel, but deteriorates towards the end. Enid has not been accepted into college, so she has to sell the car she had bought second hand to go to university, and Rebecca, who is the more ordinary and less intellectual-wannabe, wears a pair of glasses for the first time in the last page of the graphic novel as a symbol of the acceptance of her upcoming maturity.

It is the reader who has to fill the gaps the text disseminates and project herself (Gardner 2012) eluding the anonymous genericity of *Ghost World*'s landscape, to opt for the possibility of a different life or imagine the protagonists succumbing to the irresistible repetition of the same.

Considering Clowes' attention for details, the two panels in which Enid is at the beach are in this sense striking, breaking with the squared geometry and the suburban geography of the rest of the graphic novel to introduce instead round shapes and natural, open landscapes.

Fig. 9. Some panels from the small beach sequence

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Ghost World:
graffiti and the haunted suburban unconscious

One last reflection concerns the "ghost world" graffiti, which is inscribed on several architectural elements of the unnamed town of Enid and Rebecca: on a garage door, on a wall, on a glass panel, on a fence and so on.

While reflecting on graffiti, Jean Baudrillard affirms that "they resist every interpretation and connotation, no longer denoting anyone or anything. In this way, with neither connotation, nor denotation, they escape the principle of signification and, as empty signifiers, erupt into the sphere of the *full signs* of the city, dissolving on contact" (1993: 78-79; emphasis in original). Yet more recently Gaetano Chiurazzi remarks how graffiti has begun a culture with an undeniable reflexive attitude, expressing in very self-aware and culturally refined forms, capable to always allude to an alterity (though in a way that is "undecipherable by the dominant code") (2013: 96).

Graffiti has, according to Chiurazzi, a disorienting quality and an intrinsically heterotopic character, always alluding to something and somewhere else, in the same way dreams work according to Freud, that is, not being declassifiable as mere cerebral extravaganza, but as meaning-making elements, as potentially decipherable signs. In the same way, Chiurazzi asserts, graffiti is apparently indecipherable, but always allude to this elsewhere that in Freud's term corresponds to the unconscious: "graffiti are thus the symptom of the unconscious of the urban world, that emerges disturbing its normal daily life" (2013: 96).

Graffiti is hence to be counted amongst those that De Certeau, in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), defined 'tactics' through which individuals oppose and try to subtract themselves to power strategies, the daily 'practices' that he described as being repetitive and oppressive. To this pervasive sameness, graffiti oppose an alterity, constitute a heterotopia, haunt the (sub)urban landscape opening a different space and remembering of other possibilities.

This interpretation seems consistent with the sense of the "ghost world" inscription itself – as an admonishment, as a critique, and at the same time as a key to read the whole work. In this sense,

> Haunting can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time […] a fatal repetition (Fisher 2012: 19).

Furthermore, towards the end of the graphic novel, in the third-to-last panel, Enid glimpses from afar the mysterious author of the graffiti. She shouts at him and tries to talk to him, but he runs away without making visible, to Enid and to us (to our aligned focalization), any details of his face. Yet if we give a second look to the cover of the work we realize that we have already seen that silhouette: it is in the background between Enid's leg.

It is surely significant, then, that the mysterious graffiti artist appears marginally, at the beginning and at the end of the volume. Metaphorically opening and closing it, he thus configures himself as an intradiegetic personification of the author himself and as a signature to the work it begins and ends.

Fig. 10. Two close-ups of the mysterious writer at work in the cover and in the second to last page of the story.

Spectrality, already evoked in the title and reiterated in the penultimate page, seems in this sense the most fitting way of reading the work while accounting for the liminal state (on both a spatial and chronological sense) of those moments in the life of the two adolescents', between what is not anymore and the anticipations of what is not yet, that is, the traces of their individual and collective past and the uncertain future to which they try to rebel and that already conditions their choices and behaviors, as volatile as the mysterious graffiti that appears around the suburbs of *Ghost World*.

The uncanny phantasmaticity that crosses the bored, unenthusiastic gestures of Enid and Rebecca, may then, again, be interpreted as a symptom of Fisher's hauntology, as a nostalgia for an already lost future and at the same time as the «vicarious nostalgia for the times they never had the fortune to experience nor, shall we say, the misfortune to endure» (Hogarty 2017: 80), that is, as a «nostalgia for a time period when a future seemed possible and when viable alternatives seemed to exist» (2017: 89).

Despite all her ostentatious cynicism, in fact, Enid is haunted by her past exactly as the "ghost world" that surrounds her is haunted by its own timeless history. As DeFalco notices,

> The uncanny is tightly bound to temporality; the inability to return to past sites and past selves often comes into conflict with our memories of these pasts. Memories can become ghosts that haunt the present. (2010: 9)

Fig. 11. Three panels of Enid listening to her childhood favorite record

This explains the hesitance, on Enid's part, to let go of her childhood possessions (the specimen of Mr. Potato she refuses to sell at her own yard sale, the "A Smile and a Ribbon" record her father recovers under her request and to which she falls asleep): they are memories of a more secure, stable and decipherable moment, when life seemed at the

same time full of open possibilities and exciting adventure – that is, for an irretrievable time when life, and possibly Enid herself, could still be believed to be special.

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