

“God, look at these stupid cunts!”

Indications of focalization in the graphic novel *Ghost World*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Comics have always been a great medium for telling stories. However, their narrative qualities have not always been employed to their full extent. They were long seen as best suited for short humorous comic strips, funnies, or ever-continuing mass-produced adventure stories. Luckily, in the past few decades, comics artists have really started to test the limits of the medium, for example by experimenting with a longer format or by taking on a wider range of subject matter.

With the growing number of ambitious artists and their acclaimed work, comics have started to gain popularity also as a topic of academic research. The medium-specific techniques employed in creating a narrative, which include sequential images, text and image interaction, and panel and page layout, offer very complex and fruitful topics for study. As comics theory has not yet been fully established as an independent field of study, it continues to borrow tools from other fields of research to create methods and terminology suited for the medium. Literary analysis, film theory and art history all discuss concepts which can be found in comics and thus offer useful approaches, but they are essentially developed for different mediums and grasp only some aspects of graphic art. Yet, the marriage of “old” methods and a “new” medium is not only beneficial to the study of comics, but also to the specific fields from where comics theory borrows academic tools.

It is this academic “trade” which also motivates the present study. I have chosen to explore how the narrative technique of subjective filtering of information, *focalization*, is realized in a graphic narrative. Focalization is a concept originally developed in narratology to discuss point of view in literature, but it has also been used in film studies, art history and lately also in comics research. My material consists of a long-form graphic narrative, Daniel Clowes' graphic novel *Ghost World*. The novel is a type of coming-of-age tale depicting the lives of two high school graduates, best friends Enid and Rebecca, who are finding that the end of their teenage years inevitably results in the responsibilities and changes brought about by adulthood. *Ghost World* appears, at first glance, to be a very traditional piece of

comic storytelling. The page layout, the style and placement of panels and speech balloons and the visual style of characters and places are very clear and uniform. The story is mostly linear and easy-to-follow. In a sense, the graphic novel does not seem to draw attention to its method of storytelling. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, it was this unassuming appearance of the graphic novel which attracted me to take a closer look at how it tells a story.

The purpose of this study is to employ the concept of focalization, and explore, by looking at different parts of the novel, how some elements of a graphic narrative indicate focalization and what types of effects and experiences can be expressed with focalization. By examining focalization as narrative tool, this study also aims to make a contribution to the study of narratives, especially visual narratives.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides an overview of the research related to comics and focalization. I will first take a look at the medium of comics to specify how comics “tell stories”, i.e. the ways in which they create a narrative. After defining how comics work as graphic narratives, I will proceed to the field of narratology, the theories of narratives, to discuss some basic terminology, focusing on the concept of focalization. Finally, I will bring together comics and narratology as I explore how focalization has been utilized in the analysis of graphic narratives.

2.1. Language of comics

A comic is regarded as a comic even without written text, but a narrative with no images cannot be categorized as a comic. Indeed, the most characteristic feature of the medium of comics is its ability to tell stories through pictures. The study of comics calls for a deeper understanding of reading a visual narrative, i.e. the storytelling device employed by comics. According to Eisner (1994: 123), it is clear that the “factor that has always had an impact on comics as an art form is the underlying reality that we are dealing with a medium of expression which is primarily visual. Artwork dominates the reader's initial attention.” Although there might be heavily text-oriented comics, it is nevertheless the visual whole, the composition made up of pictures and text, that the reader perceives first. Eisner (1994: 10) points out that text can also be treated as an image in comics. The visual appearance and placement of text can be modified in order to, for example, implicate a sound, emphasize a mood or direct the narrative. Text framed in speech balloons stands for spoken words or thoughts, and the appearance of the balloons can be modified to indicate whether the words are whispered, screamed out or merely formulated in the character's mind. In essence, the text in comics can express not only with words, but also with its visual appearance.

In the case of a comic without text, “a mute comic”, the accessibility and explicitness of the information expressed by images is crucial. If there is no text to help the reader

decode the images, they must then be made as self-evident as possible. However, it is not the sole duty of text to make sense of the juxtaposed pictures of comics. Text is more often than not an integral part of a comic, and the language of comics is a mix of both images and text. According to Herkman (1998: 53–54), there has been some debate about whether comics should be defined as a primarily text- or image-oriented medium. Herkman sees the debate to be irrelevant, because it is in the diverse and dynamic ways of combining text and image where the expressive power of comics lies.

However, texts and images have different expressive qualities, which need to be taken into account when discussing their fusion in the medium of comics. Mikkonen (2005: 295) defines comics as a combination of text and image, iconotext, where text and image work together in telling a story which they cannot efficiently tell by themselves. Mikkonen (2005: 29) compares the methods of signifying in texts and images and argues that images are fundamentally more open in their way of signifying. All the factors within an image are connected whereas the signs in a written work are much more secluded. In addition, no smallest meaningful unit can really be distinguished in an image. However, words can portray variations and different shades of emotions more easily than images (2005: 32). Mikkonen (2005: 33) concludes his comparison by pointing out that the difference between words and images might not lie in what they are able to portray as much as in what they cannot portray as well. In other words, it might be more fruitful to consider what the limitations each form is confronted with are.

The often vocalized view in comics research (Herkman 1998, Mikkonen 2005 & McCloud 1993) emphasizes that the variety of different relationships between text and image and the continuous change in their relationship are important aspects of the unique nature of comics. In comics, both text and images can be in a dominant position, but it is also possible that there is no strict hierarchy between them. To help analyze the relationship of image and text in comics, McCloud (1993: 153) has formulated seven different ways comics use to combine them. The text–image combinations can be 1) text specific, 2) image specific, 3) duo-specific (both send the

same message), 4) additive (where they amplify or elaborate each other), 5) parallel, 6) fusions or montages or 7) interdependent. These different ways as formulated by McCloud do not, however, appear to be clearly distinguishable from each other. There is some overlapping between them, and it is possible to place one example of a text and image combination under several of these categories according to the reader's interpretation. The relationship of text and image is rarely explicit.

Nevertheless, different ways of combining text and image are employed in comics to a great extent, albeit they might evade strict categorizations. As Herkman (1998: 60–61) suggests, rather than formulate handy, all-encompassing categories, it might be more fruitful to consider how the different ways are mixed within a comic. The change from one type of text/image combination to another might help mark a change in the story or emphasize a certain mood or point of view. It could be easier to consider the effect of a text–image combination by comparing its effect to one which deviates from it. In my analysis of focalization in *Ghost World*, I have adopted the method of looking at how text and image interaction indicates focalization rather than trying to fit them into specific categories. Especially the deviations in text and image interaction seem to be a strong implication of a shift in focalization.

The seamless interplay of text and image in comics might be called into question when a comic is the work of more than one individual. It is not uncommon that a comic has been written, drawn and inked (producing final outlines to a drawing with ink) by different people. Some famous comic book writers such as Alan Moore or Neil Gaiman only construct the story of the comic, while the visual art is provided by someone else. When the division is such, it might be assumed that text and image are less successfully integrated than when the writer and artist are one and the same person. This concern is also voiced by Eisner (1994: 127), who concludes that in an ideal situation, the writer and the artist are the same person. For this study I have chosen to look at a graphic novel where this ideal is realized, and the art and story are created by the same person.

An important element of the narrativity of comics are characters. Mikkonen (2012:

76) argues that featuring a specific element, usually a main character in the story, regularly in images increases narrativity. The character's visual appearance also plays a part in the narrative. Upon discussing character design in comics, McCloud (1993: 30) argues that the expressive power of the art form owes a lot to cartoons. Comics make use of “cartooning” where the meaning potential of a picture is amplified by simplification. In other words, by stripping down the details of a picture, it becomes more open to different interpretations. In McCloud's opinion, the reader can identify more easily with a simplified, cartoon-like character than with a realistically drawn character. A simplified character can be seen to represent a greater number of different people than a character which is drawn in more detail. McCloud uses Japanese comics, or manga, as an example. The main characters in manga are often portrayed as cartoon-like figures to increase reader-identification while other characters are drawn more realistically to underline their “otherness” (McCloud 1993: 44).

The narrative in comics is created through juxtaposed combinations of image and text, which are placed in a sequence. Sequentiality is seen as such a fundamental aspect of comics that Eisner (1994: 5) defines comics as "sequential art". The mix of images and text form the language of comics, which relies on a visual experience shared by the readers and the comics artist. This means that the reader is expected to effortlessly understand – to read – what the artist has tried to express.

An important element of a narrative, time, is depicted in comics with the method of framing (Eisner 1994: 28). Different scenes can be separated from each other by framing them inside panels. However, panels can be replaced by some different kind of containment device. Regardless of what type of framing is used, the reader has to be able to instantly see the implied order of reading. When the separate scenes are placed in sequence, the illusion of elapsed time is created. Text can also be used to indicate time, for example by simply placing the phrase "Two hours later" or "Meanwhile" inside a panel. Text can be helpful in situations where it is too difficult to express the change in time with pictures or panels alone.

McCloud and Eisner's explanations on techniques and methods used in comics were written from the “practical” point of view of a comics artist. They did not set out to devise a comprehensive framework for the language of comics, but they have nevertheless been very influential to other theorists. McCloud and Eisner were both more concerned with reader response and emphasized how the comics artist must be able to make his work accessible to the reader.

Whereas McCloud and Eisner had a more practical objective guiding their work, Groensteen (2007) made a great theoretical contribution to comics research by composing a comprehensive framework, a system of comics, to help discuss the structure and interconnectivity of comics. In Groensteen's system, the panels in a graphic narrative belonging to the same sequence are “in debt to each other” (2007: 13). Groensteen defines this relationship between panels as iconic solidarity, which he recognizes as the foundation of the comics system and which is “programmed by the author at the breakdown stage, and, at the time of reception, postulated by the reader in the form of hypothesizing a coherent narrative” (2007: 13). Groensteen sees the reader of comics as an active participant, who expects to find meaning in the relationship between panels. This leads the reader to explore how panels are linked to each other and how panels can be interpreted in light of others. Groensteen's idea of iconic solidarity is an apt description of the narrative structure of comics. The immediacy of the information embedded in images enables the reader to make connections between different parts of the narrative before engaging in a closer reading. The reader has, in principle, the freedom to look at a page or a double page layout before focusing on a specific image.

The material for this study represents a particular form or style of comics, graphic novels. The term has been defined by Weiner (2005: 14) as a “a literary comic book form with a beginning, middle, and end.” Weiner also notes that the form and the term were popularized by Will Eisner's comic book *A Contract with God*, published in 1978. It was marketed as a graphic novel, aimed at an adult audience and sold in book stores instead of comic book shops. The graphic novel as a form has since gained further popularity with the works of comics writers Art Spiegelman, Alan

Moore and Neil Gaiman. Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a Holocaust memoir, was the first graphic novel to win the Pulitzer prize in 1992. With a wide range of works identifying themselves as graphic novels, the term has expanded its definition into a modern comic book with a lengthy, continuous narrative, usually with a complex subject matter and with an intended adult audience.

I would also argue that the graphic novel has become a political term, used instead of a comic book as an attempt to distance the medium from its “childish” past. Herkman (1998: 10–11) argues that comics have a history of being regarded as mere mass culture and entertainment for children, which has affected its cultural value and position. Partly due to these characterizations, comics have failed to raise academic interest until in recent decades. Although my material in this study, *Ghost World*, is referred to as a graphic novel instead of as a comic, it nevertheless is analyzed as operating according to the same basic principles as shorter pieces of comic art, for example comic strips.

In conclusion, comics rely on visual style, text and image interaction, recurring elements such as characters, sequentiality, and framing to tell stories. My material for the present study consists of a longer form of comic art, a graphic novel, because it offers various examples of the uses of the medium-specific narrative elements. In the next section, I proceed to field of narratology to look at some basic concepts related to the study of narrative and also explore the early definitions of focalization.

2.2. Narrative and focalization

The theoretical background of focalization lies in the study of narratives, or narratology. Tzvetan Todorov coined the term 'la narratologie' in 1969 to give a name for the model of narrative theory he and other structuralists, e.g. Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette, had formulated through their work (Herman *et al.* 2005: ix.). Barthes emphasized a cross-disciplinary approach to narratives which would encompass stories in different cognitive and communicative activities, such as visual art, dance, and various verbal and literary traditions. However, it was not until later

that the more extensive understanding of the concept of narrative resulted in growth of research in other disciplinary fields, such as philosophy, cognitive psychology and media studies (Herman *et al.* 2005: ix.). The inclusion of different disciplines and the widened scope of the concept have also introduced comics as a topic of narrative research.

The graphic novel I have chosen as my material can also be defined as a graphic narrative, as it is a narrative work produced in the medium of comics. Throughout the study, I refer to *Ghost World* both as a graphic novel and as a graphic narrative, using the former while discussing it on a more general level and latter when focusing on its narrative aspects. *Ghost World* is more specifically a work of narrative fiction, which Rimmon-Kenan (2005: 3) defines with three basic concepts: story, text and narration. Story is essentially a compilation of the narrated events in a text, put in a chronological order. Text is, simply put, what we read, and narration is the act of producing the text. After broadening the definition of a text to include the sign system of comics, all these formulations can be applied in the study of graphic narratives.

Other narratological concepts which are of use to the present study include character, narrator and focalization. Focalization will be discussed in detail later in this section, but I will shortly describe what character and narrator mean in the context of narratives. Narrator is essentially an agent who communicates the narrative (Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 3). Narrator can be a character in the story or a more external entity. Character is a construct in the story created with what Rimmon-Kenan (2005: 61) refers to as “character-indicators”. The indicators can be divided into two types, direct definition and indirect presentation, based on how directly they refer to the character's traits. The typology is based on written texts, and transferring them to graphic narratives is not straightforward. Characters in comics are more often shown with images than referred to in the text. In graphic narratives, a visual representation of a character communicates many qualities at the same time while the different types of texts can indicate character-traits more or less directly.

Genette is often credited for coining the term ‘focalization’ in his contribution to the study of perspective in narrative. Genette (1990: 186) saw that previous studies on perspective had not been successful due to their “confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective and the very different question who is the narrator.” Genette also wanted to avoid the visual connotations of earlier terms, such as perspective and point of view, and renamed the mode of regulating information through a restrictive point of view as focalization. Genette (1990: 189) proposed that focalization is manifested in three types: nonfocalized, or zero focalization, internal focalization and external focalization. Each type of focalization presents a degree of restriction in information. Restriction in this case is created by the focal position occupied by a certain character in the narrative. A narrative with zero focalization is not restricted by the knowledge and thoughts of a character, whereas internal and external focalization filter information from the point of view of a character, either being within the character (internal) or outside the character (external). According to Genette's formulation, the types of focalization need not behave rigidly within the narrative (1990: 191). A single narrative is not necessarily fixed on one type of focalization and, furthermore, the distinction between different types of focalizations is not always clear: an external focalization on one character could also be interpreted as internal focalization through another character. Genette (1990: 195) also introduces the idea of alterations, or disruptions, in focalization, which deviate from the general access to information in the story. *Paralipsis* is a type of alteration where the reader is presented with less information than what the character or narrator knows. *Paralepsis* manifests mostly in internal focalization, offering more information than the reader should have access to. Paralipsis can be conveyed in comics, for example, by simply restricting the reader from seeing information. The character may be looking at something outside the picture frame which the reader cannot see. Paralepsis can be more difficult to convey in comics, as they often do not follow internal or external focalization strictly, and consequently cannot indicate disruptions in either type as well as literary texts. Genette's alterations are similar to the levels of knowledge Bal uses in her discussion of suspense, which I will address later in this section.

Bal echoes some of Genette's ideas while discarding others. Bal (2009:146) agrees with Genette's criticism on the earlier attempts made in narrative theory to define the concept of point of view or perspective. Bal argues that the term 'perspective' in narrative theory has become an indication of both the narrator and the vision (the filter through which events are portrayed), and in order to move forward past the confusion between who sees and who speaks, a new term, focalization, is needed. While Genette seems to view focalization more as a voluntary narrative device, Bal (2009: 145) proposes that focalization is an essential part of every narrative.

Bal (2009: 145) defines focalization as “the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented.” Bal's definition contains the idea of a relationship, and to help analyze this relationship, she uses the term 'focalizer' to indicate the subject of focalization, or the point from which elements are viewed, and 'focalized' to refer to the object of focalization (2009: 149). Different focalizers portraying the same focalized object can result in very different images. The image of the focalized object thus gives information not only about the object itself, but also about the focalizer. Focalized objects can be characters, places, events or any other elements within a narrative. Bal (2009: 156) distinguishes between objects of focalization which can be perceived by only the focalizer and objects which can also be perceived by another character. Objects belonging to the latter case are 'perceptible'. If the objects are a character's dreams, thoughts, feelings or anything other which can only be feasibly experienced inside a character's mind, they are 'non-perceptible'. Access to non-perceptible elements means that the reader will have a greater insight into a character's mind. As Bal (2009:157) states, focalization in this case can have “a strongly manipulative effect” on the reader. For example, if a reader is presented with two characters, but given access to the inner thoughts of only one of them, the reader can be more understanding of and sympathetic towards the character whose thoughts are presented. This is also seen in *Ghost World*, where the reader only has access, although briefly, to the consciousness of one of the main characters, Enid, which can render her actions more intelligible.

Upon defining aspects of storytelling which highlight the aptness of focalization as a

concept, Bal (2009: 150 & 163) mentions memory and suspense. A memory is a view of the past recalled in the present. A person's vision of a past event may not be in congruence with what they have actually experienced, as the past is always colored by the present. Focalization can be a useful tool in analyzing the relationship between time and space by seeing how the present view of the past differs from the past (Bal 2009: 150). Suspense is created by having the reader or the character ask questions which are answered later (Bal 2009: 163). Sometimes the reader knows the answer and the character does not, or the other way around, and sometimes both the reader and the character are left in the dark. Focalization is crucial in creating suspense within a story as it presents information through restrictive filtering, thus producing disparities of knowledge between the reader and the character (Bal 2009: 163). These disparities echo Genette's alterations in focalization, paralipsis and analepsis, which are also based on the unequal level of knowledge. Degrees of knowledge can also be created in a graphic narrative where the information can be accessible to the reader not only through text, but also through images.

Bal (2009:166) also discusses the applicability of focalization in analyzing visual narratives, although she focuses mostly on film. In her discussion, Bal mentions three areas where visual narratology is useful. First of all, analyzing visual images as narrative takes into consideration certain qualities and effects of images that other types of visual analysis cannot quite grasp. Secondly, visual narratology can bring forth a mindset which can compare literary narratives and films based on them without giving precedence to the literary narrative. Thirdly, Bal suggests that the analysis of visual narratives contributes to the study of literary narratives. All of these three notions can also be easily applied to the study of narratives in comics. Contributing to the three areas listed by Bal is also the one of the ambitious goals of the present study.

Genette and Bal have formulated the basis for analyzing focalization, and concepts such as focalizer and focalized (Bal 2009: 149) and disruptions in focalization (Genette 1990: 195) are still valid also when exploring focalization in the medium of comics. However, Genette and Bal's views are affected by their focus on literary

texts, and the inclusion of other materials, for example comics, as topics of narrative study calls for a rethinking of the concept. As Bal (2009: 166) herself hinted, visual narratives can have a lot to contribute to the study of literary narratives. In the next section I will discuss studies which have put Bal's stance on visual narratives into practice by looking at how focalization is dealt with in the medium of comics.

2.3. Focalization and graphic narratives

This section discusses graphic narratives and the ways in which the medium-specific elements of comics indicate focalization. As mentioned earlier, Bal used the term 'visual narrative' which can naturally refer to comics as well, although Bal was most likely thinking of films. However, following the terminology used for example by Mikkonen (2011 & 2012) and Horstkotte and Pedri (2011), I will refer to comics as graphic narratives.

Mikkonen (2005, 2010, 2011 & 2012) has done research on the relationship between text and image in comics and other mediums and also on focalization in graphic narratives. According to him (2005: 191), the viewer of an image has, in principle, a greater freedom to choose the order in which to read and experience a visual representation than a reader of a literary work. While an image always has one or several points of view, it also usually contains instructions on the order/structure of viewing the image (Mikkonen 2005: 188–189). These instructions can be related to perspective, line of sight or the relationship between front and back of the image. Mikkonen (2005: 188) sees framing as a way for the image to imply the point of view of the reader or of the characters within the image. What is more, the point of view, or focalization, of the image plays an important part in the interpretation of the image.

Comics are a multimodal medium where storytelling usually entails a text and image interaction, although sometimes a narrative is constructed only with images. Not only are texts and images involved, but also page and panel layouts, typography, lines and colors are all a part of creating a perspective in comics. Mikkonen (2012: 71) takes

into account all these elements as he identifies how they, through their interaction, drive a narrative in graphic storytelling. Mikkonen's (2012: 71) list of elements include the narrator voice (if there is one), a verbal focalizer (if one exists), a focus of visual perception (or the visual focalizer), a center of attention (the visual focalized), the picture frame, and other components such as use of colors, texture, the style of drawing and the form of speech and thought balloons. Mikkonen employs Bal's terms focalizer and focalized in his list of elements, but uses different spellings in different articles (focalizer and focalized or focaliser and focalised). As I have adopted Bal's spelling, I have changed Mikkonen's spelling of these terms to that of Bal's to avoid confusion and maintain consistency.

As Mikkonen (2012:71) states, the process of identifying a general frame of perception in graphic narratives is not an easy task. A graphic narrative can contain multiple focalizations working on the level of text, image and layout, and through their interaction. It can also be difficult to identify a narrator and focalizer and evaluate their relationship and power structure. After raising these concerns about the frame of perception in graphic narratives, Mikkonen (2012: 74) questions their importance and usefulness. Rather than holding onto the distinction between "who speaks" and "who sees", Mikkonen suggests that it might be more important to consider "how the reader, or the viewer of visual narratives, gets optimal information about a character's consciousness, his or her motivations, thoughts and perceptions" (2012: 74).

Indeed, graphic narratives require an adjustment in the framework for narratological analysis, which has its roots in literary narratives. For a reader of comics, it might not be relevant to know "who sees", because images tend to have a fixed perspective and they always show things instead of telling them (Mikkonen 2012: 75). Mikkonen points out that comics also have non-perspectival images which may serve, for example, a conceptual, symbolic or technical purpose (e.g. maps, geometric shapes, charts) (2012:75). These exceptions, however, usually have a limited role in the narrative and are usually seen as a harmless deviation from the fixed perspective.

Thus, the essential question in graphic narratives might not be about who sees/speaks, but rather about how the reader/viewer can extract as much information as possible about the character's mind and perceptions. The multimodal nature of comics calls for a rethinking of the who narrates – who sees -division essential to narratological analysis. The image can portray perceptions and reactions in a more concrete way, even were their significance left unclear (Mikkonen 2010: 309).

Instead of a narrator, a recurring focalized in the narrative is more important for the reader of a graphic narrative (Mikkonen 2012: 76). The focalized is often a main character in the story, but it can also be for example a house, a landscape or a statue. Whatever the focalized may be, the essential element is that the focalized is featured frequently in the narrative. As Mikkonen (2012: 76) explains: “The showing of some person and his field of vision from one moment to another, being embedded in a setting and engaged in action, is a strong cohesion device that increases narrativity in any sequence of images.” In addition to showing a character's gaze, depicting people who are looking directly at the reader is also a technique which increases narrativity in comics (Mikkonen 2012: 76).

Another distinct feature of graphic narratives is the rich variety of positions between internal and external focalization (Mikkonen 2012: 87). Graphic storytelling can also present internal and external perspectives simultaneously, which is why multiple perspectives occupy graphic narratives comfortably. Mikkonen (2012: 87) concludes that “ambiguous or doubled” focalization is an essential part of graphic narratives. This can also be described as 'free indirect discourse' or 'free indirect perception'. While briefly depicting ways in which focalization can be converted to a useful tool for visual narratology, Bal (2009: 167) also touches on this issue. She discusses how 'free indirect discourse', created in literary narratives by the fusion of external narrator and internal focalizer (combination of direct discourse and narrative representation), can also take place in a visual narrative. 'Free indirect discourse' in literary narratives becomes a 'free indirect perspective' in comics, which means that the point of view is connected to and restricted by the perceptions of a character, but at the same time the perspective maintains a more detached, “objective” nature. As

Mikkonen (2012: 88) clarifies, the reader is often invited to follow the character's gaze and look with the character while at the same time looking from behind the character. The interplay between text and images also increases the effect of ambiguous focalization as narrative texts or thought bubbles introduce another perspective within the image.

Mikkonen (2011: 650) argues that the default mode in visual focalization seems to be an external viewpoint “that is subjectivised by various visual, stylistic, and compositional techniques.” Amongst these techniques are methods of creating an optical relationship between the picture frame and the focalizer, and between the focalizer and the focalized. These methods include point-of-view and over-the-shoulder images, which position the reader to see through someone's eyes or over someone's shoulder. Stylistic and visual techniques, which include the use of the graphic line and colors as well as means of organization, such as panel shape and size, can also indicate and underline someone's perceptions (2011: 650).

Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 330–331) find that the analytical applicability of focalization lies in its ability to help differentiate between narration of a story and the mental processing of that story by a character. Horstkotte and Pedri chose graphic narratives in comics as their material for analysis partly to address their list of unexplored and insufficiently answered questions concerning focalization in the field of narrative theory (2011: 330–331). Firstly, they find there are different opinions on what the concept of focalization should include, as some researchers prefer the concept to denote primarily visual perception while others wish to allow for other aspects of cognition as well. Secondly, Horstkotte and Pedri find the differentiation, dating back to Genette's formulation, between “who sees” and “who speaks” inadequately justified. Their argument is that the structuralist interpretation of focalization sees 'free indirect discourse' as a marker of internal focalization while categorizing it as an aspect of “who speaks” rather than as an aspect of “who sees” or a combination of both. Thirdly, they refer to Bal's comment on the usefulness of focalization in visual narratology and point out that despite Bal's encouragement, focalization has remained underutilized in analyzing visual narratives other than film.

Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 331) find that while utilizing the concept of focalization in graphic narratives may help to answer some questions, it also introduces some new ones specific to graphic narratives: for example, whether the distinction between narration and focalization is even relevant for the analysis of graphic narratives, what constitutes a visual focalization and what forms of focalization can graphic narratives encode.

For focalization to truly have relevance as a concept across different mediums, it should not be restricted to the aspect of optical perspective alone. As Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 334) point out, this stance is often too easily assumed in analyzing any type of visual art. Equating focalization to optical perspectivation fails to consider the mental processes at work in creating meaning, such as ideological and moral considerations. Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 334) prefer to work with an inclusive definition which recognizes perceptual as well as cognitive aspects of focalization.

If, then, focalization is assumed to convey more than an optical perspective, there need to be some other markers of subjective experience in the narrative. In order to find those subjective markers or indications which allow the reader to perceive the story through a character's or a narrator's mind, there needs to be a point of comparison, a subjectivity-neutral background (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 334–335). To help distinguish between a subjective experience and a neutral one in the narrative, Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 335) adopt Jahn's typology which follows a division based on character-bound and a more neutral narratorial focalization. This terminology also acknowledges that focalization does not have to be concerned only with presentation of consciousness and, conversely, presentation of consciousness does not always require a character-bound focalization.

Horstkotte and Pedri (2011: 330) mention Herman as one of the people likening the narrative point of view to a visual perspective. Although, as they frequently reiterate, the optical perspectivation is too narrow a definition for focalization, they find many of Herman's concepts useful. Herman's (2009: 120) approach is thinking of focalization in terms of cognitive narratology, a subcategory of cognitive semiotics,

which studies “how the use and interpretation of sign-systems of all sorts are grounded in the structure, capacities, and dispositions of embodied minds.” With Herman's premise in mind, it would at first appear that he would be more concerned with the cognitive aspect of focalization rather than the purely visual. Herman (2009: 123) approaches narrative perspective as a “reflex of mind or minds conceptualizing scenes represented in narrative texts.” Herman is, in a way, bringing together the concepts of narrative voice and vision, or narrator and focalizer, and thinking of perspective as a “sense-making strategy” (Herman 2009: 123). He defines the study of narrative perspective as analysis of how “vantage-points” on the events in the storyworld are embedded and identified in narrative discourse (2009: 122).

Conceptualization is an important concept in Herman's thinking. It refers to the idea that one and the same situation can be interpreted in different ways (Herman 2009: 128). The interpretation, or construal, is affected by a person's perspective. Herman (2009: 129) references Langacker, who details a group of parameters which affect perspective and, consequently, the interpretation. These parameters direct the perspective-taking process by taking into consideration, for example, the amount of detail available and the relationship between foreground and background elements. In Herman's (2009: 135) view, Langacker's parameters, based on cognitive grammar and cognitive semantics, can be applied to cognitive-narratological research through their ability to express general abilities and restrictions related to human cognition.

Herman is of interest to the present study not only for his contribution to narrative theory and focalization, but also because he chose *Ghost World* as a material for his analysis of perspective in a multimodal text (2009: 120). In his article, Herman analyzes a single page of the graphic novel to describe how the interplay of words and images communicate changes in perspective. He (2009: 139) recognizes shifting figure-ground alignments, changes in the vantage-point and alterations in perspectival mode and direction of viewing. Herman's conclusion is that both the design of individual panels and sequential links between panels are responsible for marking perspective within an individual page of the graphic novel. According to Herman (2009: 120), he chose a multimodal narrative as his material based on the

hypothesis that cognitive narratology would be especially useful in highlighting perspective-taking processes in narratives which use multiple semiotic modes. In his analysis, Herman employs Langacker's parameters, which are based on the physical limitations that embodied human minds have. These limitations appear to be often connected to visual perceptions, and this aspect of conceptualization seems to be one of the reasons Herman decided to use a visual narrative for illustrating his ideas. It would appear that Herman reduces, to some extent, the indications of perspective in a visual narrative to indications of optical perspective.

Furthermore, Herman's analysis falls short in taking into account the graphic novel's techniques in creating meaning (e.g. color, drawing style) as he focuses mainly on the physical point of view inscribed in the panels and on the main characters' gazes (Herman 2009: 137). I will explain Herman's discussion of *Ghost World* in more detail in my analysis (section 4.2.1.), as I have included the same set of panels as an example of a shared perspective.

In conclusion, I hope to expand on the definitions of focalization Genette and Bal have formulated, and take into account the additions Mikkonen, Herman, Horstkotte and Pedri have made. The concept of focalization guides the analysis by providing methods and terminology, such as external, character-bound and internal perspective, focalizer and focalized, multiple and shared perspectives and subjectivity-neutral background. The methods and concepts help to explain how a character's consciousness and its aspects, such as impressions, attitudes and opinions, can be represented in a graphic narrative. Following Horstkotte and Pedri's premise, I try to reach beyond finding examples of optical perspectivation in *Ghost World*. I will not, however, discard the idea of optical perspective entirely, but include it also in my analysis of focalization. Nevertheless, I follow Horstkotte and Pedri's (2011: 334–335) ideas on finding subjective markers, or indications, of perspective in the graphic narrative. In finding these indications of focalization in *Ghost World*, I will also take into account the medium-specific narrative elements of comics. Based on these narrative elements, my analysis will be divided into looking at the indications of focalization on the level of 1) color scheme and drawing style and 2) text and image

interaction. The next chapter presents the material for this study in more detail by looking at its plot, theme, characters and structure.

3. MATERIAL

This chapter provides a description of the material chosen for this study. I will examine the indications of focalization in a graphic novel by analyzing *Ghost World* (Clowes 2000), the work of an American comic book artist Daniel Clowes. *Ghost World* was originally published in serialized form: as eight different comics in eight different issues of Clowes' comic book series *Eightball*. The first issue of *Eightball* to include a *Ghost World* comic strip was published in 1993 and the last in 1997. In that same year as the final *Ghost World* comic was published in *Eightball*, the individual comics were collected into one and released as a graphic novel.

Ghost World focuses on the relationship of two teenage girls, Enid Coleslaw and Rebecca Dobbelmeyer, who have recently finished high school and spend their time mainly engaging in cynical banter and continuous commentary and criticism of the small American town they live in. Enid is an outspoken and impulsive girl, who enjoys – at least from her point of view – outrageous activities, such as visiting a sex shop or playing pranks on strangers. Rebecca is a bit more demure, but she shares many of Enid's sentiments and takes part in the relentless critique. The graphic novel follows the girls' daily life as they make fun of their home town and its range of quirky people while feeling unambitious and uncertain about adulthood and the future.

In addition to dealing with the problems of the transition from teenage to adulthood, *Ghost World* critiques the culture where “nothing is sacred except the free market, the freeway, and the headlong pursuit of happiness” (Raeburn 1997: 4). The discontent expressed by the novel's main duo springs from the emptiness in their surroundings. There is something ghostly about the places Enid and Rebecca frequent. The backdrops of their daily lives, the supermarket, record store and diner, seem to be designed as deliberate caricatures. They resemble crude film sets, and appear to lack any unique or distinctive characteristics. Enid and Rebecca find it difficult to relate to their home town and the people living in it, and they do not seem to think that their future would bring about any welcome changes. Enid decides to

apply to an art school, but ultimately cannot pass the test. Rebecca ends up staying in their home town and working in the local coffee shop. In the end of the novel, the girls have drifted apart, and Enid decides to leave the town. On her way to the bus stop, Enid bids Rebecca a distant farewell, as she happens to see her sitting in the diner. Rebecca does not see Enid, and the farewell in effect becomes Enid's own personal goodbye to her past.

Figure 1. Introducing Enid and Rebecca. (Clowes 2000: 9).



Figure 1 shows the first panel in the graphic novel where the reader sees the two main characters together. Right in the beginning it sets the mood for Enid and Rebecca's relationship with framing and alignment. Enid is in the foreground of the panel, looking through a window. Rebecca is in the background, and the reader can only see her legs. Enid disapprovingly asks Rebecca "WHY DO YOU HAVE THIS?", referring to a teen magazine Rebecca has bought and which Enid considers pretentious. As the story progresses, the reader learns that Enid is vocal and impulsive whereas Rebecca is more prone to manifest detachment and disinterest. The kind of positioning this panel demonstrates is quite frequent in the graphic novel. In many cases Enid is the more salient figure in the panel, and only a small part of Rebecca is shown. There are, however, also examples of more balanced compositions where Enid and Rebecca are featured equally.

Figure 2. A typical row of panels in *Ghost World*. (Clowes 2000: 73).



Above is a very typical row of panels in the graphic novel. It shows the usual shape of an individual panel, but also the positioning of the most frequent type of text in *Ghost World*. Speech bubbles are usually placed in the upper part of the panel. If there are several speech bubbles, the order of reading is from top to bottom and from left to right. The panels above also exemplify a typical situation in the story. Most of the text in *Ghost World* represents speech, and most of the speech is Enid and Rebecca's dialogue. Their commentary on life, people, their past, present and future is expressed in their discussions, which are usually initiated by Enid while Rebecca often provides intermittent replies and comments.

The graphic novel is made up of eight chapters, a division dictated by its original form of publication: the eight different comics published in Clowes' comic book series. Clowes uses clearly defined panels as a framing device to help structure the graphic novel's narrative. Each page is usually made up of 8–9, often equal size panels. The panels in each page are divided into rows, and there are usually three rows of panels in one page with three panels on each row. The most notable exception to this rule are the title pages, which mark the start of each new chapter. Title pages tend to have fewer panels and also deviate from the three-row division. They always include a different visual rendition of the phrase “Ghost World”,

positioned usually on the top of the page.

In general, *Ghost World* seems to employ a fair amount of text in its narrative, and there are not many panels without any text. Pulkkinen (1981: 32) has categorized four different types of text in comics based on their function in the narrative. There can be narrative text, which usually aims to add information to the image or to explain and clarify the image, and is often clearly separated from the image with some type of framing device. Text can also function as detail text or sound effect text. Detail text is embedded in the little details and objects in the image, for example in posters, newspapers, books and signs. Sound effect texts are exactly what the name suggests, and their function is to give an onomatopoeic textual form to sounds. Text can also be used to represent speech, and out of these four types, this is the most widely used in *Ghost World*.

There are not many occurrences of narrative text in *Ghost World*. There is narrative text box “The next day” at the end chapter 4 (Clowes 2000: 38), where its function is to indicate a change in time between two panels. There are also a few scenes featuring stories within stories (see, figure 9) where the text resembles narrative text, in that it is separated from the image by disclosing it in its own text box and its aim is to offer an explanation of the accompanying image. However, these stories within stories always begin with dialogue, and the narrative text is, in fact, speech. It is thus also possible to interpret these scenes with narrative text merely as illustrations for Enid's speech.

Sound effect text is used quite sparingly in *Ghost World*, as there are barely more than ten panels in which they appear. Sound effect texts include, for example, “BAM BAM”, which implies a loud knock on the door, and “CLICK”, which refers to the sound of someone changing channels with a remote control. In contrast, detail text is widely used throughout the graphic novel. It can be seen in various signs, graffiti, buildings, magazines, posters and even scribbled on the pavement. Detail text is usually quite small in size and not as effortless to read as the text in speech bubbles. Nevertheless, they often serve as important elements in the story, such as the small

sign declaring that Enid's car is "FOR SALE" (Clowes 2000: 76). Enid bought the car in order to drive it to the college she applied to, but when she learns that she did not get in, she no longer finds use for it.

The graphic novel does not, for the most part, employ text in portraying the characters' unspoken thoughts. There are no obvious thought bubbles, but there are some cases of inner monologue in which the text is written with a different font and presented in slightly modified text bubbles. These thought bubbles usually do not have tails (pointers attached to balloons and directed towards the speaker), which indicates that they represent someone's thoughts instead of speech. For the most part, however, the reader has to rely on the information the characters convey in their speech, actions and expressions. And as the range of expressions on the characters' faces throughout the graphic novel is quite limited, it is often hard to tell what they are thinking and feeling. It can be argued that, to some extent, both text and image restrict access to this inner side of the characters. This restriction suggests that an external viewpoint (Mikkonen 2011: 650) is employed to a certain degree throughout the novel. These restrictions can create a type of disruption in focalization, paralipsis (Genette 1990: 195), and disparities of knowledge (Bal 2009: 163) within the narrative. Information known to the narrator/character, which is not available to the reader, creates a type of disruption in focalization, paralipsis. It also similarly results in disparities of knowledge, as the reader cannot quite interpret what the characters are thinking and feeling.

In this chapter I have discussed the general theme and structure of the graphic novel *Ghost World*. Enid and Rebecca are the most prominent characters in the novel, and the majority of the texts represents their dialogue. I have introduced the typical compositions of panels and page layouts and common text types to preface my analysis of the graphic novel and especially the discussion on the deviations, for example in text and image interaction, which are important in indicating focalization. In the next chapter I take a closer look at how the medium-specific narrative elements of the graphic novel, i.e. color, drawing style and text and image interaction, indicate focalization.

4. INDICATIONS OF FOCALIZATION IN GHOST WORLD

In this chapter, I will take a look at the indications, or markers, of focalization found in the graphic novel *Ghost World*. I will focus on the markers which are manifested through the medium-specific narrative elements of comics. My analysis is divided into two sections: color and drawing style and text and image interaction. The indications of focalization in these narrative elements can be subtle, and translating a visual experience into words is not an easy task, which is why I have included many of the panels in the analysis to support my findings.

I have further divided each of the main sections into two subsections. The discussion on color and drawing style starts with a look at how the color scheme indicates focalization related to theme of the graphic novel. Next, I will discuss how the drawing style in the novel, on one hand, indicates viewing patterns, focalizers and focalized objects within panels and, on the other, creates a subjective filtering related to characters. The section focusing on text and image interaction is also two-fold. It first examines how focalization manifests through shared points of view and multiple perspectives and then discusses the ways in which text and image interaction creates shifts in focalization.

My analysis makes use of terminology borrowed from comics research and the study of narratives. In addition, I will also employ concepts from film-making to help describe the elements of visual presentation. These concepts include medium shot, close-up, zooming in and over-the-shoulder shot (Dirks accessed 27 May 2013). A medium shot is a conventional camera shot, which shows the character's head and the upper part the body. A close-up depicts the character from a shorter distance. Zooming in, in film-making, refers to the camera's lenses increasing the magnification of objects. This camera technique makes an object in the frame appear to grow larger. Over-the-shoulder shot shows the field of vision from behind a character's shoulder.

4.1. Color and drawing style

Color choices and drawing style are both very important elements of a graphic novel's narrative. Each comics artist has their own style of drawing, which may change and vary throughout their career. One reason why comics provide such a rich area of study is the large number of unique visual styles. In a way, each graphic narrative shows a new visual grammar, which often follows the conventions and traditions of comics, but also introduces something new with the comics artist's unique “hand-writing”. Color choices and drawing style are also key aspects in producing focalization in the graphic narrative (Mikkonen 2011: 650).

4.1.1. Color scheme and theme

In this subsection I explain how the color scheme of *Ghost World* indicates focalization related to theme, an important aspect of a narrative. The color scheme refers to the choice and use of color in *Ghost World*, and it has an effect on the overall look of the graphic novel. The color scheme indicates a subjective filtering, which is related to the theme of *Ghost World*.

Figure 3. Color scheme in *Ghost World*. (Clowes 2000: 9).



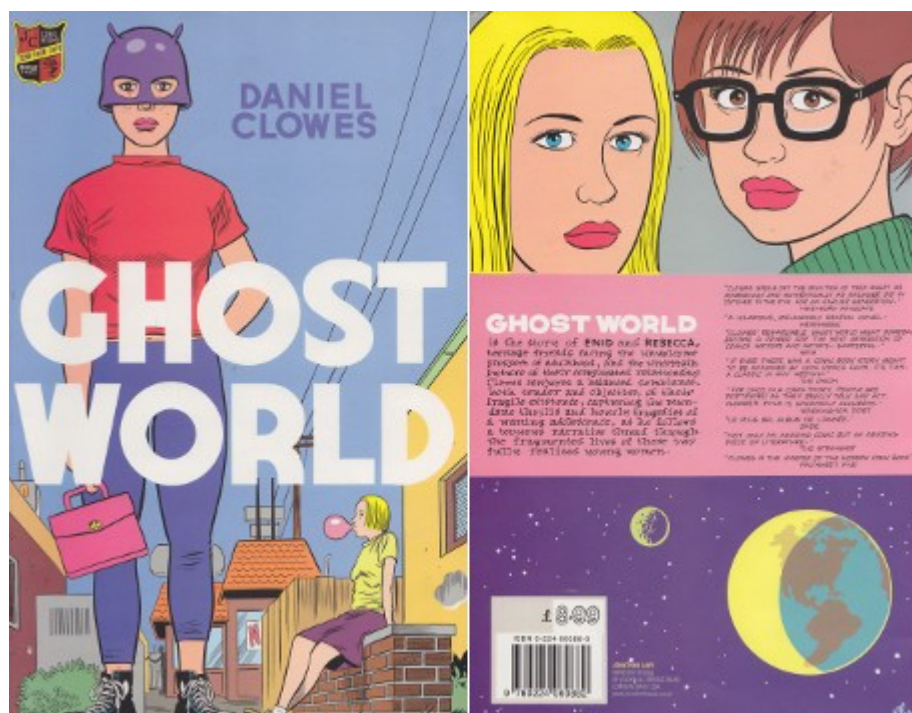
The color scheme of *Ghost World* is black and white with a light fluorescent green tint as seen in figure 3. This choice of colors is maintained throughout the graphic narrative and it creates a ghostly, almost ethereal atmosphere. The colors (and lack of them) echoes the graphic novel's title *Ghost World* and the overall theme of transitioning (from being a teenager to being an adult) and not belonging. The ghostly color scheme can be interpreted as a subjective filtering from the point of view of Enid and Rebecca. They appear to view their home town and the various characters living there with a sarcastic detachment. The places and people they see each day do not offer them points of identification. Instead, Rebecca and Enid tend to perceive their home town as a place filled with caricatures, oddballs and objects of ridicule. Rebecca and Enid's attitude can be interpreted as a reaction to the feeling of not being able to relate or identify with something or someone. The people and places bathe in an "unnatural" color because, in Enid and Rebecca's eyes, they are unreachable others, ghosts, from another time. Enid and Rebecca are portrayed with this same color scheme indicating that they are also a part of the Ghost World, even though they may desire to detach themselves from it. In a sense, everything in the story which is portrayed with this color scheme acts as a focalized object (Bal 2009: 149). Consequently, the focalizers, or the ones whose ideology and consciousness is realized with the color scheme, of these objects are Enid and Rebecca.

As I stated earlier, the color scheme stays the same throughout the narrative, so one could argue that there is no point of comparison (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 334–335), a neutral background, which would mark off the color choices as subjective filtering within the narrative. In this case, however, I would propose that the point of comparison can be found outside the actual narrative: in the front and back cover of the graphic novel.

Comics, when bound in a book form, often have a very carefully thought-out design. The front and back cover, in addition to the introductory pages, can feature images connected to the story which are, in a strict sense, not part of the actual narrative. Nevertheless, the images are not mere decorations, either. In comics, the narrative medium is a combination of text and image, and the images outside the actual

content of a comic book are much more involved in the narrative than, for example, the front and back cover of a literary book where the primary narrative medium is text.

Figure 4. Enid and Rebecca in color.(Clowes 2000: Front and back cover).



The front and back cover of *Ghost World*, as seen in the above figure, have a fuller range of color compared to the combination of black, white and green used in the novel itself. In the front cover we see Enid standing and looking straight at the reader. Rebecca is in the background, sitting sideways to the reader. Rebecca is facing a building opposite her while blowing a bubble gum bubble, but we cannot quite see what she is looking at. The place depicted on the front cover is clearly located in Enid and Rebecca's home town. The reader sees buildings similar to the ones in the story and, in the background, a faintly drawn figure which resembles the Ghost World graffiti-maker Enid encounters at the end of the story. The view is clearly connected to the narrative, but the use of color creates a different effect. There is a blue sky, green shrubbery, brown and yellow walls. Rebecca has bright yellow hair, and she is wearing a matching shirt and a purple skirt. Enid is wearing a purple rubber mask, the same one as in the story, a bright red shirt and blue leggings.

She is also dangling a pink handbag with her finger. Enid and Rebecca both have light peach colored skin.

The back cover is composed of two images with a piece text in between them. At the top, there is a close-up of Enid and Rebecca, and, at the bottom, a view from outer space showing the Earth and the Moon against a starry space background. The first image is framed to show the girls' faces as they look straight at the reader. They are shown from a close distance, but their faces are not as detailed as they are in the images in the story. Rebecca has blue eyes and her hair is the same bright yellow as seen in the front cover. Enid's hair and eyes are both the same shade of brown. Enid is wearing her black-rimmed glasses, and we can also see the collar of her green sweater. Their faces have very little shading and other detailing lines, and even Enid's freckles have been omitted. The image at the bottom is a stylized depiction of the Earth and the Moon. The Moon is outlined and detailed with a lime green color while the Earth is detailed with three colors: blue for water, brown for land and bright yellow for shading. The image of the Earth only shows North and South America with a small slice of Europe to focus on the part of the globe where the events of the graphic novel take place.

The images in the front and back cover show the places and the two main characters of *Ghost World* in a different light. The colors in these images represent, at least compared to the black-white-green color scheme, a relatively realistic style. For example, the blue sky, the green shrubbery, the red lips and the girls' peach-colored skin all seem to present the girls and their surroundings in a fairly conventional, almost neutral style. This indicates that the images in the front and back cover could be interpreted as a point of comparison and a neutral background for the black-white-green color scheme (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 334–335). The scenes portrayed in these images seem out of context and do not represent a specific point in the story. The images are meant as an introduction to the story and the girls, and as such they act already as a part of the narrative. In the front cover Enid looks directly at the reader, and both Enid and Rebecca direct their gaze at the reader in the back cover. The direct gaze is a technique which, in Mikkonen's view (2012: 76), increases

narrativity in comics by creating a heightened level of involvement. It is interesting that this technique of characters looking straight at the reader is used in the front and back covers and not in the actual story. The direct gaze can give the impression that the characters are striking a pose for the reader, but it is also a strong invitation to become involved in the story. The direct gaze is an invitation to the reader to enter Enid and Rebecca's world and see it from the girls' point of view. The indication of increased narrativity in the direct gaze technique seems to emphasize the inclusion of the front and back cover as a part of the narrative.

I would argue that comics are a medium in which the material outside the core content, or the actual narrative, i.e. the images in the front and back cover, title page and table of contents, are more involved in the narrative than, for example, in books containing written work. The images in comic books are already giving information to the reader about the characters and places in the story and creating a background before the "actual telling of the story" begins.

If we acknowledge, then, that the images the reader sees before beginning to read the actual story act as a part of the expressive whole, the images can be also considered as a neutral narrative background against which the color choices in the story can be compared to. What the reader sees in the front and back cover is the introduction to the story, and the transition from the fuller range of color to a ghostly scheme of black, white and light green indicates that the reader has stepped into a focalized view of Enid and Rebecca's world. The transition also highlights the change in Enid and Rebecca's roles from focalized objects to focalizers (Bal 2009: 149). In the front and back cover they are the center of visual attention, and the relatively neutral coloring suggests they be viewed from the point of view of a more external focalizer. The transition to the black-white-green color scheme of the core narrative indicates a change in focalization. The ghostly color scheme can be seen as an indication of the girls' shared attitude towards the Ghost World they live in, which renders the girls as the focalizers of their world.

4.1.2. Drawing style and characters

In addition to the colors used in *Ghost World*, the drawing style is also an important element in creating a subjective filtering (Mikkonen 2012: 71). First of all, drawing style is used to strengthen the main character's role as the primary focalizer or focalized within an image. Enid's visual appearance often draws the reader's attention to her first, which suggests an order of viewing (Mikkonen 2005: 188–189). By focusing on Enid's expressions and the direction of her gaze first, the reader is invited to view Enid as the focal element in the image, but also to view other characters and objects through Enid's perspective. Drawing style is also an indication of how both Enid and Rebecca view the other people around them. The differences in the appearances of the main and minor characters show an aspect of their relationship. Enid and Rebecca express similar attitudes towards some minor characters in the story, and their subjective view is indicated in the way the minor characters are drawn.

Enid has a short dark bob and black-rimmed glasses, freckles and full lips. She is also seen wearing different and often peculiar-looking hats and sunglasses. Her clothes are more detailed and striking-looking than Rebecca's. Enid's wardrobe includes a black leather jacket, green-hued, square-patterned shirts and dresses and short black skirts. Rebecca, on the other hand, has blond hair and simple clothes with very few details. All in all, Enid tends to stand out, not only compared to Rebecca, but also compared to the rest of the town. Enid is also prone to change her style frequently and suddenly, either with clothes or haircuts and colors. She seems to enjoy the way her appearance gains attention, and it strengthens her attention-seeking behavior.

The reader's gaze is often drawn to Enid's character, which also creates a viewing pattern of looking at Enid and then focusing on where her gaze is directed towards. She is often portrayed in the panels either in tightly framed close-ups, which show only her face, or in slightly wider medium shots, which show her face and her upper body. This type of framing means that the visual details important to Enid's character are hats, hair styles, shirts, jackets and eye and sun glasses, because they are always

visible in the framing. Her large, dark-rimmed glasses, which frame her eyes and her gaze, work as a framing device in a similar way as panels, borders and speech bubbles do in comics. Framing devices (Eisner 1994: 28 & Mikkonen 2005: 188) separate different objects and scenes in order to create a sense of time or a degree of importance, and to suggest an order of reading for the reader. Enid's noticeable glasses draw the reader's focus firstly on her face and her eyes and secondly to the direction and/or object of her gaze. The reader is thus encouraged to consider other characters and scenes after first seeing Enid's reactions and expressions.

The drawing style associated with the different characters in the novel can also be seen as an indication of focalization. Many of the minor characters in *Ghost World* are stylized in a way which corresponds to the dismissive attitude Enid and Rebecca have towards their home town's residents. The characters which Enid and Rebecca perceive either as weirdos and oddballs or as pretentious and annoying fools are depicted with a slightly exaggerated style which does not aim to be realistic.

Figure 5. Tom, Bob Skeetes, Al and Enid's father. (Clowes 2000: 11, 16, 41 & 69).



Figure 5 shows a compilation of four individual panels which present four minor characters. From left to right, the characters are: Tom, an ex-catholic priest who makes computer-generated child pornography, Bob Skeetes, an astrologist and psychic, Al, a waiter at a retro 50's style diner and lastly Enid's father. These characters all seem a bit like caricatures, and some of them are almost grotesque in their appearance. They have big noses, large teeth, large foreheads, unflattering hair styles and often exaggerated expressions. Their appearance seems to fit the way Enid

and Rebecca see them. They have little respect for them, and this is reflected in the way they are drawn.

Enid and Rebecca, on the other hand, are portrayed in a slightly kinder light. Their bodies and faces are naturalistically proportioned. They are not portrayed as strikingly attractive people, but compared to the other characters around them, they appear to be somewhat good-looking. A difference in appearance can, to some extent, be explained by the fact that many of the story's minor characters are older than Enid and Rebecca. Thus it makes sense that instead of youthful good looks, their faces would show the signs of years lived and experiences had. There are, however, some characters in the story who are closer to Enid and Rebecca's age, but who are nevertheless portrayed in a style similar to the older minor characters.

Figure 6. John Ellis, Melorra and Josh. (Clowes. 2000: 11, 17 & 50).



Minor characters who are around Enid and Rebecca's age include John Ellis, Melorra and Josh, portrayed in the compilation of three individual panels in figure 6. The first panel of the three shows John Ellis, who introduces Enid as his friend, but whose relationship with her is characterized more by animosity and mischievous comments than warmth and closeness. He is quite blunt and can hold his own in a heated argument or when trading insults with Enid. He is depicted as a fair-haired, bleary-eyed young man with awkward glasses, a large forehead and prominent front teeth. His overall appearance is not very appealing. John Ellis' morbid interests offer

material for his self-published magazine, *Mayhem*, where his taste manifests, for example, in an article about high-tech child pornography with illustrations made by Tom, the ex-catholic priest discussed earlier (and shown in figure 6). Both Enid and Rebecca express their disgust towards John Ellis' behavior, but while Rebecca prefers not to interact with John Ellis, Enid engages in quite a few discussions with him. It seems that Enid has more in common with John Ellis, as they both seem to enjoy attention and shocking people.

The second panel in figure 6 features Melorra. She went to the same school as Enid and Rebecca, but is not particularly close to the girls. Melorra is a dark-haired girl with a fairly conservative and plain wardrobe and overall style. Melorra's simple white shirt and skirt and pearl jewelry also make her look a bit older than she is. She is portrayed as a bit of an extrovert, who wants to get along with everyone. Enid and Rebecca are not impressed with Melorra's attempts to interact with them, but she is either oblivious to Enid and Rebecca's reserved attitude towards her or she simply does not care. Melorra is portrayed as an active and outgoing person, and she is a strong contrast to the aimlessness Enid and Rebecca feel. She seems to have exciting plans for her future, and she also works towards her goals. Melorra goes to auditions with the hopes of becoming an actress while at the same time working full-time for Greenpeace and maintaining an active social life.

Both John Ellis and Melorra are depicted in a caricature-like style similar to the other minor characters seen in figure 5. John Ellis is not depicted as a sympathetic character, and his visual appearance seems to echo his personality. Melorra is by no means grotesque, but she has a perpetual frown on her forehead and a slightly forced teeth-baring smile which do not render her appearance very likeable. Enid and Rebecca view both John Ellis and Melorra as part of the annoying ghost people of the town. Even though John Ellis and Enid share some qualities, he is not ultimately portrayed as someone Enid can relate to, and his visual depiction is in accordance with the disapproval Enid and Rebecca show towards him.

Josh is an exception to the other minor characters in the story. He appears to be the

only character who is drawn in a similar style as Enid and Rebecca. His face is simple and delicate, almost handsome. Josh's quiet, somber demeanor acts as a contrast to the girls' louder and more colorful behavior. He is a love interest for both Enid and Rebecca, and he eventually ends up having a relationship with Rebecca. Josh is one of the few characters in the story, if not the only one, whom Enid and Rebecca genuinely like. The positive attitude the girls have towards Josh seems to manifest in his visual appearance.

The drawing style attached to the different characters seems to be an indication of focalization. Enid and Rebecca's point of view creates a subjective filtering, which manifests itself in the way the other characters in the graphic novel are depicted. The unlikeable people share some unappealing qualities in their visual appearances whereas people Enid and Rebecca actually like are portrayed in a style similar to how the girls are drawn. Both the color scheme and drawing style indicate the similar viewpoints of Enid and Rebecca. This can be viewed as a shared perspective, an aspect of focalization which I will discuss in the context of text and image interaction in section 4.2.1. The subjective filtering created with the drawing style suggests plausible identities for the focalizers and the focalized objects (Bal 2009: 149). As discussed in the previous subsection, the girls can again be interpreted as the focalizers. The visual style of the minor characters corresponds to Enid and Rebecca's shared attitude towards them. Consequently, the minor characters can be seen as the focalized objects of Enid and Rebecca's often ruthless subjective gaze. Enid's visual style also strengthens her role as a focalizer. Her often prominent positions within panels combined with her eye-catching appearance creates a viewing pattern (Mikkonen 2005: 188), as the reader is encouraged to focus on the direction of Enid's gaze and to view other characters through Enid's perspective.

4.2. Text and image interaction

Text and image interaction is an integral part of the majority of comics. Although some comics tell their stories with images alone, it is the blending of textual and visual modal tracks which makes comics a unique narrative medium and offers many

fascinating possibilities for graphic storytelling (Herkman 1998: 53–54). In this section I take a look at how certain instances of text and image interaction express focalization in *Ghost World*. I will first look at how text and image interaction creates shared points of view and multiple perspectives. Shared points of view are created when textual and visual modal tracks seem to reflect a fusion of the points of view of two or more characters. The impression of multiple perspectives occurs when the experiences of different characters are embedded within the same narrative space (Mikkonen 2012: 74). The embedded perspectives result in ambiguous focalizers (Mikkonen 2012: 87) as the textual and visual tracks carry information which can be filtered through the point of view of two or even three different characters. In addition to shared points of view and multiple perspectives, I will be looking at how different juxtapositions of text and image indicate sudden shifts in focalization. These shifts in focalization depend, on one hand, on the relationship between different panels and, on the other, on the content and positioning of the textual and visual tracks within a single panel. A noticeable change in focalization relies on the sequentiality of panels, and a shift appears to be most effective when it happens within a single scene or within a single page.

4.2.1. Shared points of view and multiple perspectives

Shared points of view and multiple perspectives represent fairly similar concepts in a graphic narrative. Shared perspectives are often reliant on text and image interaction. Text and images, while juxtaposed in the same panel, can highlight different aspects of a scene. For example, a narrative text and a specific optical perspective, combined in the same panel, can each portray different details or moods while referring to the same scene. Multiple perspectives, in the context of *Ghost World*, refer to multiple focalizers performing simultaneous acts of focalization which occupy the same narrative space whereas shared points of view convey one perspective, which is shared by two or more characters. Multiple perspectives occur fairly naturally in comics (Mikkonen 2012: 71), quite often through the interaction of two different modal tracks, textual and visual. The graphic narrative makes it possible for the different perspectives to be spatially embedded within one another.

Enid and Rebecca are the most prominent characters in the graphic novel. Out of all the panels (555) in the novel, Enid is featured in 461, Rebecca in 316. 280 panels feature both Rebecca and Enid. The reader is continuously invited to follow the girls throughout the narrative and to interpret it through their eyes. Although Enid is in some scenes portrayed, with the help of her visual appearance, as the primary focalizer, the girls are featured so frequently together in the graphic novel that they represent a recurring “focalizer unit”. Furthermore, Enid and Rebecca's gazes are often directed towards the same objects of interest, which indicates their shared point of view. Most of the novel Enid and Rebecca act as a team and their “us against the world” attitude fairly easily translates into a shared perspective.

Figure 7. Enid and Rebecca's shared perspective. (Clowes 2000: 26).



The series of panels in figure 7 offer an example of a shared perspective in *Ghost World*. The reader first sees a view of a diner with the girls in the foreground. Their gazes are directed towards a young man in a striped shirt standing in the background.

Enid's comment about the him, "HE'S LIKE THE BIGGEST IDIOT I'VE EVER SEEN", conveys her attitude towards him. Rebecca agrees to Enid's sentiment in the next panel, which also shows a closer view of the girls as their gazes move onto another man who is talking on the phone further away in the background. Their dialogue again reveals how they feel about the object of their gazes. The man on the telephone is a bass player who, according to Enid and Rebecca, got kicked out of his band and apparently also has a crack addiction. The third panel is a close-up image of the bass player, framed with Rebecca and Enid's speech bubbles. Their discussion has moved onto Enid's particular taste in men. The last two panels in figure 7 return to Enid and Rebecca, illustrating their discussion with over-the-shoulder shots.

The first two panels allocate an equal amount of space for both of the girls. They have similar positions, and their gazes are directed at the same object of interest. Enid and Rebecca's shared object of interest is represented, in the first panel, by the man in the striped shirt and, in the second panel, by the man talking on the phone. From panel one to panel three, there is a continuous change in optical perspective, which follows the girls' gazes and their dialogue. The scene starts with a general view of the diner which zooms in closer to the girls' faces in the following panel. The third panel zooms in further and shows a closer view of the man talking on the phone. Although the image shows the man up close, there is no speech bubble indicating that the reader hears his telephone discussion. There are, however, Enid and Rebecca's speech bubbles juxtaposed in this image, and this renders the image as the girls' shared view of the man. The close-up of view of the man does not indicate that the reader should focus on what he is doing or saying, but rather what the girls think of him. Throughout the scene in figure 7, Enid and Rebecca's dialogue is focused on the person they are looking at, which also strengthens the impression of a shared perspective. The shared perspective is created through the equal status the girls share as focalizers in this scene. The sense of equality is maintained by showing the girls in similar positions and allotting the same amount of space for them and their speech bubbles. The content of their speech bubbles also shows a similar style of talking, and although Enid and Rebecca do not agree on everything, their sentiments about the two men are nevertheless similar and complementary.

This series of panels in figure 7 was also used by Herman (2009: 136) in his analysis of perspective in a multimodal text. Mikkonen (2012: 649) critiques Herman's discussion of these panels, pointing out that Herman is too narrowly focused on applying narrative techniques relevant in literary texts to a graphic narrative as he tries to explain the shifts in perspective with literary text terms such as third-person narration. In Herman's opinion, the scene contains shifts between a relatively external vantage point and a relatively internal, character-bound vantage point. His analysis shows that he is also quite fixed on optical perspectives, as he interprets the panel showing a young man talking on the phone as Rebecca's internal point of view. Herman wants to assign this close-up image of the young man to Rebecca's point of view possibly because he considers Rebecca's physical location to correspond to the view presented of the young man. As Mikkonen (2011: 650) points out, Herman's analysis does not take into account the possibility of a shared perspective, which would be a much more valid interpretation of the scene. Mikkonen (2011: 650) continues to pinpoint an important aspect of *Ghost World*, which relates the fusing of Enid and Rebecca's perspectives to an indication of their shared attitudes and opinions. My analysis of the scene in figure 7 echoes Mikkonen's stance, which is also valid in the discussion of color and drawing style in section 4.1. The color scheme of the narrative and the drawing style attached to the minor characters are also indicators of Enid's and Rebecca's shared attitude towards their home town and the people living there.

Figure 8. Shared perspective on Enid's photo album. (Clowes 2000: 63).



Figure 8 above shows another example of a shared perspective. The series of panels in figure 8 are part of a scene where Enid and Rebecca are looking at Enid's photo album. The first panel of the scene depicts the girls with a medium shot, which shows them looking at a photo album together. Rebecca is holding onto the left side of the album and Enid onto the right side (from the reader's perspective). In the second panel, the perspective changes into a view approximately corresponding to the girls' optical point of view in order to show the reader what the girls see in the photo album. The first look at the photo album does not focus on any particular picture. It is only when the girls are discussing a specific photo that the picture is seen more closely. In these close-ups, the photos are framed with speech bubbles. Enid's bubbles are located on the left and Rebecca's on the right. The text in the bubbles contain comments on the accompanying photo. The perspective changes a few times during the scene from a close-up of the photo album to a more external view, which shows the girls sitting on the bed and looking down at the album.

The series of panels in figure 8 show that an approximation of an optical perspective is important in creating a sense of a shared perspective. The intimate close-ups of the photos indicate the position of the girls' bodies, but also the focus of their thoughts. In other words, their physical point of view corresponds to the view of the album, and the textual track implies that their thoughts are also focused on the photos. It can be argued that the optical perspective in some of the panels is closer to Enid's optical point of view. The tails of the speech bubbles belonging to Enid point towards the center of the panel, which would indicate that the panel's perspective is centered on Enid's physical position. However, Enid's prominence in these otherwise shared perspectives can be seen as a part of the dynamic of Enid and Rebecca's relationship, as Enid is the more dominant of the two.

Overall, the relationship between text and image in the scene seems to be interdependent, McCloud's seventh type of text and image combination (McCloud 199: 153). Interdependency is created when text and image together express aspects which they cannot convey alone. The photos show details relating to the time when they were taken and the relationships between the people in the pictures. The dialogue text shows a more current view on the photos and what they represent. Panel five, for example, shows three young girls posing together for the camera. Through the textual track the reader learns the girls are Naomi, Melorra and Enid in the sixth grade. Enid and Rebecca's comments on the photo reveal their current attitude towards Naomi and Melorra. Enid refers to them as "JAPS", which means Jewish American Princess, a pejorative stereotype. Rebecca echoes Enid's sentiment with her comment about Melorra: "SHE WAS ALWAYS SUPER UGLY!" The interdependency of text and image shows a balanced relationship between the different modal tracks, and it seems that a complementary interaction, on one hand, between the textual and the visual and, on the other, between Enid and Rebecca's attitudes and opinions is crucial in creating a shared perspective.

Whereas shared points of view are conveyed in scenes where the girls are in the same physical space, multiple perspectives occur when the girls are in different places. In

these scenes, Enid acts a narrator as she relates stories to Rebecca. Embedded in these stories can also be other stories, where Enid is narrating another story to someone else. In these cases, the textual track follows Enid's narration of the events to whomever is her audience, while the visual track illustrates her description. While the narrative text in these panels seems to belong to Enid, the images can be interpreted as illustrations of Enid's point of view, Rebecca's (or some other character's) interpretation of Enid's narration, or maybe both of them at the same time. Multiple perspectives are created through the juxtaposition of text and images within individual panels, but also through the relationship between panels.

Figure 9. Multiple perspectives in stories within stories. (Clowes 2000: 35 &36).



Figure 9 shows a compilation of eight panels from a chapter in the novel which depicts Enid's phone discussion with Rebecca. The chapter consists of two examples of embedded narratives, or stories within stories. In the first example, Enid talks to Rebecca about her visit to a sex shop with Josh. The visual and textual tracks shift from depicting the telephone discussion to illustrating Enid and Josh's porn shop visit. In the second example Enid tells Rebecca about her encounter with a childhood friend, Naomi, with whom Enid ends up sharing her loss-of-virginity story. The eight

panels in figure 9 are from the second example of an embedded narrative. Enid's depiction of her encounter with Naomi is portrayed with several panels which are spread out to four pages. Of these panels, I have included eight from two different pages to illustrate the elements of an embedded narrative. The first set of four panels in figure 9 are from the end of page 35, and the second set is from the beginning of page 36 in the graphic novel. I will start by discussing the first set of four panels in more detail, followed by a closer look at the second set of panels. After looking at each set separately, I discuss the multiple perspectives within the whole embedded narrative and reference all the panels in figure 9.

The first set of panels in figure 9 depicts the shift from the primary story of the chapter, Enid's telephone discussion with Rebecca, to the second story, Enid's encounter with Naomi. The visual track in the first three panels of this set alternates between Enid and Rebecca. The visual style of the speech bubbles also indicates the reader's distance to the character. The first panel shows Enid in her room, and her speech bubble is drawn in a neutral style, indicating that the reader experiences the scene from her perspective. Rebecca's speech bubble in this panel has a saw-edged tail to inform the reader that Rebecca's voice is heard via the telephone. Panels 1 and 3 in the set show Enid's room and panel 2 Rebecca's. The fourth panel shows the beginning of the second story, Enid's encounter with Naomi. The reader sees Enid and Naomi sitting in the diner, and their dialogue is depicted with neutral speech bubbles. There is no visual deviation in the way characters or speech bubbles are depicted, which would mark off the panel from the previous ones and indicate that the reader is experiencing the scene through someone's consciousness. However, there is a box of narrative text in the top of the panel, which clearly contains a part of Enid's telephone discussion with Rebecca. The narrative text acts as a mediator between the two stories and indicates a transition from the primary story to the second story. The text informs the reader that the panel is an illustration of Enid's narration, and the scene with Enid and Naomi is embedded in Enid and Rebecca's telephone discussion. The fourth panel already shows multiple perspectives, as the reader can interpret the panel as how Enid imagines the scene or as Rebecca pictures the scene through Enid's description.

The second set of panels in figure 9 starts with the first panel, which illustrates Enid's loss-of-virginity story. The panel introduces a sixteen-year-old Enid acting indifferent towards a creepy-looking guy whose appearance combined with his intrusive query (“HEY, IS **ALL** YOUR HAIR GREEN?”) sufficiently illustrate the sleaziness and dorkiness mentioned in Enid's narration. The second panel in this set cuts back to the scene where Enid is telling the story to Naomi. The panel shows Naomi asking further questions about the “degree” of Enid's virginity. The last two panels in figure 9 continue to follow Enid's narration and introduce the young man, Allen, to whom she ends up losing her virginity. To sum up, the first, third and fourth panel illustrate Enid's narration of the story to Naomi and the second panel depicts the scene where she is actually narrating the story to Naomi. The visual track in panels 1, 3 and 4 illustrates Enid's story while the textual track follows Enid's narration of the story to Naomi. The second panel is an example of a typical panel in the narrative, and it creates a neutral background and a point of comparison (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 334–335) for the other three panels. The panels which illustrate Enid's narration are marked off with framing and text and image juxtaposition. They do not have panel border lines, and they are separated from other panels with only the white gutter (blank space between panels). The panels without border lines seem to link together and form their own group. Enid's narration is placed at the top of the panel in a text box which is also without border lines. These illustrative panels also have fewer speech bubbles compared to the more typical panels.

The narrative entanglement shown in figure 9 features three levels embedded in the same narrative space. The first level is Enid's telephone discussion with Rebecca, which then moves onto Enid's conversation with Naomi in the diner. The third level is created in Enid's narration of her story where the textual track follows Enid's description while the visual track illustrates her narration. The interplay of textual and visual tracks guides the multiple acts of telling a story in the same narrative space and keeps the reader informed of which narrative level is presented. The images and speech bubbles in the panels illustrating Enid's loss-of-virginity story support the text, but also give more information and details about, for example,

Allen's visual appearance and the way he talks.

The fusing of narrative levels results in multiple perspectives. Rebecca and Enid are both familiar with Enid's loss-of-virginity story, but Naomi is hearing it for the first time. Providing a new audience for Enid's story enables the reader to experience the story through Naomi's role as a listener and assume her point of view as someone unfamiliar with the story. Naomi's presence means that the story is told in much more detail as opposed to how it might have been handled in Enid and Rebecca's one-to-one conversation. The visual track which illustrates Enid's textual description of the events can present the impression of Enid, Rebecca or Naomi or it can be an amalgam of all of their reflections of the story. The reader can, on one hand, choose the order in which they view the panels, and, on the other, choose whose consciousness they see presented in the images. This notion echoes Mikkonen's (2005: 191) view of the potential freedom comics readers have, which, as seen in this example, can also mean the freedom to choose which character is the source of focalization.

Enid recounting the telling of her loss-of-virginity story activates three narrative levels, which results in multiple perspectives. Even though embedded narratives, or stories within stories, are not a phenomenon exclusive to graphic narratives, it is the juxtaposition of text and image along with the page layout which allow for the different narrative levels to comfortably coexist. The multiple perspectives show how open graphic narratives can be for interpretation. They also introduce an aspect of flexibility to the concept of focalization. Flexible focalization creates a sense of subjectivity without enforcing strict rules on the order of reading or interpretation of the focalizer's identity. This flexibility would seem to be valid also in the case of shared perspectives, as it enables the reader to view characters not as strictly separate focalizers, but as a "focalizing unit" with a shared perspective. Overall, the idea of flexible focalization seems to fit the narrative structure of graphic novels fairly well. The interconnectivity of panels, openness to interpretation and relative freedom in choosing a pattern of reading (as long as it does not endanger intelligibility) are all elements of graphic narratives, and a flexible use of focalization takes all these

elements into account better than a strict understanding of perspective.

4.2.2. Shifts in focalization

Although it is difficult, and perhaps also unnecessary, to identify a voice of a narrator in *Ghost World*, there are some parts, almost like disruptions, in the narrative where the juxtaposition and interplay of text and image creates a shift in focalization to a perspective belonging to someone outside the story. This shift can create a perspective which is almost meta-fictional, self-conscious, and clearly does not belong to the characters in the story. This type of disruption draws attention to the act of narrating and to the existence of a possible narrator. Other types of shifts in focalization can indicate a change from an external focalization to a more internal focalization. It is not easy to make a distinction between external and internal perspectives in graphic narratives, as fully internal points of view are quite rare. It is more common in comics to include the character in the image while presenting what the character is looking at (Mikkonen 2012: 88). This type of composition presents a perspective which is somewhere in between external and internal points of view.

One example of a shift in perspective created with text and image interaction can be found at the end of the first chapter of the novel. The first chapter depicts Rebecca and Enid hanging out in Rebecca's room. They are watching TV and Enid relates to Rebecca her encounter with one of the peculiar characters in their home town. Their straightforward comments on both the TV's stand up comic ("GOD, WHAT A LOSER!") and Enid's "friend" Tom ("GOD, WHAT AN ASSHOLE...") give the reader a good idea of their style of banter. The perspectival position of the reader is mostly fixed inside Rebecca's room, but in the last panel of the chapter, the reader is positioned outside the house looking into the room where Enid and Rebecca are.

Figure 10. Shift in focalization through text–image interaction. (Clowes 2000: 14).



The figure 10 above shows the last two panels at the end of the first chapter. The panel on the left shows the perspectival position inside Rebecca's room and panel on the right, the final panel of the chapter, shows an outside view to the room. In the last panel the reader sees Enid lying down on the bed, reading a teen magazine and commenting out loud on what she sees: “GOD, LOOK AT THESE STUPID CUNTS!” The perspective, whoever it belongs to, detaches Enid's utterance from the previous context of Enid and Rebecca talking to each other in Rebecca's room by placing the speech bubble with the external view of Rebecca's window and a glimpse of her room. This gives the effect that Enid's remark is in fact supposed to refer to Enid and Rebecca, and the perspective created in the panel invites the reader to regard the girls with the same sarcastic detachment with which the girls frequently view the world around them.

Text and image interaction creates a shift and a different sense of subjectivity in the parts of the story where the reader is presented with scenes which are portrayed with Enid as the primary focalized character. These scenes portray experiences which happen only to Enid, and she does not necessarily share them with Rebecca afterwards either due to embarrassment or, as is the case later in the story, the distance in their relationship. As Enid's lone experiences are not portrayed through Enid describing them to someone after they happen, the reader sees the events as they take place. As there are no thought bubbles and barely any narrative text

employed in the graphic novel, the reader's access to the characters' consciousness is already restricted. When there is not much dialogue, the reader relies on the images to gain information on what is happening. The perspective in these scenes focusing on Enid's experience seems at first to be a detached external one, but closer inspection shows there are indications of a character-bound (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 335) subjective filtering.

An example of this type of shift in focalization occurs when Enid goes to the magazine shop to meet a cartoonist called Dan Clowes. The cartoonist is quite clearly an alter ego of sorts of *Ghost World's* creator, Daniel Clowes. Incidentally, Enid Coleslaw is an anagram of Daniel Clowes, which makes the scene in the magazine shop appear as a meeting of Daniel Clowes' alter egos. Enid mentions the cartoonist Dan Clowes earlier in the story as an example of a man she might find interesting, and after finding out that he is having a signing in the local magazine shop, Enid tells Rebecca she is going to go see him. Rebecca has stated earlier her hatred of cartoons, and after she shows disinterest also towards the signing, Enid goes to the magazine shop by herself.

Figure 11. Shift in focalization through a change in text–image interaction. (Clowes 2000: 29).



Figure 11 shows nine panels depicting two different scenes in the novel. The first three panels, which are very typical panels as regards to framing and composition, depict Enid and Rebecca's dialogue by alternating between medium close-up and close-up perspectives, which show their faces and the direction of their gazes. Approximately one half of the panel is reserved for the characters and the other half is taken up by speech bubbles. The last six panels in figure 11 depict Enid's visit to the signing. They illustrate her gradual approach towards the cartoonist's desk as she tries to appear as if she is in the shop just to browse, instead of wanting to actually

meet the cartoonist. The scene is illustrated with six panels, all positioned on the same page in the novel. The transition from the scene with Enid and Rebecca's discussion (depicted in the first three panels in figure 11) to Enid's visit to the shop (depicted with the last six panels) starts with a panel presenting a view from inside the magazine shop. The reader sees Enid's side profile through the shop's window, with a stylized view of posters and magazines framing and partly hiding her face. We see that Enid is doubtfully glancing at the shop window, probably feeling uncertain about going there alone without Rebecca. The next panel presents a picture of a man who is revealed as the cartoonist in the accompanying text. This image portrays a surprisingly clear internal view, which shows how Enid imagines the cartoonist in her mind. Enid's fantasy image is accompanied by a recollection of an earlier dialogue between two voices, most likely belonging to her and Rebecca. The dialogue is portrayed with two text bubbles. The first text bubble asks "YOU'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN A PICTURE OF THIS GUY?" with the other responding with "I DUNNO, I'VE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE." The text bubbles present Enid's inner monologue as she most likely is recollecting a discussion she had with Rebecca about the cartoonist. The third panel shows Enid entering the shop and responding to the clerk's hello. This is the only actual bit of spoken dialogue in the scene, as the previous panel's recollection of an earlier dialogue can be interpreted as inner monologue. The last row of panels starts with a perspectival position behind Enid showing her as she approaches the cartoonist's desk. The next panel reverses the point of view and presents Enid from what could be interpreted as the point of view of the cartoonist. The final panel does not show Enid at all, but instead appears to be Enid's optical perspective on the cartoonist. He is depicted sitting behind a desk and looking in Enid's direction with an awkward half-smile on his face.

The shift in focalization in the above example happens through a transition from one scene to another. Placing the scene change in the middle of a page is important in creating the shift as it visually breaks the flow of the narrative. The textual track in the panels depicting Enid's lone adventure consists of only two text and two speech balloons. This narrative choice of image-oriented storytelling creates an immediate

contrast to the dialogue-heavy scenes with Enid and Rebecca, which dominate not only the panels preceding the scene, but also most of the narrative. Subjective filtering in this scene is first clearly indicated in the second panel which represents Enid's consciousness as she imagines how Dan Clowes looks like. In Enid's mind, the cartoonist is a stylish, dark-haired older man with thick-rimmed glasses similar to Enid's. The last panel of the scene also seems to denote a character-bound focalization (Horstkotte & Pedri 2011: 335) by illustrating Enid's disappointed impression of the actual Dan Clowes, who is depicted as a fairly unattractive, balding man with a teeth-baring awkward smile. The composition of the panel and the lack of text create a slightly unreal and staged quality in the image. The cartoonist is depicted as if he is returning Enid's gaze, and the light-green background looks like a spotlight is shined on him. The Dan Clowes in the last panel is drawn in a similar style as, for example, Tom, Bob Skeetes, Melorra and John Ellis. This style choice echoes the discussion in sub-section 4.1.2. about how drawing style indicates focalization. After seeing that her fantasy does not match reality, Enid's disappointment transforms the cartoonist into a caricature-like figure, just like her (and Rebecca's) view on most of the minor characters renders them similarly unappealing. The other images of the scene, while not showing Enid's consciousness as clearly, do indicate a sense of a subjective experience. The images do not show any close-ups of Enid's face, a technique which can express Enid's conscious attempts to blend into the background. In fact, the seemingly external viewpoint can be interpreted as a character-bound view representing Enid's evasive frame of mind.

In conclusion, the indications of focalization working on the level of text and image interaction can create smooth fusions, but also sudden changes in point of view. Shared points of view allow events to be represented as a shared experience of two or more characters. Shared sentiments can be indicated by maintaining a complementary relationship between textual and visual information related to the characters. Some text and image combinations indicate multiple perspectives, which enable the reader to have more freedom in choosing whose perspective they regard as the primary point of view. These multiple perspectives are found in embedded narratives, where they are able to coexist in the same narrative space. Shifts in

focalization are also dependent on text and image interaction. They also focus on the relationship between panels, as a sudden change in focalization requires a preceding neutral background to be noticed. Shifts in focalization can introduce external, slightly meta-fictional perspectives or more internal, character-bound experiences.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

I analyzed the indications of focalization in *Ghost World* by looking at how they manifested, firstly, with the use of a specific color scheme and drawing style, and secondly, with the varied types of text and image interaction. I found that the color scheme of *Ghost World* showed indications of focalization related to the theme of the novel: detachment and uncertainty. The color scheme was maintained throughout the graphic novel, but I found a surprising contrast to it from the front and back cover of the graphic novel. The images outside the core content presented Enid and Rebecca and their surroundings with more natural-looking colors than the black-white-green color scheme in the novel. The black-white-green color scheme appeared to be an indication of Enid and Rebecca's view of the world around them. The differences between the color schemes underlined the focalized view of the people and places depicted in the narrative. The front and back cover indicated a heightened level of reader-involvement (Mikkonen 2012: 76) by showing Enid and Rebecca looking straight at the reader. This technique along with the depiction of characters and places which are clearly visually connected to the actual narrative shows how the covers of a graphic novel can be part of the narrative whole. I would argue that the analysis of the color scheme highlighted the notion that the images in the covers of comics books are more closely connected to the narrative content than, for example, the cover illustrations in books which consist of a monomodal written narrative.

The drawing style had a strong impact on the characters of the story. The visual appearance of Enid seemed to set her apart from Rebecca and from the other characters in the story as well. The eye-catching details in Enid's appearance seemed to create a viewing pattern in the panels, which guided the reader to view other objects and characters in the panel in relationship to Enid. In a sense, Enid was both the center of attention, a visual focalized, and a point from which elements are viewed, a focalizer, in these panels (Bal 2009: 149).

Although Enid is a more prominent character in the story, she and Rebecca can often be viewed as a unit. Their shared attitude and opinions become evident, for example,

in the way the minor characters of the story are depicted. The drawing style attached to characters such as John Ellis, Enid's provocative "friend", Bob Skeetes, the oddball offering psychic services and Melorra, Enid and Rebecca's overachieving schoolmate are all drawn in a caricature-like style. Their exaggerated expressions and facial features render them as unappealing and strange figures in Enid and Rebecca's eyes. Enid and Rebecca are drawn in a more clear and simplified style, which seems to increase reader-identification, an aspect of character design McCloud assigns to simplified characters in comics (1993: 44). Josh is a rare type of minor character, as he is depicted in a drawing style similar to Enid and Rebecca's. This echoes the romantic emotions and general positive attitude both Enid and Rebecca project onto Josh. The visual style attached to the minor characters portrays Enid and Rebecca as focalizers, as it is their shared perspective which seems to have a strong influence over the appearance of the other characters.

Text and image interaction in the novel created indications of focalization, which were both complex and flexible. I first looked at how focalization created shared points of view and multiple perspectives. The notion of Enid and Rebecca's shared attitudes was already apparent in the discussion of color scheme and drawing style, and it culminated in the examples of shared points of view created through text and image interaction. It appeared that the fusion of optical perspectivation combined with an interdependent relationship (McCloud 1993: 153) between text and image was responsible for creating a fusion of Enid and Rebecca's points of view. The indications of focalization working on the level of text and image interaction seemed to realize the girls' shared world views in a subtle way.

Multiple perspectives were found in the example of an embedded narrative (figure 9). The scene where Enid is talking on the phone with Rebecca shifts into Enid's narration of her encounter with Melorra in the diner. Embedded in Enid's discussion with Melorra is Enid's story of her first sexual encounter. These stories within stories introduced different characters as possible focalizers, as they all could be interpreted as the mental processors of Enid's story. The illustrations accompanying Enid's narration can, in principle, be viewed as the mental visualizations of Enid, Rebecca

or Melorra, or perhaps as a fusion of all of their visualizations. These multiple perspectives brought about the notion of flexible focalization, where a sense of subjectivity is created without enforcing strict rules on the order of reading or interpretation of the focalizer's identity. The flexibility of focalization in multiple perspectives gives the reader the freedom of choosing whose perspective to adopt.

Shifts in focalization relied on the interconnectivity, or iconic solidarity (Groensteen 2007: 13), of panels and changes in text and image interaction to indicate a sudden change in focalization. My first example (figure 10) introduced a strikingly external perspective, which showed the girls in a less than favorable light. With the help of framing and text and image juxtaposition, Enid's comment, "GOD, LOOK AT THESE STUPID CUNTS!", directed towards the girls in the magazine changes into a reference to Enid and Rebecca. This type of shift drew attention to the act of narration and to the possible existence of a narrator in the novel. Another type of shift was discussed with figure 11, where the change from a dialogue-heavy text and image interaction changed into an image-oriented narrative. The shift indicated a subjective view, where Enid is the focalizer. Her consciousness is represented, firstly, with an idealized image of the cartoonist Dan Clowes, and secondly, by the exaggerated caricature-like rendition of how Enid thinks the cartoonist looks like in real life. The images in these scene also indicate Enid's evasive style by not showing close-ups of her face and portraying her as trying to blend in the background.

The theoretical background gave useful analytical tools for approaching the graphic narrative. Comics research directed my attention towards the medium-specific elements graphic narratives employ in telling stories. Focusing on specific narrative elements, i.e. the color scheme, drawing style and text and image interaction seemed to bring forth good examples of indications of focalization. The concepts from narratology gave me tools to analyze the different aspects of subjective filtering, as terms such as focalizer, focalized and neutral background helped to identify the sources and directions of focalization.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on finding indications of focalization in a graphic narrative. The analysis of *Ghost World* showed that graphic narratives have subtle yet complex ways of indicating focalization. The indications of focalization found with the analysis of the color scheme, drawing style and text and image interaction helped to show how focalization can highlight a key narrative aspect of graphic narratives, i.e. their openness to interpretation. I also found that a broad and flexible use of the concept of focalization is well suited for the study of graphic narratives, as it emphasizes the medium's aforementioned openness to interpretation and the relative freedom readers of comics have in choosing the order of reading.

Another one of my findings was that the visual design and illustrations of a graphic novel's book covers can be closely related to the novel's narrative. It might seem unorthodox to include a work's front and back cover in the analysis focusing on its narrative content, but comics as a visual medium invite readers to look at and take into account all the visual information that there is. The images in the covers of comic books give information to the reader about the characters and places in the story and create a background for the narrative before the actual "telling of the story" begins.

One could argue that the structure of *Ghost World* is not very experimental, because the page and panel layouts, text and image compositions, are, on the whole, fairly conventional and they follow a similar pattern throughout the novel. A fairly unified style can mean that indications of focalization are not easily distinguished in the graphic narrative. Nevertheless, the subtle indications of focalization in the color scheme, drawing style and text and image interaction were important in creating the sense of subjectivity in *Ghost World*. Comics are a visual medium and they tell stories in such an immediate way that the rich narrative techniques employed in the medium can be easily overlooked. A seemingly simple thing such as the visual appearance of a speech balloon's tail can create a sense of space and perspective.

There were some questions raised by Bal, Mikkonen, Horstkotte and Pedri which they hoped the study of visual and graphic narratives could answer. The question of how to differentiate between the narrator and the focalizer was not explored in the present study as thoroughly as the question of how different forms of focalization are encoded in graphic narratives. The analysis of *Ghost World* showed that multiple and shared perspectives are forms of focalization which graphic narratives seem to indicate inherently. The present study also showed how narrative elements such as color scheme and drawing style can indicate focalizers and focalized objects in a graphic narrative. I found that including optical perspective as an aspect of focalization is useful in the context of graphic narratives, although it should not be thought of as the only indication of a perspective. All these considered, I believe that my analysis contributed more to the study of other visual and graphic narratives than that of literary narratives.

It is possible that other graphic novels or shorter pieces of comic art can offer more relevant material for the discussion of the differences between “who sees” and “who speaks”. In general, future research on graphic narratives could benefit from the use of other, more experimental graphic narratives as material. Comics artists who push the limits of the medium and utilize the narrative techniques of comics in different imaginative ways undoubtedly offer a good source for further narratological studies. The occurrences of shared and multiple perspectives are an interesting example of the multimodal nature of comics. The idea of multiple and shared perspectives could perhaps be utilized in studying the indications of multiple perspectives in multimodal texts on the Internet, where multiple users participate in creating wikis, i.e. collaborative databases, and other joint efforts.

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