



INTRODUCTION



MY OLD PAL *MATT FEAZELL* CALLED THE OTHER DAY.

SO, SCOTT, WHAT'S YOUR NEXT PROJECT GOING TO BE NOW THAT YOU'VE FINISHED "*ZOT*"?



WELL, IT'S A BIT HARD TO *DESCRIBE*, MATT. IT'S SORT OF A *COMIC BOOK* ABOUT *COMICS*!

YOU MEAN LIKE A *HISTORY*?



NOT *EXACTLY*, NO... ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME HISTORY *IN* IT... IT'S MORE AN EXAMINATION OF THE *ART-FORM* OF COMICS, WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF, HOW IT WORKS.



YOU KNOW, HOW DO WE *DEFINE* COMICS, WHAT ARE THE *BASIC ELEMENTS* OF COMICS, HOW DOES THE MIND *PROCESS* THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS--THAT SORT OF THING.



I HAVE A CHAPTER ON *CLOSURE*--ALL ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS *BETWEEN* THE PANELS, THERE'S ONE ON HOW *TIME* FLOWS THROUGH COMICS, ANOTHER ON THE INTERACTION OF *WORDS* AND *PICTURES* AND *STORYTELLING*.



I EVEN PUT TOGETHER A NEW *COMPREHENSIVE THEORY* OF THE *CREATIVE PROCESS* AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR COMICS AND FOR *ART IN GENERAL*!!



OH.



AREN'T YOU KIND OF *YOUNG* TO BE DOING THAT SORT OF THING?



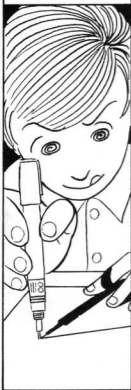
UNDERSTANDING COMICS

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.



IN LESS THAN A YEAR, I BECAME **TOTALLY OBSESSED** WITH COMICS! I DECIDED TO BECOME A COMICS ARTIST IN 10th GRADE AND BEGAN TO **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!**



I FELT THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING **LURKING** IN COMICS... SOMETHING THAT HAD **NEVER BEEN DONE.**

SOME KIND OF **HIDDEN POWER!**



BUT WHENEVER I TRIED TO **EXPLAIN** MY FEELING, I FAILED **MISERABLY.**

COMIC BOOKS?! HA!
HA!

BUT IT--
BUT IT'S--
BUH...



SURE, I REALIZED THAT COMIC BOOKS WERE USUALLY **CRUDE, POORLY-DRAWN, SEMILITERATE, CHEAP, DISPOSABLE KIDDIE FARE--**

--BUT--

THEY DON'T **HAVE** TO BE!



THE **PROBLEM** WAS THAT FOR MOST PEOPLE, THAT WAS WHAT "COMIC BOOK" **MEANT!**

DON'T GIMME THAT **COMIC BOOK TALK, BARNEY!**



IF PEOPLE FAILED TO **UNDERSTAND** COMICS, IT WAS BECAUSE THEY DEFINED WHAT COMICS COULD BE **TOO NARROWLY!**

A **PROPER DEFINITION,** IF WE COULD **FIND** ONE, MIGHT GIVE **LIE** TO THE STEREOTYPES--

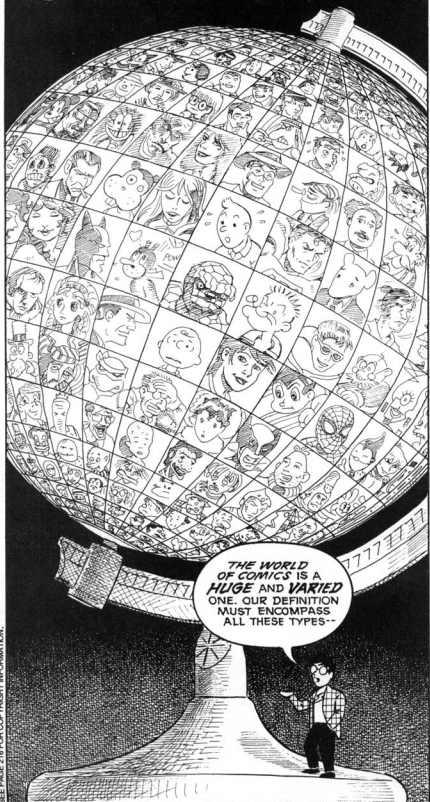
--AND SHOW THAT THE **POTENTIAL** OF COMICS IS **LIMITLESS** AND **EXCITING!**



THIS IS WHERE OUR **JOURNEY BEGINS.**



SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



THE WORLD OF COMICS IS A HUGE AND VARIED ONE. OUR DEFINITION MUST ENCOMPASS ALL THESE TYPES--

--WHILE NOT BEING SO BROAD AS TO INCLUDE ANYTHING WHICH IS CLEARLY NOT COMICS.



"COMICS" IS THE WORD WORTH DEFINING, AS IT REFERS TO THE MEDIUM ITSELF, NOT A SPECIFIC OBJECT AS "COMIC BOOK" OR "COMIC STRIP" DO.

WE CAN ALL VISUALIZE A COMIC.



BUT WHAT--
--IS--
--COMICS?



MASTER COMICS ARTIST *WILL EISNER* USES THE TERM **SEQUENTIAL ART** WHEN DESCRIBING COMICS.

TAKEN *INDIVIDUALLY*, THE PICTURES BELOW ARE MERELY *THAT--PICTURES*.

HOWEVER, WHEN PART OF A **SEQUENCE**, EVEN A SEQUENCE OF ONLY *TWO*, THE ART OF THE **IMAGE** IS TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING MORE: **THE ART OF COMICS!**

NOTICE THAT THIS DEFINITION IS STRICTLY **NEUTRAL** ON MATTERS OF **STYLE, QUALITY OR SUBJECT MATTER.**



MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN ON THE VARIOUS **SCHOOLS** OF COMIC ART; ON **PARTICULAR ARTISTS, PARTICULAR TITLES, PARTICULAR TRENDS.**



BUT TO **DEFINE** COMICS, WE MUST FIRST DO A LITTLE **AESTHETIC SURGERY** AND SEPARATE **FORM** FROM **CONTENT!**



THE ARTFORM -- THE MEDIUM -- KNOWN AS COMICS IS A VESSEL WHICH CAN HOLD ANY NUMBER OF IDEAS AND IMAGES.



THE "CONTENT" OF THOSE IMAGES AND IDEAS IS, OF COURSE, UP TO CREATORS, AND WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES.



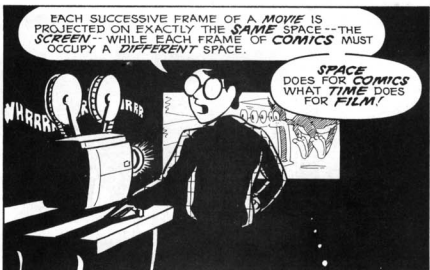
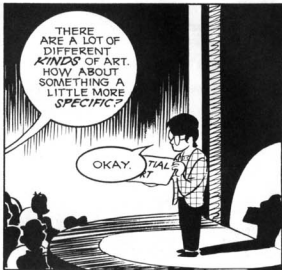
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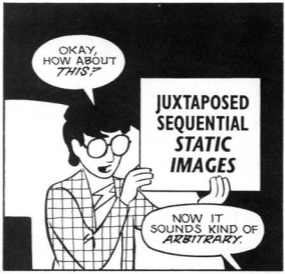
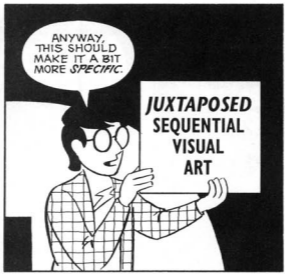
--FOR THE MESSENGER.

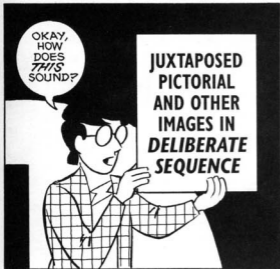


* EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

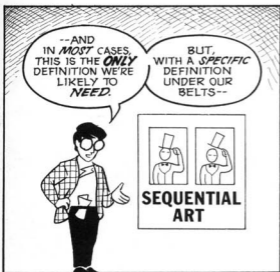


*JUXTAPOSED= ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE. GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.





adv.
com-ics (kom'iks)**n.** plural in form, used with a singular verb. **1.** Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. **2.** Superheroes in bright colorful costumes, fighting dastardly villains who want to conquer the world, in violent sensational pulse-pounding action sequences! **3.** Cute, cuddly bunnies, mice and roly-poly bears, dancing to bad fro. Hippy Hop, Hippy Hop. **4.** Corruptor of our Nation's Youth.
com-ing (kum'ing) **adj.**



ACTUALLY,
A LOT
FARTHER!

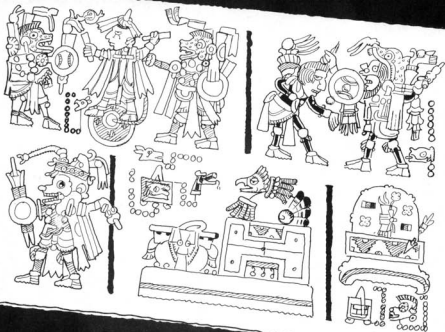
1500

1600

1700

1800

1900



HERE'S
JUST A PIECE OF THE
EPIC STORY CONTAINED
IN A PRE-COLUMBIAN
PICTURE MANUSCRIPT
"DISCOVERED" BY CORTÉS
AROUND 1519.

THIS 36-FOOT LONG,
BRIGHTLY-COLORED, PAINTED
SCREENFOLD TELLS OF THE GREAT
MILITARY AND POLITICAL HERO
8-DEER "TIGER'S-CLAW."

IS IT COMICS? YOU BET IT
IS! WE CAN EVEN READ SOME!



FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM PICTURES.



8-DEER
"TIGER'S
CLAW"

(A NAME)



11 HOUSE 12 MONKEY

(A DATE)



GOD
XIPE'S
BUNDLE

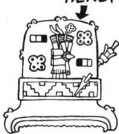
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE
NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

THEN REVERSE IT
AND STRAIGHTEN IT
OUT (THE ORIGINAL
READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT
AND ZIGZAGGED.)
AND BEGIN:

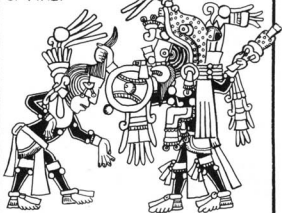
THE YEAR: 1049 AD

THE DATE: MAY 3rd

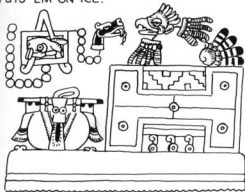
THE PLACE: HERE!



OUR HERO, 8-DEER "TIGER'S CLAW,"
CONQUERS THE PLACE AND CAPTURES THE
9-YEAR-OLD PRINCE, 4-WIND "SERPENT
OF FIRE."

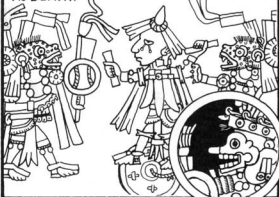


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER
BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING"
AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND
PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

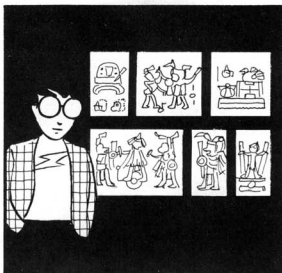
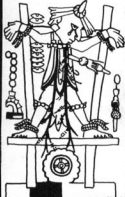


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 8-DEER AND
(PROBABLY) HIS BROTHER, DISGUISED
AS TIGERS, ENGAGE IN SACRIFICIAL
GLADIATORIAL COMBAT WITH THE PRINCE,
10-DOG, AND ANOTHER WARRIOR DISGUISED
AS DEATH.



8-DEER KILLS THE
OTHER PRINCE,
6-HOUSE "ROW OF
FLINT KNIVES"
EIGHT DAYS LATER.



* WE KNOW THE YEAR; I'M JUST GUESSING AT THE DATE REPRESENTED BY "12 MONKEY"

HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE CORTÉS BEGAN COLLECTING COMICS, FRANCE PRODUCED THE STRIKINGLY SIMILAR WORK WE CALL THE **BAYEUX TAPESTRY**.

THIS 230 FOOT LONG TAPESTRY DETAILS THE **NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND**, BEGINNING IN 1066.



TRANSLATION: THE BATTLE 1066S

BISHOP ODIN ENCOURAGES HIS SOLDIERS

FAR FROM **DISQUALIFYING** THESE AS COMICS, I THINK **MODERN** COMIC BOOK ARTISTS SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF THE **POSSIBILITIES** OF SUCH **WHOLE PAGE COMPOSITIONS** AND HOW **FEW** ARTISTS HAVE MADE **GOOD USE** OF THEM **SINCE!**

PERENNIAL EXCEPTION **WILL FISHER**



WHICH ONE IS THE **PRINCE?**

WHAT, **NO HORSES?**

FINDING COMICS BEYOND OUR OWN **MILLENNIUM** IS A BIT **TRICKIER**.

000 1100 1200



JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE?

AT FIRST GLANCE, **EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS** WOULD SEEM TO FIT OUR DEFINITION **PERFECTLY**.

BUT MUCH DEPENDS ON OUR USE OF THE WORD **"PICTORIAL."**

I'M USING IT TO INDICATE AT LEAST SOME **RESEMBLANCE** TO THE SUBJECT. BUT THESE GLYPHS REPRESENT ONLY **SOUNDS**, NOT UNLIKE OUR **ALPHABET**.

Three birds = "baü"

Wavy line = "nek"

READING LEFT TO RIGHT WE SEE THE *EVENTS* OF THE CONQUEST, IN *DELIBERATE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER* UNFOLD BEFORE OUR VERY EYES.

AS WITH THE *MEXICAN CODEX*, THERE ARE NO *PANEL BORDERS* PER SE, BUT THERE ARE CLEAR DIVISIONS OF SCENE BY *SUBJECT MATTER*.



DUKE WILLIAM REMOVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES

THUS, THEIR *REAL* DESCENDENT IS *THE WRITTEN WORD* AND NOT COMICS.

"ses tu bauu abta, hennu-nek bauu amenta"

"FOLLOW THEE, THE SOULS OF THE EAST. PRAISE THEE, THE SOULS OF THE WEST."

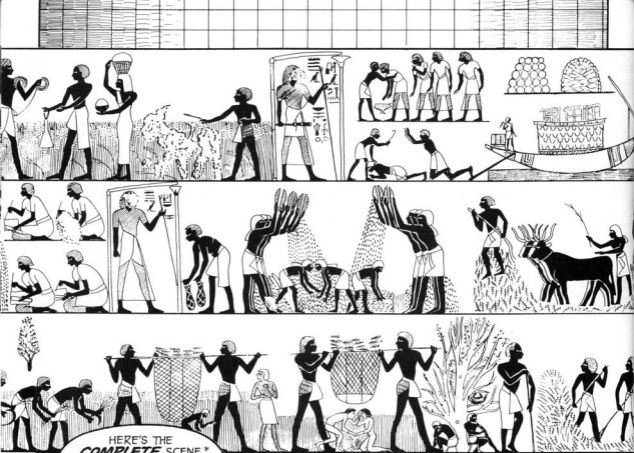
EGYPTIAN *PAINTING* IS *ANOTHER MATTER*. SOME, LIKE THIS, MAY *SEEM* TO BE CONCERNED WITH SEQUENCE, BUT ARE ACTUALLY SHOWING TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, EVENTS AND CASTS, GROUPED ONLY BY *SUBJECT*.

I HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIND *SEQUENCE* IN EGYPTIAN PAINTINGS FOR *YEARS* WHEN I BEGAN THIS BOOK AND WAS READY TO CALL IT QUILTS --

--UNTIL I DISCOVERED THAT THE BOOKS I HAD BEEN USING AS REFERENCE--

--HAD ONLY BEEN SHOWING ME *PART* OF THE PICTURE!

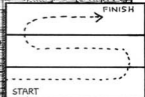




HERE'S THE **COMPLETE** SCENE* PAINTED OVER **THIRTY-TWO CENTURIES** AGO FOR THE TOMB OF "MENNA," AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SCRIBE.

AS WOULD BE DONE 2,700 YEARS LATER IN MEXICO, THE EGYPTIANS READ THEIR COMICS **ZIG-ZAG**.

GOING UP THIS TIME!



16 00

14 00

1300 B.C.

12 00

* MORE *NEARLY* COMPLETE, ANYWAY.

STARTING AT THE **LOWER LEFT**, WE SEE THREE WORKERS REAPING WHEAT WITH THEIR SICKLES--



-- THEN CARRYING IT IN **BASKETS** TO A **THRESHING** LOCATION. (IN THE BACKGROUND TWO GIRLS FIGHT OVER BITS OF WHEAT LEFT BEHIND, AS TWO WORKERS SIT UNDER A TREE, ONE SLEEPING, ONE PLAYING THE **FLUTE!**)



PAINTING TRACED FOR BLACK AND WHITE REPRODUCTION.

THE SHEAVES ARE THEN **RAKED OUT** INTO A **THICK CARPET OF WHEAT**.



THEN OXEN TREAD **KERNELS** OUT OF THE HUSKS.



NEXT, PEASANTS SEPARATE THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF.



OLD MENNA HIMSELF LOOKS ON -- *



-- AS LOYAL SCRIBES RECORD THE YIELD ON THEIR TABLETS.



NOW AN OFFICIAL USES A MEASURING ROPE TO **SURVEY THE LAND** AND DECIDE HOW MUCH WHEAT IS OWED IN **TAXES**.



AND AS MENNA WATCHES, FARMERS **LATE** IN PAYING THEIR TAXES ARE **BEATEN**.



I'LL GLADLY ADMIT THAT I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE OR WHEN COMICS ORIGINATED. LET OTHERS WRESTLE WITH THAT ONE.



?B.C.

?A.D.

I'VE ONLY SCRATCHED THE **SURFACE** IN THIS CHAPTER... **TRAJAN'S COLUMN, GREEK PAINTING, JAPANESE SCROLLS...** ALL THESE HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED AND ALL SHOULD BE EXPLORED.



BUT THERE IS **ONE** EVENT WHICH LOOMS AS LARGE IN **COMICS** HISTORY AS IT DOES IN THE HISTORY OF THE **WRITTEN WORD**.



THE **INVENTION OF PRINTING**.



*FACE GOUGED OUT BY FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LEADERS



POPULAR TASTES
HAVEN'T CHANGED
MUCH IN *FIVE*
CENTURIES. CHECK
OUT "THE TORTURES
OF SAINT ERASMUS,"
CIRCA 1460.
WORD HAS IT THIS
GUY WAS A VERY
POPULAR CHARACTER.



THE SOPHISTICATION OF
THE PICTURE-STORY DID GROW,
HOWEVER, REACHING GREAT
HEIGHTS IN THE NIMBLE HANDS OF
WILLIAM HOGARTH.

HERE IS
A TINY PIECE (ABOUT
ONE TWENTIETH) OF THE
SECOND PLATE FROM HOGARTH'S
SIX-PLATE PICTURE-STORY
"A HARLOT'S PROGRESS,"
PUBLISHED IN 1731.

DESPITE THE
LOW "PANEL-COUNT,"
THESE LUSH, RENDERED
PICTURES TELL A STORY
RICH IN DETAIL AND
MOTIVATED BY STRONG
SOCIAL CONCERNS.

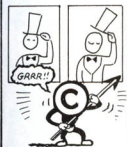
* MAYBE I SHOULDN'T SAY "INVENT,"
EUROPEANS WERE A BIT LATE IN
DISCOVERING PRINTING.

HOGARTH'S STORIES WERE FIRST EXHIBITED AS A SERIES OF *PAINTINGS* AND LATER SOLD AS A PORTFOLIO OF *ENGRAVINGS*.

BOTH THE PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS WERE DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED *SIDE-BY-SIDE* -- *IN SEQUENCE!*



"*A HARLOT'S PROGRESS*" AND ITS SEQUEL "*A RAKE'S PROGRESS*" PROVED SO POPULAR, NEW *COPYRIGHT LAWS* WERE CREATED TO PROTECT THIS NEW FORM.



THE FATHER OF THE *MODERN* COMIC IN MANY WAYS IS *RUDOLPHE TÖPFFER*, WHOSE LIGHT SATIRIC PICTURE STORIES, STARTING IN THE MID-1800'S, EMPLOYED *CARTOONING* AND *PANEL BORDERS*, AND FEATURED THE FIRST INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATION OF *WORDS* AND *PICTURES* SEEN IN EUROPE.



(TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE.)

UNFORTUNATELY, TÖPFFER HIMSELF FAILED TO GRASP AT FIRST THE FULL POTENTIAL OF HIS INVENTION, SEEING IT AS A MERE *DIVERSION*, A SIMPLE *HOBBY*...

"IF FOR THE FUTURE, HE [TÖPFFER] WOULD CHOOSE A LESS FRIVOLOUS SUBJECT AND RESTRICT HIMSELF A LITTLE, HE WOULD PRODUCE THINGS BEYOND ALL CONCEPTION."

-Goethe



EVEN SO, TÖPFFER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE *UNDERSTANDING* OF COMICS IS CONSIDERABLE, IF ONLY FOR HIS REALIZATION THAT HE WHO WAS NEITHER ARTIST NOR WRITER--

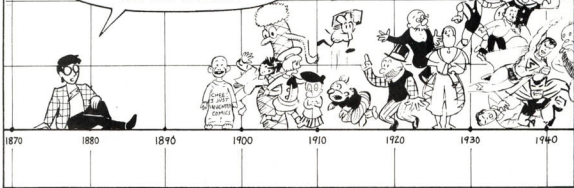


-- HAD CREATED AND MASTERED A FORM WHICH WAS AT ONCE *BOTH* AND *NEITHER*.

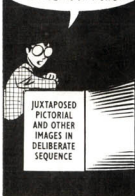


A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

BRITISH CARICATURE MAGAZINES KEPT THE TRADITIONS ALIVE AND AS THE 20TH CENTURY DREW NEAR, THE COMICS WE CALL COMICS BEGAN TO APPEAR AND EVENTUALLY TO THRIVE IN A STEADY STREAM OF WAKING DREAMS THAT HAS YET TO ABATE.

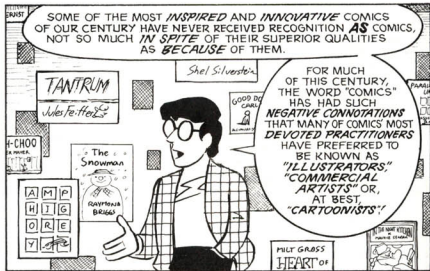


BUT EVEN IN **THIS** CENTURY, OUR DEFINITION CAN HELP TO ILLUMINATE THE WORKS OF SOME UNSUNG HEROES.



JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

SOME OF THE MOST *INSPIRED* AND *INNOVATIVE* COMICS OF OUR CENTURY HAVE NEVER RECEIVED RECOGNITION **AS** COMICS, NOT SO MUCH *IN SPITE* OF THEIR SUPERIOR QUALITIES **AS** *BECAUSE* OF THEM.

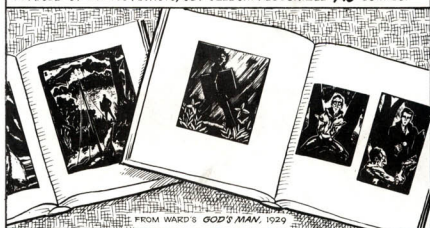


FOR MUCH OF THIS CENTURY, THE WORD "COMICS" HAS HAD SUCH **NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS** THAT MANY OF COMICS' MOST **DEVOTED PRACTITIONERS** HAVE PREFERRED TO BE KNOWN AS "**ILLUSTRATORS**," "**COMMERCIAL ARTISTS**" OR, AT BEST, "**CARTOONISTS**!"

AND SO, COMICS' LOW SELF-ESTEEM IS **SELF-PERPETUATING!** THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE NECESSARY TO **COUNTERACT** COMICS' **NEGATIVE IMAGE** IS **OBSCURED BY** THAT **NEGATIVITY**.



WOODCUT ARTIST **LYND WARD** IS ONE SUCH **MISSING LINK**. WARD'S SILENT "**WOODCUT NOVELS**" ARE POWERFUL MODERN FABLES, NOW **PRaised** BY COMICS ARTISTS, BUT **SELDOM** RECOGNIZED **AS** COMICS.



FROM WARD'S *GOD'S MAN*, 1929



ARTISTS LIKE WARD AND BELGIAN **FRAN'S MASEREEL** SAID MUCH THROUGH THEIR WOODCUTS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF COMICS, BUT FEW IN THE COMICS COMMUNITY OF THE DAY COULD *GET THE MESSAGE*.

THEIR *DEFINITION* OF COMICS, *THEN AS NOW*, WAS SIMPLY TOO *NARROW* TO INCLUDE SUCH WORK.



FROM FRANK MASEREEL'S *PASSIONATE JOURNEY*, 1919.

QUITE A *DIFFERENT* CASE IS MAX ERNST'S SURREAL "*COLLAGE NOVEL*," *A WEEK OF KINDNESS*.



THIS 182 PLATE SEQUENCE OF COLLAGES IS WIDELY CONSIDERED A *MASTERPIECE* OF 20TH CENTURY ART, BUT NO ART HISTORY TEACHER WOULD *DREAM* OF CALLING IT "*COMICS*"!

YET, DESPITE THE LACK OF A *CONVENTIONAL STORY*, THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE CENTRAL ROLE WHICH *SEQUENCE* PLAYS IN THE WORK. ERNST DOESN'T WANT YOU TO *BROWSE* THE THING, HE WANTS YOU TO *READ* IT!



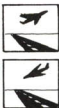
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE *PHOTOGRAPHY* FROM OUR DEFINITION, THEN HALF OF *AMERICA* HAS BEEN IN COMICS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.



IN *SOME* COUNTRIES, PHOTO-COMICS ARE, IN FACT, QUITE *POPULAR*.



MEANWHILE, *PICTURES IN SEQUENCE* ARE FINALLY BEING RECOGNIZED AS THE EXCELLENT *COMMUNICATION TOOL* THAT THEY ARE, BUT *STILL* NOBODY REFERS TO THEM AS *COMICS*! '*DIAGRAMS*' SOUNDS MORE *DIGNIFIED*, I SUPPOSE.



FROM *STAINED GLASS WINDOWS* SHOWING BIBLICAL SCENES IN ORDER TO *MONET'S SERIES PAINTINGS*, TO YOUR *CAR OWNER'S MANUAL*, COMICS TURN UP ALL OVER WHEN *SEQUENTIAL ART* IS EMPLOYED AS A DEFINITION.

com-ics (kom'iks)n. plural in form, used with a singular verb. **1.** Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.

FOR ALL THE DOORS THAT OUR DEFINITION *OPENS*, THERE IS ONE WHICH IT *CLOSES*.



SINGLE PANELS LIKE THIS ONE ARE OFTEN *LUMPED IN* WITH COMICS, YET THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SEQUENCE OF *ONE*!



"Mommy, why ain't I Juxtaposed?"

SUCH SINGLE PANELS MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED AS "*COMIC ART*" IN THE SENSE THAT THEY DERIVE PART OF THEIR *VISUAL VOCABULARY* FROM COMICS--



BUT I SAY THEY'RE NO MORE **COMICS** THAN THIS STILL OF **HUMPHREY BOGART** IS **FILM!**



HI, BOGEY.

THEY ARE **CARTOONS**, AS AM I, AND THERE IS A **LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP** BETWEEN COMICS AND CARTOONS.



-- **BUT THEY ARE NOT THE SAME THING!** ONE IS AN APPROACH TO **PICTURE-MAKING**-- A **STYLE**, IF YOU LIKE--WHILE THE OTHER IS A **MEDIUM** WHICH OFTEN **EMPLOYS** THAT APPROACH.



MORE ON THIS LATER.

THIS SAME **SINGLE PANEL** MIGHT ALSO BE LABELLED COMICS FOR ITS **JUXTAPOSITION** OF **WORDS** AND PICTURES.



"Mommy, why ain't Juxtaposed?"

A GREAT MAJORITY OF MODERN COMICS **DO** FEATURE WORDS AND PICTURES IN COMBINATION AND IT'S A SUBJECT WORTHY OF STUDY, BUT WHEN USED AS A **DEFINITION** FOR COMICS, I'VE FOUND IT TO BE A LITTLE TOO **RESTRICTIVE** FOR MY TASTE.



OF COURSE, IF ANYONE WANTS TO WRITE A BOOK TAKING THE **OPPOSITE** VIEW, YOU CAN BET I'LL BE THE FIRST IN LINE TO **BUY** A COPY!



IF COMICS' **SPECTACULARLY VARIED PAST** IS ANY INDICATION, COMICS' **FUTURE** WILL BE VIRTUALLY **IMPOSSIBLE** TO PREDICT USING THE STANDARDS OF THE **PRESENT**.

BUT OUR DEFINITION CAN OFFER US SOME **CLUES**.



1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

AND **THIS TIME**, THE SECRET IS NOT IN WHAT THE DEFINITION **SAYS** BUT IN WHAT IT **DOESN'T SAY!**



DADA
 BIOGRAPHY HORROR
 ROMANCE SURREALISM
 BLANK
 VERSE
 EPIC
 POETRY
 SOCIAL
 ALLEGORY
 ADAPTATIONS
 STREAM
 OF CONSCIOUSNESS
 SATIRE

HISTORICAL
 FICTION
 FOLK TALES
 EROTICA
 MYSTERY
 RELIGIOUS
 TOPICS



FOR EXAMPLE, OUR DEFINITION SAYS NOTHING ABOUT **SUPERHEROES** OR **FUNNY ANIMALS**. NOTHING ABOUT **FANTASY/SCIENCE-FICTION** OR **READER AGE**.

NO **GENRES** ARE LISTED IN OUR DEFINITION, NO TYPES OF **SUBJECT MATTER**, NO **STYLES** OF PROSE OR POETRY.



NOTHING IS SAID ABOUT **PAPER** AND **INK**. NO **PRINTING PROCESS** IS MENTIONED. **PRINTING ITSELF** ISN'T EVEN SPECIFIED! NOTHING IS SAID ABOUT **TECHNICAL PENS** OR **BRISTOL BOARD** OR **WINDSOR & NEWTON FINEST SABLE SERIES 7 NUMBER TWO BRUSHES!**

NO **MATERIALS** ARE RULED OUT BY OUR DEFINITION. NO **TOOLS** ARE PROHIBITED.



THERE IS NO MENTION OF **BLACK LINES** AND **FLAT COLORED INK**. NO CALLS FOR **EXAGGERATED ANATOMY** OR FOR **REPRESENTATIONAL ART** OF ANY KIND.

NO **SCHOOLS OF ART** ARE BANISHED BY OUR DEFINITION, NO **PHILOSOPHIES**, NO **MOVEMENTS**, NO **WAYS OF SEEING** ARE OUT OF BOUNDS!

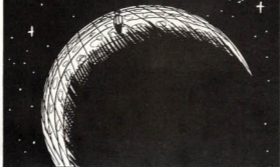


THOSE OF YOU WHO **MAKE** COMICS FOR A LIVING -- OR WOULD **LIKE** TO, SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY KNOW THAT KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE **ADVANCES** IN TODAY'S COMICS IS A **FULL-TIME JOB**.

THERE ARE SO MANY COMICS IN PRINT TODAY THAT IT WOULD TAKE AN **ARMY** OF READERS TO STUDY THEM ALL.



HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY TRY TO **UNDERSTAND** THE WORLD OF COMICS AROUND US, A **PART** OF THAT WORLD WILL ALWAYS LIE IN SHADOW -- A **MYSTERY**.



I'LL DO MY **BEST** IN THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS TO **SHED LIGHT** ON THAT UNSEEN SIDE, BUT AS WE FOCUS ON THE WORLD OF COMICS, **AS IT IS**, IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND AT **ALL** TIMES THAT THIS WORLD IS ONLY **ONE** --



--OF MANY **POSSIBLE** WORLDS!

OUR ATTEMPTS TO **DEFINE** COMICS ARE AN **ON-GOING PROCESS** WHICH WON'T END ANYTIME SOON.



A **NEW** GENERATION WILL NO DOUBT **REJECT** WHATEVER THIS ONE FINALLY DECIDES TO ACCEPT AND TRY ONCE MORE TO **RE-INVENT** COMICS.



AND SO THEY SHOULD.



HERE'S TO THE **GREAT DEBATE!**



CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

HERE'S A PAINTING BY MAGRITTE CALLED "THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES."



THE INSCRIPTION IS IN FRENCH. TRANSLATED, IT MEANS "THIS IS NOT A PIPE."



AND **INDEED** THIS IS **NOT** A PIPE.

THIS IS A **PAINTING** OF A PIPE.



RIGHT?



WELL, ACTUALLY, THAT'S **WRONG**. THIS IS **NOT** A PAINTING OF A PIPE, THIS IS A **DRAWING** OF A PAINTING OF A PIPE.



NOPE. WRONG AGAIN. IT'S A **PRINTED COPY** OF A **DRAWING** OF A PAINTING OF A PIPE.



TEN COPIES, ACTUALLY.

SIX, IF YOU FOLD THE PAGES BACK.



DO YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING?



IF YOU **DO**, HAVE YOUR **EARS** CHECKED, BECAUSE NO ONE SAID A WORD.





THIS IS NOT A MAN.



THESE ARE NOT IDEAS.



THIS IS NOT A COUNTRY.



THIS IS NOT A LEAF



THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT MUSIC.



THIS IS NOT SOUND.



THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



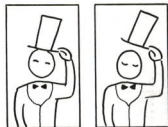
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



THIS IS NOT A COMPANY.



THIS IS NOT A FACE.



THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE MOMENTS.

THIS IS PAPER

NOW, THE WORD **ICON** MEANS MANY THINGS.

THIS IS PAPER



FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS CHAPTER, I'M USING THE WORD "**ICON**" TO MEAN ANY IMAGE USED TO REPRESENT A PERSON, PLACE, THING OR **IDEA**.

ICON

THAT'S A BIT BROADER THAN THE DEFINITION IN MY DICTIONARY, BUT IT'S THE CLOSEST THING TO WHAT I NEED HERE.

"**SYMBOL**" IS A BIT TOO **LOADED** FOR ME.



THE SORTS OF IMAGES WE USUALLY **CALL** SYMBOLS ARE ONE **CATEGORY** OF **ICON**, HOWEVER.



THESE ARE THE IMAGES WE USE TO REPRESENT **CONCEPTS**, **IDEAS** AND **PHILOSOPHIES**.



THEN THERE ARE THE **ICONS** OF **LANGUAGE**, **SCIENCE** AND **COMMUNICATION**.

A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
?	:	!	*
田	木	雨	石
+	=	×	÷
\$	%	©	¢
♫	♪	♪	🎵
☞	▲	☰	∞
Ω	Φ	↔	ℝ
☐	☁	☝	☞

ICONS OF THE **PRACTICAL** REALM.



AND FINALLY, THE **ICONS** WE CALL **PICTURES**: IMAGES DESIGNED TO ACTUALLY **RESEMBLE** THEIR SUBJECTS.



BUT AS **RESEMBLANCE** VARIES, SO DOES THE **LEVEL** OF **ICONIC** CONTENT.

OR TO PUT IT SOMEWHAT **CLUMSILY**, SOME **PICTURES** ARE JUST MORE **ICONIC** THAN OTHERS.



IN THE **NON-PICTORIAL** ICONS, MEANING IS **FIXED** AND **ABSOLUTE**. THEIR APPEARANCE DOESN'T AFFECT THEIR MEANING BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT **INVISIBLE IDEAS**.



IN **PICTURES**, HOWEVER, MEANING IS **FLUID** AND **VARIABLE** ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE. THEY DIFFER FROM "**REAL-LIFE**" APPEARANCE TO VARYING **DEGREES**.



WORDS ARE TOTALLY **ABSTRACT** ICONS. THAT IS, THEY BEAR NO RESEMBLANCE AT ALL TO THE **REAL MCCOY**.

EYE



BUT IN PICTURES THE **LEVEL** OF ABSTRACTION **VARIES**. SOME, LIKE THE FACE IN THE **PREVIOUS** PANEL, SO CLOSELY RESEMBLE THEIR **REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS** AS TO ALMOST **TRICK THE EYE!**



OTHERS, LIKE YOURS TRULY, ARE QUITE A BIT **MORE ABSTRACT** AND, IN FACT, ARE VERY **MUCH UNLIKE** ANY HUMAN FACE YOU'VE EVER SEEN!



LET'S SEE IF WE CAN PUT THESE **PICTORIAL ICONS** IN SOME SORT OF ORDER.



COMMON WISDOM HOLDS THAT THE **PHOTOGRAPH** AND THE **REALISTIC** PICTURE ARE THE ICONS THAT MOST RESEMBLE THEIR **REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS**.



REALITY THIS WAY.

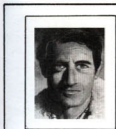
THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT SET THESE APART FROM **ACTUAL FACES**--THEY'RE **SMALLER**, **FLATTER**, **LESS DETAILED**, THEY DON'T **MOVE**. THEY **LACK COLOR**--BUT AS **PICTORIAL ICONS** GO, THEY ARE PRETTY **"REALISTIC."**





ONLY
OUTLINES
AND A HINT
OF SHADING
ARE STILL
PRESENT, BUT
WE EASILY
RECOGNIZE
THIS AS A
**HUMAN
FACE.**

SOMEWHAT
MORE ABSTRACT
IS **THIS** STYLE
OF DRAWING
FOUND IN MANY
ADVENTURE
COMICS.



WHY
THEN, IS THE
FACE ABOVE SO
ACCEPTABLE
TO OUR EYES?
WHY DOES IT
SEEM JUST AS
REAL AS THE
OTHERS?

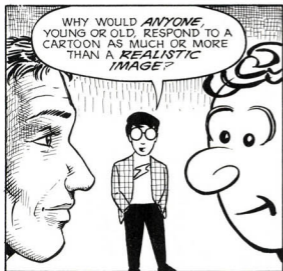
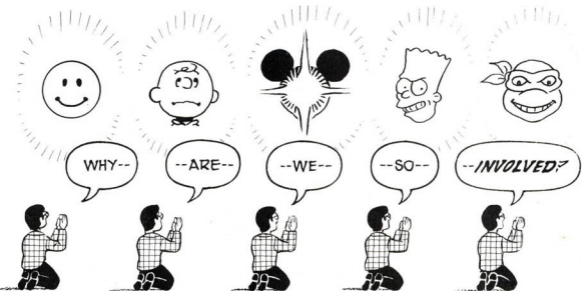
AS WE CONTINUE
TO ABSTRACT AND
SIMPLIFY OUR IMAGE,
WE ARE MOVING FURTHER
AND FURTHER FROM THE
"REAL" FACE OF THE
PHOTO.



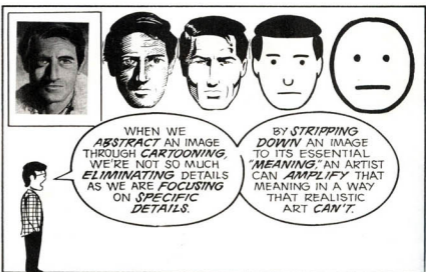
WHAT
IS THE SECRET
OF THE ICON
WE CALL--

--THE
CARTOON?





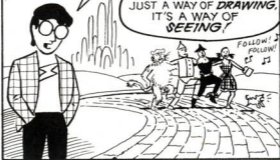
DEFINING THE CARTOON WOULD TAKE UP AS MUCH SPACE AS *DEFINING COMICS*, BUT FOR *NOW*, I'M GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF *AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION*.



FILM CRITICS WILL SOMETIMES DESCRIBE A *LIVE-ACTION* FILM AS A "CARTOON" TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRIPPED-DOWN *INTENSITY* OF A SIMPLE STORY OR VISUAL STYLE.



THOUGH THE TERM IS OFTEN USED *DISPARAGINGLY*, IT CAN BE EQUALLY WELL APPLIED TO MANY *TIME-TESTED CLASSICS*. SIMPLIFYING CHARACTERS AND IMAGES TOWARD A *PURPOSE* CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR STORYTELLING IN *ANY* MEDIUM.



THE ABILITY OF CARTOONS TO *FOCUS* OUR ATTENTION ON AN IDEA IS, I THINK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR SPECIAL POWER, BOTH IN COMICS AND IN DRAWING GENERALLY.



ONE



A FEW



THOUSANDS



MILLIONS



(NEARLY) ALL

ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO *DESCRIBE*.



BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE--WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



WHAT

ARE YOU



REALLY

SEEING?

THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS *CAPABLE* OF TAKING A *CIRCLE*, *TWO DOTS* AND A *LINE* AND TURNING THEM INTO A *FACE* IS NOTHING SHORT OF *INCREDIBLE!*



BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

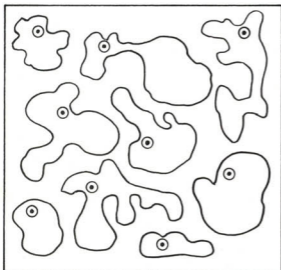


ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE **CLOSED CURVES**. BUT **OTHERWISE** CAN BE AS **WEIRD** AND **IRREGULAR** AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

LET'S SAY THE RESULTS LOOK SOMETHING LIKE **THIS**.



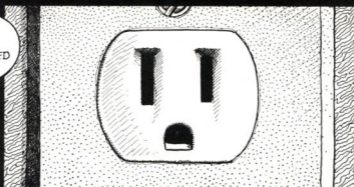
NOW-- YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY **LOOK** LIKE, EVERY SINGLE **ONE** OF THOSE SHAPES **CAN** BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



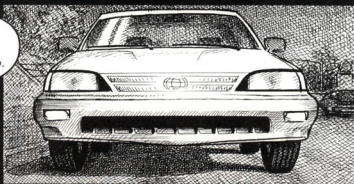
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE **THIS**--



WE HUMANS ARE A SELF-CENTERED RACE.



WE SEE
OURSELVES
IN
EVERYTHING.



WE
ASSIGN
IDENTITIES
AND EMOTIONS
WHERE NONE
EXIST.



AND WE
MAKE THE
WORLD OVER
IN OUR
IMAGE.





THINK
OF YOUR
FACE AS A
MASK.



THAT'S
WHAT IT IS,
AFTER ALL.



A MASK.



FACING
OUTWARD.



WORN FROM
THE DAY YOU
WERE BORN.



SLAVE TO
YOUR EVERY
MENTAL
COMMAND.



SEEN BY
EVERYONE
YOU MEET.

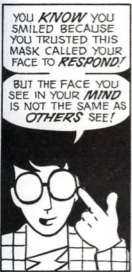


BUT
NEVER
BY *YOU.*



OPEN
ITS EYES
NOW.

JUST
THINK IT.
THE MASK
WILL
OBEY.



EACH ONE **ALSO** SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER *OWN* FACE, BUT **THIS** MIND-PICTURE IS NOT NEARLY SO VIVID; JUST A SKETCHY ARRANGEMENT... A SENSE OF SHAPE... A SENSE OF *GENERAL PLACEMENT*.



SOMETHING AS *SIMPLE* AND AS *BASIC*--



--AS A *CARTOON*.

THIS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE--



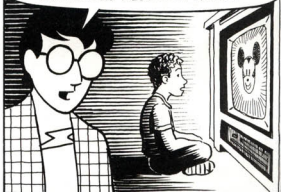
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER*.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE *CARTOON*--



--YOU SEE *YOURSELF*

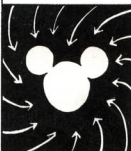
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS*, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION*, *SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY *CARTOON* CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE *CARTOON* IS A *VACUUM* INTO WHICH OUR *IDENTITY* AND *AWARENESSES* ARE *PULLED*...



...AN *EMPTY SHELL* THAT WE INHABIT WHICH *ENABLES* US TO TRAVEL IN *ANOTHER REALM*.



WE DON'T JUST *OBSERVE* THE *CARTOON*, WE *BECOME* IT!

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO *DRAW* MYSELF IN SUCH A *SIMPLE STYLE*.



WOULD YOU HAVE *LISTENED* TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE *THIS*??



I **DOUBT** IT! YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR TOO AWARE OF THE **MESSENGER** TO FULLY RECEIVE THE **MESSAGE!**



APART FROM WHAT LITTLE I TOLD YOU ABOUT MYSELF IN **CHAPTER ONE**, I'M PRACTICALLY A **BLANK SLATE!**



IT WOULD NEVER EVEN **OCCUR** TO YOU TO WONDER WHAT MY **POLITICS** ARE, OR WHAT I HAD FOR **LUNCH** OR WHERE I GOT THIS **SILLY OUTFIT!**



I'M JUST A LITTLE VOICE INSIDE YOUR **HEAD**.
A **CONCEPT**.



YOU GIVE ME LIFE BY READING THIS BOOK AND BY "**FILLING UP**" THIS VERY **ICONIC (CARTOONY) FORM**.



WHO I AM IS IRRELEVANT. I'M JUST A LITTLE PIECE OF **YOU**.



BUT IF WHO I AM MATTERS **LESS**, MAYBE WHAT I **SAY** WILL MATTER **MORE**.



THAT'S THE **THEORY**, ANYWAY.



SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY DISCUSSED **FACES**, BUT THE PHENOMENON OF **NON-VISUAL SELF-AWARENESS** CAN, TO A **LESSER DEGREE**, STILL APPLY TO OUR **WHOLE BODIES**. AFTER ALL, DO WE NEED TO **SEE** OUR HANDS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING?



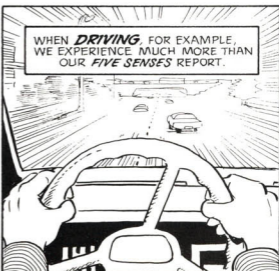
THERE'S **MORE**, TOO!



THE LATE GREAT **MARSHALL MELUHAN** OBSERVED A **SIMILAR** FORM OF **NON-VISUAL AWARENESS** WHEN PEOPLE INTERACT WITH **INANIMATE OBJECTS**.



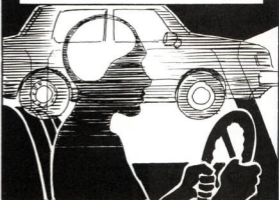
WHEN **DRIVING**, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR **FIVE SENSES** REPORT.



THE **WHOLE CAR**--NOT JUST THE PARTS WE CAN SEE, FEEL AND HEAR--IS VERY MUCH ON OUR MINDS AT ALL TIMES.



THE VEHICLE BECOMES AN **EXTENSION** OF OUR BODY. IT **ABSORBS** OUR SENSE OF **IDENTITY**. WE **BECOME** THE CAR.



IF ONE CAR **HITS** ANOTHER, THE DRIVER OF THE VEHICLE BEING **STRUCK** IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SAY:

KLUNK!

**HEY!
HE HIT
ME!!**



THAN "HE HIT MY **CAR!**"

OR "HIS **CAR** HIT MY CAR", FOR THAT MATTER.

OUR **IDENTITIES** AND **AWARENESS** ARE INVESTED IN MANY **INANIMATE OBJECTS** EVERY DAY. OUR **CLOTHES**, FOR EXAMPLE, CAN TRIGGER **NUMEROUS TRANSFORMATIONS** IN THE WAY OTHERS SEE US AND IN THE WAY WE SEE **OURSELVES**.



OUR ABILITY TO *EXTEND* OUR IDENTITIES INTO INANIMATE OBJECTS CAN CAUSE PIECES OF WOOD TO BECOME *LEGS*...



PIECES OF METAL TO BECOME *HANDS*...



PIECES OF PLASTIC TO BECOME *EARS*...



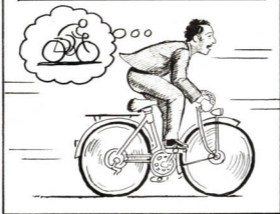
PIECES OF GLASS TO BECOME *EYES*.



AND IN *EVERY CASE*, OUR CONSTANT AWARENESS OF *SELF*--



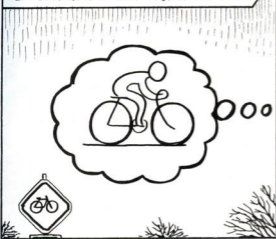
-- FLOWS *OUTWARD* TO INCLUDE THE OBJECT OF OUR *EXTENDED IDENTITY*.



AND JUST AS OUR AWARENESS OF OUR *BIOLOGICAL SELVES* ARE *SIMPLIFIED CONCEPTUALIZED IMAGES*--

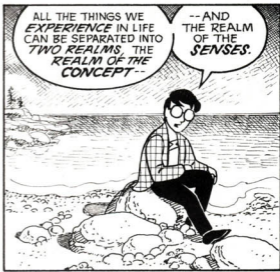


--SO TOO IS OUR AWARENESS OF *THESE* EXTENSIONS GREATLY *SIMPLIFIED*.

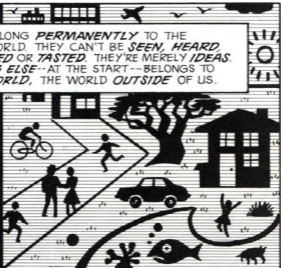


ALL THE THINGS WE *EXPERIENCE* IN LIFE CAN BE SEPARATED INTO *TWO REALMS*, THE *REALM OF THE CONCEPT*--

--AND THE *REALM OF THE SENSES*.



OUR IDENTITIES BELONG *PERMANENTLY* TO THE *CONCEPTUAL* WORLD. THEY CAN'T BE *SEEN, HEARD, SMELLED, TOUCHED* OR *TASTED*. THEY'RE MERELY *IDEAS*. AND *EVERYTHING ELSE*--AT THE START--BELONGS TO THE *SENSUAL* WORLD, THE WORLD *OUTSIDE* OF US.



GRADUALLY WE REACH *BEYOND* OURSELVES.



WE ENCOUNTER THE *SIGHT, SMELL, TOUCH, TASTE* AND *SOUND* OF OUR OWN BODIES.



AND OF THE WORLD *AROUND* US.



AND SOON WE DISCOVER THAT OBJECTS OF THE *PHYSICAL* WORLD CAN *ALSO* CROSS OVER--



--AND POSSESS IDENTITIES OF THEIR OWN.



OR, AS OUR *EXTENSIONS*--



--BEGIN TO GLOW--



--WITH THE LIFE--



--WE *LEND*
TO THEM.



BY DE-EMPHASIZING THE *APPEARANCE*
OF THE *PHYSICAL* WORLD IN FAVOR OF
THE *IDEA* OF FORM, THE CARTOON
PLACES ITSELF IN THE WORLD OF *CONCEPTS*.



THROUGH TRADITIONAL
REALISM, THE COMICS
ARTIST CAN PORTRAY
THE WORLD
WITHOUT--



--AND THROUGH
THE *CARTOON*,
THE WORLD
WITHIN.



WHEN
CARTOONS
ARE USED
THROUGHOUT
A STORY, THE
WORLD OF
THAT STORY
MAY SEEM TO
PULSE WITH
LIFE.



INANIMATE OBJECTS
MAY SEEM TO POSSESS
SEPARATE IDENTITIES
SO THAT IF ONE
JUMPED UP AND
STARTED *SINGING*
IT WOULDN'T FEEL
OUT OF PLACE.



BUT IN EMPHASIZING
THE *CONCEPTS* OF
OBJECTS OVER THEIR
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE,
MUCH HAS TO BE
OMITTED.



IF AN ARTIST
WANTS TO PORTRAY
THE BEAUTY AND
COMPLEXITY OF THE
PHYSICAL
WORLD--



--REALISM OF
SOME SORT IS
GOING TO PLAY A
PART.



WHEN DRAWING THE FACE AND FIGURE, NEARLY *ALL* COMICS ARTISTS APPLY AT LEAST *SOME* SMALL MEASURE OF CARTOONING. EVEN THE MORE REALISTIC *ADVENTURE* ARTISTS--

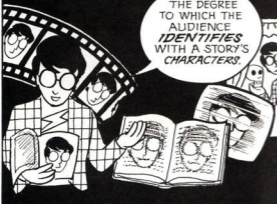


--ARE A *FAR* CRY FROM *PHOTO-REALISTS*!

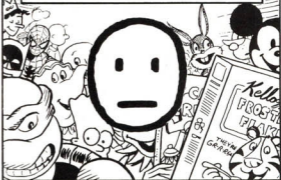


STORYTELLERS IN *ALL* MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF *AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT*--

--IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE AUDIENCE *IDENTIFIES* WITH A STORY'S CHARACTERS.



AND SINCE *VIEWER-IDENTIFICATION* IS A *SPECIALTY* OF CARTOONING, CARTOONS HAVE HISTORICALLY HELD AN *ADVANTAGE* IN *BREAKING INTO* *WORLD POPULAR CULTURE*.



ON THE OTHER HAND, NO ONE EXPECTS AUDIENCES TO IDENTIFY WITH *BRICK WALLS* OR *LANDSCAPES* AND *INDEED*, *BACKGROUNDS* TEND TO BE *SLIGHTLY* MORE *REALISTIC*.



IN *SOME* COMICS, THIS SPLIT IS FAR MORE *PROMINENT*. THE BELGIAN "*CLEAR-LINE*" STYLE OF HERGÉ'S *TINTIN* COMBINES VERY *ICONIC* CHARACTERS WITH *UNUSUALLY REALISTIC* BACKGROUNDS.



THIS COMBINATION ALLOWS READERS TO **MASK** THEMSELVES IN A CHARACTER AND SAFELY ENTER A SENSUALLY STIMULATING WORLD.



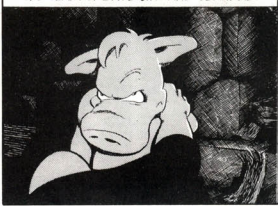
ONE SET OF LINES TO **SEE**. ANOTHER SET OF LINES TO **BE**.



IN THE WORLD OF **ANIMATION**, WHERE THE EFFECT HAPPENS TO BE A PRACTICAL **NECESSITY**, DISNEY HAS USED IT WITH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS FOR OVER **50 YEARS!**

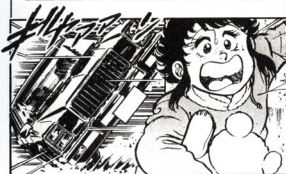
IN **EUROPE** IT CAN BE FOUND IN MANY POPULAR COMICS, FROM **ASTERIX** TO **TINTIN** TO WORKS OF **JACQUES TARDI**.

IN **AMERICAN** COMICS, THE EFFECT IS USED FAR LESS OFTEN, ALTHOUGH IT HAS CREPT UP IN THE WORKS OF ARTISTS AS DIVERSE AS **CARL BARKS**, **JAIME HERNANDEZ** AND IN THE TEAM OF **DAVE SIM** AND **GERHARD**.



CEREBUS © DAVE SIM.

IN **JAPAN**, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MASKING EFFECT WAS, FOR A TIME, VIRTUALLY A **NATIONAL STYLE!**



THANKS TO THE **SEMINAL INFLUENCE** OF COMICS CREATOR **OSAMU TEZUKA**, JAPANESE COMICS HAVE A LONG, RICH HISTORY OF ICONIC CHARACTERS



BUT, IN RECENT DECADES JAPANESE FANS ALSO DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR **FLASHY, PHOTO-REALISTIC ART**.



THE RESULTANT HYBRID STYLES HAD TREMENDOUS ICONIC *RANGE*, FROM EXTREMELY CARTOONY CHARACTERS TO *NEAR-PHOTOGRAPHIC* BACKGROUNDS.



"MONA GOES TOKYO"

BUT JAPANESE COMICS ARTISTS TOOK THE IDEA A STEP FURTHER.



SOON, SOME OF THEM REALIZED THAT THE *OBJECTIFYING POWER* OF REALISTIC ARTS COULD BE PUT TO *OTHER* USES.



FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE *MOST* CHARACTERS WERE DESIGNED *SIMPLY*, TO ASSIST IN *READER-IDENTIFICATION*.



--*OTHER* CHARACTERS WERE DRAWN MORE *REALISTIC* IN ORDER TO *OBJECTIFY* THEM, EMPHASIZING THEIR "*OTHERNESS*" FROM THE *READER*.



A PROP LIKE THIS *SWORD* MIGHT BE VERY *CARTOONY* IN *ONE* SEQUENCE--



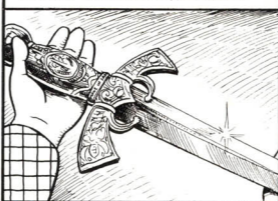
--DUE TO THE "*LIFE*" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY *CARTOON* IDENTITY!/"



BUT SUPPOSE I NOTICE SOME *MYSTERIOUS* *WRITING* CARVED ON THE *SWORD'S* *HILT*.



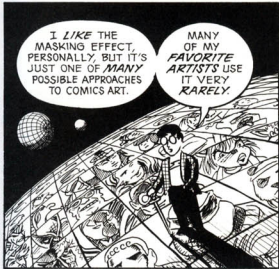
IN JAPANESE COMICS, THE *SWORD* MIGHT *NOW* BECOME VERY *REALISTIC*, NOT ONLY TO SHOW US THE *DETAILS*, BUT TO MAKE US AWARE OF THE *SWORD* AS AN *OBJECT*, SOMETHING WITH *WEIGHT*, *TEXTURE* AND *PHYSICAL* COMPLEXITY.



IN THIS AND IN *OTHER* *WAYS*, COMICS IN JAPAN HAVE EVOLVED VERY *DIFFERENTLY* FROM THOSE IN THE WEST.



WE'LL RETURN TO THESE DIFFERENCES SEVERAL TIMES DURING THIS BOOK.



I *LIKE* THE MASKING EFFECT, PERSONALLY, BUT IT'S JUST ONE OF *MANY* POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO COMICS ART.

MANY OF MY *FAVORITE* ARTISTS USE IT VERY *RARELY*.



STILL, I HOPE THE JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE ON CARTOONING HELPS DEMONSTRATE THAT ONE'S CHOICE OF STYLES CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES FAR BEYOND THE MERE "LOOK" OF A STORY.

AS I WRITE THIS, IN 1992, AMERICAN AUDIENCES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT A SIMPLE *STYLE* DOESN'T NECESSITATE SIMPLE *STORY*.

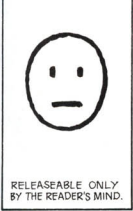


THE PLATONIC IDEAL OF THE CARTOON MAY SEEM TO OMIT MUCH OF THE *AMBIGUITY* AND *COMPLEX CHARACTERIZATION* WHICH ARE THE HALLMARKS OF *MODERN LITERATURE*, LEAVING THEM SUITABLE ONLY FOR *CHILDREN*.

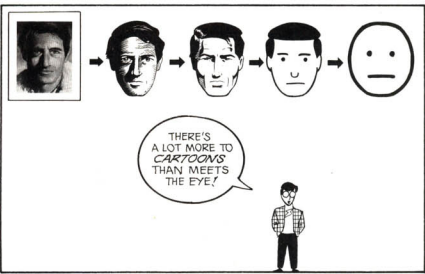
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.

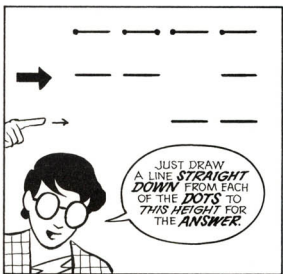
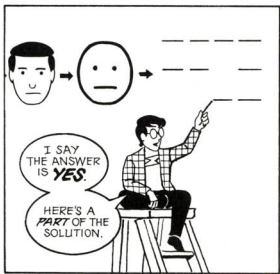
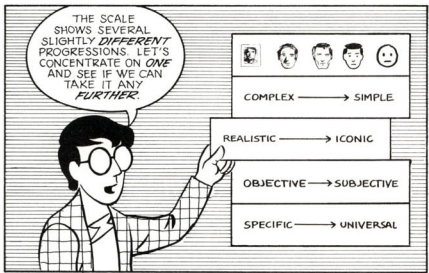
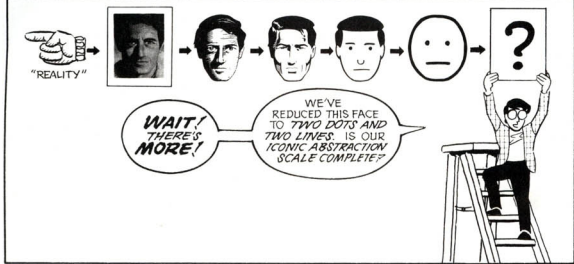


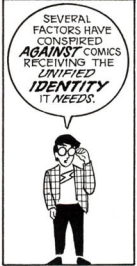
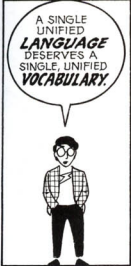
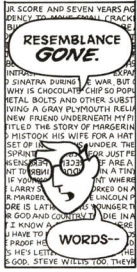
AND *LIKE* THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.



RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.





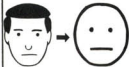


BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF "QUALITY"



"ARTIE"

"RITA"



FACE

THE ARTIST KNOWS THAT THIS MEANS MORE THAN JUST STICK-FIGURES AND CRUDE CARTOONS. HE SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF A HIGHER ART.



THE WRITER KNOWS THAT THIS MEANS MORE THAN JUST OOF! POW! BLAM! AND ONE-A-DAY GAGS. SHE SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING DEEPER.



IN MUSEUMS AND IN LIBRARIES, THE ARTIST FINDS WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR. HE STUDIES THE TECHNIQUES OF THE GREAT MASTERS OF WESTERN ART. HE PRACTICES NIGHT AND DAY.



SHE TOO FINDS WHAT SHE'S LOOKING FOR, IN THE GREAT MASTERS OF WESTERN LITERATURE. SHE READS AND WRITES CONSTANTLY. SHE SEARCHES FOR A VOICE UNIQUELY HERS.



FINALLY, THEY'RE READY. BOTH HAVE MASTERED THEIR ARTS. HIS BRUSHSTROKE IS NEARLY INVISIBLE IN ITS SUBTLETY, THE FIGURES PURE MICHAELANGELO. HER DESCRIPTIONS ARE DAZZLING. THE WORDS FLOW TOGETHER LIKE A SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET.

THEY'RE READY TO JOIN HANDS ONCE MORE AND CREATE A COMICS MASTERPIECE.



FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

*They youths
grow livery,
so gags'd
on now...*

PICTURES ARE **RECEIVED** INFORMATION. WE NEED NO FORMAL EDUCATION TO "GET THE MESSAGE." THE MESSAGE IS **INSTANTANEOUS**.



WRITING IS **PERCEIVED** INFORMATION. IT TAKES TIME AND SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE TO DECODE THE ABSTRACT SYMBOLS OF LANGUAGE.



RECEIVED

FACE

TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH.

*They you'll be
so glad
on now...*

PERCEIVED

WHEN PICTURES ARE MORE ABSTRACTED FROM "REALITY," THEY REQUIRE GREATER LEVELS OF **PERCEPTION**, MORE LIKE **WORDS**.



WHEN WORDS ARE BOLDER, MORE DIRECT, THEY REQUIRE **LOWER** LEVELS OF PERCEPTION AND ARE RECEIVED **FASTER**, MORE LIKE **PICTURES**.

OUR NEED FOR A UNIFIED **LANGUAGE** SENDS US TOWARD THE CENTER WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES ARE LIKE TWO SIDES OF **ONE COIN!**



BUT OUR NEED FOR **SOPHISTICATION** IN COMICS SEEMS TO LEAD US **OUTWARD**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES ARE MOST **SEPARATE**.



BOTH ARE **WORTHY ASPIRATIONS**. BOTH STEM FROM A LOVE OF COMICS AND A DEVOTION TO ITS FUTURE.

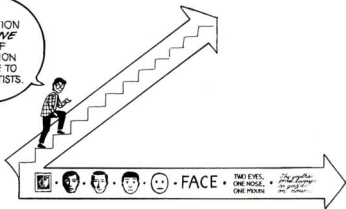
CAN THEY BE **RECONCILED?**



I SAY THE ANSWER IS **YES**, BUT SINCE THE REASONS BELONG IN A **DIFFERENT CHAPTER**, WE'LL HAVE TO COME BACK TO THIS **LATER**.



ICONIC
ABSTRACTION
IS ONLY *ONE*
FORM OF
ABSTRACTION
AVAILABLE TO
COMICS ARTISTS.



USUALLY THE WORD
"ABSTRACTION" REFERS TO THE
NON-ICONIC VARIETY, WHERE
NO ATTEMPT IS MADE TO CLING
TO RESEMBLANCE OR MEANING.



THE TYPE OF
ART WHICH OFTEN
PROMPTS THE QUESTION:
*"WHAT DOES IT
MEAN?"*

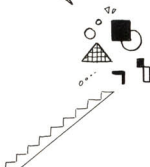


EARNING
THE REPLY
"IT *MEANS*
WHAT IT
IS!"

IN
THIS
CASE--



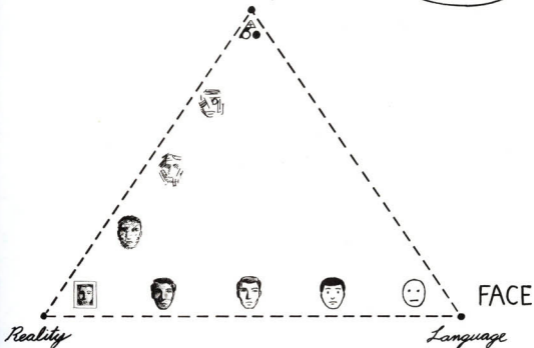
--INK
ON
PAPER.



THIS IS THE REALM OF THE ART **OBJECT**, THE **PICTURE PLANE**, WHERE SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS CAN BE **THEMSELVES** AND NOT PRETEND **OTHERWISE**.

The Picture Plane

BELOW ME, THE AREA DESCRIBED BY THESE 3 VERTICES-- "REALITY", LANGUAGE AND THE PICTURE PLANE -- REPRESENTS THE TOTAL **PICTORIAL VOCABULARY** OF COMICS OR OF ANY OF THE VISUAL ARTS.



TWO EYES,
ONE NOSE,
ONE MOUTH

MOST COMICS ART LIES NEAR THE **BOTTOM**-- THAT IS, ALONG THE **ICONIC ABSTRACTION** SIDE WHERE EVERY LINE HAS A **MEANING**.

NEAR THE LINE, BUT NOT NECESSARILY **ON** IT! FOR EVEN THE MOST **STRAIGHT-FORWARD** LITTLE CARTOON CHARACTER HAS A **'MEANINGLESS'** LINE OR TWO!

IF WE INCORPORATE LANGUAGE AND OTHER ICONS **INTO** THE CHART, WE CAN BEGIN TO BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE **MAP**--

-- OF THE **UNIVERSE CALLED COMICS.**



WATCH THAT NOSE!



MARY FLEENER at her most abstract. 2. MARISCAL's Piker. 3. DAVE MOKKEN employing one of the many styles found in his series: CAGES. 4. MARY HEMPEL's GREGORY. 5. MARK BEYER & LARRY MARDER's Banash from TALES OF THE SEANWORLD. "Resembling" nothing ever seen (hence all the way to the right), Marder's being walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STIENBERG. 8. PENNY MORAN VANHORN from THE LIBRARIAN. 9. LORENZO MATTOTTI in FIRES (© Editions Albin Michel S.A.) combines deep impressionistic lighting with iconic forms and strong, design-oriented compositions. In other words, he's a hard one to place. 10. ALINE KOMINSKY-CHUMB. 11. PETER BAGGEE's Chuckie-Boy from NEAT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KYRTTIE. 13. REA IRVIN. THE SMYTHES © Field Newspaper Syndicate. 14. STEVE WILLIS's Morly. 15. PHIL YEH's FRANK THE UNICORN. 16. JERRY MORIARTY's "Jack Survives". Based closely on real world light and shadow, but decomposed into rough shapes. Similar effects are found in nos. 8, 18, 19, 20 and 24. 17. JEFF WOKORON art for Scott Russo's JIZZ. 18. ROLF STARK's expressive RAIN. 19. SPAIN'S TRASHMAN. 20. FRANK MILLER's THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Batman © D.C. Comics. Batman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MESSMER-LEBER's Wolverine MacLairist from JOURNEY. 22. DON SAMPSON's MEGATON MAN. Beginning from a

realistic anatomical base, Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.M.'s features to the brink of abstraction. 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from SILENT INVASION. © Chwaka and Hancock. 24. RICK CEARLY. 25. PETER KUPER. 26. GARRY TRUDEAU's DOONESBURY. 27. LYNDA BARRY. 28. SAMPEI SHIRATO. 29. CHARLES BURNS's BIG BABY. 29 1/2. (Whoops) CLIFF STRETT. The character pictured here from POLLY AND HER PALS) might belong a bit lower, but Strett's art, like Fleener's often heads upward toward the wily abstract. P.A.H.P. is © Newspaper Features Syndicate, Inc. 30. SERGIO ARAGONES's GROO THE WANDERER. Simple, straightforward, but with a strong gestural quality that always reminds us of the hand that holds the pen (also true of 14, 28, 31, 41). 31. ROBERTA GREGORY's Bitchy Bitch from NAUGHTY BITS. 32. DAVID MAZZUCHELLI from BATMAN: YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MUNOZ from "Master Control, Mister Wilcox." © Munoz and Sampedo. 34. CAROL

SWAIN. 35. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRUCK. © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate. Inc. 36. JACK KIRBY's Darkseed. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's Rocco Vargas from TRITON. 39. PETER BAGGEE's Buddy Bradley from MARK COMPARE to 11. 40. SETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCET. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's Mowgli from Kingling's THE JUNGLE BOOKS. Russell's characters are as finely observed and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unparalleled sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Lately, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSKEI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI

"Wall and Cub") © Kake and Kojima. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL's ALC. Realistic to process of drawing left's hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTH. Zoro © ZoroProductions, Inc. Art © Walt Disney Productions. (Zoro created by Johnston McCuller). 48. HUGO PRATT's CORTO MALTESE © Castelman, Fina-Tourmal. 49. WILL EISNER from TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. 50. DORI SEDA. 51. R. CRUMBI swings between realistic and cartoony characters, usually staying about this high but occasionally venturing upward. 52. STEVE DITKO. 53. NORMAN SHAW. 54. VALENTINO's NORMALMAN hits a bit to the right and up from his current SHOOTAWHAWK (whose iconic mask made a bit harder to place). 55. ROY CHAKAST. 56. JOOST SWARTE's Anton Makhast. 57. ELZIE SEGAR's POPPEYE © King Features Syndicate. Inc. 58. GREGO HERRIMAN's "Ollifasa Pupp" from KRAZY KAT. © International Feature Service. Inc. 59. JIM WOODRING's FRANK. 60. NEAL ADAMS from X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. (M. Adams created by Lee & Kirby). 61. GIL KANE from ACTION COMICS © D.C. Comics. Inc. 62. MILTON CANIFF's STEVE CANYON. 63. JIM LEE. Nice. Fury appearing in X-MEN © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. 64. JOHN BYRNE. Superman © D.C. Comics. Inc. (Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster). 65. JACQUES TARDI from LE DEMON DES GLACES © Dargaud Editeur. 66. JEAN-CLAUDE MEZIERES. Laureating from the VALERIAN series. © Dargaud Editeur. 67. BILL GRIFFITH's ZIPPY THE PINHEAD. 68. JOE MATT. 68. KYLE BAKER from WHY I HATE SATURDAY. TRINA ROBBINS's

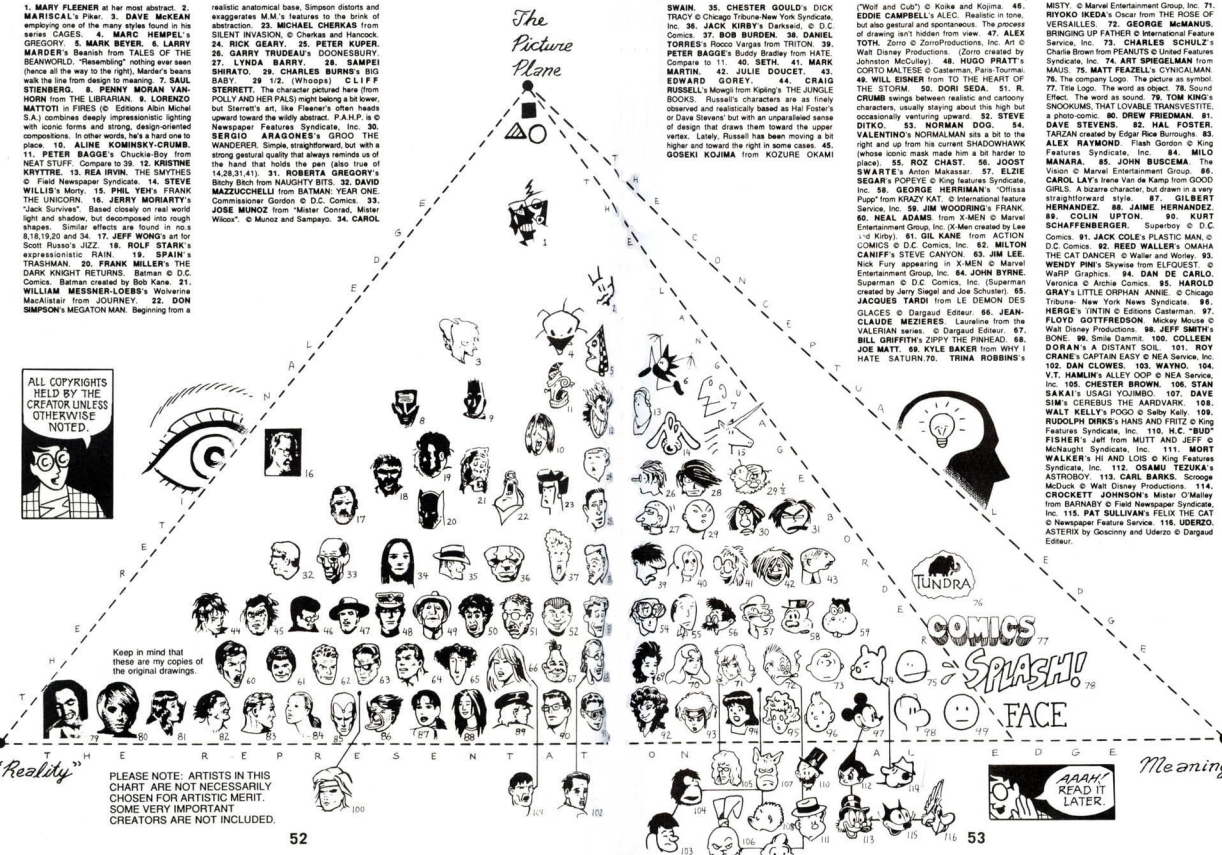
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ALL COPYRIGHTS HELD BY THE CREATOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Keep in mind that these are my copies of the original drawings.



"Reality"

PLEASE NOTE: ARTISTS IN THIS CHART ARE NOT NECESSARILY CHOSEN FOR ARTISTIC MERIT. SOME VERY IMPORTANT CREATORS ARE NOT INCLUDED.

COMICS
SPASH!
FACE

AAA!
READ IT
LATER.

Meaning

MOST OF THE PRECEDING EXAMPLES WERE PLACED ON OUR CHART BASED ON THE DRAWING STYLES USED ON *SPECIFIC* CHARACTERS.



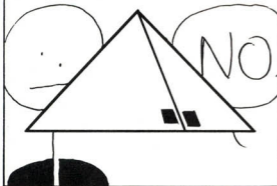
EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A *RANGE* OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY *SEVERAL* PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



SOME, LIKE MATT FEAZELL'S *CYNICALMAN*, KEEP TO ONE AREA CONSISTENTLY.



THE COMBINATION OF *EXTREMELY ICONIC* CHARACTERS AND *ENVIRONMENTS*, MIXED WITH *SIMPLE, DIRECT* LANGUAGE AND A *SOUND EFFECT* OR TWO WOULD GIVE US A SHAPE SOMETHING LIKE *THIS*:



BUT OTHERS RANGE *CONSIDERABLY* FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER.



WE'VE ALREADY DISCUSSED THE RANGE OF HERGE AND OTHERS WHO CONTRAST *ICONIC* CHARACTERS WITH *REALISTIC* BACKGROUNDS.



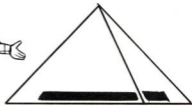
Sound on!

O.K...Let's roll!

Vision on!



HERGE STRETCHES NEARLY FROM *LEFT* TO *RIGHT*-- FROM *REALISM* TO *CARTOONING*-- BUT VENTURES VERY LITTLE INTO THE *LIPPER* WORLD OF *NON-ICONIC* ABSTRACTION.



MARY FLEENER, ON THE OTHER HAND, VARIES ONLY *SLIGHTLY* IN HER LEVEL OF *ICONIC* CONTENT, WHILE THE LEVEL OF *NON-ICONIC* ABSTRACTION GOES NEARLY FROM *TOP TO BOTTOM!*



ART © MARY FLEENER.

HEY!! COME TA THINK OF IT... WHAT ABOUT THAT WALKIN' TIME BOMB??

THAT'S RIGHT!! IF HE'S STILL LOOSE... THERE'S NO TELLIN' WHAT'LL HAPPEN!!

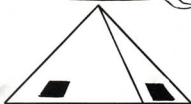


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

IN THE MID-SIXTIES, JACK KIRBY, ALONG WITH STAN LEE, STAKED OUT A *MIDDLE GROUND* OF *ICONIC FORMS* WITH A SENSE OF THE *REAL* ABOUT THEM, BOLSTERED BY A POWERFUL *DESIGN* SENSE.



TODAY, MANY AMERICAN MAINSTREAM COMICS STILL FOLLOW KIRBY'S LEAD FOR STORYTELLING, BUT THE DESIRE FOR MORE *REALISTIC* ART AND MORE ELABORATE SCRIPTS HAS PUSHED ART AND STORY *FURTHER APART* IN MANY CASES.



A FIGHT STARTED ON HIS DOORSTEP. HE PUT A STOP TO IT. FAR AS ANYONE KNOWS, ALL THE SURVIVORS ARE PRETTY MUCH OKAY.

WAY YOU TALK, NICHOLAS, FOLKS EXPECT HIM TO START NUKIN' MAMA RUSSIA ANY MOMENT.



ART: JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS (FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: CHRIS CLAREMONT.



IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES, MOST OF THE COUNTERCULTURE OF INDEPENDENT CREATORS, WORKING MOSTLY IN BLACK AND WHITE, STAYED TO THE *RIGHT* OF MAINSTREAM COMICS ART WHILE COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF WRITING STYLES.



THIS FOLLOWS THE LEAD OF THE POST-KURTZMAN GENERATION OF *UNDERGROUND* CARTOONISTS WHO USED CARTOONY STYLES TO PORTRAY ADULT THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER.

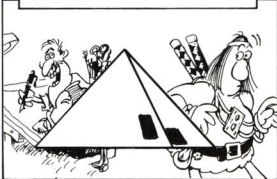


IRONIC THAT THE TWO BASTIONS OF *CARTOONY* ART ARE *UNDERGROUND* AND *CHILDREN'S* COMICS!

PRETTY FAR APART AS GENRES GO!



SOME ARTISTS, SUCH AS THE IRREPRESSIBLE *SERGIO ARAGONES*, STAKED THEIR CLAIM ON A PARTICULAR AREA LONG AGO AND HAVE BEEN QUITE HAPPY SINCE.



OTHERS, SUCH AS *DAVE MCKEAN*, ARE FOREVER ON THE MOVE, EXPERIMENTING, TAKING CHANCES, NEVER SATISFIED.



SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.

WHEN AN ARTIST IS DRAWN TO ONE END OF THE CHART OR ANOTHER, THAT ARTIST MAY BE *REVEALING* SOMETHING ABOUT HIS OR HER STRONGEST *VALUES* AND *LOYALTIES* IN ART.



THOSE WHO APPROACH THE *LOWER LEFT*, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE PROBABLY ATTRACTED BY A SENSE OF THE BEAUTY OF *NATURE*.



THOSE AT THE *TOP* BY THE BEAUTY OF *ART*.



AND THOSE ON THE *RIGHT* BY THE BEAUTY OF *IDEAS*.



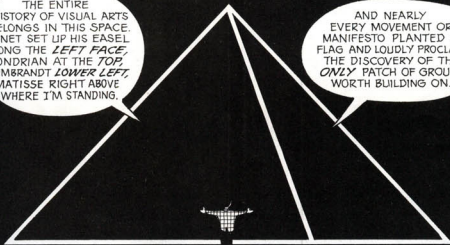
FOR COMICS TO *MATURE* AS A *MEDIUM*, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S *INNERMOST NEEDS* AND *IDEAS*.

BUT EACH ARTIST HAS *DIFFERENT* INNER NEEDS, *DIFFERENT* POINTS OF VIEW, *DIFFERENT PASSIONS*, AND SO NEEDS TO FIND *DIFFERENT FORMS OF EXPRESSION*.*



THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF VISUAL ARTS BELONGS IN THIS SPACE. MONET SET UP HIS EASEL ALONG THE *LEFT FACE*, MONDRIAN AT THE *TOP*, REMBRANDT *LOWER LEFT*, MATISSE RIGHT ABOVE WHERE I'M STANDING.

AND NEARLY EVERY MOVEMENT OR MANIFESTO PLANTED ITS FLAG AND LOUDLY PROCLAIMED THE DISCOVERY OF THE *ONLY* PATCH OF GROUND WORTH BUILDING ON.



* CHECK OUT WASSILY KANDINSKY'S TERRIFIC 1912 ESSAY, "ON THE PROBLEM OF FORM"

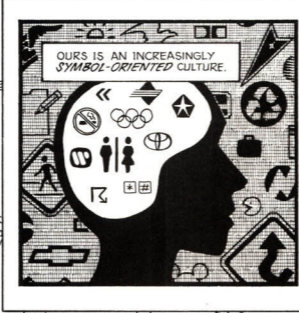


COMICS ARTISTS HAVE A **UNIVERSE** OF ICONS TO CHOOSE FROM!

BY DRAWING **BORDERS** AROUND THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS, I HOPE I HAVEN'T MADE IT SEEM SMALLER THAN IT IS.



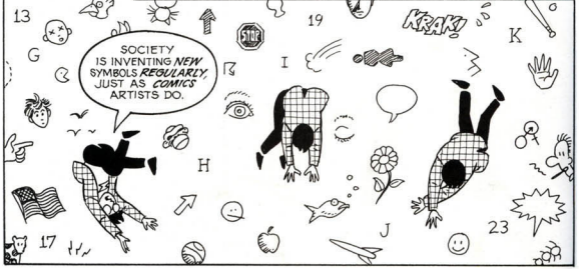
AND IT'S EXPANDING ALL THE TIME!



OURS IS AN INCREASINGLY **SYMBOL-ORIENTED** CULTURE.



AS THE **TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY** APPROACHES, VISUAL **ICONOGRAPHY** MAY FINALLY HELP US REALIZE A FORM OF **UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION.**



SOCIETY IS INVENTING **NEW SYMBOLS** REGULARLY, JUST AS COMICS ARTISTS DO.

ICONS DEMAND OUR PARTICIPATION TO MAKE THEM WORK.

THERE IS NO LIFE HERE EXCEPT THAT WHICH YOU GIVE TO IT.



IT'S YOUR JOB TO CREATE AND RECREATE ME MOMENT BY MOMENT, NOT JUST THE CARTOONISTS.

IT'S BEEN OVER TWENTY YEARS SINCE MCLUHAN FIRST OBSERVED THAT THOSE PEOPLE GROWING UP IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY DIDN'T WANT GOALS SO MUCH AS THEY WANTED ROLES, AND THAT'S WHAT VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY IS ALL ABOUT.

AS IT HAPPENS, ONLY TWO POPULAR MEDIA WERE IDENTIFIED BY MCLUHAN AS 'COOL' MEDIA-- THAT IS, MEDIA WHICH COMMAND AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT THROUGH ICONIC FORMS.



ONE OF THEM, TELEVISION, HAS REACHED INTO THE LIVES OF EVERY HUMAN BEING ON EARTH--

--AND FOR BETTER OR WORSE, ALTERED THE COURSE OF HUMAN AFFAIRS FROM HERE 'TIL DOOMSDAY.

THE FATE OF THE OTHER ONE, COMICS--

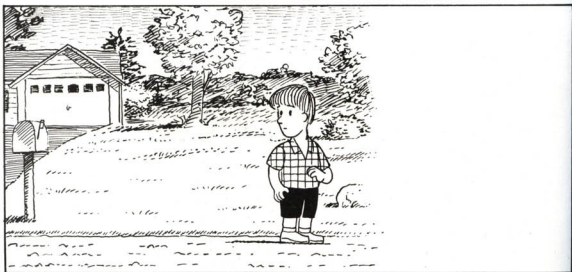
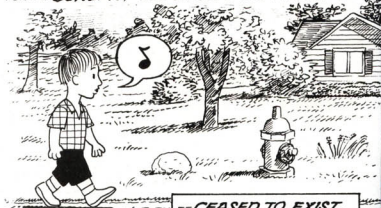
-- IS ANYONE'S GUESS.



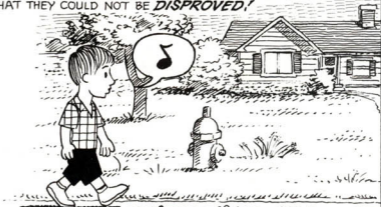
CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, I HAD A RECURRENT *DAYDREAM* THAT THE *WHOLE WORLD* WAS JUST A *SHOW* PUT ON FOR MY *BENEFIT*, THAT UNLESS I WAS PRESENT TO *SEE* THINGS, THEY JUST--



LATER IN LIFE, I FOUND **OTHERS** WHO HAD **SIMILAR** DAYDREAMS AS CHILDREN. NONE OF US EVER REALLY **BELIEVED** THESE THEORIES, BUT WE HAD ALL BEEN **FASCINATED** BY THE FACT THAT THEY COULD NOT BE **DISPROVED!**



EVEN **TODAY**, AS I WRITE AND DRAW THIS PANEL, I HAVE **NO GUARANTEE** THAT ANYTHING EXISTS OUTSIDE OF WHAT MY FIVE SENSES **REPORT** TO ME.*



I'VE NEVER BEEN TO **MOROCCO**, BUT I TAKE IT ON **FAITH** THAT THERE **IS** A **MOROCCO!**



I'VE NEVER SEEN THE EARTH FROM **SPACE** FIRSTHAND, YET I TRUST THAT THE EARTH IS **ROUND.**



I'VE NEVER BEEN IN THE **HOUSE** ACROSS THE STREET, YET I ASSUME IT HAS AN **INTERIOR**, THAT IT ISN'T JUST SOME BIG **MOVIE SET!**



IN THIS PANEL YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE MY **LEGS**, YET YOU **ASSUME** THAT THEY'RE **THERE.**



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE **NOT!**



* NOT TO SAY OUR SENSES ARE ANY KIND OF GUARANTEE!

ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A *WHOLE* THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR *SENSES*.

YET OUR SENSES CAN ONLY REVEAL A WORLD THAT IS *FRAGMENTED* AND *INCOMPLETE*.



EVEN THE MOST *WIDELY TRAVELLED* MIND CAN ONLY SEE SO MUCH OF THE WORLD IN THE COURSE OF A LIFE.

OUR PERCEPTION OF "REALITY" IS AN ACT OF *FAITH*, BASED ON MERE *FRAGMENTS*.



AS *INFANTS*, WE'RE *UNABLE* TO COMMIT THAT ACT OF FAITH. IF WE CAN'T *SEE* IT, *HEAR* IT, *SMELL* IT, *TASTE* IT OR *TOUCH* IT, IT ISN'T *THERE!*

THE GAME "*PEEK-A-BOO*" PLAYS ON THIS IDEA. GRADUALLY, WE ALL LEARN THAT EVEN THOUGH THE *SIGHT* OF MOMMY COMES AND GOES, MOMMY *REMAINS*.



THIS PHENOMENON OF
OBSERVING THE PARTS BUT
PERCEIVING THE WHOLE
HAS A NAME.

IT'S
CALLED
CLOSURE.

IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN
COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY
COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS
INCOMPLETE BASED ON *PAST*
EXPERIENCE.

SOME FORMS OF CLOSURE ARE
DELIBERATE INVENTIONS OF
STORYTELLERS TO PRODUCE
SUSPENSE OR TO *CHALLENGE*
AUDIENCES.

OTHERS HAPPEN *AUTOMATICALLY*,
WITHOUT MUCH *EFFORT*... PART
OF *BUSINESS AS USUAL.*

IN *RECOGNIZING* AND *RELATING*
TO OTHER PEOPLE, WE ALL
DEPEND *HEAVILY* ON OUR LEARNED
ABILITY OF CLOSURE.

IN AN
INCOMPLETE
WORLD, WE
MUST *DEPEND*
ON CLOSURE
FOR OUR VERY
SURVIVAL.

CLOSURE CAN TAKE
MANY FORMS. SOME
SIMPLE, SOME COMPLEX.



CLOSURE
CLOSURE
CL S RE



SOMETIMES, A MERE *SHAPE* OR
OUTLINE IS ENOUGH TO
TRIGGER CLOSURE.



THE MENTAL PROCESS DESCRIBED
IN *CHAPTER TWO* WHEREBY
THESE LINES BECOME A *FACE*
COULD BE CONSIDERED CLOSURE.



EVERY TIME WE SEE
A *PHOTOGRAPH*
REPRODUCED IN A
NEWSPAPER OR
MAGAZINE, WE
COMMIT CLOSURE.



OUR EYES TAKE IN
THE *FRAGMENTED*,
BLACK-AND-WHITE
IMAGE OF THE
"*HALF-TONE*"
PATTERNS--



--AND
OUR MINDS
TRANSFORM IT
INTO THE
"*REALITY*"--



--OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH!



IN
ELECTRONIC
MEDIA, CLOSURE IS
CONSTANT,
EVEN OVER-
POWERING!



IN *FILM*, CLOSURE TAKES PLACE CONTINUOUSLY--
TWENTY-FOUR TIMES PER *SECOND*, IN FACT-- AS OUR
MINDS, AIDED BY THE *PERSISTENCE OF VISION*,
TRANSFORM A SERIES OF *STILL PICTURES* INTO
A STORY OF *CONTINUOUS MOTION*.



A MEDIUM REQUIRING EVEN *MORE* CLOSURE IS *TELEVISION*,
WHICH, IN REALITY, IS JUST A *SINGLE POINT OF LIGHT*,
RACING ACROSS THE SCREEN SO *FAST* THAT IT'S DESCRIBED
MY FACE *HUNDREDS OF TIMES* BEFORE *YOU* CAN EVEN SWALLOW
THAT *CORN CHIP!!*"



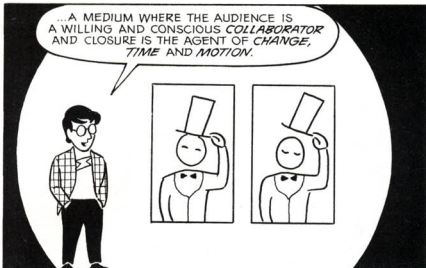
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE
OF *EVERYDAY*
LIFE--



-- THERE LIES
A MEDIUM OF
COMMUNICATION
AND EXPRESSION
WHICH USES CLOSURE
LIKE *NO OTHER...*



...A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS
A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS *COLLABORATOR*
AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF *CHANGE*,
TIME AND *MOTION*.





NOTHING IS *SEEN* BETWEEN THE TWO PANELS, BUT *EXPERIENCE* TELLS YOU SOMETHING *MUST* BE THERE!



COMICS PANELS *FRACTURE* BOTH *TIME* AND *SPACE*, OFFERING A *JAGGED, STACCATO RHYTHM* OF *UNCONNECTED MOMENTS*.



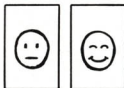
BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO *CONNECT* THESE MOMENTS AND *MENTALLY CONSTRUCT* A *CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY*.

IF *VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY* IS THE *VOCABULARY* OF COMICS, *CLOSURE* IS ITS *GRAMMAR*.

AND SINCE OUR *DEFINITION* OF COMICS HINGES ON THE *ARRANGEMENT* OF ELEMENTS--



ICONOGRAPHY



CLOSURE

-- THEN, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, *COMICS IS CLOSURE!*



THE CLOSURE OF
ELECTRONIC MEDIA
IS CONTINUOUS, LARGELY
INVOLUNTARY AND
VIRTUALLY
IMPERCEPTIBLE.



BUT CLOSURE IN **COMICS** IS
FAR FROM CONTINUOUS AND
ANYTHING BUT INVOLUNTARY!



NOW YOU DIE!!

**NO!
NO!**



EVERY
ACT COMMITTED
TO PAPER BY THE
COMICS ARTIST IS
AIDED AND ABETTED
BY A SILENT
ACCOMPLICE.



AN **EQUAL
PARTNER
IN CRIME**
KNOWN AS
**THE
READER.**



I MAY HAVE DRAWN AN **AXE** BEING
RAISED IN THIS EXAMPLE, BUT I'M
NOT THE ONE WHO LET IT **DROP**
OR DECIDED HOW **HARD** THE BLOW,
OR **WHO** SCREAMED, OR **WHY**.



**THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR
SPECIAL CRIME, EACH OF YOU
COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN STYLE.**

ALL OF YOU
PARTICIPATED
IN THE MURDER.
ALL OF YOU **HELD**
THE **AXE** AND
CHOSE YOUR **SPOT**.



TO KILL A MAN
BETWEEN PANELS
IS TO CONDEMN
HIM TO A
THOUSAND
DEATHS.



PARTICIPATION
IS A **POWERFUL FORCE**
IN **ANY MEDIUM.**
FILMMAKERS **LONG AGO**
REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE
OF ALLOWING VIEWERS
TO USE THEIR
IMAGINATIONS.



BUT WHILE **FILM** MAKES
USE OF AUDIENCES' IMAGINATIONS
FOR **OCCASIONAL EFFECTS,**
COMICS MUST USE IT
FAR MORE **OFTEN!**



FROM THE **TOSSING OF A BASEBALL**
TO THE **DEATH OF A PLANET,** THE
READER'S **DELIBERATE, VOLUNTARY**
CLOSURE IS COMICS' **PRIMARY** MEANS
OF SIMULATING **TIME AND MOTION.**



CLOSURE
IN COMICS FOSTERS
AN INTIMACY SURPASSED
ONLY BY THE **WRITTEN**
WORD, A **SILENT, SECRET**
CONTRACT BETWEEN
CREATOR AND
AUDIENCE.

HOW THE CREATOR
HONORS THAT CONTRACT
IS A MATTER OF BOTH
ART AND **CRAFT.**



LET'S
TAKE A LOOK
AT THE
CRAFT.



MOST **PANEL-TO-PANEL** TRANSITIONS IN COMICS CAN BE PLACED IN ONE OF SEVERAL DISTINCT CATEGORIES. THE **FIRST** CATEGORY-- WHICH WE'LL CALL **MOMENT-TO-MOMENT**--REQUIRES VERY LITTLE CLOSURE.



1.



NEXT ARE THOSE TRANSITIONS FEATURING A SINGLE **SUBJECT** IN DISTINCT **ACTION-TO-ACTION** PROGRESSIONS.



2.



THE NEXT TYPE TAKES US FROM **SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT** WHILE STAYING WITHIN A SCENE OR IDEA. NOTE THE DEGREE OF **READER INVOLVEMENT** NECESSARY TO RENDER THESE TRANSITIONS **MEANINGFUL**.



3.



DEDUCTIVE REASONING IS OFTEN REQUIRED IN READING COMICS SUCH AS IN THESE **SCENE-TO-SCENE** TRANSITIONS, WHICH TRANSPORT US ACROSS **SIGNIFICANT DISTANCES** OF TIME AND SPACE.



4.



A *FIFTH* TYPE OF TRANSITION, WHICH WE'LL CALL *ASPECT-TO-ASPECT*, BYPASSES *TIME* FOR THE MOST PART AND SETS A *WANDERING EYE* ON DIFFERENT *ASPECTS* OF A PLACE, IDEA OR MOOD.



5.



AND FINALLY, THERE'S THE *NON-SEQUITUR*, WHICH OFFERS NO LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANELS *WHATSOEVER!*



6.



THIS *LAST* CATEGORY SUGGESTS AN INTERESTING *QUESTION*. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR *ANY* SEQUENCE OF PANELS TO BE *TOTALLY UNRELATED* TO EACH OTHER?



PERSONALLY, I DON'T *THINK* SO.

NO MATTER HOW *DISSIMILAR* ONE IMAGE MAY BE TO ANOTHER, THERE IS A KIND OF--



--*ALCHEMY* AT WORK IN THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS WHICH CAN HELP US FIND *MEANING* OR *RESONANCE* IN EVEN THE MOST *JARRING* OF COMBINATIONS.



SUCH TRANSITIONS MAY NOT MAKE "*SENSE*" IN ANY TRADITIONAL WAY, BUT STILL A RELATIONSHIP OF *SOME SORT* WILL INEVITABLY *DEVELOP*.



BANG!



BY CREATING A *SEQUENCE* WITH TWO OR MORE IMAGES, WE ARE *ENDOWING* THEM WITH A *SINGLE*--



--*OVERRIDING IDENTITY*, AND *FORCING* THE VIEWER TO CONSIDER THEM AS A *WHOLE*.



HOWEVER *DIFFERENT* THEY HAD BEEN, THEY NOW BELONG TO A *SINGLE ORGANISM*.



CLOSURE FOR *BLOOD*, *GUTTERS* FOR *VEINS*...



GE
BICYCL
PURC
CE



1.
MOMENT-
TO-
MOMENT



2.
ACTION-
TO-
ACTION



3.
SUBJECT-
TO-
SUBJECT



4.
SCENE-
TO-
SCENE



5.
ASPECT-
TO-
ASPECT



6.
NON-
SEQUITUR

THIS SORT OF CATEGORIZATION IS AN *INEXACT SCIENCE* AT *BEST*, BUT BY USING OUR TRANSITION SCALE AS A *TOOL* --

--WE CAN BEGIN TO UNRAVEL SOME OF THE MYSTERIES SURROUNDING THE *INVISIBLE ART* OF *COMICS* *STORYTELLING!*



MOST *MAINSTREAM COMICS* IN AMERICA EMPLOY STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES FIRST INTRODUCED BY *JACK KIRBY*, SO LET'S START BY EXAMINING THIS LEE-KIRBY COMIC FROM 1966.



ALTOGETHER, I COUNT *NINETY-FIVE* PANEL-TO-PANEL TRANSITIONS. LET'S SEE HOW THEY BREAK DOWN *PROPORTIONATELY*.



BY *FAR*, THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF TRANSITION IN KIRBY'S ART IS *ACTION-TO-ACTION*. I COUNT *SIXTY-TWO* OF THEM IN THIS STORY-- ABOUT *SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL NUMBER.



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT TRANSITIONS ACCOUNT FOR AN ADDITIONAL *NINETEEN*-- ABOUT *TWENTY PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL NUMBER.

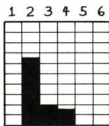


ART © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

AND SINCE **ALL** OF THE REMAINING TRANSITIONS ARE FROM **SCENE-TO-SCENE**, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING **BREAKDOWN**.

1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

AS A **BAR GRAPH** IT WOULD LOOK SOMETHING LIKE **THIS**.



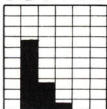
THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** STORY TELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT **KIRBY**, BUT IS HE **UNIQUE** IN THIS RESPECT?

APPARENTLY **NOT!** HERE'S A GRAPH OF PANEL TRANSITIONS IN HERGE'S **TINTIN** AND THE PROPORTION ARE VERY **SIMILAR** TO KIRBY'S

NOW, HERGE'S AND KIRBY'S STYLES ARE **NOT** SIMILAR! IN FACT, THEY'RE **RADICALLY DIFFERENT!!**

IS THERE SOME KIND OF **UNIVERSAL PROPORTION** AT WORK HERE, OR IS THERE ANOTHER **COMMON LINK?** MAYBE A SIMILARITY OF **GENRES?**

1 2 3 4 5 6



A RANDOM SAMPLING OF VARIOUS AMERICAN COMICS SHOWS THIS SAME PROPORTION **PRETTY CONSISTENTLY**.



X-MEN #1



CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



WOODRUM

A CONTRACT WITH GOD



EISNER

MAUS



SPIEGELMAN

DONALD DUCK



BARKS

A SURVEY OF WELL-KNOWN EUROPEAN ARTISTS YIELDS *SIMILAR*, IF NOT *QUITE* AS UNIFORM, RESULTS.

WHAT CAN WE DEDUCE FROM THIS?



SQUEAK THE MOUSE



MATTIOLI

ASTERIX



GOSCINNY & UDERZO

WELCOME TO AFLLOLOL



CRISPIN & MEZHEES

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & MOEBIUS

"MANHATTAN"



TARDI

CLIK!



MANARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGÉ

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



2

ARE THESE THREE TYPES OF TRANSITIONS ALL ANYONE SHOULD EVER NEED TO TELL A STORY IN COMICS?



3

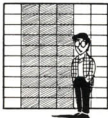
4

IF WE CHOOSE TO SEE STORIES AS CONNECTED SERIES OF *EVENTS*, THEN THE PREDOMINANCE OF TYPES 2-4 ARE EASILY EXPLAINED



TYPES 2-4 SHOW THINGS HAPPENING IN *CONCISE*, *EFFICIENT* WAYS.

1 2 3 4 5 6



TYPE 1 SHOWS *ACTIONS* LIKE TYPE 2, BUT IT TENDS TO REQUIRE *SEVERAL* PANELS TO DO WHAT TYPE 2 DOES IN *TWO*--

1 2 3 4 5 6

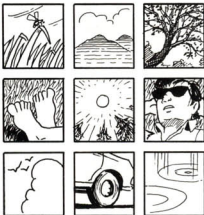


1.

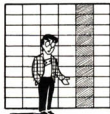


2.

-- WHILE IN THE FIFTH TYPE, BY DEFINITION, NOTHING "HAPPENS" AT ALL!



1 2 3 4 5 6



AND, OF COURSE, NON-SEQUITURS ARE UNCONCERNED WITH EVENTS OR ANY NARRATIVE PURPOSES OF ANY SORT.

1 2 3 4 5 6



SOME EXPERIMENTAL COMICS, LIKE THOSE OF ART SPIEGELMAN'S EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A FULL RANGE OF TRANSITIONS--

--THOUGH GENERALLY IN THE SERVICE OF EQUALLY RADICAL STORIES AND SUBJECTS.

STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE"



INTRODUCTION



"MAUS" (ORIGINAL)



"SKINLESS PERKINS"



"PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET"



"CRACKING JOKES"



FRONT AND BACK COVERS



"ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"



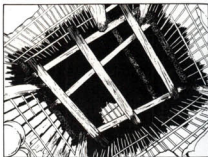
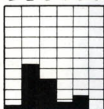
"REAL DREAM" 1975

BUT BEFORE WE CONCLUDE THAT TYPES 2-4 HAVE A MONOPOLY ON STRAIGHTFORWARD STORYTELLING, LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT OSAMU TEZUKA FROM JAPAN.



TEZUKA IS A FAR CRY FROM THE EARLY SPIEGELMAN. HIS STORYTELLING IS CLEAR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD. BUT LOOK AT HOW HE CHARTS!

1 2 3 4 5 6



JUST WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

ACTION-TO-ACTION TRANSITIONS STILL DOMINATE IN TEZUKA'S WORK, BUT TO A LESSER DEGREE.



3



IN FACT, *SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT* TRANSITIONS ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY AS MANY AS *ACTION*.



1



HERE ALSO WE SEE OUR FIRST EXAMPLES OF *MOMENT-TO-MOMENT* TRANSITIONS.

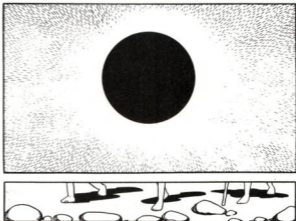


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR *FOUR PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGÉ.

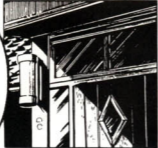


5

BUT, MOST STRIKING OF ALL IS THE *SUBSTANTIAL PRESENCE* OF THE *FIFTH* TYPE OF TRANSITION, A TYPE RARELY SEEN IN THE WEST.



ASPECT-TO-ASPECT
TRANSITIONS
HAVE BEEN AN
INTEGRAL PART
OF **JAPANESE**
MAINSTREAM
COMICS ALMOST
FROM THE VERY
BEGINNING.

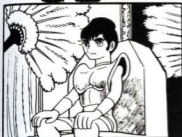


水は夜の
古寺に
いて
みる
こと
にした



MOST OFTEN USED TO ESTABLISH A **MOOD** OR A **SENSE**
OF PLACE, TIME SEEMS TO **STAND STILL** IN THESE QUIET,
CONTEMPLATIVE COMBINATIONS.

EVEN **SEQUENCE**, WHILE
STILL AN ISSUE, SEEMS
FAR LESS IMPORTANT
HERE THAN IN OTHER
TRANSITIONS.



RATHER
THAN ACTING
AS A BRIDGE
BETWEEN
SEPARATE
MOMENTS, THE
READER **HERE**
MUST ASSEMBLE
A **SINGLE**
MOMENT USING
SCATTERED
FRAGMENTS.



IN EXAMINING SEVERAL JAPANESE ARTISTS, WE FIND SIMILAR PROPORTIONS TO TEZUKA'S, INCLUDING A HIGH INCIDENCE OF THE FIFTH TYPE.

WHY?



750 RIDER
(石井一也?)



FATHER & SON
HAYASHI & OSIMA



WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOJIMA



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO



CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHIMORI

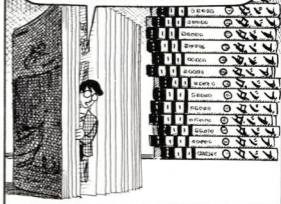


PHOENIX
OSAMU TEZUKA

LENGTH MAY BE ONE OF THE FACTORS AT WORK HERE. MOST JAPANESE COMICS FIRST APPEAR IN ENORMOUS ANTHOLOGY TITLES WHERE THE PRESSURE ISN'T AS GREAT ON ANY ONE INSTALLMENT TO SHOW A LOT "HAPPENING."



WHEN INDIVIDUAL FEATURES ARE COLLECTED, THEY MAY RUN FOR THOUSANDS OF PAGES.



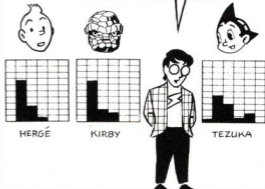
AS SUCH, DOZENS OF PANELS CAN BE DEVOTED TO PORTRAYING SLOW CINEMATIC MOVEMENT OR TO SETTING A MOOD.



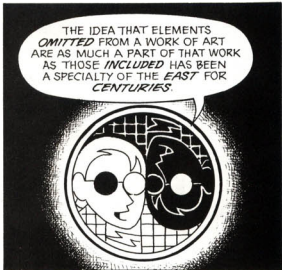
BUT I DON'T THINK LONGER STORIES ARE THE ONLY FACTOR, OR EVEN THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE.



I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING A BIT MORE FUNDAMENTAL TO THIS PARTICULAR EAST/WEST SPLIT.







IN THE GRAPHIC ARTS THIS HAS MEANT
A GREATER FOCUS ON *FIGURE/GROUND*
RELATIONSHIPS AND "*NEGATIVE SPACE.*"



"THE GREAT WAVE OFF KANAGAWA" BY HOKUSAI (c.1829)
(TURN THIS PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN TO SEE THE OTHER
WAVE OF NEGATIVE SPACE...NATURE'S *YIN AND YANG.*)

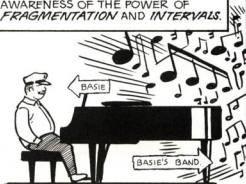
IN MUSIC TOO, WHILE THE WESTERN
CLASSICAL TRADITION WAS EMPHASIZING
THE *CONTINUOUS, CONNECTED* WORLDS OF
MELODY AND HARMONY, EASTERN CLASSICAL
MUSIC WAS EQUALLY CONCERNED WITH THE
ROLE OF *SILENCE!*



IN THE LAST *CENTURY* OR TWO, AS
WESTERN CULTURAL INFLUENCES SWEEPED
THE *EAST*, SO TOO HAVE *EASTERN* AND
AFRICAN IDEAS OF *FRAGMENTATION*
AND *RHYTHM* SWEEPED THE *WEST.*



FROM *DEBUSSY* TO *STRAVINSKY* TO
COUNT BASIE, WESTERN MUSIC HAS
GRADUALLY INCORPORATED A STRONG
AWARENESS OF THE POWER OF
FRAGMENTATION AND *INTERVALS.*



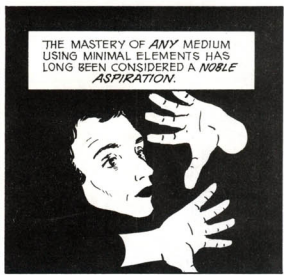
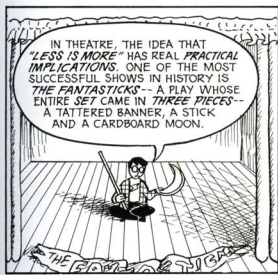


IN THE VISUAL ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF *FOREGROUND* SUBJECTS AND *CONTINUOUSNESS* OF *TONES* GAVE WAY TO *FRAGMENTATION* AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE*.



FACSIMILE OF "FIGURE" BY PABLO PICASSO 1948

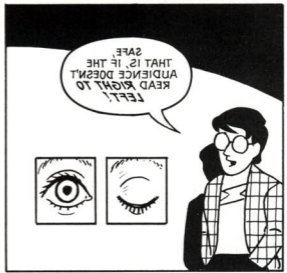
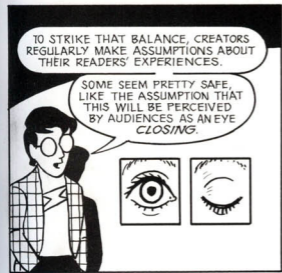


THE MASTERY OF ANY MEDIUM USING MINIMAL ELEMENTS HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A NOBLE ASPIRATION.

*ANSWER: "THE BIG N"
[SEE PAGE 216]

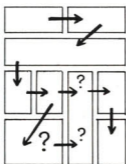


* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



WE ASSUME AS **READERS** THAT WE WILL KNOW WHAT ORDER TO READ PANELS IN, BUT THE BUSINESS OF **ARRANGING** THOSE PANELS IS ACTUALLY QUITE **COMPLEX**.

SO COMPLEX, IN FACT, THAT EVEN **SEASONED PROS** WILL SOMETIMES **BLOW IT**.



AS CLOSURE **BETWEEN** PANELS BECOMES MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION BECOMES FAR MORE **ELASTIC**.



AND **MANAGING** IT BECOMES MORE COMPLICATED FOR THE **CREATOR**.

SOME ARTISTS CAN BE **DELIBERATELY AMBIGUOUS**, OF COURSE, AND OFFER US NO STRICT INTERPRETATION TO GO ON.



CLOSURE CAN BE A POWERFUL FORCE **WITHIN** PANELS AS WELL AS **BETWEEN** THEM, WHEN ARTISTS CHOOSE TO SHOW ONLY A SMALL **PIECE** OF THE PICTURE.



COMICS CAN BE **MADDENINGLY VAGUE** ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US.



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE--



--AND OFFERING ONLY **CLUES** TO THE READER--



--THE ARTIST CAN TRIGGER ANY NUMBER OF IMAGES IN THE READER'S IMAGINATION.



READERS FACED
WITH PANELS LIKE *THESE*
WILL HAVE *SUBSTANTIALLY*
DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS.

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

BY CONSTRUCTING *WHOLE*
IMAGES BASED ON THESE
FRAGMENTS, READERS ARE
PERFORMING CLOSURE,
JUST AS--

WHOOSH!

≡ *Splip Splip* ≡

?

Ding! Ding!

UH-- JUST AS
READERS COMPLETE
AN ACTION OR
IDEA *BETWEEN--*

OW!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

≡ *AHEM!* ≡ I SAY,
JUST AS READERS
COMPLETE--

-- AN
ACTION OR--
OW! OW!

STOP THAT!

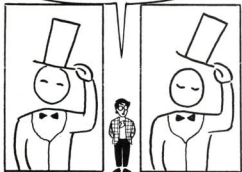
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

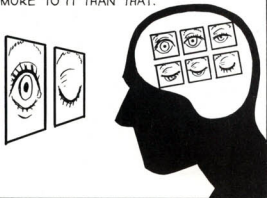
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE AND WONDERFUL THAT HAPPENS IN THIS *BLANK RIBBON OF PAPER*.

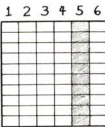


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF *IN-BETWEENER* -- FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR* MIGHT -- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE *FIFTH* TYPE OF TRANSITION, THE ONE SO POPULAR IN JAPAN.

HERE'S A FOUR-PANEL ESTABLISHING SHOT OF AN OLD-FASHIONED KITCHEN SCENE.



NOW, MOST OF YOU SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE **PERCEIVING** THAT YOU'RE IN A KITCHEN FROM THOSE FOUR PANELS **ALONE.**



WITH A **HIGH DEGREE OF CLOSURE**, YOUR MIND IS TAKING FOUR PICTURE **FRAGMENTS** AND CONSTRUCTING AN ENTIRE SCENE **OUT OF THOSE FRAGMENTS.**



BUT THE SCENE YOUR MIND CONSTRUCTS FROM THOSE **FOUR PANELS** IS A VERY **DIFFERENT PLACE** FROM THE SCENE CONSTRUCTED FROM OUR TRADITIONAL **ONE-PANEL ESTABLISHING SHOT!**



LOOK AGAIN.

YOU'VE BEEN IN KITCHENS BEFORE, YOU KNOW WHAT A POT ON THE BOIL SOUNDS LIKE; DO YOU ONLY HEAR IT IN THAT **FIRST PANEL?**



AND WHAT ABOUT THE **CHOPPING SOUND**? DOES THAT ONLY LAST A **PANEL** OR DOES IT **PERSIST**? CAN YOU **SMELL** THIS KITCHEN? **FEEL** IT? **TASTE** IT?



COMICS IS A **MONO-SENSORY** MEDIUM. IT RELIES ON ONLY **ONE** OF THE SENSES TO CONVEY A **WORLD** OF EXPERIENCE.



BUT WHAT OF THE OTHER **FOUR?**

WE REPRESENT **SOUND** THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS **WORD BALLOONS.**



WE REPRESENT **SMELL** THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS **WORD BALLOONS.**



BUT ALL IN ALL, IT IS AN **EXCLUSIVELY VISUAL** REPRESENTATION.

WITHIN THESE PANELS, WE CAN ONLY CONVEY INFORMATION **VISUALLY.**

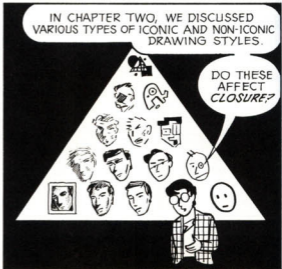
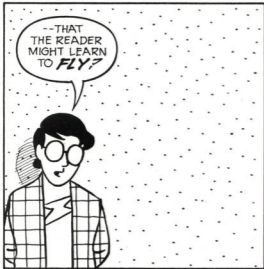


BUT **BETWEEN** PANELS, NONE OF OUR SENSES ARE REQUIRED AT ALL.



WHICH IS WHY **ALL** OF OUR SENSES ARE ENGAGED!





BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.

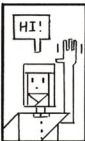


AND SO, WHAT SEEMED LIKE A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF MOMENTS IN THE LAST EXAMPLE, HERE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE LIKE A SERIES OF **STILL PICTURES**...

...TO **ME** ANYWAY. THESE THINGS ARE ALL **SUBJECTIVE!**



SIMILARLY, I THINK WHEN COMICS ART VEERS CLOSER TO CONCERNS OF THE **PICTURE PLANE** CLOSURE CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.



NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES** OF **DESIGN** THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.

A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS THAT IF READERS ARE PARTICULARLY **AWARE** OF THE ART IN A GIVEN STORY--

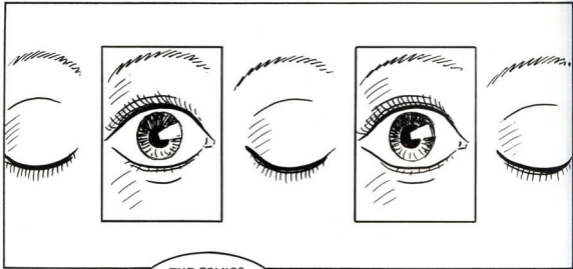


-- THEN CLOSURE IS PROBABLY NOT HAPPENING WITHOUT SOME **EFFORT**.



OF COURSE, MAKING THE READER **WORK** A LITTLE MAY BE JUST WHAT THE ARTIST IS **TRYING** TO DO. ONCE AGAIN, IT'S ALL A MATTER OF **PERSONAL TASTE**.





THE COMICS
CREATOR ASKS US
TO JOIN IN A *SILENT*
DANCE OF THE
SEEN AND THE
LINSEEN.

THE
VISIBLE
AND THE
INVISIBLE.



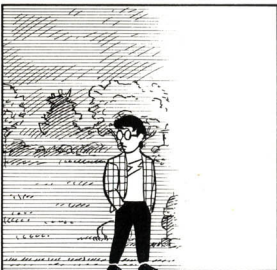
THIS DANCE IS *UNIQUE*
TO COMICS. NO OTHER ARTFORM
GIVES SO MUCH TO ITS AUDIENCE
WHILE ASKING SO MUCH
FROM THEM AS WELL.

THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS
A MERE *HYBRID* OF THE
GRAPHIC ARTS AND *PROSE*
FICTION.

WHAT
HAPPENS
BETWEEN THESE
PANELS IS A
KIND OF MAGIC
ONLY COMICS
CAN CREATE.



ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE *ASSUMPTIONS*
ABOUT YOU AND HOPE THAT THEY'RE
CORRECT--



-- JUST AS WE *ALL* ASSUME, *EVERY DAY*,
THAT THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN MEETS
THE EYE.



ALL I ASK OF YOU
IS A LITTLE
FAITH--

-- AND A *WORLD*
OF *IMAGINATION*.



CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

SO! LET'S SEE: EACH PANEL OF A COMIC SHOWS A SINGLE MOMENT IN TIME.



AND *BETWEEN* THOSE FROZEN MOMENTS -- BETWEEN THE PANELS -- OUR MINDS FILL IN THE *INTERVENING MOMENTS*, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF *TIME AND MOTION*.



LIKE A LINE DRAWN BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

RIGHT?



CLIK



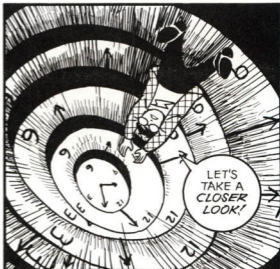
NAAH!
OF COURSE
NOT!

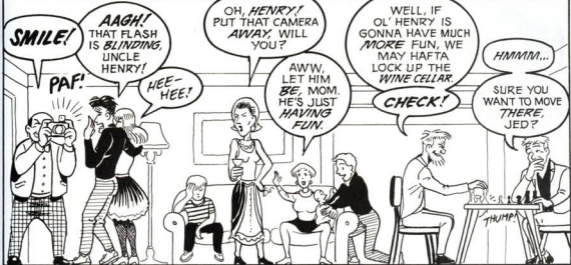


TIME IN COMICS IS *INFINITELY* WEIRDER THAN *THAT!*

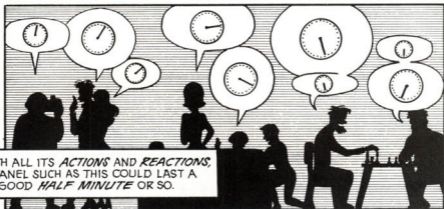


LET'S
TAKE A
CLOSER
LOOK!





JUST AS PICTURES AND THE INTERVALS *BETWEEN* THEM CREATE THE ILLUSION OF TIME THROUGH *CLOSURE*, **WORDS** INTRODUCE TIME BY REPRESENTING THAT WHICH CAN ONLY EXIST *IN* TIME -- **SOUND**.



WITH ALL ITS *ACTIONS* AND *REACTIONS*, A PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD LAST A GOOD *HALF MINUTE* OR SO.



BUT HOW COULD THIS BE ANYTHING BUT A *SINGLE MOMENT*?
OUR EYES HAVE BEEN *WELL-TRAINED* BY THE *PHOTOGRAPH*
AND BY *REPRESENTATIONAL ART* TO SEE ANY SINGLE
CONTINUOUS IMAGE AS A *SINGLE INSTANT IN TIME*.



BUT THE ACTIONS THAT WE SEE
OCCURRING SEEMINGLY AT THE SAME
TIME OBVIOUSLY *CAN'T BE!*



ANOTHER
WAY TO LOOK AT
IT: LET'S THINK OF
TIME AS A
ROPE.



EACH INCH
REPRESENTS A
SECOND.



SUCH A ROPE
MIGHT BE SAID
TO WIND SOME-
THING LIKE *THIS*
THROUGH OUR
PANEL.

SIMPLIFIED
OF COURSE,
SINCE EACH
BALLOON HAS
ITS OWN *TWISTS*
AND *URNS*.



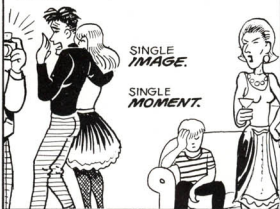
AND SINCE EACH
FACE AND FIGURE
IS DRAWN TO MATCH
HIS/HER OWN
WORDS--



--THOSE FIGURES, FACES AND WORDS ARE MATCHED IN *TIME* AS WELL.



THE PROPERTIES OF THE SINGLE CONTINUOUS *IMAGE*, MEANWHILE, TEND TO MATCH EACH FIGURE WITH EVERY *OTHER* FIGURE.



SINGLE *IMAGE*.

SINGLE *MOMENT*.

PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING *LEFT TO RIGHT*, THIS PUTS ALL THE *IMAGES* ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



AND *TANGLES UP TIME* BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!



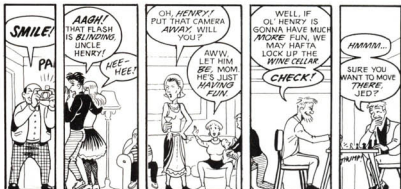
PERHAPS WE'VE BEEN TOO CONDITIONED BY PHOTOGRAPHY TO PERCEIVE SINGLE IMAGES AS *SINGLE MOMENTS*. AFTER ALL, IT DOES TAKE AN EYE *TIME* TO MOVE ACROSS SCENES IN *REAL LIFE*!



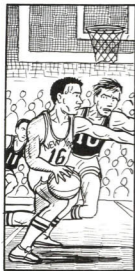
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM *LEFT TO RIGHT* IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL "*READ*" THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT *TIME SLOT*.



IN SOME RESPECTS THIS PANEL BY ITSELF ACTUALLY *FITS* OUR DEFINITION OF COMICS! ALL IT NEEDS IS A FEW *GUTTERS* THROWN IN TO CLARIFY THE SEQUENCE.

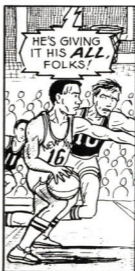


ONE PANEL, OPERATING AS *SEVERAL* PANELS.



NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.

A SILENT PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD INDEED BE SAID TO DEPICT A *SINGLE MOMENT!*

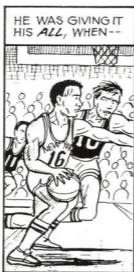


HE'S GIVING IT HIS *ALL*, FOLKS!

IF *SOUND* IS INTRODUCED, THIS CEASES TO BE TRUE --



-- BUT, IN AN OTHERWISE SILENT CAPTIONED PANEL, THE SINGLE MOMENT CAN ACTUALLY BE HELD.



HE WAS GIVING IT HIS *ALL*, WHEN--

THESE VARIOUS SHAPES WE CALL *PANELS* HOLD IN THEIR BORDERS ALL OF THE ICONS THAT ADD UP TO THE *VOCABULARY OF COMICS*.



ALL EXCEPT *ONE*.

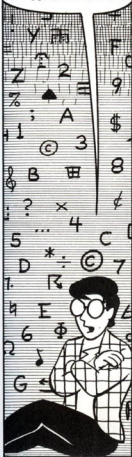


FOR JUST AS THE BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN -- OUR *SKIN* -- IS SELDOM THOUGHT OF AS AN ORGAN --



-- SO TOO IS THE PANEL *ITSELF* OVERLOOKED AS COMICS' MOST IMPORTANT *ICON!*

THESE ICONS WE CALL PANELS OR "FRAMES" HAVE NO **FIXED** OR **ABSOLUTE MEANING**, LIKE THE ICONS OF **LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION**.



NOR IS THEIR MEANING AS **FLUID** AND **MALLEABLE** AS THE SORTS OF ICONS WE CALL **PICTURES**.



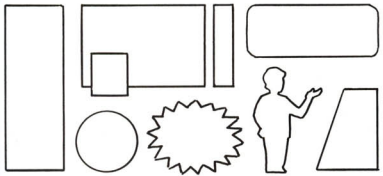
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT **TIME** OR **SPACE** IS BEING **DIVIDED**.



THE **DURATIONS** OF THAT **TIME** AND THE **DIMENSIONS** OF THAT **SPACE** ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE **CONTENTS** OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL *ITSELF*. *



PANEL **SHAPES** VARY **CONSIDERABLY** THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "**MEANINGS**" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY **CAN** AFFECT THE READING **EXPERIENCE**.

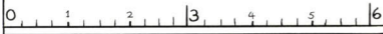
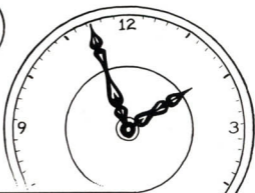


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS **DEPICTED** IN COMICS AND TIME AS **PERCEIVED** BY THE READER.



* EISNER DISCUSSES THIS UNDER THE HEADING "FRAMING TIME" IN *COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART*.

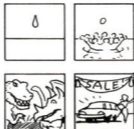
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE TIME *SPATIALLY*, FOR IN THE WORLD OF COMICS, *TIME AND SPACE ARE ONE AND THE SAME.*



THE PROBLEM IS *THERE'S NO CONVERSION CHART!*



THE FEW CENTIMETERS WHICH TRANSPORT US FROM *SECOND TO SECOND* IN *ONE* SEQUENCE COULD TAKE US A *HUNDRED MILLION YEARS* IN *ANOTHER.*



SO, AS *READERS*, WE'RE LEFT WITH ONLY A *VAGUE SENSE* THAT AS OUR EYES ARE MOVING THROUGH *SPACE*, THEY'RE ALSO MOVING THROUGH *TIME*-- WE JUST DON'T KNOW BY *HOW MUCH!*



IN MOST CASES IT'S NOT HARD TO MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS AS TO THE DURATION OF A GIVEN SEQUENCE, SO LONG AS THE *ELEMENTS* OF THAT SEQUENCE ARE *FAMILIAR* TO US.



I ALWAYS FIGURED MARY-ANNE WOULD GO FOR GILLIGAN.



I GUESS.



FROM A *LIFETIME OF CONVERSATIONS*, WE CAN BE SURE THAT A "*PAUSE*" PANEL LIKE THIS LASTS FOR NO MORE THAN SEVERAL *SECONDS.*





BUT IF THE CREATOR OF THIS SCENE WANTED TO *LENGTHEN* THAT PAUSE, HOW COULD HE OR SHE DO SO? ONE OBVIOUS SOLUTION WOULD BE TO ADD MORE PANELS, BUT IS THAT THE ONLY WAY?



IS THERE ANY WAY TO MAKE A SINGLE SILENT PANEL LIKE THIS ONE SEEM *LONGER*? HOW ABOUT WIDENING THE SPACE *BETWEEN* PANELS? ANY *DIFFERENCE*?



WE'VE SEEN HOW TIME CAN BE CONTROLLED THROUGH THE *CONTENT* OF PANELS, THE *NUMBER* OF PANELS AND CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS, BUT THERE'S STILL *ONE MORE*.



AS UNLIKELY AS IT SOUNDS, THE PANEL *SHAPE* CAN ACTUALLY MAKE A *DIFFERENCE* IN OUR *PERCEPTION* OF TIME. EVEN THOUGH THIS LONG PANEL HAS THE SAME BASIC "MEANING" AS ITS SHORTER VERSIONS, STILL IT HAS THE *FEELING* OF GREATER LENGTH!





EVER NOTICED HOW THE WORDS "SHORT" OR "LONG" CAN REFER EITHER TO THE **FIRST** DIMENSION OR TO THE **FOURTH**?

IN A MEDIUM WHERE TIME AND SPACE **MERGE** SO COMPLETELY, THE DISTINCTION OFTEN **VANISHES!**

THE **PANEL BORDER** IS OUR **GUIDE** THROUGH **TIME AND SPACE**, BUT IT WILL ONLY **GUIDE** US **SO FAR.**



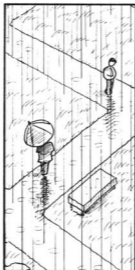
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE **CLASSIC RECTANGLE** IS USED MOST OFTEN.



MOST OF US ARE SO USED TO THE STANDARD **RECTANGULAR** FORMAT THAT A "**BORDERLESS**" PANEL SUCH AS THIS CAN TAKE ON A **TIMELESS** QUALITY.



WHEN THE **CONTENT** OF A SILENT PANEL OFFERS NO CLUES AS TO ITS **DURATION**, IT CAN ALSO PRODUCE A SENSE OF **TIMELESSNESS.**



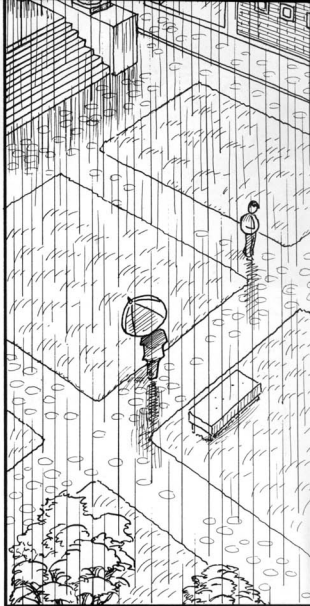
BECAUSE OF ITS **UNRESOLVED** NATURE, SUCH A PANEL MAY **LINGER** IN THE READER'S MIND.

AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH **FOLLOW** IT.



WHEN "BLEEDS" ARE USED -- I.E., WHEN A PANEL RUNS OFF THE EDGE OF THE PAGE -- THIS EFFECT IS COMPOUNDED.

TIME IS NO LONGER CONTAINED BY THE FAMILIAR ICON OF THE CLOSED PANEL, BUT INSTEAD HEMORRHAGES AND ESCAPES INTO TIMELESS SPACE.



SUCH IMAGES CAN SET THE MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE FOR WHOLE SCENES THROUGH THEIR LINGERING TIMELESS PRESENCE.



ONCE AGAIN, THIS IS A TECHNIQUE USED MOST OFTEN IN JAPAN AND ONLY RECENTLY ADOPTED HERE IN THE WEST.





IN COMICS,
AS IN *FILM*,
TELEVISION AND
"REAL LIFE",
IT IS ALWAYS
NOW.




THIS
PANEL AND
THIS PANEL
ALONE
REPRESENTS THE
PRESENT.



ANY PANEL
BEFORE THIS--
THAT **LAST** ONE,
FOR INSTANCE--
REPRESENTS THE
PAST.




LIKEWISE, ALL
PANELS **STILL TO**
COME--THIS **NEXT**
PANEL, FOR INSTANCE--
REPRESENT THE
FUTURE.



BUT **UNLIKE**
OTHER MEDIA, IN
COMICS, THE PAST
IS MORE THAN JUST
MEMORIES FOR
THE AUDIENCE AND
THE FUTURE IS
MORE THAN JUST
POSSIBILITIES!



BOTH
PAST AND
FUTURE ARE
REAL AND
VISIBLE AND
ALL
AROUND
US!



WHEREVER YOUR
EYES ARE FOCUSED,
THAT'S **NOW**. BUT
AT THE SAME TIME
YOUR EYES TAKE IN
THE **SURROUNDING**
LANDSCAPE OF
PAST AND **FUTURE!**

LIKE A **STORM FRONT**, THE EYE MOVES
OVER THE COMICS PAGE, PUSHING THE
WARM, HIGH-PRESSURE **FUTURE** AHEAD
OF IT, LEAVING THE COOL, LOW-PRESSURE
PAST IN ITS WAKE.



WHEREVER
THE EYE HITS
LAND, WE EXPECT
IT TO BEGIN
MOVING
FORWARD.



BUT
EYES, LIKE
STORMS, CAN
CHANGE
DIRECTION!

-3

-2

-1



+1



YET WE SELDOM DO CHANGE DIRECTION, EXCEPT TO RE-READ OR REVIEW PASSAGES. IT'S LEFT-TO-RIGHT, UP-TO-DOWN, PAGE AFTER PAGE.



THE IDEA THAT THE READER MIGHT CHOOSE A DIRECTION IS STILL CONSIDERED EXOTIC.



THIS MAY, IN PART, BE THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER MEDIA LIKE FILM AND TELEVISION WHERE VIEWER CHOICE HAS NOT GENERALLY BEEN FEASIBLE.



CONDITIONED AS WE ARE TO READ LEFT-TO-RIGHT AND UP-TO-DOWN, A MISCHIEVOUS CARTOONIST CAN PLAY ANY NUMBER OF TRICKS ON US.



THE INCREDIBLE MR. SPOT ©1992 Matt Fozard

THE END OF THE MONTH... BROKE AGAIN!

I'LL JUST BORROW SOME MONEY FROM MYSELF IN THE FUTURE!

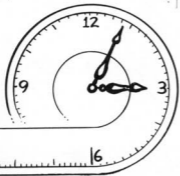
NOW I CAN GO OUT TO DINNER!

MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF, AND HERE'S THE CHECK, PLEASE!

HEY!



AS MENTIONED EARLIER,
TIME AND *SPACE* IN THE WORLD OF
 COMICS ARE *CLOSELY LINKED*.



AS A RESULT,
 SO TOO ARE THE
 ISSUES OF *TIME*
 AND *MOTION*.



AS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER
THREE, *MOTION* IN COMICS
 IS PRODUCED *BETWEEN*
 PANELS BY THE MENTAL
 PROCESS CALLED *CLOSURE*--

--USUALLY
 BY TRANSITION
 TYPES *ONE*
TWO...BUT LET'S
 NOT GET INTO
THAT AGAIN!



DESPITE COMICS' *THREE THOUSAND*
YEAR HISTORY, IT WASN'T UNTIL
 TOPFFER'S *MID-1800's DOODLINGS*
 THAT *SPECIFIC* MOTIONS WERE
 PORTRAYED IN COMICS IN THE NOW-
 FAMILIAR *PANEL-TO-PANEL* FORM.

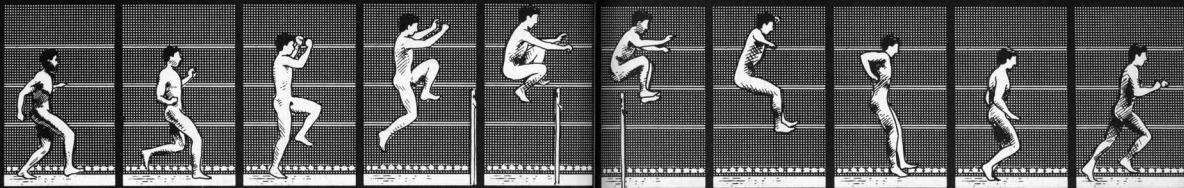


HOW, IN BRIGHT AND WITTY
 SOCIETY, ONE SHOULD BE
 SEATED IN ORDER TO
 TALK THEATRES, CASINOS,
 AND THE LATEST NOW-
 SENSE IN GENERAL.

HOW, IF A SUPERIOR MAKEA
 JOKE, ONE JUMPS UP WITH
 A ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

WITHIN
 A FEW YEARS,
 HOWEVER,
MOTION WAS A
HOT TOPIC
INDEED!





COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO CAPTURE MOTION THROUGH SCIENCE!



BY 1880, INVENTORS THE WORLD OVER KNEW THAT "MOVING PICTURES" WERE JUST AROUND THE CORNER. EVERYONE WANTED TO BE FIRST!

MY STROBOSCOPE IS SUPERIOR IN EVERY WAY TO THE OBSOLETE ZOETROPE!

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU! MERE TOYS NEXT TO THE AWESOME PHANTASMATROPE!



FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOÖPRAXINOSCOPE WILL--!

EVENTUALLY THOMAS EDISON THAT OLD SCALLYWAG, FILED THE FIRST PATENT ON A PROCESS USING STRIPS OF CLEAR PLASTIC PHOTOS AND FILM WAS OFF AND RUNNING!



IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD--



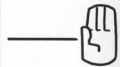
-- FILLED WITH MOTION --



-- THEN BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!



DUCHAMP, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE IDEA OF MOTION THAN THE SENSATION, WOULD EVENTUALLY REDUCE SUCH CONCEPTS AS MOTION TO A SINGLE LINE.



AS THE MOVING PICTURE BEGAN ITS SPECTACULAR RISE, A FEW OF THE MORE RADICAL PAINTERS OF THE DAY EXPLORED THE IDEA THAT MOTION COULD BE DEPICTED BY A SINGLE IMAGE ON CANVAS.

THE FUTURISTS IN ITALY AND MARCEL DUCHAMP IN FRANCE BEGAN THE SYSTEMATIC DECOMPOSITION OF MOVING IMAGES IN A STATIC MEDIUM.



Girl Running on a Balcony by Bata



Nude Descending a Staircase #2 by Duchamp

IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!



DUCHAMP SOON MOVED ON, THE FUTURISTS DISBANDED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY LOST INTEREST IN THIS OTHER TYPE OF "MOVING PICTURE."

BUT THROUGHOUT THIS SAME PERIOD ANOTHER MEDIUM, LESS CONSPICUOUSLY, HAD BEEN INVESTIGATING THIS SAME AREA.



I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEAN!





FROM ITS *EARLIEST DAYS*, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A *STATIC MEDIUM*.

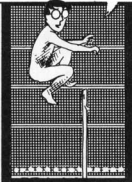
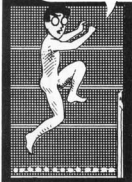


HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?

AND IN COMICS, UNLIKE PAINTING, IT WAS MORE THAN JUST A *THEORETICAL QUESTION!*



THOUGH SEQUENTIAL ART SURVIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES *WITHOUT* DEPICTING MOTION, ONCE THE GENIE WAS OUT OF THE BOTTLE IT WAS PERHAPS *INEVITABLE* THAT MORE AND MORE EFFICIENT MEANS WOULD BE SOUGHT. AT FIRST, THIS SEARCH CENTERED ON *MULTIPLE IMAGES* IN SEQUENCE.



BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *SOUND*--

SMILE!

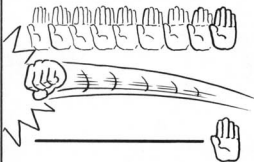
PAF!



--SO TOO CAN A SINGLE PANEL REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *PICTURES!*



SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE FUTURISTS' *DYNAMIC* MOVEMENT AND DUCHAMP'S *DIAGRAMMATIC CONCEPT* OF MOVEMENT LIES COMICS' *"MOTION LINE."*



IN THE BEGINNING, MOTION LINES--OR "ZIP-RIBBONS" AS SOME CALL THEM--WERE *WILD, MESSY*, ALMOST *DESPERATE* ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT THE PATHS OF MOVING OBJECTS THROUGH SPACE.



OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE *REFINED AND STYLIZED*, EVEN *DIAGRAMMATIC*.



EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF *HEROIC FANTASY* ARTISTS LIKE *BILL EVERETT* AND *JACK KIRBY*--



--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME *SO* STYLIZED AS TO ALMOST HAVE A *LIFE* AND *PHYSICAL PRESENCE* ALL THEIR OWN!





BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY TO DEPICT ACTION WITH **DRAMA**, SUCH **CONSPICUOUS ACTION LINES** HAVE BEEN AN **AMERICAN SPECIALTY** FOR YEARS.

IN THIS APPROACH, BOTH THE **MOVING OBJECT** AND THE **BACKGROUNDS** ARE DRAWN IN A **CLEAR, ARTICULATED STYLE**, AND THE **PATH OF MOTION** IS IMPOSED **OVER** THE SCENE.



OTHER ARTISTS TRIED **ADDITIONAL EFFECTS** SUCH AS **MULTIPLE IMAGES** OF THE SUBJECT, ATTEMPTING TO INVOLVE THE READER MORE **DEEPLY** IN THE ACTION.*



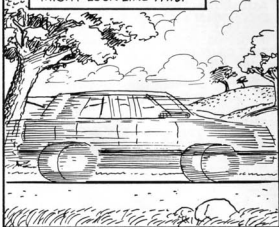
STILL OTHERS, SUCH AS MARVEL'S **GENE COLAN**, BEGAN INCORPORATING PHOTOGRAPHIC **STREAKING** EFFECTS WITH SOME **INTRIGUING RESULTS** IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES.

* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*, WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE, AN INTERESTING *BLURRING* EFFECT OCCURS.



A CAR GOING AT 60 MPH MIGHT LOOK LIKE *THIS*.



BUT IF THE CAMERA MOVES *WITH* THE MOVING OBJECT, THAT OBJECT WILL REMAIN *FOCUSED* WHILE THE *BACKGROUND* WILL NOW BE *STREAKED*.



AMERICAN COMICS ARTISTS TOOK LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THIS KIND OF *PHOTOGRAPHIC TRICKERY*.



AND IN *EUROPE* WHERE MOTION LINES WERE USED ONLY *SPARINGLY*, IT WAS LIKEWISE IGNORED.



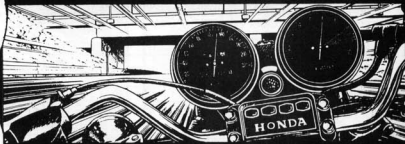
BUT IN *JAPAN*, ONCE AGAIN, A VERY *DIFFERENT* COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS *THEIR OWN!*



"SUBJECTIVE MOTION," AS I CALL IT, OPERATES ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF **OBSERVING** A MOVING OBJECT CAN BE INVOLVING, **BEING** THAT OBJECT SHOULD BE **MORE** SO.

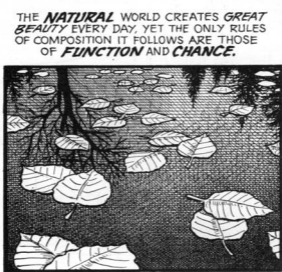
JAPANESE ARTISTS, STARTING IN THE LATE 60's, BEGAN PUTTING THEIR READERS "IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT" WITH PANELS LIKE THESE.

AND STARTING IN THE **MID-EIGHTIES**, A FEW AMERICAN ARTISTS BEGAN TO ADOPT THE EFFECT IN THEIR OWN WORK, UNTIL BY THE EARLY **NINETIES** IT HAS BECOME FAIRLY COMMON.



ARE THESE THE **ONLY** WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A **SINGLE** PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.





AS WE'VE SEEN, THE INTERACTION OF *TIME* AND *COMICS* GENERALLY LEADS US TO ONE OF TWO SUBJECTS: **SOUND** OR **MOTION**.



SOUND BREAKS DOWN INTO *TWO* SUBSETS: **WORD BALLOONS** AND **SOUND EFFECTS**.



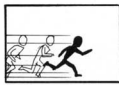
BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE **DURATION** OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND *ITSELF* AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF **ACTION** AND **REACTION**.



MOTION ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO *TWO* SUBSETS. THE **FIRST** TYPE-- **PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE**-- WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN **CHAPTER**.



THE **OTHER** TYPE -- **MOTION WITHIN** PANELS-- CAN BE **FURTHER** DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT **STYLES**. I'VE COVERED THE ONES I KNOW, BUT THERE MAY BE MANY **OTHERS**. TIME WILL TELL.



THE WORKINGS OF **TIME** IN **COMICS** SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS--



I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT MAKES COMICS "TICK" FOR YEARS AND I'M STILL AMAZED BY THE STRANGENESS OF IT ALL.

SNAP!

SNAP!

CRASH!

BUT NO MATTER HOW BIZARRE THE WORKINGS OF TIME IN COMICS IS--

--THE FACE IT PRESENTS TO THE READER--

-- IS ONE OF SIMPLE NORMALITY.

CLAK

OR THE ILLUSION OF IT, ANYWAY.

ALL DEPENDS ON YOUR FRAME OF MIND.