



# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."

—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

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WRITING AND ART  
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LETTERING  
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EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS  
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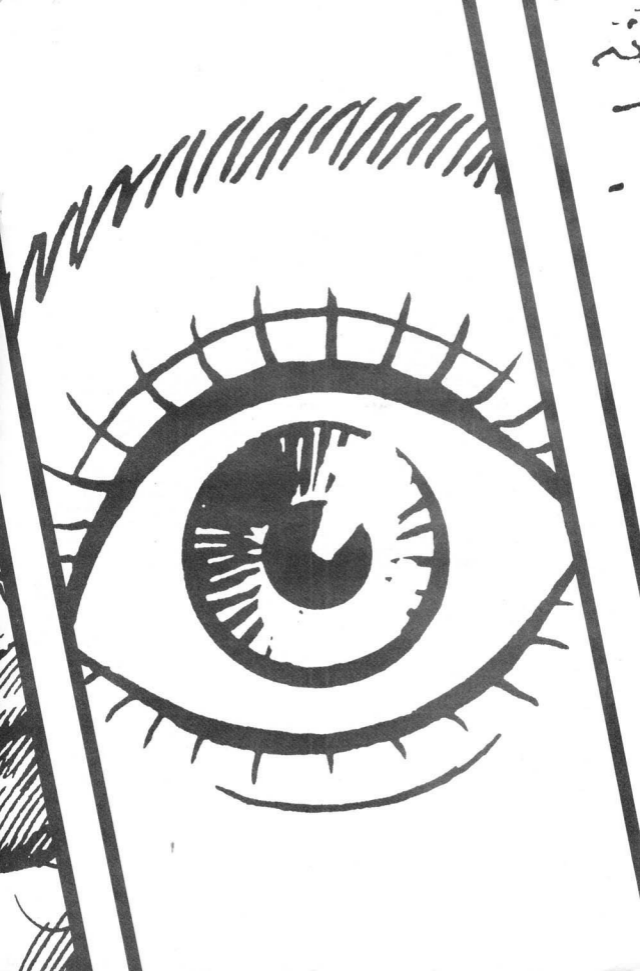
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The book you're about to read took 15 months to produce and many of the ideas it contains had been on the back-burner for over nine years, so acknowledging all of those who have helped in its development may be next to impossible. Furthermore, since its initial publication in the comics industry, I've received tremendous support from hundreds of fellow travelers in all corners of the publishing world. My apologies to anyone who is not listed below and should have been.

My deepest gratitude to Steve Bissette, Kurt Busiek, Neil Gaiman, Larry Marder and Ivy Ratafia who all reviewed my original draft in detail and offered many valuable critiques. Their contribution to the project cannot be overstated. I was also fortunate to receive detailed analysis from the talented Jennifer Lee and beyond-the-call-of-duty proofreading and good advice from Bob Lappan. Special thanks are also due to the magnificent (and magnanimous) Will Eisner who offered many words of encouragement and excellent advice in the project's later stages. Will Eisner's work has been an inspiration to me, and to thousands of artists, for many years. Eisner's *COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART* was the first book to examine the art-form of comics. Here's the second. I couldn't have done it without you, Will. Thanks.

I'm deeply indebted to all of the friends and family who offered their thoughts on the manuscript as it was being prepared. Among this long list are Holly Ratafia, Alice Harrigan, Carol Ratafia, Barry Deutsch, Kip Manley, Amy Sacks, Caroline Woolf, Clarence Cummins, Karl Zimmerman, Catherine Bell, Adam Philips and the legendary Dewan Brothers, Ted and Brian.

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endorsements to the project. I'm particularly indebted to Jim Valentino, Dave Sim and Keith Giffen who used their own books as a forum on my behalf. In the retail sector, my thanks to the generous members of the Direct Line Group, to the many stores which played host during our first tour and especially to the Mighty Moondog himself, Gary Colobuono. Thanks, as always, to Larry Marder, Nexus of All Comic Book Realities, for his tireless efforts on my behalf.

Thank you to the legion of journalists in print, radio and television who have been able to talk about this book without quoting sound effects from the old Batman TV show; especially Calvin Reid and the whole gang at PW.

Early influences on the ideas in this book are harder to trace, but no less important. Kurt Busiek introduced me to comics long ago and was my best guide for many years. Eclipse Editor-in-Chief cat ironwode helped shape my critical faculties over seven years on ZOT! and is one of the very few people in comics who really understood where I was coming from. Art Spiegelman, like Eisner, offered me a role-model for serious inquiry into comics as an art-form and, in his short comics-essay "Cracking Jokes," clarified comics' potential for non-fiction and made this book a possibility. Other important early influences include Syracuse professor Larry Bakke, Richard Howell and Carol Kalish.

My thanks to all the fine people at Tundra Publishing, Kitchen Sink Press and HarperCollins.

Without Kevin Eastman this book might have never seen the light of day. Thank you, Kevin.

Without Ian Ballantine, you wouldn't be holding it in your hands today. Thank you, Ian.

And without you, Ivy, it wouldn't have been much fun. I love you madly. Let's take tomorrow off.



Scott McCloud







# 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

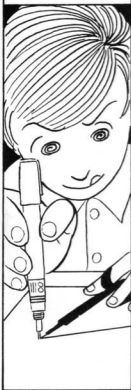


# CHAPTER ONE

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.



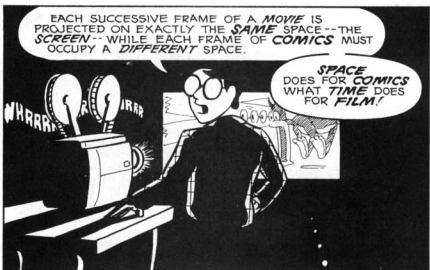
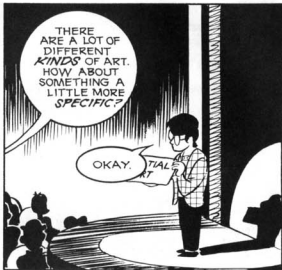
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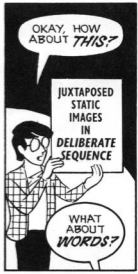
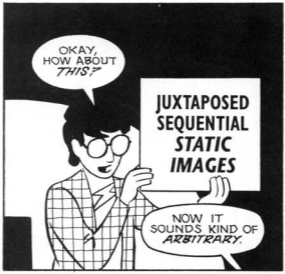
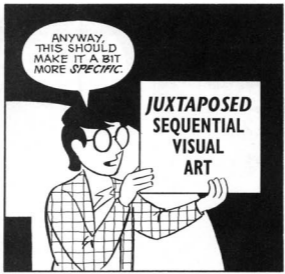
--FOR THE MESSENGER.

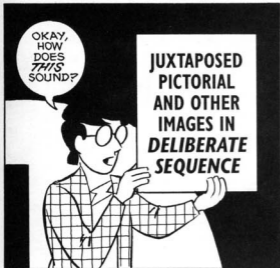


\* EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

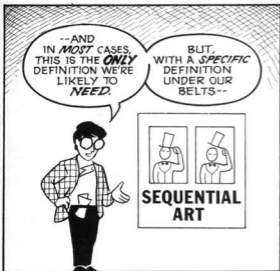


\*JUXTAPOSED= ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE. GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.





**com-ics** (kŏm'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 Hippity Hop, Hippity Hop. **4.** Corruptor of our Nation's Youth. **com-ing** (kŏm'ing) **adj.**





ACTUALLY,  
A LOT  
FARTHER!

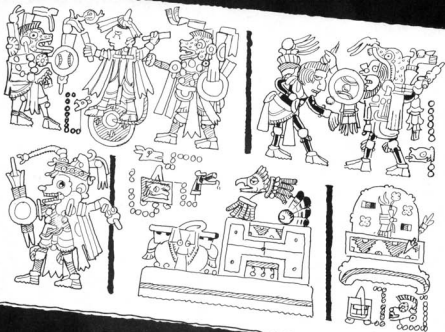
1500

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

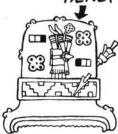
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE  
NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

THE YEAR: 1049 AD

THE DATE: MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

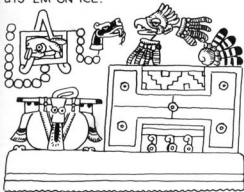
THE PLACE: **HERE!**



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

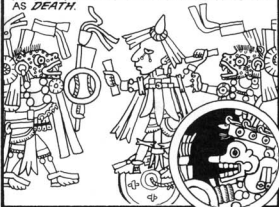


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER  
BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING"  
AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND  
PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

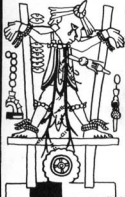


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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 1066

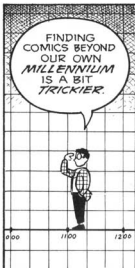
BISHOP ODIN ENCOURAGES HIS SOLDIERS

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?**

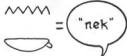


JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE ?

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.**



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."

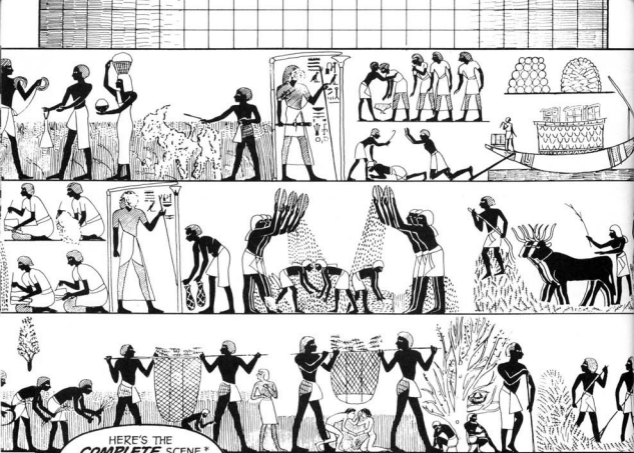
EGYPTIAN *PAINTING* IS *ANOTHER MATTER*. SOME, LIKE THIS, MAY *SEEM* TO BE CONCERNED WITH SEQUENCE, BUT ARE ACTUALLY SHOWING TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, EVENTS AND CASTS, GROUPED ONLY BY *SUBJECT*.

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

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

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

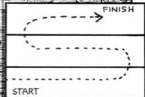




HERE'S THE COMPLETE SCENE\* PAINTED OVER THIRTY-TWO CENTURIES AGO FOR THE TOMB OF "MENNA," AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SCRIBE.

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



WITH THE INVENTION OF PRINTING\*, THE ART-FORM WHICH HAD BEEN A DIVERSION OF THE RICH AND POWERFUL NOW COULD BE ENJOYED BY EVERYONE!



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--



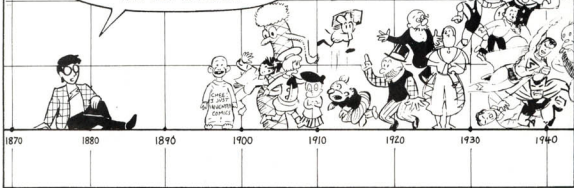
-- HAD CREATED AND MASTERED A FORM WHICH WAS AT ONCE *BOTH* AND *NEITHER*.



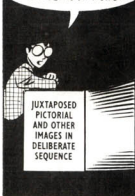
A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.



BRITISH CARICATURE MAGAZINES KEPT THE TRADITIONS ALIVE AND AS THE 20<sup>TH</sup> 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.

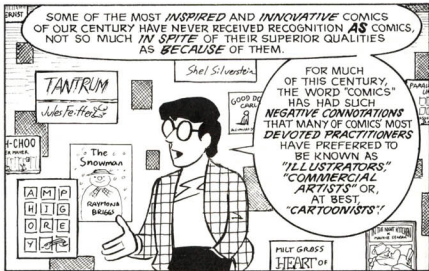


BUT EVEN IN **THIS** CENTURY, OUR DEFINITION CAN HELP TO ILLUMINATE THE WORKS OF SOME UNSUNG HEROES.



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.

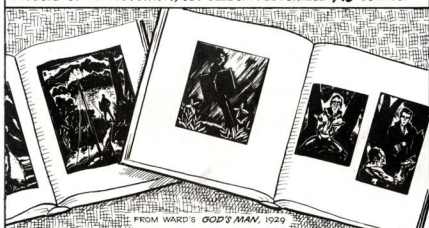


FOR MUCH OF THIS CENTURY, THE WORD "COMICS" HAS HAD SUCH **NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS** THAT MANY OF COMICS' MOST **DEVOTED PRACTITIONERS** HAVE PREFERRED TO BE KNOWN AS "**ILLUSTRATORS**," "**COMMERCIAL ARTISTS**" OR, AT BEST, "**CARTOONISTS**!"

AND SO, COMICS' LOW SELF-ESTEEM IS **SELF-PERPETUATING!** THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE NECESSARY TO **COUNTERACT** COMICS' NEGATIVE IMAGE IS OBTAINED **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 20<sup>TH</sup> 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!



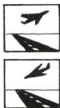
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE *PHOTOGRAPHY* FROM OUR DEFINITION, THEN HALF OF *AMERICA* HAS BEEN IN COMICS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.



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.



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!**



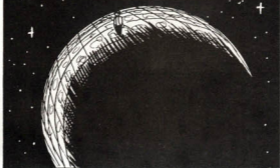


THOSE OF YOU WHO **MAKE** COMICS FOR A LIVING -- OR WOULD **LIKE** TO, SOMEDAY -- PROBABLY KNOW THAT KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE **ADVANCES** IN TODAY'S COMICS IS A **FULL-TIME JOB**.

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?









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.



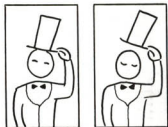
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



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	⊕	↔	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.



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."**

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



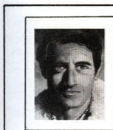
REALITY THIS WAY.





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?

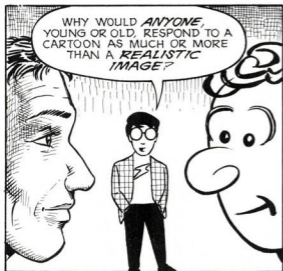
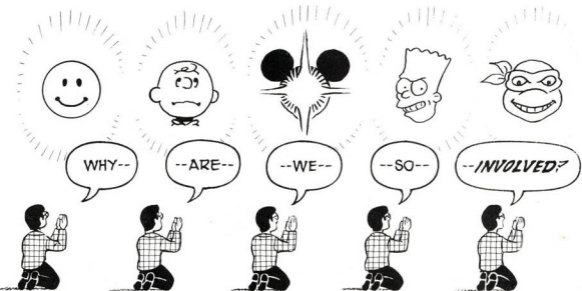
AS WE CONTINUE  
TO ABSTRACT AND  
**SIMPLIFY**  
OUR IMAGE,  
WE ARE MOVING FURTHER  
AND FURTHER FROM THE  
**"REAL"** FACE OF THE  
PHOTO.



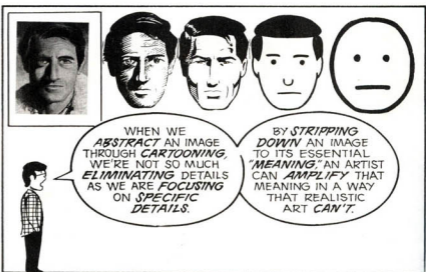
WHAT  
IS THE SECRET  
OF THE ICON  
WE CALL--

--THE  
**CARTOON?**





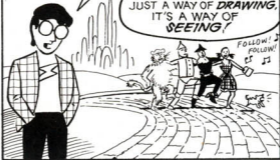
*DEFINING* THE CARTOON WOULD TAKE UP AS MUCH SPACE AS *DEFINING COMICS*, BUT FOR *NOW*, I'M GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF *AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION*.



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*.

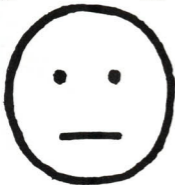


BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE* AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE--WHICH WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.



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!*

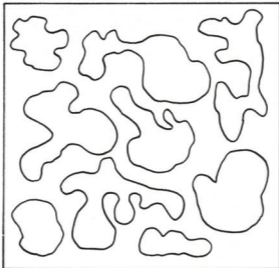


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

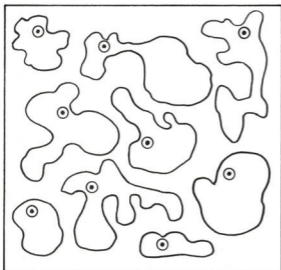


ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE **CLOSED CURVES**. BUT **OTHERWISE** CAN BE AS **WEIRD** AND **IRREGULAR** AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

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



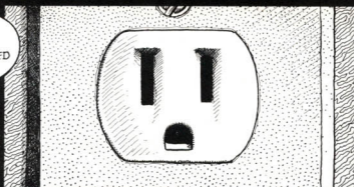
**NOW**-- YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY **LOOK** LIKE, EVERY SINGLE **ONE** OF THOSE SHAPES **CAN** BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



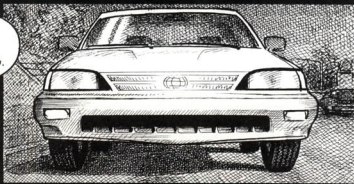
YOUR MIND HAS NO TROUBLE AT ALL CONVERTING SUCH SHAPES INTO FACES, YET WOULD IT EVER MISTAKE **THIS**--



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.



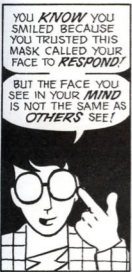
BUT  
NEVER  
BY *YOU.*



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--



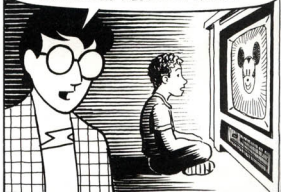
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER*.

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



--YOU SEE *YOURSELF*

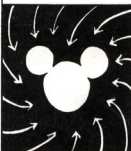
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS*, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION*, *SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY *CARTOON* CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE *CARTOON* IS A *VACUUM* INTO WHICH OUR *IDENTITY* AND *AWARENESS* 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?



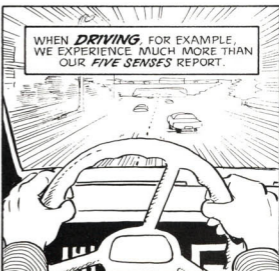
THERE'S **MORE**, TOO!



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



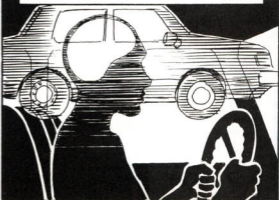
WHEN **DRIVING**, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR **FIVE SENSES** REPORT.



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



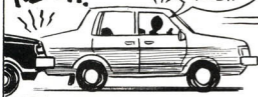
THE VEHICLE BECOMES AN **EXTENSION** OF OUR BODY. IT **ABSORBS** OUR SENSE OF **IDENTITY**. WE **BECOME** THE CAR.



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

**KLUNK!**

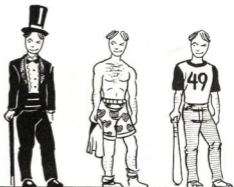
**HEY!  
HE HIT  
ME!!**



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*...



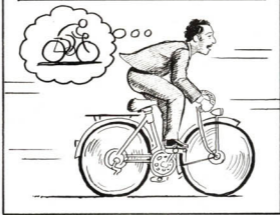
PIECES OF GLASS TO BECOME *EYES*.



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



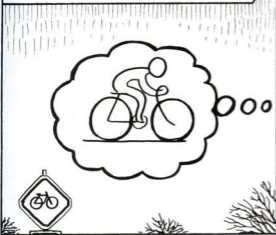
-- FLOWS *OUTWARD* TO INCLUDE THE OBJECT OF OUR *EXTENDED IDENTITY*.



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

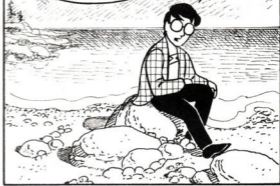


--SO TOO IS OUR AWARENESS OF *THESE* EXTENSIONS GREATLY *SIMPLIFIED*.



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--

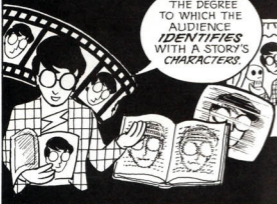


--ARE A *FAR* CRY FROM *PHOTO-REALISTS*!

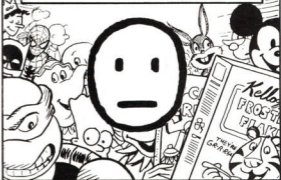


STORYTELLERS IN *ALL* MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF *AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT*--

--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--



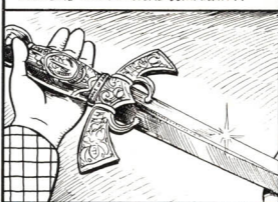
--DUE TO THE "*LIFE*" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY *CARTOON* IDENTITY!/"



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



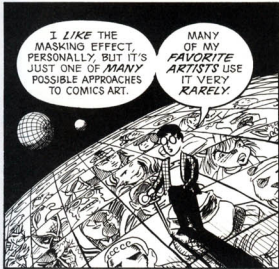
IN JAPANESE COMICS, THE *SWORD* MIGHT *NOW* BECOME VERY *REALISTIC*, NOT ONLY TO SHOW US THE DETAILS, BUT TO MAKE US AWARE OF THE *SWORD* AS AN *OBJECT*, SOMETHING WITH *WEIGHT*, *TEXTURE* AND *PHYSICAL* COMPLEXITY.



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*.

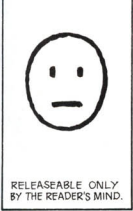


THE PLATONIC IDEAL OF THE CARTOON MAY SEEM TO OMIT MUCH OF THE *AMBIGUITY* AND *COMPLEX CHARACTERIZATION* WHICH ARE THE HALLMARKS OF *MODERN LITERATURE*, LEAVING THEM SUITABLE ONLY FOR *CHILDREN*.

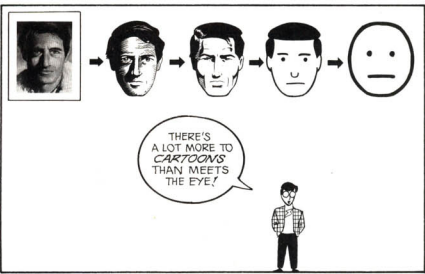
BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.

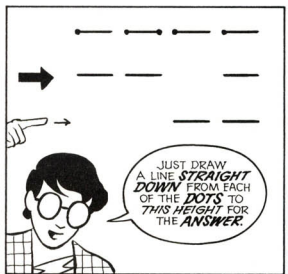
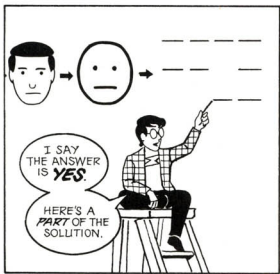
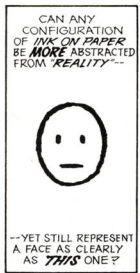
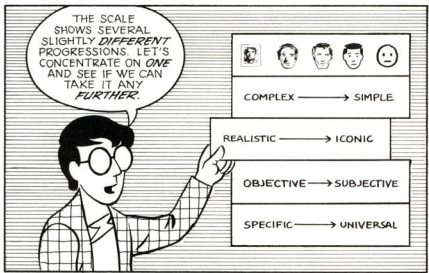
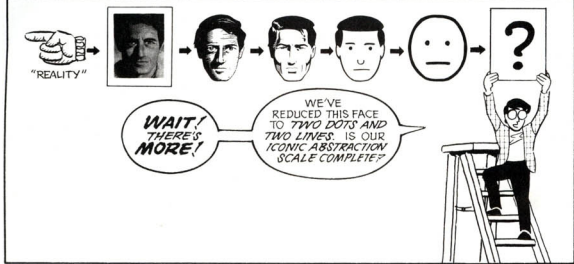


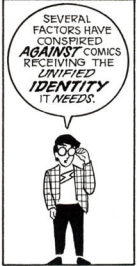
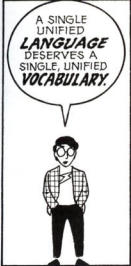
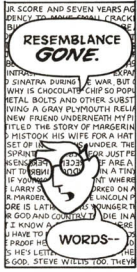
AND *LIKE* THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.



RELEASEABLE ONLY BY THE READER'S MIND.





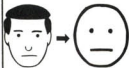


BOTH ARTIST AND WRITER BEGIN, HANDS JOINED ACROSS THE GAP, WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO MAKE COMICS OF "QUALITY"



"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.

*The youth's good looks  
so gay'd  
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?**

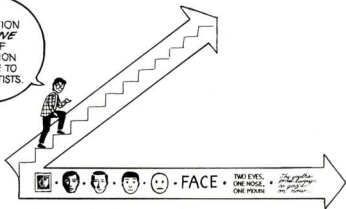


I SAY THE ANSWER IS **YES**, BUT SINCE THE REASONS BELONG IN A **DIFFERENT CHAPTER**, WE'LL HAVE TO COME BACK TO THIS **LATER**.





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?"*

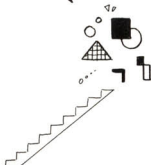


EARNING  
THE REPLY  
"IT *MEANS*  
WHAT IT  
*IS!*"

IN  
THIS  
CASE--



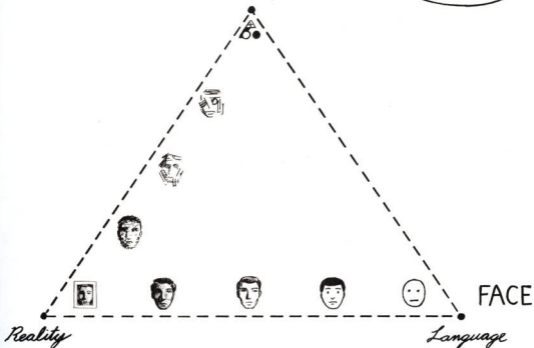
--INK  
ON  
PAPER.



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 Banish 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-CRUMB. 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 34. 17. JEFF WOKORON art for Scott Russo's JIZZ. 18. ROLF STARK's expressive RAIN. 19. SPAIN'S TRASHMAN. 20. FRANK MILLER in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Batman © D.C. Comics. Batman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MESSMER-LEBER's Wolverine MacMillan art 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. © Chetnas 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 picto 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 TRUCKS © 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

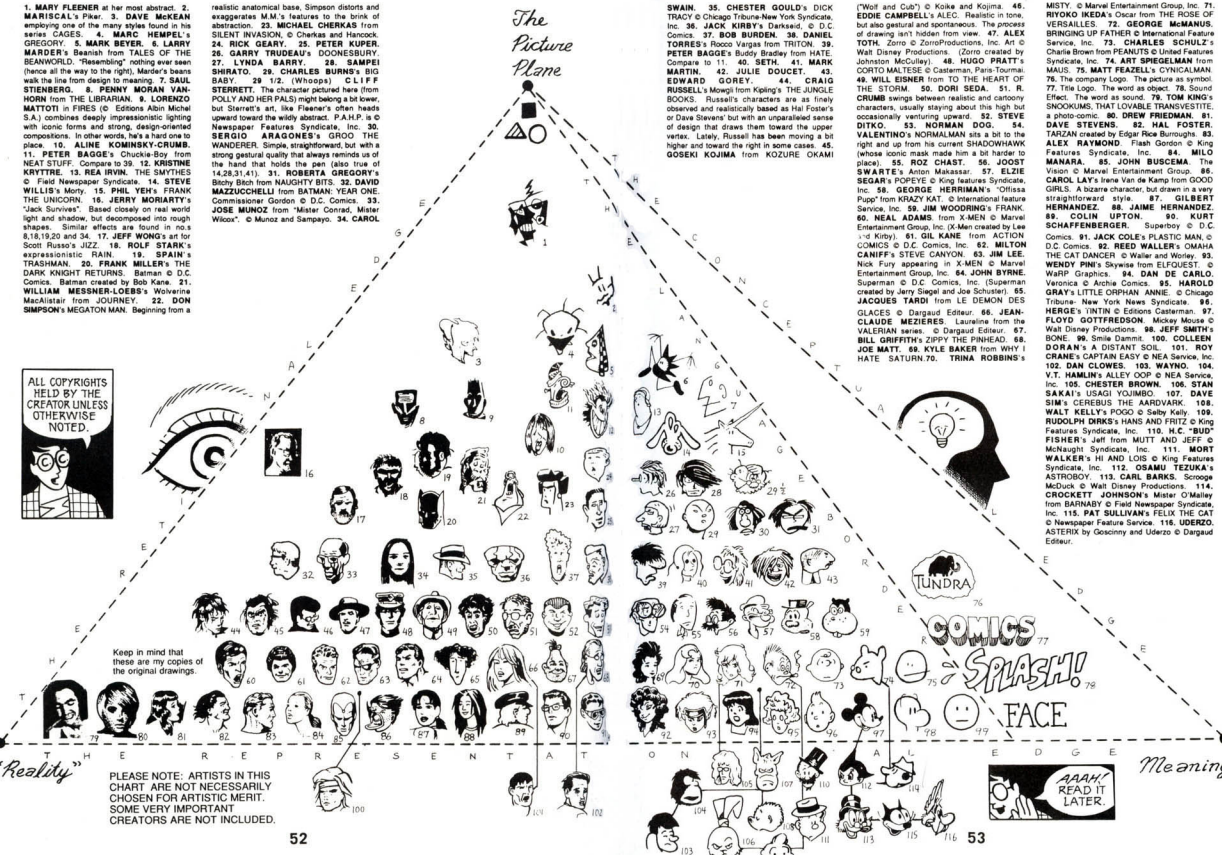
"(Wall and Cub)" © Kake and Kojima. 46. EDDIE CAMPBELL's ALC. Realistic to core, but drawing left and spontaneous. The process of drawing isn't hidden from view. 47. ALEX TOTH. Zoro © ZoroProductions, Inc. Art © Walt Disney Productions. (Zoro created by Johnston McCuller). 48. HUGO PRATT's CORTO MALTESE © Castelman, Fina-Tourmal. 49. WILL EISNER from TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. 50. DORI SEDA. 51. R. CRUMB 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 SHADOWBARK (whose iconic mask made a bit harder to place). 55. ROY CHAST. 56. JOOST SWARTE's Anton Makassat. 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. (X-Men 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. Laureline 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.

"Meaning"

COMICS  
SPASH!  
FACE

AAA!  
READ IT LATER.

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



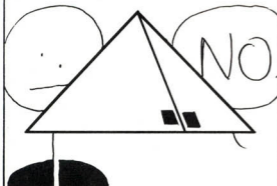
EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A *RANGE* OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY *SEVERAL* PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



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*:



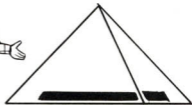
BUT OTHERS RANGE *CONSIDERABLY* FROM ONE END OF THE CHART TO THE OTHER.



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



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.

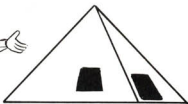
HEY!! COME TA THINK OF IT... WHAT ABOUT THAT WALKIN' TIME BOMB??

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

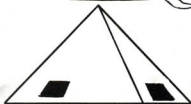


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)  
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

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.

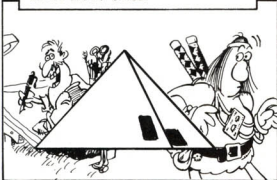


IRONIC THAT THE TWO BASTIONS OF *CARTOONY* ART ARE *UNDERGROUND* AND *CHILDREN'S* COMICS!

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"





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.

SMILE!  
PAF!



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--

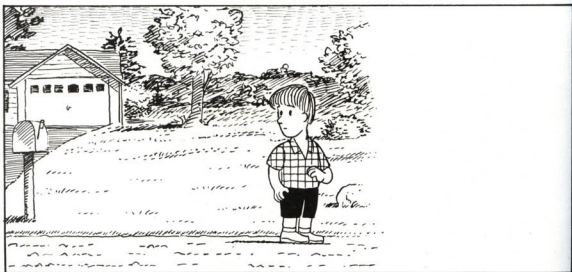
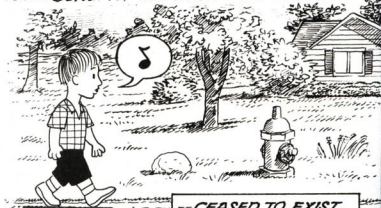
-- IS ANYONE'S GUESS.



# 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*.



Peek-A-Boo!



Peek-A-Boo!



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

IT'S  
CALLED  
**CLOSURE.**



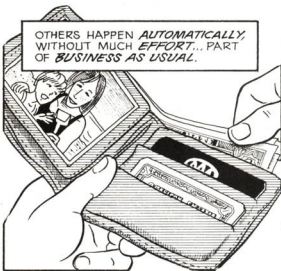
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN  
COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY  
COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS  
*INCOMPLETE* BASED ON *PAST*  
*EXPERIENCE.*



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



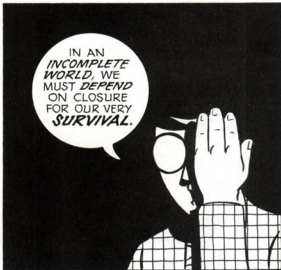
OTHERS HAPPEN *AUTOMATICALLY*,  
WITHOUT MUCH *EFFORT*... PART  
OF *BUSINESS AS USUAL.*



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!!*"



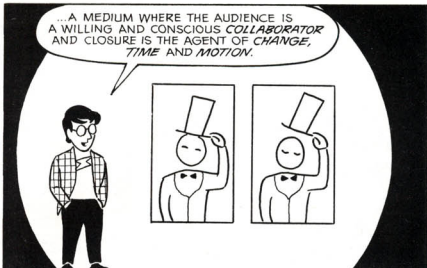
BETWEEN SUCH  
*AUTOMATIC*  
*ELECTRONIC*  
CLOSURE AND THE  
SIMPLER CLOSURE  
OF *EVERYDAY*  
*LIFE--*



-- 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*.



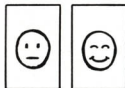
BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO *CONNECT* THESE MOMENTS AND *MENTALLY CONSTRUCT* A *CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY*.

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*...





**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.

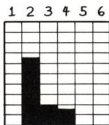




AND SINCE **ALL** OF THE REMAINING TRANSITIONS ARE FROM **SCENE-TO-SCENE**, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING **BREAKDOWN**.

1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

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



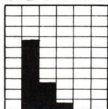
THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** STORY TELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT **KIRBY**, BUT IS HE **UNIQUE** IN THIS RESPECT?

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

NOW, HERGÉ'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 & MEZHECS

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & PLOEBIUS

"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

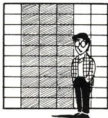
4

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

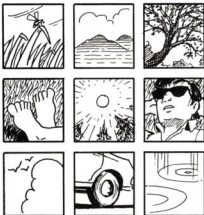


1.

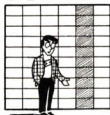


2.

-- 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"



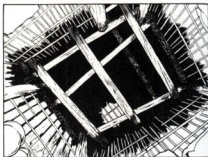
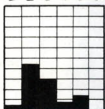
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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.

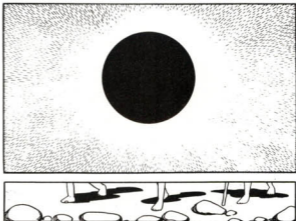


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR *FOUR PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGÉ.

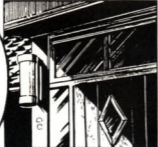


5

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.**

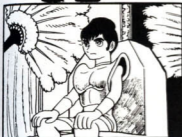


水は夜の  
古寺に  
いて  
みる  
こと  
にした



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

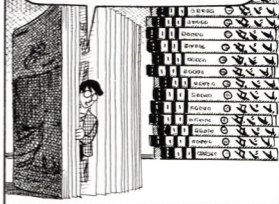


PHOENIX  
OSAMU TEZUKA

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.



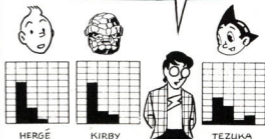
AS SUCH, DOZENS OF PANELS CAN BE DEVOTED TO PORTRAYING SLOW CINEMATIC MOVEMENT OR TO SETTING A MOOD.



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.

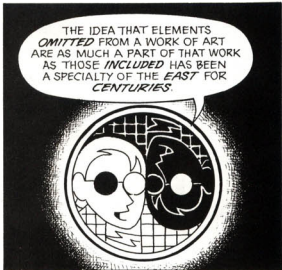


HERGÉ

KIRBY

TEZUKA





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

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!*

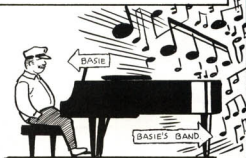


"THE GREAT WAVE OFF KANAGAWA" BY HOKUSAI (c.1829)  
(TURN THIS PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN TO SEE THE OTHER  
WAVE OF NEGATIVE SPACE...NATURE'S *YIN AND YANG.*)

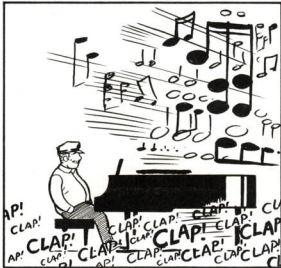


IN THE LAST *CENTURY* OR TWO, AS  
*WESTERN* CULTURAL INFLUENCES SWEEPED  
THE *EAST*, SO TOO HAVE *EASTERN* AND  
*AFRICAN* IDEAS OF *FRAGMENTATION*  
AND *RHYTHM* SWEEPED THE *WEST.*

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







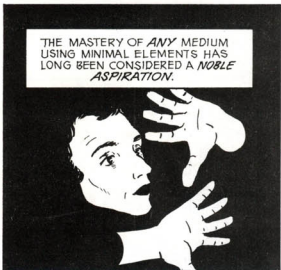
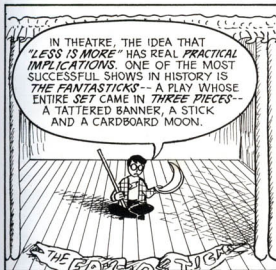
IN THE *VISUAL* ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.



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]

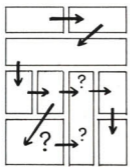


\* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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!**



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!



SEVERAL TIMES ON EVERY PAGE THE READER IS RELEASED--LIKE A TRAPEZE ARTIST--INTO THE OPEN AIR OF IMAGINATION...



...THEN CAUGHT BY THE OUTSTRETCHED ARMS OF THE EVER-PRESENT NEXT PANEL!



CAUGHT QUICKLY SO AS NOT TO LET THE READER FALL INTO CONFUSION OR BOREDOM.



BUT IS IT POSSIBLE THAT CLOSURE CAN BE SO MANAGED IN SOME CASES--



--THAT THE READER MIGHT LEARN TO FLY?



IN CHAPTER TWO, WE DISCUSSED VARIOUS TYPES OF ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC DRAWING STYLES.

DO THESE AFFECT CLOSURE?

I THINK THE ANSWER IS YES.



SINCE CARTOONS ALREADY EXIST AS CONCEPTS FOR THE READER, THEY TEND TO FLOW EASILY THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL TERRITORY BETWEEN PANELS.



IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER SEAMLESSLY.



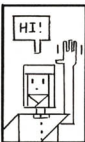
BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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**...



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.



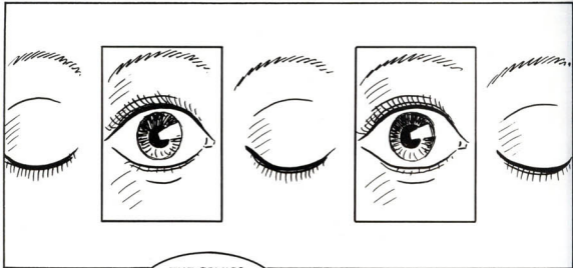
NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES OF DESIGN** THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.



-- 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.*



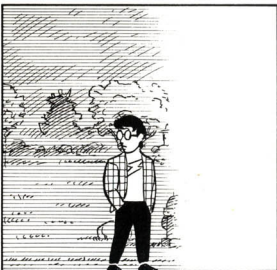
THIS DANCE IS *UNIQUE*  
TO COMICS. NO OTHER ARTFORM  
GIVES SO MUCH TO ITS AUDIENCE  
WHILE ASKING SO MUCH  
*FROM* THEM AS WELL.

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



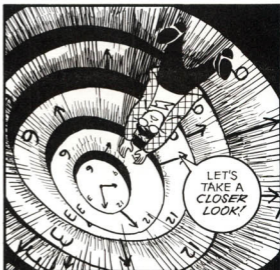
NAAH!  
OF COURSE  
NOT!

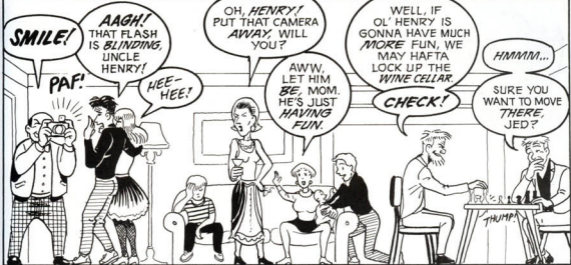


TIME IN COMICS IS *INFINITELY* WEIRDER THAN *THAT!*

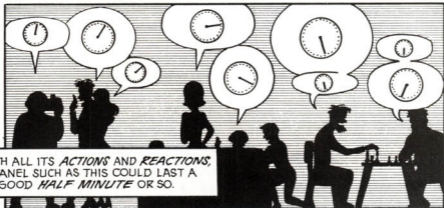


LET'S  
TAKE A  
CLOSER  
LOOK!





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**.





**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.*



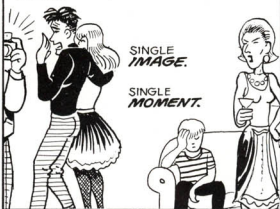
AND SINCE EACH  
FACE AND FIGURE  
IS DRAWN TO MATCH  
HIS/HER OWN  
*WORDS--*



--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.



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!



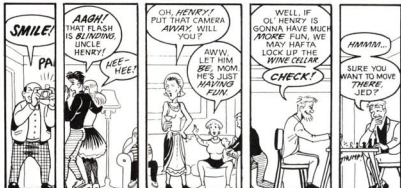
PERHAPS WE'VE BEEN TOO CONDITIONED BY PHOTOGRAPHY TO PERCEIVE SINGLE IMAGES AS *SINGLE MOMENTS*. AFTER ALL, IT DOES TAKE AN EYE *TIME* TO MOVE ACROSS SCENES IN *REAL LIFE*!



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.

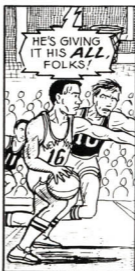


*ONE* PANEL, OPERATING AS *SEVERAL* PANELS.



NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.

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



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



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



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

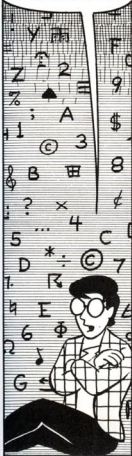




THESE ICONS WE CALL PANELS OR "FRAMES" HAVE NO **FIXED** OR **ABSOLUTE MEANING**, LIKE THE ICONS OF **LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION**.

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**.

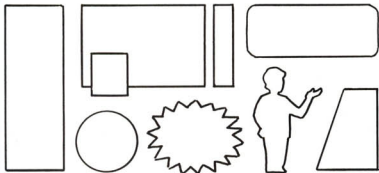


THE **DURATIONS** OF THAT **TIME** AND THE **DIMENSIONS** OF THAT **SPACE** ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE **CONTENTS** OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL *ITSELF*. \*



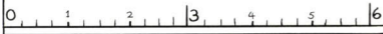
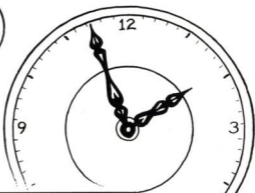
PANEL **SHAPES** VARY **CONSIDERABLY** THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "**MEANINGS**" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY **CAN** AFFECT THE READING **EXPERIENCE**.

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.**



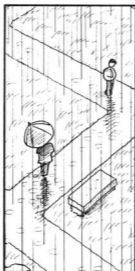
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE **CLASSIC RECTANGLE** IS USED MOST OFTEN.



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.

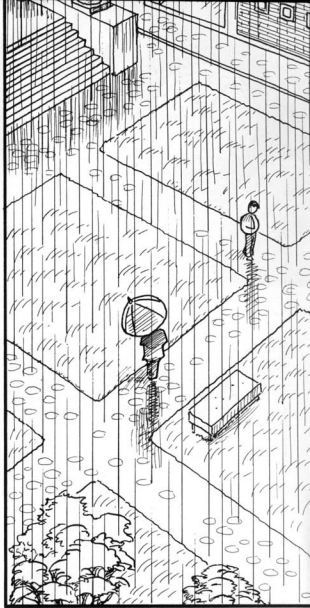


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH **FOLLOW** IT.



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!**



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.



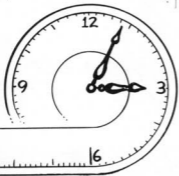
CONDITIONED AS WE ARE TO READ LEFT-TO-RIGHT AND UP-TO-DOWN, A MISCHIEVOUS CARTOONIST CAN PLAY ANY NUMBER OF TRICKS ON US.







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.

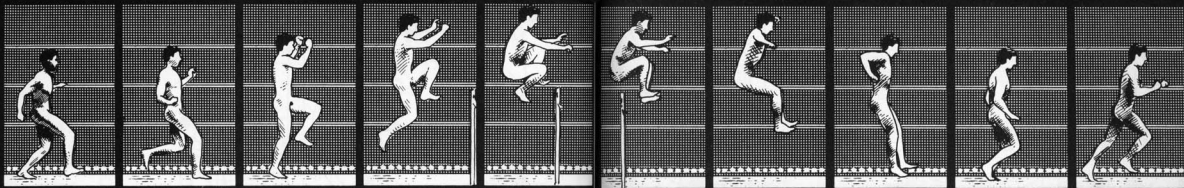


HOW, IN BRIGHT AND WITTY  
 SOCIETY, ONE SHOULD BE  
 SEATED IN ORDER TO  
 TALK THEATRES, CASINOS,  
 AND THE LATEST NOW-  
 SENSE IN GENERAL.

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 ZÖETROPE!

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU!

HA! CHILD'S PLAY! THEY ARE BUT MERE TOYS NEXT TO THE AWESOME PHANTASMATROPE!

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZÖOPRAXINOSCOPE 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--



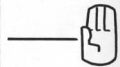
-- FILLED WITH MOTION--



-- 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*.

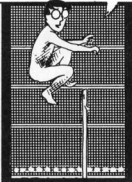
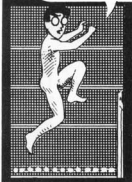


HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?

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!**

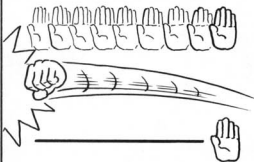
**PAF!**



--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*--

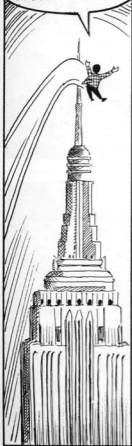


--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME *SO* STYLIZED AS TO ALMOST HAVE A *LIFE* AND *PHYSICAL PRESENCE ALL THEIR OWN!*





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.

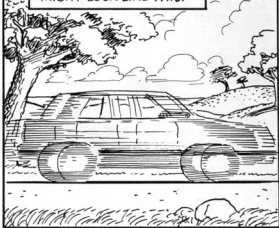


\* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

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.



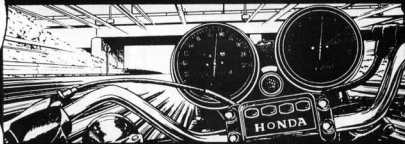
*BUT* IN *JAPAN*, ONCE AGAIN, A VERY *DIFFERENT* COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS *THEIR OWN!*



**"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.

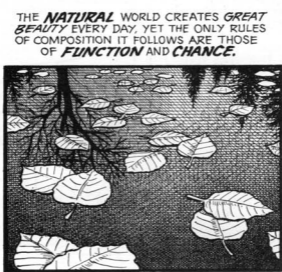
JAPANESE ARTISTS, STARTING IN THE LATE 60's, BEGAN PUTTING THEIR READERS "IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT" WITH PANELS LIKE THESE.

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**.



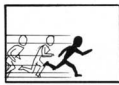
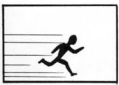
BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE **DURATION** OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND *ITSELF* AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF **ACTION** AND **REACTION**.



**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.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVING IN LINE.

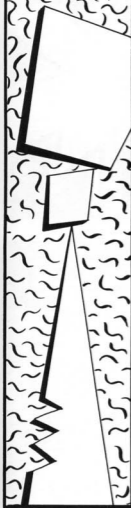
CAN  
EMOTIONS  
BE MADE  
*VISIBLE?*

IS THIS **ANGER?**

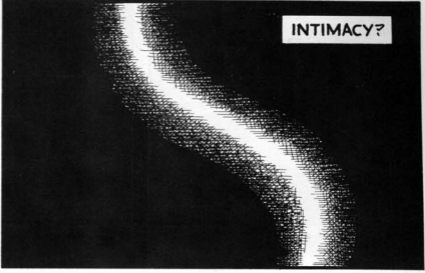
**JOY?**

**SERENITY?**

TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?

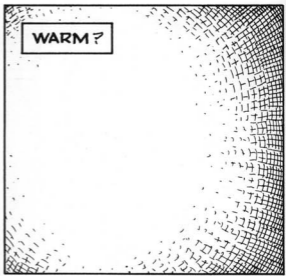
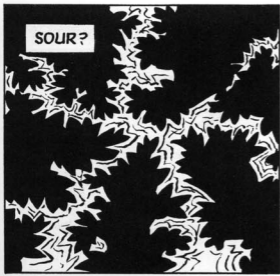
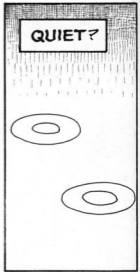
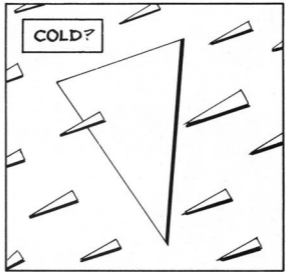
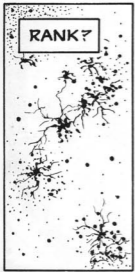
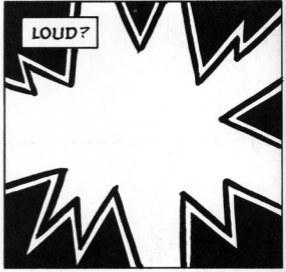


PRIDE?



ANXIETY?





THE IDEA THAT  
A PICTURE CAN EVOKE  
AN *EMOTIONAL* OR *SENSUAL*  
*RESPONSE* IN THE VIEWER  
IS VITAL TO THE ART  
OF COMICS.



SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.

IN CHAPTERS *THREE* AND *FOUR*  
WE INVESTIGATED THE VARIOUS WAYS  
TIME AND MOTION COULD BE PORTRAYED,  
BOTH *BETWEEN* PANELS, THROUGH  
*CLOSURE*--

--AND  
WITHIN A  
*SINGLE*  
PANEL OR  
IMAGE.



THE INVISIBLE  
WORLD OF SENSES  
AND EMOTIONS CAN  
*ALSO* BE  
PORTRAYED EITHER  
*BETWEEN* OR  
*WITHIN* PANELS.



WE'VE  
TOUCHED UPON THE  
*FORMER* CATEGORY  
IN *CHAPTER THREE*,  
BUT WHAT ABOUT  
THE *LATTER*?



CHOP!  
CHOP!  
CHOP!



HOW CAN A  
*SINGLE IMAGE*  
REPRESENT THE  
*SENSES* AND  
*EMOTIONS* AND  
HOW DOES THIS  
IDEA APPLY TO  
*COMICS*?



ONCE  
AGAIN WE  
CAN TURN TO  
THE WORLD  
OF "*FINE*  
*ARTS*" FOR  
SOME IDEAS.





IN THE *LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES*, SOMETHING KIND OF **SCARY** WAS GOING ON...



NO SOONER HAD THE *IMPRESSIONISTS* FINALLY CONVINCED THEIR PEERS THAT THE WORLD *THEY* SAW WAS THE WORLD AS IT IS **TRULY** SEEN --



--THAN ANOTHER **UNSEEN** WORLD BEGAN TO MAKE ITSELF **VISIBLE**.



THE SCREAM - 1895 LITHOGRAPH BY EDVARD MUNCH

IN THE WORKS OF *EDVARD MUNCH* AND *VINCENT VAN GOGH*, THE OBJECTIVE STUDY OF LIGHT SO PRIZED BY THE *IMPRESSIONIST MAINSTREAM* WAS BEING *ABANDONED* IN FAVOR OF A NEW, FRIGHTENINGLY **SUBJECTIVE** APPROACH



*EXPRESSIONISM*, AS IT CAME TO BE CALLED, DIDN'T START AS A *SCIENTIFIC* ART, BUT RATHER AS AN HONEST *EXPRESSION* OF THE INTERNAL TURMOIL THESE ARTISTS JUST COULD NOT *REPRESS*.



THE *SCIENCE* OF IT WASN'T FAR *BEHIND* THOUGH!



AS THE *NEW CENTURY* GOT UNDER WAY, *COOLER HEADS* SUCH AS *WASSILY KANDINSKY* TOOK *GREAT INTEREST* IN THE POWER OF *LINE, SHAPE AND COLOR* TO SUGGEST THE INNER STATE OF THE ARTIST **AND** TO PROVOKE THE *FIVE SENSES*.

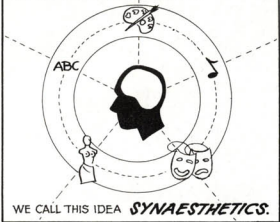
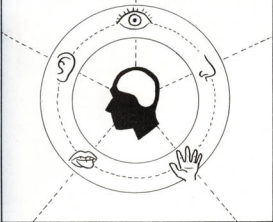
ANGRY REDS...  
PLACID BLUES...  
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...  
LOUD SHAPES...  
QUIET LINES...  
COLD GREENS...

THESE WERE  
STRANGE IDEAS  
IN 1912!



KANDINSKY AND HIS PEERS WERE SEARCHING FOR AN ART THAT MIGHT SOMEHOW **UNITE THE SENSES**--

-- AND IN *DOING SO*, UNITE THE DIFFERENT ARTFORMS WHICH **APEALED** TO THOSE DIFFERENT SENSES.



WE CALL THIS IDEA **SYNAESTHETICS**.

NOT *SURPRISING*, THEN, THAT SIMILAR IDEAS WERE EXPRESSED BY CREATORS IN *OTHER FIELDS* SUCH AS *RICHARD WAGNER* AND THE FRENCH POET *BAUDELAIRE*.

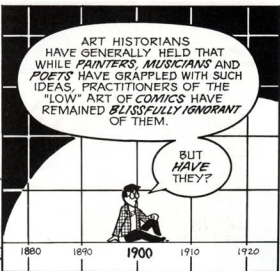
"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it *makes* visible."

— PAUL KLEE  
PAINTER,  
TEACHER,  
CARTOONIST.



ART HISTORIANS HAVE GENERALLY HELD THAT WHILE *PAINTERS, MUSICIANS AND POETS* HAVE GRAPPLED WITH SUCH IDEAS, PRACTITIONERS OF THE "LOW" ART OF *COMICS* HAVE REMAINED **BLISSFULLY IGNORANT** OF THEM.

BUT  
HAVE  
THEY?





IN SURVEYING A *CENTURY* OF COMICS, ONE FINDS CREATORS LIKE THE UNDERGROUND'S *RORY HAYES*, WHO ARE *BLATANTLY EXPRESSIONISTIC*. BUT SUCH ARTISTS ARE *FEW AND FAR BETWEEN*.



MOST HAVE WORKED IN A FAIRLY *STRAIGHTFORWARD STYLE*. *ICONIC*, MAYBE, BUT NOT FILLED WITH THE EXPRESSIVE LINES OF A *MUNCH* OR THE COLORS OF A *VAN GOGH*.



CAN WE SAY, THEREFORE, THAT ONE OF THESE TWO CREATORS IS EXPRESSING MOOD AND EMOTION AND THE OTHER IS *NOT*? OR DOES THE DIFFERENCE LIE IN *WHAT* IS BEING EXPRESSED?



PEANUTS



CHARLES SCHULZ

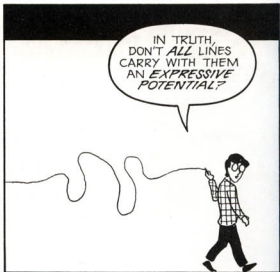
IF *THESE LINES* ARE EXPRESSIVE OF *FEAR, ANXIETY* AND *MADNESS*--



--THEN COULDN'T *THESE LINES* BE SAID TO PORTRAY *CALM, REASON* AND *INTROSPECTION*?



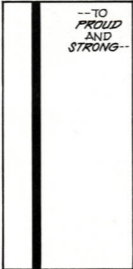
IN TRUTH, DON'T *ALL LINES* CARRY WITH THEM AN *EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL*?



BY DIRECTION  
ALONE, A LINE  
MAY GO FROM  
PASSIVE AND  
TIMELESS--



--TO  
*PROUD*  
AND  
STRONG--



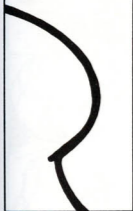
--TO  
*DYNAMIC*  
AND  
CHANGING!



BY ITS  
SHAPE, IT  
CAN BE  
*UNWELCOMING*  
AND SEVERE--



--OR  
*WARM*  
AND GENTLE--



--OR  
*RATIONAL*  
AND  
CONSERVATIVE.



BY ITS  
CHARACTER  
IT MAY SEEM  
*SAVAGE* AND  
*DEADLY*--



--OR *WEAK*  
AND *UNSTABLE*--



--OR *HONEST*  
AND *DIRECT*.



THE MOST BLAND "EXPRESSIONLESS"  
LINES ON *EARTH* CAN'T HELP BUT  
CHARACTERIZE THEIR SUBJECT  
IN SOME WAY.



AND WHILE FEW  
COMIC ARTISTS MAY  
CONSIDER THEMSELVES  
*EXPRESSIONISTS*,  
THAT DOESN'T MEAN  
THAT THEY CAN'T TELL  
*ONE* LINE FROM  
*ANOTHER*!



IN **DICK TRACY**, FOR EXAMPLE, CHESTER GOULD USED **BOLD LINES, OBTUSE ANGLES AND HEAVY BLACKS** TO SUGGEST THE MOOD OF A **GRIM, DEADLY** WORLD OF **ADULTS**--



-- WHILE THE **GENTLE CURVES AND OPEN LINES OF CARL BARKS' UNCLE SCROOGE** CONVEY A FEELING OF **WHIMSY, YOUTH AND INNOCENCE**.



IN **R. CRUMB'S** WORLD, THE **CURVES OF INNOCENCE ARE BETRAYED** BY THE **NEUROTIC GUILL-LINES OF MODERN ADULTHOOD**, AND LEFT **PAINFULLY OUT OF PLACE**--



-- WHILE IN **KRYSTINE KRYTTRE'S** ART, THE **CURVES OF CHILDHOOD AND THE MAD LINES OF A MUNCH** CREATE A **CRAZY TODDLER LOOK**.



IN THE **MID-1960s** WHEN THE **AVERAGE MARVEL READER WAS PRE-ADOLESCENT**, POPULAR INKERS USED **DYNAMIC BUT FRIENDLY LINES** A LA **KIRBY/SINNOTT**.



BUT WHEN MARVEL'S READER BASE **GREW INTO THE ANXIETIES OF ADOLESCENCE**, THE **HOSTILE, JAGGED LINES OF A ROB LIEFELD** STRUCK A MORE **RESPONSIVE CHORD**.



FOR **DECADES OF COLOR COMIC BOOKS**, THE **SIGNATURE STYLES OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS LIKE NICK CARDY** HAVE INFUSED **PERSONAL EXPRESSION INTO EVERY STORY**--



-- WHILE **JULES FEIFFER'S UNEVEN LINES DID BATTLE** WITH THEMSELVES IN A **PANTOMIME OF THE INNER STRUGGLES OF MODERN LIFE**.



IN **JOSÉ MUNOZ'S** WORK, **DENSE PUDDLES OF INK AND FRAYING LINWORK** COMBINE TO EVOKE A WORLD OF **DEPRAVITY AND MORBID DECAY**--



-- WHILE **JOOST SWARTE'S CRISP ELEGANT LINES AND JAZZY DESIGNS** SPEAK OF **COOL SOPHISTICATION AND IRONY**.



IN **SPIEGELMAN'S "PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET," DELIBERATELY EXPRESSIONISTIC LINES** DEPICT A **TRUE-LIFE HORROR STORY**.



AND IN **EISNER'S MODERN WORK** A **FULL RANGE OF LINE STYLES** CAPTURE A **FULL RANGE OF MOODS AND EMOTIONS**.





A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
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♫	♩	♪	≡

NOW, IF PICTURES CAN, THROUGH THEIR RENDERING, REPRESENT **INVISIBLE** CONCERNS SUCH AS **EMOTIONS** AND THE **OTHER SENSES**--



--THEN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PICTURES AND OTHER TYPES OF ICONS LIKE LANGUAGE WHICH **SPECIALIZE** IN THE INVISIBLE MAY SEEM A BIT **BLURRY**.

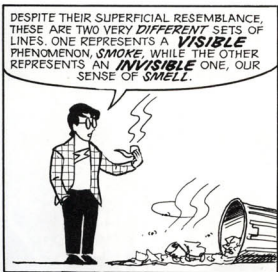
IN FACT, WHAT WE'RE SEEING IN THE **LIVING LINES** OF THESE PICTURES IS **THE PRIMORDIAL STUFF** FROM WHICH A **FORMALIZED LANGUAGE** CAN **EVOLVE!**

I'LL GIVE YOU AN **EXAMPLE**.

LET'S SAY I WANTED TO SMOKE THIS **PIPE**--

--ASSUMING IT **IS** A PIPE--

--AND I LIT IT WITH A MATCH LIKE SO:



TAKEN OUT OF THEIR *ORIGINAL CONTEXT*, THEY CAN NOW BE APPLIED *ANYWHERE* AND THE READER WILL INSTANTLY KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN.



EVEN THE *FLIES* HAVE OVER THE YEARS BEEN APPROACHING THE *ABSTRACT STATUS* OF *LINGUISTIC SYMBOLS*.



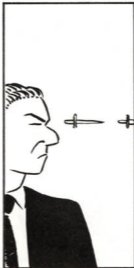
WHENEVER AN ARTIST INVENTS A NEW WAY TO *REPRESENT THE INVISIBLE*, THERE IS ALWAYS A CHANCE THAT IT WILL BE *PICKED UP* BY *OTHER ARTISTS*.



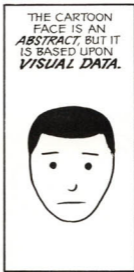
IF ENOUGH ARTISTS BEGIN *USING* THE SYMBOL, IT WILL ENTER THE LANGUAGE FOR *GOOD*--

--AS MANY *HAVE* THROUGH THE YEARS.





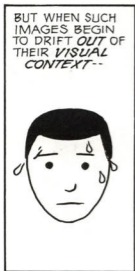
IN DEALING WITH THE FACE *ITSELF*, THE LINE BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND *INVISIBLE* WORLDS BECOMES EVEN *LESS CLEAR*.



THE CARTOON FACE IS AN *ABSTRACT*, BUT IT IS BASED UPON *VISUAL DATA*.



SOME INDICATORS OF EMOTION ARE *ALSO VISUALLY BASED*, SUCH AS THE FAMILIAR *SWEAT BEAD*.



--THEY DRIFT INTO THE *INVISIBLE* WORLD OF THE *SYMBOL*.



THIS DRIFT FROM *VISIBLE* TO *INVISIBLE* HAS BEEN THE BASIS OF ALL *WRITTEN LANGUAGES* SINCE CIVILIZATION *BEGAN*.

SUMERIANS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA GOT THINGS ROLLING OVER 5,000 YEARS AGO WHEN A NEED WAS FOUND TO RECORD CERTAIN COMMODITIES.

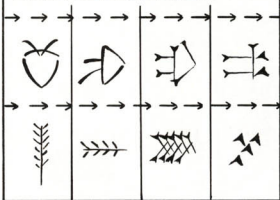


OX



GRAIN

THESE FIRST SYMBOLS -- *CARTOONS*, REALLY -- GRADUALLY EVOLVED AWAY FROM *ANY* RESEMBLANCE TO THEIR SUBJECT, TOWARD THE HIGHLY ABSTRACTED FORMS OF MODERN LANGUAGES...



...AND *EVENTUALLY* TO OUR *TOTALLY* ABSTRACT *SOUND-BASED* SYSTEM.



THE LONGER ANY FORM OF ART OR COMMUNICATION EXISTS, THE MORE *SYMBOLS* IT ACCUMULATES.



THE MODERN COMIC IS A YOUNG LANGUAGE, BUT IT ALREADY HAS AN *IMPRESSIVE* ARRAY OF *RECOGNIZABLE* *SYMBOLS*.



AND THIS *VISUAL* *VOCABULARY* HAS AN *UNLIMITED* *POTENTIAL* FOR *GROWTH*.



WITHIN A GIVEN CULTURE THESE SYMBOLS WILL QUICKLY SPREAD UNTIL EVERYBODY KNOWS THEM AT A *GLANCE*.



BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LANGUAGE EVOLVES IN MORE THAN ONE DISTINCT CULTURE AT A TIME?



THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT MORE THAN ONE SET OF SYMBOLS WILL *EVOLVE!*

SO IT WAS, ONCE AGAIN, IN *JAPAN* WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED FOR *YEARS* IN *RELATIVE* *ISOLATION* FROM THEIR WESTERN COUSINS.



ANGER



DEMENTIA



SLEEP



LUST



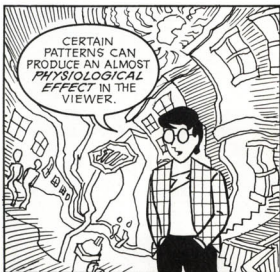
**BACKGROUNDS** CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING *INVISIBLE IDEAS*... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF *EMOTIONS*.



EVEN WHEN THERE IS LITTLE OR NO DISTORTION OF THE *CHARACTERS* IN A GIVEN SCENE, A DISTORTED OR EXPRESSIONISTIC *BACKGROUND* WILL USUALLY AFFECT OUR "READING" OF *CHARACTERS' INNER STATES*.



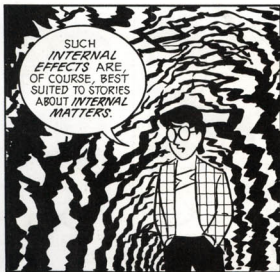
CERTAIN PATTERNS CAN PRODUCE AN ALMOST *PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT* IN THE VIEWER.



BUT FOR SOME REASON, READERS WILL ASCRIBE THOSE FEELINGS, NOT TO *THEMSELVES*, BUT TO THE *CHARACTERS* THEY *IDENTIFY* WITH.

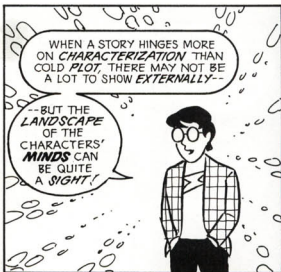


SUCH *INTERNAL EFFECTS* ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT *INTERNAL MATTERS*.

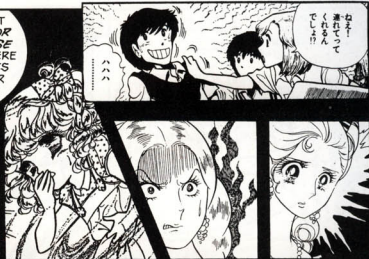


WHEN A STORY HINGES MORE ON *CHARACTERIZATION* THAN COLD *PLOT*, THERE MAY NOT BE A LOT TO SHOW *EXTERNALLY*--

--BUT THE *LANDSCAPE* OF THE *CHARACTERS' MINDS* CAN BE QUITE A *SIGHT!*



THIS PRINCIPLE IS EVIDENT IN MANY *EUROPEAN COLOR COMICS* AND IN *JAPANESE ROMANCE COMICS* WHERE EXPRESSIONISTIC EFFECTS HAVE BEEN DEvised FOR ALMOST ANY EMOTION IMAGINABLE!



EXPRESSIONISM AND SYNAESTHETICS ARE *DISTORTIVE* BY THEIR NATURE. IF STRONG ENOUGH, THEIR EFFECTS CAN *OBSCURE* THEIR SUBJECTS.

BUT A LACK OF CLARITY CAN ALSO FOSTER GREATER *PARTICIPATION* BY THE READER AND A SENSE OF *INVOLVEMENT* WHICH MANY WRITERS AND ARTISTS *PREFER*.

CREATORS WHO USE THESE EFFECTS MAY NEED TO *CLARIFY* WHAT IS BEING SHOWN, HOWEVER.

EITHER THROUGH THE *CONTENT* OF *SURROUNDING SCENES* OR, OF COURSE, THROUGH *WORDS*.

BY FAR,  
THE MOST *WIDELY-USED*,  
MOST COMPLEX AND MOST  
*VERSATILE* OF COMICS' MANY  
SYNAESTHETIC ICONS IS THE  
*EVER-PRESENT, EVER-POPULAR*  
**WORD BALLOON!**



OVER THE YEARS,  
COMICS CREATORS  
HAVE STRUGGLED WITH  
DOZENS OF VARIATIONS  
IN THEIR DESPERATE  
ATTEMPTS\* TO DEPICT  
*SOUND* IN A STRICTLY  
*VISUAL MEDIUM.*

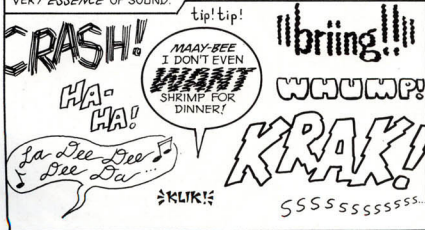


VARIATIONS IN BALLOON SHAPE ARE *MANY* AND  
NEW ONES ARE BEING INVENTED EVERY DAY.

WHILE *INSIDE* THOSE BALLOONS, SYMBOLS  
ARE CONSTANTLY BEING APPROPRIATED  
OR EVEN *INVENTED* TO COVER THE  
*NON-VERBAL.*



EVEN THE VARIATIONS OF LETTERING *STYLES*, BOTH IN AND OUT OF  
BALLOONS, SPEAK OF AN *ONGOING STRUGGLE* TO CAPTURE THE  
VERY *ESSENCE* OF SOUND.



AND  
AS FOR THE  
ESSENCE OF  
THOUGHT...



OF COURSE WORDS THEMSELVES, MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER VISUAL SYMBOLS, HAVE THE POWER TO COMPLETELY DESCRIBE THE INVISIBLE REALM OF SENSES AND EMOTIONS.



WORDS CAN TAKE EVEN SEEMINGLY NEUTRAL IMAGES AND INVEST THEM WITH A WEALTH OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES.



I SAT BY THE OPEN WINDOW, HOPING TO CATCH A WHIFF OF THE OLD CHARCOAL GRILLS. FROM NEXT DOOR CAME THE OTHERWORLDLY HUM OF TELEVISION. THE OLD CLOCK STRUCK A LAZY EIGHT.



AS NOTED, PICTURES CAN INDUCE STRONG FEELINGS IN THE READER, BUT THEY CAN ALSO LACK THE SPECIFICITY OF WORDS.



WORDS, ON THE OTHER HAND, OFFER THAT SPECIFICITY, BUT CAN LACK THE IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL CHARGE OF PICTURES, RELYING INSTEAD ON A GRADUAL CUMULATIVE EFFECT.



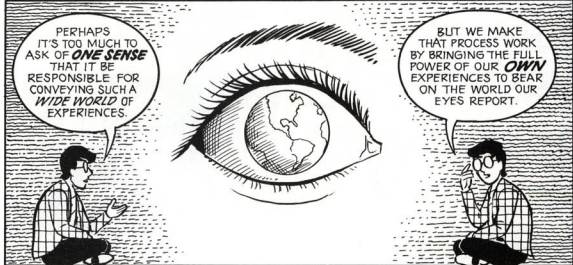
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M ON TO YOUR PLOT... I KNOW YOU PUT SOMETHING IN MY DOG'S FOOD THAT MADE HIM NOT LOVE ME ANYMORE AND...

TOGETHER, OF COURSE, WORDS AND PICTURES CAN WORK MIRACLES.

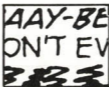
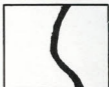


BUT WE'LL GET TO THAT IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.





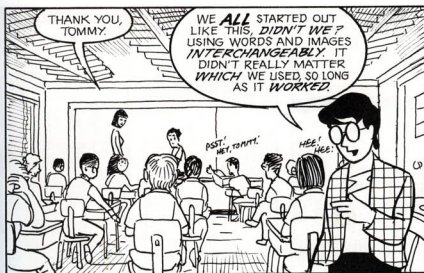
IN THE  
END, WHAT  
YOU **GET** IS  
WHAT YOU  
**GIVE.**



## CHAPTER SIX

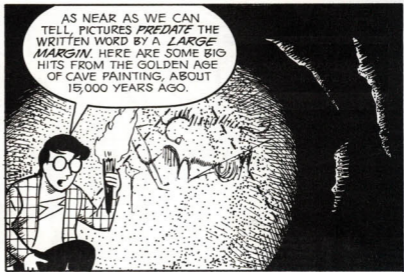
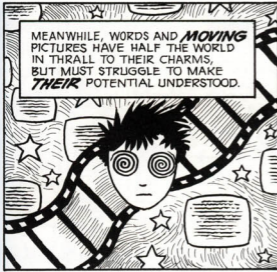
### SHOW AND TELL.

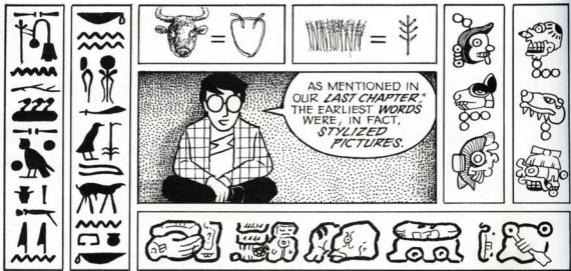












AS MENTIONED IN OUR *LAST CHAPTER*,<sup>\*</sup> THE EARLIEST WORDS WERE, IN FACT, *STYLIZED PICTURES*.

AS SEEN, MOST OF THESE EARLY WORDS STAYED CLOSE BY THEIR PARENTS, THE PICTURES.



IT DIDN'T TAKE *LONG*, THOUGH-- RELATIVELY SPEAKING-- BEFORE ANCIENT WRITING STARTED TO BECOME MORE *ABSTRACT*.



*SOME* WRITTEN LANGUAGES SURVIVE TO THIS DAY, BEARING TRACES OF THEIR ANCIENT PICTORIAL HERITAGE.



\* SEE PAGE 127.

BUT, IN TIME, MOST MODERN WRITING WOULD COME TO REPRESENT *SOUND ONLY* AND LOSE ANY LINGERING RESEMBLANCE TO THE *VISIBLE WORLD*.

ن ت ح ل خ ل ف ل ا ت ل ع ت ل ا ل ت ح م ي ع م ل ه .

בְּרַבֵּד אֶתְהָ יֵי אֶלְדֵינֵי נִינְהוּ

re's More! Order Today and receive FREE C

WITH THE INVENTION OF *PRINTING*, THE WRITTEN WORD TOOK A GREAT LEAP FORWARD--

--AND ALL OF HUMANITY WITH IT.

ba leth em' carnian  
malalchel iared e  
fale la  
cham  
abab:  
g ma  
thiras.  
Dorro filij gomee: asene: e  
thogorna. Filij aurenia  
et tharlis cethini  
cham: thus et nie  
an. filij auren ch  
et cuila  
fabatha et regua et sa  
bathaca. Dor  
ro filij regua-faba z b  
adan. Thus au  
ren genuit neu  
iste cepit elle po  
tens in terra  
um vero genuit lu  
dim et a  
laabini z nepthu  
um: pher  
et thalluim de  
qu  
philibitijm z capthu  
um. D  
millaan  
genuit sydonem  
um: ethcum quoz  
et uolueum et ambrœu et gergezum  
eueumq; et aracheum z asineum ara  
dium quoz; et samareum et emathe  
um. filij sem: elam et assur. Et acta  
fad- et lud z aram. filij aram: hus z

BUT WHERE HAD THE *PICTURES* ALL GONE?

WORDS AND PICTURES DID STILL *COEXIST* AT THIS STAGE IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION.\*

BUT *THOSE* INSTANCES WERE BECOMING THE *EXCEPTION*, NOT THE *RULE*.

\*IN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS, FOR EXAMPLE.



Don schiff will ich versamen/  
 Wol auff du miel das bitt raumen.  
 Mich soll noch niemandt mißden/  
 Es ist noch gar zu fröiden.



Wilt du lauters gottes pflegen/  
 Worscheiff wirt du dich verewigen.  
 Ich flag von groffen edden/  
 Du wirt mich jongers idden.



Die rechen solt du legen hin/  
 Und mit dem gasel vromichig sin.  
 Wie soll ich mich nun bagen/  
 Wiltig ich von meinen spannen lin.



Wilt du dich gemeten maen/  
 So miel du gar endlicher sein.  
 Clement alle samens was/  
 Er will mich endblissig gar.



Ich will dein fleisch mit freis/  
 Quasich der gasel durten mich  
 Das ist dir mich also freis  
 Das r inu leyden mer.



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.

**MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHEN THEY WERE GERMAN COMIC, AS IN THIS FROM THE 1400'S, WORDS AND PICTURES STAYED SEPARATE, REFUSING TO MIX-- LIKE OIL AND WATER.**



Ich habe meine sinnen/  
 Und fan ich sinnen.  
 Das ist dir nach!



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.



Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.

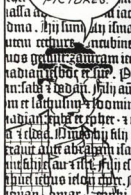


Ich verberg mich du fuchst mich nit.  
 Zunder bichem alle erdigen  
 Das ich mein lieb muget schepfen.

THE WRITTEN WORD WAS BECOMING MORE SPECIALIZED, MORE ABSTRACT, MORE ELABORATE--



-- AND LESS AND LESS LIKE PICTURES.



**PICTURES, MEANWHILE, BEGAN TO GROW IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION: LESS ABSTRACT OR SYMBOLIC, MORE REPRESENTATIONAL AND SPECIFIC.**



FACSIMILE DETAILS OF PORTRAITS BY DURER (1519) REMBRANDT (1660) DAVID (1788) AND INGRES (1810-15).

*Ode on a Grecian Urn*

1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?



BY THE  
 EARLY 1800's,  
 WESTERN ART  
 AND WRITING HAD  
 DRIFTED ABOUT AS  
 FAR APART AS  
 WAS POSSIBLE.

ONE WAS  
 OBSESSED WITH  
 RESEMBLANCE,  
 LIGHT AND COLOR,  
 ALL THINGS  
**VISIBLE...**



...THE  
 OTHER RICH IN  
**INVISIBLE**  
 TREASURES,  
 SENSES, EMOTIONS,  
 SPIRITUALITY,  
 PHILOSOPHY...

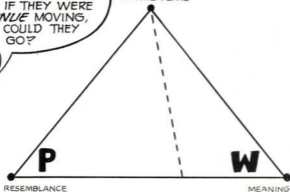
PICTURES  
 AND WORDS,  
 ONCE **TOGETHER**  
 IN THE CENTER OF  
 OUR ICONIC  
 ABSTRACTION  
 CHART, HAVE AT  
**THIS POINT**  
 DRIFTED TO  
**OPPOSITE**  
 CORNERS.



*John Keats*  
*Ode on a Grecian Urn*  
 Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

IN A WAY, PICTURES AND WORDS HAD REACHED THE END OF A 5,000 YEAR JOURNEY. IF THEY WERE TO CONTINUE MOVING, WHERE COULD THEY GO?

PICTURE PLANE



FOR PICTURES, THERE WAS ONLY UP!

IMPRESSIONISM SENT WESTERN ART TOWARD THE **ABSTRACT** VERTEX, BUT IN A WAY THAT **CLUNG** TO WHAT THE EYE SAW.

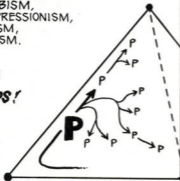
P

IMPRESSIONISM, WHILE IT COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS THE FIRST **MODERN** MOVEMENT, WAS MORE A **CULMINATION** OF THE **OLD**. THE **ULTIMATE STUDY** OF LIGHT AND COLOR.

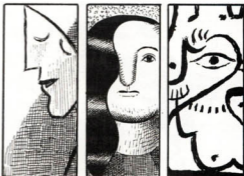


SOON AFTER CAME THE **EXPLOSION!** EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT **BACKWARDS!**

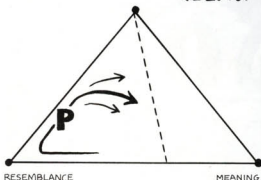


STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. **ABSTRACTION**, BOTH **ICONIC** AND **NON-ICONIC** MADE A **SPECTACULAR COMEBACK!**



SOME ARTISTS HEADED **UPWARD** TO THE **SUMMIT** OF THE PICTURE PLANE, WANTING NEITHER **RESEMBLANCE** NOR EXTERNAL **"MEANING."**

BUT THE **MAIN** THRUST WAS A RETURN TO **MEANING** IN ART, AWAY FROM **RESEMBLANCE**, BACK TO THE REALM OF **IDEAS.**



MEANWHILE, THE WRITTEN WORD WAS ALSO CHANGING. POETRY BEGAN **TURNING AWAY** FROM THE ELUSIVE, **TWICE-ABSTRACTED** LANGUAGE OF OLD TOWARD A MORE **DIRECT**, EVEN **COLLOQUIAL**, STYLE.

John Keats 1819  
Ode on a Grecian Urn

1  
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deserts, or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods or beasts th' *Urn* has seen, or lov'd?

Walt Whitman 1890  
Facing West from California's Shores

Facing west, from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking  
what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the  
house of maternity, the  
land of migrations, look afar  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the  
circle almost circled:  
For starting westward from Hindustan,  
from the vales of Kashmere, From Asia,  
from the north, from the God, the sage,  
and the hero, From the south, from the  
flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,  
Long having wandered since, round the  
earth having wandered,  
Now I face home again,  
very pleased and joyous;  
(But where is what I started for,  
so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

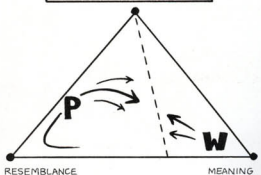
IN PROSE, LANGUAGE WAS BECOMING EVEN MORE DIRECT, CONVEYING MEANING **SIMPLY** AND **QUICKLY**, MORE LIKE **PICTURES.**



"MEANING" WAS NOT **ABANDONED** BY ANY MEANS, BUT AUTHORS WERE DEFINITELY MOVING **LEFT--**



--AND HEADED FOR A **COLLISION!**





H<sup>à</sup>tre MICHEL 40 r<sup>ue</sup> Des Mathurins

vendredi 6 et samedi 7  
JUILLET 1923

# SOIRÉE

# DU CŒUR

de semaine  
prolongée 4  
à 7 heures

canisée par

TCHEREZ A BARBE

0cati0n :

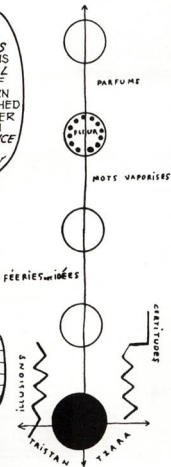
Berthelot Jeanne, 26, 26 de la Madeleine  
Durand, 4, Place de la Madeleine  
Ferdinand, 18, Rue Bonaparte  
An Sans Fauché, 27, Avenue Kléber  
Mlle S. Avenue Ledebur  
Paul Oulloume, 22, Rue la Boétie  
Léonard Morvan, 27, 28 Montparnasse  
Paul Rosenberg, 21, Rue la Boétie  
et au Théâtre Michel, Tél. : Op. 22-22

DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY  
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

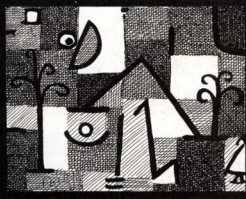
par FRANCIS PICABIA

THE WORK OF DADAISTS, FUTURISTS AND VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS OF THE MODERN ERA BREACHED THE FRONTIER BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND MEANING!

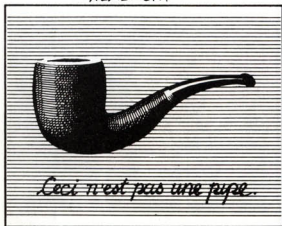


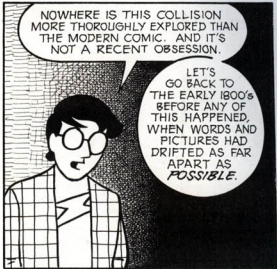
FACSIMILE OF "ORIENTAL SWEETNESS" (1938) BY PAUL KLEE

PAINTINGS INCREASINGLY TOOK ON SYMBOLIC, EVEN CALLIGRAPHIC, MEANINGS...



WHILE SOME ARTISTS ADDRESSED THE IRONIES OF WORDS AND PICTURES HEAD-ON!





UP TO THAT POINT, *EUROPEAN BROADSHEETS* HAD OFFERED REMINDERS OF WHAT WORDS AND PICTURES COULD DO WHEN COMBINED.

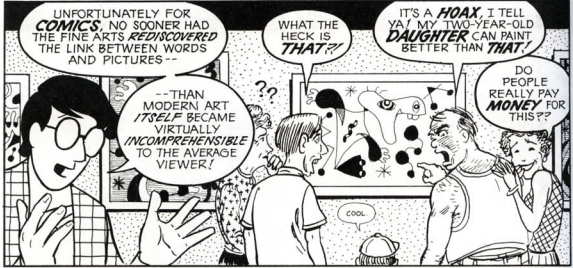
BUT AGAIN IT WAS *RODOLPHE TÖPFFER* WHO FORESAW THEIR *INTERDEPENDENCY* AND BROUGHT THE FAMILY *BACK TOGETHER* AT LAST.



M. CREPIN ADVERTISES FOR A TUTOR, AND MANY APPLY FOR THE JOB.



TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE.



UNFORTUNATELY FOR COMICS, NO SOONER HAD THE FINE ARTS REDISCOVERED THE LINK BETWEEN WORDS AND PICTURES --

-- THAN MODERN ART ITSELF BECAME VIRTUALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO THE AVERAGE VIEWER!

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!

IT'S A HOAX, I TELL YA! MY TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER CAN PAINT BETTER THAN THAT!

DO PEOPLE REALLY PAY MONEY FOR THIS??

COOL.

IN FACT, THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S PERCEPTIONS OF "GREAT" ART AND "GREAT" WRITING HASN'T CHANGED MUCH IN 150 YEARS.\* ANY ARTIST WISHING TO DO GREAT WORK IN A MEDIUM USING WORDS AND PICTURES WILL HAVE TO *CONTEND* WITH THIS ATTITUDE.



*Thou still unravish'd bride  
Thou foster-child of silen  
Sylvan historian, who cans  
A flowery tale more sweetl  
What leaf fring'd legend ha  
Of deities or mortals, or  
In Tempe or the dales  
What men or gods are th  
What mad pursuit? What s  
What pipes and timbrels*

IN OTHERS AND IN THEMSELVES...



...BECAUSE, DEEP DOWN INSIDE, MANY COMICS CREATORS STILL MEASURE ART AND WRITING BY *DIFFERENT STANDARDS* AND ACT ON THE FAITH THAT "*GREAT*" ART AND "*GREAT*" WRITING WILL COMBINE HARMONIOUSLY BY VIRTUE OF *QUALITY ALONE*.



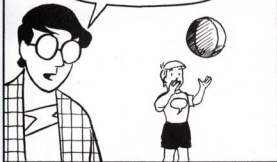
○ · FACE

TWO EYES, ONE NOSE, ONE MOUTH.

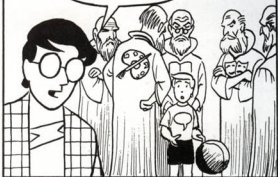
*The yoof's from luvvy so gaz'd on now...*

\* NOT AS MUCH AS WE LIKE TO THINK IT HAS, ANYWAY.

THE ART FORM OF COMICS IS MANY CENTURIES OLD, BUT IT'S *PERCEIVED* AS A RECENT INVENTION AND SUFFERS THE CURSE OF *ALL* NEW MEDIA.



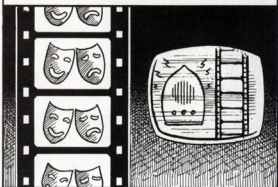
THE CURSE OF BEING JUDGED BY THE STANDARDS OF THE OLD.



EVER SINCE THE INVENTION OF THE WRITTEN WORD, NEW MEDIA HAVE BEEN *MISUNDERSTOOD*.



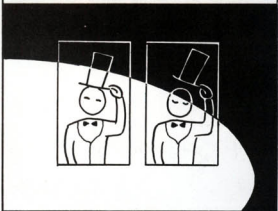
EACH NEW MEDIUM BEGINS ITS LIFE BY IMITATING ITS *PREDECESSORS*. MANY EARLY MOVIES WERE LIKE FILMED *STAGE PLAYS*, MUCH EARLY TELEVISION WAS LIKE RADIO WITH *PICTURES* OR *REDUCED MOVIES*.



FAR TOO MANY COMICS CREATORS HAVE NO HIGHER GOAL THAN TO MATCH THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OTHER MEDIA, AND VIEW ANY CHANCE TO *WORK* IN OTHER MEDIA AS A *STEP UP*.



AND *AGAIN*, AS LONG AS WE VIEW COMICS AS A *GENRE* OF WRITING OR A *STYLE* OF GRAPHIC ART THIS ATTITUDE MAY *NEVER* DISAPPEAR.



WORDS AND PICTURES IN COMBINATION MAY NOT BE MY *DEFINITION* OF COMICS, BUT THE COMBINATION HAS HAD *TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE* ON ITS *GROWTH*.

**com-ics** (kom'iks) *n.* plural form, used with a singular. Juxtaposed pictorial or other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey an idea and/or to produce an emotional response in the viewer. **2. Superheroes** in costumes; fight villains who war in the world, in violent scenes.



A HUGE RANGE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCES CAN BE *PORTRAYED* IN COMICS THROUGH EITHER WORDS OR PICTURES.



AS A RESULT--AND DESPITE ITS MANY *OTHER* POTENTIAL USES -- COMICS HAVE BECOME *FIRMLY IDENTIFIED* WITH THE ART OF *STORYTELLING*.



AND *INDEED*, WORDS AND PICTURES HAVE *GREAT* POWERS TO TELL STORIES WHEN CREATORS FULLY EXPLOIT THEM *BOTH*.



DADA  
 BIOGRAPHY  
 HORROR  
 SURREALISM  
 ROMANCE  
 BLANK VERSE  
 EPIC POETRY  
 SOCIAL ALLEGORY  
 ADAPTATIONS  
 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS  
 SATIRE  
 HISTORICAL FICTION  
 FOLK TALES  
 EROTICA  
 MYSTERY  
 RELIGIOUS TOPICS



AND SO FAR, WE'VE ONLY SEEN THE *TIP OF THE ICEBERG!*



AS CHILDREN, WE "SHOW AND TELL" *INTERCHANGEABLY*, WORDS AND IMAGES COMBINING TO TRANSMIT A *CONNECTED SERIES OF IDEAS*.



THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WORDS AND PICTURES CAN *COMBINE* IN COMICS IS VIRTUALLY *UNLIMITED*.



BUT LET'S TRY TO BREAK IT DOWN INTO SOME DISTINCT *CATEGORIES*.



FIRST, WE HAVE THE **WORD SPECIFIC** COMBINATIONS, WHERE PICTURES *ILLUSTRATE*, BUT DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY ADD TO A LARGELY **COMPLETE** TEXT.



WE STUMBLED BACK TO THE APARTMENT SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN, *VOMITING* EVERY 20 YARDS.



JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.



THE **UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION** WAS ADOPTED BY THE **SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS** IN 1787 AND PUT INTO EFFECT IN 1789.



THEN THERE ARE **PICTURE SPECIFIC** COMBINATIONS WHERE WORDS DO LITTLE MORE THAN ADD A *SOUNDTRACK* TO A VISUALLY TOLD SEQUENCE.



AND, OF COURSE, **DUO-SPECIFIC** PANELS IN WHICH BOTH WORDS AND PICTURES SEND ESSENTIALLY THE **SAME** MESSAGE.



GRIM-FACED, GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.



**BUT** THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY BLOW *MISSES* ITS INTENDED TARGET!

**BLAST!** HE DODGED MY PUNCH AND I STRUCK THIS **BRICK WALL!**



HA! I DODGED YOU!

I FEEL SO SAD!



...THOUGHT AMY.

ANOTHER TYPE IS THE **ADDITIVE** COMBINATION WHERE WORDS **AMPLIFY** OR **ELABORATE** ON AN IMAGE OR VICE VERSA.



MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A **SMASHED PUMPKIN!**

HOW D'YA LIKE MY **NEW THREADS, BABE?**

IS THIS THE SAME **JUPITER** OF MY YOUTH?

IN **PARALLEL** COMBINATIONS, WORDS AND PICTURES SEEM TO FOLLOW VERY DIFFERENT COURSES--WITHOUT **INTERSECTING**.



"TALKED TO **BILL** YET?"

"**SALLY** DID. **WHY?**"

"THE **TEST RESULTS** CAME BACK. ALL **NEGATIVE**."

"**REALLY?** THAT'S **GREAT!**"

WELL...

PEPPER. CEREAL.

MILK. BUTTER. LIGHT BULBS.

STILL ANOTHER OPTION IS THE **MONTAGE** WHERE WORDS ARE TREATED AS INTEGRAL **PARTS** OF THE PICTURE.



CASH FLOW BOTTOM LINE

ANNUAL REPORT

**HAPPY!**

The business office object...  
any with...  
items and...  
med to be c...  
Ept the...  
'Superser'  
appari...  
ed bind...  
ed by...  
After bill is...  
hot l...  
wed...  
by v...  
the...  
t...  
ept...  
in r...

PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATION IS THE **INTER-DEPENDENT**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES GO **HAND IN HAND** TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER COULD CONVEY **ALONE**.



MEANWHILE...

DID ANYONE SEE YOU?



THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!



I ASK YOU, DOES THIS GUY LOOK LIKE A C.E.O. TO YOU??



"AND JUST **GUESS** WHO DROVE UP IN BOB'S TRUCK AN HOUR LATER!"



HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.



"AFTER COLLEGE, I PURSUED A CAREER IN **HIGH FINANCE**."



INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH **WORDS**, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO **EXPLORING** AND **VICE VERSA**.

P

W



W

P



IN COMICS AT ITS *BEST*, WORDS AND PICTURES ARE LIKE *PARTNERS* IN A *DANCE* AND EACH ONE TAKES TURNS *LEADING*.



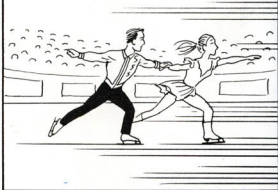
WHEN *BOTH* PARTNERS TRY TO LEAD, THE COMPETITION CAN *SUBVERT* THE OVERALL GOALS...



...THOUGH A LITTLE *PLAYFUL* COMPETITION CAN SOMETIMES PRODUCE *ENJOYABLE* RESULTS.



BUT WHEN THESE PARTNERS EACH *KNOW* THEIR ROLES--



--AND *SUPPORT* EACH OTHER'S *STRENGTHS*--



--COMICS CAN MATCH *ANY* OF THE ART FORMS IT DRAWS SO MUCH OF ITS STRENGTH FROM.

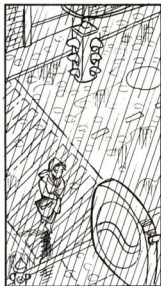


WHEN **PICTURES** CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.

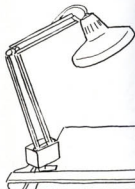


LET'S SAY I SHOW YOU A WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET IN THE RAIN, BUYING A PINT OF ICE CREAM AND EATING IT IN HER APARTMENT--

--ALL IN PICTURES.



WHEN A SCENE SHOWS YOU ALL YOU "NEED" TO KNOW, LIKE THIS ONE, THE LATITUDE FOR **SCRIPTING** GROWS ENORMOUSLY.



I MAY BE ALONE LIKE THIS FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



IT COULD BECOME AN **INTERNAL MONOLOGUE.**

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY **INCONGRUOUS**

"MISSION CONTROL, MISSION CONTROL, DO YOU READ ME?"



(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG **ADVERTISEMENT!**



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON **BROADER TOPICS.**

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...  
THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...



(INTERDEPENDENT)

ON THE *OTHER* HAND, IF THE **WORDS** LOCK IN THE "*MEANING*" OF A SEQUENCE, THEN THE *PICTURES* CAN REALLY TAKE OFF.



I **CROSSED** THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.

I **FOUND** THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID **NO THANKS**. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I **WENT** BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

**ALONE**  
AT LAST.

I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.



I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.



THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK.

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--



--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.



NOW, ONE COULD JUST COMBINE THE PICTURES FROM PAGE 157 WITH THE WORDS FROM PAGE 159 --



--BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?



I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.



IF THE ARTIST WANTS TO, HE/SHE CAN NOW SHOW ONLY FRAGMENTS OF A SCENE.

(WORD SPECIFIC)

OR MOVE TOWARD GREATER LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION OR EXPRESSION.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...



(AMPLIFICATION)

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL INFORMATION.

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--



(INTERDEPENDENT)

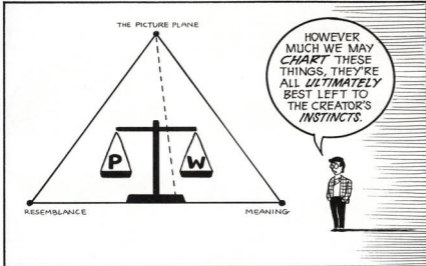
OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.



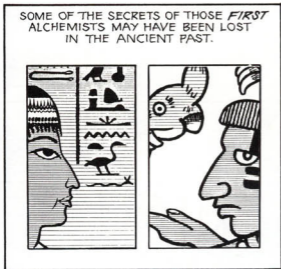
(WORD SPECIFIC)



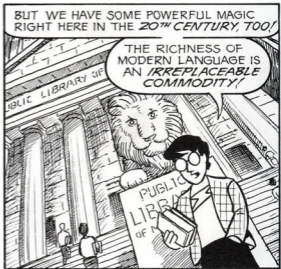
HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY CHART THESE THINGS, THEY'RE ALL *ULTIMATELY* BEST LEFT TO THE CREATOR'S *INSTINCTS*.



THE MIXING OF WORDS AND PICTURES IS MORE *ALCHEMY* THAN SCIENCE.



SOME OF THE SECRETS OF THOSE *FIRST* ALCHEMISTS MAY HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE ANCIENT PAST.



BUT WE HAVE SOME POWERFUL MAGIC RIGHT HERE IN THE *20TH* CENTURY, TOO!

THE RICHNESS OF MODERN LANGUAGE IS AN *IRREPLACEABLE* COMMODITY!



THIS IS AN *EXCITING* TIME TO BE MAKING COMICS, AND IN MANY WAYS I FEEL VERY *LUCKY* TO HAVE BEEN BORN WHEN I WAS.



STILL, I DO FEEL A CERTAIN *VAGUE* LONGING FOR THAT TIME OVER *50* CENTURIES AGO--

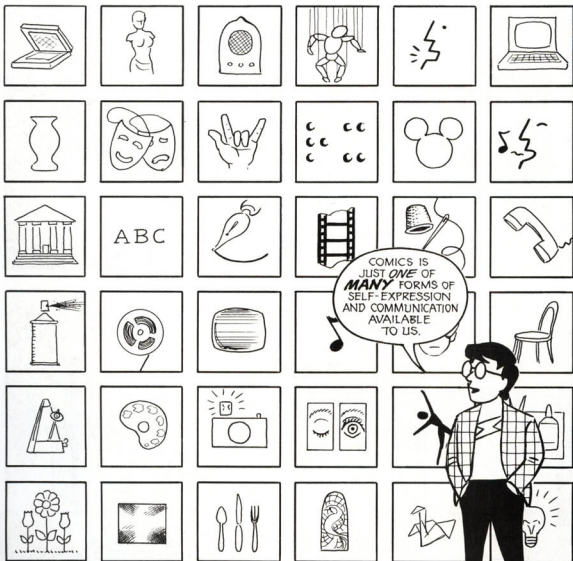
-- WHEN TO TELL WAS TO *SHOW*--



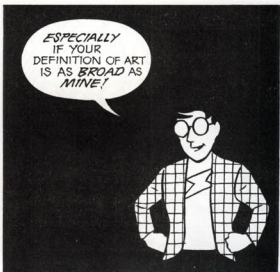
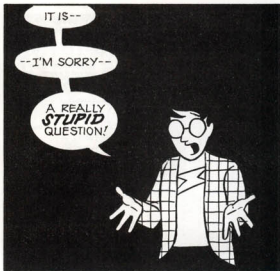
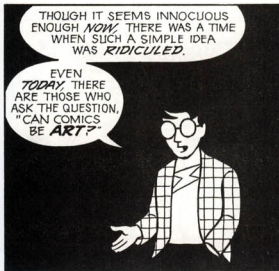
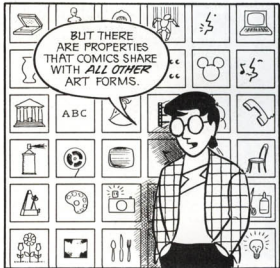
-- AND TO SHOW WAS TO *TELL*.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE SIX STEPS.



COMICS IS  
JUST *ONE* OF  
**MANY** FORMS OF  
SELF-EXPRESSION  
AND COMMUNICATION  
AVAILABLE  
TO US.





**ART** AS I SEE IT, IS ANY HUMAN ACTIVITY WHICH **DOESN'T** GROW OUT OF **EITHER** OF OUR SPECIES' TWO BASIC INSTINCTS: **SURVIVAL** AND **REPRODUCTION!**

**GRAAH!**

**EEEK!!**



**EXAMPLE:** HERE'S A **PREHISTORIC MALE** CHASING A **PREHISTORIC FEMALE**. WITH ONLY ONE THING ON HIS MIND-- **REPRODUCTION!**

SO **STRONG** IS THIS INSTINCT THAT IT GOVERNS HIS **EVERY MOVE!** NOT ONE STEP IS WASTED IN THE **PURSUIT OF HIS GOAL!**



THE **FEMALE**--AFRAID FOR HER **SURVIVAL**--MANAGES TO **HIDE**. NOW, **DEPRIVED** OF HIS GOAL, THE MALE STANDS **INDECISIVE.**



**SUDDENLY--!**

**ROAR!!!**



**NOW** ALL OF HIS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS ARE FOCUSED ON THAT **OTHER VITAL HUMAN INSTINCT-- SURVIVAL!**



AGAIN HIS LEGS PROPEL HIM FORWARD WITH **MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY!**



TRAPPED ON THE EDGE OF A CLIFF, HIS MIND CAN ONLY CONCEIVE OF ONE PATH TO SURVIVAL!



HE TAKES IT!



AND SURVIVES.



HIS NEXT MOVE MIGHT BE TO LOOK FOR FOOD (SURVIVAL) OR PERHAPS ANOTHER FEMALE (REPRODUCTION).



BUT INSTEAD...



ART.



IT'S A HAPPY FACT OF HUMAN EXISTENCE THAT WE SIMPLY CAN'T SPEND OUR EVERY WAKING HOUR EATING AND HAVING SEX! NO MATTER HOW FRANTICALLY WE PURSUE OUR GOALS, THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE TIMES WHEN WE JUST DON'T HAVE A THING TO DO!

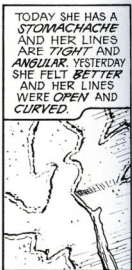




WHAT MAY LOOK LIKE A TRIBE OF BORED, INACTIVE CAVE-DWELLERS BELOW US IS, IN FACT, A THRIVING ART COLONY!



SEE THAT OLD WOMAN WITH THE STICK? NOTICE THE LINES SHE'S MAKING IN THE DIRT?

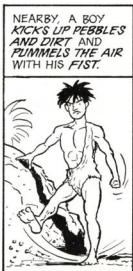


TODAY SHE HAS A STOMACHACHE AND HER LINES ARE TIGHT AND ANGULAR. YESTERDAY SHE FELT BETTER AND HER LINES WERE OPEN AND CURVED.



AND OVER THERE A MAN BEATS A SIMPLE RHYTHM WITH A PAIR OF STONES. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHY, BUT THE SOUND PLEASURES HIM.

TAP!  
TAP!  
TAP!  
TAP!  
TAP!  
TAP!



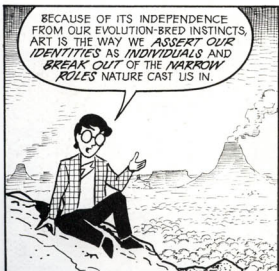
NEARBY, A BOY KICKS UP PEBBLES AND DIRT AND PLUMMELS THE AIR WITH HIS FIST.



TODAY HE LOST A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER. NOW ALL HE CAN DO IS DANCE AWAY HIS FRUSTRATION.



DoooooRRooooo  
YB-BIP-BIP-BIP!  
GREEGAH!  
WUK! WUK!



BECAUSE OF ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM OUR EVOLUTION-BRED INSTINCTS, ART IS THE WAY WE ASSERT OUR IDENTITIES AS INDIVIDUALS AND BREAK OUT OF THE NARROW ROLES NATURE CAST US IN.



OF COURSE, THE GENIUS OF "MOTHER NATURE" IS SUCH THAT EVEN THESE THINGS DO HAVE THEIR USES FROM AN EVOLUTIONARY STANDPOINT.



THREE, IN FACT.

**FIRST**, THEY PROVIDE EXERCISE FOR MINDS AND BODIES NOT RECEIVING *OUTSIDE STIMULUS*.



**SECOND**, THEY PROVIDE AN *OUTLET FOR EMOTIONAL IMBALANCES*, AIDING IN THE RACE'S *MENTAL SURVIVAL*.



**THIRD** AND PERHAPS MOST *IMPORTANTLY* TO OUR SURVIVAL AS A RACE, SUCH RANDOM ACTIVITIES OFTEN LEAD--



-- TO *USEFUL DISCOVERIES!*



THIS FUNCTION WOULD ALSO BE PERFORMED IN *LATER CENTURIES* BY *SPORTS AND GAMES*.



ART AS *SELF EXPRESSION*, THE ARTIST AS *HERO*; FOR MANY, ITS *HIGHEST PURPOSE*.



ART AS *DISCOVERY*, AS THE PURSUIT OF *TRUTH*, AS *EXPLORATION*; THE SOUL OF MUCH *MODERN ART* AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF *LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY*.



A LOT HAS *CHANGED* IN HALF A MILLION YEARS, BUT SOME THINGS *NEVER CHANGE*.



THE PROCESSES ARE MORE *COMPLEX* NOW, BUT THE INSTINCTS\* REMAIN THE *SAME*. *SURVIVAL AND REPRODUCTION* STILL HOLD THE *UPPER HAND*.



YET IN ALMOST EVERYTHING WE DO THERE IS AT LEAST AN **ELEMENT OF ART.**



PERHAPS A LITTLE **UNNECESSARY CHOREOGRAPHY** ON THE **ASSEMBLY LINE.**



OR THE **PERSONAL STYLE** OF A **BICYCLE MESSENGER.**



OR JUST THE WAY WE **SIGN OUR NAMES!**



IN **SOME OCCUPATIONS**, THE LATITUDE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION IS **GREATER.** **SURVIVAL**-- MAKING A LIVING-- GOES HAND IN HAND WITH **CREATIVE DESIRE.**



I THINK IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT SOME ACTIVITIES HAVE MORE ART **IN** THEM THAN OTHERS.



LIFE IS A SERIES OF **MINUTE DECISIONS**, SOME MOTIVATED BY **SURVIVAL**, SOME **NOT**, AND PROPORTIONS DO **VARY.**



**BUT** TO PROCLAIM, AS SO MANY SO OFTEN DO, THAT--

**THAT'S NOT ART!**



RARE IS THE PERSON IN **ANY** OCCUPATION WHO EXPRESSES **NOTHING...**



... AND RARE IS THE **ARTIST** WHO CARES NOTHING FOR **SUCCESS**, I.E., **SURVIVAL!**



BUT THE *IDEAL* OF THE LATTER IS ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF MANY ARTISTS WHO MAY *HOP*E FOR SUCCESS, BUT WON'T ALTER THEIR WORK TO *OBTAIN* IT.



THE "*FINE ARTIST*"--THE *PURE ARTIST*-- SAYS TO THE WORLD: "I DIDN'T DO THIS FOR *MONEY*! I DIDN'T DO THIS TO MATCH THE COLOR OF YOUR *COUCHES*!"



"I DIDN'T DO THIS TO GET *LAI*D! I DIDN'T DO THIS FOR *FAME* OR *POWER* OR *GREED* OR *ANYTHING ELSE*! I DID THIS FOR *ART*!"

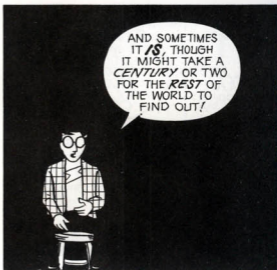
IN OTHER WORDS: "*MY ART HAS NO PRACTICAL VALUE WHATSOEVER!*"



"BUT IT'S *IMPORTANT!*"



AND SOMETIMES IT *IS*, THOUGH IT MIGHT TAKE A *CENTURY* OR TWO FOR THE *REST* OF THE WORLD TO FIND OUT!

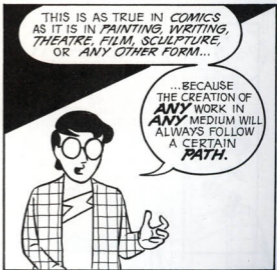


"*PURE*" ART IS ESSENTIALLY TIED TO THE QUESTION OF *PURPOSE*-- OF DECIDING WHAT YOU *WANT* OUT OF ART.



THIS IS AS TRUE IN *COMICS* AS IT IS IN *PAINTING*, *WRITING*, *THEATRE*, *FILM*, *SCULPTURE*, OR *ANY OTHER FORM*...

...BECAUSE THE CREATION OF *ANY* WORK IN *ANY* MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW A CERTAIN *PATH*.



1

IDEA/  
PURPOSE



2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



A PATH CONSISTING OF *SIX STEPS*.

1

IDEA/  
PURPOSE



**FIRST:**  
THE *IMPULSES*, THE  
*IDEAS*, THE *EMOTIONS*,  
THE *PHILOSOPHIES*, THE  
*PURPOSES* OF THE  
WORK... THE WORK'S  
"*CONTENT*."



2

FORM



**SECOND:**  
THE *FORM* IT WILL  
TAKE... WILL IT BE A  
*BOOK*? A *CHALK  
DRAWING*? A *CHAIR*?  
A *SONG*? A *SCULPTURE*?  
A *POT HOLDER*? A  
*COMIC BOOK*?



3

IDIOM



**THIRD:**  
THE "*SCHOOL*" OF  
ART, THE VOCABULARY  
OF *STYLES* OR *GESTURES*  
OR *SUBJECT MATTER*,  
THE *GENRE* THAT THE  
WORK BELONGS TO...  
MAYBE A *GENRE*  
OF ITS OWN.



4

STRUCTURE



**FOURTH:**  
*PUTTING IT ALL  
TOGETHER*... WHAT  
TO *INCLUDE*, WHAT TO  
*LEAVE OUT*... HOW TO  
*ARRANGE*, HOW TO  
*COMPOSE* THE  
WORK.



5

CRAFT



**FIFTH:**  
CONSTRUCTING  
THE WORK, APPLYING  
SKILLS, PRACTICAL  
KNOWLEDGE, INVENTION,  
PROBLEM-SOLVING,  
GETTING THE  
"JOB" DONE.



6

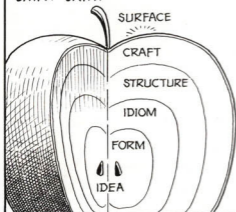
SURFACE



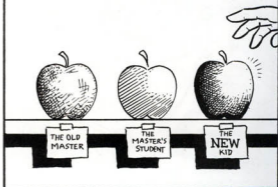
**SIXTH:**  
PRODUCTION  
VALUES, FINISHING...  
THE ASPECTS MOST  
APPARENT ON FIRST  
SUPERFICIAL  
EXPOSURE TO  
THE WORK.



IN ALL THE ARTS IT'S THE SURFACE  
THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE MOST EASILY,  
LIKE AN APPLE CHOSEN FOR ITS  
SHINY SKIN.



THE LATEST "FAN FAVORITE" OFTEN  
LOOKS BETTER AT A GLANCE THAN THE  
OLDER ARTISTS WHO HAD THE IDEAS  
AND CREATED THE IDIOMS, BUT WERE  
LESS INTERESTED IN SURFACES.



BUT OFTEN  
IF WE BITE  
INTO THAT  
SHINY NEW  
APPLE --



CRUNCH!



HOLLOW.



IT'S A  
CYCLE AS OLD  
AS ART  
ITSELF.





IN **COMICS**, THE CYCLE BEGINS *ALL OVER THE WORLD*, AS YOUNG READERS *DISCOVER* COMICS FOR THE FIRST TIME AND IN A FEW CASES, BEGIN TO DEVELOP A *LOVE* FOR COMICS THAT WILL LAST A *LIFETIME!*



IN THIS EARLY STAGE, THESE READERS ARE EXPERIENCING THE **CHARACTERS, IDEAS, EVENTS AND EMOTIONS** OF THE STORY **DIRECTLY**

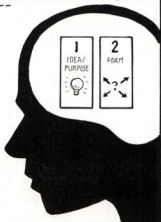
COMICS IS ACTING AS AN **INTERMEDIARY** BETWEEN **STORYTELLER** AND **AUDIENCE**.



BUT IN SOME, AN AWARENESS OF THE **FORM** BEGINS TO DEVELOP, AN AWARENESS THAT ALL COMICS ARE JUST **INK ON PAPER--**

--THAT MAKING THEM ONLY REQUIRES CERTAIN **SKILLS--**

--AND THAT THOSE SKILLS CAN BE **LEARNED!**

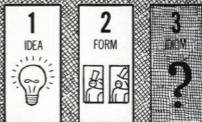


ONE OF THEM--FULL OF **BIG IDEAS**--  
MAKES THE **BIG DECISION**.

I'M GONNA  
MAKE **COMICS**  
WHEN I GROW  
UP!



HE'S OFF TO A LOGICAL START. HE HAS  
THE **IDEAS** AND HE'S CHOSEN **COMICS**  
AS HIS **FORM OF EXPRESSION**. MAYBE  
NOW HE'LL CONSIDER WHAT **TYPES** OF  
COMICS ARE RIGHT FOR HIM.



BUT PROBABLY **NOT**.

MORE LIKELY HE **POSTPONES** HIS OWN  
IDEAS AND BEGINS TO STUDY THE **CRAFT**  
OF **OTHER** ARTISTS IN HIS ATTEMPT TO  
BECOME A **PROFESSIONAL**.

HE BUYS THE  
**"RIGHT"** BRUSH,  
THE **"RIGHT"**  
PENS AND THE  
**"RIGHT"** PAPER  
AND BEGINS TO  
**PRACTICE**.



EVENTUALLY...

6  
SURFACE

LOOK, JACK!  
I CAN DRAW AS  
WELL AS A  
PROFESSIONAL!

WOW!



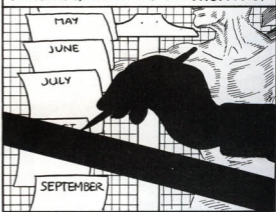
BUT WHEN HE BRINGS THE WORK TO A  
**REAL** PROFESSIONAL AT THE LOCAL **CON**:

...ANATOMY IS VERY POOR... SEE HOW  
THAT MUSCLE CONNECTS?... AND THAT  
PERSPECTIVE, **YEESH!**... DO YOU KNOW  
WHAT A **VANISHING POINT** IS?  
...AND AS FOR **FACES**...

-GULP-



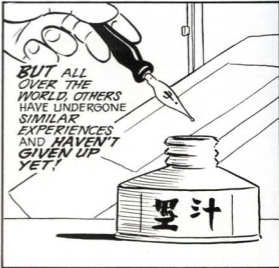
SO HE BUYS SOME BOOKS ON **ANATOMY**  
AND **PERSPECTIVE**, STUDIES A VARIETY  
OF **DRAWING TECHNIQUES** AND **PRACTICES**.  
**PRACTICES, PRACTICES** FOR **MONTHS**.



BUT SOMEHOW, IT NEVER QUITE "CLICKS" FOR HIM. MAYBE HE JUST DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH *SKILL*... MAYBE HE *LOSES INTEREST*... MAYBE LIFE JUST *GETS IN THE WAY*... BUT FOR *WHATEVER REASON*...



-- HE LEAVES HIS DREAMS OF MAKING COMICS *BEHIND*.



*BUT ALL OVER THE WORLD, OTHERS HAVE UNDERGONE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES AND **HAVEN'T GIVEN UP YET!***

ONE OF THEM IS NOW READY TO TAKE THE *NEXT STEP!* SHE'S STUDIED HER *CRAFT* ALL THE WAY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL AND INTO *COLLEGE*.



SHE'S A *GOOD, HARDWORKING STUDENT*.



< I THINK I'VE REALLY MADE A *BREAKTHROUGH!* >

< THIS IS *VERY GOOD*. >

BUT WHEN SHE SHOWS HER WORK TO A *SEASONED PRO*...

< YOU'RE A SKILLED *SCRIPTER* AND *DRAFTSPERSON*, BUT YOUR *STORYTELLING* ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH, YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF *PACING*... THESE LAYOUTS ARE *VERY MUDDY*... YOU HAVE TO *COMPOSE* YOUR *STORIES*... >



< GULP! >

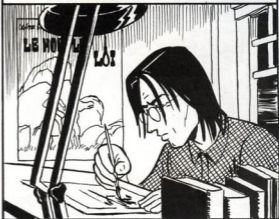
HER *SKILLS CAN* GET HER *WORK* AT THIS POINT, BUT ONLY AS AN *ASSISTANT* TO OTHERS. UNTIL SHE UNDERSTANDS THE *STRUCTURE* OF COMICS *BENEATH* THE *CRAFT*, THIS IS AS FAR AS SHE CAN GO.



BUT MAYBE THIS IS **ENOUGH** FOR THIS PARTICULAR ARTIST, ENOUGH TO JUST BE PART OF THE **ART, BUSINESS, AND COMMUNITY** OF COMICS WITHOUT NECESSARILY **CALLING THE SHOTS.**



BUT **ELSEWHERE, ANOTHER** CREATOR HAS BEEN THROUGH THE SAME SORT OF PROCESS AND HE WANTS **MORE!**



HE SPENDS HIS **EVERY WAKING HOUR** WORKING OUT THE **DIFFICULT PRINCIPLES** OF COMICS COMPOSITION AND STORYTELLING, THE KIND THEY **DON'T TEACH** IN **BOOKS!**\*



HE DISCOVERS THAT HIS **FAVORITE ARTIST** WAS ACTUALLY JUST A **WATERED-DOWN VERSION** OF AN **OLDER, LESS-POLISHED** ARTIST WHOM HE HAD ALWAYS **TAKEN FOR GRANTED.**



HE LEARNS TO SEE **BENEATH** THE CRAFTS OF **DRAFTSMANSHIP** AND **SCRIPTING** TO SEE THE **WHOLE PICTURE**-- **PACING, DRAMA, HUMOR, SUSPENSE, COMPOSITION, THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT, IRONY**-- SOON THEY'RE ALL AT HIS **COMMAND!**



\* WELL, OKAY, *ONE* BOOK! EISNER'S, AGAIN.

AND LET'S SAY IT **WORKS!** HE **DOES** LAND HIS OWN BOOK AND SOON IS ESTABLISHED AS A CREATOR OF **GREAT SKILL**. HE UNDERSTANDS **COMICS STORYTELLING** BETTER THAN MOST.



HIS WORK ISN'T PARTICULARLY **ORIGINAL**, THE CRITICS DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO HIM, BUT HE MAKES A **DECENT LIVING** FOR **HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY** AND THAT'S ENOUGH FOR HIM...



BUT **ANOTHER ARTIST** HAS MADE IT THROUGH THE **SAME SORTS OF HURDLES** AND REACHED THE **SAME LEVELS** OF SUCCESS AND **STILL ISN'T SATISFIED**



SHE WONDERS IF HER SUCCESS REALLY **MEANS** ANYTHING WHEN THERE ARE SO **MANY OTHERS** DOING THE **SAME THINGS** IN THE **SAME WAYS**. SHE WANTS AN **IDENTITY**.



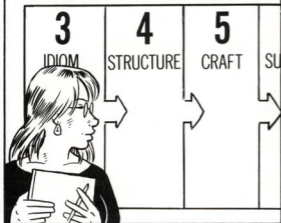
SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**-- SOME **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**-- THAT SHE **STILL HASN'T FOUND**.



SHE BEGINS TO INVENT **NEW WAYS** OF SHOWING "**THE SAME OLD THING**." SHE DEVELOPS **INNOVATIVE NEW TECHNIQUES**, AND STARTS **DOING AWAY** WITH "**THE SAME OLD THING**" **ALTOGETHER!**



AS SHE CREATES *HER OWN PERSONAL IDIOM* OF COMICS, SHE FINDS THE WHOLE OF HER WORK CHANGING TO *SUIT* THAT IDIOM.



LET'S SAY THAT *FINANCIAL SUCCESS* AND THE *RESPECT OF HER PEERS* SOON FOLLOW.\*



YOUNG ARTISTS BEGIN TO *IMITATE* HER STYLE, BUT MOST OF THEM ONLY SEEM TO APPRECIATE THE "*SURFACE*."



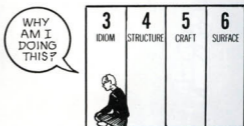
AND MAYBE SHE'LL BE *SATISFIED* WITH THAT KIND OF SUCCESS, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WHATEVER SHE *DOESN'T FIND OUT*.

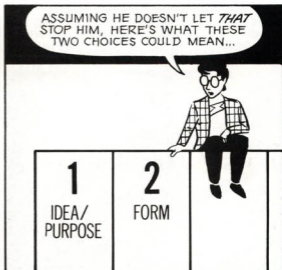
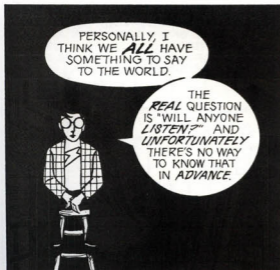
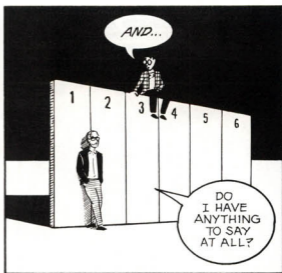
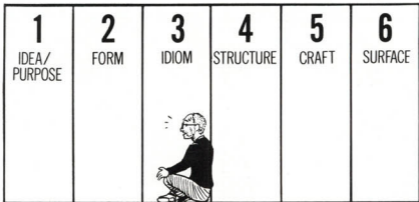


BUT *ELSEWHERE*, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS *DISSATISFIED*. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY *IMPORTANT* HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



...SOMETHING *FUNDAMENTAL*, SOMETHING AT THE *CORE* OF WHO HE IS AS AN ARTIST. WITH THESE THOUGHTS ON HIS MIND, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF *TIME* BEFORE HE ASKS THAT ONE SIMPLE QUESTION:





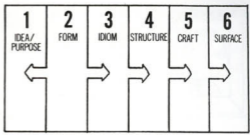
# 2 FORM



BY CHOOSING **FORM**, HE'D BE SETTING UP TO BECOME AN **EXPLORER**.

HIS GOAL: TO **DISCOVER** ALL THAT THE ART FORM IS **CAPABLE** OF.

AND HIS ART WOULD NOT **LACK** FOR **IDEAS** OR FOR A **PURPOSE**.



HIS ART WOULD JUST **BECOME** HIS PURPOSE AND THE IDEAS WOULD ARRIVE IN TIME TO GIVE IT **SUBSTANCE**.

CREATORS WHO TAKE THIS PATH ARE OFTEN **PIONEERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES**--ARTISTS WHO WANT TO **SHAKE THINGS UP**, CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE **THINK**, QUESTION THE **FUNDAMENTAL LAWS** THAT GOVERN THEIR CHOSEN ART.



(IN **OTHER** ART FORMS: STRAVINSKY, PICASSO, VIRGINIA WOOLF, ORSON WELLES, ETC.)

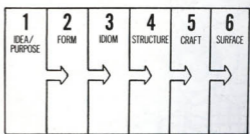
# 1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE CHOOSES THE **FIRST** STEP AS HIS GOAL, THEN HIS ART BECOMES A **TOOL**.

AND THE **POWERS** OF THAT ART WILL RELY ON THE POWERS OF THE IDEAS **WITHIN**.

NOW "**TELLING THE STORY**" (OR IN THE CASE OF **NON-FICTION**, "**DELIVERING THE MESSAGE**") TAKES **PRIORITY** OVER **INVENTION**.



BUT TELLING A STORY AS **EFFECTIVELY** AS POSSIBLE MAY **REQUIRE** SOME INVENTION. IT OFTEN **DOES**.



THIS IS THE PATH OF GREAT **STORYTELLERS**, CREATORS WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY *THROUGH* COMICS AND DEVOTE ALL THEIR ENERGIES TO *CONTROLLING* THEIR MEDIUM, REFINING ITS ABILITY TO CONVEY MESSAGES *EFFECTIVELY*.



(IN OTHER ART FORMS: CAPRA, DICKENS, WOODY GUTHRIE, EDWARD R. MURROW, ETC.)

FORTUNATELY, THIS CHOICE NEVER HAS TO BE *PERMANENT*.

IT CAN CHANGE AS OFTEN AS AN ARTIST CHANGES *PROJECTS!*

*NO* WORK OF ART CAN BE *TOTALLY* WITHOUT "*CONTENT*" ANY MORE THAN IT CAN EXIST WITHOUT A *FORM!* BUT IT DOES HELP TO SET SOME *PRIORITIES*.

HEY, I'M DRIVING!

NO, I'M DRIVING!

THIS IS A PROBLEM IN MANY "*ASSEMBLY LINE*" COMICS WHERE CREATIVE SPECIALIZATION HAS "*SCRIPTERS*"; "*PENCILLERS*" AND "*INKERS*" ALL WORKING AT *CROSS-PURPOSES* IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GET *NOTICED*.

**CRASH!**

NOT THAT WE "*CREATOR/WRITER/ARTIST*" TYPES NEVER RUN INTO THIS PROBLEM...

*DAMN!* NEEDED TO HAVE SOME MORE *DIALOGUE* HERE, BUT I REALLY WANT TO DRAW THAT *SNAZZY CLOSE-UP!*

THE MORE AN ARTIST DEVOTES HIM/HERSELF TO EITHER OF THESE TWO FOCAL POINTS, THE MORE DRAMATIC THE CHANGE IF HE/SHE DECIDES TO *SWITCH!*

ART SPIEGELMAN'S AGGRESSIVELY EXPERIMENTAL WORK OF THE *SEVENTIES* AND EARLY *EIGHTIES* LEFT NO ONE PREPARED FOR THE UNASSUMING "REPORT" STYLE OF HIS LANDMARK BIOGRAPHY "MAUS":

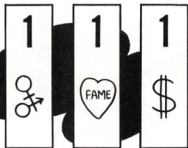
## 2 FORM



## 1 IDEA/PURPOSE



PERHAPS IF STRIPPED DOWN FAR ENOUGH, MOST ARTISTS' ULTIMATE GOALS ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE'S. EVEN FOR THOSE WITH *HIGH IDEALS*, BASIC INSTINCTS EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION.



SURVIVAL ↔ REPRODUCTION

AND WHEN ART BECOMES A *JOB* OR A MATTER OF *SOCIAL STATUS* THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFUSING ONE'S GOALS GOES UP CONSIDERABLY.



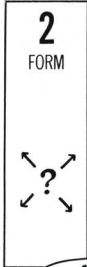
BUT EVEN IF WE TAKE LIFE'S *DISTRACTIONS* INTO ACCOUNT, IT'S STILL AMAZING HOW MUCH *TIME* AND *EFFORT* IS SPENT BY COMICS CREATORS TRYING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF COMICS --

-- BEFORE THEY EVEN KNOW *WHAT* THEY WANT!



OF COURSE, NOT *EVERYBODY* TAKES THE *LONG* WAY AROUND. SOME ARTISTS HAVE NO TROUBLE SETTING GOALS AND *ACHIEVING* THEM WITHOUT ANY *DETOURS*...





**ANY** ARTIST CREATING **ANY** WORK IN **ANY** MEDIUM WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW THESE **SIX STEPS** WHETHER THEY REALIZE IT OR **NOT**.

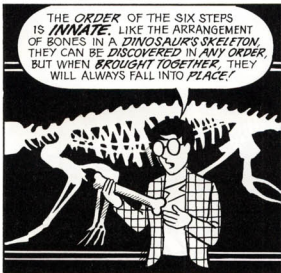
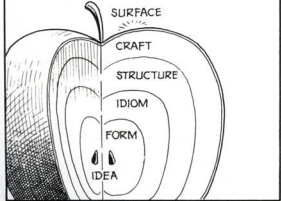
ALL WORKS BEGIN WITH A PURPOSE, HOWEVER **ARBITRARY**; ALL TAKE SOME **FORM**; ALL BELONG TO AN **IDIOM** (EVEN IF IT'S AN IDIOM OF **ONE**); ALL POSSESS A **STRUCTURE**; ALL REQUIRE SOME **CRAFT**; ALL PRESENT A **SURFACE**.

AND **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HAVE THE **POTENTIAL** FOR **SELF-EXPRESSION**, EVEN WHEN **ECONOMIC SURVIVAL** IS THE ARTIST'S MAIN CONCERN.

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF "ART."



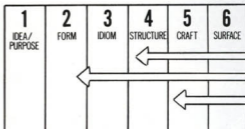
BUT THE MORE A CREATOR LEARNS TO COMMAND **EVERY** ASPECT OF HIS/HER ART AND TO UNDERSTAND HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO IT, THE MORE "ARTISTIC" CONCERNS ARE LIKELY TO GET THE **UPPER HAND**.



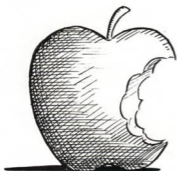
IN *PRACTICE*, **ANY** ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



STILL, THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR MOST ARTISTS IS A *SLOW AND STEADY JOURNEY* FROM **END** TO **BEGINNING**,



FROM *SURFACE* TO *CORE*.

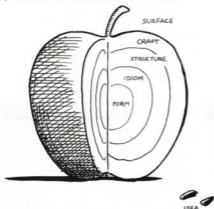


AND IT'S AT THE **CORE** OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:

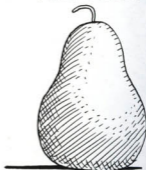


"WHY AM I DOING THIS?"

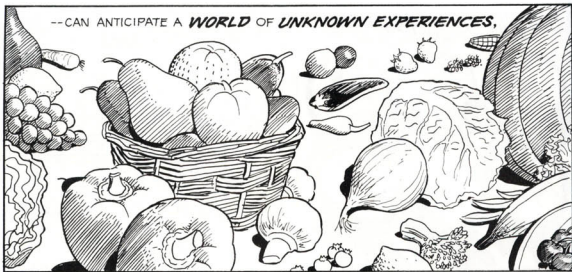
WHEN **FORM** RULES THE WORK, IT MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT **ARTIFICIAL** AT THE CORE, LIKE A *SEEDLESS FRUIT*.



BUT SUCH WORKS DON'T TAKE THE **SHAPE** OF ART FOR GRANTED AND BY QUESTIONING OUR **FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS**--



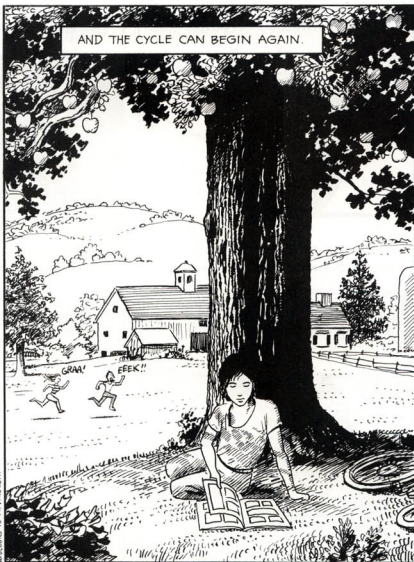
--CAN ANTICIPATE A *WORLD* OF UNKNOWN EXPERIENCES,



WHILE IF *IDEAS*  
RULE THE WORK AND  
*DETERMINE* ITS  
SHAPE, COMICS CAN  
HELP *PLANT* THOSE  
IDEAS *FAR AND WIDE.*



AND THE CYCLE CAN BEGIN AGAIN.

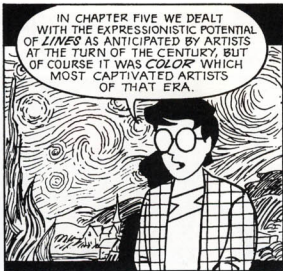


ARTWORK BY M. FARRUKH.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A WORD ABOUT COLOR.

IN CHAPTER FIVE WE DEALT WITH THE EXPRESSIONISTIC POTENTIAL OF *LINES* AS ANTICIPATED BY ARTISTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, BUT OF COURSE IT WAS *COLOR* WHICH MOST CAPTIVATED ARTISTS OF THAT ERA.



THROUGHOUT ART HISTORY, COLOR HAS BEEN A *POWERFUL*, EVEN *PREDOMINANT*, CONCERN OF FINE ARTISTS EVERYWHERE.



SOME, LIKE *GEORGES SEURAT*, DEVOTED THEIR *LIVES* TO ITS STUDY.



*OTHERS*, LIKE *KANDINSKY*, BELIEVED THAT COLORS COULD HAVE PROFOUND *PHYSICAL* AND *EMOTIONAL* EFFECTS ON PEOPLE.



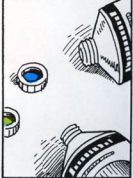
COLOR CAN BE A *FORMIDABLE ALLY* FOR ARTISTS IN ANY VISUAL MEDIUM.



YET IN *COMICS* THE CAREER OF COLOR HAS BEEN, WELL... A BIT "*SPOTTY*."



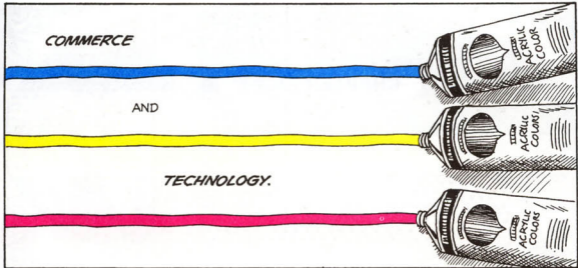
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE *STORMY RELATIONSHIP* BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE *SUMMED UP* IN *TWO WORDS*...



COMMERCE

AND

TECHNOLOGY.



NOW **ALL** ASPECTS OF COMICS HISTORY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY **COMMERCE**. MONEY HAS A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON WHAT IS AND **ISN'T** SEEN.

BUT **COLOR** IN COMICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNUSUALLY **SENSITIVE** TO THE **SHIFTING TIDES OF TECHNOLOGY**.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF COLOR REPRODUCTION WAS FIRST ANTICIPATED IN **1861** WHEN SCOTTISH PHYSICIST **SIR JAMES CLERK-MAXWELL** ISOLATED WHAT WE NOW CALL **THE THREE ADDITIVE PRIMARIES**.



THESE COLORS -- ROUGHLY, **RED, BLUE AND GREEN** -- WHEN PROJECTED TOGETHER ON A SCREEN IN **VARIOUS COMBINATIONS**, COULD REPRODUCE EVERY COLOR IN THE **VISIBLE SPECTRUM**.



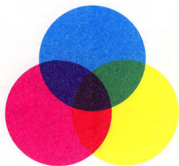
THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY **ADDED UP TO PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



EIGHT YEARS LATER, FRENCH PIANIST **LOUIS DUCOS DU HAURON**\* DEVISED THE IDEA OF THREE **SUBTRACTIVE PRIMARIES**.



THESE COLORS -- CYAN, MAGENTA AND YELLOW\* -- CAN ALSO MIX TO PRODUCE ANY HUE IN THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, BUT RATHER THAN ADDING LIGHT, THESE THREE DO IT BY **FILTERING IT OUT!**



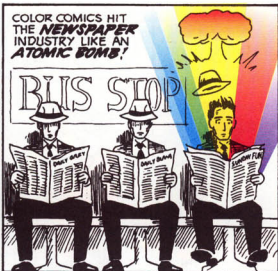
THIS SUBTRACTIVE EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES SUCH AS CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLORS --



--OR PRINTERS' INK!



COLOR COMICS HIT THE **NEWSPAPER** INDUSTRY LIKE AN **ATOMIC BOMB!**



COLOR BOOSTED **SALES**, BUT IT ALSO BOOSTED **COSTS!** MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO **STREAMLINE** THE PROCESS AND MAKE IT MORE **COST-EFFECTIVE.**



AND THE STANDARD "**FOUR COLOR**" PROCESS TOOK OVER.



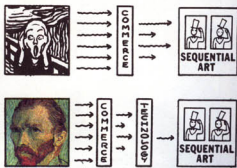
THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50% AND 20%, USING **BLACK INK** FOR THE LINE WORK.



THE LOOK OF THESE COLORS, HELD BY **BOLD, SIMPLE OUTLINES**, AND REPRODUCED ON **CHEAP NEWSPRINT** EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LOOK OF COMICS IN AMERICA.



SO, WHILE THE EXPRESSIVE ART OF **LINE** WAS SUBJECT TO THE **SUBTRACTIVE FILTER** OF COMMERCE ON ITS WAY TO COMICS, **COLOR** WAS SUBJECT TO THE FILTERS OF BOTH COMMERCE AND **TECHNOLOGY!**



\* FOR OPAQUE PIGMENTS: RED, YELLOW AND BLUE. I KNOW, IT'S TOTALLY WEIRD.



TO COUNTERACT THE DULLING EFFECTS OF NEWSPRINT AND TO STAND OUT FROM THE COMPETITION, COSTUMED HEROES WERE CLAD IN BRIGHT, PRIMARY COLORS AND FOUGHT IN A BRIGHT PRIMARY WORLD!



THE COLORS WERE PICKED FOR STRENGTH AND CONTRASTED STRONGLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT ON MOST PAGES NO ONE COLOR DOMINATED.



WITHOUT THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF SINGLE-COLOR SATURATION, THE EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN COLOR COMICS --



-- WAS OFTEN CANCELLED OUT TO AN EMOTIONAL GREY.



AS ALWAYS, THERE WERE SOME EXCEPTIONS, BUT THIS WAS THE OVERALL TREND.



HOWEVER, WHILE COMICS COLORS WERE LESS THAN EXPRESSIVISTIC, THEY WERE FIXED WITH A NEW ICONIC POWER. BECAUSE COSTUME COLORS REMAINED EXACTLY THE SAME, PANEL AFTER PANEL, THEY CAME TO SYMBOLIZE CHARACTERS IN THE MIND OF THE READER.

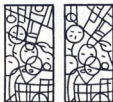


MANY SEE THE SUPERHERO AS A FORM OF MODERN MYTHOLOGY. IF SO, THIS ASPECT OF COLOR MAY PLAY A PART.

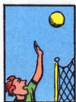
SYMBOLS ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH GODS ARE MADE.



ANOTHER PROPERTY OF FLAT COLORS IS THEIR TENDENCY TO EMPHASIZE THE SHAPE OF OBJECTS, BOTH ANIMATE AND INANIMATE --



--AS ANY CHILD WHO HAS EVER "COLORED-BY-NUMBERS" KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY.



THESE COLORS *OBJECTIFY* THEIR SUBJECTS. WE BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE *PHYSICAL FORM* OF OBJECTS THAN IN *BLACK AND WHITE*.

A GAME IN MOTION BECOMES A BALL IN AIR. A FACE SHOWING EMOTION BECOMES A HEAD AND TWO HANDS.



THE WORLD TAKES ON THE CHILDHOOD REALITY OF THE *PLAYGROUND* AND RECALLS A TIME WHEN SHAPE *PRECEDED* MEANING. OBLONG SWING SETS. CYLINDRICAL JUNGLE GYMS. THE WONDER OF *THINGS!*



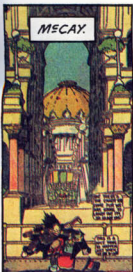
DOESN'T IT FOLLOW THEN THAT THE MASTERS OF *FLAT-COLOR* COMICS ARE, ABOVE ALL, MASTERS OF *FORM* AND *COMPOSITION*?



KIRBY.



MCCAY.



COLE.



FROM *STEVE DITKO* TO *CARL BARKS* TO *F. CRAIG RUSSELL*, THAT LOVE OF SHAPES PERSISTS IN WORLDS FAIRLY *GLOWING* WITH THE MYSTERY OF *FIRST ENCOUNTERS*.

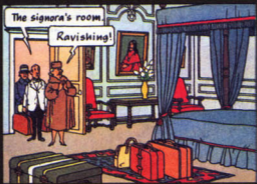
ANY WONDER THEN THAT COMICS IN AMERICA HAS BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO "*GROW UP*"?



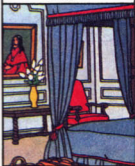
IN EUROPE HERGE CAPTURED THE MAGIC OF SUCH FLAT COLORS WITH UNPRECEDENTED SUBTLETY.

The signora's room.

Ravisking!



HERGÉ CREATED A KIND OF *DEMOCRACY OF FORM* IN WHICH NO SHAPE WAS ANY LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANY *OTHER*-- A COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE WORLD.



COMICS PRINTING WAS SUPERIOR IN EUROPE AND FOR HERGÉ, FLAT COLORS WERE A PREFERENCE, NOT A NECESSITY.

BUT OTHERS SUCH AS *CLAVELOUX*, *GAZA* AND *MOEBIUS* SAW IN THEIR SUPERIOR PRINTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH A MORE INTENSE *SUBJECTIVE* PALETTE.

SOME OF THIS WORK BEGAN REACHING AMERICA IN THE 70's, INSPIRING MANY YOUNG ARTISTS TO LOOK BEYOND THEIR FOUR-COLOR WALLS.



SUDDENLY IT SEEMED POSSIBLE FOR COLOR TO TAKE ON A CENTRAL ROLE.



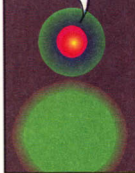
COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.



TONES AND MODELLING COULD ADD DEPTH.



WHOLE SCENES COULD BE VIRTUALLY ABOUT COLOR!





COLOR AS  
SENSATION,  
COLOR AS  
ENVIRONMENT.

COLOR AS  
COLOR!



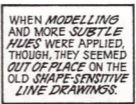
SINCE THE LATE 70'S, MORE AND MORE "UPSCALE" COLOR PROJECTS HAVE BEGUN APPEARING IN AMERICA.



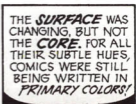
SOME PUBLISHERS AT THE BEGINNING TRIED APPLYING THE TRADITIONAL "FOUR-COLOR" PROCESS TO BETTER PAPER WITH *GARISH* RESULTS.



TAKE THAT!



WHEN *MODELLING* AND MORE *SUBTLE* HUES WERE APPLIED, THOUGH, THEY SEEMED *OUT OF PLACE* ON THE OLD *SHAPE-SENSITIVE* LINE DRAWINGS.



THE *SURFACE* WAS CHANGING, BUT NOT THE *CORE*. FOR ALL THEIR *SUBTLE* HUES, COMICS WERE STILL BEING WRITTEN IN *PRIMARY* COLORS!

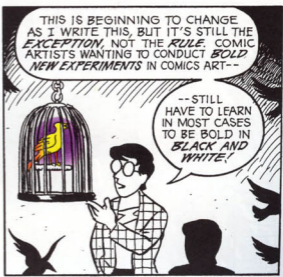


TAKE THAT!



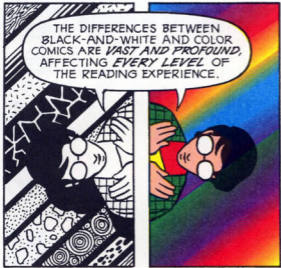
THE NEW *FORM* REQUIRED THE CREATION OF NEW *IDIOMS*!

UNFORTUNATELY, COLOR IS STILL AN *EXPENSIVE* OPTION AND HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN IN THE HANDS OF LARGER, MORE CONSERVATIVE PUBLISHERS.



THIS IS BEGINNING TO CHANGE AS I WRITE THIS, BUT IT'S STILL THE *EXCEPTION*, NOT THE *RULE*. COMIC ARTISTS WANTING TO CONDUCT *BOLD* *NEW EXPERIMENTS* IN COMICS ART--

-- STILL HAVE TO LEARN IN MOST CASES TO BE *BOLD* IN *BLACK AND WHITE*!



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK-AND-WHITE AND COLOR COMICS ARE *VAST AND PROFOUND*, AFFECTING *EVERY LEVEL* OF THE READING EXPERIENCE.



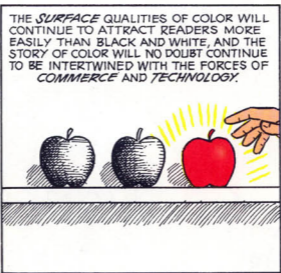
IN BLACK AND WHITE, THE IDEAS *BEHIND* THE ART ARE COMMUNICATED MORE *DIRECTLY*. MEANING TRANSCENDS FORM. ART APPROACHES *LANGUAGE*.



IN FLAT COLORS FORMS *THEMSELVES* TAKE ON MORE SIGNIFICANCE. THE WORLD BECOMES A PLAYGROUND OF *SHAPES AND SPACE*.



AND THROUGH MORE *EXPRESSIVE COLORS*, COMICS CAN BECOME AN *INTOXICATING ENVIRONMENT* OF SENSATIONS THAT ONLY *COLOR* CAN GIVE.



THE *SURFACE* QUALITIES OF COLOR WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT READERS MORE EASILY THAN BLACK AND WHITE, AND THE STORY OF COLOR WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO BE INTERTWINED WITH THE FORCES OF *COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY*.



WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF *COLORS*, NOT JUST *BLACK AND WHITE*. COLOR COMICS WILL ALWAYS SEEM MORE "*REAL*" AT FIRST GLANCE.



BUT COMICS READERS LOOK FOR *MANY THINGS* BESIDES "*REALITY*" AND, TECHNOLOGY NOTWITHSTANDING, COLOR WILL NEVER REPLACE BLACK AND WHITE ENTIRELY.



*ONE* THING'S FOR *SURE*, THOUGH. WHEN USED WELL, COLOR IN COMICS CAN -- LIKE COMICS ITSELF --



-- AMOUNT TO FAR MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

## CHAPTER NINE

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.

SO,  
WHY IS THIS  
MEDIUM WE  
CALL COMICS SO  
**IMPORTANT?**  
WHY SHOULD WE  
TRY SO HARD TO  
**UNDERSTAND**  
**COMICS?**



# SEQUENTIAL ART

I THINK THE  
ANSWER LIES DEEP  
WITHIN THE HUMAN  
CONDITION...



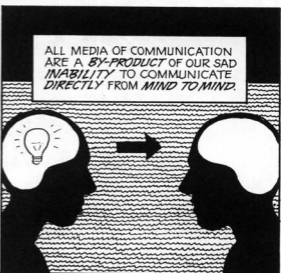
WE ALL LIVE IN A STATE OF  
*PROFOUND ISOLATION.*



NO OTHER HUMAN BEING CAN  
EVER KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO  
BE YOU FROM THE *INSIDE.*

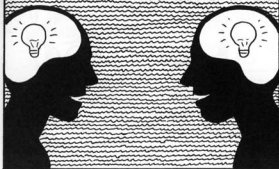


AND NO AMOUNT OF *REACHING*  
*OUT TO OTHERS* CAN EVER MAKE  
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT  
*YOU* FEEL.

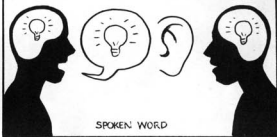


ALL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION  
ARE A *BY-PRODUCT* OF OUR SAD  
*INABILITY* TO COMMUNICATE  
*DIRECTLY* FROM *MIND TO MIND.*

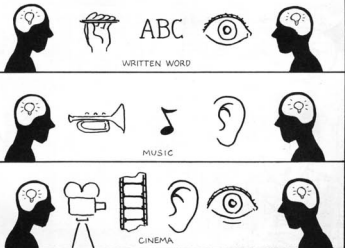
SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY *STEM* FROM THAT INABILITY.



EACH *MEDIUM* (THE TERM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD MEANING *MIDDLE*) SERVES AS A BRIDGE *BETWEEN* MINDS.

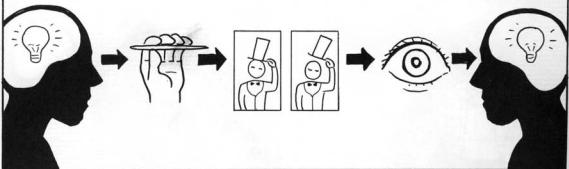


MEDIA CONVERT THOUGHTS INTO FORMS THAT CAN TRAVERSE THE *PHYSICAL WORLD* AND BE *RE-CONVERTED* BY ONE OR MORE SENSES *BACK* INTO THOUGHTS.

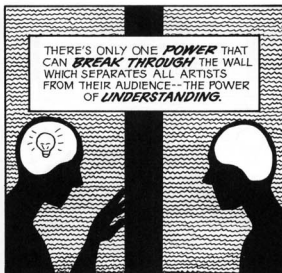
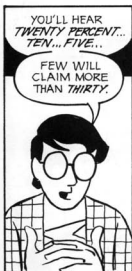


IN *COMICS* THE CONVERSION FOLLOWS A PATH FROM *MIND* TO *HAND* TO *PAPER* TO *EYE* TO *MIND*.

IDEALLY THE ARTIST'S "*MESSAGE*" WILL RUN THIS GAUNTLET WITHOUT BEING *AFFECTED* BY IT, BUT IN *PRACTICE* THIS IS RARELY THE CASE.



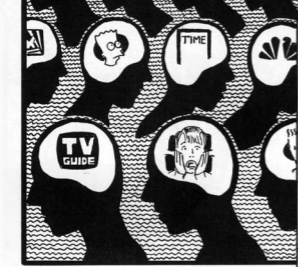






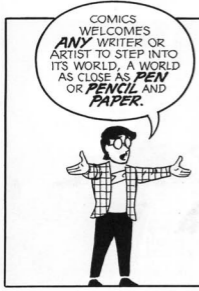
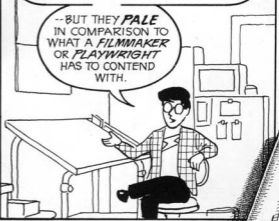
UNDERSTANDING COMICS IS *SERIOUS BUSINESS*.

TODAY, COMICS IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW FORMS OF *MASS COMMUNICATION* IN WHICH *INDIVIDUAL VOICES* STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO BE *HEARD*.

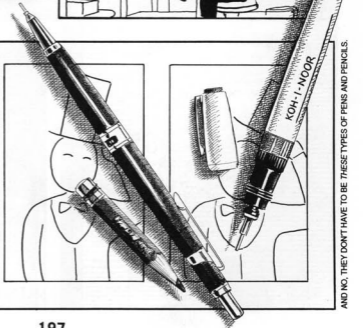


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE *BUSINESS* OF COMICS HAVE MANY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

--BUT THEY *PALE* IN COMPARISON TO WHAT A *FILMMAKER* OR *PLAYWRIGHT* HAS TO CONTENT WITH.

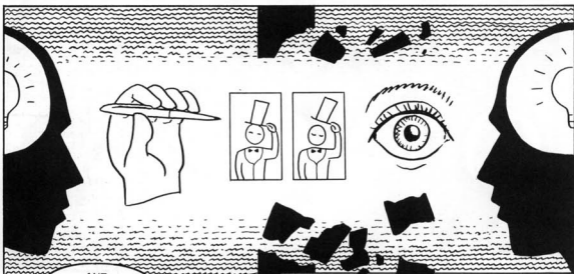


COMICS WELCOMES *ANY* WRITER OR ARTIST TO STEP INTO ITS WORLD, A WORLD AS CLOSE AS *PEN* OR *PENCIL* AND *PAPER*.



AND NO, THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE THESE TYPES OF PENS AND PENCILS.

THE WALL OF *IGNORANCE* THAT PREVENTS SO MANY HUMAN BEINGS FROM SEEING EACH OTHER *CLEARLY* CAN ONLY BE BREACHED BY *COMMUNICATION*.



AND *COMMUNICATION* IS ONLY EFFECTIVE WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE *FORMS* THAT COMMUNICATION CAN TAKE.



I'VE BEEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND COMICS FOR ABOUT 15 YEARS. HERE'S WHAT I'VE COME UP WITH SO FAR.



THE FIRST STEP IN ANY SUCH EFFORT IS TO CLEAR OUR MINDS OF ALL PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT COMICS.

ONLY BY STARTING FROM SCRATCH CAN WE DISCOVER THE FULL RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES COMICS OFFER.

THIS MEANS LEARNING TO SEPARATE THE **FORM** OF COMICS FROM ITS OFTEN INCONSISTENT **CONTENTS**.



THE BEST **DEFINITION** FOR COMICS WILL, I THINK, BE THE MOST **EXPANSIVE**.



## SEQUENTIAL ART

WITH A LITTLE **REFINING**, SUCH A DEFINITION CAN TAKE COMICS FAR INTO THE **FUTURE**--

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

-- AND FAR INTO THE **PAST**, BEYOND THE ARTIFICIAL "STARTING POINT" OF 1896 AND "THE YELLOW KID!"



1775      1800      1825      1850      1875      1900



OVER  
THREE THOUSAND  
YEARS BEYOND!

THERE'S AN  
INCREDIBLE WEALTH  
OF ANCIENT COMICS  
AND SOME MAY YET  
HOLD THE KEY  
TO COMICS'  
FUTURE!

DISCOVERING  
AND CATALOGUING  
THIS WORK HAS  
ALREADY *BEGUN!*  
BUT THERE'S MUCH  
MORE THAT *NEEDS*  
TO BE DONE!

THERE'S  
A *BIG GAPING*  
HOLE IN THE  
OFFICIAL HISTORY  
OF ART AND IT'S *HIGH*  
TIME SOMEBODY  
*FILLED*  
IT!

JUNK  
PICTURES  
AND OTHER  
IMAGES IN  
UNUSUAL  
DELIBERATE

THROUGH THE *WORKS AND WRITINGS* OF THESE NEGLECTED MASTERS, WE SEE THE *FIRST GLIMPSSES* OF COMICS' *LIMITLESS POTENTIAL* AS AN ART FORM-

"...the picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has had great influence at all times, perhaps even more than written literature."

Rudolphe Topffer  
1845

--*AND* THE ATTITUDES THAT WERE TO *OBSCURE* THAT POTENTIAL FOR *MANY YEARS TO COME!*

"...in addition, the picture-story appeals mainly to children and the lower classes..."

Rudolphe Topffer  
1845

TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE

...ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED SOME OF MODERN COMICS' MOST *PROMISING* ARTISTS TO BE *SEGREGATED* FROM THEIR *MUCH-MALIGNED COUSINS*.

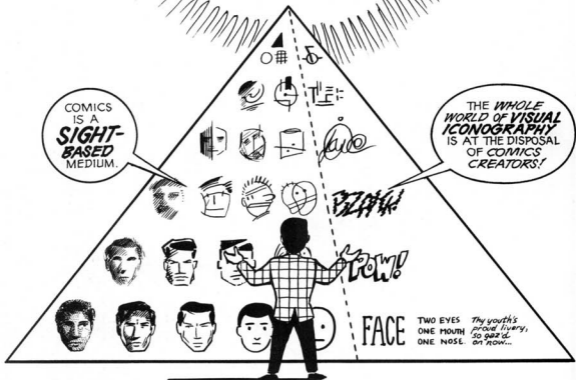
ELEVATED *BEYOND* THEIR HERITAGE BY A *CHANGE OF NAME!*





COMICS IS A  
**SIGHT-BASED**  
MEDIUM.

THE **WHOLE**  
WORLD OF **VISUAL**  
**ICONOGRAPHY**  
IS AT THE DISPOSAL  
OF COMICS  
CREATORS!



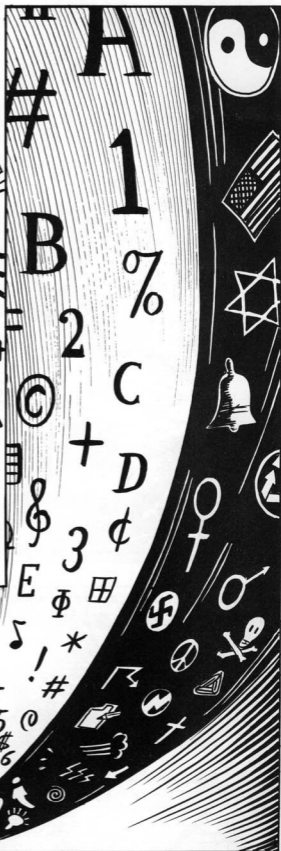
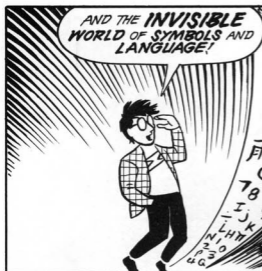
FACE

TWO EYES  
ONE MOUTH  
ONE NOSE.

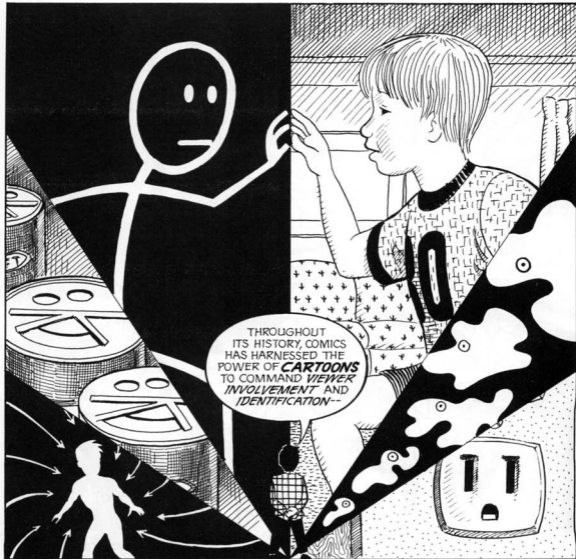
*The youth's  
proud livery,  
so garb'd,  
on now...*



INCLUDING THE **FULL**  
RANGE OF **PICTORIAL**  
**STYLES,**  
FROM **REALISTIC**  
**REPRESENTATIONAL**  
**ART** TO THE **SIMPLEST**  
**CARTOONS--**

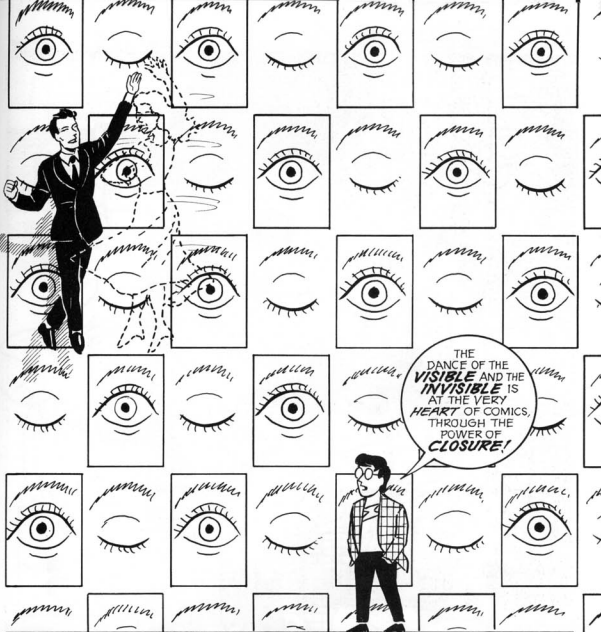






-- AND **REALISM** TO CAPTURE THE **BEAUTY** AND **COMPLEXITY** OF THE **VISIBLE** WORLD.





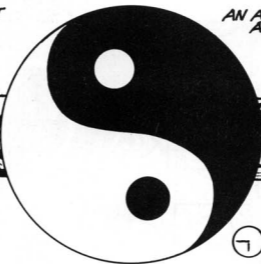
THE  
DANCE OF THE  
**VISIBLE** AND THE  
**INVISIBLE** IS  
AT THE VERY  
HEART OF COMICS,  
THROUGH THE  
POWER OF  
**CLOSURE!**



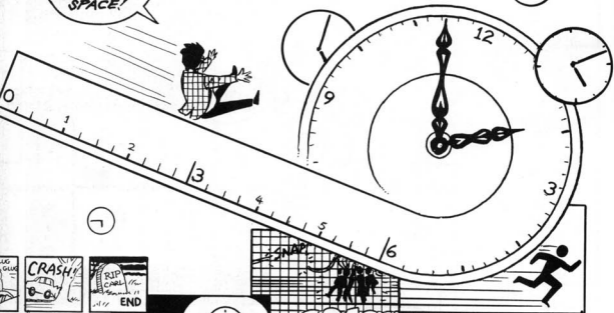
CREATOR AND READER ARE  
**PARTNERS IN THE INVISIBLE**  
CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF  
NOTHING, TIME AND  
TIME AGAIN.

COMICS IS A GREAT  
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBSTRACTIVE  
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



--AND A  
BAFFLING  
TWO-STEP OF  
TIME AND  
SPACE!



CRASH!



BUT NOWHERE IS THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND THE *INVISIBLE* MORE CONSPICUOUS THAN IN *PICTURES* AND *WORDS*...



ero genuit lu  
ini 7 nepchu  
challuim d  
ijm 7 capth  
uic frdouer



ill uncravish  
id of sibca  
n, who conit  
re sweetly th  
d legend hav  
mortals, of b  
on the dales o  
gods are thes



FACE

...A SPLIT FORETOLD IN THE  
*BIRTH OF ART ITSELF*--



--BEGUN  
IN EARNEST  
OVER *5,000*  
YEARS AGO--

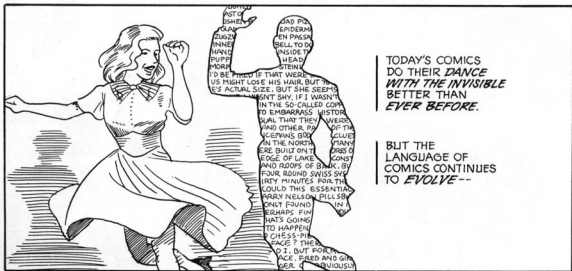


-- AND GROWN WIDER AND WIDER FOR  
CENTURIES UNTIL EVENTUALLY, ALL  
CONNECTION WAS LOST--





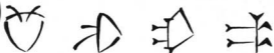
SEE PAGE 216 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



TODAY'S COMICS  
DO THEIR DANCE  
WITH THE INVISIBLE  
BETTER THAN  
EVER BEFORE.

BUT THE  
LANGUAGE OF  
COMICS CONTINUES  
TO EVOLVE--

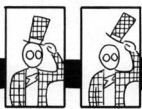
--AS ALL LANGUAGE MUST EVOLVE--



--BECAUSE EMBEDDED IN ALL PICTURES OF THE *VISIBLE* WORLD ARE THE SEEDS OF THE *INVISIBLE*.

THE SEEDS OF *EXPRESSIONISM* AND *SYNAESTHETICS*.

BUT EVOLUTION IS A TRICKY THING. SPECIES EVOLVE DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT CLIMATES.



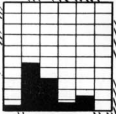
SO IT WAS IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED IN RELATIVE ISOLATION, SPAWNING A HOST OF UNIQUE APPROACHES TO MAKING COMICS.



COLLAGE



EXPRESSIONISM



STORYTELLING



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



JAPAN



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



THE 'MASKING' EFFECT



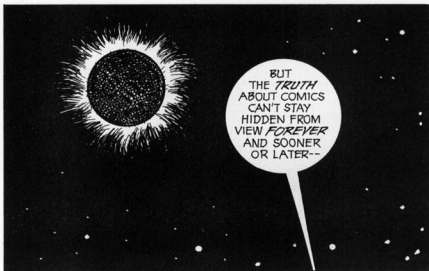
ICONIC CHARACTERS



AS COMICS GROWS INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, CREATORS WILL ASPIRE TO MANY HIGHER GOALS THAN APPEALING TO THE *LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR*.



*IGNORANCE AND SHORT-SIGHTED BUSINESS PRACTICES* WILL NO DOUBT *OBSCURE* THE POSSIBILITIES OF COMICS FROM TIME TO TIME AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE.



BUT THE *TRUTH* ABOUT COMICS CAN'T STAY HIDDEN FROM VIEW *FOREVER* AND SOONER OR LATER--



--THE *TRUTH* WILL *SHINE THROUGH!*





DADA  
 BIOGRAPHY HORROR  
 ROMANCE SURREALISM  
 BLANK  
 VERSE  
 EPIC HISTORICAL  
 POETRY FICTION  
 SOCIAL FOLK TALES  
 ALLEGORY EROTICA  
 ADAPTATIONS MYSTERY  
 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS RELIGIOUS  
 SATIRE TOPICS



TODAY THE  
 POSSIBILITIES FOR  
 COMICS ARE -- AS  
 THEY ALWAYS  
 HAVE BEEN --

--ENDLESS.

COMICS OFFERS  
*TREMENDOUS*  
*RESOURCES* TO  
 ALL WRITERS  
 AND ARTISTS;  
*FAITHFULNESS,*  
*CONTROL,* A  
 CHANCE TO BE  
 HEARD *FAR AND*  
*WIDE* WITHOUT  
 FEAR OF  
*COMPROMISE...*



IT OFFERS  
*RANGE* AND  
*VERSATILITY*  
 WITH ALL THE  
 POTENTIAL IMAGERY  
 OF *FILM* AND  
*PAINTING*  
 PLUS THE  
*INTIMACY*  
 OF THE  
*WRITTEN*  
*WORD.*

AND ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS THE DESIRE TO BE HEARD--

1

2

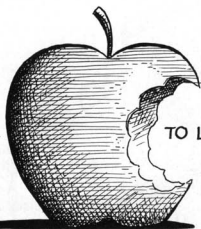
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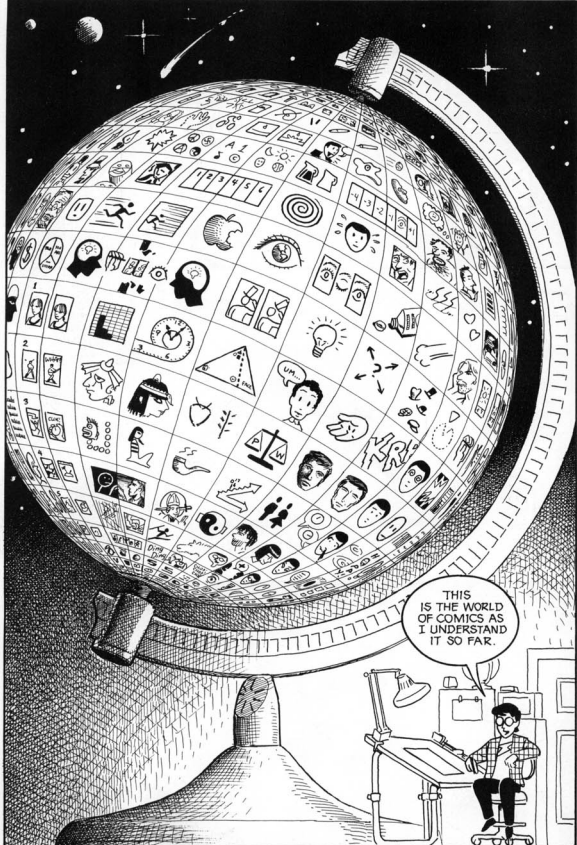
6

--THE WILL



TO LEARN--

-- AND THE  
ABILITY TO  
SEE.



THIS IS THE WORLD OF COMICS AS I UNDERSTAND IT SO FAR.



I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT COMICS SINCE BEGINNING THIS PROJECT AND I KNOW I HAVE A LOT LEFT TO LEARN.

I HOPE YOU'LL ALL CONSIDER EXPLORING-- OR CONTINUING TO EXPLORE-- COMICS ON YOUR OWN!



HOWEVER YOU EXPERIENCE COMICS-- AS READER, CREATOR OR BUSINESSPERSON-- THERE ARE A MILLION AND ONE WAYS YOU CAN HELP COMICS TO GROW INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.



THINK ABOUT IT. AND THANKS FOR LISTENING.



HMM?



OH, WOW, DID I TAKE THAT LONG? I'M SORRY. I BETTER LET YOU GO!



BACK TO THE OLD DRAWING BOARD!



AT LEAST YOU'RE NOT MARRIED TO HIM. I GET THIS ALL THE TIME!

CO  
'92

**Selected Bibliography.**

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Eisner, Will: *Comics and Sequential Art* (Princeton, WI: Kitchen Sink Press, Inc., 1992).

Kunzle, David: *The Early Comic Strip* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

McLuhan, Marshall: *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964).

Schwartz, Tony: *Media: The Second God* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

Wiese, E., editor, translator: *Enter: The Comics--Rodolphe Topffer's Essay on Physiognomy and the True Story of Monsieur Crepin* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

Special note: Kunzle's book (see above) has gone virtually unnoticed by the comics community but is an enormously important work, covering nearly 400 years of forgotten European comics. Check it out!

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Page 83: AL HELD. The Big N. (My facsimile). The original is synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 9'3/8" x 9'. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Armand P. Bartos Fund.

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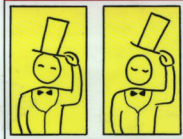
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