



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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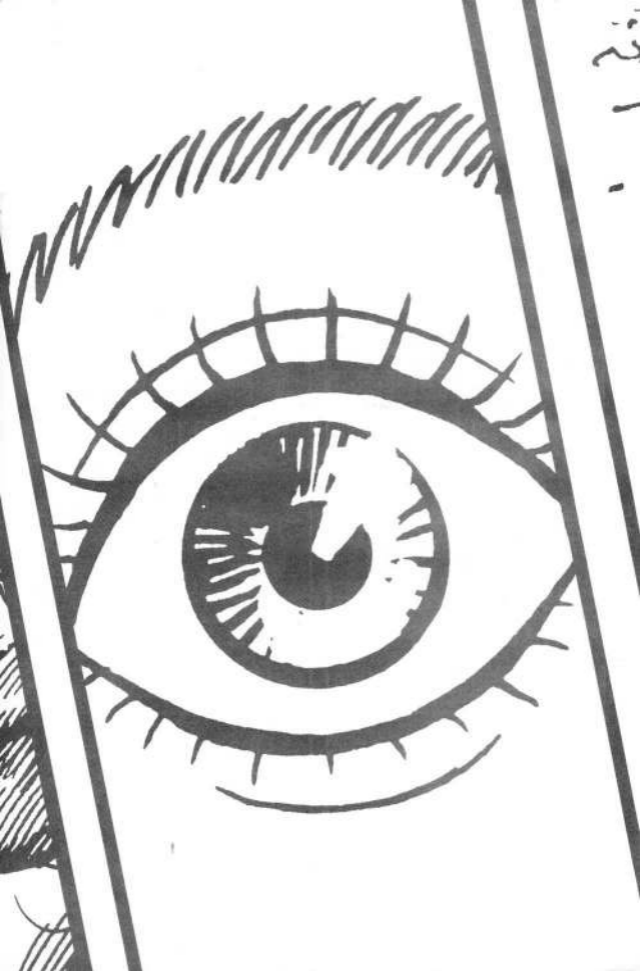
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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.

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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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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.

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



Scott McCloud



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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.

A black and white illustration of Scott McCloud in his studio. He is sitting at a drafting table, holding a pen and looking at a drawing. The studio is filled with various items: a globe on a shelf, a calendar for January, a desk with a typewriter, and a chair. A speech bubble from him says, "HI, I'M SCOTT McCLOUD."

HI,
I'M SCOTT
McCLOUD.

A close-up black and white illustration of Scott McCloud's face. He is wearing his signature glasses and has a wide, enthusiastic smile. He is holding a pen and looking at a drawing. A speech bubble from him says, "WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT COMICS WERE."


WHEN I WAS A
LITTLE KID
I KNEW
EXACTLY
WHAT COMICS
WERE.

A black and white illustration of Scott McCloud's face. He has a surprised expression with wide eyes and an open mouth. A speech bubble from him says, "COMICS WERE THOSE BRIGHT, COLORFUL MAGAZINES FILLED WITH BAD ART, STUPID STORIES AND GUYS IN TIGHTS."

COMICS WERE THOSE
BRIGHT, COLORFUL
MAGAZINES FILLED
WITH **BAD ART**,
STUPID STORIES
AND GUYS IN
TIGHTS.

A black and white illustration of Scott McCloud sitting on a stool, looking thoughtful. He is holding a pen and looking at a drawing. A speech bubble from him says, "I READ REAL BOOKS, NATURALLY. I WAS MUCH TOO OLD FOR COMICS!"

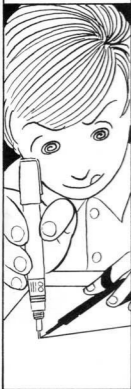
I READ **REAL**
BOOKS, NATURALLY.
I WAS MUCH TOO
OLD FOR
COMICS!

A black and white illustration of Scott McCloud lying on his back on a circular rug, reading a comic book. The comic book cover says "THE REALLY OLD MEN" by Scott McCloud. There are stars and decorative symbols around him. A speech bubble from him says, "BUT WHEN I WAS IN 8th GRADE, A FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT SMARTER THAN I WAS) CONVINCED ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION."

BUT WHEN I WAS IN **8th GRADE**, A
FRIEND OF MINE (WHO WAS A LOT
SMARTER THAN I WAS) CONVINCED
ME TO GIVE COMICS ANOTHER LOOK
AND LENT ME HIS COLLECTION.

SOON, I WAS **HOOKED!**

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.



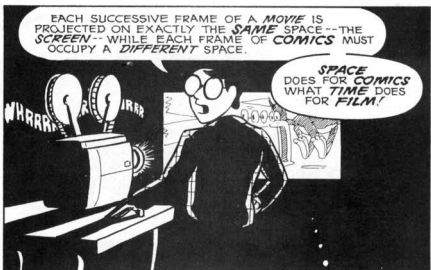
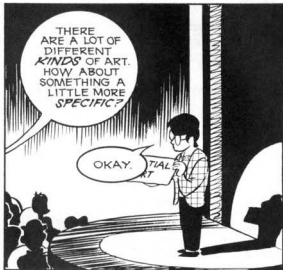
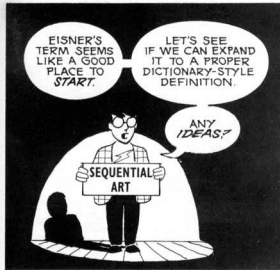
GLUG
GLUG



--FOR THE MESSENGER.

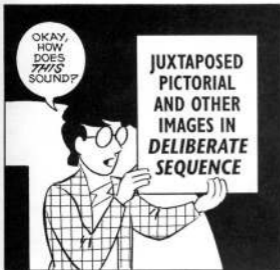


* EISNER'S OWN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART BEING A HAPPY EXCEPTION.

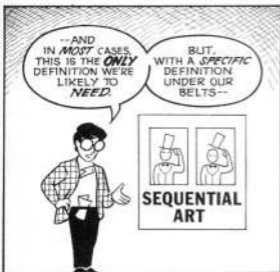


*JUXTAPOSED= ADJACENT, SIDE-BY-SIDE.
GREAT ART SCHOOL WORD.





adv.
com-ics (kəm'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 costumed villains who want to conquer the world, in violent sensational pulse-pounding action sequences! **3.** Cute, cuddy bunnies, mice and roleyoly bears, dancing to bed for Hippy Hop, Hippy-Hop. **4.** Corruptor of our Nation's youth.
com-ing. (kəm'ing) *adj.*



ACTUALLY,
A LOT
FARTHER!

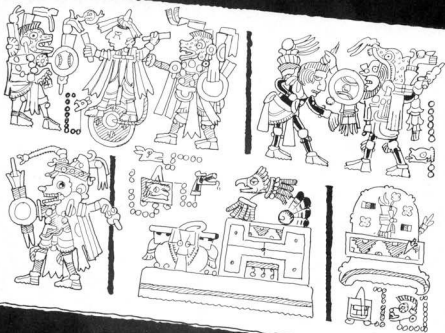
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1600

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."¹³

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



¹³OR "OCELOT'S CLAW" DEPENDING ON WHOSE BOOK YOU READ.
THIS SEQUENCE IS BASED ON A READING BY MEXICAN HISTORIAN
AND ARCHAEOLOGIST ALFONSO CASO.

FIRST, WE SEPARATE WORDS FROM *PICTURES*.



8-DEER
"TIGER'S
CLAW"

(A NAME)



11 HOUSE 12 MONKEY

(A DATE)



GOD
XIPE'S
BUNDLE

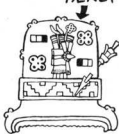
(GLYPH FOR PLACE WHOSE NAME WE DON'T KNOW.)

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

THE YEAR: 1049 AD

THE DATE: MAY 3*

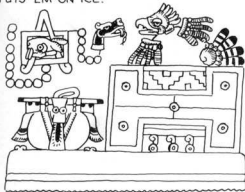
THE PLACE: *HERE!*



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

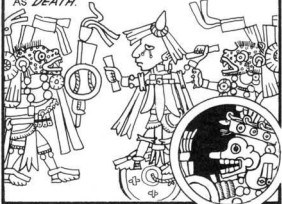


8-DEER ALSO CAPTURES THE PRINCE'S OLDER BROTHERS, 10-DOG "EAGLE COPAL BURNING" AND 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" AND PUTS 'EM ON ICE.

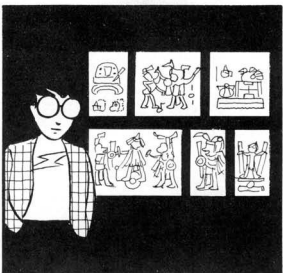
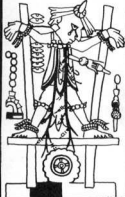


(I'M TAKING THE TRANSLATOR'S WORD ON THIS ONE.)

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*.



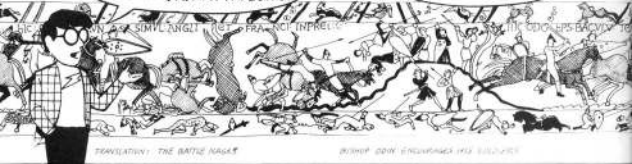
8-DEER KILLS THE OTHER PRINCE, 6-HOUSE "ROW OF FLINT KNIVES" EIGHT DAYS LATER.



* 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 OF HASTINGS

DESIGN: BOB ENGLISHMAN (1978) SOURCE: THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

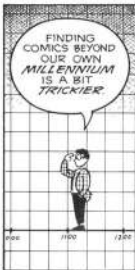
FAR FROM **DISQUALIFYING** THESE AS COMICS, I THINK **MODERN COMIC BOOK ARTISTS** SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF THE **POSSIBILITIES** OF SUCH **WHOLE PAGE COMPOSITIONS** AND HOW **FEW ARTISTS** HAVE MADE **GOOD USE** OF THEM **SINCE!**

WHICH ONE IS THE **PRINCE?**

PERENNIAL EXCEPTION **WILL FISHER**



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

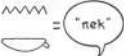
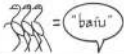


JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE?

AT FIRST GLANCE, **EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS** 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*.



DIKE WILLIAM RECEIVES HIS HELMET TO RALLY HIS SOLDIERS

HAROLD'S ARMY IS CUT TO PIECES

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

"ses tu baui abta, hiennu nek baui amenta"

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

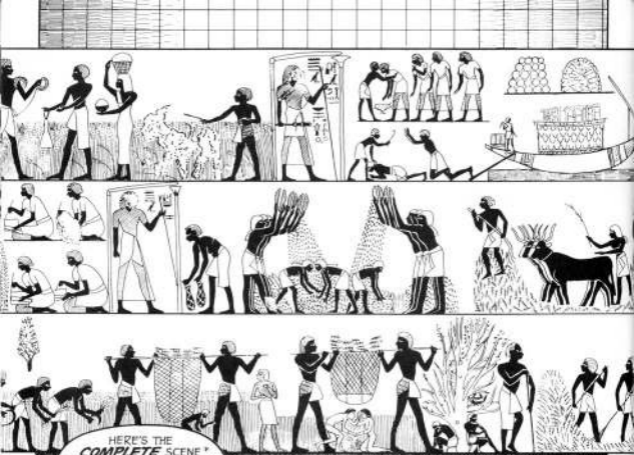
EGYPTIAN *PAINTING* IS *ANOTHER MATTER*. SOME, LIKE THIS, MAY *SEEM* TO BE CONCERNED WITH SEQUENCE, BUT ARE ACTUALLY SHOWING TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, EVENTS AND CASTS, GROUPED ONLY BY *SUBJECT*.

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?

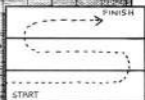




HERE'S THE COMPLETE SCENE* PAINTED OVER THIRTY-TWO CENTURIES AGO FOR THE TOMB OF "MENNA," AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SCRIBE.

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

GOING UP THIS TIME!



16 00

19 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 *RODOLPHE TÖPFFER*, WHOSE LIGHT SATIRIC PICTURE STORIES, STARTING IN THE MID-1800'S, EMPLOYED *CARTOONING* AND *PANEL BORDERS*, AND FEATURED THE FIRST INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATION OF *WORDS* AND *PICTURES* SEEN IN EUROPE.



(TRANSLATION BY E. WIESE)

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



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

-Goethe



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



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



A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN.

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



1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940

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 **FRANS 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 NOUVEAU*," *A WEEK OF KINDNESS*.



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

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



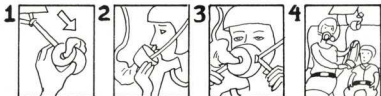
IF WE DON'T EXCLUDE *PHOTOGRAPHY* FROM OUR DEFINITION, THEN HALF OF *AMERICA* HAS BEEN IN COMICS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.



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



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



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

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

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



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



"Mommy, why ain't I Juxtaposed?"

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



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



HI, BOGEY.

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



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



MORE ON THIS LATER.

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



"Mooney, why ain't Juxtaposed?!"

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



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



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



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

1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040

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



SEQUENTIAL
ART

DADA

BIOGRAPHY HORROR

ROMANCE SURREALISM

BLANK HISTORICAL

VERSE FICTION

EPIC FOLK TALES

POETRY EROTICA

SOCIAL MYSTERY

ALLEGORY RELIGIOUS

ADAPTATIONS TOPICS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SATIRE



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

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



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

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



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

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



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

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



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



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



--OF MANY **POSSIBLE** WORLDS!



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



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



AND SO THEY SHOULD.



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



CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.

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



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



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

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



RIGHT?







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 MUSIC.



THIS IS NOT A COW.



THIS IS NOT MY VOICE.



THIS IS NOT SOUND.



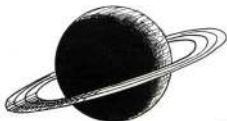
THESE ARE NOT FLOWERS.



THIS IS NOT ME.



THIS IS NOT LAW.



THIS IS NOT A PLANET.



THIS IS NOT FOOD.



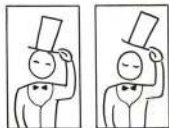
THIS IS NOT A CAR.



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.

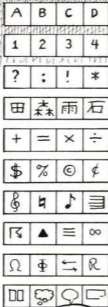


THE SORTS OF IMAGES WE USUALLY **CALL** SYMBOLS ARE ONE **CATEGORY** OF **ICON**, HOWEVER.



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

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



ICONS OF THE **PRACTICAL** REALM.

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



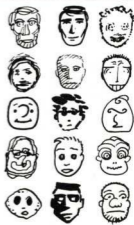
BUT AS **RESEMBLANCE** VARIES, SO DOES THE **LEVEL** OF **ICONIC** CONTENT.

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.





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



REAL WAY.



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



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



REAL THIS WAY.



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



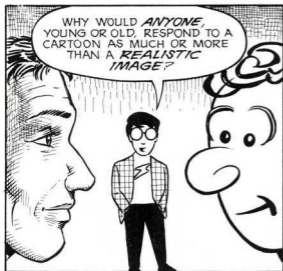
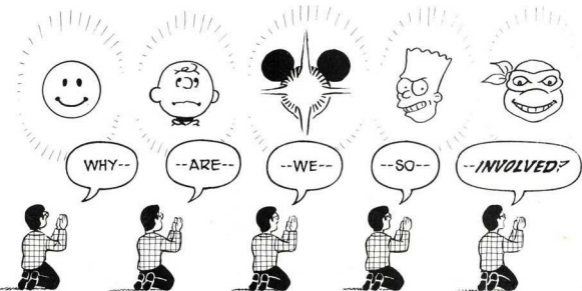
WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THE ICON WE CALL--



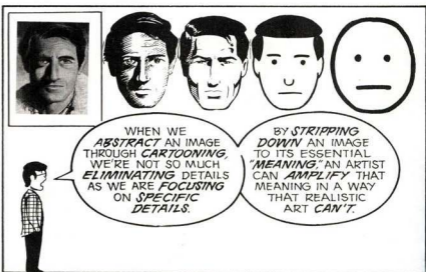
REAL WAY.



--THE ***CARTOON?***



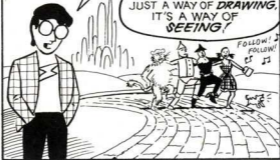
DEFINING THE CARTOON WOULD TAKE UP AS MUCH SPACE AS *DEFINING COMICS*, BUT FOR *NOW*, I'M GOING TO EXAMINE CARTOONING AS A FORM OF *AMPLIFICATION THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION*.



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!*

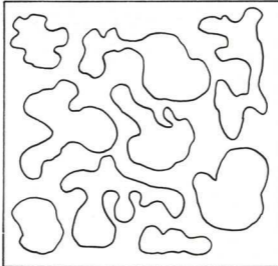


BUT STILL *MORE* INCREDIBLE IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT *AVOID* SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T *LET* YOU!

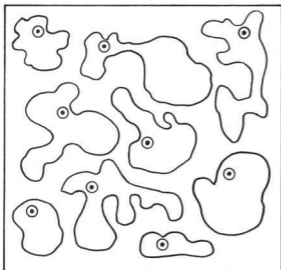


ASK A FRIEND TO DRAW YOU SOME SHAPES ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THEY SHOULD BE **CLOSED CURVES**. BUT **OTHERWISE** CAN BE AS **WEIRD** AND **IRREGULAR** AS HE OR SHE WANTS.

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



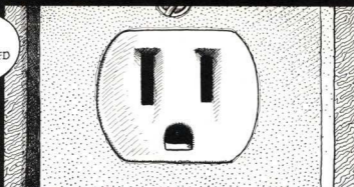
NOW-- YOU'LL FIND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY **LOOK** LIKE, EVERY SINGLE **ONE** OF THOSE SHAPES **CAN** BE MADE INTO A FACE WITH ONE SIMPLE ADDITION.



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.

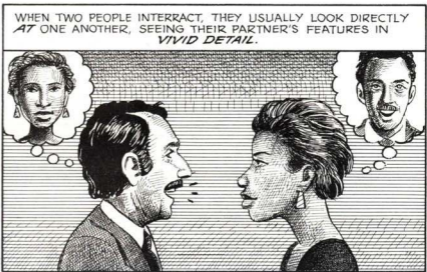


SEEN BY
EVERYONE
YOU MEET.

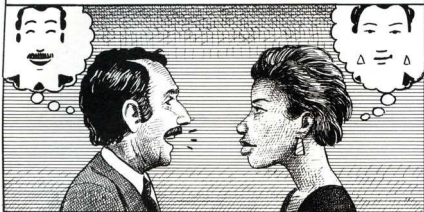
BUT
NEVER
BY *YOU!*

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--



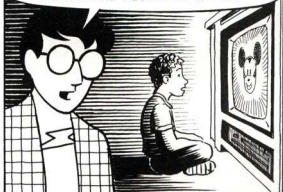
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER*.

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



--YOU SEE *YOURSELF*.

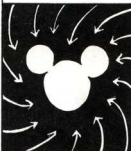
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS*, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION*, *SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY *CARTOON* CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE *CARTOON* IS A *VACUUM* INTO WHICH OUR *IDENTITY* AND *AWARENES* 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.**



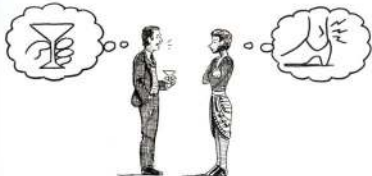
BUT IF **WHO I AM** MATTERS **LESS**, MAYBE WHAT I **SAY** WILL MATTER **MORE.**



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?



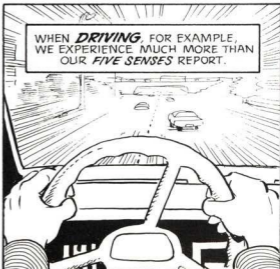
THERE'S **MORE**, TOO!



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



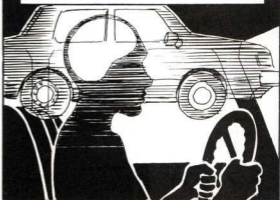
WHEN **DRIVING**, FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE THAN OUR **FIVE SENSES** REPORT.



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!

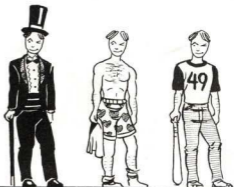
**HEY!
HE HIT
ME!!**



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*...



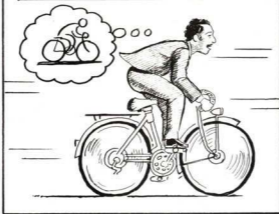
PIECES OF GLASS TO BECOME *EYES*.



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*!

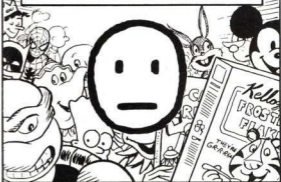


STORYTELLERS IN *ALL* MEDIA KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF *AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT*--

--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 *PRONOUNCED*. 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.



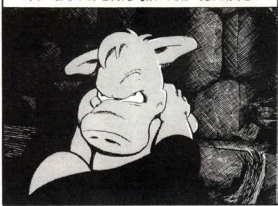
ONE SET OF LINES TO **SEE**. ANOTHER SET OF LINES TO **BE**.



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 *REALISTICALLY* IN ORDER TO *OBJECTIFY* THEM, EMPHASIZING THEIR "*OTHERNESS*" FROM THE *READER*.



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



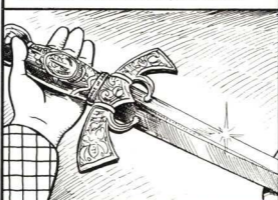
--DUE TO THE "*LIFE*" IT POSSESSES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY *CARTOON* IDENTITY!



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*.



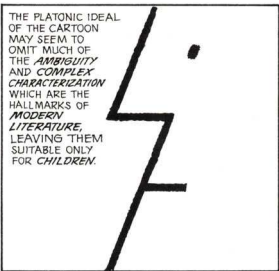
IN THIS AND IN *OTHER WAYS*, COMICS IN JAPAN HAVE EVOLVED VERY *DIFFERENTLY* FROM THOSE IN THE WEST.



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



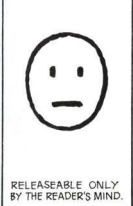
AS I WRITE THIS, IN 1992, AMERICAN AUDIENCES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT A SIMPLE *STYLE* DOESN'T NECESSITATE SIMPLE *STORY*.

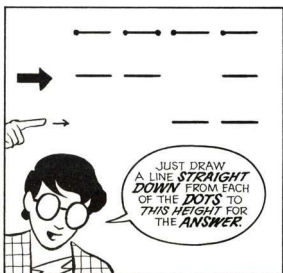
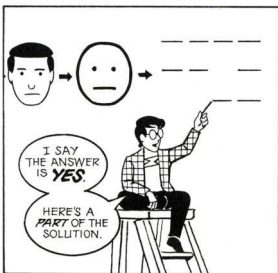
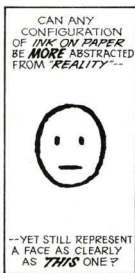
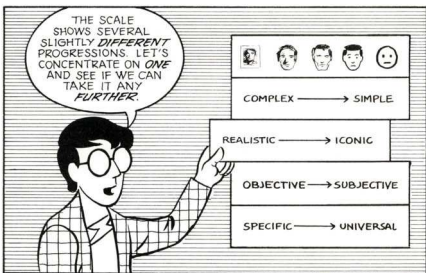
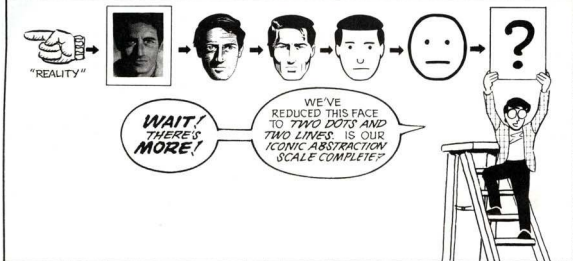


BUT SIMPLE ELEMENTS CAN COMBINE IN COMPLEX WAYS, AS ATOMS BECOME MOLECULES AND MOLECULES BECOME LIFE.



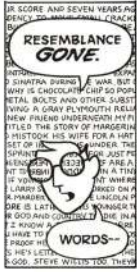
AND *LIKE* THE ATOM, GREAT POWER IS LOCKED IN THESE FEW SIMPLE LINES.







MEANING
RETAINED.



RESEMBLANCE
GONE.

WORDS--



-- ARE THE
ULTIMATE
ABSTRACTION.



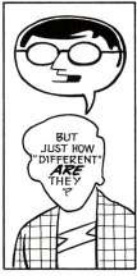
MOST AMERICAN
COMICS, NOTABLY
COMIC BOOKS, HAVE
LONG EMPHASIZED THE
DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN WORDS
AND PICTURES.



WRITING
AND DRAWING
ARE SEEN AS
SEPARATE
DISCIPLINES.
WRITERS AND
ARTISTS AS
SEPARATE
BREEDS--



-- AND "GOOD" COMICS
AS THOSE IN WHICH
THE COMBINATION
OF THESE VERY
DIFFERENT
FORMS OF EXPRESSION
IS THOUGHT TO BE
HARMONIOUS.



BUT
JUST HOW
"DIFFERENT"
ARE
THEY?



WORDS, PICTURES AND
OTHER ICONS ARE THE
VOCABULARY OF
THE LANGUAGE CALLED
COMICS.



A SINGLE
UNIFIED
LANGUAGE
DESERVES A
SINGLE, UNIFIED
VOCABULARY.



WITHOUT
IT, COMICS
WILL CONTINUE
TO LIMP ALONG
AS THE "BASTARD
CHILD"
OF WORDS AND
PICTURES.



SEVERAL
FACTORS HAVE
CONSPIRED
AGAINST
COMICS
RECEIVING THE
UNIFIED
IDENTITY
IT NEEDS.



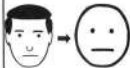
AND
AMONG
THEM LIE
SOME OF
OUR VERY
BEST
INSTINCTS.

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



"ARTIST"

"WRITER"



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 wouldn't
even know
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 youths probably
so gaz'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.

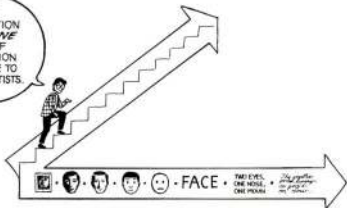
CAN THEY BE **RECONCILED?**



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--



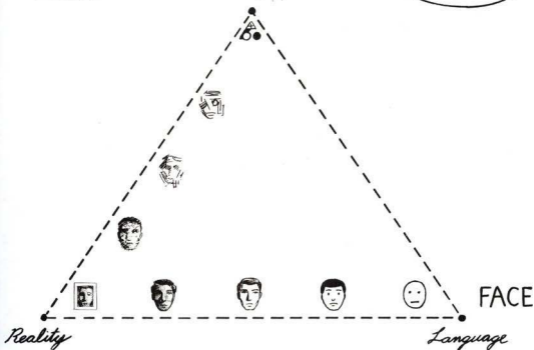
--INK
ON
PAPER.



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.



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. 3. MARISCAL's *Phoe*. 4. DAVE MOKKEN employing one of the many styles found in his series—CAGLES. 5. MARC HEMPEL's GONGYO. 6. MARK BEYER & LARRY MARDER's Banash from TALES OF THE SCARFOLD. "Reassembling" nothing ever seen (one of the way to the right), Marder's being walk the line from design to meaning. 7. SAUL STENBERG. 8. PENNY MORAN VANHORN from THE LIBRARIAN. 9. LORENZO MATTOTI in FRIES (© Editions Albin Michel S.A.) combines deeply impressionistic lighting with some forms and strong design-oriented compositions. In other words, he's a hard-on to place. 10. ALINE KOMINSKY-CRUMB. 11. PETER BADDE's *Chutiva Boy* from NEAT STUFF. Compare to 39. 12. KRISTINE KYRTINE. 13. REA IRVIN. THE SMYTHIES © Field Newspaper Syndicate. 14. STEVE WILLIS's *Moty*. 15. PHIL YEH's FRANK THE UNICORN. 16. JERRY MORTIARTY's "Jack Socrates". Based closely on real world light and shadow, but deformed into rough shapes. Similar effects are found in nos. 6, 18, 19, 20 and 24. 17. JEFF MORAN art for Scott Russo's JAZZ. 18. ROLF STARK's expressionistic RAIN. 19. SPAIN'S TRASHMAN. 20. FRANK MILLER in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS. Batman © D.C. Comics. Batman created by Bob Kane. 21. WILLIAM MESSEMER-LEBER's *Wolfram MacAlister* from JOURNEY. 22. DON SAMPSON's MEGATON MAN. Beginning from a

realistic anatomical base, Simpson distorts and exaggerates M.A.'s features to the brink of abstraction. 23. MICHAEL CHERKAS from SILENT INVASION. © Chelsea and Harrook. 24. RICK GEARY. 25. PETER KUPFER. 26. GARRY TRUDEAU's DOONESBURY. 27. LYNDA BARRY. 28. SAMPEI SURATO. 29. CHARLES BURNS' BIG BABY. 28 1/2. (Whoopie) CLIFF STRETT. The character pictured here from POLLY AND HER PALS! might belong a bit lower, but Stierlet's art, like Fleener's art, heads upward toward the wisdy 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 *Shiny Shins* from NAUGHTY BITS. 32. DAVID MAZZUCHELLI from BATMAN YEAR ONE. Commissioner Gordon © D.C. Comics. 33. JOSE MONZO from "Motor Control, Motor Willcox." © Munoz and Sampayo. 34. CAROL

"Noli and Cibi" © Koka and Kouma. 45. EDGIE CAMPBELL's ALEC. Realistic in tone, but also gestural and spontaneous. The process of drawing left/ right/ down/ up. 47. ALEX TORRES's *Rocco Vargas* from TRITON. 39. PETER BAGGE's *Buddy Bradley* from HATE COMPARE TO 11. 40. BETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCEY. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's *Mogul* from King's THE JUNGLE BOOKS. Russell's characters are as lively, colorful and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unpaired sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Later, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSKEI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI!

SWAN. 36. CHESTER GOULD'S DICK TRACY © Chicago Tribune-New York Syndicate. Inc. 38. JACK KIRBY's *Darkest*. © D.C. Comics. 37. BOB BURDEN. 38. DANIEL TORRES's *Rocco Vargas* from TRITON. 39. PETER BAGGE's *Buddy Bradley* from HATE COMPARE TO 11. 40. BETH. 41. MARK MARTIN. 42. JULIE DOUCEY. 43. EDWARD GOREY. 44. CRAIG RUSSELL's *Mogul* from King's THE JUNGLE BOOKS. Russell's characters are as lively, colorful and realistically based as Hal Foster's or Dave Stevens' but with an unpaired sense of design that draws them toward the upper vertex. Later, Russell has been moving a bit higher and toward the right in some cases. 45. GOSKEI KOJIMA from KOZURE OKAMI!

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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 "AAAH! READ IT LATER."

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



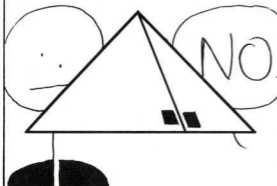
EACH CREATOR EMPLOYS A *RANGE* OF STYLES, THOUGH, AND MANY OCCUPY *SEVERAL* PLACES ON THE CHART DURING A GIVEN PROJECT.



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.



Sound on!

O.K...Let's roll!

Vision on!



HERGE STRETCHES NEARLY FROM *LEFT* TO *RIGHT*-- FROM *REALISM* TO *CARTOONING*-- BUT VENTURES VERY LITTLE INTO THE *UPPER* 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 TELLING WHAT'LL HAPPEN!!

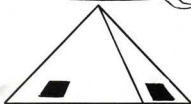


ART: JACK KIRBY AND JOE SINNOTT (MY FACSIMILE)
SCRIPT: STAN LEE.

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.





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.

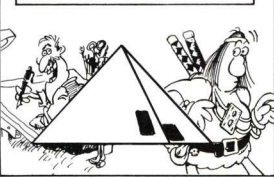


IRONIC THAT THE TWO BASTIONS OF CARTOONY ART ARE UNDERGROUND AND CHILDREN'S COMICS!

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*.



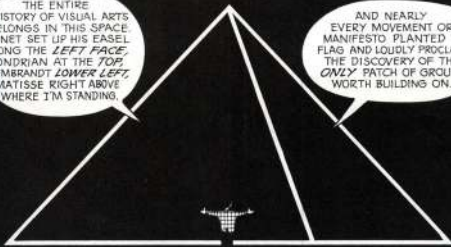
FOR COMICS TO *MATURE* AS A *MEDIUM*, IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING EACH ARTIST'S *INNERMOST NEEDS* AND *IDEAS*.

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"



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

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

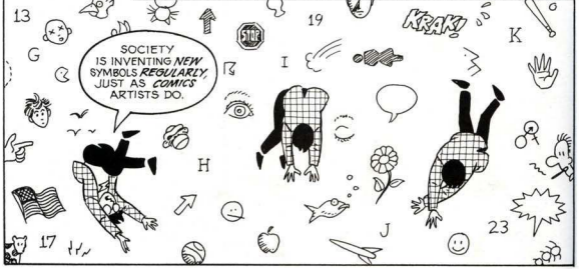


AND IT'S EXPANDING ALL THE TIME!



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

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



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



ICONS DEMAND OUR PARTICIPATION TO MAKE THEM WORK.

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

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

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

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

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--



--CEASED TO EXIST.



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



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



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



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



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



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



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE **NOT!**



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

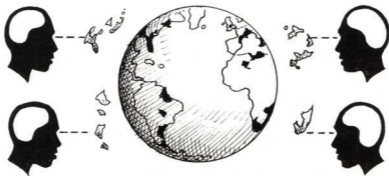
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A *WHOLE* THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR *SENSES*.

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



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

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



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

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



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

IT'S
CALLED
CLOSURE.

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

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

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

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

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

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



CLOSURE

CLOSURE

CL S RE



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



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



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



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



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



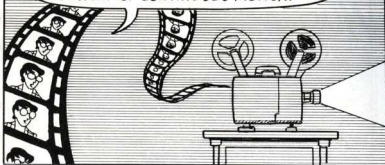
--OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH!



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



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



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



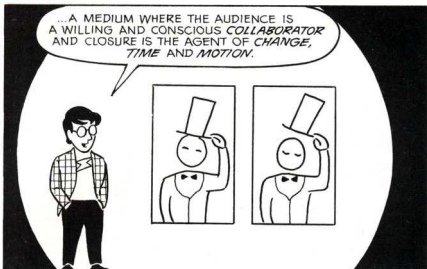
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE OF
EVERYDAY
LIFE--



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



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





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

Peek-A-Boo!



Peek-A-Boo!



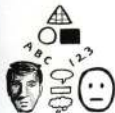
COMICS PANELS *FRACTURE* BOTH *TIME* AND *SPACE*, OFFERING A *JAGGED, STACCATO RHYTHM* OF *UNCONNECTED MOMENTS*.



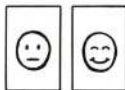
BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO *CONNECT* THESE MOMENTS AND *MENTALLY CONSTRUCT* A *CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY*.

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 **HOLD**
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*.



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.

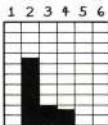


ART © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

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

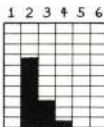
1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

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



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

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



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



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



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 AFGHOL



CRUTTEN & MEDIERES

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & MOEBIUS

"MANHATTAN"



TARDI

CLIK!



MANARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGÉ

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



2

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

3

4

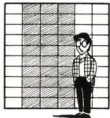


IF WE CHOOSE TO SEE STORIES AS CONNECTED SERIES OF *EVENTS*, THEN THE PREDOMINANCE OF TYPES 2-4 ARE EASILY EXPLAINED



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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

1 2 3 4 5 6



1.



2.

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



1 2 3 4 5 6



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

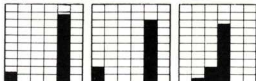
1 2 3 4 5 6



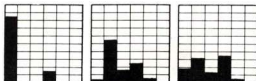
SOME *EXPERIMENTAL COMICS*, LIKE THOSE OF *ART SPIEGELMAN'S* EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A *FULL RANGE* OF TRANSITIONS--

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

STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



"DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE" "INTRODUCTION" "MAVS" (ORIGINAL)



"SKINLESS PERKINS" "PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET" "CRACKING JOKES"



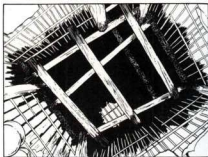
"FRONT AND BACK COVERS" "ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE" "REAL DREAM" 1975'

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.

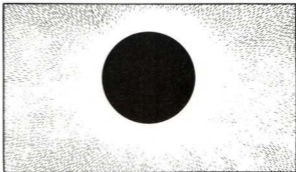


THOUGH THE LATTER TYPE ONLY ACCOUNTS FOR *FOUR PERCENT* OF THE TOTAL, SUCH SEQUENCES CONTRAST STRIKINGLY WITH THE WESTERN TRADITIONS EXEMPLIFIED BY KIRBY AND HERGÉ.



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.



水木は 夜の
古きに
いて
みる
こと
にした



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

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



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



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

WHY?



750 RIDER
(石井一也?)



FATHER & SON
HAYASHI & OSIMA



WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOJIMA



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO



CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHIMORI

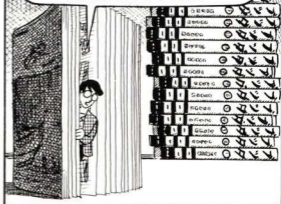


PHOENIX
OSAMU TEZUKA

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



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



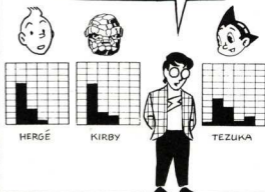
AS SUCH, DOZENS OF PANELS CAN BE DEVOTED TO PORTRAYING SLOW CINEMATIC MOVEMENT OR TO SETTING A MOOD.



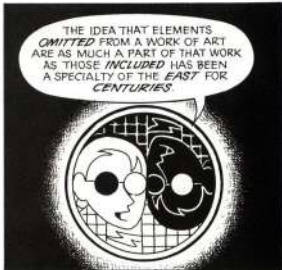
BUT I DON'T THINK LONGER STORIES ARE THE ONLY FACTOR, OR EVEN THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE.



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







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



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

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



WEST



EAST

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



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



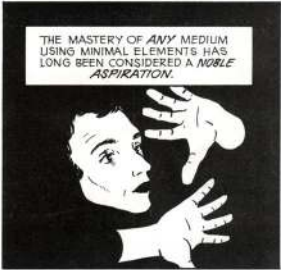
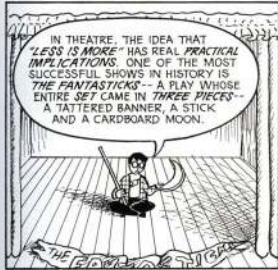


IN THE *VISUAL* ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

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



FACSIMILE OF "FIGURE" BY PABLO PICASSO 1948



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

*ANSWER: "THE BIG N" (SEE PAGE 216)

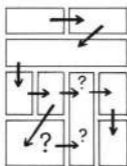


* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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

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



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



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

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



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



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



BY SHOWING LITTLE OR NOTHING OF A GIVEN SCENE --



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



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



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

CLAK! CLAK! CLAK!

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

WHOOSH!

≡ *Splip Splip* ≡

?

Ding! Ding!

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

OW!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

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

-- AN
ACTION OR--
OW! OW!

STOP THAT!

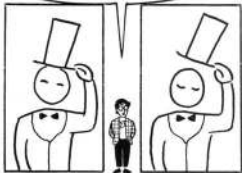
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

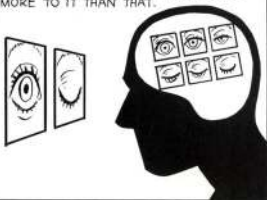
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



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



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



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

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



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



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



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



LOOK AGAIN.

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



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



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



BUT WHAT OF THE OTHER **FOUR?**

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



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



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

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



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



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



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--



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.

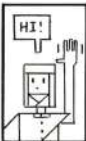
BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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.



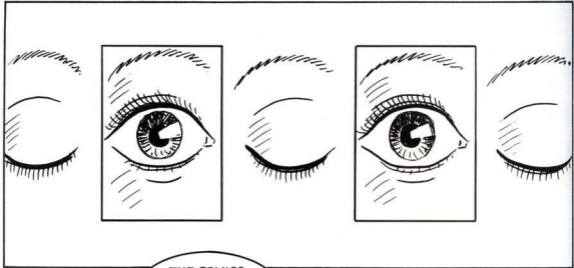
NOW IT'S THE **UNIFYING PROPERTIES** OF **DESIGN** THAT MAKE US MORE AWARE OF THE PAGE AS A **WHOLE**, RATHER THAN ITS INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS, THE **PANELS**.



-- 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
UNSEEN.

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.



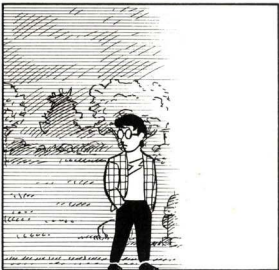
THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS
A MERE *HYBRID* OF THE
GRAPHIC ARTS AND *PROSE*
FICTION.

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

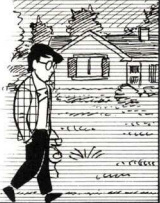




ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE *ASSUMPTIONS*
ABOUT YOU AND HOPE THAT THEY'RE
CORRECT--



-- 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.*



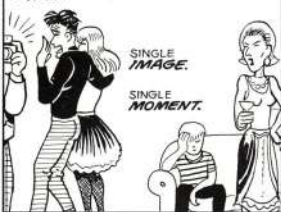
AND SINCE EACH
FACE AND FIGURE
IS DRAWN TO MATCH
HIS/HER OWN
WORDS--



--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.



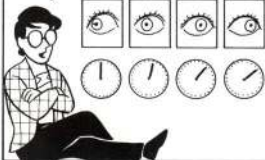
PORTRAYING TIME ON A LINE MOVING *LEFT TO RIGHT*, THIS PUTS ALL THE *IMAGES* ON THE SAME VERTICAL AXIS.



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*!



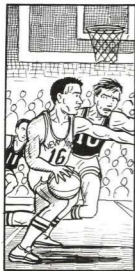
EACH FIGURE IS ARRANGED FROM *LEFT TO RIGHT* IN THE SEQUENCE WE WILL *'READ'* THEM, EACH OCCUPYING A DISTINCT *TIME SLOT*.



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!*

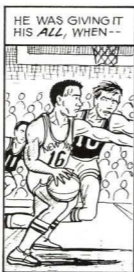


HE'S GIVING IT HIS *ALL*, FOLKS!

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



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



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

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



ALL EXCEPT *ONE*.



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



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

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

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

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

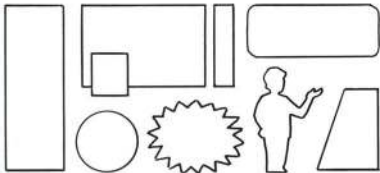


THE **DURATIONS** OF THAT **TIME** AND THE **DIMENSIONS** OF THAT **SPACE** ARE DEFINED MORE BY THE **CONTENTS** OF THE PANEL THAN BY THE PANEL **ITSELF**.*



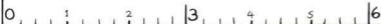
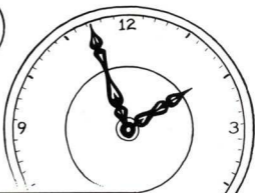
PANEL **SHAPES** VARY **CONSIDERABLY** THOUGH, AND WHILE DIFFERENCES OF SHAPE DON'T AFFECT THE SPECIFIC "**MEANINGS**" OF THOSE PANELS VIS-A-VIS TIME, THEY **CAN** AFFECT THE READING **EXPERIENCE**.

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



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

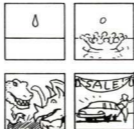
IN LEARNING TO READ COMICS WE ALL LEARNED TO PERCEIVE TIME *SPATIALLY*, FOR IN THE WORLD OF COMICS, *TIME AND SPACE ARE ONE AND THE SAME.*



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.

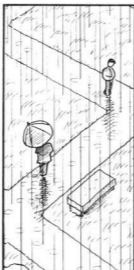


HEY, ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!



I GUESS.

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



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

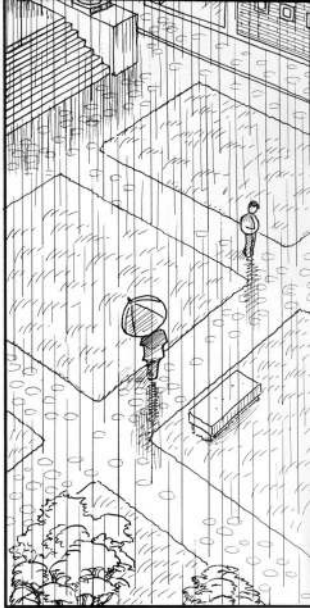


AND ITS PRESENCE MAY BE FELT IN THE PANELS WHICH **FOLLOW** IT.



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

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



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



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





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



THIS
PANEL AND
THIS PANEL
ALONE
REPRESENTS THE
PRESENT.



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




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



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



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



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


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



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



BUT
EYES, LIKE
STORMS, CAN
CHANGE
DIRECTION!

-3	-2	-1		+1
----	----	----	---	----



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



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



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



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



THE INCREDIBLE MR. SPOT ©1992 Matt Fozard

THE END OF THE MONTH... BROKE AGAIN!

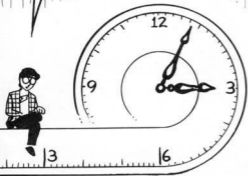
I'LL JUST BORROW SOME MONEY FROM MYSELF IN THE FUTURE!

NOW I CAN GO OUT TO DINNER!

MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF, ANDRE! THE CHECK, PLEASE!

HEY!

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



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



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

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



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

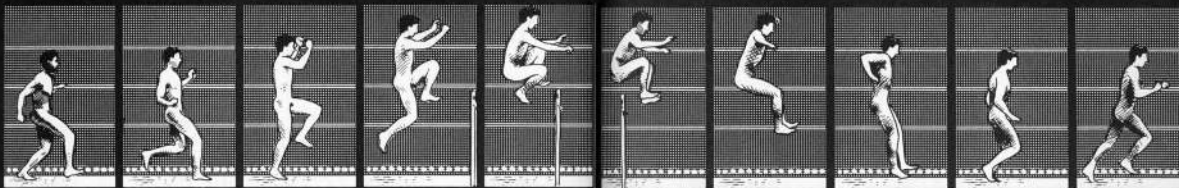


NOW, IN BRIGHT AND WITTY
SOCIETY, ONE SHOULD BE
SEATED IN ORDER TO
TALK THEATRES, CASINOS,
AND THE LATEST NOW-
SENSE IN GENERAL.

NOW, IF A SUPERIOR MAKE-A
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 1860, 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 ZOOETROPE!

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 ZOOPRAXINOSCOPE 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--

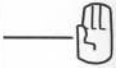


-- FILLED WITH MOTION --



-- 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 Bicycle by Balthus



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.

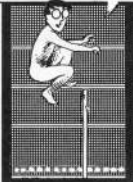


HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?

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!

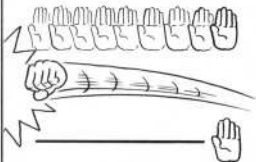
PAF!



--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*.

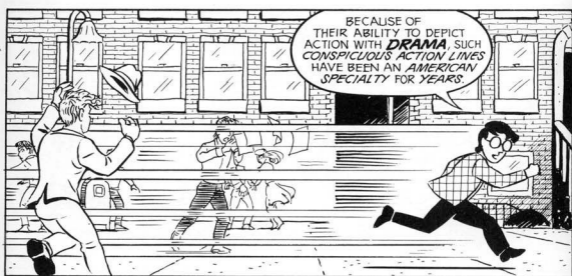


EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF *HEROIC FANTASY* ARTISTS LIKE *BILL EVERETT* AND *JACK KIRBY*--



--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.

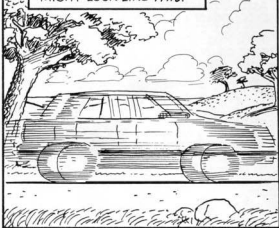


* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

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.



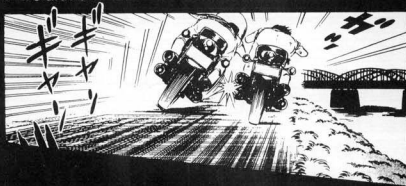
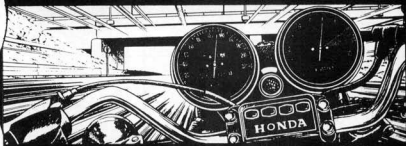
BUT IN *JAPAN* ONCE AGAIN, A VERY *DIFFERENT* COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS *THEIR OWN!*



"**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.

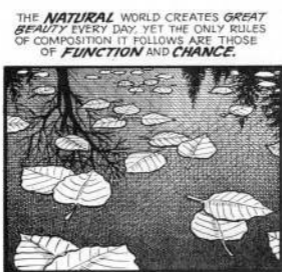


©石井いさみ?



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.**



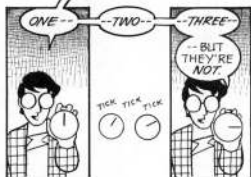
MOTION ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS. THE **FIRST TYPE-- PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE --** WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN **CHAPTER.**



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.

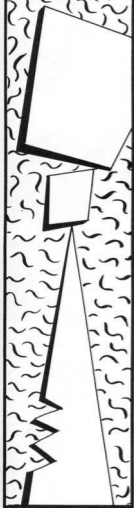
CAN
EMOTIONS
BE MADE
VISIBLE?

IS THIS **ANGER**?

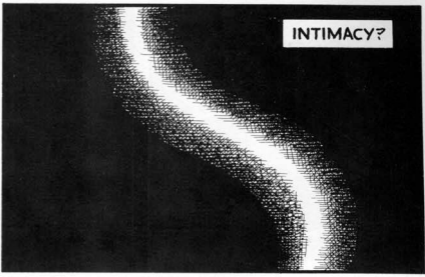
JOY?

SERENITY?

TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?

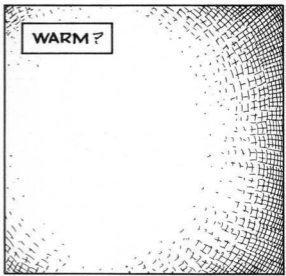
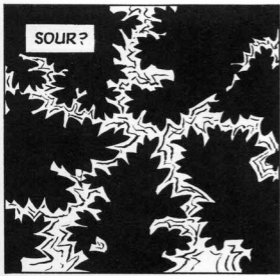
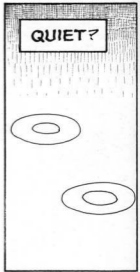
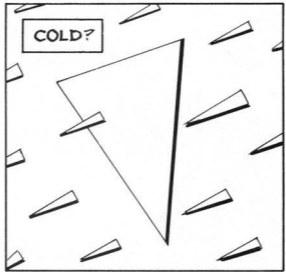
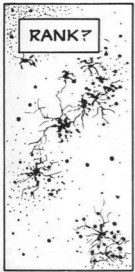
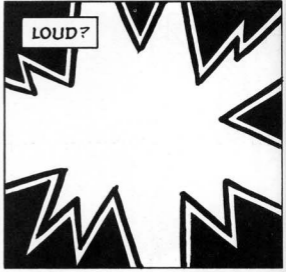


PRIDE?



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*?



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: 1893. ILLUSTRATION 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*.

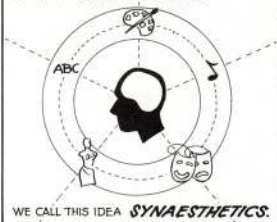
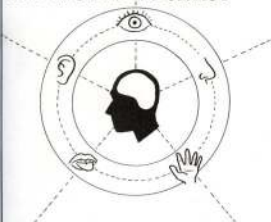
ANGRY REDS...
PLACID BLUES...
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...
LIVID SHAPES...
QUIET LINES...
COLD GREENS...

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 *APPEALED* TO THOSE DIFFERENT SENSES.

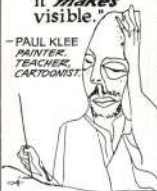


WE CALL THIS IDEA *SYNAESTHETICS*.

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?

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920



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



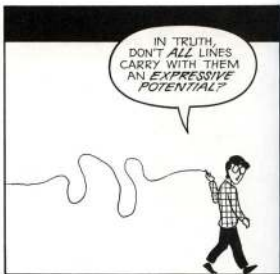
IF THESE LINES ARE EXPRESSIVE OF *FEAR, ANXIETY AND MADNESS*--



--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--



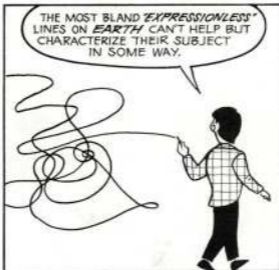
--OR WEAK
AND UNSTABLE--



--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 QUILL-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**.

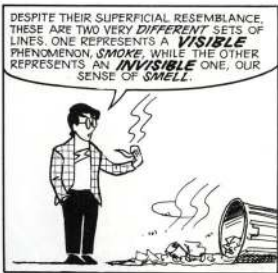
IN FACT, WHAT WE'RE SEEING IN THE **LIVING LINES** OF THESE PICTURES IS **THE PRIMORDIAL STUFF** FROM WHICH A **FORMALIZED LANGUAGE** CAN **EVOLVE!**

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.

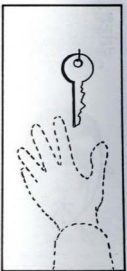
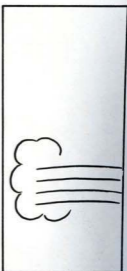


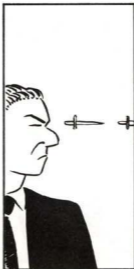
WHENEVER AN ARTIST
INVENTS A NEW WAY
TO *REPRESENT THE*
INVISIBLE, THERE IS
ALWAYS A CHANCE
THAT IT WILL BE
PICKED UP BY
OTHER ARTISTS.



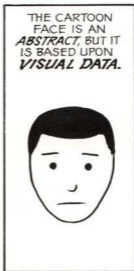
IF ENOUGH ARTISTS
BEGIN *USING* THE
SYMBOL, IT WILL
ENTER THE LANGUAGE
FOR *GOOD*--

--AS MANY
HAVE THROUGH
THE YEARS.





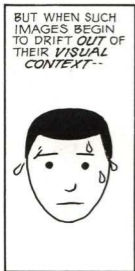
IN DEALING WITH THE FACE *ITSELF*, THE LINE BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND *INVISIBLE* WORLDS BECOMES EVEN *LESS CLEAR*.



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.

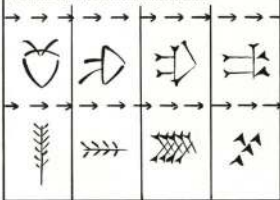


OX



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

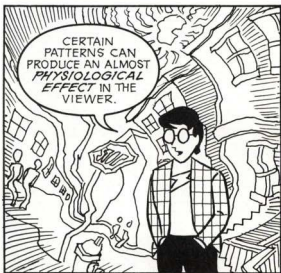
BACKGROUNDS CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING *INVISIBLE IDEAS*... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF *EMOTIONS*.



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.

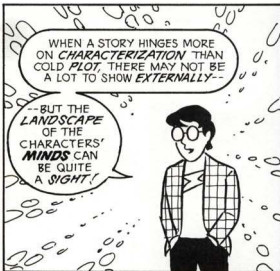


SUCH *INTERNAL EFFECTS* ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT *INTERNAL MATTERS*.



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!

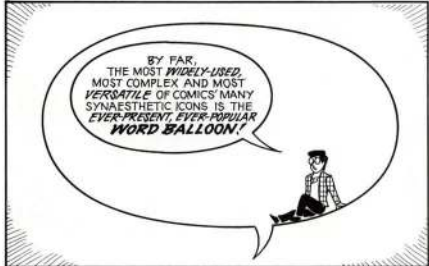


EXPRESSIONISM AND SYNAESTHETICS ARE *DISTORTIVE* BY THEIR NATURE. IF STRONG ENOUGH, THEIR EFFECTS CAN *OBSCURE* THEIR SUBJECTS.

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*.



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.



* EISNER DESCRIBES THE WORD BALLOON AS A "DESPERATION DEVICE"

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.



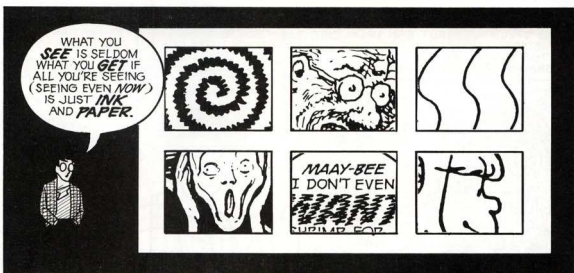
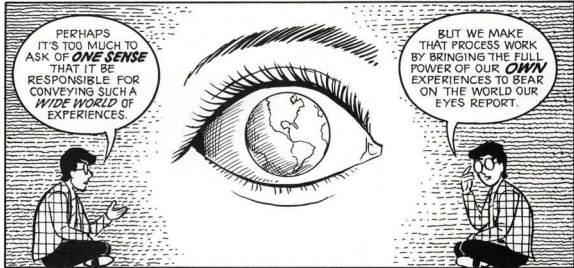
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M ON TO YOUR PLOT... I KNOW YOU PUT SOMETHING IN MY DOG'S FOOD THAT MADE HIM NOT LOVE ME ANYMORE AND...

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.



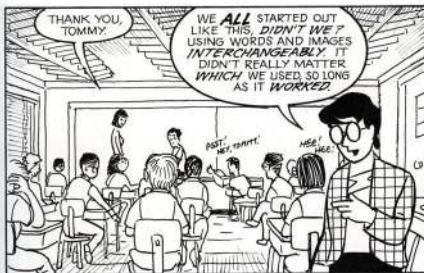
AAY-BE
ONT' EV
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CHAPTER SIX

SHOW AND TELL.





TRADITIONAL THINKING HAS LONG HELD THAT TRULY *GREAT* WORKS OF ART AND LITERATURE ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN THE TWO ARE KEPT AT ARM'S LENGTH.



WORDS AND PICTURES *TOGETHER* ARE CONSIDERED, AT BEST, A *DIVERSION* FOR THE MASSES, AT WORST A PRODUCT OF *CRASS COMMERCIALISM*.



AS CHILDREN, OUR FIRST BOOKS HAD *PICTURES GALORE* AND VERY FEW *WORDS* BECAUSE THAT WAS "EASIER."



THEN, AS WE GREW, WE WERE EXPECTED TO GRADUATE TO BOOKS WITH MUCH *MORE* TEXT AND ONLY *OCCASIONAL* PICTURES --

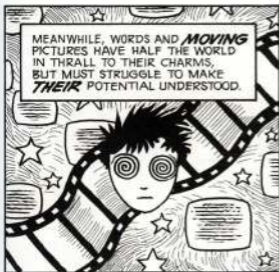


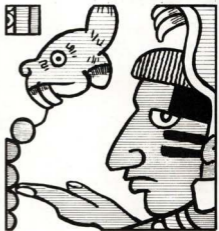
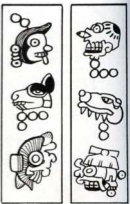
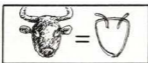
-- AND FINALLY TO ARRIVE AT "*REAL*" BOOKS -- THOSE WITH NO PICTURES *AT ALL*.



OR PERHAPS, AS IS SADLY THE CASE THESE DAYS, TO NO *BOOKS* AT ALL.







* SEE PAGE 129.



Don schiff will ich verformen/
Dai auff du müß das bitttraumen.
Wich soll noch niemandt müßen/
Es ist noch gar zu vil frügen.



Wie du lauters gaiten pflegen/
Wirtschafft wirt du das verewigen.
Ich flag von groffen nöden/
Esu wirt mich hungers töden.



Die recken solt du legen bin/
Dud mit dem gaffl enmüßig sin.
Wie soll ich mich nun bagen/
Nüß ich von meinen pannen len.



Wilt du noch geminen mein/
Es müß du gar endtöster sein.
Nement alle jamer war/
Es wirt mich endtöster gar.



Ich will dein fleisch mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.



Ich verberg mich zu finstlich mich nit.
Zu verberg ich alle wachen.
Doch mein lieb magt ich schen.



Ich will dich mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.



Ich will dich mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.

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



Ich will dich mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.

Ich verberg mich zu finstlich mich nit.
Zu verberg ich alle wachen.
Doch mein lieb magt ich schen.

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

-- AND LESS AND LESS LIKE PICTURES.



Ich will dich mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.



Ich verberg mich zu finstlich mich nit.
Zu verberg ich alle wachen.
Doch mein lieb magt ich schen.



Ich will dich mit fleiß/
Zu fleisch der gaffl derten mich.
Doch ist dir mich also fey/
Doch ist inu leyden mer.

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

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 maids 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...

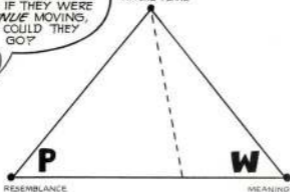
PICTURES
 AND WORDS,
 ONCE **TOGETHER**
 IN THE CENTER OF
 OUR ICONIC
 ABSTRACTION
 CHART, HAVE AT
THIS POINT
 DRIFTED TO
OPPOSITE
CORNERS.



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

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.

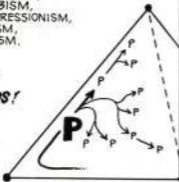
P

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.

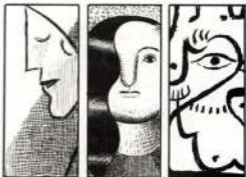


SOON AFTER CAME THE **EXPLOSION!** EXPRESSIONISM, FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM, FAUVISM, CUBISM, ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, NEO-PLASTICISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM.

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT **BACKWARDS!**

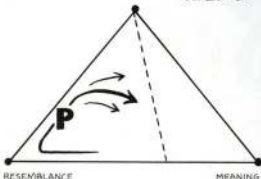


STRICT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLES WERE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE NEW SCHOOLS. **ABSTRACTION**, BOTH ICONIC AND NON-ICONIC MADE A SPECTACULAR **COMEBACK!**



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

Then 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 dieties or mortals; or, if both,
In Tempe or the Dale of Arcady?
What men or gods or beasts thy forms are destin'd

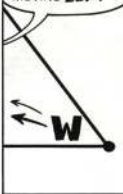
Walt Whitman 1890
Facing West from California's Shores

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?)

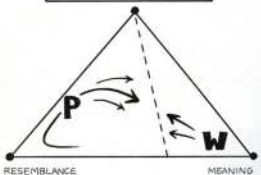
IN PROSE, LANGUAGE WAS BECOMING EVEN MORE DIRECT, CONVEYING MEANING *SIMPLY* AND *QUICKLY*, MORE LIKE *PICTURES*.



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



-- AND HEADED FOR A *COLLISION!*



H'atre MICHEL 40 rue Des Mathurins

SOIRÉE
JULIET 1923

DU CŒUR

TCHEREZ A BARBE

de semaine
prolongée à
le 7 juillet

CANISÉ
le plus de legs... 20 fr.
dessin d'architecte... 25 fr.
dessin de bureau... 15 fr.
dessin de bureau... 15 fr.

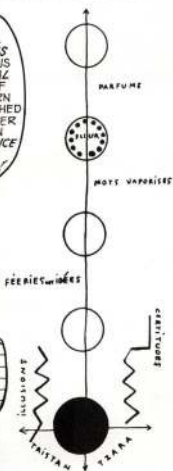
Exposition :
Boulevard des Capucines, 20, 24 de la Madeleine
Drouot, 4, Place de la Madeleine
Perdigny, 12, Rue Soufflot
Au Salon Drouot, 27, Avenue Kléber
N° 4, Avenue Ledoucq
Paul Gullmann, 20, Rue de la Boétie
Librairie Morisy, 27, Bd Montparnasse
Paul Rosenberg, 21, Rue de la Boétie
et au Théâtre Michel, Tel. : Op. 20-21

DADA POSTER FOR THE PLAY
"THE BEARDED HEART"

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par FRANCIS PICABIA

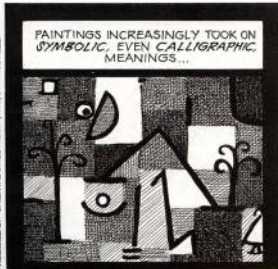
THE WORK OF DADAISTS, FUTURISTS AND VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS OF THE MODERN ERA BREACHED THE FRONTIER BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND MEANING!



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



FACSIMILE OF "ORIENTAL SWEETNESS" (1920) BY PAUL KLEE



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



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

BUT AGAIN IT WAS *RODOLPHE TOFFER* 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. WEISE.



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 sweet!
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
What pines 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*.

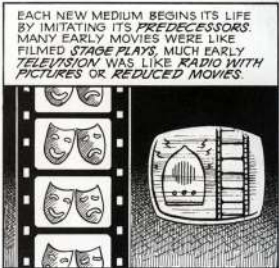


FACE

TWO EYES, ONE NOSE, ONE MOUTH.

*The world's from every-
so gaz'd
on how...*

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



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 reader.

1. Superheroes in costumes; fighting villains who want to take over the world; in violent settings.



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
SEQUENTIAL ART



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.



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!"



HEY, MARGE!

OH, MY GOD!

HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.



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



HURRY UP, WILL YA?!

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

P
—
W



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

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...

YOW!



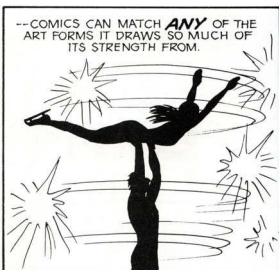
...THOUGH A LITTLE *PLAYFUL* COMPETITION CAN SOMETIMES PRODUCE *ENJOYABLE* RESULTS.



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.

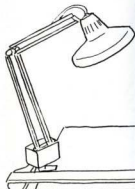


LET'S SAY I SHOW YOU A WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET IN THE RAIN, BUYING A PINT OF ICE CREAM AND EATING IT IN HER APARTMENT--

--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)

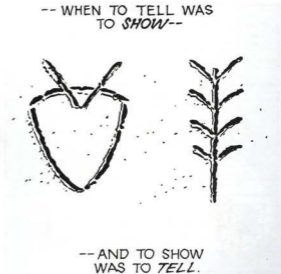
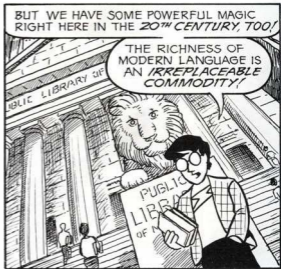
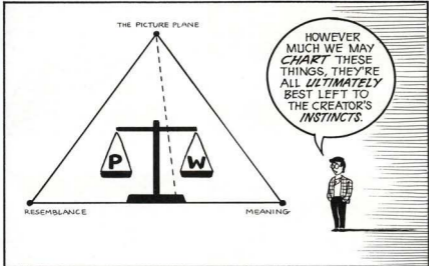
OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.

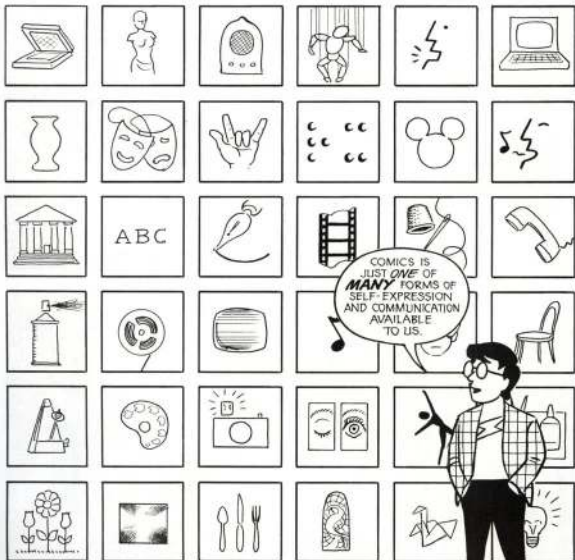


(WORD SPECIFIC)



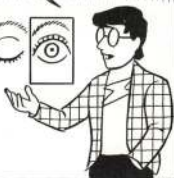
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIX STEPS.



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

SO FAR, WE'VE MOSTLY DEALT WITH THE *UNIQUE* PROPERTIES OF COMICS.



BUT THERE ARE PROPERTIES THAT COMICS SHARE WITH *ALL OTHER* ART FORMS.



THOUGH IT SEEMS INNOCUOUS ENOUGH *NOW*, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN SUCH A SIMPLE IDEA WAS *RIDICULED*.

EVEN *TODAY*, THERE ARE THOSE WHO ASK THE QUESTION, "CAN COMICS BE *ART*?"



IT IS--

--I'M SORRY--

A REALLY *STUPID* QUESTION!



BUT IF WE *MUST* ANSWER IT, THE ANSWER IS *YES*.



ESPECIALLY IF YOUR DEFINITION OF ART IS AS *BROAD* AS *MINE*!



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...

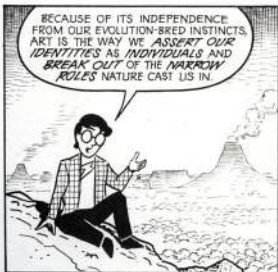


ART.



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!





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

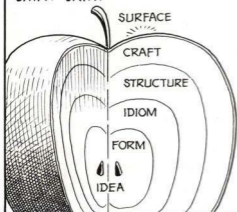
SURFACE



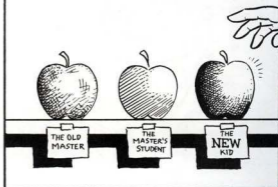
SIXTH:
PRODUCTION
VALUES, FINISHING...
THE ASPECTS MOST
APPARENT ON FIRST
SUPERFICIAL
EXPOSURE TO
THE WORK.



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**

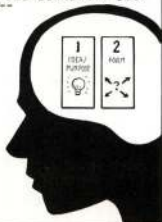
COMICS IS ACTING AS AN **INTERMEDIARY** BETWEEN **STORYTELLER** AND **AUDIENCE.**



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
SUBFACE

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...

< THAT GUY'S ART IS ALL JUST 'SURFACE?' >

AND HE **KNOWS** IT!

< WOW! >

... ENOUGH THAT FOR WHAT HE DOES, HE'S **ONE OF THE BEST.**

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**.

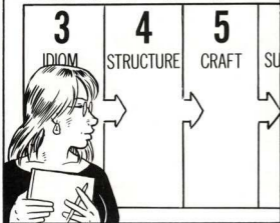


SHE BELIEVES THAT THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE**-- SOME **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**-- THAT SHE **STILL HASN'T FOUND**.

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*."



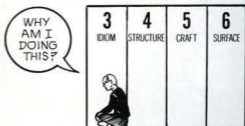
AND MAYBE SHE'LL BE *SATISFIED* WITH THAT KIND OF SUCCESS, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WHATEVER SHE *DOESN'T FIND OUT*.

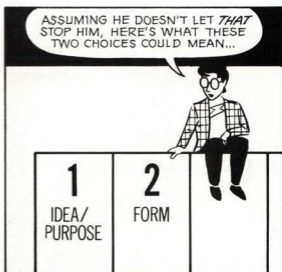
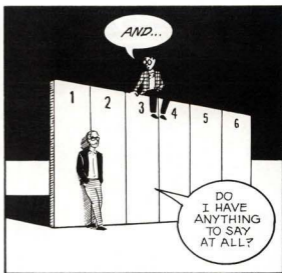
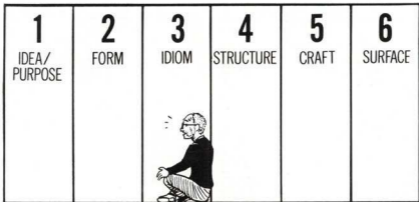


BUT *ELSEWHERE*, ANOTHER CREATOR HAS MADE IT TO THIS SAME PLACE AND STILL FEELS *DISSATISFIED*. HE FEELS THAT SOMETHING VERY *IMPORTANT* HAS BEEN NEGLECTED...



...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:





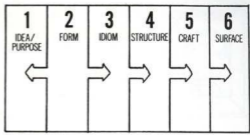
2 FORM



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.)

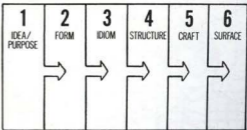
1 IDEA/ PURPOSE



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*.



SCHULZ



BARKS



HERGE



EISNER



NAKAZAWA

(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!



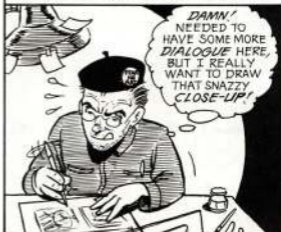
THIS IS A PROBLEM IN MANY "*ASSEMBLY LINE*" COMICS WHERE CREATIVE SPECIALIZATION HAS "*SCRIPTERS*," "*PENCILLERS*" AND "*INKERS*" ALL WORKING AT *CROSS-PURPOSES* IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GET *NOTICED*.

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*."

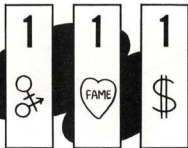
2 FORM



1 IDEA/PURPOSE

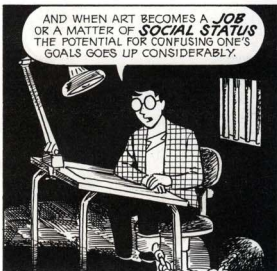


PERHAPS IF STRIPPED DOWN FAR ENOUGH, MOST ARTISTS' ULTIMATE GOALS ARE NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE'S. EVEN FOR THOSE WITH *HIGH IDEALS*, BASIC INSTINCTS EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION.



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*...



1

IDEA/
PURPOSE

2

FORM



3

IDIOM



4

STRUCTURE



5

CRAFT



6

SURFACE



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

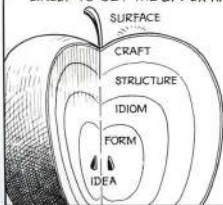
ALL
WORKS BEGIN
WITH A PURPOSE.
HOWEVER **ARBITRARY**;
ALL TAKE SOME **FORM**;
ALL BELONG TO AN
IDIOM (EVEN IF IT'S
AN IDIOM OF **ONE**); ALL
POSSESS A **STRUCTURE**;
ALL REQUIRE SOME
CRAFT; ALL
PRESENT A
SURFACE.

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."**



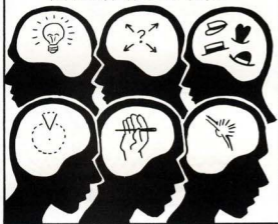
BUT THE MORE A CREATOR LEARNS TO COMMAND
EVERY ASPECT OF HIS/HER ART AND TO
UNDERSTAND HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO IT,
THE MORE **"ARTISTIC"** CONCERNS ARE
LIKELY TO GET THE **UPPER HAND**.



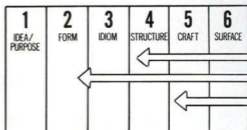
THE **ORDER** OF THE SIX STEPS
IS **INNATE**. LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT
OF BONES IN A **DINOSAUR'S SKELETON**,
THEY CAN BE **DISCOVERED** IN **ANY ORDER**,
BUT WHEN **BROUGHT TOGETHER**, THEY
WILL ALWAYS FALL INTO **PLACE!**



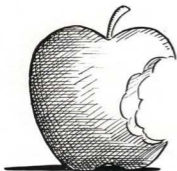
IN *PRACTICE*, **ANY** ASPECT OF COMICS MAY BE THE ONE WHICH FIRST DRAWS AN ARTIST INTO ITS ORBIT.



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



FROM *SURFACE* TO *CORE*.

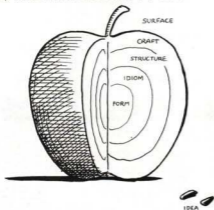


AND IT'S AT THE **CORE** OF ART THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS FINALLY ASKED:

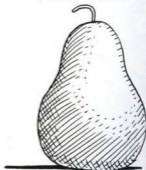


"WHY AM I DOING THIS?"

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.

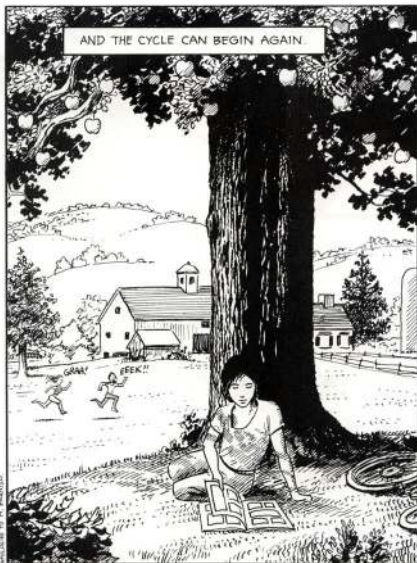


ILLUSTRATION BY PH. ANASTASIOU

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*."



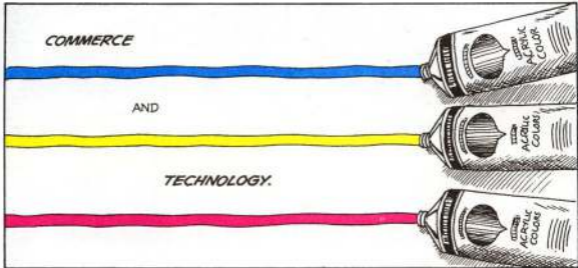
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE *STORMY RELATIONSHIP* BETWEEN COMICS AND COLOR, BUT MOST CAN BE SUMMED UP IN *TWO WORDS*.



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**.



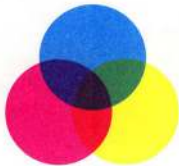
THEY WERE CALLED **ADDITIVE** BECAUSE THEY LITERALLY **ADDED UP TO PURE WHITE LIGHT**.



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!**



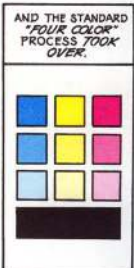
THIS SUBTRACTIVE EFFECT WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSPARENT SUBSTANCES SUCH AS CELLOPHANE, COLORED GLASS, WATER COLORS --



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.**



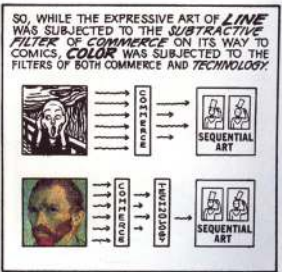
AND THE STANDARD **"FOUR COLOR"** PROCESS TOOK OVER.



THIS PROCESS RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF THE THREE PRIMARIES TO 100%, 50% ND 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 EXPRESSIONISTIC, 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.



MSCAY.



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.



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 HERGE, 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.



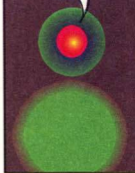
COLORS COULD EXPRESS A DOMINANT MOOD.



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!

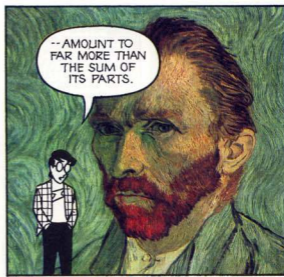
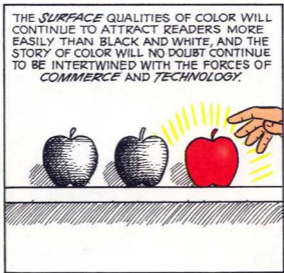
UNFORTUNATELY,
COLOR IS STILL AN
EXPENSIVE OPTION
AND HAS HISTORICALLY
BEEN IN THE HANDS
OF LARGER, MORE
CONSERVATIVE
PUBLISHERS.



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--



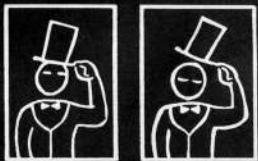
-- STILL
HAVE TO LEARN
IN MOST CASES
TO BE **BOLD** IN
BLACK AND
WHITE!



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.*

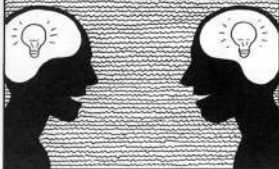


AND NO AMOUNT OF *REACHING*
OUT TO *OTHERS* CAN EVER MAKE
THEM FEEL EXACTLY WHAT
YOU FEEL.



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

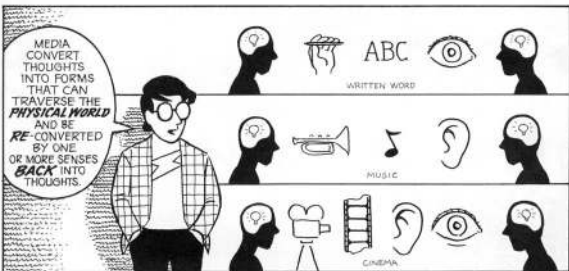
SAD, OF COURSE, BECAUSE NEARLY ALL PROBLEMS IN HUMAN HISTORY STEM FROM THAT INABILITY.



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

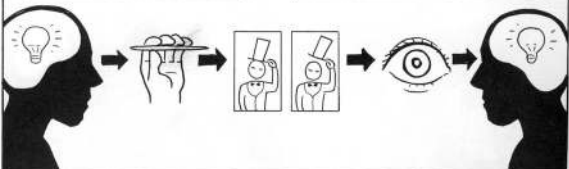


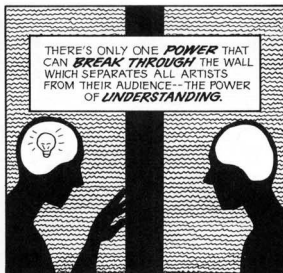
MEDIA CONVERT THOUGHTS INTO FORMS THAT CAN TRAVERSE THE *PHYSICAL WORLD* AND BE *RE-CONVERTED* BY ONE OR MORE SENSES *BACK* INTO THOUGHTS.




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.

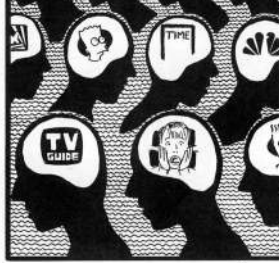






UNDERSTANDING COMICS IS *SERIOUS BUSINESS*.

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

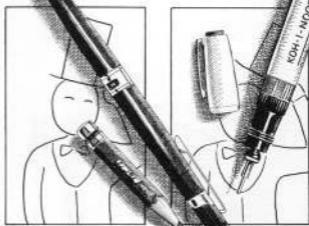


THOSE OF US WHO TACKLE THE *BUSINESS* OF COMICS HAVE MANY OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME--

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

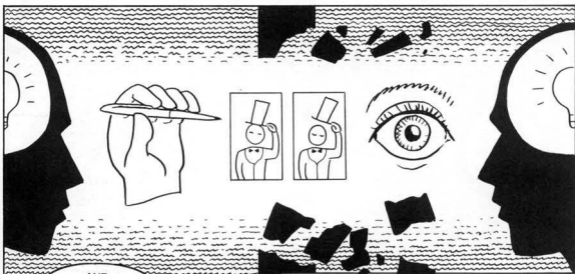


COMICS WELCOMES *ANY* WRITER OR ARTIST TO STEP INTO ITS WORLD, A WORLD AS CLOSE AS *PEN* OR *PENCIL* AND *PAPER*.



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

SEE PAGE 218 FOR COPYRIGHT INFORMATION.



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!

SEARCHING
FOR
HIDDEN
AND
LOST
ART
AND
HOW
TO
RECOVER
IT

THROUGH THE *WORKS AND WRITINGS* OF THESE NEGLECTED MASTERS, WE SEE THE *FIRST GLIMPSES* 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..."

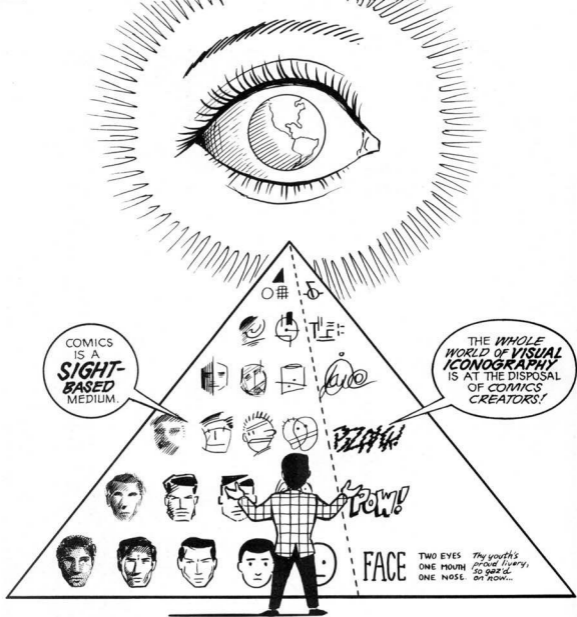
Rudolphe Topffer
1845

TRANSLATION BY E. WEISE

...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!*

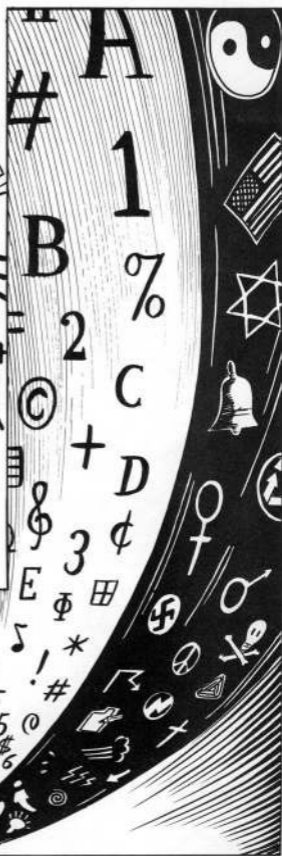


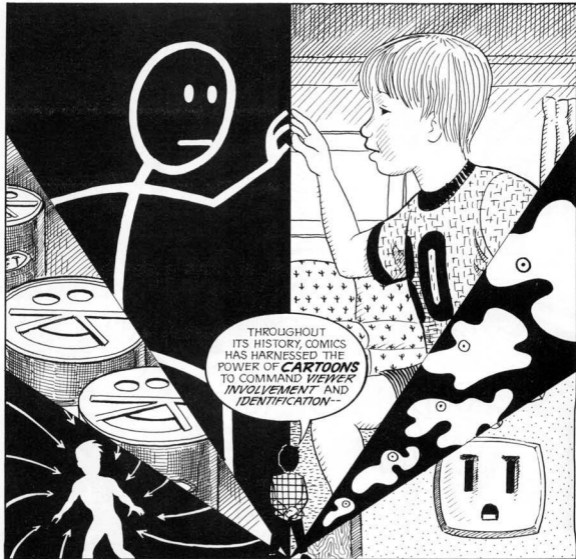


-- TO THE
TOTALLY
ABSTRACT!



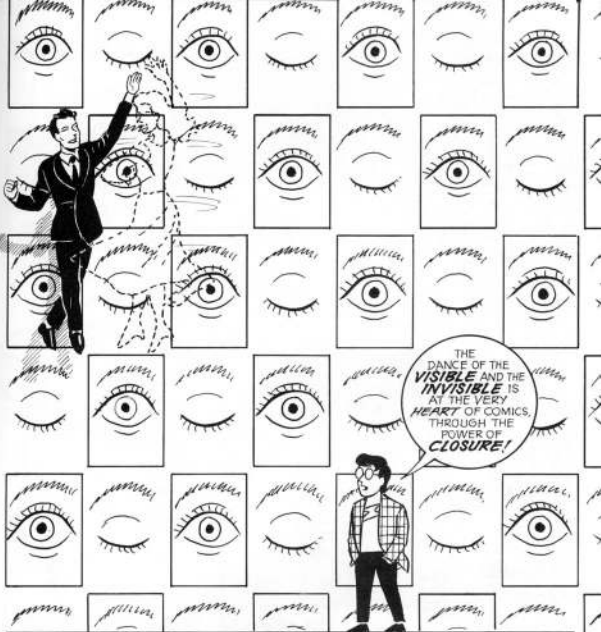
AND THE *INVISIBLE*
WORLD OF SYMBOLS AND
LANGUAGE!





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



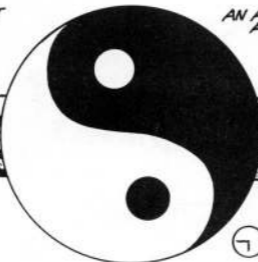


CREATOR AND READER ARE
PARTNERS IN THE INVISIBLE
CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF
NOTHING, TIME AND
TIME AGAIN.

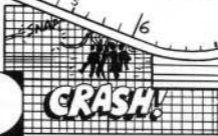
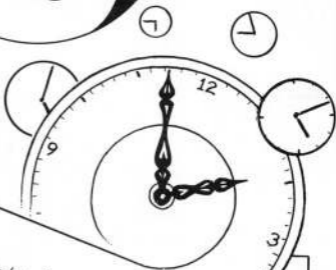


COMICS IS A GREAT
BALANCING ACT.

AN ART AS SUBTRACTIVE
AS IT IS ADDITIVE--



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



BOOM!



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



ero genuie lu
ini 7 nepchu
challuim d
ijm 7 capth
uic frdoner

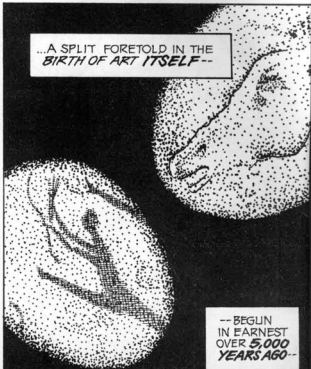


ill unravished
sild of sibra c
or, who conit t
re sweetly tho
d legend have
mortals, of b
or the dales o
gods are there

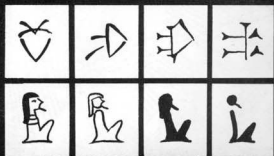


FACE

...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--

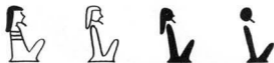
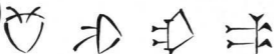




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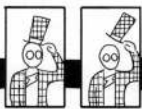
--AS ALL LANGUAGE MUST EVOLVE--



-- 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.



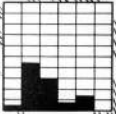
SO IT WAS IN JAPAN WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED IN RELATIVE ISOLATION, SPAWNING A HOST OF UNIQUE APPROACHES TO MAKING COMICS.



COLLAGE



EXPRESSIONISM



STORYTELLING



WORD-PICTURE LINKAGE



FORMATS



SUBJECTIVE MOTION



ICONS CHARACTERS



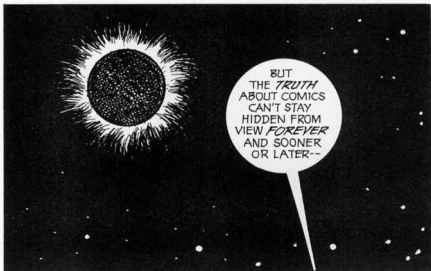
THE 'MASKING' EFFECT



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 FICTION
 POETRY FOLK TALES
 SOCIAL EROTICA
 ALLEGORY MYSTERY
 ADAPTATIONS RELIGIOUS TOPICS
 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS
 SATIRE



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

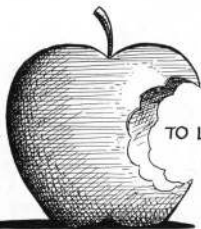
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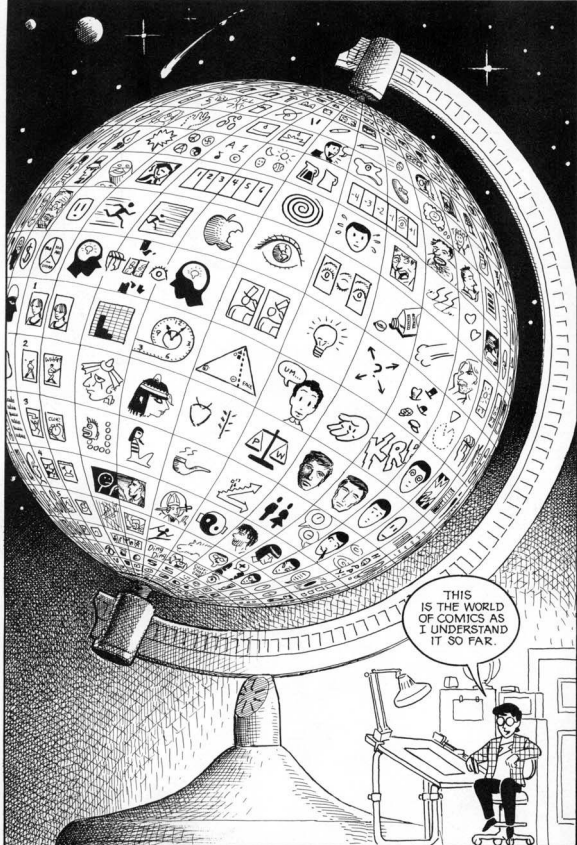
6

--THE WILL



TO LEARN--

-- AND THE
ABILITY TO
SEE.



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



CO
'92

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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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I've had my say.
Now, it's *your* turn.