



# UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."  
—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

## **What is this?**

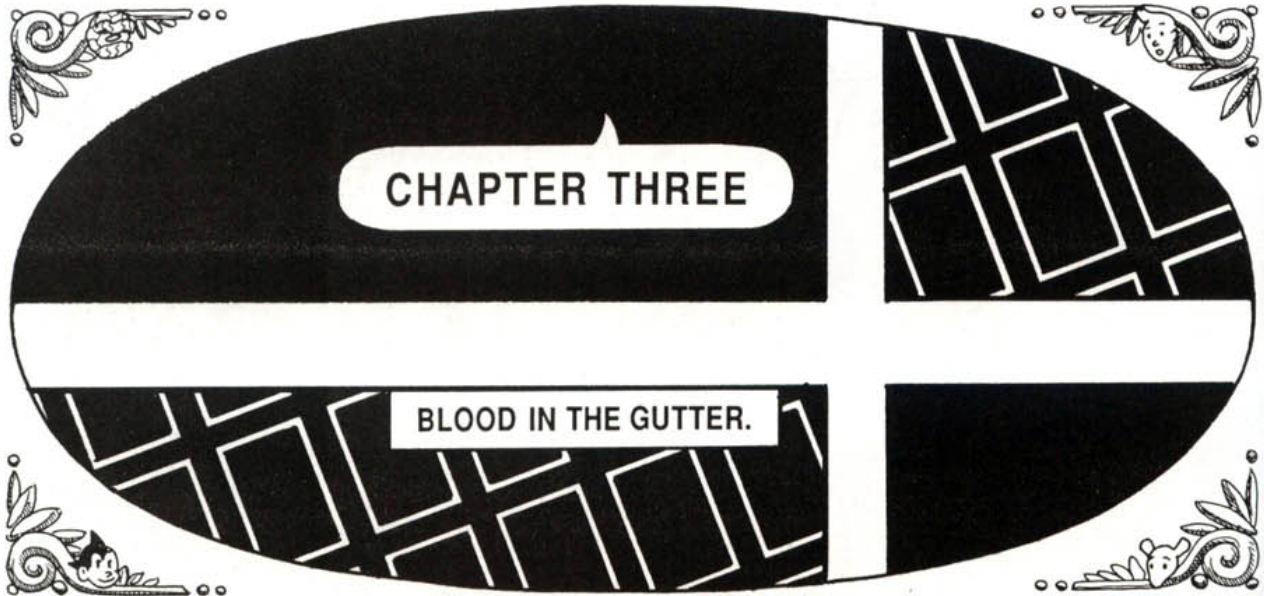
“Understanding Comics” by Scott McCloud is one of the best and clearest introductions to how sequential art works. These readings contain Chapters 3 and 4.

## **What you missed**

McCloud introduces us to the history of sequential art as well as attempting to define what a comic is in chapter 1.

In chapter 2 McCloud discusses different levels of representation within art and argues that a more iconic simplified character helps the reader to better identify with him or her. As a side note while these two chapters are the most important to what we will be exploring in class this is an excellent book for anyone interested in how our mind perceives images in sequence and I would go so far as to say required reading if you are even slightly interested in comic books. A copy of this is available in the library.

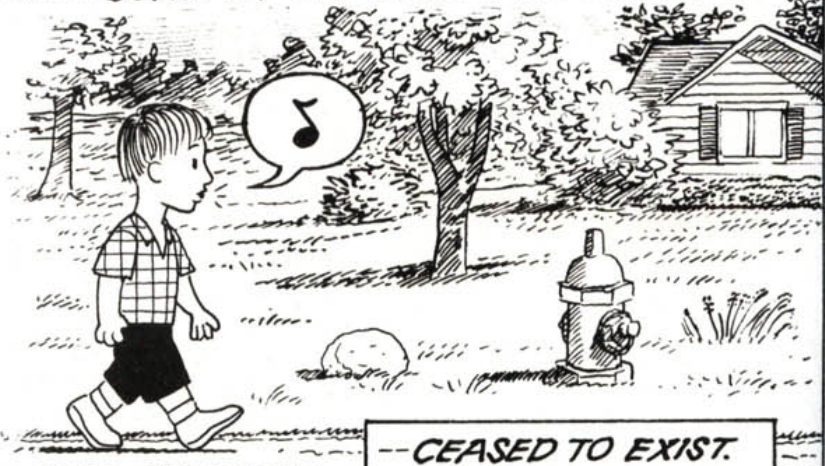
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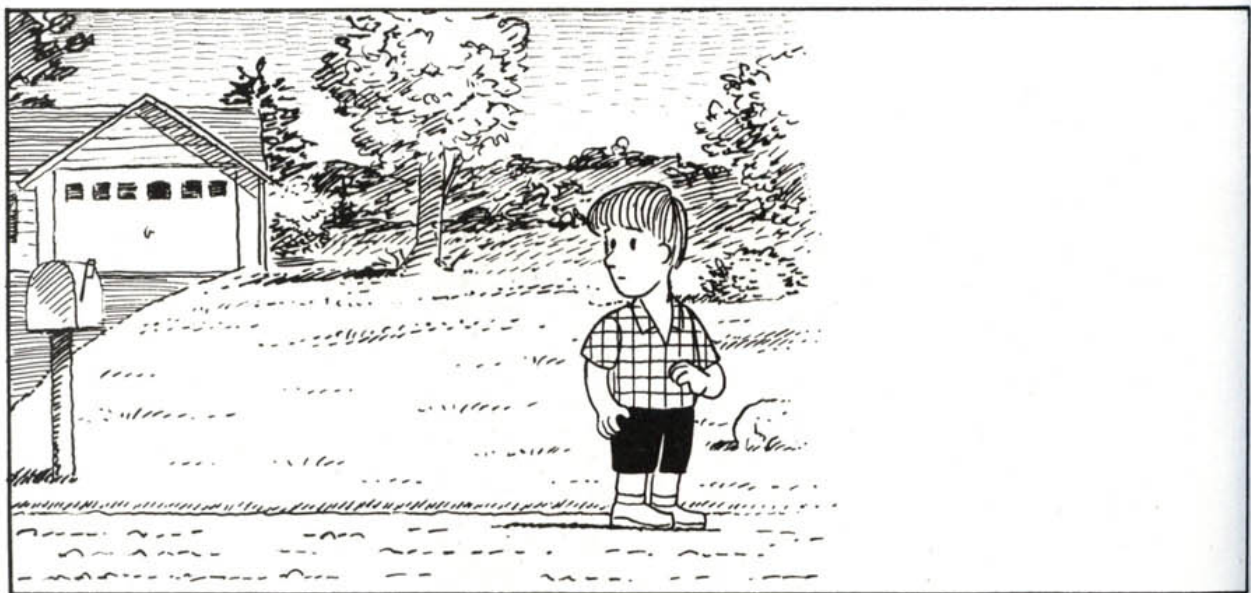
CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

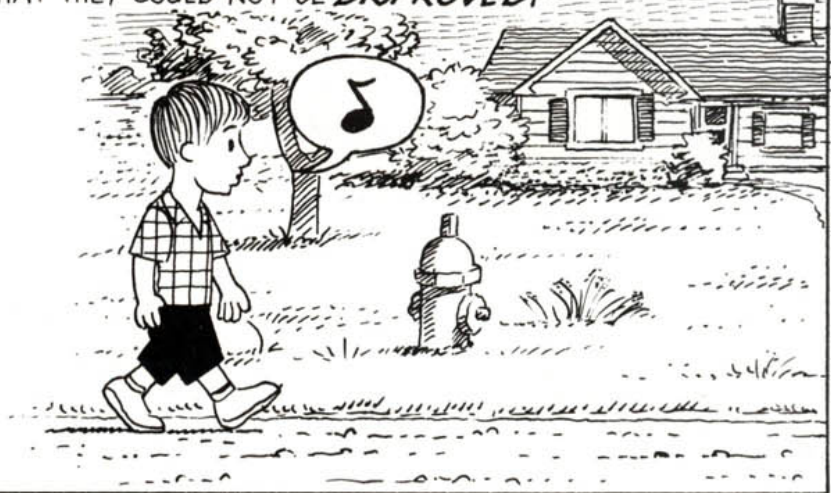
WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, I HAD A RECURRENT *DAYDREAM* THAT THE *WHOLE WORLD* WAS JUST A *SHOW* PUT ON FOR MY *BENEFIT*, THAT UNLESS I WAS PRESENT TO *SEE* THINGS, THEY JUST--



--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.

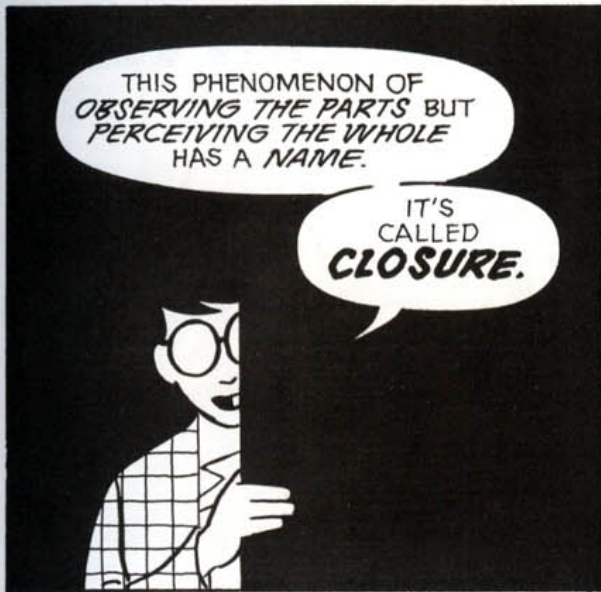
OUR PERCEPTION OF "REALITY" IS AN ACT OF *FAITH*, BASED ON MERE *FRAGMENTS*.



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*.



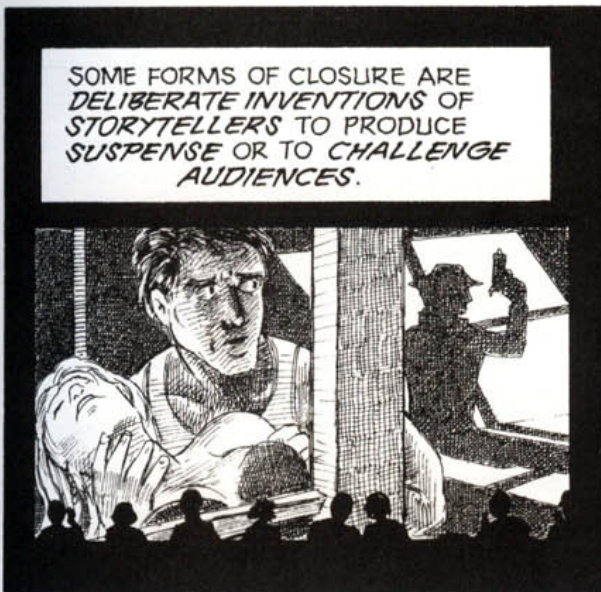


THIS PHENOMENON OF *OBSERVING THE PARTS* BUT *PERCEIVING THE WHOLE* HAS A NAME.

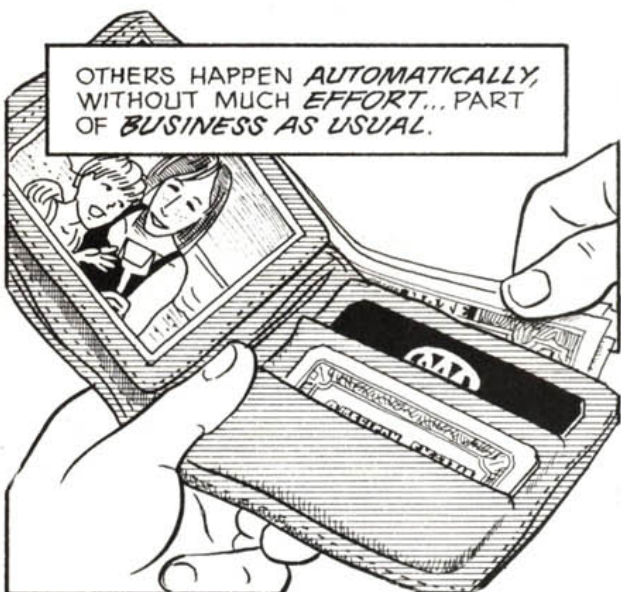
IT'S CALLED **CLOSURE.**



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



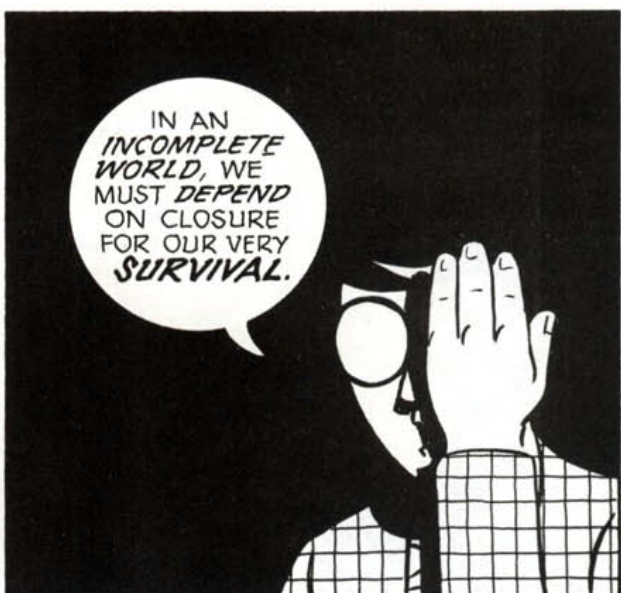
SOME FORMS OF CLOSURE ARE *DELIBERATE INVENTIONS* OF *STORYTELLERS* TO PRODUCE *SUSPENSE* OR TO *CHALLENGE AUDIENCES.*



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.

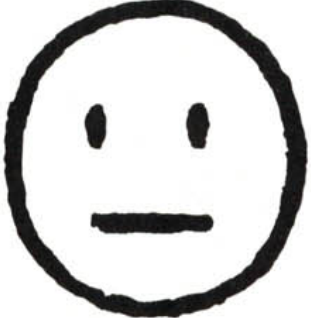


CLOSURE  
CLOSURE  
CL S RE  
CLOSURE  
CLOSURE

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*"--

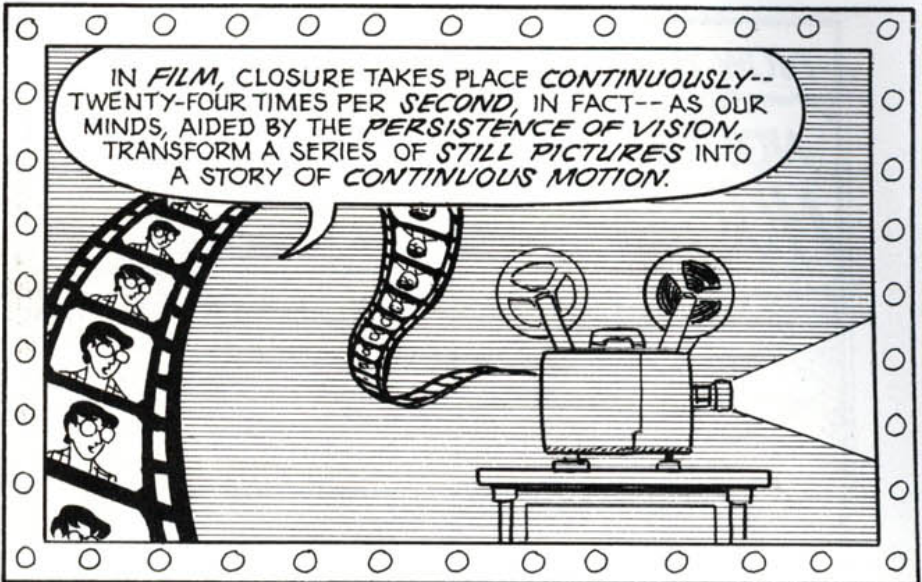


--OF THE *PHOTOGRAPH!*

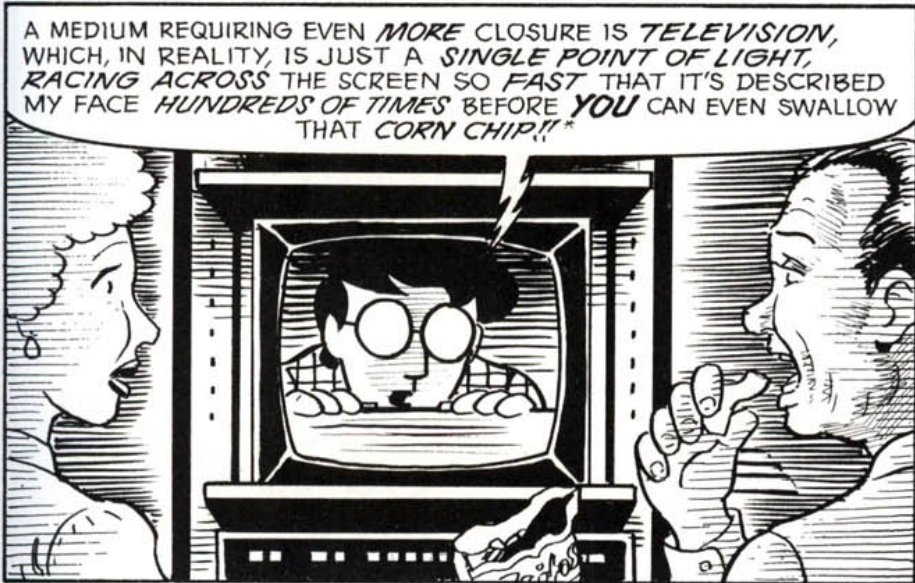




IN  
ELECTRONIC  
MEDIA, CLOSURE  
IS CONSTANT,  
EVEN OVER-  
POWERING!



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.



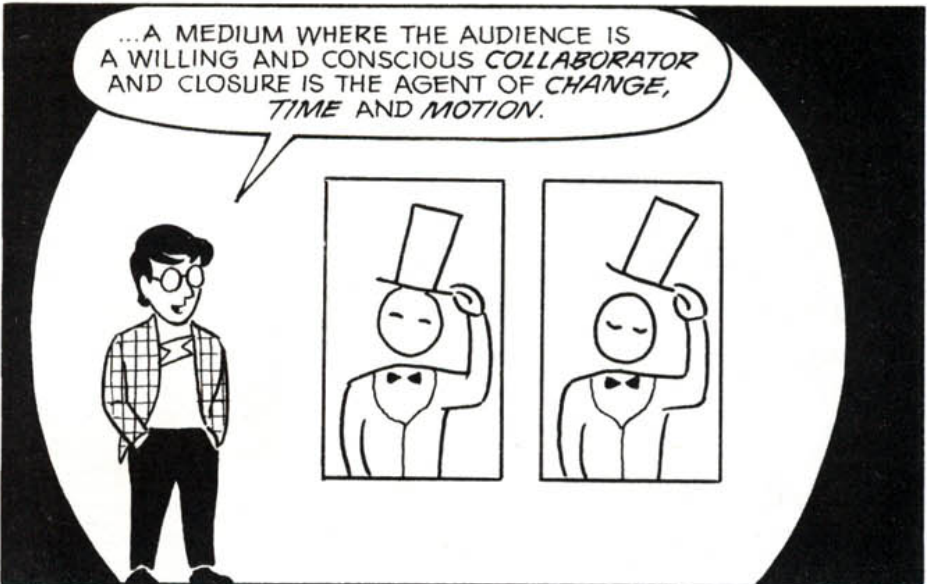
A MEDIUM REQUIRING EVEN MORE CLOSURE IS TELEVISION,  
WHICH, IN REALITY, IS JUST A SINGLE POINT OF LIGHT,  
RACING ACROSS THE SCREEN SO FAST THAT IT'S DESCRIBED  
MY FACE HUNDREDS OF TIMES BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN SWALLOW  
THAT CORN CHIP!!\*



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...

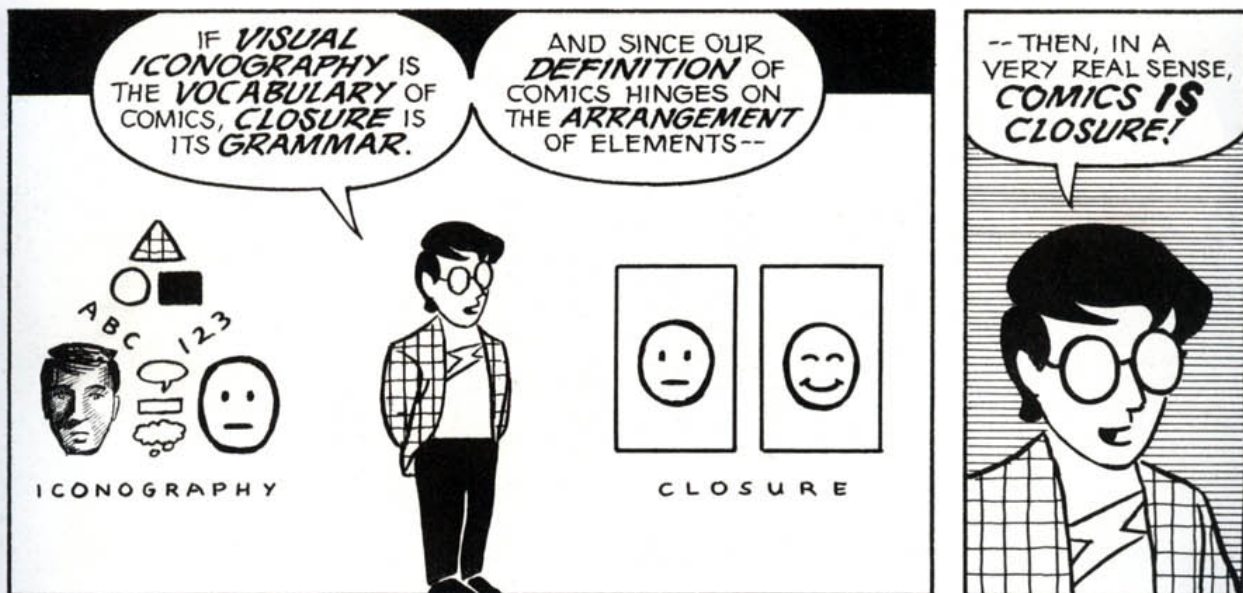
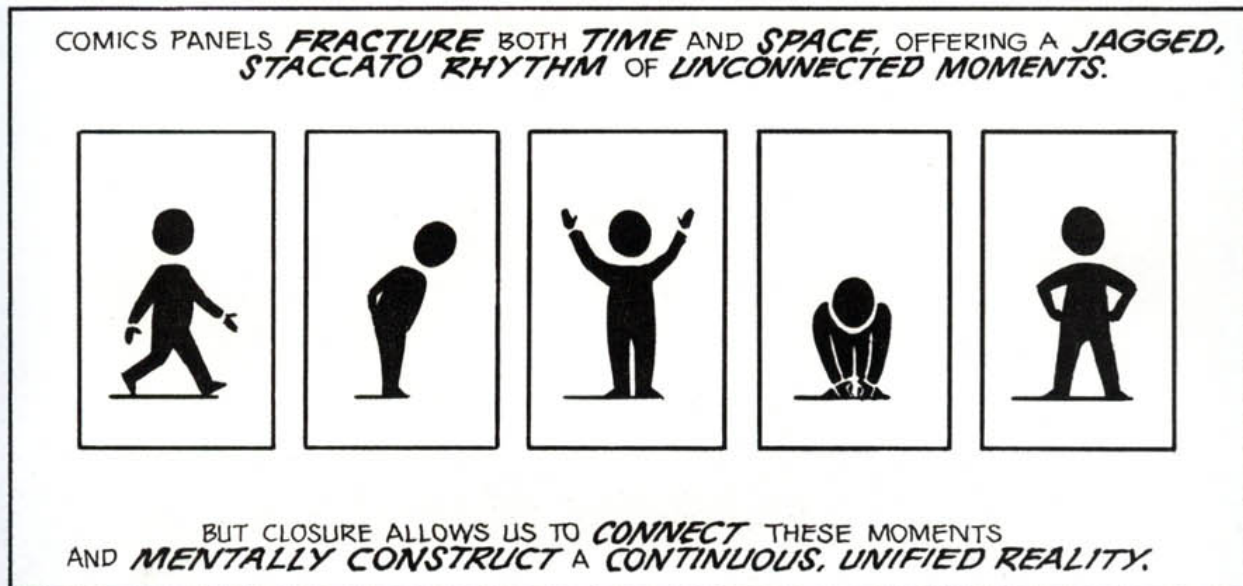


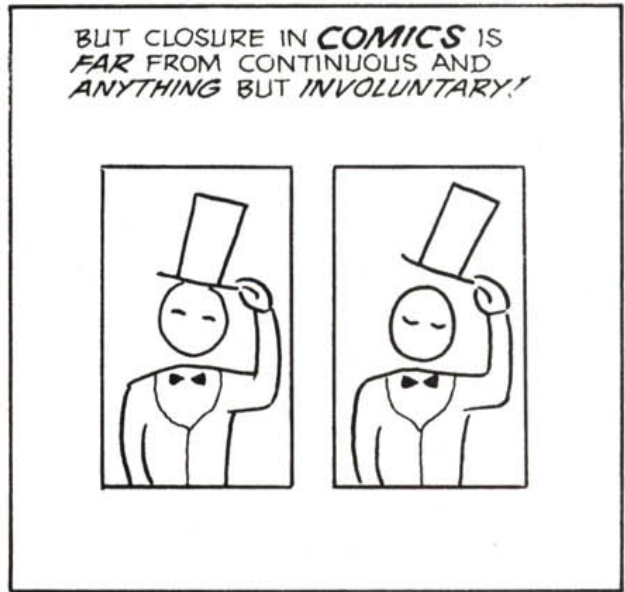
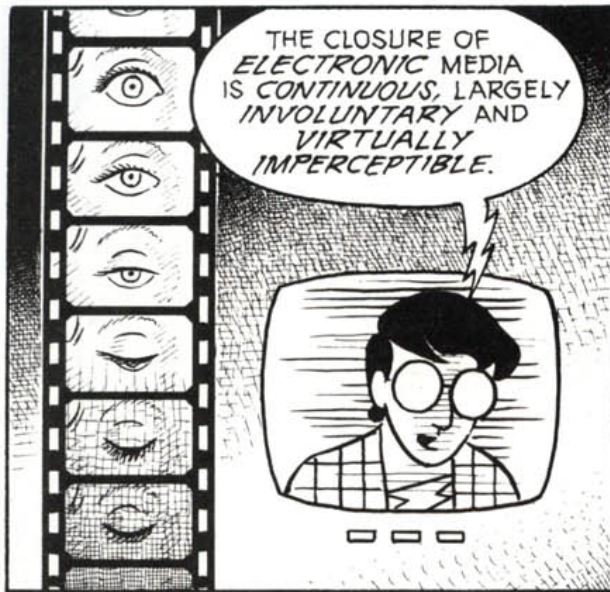
... A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS  
A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS COLLABORATOR  
AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE,  
TIME AND MOTION.

\* MEDIA GURU TONY SCHWARTZ DESCRIBES THIS AT LENGTH IN HIS BOOK *MEDIA, THE SECOND GOD*, ANCHOR BOOKS, 1983.









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.



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*.



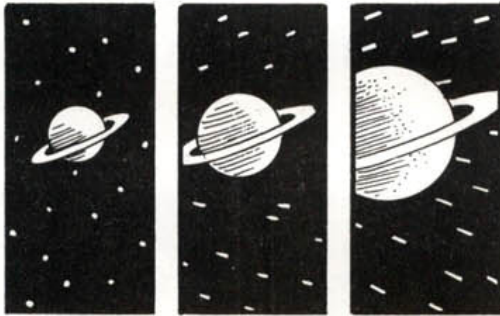
LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE *CRAFT*.



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.



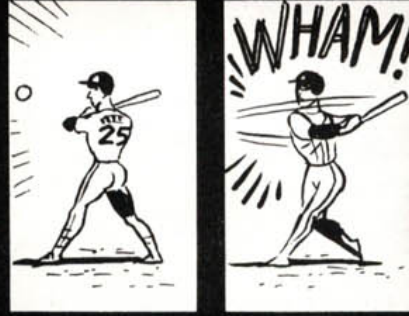
1.



*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*--



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



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

GE BICYCL PURC CE





1. MOMENT-TO-MOMENT



2. ACTION-TO-ACTION



3. SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT



4. SCENE-TO-SCENE



5. ASPECT-TO-ASPECT



6. NON-SEQUITUR

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

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



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

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



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



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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



ART © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

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

1	—
2	65%
3	20%
4	15%
5	—
6	—

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

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

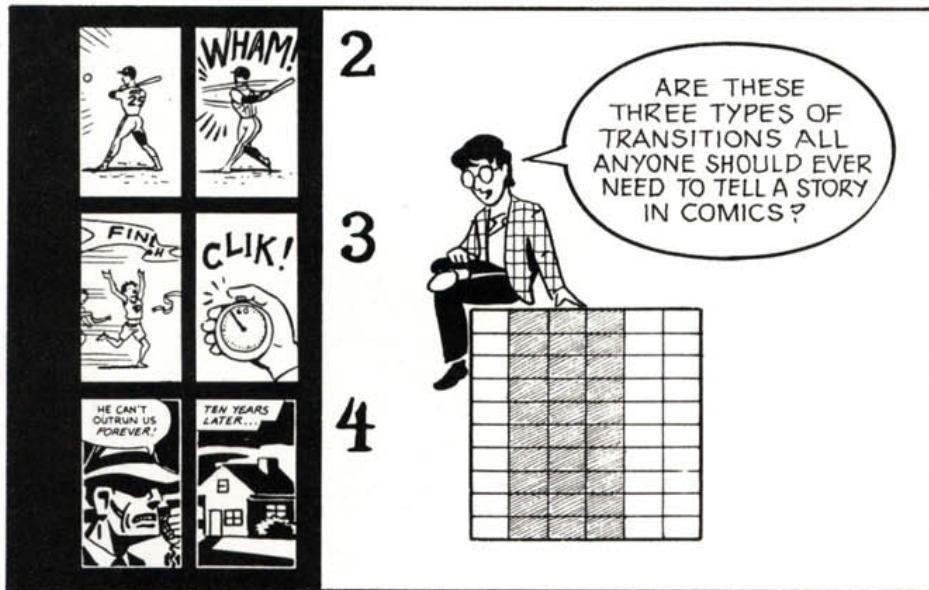
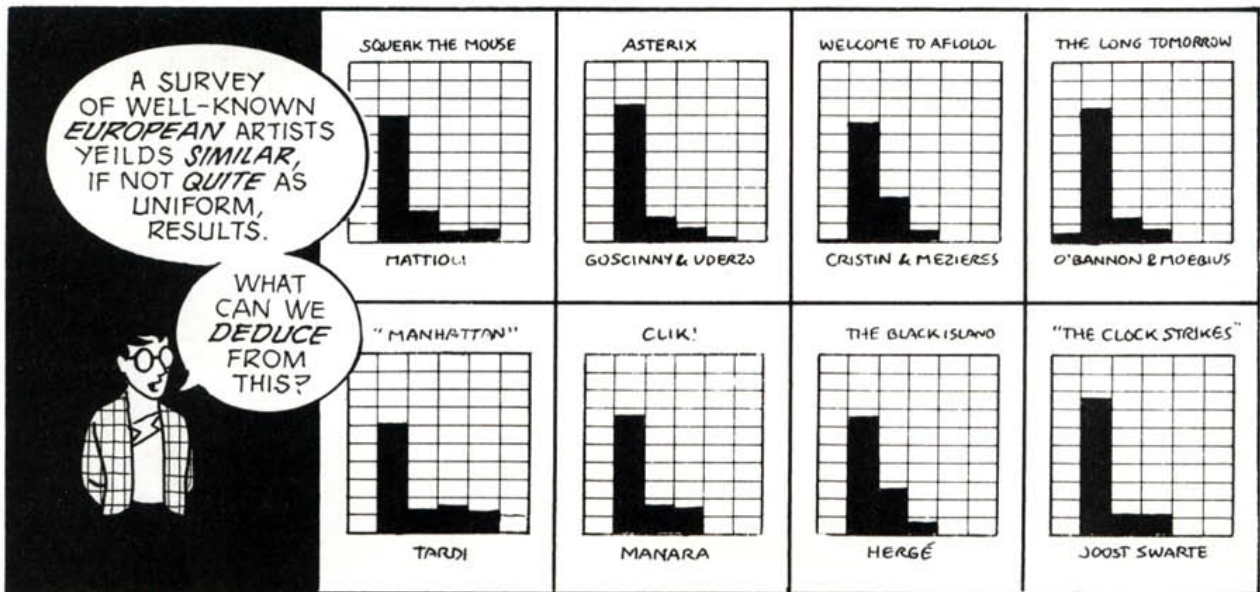
APPARENTLY **NOT!** HERE'S A GRAPH OF PANEL TRANSITIONS IN HERGÉ'S **TINTIN** AND THE PROPORTION ARE VERY **SIMILAR** TO KIRBY'S

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

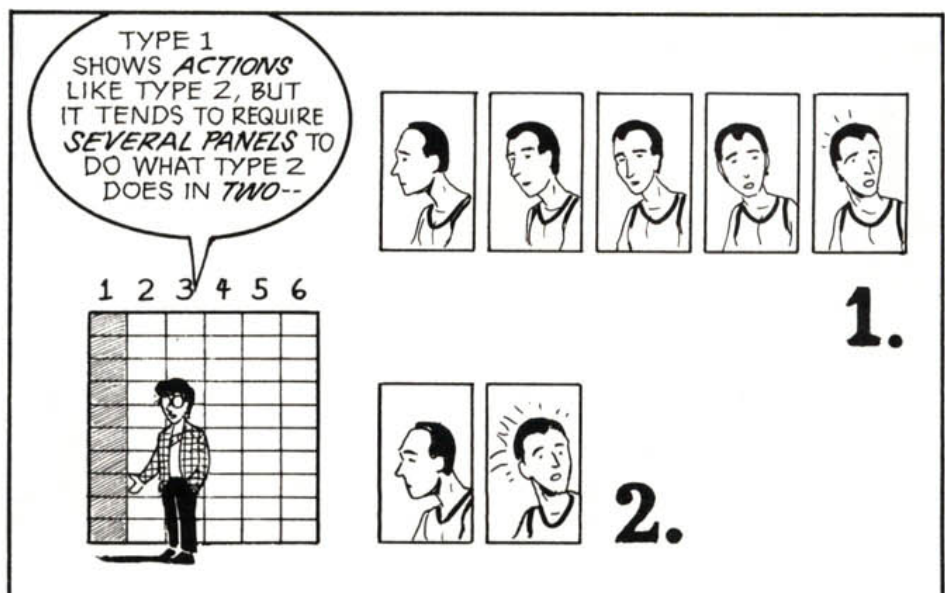
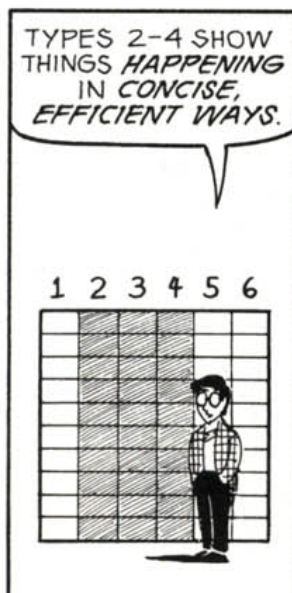
IS THERE SOME KIND OF **UNIVERSAL PROPORTION** AT WORK HERE, OR IS THERE ANOTHER **COMMON LINK?** MAYBE A SIMILARITY OF **GENRES?**

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

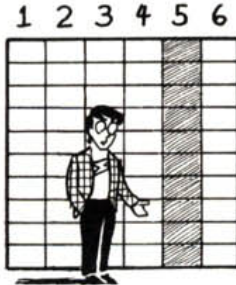
<p>X-MEN #1</p> <p>CLAREMONT &amp; LEE</p>	<p>"HEARTBREAK SOUP"</p> <p>G. HERNANDEZ</p>	<p>BETTY &amp; VERONICA</p> <p>DOYLE &amp; DECARLO</p>	<p>NAUGHTY BITS</p> <p>GREGORY</p>
<p>FRANK IN THE RIVER</p> <p>WOODRING</p>	<p>A CONTRACT WITH GOD</p> <p>EISNER</p>	<p>MAUS</p> <p>SPIEGELMAN</p>	<p>DONALD DUCK</p> <p>BARKS</p>



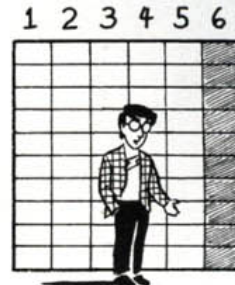
IF WE CHOOSE TO SEE STORIES AS CONNECTED SERIES OF *EVENTS*, THEN THE PREDOMINANCE OF TYPES 2-4 ARE EASILY EXPLAINED.



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



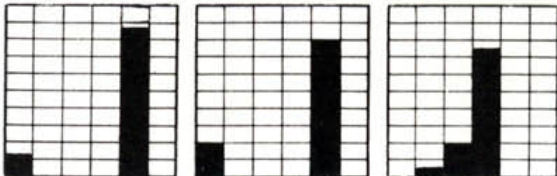
AND, OF COURSE, NON-SEQUITURS ARE UNCONCERNED WITH *EVENTS* OR ANY *NARRATIVE* PURPOSES OF ANY SORT.



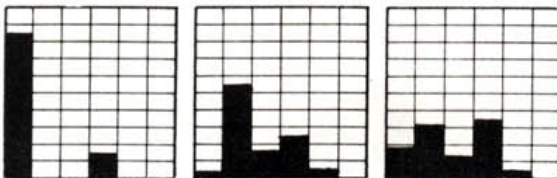
SOME *EXPERIMENTAL COMICS*, LIKE THOSE OF *ART SPIEGELMAN'S* EARLY PERIOD, EXPLORE A *FULL RANGE* OF TRANSITIONS--

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

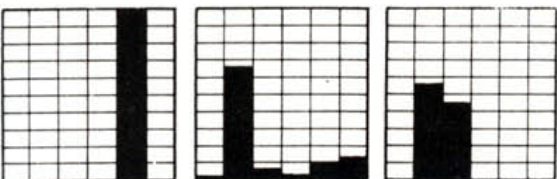
STORIES FROM SPIEGELMAN'S ANTHOLOGY BREAKDOWNS:



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



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

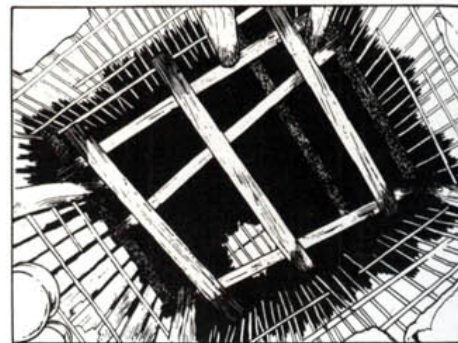
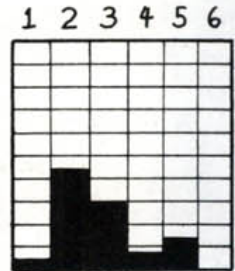


"FRONT AND BACK COVERS"    "ACE-HOLE, MIDGET DETECTIVE"    "REAL DREAM" 1975

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



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



JUST WHAT IS *GOING ON* HERE?

ART © OSAMU TEZUKA

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

FIN! CLIK! 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.

TEPEL OT THGIR DAER OT REBMEWER

ART © OSAMU TEZUKA

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



水木は 夜の  
古寺に いて  
みる こと に した



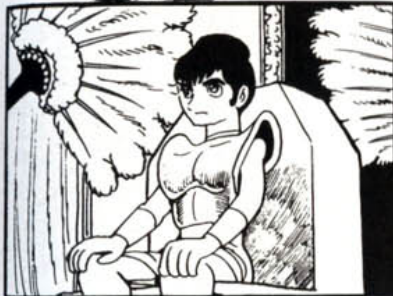
ART © SHIGERU MIZUKI.

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.



ART © OSAMU TEZUKA.



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



ART © H. SATO.

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

WHY?

750 RIDER (石井いさみ?)

FATHER & SON HAYASHI & LOSIMA

WOLF & CUB KOIKE & KOJIMA

AKIRA KATSUHIRO OTOMO

CYBORG 009 SHOTARO ISHIMORI

PHOENIX OSAMU TEZUKA

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

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

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

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

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

HERGÉ

KIRBY

TEZUKA



MMM...  
WHERE  
WAS  
I?

OH,  
YES  
...



TRADITIONAL  
WESTERN ART  
AND LITERATURE  
DON'T WANDER MUCH.  
ON THE WHOLE, WE'RE  
A PRETTY  
GOAL-ORIENTED  
CULTURE.



BUT, IN THE EAST,  
THERE'S A RICH  
TRADITION OF CYCLICAL  
AND LABYRINTHINE  
WORKS OF ART.



JAPANESE COMICS  
MAY BE HEIRS TO  
THIS TRADITION, IN  
THE WAY THEY SO  
OFTEN EMPHASIZE  
**BEING THERE** OVER  
**GETTING THERE.**

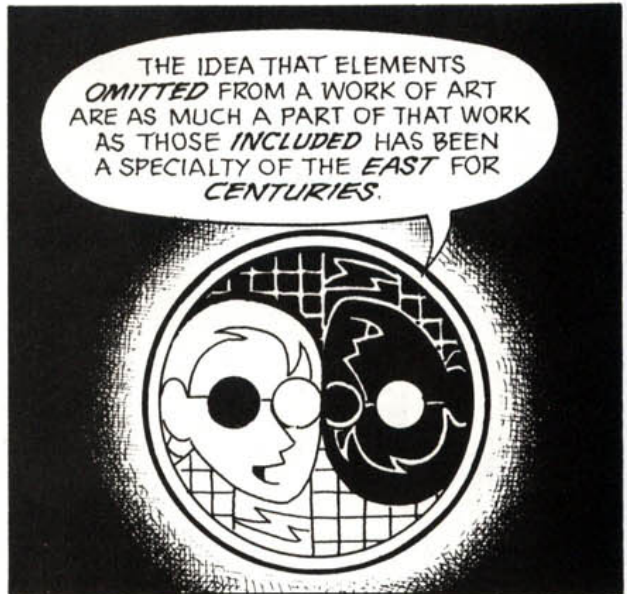


THROUGH THESE AND  
OTHER STORYTELLING  
TECHNIQUES, THE  
JAPANESE OFFER A  
VISION OF COMICS  
VERY DIFFERENT  
FROM OUR OWN.



FOR  
IN JAPAN  
MORE THAN  
ANYWHERE  
ELSE, COMICS  
IS AN ART--





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

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

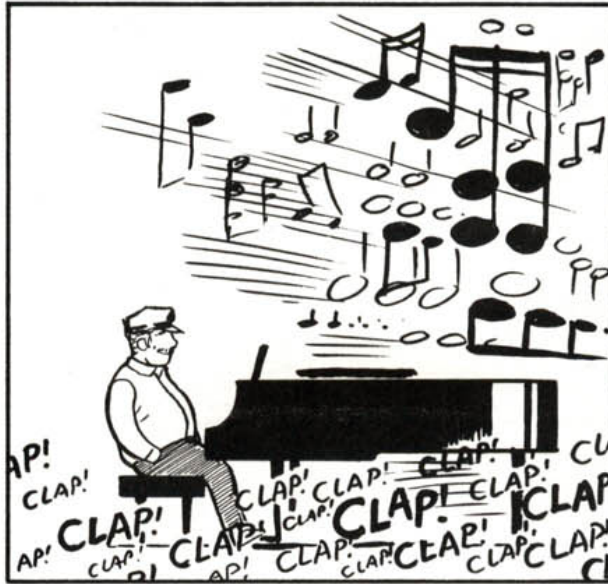
IN MUSIC TOO, WHILE THE WESTERN CLASSICAL TRADITION WAS EMPHASIZING THE *CONTINUOUS, CONNECTED* WORLDS OF MELODY AND HARMONY, EASTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC WAS EQUALLY CONCERNED WITH THE ROLE OF *SILENCE!*

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*.

BASIE BASIE'S BAND

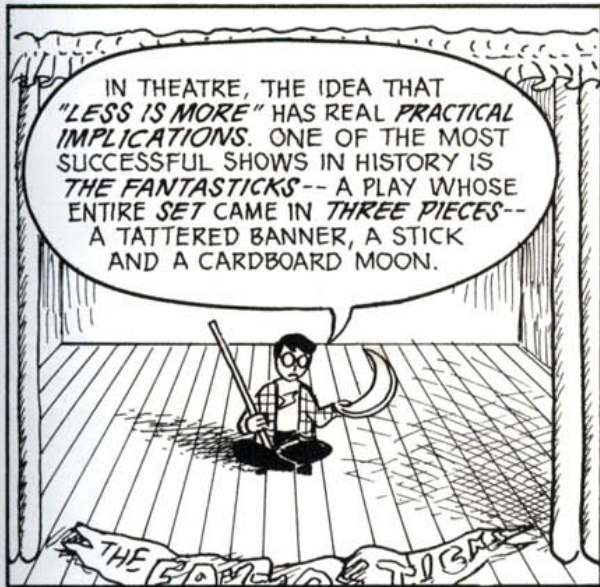


IN THE *VISUAL* ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

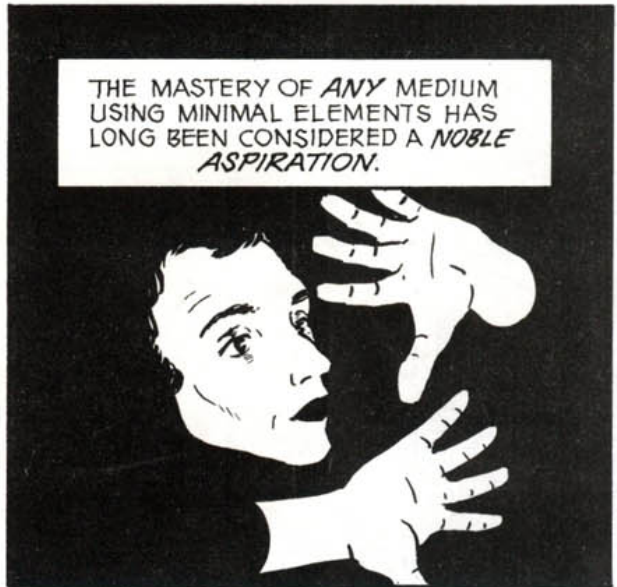
THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS IN WESTERN ART UPON THE PRIMACY OF *FOREGROUND* SUBJECTS AND *CONTINUOUSNESS* OF *TONES* GAVE WAY TO *FRAGMENTATION* AND A NEW AWARENESS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE*.



FACSIMILE OF "FIGURE" BY PABLO PICASSO 1948



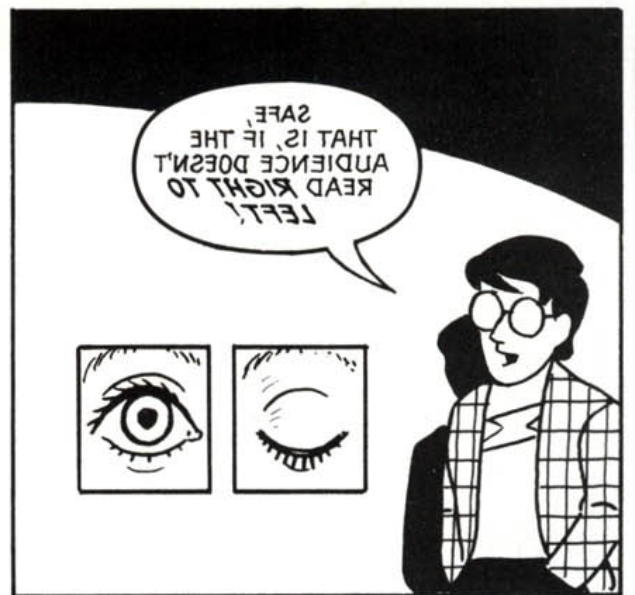
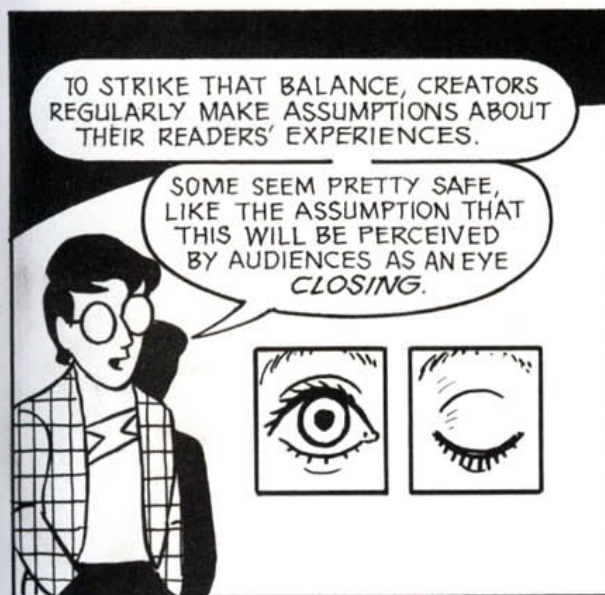
\*ANSWER: "THE BIG 'N'" [SEE PAGE 216]



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

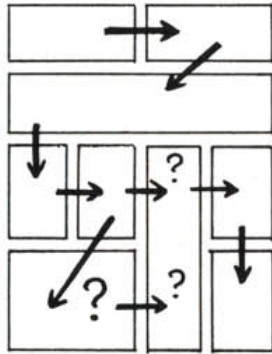


\* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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**.

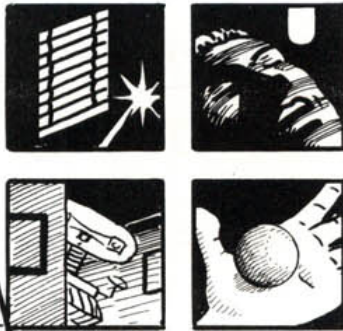


AS CLOSURE **BETWEEN** PANELS BECOMES MORE INTENSE, READER INTERPRETATION BECOMES FAR MORE **ELASTIC**.



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!



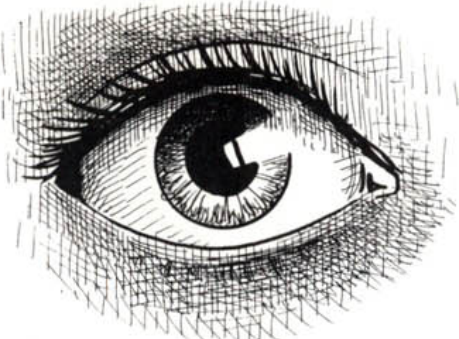
LOOK AGAIN. YOU'VE BEEN IN KITCHENS BEFORE, YOU KNOW WHAT A POT ON THE BOIL SOUNDS LIKE; DO YOU ONLY HEAR IT IN THAT **FIRST** PANEL?



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 **SOUND** THROUGH DEVICES SUCH AS **WORD BALLOONS**. BUT ALL IN ALL, IT IS AN **EXCLUSIVELY VISUAL** REPRESENTATION.



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



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



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





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

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

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



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

--THAT THE READER MIGHT LEARN TO *FLY?*

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

DO THESE AFFECT CLOSURE?!

I THINK THE ANSWER IS *YES*.

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

IDEAS FLOWING INTO ONE ANOTHER *SEAMLESSLY*.

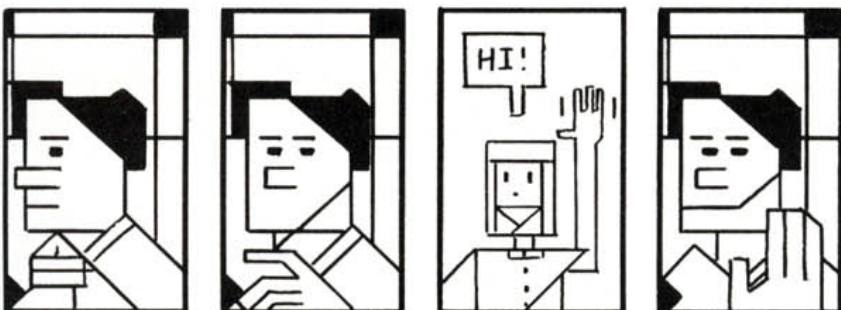
BUT *REALISTIC* IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY *VISUAL* EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



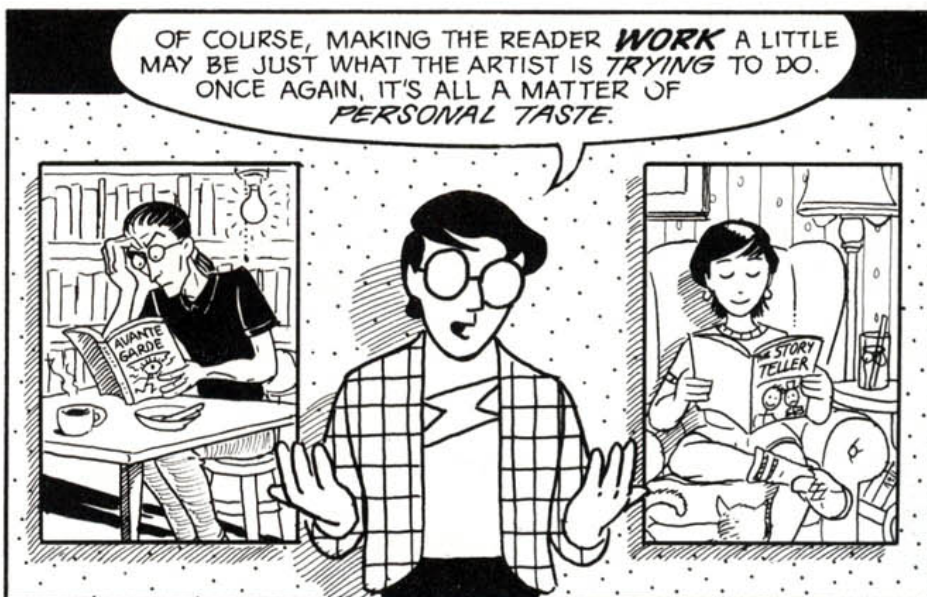
AND SO, WHAT SEEMED LIKE A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF MOMENTS IN THE LAST EXAMPLE, HERE LOOKS A LITTLE MORE LIKE A SERIES OF *STILL PICTURES*...



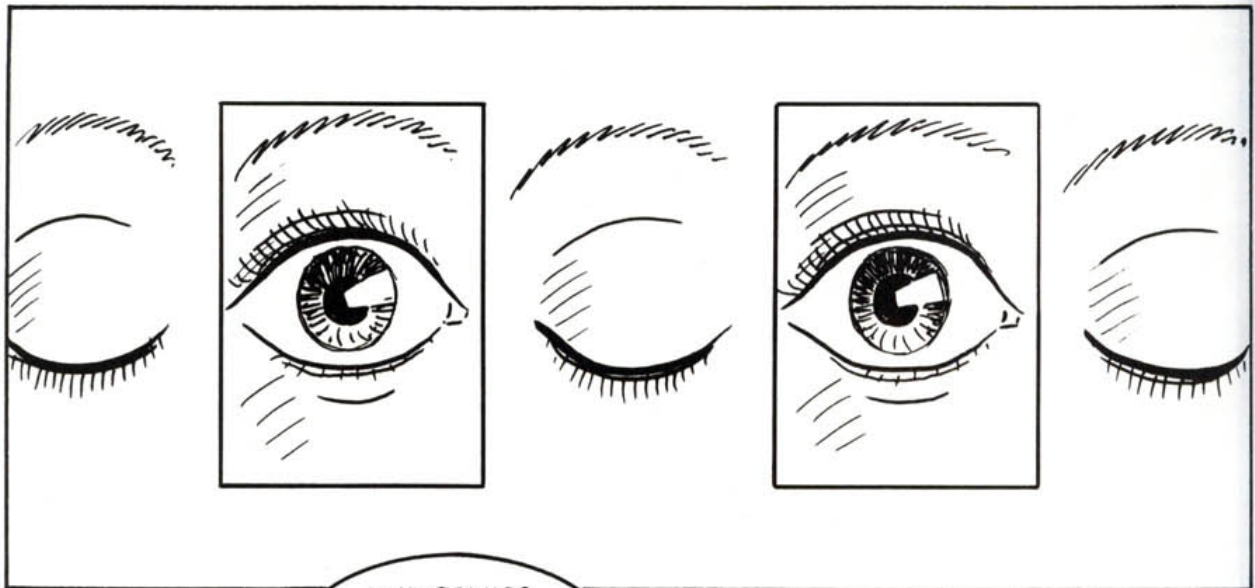
SIMILARLY, I THINK WHEN COMICS ART VEERS CLOSER TO CONCERNS OF THE *PICTURE PLANE*, CLOSURE CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.



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

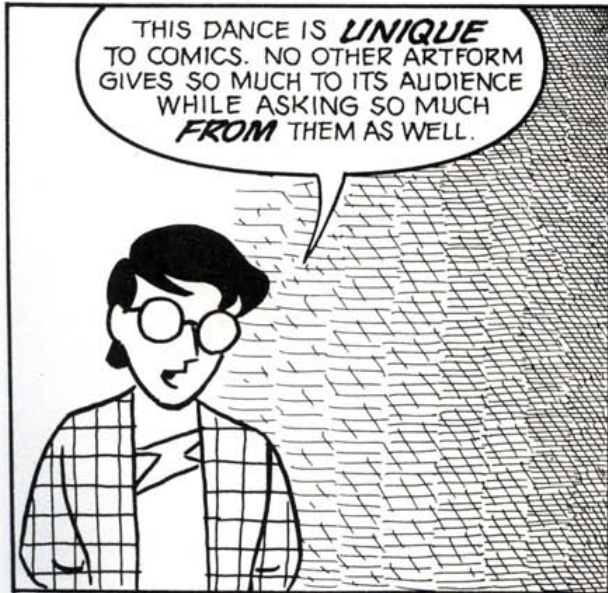
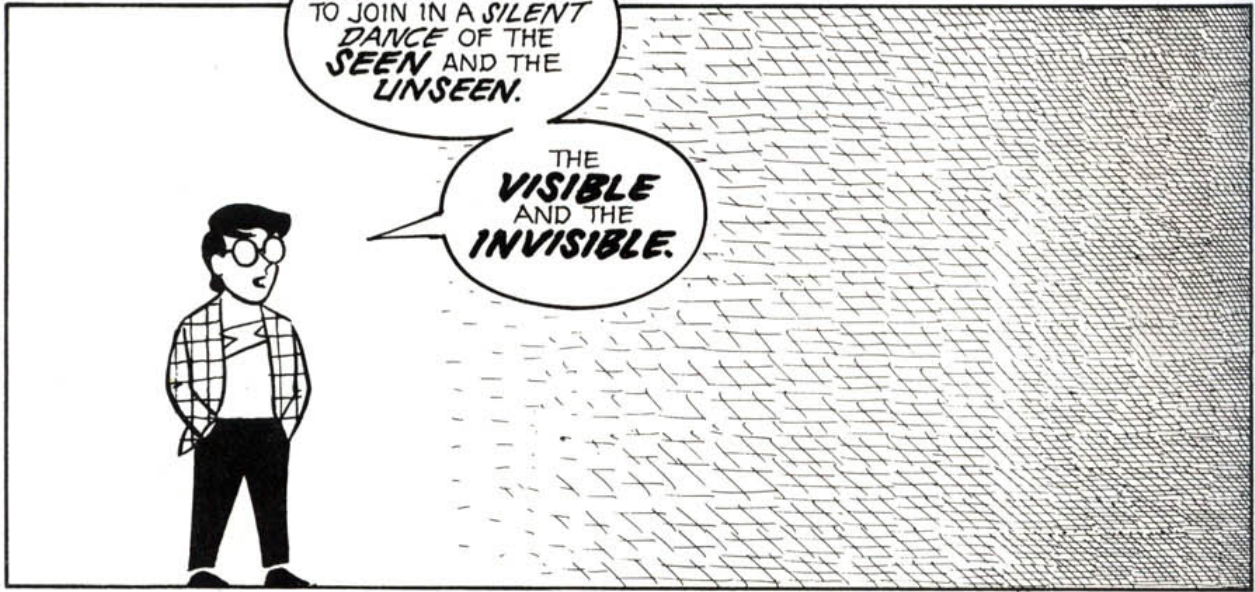


OF COURSE, MAKING THE READER *WORK* A LITTLE MAY BE JUST WHAT THE ARTIST IS *TRYING* TO DO. ONCE AGAIN, IT'S ALL A MATTER OF *PERSONAL TASTE*.

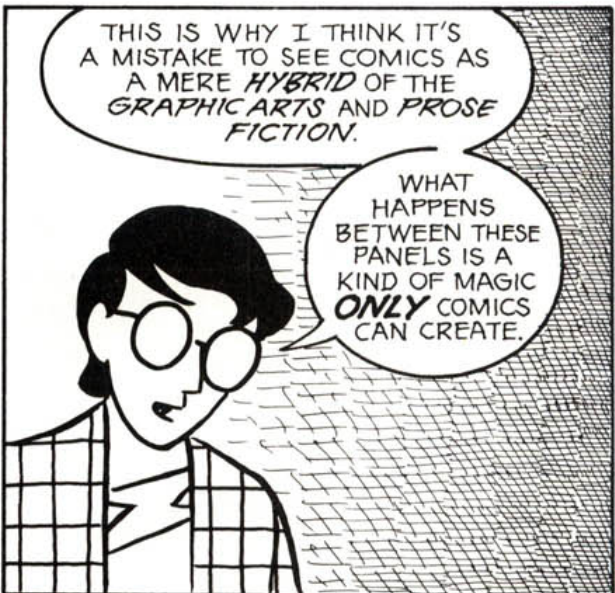


THE COMICS  
CREATOR ASKS US  
TO JOIN IN A *SILENT*  
*DANCE* OF THE  
*SEEN* AND THE  
*UNSEEN*.

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.



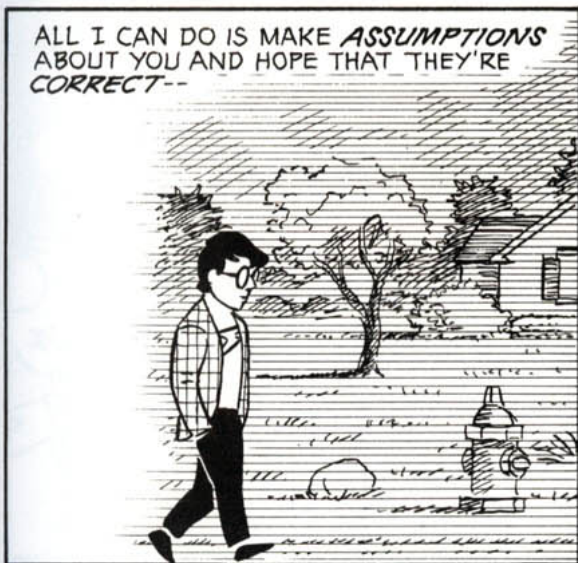
THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S  
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS  
A MERE *HYBRID* OF THE  
*GRAPHIC ARTS* AND *PROSE*  
*FICTION*.

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

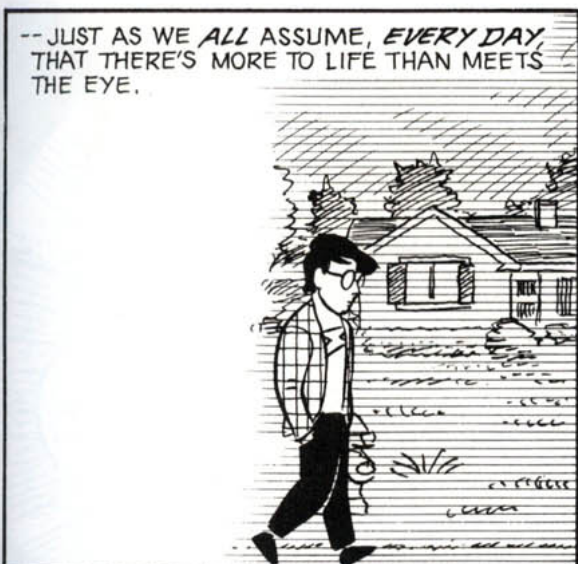
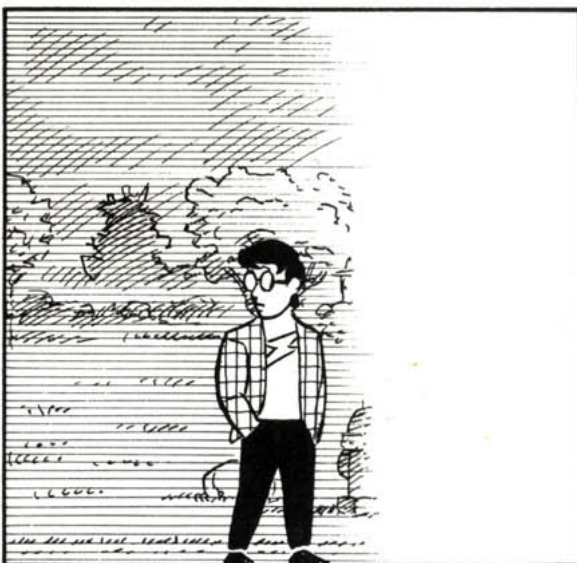


HERE IN THIS STUDIO, I'VE TRIED TO CONTROL THAT PROCESS AND USE IT TO MAKE MY CASE.

BUT I CAN ONLY POINT THE WAY. I CAN'T TAKE YOU ANYWHERE YOU DON'T WANT TO GO.



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.

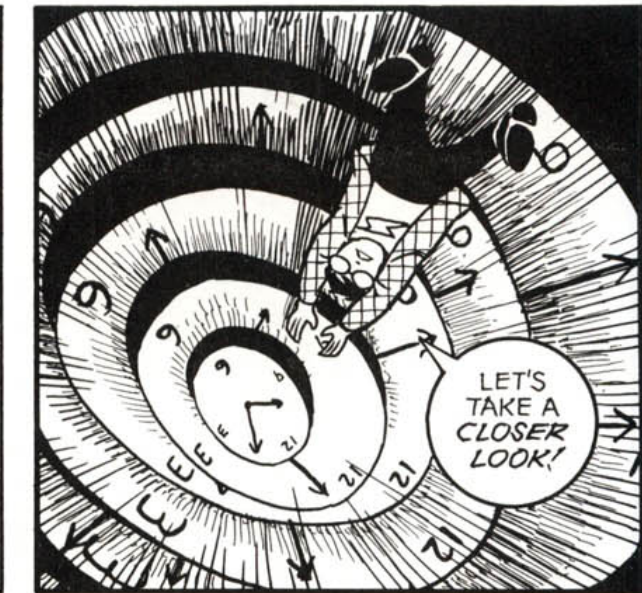
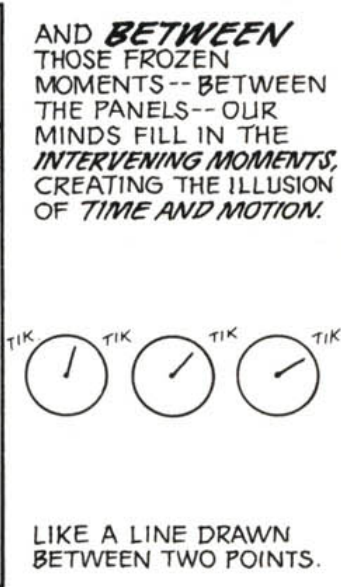


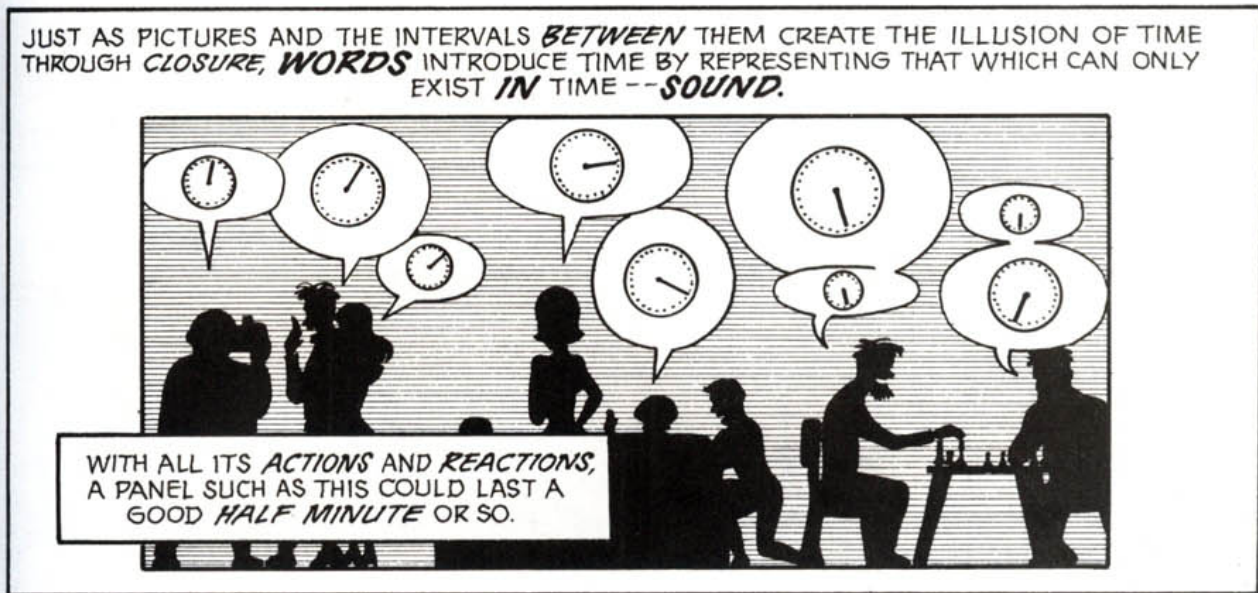
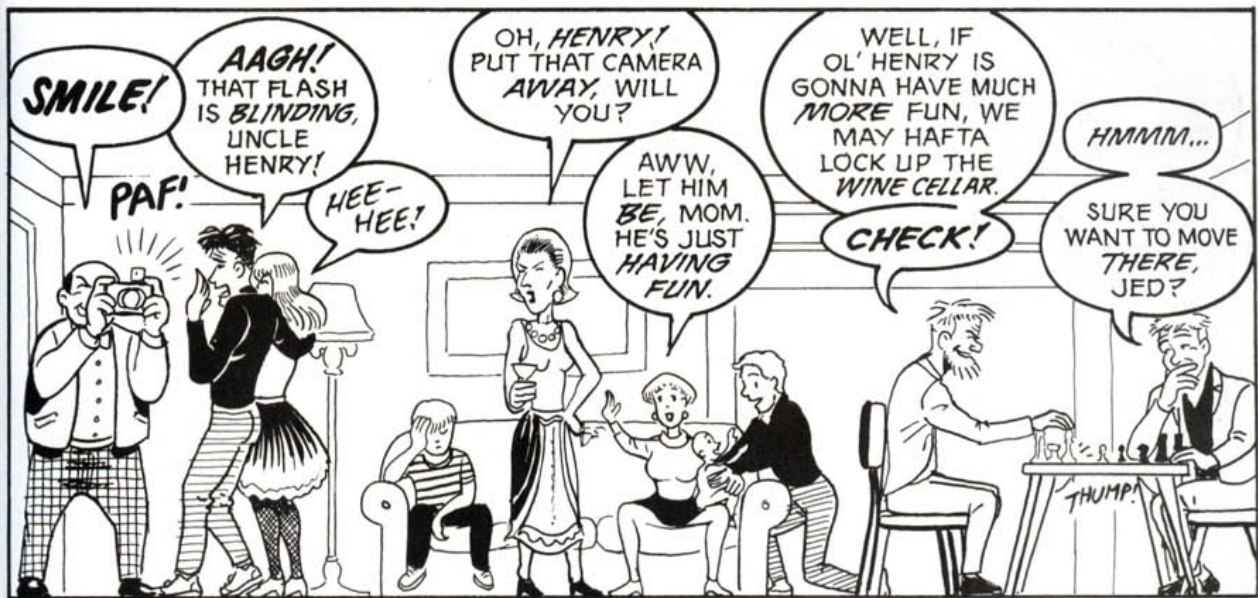
ALL I ASK OF YOU IS A LITTLE FAITH--

-- AND A WORLD OF IMAGINATION.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

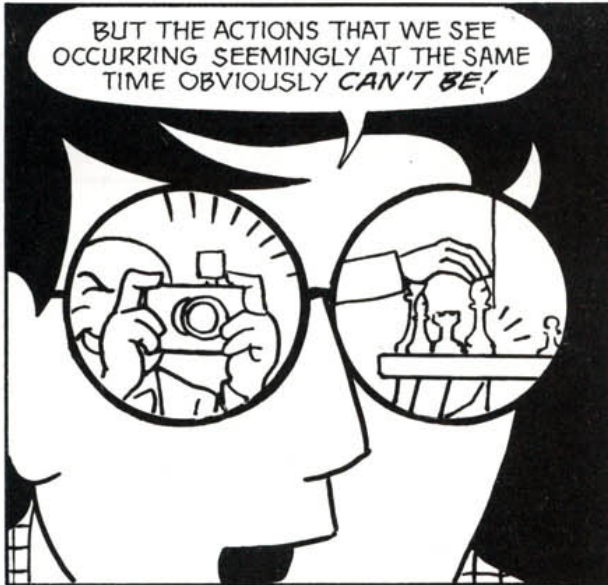
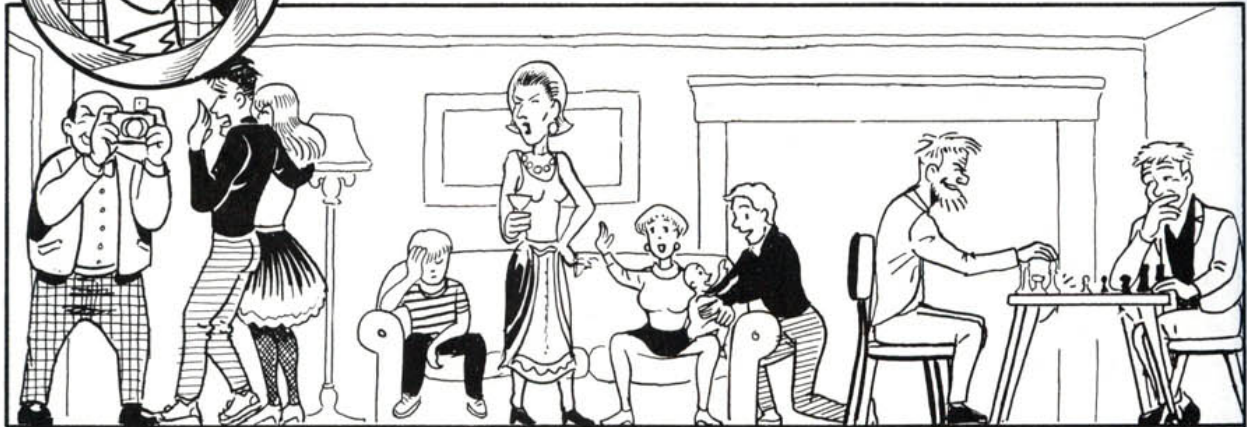
**TIME FRAMES.**







**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 SOMETHING LIKE *THIS* THROUGH OUR PANEL.

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



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

**SMILE!** **AAGH!** THAT FLASH IS *BLINDING*, UNCLE HENRY!  
**PAF!** **HEE-HEE!**

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

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

SINGLE *IMAGE*.

SINGLE *MOMENT*.

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

AND *TANGLES UP TIME* BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION!

SNAP! SNAP!

**CRASH!**

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*.

SMILE!

PA

AAGH! THAT FLASH IS *BLINDING*, UNCLE HENRY!

HEE-HEE!

OH, HENRY! PUT THAT CAMERA AWAY, WILL YOU?

AWW, LET HIM BE, MOM. HE'S JUST HAVING FUN.

WELL, IF OL' HENRY IS GONNA HAVE MUCH *MORE FUN*, WE MAY HAFTA LOCK UP THE *WINE CELLAR*.

CHECK!

HMM... SURE YOU WANT TO MOVE *THERE*, JED?

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





NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.

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



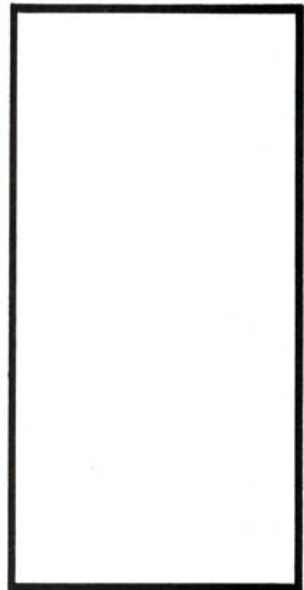
IF SOUND IS INTRODUCED, THIS CEASES TO BE TRUE--



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



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



ALL EXCEPT ONE.



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



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

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



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



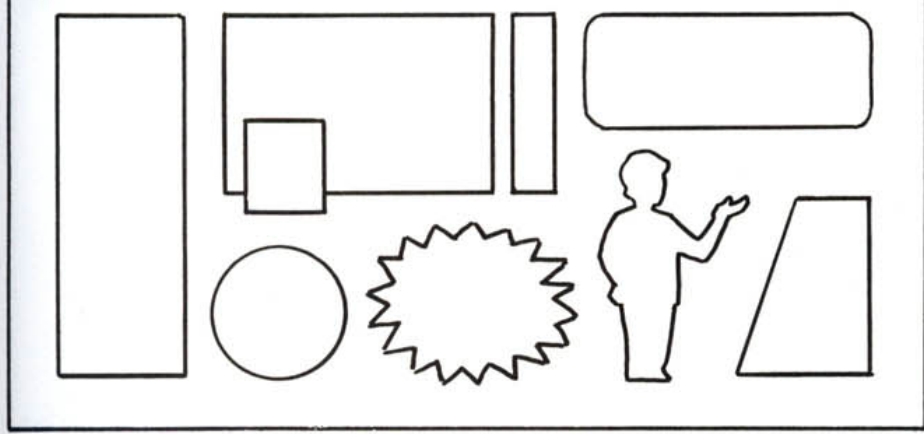
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF **GENERAL INDICATOR** THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



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



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

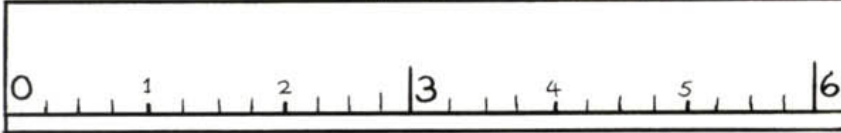
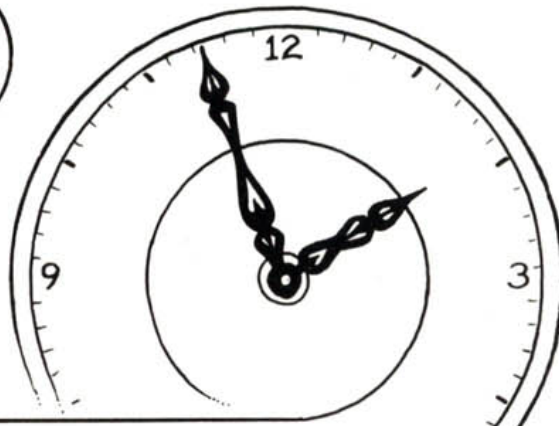


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS **DEPICTED** IN COMICS AND TIME AS **PERCEIVED** BY THE READER.

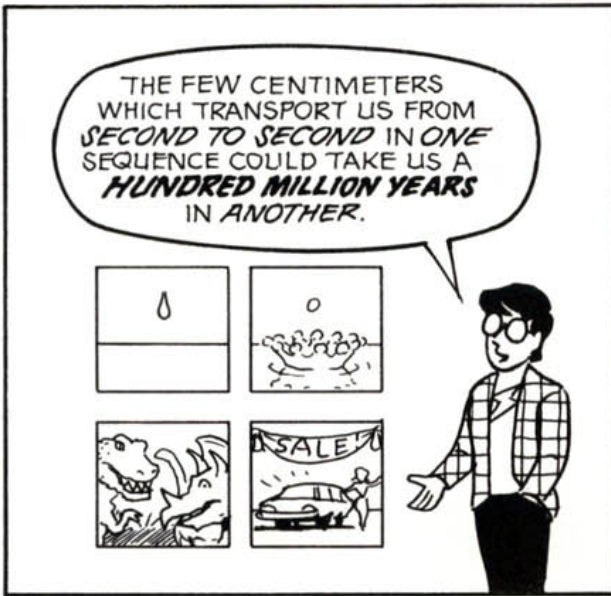


\* EISNER DISCUSSES THIS UNDER THE HEADING "FRAMING TIME" IN *COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART*.

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



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



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



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



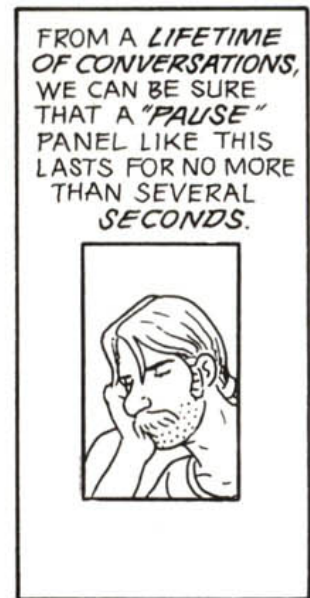
IN MOST CASES IT'S NOT HARD TO MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS AS TO THE DURATION OF A GIVEN SEQUENCE, SO LONG AS THE *ELEMENTS* OF THAT SEQUENCE ARE *FAMILIAR* TO US.



I ALWAYS FIGURED MARY-ANNE WOULD GO FOR GILLIGAN.



I GUESS.



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

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

D'YA THINK THE SOX COULD FINALLY DO IT THIS YEAR?

I GUESS.

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

HEY, I DESERVE A BETTER JOB! I COULD BE A BRAIN SURGEON!

I GUESS.

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!

THAT MADONNA, MAN, SHE'S ONE HOT BABE!

I GUESS.

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**.

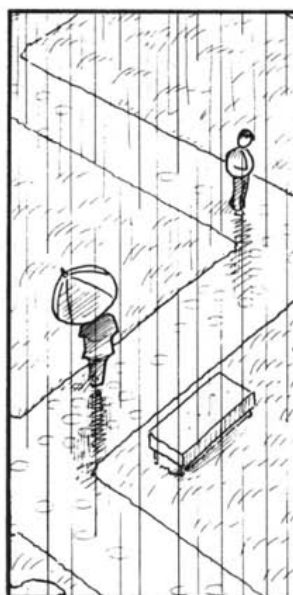
AS MENTIONED, PANELS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, THOUGH THE **CLASSIC RECTANGLE** IS USED MOST OFTEN.

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**.



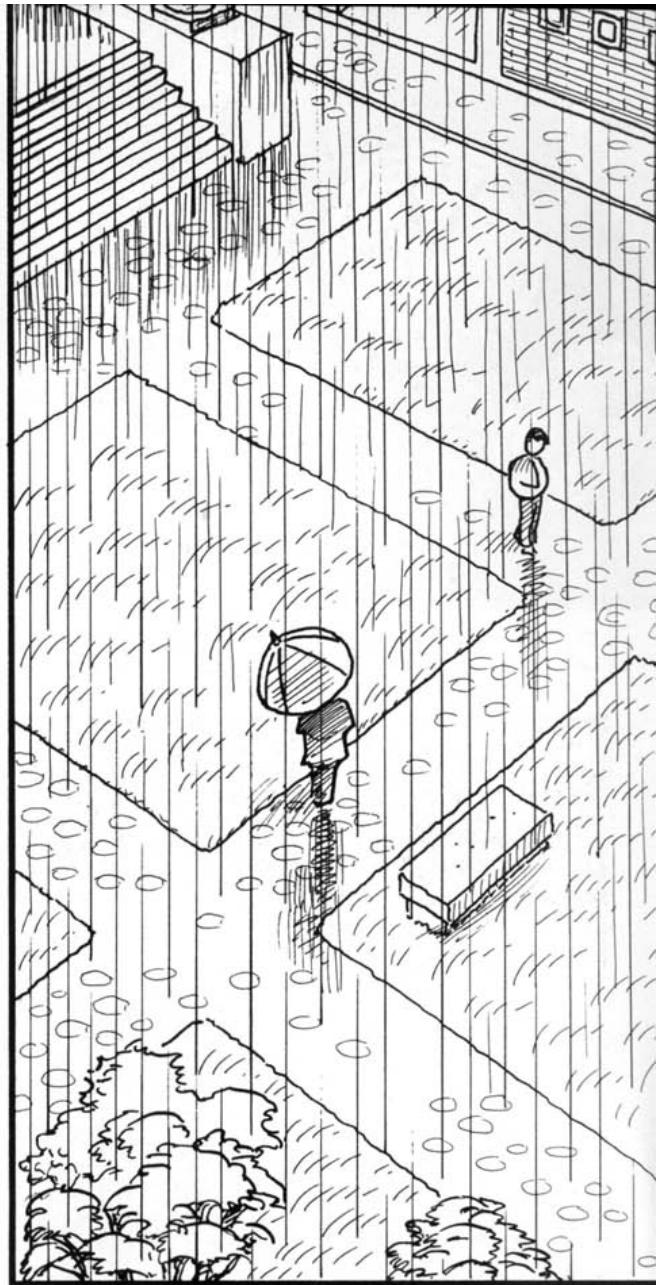
BECAUSE OF ITS **UNRESOLVED NATURE**, SUCH A PANEL MAY **LINGER** IN THE READER'S MIND.

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

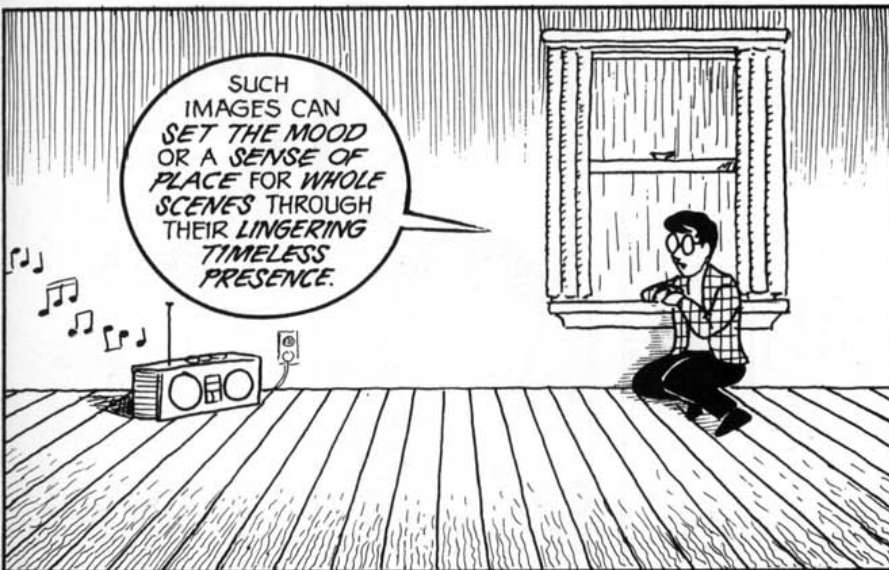
WHEN "BLEEDS" ARE USED -- I.E., WHEN A PANEL RUNS OFF THE EDGE OF THE PAGE -- THIS EFFECT IS COMPOUNDED.



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

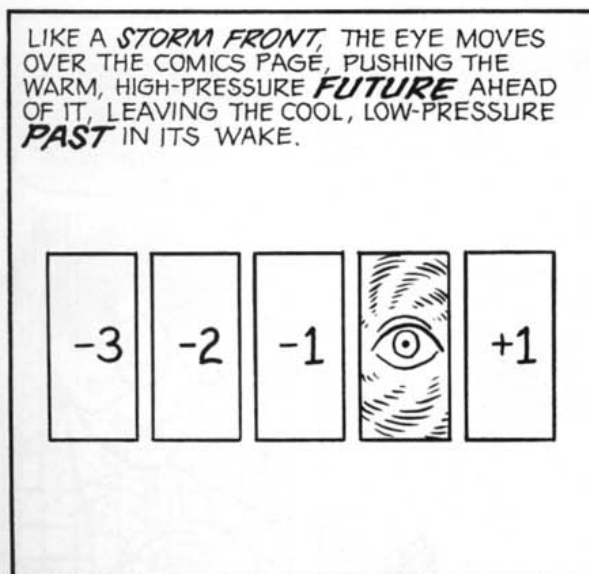


SUCH IMAGES CAN SET THE MOOD OR A SENSE OF PLACE FOR WHOLE SCENES THROUGH THEIR LINGERING TIMELESS PRESENCE.



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



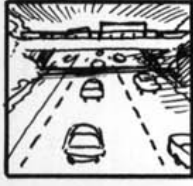
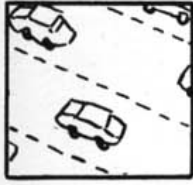
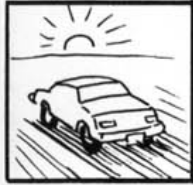




YET WE SELDOM DO CHANGE DIRECTION, EXCEPT TO RE-READ OR REVIEW PASSAGES. IT'S LEFT-TO-RIGHT, UP-TO-DOWN, PAGE AFTER PAGE.



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.







FOR NOW, THESE QUESTIONS ARE THE TERRITORY OF GAMES AND STRANGE LITTLE EXPERIMENTS.

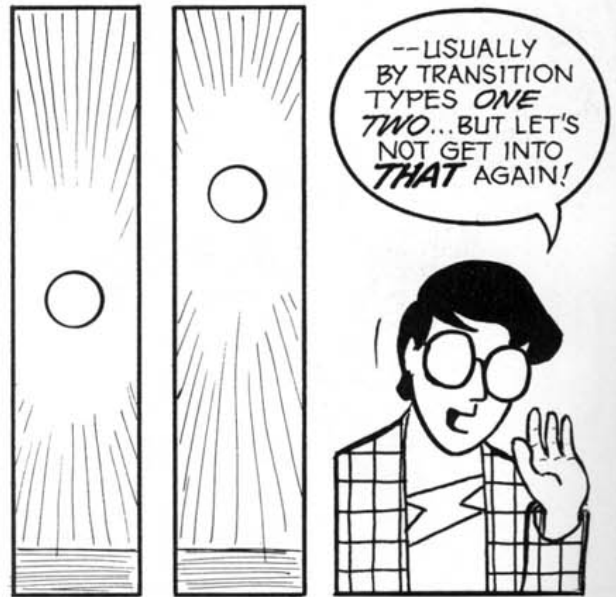
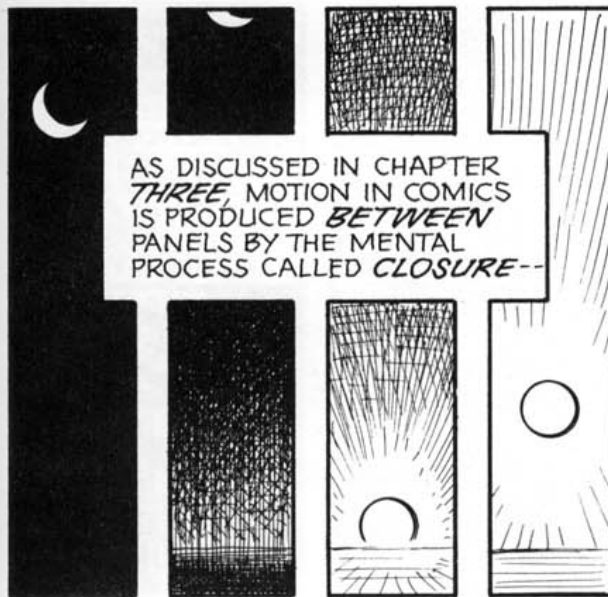
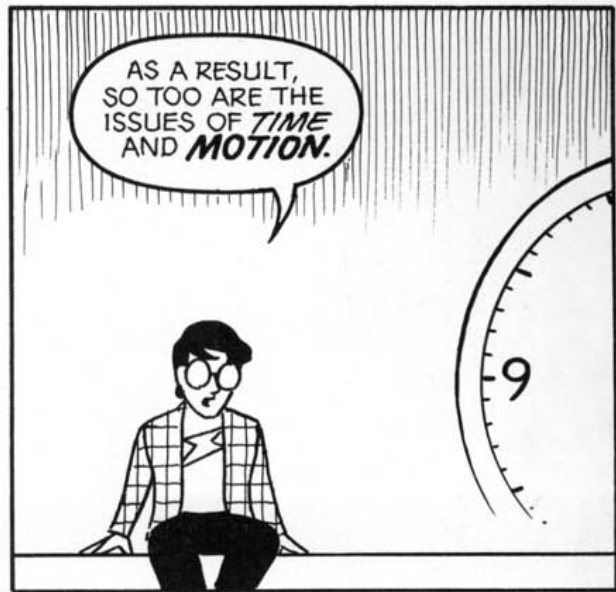
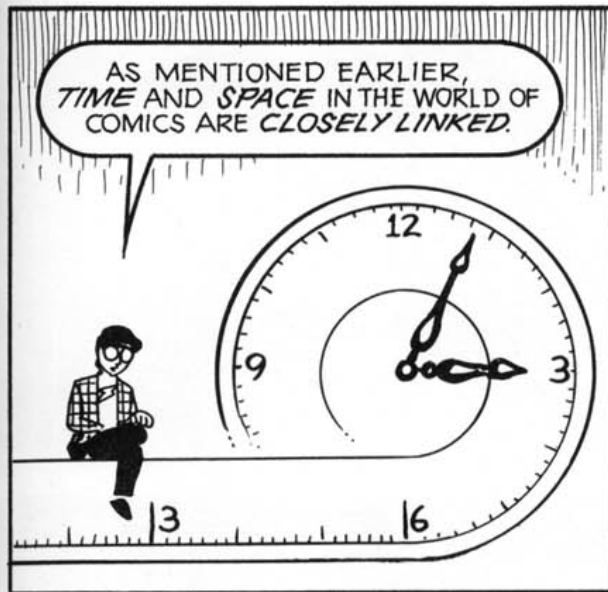


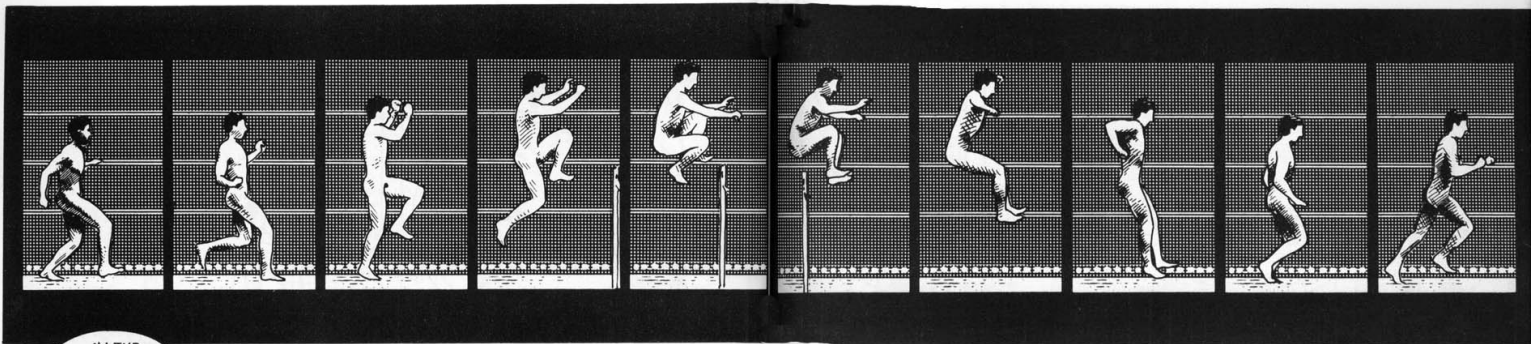
BUT VIEWER PARTICIPATION IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN ENORMOUS ISSUE IN OTHER MEDIA.



HOW COMICS ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE -- OR FAILS TO -- COULD PLAY A CRUCIAL PART IN DEFINING THE ROLE OF COMICS IN THE NEW CENTURY.







COPIED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

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

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

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

BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU!

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

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOÖPRAXINGSCOPE 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--



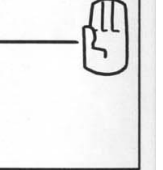
-- FILLED WITH MOTION--



-- 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.



IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!

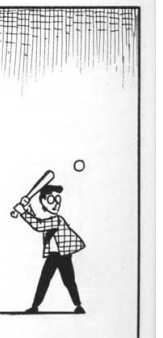


DUCHAMP SOON MOVED ON, THE FUTURISTS DISBANDED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY LOST INTEREST IN THIS OTHER TYPE OF "MOVING PICTURE."

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



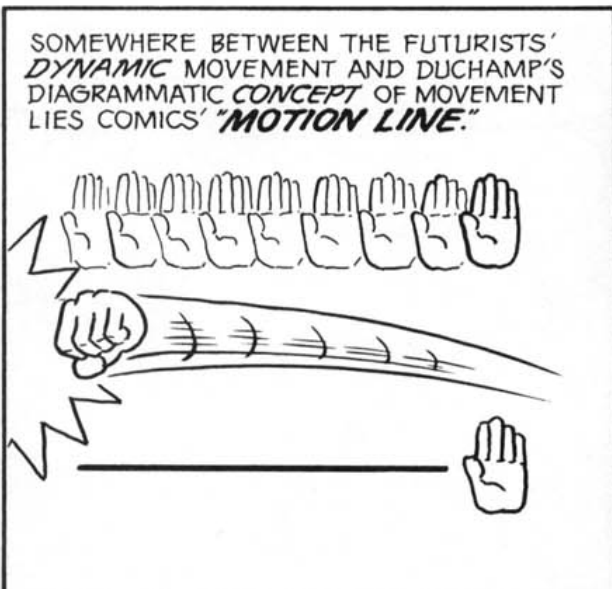
I'M SURE YOU CAN ALL GUESS WHICH MEDIUM I MEAN!





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

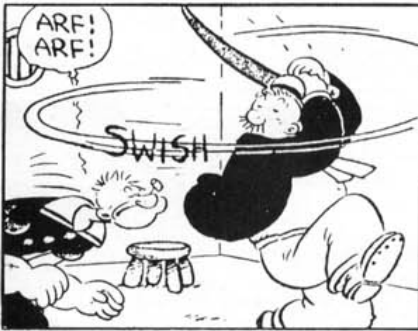
HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?



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.



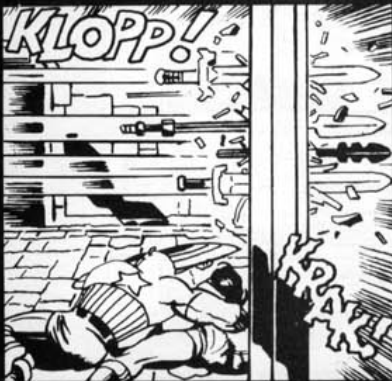
OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE *REFINED AND STYLIZED*, EVEN *DIAGRAMMATIC*.

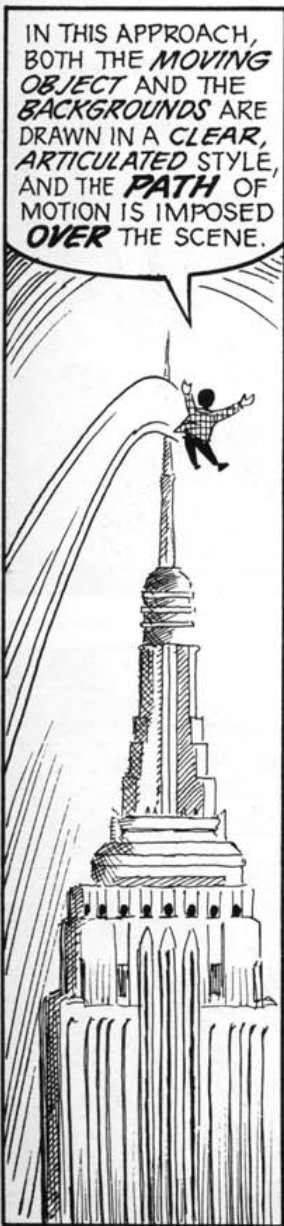
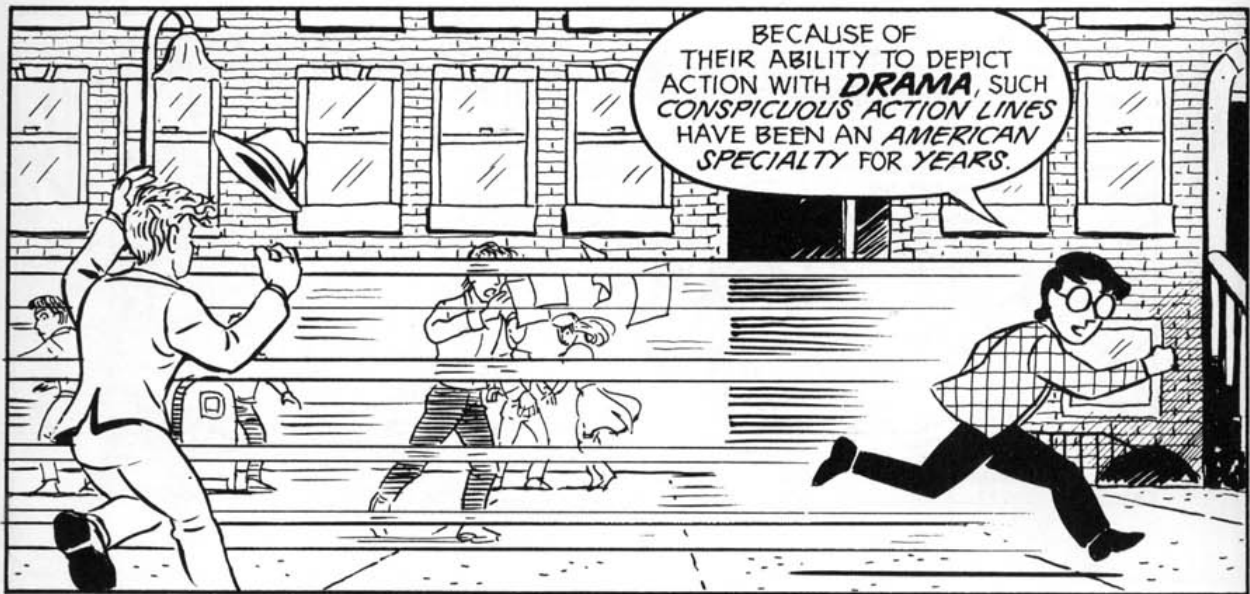


EVENTUALLY, IN THE HANDS OF *HEROIC FANTASY* ARTISTS LIKE *BILL EVERETT* AND *JACK KIRBY*--



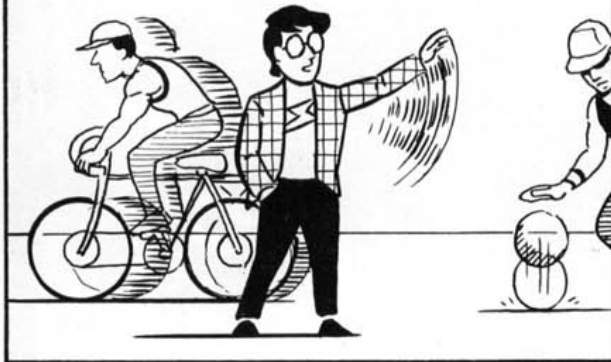
--THOSE SAME LINES BECAME *SO* STYLIZED AS TO ALMOST HAVE A *LIFE* AND *PHYSICAL PRESENCE ALL THEIR OWN!*



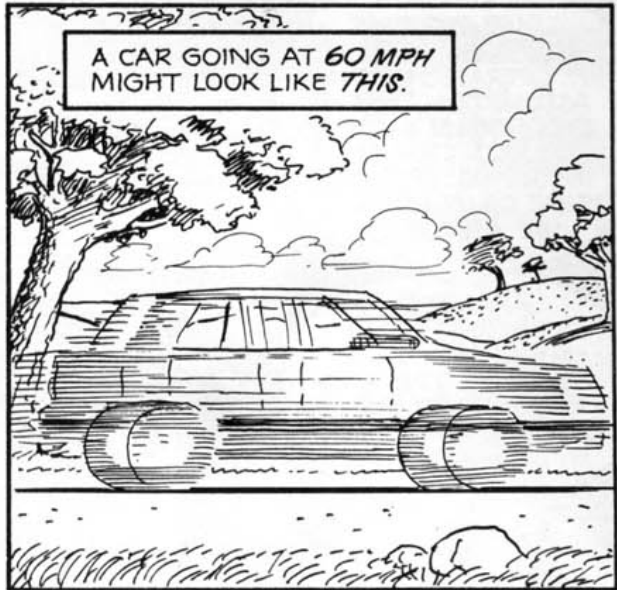


\* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

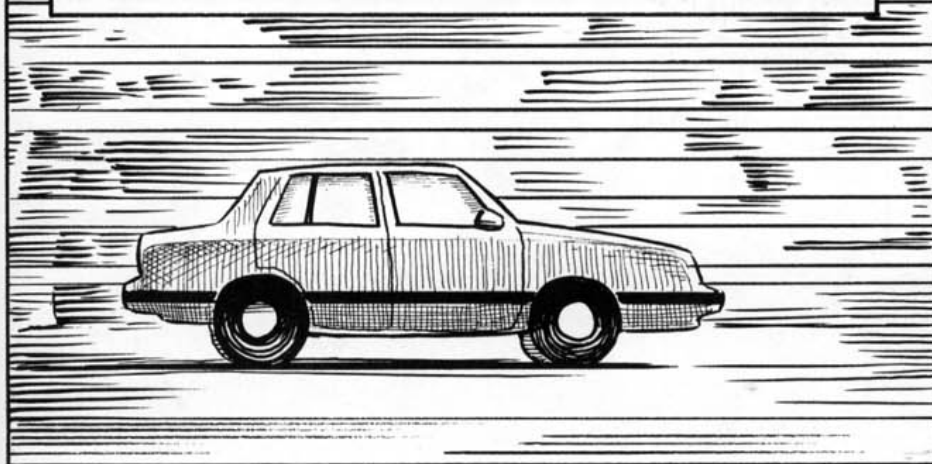
COLAN, WHO WAS ALSO A *FILM-BUFF*, WAS OF COURSE AWARE THAT WHEN A CAMERA'S SHUTTER SPEED IS TOO SLOW TO FULLY FREEZE A MOVING OBJECT'S IMAGE, AN INTERESTING *BLURRING* EFFECT OCCURS.



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*.



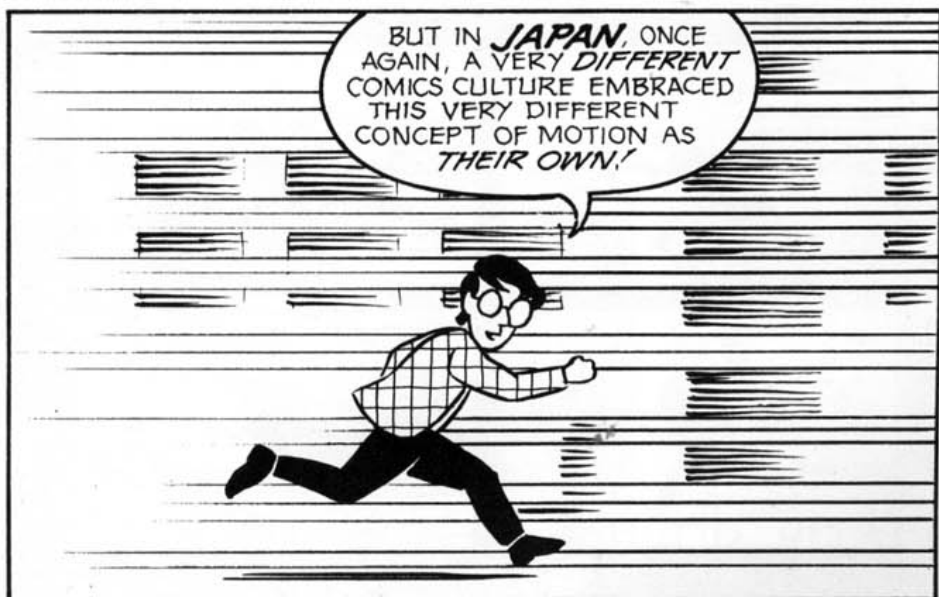
*AMERICAN* COMICS ARTISTS TOOK LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THIS KIND OF *PHOTOGRAPHIC TRICKERY*.



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



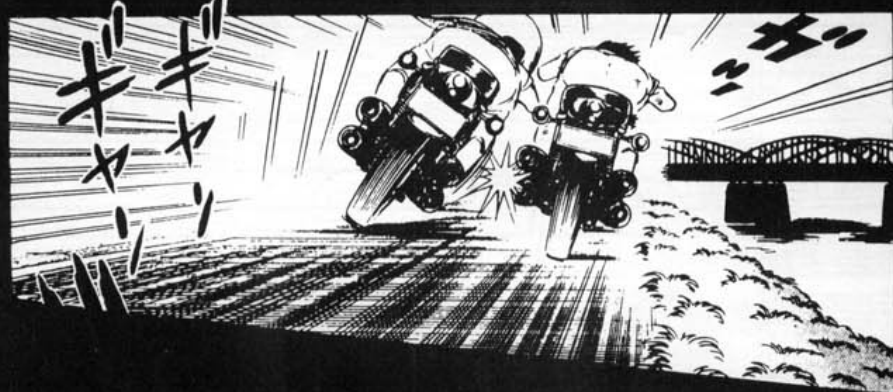
*BUT* IN *JAPAN*, ONCE AGAIN, A VERY *DIFFERENT* COMICS CULTURE EMBRACED THIS VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF MOTION AS *THEIR OWN!*



"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.







IN A MEDIUM WHERE TIME AND SPACE **MERGE**--



--THE STORYTELLER HAS SOME UNUSUAL TOOLS AT HIS/HER DISPOSAL--



--SUCH AS THE **POLYPTYCH**, WHERE A MOVING FIGURE OR FIGURES--



--IS IMPOSED OVER A **CONTINUOUS BACKGROUND**.



IN COMICS, **COMPOSITION** FOLLOWS A VERY DIFFERENT SET OF RULES THAN IN MOST **GRAPHIC ARTS**.



BY INTRODUCING **TIME** INTO THE EQUATION, COMICS ARTISTS ARE ARRANGING THE PAGE IN WAYS NOT ALWAYS CONDUCTIVE TO TRADITIONAL PICTURE-MAKING.



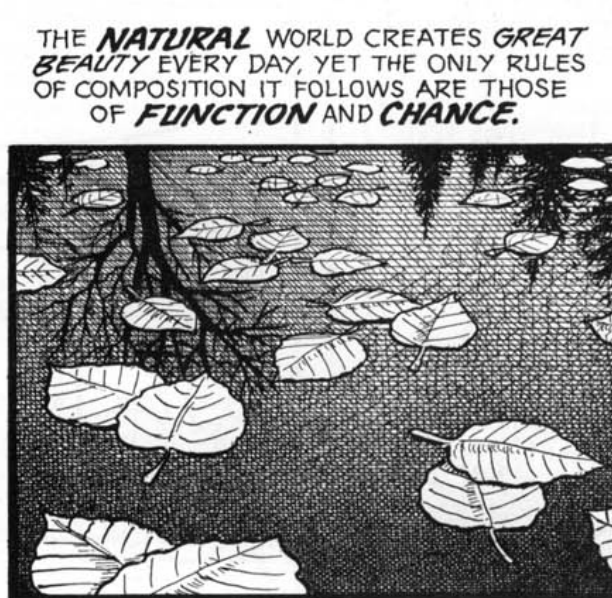
HERE, THE COMPOSITION OF THE **PICTURE** IS JOINED BY THE COMPOSITION OF **CHANGE**, THE COMPOSITION OF **DRAMA**--



-- AND THE COMPOSITION OF **MEMORY**.



IF THE COMPOSITION OF A SINGLE PANEL IS TRULY "**PERFECT**," DOESN'T THAT IMPLY THAT IT CAN--OR EVEN SHOULD--STAND **ALONE**?



THE **NATURAL** WORLD CREATES **GREAT BEAUTY** EVERY DAY, YET THE ONLY RULES OF COMPOSITION IT FOLLOWS ARE THOSE OF **FUNCTION** AND **CHANCE**.



COMICS, AT ITS BEST, SHOULD DO NO LESS.

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**.



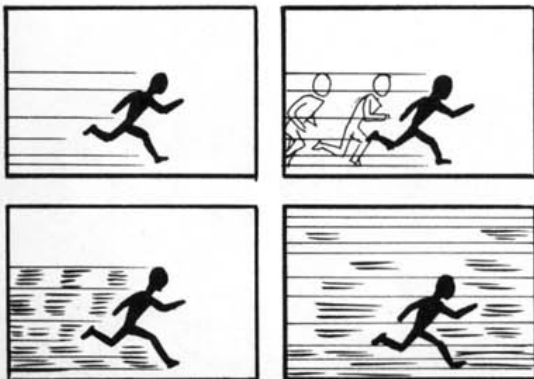
BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE **DURATION** OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND *ITSELF* AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF **ACTION** AND **REACTION**.



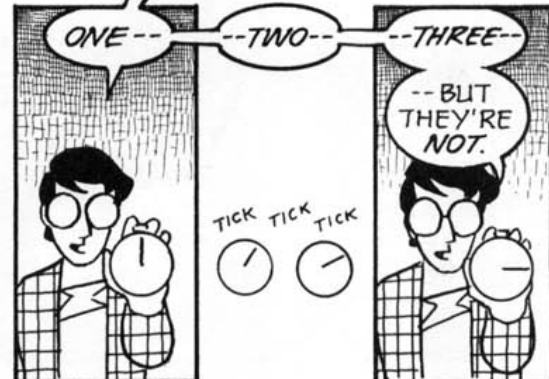
**MOTION** ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO *TWO* SUBSETS. THE **FIRST** TYPE-- **PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE**-- WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN **CHAPTER**.

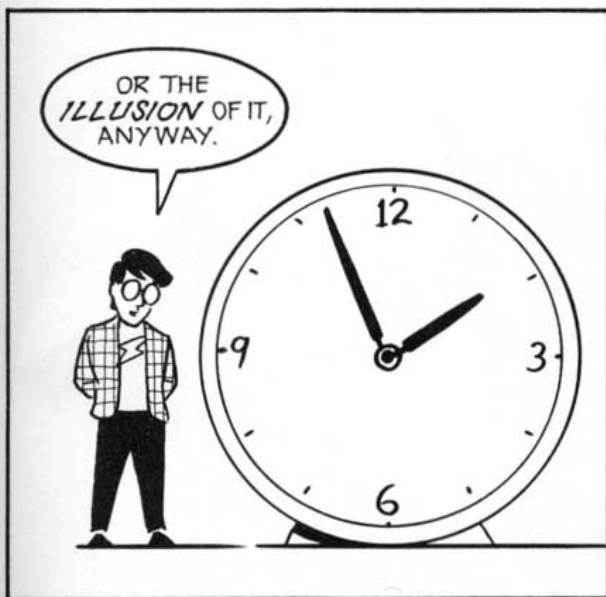
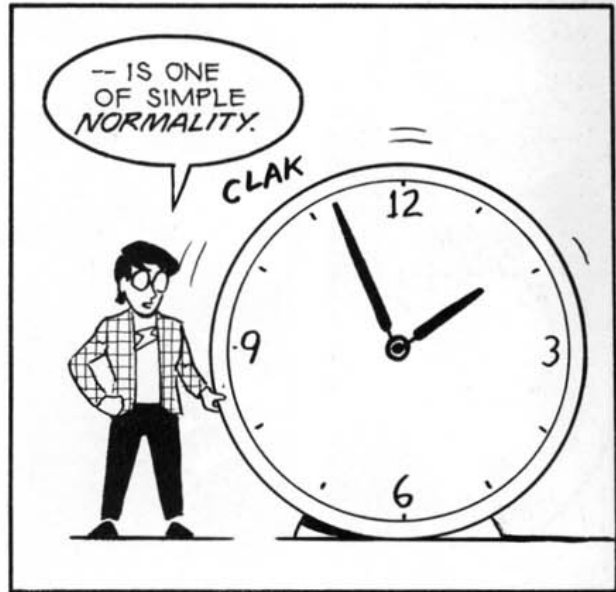


THE **OTHER** TYPE -- **MOTION WITHIN** PANELS -- CAN BE **FURTHER** DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT **STYLES**. I'VE COVERED THE ONES *I* KNOW, BUT THERE MAY BE MANY **OTHERS**. TIME WILL TELL.



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





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