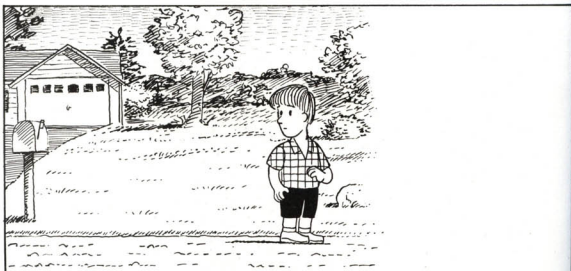
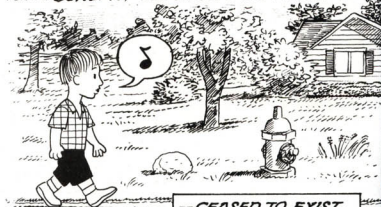


CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD IN THE GUTTER.

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE **NOT**!



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

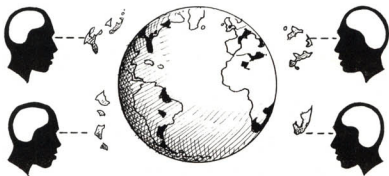
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE
WORLD AS A *WHOLE* THROUGH
THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR
SENSES.

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



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

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



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

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



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

IT'S
CALLED
CLOSURE.



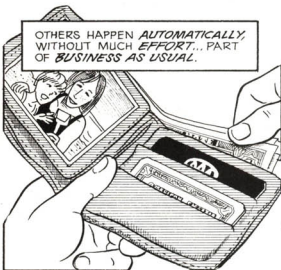
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE OFTEN
COMMIT CLOSURE, MENTALLY
COMPLETING THAT WHICH IS
INCOMPLETE BASED ON *PAST*
EXPERIENCE.



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



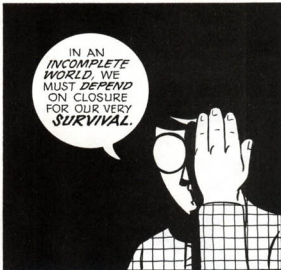
OTHERS HAPPEN *AUTOMATICALLY*,
WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT... PART
OF *BUSINESS AS USUAL.*



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



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



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



CLOSURE

CLOSURE

CL S RE

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!!



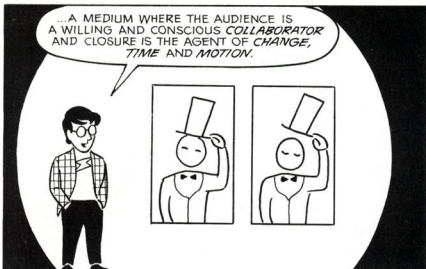
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE
OF EVERYDAY
LIFE--



--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.





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.

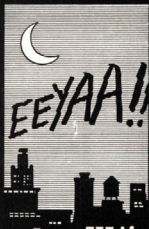


BUT CLOSURE IN **COMICS** IS
FAR FROM CONTINUOUS AND
ANYTHING BUT INVOLUNTARY!



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 *HELD*
THE *AXE* AND
CHOSE YOUR *SPOT*.



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



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



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



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



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

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



LET'S
TAKE A LOOK
AT THE
CRAFT.



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



1.



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



2.



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



3.



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



4.



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



5.



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



6.



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



PERSONALLY, I DON'T **THINK** SO.

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



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



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



BANG!



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



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



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



CLOSURE FOR BLOOD, GUTTERS FOR VEINS...





1.
**MOMENT-
TO-
MOMENT**



2.
**ACTION-
TO-
ACTION**



3.
**SUBJECT-
TO-
SUBJECT**



4.
**SCENE-
TO-
SCENE**



5.
**ASPECT-
TO-
ASPECT**



6.
**NON-
SEQUITUR**

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

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



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



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



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



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

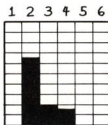


[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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**.



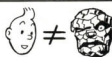
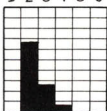
THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** STORYTELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT **KIRBY**, BUT IS HE **UNIQUE** IN THIS RESPECT?

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

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

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

1 2 3 4 5 6



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



X-MEN #1



CLAREMONT & LEE

"HEARTBREAK SOUP"



G. HERNANDEZ

BETTY & VERONICA



DOYLE & DECARLO

NAUGHTY BITS



GREGORY

FRANK IN THE RIVER



WOODRING

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 AFLLOLO



CRISTIN & MEZHERES

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & MOEBIUS

"MANHATTAN"



TARDI

CLIK!



MANARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGÉ

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



2

3

4



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

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



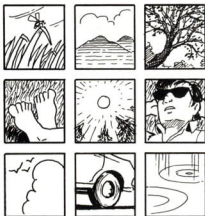
1.



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"



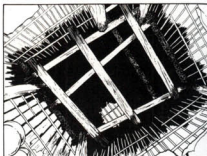
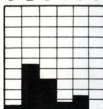
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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?



3



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



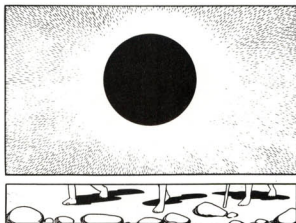
HERE ALSO WE SEE OUR FIRST EXAMPLES OF *MOMENT-TO-MOMENT* TRANSITIONS.



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.



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.



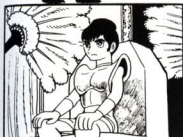
水木は夜の
古寺にいて
みることにした



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.



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
HAYASI & OSIMA



WOLF & CUB
KOIKE & KOIZUMI



AKIRA
KATSUHIRO OTOMO



CYBORG 009
SHOTARO ISHIMORI



PHOENIX
OSAMU TEZUKA

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

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

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

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

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



HERGÉ

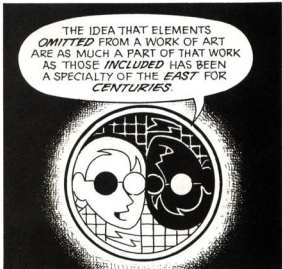


KIRBY



TEZUKA





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



"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

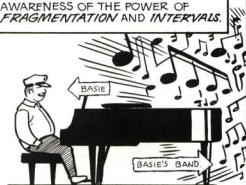


EAST

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*.



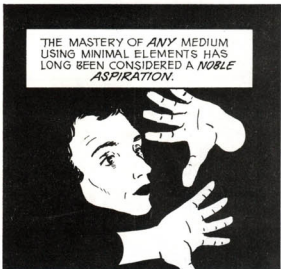
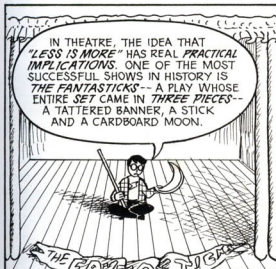


IN THE *VISUAL* ARTS, THE IMPACT OF EASTERN IDEAS WAS BOTH POWERFUL AND LASTING.

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]

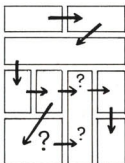


* "BRUM" APPEARS COURTESY OF M. FEAZELL



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!

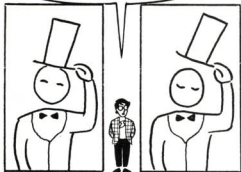
Ding! Ding!

OW!

Ding! Ding!

OW!

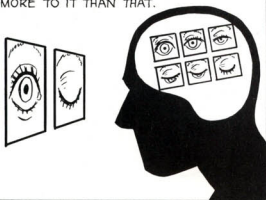
WHATEVER THE MYSTERIES *WITHIN* EACH PANEL, IT'S THE POWER OF CLOSURE *BETWEEN* PANELS THAT I FIND THE MOST INTERESTING.



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

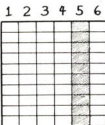


WE ALREADY KNOW THAT COMICS ASKS THE MIND TO WORK AS A SORT OF *IN-BETWEENER* -- FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN PANELS AS AN *ANIMATOR* MIGHT-- BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S STILL MORE TO IT THAN THAT.



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 THE SENSES THROUGH **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.

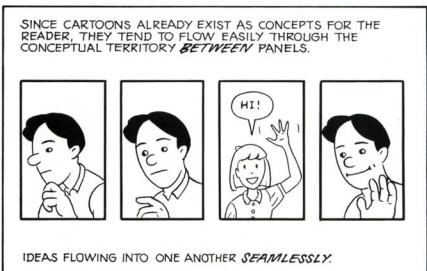
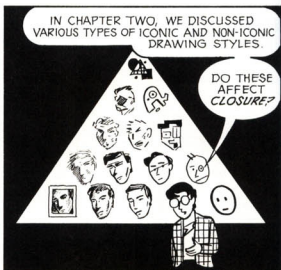


WHICH IS WHY **ALL** OF OUR SENSES ARE ENGAGED!





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

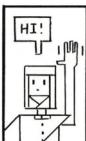


BUT **REALISTIC** IMAGES HAVE A BUMPIER RIDE. THEIRS IS A PRIMARILY **VISUAL** EXISTENCE WHICH DOESN'T PASS EASILY INTO THE REALM OF IDEAS.



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**.

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



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



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





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



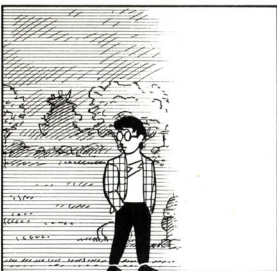
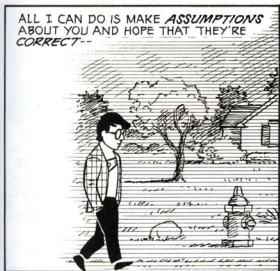
THIS IS WHY I THINK IT'S
A MISTAKE TO SEE COMICS AS
A MERE *HYBRID* OF THE
GRAPHIC ARTS AND *PROSE*
FICTION.

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

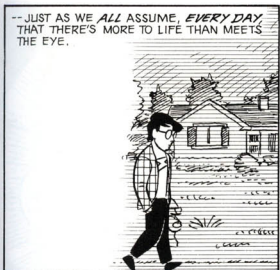




ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE **ASSUMPTIONS** ABOUT YOU AND HOPE THAT THEY'RE **CORRECT**--



-- 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**.

