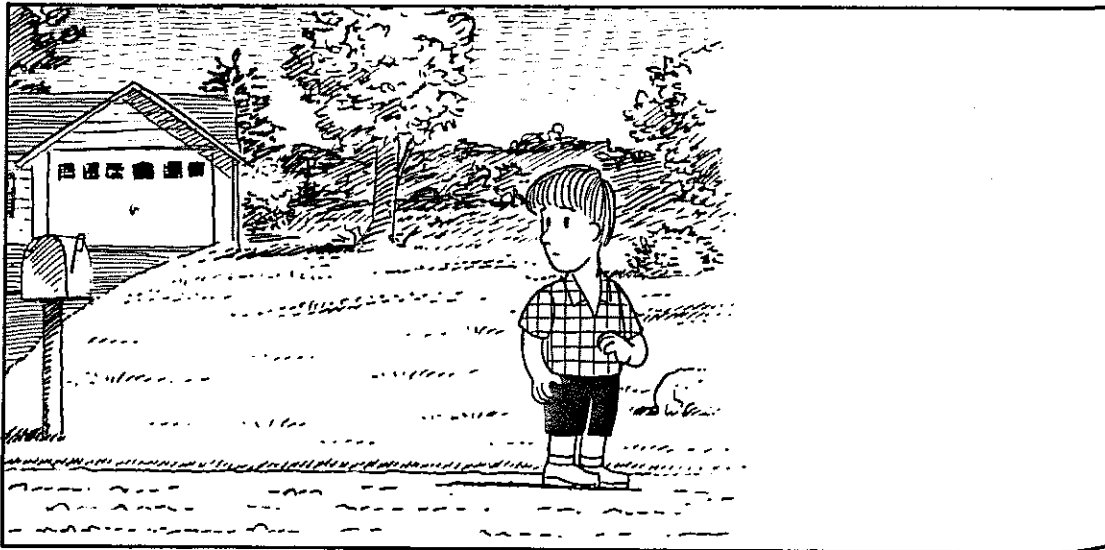
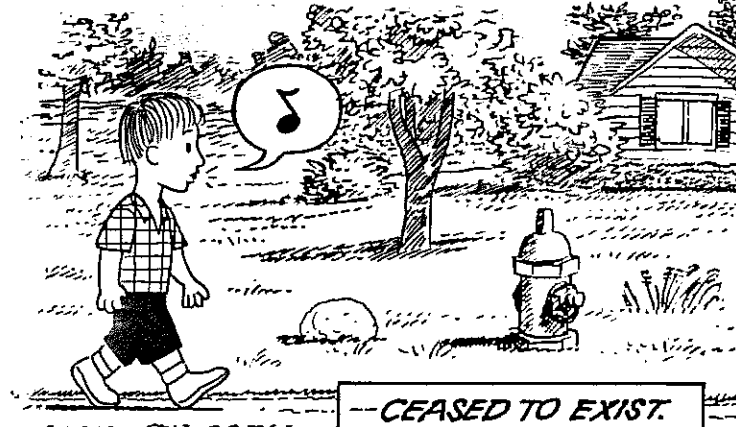


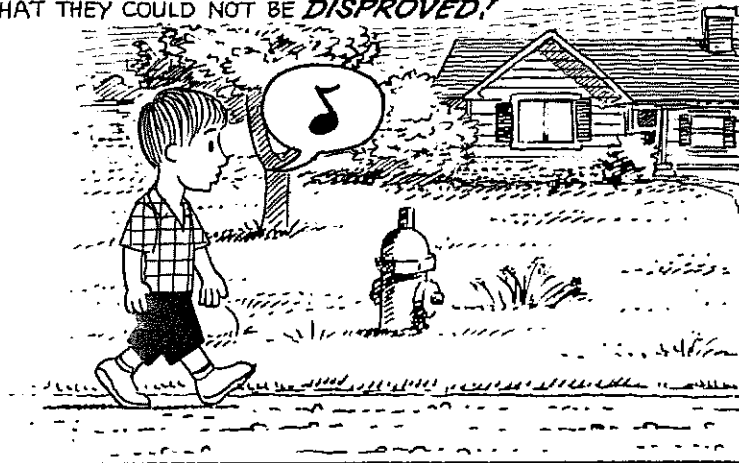
CHAPTER THREE

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.



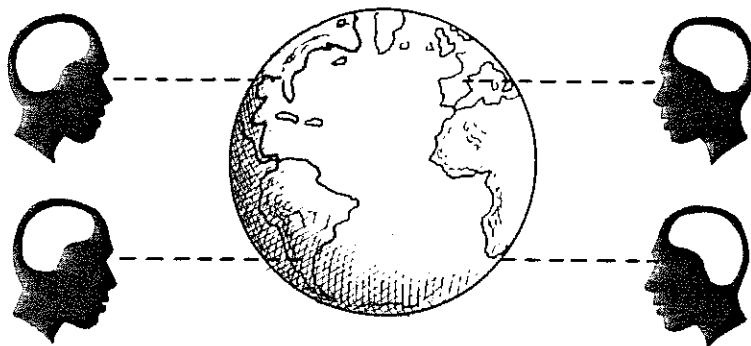
EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT!



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

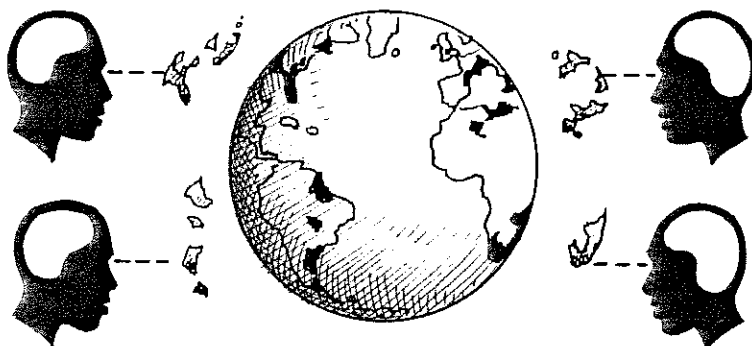
ALL OF US PERCEIVE THE
WORLD AS A *WHOLE* THROUGH
THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR
SENSES.

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



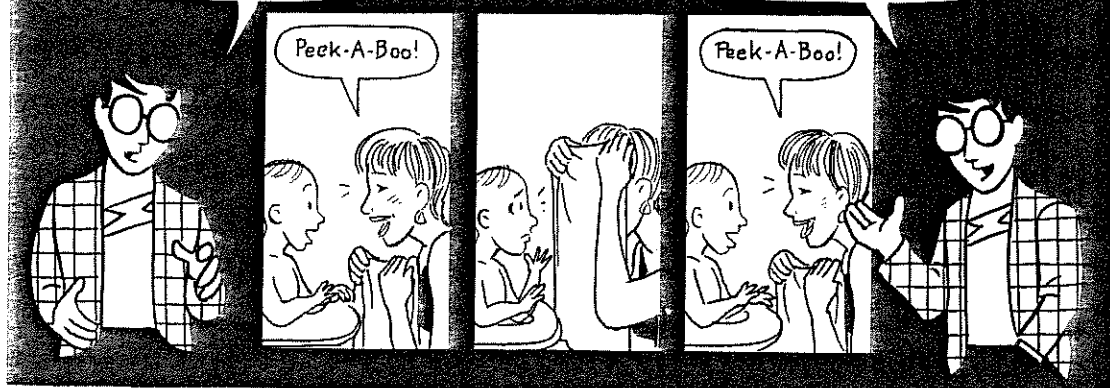
EVEN THE MOST *WIDELY*
TRAVELLED MIND CAN ONLY
SEE SO MUCH OF THE WORLD
IN THE COURSE OF A LIFE.

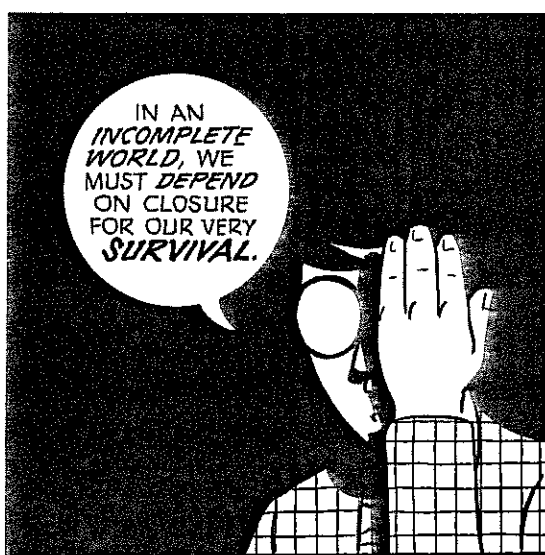
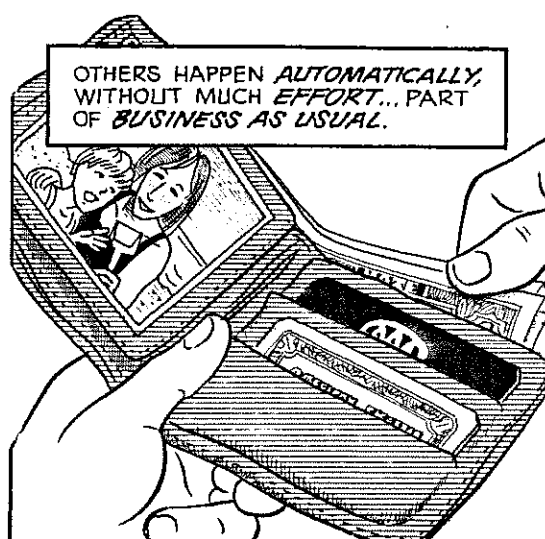
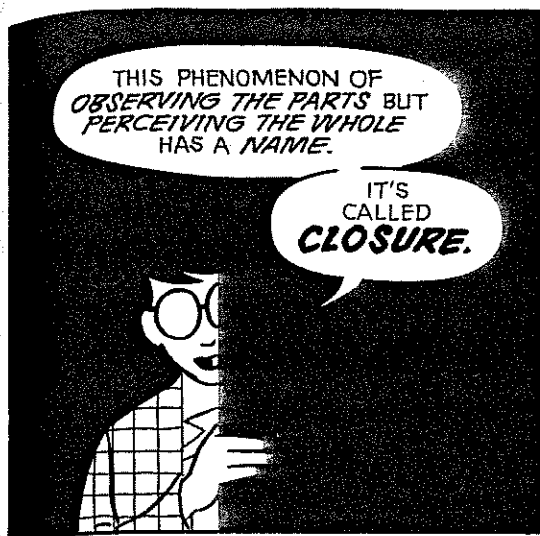
OUR PERCEPTION OF
"REALITY" IS AN ACT OF
FAITH, BASED ON MERE
FRAGMENTS.




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*.







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

CLOSURE

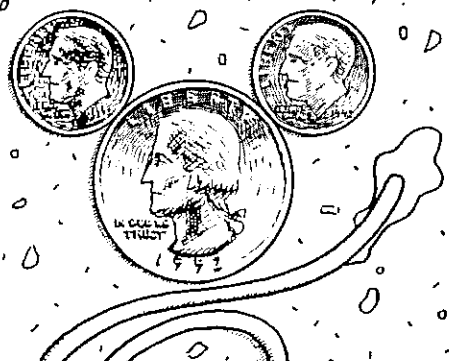
CLOSURE

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--

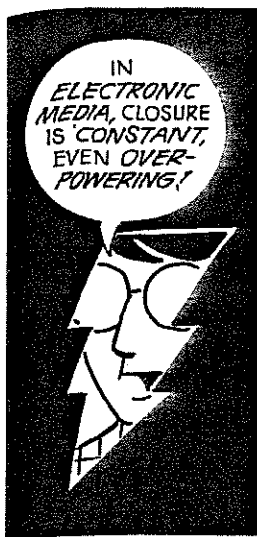


--AND OUR MINDS TRANSFORM IT INTO THE "*REALITY*"--

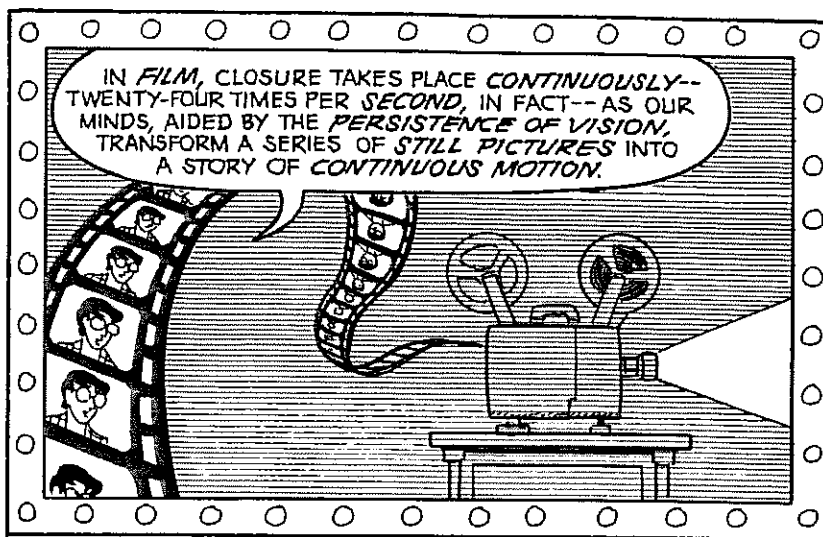


--OF THE *PHOTOGRAPH*!



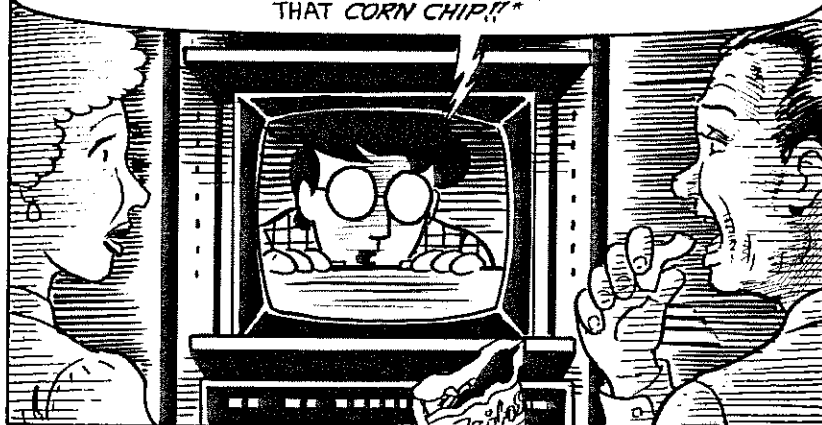


IN
ELECTRONIC
MEDIA, CLOSURE
IS 'CONSTANT,
EVEN OVER-
POWERING!'



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!!*



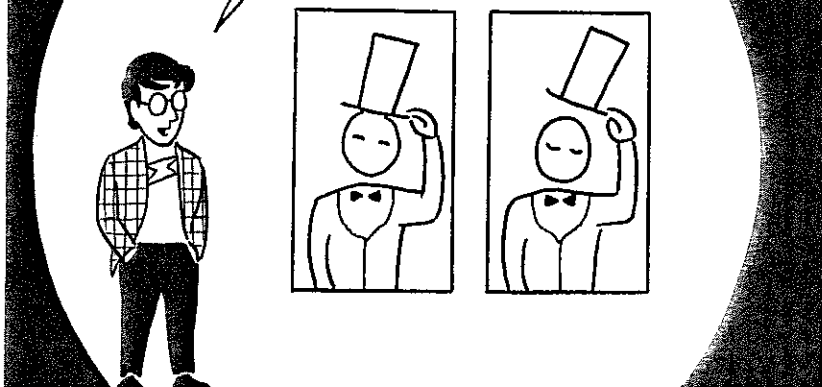
BETWEEN SUCH
AUTOMATIC
ELECTRONIC
CLOSURE AND THE
SIMPLER CLOSURE
OF EVERYDAY
LIFE--



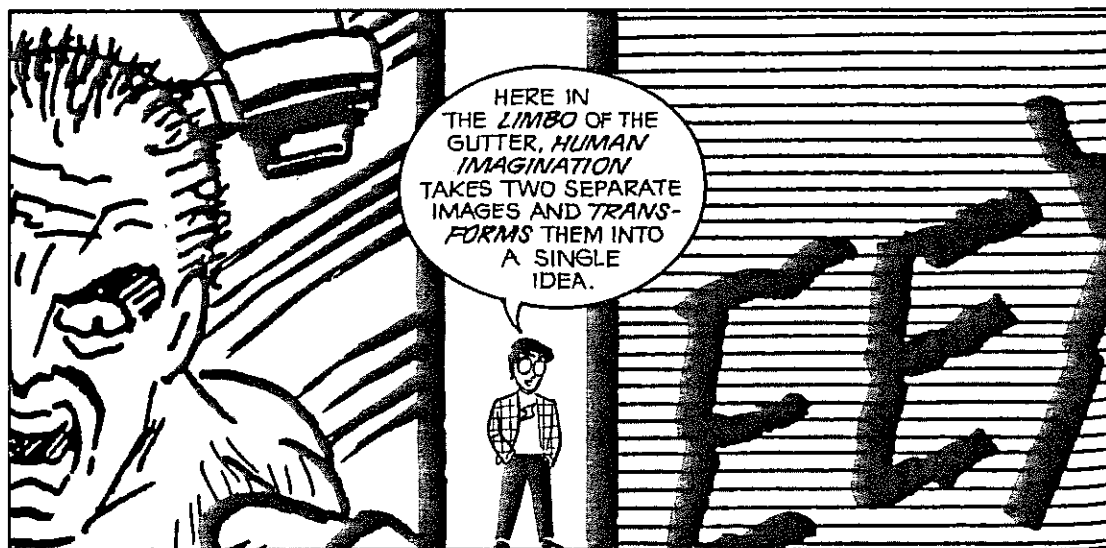
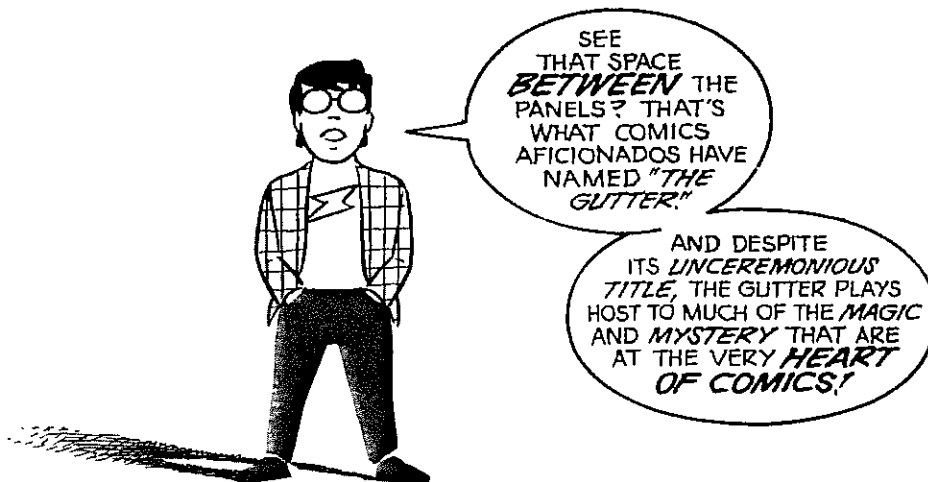
--THERE LIES
A MEDIUM OF
COMMUNICATION
AND EXPRESSION
WHICH USES CLOSURE
LIKE NO OTHER...

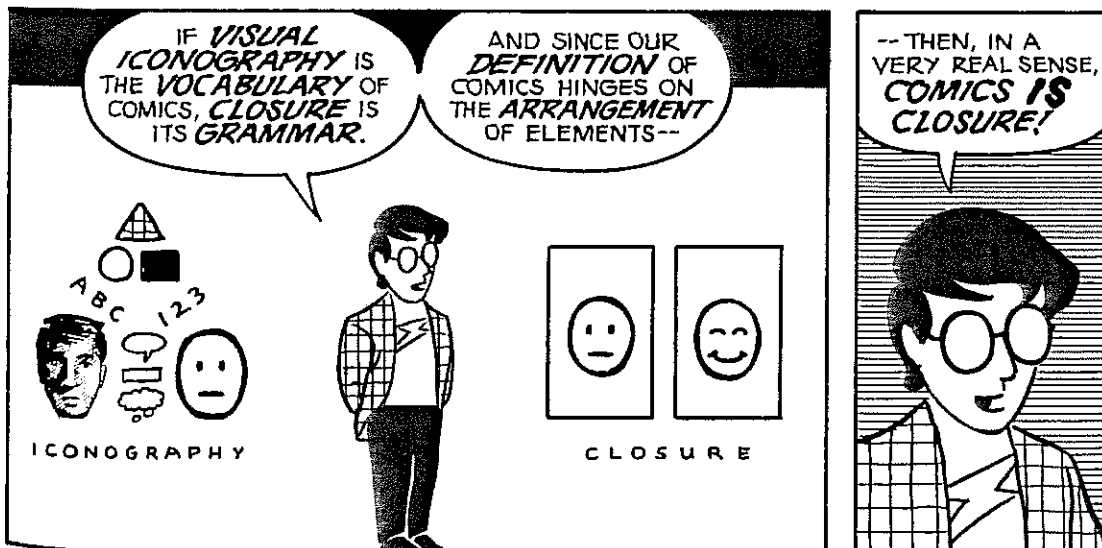
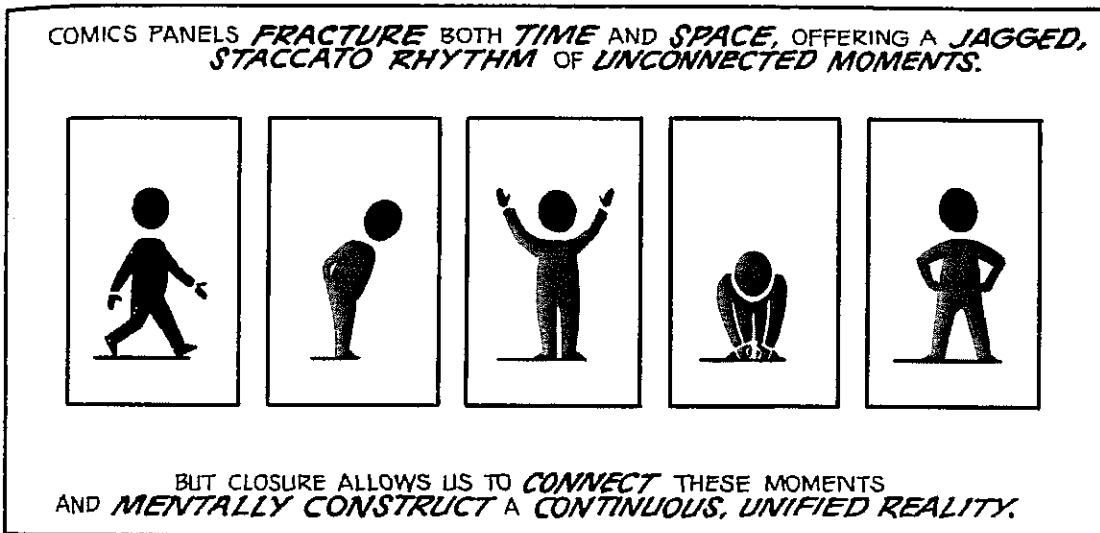


...A MEDIUM WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS
A WILLING AND CONSCIOUS COLLABORATOR
AND CLOSURE IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE,
TIME AND MOTION.



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

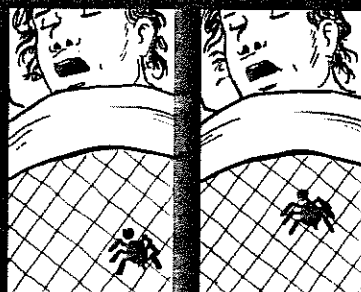
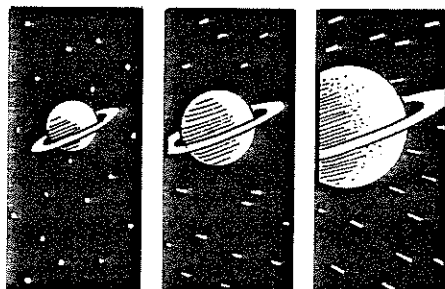




MOST
PANEL-TO-PANEL
TRANSITIONS IN COMICS
CAN BE PLACED IN ONE
OF SEVERAL DISTINCT
CATEGORIES. THE **FIRST**
CATEGORY--WHICH WE'LL
CALL **MOMENT-TO-
MOMENT**--REQUIRES
VERY **LITTLE**
CLOSURE.



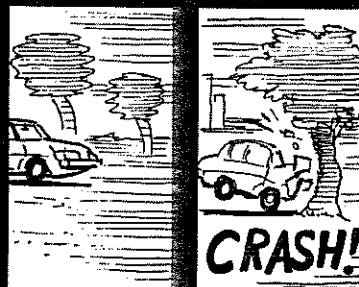
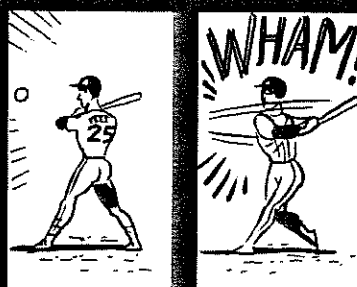
1.



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**.



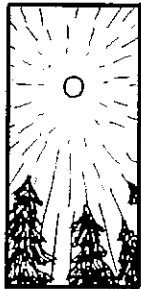
4.



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.

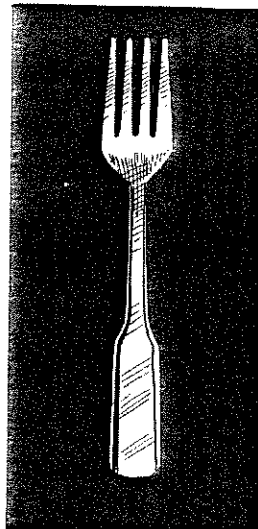


THIS LAST CATEGORY SUGGESTS AN INTERESTING QUESTION. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ANY SEQUENCE OF PANELS TO BE TOTALLY UNRELATED TO EACH OTHER?



PERSONALLY, I DON'T THINK SO.

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



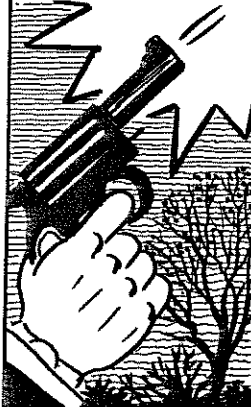
--ALCHEMY AT WORK IN THE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS WHICH CAN HELP US FIND MEANING OR RESONANCE IN EVEN THE MOST JARRING OF COMBINATIONS.



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



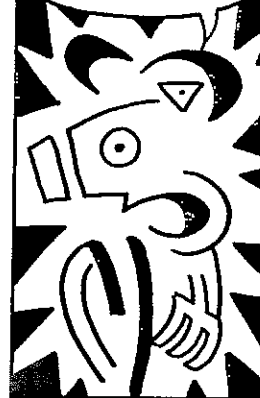
BANG!



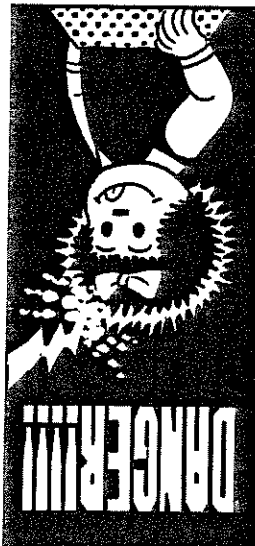
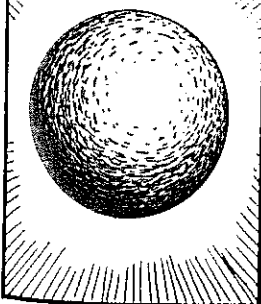
BY CREATING A SEQUENCE WITH TWO OR MORE IMAGES, WE ARE ENDOWING THEM WITH A SINGLE--



--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...



GET BICYCLE PURCHASE



1.
MOMENT-
TO-
MOMENT



2.
ACTION-
TO-
ACTION



3.
SUBJECT-
TO-
SUBJECT



4.
SCENE-
TO-
SCENE



5.
ASPECT-
TO-
ASPECT



6.
NON-
SEQUITUR

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

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



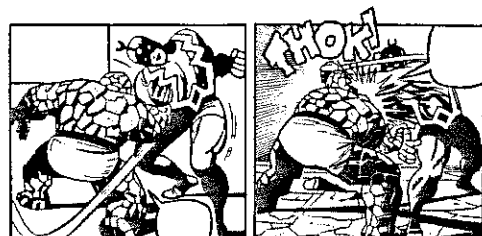
MOST *MAINSTREAM*
COMICS IN AMERICA
EMPLOY STORYTELLING
TECHNIQUES FIRST
INTRODUCED BY
JACK KIRBY, SO
LET'S START BY
EXAMINING THIS
LEE-KIRBY COMIC
FROM 1966.



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



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



[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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



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

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1 | — |
| 2 | 65% |
| 3 | 20% |
| 4 | 15% |
| 5 | — |
| 6 | — |

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

THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** 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 & LEE</p> | <p>"HEARTBREAK SOUP"</p> <p>G. HERNANDEZ</p> | <p>BETTY & VERONICA</p> <p>DOYLE & 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> |