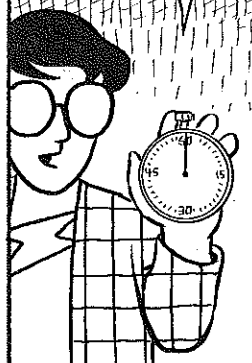


CHAPTER FOUR

TIME FRAMES.

SO! LET'S SEE: EACH PANEL OF A COMIC SHOWS A SINGLE MOMENT IN TIME.

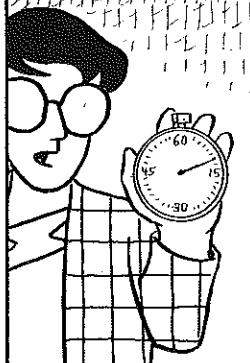


AND BETWEEN THOSE FROZEN MOMENTS-- BETWEEN THE PANELS-- OUR MINDS FILL IN THE INTERVENING MOMENTS, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF TIME AND MOTION.



LIKE A LINE DRAWN BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

RIGHT?



CLIK



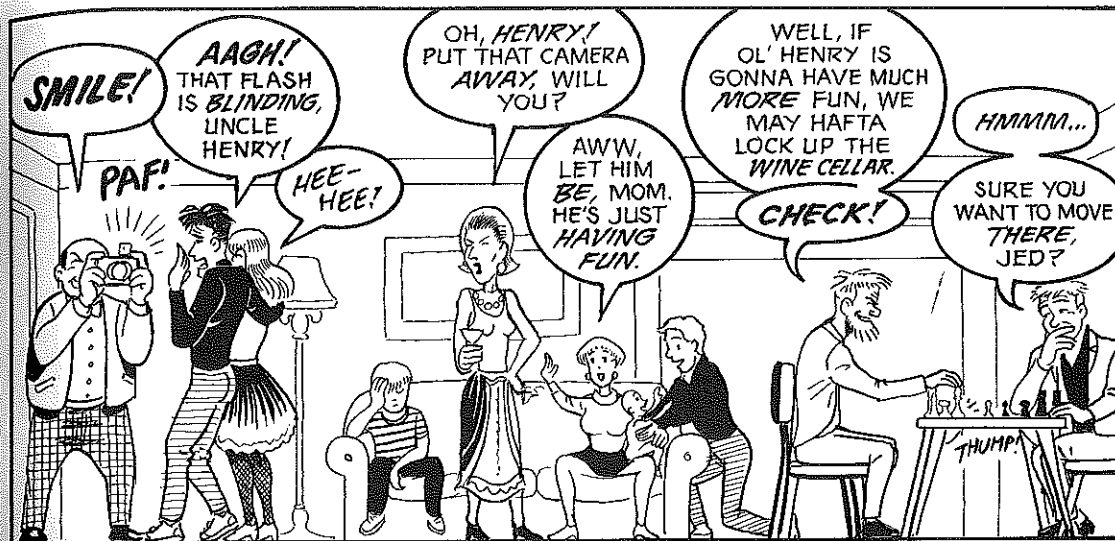
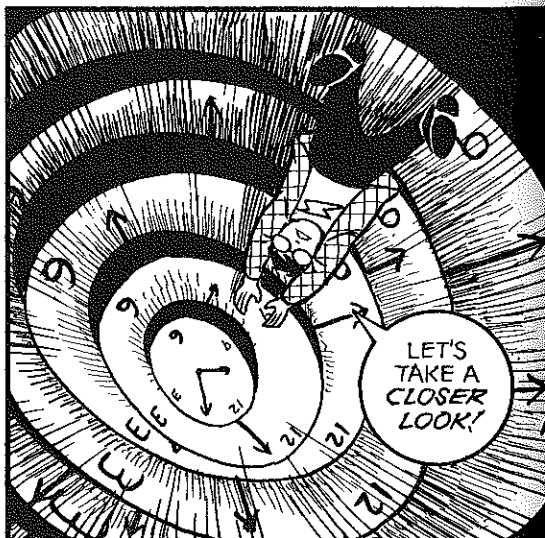
NAAH! OF COURSE NOT!



TIME IN COMICS IS INFINITELY WEIRDER THAN THAT!



LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!



SINGLE MOMENT?

HARDLY!



EVEN THE BRIEF SOUND OF A FLASH-BULB HAS A CERTAIN DURATION, SHORT TO BE SURE, BUT NOT INSTANTANEOUS!

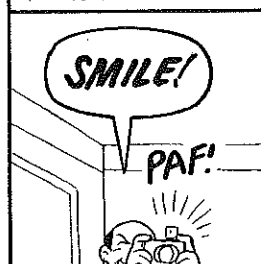
PAF!



FAR SLOWER IS THE DURATION OF THE AVERAGE WORD. UNCLE HENRY ALONE BURNS UP A GOOD SECOND IN THIS PANEL, ESPECIALLY SINCE "SMILE!" UNDOUBTEDLY PRECEDED THE FLASH.

SMILE!

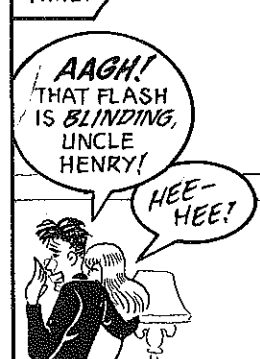
PAF!



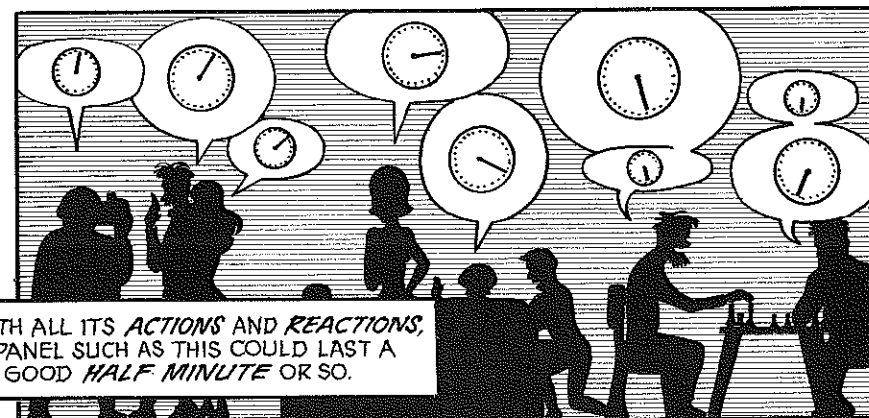
LIKewise, THE NEXT BALLOONS COULD HAVE ONLY FOLLOWED THE BURST OF THE FLASHBULB, THUS ADDING STILL MORE TIME.

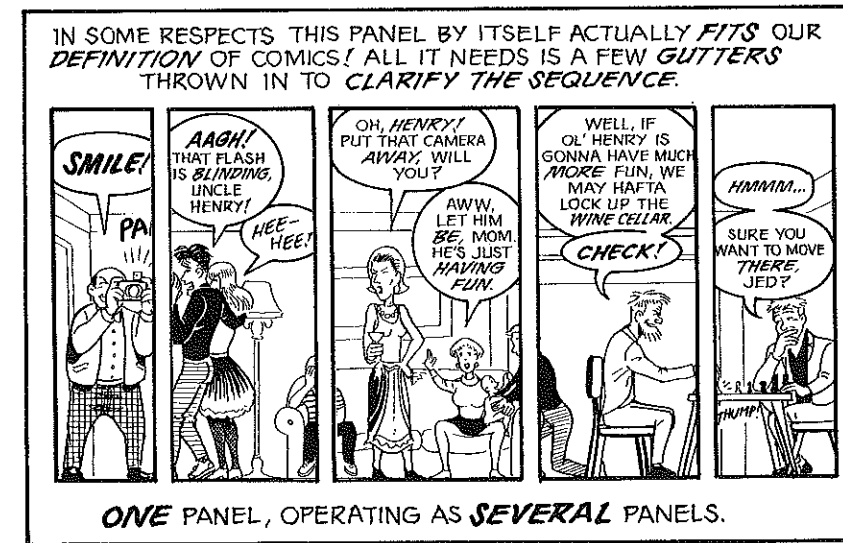
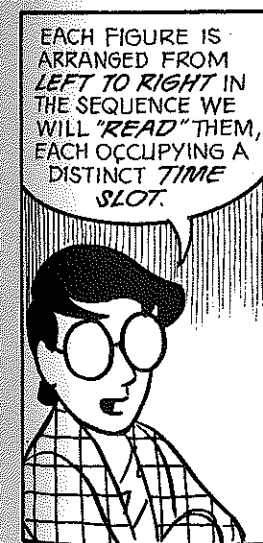
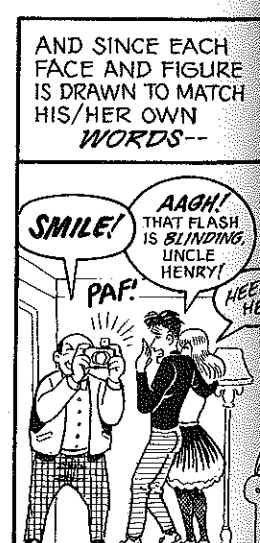
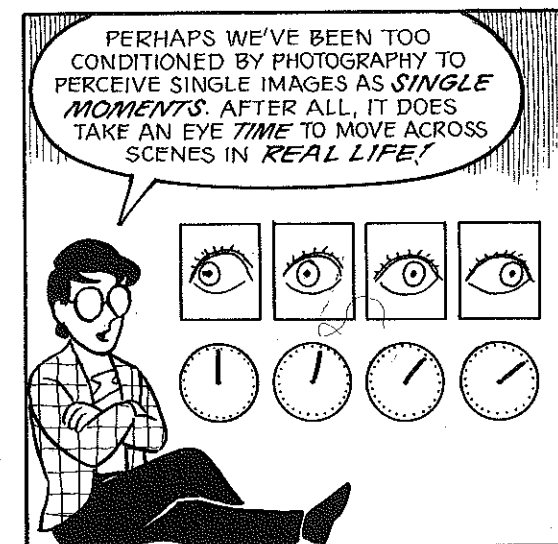
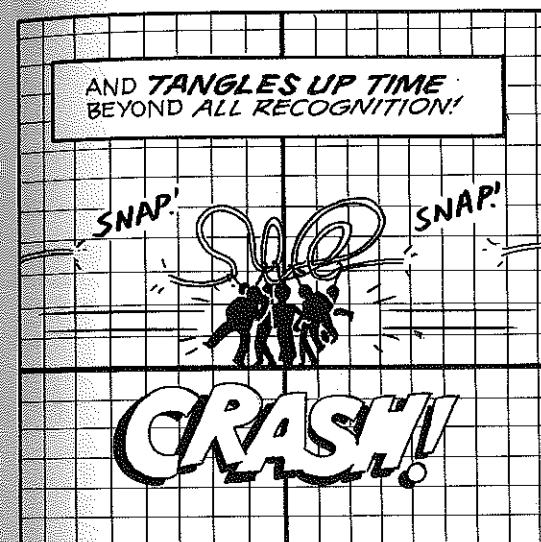
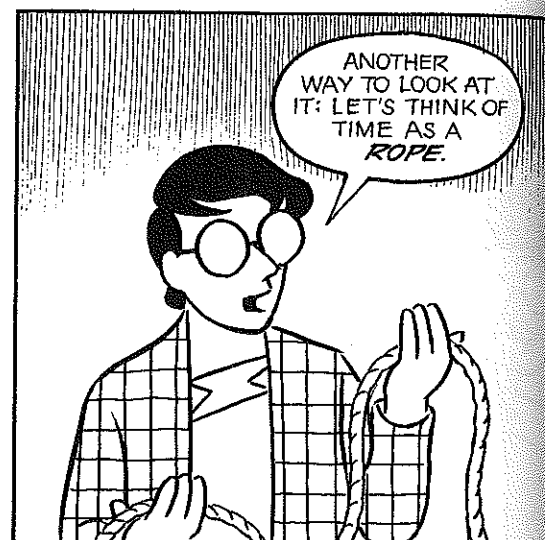
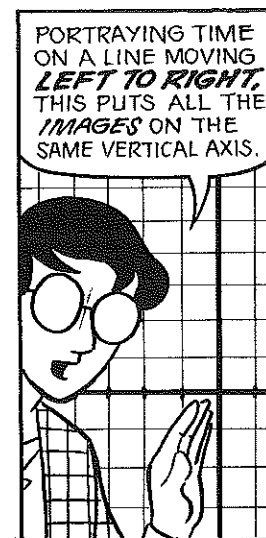
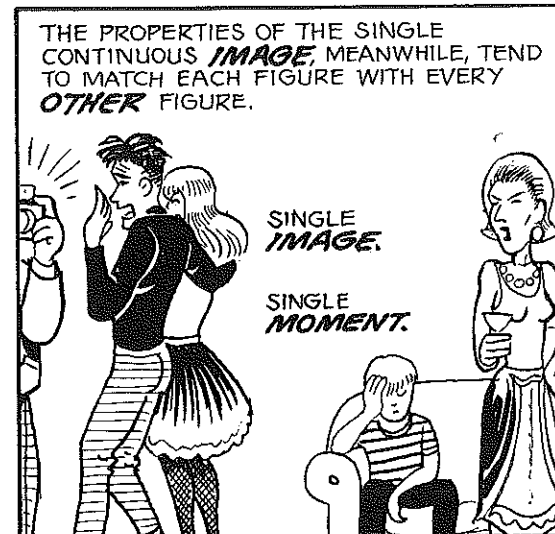
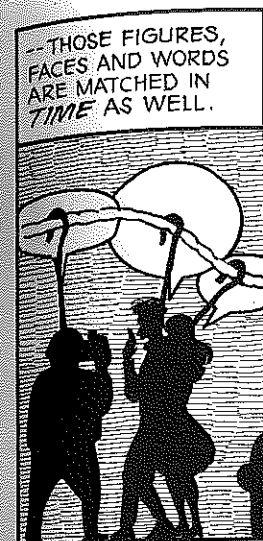
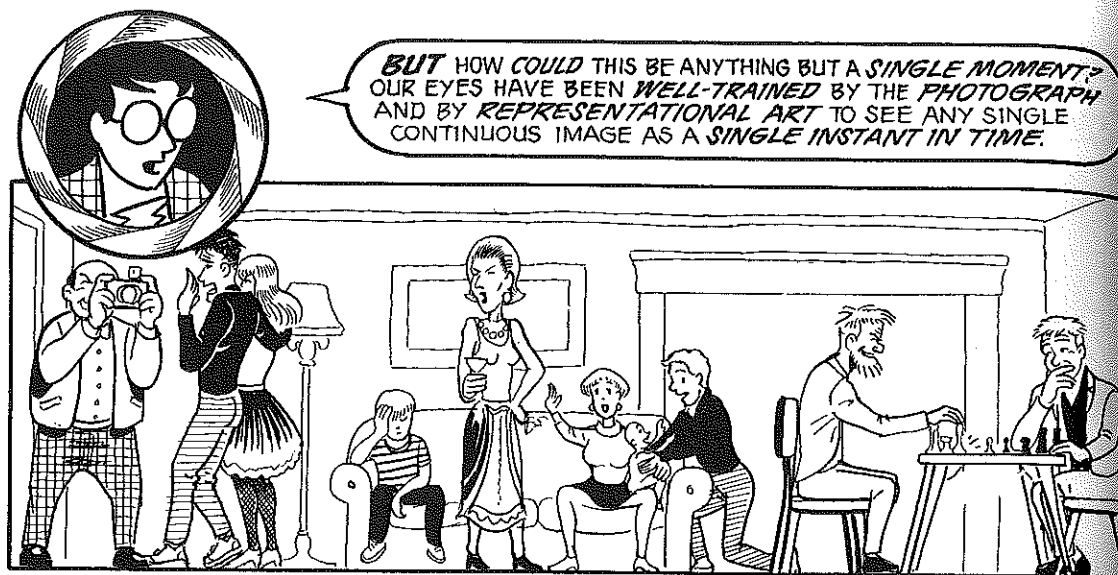
AAGH! THAT FLASH IS BLINDING, UNCLE HENRY!

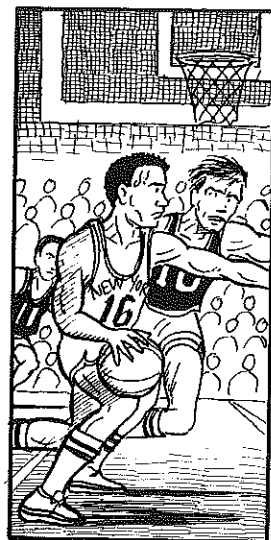
HEE-HEE!



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.

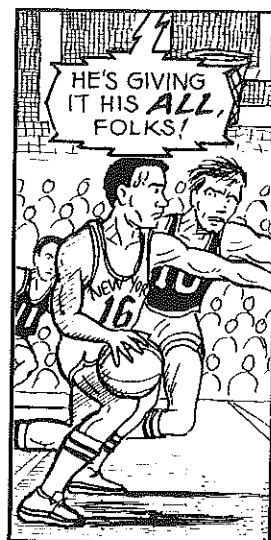






NOT ALL PANELS ARE LIKE THAT, OF COURSE.

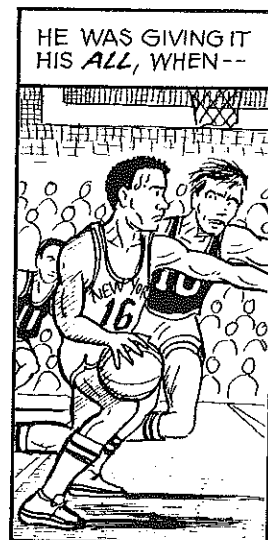
A SILENT PANEL SUCH AS THIS COULD INDEED BE SAID TO DEPICT A SINGLE MOMENT!



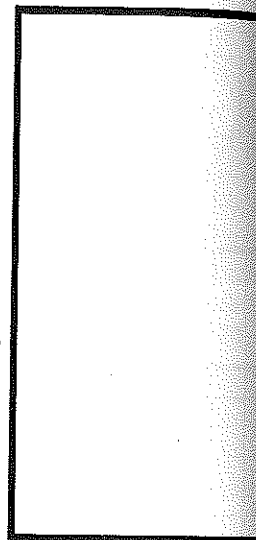
IF SOUND IS INTRODUCED THIS CEASES TO BE TRUE --



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



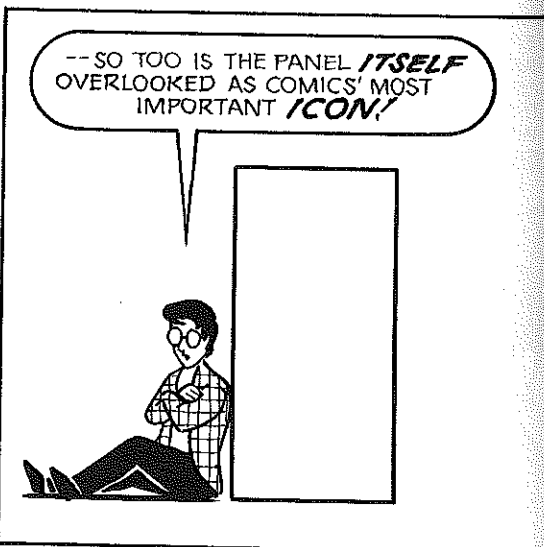
THESE VARIOUS SHAPES WE CALL PANELS HOLD IN THEIR BORDERS ALL OF THE ICONS THAT ADD UP TO THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



ALL EXCEPT ONE.

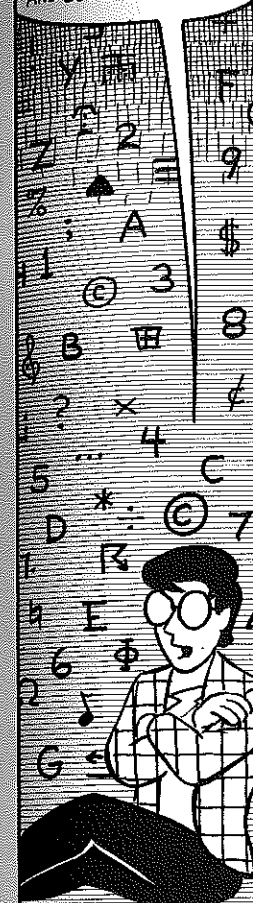


FOR JUST AS THE BODY'S LARGEST ORGAN -- OUR SKIN -- IS SELDOM THOUGHT OF AS AN ORGAN --



-- 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.



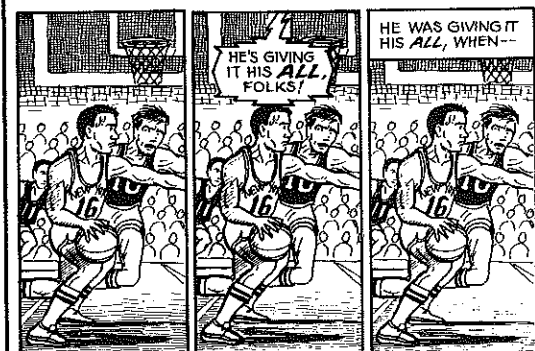
NOR IS THEIR MEANING AS FLUID AND MALLEABLE AS THE SORTS OF ICONS WE CALL PICTURES.



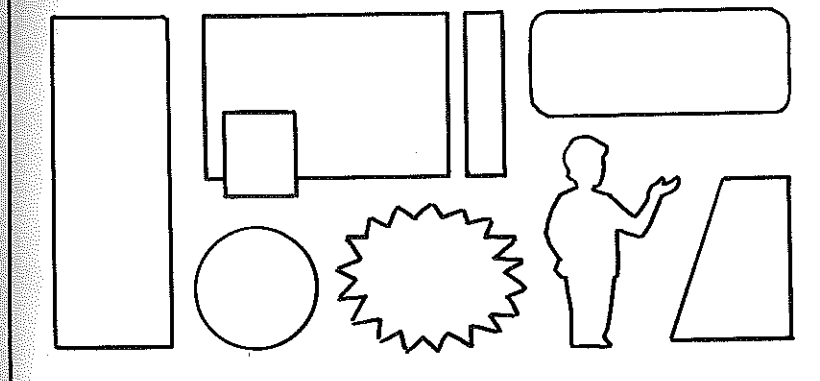
THE PANEL ACTS AS A SORT OF GENERAL INDICATOR THAT TIME OR SPACE IS BEING DIVIDED.



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.

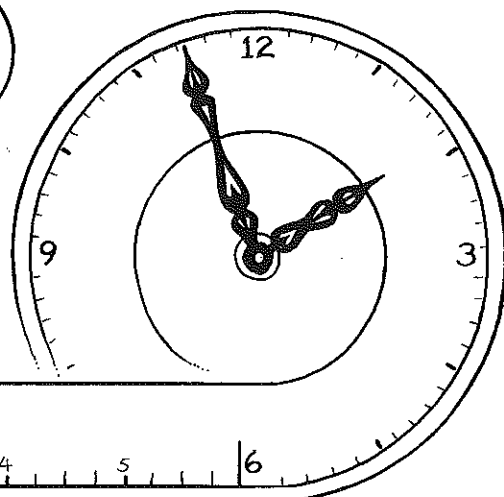


WHICH BRINGS US TO THE STRANGE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AS DEPICTED IN COMICS AND TIME AS PERCEIVED BY THE READER.



*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.**

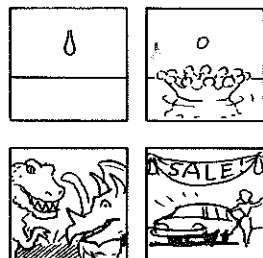


0 1 2 3 4 5 6

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



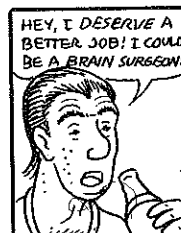
THE FEW CENTIMETERS WHICH TRANSPORT US FROM **SECOND TO SECOND** IN ONE SEQUENCE COULD TAKE US A **HUNDRED MILLION YEARS** IN ANOTHER.



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!**



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.**



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.

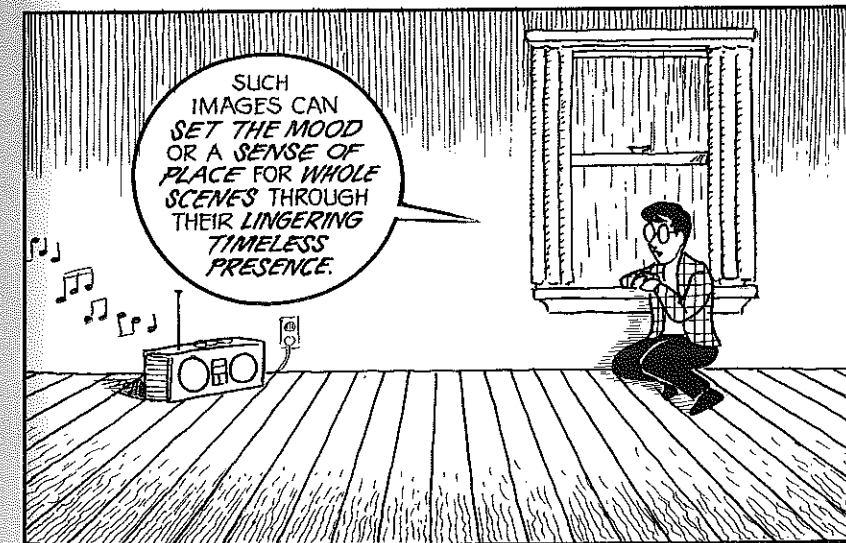
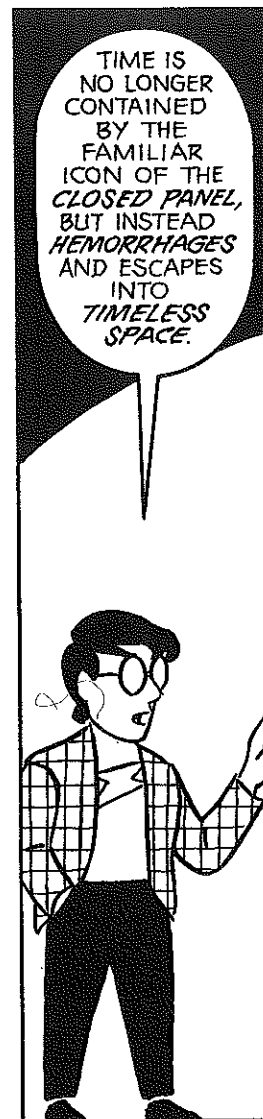
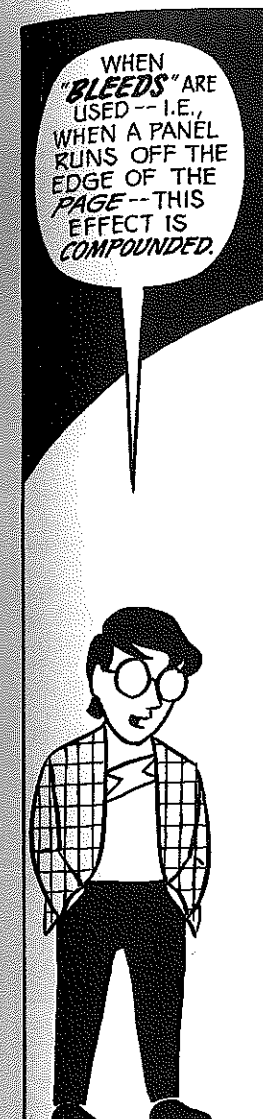
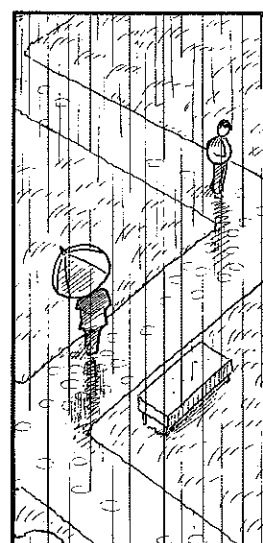
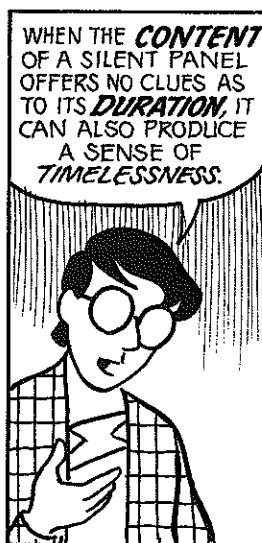
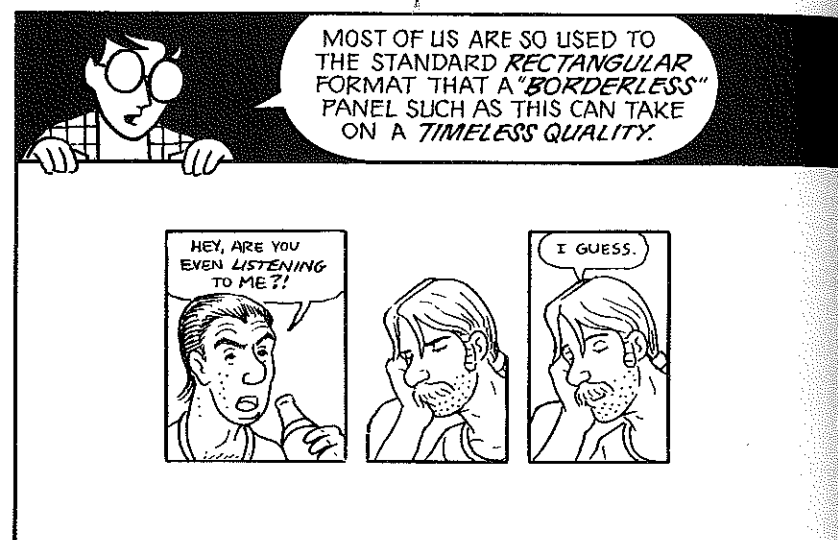
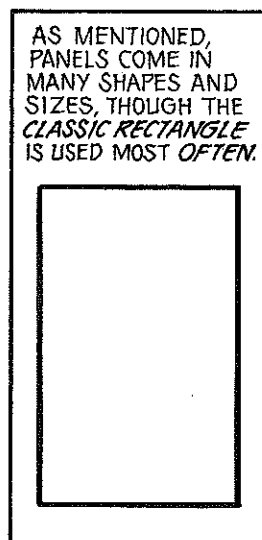
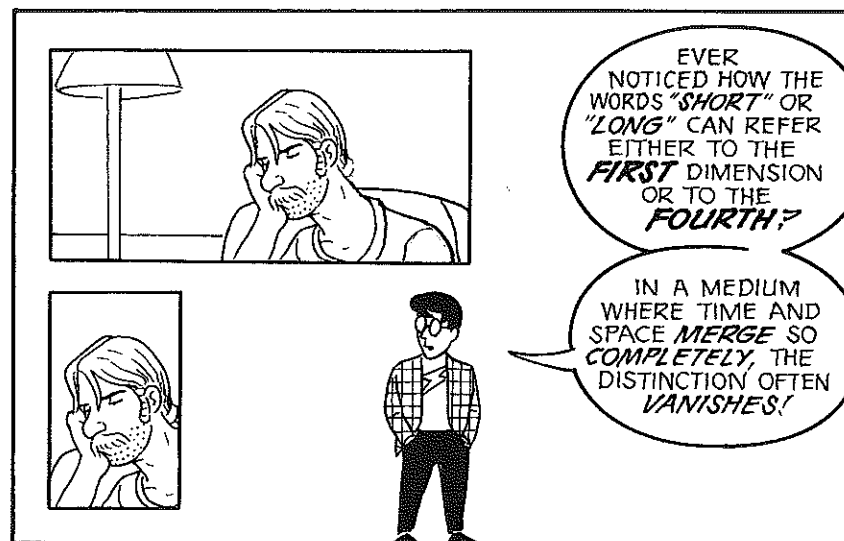


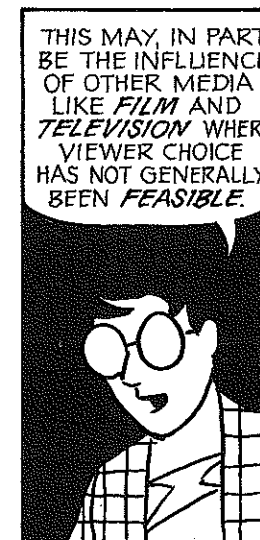
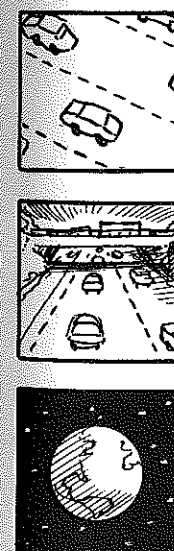
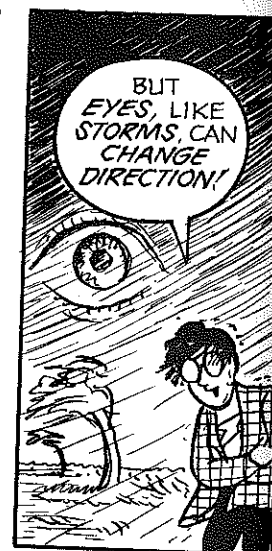
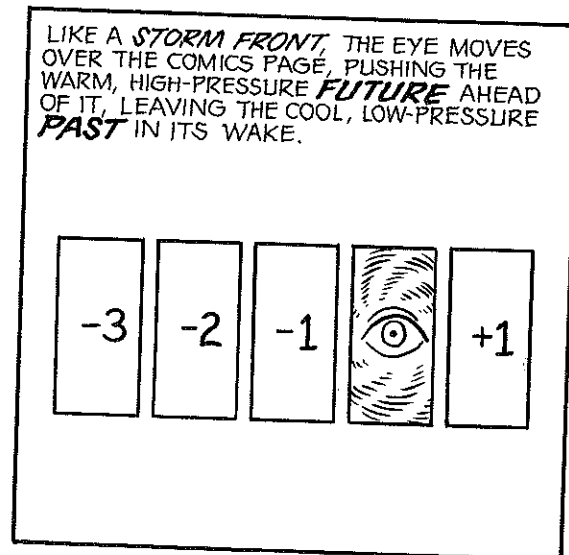
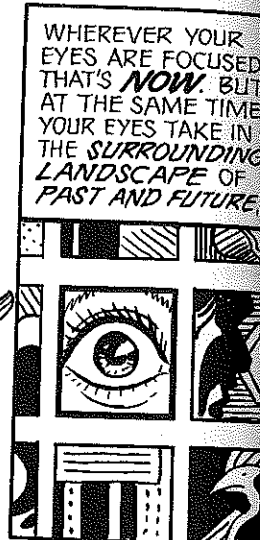
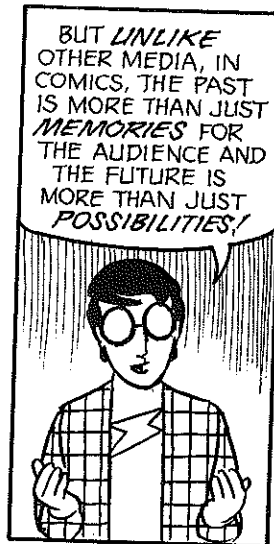
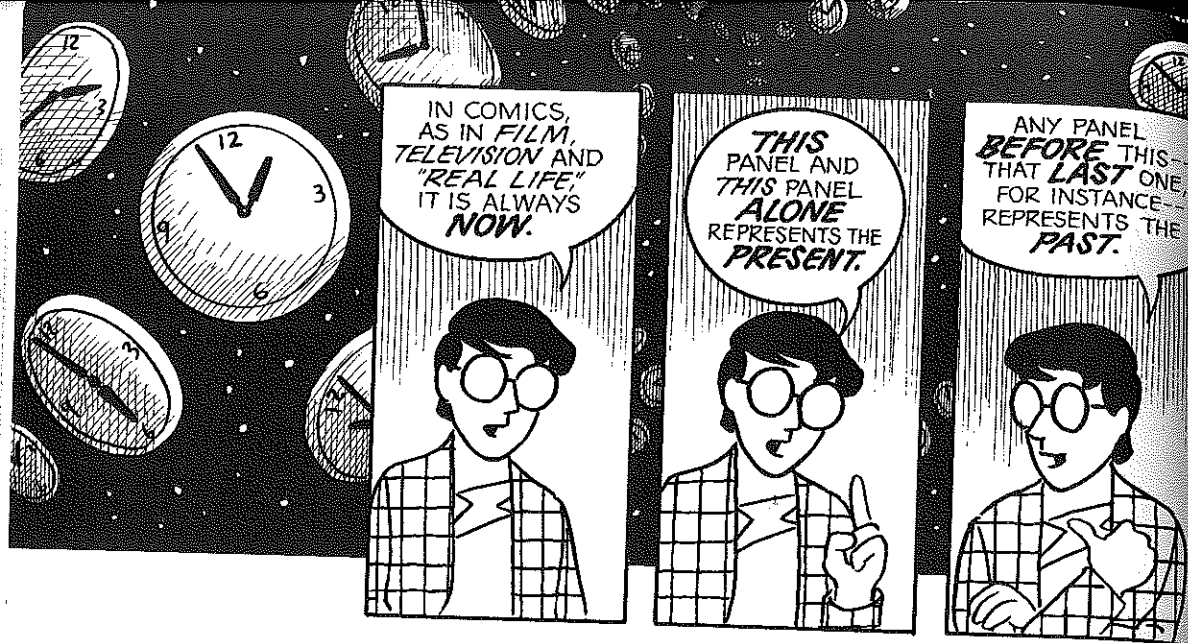
FROM A **LIFETIME OF CONVERSATIONS**, WE CAN BE SURE THAT A **"PAUSE"** PANEL LIKE THIS LASTS FOR NO MORE THAN SEVERAL **SECONDS.**

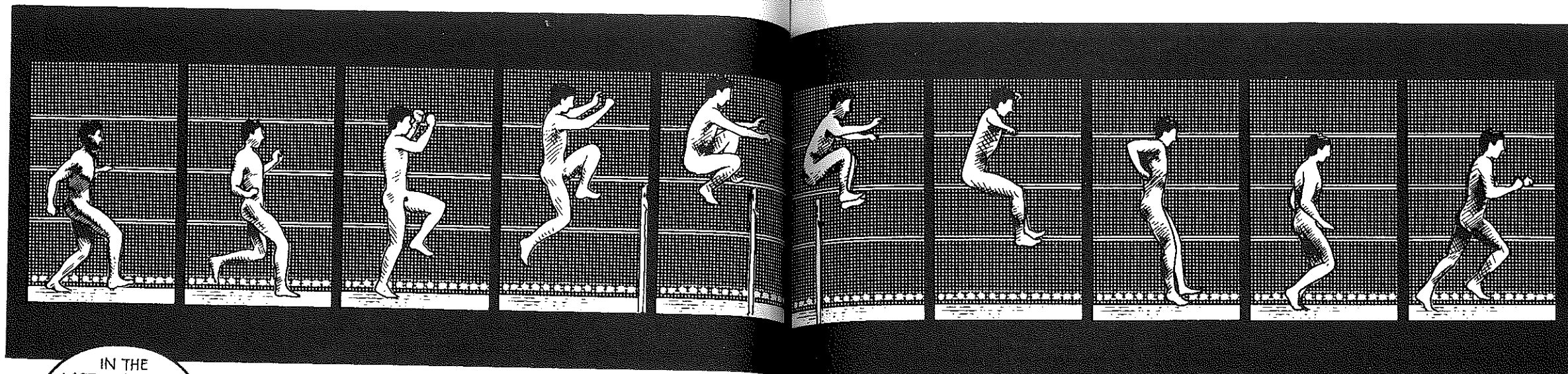


AS UNLIKELY AS IT SOUNDS, THE PANEL **SHAPE** CAN ACTUALLY MAKE A **DIFFERENCE** IN OUR **PERCEPTION** OF TIME. EVEN THOUGH THIS LONG PANEL HAS THE SAME BASIC "MEANING" AS ITS SHORTER VERSIONS, STILL IT HAS THE **FEELING** OF GREATER LENGTH!









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!

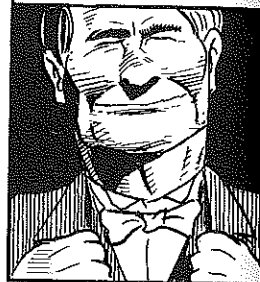
BAH! MY PRAXINOSCOPE IS BETTER!

FOOLS! MY KINEMATOSCOPE WILL SHOW YOU!

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

FRAUDS ALL! MY ZOÖPRAXINOSCOPE WILL--!

EVENTUALLY THOMAS EDISON, THAT OLD SCALLYWAG, FILED THE FIRST PATENT ON A PROCESS USING STRIPS OF CLEAR PLASTIC PHOTOS AND FILM WAS OFF AND RUNNING!



IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A WORLD--



--FILLED WITH MOTION--



--THEN BE PREPARED TO PAINT MOTION!

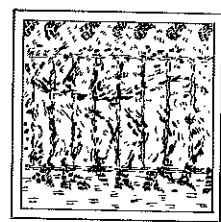


DUCHAMP, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE IDEA OF MOTION THAN THE SENSATION, WOULD EVENTUALLY REDUCE SUCH CONCEPTS AS MOTION TO A SINGLE LINE.



AS THE MOVING PICTURE BEGAN ITS SPECTACULAR RISE, A FEW OF THE MORE RADICAL PAINTERS OF THE DAY EXPLORED THE IDEA THAT MOTION COULD BE DEPICTED BY A SINGLE IMAGE ON CANVAS.

THE FUTURISTS IN ITALY AND MARCEL DUCHAMP IN FRANCE BEGAN THE SYSTEMATIC DECOMPOSITION OF MOVING IMAGES IN A STATIC MEDIUM.



Girl Running on a Balcony by Balla



Nude Descending a Staircase #2 by Duchamp

IT WASN'T A BAD IDEA!

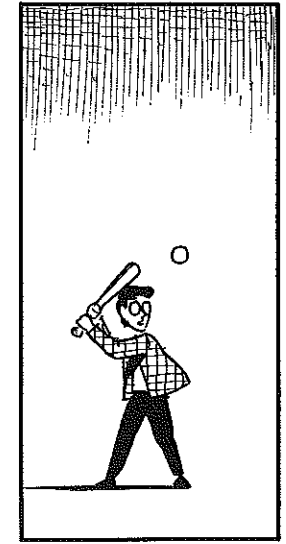


DUCHAMP SOON MOVED ON, THE FUTURISTS DISBANDED AND FINE ARTISTS GENERALLY LOST INTEREST IN THIS OTHER TYPE OF "MOVING PICTURE."

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!

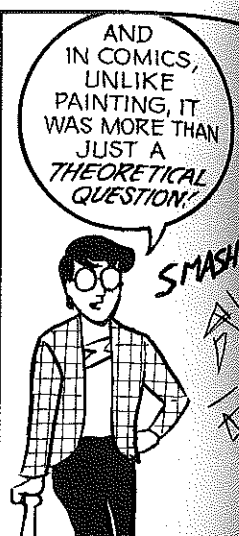




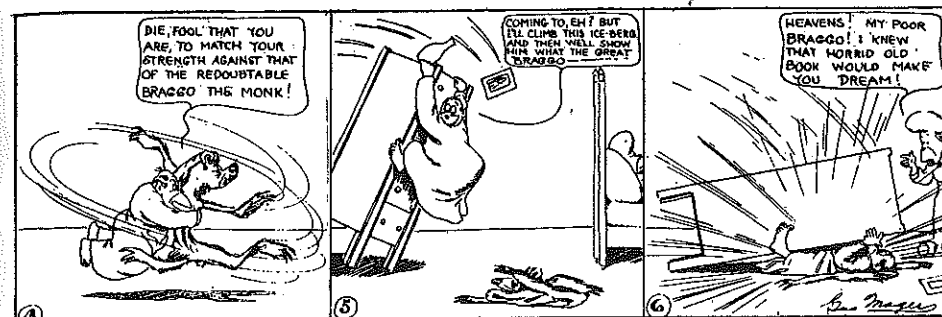
FROM ITS *EARLIEST DAYS*, THE MODERN COMIC HAS GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SHOWING MOTION IN A *STATIC MEDIUM*.



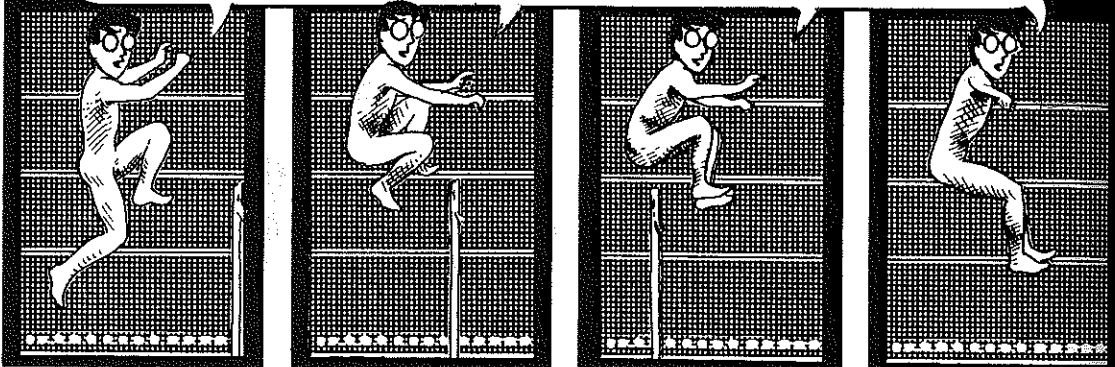
HOW DO YOU SHOW THIS ASPECT OF TIME IN AN ART WHERE *TIME STANDS STILL*?



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.



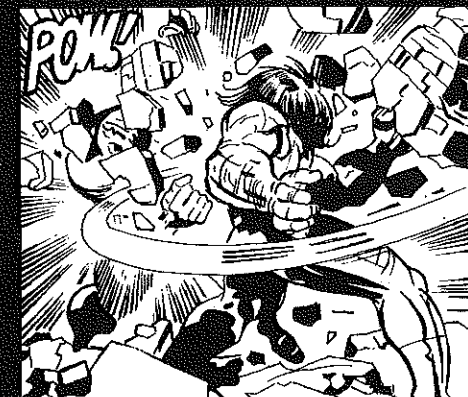
THOUGH SEQUENTIAL ART SURVIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES *WITHOUT* DEPICTING MOTION, ONCE THE GENIE WAS OUT OF THE BOTTLE IT WAS PERHAPS *INEVITABLE* THAT MORE AND MORE EFFICIENT MEANS WOULD BE SOUGHT. AT FIRST, THIS SEARCH CENTERED ON *MULTIPLE* IMAGES IN SEQUENCE.



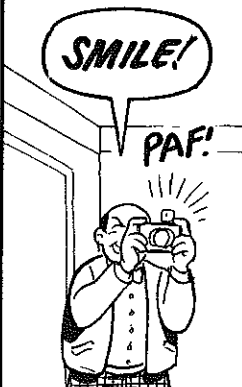
OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE *REFINED* AND *STYLIZED*, EVEN *DIAGRAMMATIC*.



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



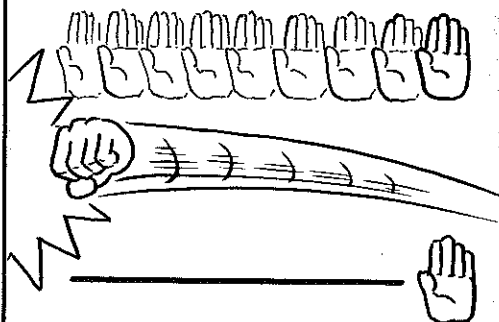
BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *SOUND*--



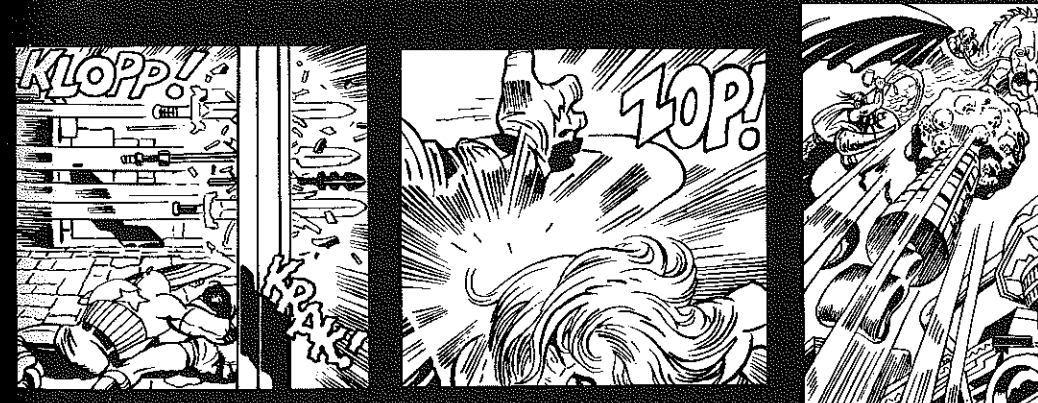
--SO TOO CAN A SINGLE PANEL REPRESENT A *SPAN* OF TIME THROUGH *PICTURES*!

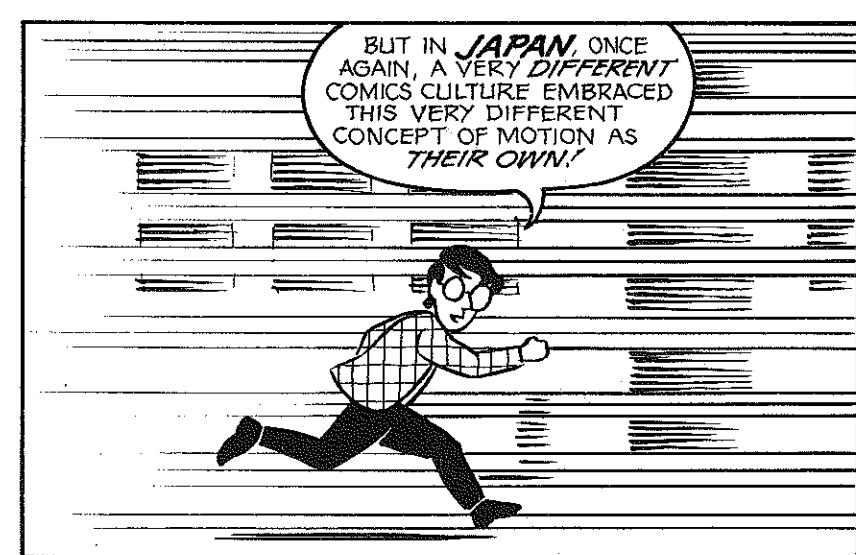
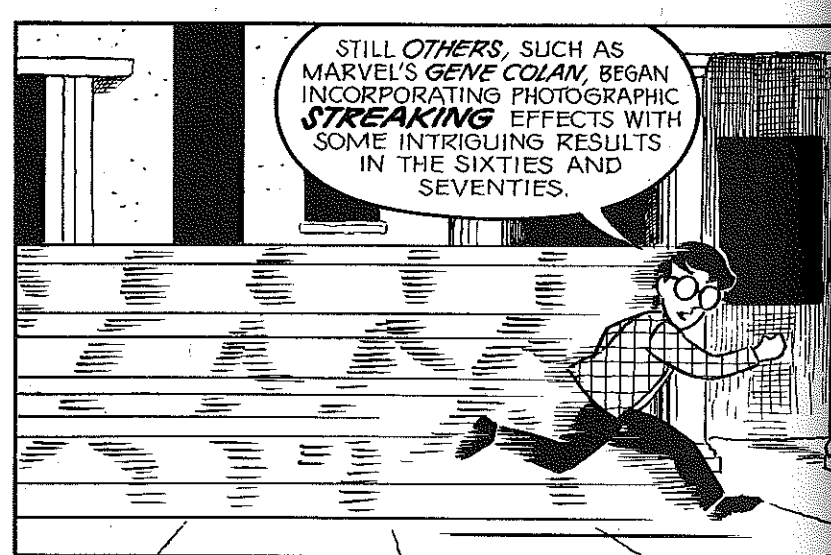
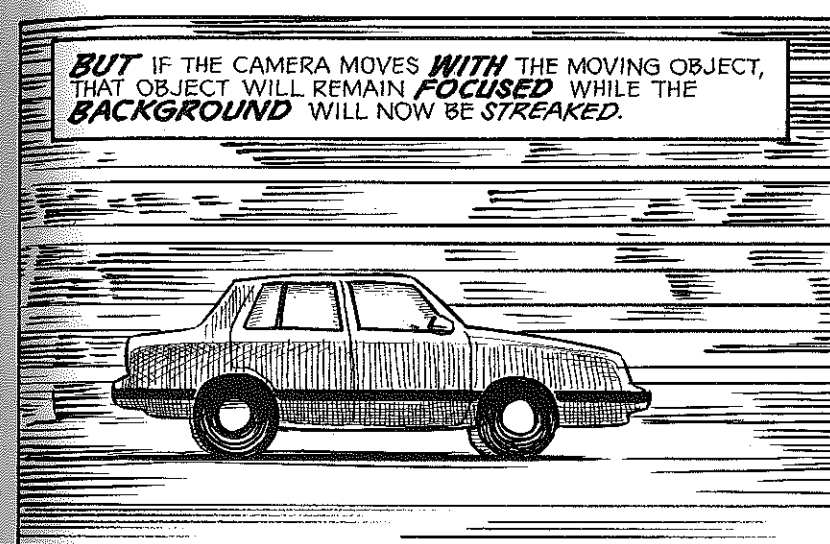
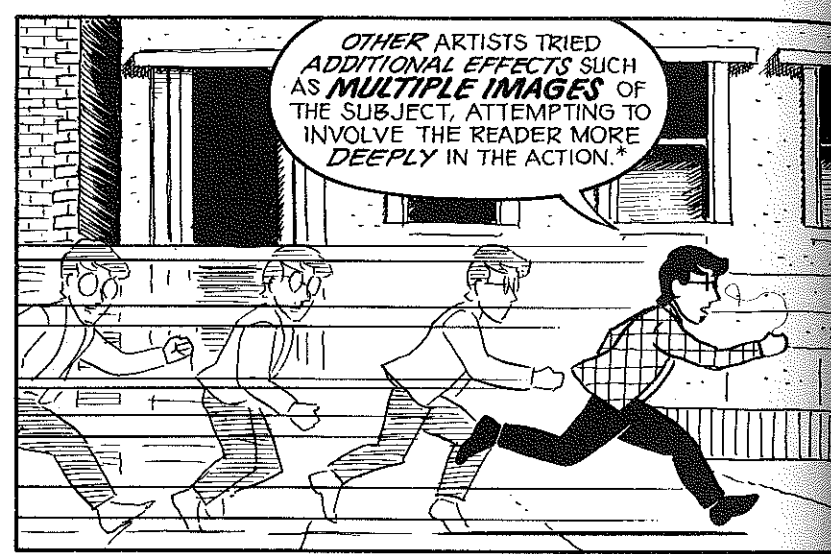
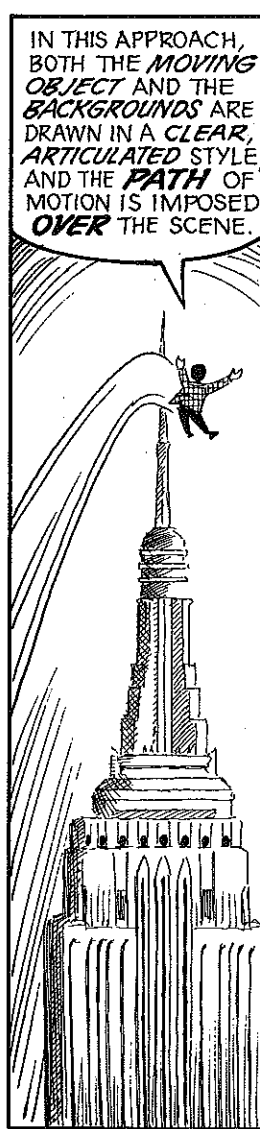
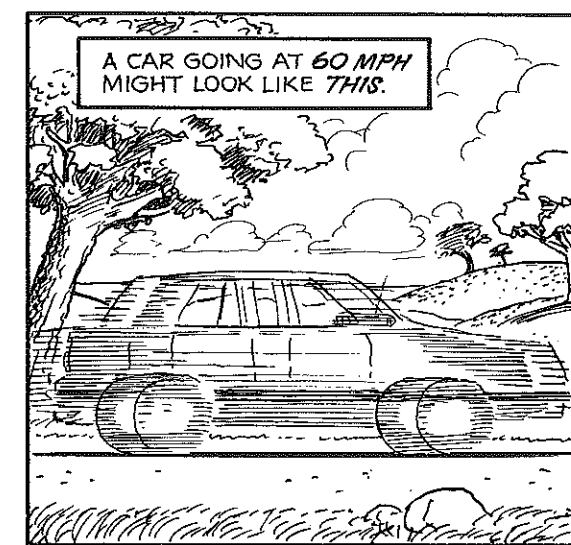
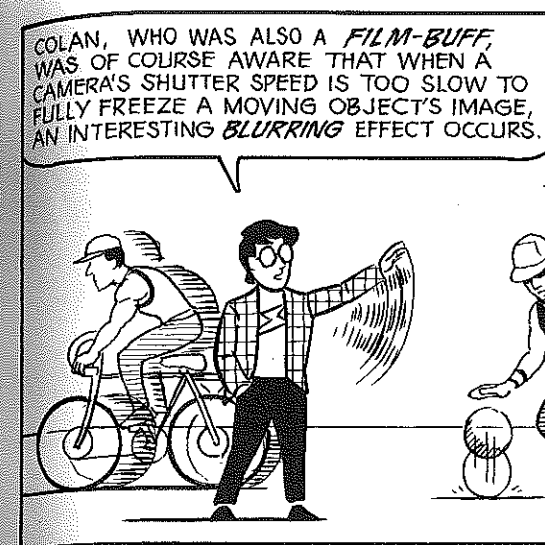
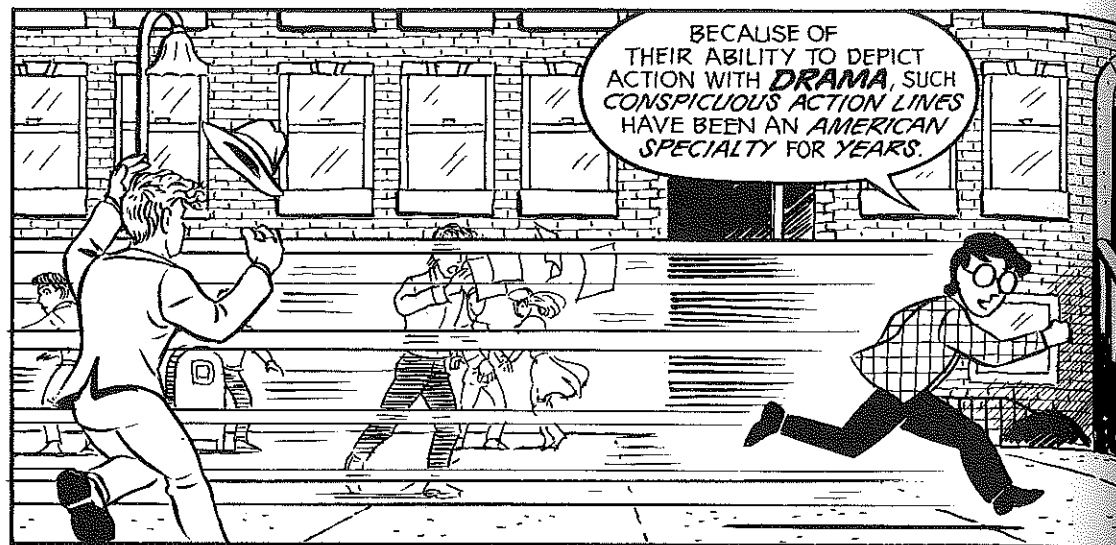


SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE FUTURISTS' *DYNAMIC* MOVEMENT AND DUCHAMP'S *DIAGRAMMATIC CONCEPT* OF MOVEMENT LIES COMICS' "*MOTION LINE*."



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



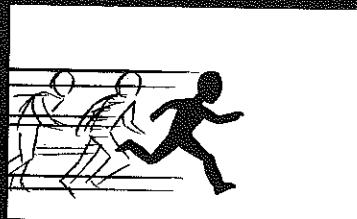
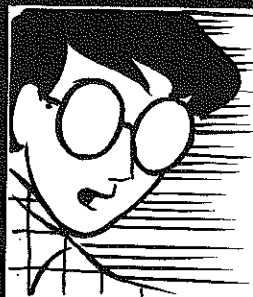
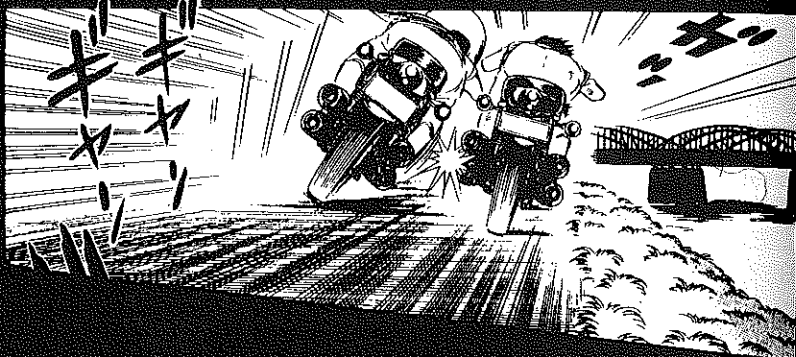
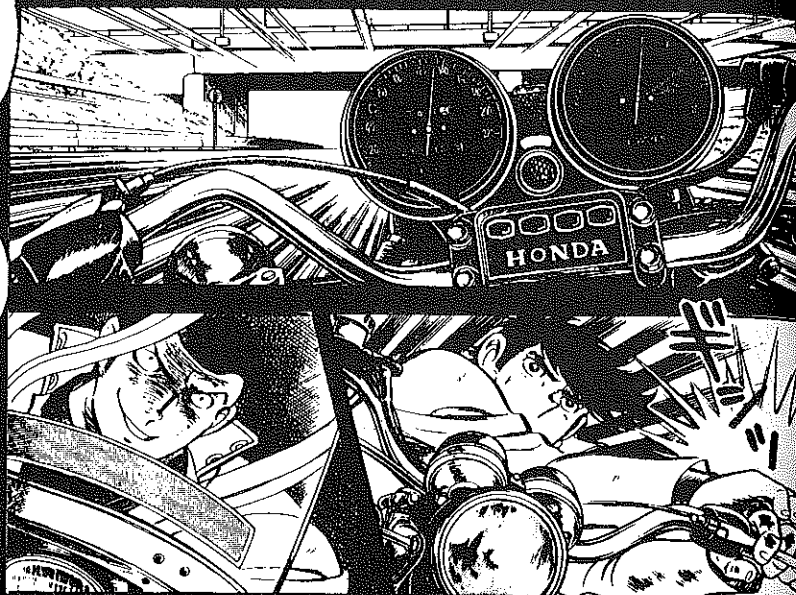


* MULTIPLE IMAGES CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF KRIGSTEIN, INFANTINO AND OTHERS.

"SUBJECTIVE MOTION" AS I CALL IT, OPERATES ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF OBSERVING A MOVING OBJECT CAN BE INVOLVING, **BEING** THAT OBJECT SHOULD BE **MORE** SO.

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

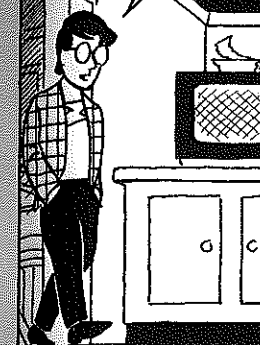
AND STARTING IN THE MID-EIGHTIES, A FEW AMERICAN ARTISTS BEGAN TO ADOPT THE EFFECT IN THEIR OWN WORK, UNTIL BY THE EARLY NINETIES IT HAS BECOME FAIRLY COMMON.



ARE THESE THE **ONLY** WAYS WE CAN PORTRAY MOTION IN A SINGLE PANEL? THINK ABOUT IT.



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



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



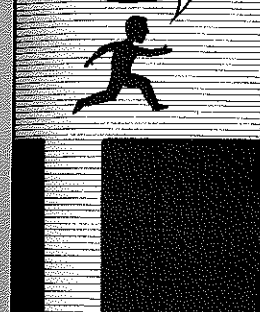
--SUCH AS THE **POLYPTYCH**, WHERE A MOVING FIGURE OR FIGURES--



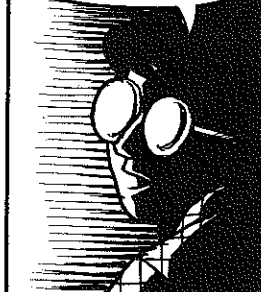
--IS IMPOSED OVER A **CONTINUOUS BACKGROUND**.



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.



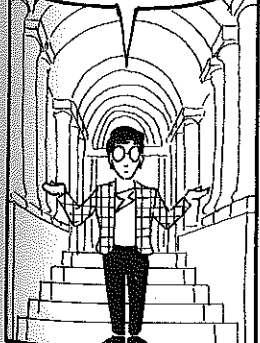
HERE, THE COMPOSITION OF THE **PICTURE** IS JOINED BY THE COMPOSITION OF **CHANGE**, THE COMPOSITION OF **DRAMA**--



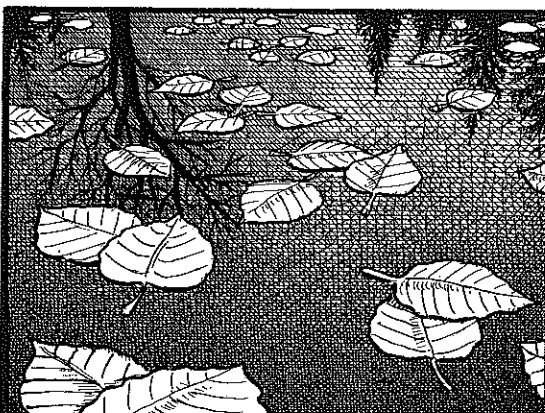
--AND THE COMPOSITION OF **MEMORY**.



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.



