



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.

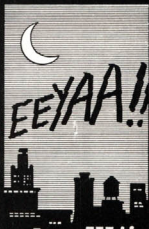


BUT CLOSURE IN **COMICS** IS
FAR FROM CONTINUOUS AND
ANYTHING BUT INVOLUNTARY!



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.

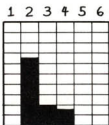


[TRACED AND SIMPLIFIED FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.]

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**.



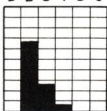
THIS EMPHASIS ON **ACTION-TO-ACTION** STORYTELLING SUITS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT **KIRBY**, BUT IS HE **UNIQUE** IN THIS RESPECT?

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
YEILDS *SIMILAR*,
IF NOT *QUITE* AS
UNIFORM,
RESULTS.

WHAT
CAN WE
DEDUCE
FROM
THIS?



SQUEAK THE MOUSE



MATTIOLI

ASTERIX



GOSCINNY & UDERZO

WELCOME TO AFLLOLOL



CRISTIN & MEZHERES

THE LONG TOMORROW



O'BANNON & MOEBIUS

"MANHATTAN"



TARDI

CLIK!



MANARA

THE BLACK ISLAND



HERGÉ

"THE CLOCK STRIKES"



JOOST SWARTE



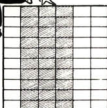
2

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



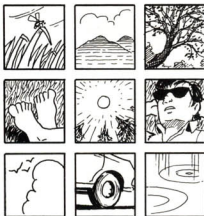
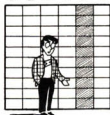
1.



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"



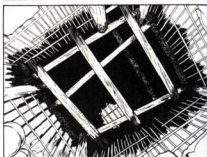
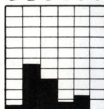
"REAL DREAM" 1975

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*.



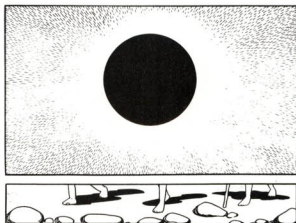
HERE ALSO WE SEE OUR FIRST EXAMPLES OF *MOMENT-TO-MOMENT* TRANSITIONS.



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.



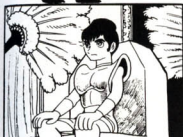
水木は夜の
古寺にいて
みることにした



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