

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVING IN LINE.

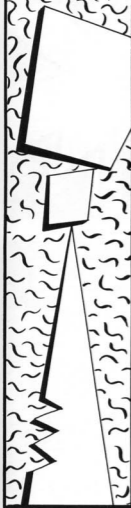
CAN  
EMOTIONS  
BE MADE  
*VISIBLE?*

IS THIS **ANGER**?

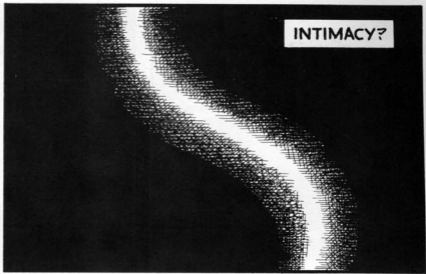
JOY?

SERENITY?

TENSION?



INTIMACY?



MADNESS?

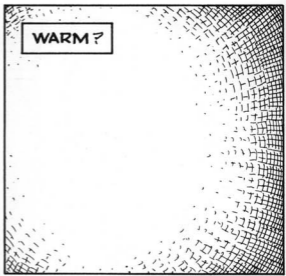
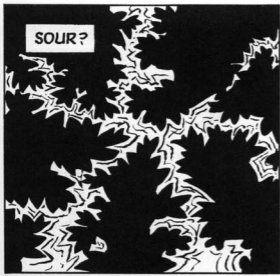
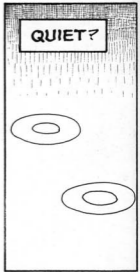
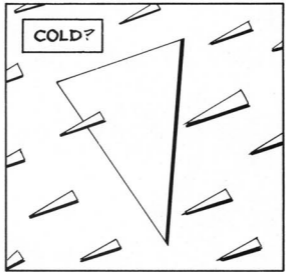
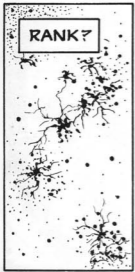
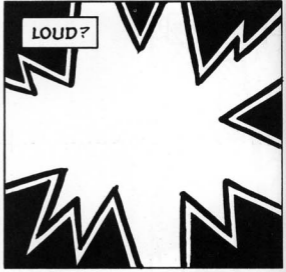


PRIDE?

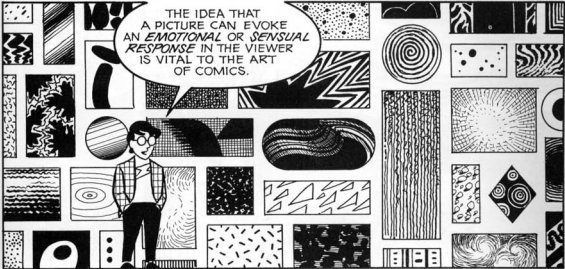


ANXIETY?





THE IDEA THAT  
A PICTURE CAN EVOKE  
AN *EMOTIONAL* OR *SENSUAL*  
*RESPONSE* IN THE VIEWER  
IS VITAL TO THE ART  
OF COMICS.



SOME IMAGES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF ADAM PHILIPS.

IN CHAPTERS *THREE* AND *FOUR*  
WE INVESTIGATED THE VARIOUS WAYS  
TIME AND MOTION COULD BE PORTRAYED,  
BOTH *BETWEEN* PANELS, THROUGH  
*CLOSURE*--

--AND  
WITHIN A  
*SINGLE*  
PANEL OR  
IMAGE.



THE INVISIBLE  
WORLD OF SENSES  
AND EMOTIONS  
CAN *ALSO* BE  
PORTRAYED EITHER  
*BETWEEN* OR  
*WITHIN* PANELS.



WE'VE  
TOUCHED UPON THE  
*FORMER* CATEGORY  
IN *CHAPTER THREE*,  
BUT WHAT ABOUT  
THE *LATTER*?



HOW CAN A  
*SINGLE IMAGE*  
REPRESENT THE  
*SENSES* AND  
*EMOTIONS* AND  
HOW DOES THIS  
IDEA APPLY TO  
*COMICS*?



ONCE  
AGAIN WE  
CAN TURN TO  
THE WORLD OF  
*"FINE  
ARTS"* FOR  
SOME IDEAS.





IN THE *LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES*, SOMETHING KIND OF **SCARY** WAS GOING ON...



NO SOONER HAD THE *IMPRESSIONISTS* FINALLY CONVINCED THEIR PEERS THAT THE WORLD *THEY* SAW WAS THE WORLD AS IT IS **TRULY** SEEN--



--THAN ANOTHER **UNSEEN** WORLD BEGAN TO MAKE ITSELF **VISIBLE**.



THE SCREAM - 1895 LITHOGRAPH BY EDVARD MUNCH.

IN THE WORKS OF *EDVARD MUNCH* AND *VINCENT VAN GOGH*, THE OBJECTIVE STUDY OF LIGHT SO PRIZED BY THE *IMPRESSIONIST MAINSTREAM* WAS BEING *ABANDONED* IN FAVOR OF A NEW, FRIGHTENINGLY **SUBJECTIVE** APPROACH



*EXPRESSIONISM*, AS IT CAME TO BE CALLED, DIDN'T START AS A *SCIENTIFIC* ART, BUT RATHER AS AN HONEST *EXPRESSION* OF THE INTERNAL TURMOIL THESE ARTISTS JUST COULD NOT *REPRESS*.



THE *SCIENCE* OF IT WASN'T FAR *BEHIND* THOUGH!



AS THE *NEW CENTURY* GOT UNDER WAY, *COOLER HEADS* SUCH AS *WASSILY KANDINSKY* TOOK *GREAT INTEREST* IN THE POWER OF *LINE, SHAPE* AND *COLOR* TO SUGGEST THE INNER STATE OF THE ARTIST **AND** TO PROVOKE THE *FIVE SENSES*.

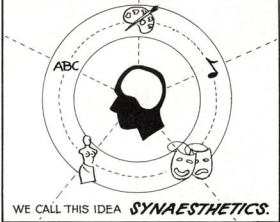
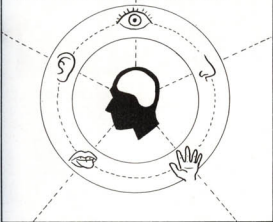
ANGRY REDS...  
PLACID BLUES...  
ANXIOUS TEXTURES...  
LOUD SHAPES...  
QUIET LINES...  
COLD GREENS...

THESE WERE  
STRANGE IDEAS  
IN 1912!



KANDINSKY AND HIS PEERS WERE SEARCHING FOR AN ART THAT MIGHT SOMEHOW **UNITE THE SENSES**--

-- AND IN *DOING SO*, UNITE THE DIFFERENT ARTFORMS WHICH *APPEALED* TO THOSE DIFFERENT SENSES.



WE CALL THIS IDEA **SYNAESTHETICS**.

NOT *SURPRISING*, THEN, THAT SIMILAR IDEAS WERE EXPRESSED BY CREATORS IN *OTHER FIELDS* SUCH AS *RICHARD WAGNER* AND THE FRENCH POET *BAUDELAIRE*.

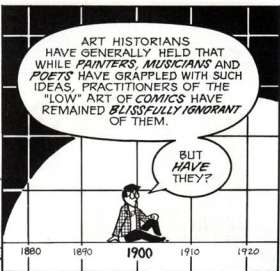
"Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it *makes* visible."

— PAUL KLEE  
PAINTER,  
TEACHER,  
CARTOONIST.



ART HISTORIANS HAVE GENERALLY HELD THAT WHILE *PAINTERS, MUSICIANS* AND *POETS* HAVE GRAPPLED WITH SUCH IDEAS, PRACTITIONERS OF THE "LOW" ART OF *COMICS* HAVE REMAINED *BLISSFULLY IGNORANT* OF THEM.

BUT  
HAVE  
THEY?



IN SURVEYING A *CENTURY* OF COMICS, ONE FINDS CREATORS LIKE THE UNDERGROUND'S *RORY HAYES*, WHO ARE *BLATANTLY EXPRESSIONISTIC*. BUT SUCH ARTISTS ARE *FEW AND FAR BETWEEN*.



MOST HAVE WORKED IN A FAIRLY *STRAIGHTFORWARD STYLE*. *ICONIC*, MAYBE, BUT NOT FILLED WITH THE EXPRESSIVE LINES OF A *MUNCH* OR THE COLORS OF A *VAN GOGH*.



CAN WE SAY, THEREFORE, THAT ONE OF THESE TWO CREATORS IS EXPRESSING MOOD AND EMOTION AND THE OTHER IS *NOT*? OR DOES THE DIFFERENCE LIE IN *WHAT* IS BEING EXPRESSED?



PEANUTS



CHARLES SCHULZ

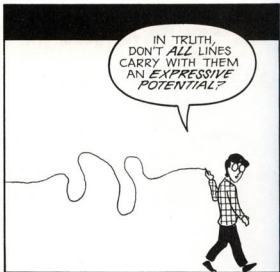
IF *THESE LINES* ARE EXPRESSIVE OF *FEAR, ANXIETY* AND *MADNESS*--



--THEN COULDN'T *THESE LINES* BE SAID TO PORTRAY *CALM, REASON* AND *INTROSPECTION*?



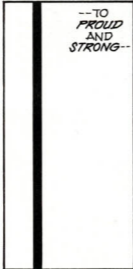
IN TRUTH, DON'T *ALL LINES* CARRY WITH THEM AN *EXPRESSIVE POTENTIAL*?



BY DIRECTION  
ALONE, A LINE  
MAY GO FROM  
PASSIVE AND  
TIMELESS--



--TO  
*PROUD*  
AND  
STRONG--



--TO  
*DYNAMIC*  
AND  
CHANGING!



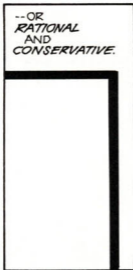
BY ITS  
SHAPE, IT  
CAN BE  
*UNWELCOMING*  
AND SEVERE--



--OR  
*WARM*  
AND GENTLE--



--OR  
*RATIONAL*  
AND  
CONSERVATIVE.



BY ITS  
CHARACTER  
IT MAY SEEM  
*SAVAGE* AND  
*DEADLY*--



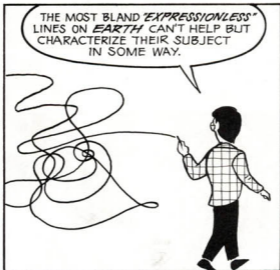
--OR *WEAK*  
AND *UNSTABLE*--



--OR *HONEST*  
AND *DIRECT*.



THE MOST BLAND "EXPRESSIONLESS"  
LINES ON *EARTH* CAN'T HELP BUT  
CHARACTERIZE THEIR SUBJECT  
IN SOME WAY.



AND WHILE FEW  
COMIC ARTISTS MAY  
CONSIDER THEMSELVES  
*EXPRESSIONISTS*,  
THAT DOESN'T MEAN  
THAT THEY CAN'T TELL  
*ONE LINE* FROM  
*ANOTHER!*





IN **DICK TRACY**, FOR EXAMPLE, CHESTER GOULD USED **BOLD LINES, OBTUSE ANGLES AND HEAVY BLACKS** TO SUGGEST THE MOOD OF A **GRIM, DEADLY WORLD OF ADULTS**--



-- WHILE THE **GENTLE CURVES AND OPEN LINES OF CARL BARKS' UNCLE SCROOGE** CONVEY A FEELING OF **WHIMSY, YOUTH AND INNOCENCE**.



IN **R. CRUMB'S** WORLD, THE **CURVES OF INNOCENCE ARE BETRAYED** BY THE **NEUROTIC QUILL-LINES OF MODERN ADULTHOOD**, AND LEFT **PAINFULLY OUT OF PLACE**--



-- WHILE IN **KRYSTINE KRYTTER'S** ART, THE **CURVES OF CHILDHOOD AND THE MAD LINES OF A MUNCH** CREATE A **CRAZY TODDLER LOOK**.



IN THE **MID-1960s** WHEN THE **AVERAGE MARVEL READER WAS PRE-ADOLESCENT**, POPULAR INKERS USED **DYNAMIC BUT FRIENDLY LINES A LA KIRBY/SINNOTT**.



BUT WHEN MARVEL'S READER BASE **GREW INTO THE ANXIETIES OF ADOLESCENCE**, THE **HOSTILE, JAGGED LINES OF A ROB LIEFFELD** STRUCK A MORE **RESPONSIVE CHORD**.



FOR **DECADES OF COLOR COMIC BOOKS**, THE **SIGNATURE STYLES OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS LIKE NICK CARDY** HAVE INFUSED **PERSONAL EXPRESSION INTO EVERY STORY**--



-- WHILE **JULES FEIFFER'S UNEVEN LINES** DID **BATTLE** WITH THEMSELVES IN A **PANTOMIME OF THE INNER STRUGGLES OF MODERN LIFE**.



IN **JOSÉ MUNOZ'S** WORK, **DENSE PUDDLES OF INK AND FRAYING LINWORK** COMBINE TO EVOKE A WORLD OF **DEPRAVITY AND MORBID DECAY**--



-- WHILE **JOOST SWARTE'S CRISP ELEGANT LINES AND JAZZY DESIGNS** SPEAK OF **COOL SOPHISTICATION AND IRONY**.



IN **SPIEGELMAN'S "PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET,"** **DELIBERATELY EXPRESSIONISTIC LINES** DEPICT A **TRUE-LIFE HORROR STORY**.



AND IN **EISNER'S MODERN WORK** A **FULL RANGE** OF LINE STYLES CAPTURE A **FULL RANGE OF MOODS AND EMOTIONS**.





A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4
?	:	!	*
田	森	雨	石
+	=	×	÷
\$	%	©	¢
♫	♩	♪	≡

NOW, IF PICTURES CAN, THROUGH THEIR RENDERING, REPRESENT **INVISIBLE** CONCERNS SUCH AS **EMOTIONS** AND THE **OTHER SENSES**--



--THEN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PICTURES AND OTHER TYPES OF ICONS LIKE LANGUAGE WHICH **SPECIALIZE** IN THE INVISIBLE MAY SEEM A BIT **BLURRY**.

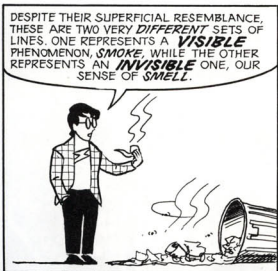
IN FACT, WHAT WE'RE SEEING IN THE **LIVING LINES** OF THESE PICTURES IS **THE PRIMORDIAL STUFF** FROM WHICH A **FORMALIZED LANGUAGE** CAN **EVOLVE!**

I'LL GIVE YOU AN **EXAMPLE**.

LET'S SAY I WANTED TO SMOKE THIS **PIPE**--

--ASSUMING IT **IS** A PIPE--

--AND I LIT IT WITH A MATCH LIKE SO:



TAKEN OUT OF THEIR *ORIGINAL CONTEXT*, THEY CAN NOW BE APPLIED *ANYWHERE* AND THE READER WILL INSTANTLY KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN.



EVEN THE *FLIES* HAVE OVER THE YEARS BEEN APPROACHING THE *ABSTRACT STATUS* OF *LINGUISTIC SYMBOLS*.



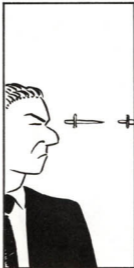
WHENEVER AN ARTIST INVENTS A NEW WAY TO *REPRESENT THE INVISIBLE*, THERE IS ALWAYS A CHANCE THAT IT WILL BE *PICKED UP* BY *OTHER ARTISTS*.



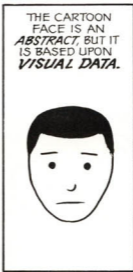
IF ENOUGH ARTISTS BEGIN *USING* THE SYMBOL, IT WILL ENTER THE LANGUAGE FOR *GOOD*--

--AS MANY *HAVE* THROUGH THE YEARS.





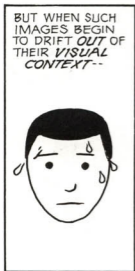
IN DEALING WITH THE FACE *ITSELF*, THE LINE BETWEEN THE *VISIBLE* AND *INVISIBLE* WORLDS BECOMES EVEN *LESS CLEAR*.



THE CARTOON FACE IS AN *ABSTRACT*, BUT IT IS BASED UPON *VISUAL DATA*.



SOME INDICATORS OF EMOTION ARE *ALSO VISUALLY BASED*, SUCH AS THE FAMILIAR *SWEAT BEAD*.



--THEY DRIFT INTO THE *INVISIBLE* WORLD OF THE *SYMBOL*.



THIS DRIFT FROM *VISIBLE* TO *INVISIBLE* HAS BEEN THE BASIS OF ALL *WRITTEN LANGUAGES* SINCE CIVILIZATION *BEGAN*.

SUMERIANS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA GOT THINGS ROLLING OVER 5,000 YEARS AGO WHEN A NEED WAS FOUND TO RECORD CERTAIN COMMODITIES.

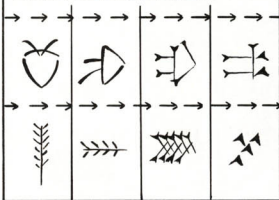


OX



GRAIN

THESE FIRST SYMBOLS -- *CARTOONS*, REALLY -- GRADUALLY EVOLVED AWAY FROM *ANY* RESEMBLANCE TO THEIR SUBJECT, TOWARD THE HIGHLY ABSTRACTED FORMS OF MODERN LANGUAGES...



...AND *EVENTUALLY* TO OUR *TOTALLY* ABSTRACT *SOUND-BASED* SYSTEM.



THE LONGER ANY FORM OF ART OR COMMUNICATION EXISTS, THE MORE *SYMBOLS* IT ACCUMULATES.



THE MODERN COMIC IS A YOUNG LANGUAGE, BUT IT ALREADY HAS AN *IMPRESSIVE* ARRAY OF *RECOGNIZABLE* *SYMBOLS*.



AND THIS *VISUAL* *VOCABULARY* HAS AN *UNLIMITED* *POTENTIAL* FOR *GROWTH*.



WITHIN A GIVEN CULTURE THESE SYMBOLS WILL QUICKLY SPREAD UNTIL EVERYBODY KNOWS THEM AT A *GLANCE*.



BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LANGUAGE EVOLVES IN MORE THAN ONE DISTINCT CULTURE AT A TIME?



THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT MORE THAN ONE SET OF SYMBOLS WILL *EVOLVE!*

SO IT WAS, ONCE AGAIN, IN *JAPAN* WHERE COMICS DEVELOPED FOR *YEARS* IN *RELATIVE* *ISOLATION* FROM THEIR WESTERN COUSINS.



ANGER



DEMENTIA



SLEEP



LUST

**BACKGROUNDS** CAN BE ANOTHER VALUABLE TOOL FOR INDICATING *INVISIBLE IDEAS*... PARTICULARLY THE WORLD OF *EMOTIONS*.



EVEN WHEN THERE IS LITTLE OR NO DISTORTION OF THE *CHARACTERS* IN A GIVEN SCENE, A DISTORTED OR EXPRESSIONISTIC *BACKGROUND* WILL USUALLY AFFECT OUR "READING" OF *CHARACTERS' INNER STATES*.



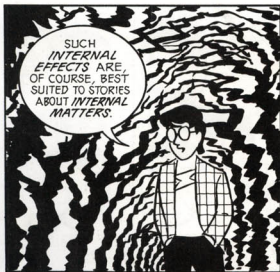
CERTAIN PATTERNS CAN PRODUCE AN ALMOST *PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT* IN THE VIEWER.



BUT FOR SOME REASON, READERS WILL ASCRIBE THOSE FEELINGS, NOT TO *THEMSELVES*, BUT TO THE *CHARACTERS* THEY *IDENTIFY* WITH.

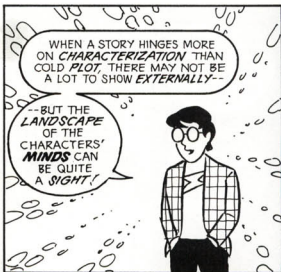


SUCH *INTERNAL EFFECTS* ARE, OF COURSE, BEST SUITED TO STORIES ABOUT *INTERNAL MATTERS*.

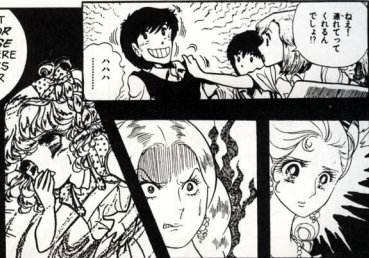


WHEN A STORY HINGES MORE ON *CHARACTERIZATION* THAN COLD *PLOT*, THERE MAY NOT BE A LOT TO SHOW *EXTERNALLY*--

--BUT THE *LANDSCAPE* OF THE *CHARACTERS' MINDS* CAN BE QUITE A *SIGHT!*



THIS PRINCIPLE IS EVIDENT IN MANY *EUROPEAN COLOR COMICS* AND IN *JAPANESE ROMANCE COMICS* WHERE EXPRESSIONISTIC EFFECTS HAVE BEEN DEvised FOR ALMOST ANY EMOTION IMAGINABLE!



EXPRESSIONISM AND SYNAESTHETICS ARE *DISTORTIVE* BY THEIR NATURE. IF STRONG ENOUGH, THEIR EFFECTS CAN *OBSCURE* THEIR SUBJECTS.

BUT A LACK OF CLARITY CAN ALSO FOSTER GREATER *PARTICIPATION* BY THE READER AND A SENSE OF *INVOLVEMENT* WHICH MANY WRITERS AND ARTISTS *PREFER*.

CREATORS WHO USE THESE EFFECTS MAY NEED TO *CLARIFY* WHAT IS BEING SHOWN, HOWEVER.

EITHER THROUGH THE *CONTENT* OF *SURROUNDING SCENES* OR, OF COURSE, THROUGH *WORDS*.



BY FAR,  
THE MOST *WIDELY-USED*,  
MOST COMPLEX AND MOST  
*VERSATILE* OF COMICS' MANY  
SYNAESTHETIC ICONS IS THE  
*EVER-PRESENT, EVER-POPULAR*  
**WORD BALLOON!**



OVER THE YEARS,  
COMICS CREATORS  
HAVE STRUGGLED WITH  
DOZENS OF VARIATIONS  
IN THEIR DESPERATE  
ATTEMPTS\* TO DEPICT  
*SOUND* IN A STRICTLY  
*VISUAL MEDIUM.*



VARIATIONS IN BALLOON SHAPE ARE *MANY* AND  
NEW ONES ARE BEING INVENTED EVERY DAY.

WHILE *INSIDE* THOSE BALLOONS, SYMBOLS  
ARE CONSTANTLY BEING APPROPRIATED  
OR EVEN *INVENTED* TO COVER THE  
*NON-VERBAL.*



EVEN THE VARIATIONS OF LETTERING *STYLES*, BOTH IN AND OUT OF  
BALLOONS, SPEAK OF AN *ONGOING STRUGGLE* TO CAPTURE THE  
VERY *ESSENCE* OF SOUND.



AND  
AS FOR THE  
ESSENCE OF  
THOUGHT...



OF COURSE WORDS THEMSELVES, MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER VISUAL SYMBOLS, HAVE THE POWER TO COMPLETELY DESCRIBE THE INVISIBLE REALM OF SENSES AND EMOTIONS.



WORDS CAN TAKE EVEN SEEMINGLY NEUTRAL IMAGES AND INVEST THEM WITH A WEALTH OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES.



I SAT BY THE OPEN WINDOW, HOPING TO CATCH A WHIFF OF THE OLD CHARCOAL GRILLS. FROM NEXT DOOR CAME THE OTHERWORLDLY HUM OF TELEVISION. THE OLD CLOCK STRUCK A LAZY EIGHT.



AS NOTED, PICTURES CAN INDUCE STRONG FEELINGS IN THE READER, BUT THEY CAN ALSO LACK THE SPECIFICITY OF WORDS.



WORDS, ON THE OTHER HAND, OFFER THAT SPECIFICITY, BUT CAN LACK THE IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL CHARGE OF PICTURES, RELYING INSTEAD ON A GRADUAL CUMULATIVE EFFECT.



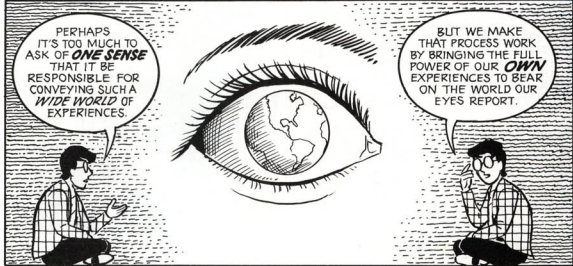
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M ON TO YOUR PLOT... I KNOW YOU PUT SOMETHING IN MY DOG'S FOOD THAT MADE HIM NOT LOVE ME ANYMORE AND...

TOGETHER, OF COURSE, WORDS AND PICTURES CAN WORK MIRACLES.



BUT WE'LL GET TO THAT IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.



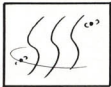


PERHAPS  
IT'S TOO MUCH TO  
ASK OF **ONE SENSE**  
THAT IT BE  
RESPONSIBLE FOR  
CONVEYING SUCH A  
**WIDE WORLD** OF  
EXPERIENCES.

BUT WE MAKE  
THAT PROCESS WORK  
BY BRINGING THE FULL  
POWER OF OUR **OWN**  
EXPERIENCES TO BEAR  
ON THE WORLD OUR  
EYES REPORT.



IN THIS  
CHAPTER, WE'VE  
DEALT WITH THE  
**INVISIBLE** WORLDS  
OF **SENSES** AND  
**EMOTIONS**. BUT IN  
FACT **ALL** ASPECTS  
OF COMICS SHOW IT  
TO BE AN **ART** OF  
**THE INVISIBLE**.



MAAY-BEE  
I DON'T EVEN  
**WANT**  
SHRIMP FOR  
DINNER!



WHAT YOU  
**SEE** IS SELDOM  
WHAT YOU **GET** IF  
ALL YOU'RE SEEING  
(SEEING EVEN **NOW**)  
IS JUST **INK**  
AND **PAPER**.



MAAY-BEE  
I DON'T EVEN  
**WANT**  
SHRIMP FOR  
DINNER!



IN THE  
END, WHAT  
YOU **GET** IS  
WHAT YOU  
**GIVE.**

