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

AND IN COMICS UNLIKE PAINTING, IT WAS MORE THAN JUST A "THEORETICAL QUESTION."

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

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.

BUT JUST AS A SINGLE PANEL CAN REPRESENT A JUMP OF TIME THROUGH COMIC:

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

SMILE!

PAF!

SOMEBEWHERE BETWEEN THE FUTURISTS' DYNAMIC MOVEMENT AND DUCHAMP'S DIAGRAMMATIC CONCEPT OF MOVEMENT LIES COMICS' "MOTION LINE."
IN THE BEGINNING, MOTION LINES—OR "ZIP-RIBBONS" AS SOME CALL THEM—WERE ROUGH, MESSY, ALMOST DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT THE PATHS OF MOVING OBJECTS THROUGH SPACE.

OVER THE YEARS, THESE LINES BECAME MORE REFINED AND STYLISTIC, EVEN DIAGRAMMATICAL.

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

—THESE SAME LINES BECAME SO STYLISTIC AS TO ALMOST HAVE A LIFE AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE ALL THEIR OWN.
Because of their ability to depict action with drama, such conspicuous action lines have been an American specialty for years.

In this approach, both the moving object and the backgrounds are drawn in a clear, articulated style, and the path of motion is imposed over the scene.

Other artists tried additional effects such as multiple images of the subject, attempting to involve the reader more deeply in the action.

Still others, such as Marvel's Gene Colan, began incorporating photographic streaking effects with some intriguing results in the sixties and seventies.
Colan, who was also a film buff, was of course aware that when a camera's shutter speed is too slow to fully freeze a moving object's image, an interesting blurring effect occurs.

A car going at 60 MPH might look like this.

_But if the camera moves with the moving object, that object will remain focused while the background will now be streaked._

**American** comics artists took little or no interest in this kind of photographic trickery.

And in Europe where motion lines were used only sparingly, it was likewise ignored.

But in Japan once again, a very different comics culture embraced this very different concept of motion as their own!
"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 60s, began putting their reader's "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 POLYPYCH WHERE A MOVING FIGURE OR FIGURES--

IS IMPOSED OVER A CONTINUOUS BACKGROUND.

IN COMIC COMPOSITION FOLLOWS A VERY DIFFERENT SET OF RULES THAN IN MOST GRAPHIC ARTS

BY INTRODUCING TIME INTO THE EQUATION, COMIC ARTISTS ARE ARRANGING THE PAGE IN WAYS NOT ALWAYS CONDUCTIVE TO TRADITIONAL PICTURE-MAKING.


AND THE COMPOSITION OF MEMORY.

THE NATURAL WORLD CREATES GREAT BEAUTY EVERY DAY, YET THE ONLY RULES OF COMPOSITION IT FOLLOWS ARE THOSE OF FUNCTION AND CHANCE.

IF THE COMPOSITION OF A SINGLE PANEL IS TRULY "PERFECT" DOESN'T THAT IMPLY THAT IT CAN--OR EVEN SHOULD--STAND ALONE?

COMICS, AT ITS BEST, SHOULD DO NO LESS.
AS WE'VE SEEN, THE INTERACTION OF TIME AND COMICS GENERALLY LEADS US TO ONE OF TWO SUBJECTS: SOUND OR MOTION.

SOUND BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS: WORD BALLOONS AND SOUND EFFECTS.

BOTH TYPES ADD TO THE DURATION OF A PANEL, PARTIALLY THROUGH THE NATURE OF SOUND ITSELF AND BY INTRODUCING ISSUES OF ACTION AND REACTION.

MOTION ALSO BREAKS DOWN INTO TWO SUBSETS. THE FIRST TYPE—PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE—WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ITS OWN CHAPTER.

THE OTHER TYPE—MOTION WITHIN PANELS—CAN BE FURTHER DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT STYLES. I'VE COVERED THE ONES I KNOW, BUT THERE MAY BE MANY OTHERS. TIME WILL TELL.

THE WORKINGS OF TIME IN COMICS SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS—

ONE — TWO — THREE

BUT THEY'RE NOT.
I've been trying to figure out what makes comics "tick" for years and I'm still amazed by the strangeness of it all.

"SNAP! Snap!"

CRASH!

But no matter how bizarre the workings of time in comics is...

"The face it presents to the reader..."

"Is one of simple normality."

Or the illusion of it, anyway.

All depends on your frame of mind."