WORDS AND PICTURES IN COMBINATION MAY NOT BE MY DEFINITION OF COMICS, BUT THE COMBINATION HAS HAD TREMENDOUS INFLUENCE ON ITS GROWTH.

AND INDEED, WORDS AND PICTURES HAVE GREAT POWERS TO TELL STORIES WHEN CREATORS FULLY EXPLOIT THEM BOTH.

A HUGE RANGE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCES CAN BE PORTRAYED IN COMICS THROUGH EITHER WORDS OR PICTURES.

AS A RESULT—AND DESPITE ITS MANY OTHER POTENTIAL USES—COMICS HAVE BECOME FIRMLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE ART OF STORYTELLING.

AND SO FAR, WE’VE ONLY SEEN THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG!
FIRST, WE HAVE THE WORD SPECIFIC COMBINATIONS, WHERE PICTURES ILLUSTRATE, BUT DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY ADD TO A LARGELY COMPLETE TEXT.

THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION WAS ADOPTED BY THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS IN 1787 AND PUT INTO EFFECT IN 1789.

JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.

WE STUMBLED BACK TO THE APARTMENT SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN, VOMITING EVERY 20 YARDS.

THEN THERE ARE PICTURE SPECIFIC COMBINATIONS WHERE WORDS DO LITTLE MORE THAN ADD A SOUNTRACK TO A VISUALLY TOLD SEQUENCE.

HE DID IT!

AND, OF COURSE, DUO-SPECIFIC PANELS IN WHICH BOTH WORDS AND PICTURES SEND ESSENTIALLY THE SAME MESSAGE.

GRIM-FACED, GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.

BUT THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY BLOW MISSES ITS INTENDED TARGET!

BLAST! HE DODGED MY PUNCH AND I STRUCK THIS BRICK WALL.

HA! I DODGED YOU! I FEEL SO SAD!

...THOUGHT AMY.
Another type is the additive combination where words amplify or elaborate on an image or vice versa.

In parallel combinations, words and pictures seem to follow very different courses—without intersecting.

Still another option is the montage where words are treated as integral parts of the picture.
Perhaps the most influential combo of word/picture is the interdependent. Where words and pictures can neither convey an idea alone, they fall anywhere on a scale between one and two. Speaking generally, the more pictures, the more the pictures can be freed from the text. And just guess who drove up in Bob's truck an hour later.

I ask you, look like a guy who's lying? He's lying. Oh my God!
IN COMICS AT ITS BEST, WORDS AND PICTURES ARE LIKE PARTNERS IN A DANCE AND EACH ONE TAKES TURNS LEADING.

WHEN BOTH PARTNERS TRY TO LEAD, THE COMPETITION CAN SUBVERT THE OVERALL GOALS...

...THOUGH A LITTLE PLAYFUL COMPETITION CAN SOMETIMES PRODUCE ENJOYABLE RESULTS.

BUT WHEN THESE PARTNERS EACH KNOW THEIR ROLES--

--AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER'S STRENGTHS--

--COMICS CAN MATCH ANY OF THE ART FORMS IT DRAWS SO MUCH OF ITS STRENGTH FROM.
WHEN PICTURES CARRY THE WEIGHT OF CLARITY IN A SCENE, THEY FREE WORDS TO EXPLORE A WIDER AREA.

LET'S SAY I SHOW YOU A WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET IN THE RAIN, BUYING A PINT OF ICE CREAM AND EATING IT IN HER APARTMENT--

--ALL IN PICTURES.
When a scene shows you all you need to know, like this one, the latitude for scripting grows enormously.

I may be alone like this for a very long time. It could become an internal monologue.

Perhaps something wildly incongruous.

"Mission Control, Mission Control, do you read me?"

(Parallel)

Maybe it's all just a big advertisement.

Or a chance to ruminate on broader topics.

(This is the way the world ends.)

This is the way the world ends...

(Interdependent)
ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE WORDS
LOCK IN THE "MEANING" OF A SEQUENCE,
THEN THE PICTURES CAN REALLY TAKE OFF.

SAME
SCENE NOW,
BUT THIS TIME
ALL IN WORDS!

I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE
CONVENIENCE STORE.
The RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.

I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF
CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP
IN THE FREEZER.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID
NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.
NOW, ONE COULD JUST COMBINE THE PICTURES FROM PAGE 157 WITH THE WORDS FROM PAGE 159 --

---BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?---

I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

OR MOVE TOWARD GREATER LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION OR EXPRESSION.

(IF THE ARTIST WANTS TO, HE/SHE CAN NOW SHOW ONLY FRAGMENTS OF A SCENE. (WORD SPECIFIC))

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID NO THANKS. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

(AMPLIFICATION)

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT EMOTIONAL INFORMATION.

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

(INTERDEPENDENT)

AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

(ALONE AT LAST)

(WORD SPECIFIC)
THE PICTURE PLANE

HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY CHART THESE THINGS, THEY'RE ALL ULTIMATELY BEST LEFT TO THE CREATOR'S INSTINCTS.

THE MIXING OF WORDS AND PICTURES IS MORE ALCHEMY THAN SCIENCE.

SOME OF THE SECRETS OF THOSE FIRST ALCHEMISTS MAY HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE ANCIENT PAST.

BUT WE HAVE SOME POWERFUL MAGIC RIGHT HERE IN THE 20TH CENTURY, TOO!

THE RICHNESS OF MODERN LANGUAGE IS AN IRREPLACEABLE COMMODITY!

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME TO BE MAKING COMICS, AND IN MANY WAYS I FEEL VERY LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN BORN WHEN I WAS.

STILL, I DO FEEL A CERTAIN VAGUE LONGING FOR THAT TIME OVER 50 CENTURIES AGO--

--WHEN TO TELL WAS TO SHOW--

--AND TO SHOW WAS TO TELL.