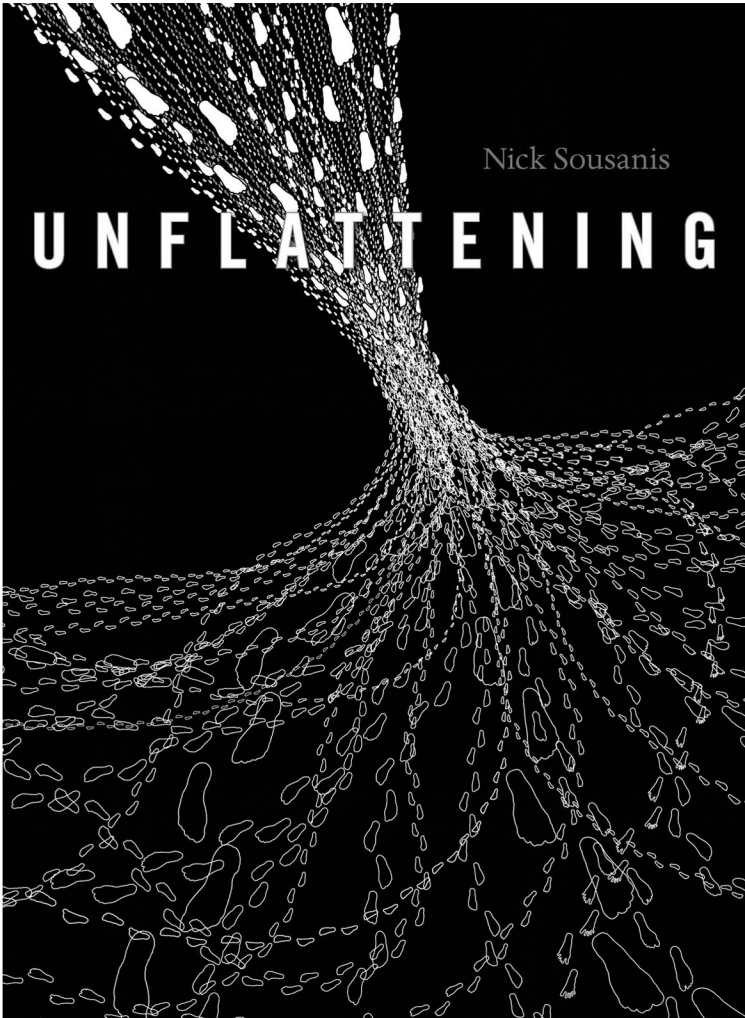


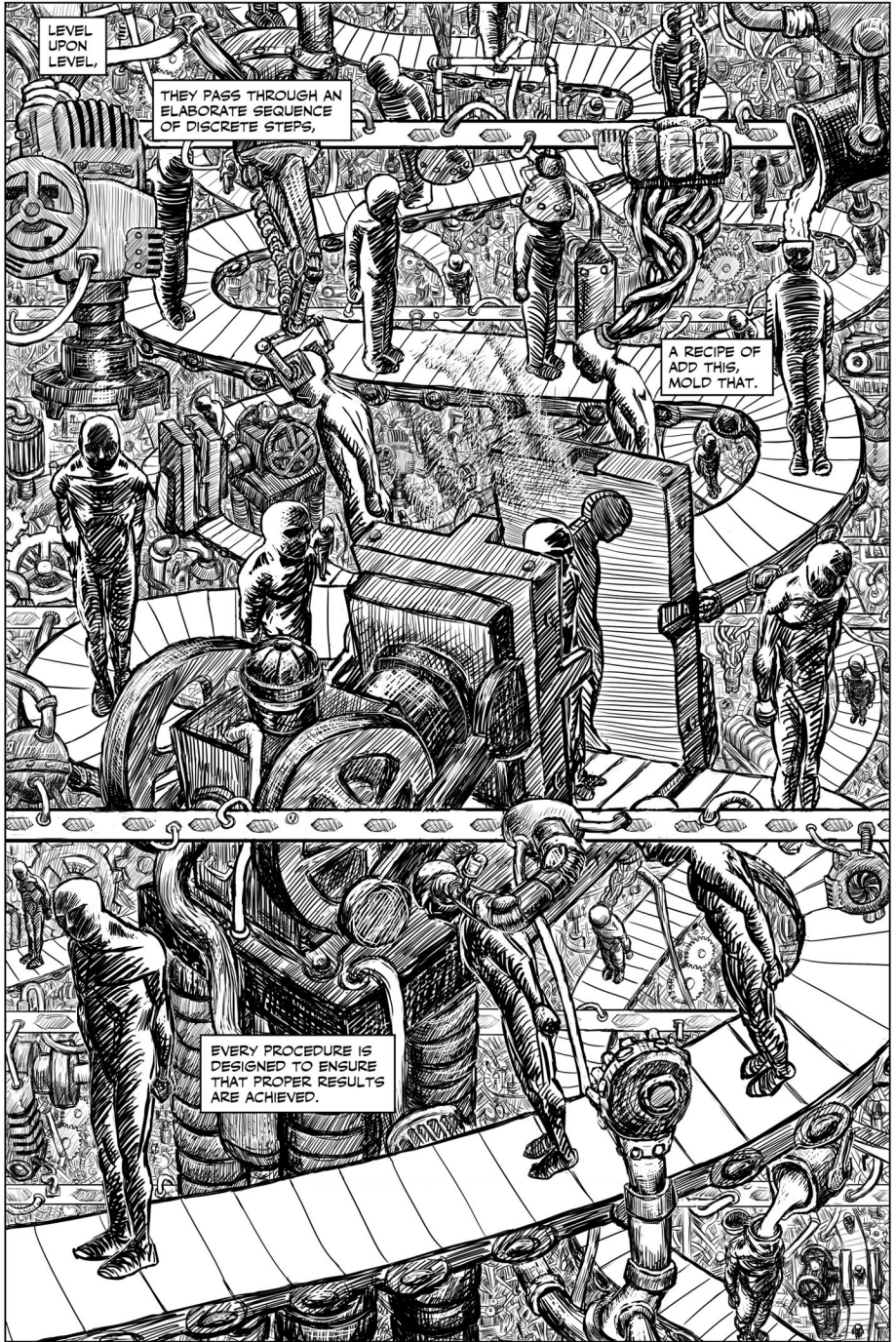
Excerpts from
Unflattening

A doctoral dissertation in comics form by Nick Sousanis @ Columbia University
Book from **Harvard University Press** March 2015



Nick Sousanis
www.spinweaveandcut.com
nsousanis@gmail.com | tw: @nsousanis

SPIN WEAVE AND CUT



LEVEL
UPON
LEVEL.

THEY PASS THROUGH AN
ELABORATE SEQUENCE
OF DISCRETE STEPS.

A RECIPE OF
ADD THIS,
MOLD THAT.

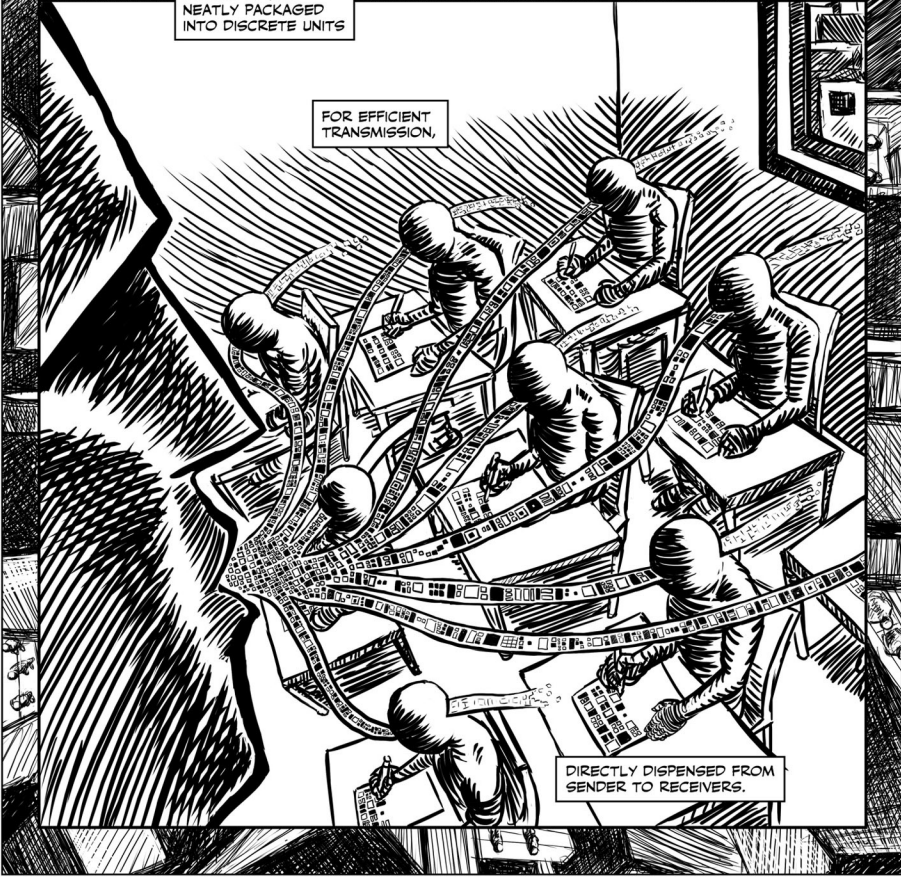
EVERY PROCEDURE IS
DESIGNED TO ENSURE
THAT PROPER RESULTS
ARE ACHIEVED.



THIS ALL TAKES PLACE IN BOXES, WITHIN BOXES...

NOT ONLY SPACE, BUT TIME AND EXPERIENCE TOO, HAVE BEEN PUT IN BOXES.

DIVIDED UP AND NEATLY PACKAGED INTO DISCRETE UNITS



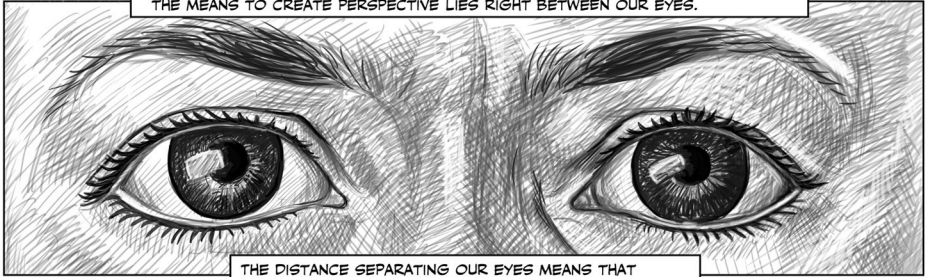
FOR EFFICIENT TRANSMISSION,

DIRECTLY DISPENSED FROM SENDER TO RECEIVERS.

IN SEEKING NEW APPROACHES FOR OPENING EXPANSIVE SPACES AND AWAKENING POSSIBILITIES,



LET US LOOK TO OUR WAYS OF SEEING THEMSELVES, AND HOW QUITE LITERALLY, THE MEANS TO CREATE PERSPECTIVE LIES RIGHT BETWEEN OUR EYES.



THE DISTANCE SEPARATING OUR EYES MEANS THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VIEW EACH PRODUCES - THUS THERE IS NO SINGLE, "CORRECT" VIEW.

THIS BECOMES EVIDENT BY LOOKING ALTERNATELY THROUGH ONLY ONE EYE AT A TIME...



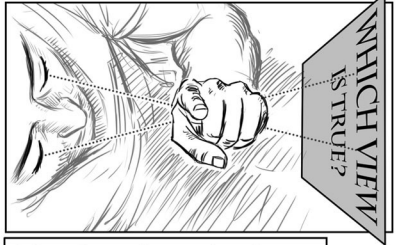
WHICH VIEW IS TRUE?



WHICH VIEW IS TRUE?

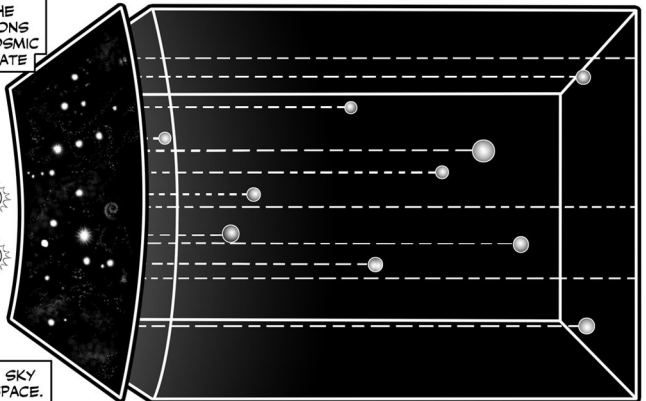
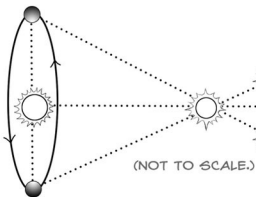


AND IT IS THIS DISPLACEMENT - PARALLAX - WHICH ENABLES US TO PERCEIVE DEPTH.



OUR STEREOSCOPIC VISION IS THE CREATION AND INTEGRATION OF TWO VIEWS. SEEING, MUCH LIKE WALKING ON TWO FEET, IS A CONSTANT NEGOTIATION BETWEEN TWO DISTINCT SOURCES.

BY MAKING A TRIP HALFWAY AROUND THE SUN, WE ESSENTIALLY CREATE TWO EYES A GREAT DISTANCE APART. THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE OBSERVATIONS FROM EACH AGAINST A DISTANT COSMIC BACKDROP, ALLOWS US TO CALCULATE DISTANCES TO THE STARS.



THEREBY UNFLATTENING THE NIGHT SKY TO REVEAL THE VAST DEPTHS OF SPACE.

SOME 2000 YEARS EARLIER IN ALEXANDRIA, ERATOSTHENES APPLIED A SIMILAR TECHNIQUE TO THE EARTH ITSELF.



REPORTS FROM SYENE, FAR TO THE SOUTH, INDICATED THAT AT NOON ON THE SUMMER SOLSTICE, THE SUN SHONE TO THE BOTTOM OF A DEEP WELL AND COLUMNS THERE CAST NO SHADOWS.



YET, IN ALEXANDRIA AT THE SAME MOMENT, SHADOWS PERSISTED - THE SUN WAS NOT DIRECTLY OVERHEAD.



Alexandria

ERATOSTHENES KNEW THAT THE SUN WAS AT SUCH A GREAT DISTANCE THAT ITS RAYS STRUCK THE EARTH PARALLEL TO ONE ANOTHER.

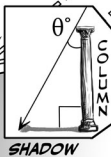


(NOT TO SCALE!)

WHICH MEANT THAT THIS OBSERVED DISCREPANCY OF SHADOWS AT THESE TWO LOCATIONS COULD ONLY OCCUR IF THE EARTH WAS CURVED (DEMONSTRATING A LONG-HELD SUPPOSITION.)

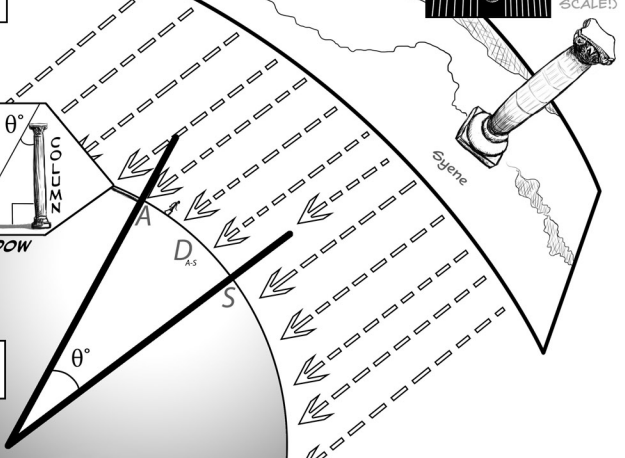
ERATOSTHENES CONTINUED.

BY MEASURING THE LENGTH OF A SHADOW CAST AT ALEXANDRIA AND THE HEIGHT OF THE COLUMN CASTING IT, HE FOUND THE ANGLE OF DISPLACEMENT BETWEEN ALEXANDRIA AND SYENE.



SHADOW

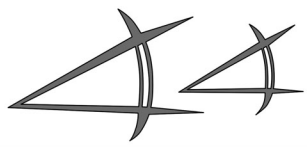
(ESSENTIALLY THE FRACTION OF THE CIRCLE SEPARATING THEM.)



$$C = \frac{360^\circ}{\theta^\circ} \times D_{AS}$$

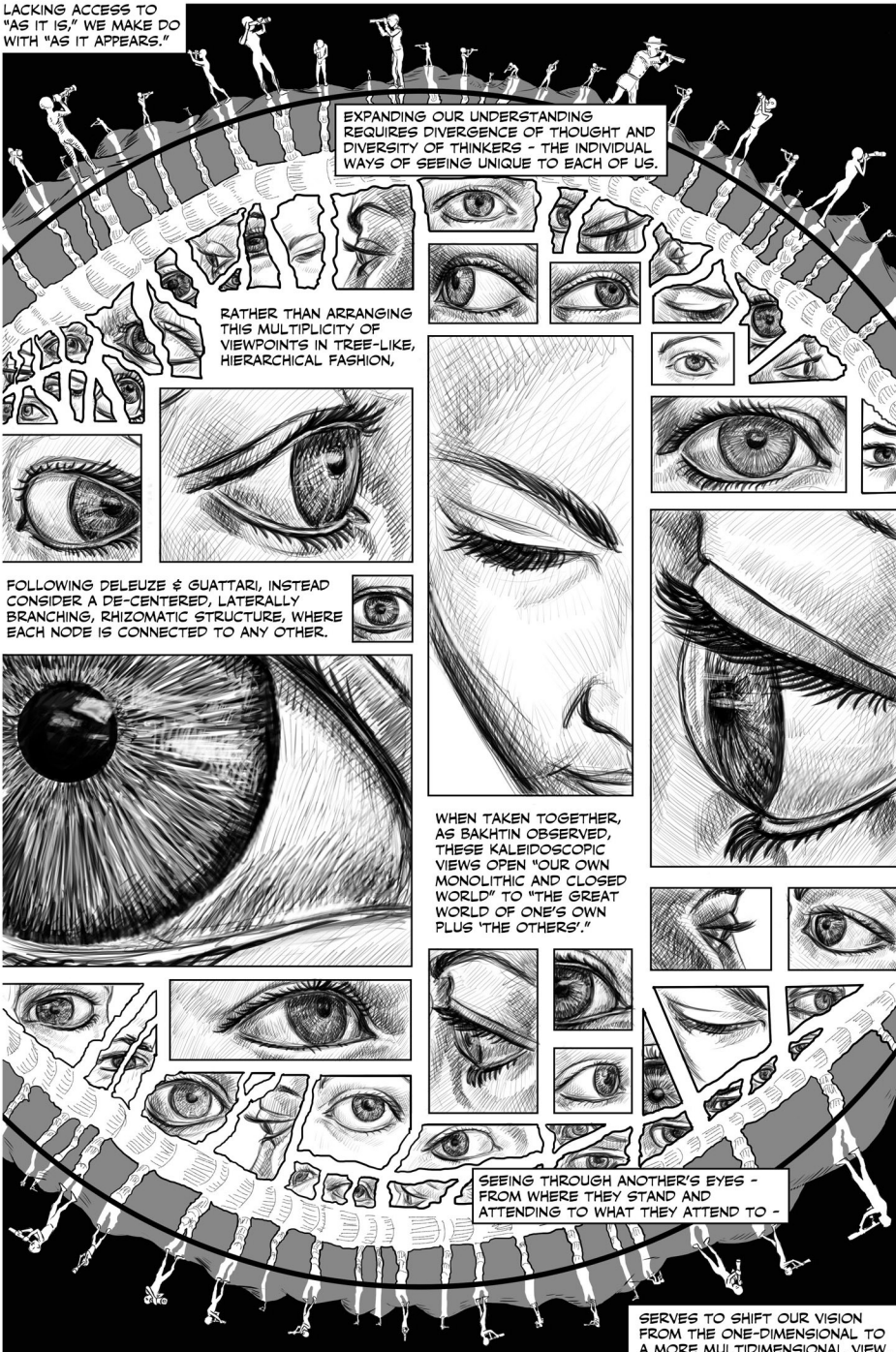
HE THEN HAD THE ACTUAL DISTANCE BETWEEN THE CITIES PAVED OUT, AND USED THIS RESULT WITH THE DISPLACEMENT ANGLE TO CALCULATE THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE EARTH WITH GREAT ACCURACY.

TWO POINTS - TWO EYES - CONNECTED, FOSTERED AN EXPANSION OF SIGHT AND RESHAPED OUR VIEW OF THE PLANET.



THIS SUGGESTS A DEFINITION TO BUILD ON: UNFLATTENING IS A SIMULTANEOUS ENGAGEMENT OF MULTIPLE VANTAGE POINTS FROM WHICH TO ENGENER NEW WAYS OF SEEING.

LACKING ACCESS TO
"AS IT IS," WE MAKE DO
WITH "AS IT APPEARS."



EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING
REQUIRES DIVERGENCE OF THOUGHT AND
DIVERSITY OF THINKERS - THE INDIVIDUAL
WAYS OF SEEING UNIQUE TO EACH OF US.

RATHER THAN ARRANGING
THIS MULTIPLICITY OF
VIEWPOINTS IN TREE-LIKE,
HIERARCHICAL FASHION,

FOLLOWING DELEUZE & GUATTARI, INSTEAD
CONSIDER A DE-CENTERED, Laterally
BRANCHING, RHIZOMATIC STRUCTURE, WHERE
EACH NODE IS CONNECTED TO ANY OTHER.

WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER,
AS BAKHTIN OBSERVED,
THESE KALEIDOSCOPIC
VIEWS OPEN "OUR OWN
MONOLITHIC AND CLOSED
WORLD" TO "THE GREAT
WORLD OF ONE'S OWN
PLUS 'THE OTHERS'."

SEEING THROUGH ANOTHER'S EYES -
FROM WHERE THEY STAND AND
ATTENDING TO WHAT THEY ATTEND TO -

SERVES TO SHIFT OUR VISION
FROM THE ONE-DIMENSIONAL TO
A MORE MULTIDIMENSIONAL VIEW.

PERMIT ME TO PAUSE BRIEFLY HERE TO NOTE THAT WHILE THIS DISCUSSION HAS BEEN RESTRICTED TO THE VISUAL, THIS IS NOT MEANT TO EXCLUDE OTHER MODES OF PERCEPTION. RATHER IT IS INTENDED THAT OUR LITERAL WAYS OF SEEING METAPHORICALLY SERVE TO ENCOMPASS OTHER WAYS OF MAKING MEANING AND EXPERIENCING THE WORLD.

TO THIS END, I'M REMINDED OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM MY DOG, NAVIGATING DEEP WOODS IN DARKNESS.



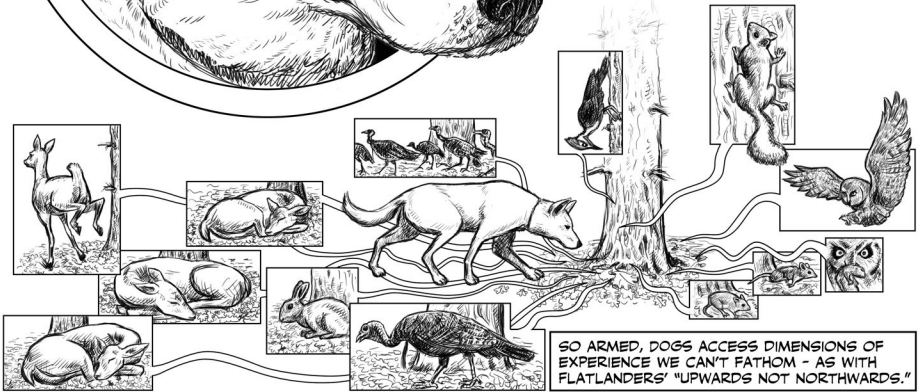
FOLLOWING HIS LEAD WHERE MY VISION FALTERED, ATTENDING TO CUES BEYOND SIGHT...

A DOG'S TOOLS OF PERCEPTION INCLUDE THE CAPACITY TO HEAR RANGES OF SOUND FAR EXCEEDING A HUMAN'S.

REFLECTIVE LENSES AMPLIFY AVAILABLE LIGHT EQUIPPING THEM WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF NIGHT VISION.

BUT MOST SIGNIFICANT IS A DOG'S SENSE OF SMELL. FAMOUSLY PUT IN SERVICE TO DETECT BOMBS, DRUGS, AND MISSING PERSONS, THEIR NOSES FAR SURPASS MECHANICAL SUBSTITUTES.

WHERE WE OBSERVE THE SHAPE, COLOR, AND FUNCTION OF A THING, INVISIBLE SCENT SIGNATURES THAT WE'RE BLIND TO SPEAK VOLUMES TO A DOG'S NUANCED NOSE. A DOG READS EVERYTHING IT ENCOUNTERS AS A TIME CAPSULE UNFOLDING WITH RICH LAYERS OF SENSORY INFORMATION FROM WHICH TO DISCERN WHO'S BEEN HERE, WHAT TOUCHED THIS, HOW LONG AGO...



SO ARMED, DOGS ACCESS DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE WE CAN'T FATHOM - AS WITH FLATLANDERS' "UPWARDS NOT NORTHWARDS."

IN RELYING ON TEXT AS THE PRIMARY MEANS OF FORMULATING UNDERSTANDING, WHAT STANDS OUTSIDE ITS LINEAR STRUCTURE IS DISMISSED,

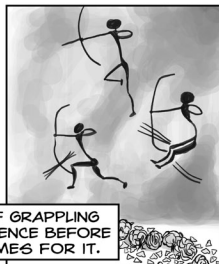
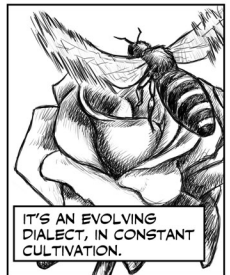
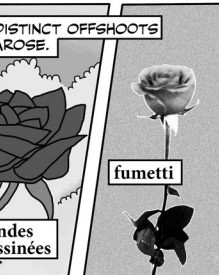
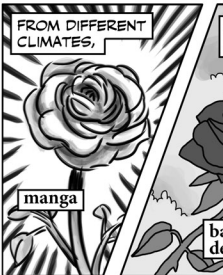
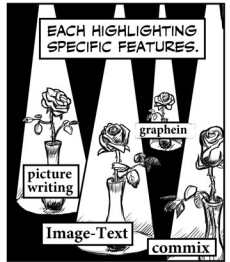
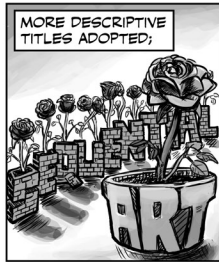
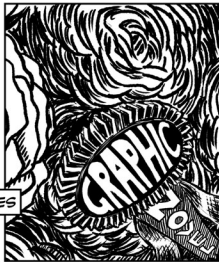
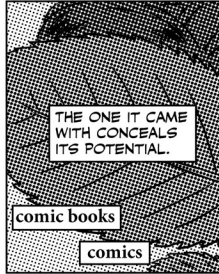
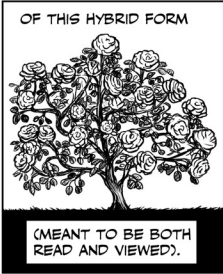
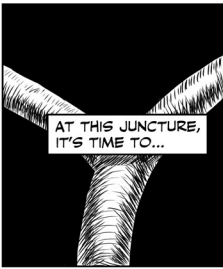
LABELED IRRATIONAL - NO MORE CONCEIVABLE THAN THE NOTION OF "UPWARDS" TO A FLATLANDER.

THE VISUAL PROVIDES EXPRESSION WHERE WORDS FAIL.



WHAT HAVE WE BEEN MISSING?

AND WHAT CAN BE MADE VISIBLE WHEN WE WORK IN A FORM THAT IS NOT ONLY ABOUT, BUT IS ALSO THE THING ITSELF.



TO UNRAVEL THE FORM'S CAPACITIES, LET'S BEGIN WITH SCOTT MCCLLOUD'S CONSIDERATION OF THE SEQUENTIAL AS ITS DEFINING ASPECT:

START

"JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE"

THE PASSAGE OF TIME IS WRITTEN IN SPACE.

IN CONNECTING THE DOTS,

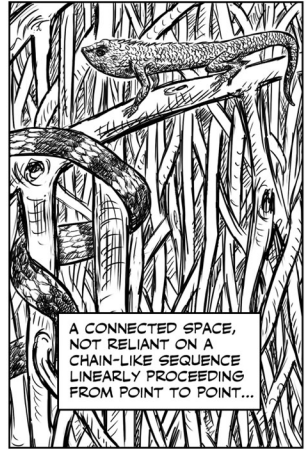
TRAVERSING THE GAPS BETWEEN FRAGMENTS AND STITCHING THEM TOGETHER - A MEANINGFUL WHOLE EMERGES.

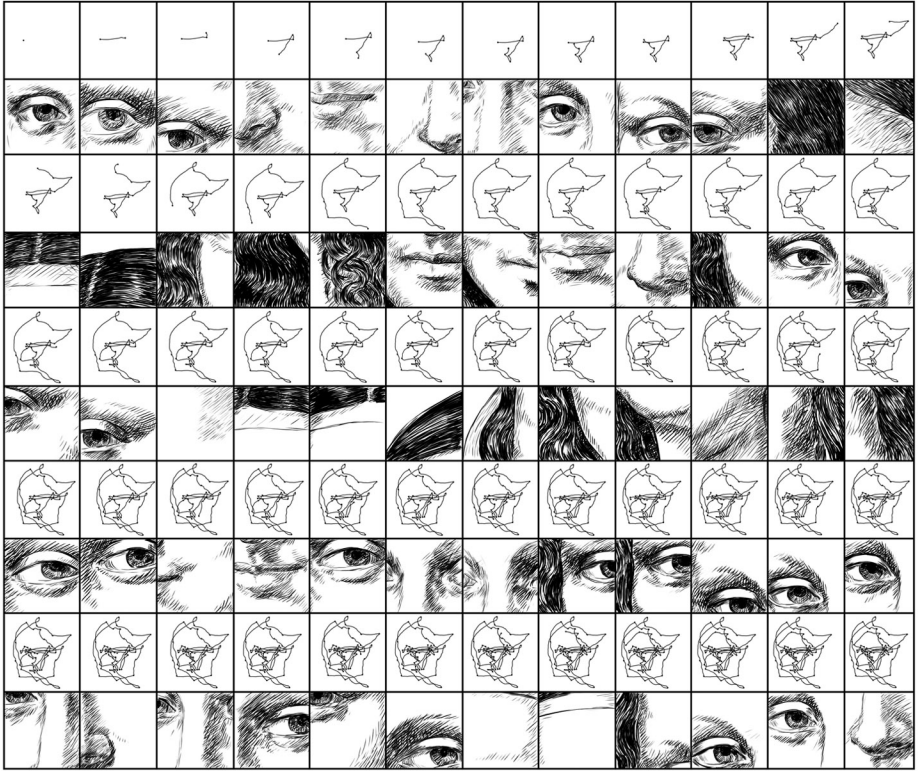
IT'S A PARTICIPATORY DANCE, AN ACT OF THE IMAGINATION,

IN WHICH THE READER ANIMATES AND TRANSFORMS THE STATIC INTO THE KINETIC...

AND BRINGS IT TO LIFE.







"TO ENCOUNTER" THE WORLD
OUTSIDE OURSELVES,

DANCING AND DARTING, OUR
EYES GO TO WORK, A FLURRY
OF MOTION PUNCTUATED BY
BRIEF PAUSES A FEW TIMES
A SECOND IN WHICH THEY FIX ON A
TARGET - BEFORE DASHING OFF
TO SEEK ANOTHER OF INTEREST.

OUR VISION CAPTURES
DISCONNECTED STATIC
SNAPSHOTS, AN INCOMPLETE
PICTURE RIDDLED WITH GAPS.

IT IS THE IMAGINATION, ETIENNE
PELAPRAT AND MICHAEL COLE
ASSERT, THAT FILLS IN THE GAPS
AND LINKS FRAGMENTS TO
CREATE STABLE AND SINGLE
IMAGES THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE
FOR US TO THINK AND TO ACT.

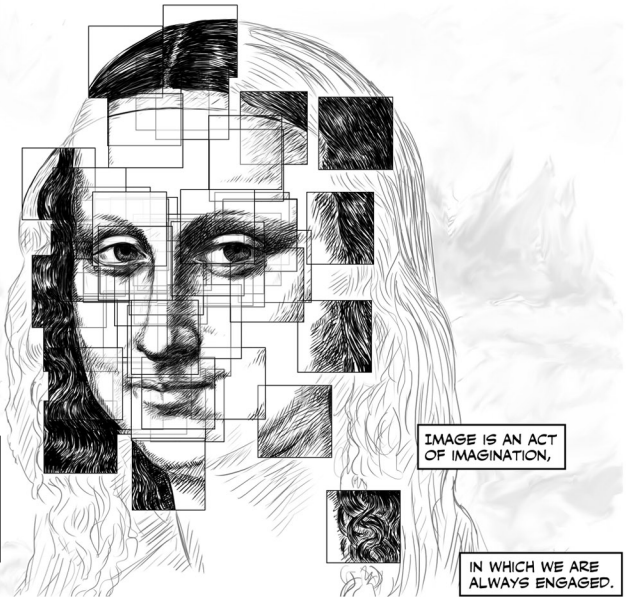


IMAGE IS AN ACT
OF IMAGINATION,

IN WHICH WE ARE
ALWAYS ENGAGED.

Thanks for checking out this brief excerpt from *Unflattening*.

To learn more about *Unflattening* and my other comics and work in comics and education, please visit my website www.spinweaveandcut.com.

Catch me on twitter @nsousanis <https://twitter.com/Nsousanis>

Unflattening is available from Harvard University Press
<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674744431>

It can be found at bookstores, comic shops, libraries, and of course, online vendors like Amazon (<http://www.amazon.com/Unflattening-Nick-Sousanis/dp/0674744438/>). Support your local bookstore or comic book shop – if they don't have it, they can order it!

Thanks! – Nick
www.spinweaveandcut.com

From the back of the book:

“Nick Sousanis’s *Unflattening* is a complex, beautiful, delirious meditation on just about everything under the sun; a unique and bracing read.”—Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics* and *Making Comics*

“An important book, *Unflattening* is consistently innovative, using abstraction alongside realism, using framing and the (dis)organization of the page to represent different modes of thought. The words and images speak for themselves and succeed on their own terms. I couldn’t stop reading it.”—Henry Jenkins, author of *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Society*