

OF COURSE, COMICS IS A VISUAL MEDIUM --



-- SO THAT INTERNAL VARIETY OF CHARACTER TYPES WILL NEED AN OUTWARD VARIETY OF VISUAL DESIGNS TO MATCH.



VARIETY AND DISTINCTION IN CHARACTER DESIGN ARE IMPORTANT FOR A FEW REASONS.



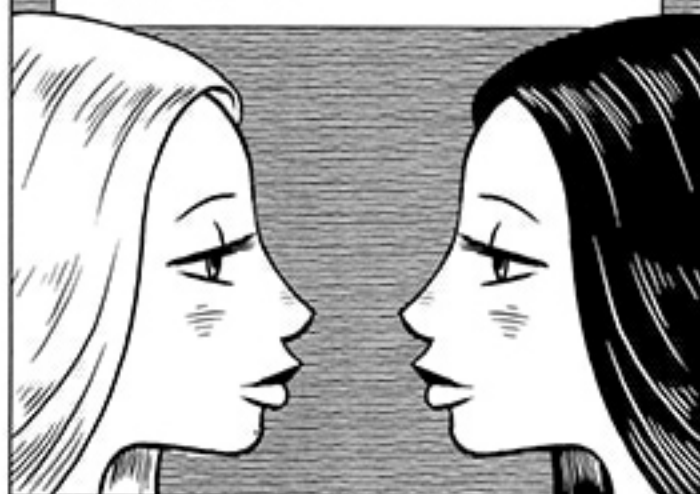
ON A PURELY PRACTICAL LEVEL, THEY HELP THE READER KEEP TRACK OF WHO'S WHO. A CAST OF CHARACTERS THAT ALL LOOK THE SAME CAN BE CONFUSING.



AND EVEN IF DETAILS LIKE FACIAL HAIR AND CLOTHING ARE THROWN IN TO DISTINGUISH THEM, TOO MUCH SIMILARITY IN CHARACTERS' UNDERLYING APPEARANCE CAN LEAD TO A BLAND COOKIE-CUTTER LOOK.



SOME STRIVE TO MAKE EVERY ONE OF THEIR CHARACTERS BEAUTIFUL, AND IN DOING SO RELY ON THE SAME IDEAL FACE AND BODY REPEATEDLY.



BUT BEAUTY IS MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN GIVEN A BASIS FOR COMPARISON --



-- AND THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF BEAUTY TO CHOOSE FROM.





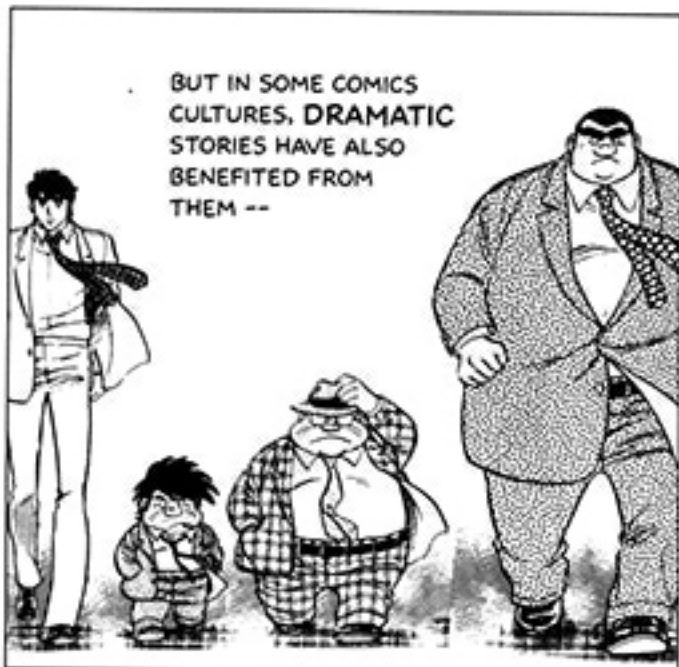
DEEPER DIFFERENCES OF FACE AND BODY TYPE HELP READERS KEEP TRACK OF YOUR CAST, AND GIVES THEM A **UNIQUE VISUAL REMINDER** OF CHARACTERS' DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES.



CARTOONY STYLES ACCOMMODATE MORE DRAMATIC VARIATIONS IN BODY TYPES, SO SUCH EXTREME DIFFERENCES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH **ALL-AGES** TITLES.



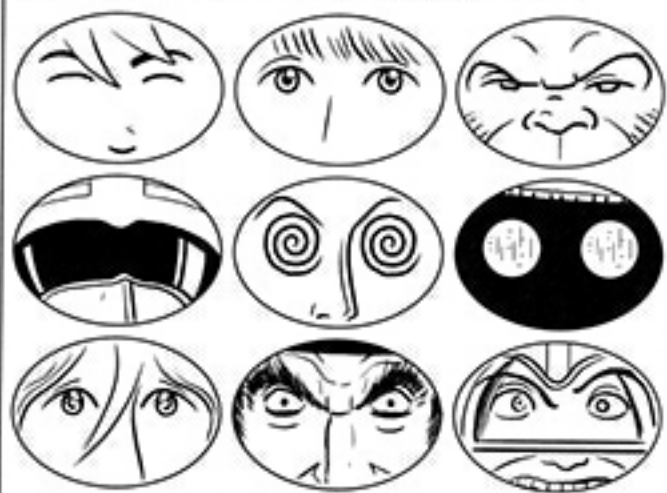
BUT IN SOME COMICS CULTURES, **DRAMATIC** STORIES HAVE ALSO BENEFITED FROM THEM --



-- AND EVEN **REALISTICALLY** PROPORTIONED FIGURES CAN SHOW DISTINCT VARIATIONS IN **SHAPE, SIZE** AND OTHER FEATURES.



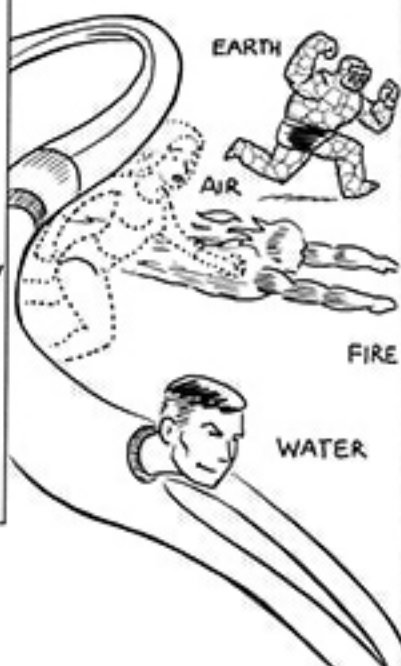
PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO **EYES**. I FOUND WHEN DOING **ZOT!** THAT I COULD HIGHLIGHT CHARACTERS' UNIQUE QUALITIES BY GIVING EACH ONE A **UNIQUE** AND **EASILY RECOGNIZED** PAIR OF EYES.



AS WITH **INNER DRIVES**, SOMETIMES A CHARACTER'S **OUTER APPEARANCE** CAN BE BUILT AROUND A **SINGLE IDEA**.



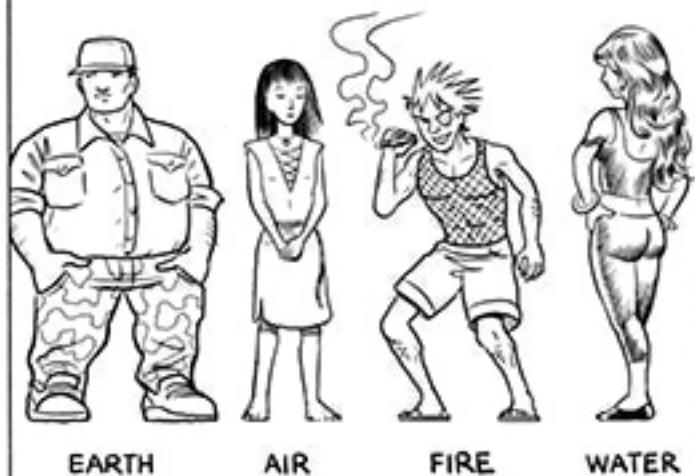
-- OR JUST UNDER THE SURFACE, AS IN LEE AND KIRBY'S **FANTASTIC FOUR**.



EISNER SUGGESTS USING **ANIMALS*** AS A BASIS FOR CHARACTERS, IN PART TO TAP INTO READERS' PRIMORDIAL REACTIONS. AND LUCKILY THERE ARE A LOT OF ANIMALS OUT THERE TO CHOOSE FROM!



ANYTHING GOES. EVEN AFTER ONE SET OF THEMES HAS BEEN USED, IT CAN ALWAYS BE USED AGAIN -- SO LONG AS YOUR TAKE ON IT IS FRESH.



EARTH

AIR

FIRE

WATER

USE YOUR **IMAGINATION** AND YOU CAN PROBABLY COME UP WITH **MANY** SUCH THEMATIC GROUPS TO USE.



SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- THE FOUR SEASONS
- CHESS PIECES
- THE FIVE SENSES
- MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES
- COUNTRIES/STATES
- CULTURAL ERAS
- THE PLANETS
- HISTORICAL FIGURES
- TREES/PLANTS
- TOYS
- TAROT CARDS
- THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS
- SONGS
- HAND TOOLS
- ASTROLOGICAL SIGNS

YOU MAY EVEN WANT TO TAP SOME OF THE VARIOUS PHYSICAL **STEREOTYPES** CARTOONISTS HAVE USED OVER THE YEARS, THE **FACE** AND **BODY TYPES** THAT CAN MARK A CHARACTER AS "**HEROIC**" OR "**BRUTISH**" OR "**NERDY**," ETC.



THESE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE AND CONFORMING TO **READER EXPECTATIONS.**



OF COURSE, YOU COULD ALSO **CONTRADICT** THOSE ASSUMPTIONS, GIVE YOUR READERS A SURPRISE, AND PUNCTURE SOME **REAL-LIFE** STEREOTYPES IN THE PROCESS!



AT TIMES, I THINK POETRY IS CIVILIZATION'S ONLY RATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE FUTILITY OF LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION.

HEY!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

EEEK!!
A MOUSE!

