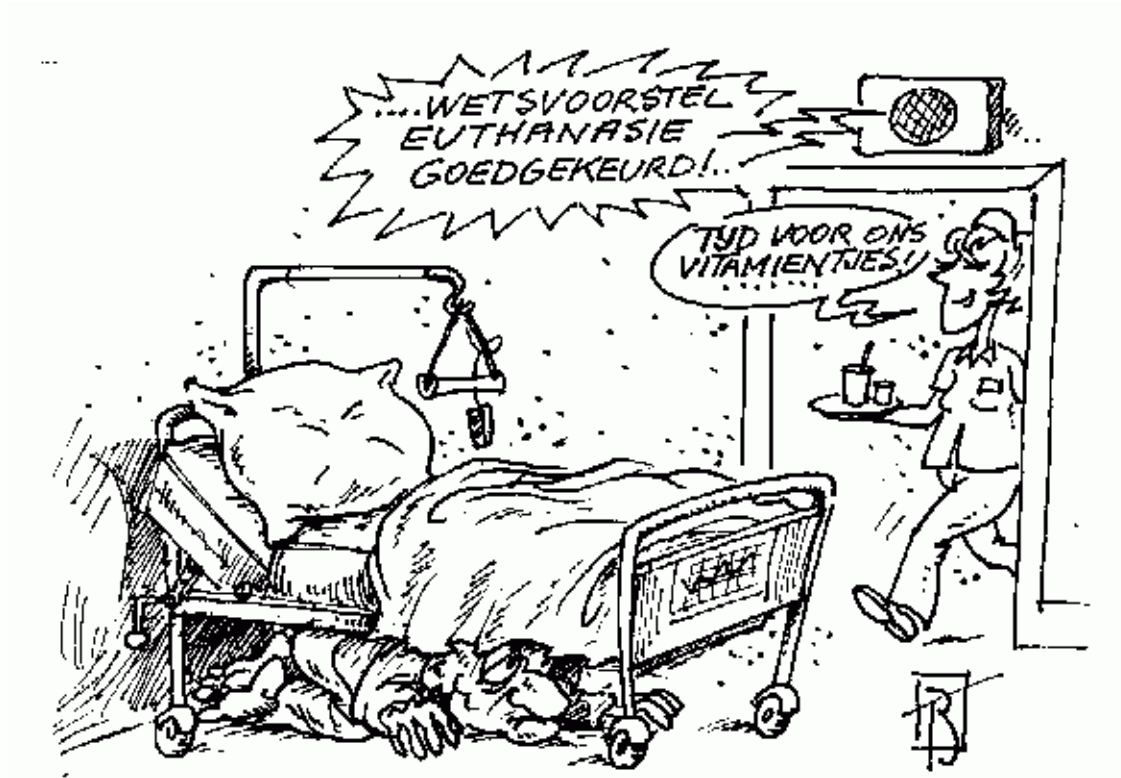


Time in a cartoon

"...in the world of comics time and space are one and the same."

From Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud,



Text from the radio (in Dutch) reads: "The Euthanasia Law has been passed!"

Nurse: "Time for our vitamins!"

In the above cartoon, even though we would tend to scan it from left to right or top to bottom to read the radio announcement before the nurse's, our perception of time passing (for the events to occur) is perceived spatially. We see the whole image and understand the radio text at the same time of looking, but our eyes would tend to move from bed to text bubble to doorway or we can read the image of the nurse and that of the patient in the same instant, fitting them into the story of in this case, top to bottom, cause and effect in the narrative indicated by the text bubbles.

McCloud also wrote: "The durations of that time and the dimensions of that space are defined more by the contents of the panel than by the panel itself.", which is easy to illustrate in the above by changing the text bubbles to: "And on the 100th day of the siege" and "Hurry hide, they think you are asleep." Now the text indicates that the nurse's text caused the action on the left and that she is running. The time span is now much shorter and because we assume that he responded to her instruction, that he jumped under the bed in response.

Later in his text he discusses expressing timelessness in a cartoon and I'll add another image here to discuss that because in the above, the jagged lines of radio text bubble and the approach of the nurse associate urgency or a short time span even if the text was in a foreign language.



In this cartoon a sense of timeless is heightened by having no defined border. The woman who could be running for days or years is not running inside a frame. As McCloud states in his book, “when the content of a silent panel offers no clues as to its duration, it can also produce a sense of timelessness”. The shadow could indicate that it is evening or morning because of the long shadow but because it is an image of an automatic rifle, we understand time here as being an abstract psychological time. Time of terror, war or fear.

Their features are generalized and since the woman and child could be any woman or child, this contributes to the sense that time here is the time we need to understand this idea which could mean us as the individual reader or us as a society.