

Inverna Lockpez (author)



Dean Haspiel (artist)



José Villarrubia (colourist)

CUBA: MY REVOLUTION (2010 – Vertigo, DC Comics)

Remembering revolution: Lockpez's "reminiscences"



Cuban-born, New York-based artist & gallery director
and former revolutionary (militia medic & surgeon)

-A **graphic memoir** published in **2010*** (DC Comics, "Vertigo") within the context of the graphic novel movement (fuelled by autobiographical and even "autobiofictionalography" memoirs of war and trauma, adolescence and identity etc.)

-A **different, and distanced perspective** on the Cuban Revolution

- Setting: Havana, Cuba: **1958/9** to Miami (?), USA, September **1966**

-Created with Dean Haspiel and José Villarrubia. **Process:** From **300-page** "reminiscences" to **144-page** comic. Every day for **two years** Haspiel sent her pages, which she reviewed and sent back with revisions, to find the right style and mood. Oftentimes, Lockpez had to "detach herself from her past."

Last class...

- Context of the Cuban Revolution (Capitalism/Socialism/Communism).

- **The Socialist State:**

Access to the means of protection and human necessity; capacity to inform, educate, and implement change.

“Transitional Protectorate of the people”

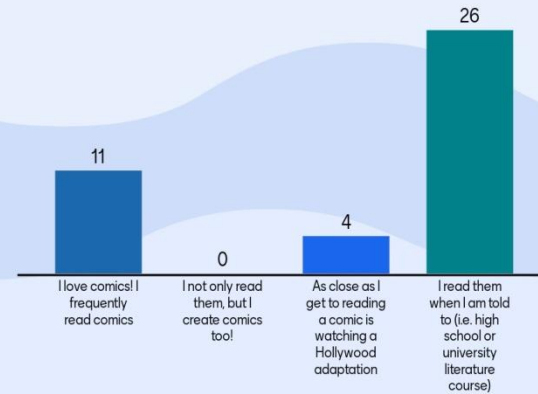
- **Poll:** What is your relationship to comics?

- Defined “graphic novel” and “graphic memoir”

- Began to consider Lockpez’s use of an **“alter ego”**: Sonya

- Kahoot: “how do we read a comic?”

What best describes your relationship to comics?



This class...

- Brief review of Part I, drawing on what we learned about the language and elements of comics

- Analysis of Part II

- Analysis & Discussion of Parts I and II

Key themes:

- From *idealism* to *questioning ideology*
- Symbolism of colour (black/white and shades of red)
- **Dreams** of/and the Revolution
- “**Disaster Drawn**” – Hillary Chute
- Documenting trauma in comics**
- Art** and/of the revolution

Part I: Key events:

-Jan. 1, 1959

- Sonya & Silvio ring in the new year
- Fidel and his rebel troops march on Havana. Batista flees.

-Jan. 8, 1958

- Fidel's speech to the people

(Sonya joins the militia)

-Dec. 1960

-Feb - March 1961

- New Nationalization Laws
- Stress on the Healthcare system

Part II: Key events:

-April, 1961

- Bay of Pigs Invasion
- Imprisonment (April to June)

-July, 1961: recovering in secret

-August, 1961: home: a safe haven?

-September, 1961: return to normalcy? “things were so different”

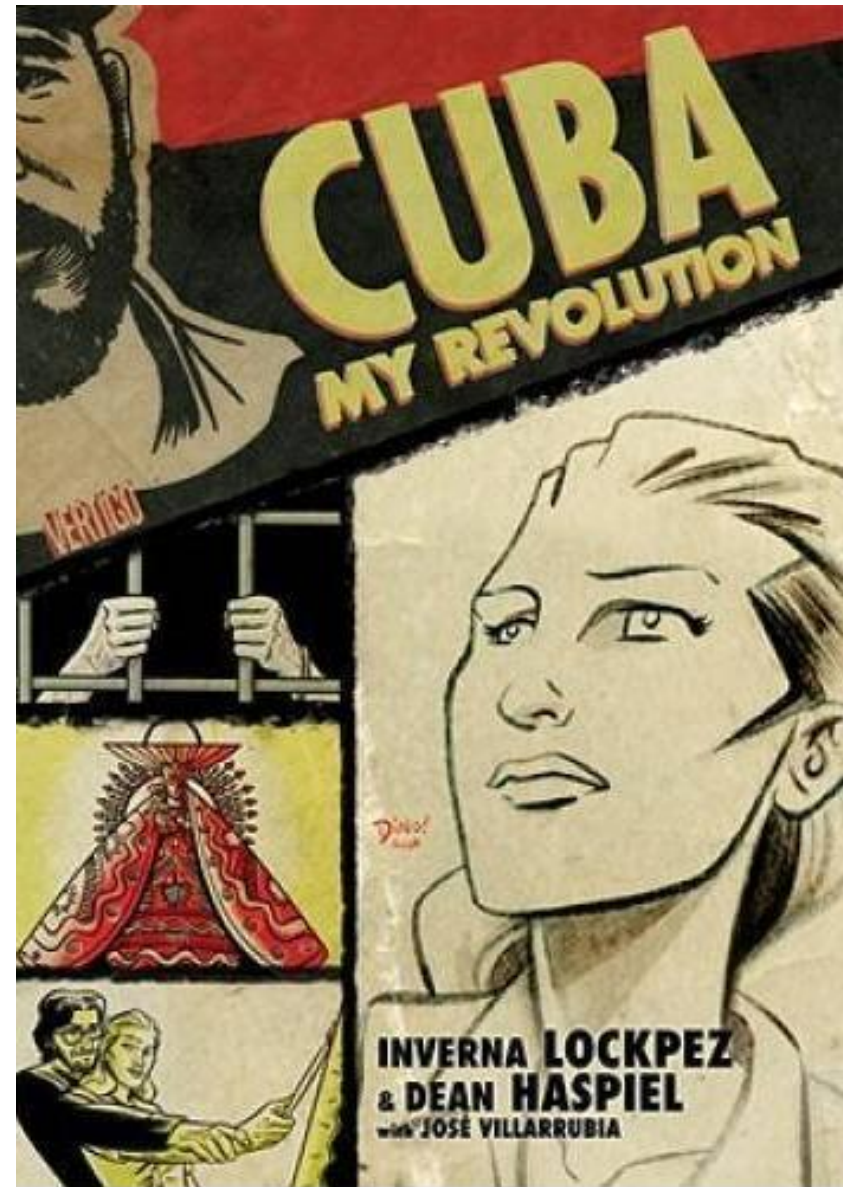
-January & June, 1962: a changing art scene

(TWO DREAMS)

-July 1962: Sonya = Ludmila

Cover & Title analysis:

- 1) After reading Parts I and II, how do you read the **title of this comic**?
- 2) How would you describe **Haspiel's drawing style**? Is it complex or simple? realistic or iconic? Objective (i.e., true to form) or subjective (i.e., evokes emotion and essential qualities)? Is it specific or universal?
- 3) What can we say about **Villarrubia's use of colour** (and lack thereof)? Why do you think these colours were chosen?
- 4) What **images** do we see on the cover? What do they tell us about the story we will read?



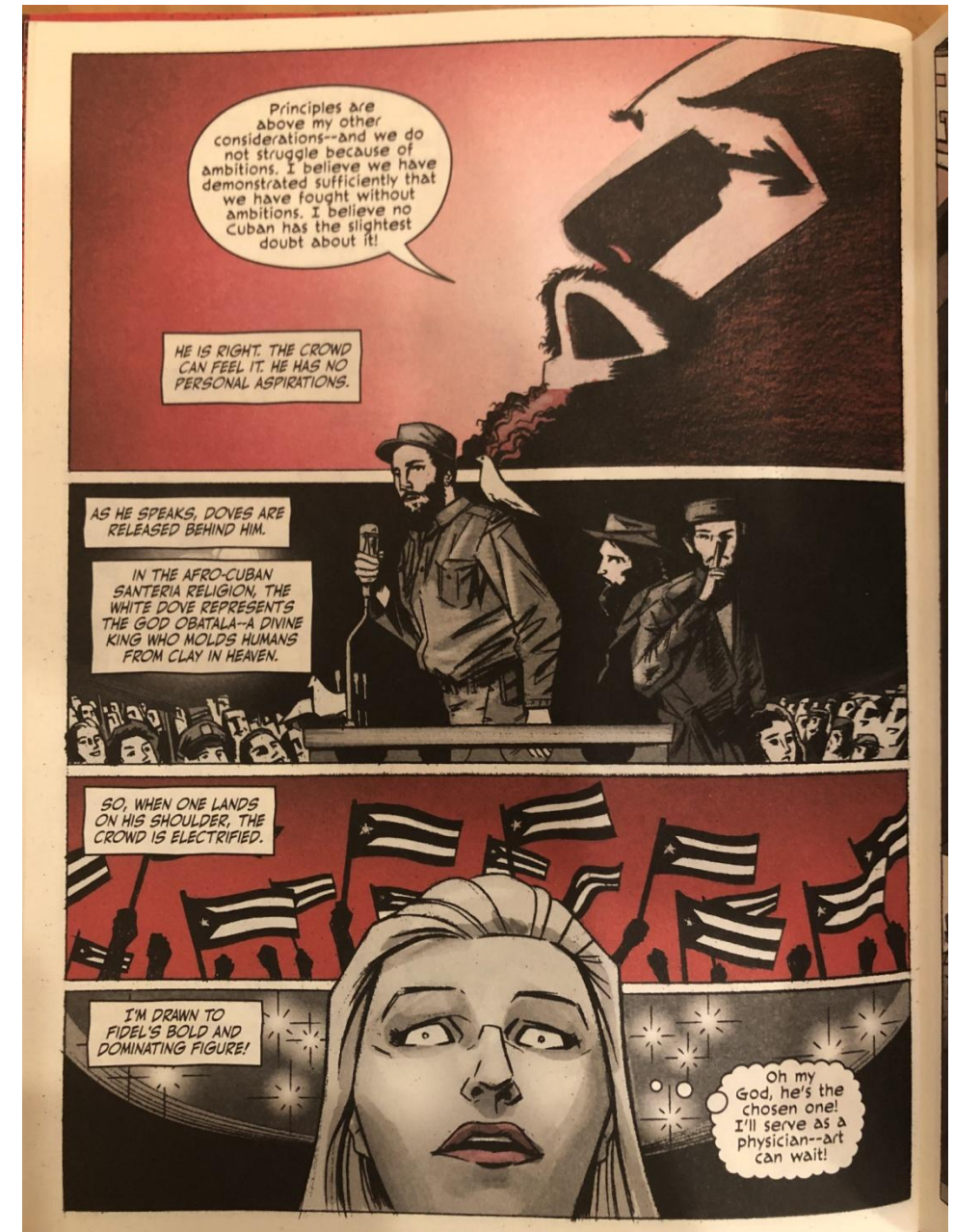
Part I summary and panel/page analysis:

1. What types of panels do we have here? How many? Are there splash pages or bleeds? Gutters and frames? What might the purpose of this arrangement be? What types of shots are used and why?
2. Is there meaning to be found in the use of text (internal/external dialogue) as well as font?
3. Is colour used expressively/symbolically here?
4. Do any images in particular stand out? Why?

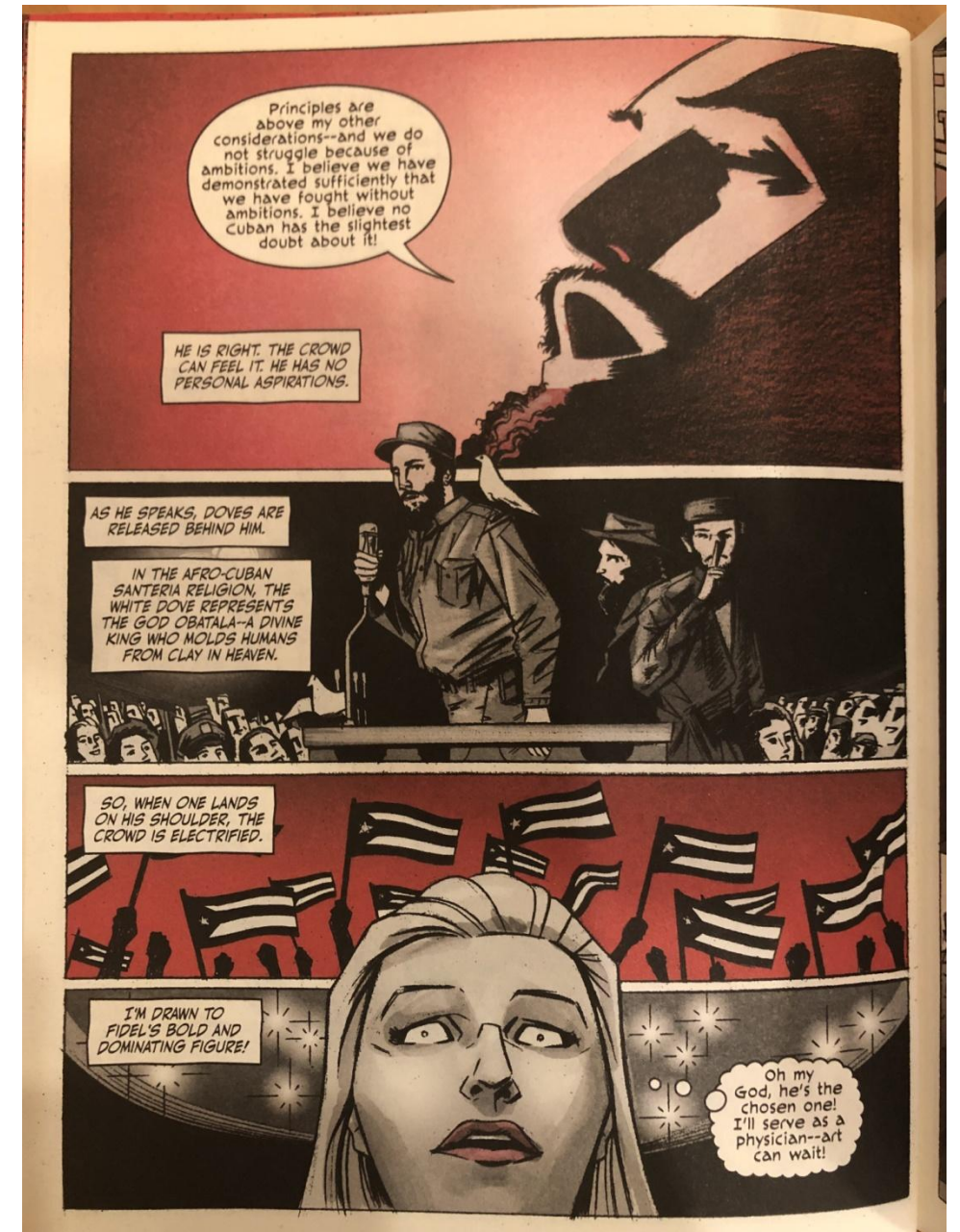


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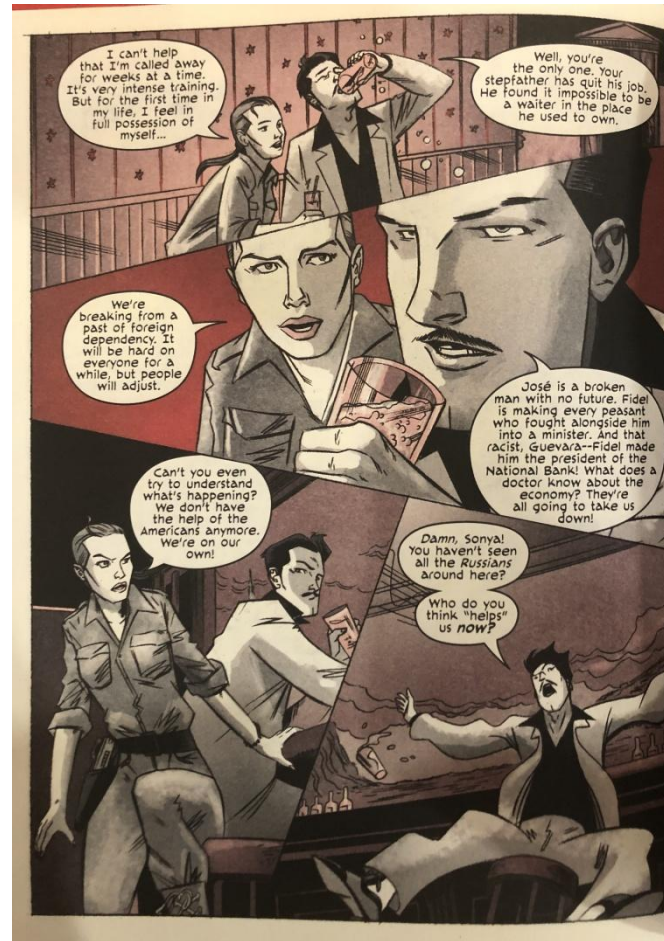
Part I summary and panel/page analysis:



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Page 26: ...Finally I am going to be an Artist!



Page 19: ...people will adjust

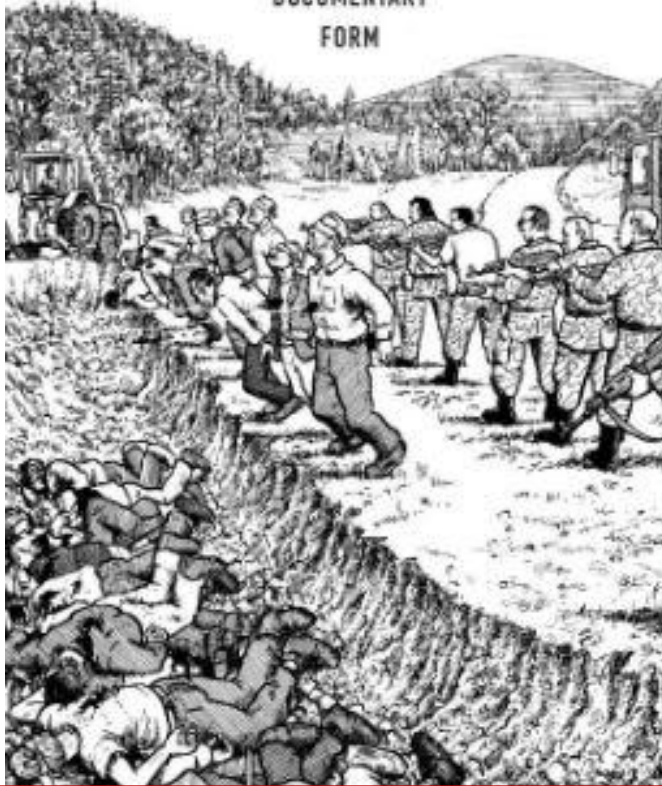


Page 30: ...the revolution will pay for health care.

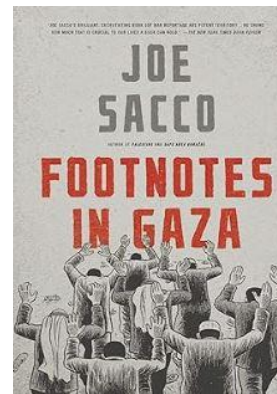
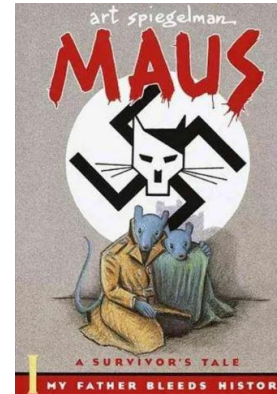
Pause: *Disaster Drawn*

HILLARY L. CHUTE
DISASTER DRAWN

VISUAL WITNESS,
COMICS, AND
DOCUMENTARY
FORM



Harvard University Press, 2016



Non-fiction comics are “a form of documentary, as a form of witnessing” (1)

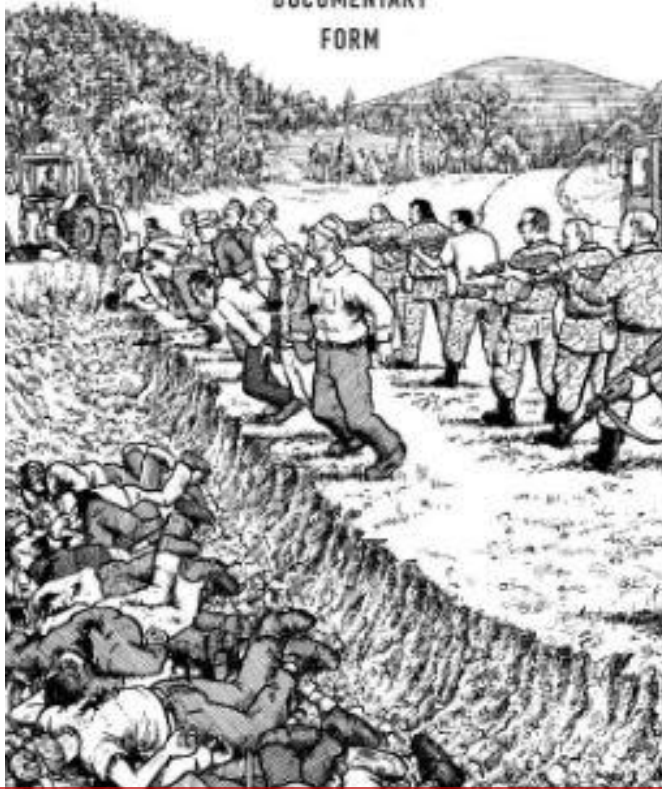
“There are many examples of the visual-verbal form of comics, drawn by hand, **operating as documentary and addressing history, witness, and testimony**” (2)

“The essential form of comics— **its collection of frames—is relevant to its inclination to document.** Documentary (as an adjective and a noun) is about the presentation of evidence. **In its succession of replete frames, comics calls attention to itself, specifically, as evidence.** Comics makes a reader access the unfolding of evidence in the movement of its basic grammar, by aggregating and accumulating frames of information.” (2)

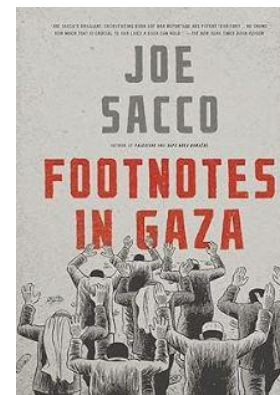
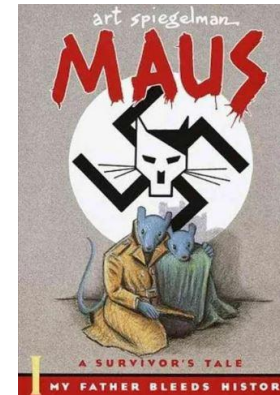
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VISUAL WITNESS,
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Harvard University Press, 2016



“...there are so many difficult and even extreme world-historical conflicts portrayed in the form of comics...a site of documentary that is expanding as I write...” (4)

3 main questions Chute asks:

1. How do the now-numerous powerful works about world-historical conflict in comics form operate?
2. To what end, aesthetically and politically, do they visualize testimony?
3. How do they engage spectacle, memory, and lived lives—as well as extinguished lives?

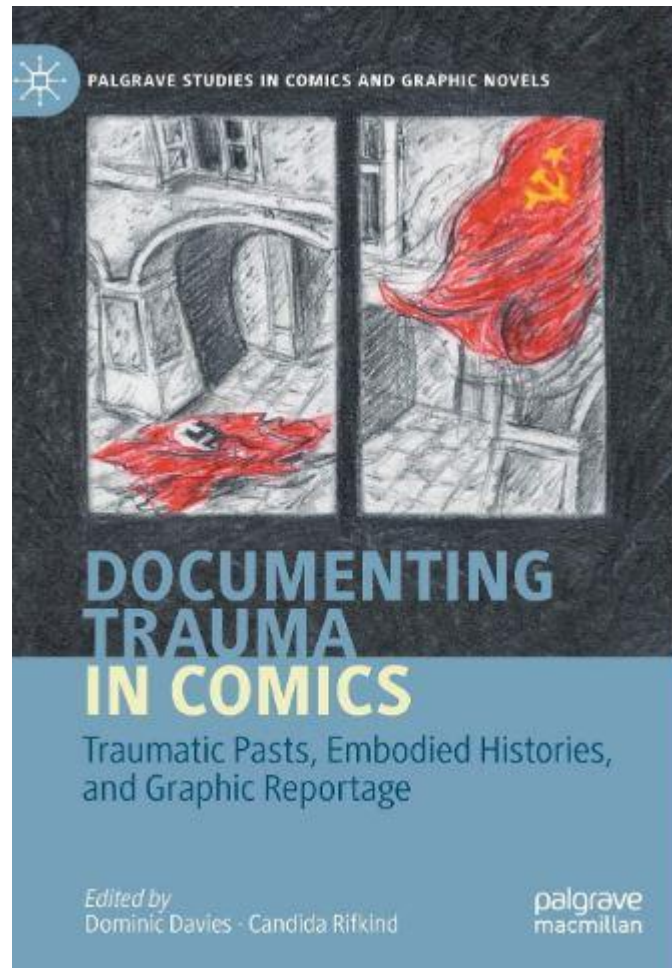
Author's Note

There were aspects of my life I preferred to forget because they were too painful to remember. In spite of myself, flashes of past experiences appeared, and in the process of reconstructing them I learned that testimony is important to the ideals and endurance of the human spirit, as well as to my own.

This book is for the people of Cuba everywhere who have not been heard, who have endured economic hardship, who long to express themselves through art without the fear of imprisonment, and who still fight for the return of freedom once enjoyed.

—Inverna Lockpez

Pause: *Documenting Trauma in Comics*



Palgrave MacMillan, 2020

“comics...invoke [trauma], play with it, revise it, challenge it, and in their most innovative moments, **move beyond it.** ...” (8)

“the comics form as a kind of ‘**working through**’ of **trauma**...comics document traumatic pasts, not trauma that is passed.” (21)

“comics are not formal mirrors that simply reflect dominant symbolic frameworks, established cultural narratives, or psychic symptoms, but are in fact **a generative force** at the core of trauma itself, **moulding and melding it into new shapes**” (21-2).

3 main questions Davies & Rifkind ask:

1. Why are so many contemporary comics and graphic narratives written as memoirs or documentaries of traumatic events?
2. Is there a specific relationship between the comics form and the documentation and reportage of trauma?
3. How do the interpretive demands made on comics readers shape their relationships with traumatic events?

Part II analysis – mini whiteboard activity:

In small (or large) groups, choose one of the following segments from Part II. Keeping in mind the idea of comics as testimony/witness/evidence and a working through of trauma, as well as our 4 guiding questions for analysis (to the right), discuss the portrayal of the events that take place in the segment you have chosen. If you finish one, you can attempt another.

1. Bay of pigs invasion (PDF 34-55)
2. Sonya's imprisonment & torture (PDF 57-69)
3. Sonya's Dream (PDF 56, 75)
4. The return to "normal" (PDF 76-87)

Guiding questions for analysis:

1. What types of panels do we have here? How many per page? Are there splash pages or bleeds? Gutters and frames? Emanata or Onomatopoeia? What might the purpose of these arrangements be? What types of shots are used, and why?
2. Is there meaning to be found in the use of text (internal/external dialogue), captions, as well as font?
3. Is colour used expressively/symbolically here?
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Wrap up: Part I and II discussion

1. Do you agree with the idea that for Sonya, the revolution is rather **black and white** (straightforward)? Does Sonya's view of the revolution change from part I to part II? What textual (either visual or verbal) evidence do you have to support your opinion?
2. What is the **role of art** in the revolution? What is the **role of revolution** in art?
3. Can one **dream of revolution**? Can a revolution **affect one's dreams**?
4. According to Lockpez's story, is there room for **charity** and **hospitality** in the revolution?
5. Can we consider comics a form of documentary and witnessing? What is the purpose of using an alter ego? Can we still consider "**autobiofictionalography**" documentary and witnessing?
6. Can documenting one's testimony through comics art be **cathartic**?

For Friday: Part III (PDF 88-136), Assembly 3: "My Life? My Revolution?"