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Blending Fact and Fiction in Graphic Narratives of the Falklands War

Abstract

In this article, we argue that non-fictional graphic war narratives are a powerful tool for influencing people's interest in and attitudes towards the issue of war because they offer an effective combination of affective engagement and cognitive mechanisms that speak to how people interpret fact and fiction.

The article first reviews the recent theoretical and empirical research on factors of visual narratives for narrative impact and for changing people's attitude, including message authenticity and affective immersion. Through analyzing a selection of Argentine comics about the 1982 Falklands War, produced across three decades, we explicate how the prominent stylistic and narrative features achieve message trustworthiness and affective engagement drawing on different persuasive strategies. These strategies include the use of widely circulated news photographs to authenticate the narrative, the inclusion of a broadly known fictional war correspondent (with mixed results), as well as the first-person point of view to emotionally engage readers in the war stories.

In synthesis, this article unravels how these narrative mechanisms are combined in graphic war narratives with different persuasive intents in a particularly effective way, namely through the subtle blending of a perceived reality linked to the authentic war materials and typical fictional storytelling devices. At the same time, the article sheds light on the limits of these devices, highlighting as an area for further inquiry a situation where the identified narrative devices effectively undermine the graphic war narrative's documentary ambition.

1. Introduction

In recent years, graphic non-fiction has been evaluated across a variety of areas and has become a popular vehicle for incorporating social, political, scientific, and other educational messages into entertainment media. For instance, several studies have shown that graphic non-fiction provides effective educational material in the areas of history (Cromer and Clark), social studies (Christensen), literature (Versaci "How Comic Books" and "This Book"), and science (Tatalociv; Green and Myers). In this article, we argue that graphic non-fiction, in particular, war-themed graphic narratives, offers a powerful way of influencing people's attitudes towards armed conflicts, as well as their emotional and intellectual engagement with wars both past and present. This is achieved mainly through a combination of cognitive factors and storytelling devices that the genre of graphic war narratives is particularly suited to deliver and that speaks to how people interpret fact and fiction. This paper will elucidate the functions of these mechanisms through synthesizing recent theoretical and empirical research findings on narrative impact and authentication. Furthermore, the analysis in this paper will also suggest that, while the blending of fact and fiction arguably increases narrative engagement and persuasive impact, nevertheless, an excess of literary techniques and the resulting fictionalization can undermine a narrative's trustworthiness to the point of putting at risk its documentary function.

We define graphic war narratives as narratives about specific armed conflicts told in comics format. While we consider such narratives to be works of non-fiction insofar as they have a socially sanctioned documentary function that is firmly anchored in the historical events about which they claim to inform the reader (González and Serra), they often include elements typically considered markers of fictionality such as frame narratives or eyewitness characters that cannot directly be linked to the real-world author. As we will show in this paper, such elements form part of the repertoire of narrative techniques that foster immersion and identification, and ultimately, persuasion and attitude change.

To examine our hypothesis, we draw on a corpus of Argentine comics about the 1982 Falklands War published between 1984 and 2012. The background of the war and the comics materials are briefly described as follows:

On 2 April 1982, Argentine troops invaded the Falkland Islands located in the South Atlantic, some 500 km off the South American coast. Within ten and a half weeks, a British task force sent by then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher crushed the attempt to establish Argentine sovereignty over the inhospitable archipelago. The military defeat against Britain left deep marks on Argentina's culture

and society. Argentine cultural responses to this war, that cost more than 900 lives on both sides, demonstrate an on-going uneasiness about the failed attempt to reintegrate the Islas Malvinas, as they are called in Spanish, into national territory. The disastrous outcome of the military expedition accelerated Argentina's return to democracy in 1983 after years of ruthless dictatorship. In cultural memory, however, this positive consequence of the Falklands War tends to be overshadowed by a sense of collective humiliation, if not trauma, which often goes hand in hand with the perceived heroism of the Argentine soldiers fighting for a just cause against a superior enemy.

Comics artists in Argentina have engaged with the Falklands War from 1982 up to the present, targeting different generations of readers with varying persuasive purposes. We have selected these comics because they form a coherent corpus that illustrates that the basic stylistic and narrative devices employed to effect narrative persuasion in war-themed comics are not specific to any particular ideological position or assessment of the armed conflict and its consequences, but form part of a general repertoire commonly used in graphic war narratives for informing the public while promoting a certain socio-political ideology. These devices are mobilized to enhance message authenticity of factual information, while evoking affective ties that are often constructed by means of a fictional, character-centered storytelling structure that draws the readers into the main characters' world. At the same time, presenting a diachronic analysis of Falklands War comics allows us to establish an explicit link between the uses of specific stylistic features in comics and their particular ideological pursuits and persuasive intents.

To our knowledge, little research has been carried out on the cognitive and theoretical foundations of narrative persuasion in graphic non-fiction and, in particular, on the ways in which the blending of fact and fiction may be a commonly used strategy to help overcome people's resistance to persuasion (Moyer-Guse and Nabi). Against this backdrop, the present article advances our general understanding of how persuasive mechanisms are mobilized to create impactful graphic war narratives.

In section 2, we provide an overview of the recent studies on the factors of persuasion in entertainment narratives. It reviews the empirical evidence of cognitive factors that impact on people's attitude change, as well as studies of narrative forms that are often used in visual war narratives. In section 3, we present our analysis, which shows how the storytelling features found in Argentine Falklands War comics implement the main cognitive factors and narrative devices reviewed in section 2. The diachronic comparison then identifies different ways in which the persuasive strategies are employed

for depicting the same war at different moments in time. The article concludes with a set of persuasive factors of graphic war narratives and points out some directions and challenges for future research.

2. Review of Formal Devices and Cognitive Factors for Narrative Persuasion

2.1. Story Factors for Message Authenticity

When categorizing the stylistic devices in graphic non-fiction such as graphic journalism, Wibke Weber and Hans-Martin Rall point out that one of the most significant purposes of graphic journalism is to achieve message authenticity (see, for example, their paper in this issue). Several stylistic devices in graphic non-fiction are employed precisely to enhance a narrative's trustworthiness. According to Weber and Rall, such devices include the comic author's presence in the text as a first-hand observer, visual resemblance of drawings to specific settings or events, and the reproduction or redrawing of photographs and documentary evidence. These devices can be found equally in graphic war narratives looking back at past conflicts.

Along the same lines, when discussing the function of multimedia frames used frequently in war films, Tseng ("The impact") proposes that one effective strategy by which these films seek to persuade viewers is the employment of media technology contemporary to the war depicted in the film. This strategy is to increase the credibility of the events of war portrayed in the films. This contention derives from empirical findings regarding media persuasiveness, which appears to be closely linked to the capabilities of human memory; most importantly, to the observation that our memory tends to separate a message from its source or carrier (Zacks). We have probably all experienced this before: we can remember the content of a certain piece of information but do not quite recall where we saw, read, or heard it. A piece of information does not necessarily have an impact at the moment we perceive it, but its significance may grow subsequently. By applying this finding to the reception of film, it becomes clear how, in the long term, viewers of films such as *JFK* (1992, Oliver Stone) or *Iron Lady* (2012, Phylida Lloyd) might conflate fictional elements found in the feature film with factual footage from other media sources. Thus, the plausibility of a message may increase over time under the influence of the media's persuasive effect. In this way, a war film can effectively manipulate the authenticity of the depicted events, using the pseudo-documentary format and mixing formats of fact and fiction to augment the credibility of a particular idea that has been planted in the viewer's mind in the long term.

2.2. Cognitive Factors for Increasing Narrative Impact

In the past decades, a body of empirical research has investigated the factors that contribute to narrative impact in entertainment media (Shrum). A range of cognitive mechanisms related to narrative immersion have been identified as relevant for achieving social impact (Bandura, Moyer-Gusé and Nabi).

The concept of narrative immersion, also referred to as narrative absorption, transportation or involvement (Green and Brock), is the process of being drawn into a narrative and experiencing both cognitive and emotional responses to the storyline. A considerable body of empirical research (Green and Brock; Slater and Rouner) has shown that fictional storylines are much more powerful in engaging people than overtly persuasive non-fictional messages because fictional narratives can more effectively reduce message counterarguing, a form of resistance characterized by the "generation of thoughts that dispute or are inconsistent with the persuasive argument" (Slater and Rouner 180).

One main immersive factor of fictional narrative is *character identification*, a process "in which an individual perceives another person as similar or at least as a person with whom they might have a social relationship" (Slater and Rouner 178). According to recent empirical findings, when people identify with fictional characters during the narrative interpretation process, they show a higher level of acceptance of the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors depicted in a narrative (Slater and Rouner). In the context of character immersion in comics, empirical evidence based on eye-tracking experiments indicates that character-centered narratives using dominantly first-person narration with embedded fictional stories indeed prompt the readers to focus their attention predominantly on the main character (Tseng et al.).

As we will suggest in our analysis, people's cognitive disposition towards narrative immersion and character identification, combined with the strategies conventionally used for narrative authentication in graphic non-fiction (Weber and Rall) are crucial factors for engaging readers as well as evoking a critical awareness towards graphic war narratives.

3. Analysis of Falklands War Comics

In this section, we will examine a selection of Argentine Falklands War comics from the 1980s to the 2010s. A table listing the comics included in our study (Table 1) is shown at the end of this section, providing an overview of the three different sets of comics on the same war: first, a series of connected comics episodes published in 1984/85, i.e., shortly after the Falklands war; second, a collection from

2007, on the occasion of the war's twenty-fifth anniversary; and, third, a collection from 2012, published exactly three decades after the war. In this section, we contextualize the production of these comics in each set and then describe the mechanisms employed with the aim to persuade the reader to accept their underlying ideology.

3.1. 1984/1985: Conflicting and Critical Voices towards the War

The first serious attempt at telling the story of the Falklands War in comics format with some historical perspective was published in the Argentine comics magazine *Fierro* between September 1984 and March 1985, a year after Argentina's return to democracy. Free from the constraints imposed by censorship and the risk of persecution by the previous military regime, "La batalla de las Malvinas" (The Battle of the Malvinas) takes a clear political stand against the fallen dictatorship (Barreiro). In this serialized comic, the responsibility for the war lies with an arrogant and ruthless Argentine leadership that saw the occupation of the Falkland Islands as a means to unite the country at a time of extreme instability, thereby hoping to perpetuate the rule of the military. Although this general interpretation of events is now shared widely, at the time things seemed much less clear and the Argentine public was deeply divided over the Falklands War.

Each eight-page episode of this multi-authored Falklands War comic is preceded by a brief, single-column overview and general interpretation of the subsequent pages. This paratextual layer, which is barely mentioned by scholars writing on this graphic war narrative (see, for example, García 84), is key to understanding how emotionally charged the discourse about the Falklands War was at the time of the comic's publication. The expressive language used throughout these short presentations highlights the absurdity of this war and openly addresses the challenges involved in telling its story in comics format.

Extensive use of News Photography

The comic itself makes extensive use of captions that offer precise information about both the political context and the course of events, particularly in the early episodes, integrating stylized monochrome renditions of several news photographs that document the nationalist sentiment in the immediate wake of the Argentine occupation of the Falkland Islands' only town Port Stanley and the diplomatic initiatives to prevent the conflict from escalating. One of the photos of a spontaneous mass gathering in the center of Buenos Aires, in which the enthusiastic crowd shows its support for the annexation, is reproduced twice: first at the top of the page as part of a series of photographs documenting the event; and a second time at the bottom of the same page as a torn photograph whose shreds have been

imperfectly rearranged (fig. 1). This visual technique not only draws attention to the mediality of the reproduced material, making it stand out as originating in a medium different than that of the embedding comic; the physical destruction of the photographic record of the display of nationalism and unity behind a brutal military regime also metaphorically demolishes the mass euphoria, exposing it as the result of the manipulation by the regime rather than a reflection of people's true concerns: the same people who only days earlier had taken part in a mass protest against the military junta, for "Pan, Paz y Trabajo" (Bread, Peace and Work). Here, the media blending has two seemingly opposite functions: on the one hand, it adds authority to the graphic narrative; on the other hand, the torn photograph questions the ability of photography to produce meaningful records of events.[1] As we will explain shortly, this type of ambiguity is arguably the main reason why the comic was abandoned before it had run its course, as it undermines its overall persuasiveness.

Fig. 1: Sample pages from "La batalla de las Malvinas" (1984/85) showing the stylized reproduction of several news photographs (left page; also panels 1, 4 and 6 on the right page); fictional war correspondent Ernie Pike (top right); Pikes handwritten notes (bottom right).

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1 On the perceived claim to authenticity of war photography as opposed to war comics, see Schmid (in particular 35–41).

Authoritative Narrative Voice

In an attempt to establish a voice within the comic that can comment with some authority on the events from an outside perspective, "La batalla de las Malvinas" introduces a storyline featuring US war correspondent Ernie Pike. In the handwritten entries of Pike's notebook, we find a general assessment of the situation as well as personal impressions, recorded from the position of a civilian observer experienced in matters of war. Pike's voice of reason provides the moral compass for the events represented in the comic (fig. 1).

To the Argentine reader, Ernie Pike was already a familiar character. Created some twenty-five years earlier, in 1957, by Argentine writer Héctor Germán Oesterheld and Italian comics artist Hugo Pratt, resident in Argentina at the time, the fictional war correspondent had made his way into the Argentine popular imaginary through a long-running series of *historietas* (comics) centered around the protagonist's experiences as an observer on the battlefield. While inserting this widely known fictional character,[2] whose pacifist attitude was well established amongst the Argentine readership, into the precise historical setting of the still recent Falklands War undermines to some extent the comic's persuasiveness as a chronicle of events, the blend of fact and fiction draws the reader into the story in ways the strict adherence to established historical facts cannot. But "La batalla de las Malvinas" does not stop at borrowing Ernie Pike as a vehicle for the overall message of the comic and a point of reference for the Argentine reader.

On one occasion, Pike explicitly asks an Argentine journalist and travel companion after a friend by the name of "Héctor Oesterheld," explaining that he has had difficulties finding him in Buenos Aires. This descending ontological metalepsis (Kukkonen 224), where the author is placed on the same narrative level within the fiction as the character he has created (Bell and Alber 167), is a politically charged reference to the most famous and prolific of twentieth-century Argentine comic writers (Gociol and Rosemberg 37–40), who was disappeared by the military junta in 1977 and presumably murdered the following year (Vázquez 235). In his brief reply to Pike's inquiry, the fellow journalist informs him of Oesterheld's fate, warning him not to mention his name in public. The reference to Oesterheld's disappearance anchors the diegesis explicitly in the context of the Argentine *guerra sucia* (Dirty War) between 1974 and 1983, inviting readers to view the Falklands War as part of this very setting of politically motivated violence and state persecution. On the one hand, having Pike inquire about his real-world author neutralizes to some extent the fictionalizing effect of inserting the

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2 The character of Ernie Pike is loosely based on the actual US-American journalist Ernie Pyle (1900–45).

established comics character. On the other hand, the intertextual reference to Ernie Pike and the metaleptic evocation of his real-world creator from within the diegesis are techniques closely associated with the realm of fictional storytelling. As a result of this ambitious and complex textual strategy, the comic soon turns into a hodgepodge of elements from a number of different genres: political pamphlet, war chronicle, human-interest story, and elaborate fiction in comics format. It has been argued that it was this hybridity, or lack of clarity regarding the comic's textual status, that led scriptwriter Ricardo Barreiro and his team of graphic artists into an impasse (García 84).

After seven episodes covering the first half of the conflict's chronology, until 7 May 1982, "La batalla de las Malvinas" was discontinued without further explanation. From the perspective of the storytelling mechanisms employed to engage readers, we propose to conceptualize the abandonment of this comic by its creators as the consequence of the specific way of blending different media. This blending entails an excessive degree of fictionalization and a certain hesitation towards the truth value of photographs, both of which enter in conflict with the comic's overall conception as a graphic narrative documenting the Falklands War.

More generally, our analysis suggests that there exists a tipping point beyond which the cumulative effect of combining strategies of message authentication and reader engagement effectively undermines the trustworthiness of a graphic war narrative. As a consequence, the narrative's aim to provide an account of historical events that the reader accepts as possessing a high degree of authority and authenticity is put at risk. Empirical studies are needed to test this hypothesis.

3.2. Falklands War Comics in the 2000s: Endorsing the Heroism of Soldiers

After this early approach from 1984/85, Argentine comics documenting the Falklands War tend to appear in close proximity to anniversaries perceived as significant opportunities to revisit the event commemorated, often in clearly defined clusters. For example, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Falklands War in 2007, a comic book with the title *La Armada en Malvinas* (The Navy on the Falklands) was released in Buenos Aires (Rodríguez Muñoz and Fernández). The book of ninety-six pages, scripted by Argentine journalist Armando S. Fernández and published by the Argentine Navy, contains eight graphic narratives relating to specific military episodes from the Falklands War in chronological order, spanning from the Argentine landing on April 2 to the decisive British victory at Mount Tumbledown on June 14. What stands out in this series of relatively short graphic war narratives—each episode occupies between five and sixteen pages—is not only the complete absence of any reference to the political situation in Argentina in 1982, but also the

insistence on the Argentine officers' unquestionable sense of duty and readiness to sacrifice their lives for what is seen as a just cause.

Inter-Pictorial Reference to Moments in War

Although this ideological message is largely text driven, delegating the artwork to a supporting, illustrative role, several episodes contain panels that are direct renditions of photographs from the events concerned and that were circulated widely at the time. The first episode, "El desembarco argentino del 2 de abril de 1982" (The Argentine Landing on April 2, 1982), for example, includes a prominent drawing based on an iconic photograph that appeared on the cover of the popular Argentine magazine *Gente* on April 8, 1982. It shows an Argentine soldier waving his gun at three Royal Marines with their arms raised in surrender on April 2 of that same year (fig. 2).[3]

Fig 2: Left: cover of Argentine magazine *Gente* from April 8, 1982. Right: page from the first episode of *La Armada en Malvinas* (2007).

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3 The same page from the first episode also occupies a central position on the book's cover. Interestingly, the accompanying caption refers to the panels on that page as "fotos [que] darán la vuelta al mundo" (photos [that] will go round the world), evidencing an awareness of the specific photographic mediality while proposing implicitly that the artistic rendition—the panel is not framed or otherwise marked as a photograph within the narrative—stands in for the actual photograph.

To the Argentine reader familiar with the Falklands War imagery, the interpictorial borrowings[4] from well-known war photographs in *La Armada en Malvinas* authenticate the graphic narrative, giving it credibility as a quasi-historical record of the events.[5] Effective as such interpictorial references are in adding authenticity to graphic war narratives, they do not openly give away the materiality of the source and depend on the reader's recognition of the original material.

Letters and Photographs as a Means for Narrative Authentication and Affective Engagement

A more compelling, or at least more reliable, way of boosting authenticity is arguably to insert other media as objects into the comic; that is, to represent a medium in its specific materiality within the graphic narrative rather than merely appropriating its content. For this narrative device to affect its basic authenticating function, it is not necessary that the media objects themselves be authentic. Prime examples of this media blending in the volume under consideration are letters of soldiers to their wives and the photograph of a soldier's fiancée which the former contemplates on the battlefield before he is killed by enemy fire (fig. 3). Despite the fictionality of these objects, they ultimately function as markers of authenticity, creating a heightened sense of trustworthiness while adding human interest to the graphic war narrative. The latter offers opportunities for character identification that foster narrative persuasion characteristic of graphic war narratives that blend fact and fiction.

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4 For the use of this and related terms, see Rose (1) and Heydemann (12).

5 There is a certain tension between this strategy, which is supported by the book's subtitle's claim to historicity, "La historia en historieta" (History in Comics), on the one hand, and the disclaimer on the copyright page, on the other hand. This disclaimer concedes that the personal situations in the graphic war narrative "pueden no ajustarse exactamente a la realidad histórica pero … tratan de representar el espíritu de los hechos" (may not exactly conform to historical reality but try to represent the spirit of the events) (Rodríguez Muñoz and Fernández 2).

Fig. 3: Argentine soldier contemplating a photograph of his fiancée before being killed in action (from "El BIM 5 pelea cada metro en Tumbledown," *La Armada en Malvinas* (2007)).

3.3. After 2010: Mediated Points of View and Embedded Narratives

Five years after *La Armada en Malvinas*, in 2012, another collection of graphic Falklands War narratives by the same scriptwriter was published: *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (Malvinas: Illustrated Stories), with a total of ten episodes (Fernández). Here the direct experience of navy officers that predominated in the previous volume gives way to a more explicitly mediated and framed memory of the Falklands War that reflects the perceived need to approximate the historical events of 1982 to a younger post-war generation of Argentinians not directly affected by the conflict at the time. "Historia de una foto" (Story/History of a Photograph), for example, is framed as the retrospective account of the Argentine photographer who took one of the iconic photographs of the

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Royal Marines' surrender to Argentine soldiers on April 2, 1982, referred to above. This frame narrative is linked to a photo exhibition on the occasion of the conflict's thirtieth anniversary in April 2012, in which said photograph occupies a prominent place, as it represents and preserves "un instante inolvidable para todos los argentines" (an unforgettable moment for all Argentinians), as the unnamed photographer comments in the final panel (fig. 4).[6]

Fig. 4: Final page of "Historia de una foto" from *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (2012). The single full-page panel includes a line art rendition of a widely disseminated photograph of Royal Marines surrendering to an Argentine soldier in the Falklands War (see also Figure 2).

A second example from this collection, "Concurso escolar" (School Competition), integrates both the Internet (Google search) and drawings on a paper notepad into the comic. The Falklands War itself is again mediated through the frame narrative of the thirtieth anniversary celebrations in 2012; this time, the point of departure is a literary competition in which the teenage pupils of a secondary school compete for the privilege of naming their classroom after an Argentine soldier who died in the conflict. We follow the team of three pupils as they research the topic on the internet and ask parents and grandparents about the *Malvinas* (Falklands). Each one of them ends up focusing on a different

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6 The picture was taken by the professional photographer Rafael Wolmann, whose presence on the islands was coincidental. For a detailed commentary on this and other photographs documenting the Argentine capture of Port Stanley on April 2, 1982, see Cora Gamarnik's insightful study.

moment of the Falkland Islands' history, summarizing the key aspects of their respective story in the form of simple monochrome drawings on lined notepaper (fig. 5). As observed before, here again the blending of different media adds authenticity to the story, while the narrative frame bridges the chronological gap that separates the historical events from their commemoration. However, it is important to highlight the ambivalence of this framing device: although the frame narratives in these stories rhetorically connect the past with the present, they also distance the reader from the events insofar as they add a prominent narrative layer that serves as the platform for a simple ideological message: that the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands was a just and heroic endeavor.

Fig. 5: Page from "Concurso escolar," in *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (2012). The second panel on this page simulates pupils' drawings on lined notepaper.

Figure 6 shows another example from this collection. "Carta a un soldado" (Letter to a Soldier) employs a first-person narrative frame, in which the war memories are embedded. The story of the Falklands War and soldiers' sacrifices is depicted entirely through the flashback of the female

protagonist, Silvina. The story starts with Silvina coming across a letter she wrote three decades earlier, but never sent, to a soldier named Ramiro, who was fighting in the Falklands War alongside her best friend Camila's fiancé (upper left page in fig. 6). The historical dimension of the main story is unpacked through her memories and the contents of the letters they exchanged (upper right and bottom left pages in fig. 6). The story ends by drawing the audience back to the present setting, where Silvina and Camila blame the cruelty of the British soldiers for Ramiro's death, praising his courage and heroism and vowing to never forget him.

Fig. 6: Selected pages from "Carta a un sodaldo," in *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (2012), depicting flashbacks of the female character.

The strategy of narrative immersion via subjective storytelling of the main fictional character can be found in several examples of the 2012 volume. Figure 7 shows two pages from another story, "El juego de la guerra" (The War Game), in which, thirty years after the Falklands War, an Argentine university student is trying to find out details about the conflict. She visits a classmate's father (shown

in the bottom left panel in figure 7), who is a veteran of the war. The story then unfolds as a flashback of his personal, traumatizing experiences. Along the same lines, figure 8 shows the beginning of the story "El enemigo" (The Enemy) with the setting of a university lecture hall. The invited speaker, a veteran of the Falklands War, addresses the students as an eyewitness of the historical war events. Figures 6, 7 and 8 show remarkably similar visual patterns, i.e., the main fictional characters are framed in close-up, following which they remember their experience of the war as an embedded story.

As our analysis of several stories from the 2012 volume of Falklands War comics shows, as the war becomes more distant, the visual narrative uses more personalized, character-centered fictional strategies to immerse a new generation of readers in the historical events of the factual war, of which they have no direct recollection. While at this point in time, it would appear that remembering the Falklands War in Argentine culture remains the prerogative of those directly affected by it, it is only a matter of time before the readers of this "postgeneration" (Hirsch 103 et passim) will themselves begin to engage in transmitting their parents' "traumatic knowledge and experience" (106), to which these comics bear witness.

Fig. 7: Selected pages from "El juego de la guerra," in *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (2012), depicting flashbacks of an Argentine veteran of the Falklands War (the character shown in the bottom panel in the left page).
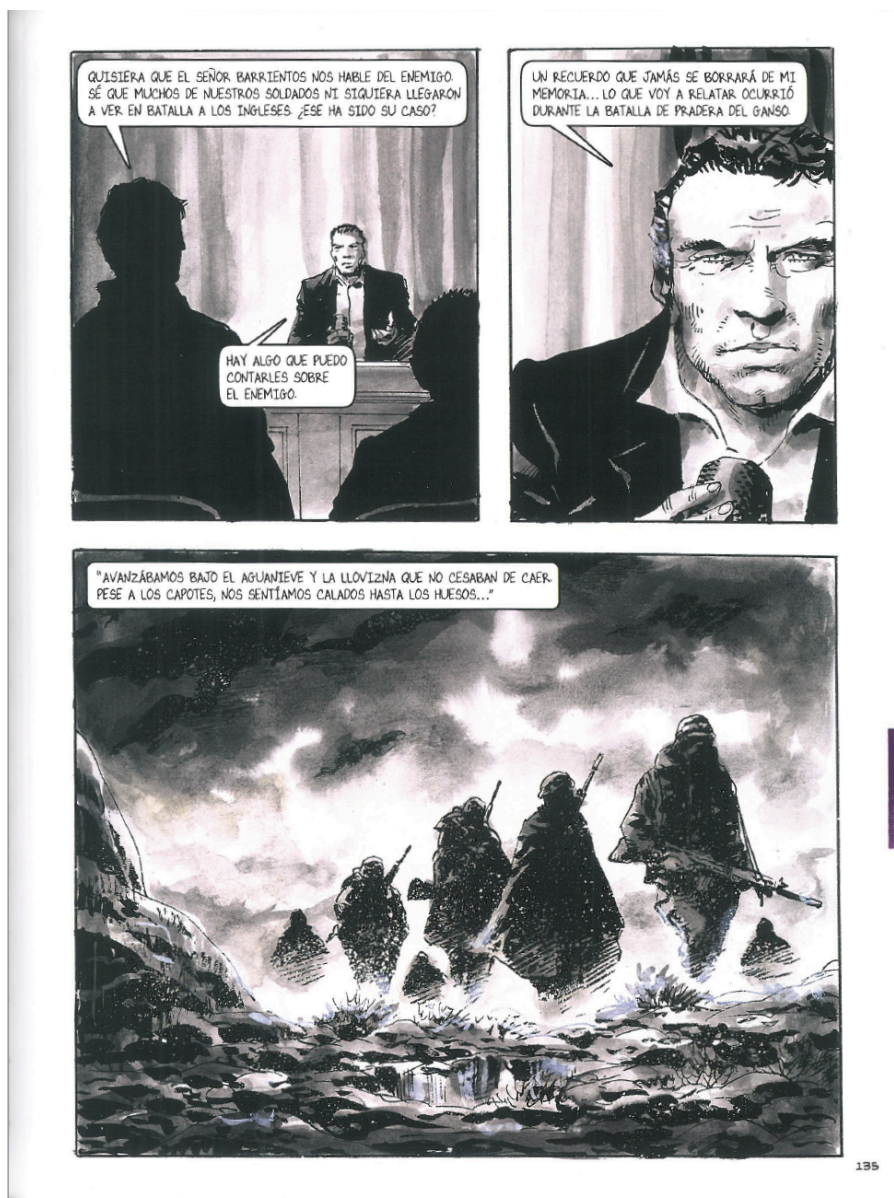
Fig. 8: A page from "El enemigo" depicting the start of a flashback by an Argentine Falklands War veteran (the character in the upper panels), in *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas* (2012).

Table 1 lists the three sets of texts analyzed and summarizes the different ideological purposes and narrative strategies for blending fact and fiction.

Year	Titles	Persuasive intents	Narrative strategies
1984/85	"La batalla de Malvinas" (publ. in comics magazine *Fierro*)	Exposing the injustice of recent political and military events	News photographs, authoritative voice of war journalist
2007	"El desembarco argentino del 2 de abril de 1982" "El BIM 5 pelea cada metro en Tumbledown" (publ. in volume *La Armada en Malvinas*)	Endorsing the soldiers' heroism	Inter-pictorial references, family letters and photographs

2012	"Concurso escolar" "Carta a un soldado" "El juego de la guerra" "El enemigo" (publ. in volume *Malvinas: Historias ilustradas*)	Commemorating the courage of the fallen soldiers and the trauma of the supervisors	Present-day narrative frame with embedded first-person, subjective narration by main fictional characters about their war experience

4. General Discussion and Future Directions for Research

We have argued that the graphic war narratives in the two collections from 2007 and 2012, respectively, detach the Falklands War from its specific political context. This observation raises the question to what extent the strategies of authentication and character identification found in these narratives by Armando S. Fernández, may be particularly well suited to promoting the stories' depoliticizing approach towards the armed conflict. It would appear that in the discussed examples, the narrative strategies correlate with an ideology of uncritical patriotism that builds on identification and strong emotional engagement, both of which these graphic war narratives offer. By contrast, the serialized narrative "La batalla de las Malvinas" from 1984/85, could not deliver on its aim to provide a historically grounded political reading of the Falklands War, despite mobilizing very similar narrative strategies. As discussed above, it is our contention that the reason for this failure lies ultimately in the excess of fictionalizing, literary techniques which prove to be incompatible with this war narrative's critical ideological message and documentary ambition. More generally, the comparison suggests that reader engagement and narrative persuasion in graphic war narratives are neither automatic nor directly linked to specific techniques—narrative frames, intertextuality and interpictorality, the blending of media genres and multiple channels (photos, letters, school notebook), or fictionalizing devices such as ontological metalepsis—but need to be tested and understood in relation to a war comic's ideological message. This, in turn, is closely linked to a graphic war narrative's particular context of production and presumed target audience.

In the examples from the 2012 collection of graphic Falklands War narratives, the genre blending and character identification are closely linked to the respective narrative frame that anchors the story in the present of the original readership rather than in the time of the events. This strategy, which engages the reader by bridging the ever-increasing chronological gap between the armed conflict and the moment of remembering it, contrasts with the approach of the genre of graphic war journalism, which tends to be more strictly contemporary to the events reported, aiming for what Cord A. Scott has called "'first version history' by reporting events in the field as soon as possible" (137), illusionary as this proximity may be in practice. This immediacy offers specific opportunities for

narrative persuasion unavailable to graphic narratives commemorating a war from a historical distance.

Finally, we would like to point out some future directions for research on war graphic narrative. Further empirical research into the effectiveness of narrative impact can build on the narrative strategies suggested in this article in order to gain a more complete understanding of the particular ways in which media messages are processed, and of the resultant effects. Moreover, any empirical assessment of narrative persuasion in particular texts needs to take into account not only a narrative's formal features but also its particular ideology in relation to the context of production, target audience, and communicative purposes. More specifically, the examples discussed in this paper show that, while narrative devices for blending fact and fiction arguably increase narrative engagement and persuasive impact, nevertheless, an excess of literary techniques and the resulting aestheticization and fictionalization can undermine a narrative's message authenticity to the point of putting at risk its documentary function.

This dilemma of balancing message credibility and narrative engagement via fictionalization needs to be explored in more detail in the future. Our general observation based on the analyses in this article is that adding visual and affective elements in order to emotionally engage the public can lead to message uncertainty and risk the credibility of factual information. Having unraveled the narrative strategies of blending fact and fiction to address the challenge of balancing message trustworthiness and affective impact—a challenge faced by media and communication research more generally (Hornsey and Fielding)—we propose that further research could investigate how to most effectively combine narratives of factual information with strategies drawing on character and narrative involvement.

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