

★ **Goodbye, My Havana: The Life and Times of a Gringa in Revolutionary Cuba**

Anna Veltfort

Redwood Press (Sep 24, 2019)

Softcover \$24.00 (240pp)

978-1-5036-1049-1

Anna Veltfort's piercing graphic memoir *Goodbye, My Havana* reveals the oppression of Cuba's citizens by the authoritarian Castro government, as witnessed and experienced by a young lesbian woman.

Veltfort was a teenager in 1962 when her procommunist stepfather brought her family to Cuba from the US. She was an outsider, both a pale-skinned "gringa" and a young woman discovering that her sexuality violated the norms prescribed by the Cuban government.

At first, Veltfort was protected by her father's position in the government, but later she saw her friends suffer the harsh consequences of being discovered as LGBTQ+. Over the course of years, she learned about the Cuban leadership's policy failures. The information was contrary to the steady diet of propaganda that the Cuban people were supplied.

By 1972, the restrictions on freedoms were too severe, the personal risk too great, and opportunities elsewhere were too enticing. Veltfort, by then a young woman, decided to leave Cuba. It was a perilous endeavor.

The book's illustrations are clear and consistent throughout, a critical feature for a detailed story with many characters. The layouts weave into the book actual copies of newspaper headlines, propaganda posters, excerpts from Cuban magazines, and photos, as well as other relevant material, including text from Castro's speeches. The result is a deep, penetrating stare into Castro's Cuba.

Though it is somewhat overshadowed by the political intrigue, Veltfort's coming-of-age-story is also compelling. She finds love, only to leave it behind in Cuba. She's plucky and endearing as both character and narrator.

With its rare combination of skill, observation, circumstance, and experience, *Goodbye, My Havana* is an unforgettable graphic memoir.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.