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Junior Year Writing

24 April 2020

*One! Hundred! Demons!* Graphic Reflections

Subverting expectations can allow an artist to convey their message from a unique angle, or to make a message more poignant from the contrast of expectation against reality. Lynda Barry uses a relatively simple art style in *One! Hundred! Demons!* reminiscent of children's picture books. This art style belies a story that, though mostly consisting of childhood memories, is neither childish nor surface-level. In doing so, Barry successfully subverts the reader's expectations, effusing her stories with greater empathy and highlighting the difficulties she faced while growing up. Many comic panels throughout the book feature characters with emotive expressions, often culminating in a short but sharp moment of reflection at the end of each chapter. These instances of emotional resonance shine as a result of the buildup preceding them, both narratively and visually. The images throughout *One! Hundred! Demons!* also enhance the story by lending greater weight to Barry's ability to reflect, from her self-portraits of reflection to physical images from her youth.

Growing up implies a loss of innocence; this inherently clashes with Barry's innocent-looking style of drawing. This is heightened by the apparent speed at which Barry grew up, which she seems to regret when she writes "some people call it 'growing up too fast' but actually it made some of us unable to grow up at all" (66). *One! Hundred! Demons!* may use its characteristic style because of this inability to grow up. This contrast is perhaps apparent nowhere more than at the end of the chapter "Resilience" where it is heavily implied that Barry

was abused by an adult in a manner she either cannot or chooses not to remember. Further highlighting the difference between the subject and the art form, this drawing is one of the youngest-looking of Barry in the entire book (fig. 1). The lines and colors are, largely like those found elsewhere, round and colorful, with the flowers on this panel consisting of inoffensive red circles atop gentle green stalks. Barry and her doll appear to be smiling at the man who is speaking; we do not see the top half of his body. Obscuring the man's face has the effect of heightening the contrast between what is shown in the panel and what is implied, because showing the man's face would possibly give away his intentions. This also leaves the panel open to being read as a metaphor for a traumatic event, and not just as a literal memory. The cigarette in the man's hand also parallels her mother's cigarette in the previous panel. Both are signs of being an "adult," as though Barry is continuously abused by those older than herself. The great space between the visuals and the narrative makes the trials of Barry's past feel all the more treacherous and unfair.

The concluding thoughts on the closing page of every chapter in *One! Hundred! Demons!* are integral components of the story. These narrative and emotional set pieces are given heft by the buildup within the preceding pages, as well as their occasional step back from the place and time of the rest of the chapter. The chapter "The Aswang" takes place within the same house, except for the final panel (fig. 2). This last panel features present day Barry looking at the story as she is drawing. By directly showing Barry reflecting, we are taken out of the past and are shown how these events have affected Barry as she is today. In this case, Barry is reflecting on the fact that she never had children, breaking the cycle of parental abuse the only way she knew how. The stark light of the lamp and Barry's beleaguered expression contrasts with the whimsical surface-layer of the chapter, but parallels the deeper narrative about parents and

children. She is also wearing a similar striped shirt to her younger self in the rest of the chapter, linking the two (fig. 3).

I think the most impactful example of this end-of-chapter climax is in the chapter “Magic,” where Barry stops hanging out with her younger friend Ev. She draws herself holding up a photograph of her together with Ev to her husband, and on the last panel of the chapter we see what the photograph looks like; not drawn, but in actuality (fig. 4, 5). We get a glimpse into Barry’s life from a perspective other than her drawing. It is a black and white photograph that instantly makes Barry and Ev’s friendship feel as distant in time as the photograph itself is distant in appearance to the rest of the book. The musical notes with a blue background connect to the page earlier in the chapter, where Barry is listening to the radio in a room drawn with blue hues and floating musical notes. The lyrics “Hello, it’s me” are the last words on the page with the photograph. The preceding panel shows Barry lost in thought about the photograph, and because of the musical notes and text on the final panel, this reflection can be connected to the lyrics after “Hello it’s me” which are “I’ve thought about us for a long long time” (fig. 6). Barry even says earlier in the chapter that “I never talked to Ev about it. I never explained what was going on. I just avoided her and hoped she would forget about me. I did this 31 years ago but my stomach still knots up when I think of it” (103). Clearly Barry has been “thinking about [Ev] for a long long time.” All of this emotion culminates in the panel with the photograph; an image that ties the chapter together and completes Barry’s reflection by publicly apologizing to her friend.

The precise manner in which Barry draws her characters, especially herself, represents an important aspect of her memory. As mentioned previously, characters rarely appear static; they frequently wear expressions conveying some sort of emotion. It is notable, then, to contrast this with the use of glasses throughout the book. When characters wear glasses in *One! Hundred!*

*Demons!*, their eyes are completely obscured. This gives these characters a remote and unknowable feeling, such as how Barry's mother and grandmother are frequently depicted (fig. 7). An exception is on the last panel of the chapter "Hate," where the substitute teacher with glasses is drawn peering down at Barry's letter (fig. 8). This gives a greater emotional connection to the scene, humanizing her substitute teacher and letting the reader see through to the teacher's true feelings. There are some more exceptions throughout the first chapter, such as when Barry's boyfriend talks down to her (fig. 9). His glasses are reflecting light in such a way that the reflection resembles closed eyes, fitting his smug demeanor. Barry is wearing glasses in almost every panel she draws of herself as an adult, in some way continuing the trend from her mother and grandmother. The glasses are circular instead of elliptical or square however; they take on a softer shape with no sharp edges (fig. 4). Perhaps this represents the author's view that while she shares the blood of these women, she is also a kinder person.

The pictures throughout the book do not always illustrate exactly what the text describes; what is absent may be just as important as what is present. While Barry mentions her mother frequently, her father is only mentioned briefly. Both of her parents were "seeing other people" and were never around (fig. 10). Her father is only mentioned with her mother as "my parents," never individually. It logically follows that since her parents are described as not being present, they are not drawn in the panel, but it remains the only panel directly mentioning Barry's father, except for one later in which her parents' divorce is mentioned in passing. In this panel Barry is arguing with her brother, and in the panel mentioning the divorce of her parents, Barry and Ev are gazing up at the clouds together (fig. 4). This lack of parental supervision is felt in Barry fighting with her brothers because she has to take care of them, and in her and Ev illegally climbing onto their school. We are left to infer that perhaps her father was rarely around

beforehand anyways, or possibly he was around but did not have as strong of an effect on Barry as her mother or grandmother. The fact that her father is “no longer” around seems to imply that he was previously, making his omission all the more surprising. The other notable time someone is not fully drawn is the man at the end of “Resilience,” but even then the lower half of his body is shown.

The ways in which Barry remembers and represents the past uniquely reflects her life experience and outlook. She makes use of bright colors and soft lines to draw pictures whose pictorial immaturity often stands against its thematic tone. This potentiates the story’s message about growing up too quickly. The technique of removing herself from the past at the end of certain chapters and drawing a self-portrait in present time reflecting shows how the past has shaped who Barry has become. Even seemingly small clothing choices such as the use of glasses can become a way of conveying a character’s personality. Throughout *One! Hundred! Demons!* Lynda Barry uses the graphic medium not just to portray the events of the text, but to communicate themes and ideas that otherwise would never be apparent.

Appendix

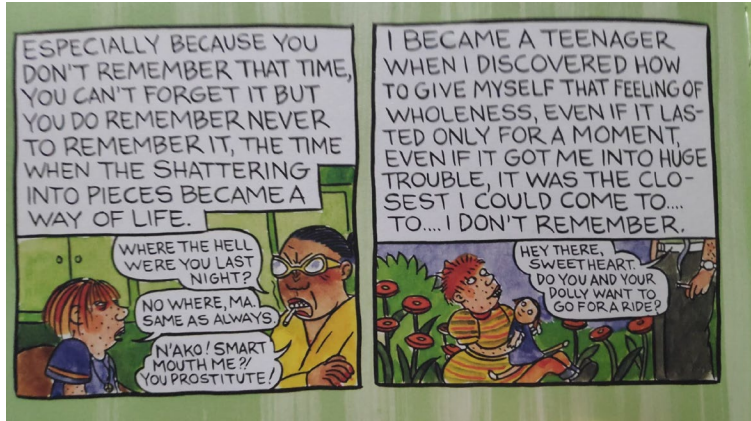


Figure 1: Barry implying she was abused by an adult, page 72

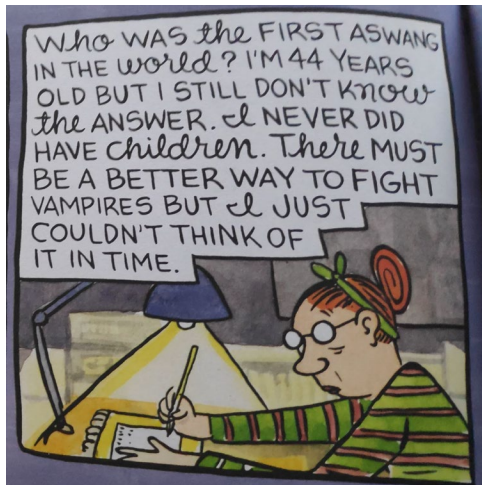


Figure 2: Barry reflecting, page 96

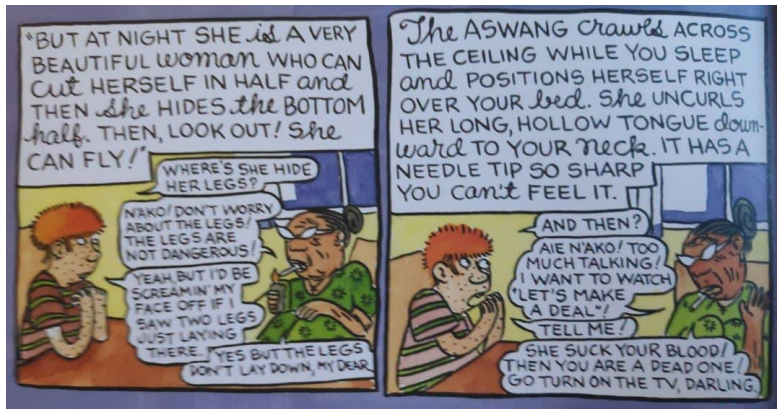


Figure 3: A younger Barry in a striped shirt, page 90



Figure 4: Barry holding a photograph of Ev; Barry and Ev looking at the clouds, page 106

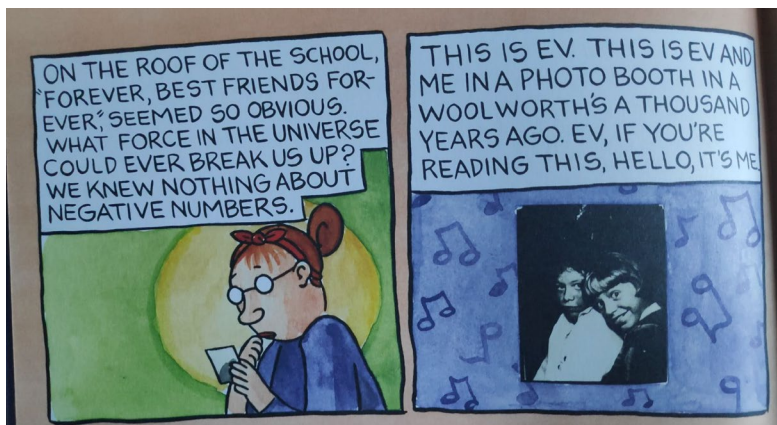


Figure 5: Barry looking at a photograph of her and Ev; photograph of her with Ev, page 108



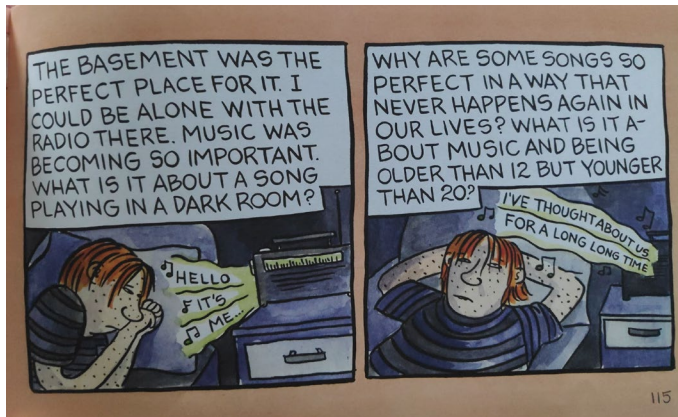


Figure 6: Barry listening to music, 105 (page number in image is a misprint)

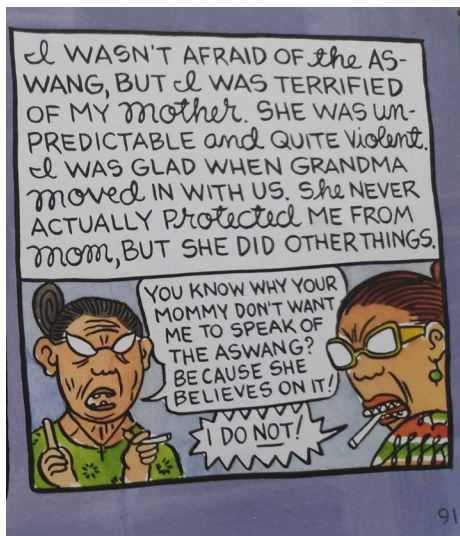


Figure 7: Barry's mother and grandmother, page 93



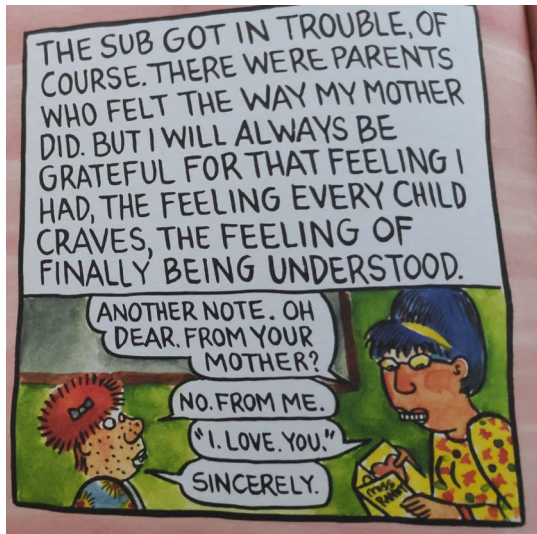


Figure 8: Barry's substitute teacher, page 84



Figure 9: Barry's ex-boyfriend, page 21



Figure 10: Barry's missing parents, page 101