

Washington & Lee University

“Drawing is an act of empathy”:

From Poverty to Healing in Nora Krug’s *Belonging* and Lynda Barry’s *One Hundred Demons*

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If a hybrid were a plant, it would be a grafted tree, where blossoms from old wounds grow together to produce an entirely new fruit (Antonetta xxiv, xxvi, xxxiii). This is a visual representation of the healing process that artists experience in creating hybrid works. German illustrator Nora Krug and Filipina cartoonist Lynda Barry come from different backgrounds, but both suffer from psychological impoverishment. As a multifaceted problem, poverty requires a multifaceted approach to healing. The kaleidoscopic nature of the hybrid literary genre allows Krug and Barry to explore a variety of meaning-making forms which enrich their respective memoirs while helping them heal. In Nora Krug's *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, and Lynda Barry's *One Hundred Demons*, hybridity is a tool of investigation, play, and restoration through which both creators overcome their experiences of poverty and share their stories with wisdom and empathy.

Defining Poverty: The Capabilities Approach

An examination of the effects of poverty on the lives and hybrid writings of Krug and Barry first requires an expansion of the definition of poverty itself. Poverty is often considered exclusively through the narrow lens of personal finance, or “the condition of having little or no wealth or few material possessions” (“Poverty”). As a socioeconomic condition, however, poverty is defined not only by destitution, but also by deficiency. “Deficiency” is an intentionally vague state of “being poorly supplied with something” (“Poverty”), which encompasses an array of deficits in both individual lives and institutions which offer insufficient supports to impoverished populations.

This concept of deficiency as the primary characteristic of poverty is expounded by notable philosophers Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, who address poverty through the Capabilities Approach. Sen equates capability to “a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to

achieve alternative functioning combinations” – in other words, the freedom to “do” or “be” a variety of things (75). Like deficiencies, capabilities can be internal “abilities residing inside a person” as well as external “freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment” (Nussbaum 20). Nussbaum in particular focuses on social justice and has curated a list of ten Central Capabilities which answer the fundamental question, “What does a life worthy of human dignity require?” (32). These

Central Capabilities are:

1. Life
2. Bodily health
3. Bodily integrity
4. Senses, imagination, and thought
5. Emotions
6. Practical reason
7. Affiliation
8. Other species
9. Play
10. Control over one’s environment (Nussbaum 33-34)

According to the Capabilities Approach, “at a bare minimum, an ample threshold level of the ten Central Capabilities is required” to maintain a life of human dignity (Nussbaum 32); thus, a deficiency in any of these capabilities is indicative of impoverishment.

Those who experience capability deficiencies are often subjected to what Dorothy Allison calls “the politics of *they*,” where people shame and “stigmatize the different while secretly dreading that they might be [or become] one of the different themselves” (“A Question of Class”). Shame is a pernicious form of psychological oppression. To feel shame is to be “weighted down in [one’s] mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over [one’s] self-esteem” and self-worth (Bartky). The danger of shame is that it can be inflicted by both external and internal sources; in other words, “the psychologically oppressed [can] become their own

oppressors” (Bartky). With this in mind, shame can be thought of as a consequence of capability deficiency and another form of poverty.

Nora Krug: Healing through Investigation

The psychosocial focus of the Capabilities Approach invites an exploration of Nora Krug’s memoir, *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, through a poverty-minded lens. Even though Krug does not live in a state of material destitution, she does experience the psychological oppression of shame as a consequence of capability deficiencies and a form of poverty. Krug has spent much of her life struggling to reconcile the dichotomy of her German identity, which reflects both her home and the infamy of World War II. This contentious connection has created a deficiency in the capability of affiliation, or “having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others;” and “nondiscrimination on the basis of...national origin” (Nussbaum 33). Despite being three generations removed from the war, Krug has inherited the shame of a nation for the Holocaust and faces constant discrimination for her German affiliation.

Krug has been conditioned to feel ashamed of her German identity by both intranational and international influences. In school, Krug and her peers took mandatory class field trips to concentration camp museums; analyzed Hitler’s speeches as schoolwork exercises; “staged avant-garde theater performances on the anniversary of Reichskristallnacht;” and censored their vocabulary (ch. 1 p. 15-18). The goal behind this aggressive confrontation with the past was to become “Fehlerfrei (fault-free)” (Krug ch. 1 p. 17), but it instead proved to be a borderline masochistic pursuit which sucked a new generation into the quagmire of national shame. As an expat intermittently studying and living abroad for the past two decades, Krug has been relentlessly stereotyped, harassed, and humiliated because of her German affiliation (ch. 1 p. 11;

ch. 2 p. 3-4). Psychological oppression is both “dehumanizing and depersonalizing” (Bartky), so whether Krug was interviewing Holocaust survivors for a school assignment or being spat at for speaking German in the U.S. (ch 1 p. 17; ch. 2 p. 4), she became a representation of Germany’s ignominious past – not an individual person, but a piece of her nation’s shame. Without the “social bases of self-respect,” Krug has internalized this psychological oppression and is unable to “avoid nonbeneficial pain” (Nussbaum 33-34). She tries to escape conspicuousness by hiding her accent, and even small, seemingly innocent moments, like raising her right arm in a yoga pose, make her feel deeply uncomfortable. “Not even marrying a Jewish man has lessened my German shame,” she admits (Krug ch. 2 p. 4-6).

Another capability in which Krug is deficient is “senses, imagination, and thought,” or “being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a ‘truly human’ way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education” (Nussbaum 33). There were significant “gaps” in Krug’s education – although German schools analyzed the Holocaust on a “collective level,” Krug and her peers were not taught about what happened in their hometowns or given the “personal tools that would have allowed [them] to investigate and take individual responsibility” for what their families did or did not do during the war (*Belonging* ch. 1 p. 18-19; “Who I am as a German” 02:53-03:13). Krug cannot truly imagine, think, and reason about her German identity because she does not have a complete picture of her past. “How do you know who you are,” she muses, “if you don’t understand where you come from?” (Krug ch. 1 p. 21). In this liminal space between recognizing the Holocaust as a German atrocity but not understanding her personal responsibility in it, Krug, like many other Germans, is trapped in shame without knowing exactly what to feel ashamed for. *Belonging* is Krug’s effort to move beyond this cultural paralysis through a multimedia investigation of her family’s history.

Krug's ignorance of her family history is one link in a chain of consequences tied to collective guilt, a concept of moral responsibility imposed upon post-war Germany by the famous psychoanalyst Carl Jung. Jung believed that collective guilt was a "powerful moral stimulus" which would prevent history from repeating itself by forcing "all Germans, regardless of their wartime activities, [to] accept this type of guilt for Nazi atrocities" (Clewell 469-70). While collective guilt has been successful in rendering Germans unable to feign ignorance of the Holocaust, instead of acting as a moral catalyst, it has caused stagnation by compounding trauma across generations and paralyzing an entire nation. The paradox of psychological oppression both "affirms [one's] human status" while also "cut[ting them] off from the sorts of activities that define what it is to be human" (Bartky). Accepting collective guilt meant that although Krug's paternal grandparents were considered "human" enough to be held responsible for the Holocaust, they were denied the human experience of mourning the loss of their son, Franz-Karl, a young Nazi soldier who was killed in action on the battlefield. The energy that Germans should have spent reckoning with the war was instead channeled into national reconstruction, which cemented "mechanisms of denial and disavowal that enabled Germans who had lived through the war to distance themselves" from both their emotions and the roles they had played in the war (Clewell 470). Consequently, Krug's grandparents developed a deficiency in the capability of emotions, impairing their ability "to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger" (Nussbaum 33).

Krug's father manifested this emotional repression as the "replacement child" (Clewell 478), inheriting the name of his ghost brother along with the trauma and expectations of his parents. Two disturbingly similar photographs of Franz Karl I and II, juxtaposed on a single spread, present an eerie visual of this "replacement" which Krug further emphasizes by

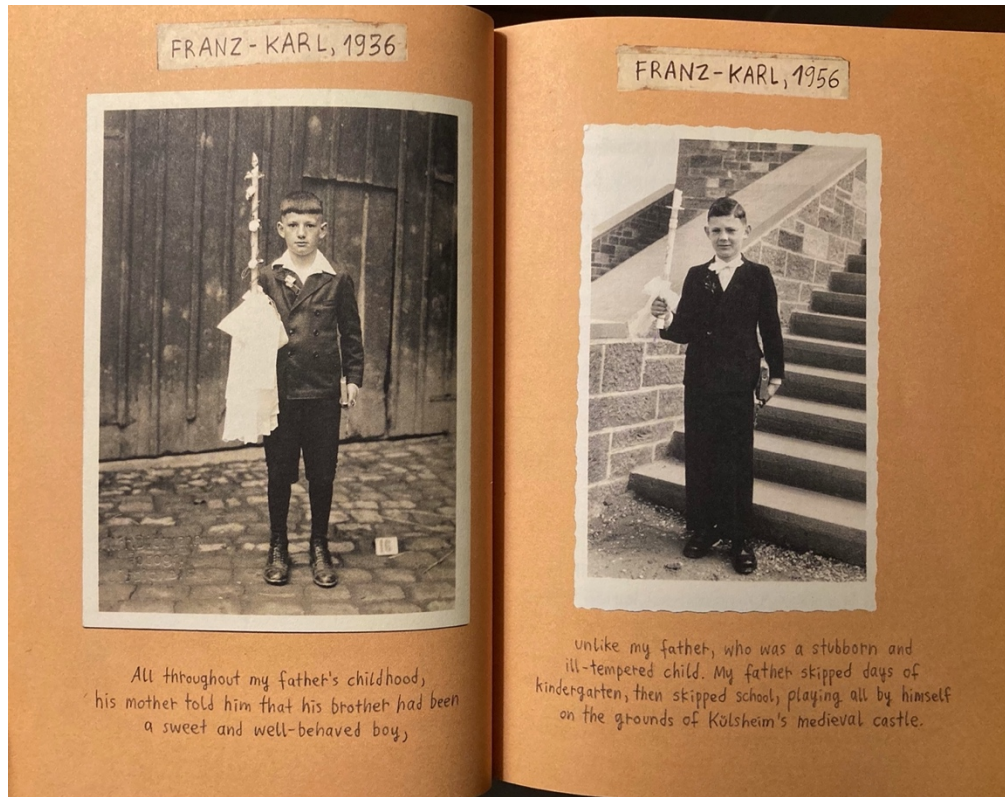


Figure 1. ch. 3 p. 6-7

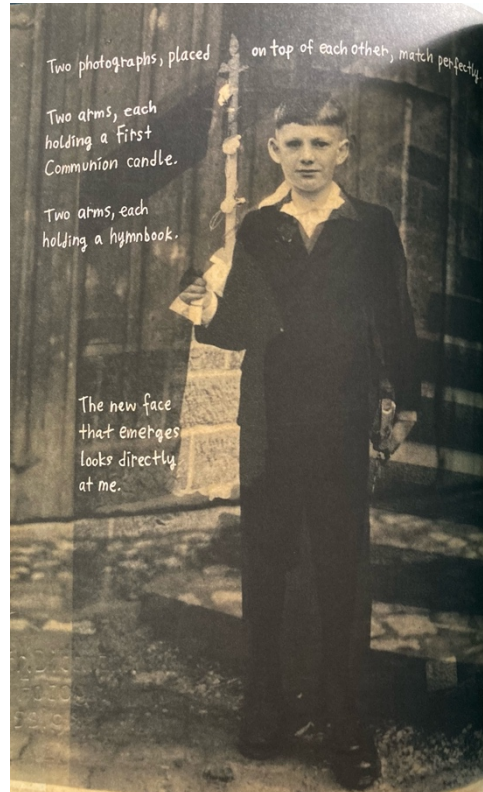


Figure 2. ch. 3 p. 22

overlaying the pictures on a separate page (Figures 1 and 2; ch. 3 p. 6-7, 22). Images in hybrid texts must not merely complement words but be “twined” in a symbiotic relationship where both mediums act as essential storytelling agents (Antonetta xxiv). On their own, these images reveal the impossible expectations of the replacement child: although the images “match perfectly,” they are not and can never be truly identical, and neither can the subjects (Krug ch. 3 p. 22). The replacement child is thus an “(always failing) attempt” to erase historical pain (Clewell 478). Doomed to fail at assuming his brother’s identity, Franz-Karl II developed his own deficiency of emotion by distancing himself from his pain, family, and “physical connection to the war” (Krug ch. 7 p. 6). Now, whenever Krug asks her father about his childhood, he “conceal[s] his anguish and suggest[s] that they change the subject” (ch. 7 p. 2). The sparse illustrations that accompany these conversations on the page reflect not only the emotional distance between the members of Krug’s family, but also the empty “gaps” in her knowledge of her history.

Having inherited her family’s collective guilt, generational trauma, and capability deficiency of emotion, Krug’s only association with her uncle is that “because he had been one of Hitler’s soldiers, [she] learned early on that [she] wasn’t supposed to feel sadness over his premature death” (ch. 3 p. 8). In order to connect with this “complete stranger” (ch. 3 p. 8), Krug explores and takes advantage of multiple mediums, including narrative, photographs, comics, historical artifacts, primary documents, and notebook entries which are compiled in an unpaginated scrapbook format. One discovery yields a schoolbook exercise from Franz-Karl’s days in the Hitler Youth, titled, “The Jew, a Poisonous Mushroom.” This document forms the background of an entire spread, where the clash between Franz-Karl’s intricate German script and his childish drawings of mushrooms and Nazi flags evokes a more “intimate and chilling” feeling than the excerpted English translation alone (Figure 3; Krug ch. 3 p. 9).

The hybridity of Krug's exploration reflects the "visual" and "fragmentary nature of memory." Memory and history, Krug explains, are "an accumulation of individually experienced moments in time that we then make sense of in retrospect" ("Who I am as a German" 05:41-06:10). As Krug attempts to piece together the life of her lost uncle, her multimedia approach helps her strengthen her capability of senses, imagination, and thought by considering what might have influenced Franz-Karl's beliefs; for example, perhaps he had played with similar Nazi-themed children's toys, trading cards, and school primers that Krug presents as flea market finds in an entry from a mini-series called, "From the Scrapbook of a Memory Archivist" (Figure 4; ch. 3 p. 18). Krug draws on her own talent as an illustrator to create comics wherein she immerses herself in the time period. One comic strip depicts a young Franz-Karl writing his anti-Semitic story in a center panel surrounded by panels detailing events and dialogue from the Nazi regime which took place the same day the mushroom story was written (Figure 5; ch. 3 p. 14). There are no gutters between any of the panels in this comic, indicating how easily Nazi ideals could and did seep into the impressionable minds of boys like Franz-Karl.

The variety of mediums Krug employs and features in *Belonging* also reflects Krug's concerted effort to judge her family's past fairly. A memoir that consists only of illustrations where Krug seeks to connect with lost family members may unintentionally insinuate an inappropriate sentimentality for the Nazi regime, but by balancing these illustrations with historical artifacts and incriminating personal documents, Krug simultaneously learns more about her uncle while holding him accountable for his participation as a Nazi soldier. Informed by both empathetic imaginations and critical analysis, Krug ultimately concludes that although Franz-Karl I may have been "too young to understand the power of Nazi propaganda," he was "old enough to understand that Jews are not like poisonous mushrooms" (ch. 3 p. 17).

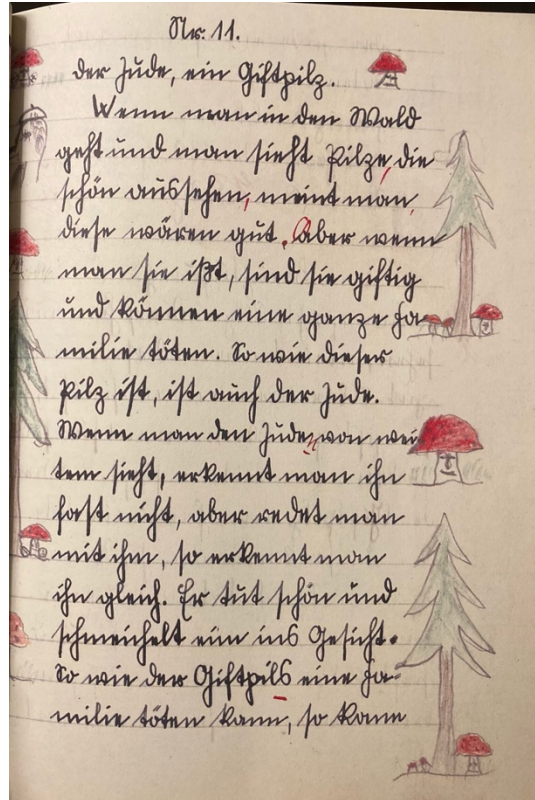


Figure 3. ch. 3 p. 9

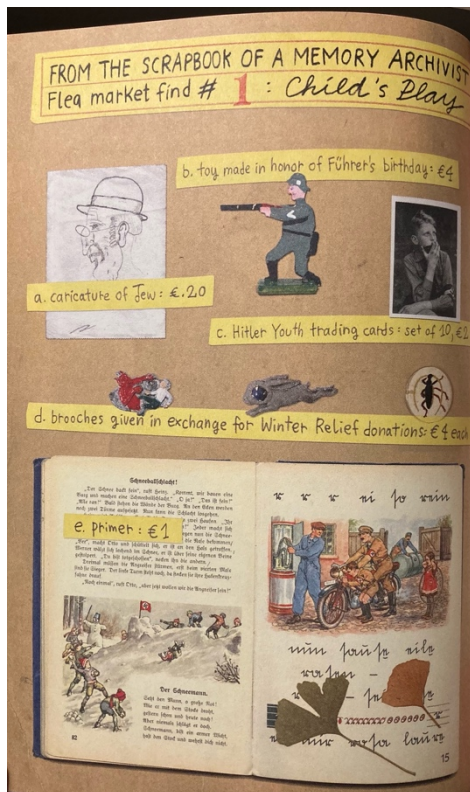


Figure 4. ch. 3 p. 18



Figure 5. ch. 3 p. 14

In addition to improving her capability of senses, imagination and thought, Krug's hybrid artistry allows her to finally exercise her capability of emotions and "experience the loss of [her] uncle's life in a physical way" (ch. 3 p. 20). After finding a copy of the military letter informing Franz-Karl I's parents of the "heroic" moment when he was killed in action (Figure 6; ch. 9 p. 8), Krug devotes the following spread to four overlapping outline drawings of her uncle that mimic a slow-motion reenactment of the moment he was shot. In the first drawing, Franz-Karl I is alive; in the fourth, he is dead; but in the middle two drawings, Krug teases out a liminal space between life and death. This is the space where memory lives, and where Krug, by putting together pieces of Franz-Karl I's life through artifacts and imagination, finds herself "closer than ever" to her uncle (ch. 9 p. 9-10).

Krug has a similar emotional experience while researching her maternal great-uncle Edwin Rock, a Nazi soldier who was reported as missing in combat and never found. With some help, Krug is able to read translated copies of Edwin's letters to his wife from the front lines. As Edwin grows increasingly disconsolate, Krug progressively blurs her illustrations of him until an emotionless, likely prefabricated military notice, presented on an equally blank background, announces Edwin's disappearance (ch. 8 p. 2-6). The next spread is filled with a dark, bleak landscape (Figure 7; ch. 8 p. 7). Krug describes the landscapes she includes in *Belonging* as "emotional landscapes of [herself] and the emotions [she] was going through at a particular moment in time" ("Who I am as a German" 08:29). As the darkest spread in the entire book, this landscape suggests both visual and emotional desolation. Only three short, small sentences appear on this spread, overwhelmed by the blackness of the hills and clouds into which Krug channels her family's sorrow. The hybridity of these pages, filled with landscapes, primary

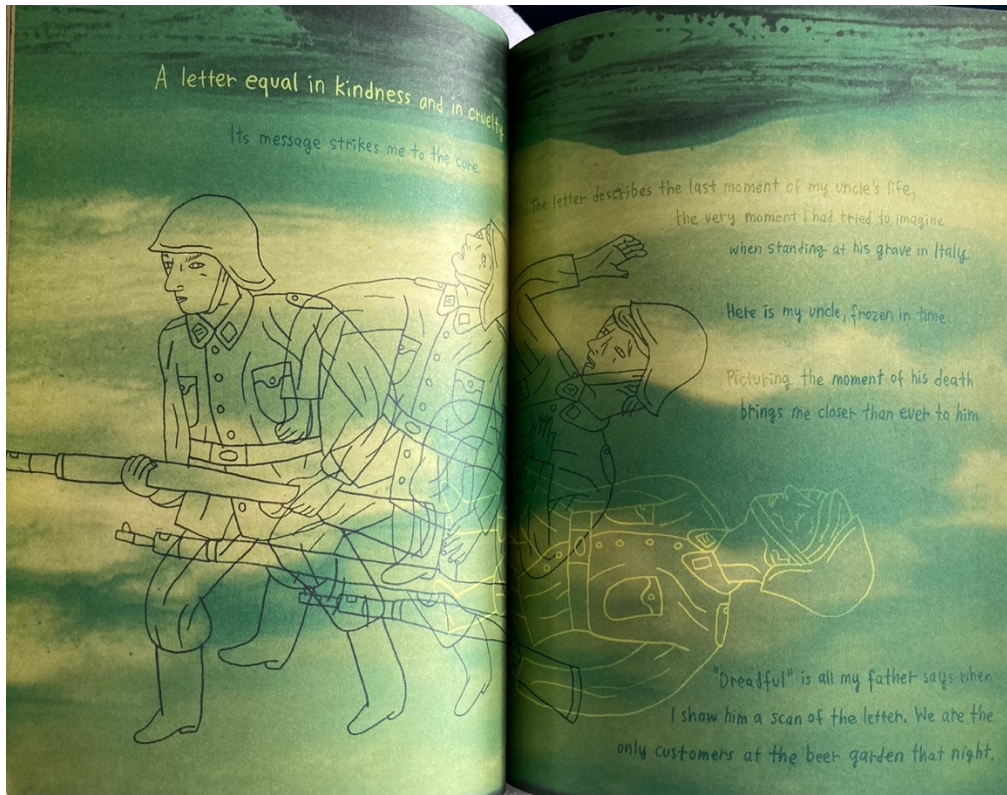


Figure 6. ch. 9 p. 8

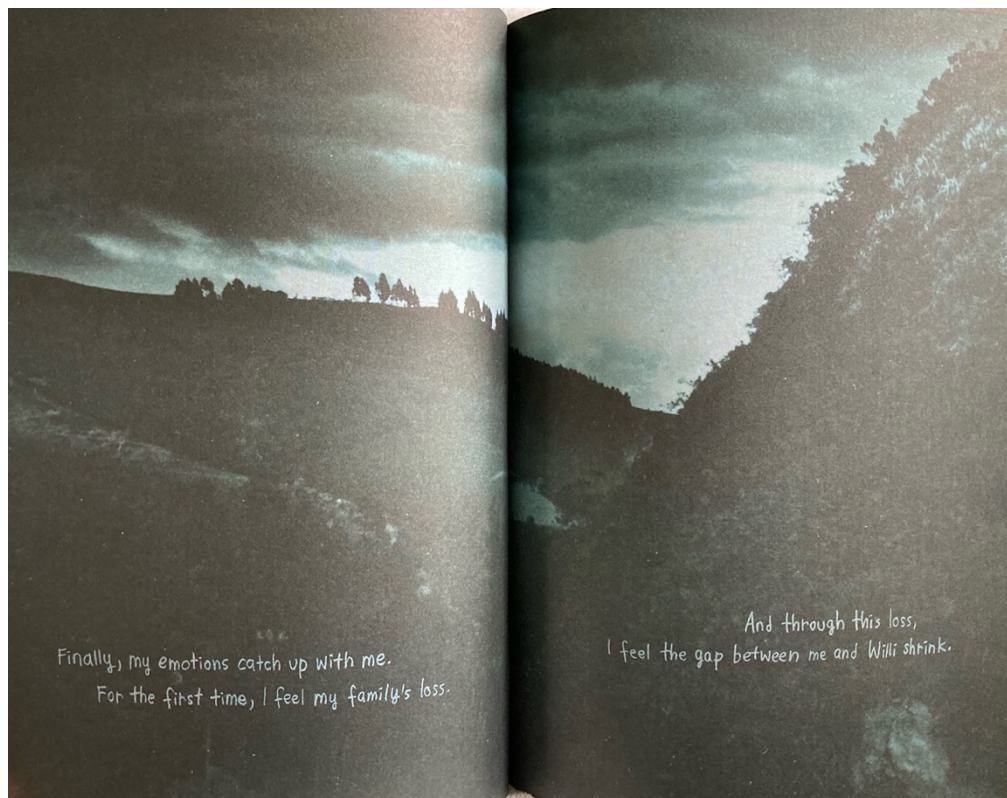


Figure 7. ch. 8 p. 7

documents, and illustrations, break Krug's capability deficiency and "finally [allow her] emotions [to] catch up with [her]." "For the first time," Krug experiences both the weight of her family's loss and a newfound closeness to family members she had never known (ch. 8 p. 7-8).

The other person of interest in Krug's familial investigation is her maternal grandfather, Willi Rock, who was a driving instructor during World War II. Just as Krug's father was distanced from the war, Krug's mother grew up in "the age of oblivion," a period in 1950s Germany where "escapist romance dramas" were all that played on television (ch. 4 p. 1). The denial and distance that had been instilled in war generation Germans by collective guilt was passed on to the next generation, and as a result, Krug's mother never knew or was motivated to learn about her father's political affiliations and actions during the war. This ignorance, perpetuated by generations of shame, was eventually also inherited by Krug and her generation.

In the same way that she pieces together the life of her uncle, Krug constructs a postmortem investigation of her grandfather's complicity in the war by encompassing a variety of mediums which allow her to strengthen her capability of senses, imagination, and thought. Unable to gather substantial information from her family, Krug searches for clues that might indicate Willi's wartime activities through fragmented memories and evidence in Kulsheim's archives, including old telephone books, photographs, newspapers, postcards, eyewitness accounts, and maps. In a climactic moment, Krug scans a 1938 map of Kulsheim and discovers that Willi's driving school was located across the street from the synagogue that was burned down in an act of terrorism during Reichkristallnacht (Figure 8; ch. 10 p. 10). To fill in the gaps between this public document and Willi's personal life, Krug again illustrates comics to help her imagine what Willi might have been doing during this time. It's important to note that while these comics help Krug better understand Willi, she does not draw them to excuse his

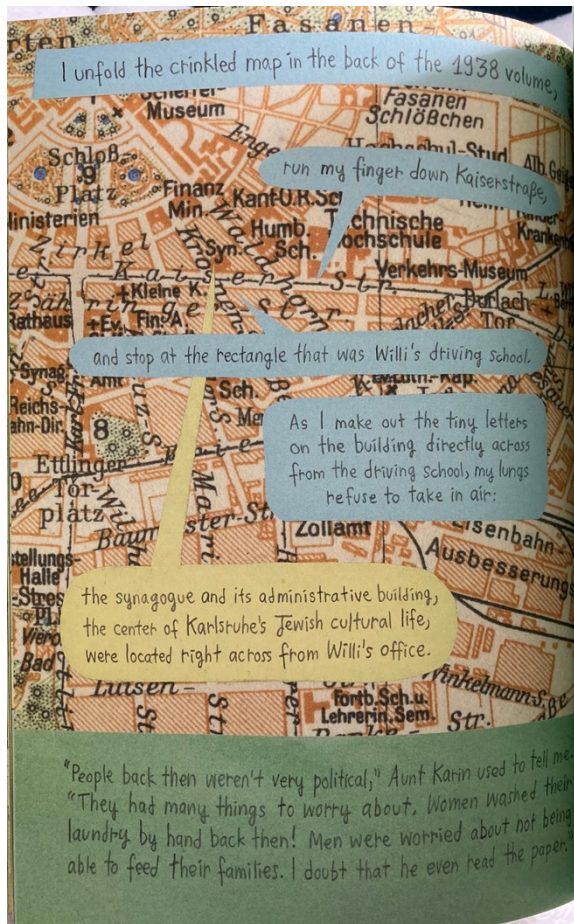


Figure 8. ch. 10 p. 10



Figure 9. ch. 10 p. 17

behavior. In one comic, Krug interrogates her illustrated grandfather about his whereabouts during Reichskristallnacht in a comic strip resembling a multiple-choice question. Despite the appearance of choice, none of the answer choices Krug offers – “a. I was in another part of town; b. I was at home; c. I was in my office; d. I was there when it happened” allow Willi Rock to be exonerated (Figure 9; ch. 10 p. 17).

The piece de resistance in Krug’s investigatory puzzle is Willi’s U.S. military file, which reveals that her grandfather was indeed a member of the Nazi party. Among the five categories of “Major Offender – Offender – Lesser Offender – Follower – [and] Exonerated Person,” Willi classifies himself as a follower, or “Mitlaufer” (Figure 10; ch. 12 p. 7). Krug presents this conviction through fragments of the official file, translations, and her own narrative additions. On one page, Krug pastes on top of a document from the military file an enlarged copy of Willi’s handwritten confession of “Mitlaufer” with a definition of the word – “a person lacking courage and moral stance” – accompanied by an illustration of a sheep (ch. 12, p. 7).

The hybrid construction of these pages demonstrates Krug’s careful balance of empathy and accountability and strengthens her capability of emotions. Including documents from the military file in *Belonging* “conveys a stronger authenticity” which lets the truth of Willi’s participation in the war speak for itself (Krug, “Who I am as a German” 05:14). Although Willi claimed in the file that he only joined the Nazi party because a high-ranking officer of the regime parked his car in the garage at Willi’s driving school, Krug still holds her grandfather accountable for his “weak-mindedness” in following the Nazi flock. At the same time, the tactility of these document pages creates a newfound sense of intimacy between Krug and her grandfather. Willi’s own handwriting, coupled with the photographs and illustrations Krug adds



Figure 10. ch. 12 p. 7



Figure 11. Krug, epilogue p. 4

to the military file, transform this yellowed archival document into a portal to the past through which Krug can have “conversations” with her grandfather and finally get answers to the questions she “ha[s] been burning to ask him” (“Who I am as a German” 11:25). Interacting with Willi in such a personal way “unlocks” Krug’s emotional capability, allowing her to feel “tenderness toward [her] grandfather” (ch. 12 p. 25).

Krug believes that “drawing is an act of empathy” (“‘Belonging’ – Featuring Nora Krug”) and indeed, through the intensive creative processes Krug undertook to curate *Belonging*, she has reached a deeper understanding of her family, her nation, and her own self. By “re-personalizing collective guilt” and emotionally processing her family’s activities and losses during World War II (Clewell 465), Krug has forged for herself a redefined German identity. This is perhaps best showcased in a mini-series interspersed throughout the book called, “From the Notebook of a Homesick Émigré” where Krug highlights iconic “Things German” – mostly domestic items like bandages, binders, hot water bottles, bread, and soap – and discusses how the reappropriation of these items for the Nazi regime permanently warps the traditional sense of pride and nostalgia associated with these items. The final entry, which ends the book, is “der Uhu,” a superglue which was used by children during World War II in the “war-important” activity of “assembling miniature military vehicles” (Figure 11; Krug, epilogue p. 4). Despite its Guinness World Record strength, der Uhu “cannot cover up the crack” of the object that was broken; however, Krug chooses to continue to use the item as a tool for repair. The same can be said for Germany, a nation that will forever be scarred by its complicity in the Holocaust but has still managed to rebuild itself. Looking to the future while still cognizant of her responsibility to the past, Krug moves forward from the paralysis of collective guilt into a new sense of German belonging.

Lynda Barry: Healing through Play

The Capabilities Approach also lends itself to an analysis of poverty and psychological oppression in Lynda Barry's *One Hundred Demons*. "I came from...a very rough house, very poor house" Barry explains; "lots of violence, lots of trouble, lots of drinking – it was a very unhappy place to grow up in" ("Lynda Barry: Accessing the Imaginary" 27:15-25). Although her circumstances are different than Krug's, Barry is also deficient in the capability of affiliation, especially "being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others" (Nussbaum 34). In addition to suffering from destitution, Barry is a mixed-race Filipina, which makes it even more difficult for her to cultivate her own sense of belonging. Peers at school avoid her because of her "cootie germs" – more likely a reaction to her tomboyish clothes and "bad teeth" – and at home, Lynda's white skin, orange-red hair, and prominent freckles distinctly separate her from her Filipina family members (*One Hundred Demons* 17, 69).

One Hundred Demons is organized into chapters that each deal with a particular "demon" from Barry's childhood. The names of Barry's demons are often unassuming and function as auxiliary vehicles through which the true demon is revealed. The demon of "Common Scents," for example, is not scent itself, but racism through the lens of cultural stereotypes that are assigned to particular scents. In the chapter, Lynda recounts an incident where a white neighborhood playmate reveals that she isn't allowed to go to Lynda's house because "[her] mom said your people fry weird food and save the grease and also that you boil pig's blood which is the reason for the smell" (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 54). In a succeeding panel, the aforementioned white mom, armed with a spray can of air freshener, tells Lynda, "you Orientals have an array [of smells], with your Chinese smelling stronger than your Japanese with your Koreans falling somewhere in the middle and don't get me started on your Filipinos" (Barry,

One Hundred Demons 56). Such an overtly racist encounter demonstrates how “shame in children of color” can be induced by “reinforcing negative associations with cultural practices that differ from white norms” (de Jesús, “Liminality and Mestiza Consciousness” 229). In Lynda’s case, she had never even noticed the smell of her own home until she was taught to feel ashamed of it – and, by extension, to feel ashamed of her identity as a Filipina (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 54).

Most detrimental to Lynda’s sense of self-worth is her abusive relationship with her mother, who is “unpredictable and quite violent” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 93). In almost every panel in which she appears, Lynda’s mother torments her daughter, oscillating from screaming death threats to demonstrating apathetic neglect (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 93, 132). A sensitive adolescent girl, Lynda laments that her mother “mean[s] more to [her] than anyone,” and “it [breaks her] heart that she [doesn’t] seem to like [her] much” (Barry *One Hundred Demons* 93). The verbal abuse Lynda suffers is a form of psychological oppression as “internalization of intimations of inferiority” (Bartky). Facing a constant barrage of demeaning insults from her mother, Lynda develops an internal sense of shame that persists in her adulthood – many of the “demons” who taunt Barry in her illustrations spew verbatim her mother’s vitriol (*One Hundred Demons* 11).

Barry reveals the generational trauma which influences her mother-daughter relationship in “The Aswang.” According to Lynda’s grandmother, the Aswang is a monster native to Filipino culture who shifts shape between a female vampire and a demonic dog (Figure 12; Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 89-90). The analogy of Lynda’s mother as the Aswang becomes evident in the collaboration between image and text as storytelling agents. In one set of panels, Barry explains that monsters “usually had a reason for being the way they were. Monsters hardly

ever started out as monsters. Something always transformed them” (Figure 13; *One Hundred Demons* 92). In the illustrated portion of the panels, Barry’s grandmother explains how the Aswang followed Barry’s mother when she came to the United States, suggesting that this immigration is the “reason” she “transformed” into a monstrous mother figure (*One Hundred Demons* 92). What also becomes clear in these panels is the defunct mother-daughter relationship between Barry’s mother and grandmother. Just as Lynda “worship[s]” her mother, Lynda’s mother “worship[s]” her own mother, and in both cases, the mothers treat their daughters with “detachment and disinterest”; however, Lynda’s grandmother is “always sweet” to her, and Lynda’s mother talks about her grandmother “with a happiness [she] rarely heard” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 93-94). While Barry’s mother is compared to the Aswang as a monster within the comic, the Aswang as one of Barry’s demons symbolizes “estrangement” (de Jesús, “Of Monsters and Mothers” 8). Despite the clear pattern of dysfunctionality that has been passed down through four generations, Barry’s mother and grandmother continue to push each other away rather than deal with their conflict, perpetuating the mother-daughter trauma cycle and preventing Lynda from establishing a close, healthy relationship with her mother.

Whereas Krug’s inadequate education was a cause of her capability deficiency, Barry’s education is an instrumental factor in her healing and capability development by nurturing the “language that help[s] [her] to survive:” drawing (*Grandma’s Way Out Party* 28:15). In the second grade, Lynda’s teacher invites her to draw pictures for her as a way to help Lynda cope with the “emotional problems” she has developed from her home life (Figure 14; Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 176). The illustration in this panel of this teacher gently consoling a sobbing Lynda is radically juxtaposed with an illustration on the next page where Lynda’s mother condemns her calling Lynda “estupido [stupid]” and an “idiot” for “wasting paper”

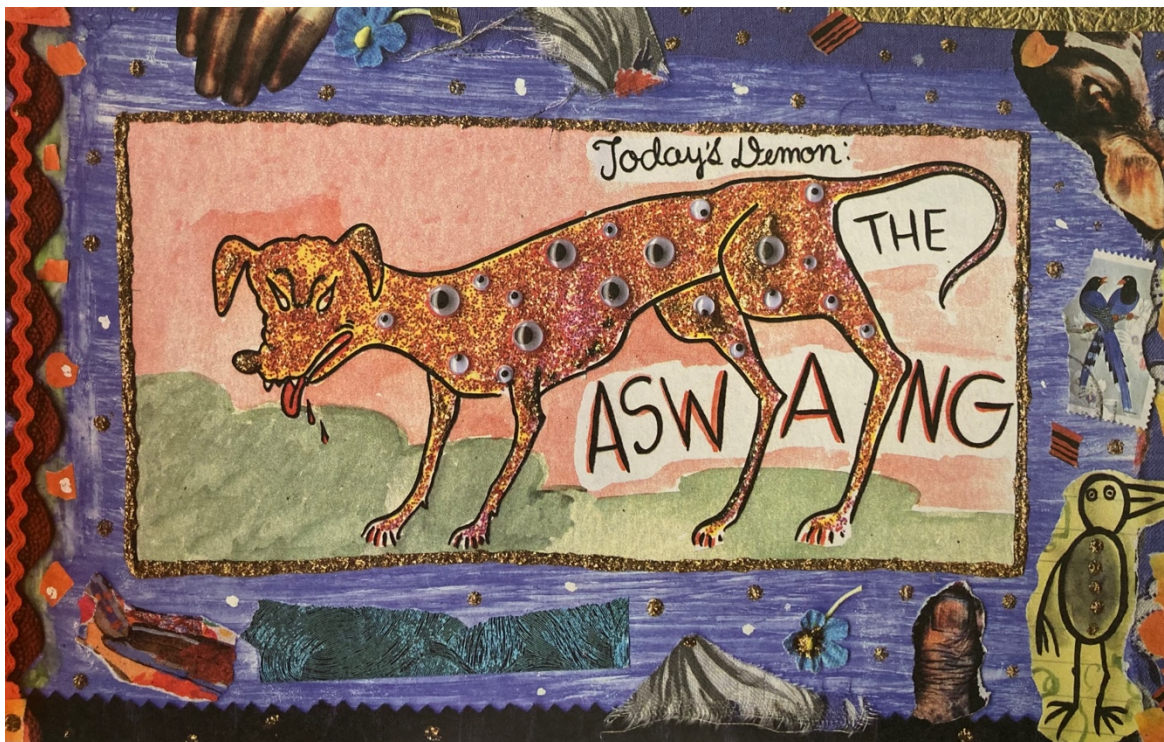


Figure 12. p. 87

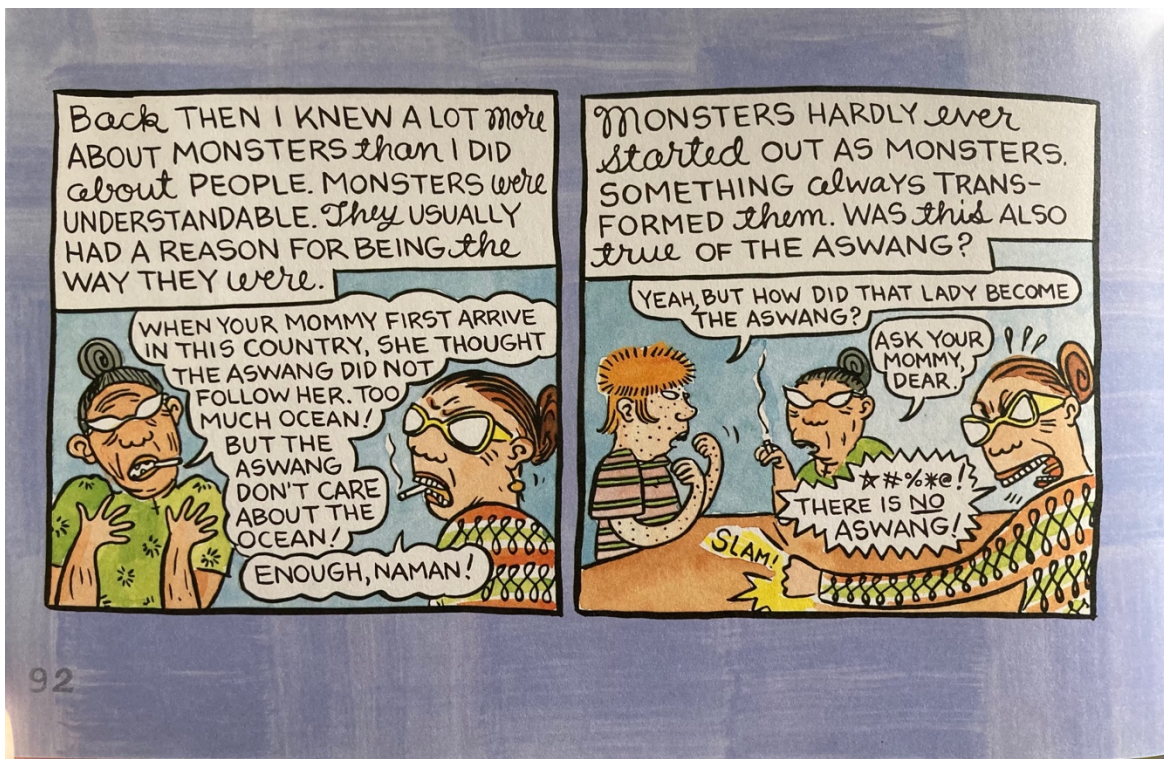


Figure 13. p. 92

(Figure 15; Barry, *One Hundred Demons*, 177). Being shamed for drawing, a popular childhood hobby, creates a deficiency in Barry's capability of play. Thankfully, in place of her mother, Lynda's teachers offer steadfast support and encouragement which motivates Lynda to study drawing in college and gives her "the feeling every child craves, the feeling of being finally understood" and valued (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 84).

Barry's hybrid work is rooted in her belief that images are "somehow alive" and "can take you places and change your life" ("Lynda Barry: Accessing the Imaginary" 08:13; 27:10). In her youth, Lynda's drawings allowed her to escape into "fantasy worlds" she created. This form of mental transportation through images, at Lynda's own disposal and control, made her traumatic home life more tolerable, which in turn helped her to "stay" in reality (Barry, *What It Is*, 40, 106). The power of images to reorient oneself in space and time is the method by which Barry confronts her childhood demons in *One Hundred Demons*. Recreating painful memories through images cannot transform the "actual situations" from Barry's childhood, but drawing comics does allow her to "transform [her] experience of" and relationship with the past (*One Hundred Demons* 40).

In "Girlness," Barry is able to both reframe and heal from a painful childhood memory that results from her family's poverty. The first two panels set up a stark dichotomy of "Us," Lynda and her fellow tomboys who live in a poor neighborhood, versus "Them," the "girlish girls" who live "up where the houses are nicer" (Figure 16; Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 184). As much as Lynda is "ashamed" of her "ratty clothes" and wants to express herself in a more girlish manner, not only can she not afford more girlish accessories, but her girlness is "forbidden" by her mother, who insists that Lynda would "look like a corpse" if she wore pink

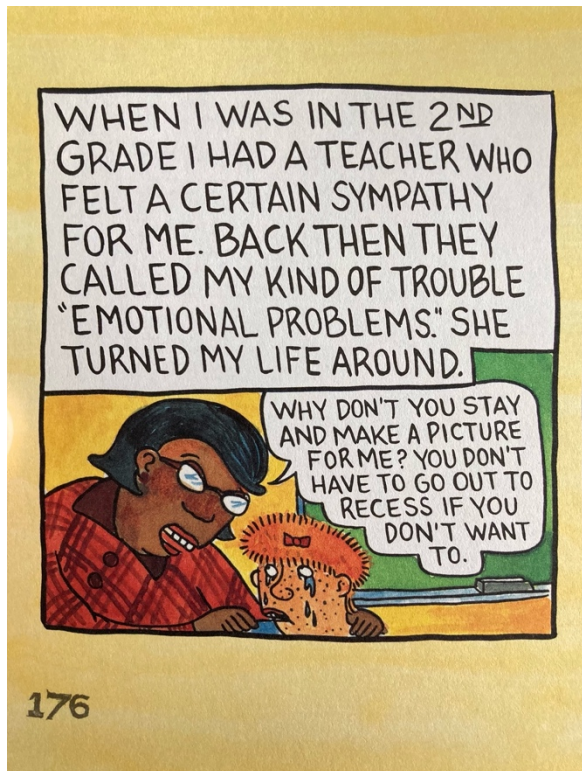


Figure 14. p. 176



Figure 15. p. 177

and purple (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 190). Consequently, Lynda harbors a “furious envy” for “Them,” the girls with girlish “clothes, toys, and hair” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 185-186).

Because Barry is writing about childhood memories as an adult, she reframes these experiences with reflections and realizations she has gained in the decades between the event and her creation of the cartoon. This strategy is part of Barry’s self-coined genre of “autobifictionalography” – part autobiography, part fiction. The hybridity of the comic form gives text and images equal importance in the art of storytelling. Through her images, Barry transports herself back into her memory, reliving the experiences and visceral emotions of her childhood as young Lynda; however, she does so with the wisdom of adulthood. What results is a new hybrid version of the memory where young Lynda in the illustrations is in conversation with adult Barry in the captions of each panel.

When Barry expresses interest in a Barbie doll in “Girlness,” Barry illustrates her mother’s outrage, the jagged edges of the text bubble punctuating the air with anger as she screams, “You have it so damn easy! You don’t appreciate anything!” (Figure 17; Barry, *One Hundred Demons*, 187). Young Lynda immediately responds with passive acceptance, but in the text captions of these panels, adult Barry reconsiders what might have influenced her mother’s response. “Looking back on it now,” she explains, “I think she was envious too. She spent her girl years in miserable circumstances. She was seven when the war broke out in the Philippines. I heard so many stories about the war. Her father was an American who died before it started. When the Japanese invaded, her family went into hiding, living in cemeteries, and being chased out of every village they came to” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 187). This

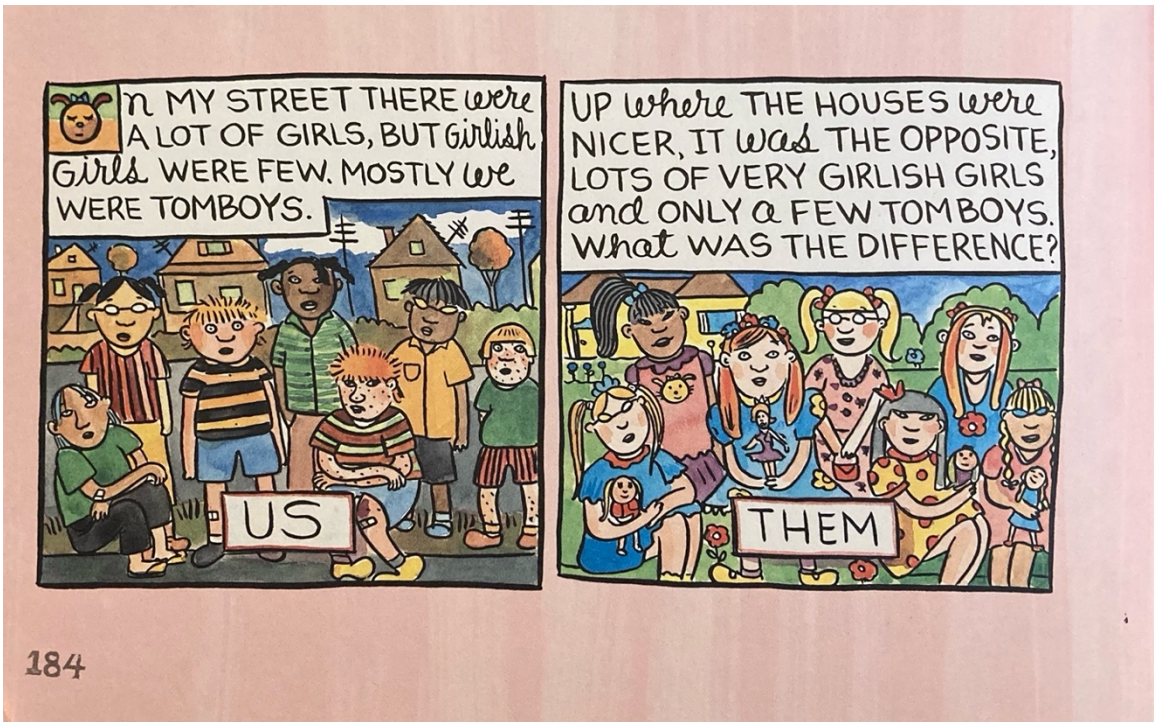


Figure 16. p. 184

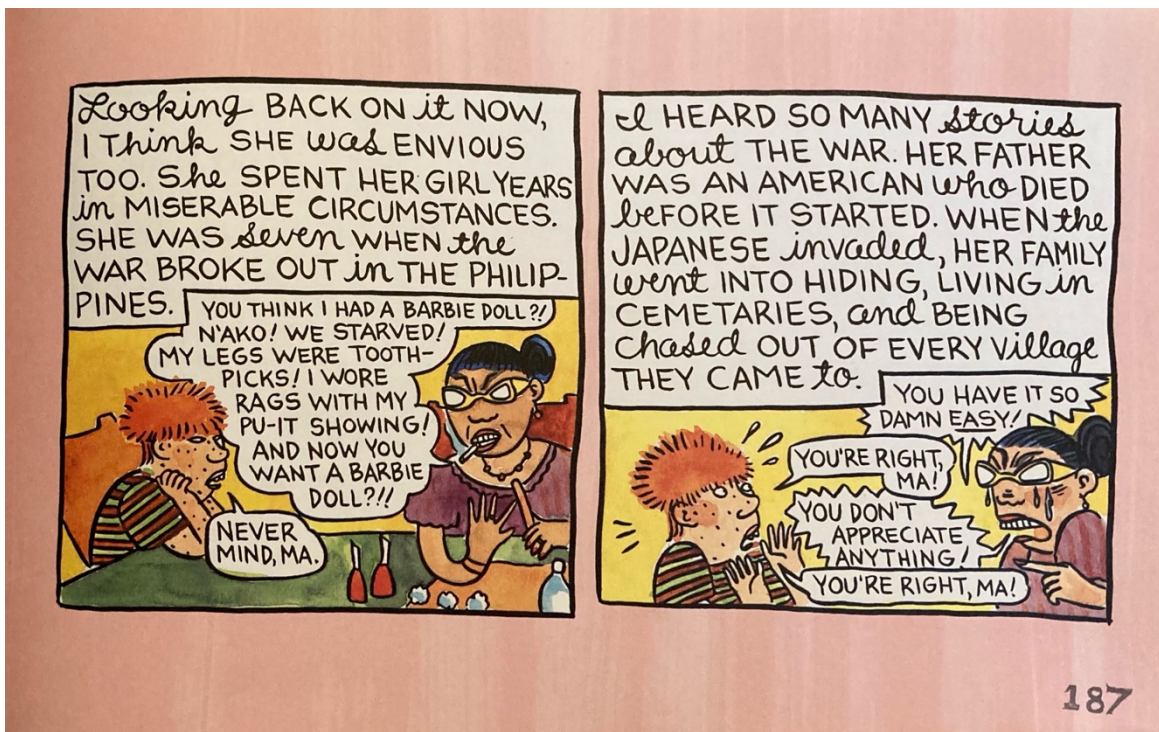


Figure 17. p. 187

reflection greatly alters the tone of the illustration and reveals the complex symbolism of this particular demon. “Girlness” is not simply Lynda’s desire to have a Barbie doll and her mother’s refusal to buy her one; rather, “Girlness” is tied to generational trauma where Lynda’s mother’s experience with material destitution has influenced her relationship with and treatment of her daughter. Notably, this is the only panel in all of *One Hundred Demons* where Barry illustrates her mother crying, an act of vulnerability which suggests that though young Lynda and her mother are still estranged, adult Barry is able to experience a sense of intimacy with her mother by understanding her past.

Drawing her childhood demons as an adult also allows Barry to create a new and improved ending to each memory. In “Girlness,” Barry shares a recent memory of shopping with a 13 year-old girl named Norabelle. At first, Barry nearly convinces herself not to buy a girlish pack of stationery because “it was too frivolous, too girlish, too late” – an illustrated Barry thinks, “My mom would scream” (*One Hundred Demons* 192). Ultimately, though, Norabelle reassures Barry to buy the stationery and embrace her “girlness.” By sharing this memory in conjunction with her childhood memory, Barry is able to not only confront her demon, but take back control of her narrative. In so doing, she asserts that “the war” – between tomboys and girlish girls; young Lynda and her mother; World War II itself, through which Lynda’s mother lived; and the war between Barry and her demons – is finally “over” (*One Hundred Demons* 192; de Jesús, “Of Mothers and Monsters” 18).

Those who have experienced and recovered from trauma and poverty are often described with admiration as resilient, but Barry is skeptical of this label. To Barry, resilience is “the ability to exist in pieces” which has the “horrible” effect of “mak[ing] adults believe that children forget trauma” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons*, 70). Whereas Krug heals from her

capability deficiencies in a serious investigation, Barry forgoes solemnity and heals from her trauma through her restored capability of play. Although *One Hundred Demons* deals with weighty material of poverty, abuse, and trauma, the burden is made lighter by Barry's cartoons, which are bursting with color and narrated with humor. For Barry, drawing is also "an act of empathy" ("Belonging" – Featuring Nora Krug"), one that allows her to extend grace and forgiveness to those who hurt her and, most importantly, to herself. Even the act of drawing her demons has become a fun experience – a demon named Sea-Ma, who in other works appears as Barry's assistant writing coach, explains of Barry's process, "at first [the demons] freaked her, but then she started to love watching them come out of her paint brush" (Figure 18; *One Hundred Demons* 12). By taking control of her childhood trauma through play, Barry is able to not only confront her demons, but to transform them from scary into silly, helpful, and even lovable friends.

The chapter "Dancing" best exemplifies Barry's healing journey from impoverished to joyful. Barry "grew up with dancing people" (Figure 19; *One Hundred Demons* 40). The illustrations in this first set of panels depict a unifying period of respite from the conflict and misery in Lynda's home: the family shakes and grooves to the beat of the record player in the kitchen, eyes closed in total bliss, cartoon hearts radiating from Lynda's body (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 40). Lynda is eager to share her love for dancing with others and tries to teach the kids on her street moves from her hula class. It only takes one blow, however, to displace Barry from her groove. When a neighborhood girl whose dancing Lynda admires tells her, "you jump around all stupid, waving your arms like you got mental problems with your face all looking like the cover of Mad Magazine," the overwhelming humiliation she feels distorts her



Figure 18. p. 12



Figure 19. p. 40

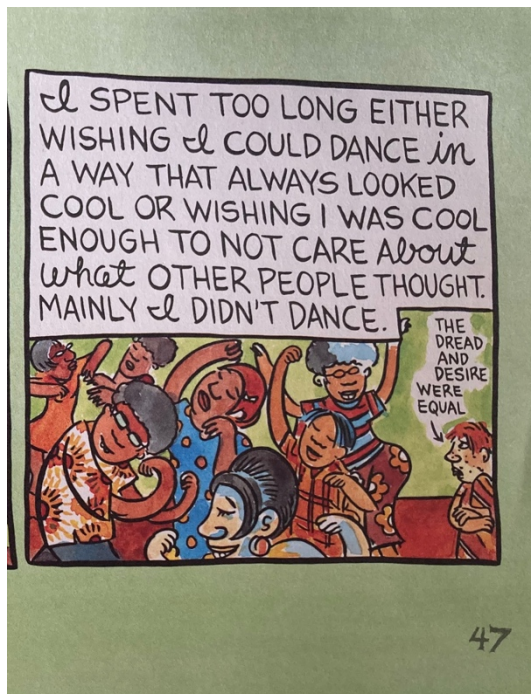


Figure 20. p. 47

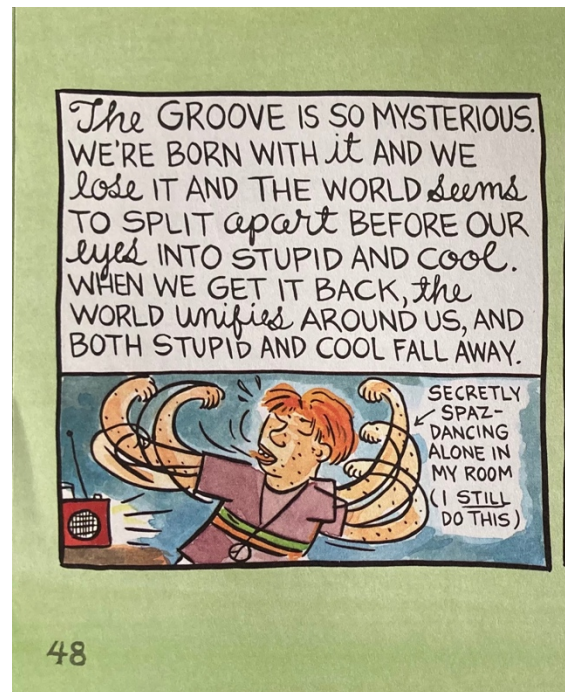


Figure 21. p. 48

perception of dance and causes her to quit dancing altogether (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 44). Adult Barry picks up the story from where young Lynda left off and admits that it took a long time to get her groove back because she spent “too long” worrying about whether or not she looked “stupid” or “cool” while dancing (Figure 20; *One Hundred Demons* 47). With the wisdom of age, Barry has come to realize that within the groove, “the world unites around us” and the psychological burdens of shame “fall away” (Figure 21; *One Hundred Demons* 48). Emboldened by the groove, Barry has healed her demons and is now unafraid to play and unabashedly assume her true self because “any kind of dancing is better than no dancing at all” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 48).

On Education and Empowerment

Having blossomed from the old wounds in the grafted tree to produce their new fruits of hybrid memoirs, Krug and Barry are both eager to share their healing journeys. By publishing her “German Family Album” (the German title of *Belonging*) for all the world to see, Krug sets a bold precedent of uncovering and claiming responsibility for personal connections to national history and provides a model for readers of all nationalities to pursue their own investigations. “The past doesn’t exist outside the present,” Krug explains; “We are made of the past, and therefore we all have the responsibility to acknowledge the past and to face up to it” while still “learning to love [one’s] country” without the “cultural paralysis” of “self-hate” (“Who I am as a German” 16:32-17:10). Lynda Barry is an educator herself who teaches others both in-person and through her books to harness the power of images. At the end of *One Hundred Demons*, Barry has created an instructional guide on how to “Paint Your Demon” which gives readers the tools to heal through play themselves. “Try it!” she reassures with confidence; “You will dig it!” (Barry, *One Hundred Demons* 219-224). By paying their healing forward, Krug and Barry

empower others to take control of their capabilities and transform that haunts them into what
heals them.

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5pAI_u0IVQ](https://www.pbs.org/video/grandmas-way-out-party-15589/?fbclid=IwAR28GNtBVQTH4u5y2a59Db89dmEF6kmp1YxkmYS6KWr23mmxj5pAI_u0IVQ).

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