Fragmented storytelling in Lynda Barry's graphic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!*

by

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Abstract

This paper explores fragmentation, looking at comics artist, Lynda Barry, and her comic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!* In doing so, I read several visual self-portraits by women artists alongside “demons” from Lynda Barry’s text, thus thinking about women’s self-representation and the power of fragmentation. Barry uses memory in *One! Hundred! Demons!* allowing herself to work through and process events in her life. Comics combine embodied experience as well as mental processing and remembering. Mind and body come together to create meaning and to process the effects of embodied fragmentation. This is principally done through exploration of three types of fragmentation: with regards to the representation of women’s bodies, of memories, and in the structure of comics form itself.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

"Who knows which moments make us who we are? Some of them? All of them? The ones we never really thought of as anything special?"

– Lynda Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!*[1]

My life is composed of fragments—of who I used to be, of past versions of myself, of memories half-remembered—fragments of a changing body. Fragments are captured in art, through practices of storytelling, collage, and self-portraiture. They are also captured in memories—memories held in both the mind and body.

I am exploring fragmentation in this paper focusing on the work of comics artist, Lynda Barry, and her comic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!* In doing so, I interweave my training in art history with my relatively new interest in comic texts. I read several visual self-portraits by women artists alongside "demons" from Lynda Barry's text, thus thinking about women's self-representation and the power of fragmentation. This is principally done through exploration of three types of fragmentation: with regards to the representation of women's bodies, of memories, and in the structure of the comics form itself.

In this paper, I explore two examples of powerful self-representational practices in Lynda Barry's work: the demons of "Lost Worlds" and "Magic Lanterns." These two demons describe touchstone aspects of childhood: play and comfort objects. These are beautiful and important examples of dealing with the fragmentation of bodies and memory through the medium of comic memoirs. These are important topics to work through from my position as an art historian, scholar, comic lover and woman. I am working through my own memories and experiences alongside Barry.

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[1] Lynda Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* Montreal, QC: Drawn & Quarterly, 2017, 36.

I believe this idea of witnessing someone's story invites the reader to revisit their own fragmented stories. This invitation from a storyteller to their reader inspires the sharing, and learning, of how our fragmented stories impact us.

A. Overview of Fragmentation

Artists and writers taking up fragmentation use it to arrange pieces of stories or forgotten memories to write and create art through our lived experiences. For each artist, this arrangement takes a different shape, as that artist's own fragments of thought and memory are collected into an embodied work. Through her work, Lynda Barry is building a theory of fragmentation and life, pulling together memories, thinking through the body and spending time with seemingly inconsequential moments that mean worlds to her. By using fragments, short and highly specific memories, Barry narrates pieces of her life in short, poignant chapters.

Fragmentation involves breaking things down into smaller pieces which can be dealt with or examined more closely. This can be taking a single memory from a whole life to look at, or placing objects cut from their context into an art piece. Fragmentation does not produce a linear lens with which to look at life, spaced out neatly along the course of an individual's history with events clearly proceeded and succeeded by one another according to some fixed timeline. Rather, the process of telling a story through fragmentation is ultimately the process of looking at individual memories and interrogating how they stick with us and inform who we are in the present. It is a way of illustrating stories, connected across nonlinear time and space, and working through how they inform and impact the present. As readers, witnessing art composed through this principle of fragmentation allows us our own opportunities to look back and notice pieces of our stories which stick out, some of which may need this sort of working through for us to better understand our own experiences. We are all, as ourselves, embodiments of memories that exist in our bodies and inform how to move through the world with our memories attached and imbedded in us. We can work through and process our lives in illustrative fragments of stories found in art and comics.

The women artists I've chosen to examine for this paper, across varying mediums of comics, performance art, and self-portraiture, have embraced the concept of fragmentation and in doing so have invited their fragmented selves to be embodied in the works. As we will see, these acts of becoming embodied through fragmentation have a profound impact not only on these women's exploration of their own selves, but in the capacity of the audience to understand themselves by engaging with the fragmentation on display in the art.

B. The Author and Fragmentation

Over the past year, I have discovered comics for the first time. For most of my life I thought "comics" meant superhero stories. But the work of creators like Lynda Barry, as well as Bishakh Som, Una and Alison Bechdel, helped me to understand that comic artists (especially women comic artists) use the form to tell complicated stories about what it is to live in a body, in a social world, and in relationship to one's self and to others. Through my study of comics, I started to see how the self-representational choices many women artists make in self-portraiture are connected to graphic storytelling about the self in profound ways.

My past study of art history makes me much more comfortable in the realm of paintings and sculpture than I am in this newer world of comics. My education branched out during the last two years while looking at contemporary art, I discovered comic memoirs in opening Lynda Barry's *One! Hundred! Demons!*. Comics allow any story to be told with depth and intimacy: heartbreaks, traumatic experiences, wonderful moments, and moments of simply existing. There is, to my mind, a richer diversity in the stories that are told in comics than I experienced in the classical art history world. I’ve always been intrigued by self-portraits as vehicles for storytelling, comics memoirs fuse repeated self-portraits with narration in remarkable ways. This project combines the storytelling found in comic memoirs with my own memories and experiences. I am using a selection of art pieces which represent different forms of fragmentation. These help to ground my understanding and analysis of comics in order to build bridges between the two worlds - comics and visual art - for a deeper understanding of both. The methods of approaching comics can lend themselves to suggesting new ways of looking at visual art.

C. Collecting Fragments

Lynda Barry is a comic artist, author and teacher who has been publishing her work since the early 1980s. Her many works have explored topics such as childhood, adolescence, storytelling and learning, in her books which include *What It Is* (2008), *Picture This: The Near-Sighted Monkey Book* (2010), and *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor* (2014). Her storytelling style in *One! Hundred! Demons!* is open-ended, with simple drawings, bold colours, and whacky, creative collages at the front of each chapter. In this text she encourages her readers to do as she is doing; sifting through her life and bringing out her particular demons to tell short, illustrative fragments of stories, pieces of memories and longer narratives. In her storytelling, she is working through fragments of memories of herself throughout childhood and adulthood. The stories are not chronological; they seem to all be happening at once, with multiple versions of Barry concurrently existing in the book alongside one another; each chapter is from a different time, and in each chapter Barry is a different age. *One! Hundred! Demons!* is an adult retelling of childhood memories and events, through Barry’s eyes.

Comics feminist scholar Hillary Chute describes Barry’s treatment of memory as a way of processing experiences, as “an aesthetic ‘working through,’” writing that “the layered space in Barry’s book indicated that the past is not linear but all around us; we think of time, or the past, as moving from one point to another; Barry says, ‘but if you think of these images, they can move every which way, and you don’t know when they’re coming to you.’”[2] There is an accumulation, a bringing together, of fragments in this book which Barry uses as a space of working through and sharing. Many autobiographies tell a life story chronologically. Lynda Barry, however, uses the comic form to represent her life according to an emotional, rather than a linear, logic.

Each chapter is titled as a particular ‘demon’ – “Magic Lanterns,” “Resilience,” “Dancing,” and “Head Lice/My Worst Boyfriend” – and begins with a mixed media collage, bringing in images from the chapter ahead, with words, stamps, glitter, stickers, and all manner of other things, woven together to tell a complex narrative of Barry’s memories and feelings. Barry uses the term “demons” specifically — unearthing her own demons of unresolved or unprocessed events as well as unexpected moments that affected her life to a strong degree. The word ‘demon,’ suggests some monster to the reader, but Barry’s ‘demons’ are attached to memories, not monsters as the word prompts us to expect. The demon Barry paints onto the yellow legal paper are not scary, they do not look intimidating, they seem almost friendly, inverting our expectations of what a demon might look like. In meeting Barry’s demons, the reader is prompted to think about our own ‘demons’ existing in the memories we carry with us, and question whether they are as monstrous as we expect them to be.

Chute’s essay entitled “Materializing Memory; Lynda Barry’s *One! Hundred! Demons!*” from her book *Graphic Women* discusses how Barry and her storytelling create a material language with which to look at and represent memories. Chute has written extensively on comics and comic memoirs and has been an important resource for me in learning about the comic medium, as her writing is engaging and approachable to someone new to the theory behind comics. Chute writes about how to decode comics, from both a visual and written language in highly personal ways that is incredibly helpful to my understanding of these texts in relation to fragmented selves. “It is also centrally about the relationship of space, memory, and the past” she writes: “one needs a sense of space for memories to come forward and take shape, and *One! Hundred! Demons!* theorizes and creates that space materially on the page.”[3]

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[2] Michael A. Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, 292.

Lynda Barry uses her comics as that space of “working through” in the sense of collecting the fragments of her memories and relating them to her identity. She explicitly welcomes the reader to do the same. Barry encourages her readers to take up their pencils, pens, and brushes and to draw and narrate their own stories, demons, or memories of Barry and the work; one of her ‘demons,’ who looks like a big scary monster, akin to what we might picture when we hear the word demon, tells the reader that “[Barry] hopes you will dig these demons and then pick up a paint brush and paint your own!” Barry’s own character echoes the sentiment: “Sincerely! Pass it on!!”[4] Barry is exploring memory as a way of both processing and understanding herself. She is sharing her stories, her art, and encouraging her readers to do the same using accessible materials (like yellow legal paper) and a brush and ink.

Moving now to the exploration of three forms of fragmentation, which are important to looking at the two chapters I examine for the last section of this paper, I look at fragmentation of bodies, memory and in comics.

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[3] Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010, 113.

[4] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 13.

2. Fragmentation in Bodies, Memories, and Art

While I wasn't consciously aware of it until I started thinking about comics, fragmentation is a tool taken up by artists across mediums like photomontage, collage, performance art and paintings. Lynda Barry employs it in her comic memoirs, in the way she depicts memories. Artists use fragmentation in their creations: Hannah Hoch with her photomontage, and performance artist Yoko Ono with "Cut Piece" are two examples.[5] In building a theory of fragmentation that speaks to Barry's work, I turn to pieces of visual art. First, Hock and Ono help me think through fragmentation in relation to women's bodies. Second, Saar's self-portrait, *Mystic Sky with Self-Portrait* helps me consider fragmentation as it relates to memories.[6] Finally, I turn to comics theory to think through how fragmentation is built into the form.

A. Women's Bodies – Fragmentation and Embodiment

Fragmentation is a powerful tool in the understanding of bodies and lives. Take German Dadaist artist Hannah Hoch who uses photomontage to fragment the female body, tearing it apart to destroy the power of the viewer in looking at the female body in her pieces. This is shown in artworks such as *Da-Dandy* from 1919 and *Around a Red Mouth* from 1967.[7] If a body is in pieces, as Hoch portrays them, it cannot be viewed as an object and commodified by the viewer. It is a form of power to take apart a body, putting the pieces back together in new ways to narrate one's own story and embodied life. I use examples here of Hoch and Yoko Ono to show how many women artists use fragmentation as a tool of power in challenging the ways of looking which fulfil a patriarchal imperative of control from viewers, in their artwork: "The self-portrait turns on the staging of the self (the model) for the self (the artist). For the woman artist, the difficulty and paradox of being both active, creative subject – a maker of meaning – and passive object – a site of meaning – can only be resolved through performing the self."[8] Yoko Ono's now-famous "Cut Piece," performance staged in 1964, was a documented performance art piece that allowed an audience to cut pieces of her clothing with scissors, examining physical fragmentation when experiencing exterior power structures through embodied life in a female body.

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[5] Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke University Press, 2011.

[6] Betye Saar, *Mystic Sky with Self-Portrait,* 1992. Color offset lithograph and collage

[7] Hannah Hoch, *Da-Dandy,* 1919 and *Around a Red Mouth,* 1967. Photomontage.

Queer theorist Jack Halberstam writes about Ono's performance art in his book, *The Queer Art of Failure* in a chapter titled "Shadow Feminisms: Queer Negativity and Radical Passivity," noting how "the act of cutting is […] assigned to the audience rather than to the artist, and the artist's body becomes the canvas while the authorial gesture is dispersed across the nameless, sadistic gestures that disrobe her and leave her open to and unprotected from the touch of the other."[9] Ono's performance art is living collage, cutting apart the clothing on her body, fragmentation is Ono's agency, in submitting to her viewers. Fragmentation is a tool Ono uses in submitting and exposing the objectification of her body by others, using it against being viewed as an object or commodity. The work is fundamentally about creating agency in bodies which agency is often stripped from – using fragmentation in her performance art as a way of displaying her agency.

Women artists often speak to the fragmentation they experience by being both a woman and an artist. Artist Annette Messager writes: "I always feel that my identity as a woman and as an artist is divided, disintegrated, fragmented, and never linear, always multifaceted…. always pictured of parts of bodies…. I always perceive the body in fragments."[10] This fragmented body ties back to Ono's agency over the fragmentation of her body by the viewer.

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[8] Liz Rideal, Whitney Chadwick, and Frances Borzello. *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists*. London, UK: National Portrait Gallery, 2001, 14.

[9] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

[10] Rideal, Chadwick, and Borzello. *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists*, 21.

There is power in embracing the fragmented nature of bodies and memories, shown, for example, in the way Barry uses non-linear fragmented memories for her book chapters. When artists take this fragmentation inflicted on them from viewers objectifying their bodies, or trauma disrupting their relationship to memory, they use it as a tool against those things. Using fragmentation in photomontage fragments the body so it can no longer be looked on as an object – Barry using memory fragments in *One! Hundred! Demons!* allowing her to work through and process events in her life. Comics combine embodied experience as well as mental processing and remembering. Mind and body come together to create meaning and to process the effects of embodied fragmentation.

B. Memory-Witnessing and Self-Portraits

Through our memories, we can understand ourselves as fragmented beings. This principle is visually shown in Betye Saar's *Mystic Sky with Self-Portrait*, 1992. Saar's self-portrait shows a visually fragmented representation of the self with her head peeking out from one corner of the painting, a fragmented hand and heart; there is no body attached. The portrait is full of rich colours of red and yellow, with a deep blue background. There are depictions of many celestial bodies – the moon, sun, Saturn, shooting stars, palmistry symbols and dice; a variety of things, mystic, celestial, and human. The viewer experiences fragmentation in this portrait from being allowed only to see parts of Saar from her body and the objects that surround her.

In Saar's portrait there is a fragmentation of self in relation to memory, but also in relation to the body. There is fragmentation from her face, with her lips floating in the upper part of the portrait. And a lack of connection to the body, with no body visibly included in the artwork. The work shows pieces of the self, fragments of memory, or existence in a similar way to Barry's panel's showing herself as a scrappy, spikey redhead with houses and an orange ball in the background. Pieces of life, which all may have meaning or attachment to Saar, are seen floating around her head, just as objects are drawn by Barry throughout the chapter.

This self-portrait questions ways of representing the self that display fragmentation visually to the viewer. Are we looking at fragmentation of the mind, with different pieces of Saar visually spread around the self-portrait? Or is this fragmentation of physical objects and body parts? Perhaps this self-portrait could suggest both to the viewer, a fragmentation of memory in both the mental and physical realms.

These objects included in *Mystic Sky with Self-Portrait* are significant to Saar, just as pieces of Lynda Barry's collages are to her, making me wonder why these artists included the things they did. I am drawn to ask more questions about the nature of the self-portraits being presented. Is Saar drawing connections between the celestial objects in her self-portrait, with the hand, the heart and her head? Are we are seeing pieces of memories, fragmented onto the canvas, originating from Saar's head? In Barry's work, we see brightly patterned shirts, hairstyles, painted houses, and an orange ball; these, I assume, are fragments of memories, brought to life on the page by Barry. In a similar way, the fragments of memory we see in Saar's self-portrait are brought to life through her self-portrait.

C. Fragmentation in Comics

Turning now to fragmentation in comics, I begin with the work of comics theorist Scott McCloud. McCloud's book *Understanding Comics* can best be seen as a toolkit to help the reader understand how to read and have the vocabulary to talk about comics. Right away in Chapter One "Setting the Record Straight," McCloud discusses how comics communicate meaning, emotion, or ideas. Comics have a special ability in the relationships between word and image, which is something to be unpacked in the graphic memoir examined in this paper.[11]

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[11] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Writing and Art*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994, 3.

This relationship between words and images fragmented over many panels allows for another type of storytelling; it allows the reader to see and feel, experiencing the story in ways a novel, for example, does not allow. The requirement of "completing" sequences through the gutter is one of the powers of comics in inviting the reader, to varying degrees, into the story to experience alongside our storytellers. McCloud uses chapters of his book to unpack how comics require the reader's participation in order to finish the narrative.[12] Barry works with themes of trauma and assault through absence, "work[ing] with the absences the form of comics provides; [Barry] does not *display* trauma so much as work in the edges of events, unsettling readers by leaving us to imagine the incidents whose aftereffects she plumbs."[13] One of the essential characteristics of her work and central to this paper, is that Barry is "deeply engaged with theorizing memory."[14]

Barry uses suggestion, trusting that a good reader will fill the story with emotional information by inferring meaning from the writing and images. In this way, Barry creates a space an absence, for the reader to finish the story, whether we fill it with our own knowledge of experiences, or the realization that we are privileged to not have a trauma or a demon to put in.[15] An example of this in *One! Hundred! Demons!* is in the chapter "Resilience," where she writes, "when I was still little, bad things had gone on, things too awful to remember but impossible to forget."[16] This chapter's collage has baby pictures, with the eyes obscured and the words "can't remember, can't forget" repeated often. The light green background of the pages stands in contrast to the dark subject matter, the dark thoughts and memories we see Barry fighting with alone at night.

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[12] McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Writing and Art*, 3, 36.
[13] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 282.
[14] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 282.
[15] McCloud, *Understanding Comics: Writing and Art*, 205.
[16] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 65.

In "Resilience," Barry addresses her memories of growing up, growing up too fast from the violence inflicted on her as a young girl. These memories show a younger version of Barry wishing to forget, yet rendered unable to do so by her memories and embodied lived experience of trauma. "The moment of trauma endures beyond that individual moment of catastrophe," writes comics theorist Jennifer Bliss, "so that the traumatic moment does not simply return but lives on as a continual process in the individual's psyche."[17] The relationship between body remembering and mind wishing to forget, proposes an interesting balance of memory and how the mind and body can become fragmented from each other through traumatic experiences. Barry's whole graphic memoir explores our relationship to memory, especially the complicated relationship to traumatic memory.

Comics have the power to represent the unrepresentable through their use of fragmentation in "understanding individual and historical traumas not necessarily as a question of either/or (either visible or not, spoken, or silenced, past, or present, etc.), but as precisely a space of contact between those conventional binaries of representation."[18] In that in-between place, comics allow the reader to combine intellect and embodied experience to complete the narrative.

This attribute of comics is most apparent in their ability to represent trauma.The theory of trauma which Barry is working through resonates with psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk's book, *The Body Keeps the Score:* looking at how "trauma can sever the connection between the mind, which wants to forget what happened, and the body, which can't."[19] There is this theory of severed connection in how the body and mind are fragments, not linked in ways which allow them to have a collective memory. Bodies keep the shadows of the past, experiences ingrained in the muscles or remembered touches on skin. A thing as simple as a smell can trigger so many memories, which Barry explores in the chapter "Smells!" These triggers and shadows of memories that our minds might choose to lock behind a door if they could. And try, unsuccessfully to forget where the door is.

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[17] Jennifer Anderson Bliss, 'Picturing the Unspeakable: Trauma, Memory, and Visuality in Contemporary Comics', Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014, 6.
[18] Bliss, 'Picturing the Unspeakable: Trauma, Memory, and Visuality in Contemporary Comics', 20.
[19] Eleanor Cummins, "The Self-Help That No One Needs Right Now." *The Atlantic.* Atlantic Media Company, October 19, 2021.

Bliss highlights this rhythm between presence and absence in comics representation of time and space, as well as the subject matter they contain. Especially relevant to Barry's work with memory and trauma, Bliss writes that "the comics page exists with and between text and image, presence, and absence. These tensions reveal, too, that the representation of trauma and memory in comics depends upon not only the spaces in between panels but on systems that perform like the mechanisms of trauma and memory."[20] These tensions are what allow the reader to participate in completing the story, by using their own experiences or memory to fill in the gaps. The places of absence, whether that is a lack of an image to accompany the text, or no text to narrate an image allow for the reader to participate in the story. The tension between word and image, often allows for complex or traumatic memories to be broken down for the reader. Comics are literally made of fragments: panels connected through gutters, with word and image connected by the reader.

Comics are split into panels and sections, think of the typical squares where the action happens and the blank spaces in between them. Those in-between spaces are called gutters. A reader should think of those gutters as the in-between spaces between rooms, in doorways, or the white wall space between paintings in a gallery space. As Chute describes "the effect of the gutter, the rich empty space between the selected moments that direct our interpretation, is for the reader to project causality in these gaps that exist between the punctual moments of the frames."[21] Those empty spaces let the reader gather our thoughts, process, and project ourselves. They take us from one place to the next in space, and from one moment to the next in time. The reader infers meaning, places emphasis, or allows for events to happen in the gutters, which take the storyline from one panel to the next.

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[20] Bliss, "Picturing the Unspeakable: Trauma, Memory, and Visuality in Contemporary Comics", 3.

[21] Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, 8.

The gutter space allows for the reader to participate and be invited into the story. Laura Mulvey is a feminist film theorist who writes about how artists use narrative and invite the guest or viewer in to witness and create meaning from their work. “In graphic narrative the spectator is a necessarily generative ‘guest’ (to borrow Mulvey’s term),” writes Chute, “constructing meaning over and through the space of the gutter.”[22] The reader must construct meaning and place them inside the gutter through these spaces.

Reading comics involves a process of decoding the relationship between the words and the pictures on the page. This process is complicated, and words and pictures don’t progress in the same way each time. Some comic artists rely most heavily on the artwork and the reader learns emotion and narrative from the character’s features or actions. Some rely on words to drive understanding and narrative. Most use a combination of the two which often switches around during the duration of the comic memoir. Marianne Hirsch describes this relationship well, stating: “with words always already functioning as images and images asking to be read as much as seen, comics are biocular texts par excellence. Asking the viewer to read back and forth between images and words, comics reveal the visuality and thus the materiality of words and the discursivity and narrativity of images.”[23] This ability to read back and forth, understanding the relationship between image and word, is integral to the power of comics. Each comic teaches how to read them – the rhythm of reading – and the reader must be adaptable to each comic’s specific rhythm.[24] For example, Lynda Barry uses two panels per page, the top half being text and the lower half showing the action. The drawings are complex, often showing multiple figures in conversation. The reader must slow down to read the large print at the top of the panel, the smaller print in speech bubbles, and then also unpack the image's emotions or actions as portrayed by the characters.

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[22] Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, 9.
[23] Marianne Hirsch, “Editor’s Column: Collateral Damage.” *PMLA*119, no. 5 (2004): 1213.
[24] Hirsch, “Editor’s Column: Collateral Damage.” 1209–15.

In the process of decoding the relationship between words and images in comics, the reader is taught how to read the comic. The rhythm and relationship are different in each comic, each one requires one to approach it openly, letting the work teach the reader how to pace themselves through it, through both time and space. Chute captures this idea by suggesting that "the way that time is shaped spatially on a page of comics – through panel size, panel shape, panel placement, and the concomitant *pace* and *rhythm* the page gestures at establishing – is essential to understanding how comics works."[25] Reading a comic, and allowing it to dictate the speed with which you read, the way your eyes move between word and image, is in a sense, a choreography both for the space on the page, but also the reader's relationship to it.

The rhythm and choreography between word and image used by comics artists allows for comics as a medium to tell difficult stories in ways that other art forms cannot. As Hillary Chute notes, using timing this way helps comics tell stories of trauma more ethically than film can:

> Comics is not a form that is experienced *in time*, as film ultimately is. That cedes the pace of consumption to the reader and begs rereadings through its spatial form, making comics a categorically different visual-verbal experience for its audience. Releasing its reader from the strictures of experiencing a work in a controlled time frame can be crucial, even ethical difference, especially in presenting traumatic narratives that may include disturbing images.[26]

This ability of comics to present trauma is embodied by Barry's work, which speaks to trauma, but never explicitly narrates, shows, or names trauma. The reader is not accosted by disturbing images or text that one cannot move away from. Decoding the relationship between word and image, the reader is placed into the story, to complete the story. This necessitates the participation of the reader in story-making, requiring the reader fill the void with their own understanding or imagination. In this way the reader can make the story their own.

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[25] Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, 6.
[26] Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, 8-9.

Just as comics are constructed strategically through fragments which readers must put together to understand, so a self-portrait is a representation of someone's life; a moment in time captured on canvas, in print or as a photo – a fragment of the self, preserved through art. Fragmentation, to me, is a beautiful and useful tool for understanding ourselves, looking back through our memories at a past version of ourselves.

Reading a comic memoir is akin to viewing an artist's self-portrait in a gallery space. The viewer is seeing a piece of the artist's lived experiences in whatever way they chose to show it. Self-portraits capture a moment in time like a narrative paused for a breath, or a single panel of a graphic memoir "like autobiography [or graphic memoir], self-portraits demand to be read."[27] Self-portraits and their study provide a conceptual bridge to the reading of comic memoirs, because they too deal with visual storytelling. This is particularly apparent in the way stories are told through the reader being able to use the art to confront memories of who we are, the art thus turned back on ourselves. Reading a self-portrait is also informed, like comics, by the work itself, our eye navigates the artwork uniquely depending on the pieces it contains. If there are many elements, if it is realistic, or abstract, we imbue the portrait with meaning from our standpoint and our history, outside of the frame.

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[27] Rideal, Chadwick, and Borzello. *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists*, 30.

3. One! Hundred! Fragments!

To situate this discussion of fragmentation and theory within the context of Barry's work, it is helpful to consider specific examples from *One! Hundred! Demons!* as illustrative of Barry's use of fragmentation.

A. "Lost Worlds"

In "Lost Worlds" Barry is exploring the lost worlds of childhood through a snapshot of a kickball game. This chapter – the "Lost Worlds" demon – opens with a collage, containing words such as "remember", and "Memory Store"; we can see textiles and textured stickers. It is rich, layered and takes the reader a moment to sift through it all. This chapter, as with the book as a whole, "calls attention to itself as multi-layered composition, the self as collage, in its rich, open layers of painting, words, and bits and pieces of ostensible debris: feathers, stamps, buttons, cotton balls, old labels, denim, felt, odds and ends from magazines."[28] Barry uses everything and anything in her collages, from used stamps, to old notes, to her own baby pictures and pictures of strangers she finds at flea markets, to old picture books and text books and valentines. These collages make a wonderful entryway from which we read each memory or story as illustrated by her hand.

Every time I read these pages, I notice something new, there is a complexity, a richness in the work. The collages in this book are a visual accumulation and gathering together of pieces of stories, phrases repeated, cloth and buttons, stamps, and handwriting samples, all parts of a story. They are all visual pieces and fragments of the story we are about to experience which introduce the emotional logic present in the demons. And these collages invite us to return to them after reading the demon, showing us new information after reading the story.

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[28] Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, 113.

"Lost Worlds" opens with a collage using two panels from the chapter, the word "Remember," in big, sparkly silver letters. The word suggests both a descriptive meaning – the 'demon' ahead contains a memory – but also is a recommendation or invitation to the reader to do this "remembering" along with her. There are small flowers cut out of fabric, and an ink monster with many teeth, dotted with sparkles. The chapter has a mauve, grey-blue background, making the white areas with handwriting pop out of them, the lower halves of each panel are full of drawn figures. While much of Barry's work feels idiosyncratic, she uses standard panelling – two uniform panels on each page – throughout each demon, and a collage page to open it. The top half of each panel on each page is words, narrating the story; the bottom half contain figures, all drawn with ink and brush.[29]

On the first pages of "Lost Worlds" the neighborhood children are arguing, talking, playing, and insulting each other: "Ya Ready Scrubly?" "Call me that again and I'll beat your behind!"[30] This chapter explores memories from childhood, our understanding of how or why we remember and keep fragments of memories and the surprise of discovering memories we have kept. We see three children arguing: "hey go get the rake," "you go get it" "no you," "no you." They bicker and fight, needing the rake to get the ball out from the prickly bushes to keep playing, bringing the petty arguments of childhood back from Barry's memory with beautiful clarity.

These memories are also embodied in the descriptions of the nighttime pools of streetlamp light, the pain of the sticker bushes, the anthills, storm drains and the pain of waiting for people to show up to play with. These memories are located also in the mind, the embodiment of locating memory; the comic shows this by the division of the panels into written words, and the figures of the children experiencing the events in the memory. Michael Chaney highlights this duality when he writes that comics are "adept at engaging the notion and matter of memory, and reproducing the *effects* of memory – its gaps, fragments, positions, layers, circularities."[31] He notes that "crucially," Barry's work "constitutes a subject, while yet expressing experiences of traumatic deconsitution."[32] Deconsitution is the pulling apart and changing of memories by the effects of time and distance from those memories. *One! Hundred! Demons!* is a work of re-constitution, placing memories and hand-drawn embodied figures back together to work through each memory, and noticing the difference, in how the body and the mind retain memory.

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[29] This is detailed at the end of *One! Hundred! Demons!* in Barry's process of creating the memoir.
[30] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 28.

Looking and reading closely "Lost Worlds," we encounter a representation of Barry that feels slightly nostalgic, without directly wanting to go back. It feels like a tangible memory, almost as if the reader can hear the ball bouncing and smell that city, that night air. The reader meets Barry just before she is a teenager, her age is not shared, but we can infer that she may be 10 or 12 years old. We witness her scrapping and verbally fighting with the teenagers whom she calls "beautiful and funny and strong."[33] Except when they fought dirty, and then they are described as totally the opposite when they pick on Barry and her friends, being described then as "so big and scary and heartless."[34] The relation to other people is interesting in this scene, in watching how Barry narrates the changes, from beautiful to heartless.

"Lost Worlds" is centered on a looking back at Barry's childhood through a rich representation of play and speaks to these experiences and person that she was in childhood; a person who is long gone, and to whom she cannot go back. Barry recalls playing kickball, a game from her childhood, which was played on the street and included a changing cast of people from her peers to the older teenagers, to someone's drunk uncle. She speaks of all these little moments and things she noticed, which seemed unforgettable at the time, but many of the details are now cloudy or lost. “I believed the people in the airplanes passing over could see us and thought we looked cool. This was long before I grew up and found out you can’t see very much from an airplane window. Big things, yes, but the little things are lost.”[35] Barry speaks for–and to–all of us in these lines, in this evocation of people that we once were.

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[31] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 304.
[32] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 304.
[33] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 30.
[34] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 31.

There is this tension that Barry notes, between the airplanes being unable to see the kickball players, and how Barry and the other children still wave as the plane flying overhead. Grown-up, she realized that the small details disappear from that height. Like memories; when one is living them, they feel unforgettable, but with time and distance, small details fade out and disappear from recollection: “The city is there and so are the streets, but at a certain distance people disappear. Whole neighborhoods of children just vanish. The unforgettable becomes the forgotten. The kids are called in, the doors lock behind them, the streetlights go out. We reach our cruising altitude.”[36] There is this temporal, and fragmented sense of self, invisible from the airplanes and now forgotten by the passage of time which creates such an embodied chapter, one where we meet a childhood version of Barry.

Reading this chapter pulls me back into my childhood memories, finding past versions of myself: who I was 5 years ago, or 15 years ago. There are many versions of myself, some who I loved, or didn’t, all of whom are in the past. They exist in those memories, visual moments of past lives, completely alive in our memories and continue to exist there. Often those memories which felt unforgettable at the time, become cloudy or lost; as Barry would say “the unforgettable becomes the forgotten.”[37] These visual moments are illustrated by Barry; as Chaney describes the book, “*One! Hundred! Demons!* is about the process of accumulating and distilling memories as a visual practice."[38] This accumulation – meaning a gathering together, and a piling on – is welcoming. As readers we are invited in to see the younger version of Barry, while perhaps being invited to reflect on younger versions of ourselves.

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[35] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 32-33.
[36] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 33-34.
[37] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 34.

This accumulation of memories feels like a large pile of fragments, collected into one place and all paradoxically – coexisting with each other. Accumulations of all past versions of ourselves, combine in strange and whacky ways to inform the person one is now, like the version of Barry trying to train her dog. Oola.[39] Barry gives Oola a home, she is very nervous and quite aggressive when scared. Barry first tries to be aggressive back, to train her, but realizes that wasn't working, and that perhaps she needs to be softer, comforting, and slow. Barry looks back at the past version of herself being aggressive and angry back at Oola and laughs: that version of herself completely gone. We do not persist as the same person, over our life span and yet, every version of us is in us somewhere. In these pages Barry is "offering a view of narrative identity that eschews the notion of a fixed self, persisting over time."[40] We are not fixed, and the versions of ourselves who live through trauma, abuse, or good times, they are parts of who we are, but they are not the same person who is here.

Those triggers that bring up memories seem so surprising every time they happen, and Barry really captures that in one panel on page 35, where she says "what reason would we have for remembering any of it? Yet, when we do there is always a feeling of surprise and amazement over this little bit of lost world."[41] These lost fragments of worlds that exist in our memories, both mental and physical, are integral to our sense of self. Yet, those memories which we thought at one time or another were foundational, so important they would never leave the forefront of our minds, often shift into the background without us noticing. Memory combines through the mental and physical embodied memories to create these fragments; small portals which bring the reader back in time, to a previous version of ourselves.

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[38] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 292.
[39] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 170-183
[40] Chaney, *Graphic Subjects Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, 297.
[41] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 35.

Marianne Hirsch captures a theory of memory as sense-related and part of the body, "the workings of sense memory imprinted on the body through vision have produced an explosive impact on the world stage, inviting rather than dividing victims, preparators, and bystanders in their embodied subjectivity."[42] Reading through "Lost Worlds" give me a sense of invitation into Barry's memories, unlocking my own in the process. The idea of memories coming back, jogged by a stimulus or by an image is something Hilary Chute interviewed Barry about, asking her specifically to talk about the "can't remember, can't forget" theme. Barry's response details her belief in the power of memory, and how images are a bridge, or a site of connection for memory:

> It's that whole thing about what images can do. Can't remember and can't forget, that's the unconscious always make that joke "If I had an unconscious I'd know about it," but it's this whole idea, and Freud had it, and it's also in a lot of mythology: there are things that are driving us that in a funny way, and until we remember them, or act them out, are going to continue. […] Because I always think of images as lowering the drawbridge where stuff – memory can cross over.[43]

Images are gateways for our memories to exist behind. I love how Barry uses them as drawbridges, leading the reader from one place to the other. This understanding of images as drawbridges is akin to how I see portraits as the drawbridge to comic memoirs and how they drew me across to a place of connection. These places of connection, even very tenuous and fragmented connections, whether between life and memory, or one area of study and another, are so important. This complicated and emotional bridge is important to me in exploring connections between my own fragmented memories and stories. As often memories function in fragments, fractured into pieces of memory, rarely a whole picture remains long after an event. To span the rivers and moats of our own forgetting, these drawbridges are important in the discovery of our fragmented memories.

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[42] Hirsch, "Editor's Column: Collateral Damage." 1212.

[43] Hillary L. Chute, *Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014, 76.

Sometimes memories present themselves like panels from a comic memoir: the outline of someone's face against the sun and an emotion. But this vision holds no narrative, or idea of what came before or after: it is a single panel surrounded by gutters.

We hold fragments of stories of who we were, capturing the temporality of ourselves. Often the fragments which remain are not what we expect or foresee lasting. Barry captures this beautifully in the second-last panel of "Lost Worlds" asking, "who knows which moments make us who we are? Some of them? All of them? The ones we never really thought of as anything special? How many kickball games did I play?"[44] This is the second-last panel of the chapter, and two thirds of it are the words, in the lower third we see four figures with Barry represented as the largest, recognizable by her spiky orange hair. We see these four characters arguing about who will pitch the ball and whether Chuckie can pitch a ball straight.

In the last panel, we see a single figure: I assume this to be Chuckie ready to roll the ball. This is a person who we do not see mentioned in any other chapter, only existing in this one fragment shared by Barry. Chuckie exists in this fragment from childhood, tied to this game and the way they played together. This chapter narrates a childhood memory of playing, the story bringing with it, Barry's understanding of the temporary nature of experiences. These experiences themselves, by bits and pieces create the fragments of memories which narrate our lives. In the next chapter we are going to briefly look at "Magic Lanterns" which also deals with time and narrating life through fragments.

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[44] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 36.

B. “Magic Lanterns”

The fragments we attach to pieces of our lives are often narrated by objects, places, and people, and they are integral to the past versions of ourselves, and to the stories we tell ourselves from these times. Barry calls them “Magic Lanterns:” they hold a lantern to the past, a window, like a self-portrait, capable of capturing a past fragment of ourselves. The chapter “Magic Lanterns” opens with a collage full of animals, we see kittens, stuffed elephants, bunnies, cats, and bears. There are drawings of rabbits and bears standing up and stretching, ribbon glued along the edges, and stamps with birds on them. The background is bright orange and becomes light blue for the background of the rest of the chapter.

Barry talks about her blanket from childhood, yellow and covered with kittens: “I’m embarrassed by how much I remember about it. It had gray and black kittens on it and they were chasing red balls through the flowers. I knew those kittens so well.”[45] The blanket is an item for comfort, making Barry feel safe when she has it with her. The beloved blanket forms a relationship of care between item and child who uses for safety, comfort and creates a sense of self – one that is looked after through the relationship to the child. In a sense, this blanket, or anyone’s beloved object from childhood is a bridge of care created with an object. It is a fragment of the self which provides safety and security, likened to what a parent is expected to provide for their child. Barry shows the love she held for her blanket, and the deeply held need to protect and keep these special belongings safe.

These lanterns or beloved objects which we imbue with meaning and special powers of keeping us safe or secure, or whole in unsettled homes or environments. These special belongings change throughout our lives but are never truly lost: “and then there are the accidents. Things drop. Things are left behind. The twins, the lovers, the child, and its mother are separated. What looked like a rag contained all these things and more. It's one of the oldest stories and we tell it often. There are a thousand versions of it in books and movies. Love takes so many forms, has so many outcomes."[46]

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[45] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 152.

These belongings are sites of love. They hold versions of ourselves safe with their presence, and when they are physically lost, the fragment of the person who prized that blanket, or stuffed animal is lost as well, except in memory. This "Magic Lanterns" 'demon' shows to the reader a child with their stuffed bear or rabbit, sitting under a table, listening to the adults talk about how attached the child is to their beloved object. We see the child become protective of their beloved object, wanting to keep it safe, as it, in turn, keeps the child safe. The loss on the child's face is shown when the beloved object is removed or forgotten, with the rabbit under a dresser and someone's foot as if walking away from it.

These beloved objects narrate fragments of childhood and beyond, tied to an external object which narrates a story of a particular time in our lives: "why are we moved by stories? [......] How does a story come so alive? [….] When we finish a good book, why do we hold it in both hands and gaze at it as if it were somehow alive? What happened to my yellow blanket?"[47] These stories are held, as if our blanket, stuffed animal, or book is alive and breathing, that by its existence it keeps a piece of us safe. I think of this chapter "Magic Lanterns" as illustrating the creation of fragments of safety, and care which we create for ourselves in external objects. These objects are beloved at a specific time and our love for them is a fragmented memory; and, as Barry notes, they stay beloved in memory even after the object is long lost or gone.

On my bed is my unicorn who has kept me company for 20 years. She is a lantern to my childhood and continues to light the world I now live in as an adult. She is a beloved object that ties me to a place and time, holds a child version of me who was afraid of monsters under the bed, [48] and to whom she provided a sense of safety and care. Beloved objects do that through the relationships, care, comfort, and security we create which surrounds them and our childhood selves.

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[46] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 153-154.
[47] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 154-155.

This ‘demon’ ends with someone finding a lost stuffed panda at an airport and Barry saving it from being thrown out, leaving her name and number in the hopes that someone will call and retrieve it. Barry is saving this fragment, held in the beloved object of a stuffed panda, keeping it safe for whatever child has lost a fragment of themselves. Lanterns to Barry, could be anything: “a book, a blanket, a cloth rabbit. A place on our bed post we liked to touch as we fell asleep. Each with a magic lantern inside capable of conjuring worlds.”[49] To remind the reader that they too have had – or still have – magic lanterns she asks: “I still have that panda. Is it yours?”[50]

In conjuring worlds, these fragments of our lives hold power over our memories, often acting as a touchstone to lost worlds. This lost panda is held by Barry, with her knowing a child lost their beloved magic lantern, a fragment of safety and security within their world.

These beloved objects hold on to the spark, the magic that we give them as children, and they hold on to it, as we turn from childhood to adulthood. They remind us of that childhood wonder and love, and the fragments of ourselves that animated them, allowing them to remain alive and beloved even as we age. Barry keeps the panda, knowing that it holds the lantern of some child, and she protects that, even though it does not contain a fragment of herself. In some ways, there is this beautiful sense of care which Barry gives in every chapter of *One! Hundred! Demons!* and we see so lovingly laid out in the care she gives this lost panda. Barry holds on to the humanity with her gift of telling life stories. We imbue these beloved objects with parts of ourselves, fragments of self which allow them to keep us safe and keep us connected to those pieces of who we used to be.

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[48] I still am.
[49] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 156.
[50] Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* 156.

4. Conclusion

“Lost Worlds,” and “Magic Lanterns” narrate different fragmentary relationships: to memory, childhood, and objects. Fragmentation is a powerful tool for narrating lived experiences, both those full of trauma, and those of comfort and care.

Contemporary art critic Ben Eastham described how objects are physical pieces of fragmented stories. These fragments are touchstones, or as Barry calls them magic lanterns, unique to each person, “They are the fragments on which the story of a self can be founded. Each carry an association to something – a formative experience, a loved person, a set of values, someone lost – that has shaped the way [we] act in the world.”[51] These pieces all form fragments that are crafted into the stories of our lives. These fragments of stories are narrated by physical objects, or magic lanterns. Just as we have seen how they are illustrated in Lynda Barry’s comic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!*.

I’ve explored art created by Betye Saar, Hannah Hoch, and Yoko Ono, in relation to Barry’s graphic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!*. These artists have proposed ways of thinking with fragmentation – in many ways fragmented themselves – within their art and storytelling. In the same way this paper has itself been a “working through,” processing and uncovering, thinking with Barry around fragmentation in art, just as *One! Hundred! Demons!* is a “working through” for Barry of memories and past selves. I am not the person I used to be, but I can remember these past selves – visualize them, image them – and in doing so, understand a bit more about who I am today. Fragments for me capture memories and working through this paper has allowed me to find a few of my own lost fragments – lost worlds and magic lanterns.

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[51] Ben Eastham, *The Imaginary Museum – A Personal Tour of Contemporary Art Featuring Ghosts, Nudity and Disagreements*. London: TLS Books, 2020. 112-113

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