‘Sounds better in Tagalog’: Linguistic and Cultural Code Switching in Barry’s *One! Hundred! Demons!*

MARISAA SINCLAIR  
University of Toronto  
mariss.sinclair@utoronto.ca

Barry’s Show and Tell

‘N’AKO! EVEN THE HOLY VIRGIN HAD KUTO!’ Pilar exclaims to Lynda in Barry’s *One! Hundred! Demons!* (Barry 2002, 18/1). The recollection of a friend’s statement in Taglish—a blend of Tagalog and English—emphasizes Barry’s focus on linguistic mixing as a form of hybridity in this work of ‘autobifictionalography’ (2002, 7/1 and 7/2). Barry’s selected narratological form, the graphic narrative, mirrors Lynda’s hybrid identity because it incorporates ‘the nonverbal, affect-laden, sensory images into verbal narrative to approach her past’ (Chute 2010, 303). Barry’s narrative boxes represent adult recollections of childhood experiences and the lessons derived from them, while the images, dialogue, and documentary-style commentary depict the painful and often humorous situations from which such narrative revelations stem. While these artistic and narrative elements seem to perform separate functions, they depend on each other to convey Barry’s experiences and to, in effect, ‘write back’ to the past. Linguistic hybridity contributes to the text’s function as a literary effort to rechannel painful memories of marginalization and to embrace the cultural hybridity that is often a source of shame throughout Lynda’s formative years. Barry retrospectively injects humour into traumatic memories through a combination of Taglish and the text boxes she inserts in the images, which allow her to construct a new hybrid identity that accepts and celebrates the cultural and racial hybridity that once tormented her.

Barry’s Beginnings

As Dan Kios outlines in a *New York Times* article on October 27, 2011, Barry is a cartoonist whose newsweekly strips have appeared in alternative newspapers for 30 years and her longer works have always incorporated graphic art. While her career trajectory shapes *One! Hundred! Demons!*, the details of her personal life are also pertinent to her story. Her parents divorced when she was 12 years old, which resulted in a difficult childhood with strained relationships,
various types of abuse, and multiple crises of identity. Her comics once focused on relationships, but gradually shifted to childhood, and specifically, to ‘fictional’ versions of her own. In the Introduction to One! Hundred! Demons!, Barry interrogates and complicates the supposed fictionality of her work when she wonders, ‘Is it autobiography if part of it are not true? Is it fiction if they are?’ (2002, 7/1 and 7/2). As Whitney Matheson states in a 2008 USA Today article, Barry invents the term ‘autobifictionalography’ to combine fictional and real events without ever defining the line between them.

‘Autobifictionalography’, Perspective, and the Graphic Form

Barry’s graphic narrative form—its own structurally hybrid ‘language’—is crucial to one’s understanding of its hybrid narrator-subject and her experiences as a marginalized mestiza figure because the text’s form mirrors its content. Eisner states that ‘A wide range of stories can be told in the graphic medium but the method of telling a story must be specific to its message’ (2008, 17), which captures Barry’s methodology. Eisner also explains that literary writing centres on the manipulation of language while ‘The process of writing for graphic narration concerns itself with the development of the concept, then the description of it and the construction of the narrative chain in order to translate it into imagery. The dialogue supports the imagery — both are in service to the story’ (112). Barry’s childlike depictions contrast heavily with the stark black and white text boxes that serve as channels by which the narrator can teach important lessons that she has learned throughout her life. Indeed, as de Jesús states, ‘[Barry’s] deliberately ‘naïve’ graphic style complements the brutally honest musings of its young narrator and the often harsh subjects of the strips themselves’ (2004, 220). For example, Barry illustrates the evolution of ‘kuto’ or head lice in an amusing manner (Barry 2002, 14), which she then ties to her ‘worst boyfriend’ by writing, ‘2,600 species of lice and I’ve dated every one of them’ (14). These are entertaining remarks, and though the lighthearted tone of the graphics and dialogue seem to contrast with the sombre tone of the narrative, these elements are actually interdependent and mutually enforcing. The narration and images operate in what McCloud calls an additive (1994, 154) and interdependent (1994, 155) relationship—each adds meaning to the other, which neither could convey alone. Both modes of storytelling and the way in which Barry intertwines these modes into a hybrid graphic form—‘style-shifting’ or ‘register-shifting’, perhaps—are necessary to Lynda’s retelling of her traumatic childhood experiences.

The interdependent relationship between images and narration that McCloud deems crucial to One! Hundred! Demons! functions as an interesting metaphor for the mechanics of hybridity in language in the text. That Barry infuses a Tagalog word into the prelude to the first section and to the book as a whole suggests the significance of Taglish. The predominantly English syntax, interspersed with Filipino idioms and vocabulary, indicates that Barry is able to code-switch between these two languages (Tay 2007, 408); this is meaningful for the narrator, who remembers moments at which she belongs to and yet feels disregarded by the cultural communities represented by the languages. While Myers-Scotton argues that code-switching ‘participants have shared and simultaneous membership in two social identities, those symbolized by each of the languages used’ (2007, 334), this does not always describe Lynda’s experience. The code-switching that occurs in Barry’s text is evident, though never explicitly
defined, which intensifies Lynda’s liminality because it suggests that she is only capable of ‘deficiency-driven code-switching’, that is, ‘not fully competent in the use of one language and therefore has to go back to the other language’ (Bautista 2004, 227). For example, in ‘Today’s Demon: My First Boyfriend/Head Lice’, Tagalog words only operate as additive idiomatic tags or interjections. When her Lola scolds her, saying ‘N’ako Lynda! Just use the fly-swatter, naman!’ (Barry 2002, 16/2), n’ako translates to oh my goodness, while naman means instead in English (Tagalog English Dictionary, ‘naman’). Neither expression nor function word (Bautista 2004, 230) is necessary to grasp the meaning because Barry’s punctuation contextualizes the vocabulary well enough for those who are not familiar with Tagalog to understand. Nevertheless, Lynda’s proficiency in either language does not seem to be the point of the text; rather, Barry implies that Taglish encodes the cultural memory conveyed by Lynda’s grandmother, Lola, from which Lynda derives a sense of comfort. While critics discuss the effects of racial and cultural inbetweenness in Barry’s work, few address the role linguistic mixing plays in remembering and reconstructing the experiences which produce Lynda’s awareness that, rather than belonging to any particular racial or social groups, she straddles the borders between Filipino, American/English, and multiracial identities. This awareness constitutes Lynda’s painful mestiza consciousness (de Jesús 2004, 226).

Reclamatory Humour, Memory, and Hybridity

Forked Tongues

In One! Hundred! Demons!, Taglish only appears in the sporadic commentary or text boxes that complement Barry’s images, but when it is used, it inserts a retroactively humorous overtone to the otherwise painful memory the images portray. In other words, Lynda the child experiences the anguish associated with certain events but cannot see the ‘whole picture’. It is only when the elder Lynda is able to narrate her memories in the text boxes that she can see and represent the humour in previously confusing or upsetting memories, and Taglish is crucial to each instance of this. At first, Lynda’s narration seems incongruous with her focus on lice in ‘Today’s Demon: My First Boyfriend/Head Lice’; however, analyzing the Tagalog term for lice, ‘kuto’, unveils a deeper connection between ‘cooties’ and lice in the text. Lynda remembers that when a child at school had ‘cooties’, ‘it didn’t mean lice, it meant something about you was so weird that no one wanted to touch anything you touched’ and that ‘[She] was one of the little cootie-girls’ (Barry 2002, 17/1). Lynda is adamant about differentiating between ‘cooties’ and lice. ‘Kuto’, which translates to ‘lice’ and to ‘germs’ in Tagalog (Wordnik, ‘kuto’), are a medical affliction while ‘cooties’ are metaphorical germs that one is perceived to have based on how well he or she relates and conforms to society’s concepts of ‘normality’ and ‘acceptability’. In Lynda’s case, her mestiza identity is a marker of otherness to the other neighbourhood children, who, despite their own racial diversity, cannot seem to understand Lynda’s position as an occupant of the middle ground between two ethnicities. While Lynda sees the distinction between lice and cooties as a child and attributes her inability to fit in to the latter, as an adult, she realizes that the contagion and ‘untouchability’ associated with ‘kuto’ and ‘cooties’ amount to the same feelings of exclusion for a child. There is something ironic and amusing about this
instance of code-switching as linguistic play (Bautista 2004, 230) because the unfamiliar English-speaking reader might miss the multiple meanings encased in many Tagalog terms. The possibility of misinterpretation or partial understanding emphasizes the importance of context in Barry’s work and opens the situations to humorous representation.

Lynda then remembers two situations in which she feels inadequate as a Filipino, which is a source of shame in her early life. The first memory centres on her trip to the Philippines, during which she meets two children who are fascinated by Lynda’s red hair and white skin and wonder if her lice are also white (Barry 2002, 18/1). When the professor tells her, ‘As my skin is brown, so my kuto is brown. As your skin is like ivory soap, your kuto will be the color soapish’ (18/1), he suggests that having lice of a certain colour entails belonging to a specific group or community. In other words, the professor implies that Lynda belongs to the white community. When Lynda argues that she does not have lice, Pilar scorns her: ‘N’ako! Even the holy Virgin had kuto!’ she exclaims (18/1). Pilar’s assurance fosters Lynda’s feelings of belonging and yet of estrangement. On one hand, Lynda belongs to the larger human community because she has or will have lice just like everyone else, including the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, when Lynda tries to assert her individuality in this moment by suggesting that she may not ever have lice, Pilar immediately reminds her that she is not special and exempt from lice simply because she is white. Barry paints the episode in a humorous light as Pilar sifts through Lynda’s hair to find her white lice, but it is also an upsetting memory. Lynda does not integrate well with children at her school in the United States, so if she does not belong to the Filipino or to the white communities, she occupies liminal space. When Lynda tries to relay the information about the Holy Virgin’s lice, her mother dispels her belief in the professor’s and Pilar’s words, saying, ‘N’ako! If Pilar said diamonds fell out of her armpits, would you believe her?’ (18/2). Her mother’s response is not funny in English, but Lynda qualifies this with a label: ‘Sounds better in Tagalog’ (18/2). Despite the fact that Lynda feels excluded from the Filipino community because she will have white as opposed to brown lice, she reaffirms her hybrid identity by identifying her mother’s quip as funnier in Tagalog; therefore, she situates herself within the Filipino community by displaying her understanding of the main Filipino dialect. Lynda’s documentary-style commentary implies that her mother’s Tagalog metaphor cannot be translated into English, which is another element of code-switching (Bautista 2004, 230). Lynda translates the phrase as closely as possible, but realizes that the translation pales in comparison to its original expression in its native tongue. There is, then, a shared joke between Lynda, her mother, and the reader who understands Tagalog to which others are not privy. One senses Lynda’s pride in understanding the phrase and in her own inability to ‘do it justice’ in English. In this moment, Lynda claims membership in the Filipino and English communities through linguistic hybridity and manages to construct an identity that is based on embracing these painful memories of marginalization and finding humour in her family’s idiosyncrasies.
Structural Shifting

Taglish is not the only form of humorous linguistic switching that occurs in the text’s first section, though. Just as Barry’s images employ linguistic code-switching to signify humour, her narration also uses textual style-switching to indicate that the more mature storyteller recognizes the absurdity of the youthful experience. Lynda’s ‘worst boyfriend’ calls her ‘little ghetto girl,’ and while this should be insulting, she excuses him: ‘I’m sure he [means] it in the nicest way,’ she explains (Barry 2002, 19/2). Initially, it appears as though she internalizes verbal abuse and is willing to sacrifice her own dignity to appease her partner, but there is also a hint of subversive humour in the statement—‘[means]’ and ‘nicest’ are handwritten as opposed to printed in the narration, which accentuates the elder narrator’s sarcasm, as though she understands upon reflection that her boyfriend was not using the phrase ‘little ghetto girl’ affectionately. Her boyfriend then tells Lynda, ‘I told [my mother] about your history. How it’s like war. The foot soldiers always age faster than the officers. [Are] you aware of that?’ to which Lynda responds, ‘Uh…’ (21/2). The way in which Barry injects humour into this otherwise infuriating episode is by relaying her boyfriend’s ignorant words verbatim, even adding in parentheses ‘(Actual dialog)’ to express disbelief that such patronizing people exist. Lynda incorporates narrative glosses into certain images such as this one, which demonstrates that she can shift between fiction and reality in terms of form and content just as well as she can shift between typefaces, languages, and registers. That her boyfriend presumes to know more about Lynda’s ‘people’ and history than she does makes her feel uneducated about her Filipino heritage, increasing her feelings of inadequacy and of exclusion. However, the adult Barry reflects on this situation and realizes that her boyfriend feels superior to her because he reads more about her history than she lives in practice and is compelled to ‘teach’ her about her past as if he is doing her a favour (21/2).

Moreover, Lynda realizes that her boyfriend reminds her of another oppressive figure from her past: her mother (24/1). The image in the first panel on page 24 is entertaining in that her boyfriend bears remarkable resemblance to the depiction of her mother in the first panel on page 20 in the same section. Barry effeminizes her boyfriend and conflates him with her bitter and critical mother who always rebukes Lynda because she ‘talk[s], talk[s], talk[s]’ about memories that nobody else cares to hear (20/1, 24/1). More importantly, once her boyfriend becomes her mother in Lynda's mind, Taglish re-emerges in the text boxes to signify the painful revelations that the adult Lynda now recognizes as humorous. Lynda embraces that which once causes pain and identity crises—namely, her idealizations of lice and her boyfriend—and can then paint such distressing experiences in amusing ways because she comes to terms with how they shape her identity. As de Jesús argues, ‘Barry constructs a hybrid new identity consciously deciding which aspects she will claim and which she must discard’ (2004, 222-223). Barry’s humorous images, dialogue, and commentary complement the serious nature of the narrative given above; together, these elements of Barry’s style help her reconstruct (or perhaps finally construct) the identity that is perpetually in flux throughout her childhood. In each of its manifestations, code or style-switching is crucial to the humorous rechanneling of negative memories for Lynda.

Barry’s words and images that ‘[swerve] from the amusing to the appalling, insisting on both as the lived reality of girlhood’ (Chute 2010, 108) are also evident in ‘Today’s Demon:
Dancing’, as is the narrator’s injection of humour via style-switching and linguistic code-switching. It is only when a neighbourhood girl points out Lynda’s ‘awkward’ dancing that she becomes self-conscious about it (Barry 2002, 44/2), just as she must be informed that her house has a peculiar scent. After the neighbourhood girl ‘[knocks] [Lynda] out of [her] groove’ (47/1), Lynda no longer enjoys dancing. Rather than delving into her hula dancing lessons, which are crucial to her Filipino heritage, Lynda stands in the back of the class and hides (45/1). Ultimately, she quits hula dancing and severs her ties with that cultural tradition altogether (47/1). She does, however, think that ‘Babies always look good when they dance. They have some thing that is very hard to get back once it is lost and it is always lost’ (Barry 2002, 46/2). This is an overwhelmingly fatalistic perspective because the narrator believes that losing one’s ‘groove’, or one’s unabashed and carefree identity, is inevitable. But the narration also offers hope for the recovery of this groove when Lynda states that, ‘We’re born with [the groove] and we lose it and the world seems to split apart before our eyes into stupid and cool. When we get it back, the world unifies around us, and both stupid and cool fall away’ (48/1). The sharp line between ‘stupid’ and ‘cool’ reminds the reader of Lynda’s initial distinction between ‘cooties’ and ‘kuto’. Barry suggests that children lose their groove when they become aware that their particular grooves will be classified and judged as acceptable or weird, but that when one matures and recovers his or her groove, the need to fit into the polarized worlds of ‘cool’ and ‘uncool’ matters less and less. Beneath such powerful narrative content is an image of Lynda dancing crazily, with several arms signifying frantic movement (McCloud 1994, 112). The narrator ensures that the reader identifies this image correctly with her descriptive label: ‘Secretly spaz-dancing alone in my room (I still do this)’ (Barry 2002, 48/1). Once again, Barry’s form shifts from narration and imagery to labels and commentary, signalling the plurality of voices that are available to her through the form of the graphic narrative. The image seems out of place, considering the serious subject matter present in the narrative portion of the panel, but the image actually supports the narration—Lynda’s spaz-dancing shows that she regains her groove and sheds her preoccupation with others’ perceptions of ‘stupid’ and ‘cool’.

Lynda then thanks the ‘keepers of the groove’ for hanging onto it and reminding those who lose it that ‘any kind of dancing is better than no dancing at all’ (Barry 2002, 48/2). The image that accompanies these words shows Lynda’s grandmother encouraging her grandson to dance, despite the awkwardness of his movement. Lynda’s grandmother watches the baby, whose arm extensions and movements rhyme with Lynda’s in the previous panel, and says, ‘N’ako! Look at him! Segie na baby! What is he doing!?! Ha-la! Segie! Only God knows the name of that dance!’ (48/2). The baby enjoys dancing freely and Lynda’s grandmother is amused by his amusement. Indeed, Lynda remembers that it is her Lola who encourages dancing but does not dance herself (40/1). Even though her grandmother does not participate in the ‘party atmosphere’ (40/1), she instills the lesson that dancing and all that it represents—shamelessness, comfort, self-assurance—is central to identity-formation, especially for the hybrid individual who must constantly navigate the liminal space between cultures. Barry employs linguistic hybridity in the image of her brother’s dancing to arrive at her narrative conclusion that accepting the conflicting parts of her heritage can only strengthen her identity. Lynda’s grandmother’s Taglish statement translates roughly to ‘Goodness! Look at him! Go ahead baby! What is he doing!?! Watch out! Come on! Only God knows the name of that dance!’ (48/2).
These are approximate translations because ‘sige na’ and ‘ha-la’ are Filipino idioms that warn or urge someone, but they do not have direct counterparts in the English language. While Tay argues that ‘the typical code switcher or mixer is usually not aware of why he/she switches codes at certain points of the discourse’ (2007, 412), Barry’s Taglish is deliberate and careful. Given that Lynda once says that her mother’s statement sounds better in Tagalog, it seems likely that she has distilled many of the Taglish statements from fluent Tagalog to appeal to the English-speaking American or international audience. ‘Segie’ should be ‘sige’, but Barry seems concerned with her English readers’ ability to pronounce and to therefore connect with the Tagalog language. While Barry’s code-switching invites the English audience to participate, the insider knowledge necessary to understand Tagalog jokes or puns demands a Tagalog readership as well. Barry reminds the reader that context is important with Taglish—just as ‘kuto’ has multiple meanings, the definition of ‘segie’ depends on the context in which it is used. In her grandmother’s first usage of the term, ‘segie’ encourages the baby to dance frantically; in the second occurrence, however, ‘segie’ entails a warning or a dare, such that the baby should proceed as his own caution because there is something mysterious about his dance. The shift between definitions is small, but significant—only fluent Tagalog speakers will understand the nuance at first glance, but Taglish used in this manner also forces English speakers to investigate Barry’s terminology. In either case, Barry draws attention to her linguistic shifting; contrary to earlier sections in the text in which Lynda’s code-switching seems to be driven by deficiency, Lynda reveals that she does have access to Tagalog and to English, fusing those languages in her memories to demonstrate her affiliation with both. In her own way, and with the help of her hybrid graphic structure, Barry reconfigures code-switching as its own code, ‘not multiple codes used mutually exclusively, but … one code used holistically; it is a code composed of different lexicons and grammatical systems in which a novel lexicon and grammatical systems are formed’ (Axel 2011, 289).

Language, Identity, and Retroactive Acceptance and Release

The most important function of linguistic hybridity in ‘Today’s Demon: Dancing’, however, is its ability to encode culturally hybrid memory. In one of the section’s first panels, which Barry reproduces in the section’s final panels, Lynda’s grandmother and Lynda watch as the baby dances. As they observe, Lola says, ‘Segie-segie-na-baby!’ which the young Lynda reiterates as ‘Shake it shake it now baby!’ (Barry 2002, 40/1). Interestingly, the baby mimics Lola’s words, saying, ‘Segie na baby!’ (40/1). While this may be an instance of children’s propensity for imitation, it also insinuates that Lynda’s grandmother is actively passing on the Filipino language, which grants her grandchildren access to the Filipino culture that is in danger of erasure in an American ‘melting pot’ society. Lola’s passage of Tagalog allows her grandchildren the ability to code-switch, enabling them to use the hybrid or ‘split’ tongue to express their hybrid experiences. The bilingual speaker has the ability to choose which language would best represent his or her reality (Bautista 2004, 230), and Barry chooses the hybrid graphic narrative to structure her memories and incorporates her hybrid tongue to negotiate her liminality. One! Hundred! Demons! offers, then, a ‘third space’ in which language ‘serve[s] as [a] [vehicle] of cultural memory, animating, simultaneously with the global-colonial, a local-indigenous identity’ (Bhatt 2010, 530). Barry’s ‘language’ and text become forms of linguistic
resistance to ‘decolonize and democratize English language use, disrupting colonial claims to its cultural-linguistic authenticity’ (530), thereby valorizing Taglish’s capacity to convey cultural memory in a specifically Filipino-American or hybrid fashion. In this way, Barry ‘writes back’ to or ‘writes against’ her own history in an attempt to reclaim it. The narration in this section is often thoughtful, but the light and funny images as well as the Taglish conversations that accompany them reformulate the moments at which narrative revelations occur for Lynda. As de Jesús asserts, ‘Barry retells and reworks childhood memories ... in order to discover her history and thus herself’ (2004, 222-223). Barry chooses humour to illustrate her growth from a broken and confused ‘Filipino-American-but-neither’ girl into a reflective hybrid woman, whose courageous revisiting of painful childhood memories push her to view them in a new and amusing light.

The situations in ‘Common Scents’ are particularly representative of the way in which Barry uses humour to tackle otherwise serious sources of alienation and pain in her childhood. That the title of the section is a pun already points to this tone of comic sombreness because it adds different registers of meaning. Humour functions in a similar way in One! Hundred! Demons!, in that the narrative offers one layer of meaning while the dialogue and documentary-style labels, often in parentheses, provide a different layer. The relationship between the text and the graphics in much of the book is interdependent because focusing on either without seeing it in reference to the other produces only half the vision and half the meaning. Similar to her experience with dancing, Lynda is blissfully unaware that her house has a certain smell until a white neighbourhood girl calls attention to it (Barry 2002, 54/2). Lynda then becomes conscious and self-conscious of that smell and all that it reveals about her family and her character. At the end of the section, the adult Barry reflects on this particular demon of being ridiculed for ‘smelling Filipino’ and presents an observation that seems profound but is actually mundane (59/1). She says that she has ‘never heard a single person ever say [he or she] [loves] the smell of air freshener and yet there are so many people who fill their homes with it’ (59/1), which is insightful commentary on that which is not often considered. The narrator may be referring to the problem of assimilation—people internalize societal conceptions of what is acceptable and continue to perpetuate them. This may be a metaphorical rendering of Lynda’s feelings about liminality and the danger of numbing one’s self to the internalization of expectations or emotions as she discusses elsewhere. This is heavy subject matter if the text alone is considered, but the graphics that occupy most of the panel offer a funnier reading. Barry illustrates the different types of air freshener, but labels them as though she is adamant that the reader knows rather than infers the specific meaning attached to each image. For example, the incense stick fits into her categorization of air fresheners, but the inscription beneath it reads ‘cat pee incense’, which subverts the idea that these are universally pleasant odours (59/1). The ‘scented candle nightmare’ and the ‘Piney Freak out’ spray function similarly, but it is especially telling that ‘piney’ looks markedly like ‘pinay’, which is an informal Tagalog term for a Filipino woman; this is appropriate, given the Filipino (and Barry’s own) tendency to play with words. If the ‘Piney Freak out’ is a ‘Pinay Freak out’, this panel speaks to the crisis of air fresheners as a metaphor for Lynda’s mestiza crisis of ethnic identity.
The first panel moves into the second panel via subject-to-subject transition, as many of the conventionally pleasing odours reappear. The narrative again operates as a life lesson or teaching exercise. The narrator warns that, ‘When combined with natural but power-filled smells, the results can be traumatic’ (Barry 2002, 59/2), but the images that follow undermine the warning by flouting reader expectations. Rather than describing what is traumatic about mixing natural and unnatural odours, they have been fused and renamed with amusing labels: the cherry-flavoured pop-up is now a cherry-fried liver pop-up; the tropical passion scented candle is now a tropical passion aroma therapy cat box; the ‘Piney Freak out’ spray now merges with the pig’s blood stew (59/2). Interestingly, Barry does not use the Tagalog terms for such dishes. Blood pudding or stew is ‘dinaguan’ in Tagalog, but English translations allow the English-speaking audience to participate in the joke whereas Tagalog might alienate such an audience. The narrator distinguishes the unnatural air freshener smells from the natural household or food-related scents, and addresses the dangers of covering the natural with the superficial. The implication is that the natural smell eventually seeps through the air freshener, and when that occurs, the overall smell is somehow worse. If the previous panel speaks to the way in which a tangential discussion about air fresheners can serve as a metaphor for hybrid identities, the second panel on the page reinforces such a reading. On one hand, the mixture of different identities could be problematic in that one may be stronger than the other, resulting in an inability to blend. On the other hand, the idea that one’s ethnicity cannot be destroyed by dominant cultures may be encouraging for Lynda, whose childhood and adolescent identity is always unstable, fragmented and disposable because she is conflicted by multiple and often competing selves.

The second panel on page 59 shifts into the first on page 60, and once again, the narrator speaks entirely in English, which may slight the Filipino audience; however, the situational conversation below the narration incorporates untranslated Tagalog words. ‘Pueet’, for example (Barry 2002, 60/1), is a Tagalog term for ‘behind’ or ‘buttocks’, but the actual word is ‘puwit’. Lynda knows Tagalog well enough to code-switch orally, but her alternative spelling may reflect her own imperfect acquisition of the language melded with a desire to relay Tagalog words phonetically, or as she remembers her grandmother saying them, to ensure their correct pronunciation for English speakers. The narrative expresses how the narrator’s grandmother falls for the rhetorical power of advertisements for air fresheners that eliminate household odours (60/1), but the narration also suggests that her grandmother realizes that quick fixes or bandaid solutions cannot last. If the running metaphor of scents as a measure of assimilation applies, perhaps the narrator realizes that quick identity fixes or changes do not solve the ultimate problem of reconciling disparate parts of one’s self. The dialogue and the images that accompany the narration illustrate how the narrator comes to the conclusion in the next panel. In the first panel, the narrator’s grandmother responds to a commercial about the effectiveness of the air freshener. The woman who markets the product resembles an iconic white doll whose face represents the robotic characteristics of American advertising and consumerism, which contrasts with the distinctive and vibrant liveliness of Lynda and her grandmother. The humorous element of this panel exists in Lola’s words, which contradict the dominant narrative of the sales pitch occurring simultaneously. Lola mocks the woman’s rhetoric, arguing, ‘Aie nako, lady. I tried it. It smells worse than the pueet of a vampire! … If I have fish, I am not
worried! I am thanking God!’ (60/1); this contextualizes the distinctiveness of the Filipino experience and response to American ideals and influences. De Jesús aptly states that ‘[Barry] presents a light-hearted but pointed reflection about American consumer culture’s successful marketing of products designed to mask ‘natural’ odors by asking what it is we are trying hide’ (2004, 230). What Lynda learns is that she cannot and does not need to hide anything about herself because such secrets eventually reveal themselves, as do the smells in her house.

The lesson learned—that the narrator loves the smells of home because they conjure feelings of belonging, authenticity, and heritage and because they play a part in teaching her how to accept who she is—appears in the final piece of narration in the second panel (Barry 2002, 60/2). The narrator admits that she would buy an air freshener which emits smells of ‘grease and fish and cigs … Jade east and pork and dogs … all the wild food my grandma boil[s] and frie[s]’ (60/2). These smells ostracize her from her neighbourhood friends, their families, and their communities, but she would rather secrete them than the conventionally fragrant smells advocated by American media and society. Lynda’s Lola imprints it into her mind that dominant or acceptable identities are not always fulfilling, and consequently, the narrator is able to form her own identity by accepting the parts of herself that once made her the butt of others’ jokes. By teaching Lynda that smells are deceiving, Lynda’s grandmother ‘connects Lynda to her Filipino heritage of ‘wild food’ and pungent odors’ (de Jesús 2004, 242-243). This is an important realization for the narrator, but it is mediated by an amusing memory that occurs simultaneously in which her grandmother presses Lynda to try a ‘duran’ fruit that ‘smells so badly but tastes so goodly!’ (Barry 2002, 60/2). The linguistic play is funny because Lola names the fruit incorrectly—it should be durian—but it is also funny because it demonstrates how Tagalog speakers may not use formal or ‘standard’ English, even though it is followed by an idiomatic English statement, ‘My golly!’ (60/2). Indeed, many of the Taglish statements that appear in this section are slang or colloquial terms for body parts, to which a speaker might be introduced when learning a new language (57-58). Nevertheless, Taglish provides the tools for humour and resilience with which Lynda can combat the painful nature of her hybrid experiences and memories. Humour demonstrates how dialogue, commentary or labels, and graphic images inform or reshape the meaning derived from the narrative; they offer complementary stories, both of which are crucial to Lynda’s understanding of herself. More importantly, Barry’s blended form incorporates Lynda’s linguistic shifting, which allows her to accept her own cultural and racial liminality. Lynda’s retellings of childhood memories are whimsical, but they are also ‘acts of survival for remembering … acts of decolonization and healing’ (de Jesús 2004, 248).
Conclusions

Barry’s One! Hundred! Demons! is simultaneously moving and amusing, and while these tonal registers seem disparate, her story necessitates the presence of both. She interweaves the meanings of the mature, thoughtful narration and the hilarious action, conversations (often represented in Taglish), and memories because she finally has the ability to do so without allowing the agonies of the past to affect the present. As Barry says, ‘At first [her demons] [freak] her, but then she [starts] to love watching them come out of her paint brush’ (Barry 2002, 12). Because she now owns the experiences that once tortured her, she gains agency over how to confront and articulate the liminal space between cultures, races, and languages that she occupies. Barry’s chosen mode of reworking and retelling is humour, and she expresses it through the linguistic hybridity to which she gains access through her grandmother. Lynda’s Lola offers humour through language, such that Lynda can use her forked tongue to refashion and to recolour her painful memories. In other words, Barry’s style-shifting employs linguistic code-switching to complement and to shape the mestiza consciousness with which One! Hundred! Demons! is concerned. The cathartic experience of writing and illustrating the book itself fulfills its purpose of ‘problematis[ing] and resist[ing] the forces that have deemed Filipino America to be, in Oscar Campomanes’ words, ‘unimaginable’ and ‘unrepresentable’’ (de Jesús 2004, 222). Barry vocalizes her own marginalized experiences as a Filipino-American, thereby inscribing it (and perhaps those of others like her) into the American experience. Perhaps One! Hundred! Demons! is what Brady calls ‘loiterature’, with ‘contrapuntal techniques … [that] rupture themselves, turning lyric moments into caustic humor, forcing a gap, like an exposed cut, between humor and bitter revelation’ (Tensuan 2006, 951). However, Barry’s uniquely hybrid graphic and narrative style separates her work from others—her contrapuntal techniques meld rather than force a gap between humour and revelation precisely because her revelations, while bitter, are not represented with bitterness.
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