

# Repression of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Through Graphic Narrative in Ian William's *The Bad Doctor* (2014)

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## Abstract

Comics is a sequential art that appeals to a diversified audience, a medium of reflection on culture, society, and history. Graphic literature is a discourse of dynamic interaction of graphics in literature, including literary comics, graphic novels, sequential art, juxtaposed images, and other dimensions of visual and printed images. A Graphic novel is the collaborative medium of the interaction of word and image, visual and verbal imagery to create numerous meanings and multiple interpretations. The term Graphic medicine was coined by Ian Williams who is a doctor, comic artist, and writer; He defined Graphic Medicine as the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare. Graphic medicine analyzes and interprets the medium of comics which serves as an innovative platform for disturbing, risky, and taboo ideas of illness. Ian Williams's graphic novel *The Bad Doctor* (2014) is a verbal and visual illustration of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The protagonist Ian a general practitioner tries to cope with his OCD, his obsessions are comically and satirically represented through the artistic medium of graphic narrative and iconography of illness. Graphic Narrative of psychological illness like OCD by the sufferer of the illness gives a whole new perspective on the experience of psychological illness. Graphic narrative and iconographic representation of illness break down the traditional stereotypes of illness and give voice to the muted patient whose stories are unheard.

**Keywords:** graphic narrative; graphic medicine; OCD, illness; visual imagery

## 1. Introduction

Narration is a fundamental human way of giving meaning to the experience of life. Throughout history, the literature's conventional narratives in novels have celebrated life and treated themes of illness, disability, disorder, and death as a menace to society. As life and death are the two sides of the same coin, human life is bound to experience and witness both. The illness perspective in literature celebrates the meaning of pain, which gives endurance to a human to become a survivor. If birth is the beginning and death is the end of life, celebrating human experience from birth to death, lies the meaning of life. Graphic novels on illness celebrate the darker side of life as the best of times and treat the themes of disease and trauma as aspects of transition in life.

Disease plays an important aspect in the history of mankind and literature. Illness both of mind and body has played a significant role in fiction and non-fiction throughout the stages of the evolution of literature. Plagues and mass deaths have been portrayed in literature as the bitter reality of life, which humanity has suffered and continues to suffer, by putting forward the question of what is art and literature in an uncertain life that decays in illness and fades in death. As Shakespeare in his eminent play says,

“Hamlet: To be, or not to be: that is the question:” (Shakespeare, 2021, pp. 63),

The characters in literature, through their experiences of physical and mental suffering, address the profound question of whether to live or not. The ultimate conclusion, however, is not only to live, but to live with purpose—finding meaning even in the face of absurdity, suffering, illness, and death. Mental illness is often misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misrepresented in the social-cultural relation of society. A person with a mental disorder is shunned and feared in society. Humankind fears the unknown things, when it comes to mental disorders, the cause of the insanity of the mind, the actions of the insane mind, and the cure to it, are unknown. The fear of the unknown is greater than the fear of the known, hence in the history of humankind those who had mental illness were treated as possessed by evil, demons and were subject to torture because of religious superstition. The evolution of the science of psychology broke down the myth of insanity of the mind and religious superstition was criticized and brought to light that insanity of the mind is an illness, which has to be treated and administered. Even with the development of Psychology, there is still no widespread understanding of mental disorders and depression.

A comic artist is a revolutionary thinker who experiments and questions the existing norms of every age through his fearless illustrations. A comic artist experiments with images, words, colors, and forms, hence making the medium of comics dynamic in its form. Comic strips of superheroes, science fiction, and animal comics-Eg: Disney are children's favorites and have influenced society with their creativity and brilliance of themes. Comics have become a part of academic discourse because it has become an exciting field that can speak and

reach diverse communities. Graphic design has become an indispensable part of the modern world with the evolution of logos, 3-D dynamic designs, and computer animation. Categorizing comics as a genre has been a long debate over the past century. Still, the evolution and intervention of graphics in literature have paved the way for the emergence of a new graphic literature genre. Comics is an interactive medium that combines words and images to communicate an idea effectively. It has a revolutionary history and has become part of popular culture over the past few decades. It has influenced film and many films have taken adaptations of English-language comics like Batman, Superman, Spiderman, etc. These films that were adaptations of comics were Hollywood's blockbusters which created rising academic interest in comics and scholarship in comics significant.

Comics emerged as graphic novels in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to engage academic readers with its subtle humor and dynamic illustrations. A graphic novel is like a comic strip but has a long narrative structure and a continuous plot. A graphic novel is a narrative work that combines text and visual art to tell a story. Graphic novels have gained significant recognition in both popular culture and academia for their ability to address complex themes while offering an immersive visual experience. Graphic novels that address themes of illness serve as a potent medium for conveying personal and emotional narratives. These works often integrate dynamic visuals with intricate themes of suffering, coping, and recovery, offering readers an immersive and impactful experience.

### 1.1 Author Biography

Dr. Ian James Williams is a medical practitioner, writer, illustrator, cartoonist, celebrated medical humanist, and founder of the graphic medicine website. He began creating comics under the pseudonym nom de plume Thom Ferrier. He has written popular debut graphic novels like *The Bad Doctor* (2014) and *The Lady Doctor* (2019). Ian's autobiography *The Bad Doctor* (2014) gives an account of his personal experience with OCD, the aspects of illness, and how it shapes a person's identity, relationships, and sense of self. He presents an insightful depiction of his challenging life, illustrating how the full spectrum of human experience converges within the confines of his medical practice. As a physician, he suffers from OCD and tries to cope with his fears. Furthermore, Ian's decision to confront his condition by attempting to assist one of his patients represents a poignant and transformative moment. This experience improves his relationships with others, as addressing his fears allows him to engage more effectively and empathetically with those around him.

### 1.2 Objective of Study

OCD (Obsessive-compulsive disorder) is a complex disorder that encompasses various aspects including psychological, neurological, and therapeutic dimensions. Various psychological research and coping mechanisms have been suggested to treat the symptoms of OCD. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure and response prevention (ERP) have helped patients of OCD to channel their minds amidst their obsessive thoughts. Pharmacotherapy has helped patients with OCD to manage the symptoms and to live a quality life. Graphic novels on OCD are autobiographies of sufferers of OCD, they provide real-life examples of people living with OCD. Reading these novels and drawing one's thoughts through graphic narratives can become a coping mechanism as it helps in the acceptance of obsessive thoughts, emotional regulation, and mindfulness of the intrusive thoughts without acting or reacting to them.

## 2. Literature Review

A comic strip is a sequential story told in pictures and narratives with an element of humor. *The Glasgow Looking Glass* is considered the first mass-produced comic illustration in the world, it depicts the political and social life of Scotland and was illustrated by William Heath. In the early days artists used caricatures to convey a story and Rodolphe Topffer a popular caricature artist whose origin from Swiss is considered the father of the comic strip. In America there developed a series of newspaper comics during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century like *The Yellow Kid*, *Max and Moritz*, *Katzenjammer Kids*, *Gasoline Alley*, *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith*, *The Little Bears*, *Popeye*, etc.

Scott McCloud in his book *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993) gives a short brief history of the origin of comics, its components, and the technique behind the creation of comics. George Perry and Alan Aldridge in their book *The Penguin Book of Comics* (1968) discuss the development of notable comics in the United States and Great Britain, providing critical commentary and plentiful illustrations. Roger Sabin in his book *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (1993) dates the history of comics for adults from the late nineteenth century to the present, he classifies the period and development of comics as pre-first World War and after World War, the boom of comic period largely invented by media. Paul Gravett in his book *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know* (2005) explains the development of comic strips to graphic novels which are long stories told in illustrations, he briefly explains the development of comics worldwide like Japanese Manga, European caricatures etc. Stephen Weiner & Chris Couch in their book *The Rise of the Graphic Novel: Faster than a Speeding Bullet* (2004) elucidate the rising number of readers of comics and their interest in reading graphic novels. The book talks about the development of graphic novels, their rise to a sophisticated status, and its comeback as the fastest-growing area in publication. MK Czerwec, Ian Williams et.al in their illustrated book *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* (2020) explains the intersection of comics in healthcare, thus creating a space in medical humanities for comics on illness themes.

Graphic novels about OCD provide illustrations of the everyday struggles of an OCD person. Veronica Agarwal and Lee Durfey-Lavoie's graphic novel *Just Roll With It* (2021) describes the life of a middle school girl who faces challenges to overcome her intrusive thoughts. *Everything Is an Emergency: An OCD Story in Words & Pictures* (2020) by Jason Adam Katzenstein is an autobiographical graphic novel on OCD illustrating how an OCD person sees the world differently. Many OCD people suffer from anxiety disorders creating worry and fear that disrupt their daily routine. *Anxiety is Really Strange* (2018) by Steve Haines illustrates the symptoms of anxiety attacks and provides coping mechanism techniques for positive thinking. *Obsessed: A Memoir of My Life with OCD* (2017) by Allison Britz is an autobiographical graphic novel on vivid nightmares of OCD person and painful struggles with OCD, when the author was a teen. Ian

Williams's *Bad Doctor* (2014) is a debut novel that presents a humorous depiction of OCD and its symptoms, the author vividly illustrates his childhood memories and obsessive thoughts, which interrupt his life in the clinic. The novel *Bad Doctor* (2014) is chosen for study in the research article as it has autobiographical elements; the author is a medical practitioner and provides his clinical experience in dealing with patients with various psychological issues. The novel has a positive outlook on life, it highlights the author's success in suppressing his obsessive thoughts and becoming a successful medical practitioner.

### 3. Methodology of Research

The 20th-century comics have metamorphosed into graphic novels. Whether graphic literature can be classified as a separate genre is a debate because it not just encompasses graphic novels but also newspaper cartoons, editorial cartoons, manuscripts that use illustrations and words, instruction manuals, it just includes any form that uses art and narrative, thus it gives a vague category of what all forms and format can come under graphic literature. Graphic Narrative in literature disintegrates the traditional narrative of words which conveys the meaning in polished words. It uses words and imagery to create transparency of meaning and with its clear, lucid, rich illustrations creates multiple meanings and contexts. It is an evolution in narratology for it has multiple contexts, giving rise to dynamic meaning and interpretation.

Graphic Medicine theory allows the subject/victim to become the subject of study and gives voice to express their suffering. Healthcare is a universal subject in which the doctors' perspective is often given importance and the patient's perspective is often ignored. The one who treats the illness owns the narrative and the one who is treated has no voice to express himself/herself. According to popular scholars of the theory, Charon and Martha Montello,

“Narrative Medicine: listen to the patient's story; attend to the expectation, wishes and fear expressed; and try to enable the patient to shape a meaningful life, right up to its end.”  
(Williams & Czerwiec, 2015, pp. 20)

Graphic medicine gives voice to the voiceless subject who suffers from illness, the subject/victim becomes the subject of study. According to the theorist of Graphic Medicine,

“Graphic Medicine seeks to disrupt this power imbalance. We believe those best positioned to represent illness and caregiving are those living with it.” (Williams & Czerwiec, 2015, pp. 20)

One image passes the meaning into the other image creating a sequential art combined with words and imagery. Graphic narrative not just makes the reader think of the image inside the captured frame but also the images that are not captured within the frame. Graphic narrative is realistic, and lucid and is a combination of words and images that goes beyond representing, to the discovery of multiple perspectives.

A graphic novel is a serialized comic, which creates a sequential narrative in graphic form. Graphic novels are an evolution of comics narrating stories with a touch of art. Graphic novels are long continuous comic narratives dealing with serious themes for mature audiences. Unlike comics which are periodicals for children and teens, graphic novels are for serious mature audiences with significant themes depicted in futuristic illustrations. A graphic novel is a sophisticated artwork that can be analysed using all literary theories and perspectives. It is a multidimensional medium that can be critically approached by different disciplines. It has a variety of themes that can be tested not only by literary theories but also by interdisciplinary theories like Graphic medicine.

“Graphic medicine is the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare.” (Williams & Czerwiec, 2015, pp. 1)

Graphic medicine an interdisciplinary theory analyses how physical and emotional signs of illness are represented through graphic narrative in the comic medium. The term was coined by Ian Williams a doctor, visual artist, and illustrator from England. Graphic medicine is a perspective that focuses on comics that narrate stories of medicine and the experience of illness. Graphic medicine can be seen as a field of study of comics that promotes medical education and healthcare. Graphic novels on illness narrate personal experiences of illness, these are autobiographical novels that use words and images to narrate stories of illness and health. The *Bad Doctor* (2014) is one such graphic novel that narrates the personal experience of a mental disorder like OCD. The popular novel is written by Ian Williams an eminent exponent of the field of graphic medicine. The novel depicts serious illustrations of everyday life of a person suffering from obsessions, these illustrations create an understanding of OCD and its symptoms.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

Psychological disorders are often considered a misunderstood subject in our society. People who admit they have psychological disorders are often subject to ridicule and not accepted by friends, peers, and family. This ridicule and discrimination are due to ignorance of medical conditions and mental illness. People with psychological disorders are in fear of the treatment of society, they live in denial of the condition and do not seek medical help. Mental health is as important as physical health, but mental health is often ignored because of the stigma surrounding mental disorders in our society. In certain cultures, people who have psychological disorders are treated as people who are possessed by demons, they undergo severe torment in the name of religious rituals. Lack of awareness of psychological conditions makes people who have psychological conditions unaware of mood swings, persistent feelings, reactions to stimuli, etc. It is a priority to

ensure that people are in good mental health for the betterment of mankind. Mental health is important as it affects a person's daily life, productivity in work workplace, and personal and interpersonal relationships. Mental health is a way of looking at how well someone is doing in terms of their cognitive and behavioral health.

Psychological disorders have an impact on a person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. These illnesses affect a person's everyday life significantly and can range from mild to severe conditions. Depending upon the severity of the condition psychological disorders are classified into acute and chronic disorders. Suppressed feelings, fear, worry, and anxiety can cause anxiety, phobias, depression, panic, etc. People with mental disorders experience a variety of physical symptoms like difficulty in breathing, sleeping, rapid heartbeat, and difficulty concentrating. But more than the physical symptoms and emotional imbalance, people having mental disorders have to face the shame and stigma of society, which makes them completely devastated. Many social factors like war, holocaust, crime, witnessing the death of loved ones, accidents, rape, bankruptcy, illness, and natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, hurricane hits etc cause trauma to the afflicted making the person emotionally imbalanced. Drug addiction and alcoholism can act as stimuli to a mental imbalance in a person. People who are disaster survivors face survivors' guilt and trauma, as do refugees, marginalized people, those with chronic illnesses like cancer, people from dysfunctional families or with a history of abuse. These groups are at a high risk of developing mental disorders. For people who are continuously in a stressful environment, whether at workplace or within the family, the environmental stressors act as stimuli making the person vulnerable to mental disorders. Distressing events in a person's life like failing an exam at school, losing a job at the office, or rejection of love in a relationship create depression, and prolonged depression creates suicidal thoughts in a person.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a disorder of mind in which a person has excessive thoughts, and obsessions leading to repetitive behavior. A person with OCD lives in constant fear and doubt. An OCD person constantly develops unwanted thoughts that are negative and cause distress and anxiety. The negative thoughts interfere with everyday activities and disrupt the function of the person. The person with OCD cannot ignore or restrain obsessions, however, this only serves to exacerbate anxiety and stress. Ultimately the person is motivated to engage in compulsive behaviors to alleviate stress. Regardless of the attempts to suppress or eliminate intrusive thoughts or impulses, they continue to resurface, resulting in an increase in ritualistic repetitive behavior. The person's compulsion and obsessions become irrational, consuming a significant amount of time and disrupting daily routine and social, educational, and professional functioning. The symptoms of OCD vary from person, a person might have a fear of germs, contamination, or dirt, and they keep washing their hands, and disinfecting their hands or the place they live. They keep cleaning the place again and again to ensure it is free of contamination. They dislike home when it is in disorder, they like every object arranged in an orderly and symmetrical manner. They have negative thoughts that something bad will happen to their life and avoid going out or having social interactions. They have negative thoughts that they can hurt themselves and also others due to their obsessions. Their obsessions trigger them to keep checking the things in their daily life like closing the doors and making sure they are locked, repeatedly checking if the stove is off, arranging things in a manner all labels are faced in the same direction, counting the staircase or steps as they walk, rereading things, fear of using public toilets, fear of being in a crowd, hoarding things like unwanted junk, repeating routine activities like walking in and out of the door, rearranging books in shelves etc. The person may also suffer from forbidden thoughts like unwanted sexual thoughts that make them do inappropriate activities and repeated religious or superstitious thoughts that create fear of God and sin.

Ian Williams in his graphic novel *The Bad Doctor* (2014) illustrates his personal experience with OCD. Ian is a middle-aged general practitioner, who works tirelessly in a rural community. He loves his patients and cares for them, he goes out of his way to help them in difficult times. He is naturally empathetic to his patients and shares his everyday experience in treating patients in his care unit. He illustrates funny encounters and disappointing incidents with his patients with a sense of humor. His autobiographical novel *The Bad Doctor* (2014) illustrates the relationship between the patient and provider. In his novel he naturally draws his life as a country doctor treating sick old ladies, careless old men with tattoos, and men with depression and obsessions; these patients awoke his empathy as well as distress. He cannot make decisions or offer suggestions as he is suffering from OCD. He lives a tiresome life that is full of responsibility, he must run his clinic, visit his patients at their time of need, and take care of his mental obsessions. He lives his everyday life in self-doubt about his decisions and the decisions he makes for his patients. He tries to calm himself by talking to his workmates and goes cycling in the mountainside, even there he encounters his patients who cause him frustration. He suffers along with his patients, empathizes with his patients, often absorbing some of their distress. He turns his patient's distress stories into entertaining stories and serious situations in a lighter vein. His illustrations of everyday clinical practice depict humorous misunderstandings and mistakes highlighting human conditions of absurdity. He expresses his plight about the difficulty in communicating with his patients who have obsessions, anxiety, and depression, he uses the element of humor to bridge the gap during difficult conversations.

There is a time lapse between the past and present life in the novel, Ian often visits his past as a teenage boy suffering from OCD. His childhood obsessions and fears become a disorder, which he tries to heal by making comic images of his obsessions. He recalls, how as a child, he suffered trauma seeing the Nazi government killing his community people. Ian's family was a spiritual Jewish family; as a result, Ian developed a fear of all the things that were unclean and unholy. He fears that God will punish him if he does anything against the religious laws.

Ian, the protagonist of the graphic novel *The Bad Doctor* (2014) suffered OCD since childhood, he finds explaining his obsession to anyone embarrassing, and explaining one's obsession in appropriate words is difficult for a person who suffers from OCD. The protagonist draws his obsession over and over again, which keeps his mind occupied by the actual object he is obsessed with. He pictures

himself as a small boy who fears darkness at night, he frequently gets up and checks his room as if something is haunting him. The visual metaphor of a small boy is used to represent his insecurities, which have been buried within him for many years. Through drawing a small boy inside a dark bedroom, the author tries to revisit his insecure childhood through the panels of graphic narrative. The visual metaphor of a small boy inside dark spaces represents the moments the author was lonely in life. Visual metaphors of the dark room and the dark spaces represent the author's fear of demons, evils, and suicidal thoughts. Drawing his fears and insecurities through visual metaphors in graphic mediums, helps the protagonist to face his fears and insecurities and eventually to overcome them.

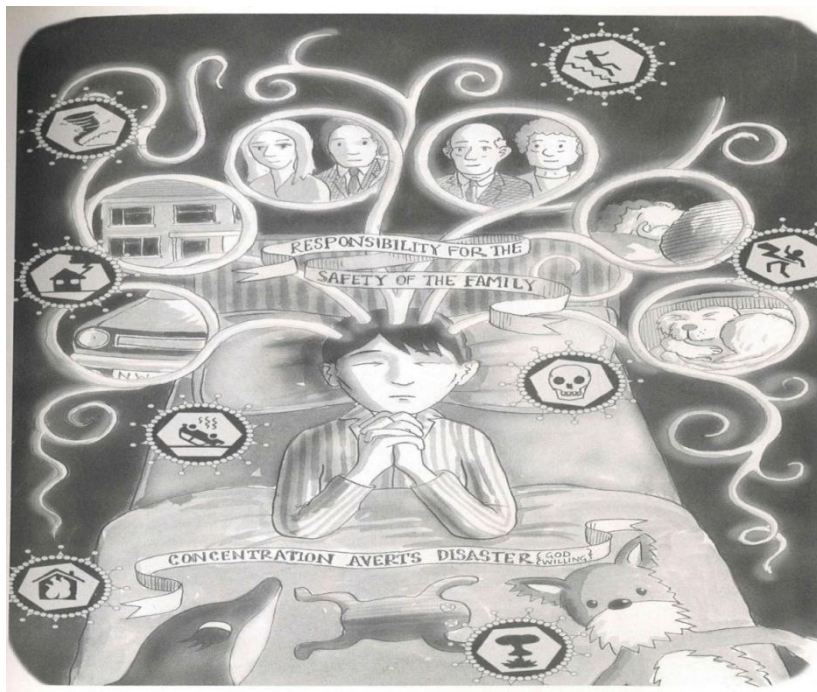


Figure 1. The Bad Doctor

(Ian Williams, 2014)

#### 4.1 Visual Depictions Of OCD

Ian illustrates himself as a teenage boy in pajamas who wakes up in the middle of the night because of nightmares. His nightmares take the shape of mysterious shadow that hides behind his head. In order to stop getting nightmares, Ian often imagined his head being chopped off by guillotine, which would make him stop the negative thoughts. He had trouble sleeping and used to pray till he slept. He illustrates all his toys that were lined on the shelf, his dog, and all the little things he cared for the most in the world. While he sleeps all the images of people he cares about, appear in his inward eye, he fears that something evil will happen to them. His obsessions and fears were buried within him; his parents barely noticed his obsessions and fears. As a boy, he talked to his toys, and became obsessed with them. His loneliness was also another reason for his obsession with his toys. The repetitive images of his toys emphasize his strong attachment to the objects.

“Hello little teddy,, I love you. Good night Dolpin. Good night Frog.Goodnight Pyjama Dog. Oh no that was four patts. Good night Dolpin. Goodnight Frog. Good night Pyjama Dog” (Williams,2014, pp. 30)

The repetition of the names of the toys again and again along with the comic images of his toys brings to light the painful reality of a person who suffers from OCD. When his family buys a new car, he imagines the new car falling from the bridge into the river killing his family. His negative thoughts are a result of his fear of death, his fear of death makes him obsess about the ways one dies and the misfortunate events that cause death. As a child he did not tell his parents about his obsessions nor did he have friends to talk to. Drawing became his only solace and coping mechanism. He draws all his obsessions and fears, the very expression of drawing all his inmost fears helps him to get relieved of his fears. He tries to draw his obsessions in comic medium, the word and the image together help him to understand himself and his obsession. As a teenager, his obsession with his toy changed to an obsession with pop and rap music.

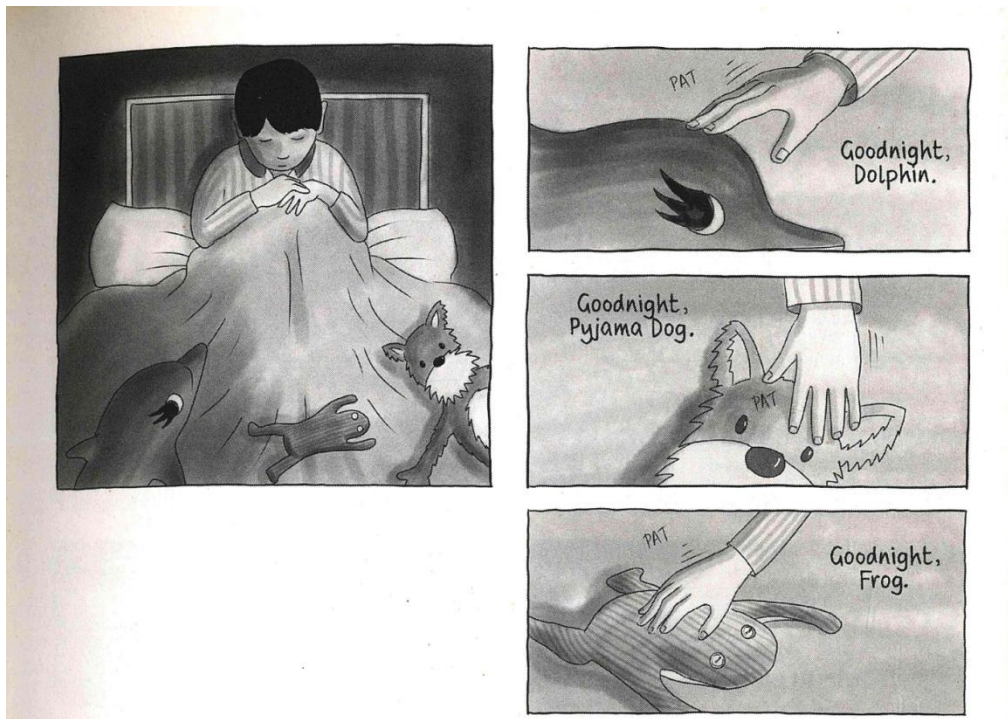
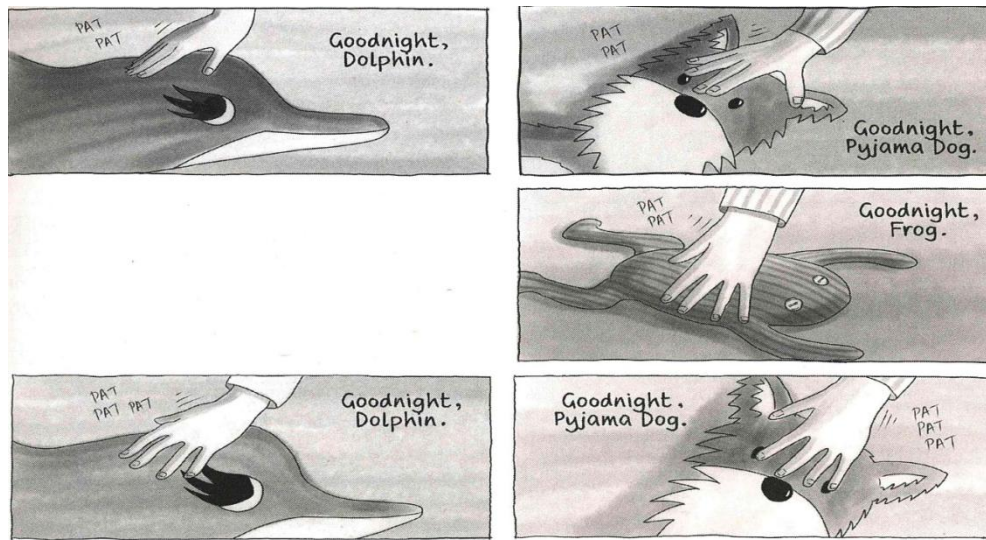


Figure 2. The Bad Doctor



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Figure 3. The Bad Doctor

(Ian Williams, 2014)

Ian pictures his mind and thoughts by drawing a tree that rises from his head with many branches. The branches divide into numerous sub-branches which lead to all his suppressed fears. Graphic narrative becomes an expressive medium to explore his thoughts and picture his innermost sub-conscious mind. As a teenager, he fears bad omens and is always worried that touching unholy or eating unholy food will cause bad omens. He throws away all the food that he buys in the market, considering it to be polluted by Satanism. Ian's pet dog Sammy dies in an accident and Ian blames himself for it. He believes listening to blasphemous music was the cause of his dog's death. His strict Jewish family and restrictive religious laws were one of the causes of his obsessions. Ian's mother instructs him not to listen to blasphemous music during the Sabbath day. Ian Williams as a doctor suffers from OCD but never gets treated for his illness; according to

him, he is good at predicting and healing his patients but not good at predicting for himself. Ian’s OCD and fear help him to understand the conditions of his OCD patients. He is more empathetic to his OCD patient and tells his experience of OCD during his teenage. Though he is not fully recovered from OCD, he carries out his daily activities without any hindrance. Ian also develops an obsession with bicycles, he buys many bicycles and his wife complains that there is no space to park more bicycles in the home. Ian illustrates his objects of obsession in a black and dark background, this highlights the objects emphasizing his concentration on the object and nothing else around the object. This iconography of OCD demonstrates how an object appears in an OCD patient's mind. When an OCD patient thinks about the object of obsession all the other things even their priorities and duties disappear in their mind and only the object of obsession remains in their mind. “Comics artworks engage reader’s imagination and thought process to connect with simple image”(Goggin 11). When an OCD patient expresses his obsessions and fears in simple images he is released of his intense feelings of obsession and fixation on an idea or object. Comic medium with visual and verbal imagery gives emotive meaning, effectively conveying intense emotions, and feelings of sufferers of OCD. The iconography of illness and OCD in *The Bad Doctor* is a mimetic representation of illness and healing. The protagonist fears crows, he considers the crow a bad omen and ill fortune. The visual metaphor of the crow represents the protagonist’s superstitious belief, his superstition is one of the reasons for his fear that something evil might happen in his life. Facing his fear of crow in the visual medium of narrative makes the protagonist face his fear which will give him the guts and reduce the fear when he faces a crow in his everyday life. The protagonist's uncontrolled thoughts lead to repetitive behaviors he ends up doing and saying the same things again and again. His repetitive behaviors make him draw repetitive images in which his excessive uncontrolled thoughts are expressed in a flexible graphic medium. He keeps doubting his circumstances, his doubts about the uncertainty of the events create fear in him, the uncertain events are drawn as a mind map around his head, and this stream of consciousness is linked with thin thread-like lines in visual narrative.

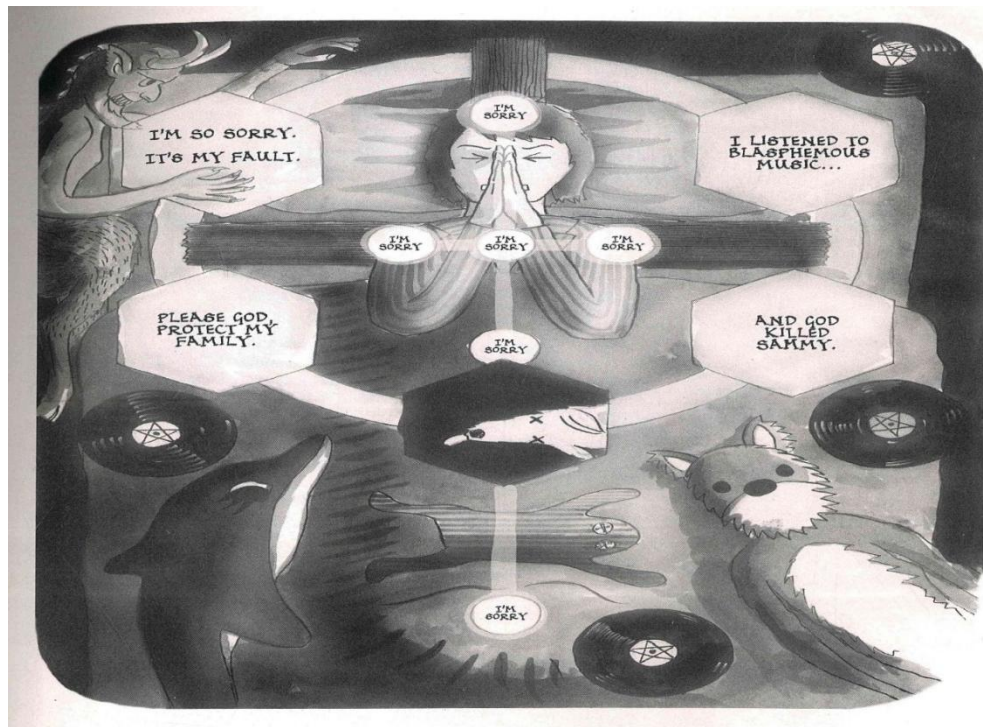


Figure 3. The Bad Doctor

(Ian Williams, 2014)

The protagonist creates visual metaphors in his graphic narrative to create a world within the panels of comics in which his mind can represent both connotative and denotative meanings, to his meaningless fears, obsessions, negative thoughts, and superstitious beliefs. The protagonist who is a doctor, sees many psychological patients every day, listening to people’s depression, and suicidal thoughts create stress and aggravate his OCD, thus he finds comic medium as a narrative medicine to reduce his stress and OCD condition. One of his patients commits suicide and also kills his dog, the protagonist who is a doctor feels guilty of not being able to help his patient. He constantly feels helpless in situations where time runs fast and he is motionless, stuck with his helpless emotions; to portray his helplessness he draws a sand clock visual metaphor. The sand clock visual metaphor becomes a part of his emotional projection into an artistic medium, which the artist uses as a psychological defense mechanism to confront uncomfortable emotions. Thus comic medium of visual narrative becomes a therapeutic medium that relieves stress and also becomes the protagonist’s coping mechanism for his OCD. The visual metaphor of the axe represents the protagonist’s fear of death, he constantly fears death is after him and is obsessed with fear of death of himself and his loved ones. He uses the wheel metaphor to symbolize the circle of events that run in his life that keeps

repeating itself, it also signifies the time that runs fast making him old and more depressed. These visual metaphors depict the state of mind of the protagonist and help us to develop compassion for people who suffer from obsessions and depression. Using visual metaphors in graphic narrative helps in visualizing mental pain and thus overcoming mental agony in psychological disorders. Visualizing mental pain through graphic narrative helps the protagonist in the graphic novel to get emotionally connected. Graphic narrative helps the protagonist who suffers from OCD to visualize the experience by representing it in visual imagery, which helps in the actual experience of life. Visualizing the experience of pain and obsession in graphic mediums helps the protagonist in programming the subconscious mind to know oneself, and to believe in oneself in coping with obsessions and fears in actual life. The suppressed feelings of fear, obsession, and expectations of future life are met through graphic medium and the protagonist is freed both in body and mind. Regularly visualizing the obsessions through sequential art, picturing the pain becomes a coping mechanism for the protagonist to lead his everyday life without breaking down emotionally. Graphic narrative is used as a coping mechanism by the protagonist in the novel, it acts as a cathartic effect and becomes narrative medicine for the victim of traumatic psychological illness.

## 5. Conclusion

“The historians of medicine use medicine in a more self-aware manner...use of images in the writing of history of health and disease stresses the artistic medium itself and internal iconography tradition of the work of art”. (Gilman,S.L, 2013, pp. 17)

Though people with OCD are not mentally fit, drawing their obsessions in graphic narrative, and reading about their disorders in graphic narrative can be a coping mechanism. It helps in developing a positive sense of how they feel about themselves and their obsessions thereby aiding them to enjoy life amidst their disorder. It can assist one in becoming more internally self-determined, forward-thinking, optimistic, and rejecting any potential negative thinking. Graphic narrative on illness explores the process of healing and truthfulness of image through a subjective lens. The gap between two images and the space between the lines and image enable the reader to create dynamic meaning. One image bleeds into another image or one image draws life into another image creating a sequential art along with wordplay. The sequential narrative of OCD by Ian Williams using graphic medium gives freedom to the thought process to express one's thoughts without any boundaries. The comic medium helps an OCD person by giving the freedom to express oneself without any restrictions; it becomes an experimental medium in which an OCD person can fully unleash his obsessions and fears through visual and verbal imagery. The comic medium works like an art therapy that provides symptom relief from intrusive thoughts, repetitive behaviors, and obsessions. It can be used as an effective coping mechanism for OCD as suggested by many studies in depressive disorders,

“Different alternative forms of therapy have been studied in relation to their applicability and effectiveness. The use of art therapy in the treatment of depressive disorder is an example frequently employed in several countries... It can be understood that art therapy is a safe and reliable tool for treatment not only of depression but also of other mental disorders.” (Brand ã & Silva, 2019, pp.871).

Graphic narrative on illness works in favor of the patient in a cost-focused healthcare market, it supports the patient's experience of illness and urges the doctor to understand, interpret, and show empathy toward the patient. It acts like a ray of hope to promote healthcare that is patient-centered. It tries to make a difference in the healthcare system by challenging social norms, reshaping the thoughts of the readers, and fostering empathy towards the afflicted. The element of humor in these graphic novels acts as a source of amusement, provides a coping mechanism, and has therapeutic benefits. It depicts the life of patients who face life-or-death situations and still choose to live a life with a lighter heart. The experience of illness in the narratives becomes a shared human experience unifying diverse communities, bringing out the essence of human frailty in an uncertain life of illness, disability, and death. The element of humor in the graphic narratives on illness offers psychological relief from fear of illness and death. Graphic novel on illness provides information on illness, symptoms of illness, and treatment procedures in illustrations, word, and image narratives, thus learning about a disease and its symptoms becomes amusing.

Graphic narratives of illness give a sensible image of the reality of illness through the subjective lens of victims. In Graphic narratives of illness, the victims of illness free their minds through art and overcome their fear by illustrating it in words, imagery, and iconography. Graphic medicine highlights the therapeutic nature of art which helps victims of mental, acute, and chronic illness to unleash their agony through art, which helps them to transform into survivors who speak about their experience of illness. Graphic memoirs on illness also help the readers to understand the conditions of victims suffering from diseases, and disabilities and make the reader empathize in helping the victims of illness. Graphic memoirs on illness give enlightening insight into life and death. When death is certain, one tries to value life more, the victims of chronic illness value their life every day while counting their days by bringing to light that in the degeneration of life i.e. death lies the rebirth, regeneration of significance of life. In the healthcare system disease gets the primary attention and the doctors focus on biological solutions, the patient's emotional state and psychology are often overlooked. The healthcare system should be shifted from doctor-centered care to patient-centered care. The doctor should respect individual preferences and the diversity of the patients who visit them. The patient is often voiceless, and their side of the experience of illness is neglected. Graphic novels on illness promote the patient's values and expressed needs, apart from treatment of illness, the patient also needs emotional support to alleviate fear and anxiety. Communication is the key to making important clinical decisions, so the doctor must understand the likes and dislikes of the patient before making the final decision. Patients who experience chronic illness undergo severe trauma and depression; they need emotional support to undertake the tiresome routine of long treatment procedures. Graphic medicine a subfield to narrative medicine promotes and highlights the experience of illness to foster empathy for those who are affected by illness and disability.



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