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Graphic Medicine & Canonization: Are We on a Worrisome Path?

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Graphic Medicine & Canonization: Are We on a Worrisome Path?

Tweet this talk using #NEGM20 / #GraphicMedicine / @NoetheMatt
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Graphic medicine is also a movement for change that challenges the dominant methods of scholarship in healthcare, offering a more inclusive perspective of medicine, illness, disability, caregiving, and being cared for.

Comics give voice to those who are often not heard.

We are calling this volume a "manifesto" for good reasons...

Graphic medicine resists the notion of the universal patient and vividly represents multiple subjects with valid and, at times, conflicting points of view and experiences.
Why This Question Now...?

< 1950's
Wertham and the Before

1960's – 1970's
Development Work

1980's – Early 90's
HIV/AIDS & Underground Comics

Late 90's – 2000's
A Period of Sporadic Uses

2010's
Graphic Medicine Explosion

2020's & Beyond
???
Why This Question Now...?

Total Mentions of Core Comics

- Morrie's Closet
- The Bad Doctor
- The Unbeing
- Ma
- Shographed Life: Comics
-lightning
- Faster Than My Shadow
- Roselle
- Billy Me & Talk About
- I Am a S...
Why This Question Now...?

### Comic Title
- Mom's Cancer
- Marbles
- The Bad Doctor
- Taking Turns
- My Degeneration
- Graphic Medicine Manifesto
- Stitches
- The Facts of Life
- Cancer Vixen
- Lighter Than My Shadow
- Rosalie Lightning
- Rx
"Each of us probably has our own sense of what are the best or most important comics, but the canon is the one backed by institutional power: by reviewers and critics, by museums and galleries, and by scholars and educational institutions.

While academics may have questionable influence in determining a work's reputation, they have an unparalleled ability to cement it by the choices they make of what works to study and to teach."

Bart Beaty & Benjamin Woo, *The Greatest Comic Book of All Time*, p. 4
Think More BROADLY
Ways to Resist... For Librarians

• What are you putting on display?

• How can you change your purchasing policies to allow for better representation?

• What's highlighted on your social media? Your resource pages?

• What are you recommending during Reader's Advisory? To the educators in your community?
Ways to Resist... For Educators

• What books are you explicitly assigning? Could they be different?

• Are you experimenting with different formats, e.g. webcomics, zines, etc.?

• How are you reading and discussing? Do you read multiple perspectives on similar health experiences?

• Consider giving your students the freedom to argue for a book's inclusion in graphic medicine – let THEM choose a comic to read.
Ways to Resist... For Scholars

• What comics are you writing about? Have they already been written about?

• Are you experimenting with different formats, e.g. webcomics, zines, etc.?

• When you create comics to use in studies, are you making them available? You should be.

• Where are you publishing? Who is your audience, and can they actually access your work?
Ways to Resist... For Creators

Keep Telling Your Stories!

Stay in Touch – Especially with Librarians!
GRAPHIC MEDICINE
You can reach me by email at Matthew_Noel@hms.harvard.edu

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