

Pigeon Tower presents

In Spate

(press kit)

A film by [Sarah Skyrme](#)

2023 ◦ United Kingdom ◦ English ◦ 10.33 minutes ◦ 16/9 ◦ Colour

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[Website](#)

Synopsis

In 2008, a nameless ill lingers in the body; Jane's disease eludes diagnosis.

Director statement

It has been a new experience to see my research depicted in and through the lives of our animated characters, rather than my usual output of academic reports and articles. I have needed to develop skills in weaving the story together using image, text and sound, and this has been an exciting process.

Researcher statement

I think that animation helps us understand the experience of being ill through someone else's eyes. In Spate illustrates how prolonged illness and limited support impacts one woman's life, creating a domino effect, where one loss leads to another. Through telling this story, we hope to generate empathy and tolerance among our

audience. I wanted to make the point that the physical, emotional and financial attrition of illness is a burden that can make life difficult to deal with, but this often goes unspoken about, lived out in private and unseen.

Some illnesses are poorly understood, and this is particularly so with stigmatised illnesses such as hepatitis C. People with the condition may be reluctant to talk about their health, and this means that their experiences are not commonly heard or talked about.

Art and creative methods can explore and depict contexts and perspectives that may be unknown, or infrequently spoken about, foregrounding the hidden lives and struggles people go through.

As a researcher, why did you make a film, instead of an article?

Journal articles are often hidden behind a paywall and may only be read by academics and policy makers. Producing an animation that is freely accessible has the potential to reach a wider audience using imagery, words and music to share the story.

What was it like collaborating with others?

Working with the animator and musician was very different to my usual method of work, and it has brought challenges I was not familiar with, such as choosing camera angles, paring down and editing the dialogue, and working with the musician as he composed the music.

I have found that through a deeply collaborative process, the work has a clarity and depth I am proud to have been a part of. Wez Allard has captured the spirit of the story in his composition, with the melody matching and evoking the storyline without sentimentality. His work adds depth and texture to the animation. Jeremy Richard has created a warmth and charm with his hand drawn style.

What do you hope audiences will get from watching it?

Animation is a familiar format that many are accustomed to consuming on a regular basis; the immediacy of the style makes it attractive both visually and as a medium for storytelling. It can reach those with an interest in health and social care, animation and visual methods, those who have gone through similar experiences, as well as anyone who enjoys storytelling.

Why fiction and not documentary?

The use of fiction gives space to explore experiences without encroaching on sensitive and personal details; hepatitis C remains a stigmatised condition, and a creative approach gives scope for expanding on themes while offering the viewer space to engage in the story using their own imagination.

What was your experience making this film?

We started this film in 2019, and it has been my first experience of using animation or indeed any type of visual methods and it took me some time to move beyond only using the written word. I needed to learn how to use images as part of weaving together a story and I have found it such a creative way of thinking and communicating. The animation explores very human experiences such as illness, loss, and fear and I am so happy with what we have produced, it has a simplicity that seems closer to poetry than an essay or article could achieve.

As a researcher what do you think you brought to the film?

I think that the training I have had in writing critically and avoiding hyperbole has helped me to pause and reflect on how I am telling the story without overly dramatising the themes. My desire to challenge inequity has helped me stick with the project as I began to see what we might achieve. Our story contains elements that are likely to resonate with many others who have experienced challenges like poor health, insufficient provision, or similar losses.

Cast & Crew

Jane, Moona	SARAH SKYRME
The Consultant	ALAN MCCARTHY
A film by, dialogue	SARAH SKYRME
Screenplay, animation	JEREMY RICHARD
Original music	WEZ ALLARD
Bouzouki composition	RALPH SMITHSON
Tales from the Vienna Woods, Opus 325	JOHANN STRAUSS JR (Internet Memory Foundation, CC BY 3.0)
With funding from	The Faculty of Medical Sciences, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Filmography

- The Unseen Life Drawn Out (2021)
- Seeing the Patient (2023)
- In Spate (2023)