

ONCE, A SECOND TIME: THESIS PROPOSAL PAPER

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Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States¹, and for being so, it often goes under-discussed. Our culture has failed the suicidal— isolation, demonization, and discrimination are just some of the ways our narrative has made life for suicidal people worse. However, though we may understand this, a new issue arises. How do we create a new and better narrative? By looking at depictions of other forms of illness and disability, we can see a long and storied use of symbolism. Where literal depictions can fail or cause harm, symbolism can open a door. The cyclical quality of life and death is omnipresent in nature, and anyone who has experienced suicide knows how familiar that omnipresence is. That familiarity is a valuable lens, and poses the question: how do we harness the connection between lived experience and nature to create understanding?

Suicide has always been a very personal issue for me. I attempted suicide when I was around ten years old and lived with suicidality before the attempt and ever since. I also have been surrounded by a contemporary media era that often does more harm than good when depicting suicide. Nine out of ten people who attempt suicide are unsuccessful, and will not die by suicide later on in life². I, for now, am one of them. I see a lack of narratives about suicide by the suicidal. We lack an essential part of recovery, to be seen by the world around us. When crafting this new narrative, I have looked to work on living with disability, trauma, and illness, and have used them as a guiding star to inform how I depict living with suicide. Works such as *On Being Ill*³, *Tender Points*⁴, and *Voice of The Fish*⁵ have all influenced this area of my research. While there are so many works for those who have passed from suicide or have lost a loved one to suicide, there is a startling lack of work by or about surviving a suicide attempt.

¹ “Suicide - National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).”

² Avenue, Boston, and Ma 02115, “Attempters’ Longterm Survival.”

³ Woolf et al., *On Being Ill*.

⁴ Berkowitz, *Tender Points*.

⁵ Horn, *Voice of the Fish*.

This project titled *Once, a Second Time* will be a 2D animated short with a runtime of five minutes, with original music and voice acting. The story follows Lump, a reclusive 20-something, trying to enjoy her fragile life with her lone friend in the city. What little stability she has is shattered when her past finally catches up to her and she throws up a salmon in a dingy bar bathroom. To survive, she must decide if she can embrace vulnerability and open up not only to herself but to those who wish to help her. This film explores the difficult experience of living after a suicide attempt, from the remembrance of the trauma to the terrifying ordeal of letting people in. It studies these ideas by using the symbolism of the salmon, and the surrealism of becoming one with it as a lens to understand the cycle of life in the face of suicide.

This film draws stylistic inspiration for its animation from the works of Jonni Peppers⁶ ⁷, Suzan Pitt⁸, and Izzy Chavez⁹. These animators all harness a rough, unpolished, yet rich style of animation that bubbles with life and passion. They harness line boil, pencil texture, and a painterly style that add a real kind of grit and humanity to their work. It makes the animation take an extra breath of life. The overall feel of the film is inspired by *Goodbye Forever Party*¹⁰, *Angels Egg*¹¹, *August in the Water*¹², and *Kagerô-Za*¹³. These works hold a certain kind of grimness and magical realism. They push and pull at how we understand the gap between ourselves and the world around us. They use technical aspects like shot composition, editing, color, imagery, and symbolism to form a rich canvas. Here is where they paint the thin veil between humanity and the world around it. These works blend the splendor of nature with our human reality, its grandness, and heavy color, and are not afraid to shy away from it.

⁶ Barber Westchester.

⁷ *Goodbye Forever Party*.

⁸ *Joy Street*.

⁹ *O PEARL*.

¹⁰ *Goodbye Forever Party*.

¹¹ *Angels Egg*.

¹² *August in the Water*.

¹³ *Kagerô-Za*.

I plan to animate this project in 2D using a variety of software. The storyboards and animatic will be done in TV Paint due to the ease and accessibility of the software. The concept art, backgrounds, and promotional materials will be illustrated in Procreate. The animation itself will be hand-drawn in Toon Boom Harmony 24. Depending on how the project develops over the year and what additional animation may be needed, some puppet animation may be done in Moho Animation. Compositing, including camera movement and color grading, will be done in Adobe After Effects. Music and sound will be done in a combination of Garageband and Adobe Audition, with my own recorded materials and additional sounds provided by SoundSnap. Final edits will be done in Adobe Premiere Pro.

With the script finished by mid-September and the storyboards and animatic will be completed in mid-October. After that, voice actors will be cast and rough animation will start in mid-October. Between November and the end of the winter semester, voice acting will be recorded. Backgrounds and music will be completed by January 2025, which will make room for sound effects to be gathered between then and the end of March. Compositing will occur as each scene is completed, allowing room for any final edits to the scene's animation. The animation will wrap up at the end of March allowing the last two weeks for editing the film together. There is not a significant budget for this film, with some money set aside for necessary supplies and one hundred dollars set aside to pay voice actors.

This project has been years in the making. I have known for a long time I needed to make a film about suicide, not for just myself, but for other people who also share this struggle. It has mostly been a matter of coming to terms with my trauma and learning what I need to say and how I want to say it. This project aims to shed light on the reality of suicide, to provide a window into an experience of it in a way that does not further the stigma or harm that already exists

around the difficult subject matter. It also aims to reject the mainstream romantic, individualistic, fatalist narrative that has plagued this issue. Integrating nature as a tool for exploration in this story rejects isolationism. A bridge is created, opening up the experience of suicide for further discussion, on its own merits, as a phenomenon shared by all life forms. If this film can do one thing, I hope it makes it easier for even one person to talk about their experience with suicide. I want this film to leave a door open so that maybe, someone else can see that there is more on the other side.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This two-part project consists of (1) a paper entitled *Responsible Depictions & Social Realities: Examining Suicide in American Films and Television Series, 1995-2020*, and an original film *Once, a Second Time*.

First, the paper is an approximately twenty-page inquiry into the portrayals and potential impact of films depicting suicide. My central research question is: what representational issues do popular depictions of suicide in film raise about the social meaning and realities of this act? To answer this question, I examined films and television series commercially released in the United States between 1995 and 2020 that show fatal suicide attempts. I distinguish and conceptualize them in terms of Durkheim's sociological typology and Aaron's categories of suicide. Focusing on three cases (*13 Reasons Why*, *The Virgin Suicides*, and *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*), I also contend that these depictions are problematic in terms of suicide prevention. This paper aims (1) to contribute to the research literature on suicide in film and its implications for vulnerable populations, and (2) to identify new and constructive ways of approaching and depicting suicide in media.

The film is a 2D animated short with a runtime of approximately six minutes. It aims to investigate the following question: how can I harness the connection between lived experience and nature to create a new narrative about suicide? The story follows Lump, a reclusive 20-something, trying to enjoy her fragile life with her lone friend in the city. What little stability she has is shattered when her past finally catches up to her and she throws up a salmon in a dingy bar bathroom. To thrive, she must decide if she can embrace vulnerability and open up not only to herself but to those who wish to help her. This film explores the difficult experience of living after a suicide attempt, from the remembrance of the trauma to the terrifying ordeal of letting

people in. It studies these ideas by using the symbolism of the salmon, and the surrealism of becoming one with it as a lens to understand the cycle of life in the face of suicide.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Sarah Rae Franklin is a Portland-based, award-winning, multidisciplinary artist focusing her practice on animation, illustration, and creative writing. She was born and raised in the rural Puget Sound area before moving to Portland to pursue a degree in animation at Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA). Franklin had her first solo show at the Bainbridge Artisan Resource Network (BARN) in 2018 and has been featured in several other shows throughout the Pacific Northwest, including a recent show with Portland's Culture & Community. Her animated work has been screened at multiple film festivals in and out of the United States, most notably by Portland Art Museum's Center for an Untold Tomorrow and Portland Panorama.

Franklin is compelled by the intimacy of the taboo, desire, and trauma. How they, along with many other facets of the human experience, can be explored through storytelling. She depicts these subjects in her cartoony and gestural art style, creating a playful dialogue with the subjects she addresses. Her film *Lone Buck Motel* is a love letter to 80's queer monster movies. Her latest film, *Once, a Second Time*, harnesses the imagery of the salmon to explore improved depictions of recovering from the trauma of a suicide attempt in film. Franklin harnesses both levity and grimness and integrates them to get at the undiscussed truths of life. She creates windows into difficult subjects for her audiences, expanding understanding of underrepresented subject matters for a greater audience.

THESIS SPEECH

SLIDE ONE

Welcome to my thesis defense!

SLIDE TWO

First, I want to give a warning about difficult subjects in this presentation

- In-depth Discussions of Suicide
- Body Horror
- Emetophobia
- Dead Fish

Feel free to step out

SLIDE THREE

I also wanted to provide some suicide prevention resources

- 988 and the Trevor Project have 24/7 call, chat, and text options
- Pamphlets are on the back table for you to share
- Sharing your experiences is always the hardest part
- You are not alone
- There is help when you need it

- The hardest part is asking for help

SLIDE FOUR

And without further ado, here is my thesis film

SLIDE FIVE

Hello!

- My name is Sarah Rae Franklin
- My pronouns are She/He
- I am an animated arts major
- And I am a creative writing minor

SLIDE SIX

While my animation reel plays, I'm gonna talk a bit about my art

- Worked in many mediums
- But I longed for a medium that could encapsulate the whole of a lived experience
- Found that in animation in animation
- Work primarily in 2D hand-drawn
 - So that means drawing each frame by hand
 - Over and over again

- I especially enjoy the rounded process of making a film from start to finish
- This includes:
 - Concept art
 - Animating itself
 - Editing
 - Music and sound design
- I finally found a medium I could express myself
- I also am going to toot my own horn
 - I am an award-winning illustrator, sound designer, and animator
 - My work has been screened internationally
 - JR film was screened by PAMCUT
 - It also has an upcoming screening at the inaugural Portland Panorama film festival. Ask me about the details

SLIDE SEVEN

I've struggled with chronic suicidality since I was about 10 y.o.

- My main coping skill has been art
- It allowed me to express what I felt too scared to say out loud due to fear and the heavy social stigma surrounding suicide.

SLIDE EIGHT

When faced with stigmatized experiences like suicide, we look for artistic comfort

- As a young person, I looked for depictions that I could find solace in
 - Looked at the most popular depictions of suicide
 - Met with a wide range of bad, if not harmful, representations

This, for lack of a better word, lit a fire under my ass.

- Somebody needed to do something about it
 - Need a new narrative for the suicidal

SLIDE NINE

This failure inspired me to write a thesis paper

- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in 2022 over 13 million people seriously considered committing suicide.
- NCHS reports that suicide is one of the leading causes of death in all age groups
- The data tells us it is a pervasive issue
- You probably know that though
 - If you haven't experienced suicidality, you know someone who has
 - You also know that it is an issue that can't be ignored
- As a filmmaker, I wanted to understand how our cultural norms and film impact suicide

SLIDE TEN

For this paper, I looked at a few different theories of suicide

- Found definitions that describe how we mostly experience it daily
 - Emile Durkheim's Sociological perspective as described in his book *Suicide*
 - Looked at Egoistic suicides
 - Caused by the breakdown in social bonds, low social integration
 - Michelle Aaron's film studies perspective on categorizing suicide as described in her book, *Death and the Moving Image*
 - Looked at her category called Avoiding Living
 - Defined as a suicide, caused by a myriad of circumstances; however, death is insisted upon as the only resolution to a life not worth living

SLIDE ELEVEN

Looked at studies on the effects of suicide in film and the real world:

These Included

- The specificity of public stigma: A comparison of suicide and depression-related stigma (2016) by Sheenan et. al.
 - Compares the effects that different kinds of deaths, including suicide, have on the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness

Elderly suicide prevention

- Association Between the Release of Netflix's 13 Reasons Why and Suicide Rates in the United States: An Interrupted Time Series Analysis (2019)
 - Analyzes the connection between the release of 13 Reasons Why and the increased rates of adolescent suicides
- A systematic review of elderly suicide prevention programs (2011)
 - As it says on the tin, it is a meta-analysis by Bridge et. All on the efficacy of different suicide prevention programs on the elderly

I've lost count of the number of articles I've read, but this is some of the standout research that informed this paper.

SLIDE TWELVE

And this research led to the formation of the question at the core of the paper:

What social and psychological issues do popular depictions of suicide in film raise about the meaning and repercussions of this act?

SLIDE THIRTEEN

And the Aims of this paper are to:

(1) to contribute to the literature on suicide in film and its implications for people susceptible to suicidal acts

(2) to identify new and constructive ways of approaching and depicting suicide in the

media.

SLIDE FOURTEEN

Data and Methods

- This is a Small selection of a greater data set:
 - The data selection criteria were as follows
 - Time: Released between 1995-2020
 - Includes a fatal attempt
 - Must be both an Egostic and Avoiding Living Suicide

SLIDE FIFTEEN

Case one was *13 Reasons Why*

- It is a show known for its highly graphic depiction of suicide
- Eventually, it had to have its graphic depiction of suicide removed
- This was caused by the fear that it would influence people to commit suicide, which was proven by studies
- Suicide contagion or copycat suicides are where someone repeats a suicide attempt they know of from either the media or their community
- It is well studied that graphic depictions such as the ones in this film cause suicide contagion

- Despite that being so well known that the World Health Organization says that filmmakers should not include these depictions in their films
- It stayed in 13 Reasons Why for two years after its release

SLIDE SIXTEEN

Case two was The Virgin Suicides

- Continues showing highly graphic suicides, which caused fear of copycat suicides by Paramount Studios, which the director dismissed

However, this film serves as a better discussion of the stigma of suicide

- Paints the suicidal hopelessly
- The Lisbon sisters' parents, neighbors, and even the "sympathetic neighborhood boys" condemn them to death
- Despite that 9 out of 10 people who attempt suicide survive, all the Lisbon sisters die.
- Research shows that these kinds of stories, fatal and hopeless, decrease the general population's belief in recovery for the suicidal

SLIDE SEVENTEEN

The third and final case was I'm Thinking of Ending Things

- While falling into the same pitfalls with its graphic nature and stigma, it makes one major improvement
- A disproportionate number of the films I looked at centered on teen girls

- Unlike those, this film shows the reality of who the most vulnerable to suicide are in America
- By centering on an elderly, low-income man, isolated and in a rural community, this film stands out
- It shows a diverse perspective of who commits suicide and why
- Yet it is still far from perfect and has the potential to contribute to both suicide contagion and stigma

SLIDE EIGHTEEN

There were many limitations to this study

- I looked at a specific time frame of films from the United States
- A certain type — Egotastic avoiding Living
- And Fatal Depictions

More Research Should be done to see if these conclusions ring true when these variables change.

However, some conclusions can be drawn:

- *The Virgin Suicides*, *13 Reasons Why*, and *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* show suicide in problematic ways, which impact not only the characters but the audience
- There is a general ignorance of Research that shows how these portrayals cause harm
- Recommendations, guidelines are critical to follow, and as filmmakers

- One can be compelled to listen to them, but not follow every letter
- Humanity and the experiences that come along with it are complex and unique, but research can also show that viewers, filmmakers, and sponsors may all benefit from reigning it in sometimes, especially when people's lives are on the line

SLIDE NINETEEN

From this research, many avenues need to be further explored

- Additional Research on different aspects, such as how these personally impact those who are or have been suicidal
- Increased awareness of suicide recommendations in film, to prevent these issues from continuing
- And I hope to continue personally advocating for improving how artists show suicide in impactful but considerate ways

SLIDE TWENTY

In response to my research, this film was created:

- Once, a Second Time follows Lump, a reclusive 20-something, trying to enjoy her fragile life with her lone friend, Jar
- What little stability she has is shattered when her past finally catches up to her, and she throws up a salmon in a dingy bar bathroom
- To begin to thrive, she must decide if she can embrace vulnerability and open up not only

to herself but to those who wish to help her

SLIDE TWENTY-ONE

I looked at many texts in creating this project, including:

- *Tender Points*, Amy Berkowitz
- *On Being Ill*, Virginia Woolf
- *Voice of the Fish*, Lars Horn

SLIDE TWENTY-TWO

There are also several Influential Films:

- *Angel's Egg*, Mamoru Oshii,
- *Goodbye Forever Party*, Jonni Peppers
- *Asparagus*, Suzan Pitt
- *O PEARL*, Izzy Chavez, a.k.a. Filthyguts
- These films use animation to harness magical realism
- Which is combined with the slow horror and emotional rawness of the mundane

SLIDE TWENTY-THREE

Those sources are some of the many I looked at, which include but are not limited to:

- *Ophelia* John Everett millais,

- *Hamlet and Ophelia*, Andrej Dugin
- *Leviathan*, Bo Bartlett
- *August In the Water*, Gakuryū Ishii
- *Kagerō-za*, Seijun Suzuki
- *Votive Statuette*, Unknown from Etruria

SLIDE TWENTY-FOUR

- This film integrates the research I've done on depictions of suicide, illness, and magical realism.
 - It aims to show a different perspective on suicide
 - One that makes room to show the important aspects of recovery
- I depict all through repeated motifs in my work
- They all act as metaphors for cycles of trauma and recovery

SLIDE TWENTY-FIVE

- Before I get more into this
- I want to answer the question that everyone has asked since the dawn of my project.
 - What is the meaning of the fish?
- I grew up in rural coastal Washington
 - That means lots and lots of fishing

- I've adored this experience of being in nature
- And being around Salmon

SLIDE TWENTY SIX

But why specifically salmon?

- Because of their cyclical life cycle
 - Being reborn out of a traumatic event
 - It mirrors the rebirth of recovering from trauma
 - Becoming out of a fundamentally violent and self-inflicted event, an event that forces rebirth

SLIDE TWENTY-SEVEN

- Spent many nights researching this
 - Evenings scrolling through Reddit threads
 - Reread and watched important films and books
 - Worked to come up with a story that thematically connected with and was appropriately represented by the subject matter

SLIDE TWENTY-EIGHT

Last summer, I spent my lunch breaks at my sandwich job drawing in my sketchbook.

- It was a free place for me to play with story ideas
- I could experiment with themes, ideas, and symbols
- Write about how my characters connect
- And create the visual world they belonged in

SLIDE TWENTY-NINE

- As I started to design my characters
 - I worked to make characters that felt real
 - Based on my own experiences
 - Also, people I hold dear to me in my life
 - I wanted to capture a caring relationship between my two main characters that also allowed them to have their agency

SLIDE THIRTY

- Lump and Jar have a complex relationship
 - Lump, like me, struggled alone through an adolescent suicide attempt
 - Now she is finally coming to terms with that she has Jar's support
- Jar loves Lump, but doesn't want to suffocate her
 - She knows that she needs her own space to recover, but support in this difficult

situation is vital.

- Those familiar with suicidality and trauma know that isolation is the most devastating part.

SLIDE THIRTY-ONE

- Once the plot and characters were in place, I wrote the script and started storyboarding
 - The script served as a linguistic expression of the tone that could translate into shots later
 - It also anchored each story beat and helped me figure out how I would pace the final product
- The storyboard translated all these aspects visually
 - The mood, pacing, and camera angles all helped accentuate the core of the story I was exploring up to this point

SLIDE THIRTY-TWO

- After that, I started on visual development. I worked to make references that I could use while drawing the backgrounds and animating
- Color Scripts helped tell the story through, well, color, using different palettes to help tell the story

- I also drew some style frames to make sure I was happy with how the film would look when I was finished

SLIDE THIRTY-THREE

After pre-production was finished, I started animating the film

- Starts with rough animation in Toon Boom
 - Translating the animatic into full moving images
 - Timing and flow
- From there, I tied it down into the final animation
 - Cleaning up the linework
 - Adding in betweens to smooth things out
- Then I add color
- Finally, I export to After Effects for compositing
 - Added Backgrounds I made in Procreate
 - Add lighting
 - Also, any necessary Camera Moves

SLIDE THIRTY-FOUR

And then all that comes together for the final shot

- In total, this film had at least 2,160 drawings
- (and you can multiply that by three to count for rough, tie-down, clean up, and color, which means this was at least 7,000 drawings)
- This is not to mention voice actors, sound design, music, and editing
- Which all takes place after this, so that what you see on the screen is what is in my head

There is so much that goes into a film.

It all takes a long time—

- I've been animating since October
- I started pre-production in August
- And I started writing the film in May

It's been close to a year-long project, and there's still more to do

SLIDE THIRTY-FIVE

- But what do I do now? Now that it's technically over
 - Well, I have to turn this in. What do you think I get a break now?
 - The paper, the film, and a bunch of other things are due
- But after that
 - I've had an amazing Festival run this year.

- I hope to repeat that with this film
- I hope to submit it to a bunch of festivals
 - And maybe travel to some of them
- However, that means lots of prep work, which I am too tired to do
 - So first, I'm gonna rest. Maybe go to Dairy Queen
 - But for now, let me leave you with this.

SLIDE THIRTY-SIX

- To be suicidal is not to be silent.
- Many people who have struggled with suicide are still alive.
- Yet their perspectives and advice on consciously depicting suicide often go unheard
- I plan to continue researching and advocating for improvements in depicting suicide
- My depiction is not perfect
- a stepping stone, rather than a final answer
- I hope this film makes someone, anywhere, feel seen and that they aren't alone
- That, instead of an end, this can maybe be a new beginning

SLIDE THIRTY-SEVEN

Before I go, I want to thank a few people:

- Za: My film mentor
- Poya: My paper mentor
- Ollie and Yvette: my wonderful voice actors
- Mary: For helping me in every aspect of the project
- All My Friends: For support
- All My Teachers: Their contributions to my education
- The Panel: for taking the time to be here
- For you all for showing up
- So many people who deserve individual thanks for supporting me and this project
 - Running out of time, so you all will have to be okay with a sappy card in a few weeks
 - Really couldn't do this alone

SLIDE THIRTY-EIGHT

To conclude, we are gonna watch the film one more time

SLIDE THIRTY-NINE

Thank you

Annotated Bibliography

Angels Egg. Animation. Studio DEEN, Tokuma Shoten, 1985.

Mamuro Oshii's film is an exploration of how we understand faith and the strain it puts on relationships. This work follows two characters, a stoic, almost Christ-like, young man and a young naive girl who clutches an egg wherever she goes as they traverse a desolate and haunted landscape. Their journey explores what it means to believe in what one cannot see or even tangibly experience, to only be surrounded by fragments of a world that is constructed to make one believe in it. This work sits with that tension and shows us how it can compel destruction and form hostility, even to those undeserving of it. Oshii is a revolutionary director, having worked on *Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* which propelled computer animation forward in an era of transition for the medium. With these works, he also changed the landscape of cyberpunk and sci-fi, his films inspiring works such as *The Matrix*. *Angels Egg* shows the rich and complex potential of animation as storytelling, that surreal and potent symbology can be used in tandem with difficult relationships and experiences can create a potent form of understanding.

August in the Water. Drama, Sci-Fi. Hill Villa, 1995.

Directed by Gakuryu Ishii, this film follows a high school diving champion after she arrives in a new town where people are contracting a new illness that turns their organs to stone. When a diving accident nearly kills her, she gains a new perspective on the supernatural events that have been happening in the town and feels compelled at all costs to resolve this rift. Exploring a dreary form of hopelessness in the face of the uncontrollable, this film shows how the collapse between the self and the other, while

beautiful, can also be overwhelming and terrifying to all those it affects. Ishii is a director and screenwriter with an impressive array of films under his belt. He is credited with starting the cyberpunk film movement in Japan. His work has influenced many contemporary filmmakers including the likes of Quentin Tarantino. *August in the Water* explores what it means to become intimately connected with nature, in a way that while it can be terrifying, also serves a purpose. For both the audience and characters there is a fear, yet beauty in this collapse, but its purpose is to build an understanding and connection.

Avenue, 677 Huntington, Boston, and Ma 02115. "Attempters' Longterm Survival." Means Matter, September 11, 2012.

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/survival/>.

Barber Westchester. Animation. Herbert Sorbet Studios, 2022.

This film by animator Jonni Peppers, follows the main character, Barber Westchester, as he moves away from their family and is confronted with the fact that reality as they know it, is a lie. As Barber struggles with this reality, they form a community and connection with the people they meet, allowing them to combat this newfound uncertainty and move into the future with hope. A surreal film with clay people, clay-eating parrots, a conspiracy to hide the fact that space is not real, and a creature that emerges from Barber's head and starts causing trouble in the real world, Peppers harnesses animation's ability to be unreal to create a playful fable that still connects to the importance of how relationships will change and form how we connect. Jonni Peppers is an influential contributor to the contemporary animation scene. Aside from her large body of work she also has cofounded Herbert Sorbet Studios and runs the

Transfiguration Film Festival. She graduated from CalArts with a BFA in experimental animation and is currently attending the School of Art Institute Chicago for an MFA in film. *Barber Westchester* shows the power that magical realism and cartoons can bring to storytelling, they are tools that Peppers uses to tear down the wall between audience and viewer to foster a better understanding of difficult subject matter.

Berkowitz, Amy. *Tender Points*. New York: Nightboat Books, 2019.

This lyrical essay by author Amy Berkowitz, aptly named after the diagnostic material for fibromyalgia, explores the author's experience with the illness. The discussion of this illness is explored through how its causes and consequences can be seen and mirrored in pop culture, internet culture, disability theory, music, the mundane, and many others. While most of these ideas are used to explore Berkowitz's direct experience, the author also shares external experiences, such as the internet postings of others struggling with this illness. Berkowitz is also the author of the poetry book *Gravitas* and their work has been featured in several publications, and has originated several literary events. She has an MFA in creative writing from the University of Michigan and works as a freelance copywriter. *Tender Points* provides an overarching and comprehensive view of the struggles of living with illness, one which can be applied to a wide array of experiences with illness.

Goodbye Forever Party. Animation, 2017.

A short film by animator Jonni Peppers discusses the difficulties that come with repressing one's emotions and forcing oneself to exist in a world that is often harsh and violent. This film follows the main character, Lilith, an actor on a children's television show, as her relationship and work life fall apart as her mental health gets worse and

worse. This film highlights the difficulties of repressing one's struggles and how they affect all aspects of one's life. Jonni Peppers is an influential contributor to the contemporary animation scene. Aside from her large body of work she also has cofounded Herbert Sorbet Studios and runs the Transfiguration Film Festival. She graduated from CalArts with a BFA in experimental animation and is currently attending the School of Art Institute Chicago for an MFA in film. *Goodbye Forever Party* is a film that challenges the repression of feeling, highlighting the importance of vulnerability and recovery. This work shows that there are sacrifices one must make in the face of adversity to recover, and while it may be difficult, progression is impossible without it.

Horn, Lars. *Voice of the Fish: A Lyric Essay*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2022.

Voice of The Fish is a lyrical essay by author Lars Horn. The core of this work is Horn's exploration of the ties between the fish and the body through an array of perspectives. This text is built off his lived experiences, from his childhood to the present day. He explores becoming disabled, being a muse to his mother, growing into his queerness, exploring the world, and learning how he fits within it. These rich personal accounts are intertwined with quotes from many writers including Hippocrates and Virginia Woolf, historical recounts, facts about fish and their biology, theological explorations from the Greek to the Abrahamic, prose, poetry, lyrics, and confessionals. These all are used to highlight their delicate connections to each other. Horn is an author and translator, teaching at Columbia University. He holds MA's from the University of Edinburgh, the École normale supérieure, and Concordia University. *Voice of The Fish* is a work that aims to tie the internal and external, pulling together

seemingly disparate concepts that typically are slated as human or natural. Horn shows us that the lived experience cannot be divorced from the world it exists in.

Joy Street. Animation, 1995.

This film, directed by artist Suzan Pitt explores the experience of a woman who makes a suicide attempt and is rescued by a ceramic cartoon character on her ashtray when it comes to life. *Joy Street* takes us through this woman's harrowing world, its dark grit that seems to infect everything, even her cartoon companions' attempt at creating joy by summoning a vibrant cartoon world full of life that fills her apartment. The story progresses and ends with the cartoon pouring some of himself into her, which is eventually what saves her, filling the drab park they sit in with vibrant tropical life. Pitt shows us the surreal nature of surviving loss, the joy that is required to overcome it, and the astounding effect caring companionship can have. Pitt was a renowned animator and an undeniable influence on the evolution of animation. Her work has won countless awards and has been displayed in the Whitney and MOMA. This film serves as a viewpoint for understanding the tie between magical realism and suicide. How they can be used to convey a complex emotional reality in a way that opens itself up to a large audience. Pitt's work pushes the conventions of depictions of suicide, focusing on the recovery and joy that can come from it.

Kagerô-Za. Fantasy, Romance, Thriller. Cinema Placet, 1981.

This indie film by Japanese director Seijun Suzuki is a surreal look at love and death and the thin veil that separates them. Shunko Matsuzaki is a playwright in 1920s Japan, who struggles with his attraction to the living and dead wives of his sponsor. Using theatrical framing devices and disjointed editing, Suzuki creates a surreal and often

confusing experience that queues the viewers into the emotional reality of the difficulties that come with love, the trouble that it brings, and the sacrifice one is willing to make to let it prosper. Seijun Suzuki is an award-winning director known for his disjointed and nonsensical style, that pushes even modern standards and understanding of film. *Kagerô-Za* as a film pushes art through our understanding of the lines we draw, in time, space, and between each other. It shows us that there are more ways to understand and experience existence than in a directly linear way. There are experiences and time does not directly impose limitations on it, rather understanding and feeling will be elevated by how we tie disjointed experiences together.

O PEARL. Animation, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbhFJk_QBXw.

Izzy Chavez's film follows a sailor who sees an eye inside an oyster. This short haunting perspective about the paranoia that can infect the brain. We see the way that we find patterns in nature, and how they dig into our mind and can terrify and compel us to act in destructive ways. The way the pearl resembles an eye, the way we yearn for answers, for discomfort to end. Izzy Chavez is an animator and illustrator, he has a unique and compelling body of work that pulls on retro, erotic, and transgressive themes. He has done art for *The Hotel Podcast* and has interned for Titmouse. He recently graduated from the Pratt Institute. *O Pearl* pulls on the way we see ourselves in nature, and how it can be both beautiful and terrifying. It is a juxtaposition that pulls on the core of how experience ourselves in relation to the world around us. It is an experience that is common and can tighten one's connection to the world around them.

Prevention, Forum on Global Violence, Board on Global Health, Institute of Medicine, and National Research Council. "THE CONTAGION OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR." In

Contagion of Violence: Workshop Summary. National Academies Press (US), 2013.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207262/>.

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<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>.

Woolf, Virginia. *On Being Ill*. Ashfield, Mass: Paris Press, 2002.

This essay posits illnesses as a subject that belongs with the likes of romance, death, and battle in literature. Woolf explores the failure of language as it stands to form understanding, that as culture currently stands some faults make understanding illness as a fundamental aspect of life difficult. From the struggles and pressures of capital to the lack of language fueled by the pressures of the state of the Western world. She places our understanding, or lack thereof, at the forefront of this conversation to create a new perspective on illness. Virginia Woolf is a prolific modernist author, known for both her fiction and essay works including *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Room of One Own*. Over the last century, she has remained an influential figure in feminist writing. *On Being Ill* is a unique and compelling writing on what it means to understand illness in a modern capitalist era, one that forms little room for the ill. This essay posits what it is like to make room for a discussion that is otherwise unheard of in most of our culture.