

DISJECTA MEMBRA

DISJECTA MEMBRA
A poetic interplay of fragments

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MASTER OF ART & DESIGN 2012

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

'I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements'.

Lyna Ayr 10th January 2013

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Lyna Ayr 10th January 2013

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ABSTRACT

DISJECTA MEMBRA: A POETIC INTERPLAY OF FRAGMENTS

This project explores the concept of '*Disjecta Membra*' through the media form of poetry-film. The thesis considers multiple poetic retellings of the death of John the Baptist. It translates fragments of selected, historical, poetic texts related to the subject. In so doing, the poetry-film creatively explores the potential of the fragment, and its conceivable synergies as a visual, kinetic, typographical and aural poetic agent.

SYNOPSIS

The poetry-film *Jokanaan*¹ creatively considers John the Baptist's interior thoughts prior to his execution. In this period, he descends into a world of visions, and he contemplates a ruptured life. Entangled in fragmented memories and sensual impressions, he approaches execution in a state of confused ecstasy.

¹Jokanaan is the old Hebrew name for John the Baptist. It has been spelled in a variety of ways in the texts that contribute fragments to this film. Here I use the spelling that Wilde employed in his 1894 play *Salomé*.

INTRODUCTION

Disjecta membra is a poetic form that Websters' New World College Dictionary (2004) defines as "scattered parts or fragments, as of an author's writings (p. 1476)". The term comes from a phrase used by the Roman lyric poet Horace (65 BC - 8 BC), "*disiecti membra poetae*" (Satires, 1.4.62). The phrase suggests that if a poetic work is dissected and rearranged, the dismembered parts of the original work might still be recognisable.

In this thesis I use the term to describe fragments dislocated from multiple retellings of the death of John the Baptist, and their reconstitution into a poetry-film that reflects upon the potential of the fragment in a newly composed work. In this project, fragments of existing poetic texts are employed to create a poetry-film that references tensions, harmonies, enigmas, and disjunctions in historical iterations of the narrative.²

Thus, in the thesis I suggest that a corpus of poetic and literary texts relating to the death of John the Baptist may be understood as a 'body' that might be creatively fragmented and reconstituted in pursuit of a poetic outcome that operates primarily in kinetic-visual form.

This exegesis offers a critical context for the inquiry. It explains the creative work, and outlines significant concepts and methodological concerns underpinning the project.

In the first chapter, I present a *positioning of the researcher*. Here I outline my creative concerns and interest in illustrating poetry and the fragment. I review my creative approaches to illustration, discussing influences from childhood, cultural disjunction, and my attraction to 19th century art and literature.

²See appendix 1 for the composite written text.

A brief *review of knowledge* relating to the project is presented in the second chapter. I discuss critical writings surrounding the concept of *Disjecta Membra*. I follow this with an overview of the story of John the Baptist, with specific reference to certain literary and artistic discordances. The review then considers recent writing relating to poetry film.

The third chapter discusses the *research methodology* and methods employed in the explication of *Jokanaan*. The project's methodological framework may be described broadly as a reflexive approach that employs significant levels of heuristic inquiry. In illustrating this approach I unpack specific methods used within the project that facilitate reflexive, critical approaches to the work.

The thesis concludes with a *commentary* and discussion of *critical ideas* relating to the project. In this chapter I discuss the distinctive use of imagery, structure and sound within the work.

Appendices for the thesis include the film's written text and the literary source material used for the poem.

CHAPTER 1

Positioning of the Researcher

When I am not studying, I work professionally as a freelance illustrator. I have always been interested in illustrating literary texts, in bringing to life words that are rich in meaning. I am especially interested in the poetic potential of illustration, because I believe the image has the capacity to reach beyond the realm of words.

ILLUSTRATING POETICS

Although I am an illustrator, in my undergraduate studies I also explored photographically certain themes relating to symbiotic relationships between life and death. In these compositions, I was interested in the orchestration of fragmented imagery to create new meanings. The resulting experiments (see figure 1:1) suggested relationships between imagery and the potentials of metamorphosis.

In my Bachelor of Art & Design honours project, I focused in more detail on the idea of building images from fragments. Deterioration, organic imagery, and the beautifully poignant formed central concerns, because I was drawn to 19th century romantic, art and literature. Explorations of narrative and theme from a period noted for its descriptive and symbolic language, and its attention to detail had a profound effect upon my stylistic approach to image making. I encountered writing and illustration in this period that might arguably be described as a playground for sensuality, poetic elevation, and alluring decadence. Within the detailed imagery, lush colour, and figurative depiction, I found approaches to painting that suggested more than the sum of its parts. These works engaged enigma and richness in ways that, for me, lifted illustration beyond the didactic.³

My dissertation project was concerned with the illustration of thematic binaries in the morally broken characters of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In *Frankenstein* I considered the use of the monochromatic postcard (the novel essentially being an assemblage of journeys), to illustrate moral tensions and antitheses in the narrative (see figure 1:2).

³This may be seen particularly in the illustrative work of artists like Aubrey Beardsley (1872 -1898); Gustave Moreau (1826 – 1898); Jean Delville (1869 – 1953); Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer (1865-1953); and William Blake (1757 – 1827).



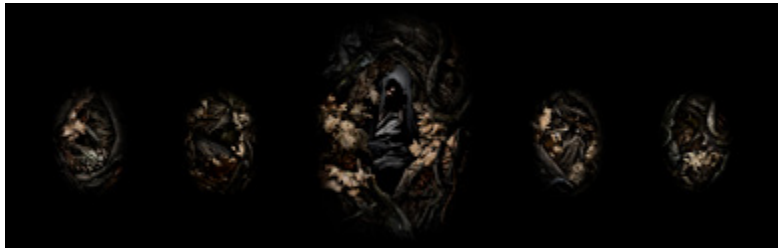


Figure 1:1 (Ayr, L. 2009) *Mother the Eternal*, Photography, 376 mm x 1200mm. Death as a returning to the womb - a series of photographic montages combining branches, insects, and the remnants of birds.

Figure 1:2 (Ayr, L. 2011) *Family*. Illustration: graphite on paper, 101.6mm x 152.4mm. Victor Frankenstein caught between allegiances to his biological and 'constructed' family.





Figure 1:3 (Ayr, L. 2011) *Dorian Gray*. Drawing, photography and digital painting, 297mm x 840mm. Dorian Gray as a hagiographic hypocrite, living in opulent decadence, while tainting those around him.

If *Frankenstein* epitomised something of the romanticism of early Victorian literature, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* featured concerns with the sensuality and decadence that marked the close of the period. For his novel, I created a series of illustrations of the main characters (as a visual *dramatis personae*). These comparatively lush fusions between elements of the photographed and the painted provided insights into moral binaries within the novel's main characters. Although the works were contemporary in their distinctive fusing of elements, they also made reference to the sensual nature of fin de siècle imagery (see figures 1:3, 1: 4, and 1:5).





Figure 1:4 (Ayr, L. 2011) *Sybil Vane*. Drawing, photography and digital painting, 297mm x 840mm. Sybil Vane held captive to her illusionary world of theatre, while melting in the shadows of her art.





Figure 1:5 (Ayr, L. 2011) *Lord Henry Wotton*. Drawing, photography and digital painting, 297mm x 840mm. Lord Henry as a man who proselytizes, but never experiences the consequences (or costs) of, his beliefs.





Figure 1:6. (Ayr, L. 1993) *Childhood Photographs taken in Buddhist Temples in New Zealand.*

CHILDHOOD AND THE FRAGMENT
Aristotle in, *On the Art of Poetry* said;

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood... Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, meters being manifestly sections of rhythm. (Trans. 1920, p.28)

In my work, I understand the fragment as poetic. Poetry springs from my nature (although it is perhaps made most evident through my use of imagery). The potential of the fragment operates not only in the fusion and juxtaposition of ideas, but also in the sythesising of media, and in the design of composite imagery that suggests new poetic meaning. This interest in the fusing of poetic fragments may be understood as a form of tacit knowing, located in memories of my childhood.

As a little Cambodian boy, I was exposed to the atmosphere of Buddhist Temples (see figure 1:6). My mother had three daughters and prayed regularly at the temple for a son. The fact that her prayers where granted meant that I was at the temple a lot. I became a temple child who rarely paid attention to customary traditions, but instead absorbed the imagery and experiences around me. I recall fragments like the decay of food offerings⁴, the opiate smell of burning incense sticks, the bleeding of pink dye into over-ripened fruit, and candle wax melting like syrup over everything it touched. Amongst these impressions, I recall the sleeping Buddhist statues, with their withered flowers that somehow bound all of these offerings into a cohesive whole. In this richly layered world, I came to understand the nature of compositions as fragments. Within these moments, I experienced things deeply as enigmatically, sensual.

⁴These were part of a religious ritual for the spirits of the dead.



Figure 1:7. 'Angkor Wat, Cambodia' (n.d.). painting. *The Angkor Wat Painting in my family home.*

CULTURE AND FRACTURE

My family moved to New Zealand as refugees from Cambodia, a country torn and ravaged by war. Many things were destroyed in the fighting. Perhaps this is why the ancient ruins of the temple of Angkor Wat represent to many Cambodians the bright and enduring side of the country.

My family brought an image of this temple over with them when they fled. It still hangs on the wall at home (see figure 1:7). I have always thought of this painting as a shard of a greater whole, something broken away, like a fractured element of culture.

Unlike my parents, in New Zealand I grew up with dual languages, English and Khmer. Because I was in a Western country, much of my enculturation was Western. This said, while the West may be understood as my face, the East is my background. I live in worlds and move between them.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

My earliest exposure to the story of John the Baptist occurred when I encountered biblical illustrations of his severed head. However my interest in the story increased when I first saw Gustave Moreau's paintings *the Apparition* (1876) and *Salome Dancing before Herod* (1875). When looking at these works, I was struck by the lush, sensualized ornamentation that resonated with enigmatic memories of the temples of my childhood.

As I began to read around the story, I encountered Wilde's play script *Salomé* (1894), and noted disjunctions between his work and earlier versions of the narrative. I realised that although John the Baptist became a popular subject in art and literature, he was in fact an assemblage of (sometimes contradictory) fragments. Similar to myself, John the Baptist was a child of the temple.⁵ But more importantly, his death was an enigma of fragments, scattered across time. It is this concept and the creative potential that fragments have in relation to the whole that forms the substrate upon which this thesis is developed.

⁵In the gospel of Luke, Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, is approached in an incense-infused temple by an angel (Luke 1:11). The angel tells him that despite being elderly and without children, his wife's prayers for a baby had been heard and they would be granted a child. "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." Luke (1: 13 - *King James Bible*).

CHAPTER 2

Review of contextual knowledge

This chapter offers a brief discussion of knowledge that contextualises, or has served in the development of, the poetry-film *Jokanaan*. It considers three arenas:

- Disjecta Membra as a poetic concept
 - Constructions of the death of John the Baptist
 - Poetry-film as a media form.
-

DISJECT MEMBRA AS A POETIC CONCEPT

Disiecta membra may be understood as poetic fragments, or parts of a corpus that are still identifiable after being separated from their original whole. Horace uses the phrase '*disiecti membra poetae*' to describe the poetry of Ennius as though it were the disfigured poet Orpheus. In doing so, he positions parts of the body and fragments of his dialogue as the same thing.

The likening of a poetic work to limbs or fragments of a body may be found in Plato's *The Phaedrus*, where he describes a well-made text as a living human or animal body. The functioning and meaning of this body, he suggests, is only made possible by the organic unity of wholeness contributed by each of its parts. This concept acknowledges that a body [text] may be made up of segments, portions, or fragments from diverse sources. This idea has been discussed by a number of writers including, Elias (2004), Harter (1996), McGee (1990), Most (2009), and Schlegel (1799).⁶

It is around this idea that the project focuses its creative concerns. It draws upon a corpus of writing, illustration, and painting that deals with the death of John the Baptist.⁷ Its concern is with the poetic potentials of *textual fragments* orchestrated from diverse historical/literary retellings and reconstructions.

Thus the thesis explores the potential *disiecta membra* as a fragmentation of a corpus of poetry that might be creatively reassembled into a new poetic work; this work is a retelling of the original subject.

⁶Although each theorist develops the concept in unique ways, there is a common understanding that the body of a text is made up of textual fragments that may, in its entirety, be dismembered and fragmented for use in another body of work.

⁷A discussion of image creation as *disiecta membra* is provided in the commentary section of this exegesis.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The poetry-film *Jokanaan* is created by an amalgamation of fragments taken from historical iterations of the story of the death of John the Baptist.

The story was first recorded in two Gospels (Mark 6:17-29, Matthew 14:3-11) circa. A.D. 65-75, as well as in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (Book XVIII, Chapter 5) in A.D. 94. In these accounts, John is represented in diverse forms including that of a messenger, wildman, prophet, and saint.

Within these versions of the story, there are often conflicts relating to how John was killed. Josephus attributes his death to Herod's fear of John's influence on rebellious forces amongst the Jews. However, the gospels suggest that the death may have been related to the relationship between Herod, his stepdaughter, and wife. Conflicts in these early texts have been discussed by a number of theorists, including Girard (1984), Hoehner (1972), Kermode (1979), Knapp (1997), Seidel (1984), and Zagora (1960).

In acknowledging differences in historical accounts of the story, these writers all discuss ways in which subsequent versions ended up blending elements from the original sources.

It was during the fourth century A.D. that the martyrdom of John became a popular subject (Zagola, 1960). At this time increasing attention was paid to the daughter of Herod's wife. Although her name Salome was taken from Josephus' records, her character and role in the story often differed considerably from his account.⁸

Although the gospels and Josephus mention the involvement of a dancing daughter, Knapp (1972) argues that it would have been impossible for a Judean princess to dance in front of an audience at a banquet (p.97). Arguments questioning the possibility of Salome's involvement in John the Baptist's death are further developed by Zagora (1960), who suggests that the story of the dance may not actually be from the court of Herod Antipas at all.⁹

⁸According to Josephus, Herodias' daughter Salome married twice and had three children. In the gospels, the girl is not named.

⁹According to Cicero, Lucius Flaminius was a member of the Roman senate; it was said that he had a prisoner beheaded at the request of a courtesan during a banquet. Others mention that he beheaded a prisoner for the love of a young boy. Another version by Seneca, who is said to have heard the story from rhetoric teachers, mentions that it was the paramour of Flaminius who seduced him with a dance, until he rewarded her with the head of a man who had offended her (Zagora, 1960. p. 105).

In Renaissance painting, John the Baptist's death (in relation to Salome) became a popular subject for commissioned paintings.¹⁰ In many of these images, Salome is depicted as a mature woman.¹¹

During the 19th century, the story again became a popular subject for painters, especially in the context of the rise of Orientalism (Praz, 1933 and Said, 1978). This was partly because, as Said noted, the Orient became a source of *reconfiguration*, particularly within scholarly communities. This preoccupation with the exotic, sensualised, and reconfigured Orient was later exploited in both decadent fiction, and symbolist paintings.¹² While Flaubert's retelling of John's death influenced the Opera by Jules Massenet in 1881, Heywood's version was the first to contribute the idea of the *death* of Salome. This in turn influenced Oscar Wilde's version of the story, in his 1884 play script *Salomé*; this version of the story contained ideas that were to influence many subsequent versions. In his account of the death of John the Baptist, Wilde elevates the role of lust and, through that, the temptation of Salomé. The girl performs 'The Dance of Seven Veils' (Wilde's invention) before Herod and receives John's head, which she kisses. She is then executed.

Subsequent versions of the story contained, in varying degrees, fragments of Wilde's retelling. These include: the poetry of Cavafy (1896), and Mallarmé (1898); the Operas of Strauss (1904) and Mariotte (1908), and the ballet of Schmitt, (1907), Ifukube (1948), and Flindt (1978). In image-based texts, references to Wilde's creation can be found in: illustrations (Beardsley, 1894; Behmer, 1903; Vassos, 1927); paintings (Lévy-Dhurmer, 1896; Stuck, 1906; Bussiere, 1914; Mossa, 1928); films (Bryant, 1923; Russel, 1988; W.I.Z, 2000; Pacino, 2011); and video games (Tale of Tales, 2009).¹³

Thus, across a diversity of narrations, the beheading of John the Baptist is told with distinct variations of detail. In these works, we may discern marked movements away from, and fragmenting of, the baseline narratives recorded in the Biblical gospels, and in the writings of Josephus.

¹⁰Significant paintings dealing with the subject include, Benozzo Gozzoli's *The Dance of Salome* (1462), Andrea Solario's *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* (1507), Titian's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (c.1515), Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Salome* (1530), Caravaggio's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (c. 1607), Reni's *Salome with the head of St. John Baptist* (1640), and Carlo Dolci's *Salome* (c. 1665-1670).

¹¹Refuting the validity of these depictions, Girard (1984) argues that the Salome in the Gospels was really a child. He notes the Greek word for her is not *kore* but *korasion*, which means "little girl" (p. 313).

¹²Significant among these are paintings like *Salome Dances before Herod* (1875), and *The Apparition* (1876) by Gustave Moreau. The story also surfaces in the literature of J.C Heywood (1862) and Gustave Flaubert (1877).

¹³This art game engages players in the death of John the Baptist, by allowing them to control his movements prior to and during his execution.

POETRY-FILM AS A MEDIA FORM

Jokanaan is a poetry-film made of fragments. It is constructed using film footage, illustration, photography, typography, and sound. The blending of these mediums serves to emphasise the eclectic nature of the story.

A poetry-film essentially presents a poetic work in filmic form. In so doing, Wees (1984) suggests it "expands upon the specific denotations of words and the limited iconic references of images to produce a much broader range of connotations, associations, metaphors." (p. 109). He says, that the medium does not directly translate a poetic text, but expands it through a combinative, poetic experience.

A number of recent film-theorists have discussed poetry-film as a media form. These include: Cook (2012), Cottage (1999), Konyves (2009), Leropoulos (2007), and Wees (1984). These writers suggest that the poetry-film focuses on the interpretation of an existing poem. This may be contrasted to 'film-poetry', that does not use an existing text, but creates poetry purely by film (Wees, 1999).¹⁴ Although the differences between poetry-film and film-poetry are often confused, Leropoulos (2007) offers a useful consideration of both forms. His approach is one of the more flexible among contemporary writers, because he suggests that considerations of film-poetry and poetry-film may be treated quite fluidly.

¹⁴The film poem as a sub-genre emerged from avant-garde film practitioners and can be seen in the works of Deran, Brakhage and Vertov. These practitioners, while at times polemic in their approaches to film-poetry, suggest that any form of medium connected to the film disrupts the emergence of poetry within the film, and thus should be abandoned.

Significant poetry-films

A number of poetry-films have influenced this project, however three seminal works warrant consideration because they contextualise the media form.

The first is *Manhatta* (1921) by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand. Wees (1999) says that this may be considered the first poetry-film, as it combines shots of New York city with several poems by the 19th century poet Walt Whitman. Man Ray's film *L'Étoile de mer* (1928) follows this approach to image and poetic text in its use of fragments of a poem by Robert Desnos. In this work, the filmmaker purposely distorts scenes, causing the viewer to interpret images in relation to poetic intertitles. In contrast, *Bells of Atlantis* (1952), by Ian Hugo, presents an undisturbed narration of Anaïs Nin reading her poem, together with abstract imagery and synthetic music.

These examples were important in the pioneering of medium's form, because they paved the way for contemporary film poets to explore more complex, synergetic relationships.

Significant to this project is the animated film *Tale of Tales* (1979) by Yuri Nostein, which I argue has characteristics of poetry-film. This film orchestrates multiple fragmented memory sequences, and is inspired by a poetic lullaby that features in the film in both instrumental and vocal form. While there is little dialogue in the animation, illustration and sound are employed to describe evolutions of life; This is achieved through metaphor. This use of visual and aural metaphor is important to my project as the poetry-film is designed as an illustrated panorama that is infused with enigmatic references to mythological, allegorical, and historical fragments of John the Baptist's life.

In addition, *Sonnet 138* (2008), by Dave McKean, is of importance because it adapts a poem by Shakespeare, using fractured imagery to match the mood of the work. This is of interest to my project, because it visualises the musing of the central character as an *environment*. (In *Jokanaan*, the protagonist contemplates his death in a world constructed of fragmented elements. This environment subsumes and re-presents his identity).

Also of significance to this research project is the poetry-film *Balada Catalana* (2010), by Laen Sanches. This work interprets a poem by Vincete Balaguet, through a process of antithesis. By 'antithesis' I mean the content of the poem and the visual imagery that houses it are set in opposition to each other. Thus we encounter the imagery as a form of allegory rather than a literal, illustrated interpretation of the written text. In *Jokanaan* I use a similar approach. Images of land and creatures interplay with, but do not literally illustrate, the selected fragments of poetry. They add to the fragments, intersect with them, and escort them, but their role is not translative.

This approach is also evident in Delcan's *The Spider* (2007). Using a poem by Gabor Barabas, Delcan weaves dialogue and animated transitions into a kind of fragmented metaphor. Again, he does not literally translate the poem, but rather uses the written text and audio monologue as additional dimensions that build the meaning of the poem beyond its original, written form.

These poetry-films have each explored the synergy between written poetry and multi-media image construction. Delcan (2012) says that, in his work, the poems and animations 'retrofeed' on each other. Through this they bring into being a new form. He argues therefore that it is in the space in between the poetry and the moving image that poetry-film lies.

Having now considered contextual material impacting on the project, it is useful to discuss the methodological approach underpinning its resolution.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Methodologically this project may be framed as a reflexive inquiry that employs a heuristic approach.

Heuristics is a subjective form of inquiry that is guided by intuition, self-learning, and self-discovery. Moustakas (1990) says:

Heuristic research is a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience. It requires a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomena under investigation. Its ultimate purpose is to cast light on a focused problem, question, or theme. (p.40)

Heuristics offers flexibility for the researcher to find patterns and new connections, through informed decision-making. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) say: “Learning that proceeds heuristically has a path of its own. It is self-directed, self-motivated, and open to spontaneous shift” (p.44). Because this research focuses on the potentials of the fragment, experimentation and outcomes are heavily guided by the locating of inter-subject connectivity. The ability to work towards the unknown suggests heuristics as an appropriate framework for the project. This is because synthesis is pursued through rigorous, responsive questioning of what emerges, through both experimentation, and a *sense* of what is conceptually and stylistically coherent. In other words, heuristic inquiries enable me as a designer to pursue ideas in a landscape of possibilities, where there is no existing roadmap or established formula.

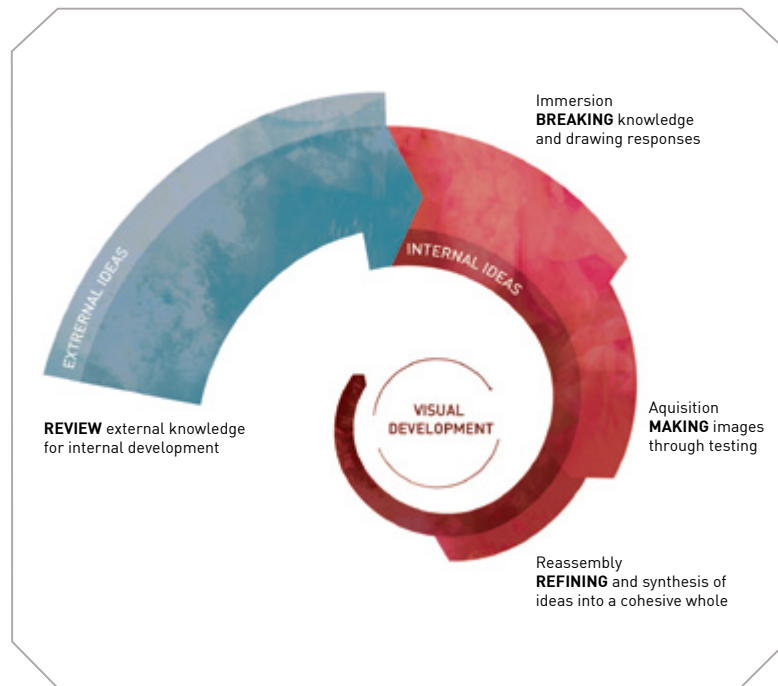


Figure 3:1 The research design constructed for *Disject Membra*, adapting Moustakas's three-phase model: (Immersion, Acquisition, and Realisation).

HEURISTICS

Heuristic comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning “to discover or to find” (Moustakas, 1990, p.9). It places the researcher at the centre of the problem to be solved. As a conceptual approach to inquiry, it does not restrict itself to a predetermined system of implementation, but rather allows for the researcher to engineer approaches that effectively fit the particular investigation (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985).

While writers like Kliening and Witt (2000), Polanyi (1945), Lohmann (1957, 1960), Hubka & Elda (1996), and Douglass and Moustakas (1985) have suggested methods, or essential rules, for activating the unstable nature of heuristics, I have approached this research project through Moustakas's (1985) three-phase model (see figure 3:1). In this process I creatively examine the potentials of *Disjecta membra* as a way of fusing personal and imagined experiences of the sensual fragment, with the story of the death of John the Baptist.

DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Moustakas's (1985) model begins with a process of *immersion* into the question, problem, or theme. The second phase, *acquisition*, involves the gathering of information, and the maintenance of a perceptive awareness towards the research question. The final phase, *realisation*, involves synthesis, and the assembly of ideas generated from the previous phases. In this phase he suggests the researcher is able to formulate a resolution to the question, problem, or theme under consideration. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) in describing this model say:

The steps of heuristic inquiry unfold spontaneously, yet they are guided by a desire to illuminate the phenomenon. In the spirit of this flow, it is appropriate to change methods or procedures... according to the requirements of explicating the levels of meaning connected with the investigation. (p.45)

Thus, while my diagram may suggest a certain linearity, it is important to realise that these processes often happen in conjunction with each other. They are not mutually exclusive and may bleed, overlap, and become interdependent on one another. However, as the inquiry progresses through each phase, knowledge is taken deeper into the researcher.

The process may be understood as moving from the exterior towards the interior.¹⁵ Knowledge and data gradually spiral deeper into the self, as the poetry-film finds definition and presence. The process begins with an initial review of knowledge, then, in concord with the project's theme of *disjecta membra*, it moves through a process of *breaking, making, and reassembly*.

¹⁵Although its purpose it to produce an external artefact (the poetry-film).

REVIEW AND PATTERN FINDING

In this phase I reviewed knowledge relating to the research question. I studied every text I could find on John the Baptist. These included written (scholarly and literary) texts, paintings, films, and illustration. At the same time I began to think about iconography from my past and my personal resonances with the story.

In this regard I began to explore a diversely scattered corpus as a way of bringing a 'body' together. As this corpus accumulated, data began to shape the question(s) I was asking myself.

During this process, as I began to identify concords and divergences in these texts I also located patterns. Through this process, my research question incrementally took more tangible form. I realised that I was dealing with fragments, and at this time I serendipitously came across writing around both *disjecta membra* and the poetry-film. As these ideas settled within me, I realised that there were resonances between them. I wondered if *disjecta membra* might potentially operate as a vehicle for the realisation of a poetry-film.

From patterns I identified within this review of knowledge, suggestions of a new body began to take form. This potentially comprised fragments and contradictions.

Here I was reminded of Kleining and Witt's (2000) assertion that in heuristic inquiries one is seeking similarities and patterns through a process of questioning. One asks questions of the material, locating similarities, analogies, or homologies. The success of the procedure they suggest is measured by the richness of the result, its cohesive patterns, and inter-subject validity.

BREAKING

This phase of the research grew out of the process of reviewing and pattern finding. It may be broadly understood as a process of indwelling, where one breaks apart accumulated data into fragments (as in the initial phase of *dissecta membra*).

In this phase, fragments of text are separated and reconfigured through a series of what Schön (1983) calls exploratory experiments. Exploratory experiments, he suggests, are a probing of playful activity by which we get a feel for things. They succeed when experimentation leads to the discovery of something else.

This process was internal. I drew the question and the fragments of data into an interior environment where I questioned and responded to potentials.

In this phase I immersed myself within fragmented meanings to create a potential whole. Here, 'marriages' of at times contradictory elements were guided by intuitive decisions that drew on tacit¹⁶ knowing, connection, and poetic flow.

I broke things apart and began formulating responses (as drawings) to their fragmented elements. This process began to feel *right* because I concurrently came to understand John the Baptist as a broken vessel. Not only was his narrative broken, but so too was the man.

¹⁶Polanyi (1967) describes tacit knowing as the subliminal, archetypal and preconscious knowledge that operates beneath our conscious awareness. He believes that we cannot describe it but it operates in, the form of 'intuition'.

The process of drawing as a means of pursuing fragments may be compared to Heidegger's writing around thinking. He suggests that what is thought-provoking has not yet been thought. Heidegger (1951), says

Once we are so related and drawn to what withdraws, we are drawing into what withdraws, into the enigmatic and therefore mutable nearness of its appeal. Whenever man is properly drawing that way, he is thinking – even though he may still be far away from what withdraws, even though the withdrawal may remain as veiled as ever. (p. 381)

When I draw as a method of thinking, I am not recording memories, I am thinking with my pencil. Palasmaa (2009) suggests "the pencil... is a bridge between the imagining mind and the image that appears on the sheet of paper" (p.17). He suggests: "the draftsman forgets both his hand and the pencil, and the image emerges as if it were an automatic projection of the imagining mind" (ibid.). Both Ings (2012) and Rosenberg (2008) suggest, that this kind of drawing creates a contemplative state where thought is pursued, with the purpose of ideation. In the process, one seeks *potential* rather than *capture*. This idea, Schön (1983) suggests is part of a design process because it affords one time to think more deeply on potentials. He believes that when drawing, we construct a "virtual world" where "the pace of action can be varied at will. The designer can slow down and think about what he is doing" (p.159).¹⁷

¹⁷This process of thinking through drawing aligns somewhat with Polanyi's concept of "Indwelling" (1967, p. 17). In this state he believes the thinker is not pursuing fixed meaning but rather dwelling inside an environment where meanings and connections can surface. Miller (1993) appears to recognise this state when he says "creativity is linked to a state of consciousness where images appear" (p.74).

Figure 3:2 (Ayr. L. 2012) Graphite drawing in response to Stéphane Mallarmé's lines from *Hérodiade* (1898):

And my head up-cropped,
Solitary lookout,
In the triumphant flights,
Of this scythe

Here I consider, through drawing, John's beheading as both a rise and fall. He descends into death, while fluttering towards the skies.



Figure 3:3 (Ayr. L. 2012) Graphite drawing of the moon personified amongst cedars, in response to Oscar Wilde's lines from *Salomé* (1894):

Thy Hair is like the cedars of Lebanon
That give their shade to lions and to robbers who would hide them by day.
The long black nights, when the moon hides her face
When the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair.

Here I consider a world enveloped by forest, with trees in immortal slumber.
Bacchanalian and dryad-like creatures try to wake the forest, but to no avail.



Figure 3:4 (Ayr, L. 2012) Graphite drawing in response to Hermann Sudermann's line from his play script *Johannes* (1898):

Shall I be the sun, and thou my King?
Or wilt thou be the sun, and I thy Queen?

Here I consider John as a Sunbird,¹⁸ in contrast to Salome who is the moon. They are spiritually bound by a connection to the sky.

¹⁸The sunbird is Cambodia's equivalent of the hummingbird.





Figure 3:5 (Ayr, L. 2012) An example of a storyboard where I moved tested refinements and connections. Sequences were trialed and notes were made that reflected on potentials. These notes were posted but removable. Sketching was light; its purpose was only to suggest an idea. The storyboards were pinned onto a wall, so I could stand back and consider relationships as a whole and rearrange elements with relative ease.

MAKING AND ORDER

In this phase, I moved from exploration to a process that Schön (1983) calls *move testing* experimentation. In this kind of experimentation he says, “the practitioner moves [to] produce unintended changes which give the situation new meanings. The situation talks back, the practitioner listens, and as he appreciates what he hears, he reframes the situation once again” (pp. 131-132).

In this phase I began to structure my work in accordance with a sense of inter-subject connectivity. Normally to do this, I used a process of storyboarding. During storyboarding I structured ideas into sequences (see figure 3:5). Within this process I explored structure and relationships between ideas, both stylistic and conceptual.

In these experiments I continued to work in an interior world, but this world now began to gather coherence and a subtle sense of narrative order. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggest that this phase may initially be marked by “vague and formless wanderings” (p.47), but eventually there develops “a growing sense of direction and meaning ... as the perceptions and understandings of the researcher grow and the parameters of the problem are recognised” (ibid.).

Using diverse agents for productive discovery, I moved between painting, photographing and filming. When I found my ideas visually ‘treading water’ I explored thinking through other media. Schön (1983) argues that with such an approach, what is successful progresses, and what fails is negated. I found that by doing this, I was able to form relationships, not only between ideas but between media (see figures 3:6-10). As composites began to take form, they suggested other iconography and conceptual possibilities.

Thus, I moved ideas forward and sideways in an effort to see what impact they might have on surrounding elements. Out of this process a world began to emerge that had embedded into it fragments of poetry, memory, and visual responses to ideas about John the Baptist.

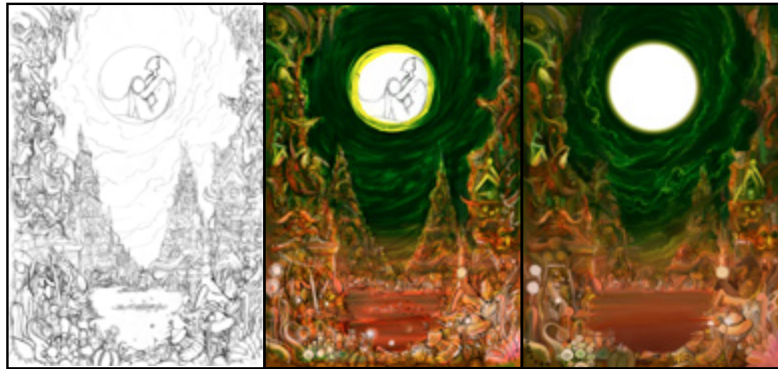
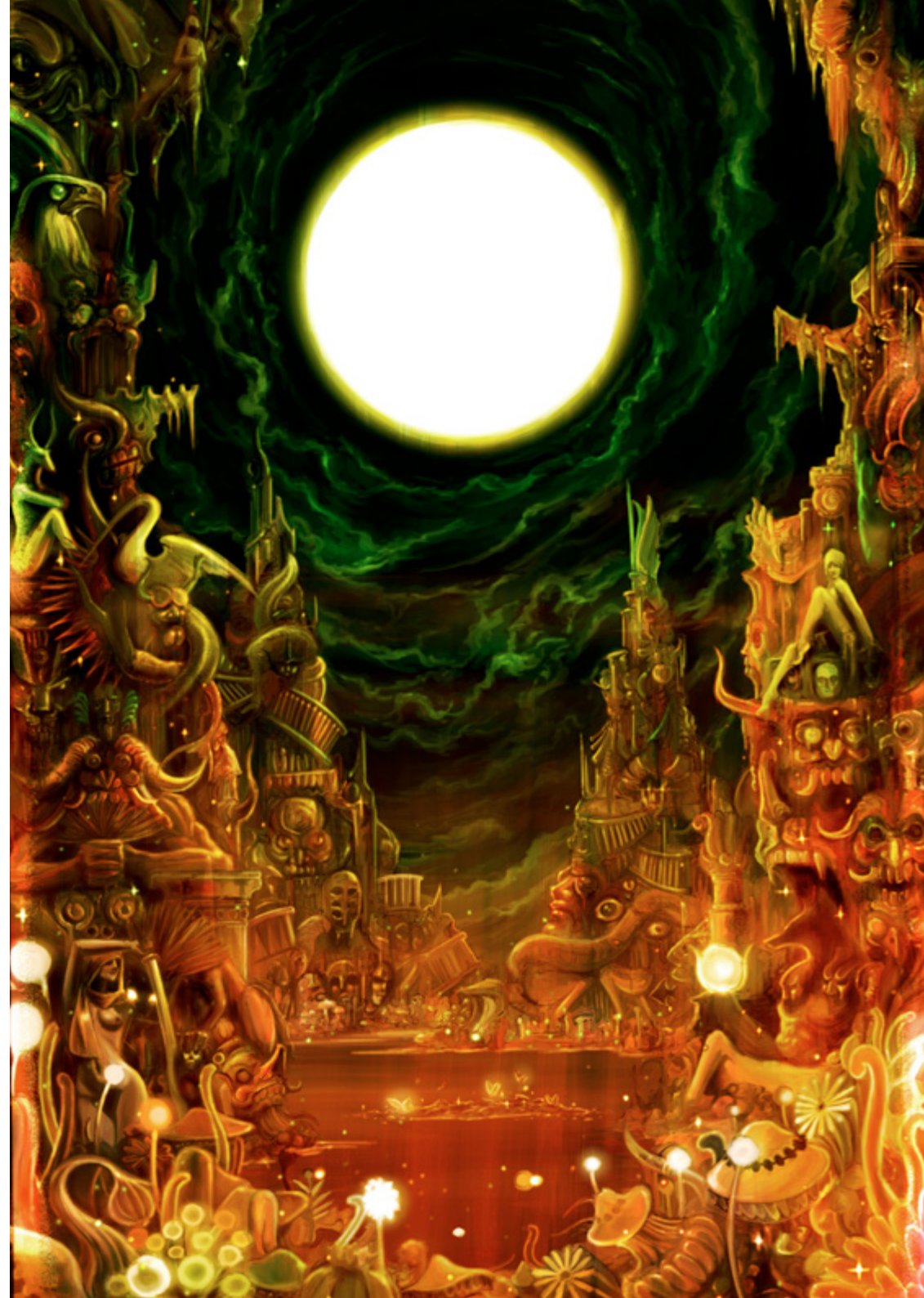


Figure 3:6 (Ayr, L. 2012) Initial creation of the world of Jokaanan, as digital paintings from sketches. At the beginning of the Making phase, I painted worlds digitally. However, I found the worlds to be lacking in distinction, because they looked too smooth and static. Accordingly, I began to explore on a deeper level the potentials of hand painting, so I could emphasize a sense of irregular grain and texture.



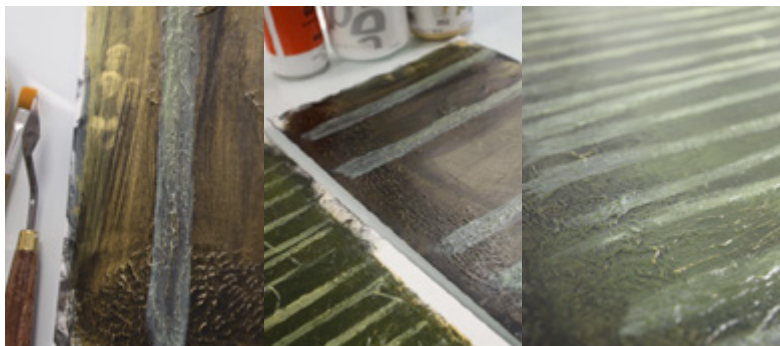


Figure 3:7 (Ayr, L. 2012) A forest of cedars. This was developed by layering both hand painted and digitally painted elements in Photoshop. In the fusion of these approaches, I found rich potentials.

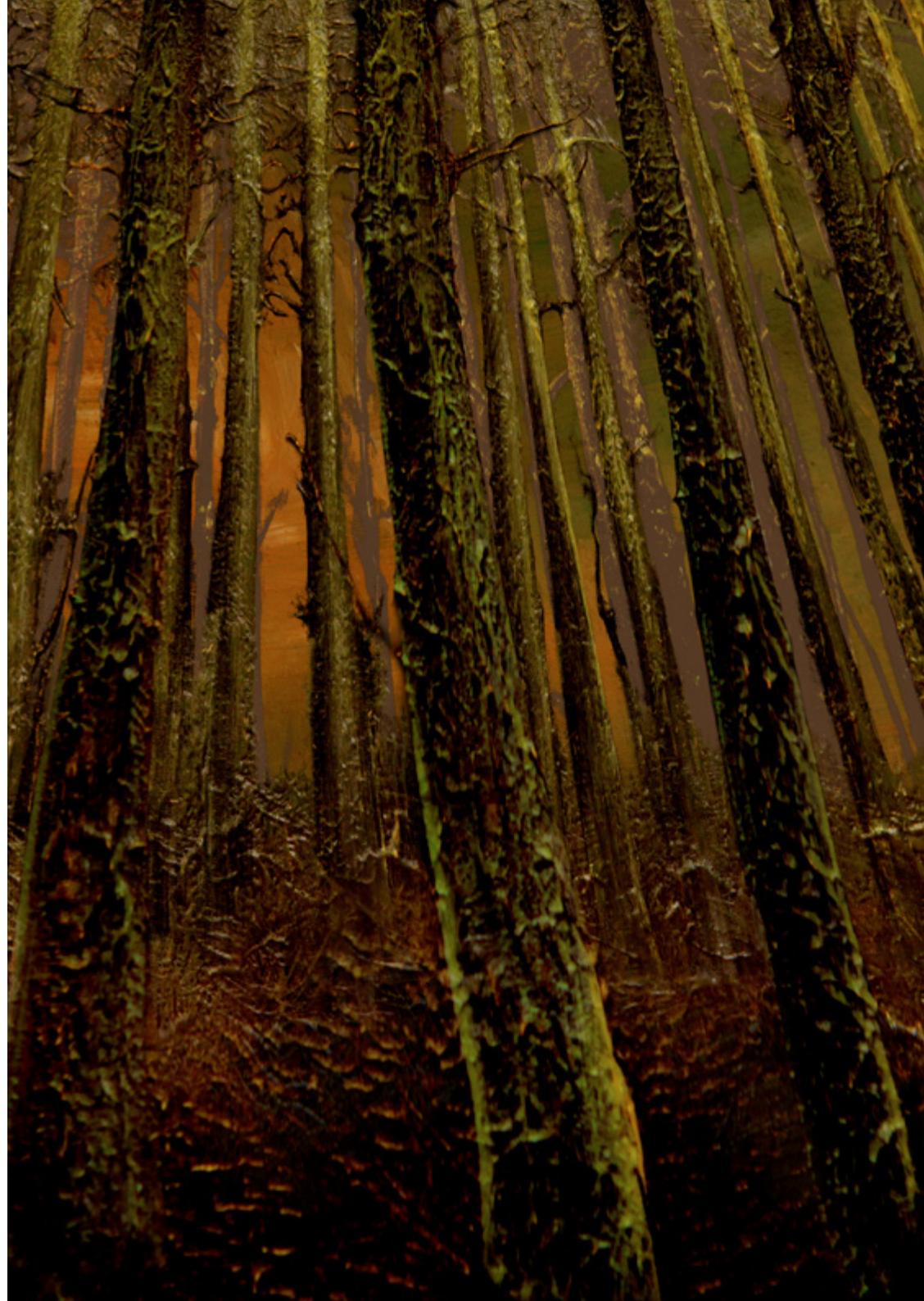




Figure 3:8 (Ayr, L. 2012) Painted textures. These were created using gesso on board. They produced a more random and visually interesting substrate upon which I could later layer imagery.





Figure 3:9 (Ayr, L. 2012) This experiment features Salome and Jokaanan (as a sunbird). It explores an enigmatic but sensual relationship made up of seemingly unrelated fragments. These fragments comprised both digital and analogue illustration.

By move testing relationships between photography and painting, I was able to consider the idea of integration as a process. I was experimenting with ideas *and* media as connectable phenomena. This image was tested through stratas of information. Images were digitally layered so I could assess potential relationships; I turned sections on and off (hiding layers in Photoshop) as I sought more cohesion.



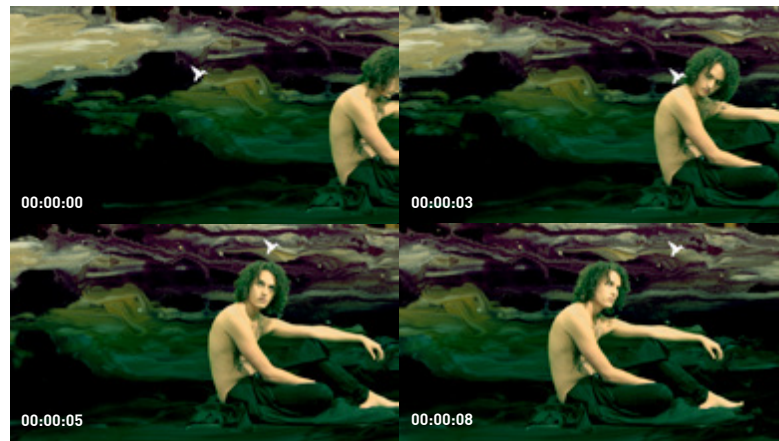


Figure 3:10 (Ayr, L. 2012) Early experiments testing the potentials of an embedded moving image sequence. Although this figure only shows a still from the experiment, by combining moving and painted imagery I began to think more clearly about transitions. This led me to the idea that the poetry-film might elegantly track around a complex image and all episodes within it might seamlessly integrate.

REASSEMBLY AND REFINEMENT

The final part in the inquiry involved drawing elements together and refining them. In this phase, the new body was reconstructed from fragments. *Jokanaan* was assembled and refined in a spatio-temporal environment where I concerned myself not only with continuity of image and text but also with pacing, rhythm and sound. Thus this phase was concerned with *whole text* relationships. It involved not only the assembly of the body but also its working relationships and interconnectivity. Each fragment had to be brought into concord aurally, textually, visually and conceptually.

However, as I worked with these new dimensions, ideas continued to surface and challenge my thinking. Although sometimes these felt disruptive (because they often meant untangling weeks of work to test their veracity), Kleining and Witt (2000) note that if one is to optimize the chances of discovery in a heuristic inquiry, one must accept that the research question may only be fully known after being successfully explored. Thus, they argue, one has to regard changes as a positive sign of accumulating knowledge and insight, they suggest “Changes of this sort should be regarded as a positive sign of accumulation of knowledge” (p.3).

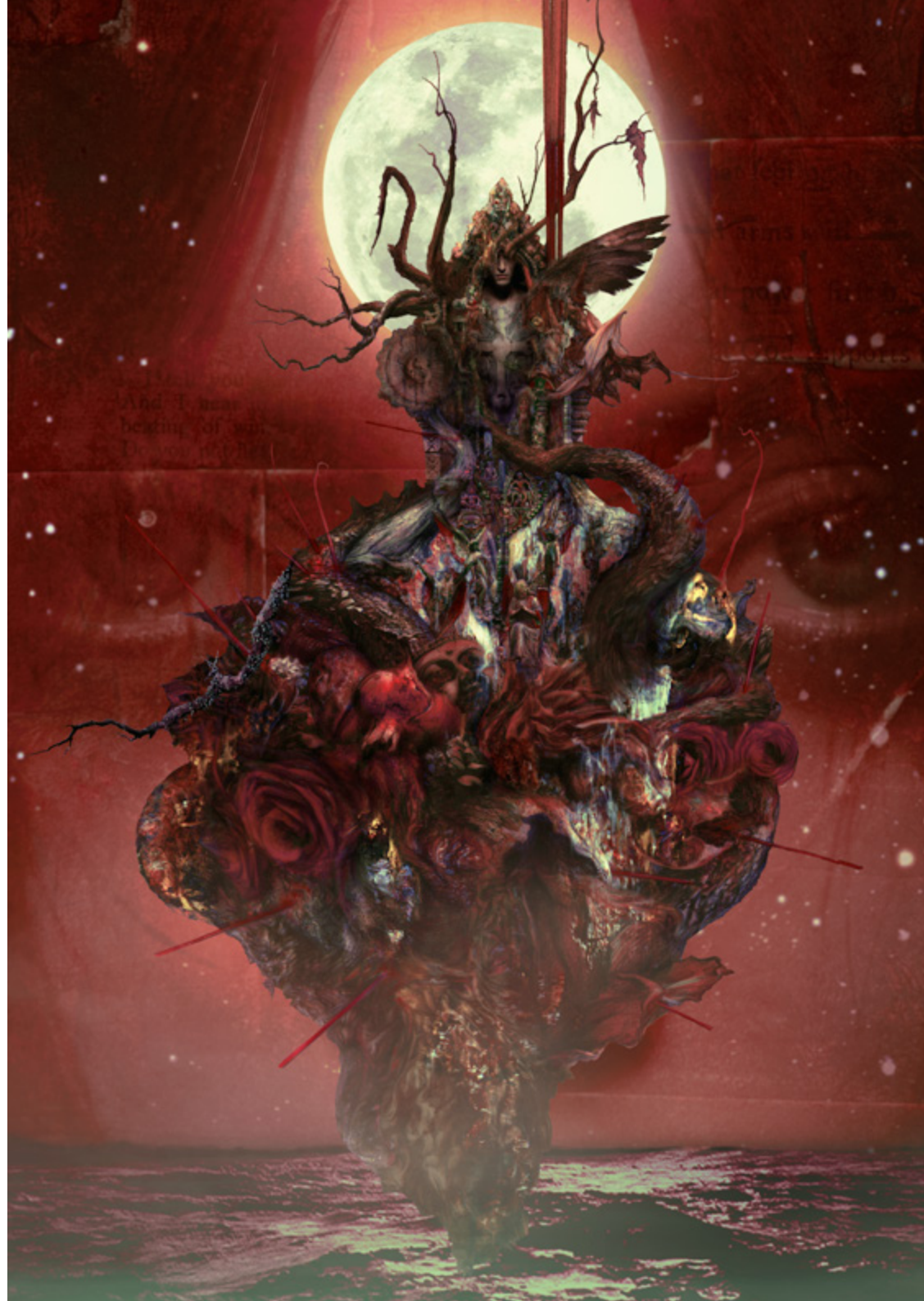
Thus, it was only near the end of the project that I moved from the idea of tracking left to right, along an extended illustration (figure 3:11). While I was thinking about the passion of John before his death, the concept of the heart surfaced. Accordingly, the whole structure of the work was undone, as I explored moving the poetry-film through the landscape of the burdened heart (figure 3:12).¹⁹

¹⁹This idea will be discussed in more detail in the commentary on the film.



Figure 3:11 (Ayr, L. 2012) [Construction in September/October of the film as a panel across which we track.]

Figure 3:12(Ayr, L. 2012) [Construction of the film as a heart. This is the poetry-film conceived as an embodiment of a beating life force]. It is constructed from multiple sources of fragments that are congested, ruptured, and enigmatic.



CONCLUSION

The role of evaluation

In harmony with the conceptual concerns of the project, the research design follows the process of *dissecta membra*, in that it reviews, breaks, makes, and reassembles. While these phases may appear linear in form, the cyclic nature of spiraling deeper into the self causes them to bleed and influence surrounding parts of the inquiry.

Critical evaluation of thinking permeates all phases of the inquiry. While Moustakas' approach to heuristic inquiry is open to external feedback, I have, in keeping with Sela-Smith's critique on his method, preserved the primary role of the internal critic. Sela-Smith (2002) argues that when importing outside critique, a "confusion of... different perspectives and different meanings, can fully disorient the researcher" (p. 71). She suggests that if a heuristic inquiry is functioning effectively...⁹ the researcher is able to assess the effectiveness of the work through its developing, internal coherence. If one chooses to import elements of external critique into a heuristic inquiry, Ings (2011) suggests, the researcher must be attentive to "the power of the subjective search [shifting] to an objective analysis of the created phenomena" (p.231). This sudden objectivity, he warns, "can result in a work in the final stages of its realisation, losing much of its integrity and idiosyncratic voice." He argues: "if one applies critique to the emerging artifact instead of the question, the outcome can become disconnected from the wealth of tacit knowing that brought it into being." (ibid.).

Thus, because *Jokanaan* focused on subjective, intuitive, poetic responses, an internal, deep questioning enabled effective data to emerge, as Cook (2012) notes, "The emphasis here is on *change*: poetry is essentially internalised"(para.3). If feedback was applied to the emerging design (as in the occasional consultation with photographers, sound designers, or film directors), suggestions were always drawn back into the interior processing of the project.

Summary

The research project took many months. It was unstable and rich. Often I felt myself generating large bodies of work with little forward progression. At other times I broke through and things began to fall seamlessly into place. A heuristic inquiry works well when one is creating work from a subjective position. Although external data was integral to *Jokanaan's* development, beneath it percolated my memories as a temple child. Memory infused my thinking. It scented the colours of my experiments and whispered to emerging iconography.

CHAPTER 4

Critical commentery

Jokanaan is a body reconstructed. It is a *disjecta membra* and its process is one of sensing and experimenting with the potentials of fragments. Having established *disjecta membra*'s influence on the research design for the project, it is now useful to consider how it impacted on the construction of the final work.

Dick Higgins, in his 1987 book *Pattern Poetry*, spoke of the “ongoing human wish to combine the visual and literary impulses, to tie together the experience of these two areas into an aesthetic whole” (p. 3). This has been the creative concern of this project.

Although the two broad influences on the thesis (the poetry-film and *disjecta membra*) have been discussed in the review of knowledge, in this chapter I relate these ideas to the practical work. This is done via a brief consideration of each phenomenon followed by a discussion of distinctive features in *Jokanaan* including iconography, structure, and rhythm.

POETRY-FILM

Wees (1997) says of poetry-film:

The history of poetry in our century has taught us that any verbal expression can be turned into poetry, and poetry-films vividly illustrate this modern concept of the 'poetic' – just as the diversity of visual effects exemplify the discovery by digital artists that there is virtually no limit to what can be made 'cinematic'. (para.1)

In discussing the physicality of this idea, Leropoulos (2007) states:

The poetry-film is interested in the fine line between text as word or image, spoken voice as words or sounds and the question of whether image or concept comes first in a human mind". (p. 3)

Arguably, there are few limitations to what can be poetically expressed. As a consequence in this project, I explore the potentials of the poetic fragment in written, aural, and visual form. While poetry-film is normally associated with the cinematic re-presentation of a *single* text, *Jokanaan* seeks to adapt a number of texts from a corpus of discrete elements. This corpus comprises texts that include in their scope poetic verse, script writing, and short story between 1801 and 1898. They include Cottle's 1801 *John, a poem*, Flaubert's 1877 short story *Hérodias*, Wilde's 1894 one act play *Salomé*, and Sudermann's 1898 theatre script *John the Baptist: A play*.²⁰

These works were selected because they contained similar forms of lyrical and metaphorical engagement with the story. They were drawn from a body of late Romantic and Victorian writing,²¹ because their distinctly metaphorical treatments of the story suggested rich and stylistically similar approaches. Accordingly, concords in the final poetry-film were drawn between related treatments of tone, rhythm, sensuality, and metaphor.

²⁰See appendix 2 for the original source material.

²¹This is a difficult period to define precisely. The Romantic era as a literary and intellectual movement in England is normally considered to span a period between 1800 and 1840. Its most prominent literary form was the poem. Victorian literature tends to describe work between 1837 to 1901, during which time the novel (and later the play) became popular literary forms. During both of these periods there was a distinctive emphasis on metaphor, mystery, and wonder (Pfordresher, 1991). As such Romanticism began a movement where writers broke with the eighteenth century belief in the power of reason, and turned instead to a consideration of imagination and emotion. This emphasis on imagination and emotion is also a feature of certain mid-to-late Victorian writing, illustration, and painting. Broadly, this work was heavily influenced by European Decadence. Bradley (2012) notes that these decadent works expanded "an interest in perversity, ennui, art for art's sake, transgressive modes of sexuality, artificiality, and decay" (para.1).

The idea of combination and concord is central to poetry-film. Wees (1999) notes: "Poetry-film... engage[s] us in a multi-layered experience of the visual and verbal, spatial and temporal, literal and figurative that invests words with visual meaning and makes linguistic sense of moving images" (p.2). He suggests that poetry-films "offer modes of communication that push against the limits of everyday uses of language (as does poetry) and conventional forms of filmmaking ... They are, like all interesting art, greater than the sum of their parts" (ibid.).

Jokanaan engages with this idea. It is an orchestration of textual fragments, responded to using diverse media.

Like most poetry-film *Jokanaan* is non-linear in its treatment of narrative. Its contemplation is closer to a stream of consciousness,²² where we encounter a flow of images and poetic text that serve to describe something beyond the written word. John the Baptist is lyrical, sensual, and steeped in metaphor. His identity is treated as a poetic enigma. He is a poem as film, and a lyrical concordance of fragments.

²²This device Cuddon (1984) describes as a depiction of "multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind" (p.660) or an "interior monologue" (p.161). It is a literary form that surfaced in the 1890s (during the same period from which I selected the corpus of work for this project), and was heavily influenced by the writing of the philosopher William James.

DISJECTA MEMBRA AND TEXTUAL FRAGMENTS

Rationale for use

In a contemporary design project, dealing with the fragment, one might be expected to engage with either the concept of *pastische* or *bricolage*. However, neither of these post-modern constructs satisfactorily describes the idea of a whole body being a poetic reconstruction of fragments of existing poetic works.

Jameson (1991) describes *pastische* as a form of intertextuality that cobbles together a text in imitation of several original works. Significantly, though, he sees *pastische* as *imitative* and often serving as a vehicle for satire. In a postmodern age, he argues that it has come to replace parody. *Disjecta membra*, however, is not *imitative*. It does not *parody*, but uses selected fragments from lyrical sources in a poetic reconstitution that seeks to re-emphasise the tone and nature of original works.

Conversely, *bricolage* as a visual arts term refers to the creation of a work assembled from available elements. Although philosophically the concept has been extended by theorists like Levi-Strauss (1966), Derrida (1996), and Deleuze & Guattari (1972), the term normally applies to an assemblage of a diverse range of found elements.²³ *Disjecta membra*, however, reconstitutes fragments from discrete, literary texts. It is concerned with a body, re-composed from fragments of existing bodies by the same writer, or as in my thesis, from a period of time in the development of a specific narrative.

²³This idea is an extension of the term *collage* that derives from the French “coller” meaning glue. The technique of gluing pieces of found material onto two dimensional surfaces was coined by both Braque and Picasso at the beginning of the twentieth century. Because of the limitations of collage, both conceptually and spatio-temporally, it is not an appropriate replacement for *disjecta membra*.

The real whole

Accordingly, the poetry-film proposes an unstable, ‘real whole’. Most (2009) says: “Real wholes are ephemeral and start falling apart even before they are finished. Their fragments last much longer and yet they too are subject to decay and corruption” (p.18). The only thing that he believes “is truly immortal is the lost whole that we reconstruct on the basis of fragments, that never existed in reality, and that therefore can never perish. However the fragment gleams, what fascinates us even more is the darkness surrounding it” (ibid.).

This darkness is the unknown and now unknowable death of John the Baptist. His demise is an unsolvable mystery. As such, John the Baptist and my poetry-film *Jokaanan* are *real wholes* in a state of construction and disintegration. Although a baseline narrative of “scattered remains” (Horace, 2005, p.21) is discernable, both the contributing literary works and my poetry-film are essentially suppositions.

A CONSIDERATION OF ELEMENTS IN JOKANAAN

Jokanaan offers a distinctive treatment of subject. Accordingly, it is useful to consider how the fragment has been treated in the final text. In this regard, I now offer a consideration of two aspects of the text, iconography, and structure.

ICONOGRAPHY

In relation to textual fragments, *Disjecta membra* is a term applied to both literary texts and to artefacts.²⁴ However, although I have used fragments of images in constructing this work, the approach to imagery cannot technically be framed as *disjecta membra*. This is because the iconography is not composed of fragments from a discrete corpus of painting or illustration. However, I do employ the fragment as a means of paying homage to the concept of *disjecta membra*. In other words, I do not treat the fragment as collage, bricolage, or pastiche; instead I am interested in images that collectively capture the spirit of *disjecta membra*, through their positioning in fragmented conversation with the text. Because of their strategic placement and integration, they contribute to a *new* text dealing with the same subject. Iconography extends the spirit and tone of the writing. It alludes to the sensual, mysterious, religious, and enigmatic. This may be seen as a kind of allegorical collection of fragments, through which the voice of the *disjecta membra* speaks.

Mythological imagery

Jokanaan is rich in mythological references (particularly Greco-Roman). Some of these references are already embedded in the corpus of literature from which the poetry-film is constructed. However, they are also interesting because classical mythology itself has been conceptualised as an orchestration of fragments.

Graves (1955) likens mythology to the chimera, because this beast is comprised of: “a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpent’s tail.” (p.11) He describes Greek mythology as a “disorganised corpus... which contains importations from Crete, Egypt, Palestine, Phrygia, Babylonia, and elsewhere” (ibid.). These myths, he argues, are not a collection of stories, but rather a complex composition of historical, cultural, and fictional fragments.

²⁴Although slightly different in nuance, archeologists, historians, and anthropologists sometimes refer to fragments of Greek pottery as *disjecta membra*. By studying these fragments, they are often able to attribute work to a specific artist or to find connections between fragments housed in different museums.

Creatures

Within *Jokanaan*, a number of composite mythological creatures emerge from, and reside within, fragmented worlds (see figure 4:1). They are *bacchanalian*²⁵ in behavior. Among these are the centaurs which Graves (1955) suggests were worshippers of Dionysus. These creatures consumed mushrooms called *amanita muscaria* which induced hallucinations, riotous behaviour, prophetic sight, and erotic energy. While these fungi appear in the film, I connect their sense of the Bacchanalian to the decadent court settings originally described by Wilde and Flaubert.

The centaurs, along with other mythological creatures in the film, represent the disorder that accompanies John on a pilgrimage into death.

The pilgrimage into death

John descends into a world of visions. He is entangled in fragmented memories and sensual impressions. As he approaches his execution, hallucinations combine in a rich and confused ecstasy. His pilgrimage may be likened obliquely to Orpheus’s²⁶ journey through the underworld. However, unlike Orpheus and Eurydice, John does not seek to release the object of his desire from death, but rather to bring desire and death into harmony. He is attuned to his fate, and embraces his demise. His journey flows through recollections of himself, his unresolved relationship with Salome, and the unruliness of a world caught between the order of the temple and the nature of wilderness. Both ideas are infused with excess.

Wine

Wine is a reoccurring metaphor that permeates the film. It may be seen as both the life force and the blood of John the Baptist. The metaphor alludes not only to John’s spilling of blood (beheading), but also to the use of wine as the blood of contracted forgiveness (Matthew 26:27-29). As such, the metaphor also alludes to older Jewish rituals like the Paschal Seder²⁷ and the Berakah²⁸ (during which times wine was drunk).

²⁵*Bacchanalian* (or *Bacchanalia*) refers to the wild and mystical festivals of the Greco-Roman god Bacchus (or, Dionysus), the God of wine (Graves, 1955. pp. 103-107).

²⁶Orpheus the poet ventures to the underworld to retrieve his wife, Eurydice (Graves, 1955. p. 112). Like John, he was a prophet; he is noted for forming the Orphic Mysteries. Curiously, the earliest literary reference to Orpheus survives as a two-word fragment in a work by the sixth-century BCE lyric poet Ibycus: *onomaklyton Orphen* (“Orpheus famous-of-name”).

²⁷The Passover.

²⁸Ritual blessings.

Within the poetry-film, creatures emerge from wine, consume it, and are intoxicated by it. It is the elixir of life, the ambrosia of visions, and the symbol of demise and sacrifice.

Temples

In the poetry-film I include distinctive treatments of the temple that draw upon the Buddhist architecture of my childhood. The architectural fusion between Buddhist and Jewish temples references parallels between my and John's respective positions as children of the temple.

In Jokaanan, the temple is treated as the body. This is an allusion to verse nineteen in chapter six of the first book of Corinthians which frames the human body as a temple of the holy spirit.²⁹ However, Jokaanan's temple is also a wilderness,³⁰ where plantations and fruit intermingle with offerings and decay.

The composite body

Jokanaan is physically structured as a heart. This heart bleeds wine; we flow with its secretions from the beginning to the conclusion of the work. Within the heart, lyrical text, imagery, and sound combine. At no time do we encounter the heart as a whole (see figure 4:2), but we journey languidly through its structure. Connected by the metaphor of wine, fragments are disconnected and connected as a 'real world' that is unstable and enigmatic.

Figure 4:1 (Ayr, L) Concepts for composite creatures, designed with references to centaurs, chimaeras and nymphs.

²⁹"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (Corinthians 6:19). [Bible: New International Version (NIV)]

³⁰This is a reference to records that he lived in the wilderness of Judea between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Here he wore a... "raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4). [Bible: New International Version (NIV)]

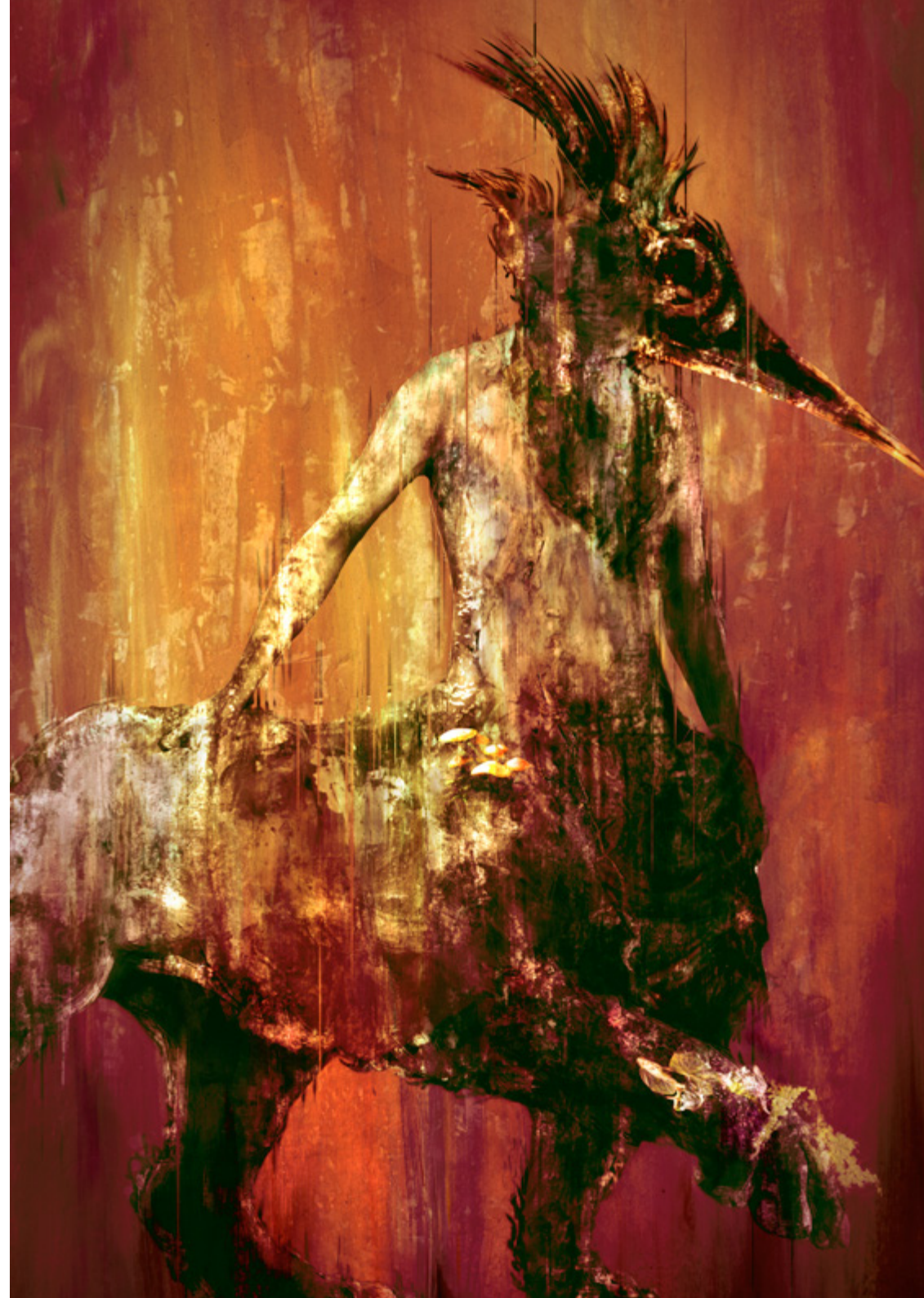




Figure 4:2 (Ayr, L) Overview of the heart as the composite body of the film.



STRUCTURE

In the poetry-film *Jokanaan*, I use a free verse structure³¹ that incorporates the poetic device of the stanza.³² This approach enables me to bring in to concord fragments without having to negotiate broader rhythmic and structural contradictions between texts that were originally stage scripts, lyrical poems, or short stories.

Jokanaan is structured into three stanzas. Each stanza begins with John's name. Respectively they deal with the realm of the offering, the realm of wine and the realm of death. In the poetry-film, each stanza is transitioned by imagery that relates to the upcoming realm.

These stanzas are metaphorical fusions of fragments. Below is an example from the realm of wine. It is created from fragments of Wilde's *Salomé* and Schumann's *John the Baptist: a Play*.

Jokanaan...
Wilt thou be the sun, and I thy queen?
Gilded eyelids where dragons dwell, lakes troubled by fantastic moons.
Flower of the valley, I will not look at thee.
Sun or king, I cannot be...

In this stanza, the first and third lines are from Wilde, while the second, fourth and fifth are from Schumann. These fragments are connected by their reference to celestial bodies. They also feature a distinct structural form. All lines following the appellation 'Jokanaan' are divided into two ideas. This structure provides a consistent symmetry to the stanza.

This stability is important in the written text, because the imagery that surrounds it is not consistent. Although images might sometimes link to a word or phrase in the poem, the visual aspect of the poem does not constitute a literal illustration of what is read. Rather, the imagery operates as a synergistic context for the written text.

³¹Free verse is a form of poetry that isn't strictly bound by the use of consistent pattern, rhyme, or musical formula. While it can still use these elements, it opens poetry to the rhythm of natural speech.

³²A stanza is a group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit of a poem.

Summary

This thesis orchestrates the fragment.

- It creatively considers the archaic poetic construct of disjecta membra as a means of forming a new poetic body (poetry-film) from fragments.
- It responds to the dismemberment of the body of John the Baptist by dismembering narratives about him.
- It explores poetry-film structurally, metaphorically, and visually as a composite body.
- The methodology underpinning the design of the work engages the core process of disjecta membra, through an approach that employs breaking, making, and reassembly.

CONCLUSION

The work and its journey

Presented in high-definition, *Jokanaan* is multi-layered poetry-film that uses image, sound, and text to creatively consider John the Baptist's interior thoughts prior to his execution.

Drawing on the archaic tenets of *disjecta membra*, I have contemplated the period before his death, when he descends into an enigmatic world of visions. Entangled in fragmented memories and sensual impressions, he approaches execution in a state of confused ecstasy. The work is a composite of four poetic retellings, offering fragments that emphasise not only the richness of John's visions, but also the enigma that surrounds his character and death.

There was no template for this research. Despite an exhaustive review of knowledge, this approach to a graphic design thesis has navigated relatively uncharted territory. In actualizing it, I have adopted a heuristic form of inquiry, not only because I was in unstable territory seeking high levels of discovery, but also because I was able to explore an approach to research where the subject (*disjecta membra*) might also suggest a methodological design.

In terms of a practice-led Masters thesis, the inquiry has gone further than one might expect. The hours spent researching and locating (often obscure) retellings of a historical text, examining differences in ideas and themes, and learning to work with moving image (with which I had no former experience) has been very demanding.

Conceptually, I wanted to bring something new into being. I could have positioned the project in charted waters (an analysis of Jameson's postmodern construct of pastiche, or a consideration of Derrida and Levi Strauss's writings on bricolage), but I chose not to. Instead, I tried to draw into productive correlation two lesser known ideas: the poetry-film and *disjecta membra*.

I took seriously the expectation of postgraduate study that it should seek to engage with new bodies of knowledge. This is of course risky. But without risk one can end up simply applying and adapting contexts to already explored practice.

Accordingly, this has been a rigorous and passionate thesis where I have developed my thinking through months of drawing, redrawing, photographing, painting, and filming. It has been more than design. It has been the bringing of a poetic concept into fruition, and, in this process, the application and expansion of *disjecta membra* to a visual work of literature.

In considering the risk and passion of such a thesis, I am reminded of Oscar Wilde's observation in his essay *The Critic as Artist*. He said:

A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight,
and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the
world.³³

Perhaps this is a fitting aspiration for a designer.

To traverse new, unknown, and unstable paths, in pursuit of vision.

Lyna Ayr December 2012

³³From Wilde, O. (1976). 'The Critic as Artist' in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. London: Book Club Associates, p.1058.

POST EXAMINATION REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

Static-to-motion

As an illustrator I have developed the ability to create images on a flat page. What I draw can be seen in its entirety and read from a single position. Consequently the move into illustrating for spatio-temporal environments raised significant issues for me. In such an environment one must work multi-dimensionally. I had to learn to think in sequences. I came to understand the plane not as a definite surface but as something permeable and ephemeral. The nature of detail was also different. What might work as a static image was often congested when applied to film. The loss of static emphasis due to time and movement, means that the eye of the viewer can hold comparatively little. Transition and breathing space became increasingly important as I began to encounter illustration as a linear trajectory. Within this notion, ideas, and imagery had to be simplified for more effective communication (see appendix 3).

The learning trajectory

This project moved my fascination with fragments into a fourth dimension. I encountered knowledge that was neither fixed nor necessarily true. Assumptions like biblical stories being *absolute* were shattered and assumptions about learned principles of illustration were often found to be inapplicable. However, the focus on links between elements rather than their discrete design made the concept of *disjecta membra* a very rich one for me; certainly one that went beyond conventions of collage or pastiche.

I now find myself thirsty for contradiction. This is because I see it as creatively generative rather than problematic or immobilizing. Looking back however, I can see that often I was too absorbed in finding connections via experiment, ignoring (at the cost of time) important reflections on media choices, techniques, and processes. Although my educational trajectory may be seen as discovery-learning I think I would have been wise to have established a more informed substrate from which to begin working in AfterEffects, sound design, film capture and processing.

Future directions

I will enter *Jokaanan* in film festivals, specifically those dealing with poetry-film. To date there has been little evidenced in these festivals that deals with multiple poems, and certainly nothing that draws on concepts of *disjecta membra*. In the genre there is also little that is as intricate and multilayered as my work. While *Jokaanan's* origin as a *disjecta membra* may influence this, it is also a work created by an illustrator, where most poetry-film is designed either by poets or cinematographers.

While I still see myself as an illustrator, I would like to continue exploring approaches to image creation that move through space and time. This may be in either web-based design or in new approaches to film that extend conventions of animation.

Lyna Ayr July 2013

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APPENDIX 1

Composite written text for the poetry-film *Jokanaan*
[disjecta membra]

JOKANAAN

Aspiring trees
Supple as serpents, light as birds,

Jokanaan...
Wilt thou be the sun, and I thy queen?
Gilded eyelids where dragons dwell, lakes troubled by fantastic moons.
Flower of the valley, I will not look at thee.
Sun or king, I cannot be...

Jokanaan...
Thy voice is wine to me
The desert blossoming like the rose.
The centaurs have hidden themselves in rivers,
And the nymphs are lying beneath the forest leaves.
I hear the beating of wings...

Jokanaan...
It is your mouth that I desire.
The shores of the Dead Sea became visible.
The sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair,
And the moon shall become like blood,
I will kiss your mouth
Scatter the remains of your bodies.

Jokanaan...

APPENDIX 2

Source literature for *Jokanaan*.

Fragments used are underlined and italicised.

JOSEPH COTLE: JOHN, A POEM (1801)
(Verse 30, p. 5)

And o'er the wat'ry chaos pafs'd the florm,
His fecret thought the ruthlefs winds obey,
He fpake and darknefs brighten'd into day,
Aspiring trees from fheril clods arife,
And Eden's richeft fragrance fills the fkies.³⁴

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT: HÉRODIAS (1877)
(Chapter 1, p. 71)

A light mist floated in the air; presently it lifted, and *the shores of the Dead Sea became visible*. The sun, rising behind Machaerus, spread a rosy flush over the sky, lighting up the stony shores, the hills, and the desert, and illuming the distant mountains of Judea, rugged and grey in the early dawn.

(Chapter 2, p. 86)

They were indeed wonderful animals; *supple as serpents, light as birds*. They were trained to gallop rapidly, following the arrow of the rider, and dash into the midst of a group of the enemy, overturning men and biting them savagely as they fell. They were sure-footed among rocky passes, and would jump fearlessly over yawning chasms; and, while ready to gallop across the plains a whole day without tiring, they would stop instantly at the command of the rider.

(Chapter 2, p. 88)

"And thou too, Moab! hide thyself in the midst of the cypress, like the sparrow; in caverns, like the wild hare! The gates of the fortress shall be crushed more easily than nut-shells; the walls shall crumble; cities shall burn; and the scourge of God shall not cease! He shall cause your bodies to be bathed in your own blood, like wool in the dyer's vat. He shall rend you, as with a harrow; He shall *scatter the remains of your bodies* from the tops of the mountains!"

³⁴I have used an updated English spelling of the words *Aspiring trees*.

(Chapter 2, p. 89)

Presently his voice became almost as sweet and harmonious as if he were uttering a chant. He spoke of the world's redemption from sin and sorrow; of the glories of heaven; of gold in place of clay; of *the desert blossoming like the rose*. "That which is now worth sixty pieces of silver will not cost a single obol. Fountains of milk shall spring from the rocks; men shall sleep, well satisfied, among the wine-presses. The people shall prostrate themselves before Thee, and Thy reign shall be eternal, O Son of David!"

OSCAR WILDE, SALOMÉ (1894)

(Jokanaan's speech from p. 6).

The Voice of Jokanaan

Behold! The Lord hath come. The son of man is at hand. *The centaurs have hidden themselves* in the rivers, *and the nymphs* have left the rivers, and *are lying beneath the leaves* in the *forest*.

(Jokanaan's speech from p. 10)

Jokanaan

Who is this woman looking at me?

I will not not have her look at me.

Where fore doth she look at me, with her golden eyes, under her *gilded eyelids*?

I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone.

It is not to her that I would speak.

(Salomé's speech from p. 10)

Salomé

It is his eyes above all that are terrible.

They are like black holes burned by torches in a tapestry of Tyre. They are like the *black caverns* of Egypt in which the *dragons dwell*. They are like Black *lakes troubled by fantastic moons*. . . Do you think he will speak again?

(Salomé's speech from p. 10)

Salomé
Speak again, Jokanaan. *Thy voice is wine to me.*

(Jokanaan's speech from p. 11)

Jokanaan
Get behind me! *I hear in the palace the beating of wings* of the angel of death.

(Salomé's speech from p. 13)

Salomé
I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

(Jokanaan's speech from p. 14)

Jokanaan
I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salomé, thou art accursed. [*He goes down in the cistern.*]

(Jokanaan's speech from p. 23)

Voice of Jokanaan
In that day *the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood,* and the stars of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and all the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERMANN SUDERMANN, JOHN THE BAPTIST: A PLAY (1898)

(Salome's speech from p. 81)

Salome
[*Coyly trifling*] I am a rose of Sharon and a *flower of the valley.*

(Salome's speech from p. 84)

Salome
Well, I will make a compact with thee.
Shall I be the sun, and thou my
king? Or *wilt thou be the sun, and I thy queen?*

(John's speech from p. 84)

John
Maiden, *I cannot be* either *sun or king.*

APPENDIX 3

Introduction

This project was eventually completed on the 24th of April 2013, four months after the exegesis was submitted. Accordingly certain aspects of the work changed. This appendix discusses some of the significant changes that occurred in *Jokanaan* in the last four months of its gestation.



Figure 4:3 (Ayr, L. 2013) The final sequence for *Jokanaan* as a single strip that we track from left to right. At times we also move into the images entering layers of imagery hidden behind the surface.

Sound, type and colour

Originally I conceived *Jokanaan* as a poetry-film with a typographic voice. In this regard I imagined diegetic sound with the *disjecta membra* operating as a mute accounting of the tensions we witnessed between John and Salome. However, in the last months of the project I applied an atmospheric soundtrack that was cut and reassembled to suit the overall mood of the work. I was seeking an audio accompaniment that would not end in a climax but would drift towards an enigmatic closure.

My experiments with animated type (beyond those employed in the titles sequence) were problematic because they tended to congest an already complex visual surface. They distracted from the imagery and interfered with an already intricate weaving together of iconography (see figure 4:4).

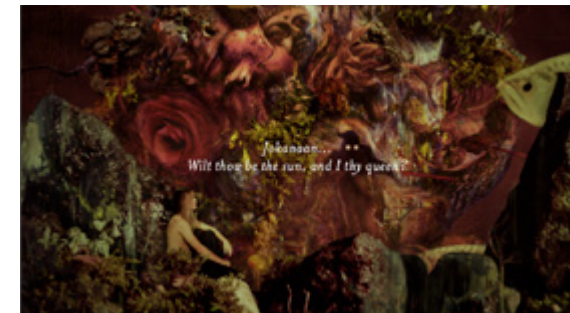


Figure 4:4 (Ayr, L. 2013) Heart scene with typographic overlay.



Figure 4:5 (Ayr, L. 2013) Type as an inter-title

I also experimented with using type as interceptive inter-titles. However this approach resulted in pacing problems with the film's flow.

Eventually as a solution to this, I sensed that we might ‘hear’ the poem as a seductive conversation. When I wrote the *disjecta mebra* I was drawn to the rich, sensual nature of the Victorian writer’s imagery. I wondered if instead of a single reader delivering the poem, I might construct it as a dialogue that was rich with tension and desire.

After auditioning a number of people to read the work I employed two actors (Ross and Kerynn Brannigan) to read the parts of John and Salome respectively. I emphasised the need for seduction and enigma but also a certain strength as both characters in the poetry-film were powerful, and had substantial literary histories.

The final vocal recordings were edited to arrange the best poetic renditions from several takes. These recordings were then positioned in the flow of imagery and supported by a musical soundtrack. Once layered, the recorded conversations impacted immediately on sense of desire and tension in the work. While the images emphasised sacrifice, enigma and ritual, the voices underscored the sexual undercurrent in the film.

With the images now rich with a sense of desire I experimented with lowering their colour intensity. This was necessary because I was aware of the need to mitigate against congestion. After a number of experiments, a limited (sepia) colour palette brought harmony that settled the fragments of dialogue and imagery into a more integrated flow.

The monochromatic palette removed unnecessary discord in the work. The film became darker, more modulated... and as a consequence the vocals became more pronounced.



Figure 4:6 (Ayr, L. 2013) Comparison of colour and monochromatic treatments of Salome nestled in the forest [scene 6].

Sacrifice and the Enigmatic

Thematically the poem was open to many interpretations. Indeed the research trajectory was largely concerned with the selection and iconographic treatment of these. Although I had considered many potential emphases (eg: the living heart, the bi-cultural temple and the hybrid mythological creature), I realised that these themes were not serving to establish a clear focus to the work. Although my decision to explore the idea of sacrifice, meant undoing many weeks of model construction, illustration, and film work, the decision to clarify a central theme was necessary because the work was becoming overly complex. In considering everything, the work had begun to suggest nothing.

Accordingly I let go of the idea of metaphoric realms. The final outcome still alluded to subtle aspects of these realms but did not illustrate them as a linear progression. What remained were the references to classic antiquity, the consumption of wine, and the climbing tree roots that wound through and between imagery.

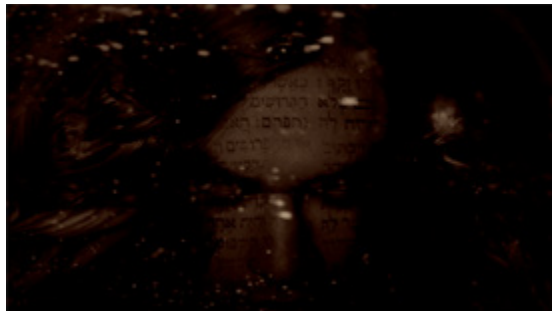


Figure 4:7 (Ayr, L. 2013) Frame grab of liquid and flowing fragments.

The personification of the poetry-film as the heart of John the Baptist also became less literal. We *felt* his heart as desire rather than navigated its chambers as a physical exploration. The work also revisited certain early experiments with the temple but I treated these more architecturally. The Asian stone temple elements were largely removed to avoid being recognised as ruins. Their inclusion I realised was more of an 'in-house' reference to my personal history, than a necessary visual metaphor for communicating the idea of sacrifice, desire and decay.



Figure 4:8 (Ayr, L. 2013) Frame grabs of the respective temples of John and Salome. In the final version of the film we encounter John and Salome in different temples, each surrounded by fragments. John's temple is based on drawings of details of a Jewish Tabernacle while Salome's is a confusion of flowers and foliage that alludes discretely to the work of Art Nouveau artists who were painting in the period from which the original poems were sourced.



Across the trajectory of *Jokanaan* floral and faunal fragments litter a left-to-right directional flow. The architecture is decayed and the landscapes are enigmatic. While the Asian temple references were removed, I retained and developed the concept of the offering.

The film begins with three two enigmatic sacrifices. These are all suspended in the temple. They prefigure John's sacrifice. The offerings are also in a state of decay. They are neither one object nor another. Like the rest of the film they are fragments, cobbled together in a confusion of meaning. In the film, the iconography of the sacrifice is extended through offerings of flowers and wine (libations), though John's head suspended from the branches of trees, in his offering of falling pieces of broken temple rock, and finally in the closing sequence of the film, the haze of floating, cremated ashes.

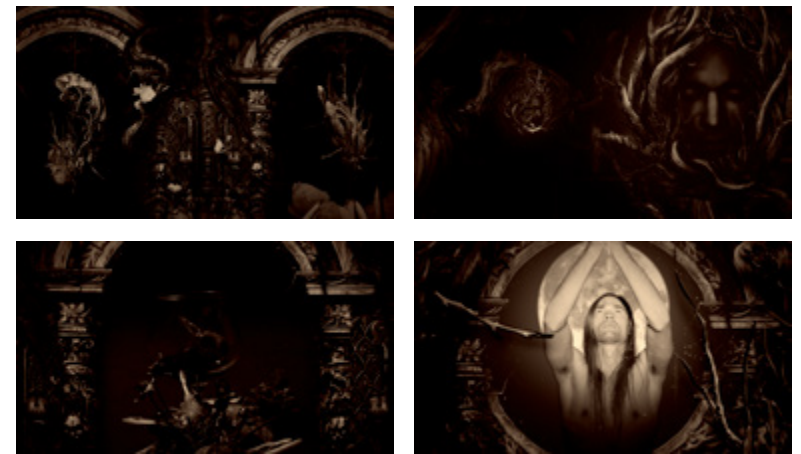


Figure 4:9 (Ayr, L. 2013) Four film grabs of temple sacrifices. These images allude to John as an offering - a sacrificial body who is shrouded in mystery.

The emphasis on sacrifice also saw the deletion of hybrid mythical creatures from the work. In many cases these were the residue of early literal treatments of references in the *disjecta membra*. These creatures remain in only one section of the film; they can be seen etched into details of the stained glass windows that flank Jokanaan part way through the poem.



Figure 4:10 (Ayr, L. 2013) Film grab of the stained glass windows.

In summary, while the final poem film differed from what was described in the exegesis, the additional months refining its emphasis produced a more coherent outcome.

The emphasis on a central theme of sacrifice (treated enigmatically), and the use of a seductive audio rendition of the text meant *Jokanaan* became a more finely modulated poem film. I cannot pretend that it didn't wound me somewhat to lose many months of previous work from the project, but perhaps this is the nature of research (in opposition to answering a design brief). One is always in a process of design and redesign as one moves towards higher and higher levels of conceptual and physical resolve.

In the end *Jokanaan* has become a poetry-film that translates pieces of *disjecta membra*, across and within a multi-layered experience. The work is seductive, dark and enigmatic... as such it touches the only unifying element in all of the stories told about John the Baptist.

He died as a sacrificial martyr.