

Contents Page

The Human Condition P 2-13

Seamus Heaney P 14-15

Blackbirds, Crows and Ravens P 16-19

Ida P 20-21

Christopher P 22-23

The Ghosts P 24-25

Ireland P 26-27

Love and Loss P 28-29

Cinematic Adaptations P 30-31

What is a Catalogue Document? This document marks out the manifesto of the show. With all its braiding, writing, re-writing, to document what the show is. This document can be viewed to correspond with the play to view the inner workings, meanings and representations.





The aim of the play is for the audience to travel into the spiritual realm alongside the characters. The audience are invited to their own traditional Irish wake. Leaving the parts of life behind that no longer matter. Embracing fear to experience the death of ego through the lens of cinema.

Hoping to trigger the audience into recognition that there is nothing wrong with dying. We die a million times before we truly leave the earth, there is nothing to fear. All we are what we will always be. Lovely creatures that will too begin to rot one day. The Wake, such as in Ireland is not an embellishment of loss. But rather a celebration of the blessing of life we get to live.

*Life – is an endless series
of disappointments.*

I was born.

And now I'm bored.

*And then some day
I'm gonna*

Die.

FUCK!

[1]

Human

Something that differs humanity from other species is our thirst for knowledge. Our ever present need to understand what purpose we're serving by being here. It is a deafening grievance that the 21st century human has to endure.

We're thrown into the world, told we're going to die and we don't have any answers to the question of why we're here. So we do what we can.

We grasp the simplest pleasures wherever we can find them.

Food, wine, cigarettes, love, sex, dance, music, magic.

There is no pamphlet that we're handed once we're thrown into existence.



This is all we know,

we do

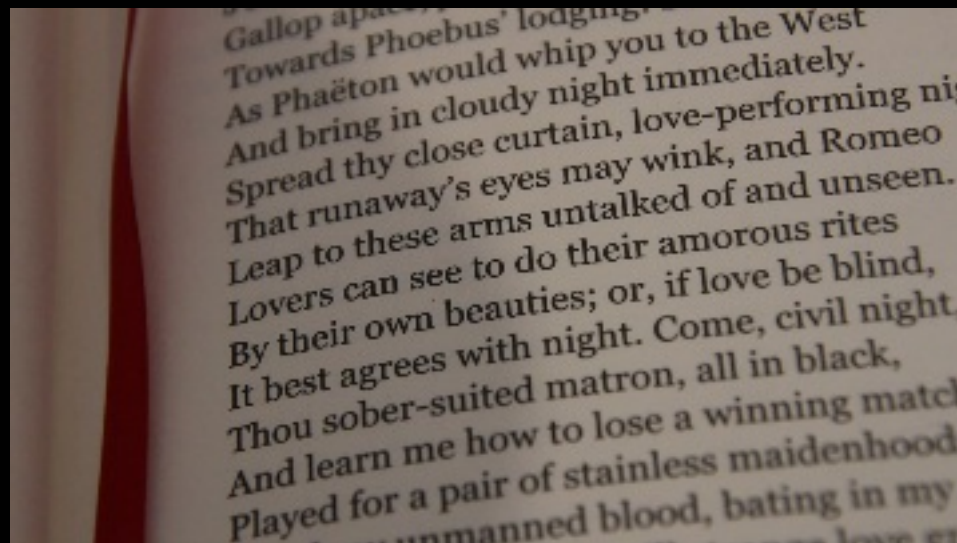
our best

to understand.



The catalyst for my research began with a single video essay by the poet Savannah Brown '*Life Cheated us all and I'm full of angst*' [1]. Within said essay, Brown discusses the unfairness of life, concluding that the only thing that makes the pain of knowing you're going to die someday is the opportunity to have lived. This, in short, is all that this play strives to be. An eye opening experience that shows an audience that death will come for us all one day, and so there is no point trying to run from it.

The aim with Play of the Wicklow is to balance the concept of Eros and Thanatos, through the medium of poetry and theatrics [2]. The challenge was to capture both life and death through theatre making. Freuds theories of blissful and bad pleasures alike, I wanted to intertwine. Creating a visual representation of the concept, 'we don't know if, Living without knowing, – or dying and finding out the meaning of life, is the greater sacrifice. These questions cannot be answered. My objective was never to do this. Only to partake in dialogues of understanding through aesthetics and literature.



Condition

“In ecological terms, the human is not central but simply a constituent element.”

[3]

We live under the impression that we are the chosen ones, we're told the world is our oyster and is ours to take.

So when you wake up and realise that this isn't – and has never been – the truth we don't know what to do with our self.

The reminder that we are no more than the joining of atoms, and the lucky, rather than the chosen ones, your perspective shifts.

And you realise, **you where never meant to be here.**

Why would God put you here just to die?

“Everything is more beautiful because we are doomed.”





You will never be lovelier than you are now.
We will never be here again”

[4]

Who are we to not trust the ancient poets. Strip chaotic societal beauty,
capitalistic complacency.

Cast aside your thoughts and ego, what makes you the best version of
yourself and realise.

We are all children of romanticism.

We just want to be loved forever.

We want to make our mark in the world and find someone who will be
proud of us when we're gone.

Yes we are doomed, living in an endless cycle of pleasure and regret.

But the world carries on spinning far after we're gone.





Seamus Heaney

In the earliest stages of writing *The Wake* Seamus Heaney's poetry was the only source of text I was using. The characters Ida and Christopher were still the two driving voices within the play however they only spoke to one another using Heaney's words. As is always the necessary to when creating something new I played around with the concept of voice and poetry for a few weeks. However, as time passed, the play became something different. An outlook to explore humanity's relationship with death. I found that using Heaney's poetry as the bulk of the text was not translating the themes that I wanted to portray to its full potential.

I moved away from Heaney. Adopting elements of him to shine through the work. For example, as I have already discussed, Christopher is a homage to Heaney's younger brother. The snowdrops as a recurring theme within the work also gives a nod towards him as Seamus Heaney discusses in his poem *Mid Term Break*

"Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops And candles soothed the bedside;" [5]

in reference to the moment he saw his younger brothers' body after he had passed. As well as the closing sequence, *Parting Glass* [6], a traditional Irish wake song. That was performed in honour of Seamus Heaney when he passed away in 2013.

BLACKBIRDS,

Poetry pumps through the blood of academics and lovers alike.

Seamus Heaney manifested the Bird. The Wicklows figure of death. Seamus's own poetry is littered with references of the creatures.

Mid-term Break

"I never liked Yon bird" [5]

The Blackbird of Glanmore

"on the grass when I arrive In the ivy when I leave" [7]

Much the same as any child of Ireland he was plagued with the folklore tales of Ravens, wrens, crows, magpies, blackbirds, travelling from our world to the other side. Their pilgrimage between life and death is swift and repetitive for them.

CROWS,

& RAVENS



THE BLACKBIRD



The great blackbird is all knowing. The wise woman of the village, the banshee who gives warning when it is time to depart from this world. Washing away sins and watching over the wake. She acts as a Chevron (Dante's Inferno [8]) for Ida and the boy.

It could not be done without her,

she does not speak, she has no words that can help.

Her presence manifested an age-old personification.
Our plague year presented the blackbirds visual representation as a plague doctor.
Such doctors would know death, loss and suffering more than most.

They know when it is time for you to leave this world.

She is the wise woman of the village, the hag that would cure the sick and eat the sins of the recently deceased. In historical accounts these women would be viewed as the village witch. She would know the villages secrets and aid those who would ask it of her. There is something ominous about her however. As temptingly ethereal she may be, there is a sense of fear around her. She is both a guide in death as much as a bringer of it.

She is both Banshee and Witch, Moon and Sun, Mother and Killer, Life and Death. The characters around her both fear her and long for her approval (seemingly without knowing it)

OF WICKLOW

IDA

The meaning of the name is 'thirst for knowledge'.

Ida embodies humanity's unknown misfortune, their drive and fear for the discovery of who we are once we are dead.

She stumbles through, trying to remember who she is, what made her human and where to take this knowledge now.

She is the lover that has forgotten.

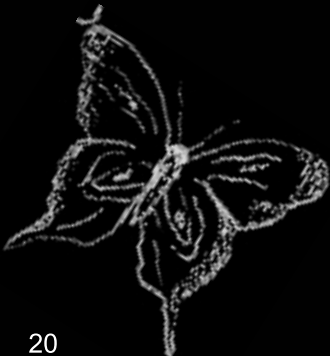
There is something both heart-breaking and forgiving about Ida. It is not her fault that time has drawn her to forget. However, she represents all the lost loves, the could have been, the moving on, until she remembers.

She acts as a personification of human innocence through her naive nature.

Although this may not be truth, many associate questioning as childlike and naive, those who think this may be wrong, or they may be right. There is no way of knowing.

Through her questioning she remembers what it means to love, all that it feels and all that it is. She is the metaphor of human existentialism, the questioning of 'The Meaning Of Life'.

Only through death do we really discover such things.







The boys name is not uttered until the very end of the play. This is all he craves, for his lover to remember who he is as he cannot recall it himself. He signifies the fear of being forgotten when we pass away



“ They say you die twice. One time when you stop breathing, and a second time, a bit later on, when somebody says your name for the last time.” Bansky [9]



He represents every forgotten and unmarked graves, coated with moss so much so that the name can no longer be read.

The name Christopher pays homage to Seamus Heaney’s young brother, who passed away while they were both children.

He represents the lost souls that had so much living ahead of them. He is life that should have been lived, and memories of the past that act as time capsules. Trapped beneath the earth.

CHRISTOPHER

The Ghosts of

“If we wish to speak of the world today we cannot do so directly, but must pass through the interval of another text, through a close reading of another philosopher, rather than to make claims directly about the world.” [10]

We must talk about the hauntings.

The ghostly figures of the piece.

Artists that occupy the empty chairs in the church of the poet.



The importance of the Wicklow Mountains, located below Dublin, is that it is a site for the discovery of many shallow graves. ‘In A Week’ by Hozier [11] (song number 1) describes the rotting of two young lovers who will be found in the Wicklow mountains ‘in a week, when the weather gets hot’. Such is the story of Ida and Christopher, showing how they arrived where they are now.



The Wicklow



IRELAND

The significance of Ireland is their acceptance of death within their traditions. The Irish wake (a traditional style of funeral) is what *Play of the Wicklow* is at its core. The two characters are trying to grow through their process of loss for one another. Christopher sits with her, drinks, lights candles, prays to her. To prepare her to descend into death. All such things are done at a traditional Irish wake. The body is never left alone, surrounded by candles, family and friends with drinks and pray to memory of their loved ones.

The play is also laced with references to poetry and literature. As working with words and poetry is a way, I find useful to bring theatrics to life. The work of Irish poet Seamus Heaney was the catalyst for the initial concept of *Play of the Wicklow*. Heaney works with nature in a similar manner to myself. Embracing the beauty as well as the vulgar that it can hold. Within Irish culture birds are seen as creatures that can pass between the boundaries of life and death. Such as Heaney writes of his younger brothers passing in 'The Blackbird of Glanmore' [7].

The first draft of the script was entirely verbatim text from Heaney's poetry. However, as time passed, the play became something different. An outlook to explore humanity's relationship with death. To play tribute to the ghost of Heaney Christopher is named after his younger brother, as well as the outro being the Irish funeral song 'Parting Glass' [6]. One that was played to commemorate the passing of Seamus Heaney himself in 2013.

The parting glass signifies all that *The Wake* is. A last hurrah before you must leave the life you once knew, whether it be to grow into a new life, or to pass on for good.

Love & Loss

Play of the Wicklow began as a compilation of poems. Eventually morphing into the storyline of two lovers accepting their fate of losing connection with one another. There are many layers to the story, however one of the overarching themes is the story of grief of a life not fully lived together. A similar story occurs in “A Haunted House” By Virginia Woolf. [12]

“a story Virginia Woolf published in 1921 called “A Haunted House,” which features a pair of ghosts sliding from room to room of a house where they had lived centuries ago. The ghosts seem happy but their transit through the house is disturbing, not least of all in its pronouns. The narrative voice shifts from “we” to “one” to “you” to “they” to “I,” as if no one in the story can keep a stable skin on (...)” [13]

Much the same as in this piece of literature, the segment of *If We Were Older* is a version of a life that can no longer be lived with the other. It captures the grief of the mundane, a life not lived. The loss of love.





Cinematic

Since the pandemic affected the way that Play of the Wicklow could be presented to an audience, I have adapted both script and aesthetics to fit within a cinematic perspective. To begin with there was a struggle with adaptation into an online space. However, after consideration I began to see the cinematic filter as an opportunity to bring a new life to The Wake.

You are taken on a cinematic journey, flicking from life to death. The filter was to have the audience watch the world go by. From mundane shots of everyday objects to scenery and beautiful nature. Many of the shots are with the camera facing towards the sky. This was to mimic the view that the audience are rotting alongside Ida and Christopher. I made note to incorporate

Dutch angles into the work (Where the camera is tilted slightly, creating an otherworldly experience) to accomplish this. You are becoming one with the earth. The black screens are added to incorporate the fading and joining reality. From the moss and foliage that begins to cover your skin. Eventually the blackbird arrives, allowing you to pass on in peace.

Adaptations

David Lynch, folded inwards with a cigarette between his lips. Watching the blackbird silence with intent, admiring the ambiguous half animal, half human creatures much like his own.

Hozier,
singing along to his melody of shallow graves and love affairs.

Beckett, shivering from the cold, unsure of where he is but never asking the question. Nodding along to the notion of existentialism philosophy, allowing the questions to be asked and never answered.

Savannah Brown, Contemplating
the existence of humanity.

Heaney, reading into his unspoken words,
knowing exactly what's going to happen next.
Knowing the boy to be his brother, son and
others lost along the journey of life. He did of
course, write the first performance draft.

And you my dear reader. The ghostly voyeur to it all.
The lost souls, the forgotten lovers, the tragically departed.
There is an empty seat for each ghostly figure,
should they hope to stay a while.

A last hurrah before you must leave the life you once knew,
whether it be to grow into a new life, or to pass on for good.

Bibliography / Further reading

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