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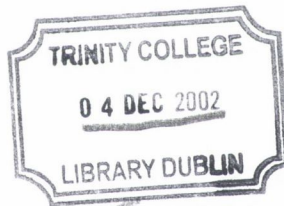
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'THE GRAMMAR OF GREATNESS':  
SELF, COMMUNITY, AND INSPIRATION  
IN OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

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Ph. D. Thesis

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September 2002



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## SUMMARY

The first chapter of this thesis is introductory, and proposes a reading of Oliver Gogarty as a self-depicting writer, one who usually employs the form of memoir. It argues that Gogarty does not demonstrate the confessionality and self-assessment usually associated with autobiography. The chapter reads Gogarty's self-depictions as attempting to communicate the subjective experiences of nobility, transcendence, and connection with timeless human values, that he derived from interaction with his most distinguished and colourful friends.

The second chapter assesses Gogarty's poetry in light of his self-representations therein. It notes that he associates the qualities of transcendence and ennoblement with poetry that he finds in his friendships. The chapter observes that Gogarty rarely represents himself factually in his poetry, and that his representations of his life in his verse are primarily records of moments of spiritual transcendence.

The third chapter studies *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street*, and argues that Gogarty's self-representation therein is that of a guide revealing Dublin 'as it is every day.' The chapter notes that this communal depiction is, in fact, really a depiction of the most accomplished figures in Ireland at the time, and that Gogarty represents his interaction with them as leading him backwards in time towards a spiritual 'Golden Age.'

The fourth chapter reads *I Follow Saint Patrick* as one of Gogarty's most unusual self-depictions: it suggests that he here places himself into a textual relation with his exemplary figure (Patrick) in a manner that inverts his similar presentation of inspiration in *Sackville Street*. In *I Follow* Gogarty proposes another temporal regression of the spirit towards the timeless qualities of dignity and reverie he believes Patrick still represents for the Irish. The chapter notes that this is as much a political as a cultural regression, for it is a spurning of de Valera's era, and policies.

The fifth chapter reads *Tumbling in the Hay* as a variation upon the Bildungsroman. In *Tumbling*, Gogarty presents a juxtapositional portrait of the society of Trinity College in his youth, and argues that community and social interaction are those experiences that both form the mind, and uplift one from the cares and boredoms of the everyday. He illustrates this by contrasting the dons and the students.

The sixth chapter examines Gogarty's second clearly fictionalized memoir, *Going Native*. *Going Native* is Gogarty's first self-depiction set almost entirely outside of Ireland, and the chapter observes the shifting importance of community as the Gogarty-figure attempts to attain the spiritual transcendence he seeks, whilst simultaneously repressing his spiritual exuberance in imitation of the English. It notes also that here his self-depiction is demonstrably incorrect as a representation of his life, and suggests that this novelization of his memories and experiences conflicts with the work's more serious attempt to provide social commentary contrasting English and Irish societies.

The seventh chapter addresses Gogarty's life and work in the United States. It notes that Gogarty's work alters in America to accommodate the demands of periodical publications for which he wrote, which resulted in his writing short essays and memoirs about his friends from Ireland. The chapter notes that Gogarty's self-depictions in the United States portray a man incapable of forming the personal and social associations that he praises most highly in his Dublin writings. The chapter argues that Gogarty's continued reliance upon his memories of the Ireland of 1900-1939 is not, however, mere creative exhaustion, but is the inescapable result of his continued attempt to portray those friendships and associations by which he derived the greatest sense of ennoblement and spiritual transcendence. The people who provided him with these sensations were almost exclusively his companions in Ireland, between the years of 1900-1939.

The eighth chapter notes that Gogarty positioned himself in American literary circles as one who had intimate biographical experience of the great Irish authors. The chapter asserts that Gogarty's late writings on Joyce associate his objections to Modernism with his bitter memories of Joyce, and that his late essays on Joyce thus support attacks on Modernism with the evidence of personal memory. This was problematic for Gogarty, for he had, throughout his self-depictions, argued that memory and friendship inspire one to transcend the facts of the everyday. His critics attacked him for being careless of fact. The chapter argues that his Joyce essays are consistent with his treatment of memory, fact, and spiritual reaction to another, and that they cannot be held to be mendacious when seen in the light of his previous self-depictions.

The ninth chapter is a conclusion.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

OSJG	Oliver St. John Gogarty
IITTOYAA	<i>It Isn't This Time of Year At All!</i>
I Follow	<i>I Follow Saint Patrick</i>
Many Lines	<i>Many Lines To Thee</i>
Poems & Plays	<i>Oliver St. John Gogarty: The Poems &amp; Plays</i>
Rolling	<i>Rolling Down the Lea</i>
Sackville Street	<i>As I was Going Down Sackville Street</i>
Somewhere Else	<i>Start From Somewhere Else</i>
Spendlove	<i>Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove</i>
Talents	<i>Oliver St. John Gogarty: The Man of Many Talents</i>
Tumbling	<i>Tumbling in the Hay</i>
Week End	<i>A Week End in the Middle of the Week</i>

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Oliver St. John Gogarty died on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1957 in New York City. At the time of his death he was far removed from the people, places, and era that defined him, and of which he was one of the last survivors—the Anglo-Irish artistic milieu of the early twentieth century. Gogarty was omnipresent during the Irish cultural efflorescence of the century's first forty years. He had known, and had at times counted among his close friends, some of the greatest artistic and political figures of the epoch. W. R. Rodgers noted of Gogarty that he was 'the epitome of his time and place, the Ireland of Yeats, Joyce, and Synge...his tongue was the sharpest, his wit the readiest, his friends, and enemies, the most illustrious.'<sup>1</sup> The most distinguished of his friends constitute a virtually incomparable gallery of contemporary eminence: Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Augustus John, James Joyce, John Pentland Mahaffy, George Moore, Sean O'Casey, William Orpen, George Russell (Æ), James Stephens, and William Butler Yeats, to note only the most prominent. All of these men save O'Casey preceded Gogarty in death; none died so far from his home country as did Gogarty.

In the years since his death, Gogarty has occupied a precarious position in the general scholarly estimation of Anglo-Irish literary achievement. His personal associations with many of the greatest writers of the period tie him inextricably to their works, and he has thereby attained a certain prominence in the field; yet in an era of literary colossi, Gogarty himself wrote nothing of indubitable canonicity. He is generally better known for his appearances in the works of others than he is for his own artistic accomplishments. It seems likely that his identification with Buck

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<sup>1</sup> W. R. Rodgers. *Irish Literary Portraits*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation. 1972. [p. 142]

Mulligan in Joyce's *Ulysses* will permanently assure Gogarty an unsought literary posterity. Of Gogarty's own writings, however, it is difficult to discern what, if anything, will endure.

The majority of Gogarty's works have fallen out of print. The predominant view of his *As I was Going Down Sackville Street* as an engaging memoir of an important era may guarantee it a continuing public, but reissuance appears improbable for much of the rest of his prose oeuvre. Gogarty's hackwork historical novels of the 1940's, *Mad Grandeur* and *Mr. Petunia*, and his rather limp collections of late essays, such as *Start From Somewhere Else* and *A Weekend in the Middle of the Week*, cannot reasonably be held to merit republication, except perhaps as curiosities for enthusiasts. Similarly, his dramas are unlikely to inspire theatrical remounting. Two of his three Abbey-produced plays (*A Serious Thing*, *The Enchanted Trousers*) are little more than diverting political allegories, interesting more for their reflection of the Abbey Theatre's political engagement than as dramas themselves. Gogarty's first play (*Blight: The Tragedy of Dublin*) inspires mild scholarly interest mainly through its presumed influence on the young Sean O'Casey, who is believed to have seen, remembered, and re-employed in his own great dramatic trilogy, *Blight's* evocation of Dublin's slums. Yet even with the O'Casey connection to *Blight*, all three of Gogarty's plays were virtually unavailable after their initial productions in 1917-19. Their texts were originally published as theatre-goers editions, and these quickly became collector's rarities. Subsequently, the determined Gogarty scholar Professor James Carens of Bucknell University republished all three of Gogarty's mounted

plays in a Proscenium Press collection of 1971,<sup>2</sup> but his edition's limitation to only 500 copies rendered this volume almost as unobtainable as the originals themselves.<sup>3</sup>

It is probable that Gogarty's artistic reputation will rest primarily on his poetry. Several of his better poems remain occasionally anthologised, most notably 'Non Dolet,' 'Golden Stockings,' 'Leda and the Swan,' and 'Ringsend.' Because of their accessibility, their assured artistry, their graceful employment of conservative metrics, and their movingly traditional notions of poetic address in an age of confrontational Modernism, the poems bid likely to constitute Gogarty's best-remembered contribution to Irish letters. It should be noted, however, that Professor A. N. Jeffares has recently rescued many of Gogarty's best poetic compositions—his bawdry—from obscurity. Although these will certainly be studied for their connections to other writers (particularly the two which Joyce purloined for *Ulysses*, 'The Song of the Cheerful {but slightly sarcastic} Jaysus' and 'Song' {Medical Dick and Medical Davy}), they retain, as a group, a transgressive appeal and a poetic agility that keep their attractions fresh. It may prove Gogarty's ironic artistic fate to be remembered by the facetiae that thrilled Dublin, but that Gogarty himself sought to have published only anonymously, if at all.<sup>4</sup>

This introduction is divided into six subsequent sections. The first section summarises the current state of Gogarty scholarship. The second segment offers a general summary of the primary discoveries and arguments of this thesis. The third section offers a brief survey of Gogarty's philosophy and aesthetics, where they are applicable to this thesis. The fourth section assesses the distinction between

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<sup>2</sup> James Carens, [Ed.]. *The Plays of Oliver St John Gogarty*. Newark: Proscenium Press. 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, only with the 2001 publication of Prof. A. N. Jeffares' volume (A. N. Jeffares, [Ed.]. *The Poems and Plays of Oliver St. John Gogarty*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe. 2001.) have Gogarty's plays been easily available.

<sup>4</sup> Gogarty never published his own bawdry. In the early 1950's his long-time American friend Horace Reynolds considered gathering and publishing Gogarty's bawdry himself: Reynolds and Gogarty happily exchanged correspondence including such verse for a time, but the collection never appeared.

autobiography and memoir as genres, and suggests that Gogarty is generally better considered a memoirist than an autobiographer. The fifth segment positions Gogarty amongst the other writers of memoirs and autobiographies of his time, and notes his most prominent appearances in such works by other people. Finally, the sixth section offers an extremely brief summary of the chapter.

### I. GOGARTY SCHOLARSHIP

It is strange that, despite both Gogarty's social prominence and the accolades that his work achieved in his lifetime—Yeats famously called him 'one of the great lyric poets of our age'<sup>5</sup>—Gogarty has attracted remarkably little scholarship. This paucity has meant that Gogarty has had few direct explicators, and that the prevailing depictions of Gogarty tend, in fact, to come from those scholars whose work is upon other writers. Gogarty is thus in the unusual position of being well known in the field of his achievement, without being well known for his accomplishments. What mention in criticism there is about Gogarty tends unfortunately towards the adversarial or the incompletely informed. For this reason, Gogarty's reputation amongst critics is even lower than it should reasonably be. Even the best scholars of Anglo-Irish culture and literature, however, often take scant notice of Gogarty, or omit mention of him altogether. We note that, as but one example, Gogarty's only appearance in Professor Declan Kiberd's extensive survey *Inventing Ireland* is in a

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<sup>5</sup> W. B. Yeats. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1936. [p. xv]

passing reference to Gogarty as the author of works which ‘so raucously celebrate’<sup>6</sup> the whorehouses of Nighttown. Prof. Kiberd’s remark is an indisputably accurate, but unfortunately limited, description of Gogarty’s literary themes.

A common view of Gogarty, although it is not one associated with any individual critic, is that Gogarty was, if anything, a classicist. This is a correct, but not a wholly satisfactory, identification. The failing of a classicist reading of Gogarty is that it implies a unity of theme or intention that misrepresents the diversity of Gogarty’s work. He was not an active participant of a movement, he proposed no specific aesthetics, and he produced a remarkably varied body of work. Of course, Gogarty did indeed have many classical interests: he knew Greek and Latin, and could recall poetry in both with ease; he had a temperamental and philosophical affinity for Greek and Roman ideals; his references were often classical; and he wrote in Greek and Latin metrics more commonly than did many of his peers. The prominence of classical elements in Gogarty’s work is highly pronounced, and many scholars have noticed these classical interests, whether favourably<sup>7</sup> or with disappointment.<sup>8</sup>

Yet it is difficult to assert Gogarty’s classicism without missing more than one includes. Of foremost concern is the fact that it is almost entirely impossible to find any significant classicism—of form or content—in any of Gogarty’s non-poetical works. Secondly, within the poetry, the frequency of classical influences should not obscure the fact that Gogarty loved to use styles and metrics from poets he loved, and he borrowed widely—from Scots poets, Elizabethans, Swinburne, Yeats, and Rabelais, as well as from the ancient examples. Third, although Gogarty was certainly

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<sup>6</sup> Declan Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*. London: Jonathan Cape. 1995. [p. 264]

<sup>7</sup> ‘Gogarty himself wrote several finely chiselled poems and epigrams on classical themes and often in classical metres...’ W. B. Stanford. *Ireland and the Classical Tradition*. Dublin: Allen Figgis & Co. 1976. [p. 93].

<sup>8</sup> ‘[Gogarty leaned] too heavily on ready-made symbols and facile literary or mythological allusions...Gogarty traded in Greek and Roman cliché.’ Vivian Mercier. ‘Oliver St. John Gogarty’ in *Poetry*. October 1958. [p. 35]



known for his interests in classical culture, he was by no means unique. There was a tremendous artistic interest in classical culture in Gogarty's immediate period: Wilde knew the classics well, Yeats frequently used classical references in his poetry, Moore set the story of *Aphrodite in Aulis* in the age of Pericles, Synge translated Petrarch, and Joyce was saturated in Latin (although apparently primarily ecclesiastical Latin), and famously employed the Homeric model of the *Odyssey*. Finally, however, and perhaps most important, Gogarty's general affinity for classical culture and conduct bears equally the stamps of his TCD tutors John Pentland Mahaffy and Robert Yelverton Tyrrell as it does of Socrates or Caesar. For Gogarty, the influence of Mahaffy and Tyrrell is essentially incalculable, for they gave him a lifelong conception of the 'classical' individual being an educated, witty, gentlemanly Trinity don at the end of the nineteenth century. As such, Gogarty's classicism is often as much an evocation of Victorian academic urbanity as it is of antiquity. Thus whilst it would be entirely wrong to discount the classical interests Gogarty had, it is also unacceptable to remark them alone of his themes, or to suggest a greater unifying influence in his work than they in fact exert.

In assessing the totality of Gogarty's writings, it is unfortunate that, for many critics, Gogarty's personal renown obscures everything that he wrote. Part of the reason for this heavily biographical focus to Gogarty studies stems from Gogarty's personal friendships with so many greater talents than his own. This thesis will repeatedly observe Gogarty's intense desire to surround himself with the most accomplished people he could encounter; yet these same friendships have tended to throw their shadows upon him where, even at his best, Gogarty the writer cannot bear extended comparison with the genius of, for example, Yeats or Joyce. Gogarty has thus been deprived of his deserved recognition as a poet and memoirist of significant

skill by associative comparison with authors whom he knew, but with whose definitively accomplished works of genius Gogarty's own writings bear little necessary comparison. From this viewpoint, it is tempting to suggest that Gogarty was, strangely, uniquely unfortunate in having so many distinguished friends, for their fame has eclipsed his own by exposing him to a gratuitously high standard of accomplishment. His own literary achievements appear much stronger when viewed in contrast with those of his friends Seumas O'Sullivan, Witter Bynner, or even Æ, than when compared with Yeats, Moore, or Joyce.

Of course, Gogarty's reputation is also uniquely intertwined with Joyce's employment of him as a model for Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*. The incomparable impact of *Ulysses*, combined with Mulligan's unmistakable resemblance to Gogarty, have permanently altered the terms in which Gogarty is himself studied. His undesired prominence in Joyce's book, particularly as reflected in the tensions between Daedalus's aloof intellect and Mulligan's boisterous frivolity, has often positioned Gogarty the man as having been somehow opposed to Joyce in an endless binary antagonism. Gogarty scholars have justifiably lamented the potent influence of Joyce's work on Gogarty's reputation, yet as *Ulysses* is essentially definitional of the Modernist novel, it is an ineluctable and permanent work of Anglo-Irish and Anglophonic literature. This stature has meant that *Ulysses'* depiction of Gogarty's relations with Joyce, whilst disputable, nonetheless defines Gogarty's reputation more than does his own work. At its extremities, this tendency has led to real critical mischief, as evidenced by no less distinguished a literary theorist than Professor

Helene Cixous absurdly denominating Gogarty ‘the most unsympathetic, most unattractive and least likeable citizen of Dublin.’<sup>9</sup>

A telling illustration of Gogarty’s appearances in more moderate criticism comes from Professor Hugh Kenner’s examination of the Irish literary movement, *A Colder Eye*. Prof. Kenner is a skilled scholar, and it is for this reason that he is valuably illustrative of the tendency for even accomplished academics to treat Gogarty with unaccustomed laxity and partiality. Prof. Kenner is complimentary of Gogarty’s ‘lyric gift’ and offers praise for Gogarty’s surgical ability to extract Yeats’s tonsils (‘no joke with a fifty-five-year-old for a patient’). Yet his general remarks are revealing for their inequitable treatment of Gogarty, in which even basic biographical description is phrased so as to make Gogarty look foolish or inconsequent:

Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty (1878-1957) will be remembered as long as *Ulysses* is read, with always a footnote somewhere to explain that “Buck Mulligan,” stately and plump, derives from him.

Who cares about A. E. C. Hodister today? Yet he was Conrad’s Kurtz. The originals of characters in novels tend to be unnoticed, or when noticed forgotten. But not in Dublin, where gossip was quick to put it round that a big dirty book had Dr. G. in it. The victim roared his protest: “That bloody Joyce whom I kept in my youth has written a book you can read on all the lavatory walls of Dublin.” Not the least of his afflictions was a gilded turd of a name. If “Buck” is an eighteenth-century honorific, “Mulligan” is slum-grubby: a low name indeed, Mulligan, a class of stew. To call your man “Buck Mulligan” is to liken him to a tramp who affects calling cards.

“That bloody Joyce” is the splutter of an Irishman angry enough to sue. Bringing suit is the national catharsis; later Gogarty crucified naïve Paddy Kavanagh in the courts over a single ill-gauged jest in Paddy’s memoir *The Green Fool*, having been himself brought to book by a man he libelled in a “memoir” of his own, an action memorable for the words his counsel applied to a twenty-two-year-old witness then domiciled in France, “the bawd and blasphemer from Paris”: that was Sam Beckett.

But Gogarty could not sue Joyce because Joyce was not in Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Helene Cixous, [Trans. Sally A. J. Purcell]. *The Exile of James Joyce*. London: John Calder. 1976. [p. 112]

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Kenner. *A Colder Eye*. London: Allen Lane. 1983. [pp. 187-188]

Prof. Kenner's Gogarty is a vindictive blusterer: given immortality by the book that demolished him, he splutters through life, 'the victim' impotent to sue his vanquisher, yet forever burdened by his inescapable identification with a 'slum-grubby' 'golden turd' of a name, one that suggests a 'tramp who affects calling cards.' When not spluttering or roaring, Gogarty crucifies 'Paddy' and humiliates 'Sam.' A suggestive torrent of allegations notes that Gogarty was 'angry enough to sue,' that it was in his national character to do so, that he later 'crucified naïve Paddy,' but was unable to sue Joyce 'because Joyce was not in Ireland'; yet Prof. Kenner advances not one piece of evidence that Gogarty ever, in fact, *tried* to sue Joyce. It is disappointing, but revealing, that even a scholar of Prof. Kenner's undoubted acuity should choose to assess Gogarty with unnecessary condescension.

A similar difficulty arises from Richard Ellmann's depictions of Gogarty. Although Ellmann's exemplary biography of James Joyce is rightly hailed for its comprehensive and sympathetic explication of the often perplexing Joyce, Ellmann's depiction therein of Gogarty too often fails to distinguish between the man who was Oliver Gogarty, and the rather different image of Oliver Gogarty that Joyce nursed for a lifetime. Ellmann properly elucidates Joyce's antagonistic view of Gogarty as a frivolous, self-indulgent man, for this scabrous image of his erstwhile friend sustained Joyce through many years of penury and discouragement, and helped him to persevere with the difficult composition of *Ulysses*. Most critics agree with Ellmann that it was important to Joyce to believe that Gogarty was a distracting, untrustworthy influence that he (Joyce) had escaped. As Ellmann notes, 'Gogarty could not guess how thoroughly committed Joyce was to keeping on bad terms with him.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Ellmann. *James Joyce*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1983. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. [p. 207]

Too often, however, Ellmann fails to dissociate his narrative from Joyce's perception. Notable in this context is Ellmann's description of Gogarty's invitations to Joyce to visit him (Gogarty) in Oxford: 'Joyce would have liked to see Oxford, and perhaps did not mind the prospect of being exhibited there by ringmaster Gogarty as a rare specimen of undomesticated Hibernian man.'<sup>12</sup> Joyce possibly did suspect that Gogarty's repeated invitations to visit Oxford implied that he was to be 'exhibited there by ringmaster Gogarty,' yet there is nothing in Gogarty's letters to Joyce that suggests that Gogarty invited Joyce for any other reason than personal friendship.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, of course, as Joyce was one of Gogarty's most intellectually formidable friends, the idea of presenting him as an 'undomesticated Hibernian man' is not more plausible than that Gogarty relished the idea of stunning English prejudices by bringing a fantastically brilliant Irishman to Oxford. Such an 'exhibition' of an 'unreconstructed Hibernian,' were it that, becomes a compliment, not an insult.

It is possible, of course, that Ellmann came himself to believe that Joyce's view of Gogarty was correct, and that the Gogarty that emerges in *James Joyce* is what Ellmann believed to be accurate. Yet if this is the case, it is difficult to know whether Ellmann's demonstrable inaccuracies are either honest errors, or intentional misrepresentations. We note, as just one instance, that in his pamphlet *James Joyce's Tower, Sandycove*, Ellmann notes that Joyce left the Tower after the night of 14/15 September, 1904, and that a consequence of this departure was his 16 September letter to Nora Barnacle, which resulted in their travelling abroad together. After recording this, Ellmann notes:

As for Gogarty, he was both pleased and uneasy at Joyce's sudden removal. He put as good a face on it as he could, and in writing to Bell he blamed the quarrel on

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<sup>12</sup> Ellmann. *James Joyce*. [p. 153]

<sup>13</sup> The relevant letters from Gogarty to Joyce are preserved in the Cornell University Joyce archive. Joyce's corresponding letters to Gogarty appear to have been destroyed when the IRA burned Gogarty's home.

Joyce's 'The Holy Office': 'I have broken with Joyce, his want of generosity became to me inexcusable, he lampooned Æ, Yeats, Colum and others to whom he was indebted in many ways. A desert was revealed which I did not think existed in the seeming luxuriance of his soul, so.' He did not admit to having been targeted himself, but the unaccustomed sententiousness sounds shaky.<sup>14</sup>

Gogarty certainly wrote this letter; what is insupportable is Ellmann's direct assertion that Gogarty wrote this in any connection with Joyce's 'sudden removal' from the Tower. In fact, the sole reason why Gogarty 'blamed the quarrel on Joyce's "The Holy Office"' is that the letter Ellmann cites was written on August 27.<sup>15</sup> Gogarty here makes no mention of the Tower uproar precisely because it had yet to happen. Thus this letter, far from revealing that Gogarty tried to 'put as good a face' on their break as he could by blaming it on 'The Holy Office,' in fact reveals that Gogarty's friendly gesture in allowing Joyce to live in the Tower was made *after* he thought he had broken with Joyce. Ellmann, however, presents this letter as having been a response in subsequence to the events in the Tower, thus completely misrepresenting both Gogarty's actions and the evidence he (Ellmann) presents. It is this type of atypically flaccid scholarship that undermines the credibility of Ellmann's depictions of Gogarty, for not only does he misuse the evidence he possesses, but this misapplication also often undercuts evidence in Gogarty's favour.

There are several critics of significance who have striven to understand Gogarty's work on its own merits, and who have argued on his behalf. Gogarty is, for example, favourably noticed in Vivian Mercer's important study of *The Irish Comic Tradition*, and Gogarty was the exclusive subject of Prof. Jeffares' British Academy lecture of 1960.<sup>16</sup> Both assessments are closer to prolegomena than full explication,

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Ellmann. *James Joyce's Tower, Sandycove*. Dublin: Eastern Regional Tourism Organisation. 1969. [pp. 20-21]

<sup>15</sup> See: OStJG, [James Carens, Ed.]. *Many Lines to Thee*. Dublin: Dolmen Press. 1971. [p. 33]

<sup>16</sup> This lecture, although published separately by the British Academy, is most easily located as 'Oliver St. John Gogarty: Irishman' in Prof. Jeffares' 1970 collection, *The Circus Animals*. See: A. N. Jeffares. *The Circus Animals*. London: Macmillan. 1970.

and they therefore do not propose comprehensive interpretations of Gogarty's oeuvre. In his lecture, however, Prof. Jeffares called for serious scholarly inquiry into Gogarty's work. Academia has largely ignored this challenge: since 1960 Gogarty has been the primary subject of only two significant studies for advanced degrees. The first of these was David J. Huxley's unpublished 1969 M.A. thesis for the University of Sheffield, entitled 'A Study of the Works of Oliver St. John Gogarty.' Huxley's is a skilful initial work of academic advocacy and reclamation, yet it suffers by its primacy, and is now almost wholly superseded by later published scholarship. Mary J. Regan wrote the second of the advanced theses on Gogarty, which she submitted for New York University's Ph.D. in 1974. Her also unpublished work, entitled 'The Poetry of Oliver St. John Gogarty: A Study of the Irish and Classical Elements,' reveals diligence of thought and dexterity of analysis, and it is therefore particularly unfortunate that it has never been published.

Excluding critical editions of his own work, Gogarty has been the exclusive subject of three<sup>17</sup> book-length scholarly studies: *The Times I've Seen*, a biography by Ulick O'Connor; *The Man of Many Talents*, a biography by Professor J.B. Lyons; and *Surpassing Wit*, a critical survey by Prof. James Carens. All three of these works make important contributions to Gogartian scholarship. O'Connor's was the first and, although his style is closer to the anecdotal than to the strictly academic, no other scholar better conveys the power, ebullience, and the simultaneous predilection for fun and sublimity, of Gogarty's personality. Prof. Lyons lacks O'Connor's impelling fascination with Gogartian incident, but he compensates for this by the sheer profundity of his research and his exactitude of detail. Whereas O'Connor's biography is brisk, characterful, and discursive, Prof. Lyons' work better locates

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<sup>17</sup> This number disregards a fourth book: Prof. J.B. Lyons contributed an 86-page monograph on Gogarty to the Bucknell University 'Irish Writers Series,' but this volume is entirely superseded by his subsequent biography *The Man of Many Talents*.

Gogarty in a verifiable chronological continuity of events and places. Moreover, Prof. Lyons' own medical knowledge greatly contributes to his elucidation of Gogarty's otorhinolaryngological career. His work remains unsurpassed as the primary source of Gogartian biographical information. Prof. Carens' work is the only fully critical book-length work on Gogarty. Prof. Carens is perhaps uniquely<sup>18</sup> conversant with Gogarty's writings, and he brings a vast knowledge of the Anglophonic literary tradition to bear on his study of Gogarty. His informed insights into Gogarty's knowledge, and employment, of the English literary tradition are unmatched by either O'Connor or Prof. Lyons. Unfortunately, *Surpassing Wit* has no specific thesis. Prof. Carens' individual judgements are informed, prudently conservative, and trenchant, yet their value is diminished by the lack of a coherent argument behind which they are marshalled. Moreover, Prof. Carens has also a tendency to describe Gogarty's works with Northrop Frye's terminology of 'anatomy' and 'confession,' without developing these identifications. This is to be regretted, for Prof. Carens deserves his own convincing discoveries by a less convincing application. As a result, the individual observations in *Surpassing Wit* constitute a far greater general assessment of Gogarty than does the book as a whole.

The two biographies by O'Connor and Prof. Lyons, and the critical work by Prof. Carens, constitute the bulk of the current state of published Gogarty criticism; occasional brief essays scattered over forty years represent the remainder. That Gogarty has been the subject of more biographical than analytical interpretation exemplifies a tendency in Gogartian study with which this thesis is directly concerned. Much of the interest in studying Gogarty lies in the extraordinary

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<sup>18</sup> Beyond editing and publishing both Gogarty's plays (*The Plays of Oliver St. John Gogarty*, 1970) and a series of Gogarty's early letters (*Many Lines to Thee*, 1973), Prof. Carens also initiated and oversaw the purchase of Gogarty's archive by his (Carens') university, Bucknell, in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.



diversity, kinesis, and accomplishment of his life. He was not merely a poet or an author only, but was also a champion bicyclist; an amateur classicist; a skilled ENT surgeon; a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; a supporter and confidant of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins (both of whom he also autopsied); a licensed pilot; an Irish Senator; a Dublin 'wit'; a hotel proprietor; a free-lance lecturer; a conversationalist so skilled that he shone even in the company of W. B. Yeats, George Moore, James Stephens, Æ, and John Pentland Mahaffy<sup>19</sup>; a foundation member of the Irish Academy of Letters; a later Fellow of the American Academy of Poets; and the friend and companion of many of the greatest literary and visual artists of his time. His experiences ranged from whoring with James Joyce in the infamous kips of Nighttown to being granted a Papal audience in the Vatican; he escaped with his life from both a plane crash and an IRA kidnapping; he saved three lives on three separate occasions by leaping twice into the Liffey and once into Dublin Bay to extract drowning men; his country home, Renvyle House, was put to the torch by anti-Treaty agitators; he successfully drank the sponce at Worcester College, Oxford, a feat in which he took inordinate pride; he lived with, or as the neighbour of, James Joyce, Thornley Stoker, and George Moore; he personally treated several of the great figures of his era as his medical patients (most notably W. B. Yeats, whose tonsils he extracted); he wed, and became the father of three children; a later enthusiasm for archery led him to become a skilled bowman; he purchased and flaunted the first privately-owned Rolls-Royce automobile in Ireland; he resided in, at various times, Dublin, Connemara, London, and New York City (and owned Dunguaire Castle in Galway); and he was, of course, a successful author and a prize-

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<sup>19</sup> Although Lady Glenavy records that George Bernard Shaw regarded (what she felt to be) Gogarty's 'good talk' as 'silly Dublin persiflage.' Beatrice Campbell (Lady Glenavy). *Today We Will Only Gossip*. London: Constable. 1964. [p. 128]

winning poet, thrice taking the Trinity College Dublin Vice-Chancellor's poetry prize, and winning the gold prize for verse at the 1924 Tailteann Games. It is in recognition of such diverse and superior achievements that Prof. Carens rightly observes 'Oliver Gogarty crammed a dozen lives into one.'<sup>20</sup>

Because of the multiplicity of Gogarty's interests and accomplishments, and acknowledging the inherent drama of the events of his life, it is unsurprising that much writing on Gogarty has tended toward the anecdotal and biographical. It is a tendency noted by Roger Greene, who concisely limns the general critical position:

Oliver St. John Gogarty is unique amongst Irish literary renaissance figures for many reasons, not least of which is that his own celebrity has tended to obscure his accomplishments in print. His notoriety as a Rabelaisian wit and his associations with the leading literary and political figures of his day are by now well chronicled. By comparison little attention has been given to his writings over the decades since his death in 1957.<sup>21</sup>

It might be asserted that a rigorous critical dissociation of the study of Gogarty's writings and his biography could redress this imbalance. Yet this aspiration is unacceptable. This thesis argues that there is a deeper level of artistic implication that links Gogarty's writings directly with his biography. The prominence of Gogarty's life, friends, and adventures in Gogartian studies is, in fact, largely traceable to Gogarty's writing itself. Moreover, this thesis argues that the predominating element in the totality of Gogarty's writing is, in fact, the first person recording of inspiring encounters, usually in the form of memoir. As we shall see, it is Gogarty himself who repeatedly refocuses his artistic attention upon his life, his friends, and the society and culture of his youth and middle age. Certainly Gogarty's writings vary widely in their

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<sup>20</sup> James Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1979. [p. 1]

<sup>21</sup> Roger Greene, [Intro.]. *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*. Dublin: The O'Brien Press. 1994. [Introduction pages unnumbered.] But Greene's claim for Gogarty's uniqueness as an Irish renaissance figure overshadowed by his own celebrity omits the example of Lady Gregory, whose relations with W. B. Yeats have tended to obscure her own literary achievements. For Gogarty's relations with Lady Gregory, see: J. B. Lyons. 'A Gogarty/Gregory Correspondence, 1910-30' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 49: 1997. [pp. 143-158]

form, scope, and direction; Gogarty wholly lacked the Yeatsian desire to ‘hammer [his] thoughts into unity,’<sup>22</sup> and Gogarty explicitly delights in the diversity of his thoughts and exploits. Yet the indubitable fact is that the significant majority of his published writings are depictions of Gogarty, most commonly with his friends, usually set in the first forty years of the century. This is the period that one might consider Gogarty’s golden age, for he was most active in that period, and repeatedly recreates it in his recollective prose.

## II. THIS THESIS PROPOSES

This thesis argues that the bulk of Gogarty’s complete work is recollective self-depiction. The element of memoir, more than any other, is pervasive. From his earliest through his latest poetry, from the slightly fictionalised ‘phantasy in fact’ memoirs of his first extended prose composition *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, through his thinly-disguised Gogarty surrogate ‘Gideon Ouseley’ in the novels *Tumbling in the Hay* and *Going Native*, to his numerous late essays and recollections of Dublin’s renaissance period, Gogarty used his own life and his acquaintances as his primary subject matter. Indeed, with the exceptions of some of his poetry upon classical themes, most of Gogarty’s literary deviations from the touchstone of his own life were, and remain, creative disappointments.

This thesis therefore undertakes a reading of Gogarty as a writer of self-depiction. It seeks to understand why Gogarty wrote so commonly about himself, or

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<sup>22</sup> W. B. Yeats. *If I Were Four-and-Twenty*. Dublin: Cuala. 1940. [p. 1]

about a clearly associable Gogarty figure, and what he intended to communicate through these self-depictions. It is not precisely interested in noting discrepancies between his biography and his memoirs, but aims more to understand what those discrepancies imply about his artistic presentation of himself. Of course, were Gogarty a straightforward autobiographer or memoirist there would be little to note. Yet despite returning to his experiences repeatedly in his work, Gogarty evinces no significant interest in either self-explication or self-assessment. He cannot in any accurate sense be considered an autobiographer, for his self-depicting writings lack both personal assessment and internal personal development, and omit many interesting events from his life. One of the fascinations of assessing Gogarty as a self-depicting artist, however, arises from observing his changing literary uses of himself, and of his memories. This thesis argues that there is an unsuspected constancy in his literary intention, which is the heart of this work. It is this: *that throughout Gogarty's career, he uses his memoirs and self-depictions to illustrate his spiritual reactions to his companions, particularly where those interactions with friends inspired in him a sense of elevation or ennoblement. Furthermore, this thesis argues, Gogarty attempts, throughout his work, to offer to his readers inspiring glimpses of the accomplished and the compelling people he has known. He does this in the belief that distinguished individuals, and great art, can inspire a wonder in observers that induces in the observers a sensation of dignity, ennoblement, and participation in timeless qualities of the human spirit.*

This thesis notes furthermore that, in the general progression of Gogarty's writings, there is one consequential alteration of his literary approach to self-depiction and memory. This stylistic shift, generally attributable to the different literary demands his relocation to the United States imposed upon him, occurs between his

early books<sup>23</sup> of (what he claims to be) fictionalised memory and his later collections of essays and recollections.<sup>24</sup> In the earlier works, Gogarty is far more interested in recreating the mood and atmosphere of his remembered milieu than in recording its exact historical reality. Indeed, he insists upon blurring the fictional and actual events he describes, playfully embracing the real and unreal elements of his work, whether by employing obvious Gogarty surrogates ('Gideon Ouseley') who interact with Gogarty's real friends, or by titling his first major prose work, 'A Phantasy in Fact.' This tendency towards mixing fiction with memory is, this thesis will argue, consistent with his advocacy of wonder, reverie, and spiritual 'enlargement,' for it places equal value on the subjective and the objective, and upon fancy and fact.<sup>25</sup> He is therefore less interested in describing the precise facts of a person or an event than in the subjective impression that this person or event made upon him. Although in many of his later works he maintains this atmospheric, subjective recreation of his subjects, in several essays on James Joyce, however, Gogarty grows somewhat more insistent upon factualities of time and place, particularly in relation to his own knowledge and participation in the events described. This shift proved detrimental to Gogarty's reputation, for in his later essays on Joyce he fails to match the stridency of his assertions with an increased factual rigour.

Throughout his catalogue of writings, Gogarty displays a profound and continuing reticence to embed himself as the centralised subject in his self-depicting writings, whilst nonetheless employing his own experiences to recreate both the atmosphere and the social interactions of the age in which he lived. This creates for

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<sup>23</sup> *Being As I was Going Down Sackville Street, Tumbling in the Hay, I Follow St. Partick, and Going Native.*

<sup>24</sup> *Being Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove, Rolling Down the Lea, Intimations, It Isn't This Time of Year at All!, Start from Somewhere Else, and A Week End in the Middle of the Week.*

<sup>25</sup> Paul Muldoon has suggested that it is 'a central tenet of the Irish imagination that what you see is never what you get.' Paul Muldoon. *To Ireland, I.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000. [p .6]

Gogarty an unusual paradox: although he is the clearly the primary character in his early semi-autobiographical writings, it is difficult to find even one of these works that may properly be said to be *about* Oliver Gogarty. This thesis proposes that Gogarty's position results from his having attempted an unusual act of literary self-depiction: to use his own experiences to write works of collective social portraiture, in which the authorial figure is not (as in autobiography) also the object of literary scrutiny, but is instead the percipient participant. In other words, instead of engaging in the traditional autobiographical project of expressing an individual subject's development over time, Gogarty's early artistic effort is to construct, from his own experiences, a portrait of Dublin's society at its most inspiring from within.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, we shall see that he claims that to portray oneself by one's companions is as good an indication of self as is a direct self-portrait. Because he adopts this collective method, conversation and polyphony become extremely important elements in his writings. In Gogarty's self-depictions, conversation has two important functions: 1) one reveals one's taste and preferences by the character of those with whom one associates, and the manner in which one interacts with them, and 2) conversation is, for Gogarty, the perfectly mutual interaction, where individual character is revealed, and becomes a shared possession. We shall observe that many of the anecdotes Gogarty records of his experiences of reverie and elevation derive from conversations.

This contention that Gogarty prefers social depiction to self-assessment does not suggest that Gogarty is somehow absent from his works. One of the signal attractions of Gogarty's writings is his amused, self-deprecating, and occasionally

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<sup>26</sup> Gogarty's rejection of self-assessment in favour of recording his encounters with his most distinguished and colourful friends is in accord with the observations about proper self-presentation made by his friend and mentor, John Pentland Mahaffy. Mahaffy denounced confessionality as 'exhibitions of morbid vanity,' yet called 'having seen and conversed with the greatest men of the day [the] feature which lends the principal charm' to autobiography. John Pentland Mahaffy. *The Principles of the Art of Conversation*. Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Company. 1891. [p 136, pp. 28-29]

poignantly reflective, personality. Yet that presence is oddly choral instead of centralised. He does not fully show the developing or deepening engagement of one consciousness with its society of which Sean O'Casey is likely the past master in Anglo-Irish autobiography. Instead, Gogarty's personae are all slight variations on a consistent and recognisable Gogarty personality: witty, erudite, and with an equal taste for absurdity and sublimity, he is social, extremely well connected, and prefers to reveal himself by conversation with friends, instead of by direct self-assessment. Gogarty's works follow this persona about Dublin, Ireland, and England, yet the Gogarty figures form less an object of interest than do the general social and conversational atmospheres in which they find themselves. The concept of autobiography revealing the development or alteration of an individual consciousness over time is almost wholly absent in Gogarty's work, and is replaced by selective portraiture of participant social atmosphere. It is primarily for this reason that this thesis most commonly treats Gogarty's writings from life as memoir, and not as autobiography.

This thesis also observes that, on the whole, Gogarty's prose rarely leaves Ireland or England, and only infrequently departs from the era 1900-1939. In this light, his early works of recollective self-depiction may be seen to be playfully impressionistic and social, whereas his later works may be seen as personal and corrective of the increase in scholarly interest in the period Gogarty depicted. This thesis suggests that his Joyce essays represent a detectable shift from his early social portraiture of a fondly-remembered milieu to, initially, an attempt to position himself as an exponent of Irish literary culture in the United States, and then to an irritated reaction against the excessive and slavish critical attention to Joyce which Gogarty felt was misrepresenting the ennobling example of the era he loved.

The more important element to Gogarty's general literary fixity to the Dublin of 1900-1939 lies, this thesis argues, in his attempts to convey to his readers the inspiration and enthusiasm he derived from the people he knew in the most interesting years of his life. In the company of people as diverse as Yeats and George Redding, Mahaffy and Endymion, Collins and Æ, Stephens and Talbot Clifton, Gogarty felt a companionship and a human exemplarity that lifted him from the everyday. It is this ability to provoke spiritual transcendence in others that Gogarty valued in individuals and sought in art; and this thesis argues that he attempts to draw from his life, and transmit to his readers, the influence of such inspiring people. His attempt has two important corollaries for interpreting Gogarty: 1) it helps to explain the peculiar lack of self-representation depicting his American years for, this thesis will suggest, that personally disappointing period for Gogarty offered few opportunities for the inspiring and transcendent influence that he sought to record in his writings, and 2) it explains Gogarty's notorious inconsistency and imprecision in his memoirs for, the thesis argues, Gogarty filters his stories so as to present their ennobling and enlarging qualities as he felt them subjectively, not to record them with verifiable accuracy.

An essential element of Gogarty's writings is his belief that the past and the present exist in a continuum of example and memory. We shall see that he incorporates this fluidity of time into the formal structure of several of his works. Here is it important to note that, for Gogarty, the concept of an uninterrupted connection between the present and the past is the heart of what he views as spiritual transcendence, and inspiration. What he most seeks in his activities is their provision of a release from the cares of everyday life. This release he tends to associate with a reconnection with timeless elements of the human spirit. This has an important



ramification for Gogarty's treatment of inspiration and example, for he persistently offers depictions of a better past that may reinvigorate and re-ennoble the present.

This thesis further argues that part of the reason Gogarty repeatedly presents the example of the inspirational and the improving is as a corrective to a modernity he detested. This detestation had two general objects. The first object is political: Gogarty's loathing of de Valera, and of the small-mindedness in Irish society that he felt tolerance of de Valera epitomised, became the object of virtual obsession for Gogarty. His frequent regressions into his past are therefore not mere nostalgia on Gogarty's part, but are also attempts to repudiate the world of de Valera's Ireland, and to offer the ameliorative example of (what Gogarty felt to be) better men and more distinguished eras. Gogarty's second object is aesthetic: Gogarty saw in contemporary art a glorification of ugliness and disorder that typified the commonality of the average man, and did not ennoble the audience. That he saw this decadence as a particularly modern condition is apparent in his remarks on a Columbia Broadcasting System radio show in which he participated in New York City:

Gogarty: The dignity of humanity stands out clearly in all Aeschylus' tragedies—the importance of human existence, and the fact that man wasn't a puppet, or become a robot.

Bryson [The Moderator]: Your opinion is that we might better have stuck to those high themes?

Gogarty: Oh no, you can't stick to the high themes today, because of the reign of the little man. The high theme is out; it's looked upon as archaic.<sup>27</sup>

In art and politics Gogarty, as we shall see, viewed the world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as ignobly substituting the average for the exemplary, and uplifting the common by denigrating greatness. This thesis argues that Gogarty saw his writing as the provision of valuable example to readers by depicting those who had provoked in Gogarty a sense of transcendent connection with 'something better than ourselves.'

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<sup>27</sup> George D. Crothers, [Ed.]. *The Invitation to Learning Reader on Popular Classics*. New York: Columbia Broadcasting System. 1953. [p. 48]

There is one further point of importance in Gogarty's adherence to the time and place of Ireland between 1900-1939, which has a significant bearing upon the structure of this work. This thesis argues that Gogarty routinely draws subject matter from the period that represented his closest encounter with the people and events that excited him. In this light his notorious anecdotal repetition becomes understandable. Instead of reading Gogarty's repetitions as mere artistic carelessness, this thesis sees in them his continuing attempt to portray the most compelling and inspiring individuals from his memory. Because the Dublin period of his life held virtually all of the examples of what he wished to express about inspiration and companionship, Gogarty returns to that period, and to those people, frequently. His use of the same stories about the same people is thus not evidence of creative exhaustion, but testifies to their unsurpassable encapsulation of those themes that Gogarty continued to wish to record.

Recognising Gogarty's tendency to re-employ the same figures and subject matter in his writings, this thesis takes a chronological approach to his work. It does this in order to represent most accurately the varying uses to which he puts often similar subject matter in different books.

### *III. GOGARTY'S PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS*

Because much of this thesis deals with Gogarty's employment of concepts such as wonder, example, greatness, and spiritual enlargement, this section looks briefly at his understanding of those aesthetic and philosophical concepts central to

his writings. As Gogarty followed neither specific ideology nor movement, a description of his philosophy and aesthetics must, of necessity, be somewhat provisional; this segment attempts only to delimit the most recurrent elements of Gogarty's artistic thought, as applicable here. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but instead to offer an introduction to ideas that Gogarty uses frequently, but which are often vague in his work.

Gogarty had no philosophy as such. His occasional references to Berkeley and Hegel suggest little engagement beyond interested study, and it appears that their ideas appealed to his fancy without wholly converting him. Nor was he particularly receptive to individual philosophies: in general he much preferred intellectual and spiritual diversity to enforced unity of spirit, and he detested the single-minded purpose that he felt blighted Joyce's existence.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, Gogarty's lifelong love of Whitman seems to have been rooted partially in Whitman's advocacy of contradiction, and in Whitman's assertion of the possibility of contradiction with integrity. For Gogarty, what was not diverse and diffuse was dull. Gogarty did have, however, a few important coherences in his philosophical and aesthetic views that significantly influenced his writings. Throughout his literary career Gogarty was remarkably consistent about his notions of artistic and personal probity. As will quickly become evident, Gogarty's lack of programmatic approach does not diminish the emergence of a definitely Gogartian association of philosophy and aesthetics.

The most important of Gogarty's artistic and philosophical beliefs is his conviction that there are distinctions among human beings, and that there exist individuals more distinguished, colourful, or accomplished than others. He possessed

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<sup>28</sup> 'Joyce was an unloveable and lonely man; but he willed his life. He was an artist deliberately and naturally, and for this he sacrificed everything, even his humanity.' OSTJG. *Intimations*. London: Sphere. 1985. [p.45]

and advocated a sincere Carlylean<sup>29</sup> or Emersonian notion of greatness. Gogarty was determined in praising the great:

I think it is high time that we turned to praise of famous men. For Humanity was never in greater need of magnanimous ideas and noble examples. Men who spread civilization or saved it; men who array Truth in the noblest forms of human speech; men who magnify men's souls until they transcend the bounds of Time—these are the bastions of Man's spirit and the exponents of his worth.

So much the rather let us praise famous men. Let us praise them if for no other but the selfish reason that the act of praise exalts the praiser above pettiness and soul-scald, and draws him closer to the object of his laudation.<sup>30</sup>

Here Gogarty's reader immediately notes that the accomplished serve as an edifying example to everyone else. In Gogarty's presentation these examples assume two forms—they are either revealing anecdotes in which the unexpected, inherent greatness of an individual shone out, or they can be more general instances in which one person inspires another to experience a manner of transcendent broadening of perception ('magnify men's souls until they transcend the bounds of time'). Revealingly, the general importance of an individual does not of itself qualify that individual for Gogarty's exemplary greatness; Gogarty seeks from the great the inspiration of 'magnanimous ideas and noble examples,' which he finds lacking in people often considered distinguished, such as de Valera or Joyce.

One of the greatest difficulties in assessing Gogarty's writings lies in the importance of generalised categories to his work. He believes in greatness, beauty, nobility, courage, inspiration, permanence, and dignity as evident and undefined concepts. When a lived experience provides him with a subjective spiritual experience

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<sup>29</sup> 'Great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the light giving fountain, which it is good to be near...No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life.' Thomas Carlyle. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & The Heroic in History*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1993. [pp. 3, 11] OSJG: 'There are few things in this life which give as much satisfaction as the friendship of good and famous men...It is as though they had more spirit than their bodies could contain and it stood out about them like the rainbow round the moon.' OSJG. *William Butler Yeats—A Memoir*. Dublin: Dolmen. 1963. [pp. 25-26]

<sup>30</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [pp. 74-75]

of these virtues, he refers to this as a spiritual ‘enlargement’—yet, as we shall see, he does not precisely define this, offering an amalgamated conception of both emancipation and transcendence. It is both this enlargement and the provocation to it that he seeks to describe in his self-depicting writings.

Although these large, ill-defined categories such as ‘greatness’ or ‘inspiration’ are at the heart of his literary efforts, a general description of Gogarty’s understanding of the enlargement they represent can be deduced from his usages. For Gogarty, the people and the art that most transmit sensations of joy, timelessness, nobility, and dignity are those most worthy of being described as great, and being recorded. The closest Gogarty comes to an explication of his idea of wonder and inspiration is in his book, *Intimations*:

What if that which is in ourselves is a memory of the great poetry of all time, or the heroic deeds of men? Of necessity it must be but an echo, for the diapason would be too great to bear, certainly too great to be expressed. For this reason inspiration is neither complete nor continuous.

There is another thought which is inspiring: it is that this inspiration or enthusiasm can be transmitted from man to man, to the novice from the adept. And there are many men and women who can transmit it. In some cases their presence is enough. Others can transmit it by example or the spoken word. They have in them something of the Immortals’ bodily shape or mighty mind. Love and reverence are needed before we can receive what they have to give, just as silence and stillness are needed if the inspiration is to come from within.<sup>31</sup>

Although this is exceptionally abstracted, one may observe Gogarty apply it more practically in describing his friend Æ:

He is one of those rare spirits who bring to us a realisation of our own divinity and intensify it. He enlarges the joy that is hidden in the heroic heart. He is a magnifier of the moods of the soul; and he communicates them more naturally by music and murmuring sound than by messages or points. Don’t forget what Robert Louis Stevenson said about geniuses like Æ. ‘Such are the best teachers. A spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the plane of art. It is themselves, and, what is more, the best in themselves, that

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<sup>31</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 80]

they communicate.’ That is the secret of Æ. He is an artist. He teaches nothing. He communicates himself, and the best in himself.<sup>32</sup>

The important observation here is that Gogarty views this spiritual inspiration as being interactive; Æ’s spiritual genius lies in calling forth, by the magnification provided by his personality, the ‘divinity’ and ‘joy’ already in the heart of the other. Again and again we shall see Gogarty present such enlargement as the result of interaction and intercourse, and he marks out as ‘great’ individuals those who can inspire in others ‘a realisation of our own divinity.’

Another important belief that appears in different forms throughout his writings is that the mind determines its own reality. Generally, in Gogarty’s writings, this belief assumes one of two forms. The first of these forms is essentially emotional. This is Gogarty’s repeated insistence that one may choose to be happy, exuberant, and cheerful, instead of suffering from the misery he found in Dante, and diagnosed in Joyce—‘sullen in the sweet air.’ Applied artistically, this meant that Gogarty repeatedly writes amusing stories, lyrical descriptions, and praise of those he admires. Where he introduces topics such as disappointment or pain—uncommon themes usually encountered in a medical context—he promotes the reflection that the general good cheer of his narrations is not in ignorance of disappointment or pain, but is instead the conscious choice of an artist who resolves to focus upon the uplifting and the cheerful.

The second of the forms in which Gogarty describes the mind creating its own reality lies in his interest in formal experimentation to mimic memory, consciousness, or general thought. Indeed, Gogarty’s reputation as a classicist has obscured his few, but significant, experimentations with formal structure. As we shall see, Gogarty’s narratives attempt, in different ways, to formalise a timeless quality whereby the

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<sup>32</sup> OStJG. *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*. London: Rich & Cowan. 1937. [p. 180]

remembered past and the present are equally sifted by a judging consciousness. Thus for Gogarty, and in his books, the fondly-remembered dead, and the times he shared with them, are not only more present in his mind than are the people who surround him in his later years, but they also form the central matter for his writings. Just as Gogarty believes that memory and affection keep the past and the dead present for the living, so Gogarty attempts to resurrect the people and eras he most enjoyed, and to preserve them in his writings. For this reason, Gogarty's recurrent use of memoir and reminiscence is less an act of self-absorption than it is an active engagement with those whom he was privileged to know, and whose influence he wishes to promote.

Gogarty's unusual artistic employment of location is also allied with this notion of a mind choosing its own reality. Here again his philosophical and aesthetic notions coincide in two different forms. The more general of these coincidences lies in Gogarty's repeated conception of the spirit of place, or the *genius loci*. This he feels particularly evocatively in Ireland, and most specifically in the natural world. These locations tend to provide Gogarty with a sense of timelessness and wonder akin to that he feels when in the company of the distinguished, or when engaging with great art. Yet he also believes that the properly receptive mind can experience such localised transcendence based upon the company in which one inhabits a place. Throughout Gogarty's work his interest in conversation and companionship tends to provide him with a movable *genius loci*, conveyable to professors' rooms, warehouses, or, most especially, pubs.

The other aspect of Gogarty's writing that unites location and determinant consciousness is his condemnation of slums. Of course, this too has its roots in Gogarty's personal experience, whether in the squalor that led to medical conditions Gogarty faced in hospital wards, or in the colossal fiscal inequalities he saw between

wealthy and abject patients. Although Gogarty 'so raucously' celebrates the whorehouses of Nighttown, he no less frequently excoriates slums, and repeatedly depicts the mental and spiritual retardation by which misfortune and civic indifference blight the lives of the poor. For Gogarty, slums pose as great a threat to the mentality of their residents as they do to their health, for slums suppress aspiration and reverie and surround the mind with squalor.

#### IV. AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIR AS GENRES

Because this thesis will repeatedly note the genres of memoir and autobiography in Gogarty's writings, it is necessary to observe here the relation of contemporary autobiographical studies to Gogarty's work. Many of the controversies and investigations in recent autobiographical study have been largely theoretical, as scholars have attempted to apply the theories of Barthes, Derrida, and de Man, to the question of autobiographical authority. Unfortunately, this theoretical work tends to value obliquity, and to pursue externally inapplicable arguments:

One *can* only make autobiography under the aegis of chance, this quasi-maternal injunction to specificity. But *if* specificity, then variety and plurality, the non-singular, even the non-specific, the shared, the open, the to-come, the intrusion of an other who will have the power—an other who will be the power—both to love and to hate. That the other can either love or hate the shared memory, the fact of public passion, makes again for the interminable political trafficking that follows upon the autobiographical scene—which never ends—of the mother's death.<sup>33</sup>

This type of theory is of no utility when studying Oliver Gogarty's writings of recollective self-depiction. Indeed, Gogarty might best be employed, for such

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Smith. *Derrida and Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995. [p. 45]



autobiographical analysis, as an example of pure recidivism. As we shall see, Gogarty has no interest in confessionality; he shows little interest in self-expression for its own sake, consequently leaving enormous unrecorded gaps in his life whilst repeatedly emphasizing the same distinguished individuals and interesting events; he routinely praises the distinguished and the great, illustrating even his basic points with such intimidatingly accomplished exemplars as W. B. Yeats, Michael Collins, and Augustus John; he gives almost no textual space to those who are not distinguished, engaging, or colourful; his predominant references are to male Western European culture, with a marked preference for classical and Elizabethan references; and he tends to place others in the narrative centre of his memoirs, instead of inhabiting that centrality himself.

There is, however, one area where contemporary scholarly debates about the notion of autobiography must be taken into account. This is in the attempt to define what autobiography itself is, as a genre. In these contentious debates about how autobiography is to be defined, Professor Jean Starobinski's proposal is widely accepted as being the most liberal and accommodating, without being so lenient as to allow numerous extraneous inclusions:

[Autobiography is] A biography of a person written by himself: this definition of autobiography establishes the intrinsic character of the enterprise and thus the general (and generic) conditions of autobiographical writing. But this is not merely the definition of a literary genre: in their essentials, these conditions ensure that the identity of the narrator and the hero of the narration will be revealed in the work. Further, they require that the work be a narrative and not merely a description. Biography is not portrait; or if it is a kind of portrait, it adds time and movement. The narrative must cover a temporal sequence sufficiently extensive to allow the emergence of the contour of life.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jean Starobinski, 'The Style of Autobiography,' in James Olney, [Ed.]. *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1980.[p. 73]

This thesis accepts this definition, particularly in its insistence that ‘the narrative must cover a temporal sequence sufficiently extensive to allow the emergence of the contour of life.’ This thesis therefore refers to this definition when discussing autobiography, despite the fact that Gogarty departs significantly from its terms. As we shall observe, Gogarty’s general literary output represents an unusual and idiosyncratic mixture of personal history, social observation, and cultural promotion.

What Gogarty most commonly wrote is better described as ‘memoir’ than autobiography. Gogarty bristled at the idea of memoirs, but he wrote them repeatedly. He wrote only one truly autobiographical work. The distinction is perhaps more clear in definition than in practice: both autobiography and memoir are self-portraits of events from one’s life, yet where autobiography requires some sense of continuity and development (Prof. Starobinski’s ‘time and movement’), memoir is often a reflection of events known to the author, yet presented without the ordering principle of ‘the contour of life.’ *The Oxford English Dictionary* generally treats memoir and autobiography as synonymous, yet notes of memoirs that they are less complete than autobiography: ‘not purporting to be a complete history, but treating of such matters as come within the knowledge of the writer.’<sup>35</sup> This is precisely what Gogarty usually offers. The difficulty in discussing Gogarty strictly as a memoirist, however, lies in his several stylistic attempts in his early works to provide an ordering principle to what are essentially memoirs—the most prominent example, as we shall see, is his reversing chronology in *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, in an attempt to mirror consciousness, whilst simultaneously giving what he terms a ‘perspectiveless’ portrait of Dublin city itself. Yet even when he, for example, goes in pursuit of St. Patrick’s influence in *I Follow Saint Patrick*, and offers little personal assessment or

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<sup>35</sup> J. A. Simpson & E. S. L. Weiner, [Gen. Eds.], *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Vol. IX). Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1989. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. [p. 593]

description, we nonetheless continue to see that Gogarty's constant literary thought is to present through a record of his experiences the notion of greatness, and to recapture the transcendent expansion of perspective that the distinguished may provide to others, and had provided to Gogarty.

#### V. GOGARTY'S CONTEMPORARIES, AND THEIR AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

The place and the period to which Gogarty returned again and again in his memoirs, the Dublin literary and cultural milieu of 1900-1939, is well-recorded not only by literary historians, but by the major figures themselves. In his lecture 'Literary Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Ireland,' Professor Terence Brown has observed that these autobiographies significantly colour our appreciation of the era, and its prominent figures:

Moore, Yeats, Synge, O'Casey, Edward Martyn, Gogarty, George Russell, Hyde, Lady Gregory, Maud Gonne, Osborn Bergin, Kuno Meyer, Thomas MacDonagh *et alia* comprise the *dramatis personae* of a drama enacted in the memories of a plethora of autobiographers through which, in part, we gain our sense of the period.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, there is also a further group of Irish writers whose autobiographical works include their encounters with the figures Prof. Brown mentions, such as, most notably, Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Austin Clarke, and Padraic and Mary Colum.

Because the period he records abounds with first-person recollections, we will find it illustrative of Gogarty's particular concerns and style to assess how he differs from the majority. In contrasting Gogarty's self-presentational concerns with those of

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<sup>36</sup> Terence Brown. 'Literary Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Ireland,' in Augustine Martin [Ed.], *The Genius of Irish Prose*. Dublin: RTÉ/ Mercier Press. 1985. [p. 89]

his contemporaries, we observe that five differences have distinguishing prominence. First, as we noticed in our assessment of how autobiography and memoir differ, Gogarty shows almost no concern with writing a biography of his life as such. This tendency is best seen in his almost complete silence about the existence of childhood. Unlike those authors, such as James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, and Sean O'Faolain, who take an extraordinary interest in revealing the development of the individual consciousness, Gogarty almost invariably presents himself as at least a young adult, who can converse at an intelligent adult level and hold his ground mentally and conversationally with formidable Trinity dons. One notes, in this context, that even where there is supposed to be a clear development in the main Gogarty character—as, for example, in Gideon Ouseley's university career in *Tumbling in the Hay*—there is no correspondent development in the consciousness or articulacy of the narrator. Secondly, Gogarty rarely mentions his relatives, particularly his siblings; although his mother conducts him to Trinity in several of his books, he shows none of the oddly obsessional maternal interest one finds in O'Casey and O'Connor. Later, having married, Gogarty records unusually little about his wife and their children in his writings. Third, although he repeatedly attacks de Valera, Gogarty is remarkably quiet about major social and political issues that significantly shape other autobiographical narratives—for example, Gogarty rarely mentions the divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland and, politically, despite his long and close association with both Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, Gogarty does not write of his personal political engagement in the manner most notable in O'Casey, O'Faolain, and O'Flaherty. Gogarty also essentially ignores linguistic tensions between Irish speakers and Anglophones, and certainly never alters his name and identity accordingly, as do O'Faolain and O'Casey. Moreover, Gogarty's experiences of poverty were

significantly different from most of his associates. The stability of the Gogarty family's financial position meant that Gogarty's upbringing had none of the privation that so painfully marks the self-depictions of Joyce and O'Casey. Fourth, he lacks Yeats's serious, and Moore's satirical, desire to measure his life and work in the light of reflection, and self-assessment. Gogarty's recreations of events from his life, as we shall see, structurally suggest that the past and the present are directly coexistent to the mind, so that there is, in his writings, little reflection and development, and an unusual conflation of memory and reality. Fifth, Gogarty, despite being notorious for turning his devastating wit upon even close friends, shows almost no interest in the type of public mockery of private friends that defines Moore's *Hail and Farewell*. Although Gogarty certainly enjoys revealing the humorous idiosyncrasies of his friends, it is an affectionate revelation,<sup>37</sup> and is usually tempered by Gogarty's forthright praise of his friends' cultural and political importance.

Aside from writing many memoirs of his own, Gogarty's ubiquity in the Dublin of 1900-1939 guaranteed that he also appears in many autobiographical writings of others. This is particularly salutary, for the totality of Irish memoirs tends to contradict the overwhelming influence of Joyce's depiction of Gogarty as Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*. In fact, Gogarty was friendly with many enormously accomplished authors, none of whom records him acting as a subversive or impeding influence, and Gogarty was so far from being a betrayer that Michael Collins, who had much more to fear from betrayal than Joyce ever did, routinely hid in Gogarty's Ely Place home, whilst on the run from British military and police authorities.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that Gogarty should come to be defined by one of his few friendships that went wrong and broke apart in acrimony, when many of his

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<sup>37</sup> "There can be playful "debunkings" which are harmless because they are amusing, good-humoured, perceptive and the reverse of malign." OSTJG. *Intimations*. [p. 74]

contemporaries maintained lifelong friendships with him, and praised him as both a man and a writer in their own writings: W. B. Yeats called him 'one of the great lyric poets of our age,' Stephens thought that 'after Yeats himself, [Gogarty is] the best poet of our land...no poet whatever writing at this moment is so good as Oliver St. John Gogarty,'<sup>38</sup> and Æ felt 'my friend's' work offered him 'some gay and gallant life which was not in my own birthright.'<sup>39</sup> These are important judgements, for they not only reflect the esteem in which enormously accomplished artistic figures held Gogarty, but they also reveal their appreciation for his work. As we have noticed, too often the vitality and colour of Gogarty's adventurous life make him seem more like a living anecdote than a real man, and the appreciations above reveal that Gogarty was valued as an artist, as well as a friend.

Yet two personal estimates of Gogarty deserve special mention, for they offer evidence of his impact upon the generation after his own. The first is by Flann O'Brien who, in his newspaper column 'Cruiskeen Lawn,' records his admiration for 'this great man.' The passage is of interest not only because of its unusually admiring tone from O'Brien's 'corner often used for derision,' but also because it records a significant writer's assessment of Gogarty immediately after Gogarty's death:

I hope it is permissible for myself to record here, in a corner often used for derision, a personal but also very widespread regret at the passing of Oliver St. John Gogarty...I personally knew this great man and here attempt to record qualities known also to many others who knew him.

He had courage...Confining this remark of mine to Gogarty's own respect for the dignity of language, I would be content to say merely that he had courage...When one says that somebody was good, one derogates rather than adds when one says he was 'very good'...

Two minutes of that tongue and very subtle mind at the back would convince anybody of his day that Gogarty's departure involved for the party of the other part something of the nature of a bereavement. To a stranger it may seem that he was glib.

<sup>38</sup> Stephens, [Finneran, Ed.]. *Letters of James Stephens*. New York: Macmillan. 1974. [p. 393]

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in: Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. xxii]

Less glib or more honest man I personally never met. Wit, adjustment to an existing situation, improvisation, all those qualities he had, he had in a profusion unexampled. Now and again a remark seemed cruel...Against whom can this charge not be laid? Even his majesty the sun has spots.<sup>40</sup>

Several years later, Sean O'Faolain included his own assessment of Gogarty in his memoir, *Vive Moi!*. O'Faolain's account is valuable not only because of his personal acquaintance with Gogarty, but also because of his direct comparison between the Gogarty he knew and the impression of Gogarty conveyed by Buck Mulligan:

Here I would like to pay tribute to Oliver Gogarty. Joyce did him an immense and cruel injustice in *Ulysses* by presenting him to posterity as something approaching the nature of an insensitive lout whose only function in life was to offset and emphasize the exquisite sensitivity and delicacy of Stephen Daedalus. Gogarty was a kind and generous man, full of verve and zest, as well as being, especially in later life, a curiously lonely man. When he retired to New York, where I met him three or four times, he was a pathetically lonely man. His essential nature, which nobody could ever possibly gather from *Ulysses*, was his nature as a poet—he was a fine poet—and it must have hurt him deeply that from the time *Ulysses* appeared everybody knew him as the original of Malachi Mulligan and only a very few as a poet. He had his insensitive areas. (So had Joyce—large areas. So, no doubt, have we all.) He could be cruel, above all if he could be cruel wittily; he would, as we say, have sacrificed his grandmother for a joke; and in Ireland, where the bitter joke is treasured, this could do for others exactly what Joyce did for him. I will not say that he was a gentleman, not because he was not but because it is a period word, and his period was the eighteenth century, when he might have been called a Corinthian, or as Joyce accurately dubbed him, a buck. His tragedy was that he outlived Dublin's best age and, like Tithonus, had no option but to die as our green grasshopper.<sup>41</sup>

Both of these generous statements of tribute show recognition of Gogarty's faults, yet each offers a depiction of Gogarty that is generally admiring and personal. Both authors had met Gogarty, although neither claims to have been a close friend. Nonetheless, they both illustrate the esteem in which Gogarty was held by those

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<sup>40</sup> Flann O'Brien, [Kevin O'Nolan, Ed.]. *Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn*. London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon. 1976. [pp. 81-82]

<sup>41</sup> Sean O'Faolain. *Vive Moi!* Boston : Little, Brown & Co. 1964. [pp. 353-354].

slightly younger than he was, which importantly testifies to his presence—in two generations of Irish memoirs—as a valued presence in the literary community.

## VI. BRIEF INTRODUCTORY CONCLUSION

Gogarty's life was remarkable for the diversity of his accomplishments, the distinction of his friends, the eminence of his own achievements, and the literary record by which he chronicled that life, and those friends. This thesis proposes that the most widespread element in Gogarty's writing is this element towards self-description and the recording of personal memories. It also proposes that Gogarty's primary interest in doing so is to use his experiences not to assess himself or explicate his development, but instead to provide examples of spiritual enlargement. He particularly seeks to reveal these experiences when provoked by his most distinguished associates, in whose persons and companionship he found the inspiration and ennoblement of perception that he attempts to convey, through his writings, to his readers. Throughout Gogarty's literary career, he advances the idea of literature as spurning despair, engaging life with boldness and good humour, and inspiring the reader with an incomparable connection to the greatness of the past. In his own works, Gogarty attempts to provide such a courageous, stimulating testimony to the examples of his friends, by writing about his direct experience of them.



CHAPTER 2  
SELF, SOCIETY, AND EXAMPLE IN GOGARTY'S POETRY

Oliver St. John Gogarty's literary strengths are most apparent in his poetry, and it is in his poetry that he attains his most convincing artistic successes. He wrote poetry all his adult life, which makes it the unique artistic genre by which he may be assessed over a large span of his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, of all the various creative genres Gogarty attempted, only poetry fully allowed an unstrained encompassment of his notoriously multifarious moods and skills. Gogarty was and remains famed for the almost distracting diffusion of his interests and talents, and it is only in his poetry that he unrestrainedly expresses this peculiar breadth of concerns and passions—a breadth that constitutes what Prof. Jeffares has noted might 'be considered a dangerous spread of subject by...critics who confuse solemnity with seriousness.'<sup>2</sup>

In Gogarty's poems one finds, to a degree unmatched in his prose, the humour to which his friends testified; the gravity and philosophical courage that his medical career demanded; the contempt for mortality that he displayed in moments of physical peril; the general conservatism of his approach to artistic form and, above all, the compelling qualities claimed for his conversation, being an extraordinary coupling of witty, friendly address to a massively learned referentiality that comprehended the major works of classical and Anglophonic literature. The necessary rigour of the form also imposed an unaccustomed discipline on Gogarty's writing, thus partially reigning in what Yeats termed Gogarty's 'confused exuberance.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Almost all of Gogarty's non-poetical writing appears in the last 20 years of his life.

<sup>2</sup> 'Oliver St John Gogarty, Irishman.' Jeffares. *The Circus Animals*. [p.161]

<sup>3</sup> OStJG, [W. B. Yeats, Intro.]. *An Offering of Swans*. Dublin: Cuala. 1923. [unnumbered introductory page]

As is true of Gogarty's writings as a whole, his poetry is beset by unevenness. His bawdry is sometimes exquisite and almost classical,<sup>4</sup> yet at other times it seems sniggering and adolescent. His literary tendency towards reticence about private issues means that much of his serious love poetry is of so vague a nature that it is difficult to decide whether he is in love with the woman he addresses, or employs her primarily as an object for the metrical forms by which he expresses himself. He is capable of utilising those difficult metrical forms sublimely (as in 'Portrait with Background'), yet he too often permits himself a distractingly easy metre (as in 'Time, Gentlemen, Time!'). His classical and Irish mythological references range from the subtly apt to the intrusive. His humorous poetry is among the best of its kind, particularly in those poems—the best of which is surely 'Leda and the Swan'—where he effortlessly advances a lighter approach to an established and serious topic. He shows no talent for *vers libre*, and usually avoids it. He possesses, as Vivian Mercier notes, 'the knack of half-redeeming a mediocre poem with a haunting final cadence.'<sup>5</sup> His writings about mortality at times attain a most rarefied beauty by their simplicity and consolatory sincerity:

Death may be very gentle after all:  
 He turns his face away from arrogant knights...  
 And he has with him those whose ways were mild  
 And beautiful; and many a little child.<sup>6</sup>

His odes of tribute to his friends are often better evidence of friendship than of scrupulous composition, although several—notably the 'Elegy on the Archpoet William Butler Yeats, Lately Dead' and 'Aeternae Lucis Redditor'—must rank among Gogarty's best poems. His theoretical abstractions are sometimes strikingly lucid ('Our friends go with us as we go down the long path where Beauty wends,

<sup>4</sup> In the sense of Martial or Catullus.

<sup>5</sup> Vivian Mercier. 'Oliver Gogarty' in *Poetry*, October 1958. [p. 37]

<sup>6</sup> 'Death May Be Very Gentle.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 183]

where all we love foregather'<sup>7</sup>), and at others cumbersome and awkward ('Women are our subconscious selves, materialisations from our souls' regions where fairy queens and elves disport...'<sup>8</sup>). At his best, his lyrical sense of tone and pace within a poem are almost unmatched by his contemporaries. He is, in sum, a skilled minor poet, one with idiosyncratic strengths and weaknesses.

Of his contemporaries in Ireland, Gogarty must rank as one of the best sub-Yeats poets, whose verse work *in toto* offers more variety and genuine accomplishment than the complete poetries of Æ, Stephens, O'Sullivan, and numerous lesser figures. Yet it is difficult to disagree with Mary Colum's penetrating observation that Gogarty's poetry has 'has suffered from too many introductions and too many accolades.'<sup>9</sup> Gogarty's poetry is so often erratic that it is not wholly congruous with the exceptional praise it has received from illustrious colleagues. Certainly Gogarty wrote at his best too infrequently to be considered a great poet, and he lacks the durability or the intensity of Yeats's genius, but his skills are—at their best—of a sufficiently high level and diversity to deserve the conditional plaudits of that supreme poet of his era, Yeats himself: '[Gogarty] never stops long at his best, but how beautiful that best is, how noble, how joyous.'<sup>10</sup>

This chapter asserts that Gogarty's poetry is, like the rest of his literary work, an attempt to express the ennobling and transformative by illustration from his life, and often by the example of his friends. It is not properly autobiographical, as his repeated concern is to reveal the spiritual elevation beyond the basic facts of one's existence; yet his poetry is also frequently drawn from his life, experiences, and acquaintances. This chapter is divided into five subsequent sections. The first section

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<sup>7</sup> 'Non Dolet.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 182]

<sup>8</sup> 'Women.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 150]

<sup>9</sup> Mary Colum. [Review of *Elbow Room*] in *The New York Times Book Review*. 12 April 1942. [p. 5]

<sup>10</sup> OSJG, [W.B.Yeats, Intro.]. *An Offering of Swans*. [unnumbered introductory page]

notes Gogarty's unusual but specific understanding of poetry itself as providing or describing a spiritual enlargement. This section asserts that this sense of enlargement is largely analogous with Gogarty's lifelong artistic interest in providing his readers with examples of wonder and imaginative transcendence from his life, experiences, and friendships. The second section examines Gogarty's tendency in his poetry to describe his personal experiences in precisely those terms of spiritual emancipation, ennoblement, and transcendence, even to the exclusion of biographical description. In his poetry as in his prose, Gogarty's literary use of his life as subject matter is not to focus attention upon himself but, almost paradoxically, to provide illustrations of wonder and transcendence whereby he glimpsed an ennobling reality beyond the life of which he writes. In direct relation to this point is the argument of the third section of this chapter. This section assesses Gogarty's treatment of his friends, and of the notion of friendship, in his poetry. It finds that these too he employs as subject matter for depicting enlargement and transcendence. The fourth section notes that Gogarty frequently depicts poetry itself as being a transcendence of time, in the sense of revivifying the past in the present, and in preserving that experience for the future. The fifth section offers a brief summation of the chapter.

Because this is a specific reading of self-depiction, friendship, and testimony of transcendent experience in Gogarty's verse, it is necessary to acknowledge that the restrictions of proper argumentation render a full consideration of Gogarty's poetical work inappropriate here. This chapter is thus not a full consideration of Gogarty's poetry, but is an openly partial assessment, looking only at those areas of Gogarty's verse applicable to the specific interests of this thesis. This is somewhat to be regretted, as one of the most impressive characteristics of Gogarty's verse is the enormous variety of poetical forms he employed with skill, such as elegy, satire, lyric,

bawdry, aphorism, and ode. The restrictions of this chapter's specific argument mean that much of his best poetry—for example, 'Europa and the Bull' or 'Leda and the Swan'—is inapplicable here. This chapter should therefore be understood only as a consideration of the specifically addressed aspects of Gogarty's poetical accomplishment, and exclusion from assessment here is not intended to reflect the merit or weakness of the works so omitted.

### I: 'A RHYTHMIC SPELL TO ENLARGE THE SPIRIT'

For Gogarty, poetry was not merely a metrical expression of an emotion or a thought, nor was it Pound's famous definition of literature, 'news that STAYS news.'<sup>11</sup> In fact, Gogarty's faith in poetry verged upon reverence, and he seems to have viewed it as an indeprivable richness of the spirit. He wrote verse seriously and casually, and he saturated himself in the verse of others. We know, from both the references in his own books, and the recollections of his companions, that Gogarty had a formidable memory, stocked particularly with poetry in English, ancient Greek, Latin, and Scots dialect.<sup>12</sup> He loved to deploy apt poetical citations in conversation, and several friends record their worry that he could become so absorbed by his recitations whilst driving that they felt imperilled by his inattention to the road.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ezra Pound. *ABC of Reading*. London: Faber. 1957. [1991 Reprint] [p.29]

<sup>12</sup> James Stephens, reviewing *An Offering of Swans and Other Poems* in *The Dial*, June, 1924: 'Dr. Gogarty is still a little the slave of his vast memory of Latin verse, English lyric, and Scotch ballad, and a little more he is the sport of a desire to assert his scholarship by remembering it.' Reprinted in: James Stephens, [Finneran, Ed.]. *Letters of James Stephens*. [p. 307]

<sup>13</sup> 'Senator Gogarty, at the wheel, chooses to recite epigrams at just the most dangerous curves, scanning the metre with his left hand raised, his first finger stretched, his second half bent; and Yeats takes a passionate interest in the rhythmical problem, so that the 'Ford' veers continually on two wheels...' Mario M. Rossi, [Trans. J. M. Hone]. *Pilgrimage in the West*. Dublin: Cuala Press. 1933. [p. 38] See also Horace Reynolds' account of a similar trip: Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. xxvii]

His taste in verse was good, if traditional: he had exceptional passions for Shakespeare, Whitman, Burns, Yeats, the Cavaliers, especially the so-called 'Tribe of Ben,' Carew, Herrick, and Lovelace, and the major classical poets, with particular interest in Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Pindar. Gogarty's own poetical work often resembles that of these favourites, although the poetical quotations in his prose vary widely beyond his particular enthusiasms.<sup>14</sup> Yet of Gogarty's understanding of poetry Prof. Carens notes with some justification that:

Gogarty can scarcely be said to have formulated a poetic or to have articulated a defence of his practice, any more than he can be said to belong to a particular movement or group of poets. To say this is not to say that he did not have a definite conception of poetry and of the poet's role, a firm view of technical matters, or a relation to important developments in modern poetry. Of course he did. But he was in no sense programmatic; and, though he may even be said to have had a historical view of the development of English poetry and lectured and wrote about his poetic preferences late in his life, he had made no effort to formulate anything like a theory.<sup>15</sup>

This is largely true, for Gogarty was not a theorist, and wrote nothing comparable with Shelley's or Sidney's treatises. Yet Prof. Carens is not precisely correct in his assertion that Gogarty never 'formulated a poetic' for, as we shall see, in a late essay he offered a definition of poetry that is consistent with his poetry as a whole. This view of poetry has been largely neglected in Gogarty studies, which is unfortunate, as it has a wide applicability to Gogarty's work generally.

On the whole, Gogarty's view of poetry was intensely conservative. He has routinely been seen as a classicist in verse, and there are valid reasons for this: his metres and subjects are often classical, his references and imagery are frequently ancient, and his philosophy in the poetry—despite being a believing Christian—reveals no sense of birth conveying sin, or death containing possible damnation. For

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<sup>14</sup> For example, *As I was Going Down Sackville Street* cites passages from poets as distant in style, age, and form as Homer to George Redding, or Dante to Burns.

<sup>15</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 51]

these reasons, it is in his poetry that Gogarty's classicism is most evident. Yet even in the poetry his classicism has perhaps been overemphasised, for he was, in Prof. Carens' phrase, 'in no sense programmatic.' Gogarty tried many styles, many themes, and many tonal registers, and he wrote to various models among those he considered the most artful, traditional, and beautiful. As his friend Horace Reynolds noted, Gogarty was 'a survival of the bardic age, an Elizabethan, a Cavalier lyricist, a man of the eighteenth century: few have been born out of more times.'<sup>16</sup> Consequently, although he relishes the ancient metres and references he employs, he also draws almost as frequently upon 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English poetical precedents as he does upon the ancient Mediterranean heritage. In sum, to reduce Gogarty to his most consistent borrowings is to miss the most vital aspect of his poetry, which is the variety of his styles and topics.

Nevertheless, Gogarty's verse is an indubitable rejection of contemporary technical innovation in favour of traditional subjects, references, and metrics. Having written in the era of high Modernism, when the foremost Anglophonic poetry often addressed urban drudgery and spiritual impotence with verse characterised by disrupted linear sense and philosophical disillusionment, Gogarty's poetical peculiarities can sometimes appear outdated, if not eccentrically regressive. His interest in the strictly technical experimentation of his era extended only to Yeats. Furthermore, for Gogarty there were distinct differences between what was fit matter for poetry, and what was unworthy of the form. One of the antiquating factors of Gogarty's verse is that he unhesitatingly and sincerely wrote of themes usually treated with irony or condescension by the most influential verse of his era, such as love,

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<sup>16</sup> Horace Reynolds. 'The Odyssey of an Irishman' in *The New York Times Book Review*. 4 April 1937. [p. 1]

truth, wonderment, and joy, as absolute concepts. Indeed, he frequently capitalises these and similar words, to make their absolute status the more apparent.

In a corollary point, Gogarty willingly accepted the exclusionary viewpoint that misery and social dislocation were irreconcilable with poetry. He wrote a poetry of ideals, and believed intensely in the ideality of poetry itself. To him, dwelling on squalor or degradation in verse was not merely irresponsible, but was itself a betrayal of the form. In his book *It Isn't This Time of Year at All!* Gogarty declared clearly, 'Poetry is a recoil from ugliness and decay.'<sup>17</sup> In *Intimations*, Gogarty ventured this definition of poetry—'a rhythmic spell to enlarge the spirit':

Enlarge is used in two senses here—in the sense of to *magnify*; and in the sense of to *set free*, as when we say that the stag was 'enlarged,' or when we speak, as Richard Lovelace does, of 'enlarged winds that curl the flood.' And it must be rhythmic, and none of your modern, disarticulated prose, which is called *vers libre*.<sup>18</sup>

This definition is centrally important for study of Gogarty's writing of poetry, particularly in the context of self-depiction, for it unambiguously proclaims poetry emancipatory, and values neither accuracy nor biographical fixity. Indeed, Gogarty's understanding of poetry is *contrary* to accurate representation of lived existence: for Gogarty, poetry is that art form whereby one is raised from the degradation and disappointment of life, into a spiritual reverie of beauty, balance, and bravery. As he stated in a late essay, 'The business of the poet is to build anew and magnify, not to photograph or to hold a cracked mirror up to nature.'<sup>19</sup> Even in his university years Gogarty routinely repudiated any association between poetry and the commonplaces of daily life: as just two examples, he noted to his friend G. K. A. Bell that 'a poem is set in a region that circumstances cannot affect nor the trivialities of daily life vex,'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> OSJG. *It Isn't This Time of Year at All!* New York: Doubleday. 1954. [1989 Abacus reprint]. [p. 52]

<sup>18</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 114]

<sup>19</sup> OSJG. 'They Think They Know Joyce' in Jerome Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *The Saturday Review Gallery*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1959.

<sup>20</sup> Carens, [Ed.]. *Many Lines*. [p. 56]



and attacked particularity as antipathetic to verse: 'knowledge, dealing with the particular alone, is of course antipathy to poetry.'<sup>21</sup> Much later, in his epilogue to the poet Scharmél Iris's collection *Bread Out of Stone*, Gogarty proclaimed that poets are they who are 'attuned to brave translunary things...On poets we have to depend for a glimpse of what lies beyond the veil.'<sup>22</sup>

Gogarty's notion of poetry being a 'spell' offering 'a glimpse of what lies beyond the veil' reinforces this notion of verse as having an almost hypnotic effect that offers a transcendent perception of customary reality. As we have seen, Gogarty believed the proper work of a poet not to be the expression of factual or social truth, but instead as the expression (or the encouragement) of the enlargement of the spirit. There is, implicit in this belief, the suggestion that the day-to-day routine of life does not satisfactorily engage the life of the spirit; indeed, despite Gogarty's reputation for ebullience and cheer, he had at heart a more stoic than optimistic view of existence: 'Sadness is fundamental with us, let it be nobly borne. It is unbecoming to let it degenerate into misery.'<sup>23</sup> In his doubled employment of 'enlargement,' Gogarty intimates that the goals of poetry are the provision of encouragement and solace amidst the difficulties of life, as well as the displacement of routine by an almost metaphysical reconnection of physical life to spiritual experiences of beauty, truth, friendship, dignity, joy, and endurance.

The subject matter of Gogarty's verse is heavily determined by his belief that poetry should enlarge. Gogarty's thematic oddity in the Modernist era becomes more understandable in this light, for he simply felt it a negation of poetry's 'enlarging' purpose to write of, for example, 'an old bitch gone in the teeth...a botched

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<sup>21</sup> Carens, [Ed.]. *Many Lines*. [p. 69]

<sup>22</sup> Scharmél Iris, [OSIJG, Epilogue]. *Bread Out of Stone*. Chicago: Henry Regnery. 1953. [pp. 60-61]

<sup>23</sup> Carens, [Ed.]. *Many Lines*. [p. 58]

civilization.’<sup>24</sup> His verse is shaped by this determination to spurn the miserable or disputatious, as one may note in the near absence from his poetry of several important aspects of Gogarty’s life. One such example, to which he rarely gives full voice in either his poems or his prose, is his extensive acquaintance with illness and suffering. Gogarty’s almost thirty years as a practising physician rarely appear in his poems as subject matter or reference, yet they are at the heart of his conceptions of stoicism, mortality, and dignity—concepts that, as abstractions, run prominently throughout his verse:

Since you are human, do not hope  
For life exempt from fear and pain:  
Ask, rather, for the strength to cope  
With fear, and courage to sustain.<sup>25</sup>

It is credible, therefore, that part of the reason for Gogarty’s tendency in his verse to shy away from specific biographical detail, and to move rapidly to poetic abstraction, lies in the prominence of suffering in his everyday life. When Gogarty writes of poetry magnifying one’s spirit and emancipating one from cares, he is not referring merely to freedom from a cosmopolitan angst, but to the (often-preventable) infection, disease, and misery that his patients endured. As he writes in his atypically revealing poem, ‘*Medicus Poetae*’:

But I by bed and in the lazar-house  
Where misery the Feast of Life derides  
And Death confuses Autumn with the Spring,  
Can sometimes, though I see not Beauty’s brows,  
Catch the uncertain syllable that bids  
The blackbird leap from his dark hedge and sing.<sup>26</sup>

Comparably specific insights into Gogarty’s relation of poetry to the suffering he saw professionally rarely appear with such clarity in Gogarty’s work, yet each is telling,

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ Ezra Pound. *Selected Poems 1908-1959*. London: Faber. 1975. [p. 101]

<sup>25</sup> ‘Serenity.’ Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 486]

<sup>26</sup> ‘*Medicus Poetae*.’ Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 248]

for they reveal that it is a fundamental misconception of Gogarty's poetry to interpret the gaiety and stoicism of his work as an irrepressible joviality in ignorance of sorrow or suffering;<sup>27</sup> in fact, poetry was his means of *transcending* the consciousness of such misery and attaining to a tolerable realm of beauty or composed resignation. Gogarty directly pits the awareness of unhappiness against the willingness of art to ignore suffering in his poem 'To A Critic':

You ask me why my simple life  
Is not tuned seriously to Life.  
What bird has ever gloomed his note  
For fear of days when he'll be not?  
What salmon for its roaring wall  
Has ever feared the waterfall?<sup>28</sup>

In this context we may recall his enthusiasm for 'the noblest example—Sophocles; the attitude of one who, realising that behind life is the ultimate sadness of death, yet sanely and largely makes the best of it, divine beneath the Fates,<sup>29</sup> and it is in a similarly Sophoclean mood that Gogarty directly addressed death itself, in one of his most abstracted, and beautiful, poems:

But for your Terror  
Where would be Valour?  
What is Love for  
But to stand in your way?  
Taker and Giver,  
For all you endeavour,  
You leave us with more  
Than you touch with decay!<sup>30</sup>

This is emphatically not the triumphalist verse it might appear were one ignorant of Gogarty's professional familiarity with mortality. Here death is not impotent but is, by that very power to ruin that the poem acknowledges, a catalysing source of elevated

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<sup>27</sup> This observation is also a partial corrective for those who would attribute the buoyant frivolity of Buck Mulligan to Gogarty.

<sup>28</sup> 'To A Critic.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 381]

<sup>29</sup> Carens, [Ed.]. *Many Lines*. [p.120]

<sup>30</sup> 'To Death.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 181]

spiritual response. In Gogarty's writing, he almost invariably introduces despair and misery to prove the dignity of perseverance or the nobility of vivacity and wonder. It is a mark of the strength of 'To Death' that one may read it without any knowledge of Gogarty's personal circumstances and nonetheless derive pleasure from it; yet it is revealed to be a more complex poem than it initially appears to be, when the reader also has the biographical information that Gogarty does not provide.

One further collateral observation is appropriate, in this context of Gogarty's understanding of poetics, regarding 'To Death.' Because Gogarty here expresses his reaction to death, yet offers no biographical context, it is impossible to know whether or not a specific death drove Gogarty to compose this poem. This biographical ambiguity of Gogarty's motives, as we shall see, is a common trait of his writings. Despite his enthusiasm for addressing enormous philosophical concepts such as death and love in verse, much of Gogarty's poetry appears to arise from biographical experience, but is then expressed in terms of its spiritual sensation, so that the actual biographical events (of death, or love, etc.) are subservient to their emotional or imaginative expression. This accords with Gogarty's belief that poetry emancipates one from the basic cares of life, and that poetry is a building anew and a magnification of life, not a photograph, or the reflection in a 'cracked mirror.'

Pursuing observation of this tendency, we note that Gogarty's two-faceted view of poetry as enlarging—setting free, and magnifying—helps to explain one of the most arresting aspects of Gogarty's use of self-presentation throughout his writings. This is his notion of the self in time. He repeatedly rejects biographical accuracy and chronological structure, choosing instead to present life as that series of experiences by which one's spirit and temperament were ennobled. To this end, he presents the dead as being equally present with the living, and much of Gogarty's

work is a loving recreation of friends and communities that he had outlived. Through his notion of poetry being an enlargement of the spirit, Gogarty employs the role of the writer to present his friends, and the most 'enlarging' moments of his own experiences, to his readers, in a poetry that thus transcends the physical deaths of the participants, because communicated to the larger community of readers. These issues will be dealt with more extensively in sections III and IV of this chapter.

## II. THE SELF, SELF-DEPICTION, & LIVED EXPERIENCE IN POETRY

It is telling that Gogarty's first poem in his first book—'To The Muse,' in *Hyperthuliana*—is a statement of what would come to be recognisably Gogartian examinations of the role of self, community, and the literary depiction of striving to transcend, through wonder and nobility, the banalities of life:

Mother, must Virtue be  
Always dejected?  
Is it a sin for me  
To live unaffected,  
Taking the Muses' part?...  
But to the few robust  
Friends who desire us  
Sing with the careless lust  
Song can inspire us;  
Then they will plainly tell,  
Reading it rightly,  
You, though I loved you well,  
Loved me but lightly.<sup>31</sup>

Gogarty's refusals to be dejected, his humorous self-deprecation, and his urge to give himself over to a reverie of poetic escape, are consistent throughout his work. Also

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<sup>31</sup> 'To The Muse.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 197, 199]

consistent is Gogarty's employment of a Gogartian voice to represent an apparently Gogartian figure, whilst avoiding biographical specificity. This section suggests that Gogarty avoids biographical specificity in order to emphasise the ennobling and transcendent qualities resultant from the lived experience being described, and to diminish the individual importance of the actual event itself.

Gogarty uses his life as his subject matter throughout his writings, and his poetry is no exception. Few poets are as personally present in their poetry as is Gogarty, whilst revealing so little factually about themselves. It would be exceptionally difficult to assemble a recognisable biography of Gogarty from references to his life in his verse. Gogarty shows little interest in recording specific biographical events from his life in his poetry, and focuses more of his attention upon the reaction that these events produced in him. As will also be true in most of his self-depicting prose, Gogarty's poetry tends towards revelation and reverie as being an individual's moments of greatest experiential intensity. Those transcendent moments of inspiration that Gogarty loves to record are moments selectively valued precisely because in them he glimpses something larger than himself, and thus escapes personal restriction, or commonplace existence. Accordingly, Gogarty throughout his poetry scatters images of escape, or emancipation, in which he leaves his body behind and travels spiritually or intellectually—most prominently in 'Non Blandula Illa.' Gogarty's poetical use of himself and his experiences is essentially devoted to the autobiography of his spirit, not to a record of his actual doings.

Yet despite being less than effusive in his provision of a clear biographical portrait, Gogarty writes about himself with heavy frequency, and his personality pervades his poetry. He only infrequently adopts personae, and tends to invoke a plausibly Gogartian 'I,' even when the identity of the first person singular is largely

irrelevant to the poem.<sup>32</sup> Most often Gogarty asserts himself, and his opinions, through this first person narrator who is unmistakably Gogarty, yet who does not offer significant biographical information or self-assessment.

Usually the narrator of a Gogarty poem is associable with Gogarty through a mutual voice: the shared penchant for humour, refusal to admit squalor or misery as subjects for verse, attraction to classical allusion and comparison, exuberance for life and experience, and a definite preference for spiritual expression instead of practical or specific fact. Furthermore, this voice often narrates poems in which Oliver Gogarty himself has no part, as 'Leda and the Swan' and 'Europa and the Bull.' This is the joking figure behind many lines that are not obviously self-depicting, but who nonetheless presents a consistent Gogartian figure. This background character is witty, casual, and loves surprising his readers. He is the major figure behind much of the facetiae, and he relishes writing poetry of the moment, to capture—even if in bad verse—the good spirit of a conversational exchange, a moment of banter, or merely just a passing observation. He seems particularly to enjoy an almost insouciant inconsequence, provided that the casual verse remains true to the moment it captures, and is not seen to be anything more than a good-natured effusion. It is this poetical personage who also underlies a number of Gogarty's most charming, and more serious (if thematically baffling) poems, such as 'Begone Sweet Ghost' and 'The Nettle.' Gogarty has very little to communicate in these verses, and nothing of it is strictly autobiographical, yet they are masterpieces of how to compose poetry out of authorial exuberance, and little else. Several of his most impressive compositional achievements are these joyous, improbable pieces, in which Gogarty ludicrously links mortality, love, and lust with a Donne-like humour—'The Nettle' and 'To the Maids

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<sup>32</sup> As, for illustration, his poem 'Alas!'

Not to Walk in the Wind' best exemplify this type of Gogarty's writing. In a similar manner, Gogarty's verse narrator frequently relishes a Cowper-like ability to find surprisingly poetical themes in hopelessly unpoetical inspirations, a tendency best evidenced in his *jeu d'esprit*, 'To a Mushroom.' Although this Gogartian voice rarely, if ever, provides biographical information about Oliver Gogarty, he nonetheless represents the boisterousness and confused exuberance that so many found to be Gogarty's dominant personal trait, and which caused his friends W. B. Yeats and Æ to be surprised when he first showed them the more classical strain of poetry with which he is posthumously most associated.<sup>33</sup>

Of course, the man Gogarty is not the inevitable figure behind the authorial 'I': his translation of Shah's 'To Shadu 'L-Mulk' places two distinct identities before Gogarty's own is even possible (the narrator, who is 'I'; Shah, who is 'I'; then Gogarty). But there is, generally, an identifiable trace of Gogarty in his work; there is nothing in Gogarty's poetry that recollects the dialogic multiplicity of personae and voices in, say, Pound's or Browning's writings.

It is one of the curiosities of Gogarty's poetry that, for a man with a remarkably diverse and active life, Gogarty's self-depiction in verse is notable for the absence of major events and influential figures in his life (such as his abduction by the gunmen who attempted to murder him, or the existence of his sons). Indeed, even Martha, his wife of fifty years, is incorporated, if anywhere, as an unidentified woman whom he addresses in some laboured guise as a Calypso, or a Helen. She is not unmistakably mentioned or addressed as herself. Prof. Lyons has noted this discretion as a central aspect of Gogarty's poetry: 'Gogarty was the soul of discretion.

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<sup>33</sup> Æ: 'I was astonished when he began to show us verses so finely carved...'; Yeats: [of the transformation of 'a wit into a poet'] 'I at any rate might have foreseen the miracle. Yet no, for a miracle is self-begotten.' Both reproduced in: Jeffares, [Ed.], *Poems & Plays*. [Æ: pp. XIX-XX], [Yeats: p. 238 ]



With the exception of Alice Steele, an Islip barmaid whose prettiness is praised in 'Winifred,' published in *Dana* in 1904, the lassies to whom he paid his tributes in rhyme remain unnamed.<sup>34</sup> Prof. Jeffares concurs, noting that 'Gogarty kept his private life private, permitting only very rarely indeed what we now realise are the barest of hints in a few poems about his married life and fatherhood.'<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps partially due to this belief (that personal matters deserve to be accorded a responsible discretion) that the publication of *Ulysses* caused Gogarty so much discomfort; it seems also to have impelled him towards an unnecessary lawsuit against the young Patrick Kavanagh.<sup>36</sup> As we shall see, Gogarty's later essays and memoirs will be attacked (most notably by Stanislaus Joyce) for the apparent hypocrisy of Gogarty's division between public and private life, and the appropriate probity of literary revelation. Yet that Gogarty felt this division intensely is indubitable, as his review of Sean O'Casey's *I Knock at the Door* reveals:

Should a dramatist unlock his heart? The answer is No. Nor anyone else for that matter. There is a decorum of Life which has to be observed, because within its bounds most of the world moves. To that one-third of the world's population which is in China decorum is religion.<sup>37</sup>

In this connection we have unusual evidence of Gogarty's reticence to publicise private matters—his infamous bawdry. It was perhaps this same conservative sense of discretion and decorum that made Gogarty suppress some his satires, parodies, and limericks, which represent some of his most skilful, and often

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<sup>34</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 62]

<sup>35</sup> Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 7]

<sup>36</sup> In *The Green Fool*, Kavanagh makes the observation, 'I mistook Gogarty's white-robed maid for his wife—or his mistress; I expected every poet to have a spare wife.' Gogarty sued, successfully. It is this event that Prof. Kenner describes as a crucifixion. In the context of the novel, the remark seems intended less to ridicule Gogarty than to reveal the narrator's rural naivety.

<sup>37</sup> OSJG. 'The Unlocked Heart' in *The Observer*. 12 March 1939. [p. 4]

most personal, poetry.<sup>38</sup> Several of his compositions in these genres remain definitional masterpieces of poetic parody, mockery, and jesting carnality:

Much have I travelled in those realms of old  
Where many a whore in hall-doors could be seen  
Of many a bonnie brothel and shebeen  
Which bawds, connived at by policemen, hold.  
I, too, have listened while the Quay was coaled,  
But never did I taste the pure obscene  
Much less imagine that my past was lean,  
Till this Kraft-Ebing out his story told.  
Then felt I rather taken by surprise  
As on the morning when I met Macran:  
And retrospective thoughts with doubts arise:  
Was I quite normal when my life began  
Of Love that tends to rural sympathies  
Potent behind a cart with Mary Anne?<sup>39</sup>

Despite his skill with the genre, it is particularly true of his bawdry that Gogarty preserved the distinction between what may pass amongst friends and what may be published, and his private verse did not appear in his lifetime. It is possible that Gogarty omits many biographically important events and individuals from his poetry because he felt their inclusion would, in a similar vein, transgress the appropriate division between publicity and privacy. His exact motives for keeping these verses private will likely remain unknown to us; yet in the bawdry we have evidence that, at the least, Gogarty was willing to suppress works that were widely regarded as being among his best efforts.

Where Gogarty reveals something factual about himself we find that often this personal poetry is an apparently simple recreation of the experience of being Oliver Gogarty—or at least someone who closely resembles him. His verse is full of

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<sup>38</sup> In his preface to Gogarty's 1923 edition of *An Offering of Swans*, Yeats notes that Gogarty was the author of 'the Rabelasian verse that we all copied,' which publicly acknowledges that such verse existed, although it is not included in the collection.

<sup>39</sup> 'On First Looking into Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.211]

indications of how he feels, either through description of some minor action ('I lie and wonder sleepily...'<sup>40</sup>) or of emotional state ('It makes me sadder day by day...'<sup>41</sup>). Not infrequently his expressions of interest or emotion are not objectively important, yet Gogarty records them to be true to his sensation, at a time or in a place; this tendency may best be seen in many of his numerous nature or landscape poems, in which he is irresistibly inspired by a location, and his presence in it, yet allows himself to write more about the track of his thought than about the location itself.<sup>42</sup> Yet, when openly writing of himself, Gogarty most commonly demonstrates an unusual capacity to write with absolute perception and exactitude about his interior life, whilst offering nothing concrete of his biographical life. An example of this would be his poem 'Angels,' in which he notes:

I am a lover  
Of Beauty and Splendour  
Lover of Swiftness  
Lover of Brightness<sup>43</sup>

This assessment is accurately revealing of his personality, but has no corporeal fixity whatsoever. One may best observe this tendency in his 'Fresh Fields,' in which nothing occurs outside the consciousness of the narrator:

I gaze and gaze when I behold  
The meadows springing green and gold.  
I gaze until my mind is naught  
But wonderful and wordless thought!  
Till, suddenly, surpassing wit,  
Spontaneous meadows spring in it;  
And I am but a glass between  
Un-walked-in meadows, gold and green.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> 'Dawn in Vermont.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.93]

<sup>41</sup> 'Just One Glimpse.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.63]

<sup>42</sup> See, among many others, 'Liffey Bridge,' 'The Crab Tree,' 'Thrush in Ash,' 'Perennial,' etc.

<sup>43</sup> 'Angels.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 79]

<sup>44</sup> 'Fresh Fields.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.97]

'Fresh Fields,' with its effective doubled consonants ('gaze' and 'gaze'; 'green' and 'gold'; 'wonderful' and 'wordless'; 'suddenly' and 'surpassing'; 'spontaneous' and 'spring'; and 'gold' and 'green') magnificently carrying the movement of the poem, is unobtrusively kinetic. Yet nothing happens or, rather, the narrator does not engage in any physical activity. Prof. Carens has written of 'Fresh Fields' that 'one has to turn back to the seventeenth century to discover in English poetry the capacity to render an ecstasy such as this with such simplicity, grace, ease, and gaiety.'<sup>45</sup> He also notes that 'here absolute simplicity of diction and economy of detail convey an experience that transcends reason.' Prof. Carens is on firm ground with his claims, for Gogarty's achieved (and artistically difficult) intention is to recapture in words the *reverie* of 'wonderful and wordless thought.' Yet here too the 'economy of detail' Carens praises is taken to such an extremity of withheld information that no plausible connection may be established with any specific event in his life. It is peculiarly Gogartian to recreate so personal an epiphany with this almost total impersonality of biographical detail. Whatever biographical experience there may be in this poem—if any—is subsumed by a conscious attempt to suppress causal specificity, in favour of explicating the sensation provoked.

One should note that Gogarty particularly relishes the impersonality and selflessness that the transcendent vision causes in him ('I am but a glass between...'), for in 'Fresh Fields' Gogarty not only experiences the vision that he describes, but is essentially lifted by it out of his physical reality. This enacts the poem's 'building

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<sup>45</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 84] Of course, in 'Vacillation' Yeats conveyed a similar, unexpected ecstasy as 'twenty minutes, more or less./ It seemed, so great my happiness/ That I was blessed, and could bless.' We may note that Yeats, unlike Gogarty, begins his poem with almost diary-like biographical description, describing not only the shop in which he sits, but also the arrangement of the commonplace items before him on the table. OSTJG: 'It comes rarely in rare lives; to the generality never. I knew a great poet who was overwhelmed by this bliss but once in his life. He felt blessed and able to bless. The mood lasted but twenty minutes; but those minutes were worth his earthly life span, for they were more than intimations. They were more than assurances. They were the actual experience of immortality.' OSTJG. *Intimations*. [p.81]

anew' of reality, instead of holding a 'cracked mirror' to it. Furthermore, the reader will find a similar role—that of a viewing glass between his readers and the society he records, instead of outright protagonist—in Gogarty's early prose. Yet a reader will also observe in this Gogarty's simultaneous assertion of personal agency ('I gaze and gaze') and impersonal transformation ('I am but a glass between un-walked-in meadows'). In this Gogarty gives a clearly articulated expression of what this thesis argues is his artistic interest in biographical experience: he finds particularly appealing those moments of life in which the event, the location, or the company provoke a transcendent reverie by which a greater reality is glimpsed. The catalyst itself may be utterly ordinary, as is a field, but it is the experience of spiritual and mental transcendence that Gogarty draws from his biography, not the event in itself. In this context we should again advert to Gogarty's poems inspired by landscape, location, and nature (particularly the Irish landscape), so that the inspiration of his physical location transports him into that mental exultation that inspires him to compose. We shall see that an analogous notion of the inspiration of *genius loci* will become an important part of his prose memoirs.

Æ saw in this attitude of lived stimulus provoking spiritual transcendence the essential tendency of Gogarty's poetry. As he notes in an 'Appreciation' of Gogarty:

In these poems an image or idea is always before the eye or the imagination...A girl running, a cold light on a flowering tree, a twisted branch, a carved gem will excite Gogarty's imagination, and he will often so lose himself in his dream that words are melted into the image, and surprise us with an iridescent grace.<sup>46</sup>

What Æ perceptively detects in Gogarty's work is Gogarty's proclivity to pursue a revelation, or a reverie, *beyond* the specific cause that engendered it: this is the enlargement or transcendence. As Æ correctly suggests here, the basic elements of a Gogarty poem are usually simple items ('a girl running, a cold light on a flowering

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<sup>46</sup> 'An Appreciation by Æ' in [Pond Lecture Bureau]. Promotional pamphlet. New York. 1932[?].

tree, a twisted branch...') that have provoked some 'dream' in Gogarty. What Gogarty poems truly address is neither the provocative thing itself that pleases Gogarty, nor the biographical description of his encounter with the occurrence or item, but instead the transcendent vision that the experience has engendered in him. The result of this is that, in both his poetry and prose, Gogarty tends to focus upon the subjective moment of revelation (Æ's 'dream') instead of more objectively regarding the specific facts being described. This creative approach succeeds in poetry, but it becomes problematic in Gogarty's later prose.

We may see this tendency to describe reaction to experience instead of the experience itself well exemplified in one of Gogarty's best and most typically Gogartian effusions, 'O Boys! O Boys!' (a poem sufficiently representative of Gogarty's outlook that Ulick O'Connor took from it the phrase 'The times I've seen' as the title of his biography). This poem, impelled by assertions of amazing experiences, is something of a thematic riposte to Gogarty's earlier 'The Ship,' wherein that narrator longingly recalls a squandered opportunity to voyage.<sup>47</sup> 'O Boys! O Boys!' tells of such opportunities seized:

O boys, the times I've seen!  
The things I've done and known!  
If you knew where I have been?  
Or half the joys I've had,  
You never would leave me alone;  
But pester me to tell,  
Swearing to keep it dark,  
What...but I know quite well:  
Every solicitor's clerk  
Would break out and go mad;  
And all the dogs would bark!

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<sup>47</sup> This poem too is an intriguing manipulation of verse as a means of moving beyond common reality. The ship offered the narrator a chance to escape from his routine existence; he did not sail with it, yet indulges a form of escapism in the memory of the ship, and the imagination of what his life might have been, had he sailed; and Gogarty makes the whole into a suggestive poem of escape, routine, regret, and dreams.

There was a young fellow of old  
Who spoke of a wonderful town.  
Built on a lake of gold,  
With many a barge and raft  
Afloat in the cooling sun,  
And lutes upon the lake  
Played by such courtesans...  
The sight was enough to take  
The reason out of a man's  
Brain; and to leave him daft,  
Babbling of lutes and fans.

The tale was right enough:  
Willows and orioles,  
And ladies skilled in love:  
But they listened only to smirk,  
For he spoke to incredulous fools,  
And, maybe, was sorry he spoke;  
For no one believes in joys,  
And Peace on Earth is a joke,  
Which, anyhow, telling destroys;  
So better go on with your work:  
But Boys! O Boys! O Boys!<sup>48</sup>

Much of the fascination of this accomplished and compelling poem lies in the insistent assertion of extraordinary experiences and the simultaneous refusal to provide details of even a single one of them. Indeed, few poems written in Gogarty's era so skilfully avoid their declared theme as does 'O Boys! O Boys!' The narrative claims that these experiences are worth hearing about are virtual aposiopeses, in that every time the narrator makes his assertion of fascinating biographical accomplishments, he promptly moves away from any specificity about those events. The embodiment of Gogarty's view of poetry offering an 'enlargement' is here evident, in that the speaker records in the poem his life of freedom and adventure to

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<sup>48</sup> 'O Boys! O Boys!' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 110-111]

convey a sense of wonder to an audience (and readers) whose lives are less adventurous—‘better go on with your work.’ The intentional avoidance of precise biographical detail, of course, also adds a pleasant teasing to the reader’s encounter with the poem. Gogarty’s refusal to provide this detail also, in fact, enacts the conceit of the poem—the narrator begins with the false implication that a group gathered about him has pressed him for tales, but he then leaves his allegedly amazing adventures in such ambiguity that, by the end, the reader is indeed tempted to ‘pester [the narrator] to tell’ what those adventures really were. By refusing specificity, Gogarty creates the curiosity that he merely proclaimed at the beginning.

A further effective trait of the poem lies in its advocacy of what it requires: a credulity when hearing of incredible experiences, indescribable pleasures, or incommunicable memories, and a suspension of cynicism when considering the wonderful. To insist upon the biographical specificity of the events the narrator relates is to miss the point of the poem, for the narrator states clearly that ‘telling destroys’ the experiences he extols. Yet the reader also notes that there is a profound autobiographical ambiguity here in the identity of the narrator. Although this is a good illustration of Gogarty’s ability to adopt the plausibly Gogartian ‘I,’ it cannot be asserted with certainty that Gogarty is, in fact, the speaker of the poem. There is no reason to discount him as a possible narrative figure, and the zestful relish with which he contemplates life is a consistent attitude found throughout Gogarty’s work, yet the nebulosity of the proclaimed experiences diminishes any precision with which the narrator’s identity may be established. We know only that he is someone rich in experiences, who exhorts the ‘boys’ to continue their work, and to whom the time of Marco Polo was ‘old.’ In this sense ‘O Boys! O Boys!’ is representative of Gogarty’s poetic habit of expressing identifiably Gogartian personality and philosophy without



directly recording his biography in the work. Whatever ‘the times I’ve seen’ may have been—and in Gogarty’s case, they would indeed have been exceptional—remain unspecified.

The patterns thus emerging are highly consistent throughout Gogarty’s poetry. Although he appears to use himself in his verse, and adopts a distinctly Gogartian voice, there is little direct biographical information in Gogarty’s poetry. In this strict sense, Gogarty’s poetry is almost never autobiographical. His incessant employment of himself in his poetry arises from, and expresses, more spiritual than biographical experience. Even where he appears to utilise events from his life, Gogarty’s focus remains (as in ‘Fresh Fields’) on the spiritual transcendence those events provoked in him, rather than upon any inherent interest of the activities themselves.

### *III. FRIENDS AND COMPANIONSHIP IN GOGARTY’S POETRY*

Gogarty was an intensely companionable man, one whose taste for ‘at-homes,’ pubs, and general garrulity reflected his sheer joy in interacting with other people. Ben Lucien Burman noted that this fascination with others lasted into Gogarty’s old age, and that it was generously indiscriminating:

I have sat with him until far into the morning, listening as some waiter or floorwalker or truck driver told Oliver of his hopes and desires, or related in great detail his ideas about world philosophy and literature. And Oliver, the most genuinely learned man I have ever encountered, would pay him the same respectful attention he would have given to the head of his own Trinity College.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> OSTJG [Ben Lucian Berman, Intro.]. *Week End*. [p. 15]

Yet Gogarty, despite the ease with which he formed friendships, had an intense devotion and loyalty to them, once established. In Gogarty's writings, friends are something like associate selves, people whose personalities enlarge one's own spirit in much the way he suggests poetry does. Appropriately, Gogarty often pays handsome tribute to his friends in verse, and relishes his ability to act as their advocate to a wider public. It will be a common occurrence in his prose as well for Gogarty to employ his art to make public the personalities of his private friends.

As Mary J. Regan notes, 'Gogarty derived much pleasure from praising his friends.'<sup>50</sup> Although poems of tribute and salutation about one's friends were by no means unknown in Gogarty's era—Yeats' 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited' is likely both the best known and most elegant contemporary Irish example of this genre—Gogarty is unusually notable for the frequency of his attempts to praise his friends in verse, and for his eagerness to publish individualised poems of praise. Indeed, there are no comparable poems of personalised tribute in the *Collected Poems* of Gogarty's friends and near-contemporaries, Æ, James Stephens, or Seumas O'Sullivan.

Despite the uncommon frequency in Gogarty's published work of verse about his friends, we should recall that he and his contemporaries engaged in poetry as a shared interest and a shared talent. On occasion Gogarty exchanged correspondence in verse with his poet friends, such as Seumas O'Sullivan, George Redding, and G. K. A. Bell. Prof. Jeffares' incorporation of Gogarty's private poetry into his recent edition of Gogarty's verse illustrates this, publishing several such epistles for the first time.<sup>51</sup> Gogarty and O'Sullivan also traded answers in verse, thus establishing a full

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<sup>50</sup> Mary J. Regan. *The Poetry of Oliver St John Gogarty: A Study of the Irish and Classical Elements*. Ph.D. Thesis. New York University, 1974. [p. 132]

<sup>51</sup> As, for one example, '[A Letter to Starkey from Dresden].' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 389-392]

conversation (thesis/antithesis) entirely in poetry.<sup>52</sup> Such exchanges were also carried out publicly, as Prof. Carens describes:

[Gogarty] addressed some lines to his good friend George Redding (2 July 1927) in another friend's newspaper, the *Irish Statesman* of Æ...It tells us something about the social and literary culture of Dublin in the twenties that George Redding (who held a managerial post in the Guinness brewery) replied in the same poetic measure, a fortnight later, and that a third correspondent then responded to both Gogarty and Redding.<sup>53</sup>

This further illustrates the unusually communal activity that poetry was in Gogarty's Irish social circle, in which individuals sent poems to one another, wrote poems about one another, memorised each other's works, parodied one another's verse, travestied great poetry over casual drinks, and spoke amongst themselves about poetry, in James Stephens' words, 'with the assured carelessness with which a carpenter talks of his planks and of the chairs and tables and oddments he will make of them.'<sup>54</sup>

Despite the frequency of such exchanges of friendly verse, Gogarty stands out particularly in his era as a writer for whom the joy of companionship was an incessant inspiration to composition. His work is replete with either directly tributary poetry ('To Æ Going to America,' 'To James Stephens,' 'To the Poet W. B. Yeats, Winner of the Nobel Prize 1924,' etc.), or poems not specifically intended as works of tribute, which nonetheless devote their attentions to depictions of Gogarty's friends ('To My Portrait, by Augustus John,' or, at the comical extremity, 'Threnody on the Death of Diogenes, the Doctor's Dog'). He also makes little distinction between his famous and his unknown friends, writing poems of roughly similar praise for men such as W. B. Yeats and Augustus John, as for such relative unknowns as Eugene F. Kinkead and George Redding.

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<sup>52</sup> As, for example, 'Praise and Friendship' and 'The Poet to the Physician/ The Physician Replies.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 228-229; p. 224]

<sup>53</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 54]

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 4]

What is most important in Gogarty's poetical depiction of friends is his preference for their subjective impact upon him, instead of recording objective descriptions of their persons, or their accomplishments. In this trait, Gogarty's depictions in verse of individual friends tend to portray them in almost exactly the same manner that Gogarty depicts himself in poetry; that is, his depictions of others tend to take a basic verifiable fact about them, and then to use that as the point of enlargement from which he takes a philosophical view of their meaning to him. In certain circumstances this results in Gogarty's creation of strange extended metaphors, such as the dining table of his (evidently obese<sup>55</sup>) friend becoming the site of a battle in 'To My Friend the Rt. Hon. Lorcan Galeran,' or his description of the cricketer George Bonass's death as being the drawing of the stumps for one who had been 'a right good bat and blade.'<sup>56</sup> Generally, however, Gogarty's tributes to his friends are straightforward praise, as in 'To Æ Going to America,' a lovely poem of devoted friendship that is, nonetheless, not effectively particularised to Æ, so that it might equally be about any of Gogarty's friends who happened to be going to the United States:

Dublin transmits you, famous, to the West.  
 America shall welcome you, and we,  
 Reflected in that mighty glass, shall see,  
 In full proportion, power at which we guessed:  
 We live too near the eagle and the nest  
 To know the pinion's wide supremacy:  
 But yours, of all the wings that crossed the sea,  
 Carries the wisest heart and gentlest.  
 It is not multitudes, but Man's idea  
 Makes a place famous. Though you now digress,  
 Remember to return as, back from Rome,  
 Du Bellay journeyed to his Lyre home;

<sup>55</sup> See, for a brief identification, Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 662]

<sup>56</sup> 'George Bonass.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 497]

And Plutarch, willingly, to Chaeronea

Returned, and stayed, lest the poor town be less.<sup>57</sup>

Although this poem records both Gogarty's love of Æ and commends Æ's 'wisest and gentlest heart,' it does not provide any specific information about Æ the man, why he is going to America, how he is going to America, or what he intends to do there. This general praise leads, here, to a strangely unfixed objective relation between poet and subject: Gogarty writes this high praise with almost the same impersonal admiration he expresses for the classical dead, yet nowhere does he note that the subject of this poem had also been, for decades, one of his closest personal friends. This lack of biographical specificity is, of course, largely attributable to the fact that this is a poem between friends—Gogarty has no need to describe Æ to himself. Yet Gogarty's refusal to include any biographical specificity make this poem equally applicable to any of Gogarty's friends; without a word altered, the poem could be addressed with equal success to W. B. Yeats, James Stephens, Seumas O'Sullivan, Jimmy Montgomery, etc.

Part of the reason Gogarty writes of others in rather unspecific terms of praise is directly related to his own notions of self-presentation, most specifically that concept we noticed as his determination to use an inspiring event as a portal to transcendent perception. This shift from the physical to the spiritual impact of another is particularly appropriate for Æ, whose work abounds with mysticism, transformations, and spiritual selves emerging from the shell of the material body. Yet Gogarty applies this technique pervasively. When writing verse about others—except in the bawdry—Gogarty almost always records the impression of higher spiritual values that they embody, or that they inspire in him, but not specific records of their

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<sup>57</sup> 'To A. E. Going to America.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 48-49]

doings. 'To Major Eugene F. Kinkead (Sometime Sheriff of Hudson County, New Jersey)' is an illustrative example of this:

Major, who steadily upheld the Law,  
Not by strong armor but the greater might  
Of human kindness and the sense of right  
Which those in insurrection felt and saw;  
And, though they had not given in to Awe,  
Trusted a man so fearless and upright  
And rich in understanding, with their plight;  
And gained a vindication without flaw.

Man's doom is doubtful; but one thing is clear:  
That Good beats Evil down in spite of skaith;  
And when I come across a man like you  
Serene amid the discord and sincere,  
Belief in human nature cheers anew  
By re-confirming, when it flags, my faith.<sup>58</sup>

Here Gogarty's treatment of Kinkead is less accurate in depicting Kinkead himself, than in recording the almost Malorian impression of probity and knightly legality that Kinkead evokes in Gogarty. Indeed, Gogarty's depiction of Kinkead is, in a certain sense, ludicrously inappropriate for a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century county sheriff in New Jersey: Gogarty presents a man by whose agency 'Good beats Evil down,' and one to whom 'strong armor' is unnecessary as he intimidates 'those in insurrection.' Yet this is almost precisely the same technique of individual presentation that Æ noticed as Gogarty's allowing a vision to mingle with the real inspiration until the vision itself becomes the poem. By presenting the impression Kinkead makes, instead of recording strictly accurate biographical information about the sheriff, Gogarty offers a distillation of Kinkead's subjective impression on Gogarty as a person, and communicates the essence of Kinkead's personality to the poem's readers in a way that a biographical sketch would not transmit. Throughout Gogarty's career he prefers

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<sup>58</sup> 'To Major Eugene F. Kinkead (Sometime Sheriff of Hudson County, New Jersey).' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 272]

this atmospheric and impressionistic presentation of people whom he remembers, and companionships he records, to factually based reconstruction. This is also true, as we have seen, of his tendency to present himself through his personality and inspiration instead of through description of his activities.

In this regard Gogarty's interest in self depiction, and in the literary presentation of others, is often based around the notion he expresses in his poem 'To Maurice Baring': 'To judge you by the things you love and praise.'<sup>59</sup> Gogarty often writes of his friends, in both his poetry and prose, as a means of indirect communal self portrait: praising the characters and accomplishments of his friends is, as we will observe, Gogarty's first, and most clearly articulated, method to portray himself in his prose. He does not conceal the self-reflexivity of such portraits of friends for, as he observes in his poem 'Praise,' 'My song is half a ruse/ To praise myself in you.'<sup>60</sup> It is notable, in this context, that Gogarty often writes scathingly of others in his unpublished work, yet almost never publishes personal portraits in verse of those who disgust or dispirit him.

This tendency of Gogarty's, of course, is clearly associable with his belief in the two-fold enlargement that poetry offers. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the role of the friend for Gogarty is incessantly aligned with the escape from the self into a better, or less transient, perception of existence. Because he often employs experiences of such transcendence as stimulus to his poetry, it is predictable that he also uses the inspiring influence of his friends in his verse. Perfect evidence of this may be found in Gogarty's poem in praise of his Trinity College Dublin classics professor, Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, 'Aeternae Lucis Redditor':

Old friend, long dead, who yet can thrive

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<sup>59</sup> 'To Maurice Baring.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 327]

<sup>60</sup> 'Praise.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.158]

More in my heart than men alive  
Because in you the flame lived more  
Than ever since the days of yore  
When, everywhere that Rome was known,  
The post-triumphal silence shone,  
And in the vespertinal hush  
The trumpet yielded to the thrush:  
Because those days you could restore:  
Aeternae lucis Redditor.

You shared with us the mood serene  
That ruled the universal scene  
When Peace was guardian of the poor,  
And only rusty was the door  
Of Janus, and the pillared shade  
Revealed the studious colonnade:  
The toga with the purple hem,  
The temple that with quiet flame  
Acclaimed the distant Emperor,  
Aeternae lucis Redditor.

Too seldom on this world of ours  
Unwrackt the eternal radiance pours.  
Again we shall not see it pour  
As in the days and nights before  
We lost the wide Virgilian calm;  
Days when we sought to earn the palm—  
Through the endowment of a wit  
Which made us eligible for it—  
From you who were Wit's arbiter,  
Aeternae lucis Redditor.

'Twixt you and me and me and those  
Irremeable the River flows  
Since we beheld with joy and awe  
The light by which blind Homer saw.  
And not again in this our time  
Shall sound magnanimous the rhyme;  
The wolves have torn our pleasant folds,  
And the Great Wall no longer holds.



But Love can bridge the Stygian shore,  
Aeternae lucis Redditor.<sup>61</sup>

Biographically, this makes little sense as tribute to a Victorian Dubliner. Revealingly, however, Gogarty's high praise for his friend is that Tyrrell spiritually evoked a golden age, but one in which Tyrrell himself never lived, the Roman ('...those days you could restore.') It is the *spirit* that Gogarty finds of essential interest in estimating a person—himself or another—and not the mere chronological facts of an individual's existence. This belief will have three significant repercussions in Gogarty's prose: 1) it will underlie his initial attempts to present himself through his milieu in his early prose, 2) it will be the essence of his attempt to create a character study of Saint Patrick, and 3) it will form one of the central points of contention when his disdain or disinterest in chronology leads to imprecisions that are questioned by scholars seeking facts about his associates.

In this connection one notes Gogarty's insistence upon the essential irrelevance of chronological accuracy to personal experience. Gogarty's assertion that 'Love can bridge the Stygian shore' has a later resonance in his self-depicting writing, for most of his literary work attempts the recreation of his past, either through individuals or small groups. The notion that personal affection establishes a continuity in the consciousness between those who are dead and those who remember them is at the heart of Gogarty's writing. It is here most evident in Tyrrell's ability to revive 'the mood serene' of the Roman era, and to 'thrive more in [Gogarty's] heart than men alive.'

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<sup>61</sup> 'Aeternae Lucis Redditor.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. Poems & Plays. [pp. 187-188]

#### IV. TIME AND MEMORY IN GOGARTY'S VERSE

In his poem 'The Forge' Gogarty refers to succumbing 'to the English curse Of mixing philosophy up with verse.'<sup>62</sup> Yet few poets write as consistently about philosophy, philosophical issues, and abstracted reactions to existential questions as does Gogarty. This approach of necessity implies a great deal of personal subjectivity, for many of Gogarty's philosophical poems, even where they appear not to be personalised, of course bear the shape of his thought, his study, his profession, and his character. As we have just observed in 'Aeternae Lucis Redditor,' however, the issue that gives him the most frequent subject is his attempt to reconcile time, death, friendship, and memory. These are, of course, vast questions, and Gogarty's skill in presenting them with lyrical lightness is notable. But it is in his considerations of time that these strands come together, and most significantly influence his recollective self-portraits.

Although Gogarty's poetry is famous for its composed view of mortality, it frequently demonstrates a passionate detestation for both the passing of time, and for the structures by which time is measured, such as calendars, clocks, and pub closing times. Gogarty's objections to time as a restriction, particularly where time assumes a defining or a delimiting influence, are largely invariant throughout his poetry. His usual contention is that time is too often the measure of experience when, in his view, the greatest experiences are those that, again, offer one an experience transcendent of oneself. In his most concise formulation of this view, Gogarty argues that he wishes to 'make the heart Time's measure,'<sup>63</sup> for time will 'surely at last enmesh before I can save in verse the timeless traits of the flesh.'<sup>64</sup> Although this conceit is an old one, Gogarty presents verse as the conduit by which finite existence (the 'flesh') expresses

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<sup>62</sup> 'The Forge.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 57]

<sup>63</sup> 'Time, Gentlemen, Time!' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 166]

<sup>64</sup> 'I Tremble to Think.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 159]

its 'timeless traits'—a symbiosis whereby, if done well, the expression itself becomes timeless. This view is consistent with his general treatment of biographical experience as being most worthy of poetic expression at precisely those times when it generates a perception of timelessness, or, in Gogarty's terms, presents a revelation of the spirit's 'timeless traits.' In this context the reader recalls Gogarty's equation of Yeats's twenty-minute sensation of being blessed and able to bless as an experience of immortality.<sup>65</sup>

The importance of this philosophy of time for Gogarty's prose and verse self-depictions lies in the unusual way in which he views, and represents in literature, his life. Instead of beginning his books in childhood, then progressing generally towards whatever age he was at composition, Gogarty almost inevitably chooses highly selective, highly subjective episodic narration. He thus gives a biographical account of himself that is a highly credible depiction of his spirit, personality, and preferences, yet is signally distorted, where not inaccurate, as an actual participant's record of the times and individuals Gogarty records.

In numerous instances in his poetry Gogarty explicitly makes the claim to be writing against time as a restriction on the spirit. In 'The Casting,' the effect of his pouring 'into the mould of rhyme all that my heart would hold'—which he then details to be such impermanent matter as 'transient light on the tower, the moat in its wintry gold, sunlight and a passing shower, the gleam of your garments' fold'<sup>66</sup>—is 'to temper Beauty from Time.' He has so exalted a view of the permanence of poetry

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<sup>65</sup> See footnote 43. OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 81]

<sup>66</sup> 'The Casting,' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p.31] Observe here too that all of the matters Gogarty specifies as being worthy of preservation in rhyme are unimportant in themselves, and matter only to a percipient who values them. They are also essentially incorporeal, thus lacking even the most basic form of existence in time—physical presence. This is roughly analogous to Gogarty's tendency to present the effusions of the spirit, instead of the physical actions of the body that provoked the reverie.

in the face of time and mortality that he claims for it the essential continuity of human knowledge:

What should we know,  
For better or worse,  
Of the Long Ago,  
Were it not for Verse;  
What ships went down;  
What walls were razed;  
Who won the crown;  
What lads were praised?  
A fallen stone,  
Or a waste of sands;  
And all is known  
Of Art-less lands.  
But you need not delve  
By the sea-side hills  
Where the Muse herself  
All Time fulfils,  
Who cuts with his scythe  
All things but hers;  
All but the blithe  
Hexameters.<sup>67</sup>

In his 'Ode' for the Tailteann games Gogarty makes the yet stronger claim that poetry generated by ennobling events may actually counteract the restrictions of time, even the ultimate limitation of death, for in verse 'Loveliness we can renew unrestricted by its date, and the brave man's death undo. We can bend the neck of fate.'<sup>68</sup>

Gogarty's conception of poetry as something timeless produced by, but surpassing, time is further utilised in his odes of tribute to personal friends. The most accomplished of these is his 'Elegy on the Archpoet William Butler Yeats Lately Dead,' where Yeats's death is described as a transformation from the physical body into poetry: 'Now...you are a Song and your life has come to an end and you wholly

<sup>67</sup> 'Verse.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 31-32]

<sup>68</sup> 'Ode.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 37]

belong to the world of Art.’<sup>69</sup> What is perhaps most unusual in this work is that Gogarty partially sets aside transcendent depiction, and instead proclaims the preservable quality of his work to be precisely those impermanent aspects of Yeats’s life that would otherwise be forgotten.<sup>70</sup>

The world knows well your rhymes,  
But I would depict you to please  
The men in coming times  
By a picture of you in these  
And make them as grateful to me  
As I would be could I find,  
Searching past history,  
Troubled Euripides  
Or unvexed Sophocles,  
By some contemporary mind.<sup>71</sup>

This claim to write lasting verse by writing specifically about lost physical details gives an unusual and effective twist to the traditional elegiac lament for the dead. The reader will note, however, that Gogarty’s tendency to portray verse as a product of time that surpasses time is, in fact, not significantly disrupted by this ‘Elegy’; the very reason Gogarty’s poetry of commonplace details will be valued is because Yeats himself has already guaranteed the vitality and permanence of his perceptions in his own poetry.<sup>72</sup> Gogarty, in the unusual position of writing to the future about one whose permanence is assured, allows himself the pleasing conceit of preserving the transient physical characteristics of his subject. This he does, with a degree of precise detail that is surprising in Gogarty’s work, for those who are accustomed to his tendency to write of more abstracted characteristics:

The noble head held high,

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Elegy on the Archpoet William Butler Yeats Lately Dead.’ Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 189]

<sup>70</sup> Yet Mary Colum asserts that this poem ‘does give a living character; it really does show what Yeats was like.’ Mary Colum. [Review of *Elbow Room*] in *The New York Times Book Review*. 12 April 1942. [p. 5]

<sup>71</sup> ‘Elegy on the Archpoet...’ Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 189-190]

<sup>72</sup> Already ‘the world knows well [Yeats’s] rhymes,’ and the interest of ‘the men in coming times’ implies that their interest is based on Yeats’s poetry still being valued.

The nose with an eagle's gaze,  
The sharp appraising eye,  
The brown unageing face,  
The beautiful elegant hands...<sup>73</sup>

It is unsurprising that Gogarty should present time as an unpleasant force in his odes of tribute to dead friends. Similarly, it is not unusual that he employs the traditional conceit that something of the dead lives on when the dead are recalled by the living ('Old friend, long dead, who yet can thrive/ More in my heart than men alive...').<sup>74</sup> Yet what is most notable in Gogarty's treatment of death, poetry, timelessness, and memory here in 'Elegy' is this effortless depiction of imperishable accomplishment as the action of perishable physicality. Yeats, who in his life made immortal verse, has died; Gogarty, relying upon the strength of Yeats's verse to interest people in the future, writes a poem to preserve the personal attributes of the man he knew. Gogarty's artistry in this tribute is of an accomplished level, particularly in the transformation between the first line's proclamation that Yeats as a physical being has 'become a song' because of the devotion to art he demonstrated whilst living, and the poem's last line, which collocates Yeats's physical and creative lives in 'lips that murmured metre till the end.'

The salient importance of time and memory in Gogarty's verse is that, throughout his literary career, Gogarty will present friendship, memory, and art in a triple relation that keeps the dead, and the past, present as inspiration to the living. His attempts to record his past are thus not merely the incessant recollections of an ageing man, but are a conscious attempt to recreate in art the most impressive and luminous individuals, and eras, from his memory. Gogarty's belief that art records the most transcendent moments in life, and that it then preserves them against time, explains

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<sup>73</sup> 'Elegy on the Archpoet...' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 190]

<sup>74</sup> 'Aeternae Lucis Redditor.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 187]

his tendency to ignore mere biographical description in favour of recording companionship, enlargement, or wonder.

#### V: CONCLUSIONS FROM THE POETRY

Although the breadth of Gogarty's interests in poetry is wide, and the self-depicting element is only a part of his total poetical expression, we have noted four primary elements of self-depiction that are fundamental to his verse. The first is his notion of poetry as being dissociated from strict biography or verifiable fact, preferring instead the sense of wonder or transcendence that a biographical moment may contain. In this context we have noted Gogarty's definition of poetry as being 'a rhythmic spell to enlarge the spirit,' in which the enlargement is both a magnification of perception and an emancipation from routine and everyday existence.

Secondly, we have noted Gogarty's general hesitancy to employ factual or descriptive biography in his poems, and his preference for writing about abstracted issues arising from experience, instead of recording the experience itself. These tendencies are allied with Gogarty's generally self-diminishing role in his verse, where his frequent first-person presence is nonetheless more in the form of a commentator or describer than active shaper of the expression. As we shall see, this is analogous to his role in much of his prose memoirs, particularly his early works such as *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, *I Follow Saint Patrick*, and *Tumbling in the Hay*, where he persistently diminishes his own role in favour of collective group portrait.

Third, we see in Gogarty's poems that this social role appears commonly in the form of tributes and personal addresses. Gogarty's employment of poetry to praise and greet his friends testifies to the high value he set upon both his friends and his verse. Yet he also infrequently notes their habits or physical characteristics, and instead regards their effect upon him, or suggesting that they evoke particular cultural values he applauds. By this technique Gogarty writes of his friends in much the same way he writes about his experiences, depicting their interest as lying primarily in their capacity to provide a view of existence and personality that is 'enlarging,' or transcendent of commonality. Furthermore, his descriptions of his friends tend to be in the forms of high praise, so that he creates a type of self-portrait by extension—a concern that manifests itself throughout Gogarty's prose, which is most clearly expressed in *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, but which pervades Gogarty's writings in the form of individuals being defined by their chosen associates, and by the company they form collectively.

Finally, we have noted that Gogarty views poetry as being an art form somewhat akin to the most inspiring effects of thought, or friendship, in that they all provide a similar sense of escaping time. As we have seen, particularly in his odes to his friends, Gogarty aligns verse, friendship, and vivacity against his perception of time as restrictive, and omnivorous. He seeks, in his own words, to 'make the heart Time's measure,' and he posits that even dead friends can be more real than living men, if the companionship of the dead is sufficiently valued. Here again he employs the facts and individuals from his life to attain a detached view of existence, so that one's understanding of life and time is defined by philosophy and friendship, not routine and mortality.



Gogarty's view of poetry was somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, he was almost reverential about the power of poetry to make a person, or an emotion, endure, and he felt keenly the communicative and consolatory force of poetry (particularly classical) when it addressed the hurt and disappointment in any life. He felt and wrote that poetry had an intense capacity to inspire and, indeed, he suggests this 'enlarging' quality as being normative for defining poetry. On the other hand, however, Gogarty and his friends wrote poetry casually, socially, and often with intentional scurrility and outright indecency. He wrote, with equal contentment, disciplined verse about enduring philosophical questions and extempore squibs about utterly transient occurrences. He was patient in working and reworking poems that he felt expressed a serious thought, yet he was also slapdash and easily satisfied with poems he knew to be minor effusions. This paradoxical view of poetry—reverential of its grace and capacity for permanence, and workmanlike in its willingness to employ verse for common, transitory, and occasionally almost meaninglessly minor ends—gives Gogarty's poetry a breadth of form, content, and tone that is highly distinguished among his contemporary compatriots. But this breadth can also distract an assessor from the central facts of Gogarty's hope for poetry: that it provide an escape from mundane cares, and offer a dignified view of life and society. Recurrently in his verse, Gogarty strives to attain these effects by writing of events from his life, or about his friends, using as illustration the personal and philosophical 'enlargement' that he derived from them.

### CHAPTER 3

#### SACKVILLE STREET AND THE GRAMMAR OF GREATNESS

This thesis has already observed that Oliver St. John Gogarty began his professional literary career unusually late in life.<sup>1</sup> Although Gogarty wrote much occasional verse, and he published the poetry collections *An Offering of Swans* in 1923, *An Offering of Swans and Other Poems* in 1924, *Wild Apples* in 1929, and *Selected Poems* in 1933, at this time he (like Eliot, Stevens, Williams, and numerous other contemporaries) did not derive his primary income from literature, and remained a practising physician. It may be that his continuing obligations as both a Senator and a doctor delayed Gogarty's prose debut until the 1937 publication of *As I was Going Down Sackville Street*, when he was already 59 years old. It was only in the late 1930's, in the period roughly correspondent with the publication of *Sackville Street*, that he wound down his medical practice and concentrated on writing professionally for a broader public. This transition from private to public artist proved important for Gogarty's subsequent writing, as he spent much of the rest of his life writing memoirs about the friends and events of his first sixty years.

*Sackville Street* begins Gogarty's experimentation with memoir, and self-presentation in prose. It was perhaps natural—and it was certainly marketable—for him to write his memoirs, for by the late 1930's he had established a firm public reputation as a wit, a conversationalist, a friend of the famous, an amateur poet of note, a bon vivant, an Irish Senator, and a character in *Ulysses*. There was, therefore, a general public

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2, footnote 1.

curiosity about Gogarty, so that *Sackville Street* was ‘widely anticipated before its appearance.’<sup>2</sup>

Gogarty, however, does not present *Sackville Street* as being either autobiography or memoir, preferring to suggest that it represents a ‘phantasy in fact.’ He may have resisted the descriptions of ‘memoir’ and ‘autobiography’ in the fear that his reminiscences would be seen as a retrospective chronicle of a life winding down. That he began his professional writing at an age when many people retire perhaps made him particularly sensitive to this suspicion. Gogarty would have been vulnerable to such an interpretation, as his recollective texts frequently juxtapose a fondly remembered past against a dispiriting present. This might have made Gogarty fear that his literary essays about the people and events of his youth and middle age would be seen not as aesthetic preferences, but merely as signs of life slowing into recollection.

Whatever its foundations, Gogarty’s dislike of the idea of memoir and autobiography manifests itself in *Sackville Street* as a rebellion against the unnatural barrier that retrospective assessment establishes between a life and its literary record. Instead of offering his reminiscences, therefore, Gogarty records incidents from his past as they are still present in his consciousness. To this end Gogarty, in *Sackville Street*, attempts a form of memoir that is an engaged interaction with life, not a summary issued from a dispassionate remove. In an interesting confession in *Sackville Street*, Gogarty conflates facts and reality with boredom, and a too-great rigidity of thought: ‘I cannot bear unmitigated facts for long...[I have] a mind that had to fly if Reality was becoming too rigid—in other words, my inability to stand boredom.’<sup>3</sup> For Gogarty, the act of

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<sup>2</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 110]

<sup>3</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 252]

recollective writing is only partially an act of memory, for it also involves measures of revitalization and recreation in the authorial present. The most notable example of this tendency in *Sackville Street* is the peculiar and virtually unprecedented chronological structure by which Gogarty recreates three eras, with what appears to be proximate accuracy, yet orders them backwards. Throughout his literary career, Gogarty grapples with these differing impulses to record precisely, or to recreate with license, his previous life.

This chapter is divided into nine subsequent sections. The first section notes Gogarty's determination to avoid textual centrality in what are evidently his own memoirs, and to offer the central role of the work to the city of Dublin itself. It finds that this will have further repercussions in Gogarty's later works, where he repeatedly avoids taking the central roles in his texts, preferring to let others, or the collective society in which he participates, become the textual focus of his writings. The second section notes that Gogarty introduces a central theme of his life's artistic work—as interpreted by this thesis—the communication, through memoir and self-depiction, of 'the grammar of greatness.' This section notes the first appearance of this concept, and calls attention to the intimate, subjective, social portraits of accomplished individuals that Gogarty begins here, and makes his literary work. The third section assesses Gogarty's unusually extensive undermining of authority and authorship in *Sackville Street*, and argues that this too is attributable to Gogarty's insistence upon the mutuality, plurality, and interchange of Dublin, which cannot be reduced to one individual's conception or authorship. In the fourth section, observing a closely allied phenomenon, this thesis notes Gogarty's assertion that he conflates 'phantasy' and 'fact,' and it asserts that Gogarty's text

frequently implies a relation to the factual world for narrative effectiveness, whilst simultaneously allowing itself the minor play with fact that permits humorous invention. The section suggests that this tendency will also have importance in Gogarty's later work, where the accuracy of his memory becomes a matter of contestation; here, this section observes that Gogarty questions the independence of fact and invention even in his first, apparently largely accurate, memoir. The fifth section assesses the role of Gogarty's symbolic figure Endymion, and sees in him the temporal regression that Gogarty uses to symbolise a consistent Gogartian literary concern, that of the interactivity of the past and the present. The section argues that, in *Sackville Street*'s structure, the dead and the living, and the past and the present, intermingle; Gogarty enacts that interaction in the regressive time structure of *Sackville Street*, and it is by Endymion that Gogarty symbolises this ability of the spirit to triumph over time, even to the point of moving backwards through time. The sixth section assesses the specific role of the Gogarty persona, and observes that the general synonymy of Gogarty and his narrative persona is appropriate to the memoir form, yet deflects any manner of reflection, self-assessment, or confessionality that might be found in the genre of autobiography. The seventh section briefly contrasts Gogarty's approach to recollective self-depiction in *Sackville Street* with the book's most clear influence, George Moore's trilogy *Hail and Farewell*. This section finds that, although they are similar in their approach to the social representation of accomplished society in Dublin, the relation of each author to his representative narrative persona in the work is significantly different, reflecting the attitudes of each man to the society he depicts—Gogarty praises the society of which he writes, whereas Moore seeks to make his subjects seem faintly ridiculous. The eighth section briefly asserts that the

most important issues at stake in the *Sackville Street* libel trial are not the suggestions of defamation and anti-Semitism that are usually detected in these proceedings, but instead are their substantiations of Gogarty's depictions of authorship, accurate citation, and social depiction by conversation that Gogarty attempted in *Sackville Street*, and later. The ninth section is a short summation of the chapter.

#### I: CENTRALITY & THE 'PERSPECTIVELESS' MEMOIR

The treble interrelations of Gogarty's life, his role as author, and his reflection in the Gogarty-persona of *Sackville Street* are complex and, at times, inconsistent. From its publication, *Sackville Street* has been seen as directly representing identifiable events and individuals from Gogarty's life; we shall see that this correlation was implicitly upheld in a legal case. No figure occupies the foreground of *Sackville Street* as frequently as does the Gogarty character. Gogarty further assumes a choric role throughout, commenting upon his friends with affection, upon himself with humorous self-deprecation, and upon de Valera and his followers with disgust. Despite the primarily social focus of *Sackville Street*, there are several passages that occur only within the Gogarty persona's mind (such as his description of his thoughts and sensations as he flies his airplane over Dublin), of which only Gogarty could inform the reader. Gogarty also seizes numerous opportunities to offer his opinions through his narrator's role, even in instances where the Gogarty figure of the book is already taking part in the conversation. Virtually everything that

occurs in the book occurs within either Gogarty's presence, or is generated by his thoughts.

Yet *Sackville Street* is not properly autobiographical. It is not, in any reasonable sense, a book about Oliver Gogarty, not does it show any significant development of his thoughts, spirit, or personality. The Gogarty persona's personality is largely static within the book, despite the varying conditions around him; that is, despite his personal dynamism, the Gogarty character is barely altered by the passing decades, showing no significant process of maturation or development. Although he is present in virtually every instance recreated in the book, he is infrequently singled out for particular attention, and often becomes a secondary figure in the generality of a social discussion. His prominence in conversational scenes, of which the book is largely composed, is emphasised more by his authorial commentary on the scene than by the actions of the Gogarty persona within it. Instead of occupying the focus of the reader's attention, the Gogarty persona's role is more that of being the reader's guide through Dublin, than the evolving focus of the reader's attention.

This unexpected duality of the apparently central figure—a narrator who conducts his reader everywhere, and yet whom the reader is not encouraged to view as the primary subject of the work—has led Prof. Carens to describe *Sackville Street* correctly as enacting 'the quest for heroic value, for an active identity.'<sup>4</sup> Yet Gogarty does not accept the notion of an individual hero: he does not assert that role as his own, assigns it to no other specific individual, and offers his friends individual tributes without declaring of any that he is the ideal. Furthermore, Gogarty does not himself seek a hero as such: although Gogarty offers extraordinarily high praise for several figures (the most

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<sup>4</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 119]

prominent being Talbot Clifton, W. B. Yeats, Arthur Griffith, and Michael Collins), there can be no real suggestion that any is the 'hero' of the work, for they are encountered as occasional tonics, men whose peculiar isolation from their age (either through nobility of character, as Clifton, political dedication and sacrifice, as Collins and Griffith, or intensity of artistic genius, as Yeats) makes them precisely *unrepresentative* of the period depicted in *Sackville Street*. Each is individually accomplished and admirable, yet none is the focus of the book, for they are exceptions to the sweep of conformism and mediocrity that *Sackville Street* observes, and opposes, in the Ireland slowly succumbing to de Valera.

Despite Gogarty's refusal to nominate an autonomous hero, there is a clearly articulated hero of *Sackville Street*, and it is one that appears with a frequency almost as great as that of the Gogarty figure himself: the city of Dublin, and specifically, the society of people with whom Oliver Gogarty associated in the years the book chronicles. Gogarty explicitly draws the contrast between his own centrality in the work—which he firmly rejects—and his desire to make Dublin itself the 'hero' of *Sackville Street*. When in Chapter IV Kurt Kelner (an American literary agent) asks Gogarty for 'the whole show...all your memoirs,'<sup>5</sup> Gogarty replies that the necessary discretion of his medical profession forbids public reminiscence. Although ethically understandable, this objection is contextually impertinent, and Kelner is rightly unconvinced by Gogarty's dissuasion.

Kelner presses his suggestion:

But, sure, Doc., you could do a book that would not give away any medical secrets. You have been right through the whole movement and you knew all the figures of your own

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<sup>5</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 58]



time. You could include an historical perspective from the inside that would be a valuable contribution when the history of the time comes to be written.<sup>6</sup>

Gogarty promptly rejects this suggestion; he introduces Kelner's pleas because they define what Gogarty rejects of the traditional form of literary recollection. Gogarty employs them so that he may openly address, and dismiss, the subject of personal memoirs. Gogarty then places his own view before Kelner, and the reader; what Gogarty proposes is not his own autobiography, but that of the city of Dublin itself:

Don't expect me to write a perspective. The only way to treat this town is the way the Chinese treat their pictures: eschew perspective. Perspective is too facile...But if you make Dublin the hero of a book and let it portray itself as it is every day, you may get an effect such as the wisest of Masters, the Chinese artists, achieved.<sup>7</sup>

These two conceptions—that of *Sackville Street* as the collective self-portrait of an entire city, and of the need to 'eschew perspective'—were absolutely central to Gogarty's intentions in writing the book.

The notion of *Sackville Street* as being without perspective is one that Gogarty claims to have borrowed from Desmond MacCarthy: 'Perspective is too facile. Read Desmond MacCarthy's wonderful description of a Chinese landscape in his *Experiences* to realize my idea. Taking a point of view, any point of view, is certain to fill one with sorrow.'<sup>8</sup> MacCarthy's description is an important, unaccountably neglected insight into what Gogarty attempted in *Sackville Street*, as it accords exactly with Gogarty's subsequent depiction of Dublin's literary society:

As often in Chinese pictures, everything in this one seems to hang enskied. The cunning disposition of the figures, of the blossoming trees (happy the country which has no perspective!), of the little boat upon the lake, in which ethereal yet courtly beings sit amicably together, seems to lift a scene of earthly beauty into the atmosphere of a soft enchantment. The gestures of this courteous company are those of boon-companions,

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<sup>6</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 58]

<sup>7</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 58]

<sup>8</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 58]

entirely at ease with one another. But to what a delicate feast have friendship and the graces led them! Calm and composed they sit in timeless intimacy, participating at once in the pleasures of humanity and the immunities of disembodied souls...No doubt they are conscious of the passage of the hours and the fragility of happiness, which the falling blossom recalls; but with what inward security, with what bland acquiescent irony they remember! Surely they would laugh, if laughter, too, had not been left behind in this region, where they have been gently weaned from all mortal concerns—except the most refined of simple pleasures, and unending intimacy...It is the paradise of an affectionate people, who feel that it is not through the passions, but thorough a kind of detachment—philosophic, religious, aesthetic?—I do not know which to call it—that men draw closest to each other.<sup>9</sup>

As we will see, Gogarty found this passage highly suggestive, and he borrowed numerous conceptions from it. His primary borrowing, however, was that of the ‘persectiveless’ country, which he explains as giving *Sackville Street* the characteristics of ‘a Chinese masterpiece, where everything has the same value in space...past and present [have] the same value in time.’<sup>10</sup> Gogarty expresses this equality of past and present even more clearly in a letter of 22 March 1937 to his friend Horace Reynolds: ‘The only world that exists is my own consciousness; and the dead are in that, as much alive as the living; more so when they are remembered more vividly. Hence thirty years of life all contemporaneous.’<sup>11</sup> This explication is by far the most revelatory statement Gogarty ever offered of his intentions for the structure of *Sackville Street*. It is unfortunate that this explanation was confined to a private letter, for there is little in the published text of *Sackville Street* that suggests Gogarty’s odd structure for the book was intended to mirror consciousness itself. Gogarty’s published assertion that one ought to ‘eschew perspective’ makes little sense without the qualifying information that Gogarty sees

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<sup>9</sup> Desmond MacCarthy. ‘The Chinese Ideal’ in *Experience*. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press. 1968. [pp. 69-70] It may be that this passage influenced Yeats’s ‘Lapis Lazuli,’ and I am grateful to Prof. Terence Brown for calling my attention to this possibility.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in: Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 124]

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in: Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 124]

perspective as unnaturally ordering the free-movement of consciousness between the past and the present. By this attempt to write a work of memory entirely contemporaneous with itself, however, Gogarty has found his formal means to record his reminiscences without writing direct autobiography. He thus establishes the unusual conceit of the 'perspectiveless' Chinese painting, by which he attempts to equate the spatial flatness of Chinese painting with the temporal equality, or flatness, of events in the recollective consciousness.

This conception of the temporal equality of the past and the present to the mind is a theme that Gogarty retains throughout his career. This thesis has noted, in the second chapter, that Gogarty makes his poems of tribute and recollection an important facet of his later verse writing. Predictably, Gogarty continues to insist upon the interpenetration of the past and the present when many of his close friends start to die. Similarly, in his prose, Gogarty will often recreate the people and events of his past life, not merely as an attempt at recollection, but in the belief that the influence of a valued friend is not lost to one who keeps it renewed in the spirit. Furthermore, committing that act of renewal in writing offers a public testament that spreads the influence of a friend or a mentor beyond recollection, and promotes the inspiring qualities of the remembered individual, whether that person be a Yeats, a Tyrrell, or a George Redding. Although much of his later work may be read as 'cashing in' upon the famous acquaintances from his earlier years, this thesis argues instead that this notion of literary tribute through recollection is a manifestation of the central aspect of Gogarty's work—the recording of his experience of spiritual enlargement, particularly when inspired by others, and thus to preserve and disseminate 'the grammar of greatness.'

As part of his effort to 'eschew perspective', Gogarty claims to Kelner that he shall 'make Dublin the hero' of *Sackville Street*. Kelner says nothing about writing about Dublin itself—and, indeed, he requests only Gogarty's reminiscences of the era—but Gogarty replies with his proposal to make Dublin the centre of his book. This juxtaposition is informative. By thus attempting to diminish his personal authority and centrality in *Sackville Street*, Gogarty is apparently striving to achieve a greater fidelity to the events and people he describes. It is not to be his work alone, with his various biases and opinions, but will attempt to recreate the collective effusion of the entire polis as participated in by Oliver Gogarty.

*Sackville Street* is thus primarily a social work. Although Gogarty spends most of his attention observing the best of Dublin society, he does not present mere character portraits (a type of writing he would do later in his career). In *Sackville Street*, however, Gogarty presents even his most accomplished friends in social settings. There is no more common activity in *Sackville Street* than friendly conversation, yet this is not merely to accommodate Gogarty as a famed conversationalist. Instead, the frequency of conversation represents in two ways Gogarty's determination to offer a 'perspectiveless' portrait of Dublin. The first of these is, of course, the inherent multiplicity of views that arises from an exchange of ideas, instead of the singularity of a monologue, or of the direct authorial control of an autobiography. Unlike a typical autobiographical text, in which the subject's voice overrides all others, Gogarty dislikes monopoly of even part of a conversation: 'I detest the set story which is brought to dinner, as obvious as a stud on one's shirt. I prefer personalities...' <sup>12</sup> Although the main characters in *Sackville Street* do not commonly disagree, and they have no significant conflicts of opinion that Gogarty

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<sup>12</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 117]

depicts, their penchant for discussion ensures that many voices, and thus many personalities, appear with Gogarty's in the text. We know that this emphasis on personalities was Gogarty's storytelling style in person as well, for one of his friends (Lord Dunsany) records Gogarty telling a story identifiable as one which Gogarty later relates in *Sackville Street*, that of Talbot Clifton leading Gogarty on a hunt for a stag:

To sit at dinner with Oliver Gogarty is to be entertained by many personalities which he will assume in the course of the evening. I have seen him, for instance, in a smoking-room turn suddenly into a didactic Highland laird showing a novice how a stag ought to be stalked. The stalk was a very good one, advantage being taken of every scrap of cover provided by any chair that was met on the way; indeed, after a short homily in a whisper, the laird was actually about to shoot, when he noticed that his gillie had neglected to bring his rifle. The oaths that then broke out from the thwarted sportsman made one forget that a Dublin surgeon was talking in a smoking-room; they somehow seemed too breezy for four walls.<sup>13</sup>

The other manner whereby the numerous conversations in *Sackville Street* work to prevent Gogarty's perspective from overwhelming others is the intimate entrée to his friendships that the conversational style gives to his reader. Although, of course, Gogarty controls the narrative as a whole, the thematic illusion created by so much conversation is that we the readers are with Gogarty as he pays his social calls. Gogarty does not disburse his friends' comments only in reported speech, which would emphasize his authorial intervention between his friends and his readers, but instead gives the illusion of allowing readers in to observe the conversation. This has the thematic effect of reinforcing Gogarty's view of Dublin as primarily social in its interests, for the book appears to invite its readers to enter into the 'courteous company' that Gogarty inhabits, instead of asking us to observe this company through his interposition, and thus through his interpretation

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<sup>13</sup> Lord Dunsany. *My Ireland*. London: Jarrolds. 1937. [p. 41]

as well.<sup>14</sup> *Sackville Street* is determinedly concerned with the social and conversational energies of Dublin, often to the exclusion of even the barest physical description of the locations or collocutors it presents.

There is one other aspect of Gogarty's treatment of conversation and interaction in *Sackville Street* that deserves notice. This is the political aspect that lies in his extraordinary recreation of one of his 'at-homes' in Chapter XI. Although Gogarty here apparently attempts to convey the social pleasure of the moment when the 'Angelic Anarchist' Æ first encountered the practical man-of-action Michael Collins, there is an insinuating, menacing undercurrent to the chapter. As Æ, Collins, James Montgomery, an American Senator named Phelan, Gogarty, and several unnamed female students from the United States conduct their conversation, they are frequently interrupted by the noise of gunfire and explosions in the street outside. The notion of the interruption is important, for the entire chapter contrasts exchanges: the pleasant exchange of ideas in conversation, best embodied by the gentle mystic Æ, and the simultaneous exchanges of gunfire in the streets of Dublin. Gogarty's subtle evocation of these contrasts is masterly, particularly in the lightness with which he appropriates conversational terms and applies them to violence, thus calling the gunmen Æ's 'hecklers,' having Collins ask Æ to speak by using the phrase 'Blaze away!,' and noting that the men of his (Gogarty's) bodyguard 'reply' to the fire directed at them.

There is, of course, a thematic importance to this comparison of conversational and violent exchange that goes beyond the mere skill with which Gogarty wrote it. That importance lies in the misery and disruption that de Valera is alleged to inflict upon

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<sup>14</sup> This collective depiction of Dublin is in sharp contrast to Gogarty's depictions of his later home, New York City. On Gogarty's depiction of himself in, and the society of, Manhattan, see chapter 8.

society by his devotion to his one idea: the assumption of political power. In *Sackville Street*, de Valera's response to discussion and exchange is gunfire and retort, violence being his attempt to force upon the Irish the 'revolution [that] is De Valera's idea of evolution.'<sup>15</sup> In this context it is revealing that Gogarty's high praise for his friends the Laverys is that, in their home, 'men could meet as human beings beyond the scent of herded wolves, and exchange views and reveal difficulties,'<sup>16</sup> but Gogarty cannot host a friendly discussion in his own home without the company being disrupted by de Valera's gunmen. *Sackville Street* itself repeatedly demonstrates the perseverance of Ireland's cultural elite amidst the growing politicisation of Irish society, a process that Gogarty attributes to de Valera. Although certainly the historical de Valera was a far more complex, and less villainous, man than the figure invoked in *Sackville Street*, this depiction nonetheless exemplifies well what Gogarty so detested in the notion of perspective—a single, overriding idea that resists questioning, and would impose itself upon others. Throughout *Sackville Street*, Gogarty presents the image of contemporary (1920's and 1930's) Ireland devastated by de Valera, whose only passion is blind adherence to 'hatred mistaken for patriotism,'<sup>17</sup> and whose words (as military orders) exterminate his betters: 'What an unlucky shake-hands De Valera gives! He shakes hands to speed Collins and Griffith to London. They are dead within a year.'<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in Gogarty's presentation of this 'at-home,' the menace posed by de Valera's intrusion is not a mere literary device, but is real and perilous; Collins is dead within a fortnight of

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<sup>15</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 171]

<sup>16</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 241]

<sup>17</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 200]

<sup>18</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 184]

the 'at home': 'A few weeks later Emmet Dalton sent that key back from the blood-stained tunic of a murdered man.'<sup>19</sup>

Gogarty's refusal to adopt a specific perspective, despite Kelner's proposal ('you could include an historical perspective from inside'), is determined, and Gogarty specifically adverts to the misery caused by accepting one perspective ('Taking a point of view, any point of view, is sure to fill one with sorrow'). Gogarty instead chooses a different type of presentation, and thus a different type of self-depiction. He will be defined not by explicit self-portrait, or by his actions and opinions, but by what he chooses to observe—most particularly, the people with whom he associates and the events he chooses to record. In this he is precisely comparable to the subject in the Chinese painting he evokes at the book's end. In an observation that is surely intended to modify his earlier comparison of *Sackville Street's* structure with Chinese painting, Gogarty reflects, 'I like to think about Dr. Bodkin's story of the Chinese mandarin who sat for his portrait looking at a landscape through a window with his back to the artist. His choice of landscape was a better clue than his face to his true self.'<sup>20</sup> We shall see that Gogarty uses this method throughout much of his subsequent career, for it enables him both to replicate the friendly social exchanges he makes one of his literary staples, and to demonstrate his philosophical belief that one's reality is determined by choosing optimism over pessimism, and by admiring only the admirable. This role—that of the observer self-defined by what he chooses to observe—is the role Gogarty adopts for his own.

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<sup>19</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 172]

<sup>20</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 255]



Gogarty thus establishes an unusual structure for memoir and self-depiction: his reminiscences are not aimed primarily at elucidating his own life, but are intended to illustrate the cultural life of his milieu (here, largely Dublin). He is a decentralized participant observer, whose own life is enacted against the larger background of the city, which itself becomes the primary focus of the narrative. Even Kelner's claims for the value of Gogarty's book are strangely passive, being that he had 'been right through the whole movement' and 'knew all the figures,' neither of which is an accomplishment specific to Oliver Gogarty. In the terms of his Chinese painting metaphor, Gogarty is not (as in most autobiographical writing) both subject and artist, a self observing itself; his own character, like that of the mandarin, is revealed more by his choice of landscape than by any attempt at self-description.

## *II: THE GRAMMAR OF GREATNESS*

The question then immediately arises of what Gogarty chooses to observe as a means of decentralized self-depiction amidst a 'perspectiveless' portrait. Gogarty's choice of landscape is emphatically not, however, his posited aim of allowing Dublin to reveal itself 'as it is every day.' Just as the Chinese men MacCarthy notes are not a random rabble, but are instead a 'courteous company' of 'boon-companions,' so Gogarty's Dublin is also a highly selective cultural portrait of the city, with rigorously

exclusive boundaries. The Dublin of *Sackville Street* is, for example, essentially masculine. There are few significant female characters (only Mrs. Clifton and Lady Lavery reappear regularly, and they with their husbands), and married men—including the Gogarty persona—are usually encountered without their wives. Of these men, Gogarty tends to meet only the most culturally, politically, or academically significant figures of Irish society, and largely fails to encounter labourers, tradesmen, servants, or the unemployed. *Sackville Street* in this sense crucially lacks a true social diversity; here, we observe only the upper strata of accomplishment, character, and talent. Moreover, these cultural figures Gogarty meets are generally depicted in their social, not professional, contexts. The important work these people pursue is left to stand for itself. Indeed, no one in *Sackville Street* seems to have an employment. As he was to do for most of his literary career, Gogarty here primarily illustrates the intimate characters of his publicly recognized friends. The reader does not see Yeats, Moore, or Æ writing; nor does the reader see Tyrrell, Mahaffy, or McGurk (Macran) teaching or conducting researches; neither Augustus John nor Æ paints; and General Michael Collins enters the book in no more military a setting than Oliver Gogarty's Ely Place 'at-home' for drinks and conversation—although de Valera's gunmen shadowed him to the door.

The implication of Gogarty's focus is clear, and it largely repudiates his previous pronouncement that he would allow Dublin to 'portray itself as it is every day.' He does not intend to give a portrait of commonplace, everyday, Dublin, but instead chooses to represent the social milieu of the distinguished. As he observes in the most important passage of *Sackville Street*:

How can such things be translated to those who have lost, or have never known the grammar of greatness? Something better than ourselves! There must be something if not

of the courtier, then at least of the flunkey, in my composition. I like to have people better than myself about me. They radiate on me a security similar to that Julius must have felt when he had men about him of his own liking. Every Irishman loves an aristocrat. In all the sagas of Erin there is not the name of a commoner mentioned. Even the charioteers were noblemen. Let my critics digest that. Anyway, I dearly love a Lord, and I think I can analyse the reason; he stands for an established order of things, for a household of continuance with the obligations its traditions confer.<sup>21</sup>

It is desperately unfortunate that Gogarty's self-deprecating humour in admitting to being a flunkey has obscured the clear statement of community and literary values that he offers in this passage. By focusing on those who are 'better than ourselves,' Gogarty engages in his policy of self-definition by the choice of his subject. Just as, in his poem 'Angels,' Gogarty asserts that 'nations are judged/ by their capital cities,' so too in *Sackville Street* Gogarty seeks to assess Irish society in its capital, and by the greatest figures in that capital city. Gogarty's 'choice of landscape' is the highest level of Irish social, artistic, and political accomplishment; he is interested in that which is 'better than myself,' and he is distinctly uninterested in the common or ignoble. Prof. Carens has correctly noted that there is 'a constant impulse in *Sackville Street*'s author himself to achieve imaginative release from the terrestrial,'<sup>22</sup> and Gogarty states explicitly that he derives this spiritual ascension from the influence of those people who are his superiors: 'Blame me not at all or as much as you like when I honestly betray what may not be called a weakness in me, but a yearning towards the better than myself, to the "Beyond Man."'<sup>23</sup> Gogarty defends the inherent elitism of this approach, noting that he is writing in the long-established tradition of Irish sagas: 'In all the sagas of Erin there is not the name of a commoner mentioned. Even the charioteers were noblemen. Let my critics digest that.' Yet

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<sup>21</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [pp. 243-244]

<sup>22</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 120]

<sup>23</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 244]

Gogarty's paramount intention is not merely to praise the accomplished—the action of a 'flunkey'—but instead to relate his experience of knowing them 'to those who have lost, or have never known the grammar of greatness.'

Here too Gogarty has created for himself a paradoxical authorial position. In his attempt to write a book in which Dublin 'reveals itself as it is every day,' he essentially ignores the average Dubliner in favour of those necessarily atypical people distinguished as being 'something better than ourselves.' Yet Gogarty's intention is not to provide accurate, or inclusive, social observation: he is much more interested in the social milieu created, particularly in Dublin, by a social and creative elite. That these figures are defined by merit, and not by fame, is a point of importance, for Gogarty offers roughly similar amounts of space to his unknown poet friend George Redding as he gives to his world-famous poet friend W.B. Yeats. Gogarty knew himself to be unusually fortunate in being acquainted with many of the most accomplished people in the British Isles, whether or not they were publicly recognized, and he uses *Sackville Street* to translate 'the grammar of greatness' to the general public. The frequent attention he gives to the socially or artistically prominent is intended to be illustrative and inspiriting, not needlessly exclusionary. The great and noble are, Gogarty suggests, not merely instructive to the national life, but necessary for the full potential of the society:

Not only do my countrymen believe as I do that there is something innate in noble beings that may not be achieved fortuitously—Pindar had a faith much like it—but it is borne out by the fact that they cannot do themselves justice if far removed from the inspirers of their chivalry. They must not be separated far from their springs of valour, which are in their case the aristocrats...<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 244]

It should also be observed that, despite the obvious clarity and sincerity with which Gogarty expresses himself here, his own encounters with the elite are often humorously self-mocking, thus deflating *Sackville Street*'s occasional social pretensions. In fact, Gogarty is no flunkey, and not much of a courtier. Although he confesses to liking the social elite, he also emphasizes his differences from them with self-deprecating comedy. Gogarty thus adopts the role of the reader's passepartout, granting entrée to the most select society, yet maintaining a modest, observational position with his reader. Gogarty moves, admiring and bemused, among the great, but he claims for himself no particular place of prominence among them. Whether lying in a puddle during a hunt, or needing to leave an ambassadorial party to prove his friend's existence, Gogarty happily exposes his own social awkwardness in the highest society. Yet in this comedy is a point crucial to *Sackville Street* as a whole: the great are inimitable individuals, whose inspiring companionship is as desirable as their examples are irreproducible. The Gogarty persona is as out of place when hunting with 'the Overman'<sup>25</sup> Talbot Clifton as *anyone* would be—not because the reader, or Gogarty, is under-accomplished, but because Clifton is that much better than everyone else: 'An unique and dominating personality which cannot or will not express itself within the measures of mediocrity is reduced to the survey of us who can never be his equal.'<sup>26</sup> He fascinates Gogarty by the example of his irreducible and unrepeatable individuality.

To this end, Gogarty profiles Clifton to show 'the grammar of greatness' to the reader by recreating the companionship of a truly great individual. Curiously, however, of the friends by whose example Gogarty illustrates greatness, only Clifton and Dunsany

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<sup>25</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 218]

<sup>26</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 218]

naturally fit the profile Gogarty proposes—‘he stands for an established order of things, for a household of continuance, with the obligations its traditions confer.’ This argument superficially seems to defend a nobility of birth. But although these criteria may be applied to genetic inheritance, it is the example of mental and spiritual nobility that Gogarty himself most frequently emphasizes. Neither Arthur Griffith nor Michael Collins was born to ‘a household of continuance,’ and both pursued socially disruptive careers, yet Gogarty offers them only praise. W. B. Yeats was not aristocratic by birth, but Gogarty praises him for his taking a personal stand for dignity against decay: “‘Unless we are to let the country drift without a protest into the loutish ways of the bog, we must stand for the observances of good manners. We must wear tall hats.” The grandeur innate in the man was coming out.’<sup>27</sup> It is the *innate* quality of Yeats’s grandeur that Gogarty admires, despite the fact that it must be coaxed from him by a comic appeal for wearing tall hats. In a similar approval of instinctive superiority, Gogarty again and again praises friends for acting alone against massed uncivil forces: ‘[Talbot Clifton] waited alone, with his Purdey in his hand; alone, to hold up, how many armed men? He did not care.’<sup>28</sup> ‘I take my hat off—well, a better hat than this—to Dan Breen, who, single-handed, shot up a lorry load of ruffians such as these, and then, wounded with his arm hanging useless, came back for more.’<sup>29</sup> ‘Just like Collins to walk about unaccompanied by a guard after nightfall. Just like Collins unhesitating to attack regardless of odds. Just like Collins to send his enemies flying before the terrible exhibition of his courage.’<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 114]

<sup>28</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 151]

<sup>29</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 268]

<sup>30</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 172]

Gogarty's examples of 'the grammar of greatness' all suggest one of the most notable contradictions in *Sackville Street*. This is the tension between Gogarty's stated attempt to write a 'perspectiveless' memoir, and his persistence in diverting his reader's attention towards the inspiring examples of 'those better than ourselves.' Despite Gogarty's claim that he will write in such a manner as to 'eschew perspective,' he in fact goes to considerable lengths to exclude the ignoble and to praise the best in Irish society. His 'perspectiveless' study is, in fact, a highly Gogartian survey of social and personal achievement. Gogarty never resolves this contradiction of intentions, but its existence helps to explain the dual role Gogarty assumes as character and as a narrator. It is generally true that where Gogarty the character engages in conversation, or finds himself in some humorous escapade, *Sackville Street* maintains its attention upon the group, and upon the social nature of the encounter; yet where Gogarty seeks to reveal 'the grammar of greatness,' that grammar, being by virtue of its greatness inassimilable to generality, provokes Gogarty into direct comment and individualized illustration. Of course, there are exceptions to this tendency, yet it represents the closest Gogarty comes to reconciling the wide, 'perspectiveless' scope of *Sackville Street* with Gogarty's determination to record his own preferences for the bold, the genial, and the wise.

### III: AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORITY

There is another aspect of *Sackville Street* that represents the profound suspicion with which Gogarty viewed memoirs and perspective, and this is *Sackville Street's*

relentless disputation of authorship and authority. Although *Sackville Street* is clearly accurate in numerous substantive, and usually verifiable, details, Gogarty also exerts himself to distance *Sackville Street* from the lived reality that it purports to describe. He subtitles the work, 'A Phantasy in Fact,' but there seems to be little that is fantastic, invented, or even notably inaccurate in the text. This is an observation that also applies to his prefatory 'note,' 'The names in this book are real, the characters fictitious.' As Prof. Carens has correctly observed, 'In fact, not even all the names are real, for Gogarty has modified some of the original names.'<sup>31</sup> Gogarty's modifications, however, in no place significantly obscure any real individual. The most prominent replacement of a name changes (Henry Stuart) Macran to M'Gurk, but his identity remains immediately ascertainable, as M'Gurk occupies Macran's position as the Professor of Logic in Trinity College, Dublin. As this is an uncommon calling, there can be little doubt about whom the M'Gurk identity represents. What is particularly strange about these minor alterations, however, is the fact that the most prominent figures appear without modification: Yeats is Yeats; Moore is Moore; Joyce is Joyce; Collins is Collins; Griffith is Griffith; and Gogarty—although rarely addressed by name—is apparently Gogarty, and is several times noted as 'Oliver' or 'Alliver.' Eamon de Valera, of course, appears under his own name.

More important than Gogarty's minor alterations to the names of his minor characters, however, is the outright inaccuracy of Gogarty's claim that 'the characters [are] fictitious.' The characters are patently not fictitious. In fact, much of the interest of *Sackville Street* would be lost were the characters fictitious, for one of the book's enduring attractions is Gogarty's easy interaction with the great individuals of his era.

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<sup>31</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 130]



Gogarty's insistence upon the grammar of greatness requires his subjects' reality. Indeed, any significant departure from the actuality of his distinguished friends would diminish the value of Gogarty's work as an exemplary presentation of the best of Dublin society, recreated from Gogarty's memory. Yet most of the known characters in *Sackville Street* conduct themselves in a manner entirely consistent with their public personae. His portrait of George Moore, for example, corresponds perfectly with Moore's own self-amused self-depiction in *Hail and Farewell*, Gogarty's Æ speaks with the kindly, impractical spirituality that characterizes Æ's prophetic poetry and prose, and Gogarty's Michael Collins is the courageous, practical figure of a youthful general. Indeed, only regarding Gogarty's hostile depiction of Eamon de Valera might one make the case that he grossly misrepresented a known figure. In this context, Gogarty's lifelong detestation of de Valera suggests that *Sackville Street's* extremely negative portrait was, nonetheless, not an intentional misrepresentation, but accurately conveyed Gogarty's impression of the man. Although the Gogarty persona only once encounters de Valera in *Sackville Street*, he is blistering in his denunciation:

There were no Englishmen about when [Collins was assassinated], but Mr. De Valera was not far away, he who has done more damage in a decade to our country than England did in seven hundred years. England never sapped Ireland's morale. De Valera and degeneration are synonymous.<sup>32</sup>

Gogarty's unmitigated detestation of de Valera becomes a dominating theme of *Sackville Street*, for Gogarty blames de Valera for the cultural diminishment that *Sackville Street* observes. In a sense, this constancy of accusation acts against the effectiveness of *Sackville Street*, as de Valera's persistent infamy becomes less inciting than monotonous. Yet even in the extreme case of de Valera, Gogarty's persistent accusations and vitriol

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<sup>32</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 99]

depend for their effect upon the identifiability of *Sackville Street's* de Valera with the real historical man. Too great an excess of anger would have rendered Gogarty's portrait of de Valera unrecognisable, or actionable—as it already almost is.

Gogarty's hatred of de Valera was of a severity that Gogarty never permitted to diminish, so that his complaints against him become one of the most unchangingly recurrent aspects of Gogarty's writings. This is regrettable, as Gogarty nowhere convincingly matches evidentiary proof to the extremities of his denunciation; Gogarty's rhetoric is invariably excessive when attacking de Valera. It is necessary to observe in Gogarty's defence, however, that the ferocity with which he curses de Valera was common in Gogarty's social circles. Frank O'Connor noted that one night Gogarty's gentle friend Æ 'really frightened me' by flinging his arms over his head in a rage, and crying 'I curse that man [de Valera] as generations of Irishmen to come will curse him—the man who destroyed our country!'<sup>33</sup> Another of Gogarty's close friends, Michael Collins, openly made the accusation against de Valera that Gogarty was to make later: that de Valera was the greatest enemy Ireland had ever faced: 'And I say, deliberately, that in doing so [keeping antagonisms within Ireland alive] Mr. de Valera and his followers are proving themselves to be the greatest enemies that Ireland has ever had.'<sup>34</sup> Even Wyndham Lewis, who had no obvious connection with Irish politics, and whom Gogarty does not seem to have met, assailed de Valera in print, calling him 'that old bourgeois ranter of a Valera,' and rebutting the rumour that de Valera was Jewish by noting 'He hasn't the brains! He hasn't the honesty! He's a grandee from Castille I tell

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<sup>33</sup> Frank O'Connor. *My Father's Son*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. 1968. [p. 113]

<sup>34</sup> Michael Collins. *Free State or Chaos*. Political Pamphlet: No Publisher's Data. 1924 [?: NLI speculative date] [last of four unnumbered pages]

you.’<sup>35</sup> These excoriations of de Valera suggest that Gogarty’s excessive rhetoric in attacking de Valera, whilst not a convincing aspect of Gogarty’s works, is not exclusively Gogartian in its vehemence.

As a further complication of Gogarty’s presentation of authorship and authority, the reader finds that throughout *Sackville Street* Gogarty presents the act of writing as an unusually indeterminate exercise in truth and invention. His subtitle and prefatory warning have already been noted as both affirming and repudiating the reliability of *Sackville Street*. In this context Gogarty’s depiction of George Moore is, although small, revealing, for Moore spent a lifetime courting public scandal by writing unreliable accounts of what he alleged happened to or around him. In the *Sackville Street* episode in which Thornley Stoker’s mad wife bursts naked into a dinner party, it is Moore who is ‘particularly’ conjured by Stoker—because of this reputation—to keep this private episode from attaining a public scandal. Moore’s prompt reply is perfectly consonant with what the real Moore may have said (and his biographer, Aidrian Frazier, has repeated the anecdote, citing *Sackville Street* as his source, although Frazier cautiously relegates it to an endnote<sup>36</sup>): ‘But it was charming, Sir Thornley. I demand an encore.’<sup>37</sup> Perhaps this occurred precisely as Gogarty relates it; perhaps it never occurred; yet the matter of importance is that it is Gogarty, not Moore, who reveals the tale. Gogarty thus creates a Chinese-box conundrum of authorial reliability: Moore, known for his embroidery of the truth to present scandalous, unreliable memoirs of his life, is alleged to have been handed a wonderful episode in reality, and yet does not write about it—all of

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<sup>35</sup> Wyndham Lewis. *The Revenge for Love*. London: Cassell. 1937. [Penguin reprint 1982]. [p. 136]

<sup>36</sup> Aidrian Frazier. *George Moore*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2000. [p. 562]

<sup>37</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 293]

which appears in the work of another writer, who was himself present, but who states that all of his characters are fictitious.

Even when he is dead Moore dominates a scene, as he does when Yeats and Gogarty strive to distinguish between Moore's creativity and his textual reliability. Their discussion is almost wholly comic, particularly in that the absurd theories they exchange about Moore are expressed with an almost believable seriousness: 'Do you think George Moore was impotent?' 'I don't know. It is rare for a man to be impotent. He may be unable to propagate, but organic impotence must be very rare.' 'Was he a man?' 'He had the pelvis of a woman, as artists are said to have. There is little to be deduced from that.'<sup>38</sup> They acknowledge that Moore invented stories about himself incessantly ('he was recounting with a reminiscence so devoid of melancholy that I suspected it was but a work of the creative imagination...'<sup>39</sup>), yet they use his writings as evidence of both Moore's unreliability *and* his factuality. Here too we detect a significant multiplicity of conflicting authorial reliabilities and inventions: Yeats and Gogarty use gaps or improbabilities in Moore's writings as evidence of his inventions ('Moore never tells what the woman did...because she was not there'), yet they then use those same writings to detect other factual peculiarities of Moore's ('I have just been reading George Moore's *Memoirs of my Dead Life*. And a question keeps rising in my mind...This is the question: Do you think George Moore was impotent?'), which may themselves have caused him to invent untruths in the first place ('he was a great artist and greatly loved art...[he had to] defend himself from Reality and common-sense. Had he not said, "We must keep up the illusion."'). One should also note of this passage, although it has sadly gone unnoticed,

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<sup>38</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 110]

<sup>39</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 111]

that it is a wonderful, affectionate mimicry of Moore's style; Gogarty's sly tribute to Moore's writing is wittily evocative of Moore's own books, into which two people discussing, with ludicrous earnestness, the sexual impotence of a mutual friend as revealed by his scandalous novels, would fit perfectly.

Of course, Gogarty's presentation of these two episodes is primarily comic (as is Moore's other significant episode, in which he contracts weeping eczema), despite the serious issues of authorial reliability they raise. Yet these two episodes, although they are themselves full of internal contradictions, both raise a fundamental concern of *Sackville Street*, which is whether or not a work of memory must be reliable, or whether the memoirist may embroider the details to better capture the larger atmosphere of the time being recreated. Gogarty notes that his own preference is for occasionally allowing details to vanish to improve the general image: 'It is good to let the eyes relax and to lose accommodation on wide prospects.'<sup>40</sup> This preference will shape his first major works of prose, and will remain present in his later works, but its concomitant impatience for precise detail will expose Gogarty to the allegation of intentional misrepresentation in several of his later recollective writings.

In a similar vein, Gogarty litters *Sackville Street* with authors whose works are either stolen directly from others or are detectable inventions passed off as reality. A few examples of this must suffice to illustrate the extensive pattern. George Redding's poems are attributed to Gogarty by partygoers who deny Redding's existence: 'They insist on believing that I am the author of all your verse; and that I use your name to save my own'<sup>41</sup>; James Montgomery gets credit for Gogarty's poems: 'But look at the position in

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<sup>40</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 142]

<sup>41</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 73]

which I find myself! Between George, whose excellent verse and solid presence are attributed to me, and Monty, who wants to make me into a kind of George for himself,<sup>42</sup>; Yeats accuses Moore of inventing his literary love affairs: ‘Moore never tells what the woman did. Why? Because she was not there!’<sup>43</sup>; and Joyce disappears from a pub snug not to write his own words, but to record words he overheard Gogarty speak: ‘ “Whist! He’s gone to put it all down!” “Put what down?” “Put *us* down. A chiel’s among us takin’ notes. And, faith, he’ll print it.” ’<sup>44</sup> This repeated conception of authorship itself being a borrowing from others reinforces Gogarty’s claim of the need to represent Dublin only by ‘perspectiveless’ writing, for the active life of the city is a communal expression. Any attempt of one individual to impose an artistic structure upon it will inevitably misrepresent the reality of the whole. Although he makes no direct comparison, his absolute determination to depict Dublin as mutual, multi-vocal, and conversational, may be a subtle repudiation of Joyce’s totalising systemisation in *Ulysses*. Such an intention must, however, remain speculative.

Gogarty’s repeated concern to declare ‘the characters fictitious’ in this ‘phantasy in fact’ indicates, if nothing else, his extreme desire to establish an *authorial* distance between *Sackville Street* and the events, and people, it describes. We have already seen that most of *Sackville Street* represents real people in recognizable and credible, if not verifiable, contexts. Yet he clearly does not wish to be held accountable for the factual accuracy of what he writes. All of his extra-textual textual comments (as the subtitle, the prefatory note, his two epigraphs: Homer’s ‘Ὠ μοι ἐγώ, τέων αὖτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖάν

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<sup>42</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 77]

<sup>43</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 111]

<sup>44</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 285]

ἰκάνω;’ and Berkeley’s maxim ‘We Irishmen are apt to think something and nothing are near neighbours’) undermine the notion of *Sackville Street* as a work of reliable, accurate witness. But Gogarty’s insistence upon the role of imagination in his book is not significantly borne out by the text itself. Although Gogarty here, and throughout his career, indulges a love of reverie and imagination, the essential facts and tenor of *Sackville Street* are apparently true; in *Sackville Street* there is little that is implausible, nothing inherently impossible, and much that depends for its literary effect upon its associability with the world that Gogarty claims to represent (most specifically, for example, the named individuals about whom Gogarty writes). Indeed, where Gogarty indulges his own imagination, he tends to do so in monologues referent only to himself (as the beginning of Chapter VII, ‘To-day I will be a millionaire. I will do just as I please....’<sup>45</sup>), which are clearly expressed as being imagination, and which neither have nor claim any applicability to other individuals in the book.

#### IV: ‘A PHANTASY IN FACT’

What Gogarty may be attempting to assert by this repeated insistence upon the fantastic element in his ‘phantasy in fact’ is the role of perception in defining reality. This, as we shall see, is a consistent artistic concern for Gogarty, and is one of the central elements—both thematic and structural—of *Sackville Street*. As we have observed,

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<sup>45</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 107]

Gogarty structures his self-portrait upon precisely this issue of a person being defined not by his appearance, but by what he chooses to regard, and with whom he chooses to associate. To illustrate this, Gogarty employs the ‘perspectiveless’ survey, and invokes the mandarin whose portrait is best delineated not by his face, but by his taste and temperament. Yet this is only the most explicit manifestation of Gogarty’s continuous assessment of the role that perception plays in establishing reality. This notion also surely influences Gogarty’s frequent emphasis upon those who are ‘better than ourselves,’ for Gogarty presents them as providing an ennobling example (‘the grammar of greatness’) amidst the squalor of the declining era—and, in fact, he praises Talbot Clifton for precisely that atemporal inspiration: ‘My greatest tribute to him is that he is incredible in these our times.’<sup>46</sup> Gogarty explicitly declares that perception defines actuality by unequivocally proclaiming his ability to make reality accord to his own devices: ‘How magnificently I was turning the tables on Reality by making it wax and wane to suit my ebb and flow of consciousness!’<sup>47</sup> He is later rebuked for this in exactly the same words by the resolute Hegelian M’Gurk: ‘You have an impish mind with no respect for anything in this world of phenomena, not even for the great Hegel himself! For you, Reality simply waxes and wanes!’<sup>48</sup> Even Gogarty’s jokes in *Sackville Street* contrast or align perception and reality: Prof. Tyrrell rebukes a waiter with the quip ‘Get this into your head. There is no such thing as a *large* whiskey’<sup>49</sup>; Endymion buys a ham, only to race back later to grab it and run, thus to be arrested for stealing his own property, ‘But so

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<sup>46</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 218]

<sup>47</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 248]

<sup>48</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 322]

<sup>49</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 238]



much depends on the way the claim is made'<sup>50</sup>; and Æ troubles Yeats's Berkeleian assertion that 'all existence depends on the observer' by retorting, 'Very well, Willie, then I am responsible for both your existence and your poems.'<sup>51</sup>

Gogarty's belief that one's choice of perception may alter the structure of one's reality—and certainly of one's memoirs—is most evident in the structure and chronology of *Sackville Street*. In no other book does Gogarty attempt as complex and unusual an artistic composition as *Sackville Street*'s regressive chronological arrangement. *Sackville Street* moves backwards from the de Valeran era of the mid-1930's (the period coincident with the composition and publication of the book) through to the approximate period 1914—1919 (at the end, Mahaffy is referred to as the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, a position he attained in 1914; he died in 1919), with several further memories incorporated that depict Synge alive (dead 1909), and James Joyce resident in Dublin (Joyce left Ireland in 1904). This unusual chronological and formal structure was Gogarty's attempt to enact his 'perspectiveless' survey of reality defined by consciousness, as Gogarty explained it in the letter to Horace Reynolds, cited above, 'The only world that exists is my own consciousness; and the dead are in that, as much alive as the living...' The impression Gogarty achieves is that of persistent immediacy, in which the dead, or the events of the past, appear to the reader with the reality and tangibility of the present—precisely as they would appear to a recollecting mind. Gogarty handles this regressive chronology well, despite its complexity, and this structure remains the distinguishing formal feature of *Sackville Street*.

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<sup>50</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 270]

<sup>51</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 75]

As the (unnamed) reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* noted in its review of *Sackville Street*, ‘Dr. Gogarty has, in fact, allowed the past and present to meet in this book, and, although the experiment is not sufficiently compelled by artistic necessity, the result, however disconcerting to a conventional reader, is justified by an emotional appositeness.’<sup>52</sup> What this review omits to note is that the emotional appositeness the reviewer praises is the ‘artistic necessity’ that Gogarty pursues. Gogarty’s structure is based on the connections that affection itself discovers as it surveys the past through recollection. That this is thus a highly personal and subjective approach to the past has little importance to Gogarty: literary self-depiction is an implicitly subjective genre and, as we have seen, Gogarty litters his book with warnings about the variable relations between existence and perception. In this context, it seems likely that Gogarty would have endorsed the view of subjectivity and objectivity as indissociable twins advocated by his tutor Macran:

And here again it is interesting to observe how the subjective is not something existing separately and distinct from the objective; but the two, related to one another as the concave to the convex, unite their harmonious operations to effect in their individual and collective capacities, a self-subsistent, self-sufficient, all-containing, all-absorbing whole.<sup>53</sup>

Strangely, however, Gogarty does not acknowledge textually that this extraordinary structure is an imposition of a type of perspective.

In fact, it is Gogarty’s reversed structure that creates these numerous moments of emotional apposition that the *TLS* observes. As just one illustration of the artistic potential that this regressive recreation provides is Gogarty’s evocation of the 13 December 1921 ‘Sortes Virgilianæ.’ Here Gogarty and his associates, by reading random

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<sup>52</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*. Saturday, 10 April 1937. [p. 266]

<sup>53</sup> H.S. Macran; W. J. Pocock; R. S. Woods. *The Spirit of the Times*. Dublin: Dublin University Press. 1890. [p. 11]

passages of Virgil, attempt to divine the future of Griffith's struggle to get the Treaty approved. We should note here the curiously achronological literary position that Virgil holds in Gogarty's depiction of the interrelations of literature, perception, and reality, for Virgil's fictional writings predict, with an accuracy that Gogarty finds eerie, what will happen twenty centuries later, in a country Rome never occupied. But the real artistic value of Gogarty's regressive structure lies in its creation of a powerful thematic link where none exists in reality: when they read the answer for their question about Griffith, Gogarty marvels at the reply: 'But who could have seen Griffith lying dead, tracked by one of the Maenads to the holy place of a nursing home owned by nuns with his left arm sliced open?'<sup>54</sup> Chronologically, none could have foreseen the circumstances of Griffith's death; but in Gogarty's structure, *every* reader has seen Griffith lying dead, seventy pages previously: 'I was at the nursing home within four minutes...At the stairs' head President Griffith, the man who believed in the Irish people, lay on his back. His left arm was outstretched and bloody. A long incision of four inches gaped where his pulse was.'<sup>55</sup> The poignancy of Griffith's body—'that corpse'—lying on the stairway gives a shocking reality to the otherwise implausible suggestion of menace in the Virgilian prophecy; Gogarty provides the corpse before the warning. This ante-chronological arrangement also renders Griffith's subsequent vitality unusually startling, for when Gogarty later writes the simple, factual lines 'Arthur Griffith had something on his mind. We walked in silence along Duke Street. He had been telling me that he modelled his style on that of Dean Swift,'<sup>56</sup> these Hemingway-blunt statements have little inherent impact, yet the

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<sup>54</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 260]

<sup>55</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 188]

<sup>56</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 276]

sudden reappearance of Griffith, already dead, has the alarming power of a revenant's return.

Ghosts, unusually, are a curiously prominent feature of *Sackville Street*, for the reason that Gogarty has already detailed: the dead are in his mind as much as the living, they symbolise the interactivity of the past and the present, and they have a greater prominence if more frequently, or more pleasantly, remembered than the real individuals encountered in life. The dead and the living thus mingle in *Sackville Street* just as they might mingle in consciousness, but as they cannot in reality—this potentiality being another instance of the mind determining reality.

Some of Gogarty's evocations of the dead are merely vague execrations of the historical animosities that batter Ireland—'Damn the Dead! When will they cease to infect both Irish and English with their mortality?'<sup>57</sup>—but these are contemporary political statements, not chronological rearrangements. The most common appearance of the known dead is in the manner already noted in the example of Arthur Griffith, that being the sudden revivification of one already dead, a resurrection entirely impossible factually, yet achieved effortlessly in memory, and accommodated within the temporally regressive structure of Gogarty's presentation.

With Griffith there are other ghosts lurking in *Sackville Street*, the most prominent of whom is Athelstone Blake, the scion of the family from whom Gogarty bought his holiday home, Renvyle House, and who haunts it until he is placated by the 'Archimandrite Yeats' or, more precisely, Mrs. Yeats. Blake's appearance itself is of little general interest, for Gogarty professes no real knowledge of the dead child, although Blake's haunting of his ancestral home does form a powerful, unexpected symbol of that

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<sup>57</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 148]

‘household of continuance’ that Gogarty applauds. Yet the context of Blake’s visitations reveals Gogarty’s continuing exploration of the ability of consciousness to define reality. When Gogarty writes Blake’s story, Renvyle House has been destroyed by the rebels: ‘Renvyle House is burned by the I.R.A....Books, pictures, all consumed: for what? Nothing left but a charred oak beam quenched in the well beneath the house. And ten tall square towers, chimneys, stand bare on Europe’s extreme verge.’<sup>58</sup> Gogarty unambiguously explains why he tells Blake’s story: ‘How this one memory furnished the lost house for me!’<sup>59</sup> Gogarty’s evocation of the Yeatses’ encounter with Blake is thus an attempt to recreate the memory of a house, and its activities, gone beyond reclamation—yet it is also more than that, for by recreating the evening spent with the Yeatses and Blake, Gogarty *does* recreate the burned house, and the atmosphere of its residents and guests, in *Sackville Street*. Gogarty claims that he can define reality by making it ‘wax and wane,’ and this he does impressively, for in this artistic coup-de-théâtre, he writes a tangible and entertaining chapter with only vanished subjects—he resurrects the ghost of a dead child to haunt a destroyed house, to evoke the atmosphere of its dispersed company. All have reality again in recollection, and literary recreation, and their influence increases by Gogarty’s dissemination of their impact upon him.

Taken as a whole, Gogarty’s structural experiments with consciousness instead of chronology generate an additional level of artistic power that an accurately chronological presentation would not create. His emphasis upon consciousness and experience as defining reality more than does time also accords with his stated poetical desire to ‘make the heart Time’s measure,’ for in *Sackville Street*, he does precisely that. Yet Gogarty

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<sup>58</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [pps.190, 198]

<sup>59</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 193]

also suggested to Horace Reynolds a Dantean influence, proposing that *Sackville Street* follows 'a paradigm backwards of the Divinia Commedia,'<sup>60</sup> but this is not a particularly effective analogue. Indeed, Gogarty's only significant gesture towards his Dantean precedent is his subtle employment of the word 'stars' to end Chapters IV and XXV, which apparently conclude the 'Inferno' and 'Paradiso' analogues. The 'Purgatorio' segment of *Sackville Street* is less clearly defined, but Prof. Carens has made the attractive suggestion<sup>61</sup> that it ends in Chapter XVIII when Gogarty compares Ireland with Purgatory ('Ireland is a place or state of repose where souls suffer from the hope that the time will come when they may go abroad'<sup>62</sup>).

The relevance of the Divine Comedy to *Sackville Street* is more thematic than exact. Dante's importance for Gogarty is largely in the establishment of a journey from hell to paradise, which Gogarty re-enacts in his characters' journey backwards in time. *Sackville Street* follows its characters from the 'hell' of de Valera's Ireland in the 1930s to the 'paradise' of Irish academic society of approximately 1915. This rough correlation between the Dantean journey and the movement of the characters in *Sackville Street* is inexact, but Gogarty's employment of the Dantean motif is general, not specific. As Gogarty notes, 'We should not insist too much upon the appositeness of symbols. Their value lies in the breadth of interpretation they allow.'<sup>63</sup> Gogarty places no significant textual value on the Dantean structure except to illustrate general movement from bad to good. What should be noted here, however, is the fact that Gogarty's importation of the Comedy's progression adds yet one more perspective to what is intended to be a

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<sup>60</sup> Quoted in: Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 123]

<sup>61</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 123]

<sup>62</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 257]

<sup>63</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 4]

perspectiveless book. There is a necessary valuation in Dante's progression from hell to paradise that Gogarty exploits, usually for political or social observations, in his attempt at 'perspectiveless' reminiscences. But this structural movement from unhappiness to pleasure emphasizes again Gogarty's belief that one may determine one's reality by defining that reality oneself. Instead of allowing himself to be 'sullen in the sweet air'<sup>64</sup>(tellingly, one of Gogarty's infrequent direct citations of Dante), Gogarty chooses to regress to the happier times, where he relishes 'a great calm like this above the world, with friends like these'<sup>65</sup>—precisely the type of ethereal, 'timeless intimacy' that MacCarthy praises in the 'courteous company' of the Chinese philosopher-poets.

#### V: ENDYMION

There is only one character in *Sackville Street* who is able determine his own reality fully, and it is he alone who enacts the chronologically regressive principle of the book. This is Gogarty's parodic Doppelgänger Endymion, who personifies the regressive and perceptual elements of the work. Although Gogarty appears to have invented temporal regression as an attribute of Endymion's, he did not invent this strange symbolic figure, and his basic depiction accords well with other descriptions of Endymion, such as this by Lionel Fleming:

Endymion had been before my time, and it was generally held in Dublin that the place had never been quite the same since his death. As a respectable, middle-class official in

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<sup>64</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 159]

<sup>65</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 324]

Guinness's brewery (it is curious that few recall his name) he had accidentally fallen into an empty vat, and was half-dead from the fumes by the time he was rescued. Thereafter, his mind gave way. Under his new name, he wandered through Dublin in white cricket-trousers and a plumed hat, bearing a sword.

His lunacy, from what one hears, was harmless but disturbingly pointed...Then as always, the crazy logic of his actions seemed to assert that authority was not only there to be defied, but was an absurdity in itself.<sup>66</sup>

Gogarty states his basic attraction to Endymion as being Endymion's ability 'to adjust the Reason to the phantasmagoria of Life...to be magical as Life itself, and as irresponsible...to be able to adjust oneself to the changes in intensity which the waxings and wanings of Reality assume.'<sup>67</sup> These are, of course, precisely the tasks Gogarty sets his narrative in *Sackville Street*, and Gogarty claims for his own persona the ability to make Reality wax and wane. It should also be noted that in all three statements Gogarty defines these extrinsic eccentricities as being accurate to life and reality, which accords with *Sackville Street*'s insistence that the twists of consciousness may be as accurate a representation of lived experience as an apparent adherence to reality. Yet Gogarty complicates this presentation of Endymion by specifying overtly, in the book's first sentence, that Endymion's embodiment of self-referential temporal regression reveals a madness in him—'an odd figure moidered by memories, and driven mad by dreams which had overflowed into life, making him turn himself into a merry mockery of all he had once held dear.'<sup>68</sup>

Endymion's symbolic value is clear, and Gogarty exploits it extensively. Indeed, Gogarty announces Endymion's symbolic role with a lack of creative subtlety unusual in *Sackville Street*: 'There was method in his madness, and more than method. But let that

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<sup>66</sup> Lionel Fleming. *Head or Harp*. London: Barrie & Rockliff. 1965. [p. 137]

<sup>67</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 4]

<sup>68</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 1]



more reveal itself to those with eyes to see.’<sup>69</sup> In this ‘more than method,’ Gogarty insists that Endymion’s upside-down dressing and determination to regress in time are not mere affectations, but are correct responses to a world he perceives to be wrong-side-up: ‘...if Endymion’s world is upside-down, then he becomes the only one who can be said to be related to it correctly...if we stood on our heads in a topsy-turvy world, there would be no disharmony. Endymion becomes the only sane creature in the world as he sees it.’<sup>70</sup> Endymion is, in a way that Gogarty never fully explains, aware of his transgression of the time periods he inhabits, for his oddity presents itself as normative (that is, in properly deranged relation to a deranged reality), which only works as a reactive response to a dominant, recognized social order. Of course, the world that Endymion sees as itself mad is the Dublin of the middle de Valera era, which Gogarty also represents as being, if not mad, then at least abnormal, unnecessary, irresponsible, and contemptible. Moreover, the world towards which Endymion regresses is that period into which Gogarty would like to escape spiritually, and towards which the narrative of *Sackville Street* progresses. Endymion is clearly described as personally enacting ‘a cavalcade of Dublin life backwards for thirty years,’ which is precisely the thematic movement of *Sackville Street* itself.

Endymion’s associability with the temporal and perceptive regression of *Sackville Street* raises again the issue of individual textual centrality. Endymion appears with insufficient frequency to be plausible as the central figure of the work, and his role is more that of an ironic chorus than as the focus of textual attention. Only he and the Gogarty persona appear with significant consistency throughout the book, with the

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<sup>69</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p .2]

<sup>70</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p .3]

Gogarty figure being far more prominent than Endymion. But Endymion, more than any figure in the work, embodies the movement and outlook of *Sackville Street*'s narrative. This is of interest as another example—like that of making Dublin itself the centre of the work—in which Gogarty diverts the thematic attention away from himself.

Gogarty states clearly that he takes Endymion's example as a guiding structure for his book, and also directly allies himself with Endymion's chronologically regressive, topsy-turvy endeavour:

To be Endymion, to speak—if not my mind—to act my part protected from the hates, jealousies and trickeries of the days about us now; to scorn them symbolically...to turn myself right about, not only right about face, but upside-down, and journey ever onward to the Golden Age.<sup>71</sup>

This is a crucially explicative passage of *Sackville Street*, for nowhere else does Gogarty comparably clarify why he employs the chronologically backwards structure suggested to him by Endymion. His regressive following of his own consciousness is not merely the perversity of assertive individualism, but is the symbolic repudiation of the de Valera era from which the narrative departs. By presenting the de Valera period at the beginning of *Sackville Street*, Gogarty thematically links his chronological regression to his definition of madness, to the detriment of de Valera's period: 'the horrors before the excesses. Delirium without a drink! The shock before the shell! That would do very well for a definition of madness.'<sup>72</sup> By the symbolic value of Endymion, Gogarty asserts that only the insane are properly aligned to the world of de Valera's Ireland. At one place, Gogarty's aversion to de Valera is so extreme that the text literally halts, and the topic

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<sup>71</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 4] [Gogarty's ellipsis]

<sup>72</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 196]

changes to exclude him: ‘...the contemplation of [treachery] and of Griffith’s betrayer has a physiological effect on me. I cannot proceed.’<sup>73</sup>

The ‘cavalcade of Dublin life backwards for thirty years’ is thus both a recollective attempt to recapture an explicitly denominated ‘Golden Age,’ as well as an act of contemporary political repudiation. Yet it would be excessive to emphasize Gogarty’s aversion to de Valera over Gogarty’s real, and lifelong, devotion to those people to whom he ‘returns’ in the last passages of *Sackville Street*. Prof. Carens has nicely stated Gogarty’s mingling of times, both recreated and compositional, to represent the age he most enjoyed:

*As I was Going Down Sackville Street* in its entirety is a paradoxical exercise of the imagination upon ‘nothing’ and ‘something’. It satirises the present, and offers us, in its concluding chapter, a joyous moment in the past, a moment of freedom and spontaneity, untouched by conflict: a redemption of time.<sup>74</sup>

Yet this ‘redemption of time’ is surely more troubled and complex than the idyll Prof. Carens suggests, for when Gogarty’s persona affirms the interest and pleasure of life with *Sackville Street*’s final ‘I would say ‘The Same Again!’ and chance my lucky stars,’ the reader is ironically aware that the Gogarty persona’s life will then progress again into the de Valeran era from which he has escaped during the progress of *Sackville Street*. Only Endymion, because of his persistent regression, avoids the ‘darkening days’ ahead—or, textually, behind.

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<sup>73</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 259]

<sup>74</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 133]

## VI: THE GOGARTY PERSONA

This thesis has noted that there can be little doubt that the narrative first-person of *Sackville Street* is intended to represent Oliver Gogarty. The narrative persona is directly addressed as 'Oliver'; the I.R.A. burns his home in Renvyle; his home in Dublin is Gogarty's home at 15, Ely Place; he is a physician by profession; he owns Gogarty's airplane; and all of his friends are Gogarty's friends. Nothing in the book suggests that the Gogarty persona is intended to represent someone other than Gogarty, nor is there any suggestion that the Gogarty persona is dissociable from the real Gogarty himself. This congruity between the real Gogarty and his character would appear to be apposite for autobiography. The Gogarty persona, however, is hardly the common figure of self-representation within the autobiographical genre. He even, as we have seen, renounces his own textual centrality.

Returning here briefly to Prof. Starobinski's definition of 'autobiography,' we note that *Sackville Street* fails, in both intention and actuality, the very first principle of Prof. Starobinski's terms: *Sackville Street* is not Gogarty's biography as written by Gogarty, but is instead a portrait of the city and society of Dublin as remembered and perceived by Oliver Gogarty. As we have seen, Gogarty explicitly diverts attention from himself when asked for his 'perspective from the inside,' and instead offers his expansive, 'perspectiveless' survey of Dublin. In fact, Gogarty makes no attempt whatsoever at comprehensiveness in his biographical presentation, omitting his youth, his siblings, his children, the death of his parents, and most mention of his education. Moreover, Prof. Starobinski's intended association between 'the narrator and the hero of the narration' cannot fully apply to *Sackville Street*, for the Gogarty persona is

undoubtedly the narrator, yet he is not the hero. He asserts no particular prominence for himself amongst the other characters, and makes numerous textual remarks about his preference for associating with those who are superior to him. He unites all the characters in his conceit that they are merely manifestations of a national community—‘What are any of us but figures in the National mind?’<sup>75</sup>

Prof. Starobinski is not here introduced as a straw man for, on the contrary, his definition of autobiography is distinguished amongst literary theorists as being notable for its deliberation and utility. Yet *Sackville Street*, in which Gogarty records events from his life from his own viewpoint, by Prof. Starobinski’s definition lacks even ‘the intrinsic character’ of autobiography, and ‘thus the general (and generic) conditions of autobiographical writing.’ This discrepancy reveals the generally unacknowledged novelty of Gogarty’s approach to self-presentational writing. He is, perhaps, unique in the persistence he shows (in his early works) to couple first-person descriptions of his own life with a reticence to make himself the absolute centre of the narration. The Gogarty of *Sackville Street* is unquestionably forthright and opinionated, and his personal attitudes pervade almost every page of *Sackville Street*, as either direct authorial address to the reader, or by the indirect means of conversing with other characters as his persona. Yet as he gives the reader his opinions, he offers almost no personal knowledge about Gogarty, or the Gogarty persona. For a work of personal memoir, *Sackville Street* reveals much of its writer’s personality, yet is remarkably reticent to provide specific details about his physical existence.

Despite the undoubted presence in *Sackville Street* of what Prof. Starobinski terms ‘a temporal sequence sufficiently extensive to allow the emergence of the contour

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<sup>75</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 16]

of life,' the contour of life that *Sackville Street* reveals is that of Dublin society and politics, without a corresponding contour of the Gogarty persona's life. Gogarty shows the reader the significant changes that occur in Irish society between the Mahaffy era of Trinity College Unionism and the de Valera period of the middle-1930s, yet there is no concomitant development (or, in *Sackville Street*'s temporal reversal, regression) of the Gogarty persona's personality. There is a noticeably static quality to the character and opinions of the Gogarty persona throughout the book.

Much of the developmental inertness of the Gogarty persona is attributable to the chronologically regressive structure of *Sackville Street*. There is no sense of the 'later' Gogarty being a wiser, more experienced, or even substantially different figure from the 'earlier' Gogarty at the conclusion of the book. By moving backwards in time, Gogarty's structure in *Sackville Street* destabilizes the general narrative principle that a past event will be more distant than a recent event, and that a narrator who specifically locates a past event in the past has had some opportunity to assess, order, or evaluate the experience being related. Gogarty's disruption of the apparent continuity between the past and the present leads to otherwise unattainable narrative effects, as when Arthur Griffith dies 'before' he appears walking the street. Yet this regressive method also disrupts any narrative sense the reader might have that what occurs as the reader encounters it will effect, or will align itself in a clear progression with, the events 'to come' in the work. For the reader, what is to come—what has yet to be read in the text—has already occurred to the Gogarty figure; but as the reader finishes the work, the reader is privileged with full knowledge of what 'will happen,' whereas the Gogarty of the last pages knows nothing of what is 'to come.'

Here Gogarty, whose general narrative approach throughout his career is clear and uncomplicated, nonetheless in *Sackville Street* conducts an enormously complicated experiment with time: the matter of greatest salience in this experiment is the multi-layered presence that Gogarty occupies in any given textual scene. He is always, at any moment in the text, the Gogarty persona of that era, yet he is simultaneously the Gogarty of all the events 'to come' in the book, for he has already experienced them. Furthermore, there is also the authorial reality in which Gogarty is present in the 1930s, remembering all the events recreated in *Sackville Street*. Thus the true narrator's development in *Sackville Street* is, in fact, not an accumulation of experience, but a stripping away of experience to attain the more optimistic outlook of the final pages. The concept of the narrator's developing through *Sackville Street* is therefore a largely impossible supposition, for the Gogarty persona *loses* experiences into his future as we, the readers, encounter them as 're-lived' in the text. Gogarty is consistent in his approach to this time structure throughout the work, and it is, despite its peculiarity, artistically effective at the most simple level of artistic assessment—it adds meaning. Yet it should be noted that this again reveals *Sackville Street*'s oddity in relation to Prof. Starobinski's definition, for the 'temporal sequence' in *Sackville Street* does reveal the 'contour' of the Gogarty persona's life—but only to the reader, and not to the subject of the self-depiction himself.

## VII: MOORE AND HAIL AND FAREWELL

Despite the plethora of Irish autobiographies and memoirs of which *Sackville Street* is but one example, the only antecedent Irish memoir that significantly influences *Sackville Street* is George Moore's trilogy *Hail and Farewell*. The superficial connections are clear, in that both men wrote portraits of the Dublin artistic (and specifically literary) culture, whilst writing a comic memoir of a distinguished cultural era. Gogarty appears in *Hail and Farewell*; Moore appears in *Sackville Street*. Both *Sackville Street* and *Hail and Farewell* make gestures towards social and cultural comprehensiveness that ultimately reinforce the specifically wealthy, educated milieu of which both Gogarty and Moore write. Both books seek to settle scores, Moore's by recreating the Irish Literary Renaissance as a faintly laughable endeavour, and Gogarty's by openly savaging modern Irish culture and contemporary Irish political figures in what Yeats called 'passionate not self complacent' attacks that reminded Yeats of a description of Raleigh, 'high, insolent and passionate.'<sup>76</sup> Prof. Carens believes Moore's influence to have been so strong that it was both generative and structural: 'George Moore's *Hail and Farewell* provided an immediate stimulus to Gogarty's imagination and choice of subject, and it strongly influenced the way he handled dialogue.'<sup>77</sup> Gogarty's emphasis on the blending of 'phantasy' and 'fact' is strongly similar to the hybrid form of fictionalised memoir that Moore developed with particular mastery, from his earlier *Memoirs of My Dead Life* and *Confessions of a Young Man*, through to the great achievement of *Hail and Farewell*.

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<sup>76</sup> Yeats. *Letters On Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1940. [p. 137]

<sup>77</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 122]



*Hail and Farewell* is useful for assessing Gogarty's use of self-depiction within *Sackville Street*, for the significant similarities between the books do not fully extend to their literary personae. One of Moore's most pronounced tendencies in *Hail and Farewell* is to express an ironical narrative attitude towards the 'George Moore' who acts on the page, thus implying some manner of authorial distance, or imposed artistic remove, separating the George Moore who writes from the character 'George Moore.' As Moore's outstanding exegete Professor Elizabeth Grubgeld observes:

Many autobiographies, while presenting a distinct "past self" depicted in retrospect, assume the synonymy of author and narrator...Moore's self-irony differs considerably from this paradigm...although the author, the naïve narrator, and the even more naïve past self all share the same name, there is a clear differentiation between the author, on the one hand, and the narrator and past self, on the other. Moore accomplishes this distinction through his novelistic structuring of narrative time. The narrator does not speak from the privileged position of the author; the narrator himself ages and changes throughout the book. Unlike most first-person narratives in which the speaker addresses the reader from the standpoint of one who has passed through all the events he is about to relate, *Hail and Farewell's* narrator speaks most frequently from a moment coterminous with the events he describes. Occasionally he speaks a few days after an event has happened or, as in some sections, recalls his childhood and youth, but all such recollections are conducted from specific moments in his ongoing life rather than from the static vantage point of an author who controls the shape of the whole text.<sup>78</sup>

Gogarty's approach bears certain resemblances to this pattern Prof. Grubgeld discerns in Moore, most particularly in Gogarty's reliance upon structuring the narrative to create a continuous immediacy with the events and people encountered that is chronologically impossible for the recollecting author himself. Yet Gogarty does not create for the Gogarty persona the multiply layered ironies upon which so much of Moore's self-referential comedy is based. As Prof. Grubgeld notes, Moore creates three distinct

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<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Grubgeld. *George Moore and the Autogenous Self*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. 1994. [pp. 106-107]

narrative personalities for 'George Moore' in *Hail and Farewell*, which Prof. Grubgeld terms 'the author, the naïve narrator, and the even more naïve past self.' The Gogartian narrator has no stated link to Oliver Gogarty as author, despite *Sackville Street*'s thematic presumption of such a connection. Indeed, even the title page itself notes that the author of the book is Oliver St. John Gogarty, only after it has already declared the writing to be a 'phantasy in fact' entitled 'As I was Going Down Sackville Street'—the I of which is itself revealed in the text to be not Gogarty, but someone from Dublin's 18<sup>th</sup> century who was commemorated in a ballad of that name, which was excavated from oblivion by the young James Joyce. Moreover, Gogarty's authorial note that 'the names in this book are real, the characters fictitious' applies equally to the 'Oliver Gogarty' of the text as it does to 'Michael Collins,' 'W.B. Yeats,' or 'Eamon De Valera.'

Gogarty's essential fixity in the time of the action being described is similar to Moore's, but Moore distances himself from that point to gain a further perspective on his narrator that Gogarty does not attempt. As Moore speaks generally 'from a moment coterminous with the event he describes,' so too does Gogarty write generally from the present, and narrates his experiences as though relating them from the moment of their enactment. Yet in *Sackville Street* Gogarty does not explore the role Prof. Grubgeld has described as 'the even more naïve past self,' largely because Gogarty's narrative moves backwards. Moore's narrative acceptance of forward-moving chronology allows him to manipulate the unity of textual and chronological progression, for he may satirize his earlier self from the perspective of one who has lived through the events *as* the earlier self. Gogarty's regressive chronology, despite its creation of unusual and striking narrative possibilities, deprives him of this self-satire from a later perspective, because

the chronologically later (and perhaps wiser, or less naïve) perspective will inevitably be textually earlier. Gogarty could bypass this difficulty by availing of a third textual personality, that of the author who is distinct from the narrator, but this Gogarty does not do with frequency. There are moments where Gogarty comments extra-temporally, as when he interrupts the narrative relation of his 'at-home' to note, just after he gives his house key to Michael Collins, 'A few weeks later Emmet Dalton sent that key back from the blood-stained tunic of a murdered man.'<sup>79</sup> Yet such interjection of later compositional time into the narrative present is an uncommon trait of *Sackville Street*, and is generally used for just such heightening of textual poignancies. Gogarty does not, however, as Moore does, establish an ongoing, interactive series of narrative identities to satirize his self-depiction or enthusiasms.

The primary difference in recollective self-portraiture between *Hail and Farewell* and *Sackville Street* lies in the respective authors' treatment of others with whom their autobiographical personae come into contact. Both Moore and Gogarty wrote of their personal friends, usually depicting them under their correct names. Gogarty, as we have seen, pursues the company and example of those who are 'better than ourselves.' He depicts himself with a knowing self-deprecation, a presentational strategy that emphasizes the strengths of his friends whilst maintaining a light, affable narrative tone. Gogarty is therefore generally respectful of his subjects, for they are included precisely because they are exemplary—Gogarty finds greatness in them, and seeks to convey that to his reader. Where he depicts the humorous idiosyncrasies of his friends, his 'revelations' are remarkably restrained. His readers 'learn' only such tepid secrets as the fact that Æ was amiably ethereal in his penchant for abstract thought, or that Yeats

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<sup>79</sup> OSTJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 172]

enjoyed gossiping about George Moore. In *Hail and Farewell*, however, Moore withers even his closest friends (most notably Edward Martyn) by public exposure, a literary fate not ameliorated by Moore's absolutely scrupulous willingness to stand in his own fire, and to apply the same merciless scrutiny to himself. Where *Sackville Street* accommodates the peculiarities of friends, there is a brutal lucidity in *Hail and Farewell* that is unblurred by affection. Gogarty does not humiliate his friends in the manner habitual to Moore.

Moore's primary depiction of his interactions with others is, like Gogarty's, that of urbane literary gossip and social calls. Again, although Moore is far more interested in the character 'George Moore' in *Hail and Farewell* than Gogarty is in the Gogarty persona of *Sackville Street*, Moore and Gogarty are still in general concord in depicting Dublin in social, interactive terms. But on a more profound level—his biographer Adrian Frazier calls this 'the conflictual center'<sup>80</sup> of *Hail and Farewell*—Moore's depiction of his diminishing, and then irreparable, relations with his brother Maurice introduces an artistic palette of self-portraiture that Gogarty entirely misses. The Gogarty persona of *Sackville Street* relishes his friendships, yet he never allows himself to address their conclusion, and the book's regressive chronology permits Gogarty to move *into* lost friendships (most notably with the dead), instead of noting their decline. Moore, however, takes an almost perverse pleasure in depicting the inevitability of social associations collapsing, whether they are formed upon friendship (Martyn), shared artistry (Yeats), or blood (Maurice). Moore's fascination with faltering friendships reveals a deeper level of Moore's meaning, however, than mere social portraiture, for Moore's eye is constantly upon the need of the artist to sacrifice everything for his art. In *Hail and Farewell* Moore

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<sup>80</sup> Frazier. *George Moore*. [p. 322]

volitionally traps himself within an inescapable circuit of inspiration and dissociation, where the friendships that inspire his work must be sacrificed by the artistic integrity necessary to write the book worthy of such a sacrifice. Although Moore generally adopts a comic persona in *Hail and Farewell*, the seriousness and sadness in his self-depiction must not be overlooked for, as Prof. Grubgeld observes, Moore's 'elegiac mood produces extended sections of genuine poignancy and emotional power: vividly realized scenes from the "old life" of his father's world at Moore Hall, his youth in France, and the deterioration of his bond with his beloved younger brother, Maurice.'<sup>81</sup> All of these are personal memories of what Moore the man has sacrificed to become Moore the artist, one capable of writing *Hail and Farewell*. Gogarty neatly avoids such sacrifice by his regressive re-inheritance of what he has lost, and this artistic reclamation is itself, for Gogarty, an aggressive act of social affirmation. Nonetheless, Moore's ability to portray himself in compromised terms, as one who is himself responsible (if only through his artistic probity) for some of his unhappiness, represents a greater literary achievement in self-portraiture than does Gogarty's amiable persona trapped in a de Valera-blighted world.

Finally, Gogarty's self-presentational writing in *Sackville Street* also lacks the tremendous confessional urge that appears throughout *Hail and Farewell*. Moore, of course, parodies his own confessional tendencies, as when he makes his famous admission that he failed to assist the woman about whom he wrote *Esther Waters*, 'This confession costs me as much as some of Rousseau's cost him.'<sup>82</sup> Yet there is a significant difference between Moore and Gogarty in the approaches they take towards what to

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<sup>81</sup> Grubgeld. *George Moore and the Autogenous Self* [p. 135]

<sup>82</sup> George Moore. *Hail and Farewell*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe. 1976. [p. 103]

reveal of themselves in recollective self-depiction, and why. Moore writes of himself as a novelist of his work, probing into the mind and motivations of his main character, George Moore, and sometimes expressing dismay at what he finds. His biographer Dr. Frazier expresses this author-subject relationship to the self in a compelling image: “George Moore,” the author-function, had a friend, “Amico Moorini,” who lived a life that provided the author with endless insights into the silliness of the human species.<sup>83</sup> This profoundly self-observing element in Moore’s writing does not appear in Gogarty. Gogarty himself notes in *Sackville Street* Moore’s unusual artistic ability to view himself as a novelist would: ‘He could describe all his experiences, and all his acquaintances, from a detached standpoint, and include himself in the pageant.’<sup>84</sup> Gogarty lacks that detachment. Although he occasionally uses a figure named Gideon Ouseley, the narrator of Gogarty’s memoirs is in many points associable with the man Gogarty. This authorial proximity to the narrative enables Gogarty to write of his friends with a particularly observable personal intimacy: ‘[Yeats’s] mind provides me with a realm of beauty beyond the beauty of Woman. It will be a relief to be independent in thought for an hour or two while I sail in the shadowy waters or sit with Cuchulainn grown old.’<sup>85</sup> Gogarty, however, when writing of encountering setbacks or difficulties, is remarkable for his intentional restriction to the impersonal. The problems in *Sackville Street* are not Gogarty’s personal problems, but are instead the more generalized social and political troubles of the era. Where he questions himself it is an essentially rhetorical gesture:

Why do I allow my mind to dwell on the normal or the unexceptional? Here am I who always pretended that I would like to meet the mighty and the unsurpassable. The

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<sup>83</sup> Frazier. *George Moore*. [p. 365]

<sup>84</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 249]

<sup>85</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 108]

moment I do, I find myself endeavouring to reduce them to the ordinary and to make them amenable and comprehensible. Why?<sup>86</sup>

But this questioning of himself is entirely consonant with *Sackville Street*'s general theme that the example of superiority is ennobling. Where Moore offers dissecting insights into his motivations and impulses, Gogarty's books are an immersion in Gogarty's personality, without a correspondent recognition of his particularly individualized strains or disappointments.

#### VIII: TRIAL AND AUTHORITY

*Sackville Street* was a successful publication, attracting enthusiastic reviews and a wide readership. W. B. Yeats noted it to Dorothy Wellesley, commenting on its popularity: 'Here everybody is reading it. A publican down the quays told a customer, "You can open it anywhere, like the *Imitation of Christ*."' <sup>87</sup> This admirable readership—spanning from Yeats himself to unknown quayside publicans—testifies both to the fascination and renown of Gogarty's character, as well as to the virulence of Gogarty's denunciations of the presiding leader of the country. As a reminiscence of Irish literature's most important era, *Sackville Street*'s combination of authorial personality, literary character-study, boisterous memoir, and privileged access to literary genius stands with *Hail and Farewell* and Yeats's *Autobiographies*.

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<sup>86</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 217]

<sup>87</sup> Yeats. *Letters on Poetry*. [p. 137]

There is, however, one further matter of self-presentational and textual accuracy that must be noted. Soon after *Sackville Street* appeared, Gogarty was sued for libel by a litigant named Sinclair, who alleged that he and his brother were identifiable as the 'Two Jews' in a rhyme the Gogarty persona recites as a guide to where in Dublin antiques may be purchased: 'Nassau Street, Sackville Street, Liffey Street, where Naylor's is and all along the quays. Have you not heard?

Two Jews grew in Sackville Street  
And not in Piccadilly.  
One was gaitered on the feet,  
The other one was Willie.  
And if you took your pick of them,  
Whichever one you chose,  
You'd like the other more than him,  
So wistful were these Jews.'<sup>88</sup>

These two reappear later in a rhyme attributed to George Redding:

It is a thing to wonder at, but hardly to admire,  
How they who do desire the most, guard most against desire;  
They chose their friend or mistress so that none may yearn to touch her.  
Thus did the twin grandchildren of the ancient Chicken Butcher...<sup>89</sup>

The details of the resultant trial have attained an unusual renown, as Sinclair called the young and unknown Samuel Beckett to the stand, and Beckett's disgust with the experience is thought to have reinforced his desire to return to Paris.<sup>90</sup> It is largely Beckett's later importance that continues to give these proceedings public attention, and

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<sup>88</sup> OSIJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 65]

<sup>89</sup> OSIJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 71]

<sup>90</sup> For Beckett's involvement, see his recent biographers: Anthony Cronin. *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist*. London: HarperCollins. 1996. [pp. 268-275], and James Knowlson. *Damned to Fame*. London: Bloomsbury. 1996. [pp. 275-281]



Beckett himself, when questioned by Ulick O'Connor in the early 1960s, replied that the case 'should never have happened.'<sup>91</sup>

The issue in the proceedings that pertains here is that of authority and accuracy. The poems themselves were not by Gogarty: O'Connor has identified them as being George Redding's compositions<sup>92</sup> and, indeed, the second of the two verses is already attributed to Redding in the first edition of *Sackville Street*. Gogarty does, however, apply them to Sinclair, and suggests in his guise as the narrator that '[the Sinclairs' grandfather] enticed little girls into his office. That was bad enough; but he had grandsons, and these directed the steps of their youth to follow in grandfather's footsteps, with more zeal than discrimination.'<sup>93</sup> That Sinclair believed himself traduced in these lines and, moreover, was able to convince a jury that he had been libelled, gives us several important clues about Gogarty's authority and reliability that might otherwise be uncertain. The first is the simple matter of accuracy. As we shall see, critics react to his later writings with allegations of wilful inaccuracy, yet the libel case offers precisely the opposite indictment—that Gogarty adhered too closely to the truth, and represented real individuals with a fidelity that rendered them identifiable. Secondly, we see in Gogarty's easy borrowing of a friend's verse proof of his attempts to render the text multivocal, for he not only recreates the light, conversational style in which he and his friends swapped poetry, but directly attributes the second verse to George Redding himself. That he may have recorded the poem with accuracy is suggested by a passage from Lord Dunsany, in which he (Dunsany) learns that Gogarty intends to quote him in *Sackville Street*, to which Dunsany replies that Gogarty has misremembered Dunsany's verse, and should correct it:

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<sup>91</sup> Ulick O'Connor. *A Critic At Large*. Dublin: Mercier Press. 1984. [p. 74]

<sup>92</sup> O'Connor. *The Times I've Seen*. [p. 329-330]

<sup>93</sup> OSJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 71]

‘For, whatever one says one can defend, but against misquotation one is powerless. Gogarty promised to do as I asked, and an anxiety was lifted from my mind.’<sup>94</sup> It is probable that, as Gogarty was willing to correct his misremembering of Dunsany’s poem, he would have done so also for Redding’s, had such an inaccuracy needed amendment. Finally, we find in *Sackville Street* that Gogarty attempts to distance himself from any direct culpability by referring to a query about the identities of the twins, that they are ‘Consummations of the poet’s dream. Shadows invoked by sound. Men who do not exist. I thought I made that clear?’<sup>95</sup> Here again Gogarty attempts his dual narrative approach, by claiming the fictiveness of individuals whom he knew to exist. Whatever the merits of Gogarty’s case, he lost. This cost him a significant amount of money in penalties, (1937)IEP£2000, which in turn, appears to have urged him to begin his next work—*I Follow Saint Patrick*—without delay.

#### IX: CONCLUSIONS FROM SACKVILLE STREET

This chapter has assessed Gogarty’s first work of prose recollection. It notes that he strives to avoid outright autobiography by suggesting the continuity of the past and the present in the spirit, as represented in *Sackville Street*’s attempt to provide a ‘perspectiveless’ portrait that mimics the free movement of consciousness. The chapter observed that this striving to avoid perspective is also aligned with Gogarty’s desire to

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<sup>94</sup> Lord Dunsany. *My Ireland*. [p. 42]

<sup>95</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 71]

present a collective and polyphonic depiction of Dublin, instead of accepting the textual centrality of the subject in the traditional autobiographical focus upon a single individual. Allied with Gogarty's rejection of a single narrative voice is his extensive undermining of the notion of individual literary authority in *Sackville Street*, and his related attempt to depict Dublin through conversation and plurality. The chapter has further noted that Gogarty's depiction of Dublin society is similar to George Moore's in *Hail and Farewell*, yet argues that the foremost difference between the two recollective presentations of their authors in Dublin lies in Gogarty's approval of, and Moore's desire to render ludicrous, those with whom they interact. As both Moore and Gogarty intermingle the notion of fact and reality, the chapter observed that Gogarty's proclamation of the combination of 'phantasy' and fact does not result in notable invention, but participates in his undermining of individual literary authority. The chapter also noted that the legal case taken against *Sackville Street* illustrated that Gogarty's representation of conversation included direct citations of the poems of others, and that his depiction of Dublin was sufficiently accurate that the libel laws found against him.

Most importantly, the chapter observes that Gogarty's 'perspectiveless' depiction of Dublin is given a perspective by his recurrent attempts at valuation in memory; he seeks to remember, and to record, those people with whom he has interacted, and who gave him a feeling of ennoblement, or of transcendence over the routine concerns of life. These people vary: they may be artists like Æ, men of action such as Collins, or friends whose conversation enlivens an evening, such as George Redding, yet they all represent an elite of character that inspires Gogarty, and that he generally associates with Dublin. He describes the influence of these individuals as the 'grammar of greatness,' and seeks

to promote it as a corrective to the small-mindedness and politicisation that Gogarty sees in the era of de Valera. The text itself moves from the de Valera period to the 'Golden Age' of pleasant discussions and friendships that Gogarty values most in his recollections, and this re-inheritance of the dead further enacts Gogarty's interest in attaining to a timeless continuum in which the cares of the everyday are minimised, and the living and the dead intermingle in consciousness.

CHAPTER 4  
SAINT PATRICK AND THE RECLAIMABLE PAST

After the initial success of *Sackville Street*, and the subsequent disappointment of the libel action and its result, Gogarty swiftly embarked upon what can often seem to be a very different literary endeavour. The resultant work, *I Follow Saint Patrick*, appeared in 1938, published in New York by Reynal and Hitchcock and in London by Rich and Cowan. From its publication the book's critics have had difficulty assessing the work, almost invariably dividing their attentions between praise for Gogarty's narrative style and energy, and regret that the book has so little factual relation to its immediate subject. *The Times Literary Supplement* perceptively noted that 'Dr. Gogarty's book will be enjoyed for its incidental and highly personal points of view. Ingenious in detail, it is as a whole exasperating in its illogicality and elusiveness in matters of conviction.'<sup>1</sup> Ulick O'Connor cautiously restricts himself to general diagnostic description: '*I Follow Saint Patrick* is a blend of light scholarship and Gogartian discursiveness.'<sup>2</sup> Prof. Lyons notes that 'Gogarty could not resist' this discursiveness, but praises Gogarty for revealing historical landscapes with an eye 'in no way inferior to the best landscape painters.'<sup>3</sup> Prof. Carens, again employing Frye's literary terminology, calls *I Follow Saint Patrick* a 'confession and anatomy,'<sup>4</sup> although he perhaps oversteps critical restraint with the claim 'that Gogarty set out in quest of St Patrick and found himself.'<sup>5</sup> One may observe that most of these comments are generally applicable to Gogarty's entire literary oeuvre. There is, throughout Gogarty's work, an appealing narrative blend of humour, vivacity,

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<sup>1</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*. Saturday 18 June 1938. [p. 413]

<sup>2</sup> O'Connor. *The Times I've Seen*. [p. 331]

<sup>3</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 226]

<sup>4</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 136]

<sup>5</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 144]

character, and wonderment, that all too often expends itself in discursive opinions that do not naturally arise from his theme. Almost everything that Gogarty wrote is ‘a blend of light scholarship and Gogartian discursiveness’ that may be ‘enjoyed for its incidental and highly personal points of view,’ despite being ‘exasperating in its illogicality.’

We should note that we possess a favourable contemporary assessment of *I Follow* from an unusual source: James Joyce. Indeed, *I Follow* may have been the last book that James Joyce read before his death. Joyce’s friend Carla Gidion-Welcker recalls that, at the end of his life, ‘there were two books lying on his table: a Greek dictionary and next to it the book *I Follow St. Patrick* by Oliver St. John Gogarty.’<sup>6</sup> That Joyce had read and admired the book may be deduced from his remark to another associate, Jacques Mercanton, who recorded that, “‘I follow Saint Patrick,” [Joyce] said, pointing to Mrs. Joyce, who was motioning to us from the platform of a streetcar. “It is the title of an erudite book by my friend Gogarty, the Buck Mulligan of *Ulysses*. It would interest you.’”<sup>7</sup> Joyce is correct to note that *I Follow* is erudite, but it is an idiosyncratic erudition, one that is undisciplined by the rigour of historical science, yet which admittedly gathers a blithe momentum from Gogarty’s characteristic enthusiasm and his nonchalant dismissals of scholarly reliability.

On the whole, however, *I Follow* is an occasionally disorienting amalgamation of personal anecdotes about Gogarty’s travels in search of Patrick; novelistic evocations of Patrick’s life and mission; lengthy disquisitions about, *inter alia*, landscape and folk wisdom; and the indiscriminate narrative diversions that O’Connor felicitously describes as ‘Gogartian discursiveness.’ Yet there is a clear associability between *Sackville Street*

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<sup>6</sup> Willard Potts, [Ed.]. *Portraits of the Artist in Exile*. Dublin: Wolfhound. 1979. [p. 279]

<sup>7</sup> Potts, [Ed.]. *Portraits of the Artist in Exile*. [p. 219]

and *I Follow* which makes the apparent divergence of topics between the books much more comprehensible. This similarity of narrative intention also helps to explain what *I Follow* is, and why it assumes so unusual a form. In *Sackville Street*, as we have seen, Gogarty advances several arguments about life, friendship, time, inspiration, and literary self-depiction. He notes that one is defined by one's friendships; that one reveals as much of oneself artistically by what one chooses to describe outside of oneself as by intentional self-depiction; that the great offer an ennobling and inspiring example worthy of literary record; that the spirit is capable of communing with the dead as with the living; and that time is a matter of preference, so that inspirations from the past, or indeed from the dead, may still directly influence and ennoble one's experience of the present. In *I Follow*, Gogarty advances many of the same propositions, with the following alteration—instead of revealing the 'grammar of greatness' as evident in his friends, he will find it in Ireland's most unifying national figure, Saint Patrick. His argument is that, despite the fifteen centuries separating his era from Patrick's, elements of Patrician influence remain associable with the Irish land itself, which fact Gogarty believes must leave an inalienable Patrician impress upon the character of the Irish people. It is to locate and recombine these impressions from around Ireland that his narrative unites speculation, travel, archaeology, gossip, patriotism, and historical imagination, for it requires all of these investigative methods to find Patrick's multiple continuing traces. Of course, by following Patrick with good humour and enthusiastic devotion, Gogarty also offers an indirect self-portrait, akin to that which he claimed to provide in *Sackville Street*, through the metaphor of the Chinese portrait subject with his back turned. The Gogarty we are to see in *I Follow* is a man who has the reverence, curiosity, and humility to embark on

what is essentially a secular pilgrimage, but one who also possesses the wit, patriotism, and garrulity to write an engaging record that will re-establish the inspirational linkage between Gogarty's readers and Patrick's example. As ever, Gogarty seeks to encapsulate ennoblement and entertainment in his writings.

Although *I Follow* is not properly a memoir of his times, it nonetheless represents a peculiarly Gogartian exercise in memory, self-depiction, and inspiration that is closely related to his more clearly recollective works. It holds this position because Gogarty, instead of writing a biography or other work of similar scholarship about St. Patrick, instead records his own imaginative engagement with Patrick as a figure of continuing influence and ennoblement. He places himself as a figure into a narrative about another, yet does so largely to testify to the inspiring characteristics of that individual. For this reason his literary relation to Patrick is that which he assumes many times in his career: one who records his own sensations of another in order to transmit to his readers the inspiration that the ennobling figure provided him.

This chapter will note three characteristics, and one continual theme, of *I Follow* that have direct relevance to Gogarty's engagement with memoir, self-depiction, and the provision of inspirational example. The first section notes again Gogarty's conflation of the past with the present in a sense of spiritual continuity and communion. It finds that, in Gogarty's depiction, not only does Patrick's influence continue to be normative of Irishness in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but that Gogarty asserts that one may re-encounter Patrick's defining spirit itself by a spiritual, imaginative engagement with the Irish landscape, in sites associated with Patrick. The second section observes that Gogarty's self-depiction is similar to his self-representation in *Sackville Street*, where he portrayed himself more by



temperament and choice of subject than by factual self-description or confessional self-analysis. It finds that, in *I Follow*, Gogarty offers an indirect self-portrait, again by enthusiasm, whimsy, and preparedness to marvel, whilst nonetheless engaging in a peculiar textual duality with a Saint of the Church. Here too Gogarty cedes the textual centre to another, offering another example of the tendency displayed in *Sackville Street*, to present the inspiring example of greatness from a personal perspective. The third section studies Gogarty's historical method, particularly as it applies to creating a character portrait of one he nominates as inspirational but whom he never met. It finds in particular that Gogarty willingly substitutes wonder and imagination for factuality and scepticism, which results in a lesser historical reliability but in a greater spiritual engagement with his subject. This again relates to Gogarty's notion of the spirit being more important than the factuality of an individual—one of the guiding concerns behind his own tendency to define himself through depictions of his friends and enthusiasms. Running throughout all these sections, however, is the most salient point of all, which is Gogarty's attempt to create a profile of Patrick's influence that supports his continuing inspirational role for the modern Irish people. This profile is based—as were those in *Sackville Street*—upon the notion that greatness reveals itself in character and spirit, and Gogarty intends to represent these inspiring characteristics to those who have not had his opportunities to feel their ennobling influence. The fourth section offers a brief summation of the chapter.

## *I: GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY & THE GENIUS LOCI*

Gogarty bases his pursuit of Saint Patrick upon detecting the unified influences of Patrick, the Irish landscape, and the modern Irish people. Few titles, therefore, convey as much accurate information about their contents as does *I Follow Saint Patrick*, for Gogarty follows Patrick as a chronological successor, as a geographical pursuer, and as a philosophical adherent. Gogarty suggests that such a multiple pursuit requires, in his phrase, 'a treble compass,' attuned to the spiritual, physical, and chronological object of his journey. This method immediately distances Gogarty's pursuit from the factuality and provability he finds tedious in most scholarship, and instead advances the speculative, atemporal reveries that he favours. This triple-pursuit also individualises Gogarty's venture, and it is of this individualised method that Prof. Carens notes that 'judged as archaeological treatise, saint's life, or history, *I Follow Saint Patrick* is an appalling botch. Seen as what it actually is, an account of Oliver St. John Gogarty's highly personal quest and conclusions, it is a discovered delight.'<sup>8</sup>

Gogarty explains the outlines of his 'highly personal quest' in his prefatory note:

This book follows the journeys of St. Patrick as far as they are traceable at the present time. It is by no means a 'Life.' The writer has not the qualifications for such a work, nor the ambition to step in where, with all his advantages, the earliest biographer, Muirchu, left much to conjecture and uncertainty.<sup>9</sup>

This notion of Patrick's biography being composed significantly of conjecture and uncertainty is important to Gogarty, for he attempts to fill in such gaps as much by inspiration, interpretation, and enthusiasm, as by historical research. For Gogarty, the biographical inaccessibility of Patrick does not diminish his accessibility as a

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<sup>8</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [pp. 136-137]

<sup>9</sup> OSTJG. *I Follow Saint Patrick*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1938. [p. vii]

contemporary inspiration. It is by misunderstanding this point that one may most easily go astray in interpreting *I Follow*, for it is often tempting to suggest that Gogarty's disregard for factuality and historiography fatally undermines his pursuit of Patrick (witness the *TLS* reviewer's complaint against Gogarty's illogicality). Yet Gogarty bluntly declares that *I Follow* is not a biography, that he himself 'has not the qualifications for such a work, nor the ambition' and, despite offering a basically convincing biographical summary of Patrick's doings culled from the work of serious scholars, he suggests a completely unscholarly purpose for *I Follow*. His design has little to do with precision or verifiability, and focuses instead upon this continued inspiration that Patrick provides to him and, he believes, to the Irish nation:

The present writer's object is not biography so much as geographical history. And his aim is, by describing the places which the Saint visited and sanctified in our island, to draw from these, as from well-springs, inspirations which shall be truly traditional, pure, and undiluted by modern distractions and fatuous ideas of patriotism; and shall again be as much part and parcel of our race as the rivers, seas, valleys, fields, and mountains are part of our country.<sup>10</sup>

Although it may seem that Gogarty is too often incautious in preferring imagination to research in a historical investigation, even within the book's porous distinction between fact and interpretation, the reader must recall that Gogarty's authorial interest lies in showing the workings of Patrician influence upon a modern, receptive Irish mind, and further to suggest that there are specific locations in Ireland that particularly promote this connection between the modern Irish and their patron Saint. In fact, Gogarty sees gaps in historical knowledge as an invitation to speculate, and thus attempts to overcome evidentiary holes by intuitive reconstruction of Patrick's life. His method is a *post hoc*, *propter hoc* reconstruction of missing events in Patrick's life—where there is no

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<sup>10</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [pp. vii-viii]

evidence, the character of the man may be retrospectively imagined to provide a depiction of his life. Gogarty's disregard for strict factuality is here apposite, for his engagement is more with Patrick's image and public role than with the historical Patrick.

In despite of Gogarty's claim not to offer a biography, however, his reader notes at least that his portrait of Patrick is rather ill defined. Much of Gogarty's narrative follows traditional hagiographical descriptions of Patrick's ministry, with the twist that Gogarty is more interested in the human drama, and endurance, of Patrick's accomplishments than he seems to be in Patrick's religious achievements. Yet this too is reminiscent of *Sackville Street*, where Gogarty offers more personal depictions of his eminent friends than professional tributes—in *I Follow*, Gogarty attempts to avoid hagiographical portraiture by illustrating the innate greatness that emanates from so consequential an individual.

Gogarty's conviction of Patrick's greatness, and continuing exemplarity, rests largely upon his perception of Patrick's vitality, perseverance, and fortitude against discouragement; as ever, Gogarty relishes depicting individuals in circumstances wherein they reveal their spiritual characteristics in a manner that engages the imagination of others. Much of Gogarty's actual pursuit of Patrick's trail, therefore, offers atmospheric description of the hillsides, river-fords, and boat landing sites where Patrick faced difficult tests. Unsurprisingly, these also tend to be the places where Gogarty feels the greatest sense of proximity to Patrick's influence and continuing example, a sensation he describes as feeling the *genius loci*, of which this section will note more shortly. Here, we observe that Gogarty is effective in the simple task of conveying a sense of where he was, what he saw, and what he accomplished in any given place. Thus, curiously, on the basic

level of memoir, *I Follow* is one of Gogarty's more reliable attempts to put himself in print and to describe specifically what he did, and where. Yet his interest in the locations is impressionistic, not taxonomic:

This is no guide-book. If you want to go in search of any particular place in Europe there is always Baedeker. But to follow St. Patrick through Ireland requires a double or a treble compass, because one has to follow him first through the face of the country, secondly through the century in which he lived and wrought, and thirdly through the legends which began during his lifetime...and all the time we must be prepared to put a slow tempo on the movement and to reduce the compacted outlook of his biographers.<sup>11</sup>

Gogarty's attempt to be guided by the influence of Patrick is an indirect application of his notion that the immutability of a compelling spirit allows the dead and the ancient to influence one in the present, should an individual seek out such inspiration. In Gogarty's thought, the endeavour 'requires' this appreciation of the face of the country, and the legends about Patrick, so as to enlarge the 'compacted' outlook of biographers. For Gogarty, the face of the land and the presence of legends are in closest proximity where he can feel what he nominates the *genius loci*.

Gogarty offers what is, for him, an unusually specific definition of his experience of wonder in his definition of the *genius loci*:

...the faint influence which emanates from the very soil of certain spots and affects the visitor according to his sensitiveness...a power which breathes in the open fields in the broad noonday in lands where minds have dreamt and men have moved from time immemorial...<sup>12</sup>

This definition, of course, both accords with Gogarty's interest in Patrick's detectable influence, and places a premium upon Gogarty's sensitiveness, encouraging him to indulge his imagination. He finds that Patrick, and the hardships that Patrick overcame, inspire him in a manner similar to that his most accomplished friends inspire, in that all

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<sup>11</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [pp. 204-205]

<sup>12</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 59]

provoke him to a sense of wonderment, or at least to a new perspective on life, outside of his usual perception. Furthermore, the sense of connection he feels to a timeless continuity of activity in Ireland helps Gogarty to bridge the temporal distance between him and Saint Patrick.

Gogarty is unapologetic about his penchant for dreaming first, and then questioning his vision, for 'In studying the external universe we have neglected the universe within ourselves...Wonder which has gone out of the world remains in me. I want more of it.'<sup>13</sup> For this reason, many of the most arresting passages in *I Follow* are depictions of historical events written not on the basis of historical knowledge, but from the almost novelistic impression that Gogarty receives from the spirit of Patrician locations. The most notable example of this is Gogarty's famous evocation of the piratical raid in which Patrick was seized and enslaved in his youth. In fact, Gogarty does not so much follow St. Patrick as he follows the track of Patrician sites that can reconnect him spiritually to his sensation of a 'pure, and undiluted' Ireland.

Gogarty admits that his is a selective itinerary, and he visits only the primary *loci* associated with Patrick, for 'like dew on the fields of Erin, the name of St. Patrick has saturated the very land. It would be vain to trace his footsteps everywhere, for the retracing and retracing again would confuse the reader.'<sup>14</sup> The spirit of uncorrupted Irishness that Gogarty finds throughout is, of course, intangible, and Gogarty confesses that he himself can only experience this connection to the past, and cannot define it: 'messages ancestral, not to be comprehended by modern man, invaded my spirit, and I

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<sup>13</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [pp. 164-165]

<sup>14</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 201]

felt the weight of immemorial dreams.’<sup>15</sup> Yet his example of another locus where he felt such a connection—the famous Lion Gate at Mycenae—suggests that Gogarty seeks a definitively Irish connection to heritage and antiquity similar to that which pervades Greece.

Gogarty’s relation to the actuality of Saint Patrick, and to historical writing, is a complex one. It is in this connection with representing a lived past that Gogarty’s historical approach clearly influences a consideration of Gogarty’s recollective self-depictions. In a fascinating reversal, *I Follow* pursues a mirror image of the approach to memoir taken in his previous book, *Sackville Street*. In that former book, Gogarty attempts to depict the cultural milieu of Ireland by offering an intimate view of its most distinguished and accomplished members. This method offers the outside reader the opportunity to experience the impact of the most influential and characterful figures, and thus to sense, by imaginative extension, the spiritual enlargement that they provided to Gogarty.

For *I Follow* Gogarty inverts his depictive methodology. Whereas *Sackville Street* is shaped and distinguished by Gogarty’s unique personal knowledge of all the important figures therein, *I Follow* is defined by the fact that Gogarty has no direct knowledge of Patrick, and indeed lacks even the qualifications biographers, theologians, or archaeologists might bring to such a study. Yet instead of taking refuge in the defensible claim that evidence may be contested, and that no one anywhere has possessed personal knowledge of Patrick for 1500 years, Gogarty actually advances the claim that a direct form of personal knowledge of Patrick has indeed survived—his continuing felt presence in the folklore and traditions of the Irish locations associated with him. To create a

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<sup>15</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 159]

character study of the man, Gogarty attempts to recreate the character of a virtually irrecoverable individual by imaginatively examining the way he continues to inspire his society.

## II: INDIRECT SELF-DEPICTION

Despite the prominence of Patrick in the book, even the title *I Follow Saint Patrick* establishes a narrative pair—the narratorial ‘I’, and the Saint. Gogarty is everywhere present in *I Follow*, and he writes of his experiences and adventures whilst trailing Patrick’s movements in Ireland, yet he does not provide anything like a detailed self-portrait. He establishes a correspondence between Oliver Gogarty and the narrator, for he states ‘I am called Oliver,’<sup>16</sup> which correspondence he only implies in *Sackville Street*. Yet, although the work is peculiarly coloured by ‘Oliver’s’ opinions and idiosyncratic effusions, we learn little of textual importance about this narrator: he has a daughter (‘my daughter, who suggested...’),<sup>17</sup> he has been to Crete (‘An American archaeologist gave up digging, so I was told in Crete, when he was...’),<sup>18</sup> he presented valuable relics to the National Museum of Ireland (‘I presented a collection of flint arrows, celts, and spearheads...’),<sup>19</sup> he has seen a giraffe (‘I have never seen a gazelle, whereas I have seen a giraffe: I am a life-member of the zoo’<sup>20</sup>), and he won a prize at the

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<sup>16</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 41]

<sup>17</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 132]

<sup>18</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 32]

<sup>19</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 6]

<sup>20</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 214]



Tailteann Games in 1924 ('I wrote an Ode for the Tailteann Games...I have their fruit, a medal with a head of Queen Tailte all in gold').<sup>21</sup> In *I Follow*, however, Gogarty has good reason to avoid textual centrality, and to focus the reader's attention upon another. Gogarty expresses this impetus by observing, 'let me hasten to say that there is room for only one saint at a time in this book, and he is not the author!'<sup>22</sup>

Of course, Gogarty's minimal self-portraiture in *I Follow* is not only deference to Saint Patrick's appropriate textual precedence. In fact, the absence of a contextual self-presentation must also reflect a fact that significantly determined his self-depiction in *Sackville Street*. This is his general prominence in Irish society specifically, and in the British Isles generally, in the 1930s, when both books were published. Although Gogarty lacked the world fame of Yeats, he was nonetheless a well-known figure in the literary and cultural circles of the British Isles, and he was, as we have seen, an unusually prominent man in Dublin. He therefore had less need to explain himself, or to insert basic biographical information about himself, in his initial books. This fact helps to account for Gogarty's apparent tendency to presume that his readers already know who he is when he employs a first person narration: many of his readers would indeed have known him, or at least have known of him.

This point raises another important narrative similarity between *I Follow* and *Sackville Street*. In both, Gogarty employs a frequently informal narrative tone,<sup>23</sup> only interrupting it for external citation, or his occasional solemnities. In *Sackville Street*, Gogarty employs this personal, conversational approach to suggest, by recreating the

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<sup>21</sup> OSTJG. *I Follow*. [p. 188]

<sup>22</sup> OSTJG. *I Follow*. [p. 93]

<sup>23</sup> It is to attain this light tone that Gogarty includes some of his most irrelevant remarks, as when he notes that 'the only way to obtain privacy [in Ireland] is to run out of petrol.' OSTJG. *I Follow*. [p. 99]

conversational milieu that Gogarty reports, that his readers are also casual participants in the same social circles to which Gogarty conducts us. In *I Follow*, however, Gogarty employs a friendly and informal address for slightly different reasons. First, throughout *I Follow*, Gogarty emphasises the importance to his narrative of conversations that he has with the people he encounters; his point is that Patrick's continuing influence is felt to such a degree that Gogarty may follow Patrick's trail and influence by listening to local legends.<sup>24</sup> In maintaining this tone of intercourse and fluidity, Gogarty again creates a tone of participatory accompaniment by the reader, which is textually important, given the enormous value Gogarty puts upon actually visiting the locations associable with Patrick. Secondly, Gogarty is aware that his work often requires explanations of historical realities, despite his efforts to 'preserve myself and my readers from the ardours of scholarship,'<sup>25</sup> and his more personal observations, and jokes tend to minimise the formality of what Gogarty pursues as a serious investigation. Finally, Gogarty's unceremonious narrative style echoes the essential theme of the work itself—that Patrick has become a unifying figure for the Irish, a shared ennobling inheritance from whom no one may be excluded. It is thus appropriate that Gogarty makes significant efforts to personalise his narrative voice, and to present information about Patrick in as accessible and accommodating a manner as possible, for he claims Patrick not for himself alone, but for the entire Irish nation.

*I Follow* does not employ what we shall come to see as Gogarty's typical memoir style, in that it does not relate his experiences with friends, nor does it describe his own activities and adventures in the manner that will be his common métier. It is clearly not a

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<sup>24</sup> 'When scholars are divided, contradictory, and uncertain, the only appeal that remains is to what is not yet fully appreciated, and that is the veracity of legend and local tradition.' OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 31]

<sup>25</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 43]

straightforward autobiographical text in Prof. Starobinski's sense, as it is neither about Gogarty nor does it chronicle the events of his life. Yet *I Follow* nonetheless bears numerous important correspondences with Gogarty's previous and future self-depictions. Foremost of these, of course, is his physical presence in activities that he records in the first person, to testify to the ennobling influence of another. Also characteristic of his self-presentational style is his general dominance of the narrative by his commentary, if not by his activity. His reader notes further Gogarty's preference to record his physical actions as he interacts with the spiritual influence of a 'Golden Age' of the past.

In this connection lies the most significant narrative similarity between *I Follow* and *Sackville Street*, for in both Gogarty renounces his personal centrality in order to focus his reader's attention upon an inspiring example. As Gogarty explains:

Don't read further in this book if you regret that you were not born in a slum...my opinion is that a good aristocratic is the highest type that humanity or evolution has evolved...[in modern Ireland] you have Pelagianism at its worst, for here it is implied that the poorest and most illiterate and dole-debauched members of the nation are free from social and political original sin...Bear with me if I maintain that "one man is not as good as another," our Pelagians' way of saying that our worst is equal to our best. As if there were nothing worthy of imitation or adulation remaining in Ireland. Let us leave this mental slum.<sup>26</sup>

This passage suggests why Gogarty bothers to follow Saint Patrick at all: it is Gogarty's continuing attempt to define and ennoble the national community by the example of its greatest individuals. Gogarty's choice of Patrick as the definitive figure of Irishness is thus not mere adherence to a tedious stereotype, but is entirely consistent with many of the attitudes he expressed in *Sackville Street*. Gogarty is here provocatively direct ('illiterate and dole-debauched') in his repudiation of the peasant-lauding tendencies of

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<sup>26</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [pp. 144-145]

Irish politics and art,<sup>27</sup> but instead of offering his previous ‘overman’ Talbot Clifton as a corrective, he here offers a real overman: a beatified saint. His subject, however, is not merely a saint, but is precisely that saint who wrested Ireland from the insular allegiances of pre-Christian Ireland, and incorporated Ireland into greater Latinate Europe. Gogarty specifically emphasizes this aspect of Patrick’s ministry: ‘Christianity connoted Rome.’<sup>28</sup> The Europeanising Latinity of Patrick’s ministry must also account for Gogarty’s choice of epigram, from Lindsay’s translation of an anonymous work:

The savage people free and yet despised,  
The outlying parts where still the Tribesmen fight,  
You drew to better things and civilized,  
Loading the Roman arch with greater might.<sup>29</sup>

For Gogarty, as we will see, the pursuit of Patrick is not only an attempt to feel the ‘messages ancestral’ of the Irish landscape, but is also an explicitly modern attempt to reaffirm the best of Ireland, and a ‘symbolic spurning’ of the Ireland of the late 1930s. In this way Gogarty’s political and social opinions of the late 1930s have an unusually defining role in this depiction of Saint Patrick and his influence. Furthermore, as was true of his place in *Sackville Street*, Gogarty’s personal role in *I Follow* is less that of someone who embodies the greatness he lauds, but is instead that of a passionately concerned observer, one whose personal activities and relations enable his readers immediate access to perfect exemplifications of that greatness which Gogarty believes can ameliorate Irish society. For this reason, primarily, Gogarty diverts textual centrality from himself.

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<sup>27</sup> Even his friend Yeats puts the peasant first: ‘Sing the peasantry, and then/Hard-riding country gentlemen.’

<sup>28</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [p. 42]

<sup>29</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [p. v; epigrammatic page, thus unnumbered]

Despite the serious nature of Gogarty's intentional renunciation of textual centrality to Saint Patrick, there is also a sly humour with which Gogarty presents himself as a follower of the Saint. Gogarty is clearly aware of the textual risk in placing oneself in relation to a sanctified figure of the Church, particularly one with so important a national profile as has Patrick, yet Gogarty undermines any impression of pomposity he might convey with understatement and self-deprecation. A telling example of this occurs when Gogarty pursues Patrick's trail to Skerry, and a local conducts this exchange with him:

"Have ye ever heard of St. Patrick?"

"Yes."

"Well, he jumped from Skerry to Slemish."

"But—!"

"It might be the other way."

"But it's a long way?"

"He could lep all right."<sup>30</sup>

This conversation is, of course, designed with two purposes: one is to convey the humorously exaggerated claims that accrue to a Saint's memory, and the other is to reveal that Saint Patrick indeed remains a felt presence in the landscape for the inhabitants. Yet there is another textual level to this exchange that reveals Gogarty's determinedly secondary position to Patrick, for Gogarty encounters his rural collocutor directly after, 'I leaped a wall and twisted my ankle. As I limped down I met a lad...'<sup>31</sup>

Thus while Patrick is able to 'lep all right' from Skerry to Slemish, Gogarty cannot hop a fence without twisting his ankle. Throughout *I Follow*, Gogarty relates his activities in pursuit of Patrick with an amused, and humanizing, portrait of himself in pursuit. Yet this humour should not be understood only as a lightening of the mood for, just as Gogarty portrayed himself as slipping through the mud and as being perplexed whilst hunting with

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<sup>30</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 87]

<sup>31</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 86]

Talbot Clifton in *Sackville Street*, so Gogarty's occasionally ludicrous inadequacy when compared with Patrick is not designed to demean Gogarty, but instead to offer personalized testimony to the true transcendence of his subject. Here, as throughout his works, Gogarty sincerely believes in the edifying example of individual greatness, and he exerts himself—often, at the expense of his narratorial dignity—to insist that 'one man is not as good as another.' Because one could understand this opinion to be condemnatory or intolerant, instead of the inspiration that Gogarty believes encounters with greatness should be, he places himself in the role of the occasionally embarrassed follower, thereby deflecting onto himself any sense of inferiority that greatness imposes upon others.

### III: 'IGNORANCE OF OUR HISTORY': HISTORY, POLITICS, & PORTRAITURE

Running throughout *I Follow* is Gogarty's belief in the cultural applicability of the past to the present. He makes the connection absolute: 'Ignorance of our history is one of the root causes of our Irish troubles.'<sup>32</sup> Gogarty presents the age of Patrick as being not merely reclaimable, but definitional. He asserts that he pursues Patrick to find 'well-springs, inspirations,' and both of these descriptions imply the revivifying effect of the past upon the present. Moreover, Gogarty openly expresses his desire to see the 'traditional, pure, and undiluted' example of Patrick reassert itself culturally against 'modern distractions and fatuous ideas of patriotism.' This language is strikingly redolent of the terms in *Sackville Street* in which Gogarty attacks de Valera, and the de Valeran

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<sup>32</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 4]

period. Although Gogarty is much more restrained in his open attacks on contemporary figures in *I Follow* than he is in *Sackville Street* (perhaps as a result of his libel loss<sup>33</sup>), he is nonetheless forceful in his rejection of contemporary Ireland and its 'fatuous ideas of patriotism.'

There is a philosophy mutual to *Sackville Street* and *I Follow*, for in both Gogarty sees a regression into the past as an escape from de Valera's politicising and demoralizing influence upon Ireland. Gogarty views this regression as being a reaffirmation of normative Irishness. In apparent contradiction of himself, Gogarty appears to define traditional Irishness by the characteristics of a, it seems, Welshman—Patrick himself—whilst in *Sackville Street* heaping abuse upon de Valera for being an alien. Yet this is not contradictory; the argument of *I Follow* is that the Irishness that Gogarty lauds, and with which he seeks to reconnect, began with Patrick. Nonetheless, by engaging with the well-springs and inspirations of Patrick's example, Gogarty seeks to recover elements of Irish life that he conceives as being threatened or perverted during the 1930s. In this the Gogarty of *I Follow* closely resembles the Æ of *Sackville Street*, who proposed that the solution to the division in Ireland in the 1920s was a reinvigoration of the traditional Irishness of the past: 'We were more truly Irish in the Heroic Ages. We would not then have taken, as we do to-day, the huckster and the publican and make them our representative men, and allow them to corrupt the national soul.'<sup>34</sup> This conservative approach to defining Irish culture thus revealingly illuminates Gogarty's intentions in writing a book about Saint Patrick, for it is another of Gogarty's attempts to affirm inspiring personal and cultural example, and symbolically to turn his back upon the

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<sup>33</sup> In *I Follow* Gogarty pointedly notes that 'early in Irish history, law was dissociated from literature.' [p. 175]

<sup>34</sup> OStJG. *Sackville Street*. [p. 174]

prevailing attitudes in Ireland during the 1930s. We will note later that this attempt is also an effort to propose a unifying element into an Ireland Gogarty sees as divided and uncivil.

In Gogarty's conception Patrick represents a pure Irishness that English intervention disrupted, and de Valera threatened to abort, or to squander. It would be inept to read *I Follow* as being exclusively an attack on the English or de Valera for it is, above all else, an attempt to celebrate the example of Irishness first embodied by Patrick. Yet as Gogarty produced this work less than twenty years after the establishment of an independent Irish state, and at the height of the de Valeran period, it is certain that he was acutely conscious of the period of self-definition that all new nations face. Gogarty's reinvigoration of Patrick is thus as much a contemporary and political act as it is an historical, excavational impulse. Having written a book in which he escapes the present by regression into the past, Gogarty then wrote a work in which the distant past is contemporised by its redemptive provision of societal inspiration.

But in turning his back upon the Ireland of de Valera's period, Gogarty does not reemploy *Sackville Street's* tenacious language damning 'the vampire dead.' He here chooses instead to reassert the values of the distant past in the present. In this is revealed the curious dualism that lies at the heart of *I Follow*. This dualism manifests itself in two basic thematic relations that Gogarty combines: the relation of the past to the present, and the relation of Gogarty to Patrick. The relationship of the past to the present is, as Gogarty states, one of example, inspiration, and tradition. None of these qualities has an intransitive value, and all of them depend upon—and promote—an interaction between historical periods. Gogarty freely acknowledges the chronological limitations of his work



by noting that he follows Patrick's travels 'as far as they are traceable at the present time.' The work is thus defined as much by Gogarty's authorial present as it is by its subject.

As ever, Gogarty sees the past and the present as united and interpenetrating. Yet Gogarty forthrightly confesses his own difficulties in reconciling the different realities of his and Patrick's eras. As he notes,

Difficult as it is to imagine oneself in another person's position, it is harder still to reverse the reel of Time and to fit oneself into another period. For here imagination is a hindrance rather than a help. It is liable to be prejudiced by ideas from one's own day; and is far harder to dissociate ideas than to combine them. So when I try to project myself into the fifth century, not only have I to throw overboard a great deal that I have learnt, but also to take on board a great deal that has not been within the reach of those educated in Ireland, as education here is known. And in addition to this there is the tendency of past things to appear to run together, as railway lines seem to meet in the distance. I find myself suffering from a mental limitation which regards things long past as having happened all at once or suddenly, and I am unable to extend to the men of old what I may call the benefit of Time.<sup>35</sup>

Gogarty's recurrent argument here is one of interpretive license. All of his observations about recapturing the past rely less on the difficulty of finding trustworthy evidence than on the inherent flaws of imaginative arbitration. Yet Gogarty insists that his is a work of imaginative reengagement, for nowhere in this admission of difficulty does he mention any faculty of historical research that depends more upon evidence than interpretation. This is, of course, entirely consistent with his attempt to rediscover Patrick as an 'inspiration' instead of as a dusty biographical subject. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Gogarty's method of investigating the past is to 'project myself into the fifth century,' because what Gogarty loses in verifiability by this approach he gains in

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<sup>35</sup> *OStJG. I Follow.* [p. 3]

arbitrative scope. His bridge between the fifth and the twentieth centuries is his own imagination, leaving Gogarty the primary arbiter between the eras.

Most important for Gogarty's investigative method, however, is his belief that the past and the present are interrelated by the continuity of the human character. Upon this belief rest these two prominent aspects of his study, the political and the interpretive. To preface his conviction that 'It is the ages and beliefs that change more than the heart,'<sup>36</sup> Gogarty invokes Longfellow's line 'That in all ages every human heart is human.' Supported by this continuity of character, Gogarty constructs most of *I Follow* on his ability to 'project myself into the fifth century.' His method presupposes congruence between the human character in Patrick's time and in the twentieth century, a plausible yet inevident supposition. Nevertheless, Gogarty here expresses the buttressing idea of the book itself—that one may peer through the distractions of historical distance to perceive the still vital example of Patrick.

Despite Gogarty's expressed reservations about writing, or being seen to write, a biographical study of Saint Patrick, he nonetheless presents a fairly complete picture of Patrick that is an illuminating character study, if not a full biography. Because much of Gogarty's later works will offer similar, briefer character portraits of his friends and acquaintances, and because so much of Gogarty's work depends upon his literary handling of the past, there are several points of importance to be noted in Gogarty's depiction of Saint Patrick here, as well as in his approach to history, literary recreation, and personal profiles.

Gogarty's employment of history is idiosyncratic. He does not, in general, choose to ignore facts that are known to him, despite his recognition that much of the Patrician

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<sup>36</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 4]

story is either reverential hagiography or Saintly humility (as in Patrick's own *Confessio*). Although Gogarty's guesses and speculations about Patrick are the most notable aspect of his presentation of the Saint (he even jokes about this tendency, dryly remarking on the 281<sup>st</sup> of *I Follow*'s 291 pages that 'Here at last I can leave the fields of conjecture and reconstruction'), it should be noted of Gogarty that his basic depiction of the Saint accords with the scholarly accounts of Patrick he draws upon. Gogarty acknowledges the greater practical authority of the 'standard work' of Professor Bury and 'the larger and more detailed work of Dr. Healy.'<sup>37</sup> Despite Gogarty's claims to be led by local tradition, his demonstrable knowledge of the literature about Patrick available at the time reveals his basic respect for formal scholarship; indeed, Gogarty even bothered to acquaint himself with the bizarre pamphlet *St. Patrick: Where was He Born?*, in which the Very. Rev. John Roche Ardill unpersuasively proposes that Patrick was born 'I believe, about A.D. 150, or earlier, and he came to Ireland, as a bishop, about 180.'<sup>38</sup> Gogarty politely corrects him—'even to-day [Dichu] can confound those who would make out that his friend the Saint never existed, or that he existed two hundred years before he was born, *vide* the Rev. John Roche Ardill, LL.D., from the Calry Rectory.'<sup>39</sup> This correction, though minor, nonetheless demonstrates the strength of Gogarty's background preparation, for he was not only able to correct another scholar, but he also knew the field sufficiently well that he could deduce where the other scholar went wrong.

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<sup>37</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 45]. These volumes are: J. B. Bury. *The Life of St. Patrick & His Place in History*. London: Macmillan. 1905. and Most Rev. Dr. Healy. *The Life & Writings of St. Patrick*. Dublin: M. H. Gill. 1905.

<sup>38</sup> Very Rev. John Roche Ardill. *St. Patrick: Where was He Born?* Dublin: Church of Ireland Printing & Publishing Co. 1934. [p. 27]

<sup>39</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 138]

Yet Gogarty is routinely critical of the historian's lack of imaginative engagement with his subject. As he remarks of a particularly acute discussion of a tricky historical conundrum, 'Now, that is the whole thing in a nutshell. But we don't want things in a nutshell, for ancient history is too prone to crystallise itself into nutshells, and so prevent an expansive view.'<sup>40</sup> Here again he seeks the 'enlargement' of inspiration as opposed to the strictures of historicity. In *I Follow*, however, Gogarty articulates his desire for 'the expansive view' not as complimentary to solid research, but virtually in opposition to rigour, fact, and scholarly discipline:

The telescope, the microscope and the test-tube have made sceptics of us all. We have changed wisdom for an exact knowledge of stains, precipitants, reactions and refractions, and put it, for this generation at least, beyond recall. Even when our calculations are found to be deceptive, we go on by the same narrow, exacting formulae, correcting 'calculations,' but never correcting the preposterous hypothesis on which they are founded, which is that everything that cannot be reduced to one or other of our 'sciences' is *ipso facto* false. Therefore, when you object, in the scientific twentieth century, to the magic of the fifth, it is no use expecting me to share your incredulity. You do not believe in angels because you cannot see them; but you believe in X-rays, which cannot see the living flesh but reveal only the bones of the skeleton, without asking yourselves how many magical beings there could be between us, as we look at one another, invisible to these eyes of ours, which can only see solid flesh...The telescope and the oil-immersion lens have immersed you in speculations which tell of many things in heaven and earth, but nothing of man or of his mind...In studying the external universe we have neglected the universe within ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

This is one of the clearest statements of preference in Gogarty's canon, and it expresses a spiritual defence of wonderment and reverie that Gogarty advocates passionately, and never repudiates. This preference for 'the universe within ourselves' is analogous to his argument, which we have seen in his poetry, that the appropriate assessment of life

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<sup>40</sup> OSTJG. *I Follow*. [p. 20]

<sup>41</sup> OSTJG. *I Follow*. [pp. 163-164]

should not demand dates and facts only, but must accommodate the passions of the heart, and of the spirit.

Although Gogarty's reader is willing here to concede his points about the power of the spirit and the value of imagination, Gogarty displays an unconvincing antagonism towards serious scholarship as being necessarily opposed to imaginative truth. In *I Follow*, Gogarty often fails to distinguish between the power of imagination to offer suppositions to fill scholarly gaps, and the actual reliability of those suppositions. Throughout the book, Gogarty unsuccessfully blends jibes at scholarly insistence upon provability with his personal observations or opinions, which he presents as being supportable, and sometimes conclusive. His dissatisfaction with straightforward scholarship and its rigorous insistence on verifiability partially undermines his authorial mediation of Patrician fact, because his standards are too irregular and personalised to be of significant use to anyone else. This, of course, is a general weakness of his recollective prose: in recording his subjective impressions, whether of Patrick or of James Joyce, Gogarty often fails to subordinate his opinions to what he can actually prove. In his depiction of Saint Patrick, this approach to the past makes him appear, depending upon the reader's interests, as either an excited enthusiast or a merely harmlessly opinionated author. This has little importance for *I Follow* itself, for *I Follow* openly declares its methodological idiosyncrasies. Yet in his later works of personal and social self-depiction, particularly in his depictions of his relations with Joyce, Gogarty's preference for spirit above factuality significantly diminishes his record's reliability for researchers and scholars. It is important to notice, therefore, that Gogarty's attitudes towards the literary representation of the past, and his desire to depict compelling individuals by an

enthusiastic—and perhaps partially imaginary—engagement with their inspirational qualities, are longstanding concerns in his writings, and that he prefers colourful imprecision even when his subject is someone whom he would have no possible personal reason to misrepresent.

The question of misrepresenting Patrick raises the interesting issue of how Gogarty chooses to represent another, one for whom he feels a temperamental affinity, yet whom he never met; Gogarty's overwhelming tendency is to write of those he knew. The following passage demonstrates many of Gogarty's techniques of biographical presentation:

His [St. Patrick's] energy must have been as terrific as his endurance, so *pace* our artists, for all their piety I cannot see the Saint as they see him, frail, elderly and emaciated; but rather do I call him up to the mind's eye as an active man between forty-five and sixty, in the full vigour of his years. And most of all I think of him as a man of commanding presence. Whether you agree with me or not...I see him as a stalwart and even a tall man. How else could he have impressed the Ancient Irish, who even to this day in their descendants will not respect a doctor unless he be 'the full of a door?'<sup>42</sup>

Typically for Gogarty, his depiction of Patrick is one that emphasises nobility, vigour, and a 'commanding presence.' The reader will note sceptically with what a paucity of actual fact Gogarty constructs this compelling picture from which dissent is, perhaps justly, invited. Gogarty may be correct or he may be wrong, but nothing in this depiction of a forceful saint 'in the full vigour of his years' has a *provable* relation to Patrick as a living man. Because we do not possess an adequate physical description of Patrick by a contemporary, Gogarty's vision of a vital, tall, crusading Patrick cannot be disproved: yet neither can it be supported. As we see throughout Gogarty's career, his depiction of individuals is largely based upon the subjective impact of their personalities on Gogarty,

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<sup>42</sup> OSuG. *I Follow*. [pp. 230-231]

and not generally upon their physical descriptions—and one will note that Gogarty's reasons for thinking Patrick tall depend largely upon the spiritual impact that Patrick made upon the people of his time, and upon Gogarty's personal concordance with their admiration for the Saint.

Gogarty seeks to find in Patrick and Patrick's travels 'traditional, pure, and undiluted' evidence of characteristic Irish traits, and he comes to believe that he finds them:

Every person in our island shares something of the personality of that steadfast and enduring man who is spoken of more frequently with affection than with awe...He met savages and made them Christians who to this day owe to him largely that which makes them kindly Irish.<sup>43</sup>

But Gogarty, throughout *I Follow*, bases his deductions about the Saint's life, character, and influence by noting that ancient traits remain, and may be seen in the contemporary Irish landscape and populace. Because Gogarty presumes a detectable correspondence between the modern Irish and Saint Patrick—'He has become Ireland. He lives in the people that he made'<sup>44</sup>—he argues circularly that the modern Irish, because they were shaped by Patrick's influence, may be used retrospectively to recreate a picture of the Saint himself. He uses the symptom to prove the existence of a causal force. Unsurprisingly, Gogarty eventually depicts his Patrick as a felt, vital presence in Ireland. This result could hardly be avoided, as Gogarty's method of deduction is retrospective application to Patrick of those contemporary Irish traits that Gogarty believes are attributable to Patrick himself. This dubitable retrospective interpretation has little effect upon his presentation of Saint Patrick, for Gogarty cannot here be shown to be wrong when guessing, or when drawing false conclusions from a retrospective reading of the

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<sup>43</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [p. 291]

<sup>44</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [p. 286]

Saint and his influence; yet when Gogarty later allows himself to recollect his personal friendships and quarrels with such retrospective colouring, he can be, and occasionally is, shown to be imprecise. Yet here, even in this reconstruction of a personality that he admires, and for whom he claims a unique historical role and influence, Gogarty is willing to guess, deduce with little evidence, and draw conclusions based upon his own presumptions about the character of another. His readiness to create extensive character portraits out of fact, supposition, and opinion thus cannot be interpreted in his later writings as crude manipulation, but must be seen within the context of his career as the method by which he depicts even those whom he admires.

This has a much larger implication for Gogarty's work as a whole. Throughout his literary career, Gogarty maintains this cavalier attitude towards substantiation of fact, whilst indulging in purely personal speculations and preferences that he defends as valuable expressions of the spirit, or as 'wisdom' opposed to 'exact knowledge.' This, we have noted, undermines his credibility as a biographer of Patrick, yet he does not claim to fulfil a biographical function. Yet Gogarty maintains this uneasy double act of dismissing verifiability, whilst arguing in favour of subjective response, throughout his works.

One of the most important aspects of Gogarty's pursuit of Saint Patrick is allied with his position on the political climate of Ireland in the late 1930's. His previous work represented the de Valeran present as a politicised, suspicious time, and engaged in a regression from that dismal reality into a noble past. As he describes his pursuit of Patrick in a brief epilogic summation,

It was impossible to visit the many places which he had made famous and to talk to the many people who, after their different fashions, from intimacy to reverence, held him dear, without finding that a definite portrait of the Saint was beginning to form itself on the canvas of our country. I could not follow St. Patrick without knowing St. Patrick as



he lives to-day in the general heart of his people. I had begun by tracing a vague, historical figure through the dimmest century of European history; I end by meeting a definite living force and a spiritual personality unique in the Calendar of the Saints.<sup>45</sup>

This is the generally undeclared quality of Gogarty's interest in Patrick: the reconciliatory, communal example of the Saint for modern Ireland. As we have seen, proposes Patrick and the Patrician influence as characteristically (indeed, definitively) Irish buttresses against the antagonism and division of 'fatuous ideas of patriotism' for which Gogarty derides de Valera and his followers. Yet there is something in Gogarty's depiction of Saint Patrick that goes beyond caustic repudiation of political fatuity, and proposes a deeper unifying agency for Patrick than might only be attributable to his being a patron saint:

There is no Saint in any country who is so familiar to the inhabitants, and I may say, using it in a secondary sense, with whom the people are so familiar. What does St. George mean to the Prime Minister of England? An heraldic figure; a design on an obsolete coin. And St. David is not much of an inspiration or a comfort to the miners of Wales. It is not about him they joke. He is dated and dead. But with St. Patrick it is different. He is not dead. He is everyone's "familiar."<sup>46</sup>

In this context, the reader will observe that Gogarty's depiction of Saint Patrick is more social than religious. This is not to suggest that Gogarty is dismissive of Patrick's religious importance, nor that Gogarty neglects Patrick's unusual position as a religious elect: Gogarty suggests, for example, that dogs fell quiet around Patrick 'by virtue of that sympathy for all creatures which emanates from persons destined to be blessed.'<sup>47</sup> Yet Gogarty takes remarkably little notice of the central accomplishment of Patrick's life, which was the Christianisation of Ireland. One might suggest that Gogarty believes this to be too obvious to mention, yet even where he has a suitable opportunity to reflect upon

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<sup>45</sup> *OStJG. I Follow.* [p. 281]

<sup>46</sup> *OStJG. I Follow.* [p. 285]

<sup>47</sup> *OStJG. I Follow.* [p. 98]

Patrick's religious influence, Gogarty continues to focus upon Patrick's social role. Even when descending Croagh Patrick, when he might have turned his mind to the penitential symbolism of the ascent, Gogarty marvels at the social effect he encounters:

Suddenly illumination! I had climbed Croagh Patrick. I had made the pilgrimage. I had become a worthy person through no fault of my own. Now I began to realise what St. Patrick had done for our country...The amelioration of manners, the kindness, the good nature that mark the Irishman, how far were they due to him?...The Saint's strong soul was reigning influence still over all of us after fifteen hundred years. 'A spirit communicated is a perpetual possession.'<sup>48</sup>

Gogarty sees Patrick as a unifying figure for all the Irish, despite the ineluctable association between Saint Patrick and Catholicism, and therefore Gogarty promotes his Patrick as a figure who could be no less inspiring to an Irish Protestant as to an Irish Catholic. Gogarty's Patrick is notable more for the dynamism of his character, the profundity of integrity, the continuance of his example, and his personal integration of Irish culture into the larger body of Latin Europe, than for any Sainthood qualities, or for his specific proselytising. In this light Gogarty's strangely irreligious depiction of Patrick appears less idiosyncratic than it might otherwise seem: Gogarty's intentional emphasis on Patrick's social example excludes no one, whereas a highly religious depiction could appear sectarian, and might thus alienate many Irish Protestants. At a time when, Gogarty believed, de Valera had betrayed, divided, and confused the Irish people, Patrick's great relevance for Gogarty lies in his provision of a figure upon which a unified, non-sectarian, conception of shared Irishness might be constructed.

If one were to nominate a thought that buttresses the whole of *I Follow*, it would likely be this late quotation from Stevenson that 'a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession.' Gogarty's entire endeavour in this work is to reencounter the spirit of Patrick

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<sup>48</sup> OSJG. *I Follow*. [p. 235]

in the land and the people of Ireland, and to communicate to his readers the sense of shared benefit that Patrick's spirit continues to bestow upon the Irish. Again, he sees this as primarily a social phenomenon, yet it again testifies to Gogarty's inveterate faith in the notion of great individuals inspiring and improving their societies by their example. Patrick's continuing relevance for the Irish, Gogarty states plainly, is certain: 'This is where one can be on certain ground: the realisation of the omnipresence of the Saint in our country. His presence is a bond, a common heritage, an obligation of good will.'<sup>49</sup>

These three elements of Patrick's influence upon Irish society—'a bond, a common heritage, [and] an obligation of goodwill'—have little to do with Patrick himself, or with the Saint's journeys as retraced by Gogarty. These characteristics instead depend upon the Irish accepting a compatriotism based less upon division and distinction than upon shared inheritance, and it is precisely in the language of inheritance that Gogarty depicts his Patrick: 'a bond, a common heritage.' This provision of an exemplary figure recollects Gogarty's attempt in *Sackville Street* to provide the examples of Griffith, Collins, Clifton, and Yeats against an age of political and social delinquescence. In *I Follow*, however, Gogarty makes the much bolder attempt to suggest—fewer than twenty years after the Treaty and the civil war—a definitively Irish inheritance in which all Irishmen and Irishwomen may proclaim an inalienable participation.

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<sup>49</sup> OStJG. *I Follow*. [p. 286]

#### IV: CONCLUSIONS FROM *I FOLLOW*

This chapter has argued that *I Follow* offers useful insights into Gogarty's self-depictions in prose, for many of the tendencies notable in it exemplify his central artistic theme: to record his personal experiences of inspiration and ennoblement and to translate those sensations—and those inspirational examples—to his readers. Gogarty demonstrates again his predisposition to reveal himself more by expressing his philosophy and opinions than by any direct self-depiction, a tendency that we have previously seen in *Sackville Street*. It observes also that Gogarty prefers to depict his subject by disdaining strict adherence to facts, and by substituting for them an imaginative engagement with his subject's personality. Whether writing of himself or of another, Gogarty is more interested in personality than in strict biographical accuracy. Furthermore, Gogarty avoids narrative centrality, yet positions himself in *I Follow* as the textual interpreter of information, factuality, and plausibility. As we see throughout the book, Gogarty allows himself to speculate, surmise, and simply wonder, and to suggest a validity for the results of these inquiries equal to the validity of results obtained by more scholarly research. This he relates to the necessity of wonder in modern life, as a corrective to the contemporary fascination with 'the telescope and the oil-immersion lens...which tell of many things in heaven and earth, but nothing of man or of his mind.' Thus Gogarty makes the claim for wonder and reverie as being integral, if disvalued, constituent parts of 'man' and 'his mind' as broad categories. In a position allied to this belief, Gogarty regards the active exercise of the imagination in recreating the personality of another to be justified by the continuity of human characteristics. This chapter suggests that Gogarty, even when he feels acute admiration for his subject, is willing to present

guesses and preferences as having equal value with demonstrable fact. It is worth noting this tendency as a characteristic of this 1938 work, however, for he has been undermined and criticised for similar characteristics in his later works. Finally, this chapter has noted that Gogarty's imaginative recreation of a past distinguished by courage and accomplishment is partially an antagonistic response to the Ireland of de Valera. As *Sackville Street* moves back into a preferred past to escape the de Valera era of the 1930s, *I Follow* makes a similar regression, yet with an additional purpose: by moving back to a figure Gogarty proposes to be definitional of Irish national characteristics, Gogarty proposes an inspirational figure around whose influence a divided Ireland could reunite, if only through spiritual identification.

CHAPTER 5  
TUMBLING IN THE HAY

Gogarty published his first novel, *Tumbling in the Hay*, in 1939. It is one of the peculiarities of Gogarty's memoir style that this apparent work of fiction is not evidently more fictional or imagined than were *Sackville Street* and *I Follow*. Indeed, in *Tumbling in the Hay*, Gogarty again excavates incidents from his own life for his subject matter, and even resurrects the basic warning that 'the characters [are] fictitious' from *Sackville Street*—"The time of this book is approximately the beginning of the present century, and all the characters are fictitious."<sup>1</sup> This claim is no more accurate here than it was in *Sackville Street*, for *Tumbling in the Hay* is a thinly disguised roman à clef of Gogarty's university years at Trinity College, Dublin. Indeed, in many instances it cannot even be considered sufficiently fictional to be a roman à clef, as no key is needed—it features, all again appearing under their own names, John Pentland Mahaffy, Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, and Arthur Griffith, among other identifiable individuals.

This chapter assesses *Tumbling* in six subsequent sections. The first section assesses Gogarty's associability with Ouseley, and acknowledges Gogarty's fictionalising impulse in relating the events of *Tumbling*, and suggests a reason why Gogarty chose to present his own memories as fiction; yet it also accepts the need to treat this novel as lightly-fictionalised memoir, for the work is a demonstrably recollective evocation of the youth of Oliver Gogarty. The second section addresses the continuities of identity, memoir, social portrait, and inspiration that link *Tumbling* with its predecessors *Sackville Street* and *I Follow*; it finds that *Tumbling* again engages in the depiction of those friends and associations that inspire one to view

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<sup>1</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling in the Hay*. London: Constable. 1939. [Sphere reprint 1982] [p. 303]

existence from a view that transcends the cares of the common and the banal, yet that *Tumbling's* depiction of such friends and social circles is a much broader one than Gogarty had yet attempted. The third section notes the similarities of *Tumbling* with the traditional genre of the *Bildungsroman*, but asserts that *Tumbling* is not a proper *Bildungsroman*, for it does not focus upon the development of the central figure, choosing instead to draw a composite portrait of the society and location in which he conducts his education. The fourth section investigates the unusual prominence of suffering and pain in *Tumbling*, and argues that Gogarty here articulates a central, although rarely-expressed, aspect of his thought: that the joyousness and inspiration to transcendence that he promotes is a direct response to the misery that besets life, and with which physicians must deal on a daily basis. The fifth section compares *Tumbling* with *Ulysses*, and notes that both works recreate the same period, figures, and city, yet where *Ulysses* offers an extreme stylisation of the ordinary, *Tumbling* counters the ordinary with depictions of those associations by which the ordinary may be transcended spiritually. The sixth section combines themes from the second and fifth sections, to note the importance of conversation and mutual interaction in *Tumbling's* conception of transcendence and exuberance. It notes particularly that the juxtapositions upon which the novel is based pose the different social spheres of the dons and the students, whilst maintaining of each the importance of interaction and friendship with others. The seventh section is a brief summation of the chapter.

## I: GOGARTY AS OUSELEY IN TUMBLING

Because of the intricate interrelation between fiction and memory in *Tumbling*, this thesis first briefly investigates Gogarty's personal appearance in the book. Gogarty himself appears in *Tumbling* in the easily penetrated guise of the narrative's primary figure, Gideon Ouseley. There is no discernable connection between Gogarty and the real Gideon Ouseley, so Gogarty may have chosen the name simply as a colourful inversion of his own unusual initials. He had used 'Gideon Ouseley' before: in 1919, twenty years before *Tumbling*, Gogarty employed 'Gideon Ouseley' as his allonym for the plays 'A Serious Thing' and 'The Enchanted Trousers.'<sup>2</sup> We know from the diaries of the indefatigable Abbey patron Joseph Holloway that the 'Ouseley' persona was readily penetrated at that time, and that these plays were recognised as Gogarty's work: 'I...went to the Abbey for the first night of *The Enchanted Trousers*, a play (or satire) in one act by Gideon Ouseley (Dr. O. Gogarty).'<sup>3</sup> It is, however, possible that Gogarty resurrected the Ouseley identity for *Tumbling* as a sly joke upon George Moore and James Joyce. Moore, having appropriated the name 'Oliver Gogarty' for the priest at the centre of Moore's novel *The Lake*, met Gogarty's mother's objections to this usage with the plea, 'But, Madam, if you can supply a name with two such joyous double dactyls, I will change it.'<sup>4</sup> It has frequently been suggested<sup>5</sup> that Joyce attributed the name Malachi Mulligan to his Gogarty figure in *Ulysses* in an attempt to match Moore's 'joyous double dactyls,' and it is possible that Gogarty felt an attraction to the name 'Gideon Ouseley' as yet another bi-dactylic appellation. The interrelations between *Tumbling*

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<sup>2</sup> See: Jeffares, [Ed.] *Poems and Plays*.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Holloway, [Hogan & O'Neill, Eds.] *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre*. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press. 1967. [p. 206]

<sup>4</sup> Frazier. *George Moore*. [p. 553]

<sup>5</sup> As, for example, Dr. Frazier, writing of the double dactyl incident: 'Joyce would have been able to supply him with those dactyls—"Malachi Mulligan," the name of Gogarty in *Ulysses*.' Frazier. *George Moore*. [p. 553]



and *Ulysses*—assessed in section V—make this an attractive, if ultimately unprovable, suggestion.

Whatever the cause for Gogarty's choosing to appear as 'Gideon Ouseley,' his fictionalisation of his memories makes no significant attempt to conceal the similarities associating his own life with Ouseley's. Gogarty retains the first-person narration of his two previous prose books, wherein, as we have seen, he maintained a strong personal presence whilst diminishing confessionality and revelatory introspection. He continues this approach in *Tumbling*. Furthermore, the primary events in Ouseley's university years as chronicled in *Tumbling* are drawn directly from Gogarty's life: the enrolment in Trinity College, Dublin after an aborted enrolment in the Royal University; the medical concentration; the friendships with both drunken medical students and bibulous classical dons; the bicycling skill; the deferential friendship with Arthur Griffith; and numerous other less substantive details inextricably associate Gogarty's life with Ouseley's. It is revealing that Gogarty occasionally includes personal details from his own life in his depiction of Ouseley that have no textual bearing upon *Tumbling*, yet which reinforce the synonymy of Gogarty and Ouseley (as, for example, the fact that Ouseley lives, as did Gogarty, with his widowed mother on Rutland Square—a detail of no exploited relevance to *Tumbling*, but one exactly translated from Gogarty's life).

There is one further self-representational matter of note in *Tumbling*. This topic is the varying centrality of Ouseley to the plot. Although Ouseley is a clearly identifiable Gogarty figure, and the narration of the book is generally a first person recounting by Ouseley of his own experiences, there are curious passages in *Tumbling* that relate matters in which Ouseley does not participate, and some for which he is not even present. Soon after *Tumbling* begins someone records a seven-page-long

conversation in Golly's pub before 'a sprightly figure rushed in, clapped both of them on the back...for it was I'<sup>6</sup> This 'I' is clearly Gideon Ouseley, yet the narration makes no concession to the fact that the reader has just observed an extensive conversation before 'I' arrives. One may also note that the 'Coroner' subplot, which occupies most of Chapters IX, XIII, XIV, and XIX, does not involve Ouseley whatsoever, and he makes no appearance in them. During these chapters, and in those other passages where Ouseley arrives *in medias res*, Gogarty does not detectably alter the narrative voice of *Tumbling*, and he provides no explanation for the continuity of the narration in Ouseley's absence.

In this narrative approach one sees Gogarty's continued emphasis upon groups and interaction in his own recollections. Gogarty's approach to *Tumbling* is, as it was in *Sackville Street*, more social than individual. The division of the narrative voice and the first person singular is highly unusual even in Gogarty's works of memoir, and is generally opposed to the most basic notion of literary self-portrait, that of self-articulated self-representation. Gogarty does not address this occasional alienation of the narration and Ouseley, so no certain deduction of his intentions is available. Nonetheless, the effect is clear: Ouseley, although he is the most prominent figure of the work, and is clearly the primary narrator, is nonetheless only a constituent part of the larger society Gogarty portrays. Conversations start before he arrives, and he joins them when he chances to enter the pub in which they are taking place; the narrative focus lies not specifically on Ouseley's perception of the conversation, but upon the mutuality of the social exchange. As Ouseley is merely a component of that interaction, his absence from a location or an event does not preclude its inclusion within the larger narrative of *Tumbling*.

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<sup>6</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 12]

Although frequently comparable with both *Sackville Street* and *I Follow* in narrative approach to self-presentation, *Tumbling* nonetheless represents a significant authorial transition in Gogarty's prose for, despite Ouseley's clear associability with Gogarty, this work is both Gogarty's first work presented as fiction and his first appearance as a character of another name in his own work. Prof. Lyons has described this peculiar mixture as resulting in an 'autobiography...lightly disguised as an impressionistic novel'<sup>7</sup> (although Prof. Carens cautions against considering *Tumbling* a 'novel,' preferring instead to call it 'another work of the imagination, a selection from "reality," a transformation rather than a transcript, [a] blend of confession, anatomy, and romance rather than novel'<sup>8</sup>). It may be that Gogarty took the Ouseley name, and employed the semblance of fictiveness implied by the novel form, in an attempt to distance himself from the less reputable elements of *Tumbling*, wherein he records the pawnshops, whorehouses, unseemly pubs, and student sloth of his youth with general fidelity. Although *Tumbling* is nowhere salacious, much of its seedier material is thematically ineluctable, for the novel is based upon a series of contrasts and comparisons between the world of Trinity College dons and the extracurricular student underworld of early twentieth century Dublin.<sup>9</sup> Gogarty's depiction of Ouseley's education juxtaposes the donnish world of Trinity with the penurious camaraderie of the medical students; to expurgate the (for example) pub scenes would undercut the artistic contrast Gogarty establishes between the differing styles of drunkenness, and of inebriated conversation, of the students and of the dons. What Gogarty's reader will note here, however, is his continued determination to cull the material for his literary efforts from his own life and experiences. As we have

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<sup>7</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 229]

<sup>8</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 145]

<sup>9</sup> The intemperance of 'medicals' was proverbial: '...from that moment Bernard Shaw became the most formidable man in modern letters, and even the most drunken of medical students knew it.' W. B. Yeats. *Autobiographies*. London: Macmillan. 1955. [p.282]

observed, much of the matter in *Tumbling* can be verified as having occurred in Gogarty's life; although Gogarty's university years are necessarily incompletely documented, little that cannot be independently verified in *Tumbling* is implausible.

The primary difficulty in assessing *Tumbling* lies, however, in precisely this temptation to distinguish between fiction and memoir. Yet this is an un-Gogartian temptation, for Gogarty relishes the fictionalising privilege of authorship, and treats the work as both fiction and recollective self-portrait. It is one of *Tumbling*'s charms that memoir and fictionalisation flow together without embarrassing self-aggrandisement or achronological political enmity. It is a book sufficiently precise in its historical record to be revealing of Gogarty and his university circles, yet it is adequately fictional that no scores need to be settled, and no real animosities appear. *Tumbling* too might well be considered 'a phantasy in fact,' for it is intentionally both: Gogarty writes what is ostensibly fiction, in the first person, based almost entirely upon his own friendships and experiences, about someone who bears another name, which was a well-known guise for the original author.

## II: STYLISTIC CONTINUITIES WITH *SACKVILLE STREET* AND *I FOLLOW*

In essential self-depictive terms, *Tumbling* follows closely upon the precedents Gogarty set with *Sackville Street*. With *Tumbling* Gogarty again recreates a social atmosphere dear to him by focusing his narration upon the interpersonal and conversational energies of that time, instead of attempting a more personalised self-revelatory depiction of personal insight or intellectual development. Moreover, both

works—along with *I Follow*—have an immediate engagement with the periods they recreate, instead of substituting reflective reconsideration and analysis. Although this limits Gogarty's opportunities to comment authorially upon the individual Gogarty figure as he (Gideon Ouseley) engages in his activities, the essential narrative contemporaneity of the three works accommodates Gogarty's conversational style. He relates and comments upon events as though they were fresh to him, instead of posing them from the thirty-five years' distance he had at the time he wrote the novel. Finally, *Tumbling* shares with *Sackville Street* a portrait of Ireland that is urban, educated, and accomplished: despite their pawn-tickets, late drunken pub meetings, brothelling, and failed examinations, the students Gogarty profiles are nonetheless ultimately successful students of Trinity College's medical school, with even 'Silly Barney' passing his examination 'with honour marks.'<sup>10</sup>

Where *Tumbling* most significantly differs from *Sackville Street* and *I Follow* is, of course, in Gogarty's adoption of the Ouseley persona. Although Ouseley is clearly a Gogartian figure, it is noteworthy that Gogarty takes this persona for a work based upon his own life, and which contains other identifiable figures whose relations to Gogarty are known. This chapter has proposed that this utilisation of the Ouseley guise is intended largely to distance Gogarty from the less-salubrious aspects of *Tumbling* but, even should that supposition be correct, Gogarty gains no more authorial distance by this tactic than he does by his warning that 'all the characters are fictitious.' His employment of the first person singular further ties Ouseley to Gogarty, as Ouseley ('...for it was I'<sup>11</sup>) relates as his own distinct events from Gogarty's personal biography. This seems to indicate, yet again, Gogarty's fascination with claiming to mix the fictional and the remembered, whether or not

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<sup>10</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 101]

<sup>11</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 12]

there is any significant fictionalisation in the book. Both in *Tumbling* and *Sackville Street* Gogarty issues warnings of fictionality that do not appear to be significantly supported by detectable invention in the texts. (An epigram of *Tumbling*, Shakespeare's 'Were such things here, as we doe speake about? Or have we eaten on the insane Root, that takes the Reason Prisoner?' suggests a disjunction between reality and representation that the novel itself does not enact.)

As a work reflecting events from Gogarty's biography, *Tumbling* chronicles Gogarty's years in medical training, which is the chronological period just before the conclusion of *Sackville Street*; in an unusual manner, therefore, *Tumbling* is something of a continuation of *Sackville Street*. Indeed, Ulick O'Connor suggests that *Tumbling* contains Gogarty's 'student memoirs written in the conversational mode of *Sackville Street*.'<sup>12</sup> Yet there are also thematic and chronological links beyond the conversationality of the narration. As we have seen, *Sackville Street* concludes in the 'paradiso' period of Gogarty's young maturity. In *Tumbling*, Gogarty recreates the exuberant, humorous approach to life and society that one finds in the last passages of *Sackville Street*.

Unlike Gogarty's active political and cultural observation in *Sackville Street* and *I Follow*, his few political comments in *Tumbling* are topical to the period of the narration, not to that of the writing. These political remarks reflect Gogarty's uncharacteristic discipline in placing contemporary animosities and disappointments aside to better recreate the atmosphere of the era being depicted. His discussion of the early Sinn Fein takes only one oblique swipe at de Valera, choosing instead to focus upon the inspiration of the early movement itself:

We were quite satisfied that there could not be a better name for the movement than SINN FEIN, which, meaning as it did not OURSELVES ALONE, which might

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<sup>12</sup> O'Connor. *The Times I've Seen*. [p. 332]

exclude external aid and communications, but WE OURSELVES, would inculcate a sense of self-reliance and bring men's thoughts to dwell on Ireland and not fly off to Westminster, where at best we were asking England to give us leave to give her a black eye. It would put an end to the demoralising effect which Westminster had on Irish members who after a few years get themselves dug in with a host of other interests other than Ireland's, such as promoting bills for private companies—witness Tim Healy—or they got themselves weakened by kowtowing to English prestige that made an Irishman so forgetful of his own heritage of culture as to be actually flattered if he came to be accepted as one of themselves. England was the only country that could make money and servile subjects out of selling snubs. That's what WE OURSELVES would stop.<sup>13</sup>

Gogarty's description of the early idealism of Sinn Fein effectively elides all the intervening, and to Gogarty politically disappointing, years. Of course, Gogarty's determined distinction between 'We Ourselves' and 'Ourselves Alone' reflects the split in Irish nationalist activity for which Gogarty blamed de Valera; yet this remains an exceptionally muted criticism of the individual and faction that *Sackville Street* essentially accuses of murdering Collins and driving Griffith to the grave. Finally, it is also worth noting Gogarty's still rhetorical depiction of the Irish relations with England, as the relations between Ireland and England form the crux of his next work of fictionalised memoir, *Going Native*.

A further comparison among *Sackville Street*, *I Follow*, and *Tumbling* is revelatory. This lies in the essentially episodic nature of all three works. Although all three follow Gogarty (or a Gogarty-persona) on adventures in which he encounters interesting people and relishes his friends and his circumstances, there is little internal relation of anecdote to anecdote, and no sense whatsoever of a developing or deepening self-awareness that structures the self-presentation. Both *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling* have chronological structures, not developmental: *Tumbling* follows a clearly chronological progression, from Ouseley's entry into Trinity College, to his

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<sup>13</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 96]

medical qualification; *Sackville Street*, as we have seen, adheres to a chronologically regressive timeline to attempt a 'perspectiveless' portrait; and *I Follow* moves back and forth between Patrick's time and Gogarty's, and is necessarily episodic, as Patrician hagiography and biography are incomplete. Yet despite Gogarty's utilisation of straightforward chronological development in *Tumbling*, he relates Ouseley's education in strangely apportioned anecdotes. Ouseley's undergraduate education consists entirely of enrolling in Trinity, riding a bicycle, dissecting a corpse, and sitting in a pub: he next appears in the Trinity Examination Hall, feeling intimidated by a portrait of Elizabeth I. The reader notes in this narrative episodicity Gogarty's tendency, yet again, to shunt the Gogarty figure to the side of the narrative, and to focus instead upon social incident and interaction instead of individual development. He does not attempt to find a larger theme, or purpose, that unifies his stories, except that they tend to record a moment out of the ordinary, in which a reflection or a conversation lifts the Gogarty figure out of his daily concerns. His later works, particularly those essays Gogarty wrote in the United States, take a similarly anecdotal approach to their subjects. He often seeks to present an individual's portrait by this type of illustrative characterful anecdote, instead of by creating an extended balanced narrative. It is worth observing here that Gogarty records his own memories in precisely the same loosely related manner.



### III: THE GRAMMAR OF GREATNESS AS BILDUNGSROMAN

One of the fascinations of *Tumbling* lies in the book's formal resemblance to the traditional Bildungsroman, yet its characteristic Gogartian reluctance to depict any development in the Gogarty character's personality. As the characters in *Sackville Street* do not significantly alter over the thirty years of that work, in a similar manner the characters of *Tumbling* also change little personally or intellectually in the approximately six-year span that the novel describes. Although Ouseley has, by the book's conclusion, obtained his B.A., passed his medical examinations, performed his residency, and is set to become a professional physician, these experiences have not significantly altered his views, his reflections, or his conduct. Gogarty emphasises this personal continuity by beginning and ending the novel with the same basic image: as *Tumbling* begins, Ouseley rides with his mother in a cab as they go to enrol him in Trinity, and at the novel's end Ouseley, his education at Trinity completed, rides drunkenly with his medical friends in a small-pox cab on a late night quest for liquor. Thus the novel that chronicles Ouseley's medical education concludes parodistically with the cry 'What is the use of a profession if you cannot turn it to account?'<sup>14</sup> as Ouseley attempts to requisition, on his new authority as a doctor, a bottle of brandy. In the symbolism of the work's opening and closing images, Gogarty illustrates the continuity of Ouseley within the shifting of Ouseley's companionships—he arrives in Trinity with his mother, and he leaves with his drunken friends.

In fact, in *Tumbling* Gogarty writes an unusual type of Bildungsroman, one in which the actual obtaining of educational certification is distinctly secondary to the experiences to be had by living in the academic milieu. Gogarty's interest is in the extracurricular education that the society of Trinity provides to an inquisitive young

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<sup>14</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 301]

man. It is in this that Gogarty returns to his habitual pattern of writing about specifically those friends and episodes from his life in which he believes there is an exemplary element of personal elevation or inspiration. In Ouseley's two sets of friends Gogarty presents an unusual, yet still recognisable, version of the inspiring social interaction he considers the literarily communicable influence of those who lift him above the everyday.

Gogarty appears appreciative of the official educational possibilities at Trinity College ('It's a fine thing to have the Western Front of Dublin University behind you. That's a wall you can put your back to when it comes to scholarship'<sup>15</sup>), although he notes with some amusement of Goldsmith, Burke—sculptures of whom are situated at the college with their backs to 'the Western Front of Dublin University'—Swift, and (by humorous association) himself, 'It is an extraordinary thing that Trinity's greatest sons were in her eyes her greatest dunces.'<sup>16</sup> Yet Ouseley's intellectual interests go largely unstimulated by his academic courses, and he learns far more from his professors by their extracurricular society. As Ouseley notes, whilst attempting to find a conversational topic during a social gathering:

I felt like a man imprisoned in a surrounded house. There was no escape from knowledge. If I tried Greek—but who would have that audacity in Trinity College? The Doctor knew as much Greek as Plato—almost. If I tried Philosophy, what a hope! Antiquities, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese? I was rounded up in the Old Kingdom a minute ago. Music? The Master and Mahaffy had, what is extremely rare in a generation, perfect musical ears. Politics? I had already let Arthur down. English, even if I slipped a rare quotation past the Master there was always Dowden out in the Front Square...I was trapped. I know that I should be feeling very glad to be 'trapped'; for that my mother was paying. But it is sometimes painful to feel like a goldfish surrounded by the crystal sphere of knowledge in which all I could do was to go round and round in a circle and gape. I know what is wrong with me. Whenever I feel like this my mind is being formed! 'Bear it, father! Bear it! It will be the

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<sup>15</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 81]

<sup>16</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 76]

making of the pup,' as the boy said to his sire when the bulldog seized his nose. I should be glad to be with the Gods. So I am!<sup>17</sup>

In this passage Ouseley's sensation of being overmastered in all academic subjects relates to the seeming omniscience of the individual dons, and not to the knowledge that they impart in their courses. Here again, as in all of Gogarty's work, it is personal interaction that forms the mind, not rigorous application to one's official responsibilities. Even the learning Ouseley is expected to derive by his coursework he obtains outside the classroom, whether by memorising his friend Birrell's anatomical mnemonics or by attending Parker's astronomical 'grinds': 'I wish I had read more in my book, but, after all, I had gone to Parker, and he gets everyone through if they read his notes.'<sup>18</sup> For Ouseley, it is perfectly acceptable to pass an examination by learning *how* to pass examinations, even if one otherwise lacks the specific knowledge being assessed. (Ouseley's grinds do not, in fact, help him, as he forgets the term 'foci'; yet he feigns personal misgivings about orbital ellipses, by these misgivings convinces the examiner that he has not employed a grinder—'You have approached it apparently yourself'<sup>19</sup>—and is rewarded for his probity with a passing grade of 5).

Gogarty's treatment of 'the Gods'—his Trinity professors generally, but specifically the trio of Mahaffy, Tyrrell, and Macran—is crucial to understanding Gogarty's intriguing representation of 'the grammar of greatness' in *Tumbling*. In the citation above, Ouseley's reaction to the tutors is one of social enjoyment, intellectual inadequacy and challenge, and, most importantly, a recognition that for all of their academic attainments, the foremost manifestation of their greatness lies in their illuminating companionship, not their teaching. Because of their prominence as individuals and as accomplished scholars, these three dons are the closest to truly

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<sup>17</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [pp. 204-205]

<sup>18</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 55]

<sup>19</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 59]

prominent characters Gogarty includes in *Tumbling*—with the one revealing exception of James Joyce. Gogarty clearly intends the dons to play the role that, in fact, they also played in *Sackville Street*, that of inspirational and elevating provocation to an urbane, sardonic, and intensely learned attitude to life that buffers an individual from the unpleasantnesses of existence.

*Tumbling*'s structure is an elegant juxtaposition of social circles, so that Ouseley's intellectually motivating experience in the company of the dons interacts thematically with Ouseley's other friendships, those with his fellow medical students. Both societies represent the social life of Trinity College, and they both pursue similar activities—generally, speculative conversation over alcohol. Yet the obvious contrast between circumstances is clear from the beginning, for the dons provide Ouseley with precisely that sense of mental elevation that Gogarty seeks and records, whilst his young medical colleagues occasionally repulse him: 'I felt a sense of degradation. My friends repelled me. If my mother knew! The very thought of a pawn office! They saw nothing bad in it. They saw it as a joke, a grim one at the worst.'<sup>20</sup> But it would be incorrect to read Ouseley's dismay with the conditions to which the students are reconciled with repudiation of their company; in fact, Gogarty's presentation of Ouseley's 'medical' friends is generally tolerant and amused, and they ultimately succeed in their academic studies, despite significant malingering. His disgust is instead for the students' vulnerability to the mundane cares of existence, and their concomitant need to endure the deprivation and embarrassment of pawning valued items to buy food and drink.

The illustrative function for the 'grammar of greatness' of the dons' company is clear in *Tumbling*, for they are 'the Gods' who form Ouseley's mind, and whose

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<sup>20</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 15]

conversation draws him from his studies in the autopsy rooms to a realm of unbroken intellectual continuity with ancient Athens and Rome. Yet in assessing the students' role the example of *Sackville Street* is instructive, for the students occupy much the same position in *Tumbling* that Gogarty's relatively unknown friends—such as George—fill in *Sackville Street*. That is, they represent the colourful individuality that, along with extraordinary accomplishment, provides Gogarty with enlarging glimpses of life beyond the preoccupations of the ordinary. It is through the conversational exchanges with his student friends that Ouseley is often able to linger over several pints, to ignore the poverty in which they all live, and to relish the vitality and exuberance of the characters who surround him. In this one sees yet again the importance of society, mutuality, and generous interaction to Gogarty's conception of being released from one's daily cares.

The importance of social interaction serves two important narrative functions in *Tumbling*. First, *Tumbling* again enacts Gogarty's recurrent notion of self-portrait by the depiction of friends, and one's social milieu. Although he does not provide an extensive developmental portrait of Ouseley, Gogarty offers a remarkably engaging study of Ouseley's friendships and social interactions through the omniscient conversation of the dons, and the punning, vernacular give-and-take of the students. Secondly, in a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare's habit of having 'low' characters humorously echo the situations of the 'noble' characters, Gogarty's students mimic the dons—so that *Tumbling* covers a much larger social register than do Gogarty's previous works—yet Gogarty, also like Shakespeare, makes each group appealing and understandable in its own terms, so that the similarities between them do not diminish their dignities by making both groups ridiculous.

Gogarty's tendency to focus upon learning attained by experience instead of learning gained by study represents one of the thematic undercurrents of *Tumbling*, which is Gogarty's objection to the false specialisation and academicisation of life. Although Ouseley makes jokes that might come from any of the students—'Once a thing becomes a matter for professors there is no knowing where the truth lies'<sup>21</sup>—he pursues throughout the book an interest in what is vivid in his subjects, as opposed to that which is strictly academic. Gogarty's second chapter, 'In College Park,' is a particularly accomplished set-piece, for in this brief chapter he skilfully moves from the vitality of young men racing bicycles around College Park to the dissection room in which Ouseley and Birrell must anatomise paupers' corpses. Ouseley's speculations in the dissection chamber are central to Gogarty's views throughout his literary career:

Who in his senses would waste his days in a dead-house when the sun is shining outside and when the whole subject of Anatomy is not a mind-full for a moron?... We must bring the Muse into Medicine, or, rather, bring Medicine, which has wandered, back to Phoebus, back to the God in whom all music and song and blood are pure. It is an awful task, but it has to be done. I must take the onus of it on my back, ably helped by a merry blade or two, and rewrite Anatomy in rhyme. It has to be done. It should have been done long ago.<sup>22</sup>

There are numerous threads here that relate to Gogarty's writings. The first is simply his desire to reattach scholarly activities to the potential exuberance of life. Even the study of life itself (or, more precisely, the study of its medium, the body) has become, for Ouseley, an exercise in rote memorisation and dissection of the dead. In his anatomical studies, there is no sense of wonder at the body as a source of pleasure, or of surprising strength—yet Ouseley experiences both of these, through alcohol and bicycle racing. Gogarty is, throughout his work, interested in life as it is experienced

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<sup>21</sup> OSuJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 53]

<sup>22</sup> OSuJG. *Tumbling*. [pp. 22-23]

spiritually, not as it is dissectible into cold verifiable constituents, whether in a biographical profile, or in the literal dissection of a corpse. Just as Gogarty gave much greater attention to St. Patrick's character and influence than to the Saint's actual physical or geographical verifiability, so Gogarty here objects to a scholarship of life that neglects the very interest of life itself, vitality. In *Tumbling*, he presents academic learning as being wrongly addressed toward fact instead of inspiration. Ouseley therefore finds it ridiculous that even the freshly mown grass on which he cycles should be academicised: 'The grass—what is this the Professor of Weeds called the grass in his last lecture? Yes, *Poa pratensis*, meadow grass, that was it. I was doing twenty on *Poa pratensis*.'<sup>23</sup> It is this careful opposition Gogarty draws between the enjoyment and the study of life, particularly as symbolised by the healthy young people trapped by scholarship in a dead-house, that renders 'In College Park' so striking a chapter.

Here again Gogarty continues his advocacy of treating the factual as being subject to wonderment, poetry, and 'all music and song.' As we saw in *Sackville Street*, but more clearly observed in *I Follow*, Gogarty believes that it is possible to overemphasise proof and verifiability, to the detriment of wonderment, inspiration, and, Gogarty argues, the reality of life that is only to be apprehended by imagination. Here his reader notes that, even in the necessarily precise field of medicine, where life itself may depend upon exactitude and diagnostic knowledge, Gogarty proposes a vague, but temperamentally understandable, return 'to Phoebus, back to the God in whom all music and song and blood are pure.'

What is most important to notice in the above citation, however, is a point closely allied to the previous observations, yet which is a point with greater

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<sup>23</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 17]

applicability to the whole of Gogarty's career than its predecessors. This is Gogarty's reaction to medicine, and to the demands placed upon a physician by confronting suffering, disease, and putrefaction on a regular basis, as a professional obligation. As Gogarty noted in *Sackville Street*, 'A medical man has no memoirs,' yet in *Tumbling* Gogarty neatly avoids the ethical complications of writing about his medical career by writing instead of his medical education. This approach allows him to express his thoughts on the issues raised by medicine without revealing sensitive or identifiable case histories. The view of medicine against which Gogarty fights—yet which he understands with a professional appreciation—is that which his Trinity professor expresses in one of the most negative monologues in Gogarty's canon. Even an extensive selection eliminates important passages, but the following is a succinct excerpt:

Turn back now if you are not prepared and resigned to devote your lives to the contemplation of pain, suffering and squalor. For realise that it is not with athletes that you will be consorting...but with the dying and the diseased. The sunny days will not be yours any longer but days in the crowded dispensaries, the camp of the miner or of the soldier where, unarmed, you must render service in the very foremost positions. It is in the darkened pathological department of some institution that you, some of you, will spend your lives in tireless investigation of that microcosmic world which holds more numerous and more dangerous enemies of man than the deep. Your faces will alter. You will lose your youthful smirks; for, in the end, your ceaseless traffic with suffering will reflect itself in grave lines upon your countenance. Your outlook on life will have none of that deception that is the unconscious support of the layman: to you all life will appear in transit, and you will see with clear and undeceived vision the different stages of its devolution and its undivertible path to the grave...These are no delightful thoughts, but they will inevitably be yours, and your recompense for them is that your work for a short space may ease pain and baulk, if only for a year or two, the forces of annihilation and decay.<sup>24</sup>

In this passage Gogarty reveals his thirty years as a practicing physician. Although Gogarty clearly contextualises the grim message by making it a warning to

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<sup>24</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [pp. 226-227]



(perhaps excessively frivolous) young medical students, there is behind it the central reality of the medical profession—that one must daily grapple with ‘pain, suffering and squalor.’ Yet to Gogarty, the professor’s logic leads to an erroneous gravity. The inevitable confrontation with death and disease does not, for Gogarty, detract from the ‘sunny days,’ but contrarily adds to their value: ‘It adds a pleasant tang to life to know that it’s fleeting. If I may be forgiven for employing a medical term: Death is Life’s astringent.’<sup>25</sup>

#### IV: ‘DEATH IS LIFE’S ASTRINGENT’

This Gogartian conception of suffering, misery, and death as augmenting the pleasures of healthy, enjoyable life frequently influences his work, yet he rarely addresses such issues to the extent that he confronts them in *Tumbling*. The only comparable engagement with misery and unhappiness in his works is his outspoken attack on slums.<sup>26</sup> By generally focusing his memoirs on the inspiring and the amusing Gogarty makes a conscious choice to represent himself by what he enjoys in life, to the detriment of biographically accurate writing. He makes his case directly in *Tumbling*:

The aim of Art is spiritual expression, and it would be the very contradiction of Art were it not to detach itself from the material and the factual. That is where American poets go astray. Rather it is where they keep earthbound and think that things significant in the daily round are therefore themes fit for...<sup>27</sup>

What his readers have not seen addressed so directly in Gogarty’s prose writing, before *Tumbling*, is the specifically medical familiarity with suffering that impelled

<sup>25</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 75]

<sup>26</sup> This aspect of his writing is here assessed in Chapter 7, section IV.

<sup>27</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 80; Gogarty’s ellipsis leaves the thought unfinished]

Gogarty to this necessarily optimistic attitude. His recollective self-depictions are therefore often intentionally distorted representations of his life; Gogarty's interest in writing memoir is not in recording the 'daily round' of illness and suffering, but is instead the presentation of those people, events, and interactions that provoked a view of life more noble than the 'earthbound.'

It is, of course, easy to overstate Gogarty's exposure to suffering. He is not unique. Stephens, as just one example, often writes with quiet sympathy of the poor, the overworked, and the frightened, as in *The Charwoman's Daughter*, or 'Hunger.' In personal terms, Synge is notable for the dignity of his writing in the face of his own death, and Joyce's persistent ocular troubles (as well as his daughter's ongoing illness) caused him enormous grief. Furthermore, the reality of Gogarty's otorhinolaryngological practice on the fashionable<sup>28</sup> Ely Place was less adverse an undertaking than 'rendering service in the very foremost positions' of combat, and the medical cases he deals with, even in *Tumbling*, tend more towards the detection of syphilis than to the horrors of a trauma ward. It is nonetheless pertinent to note here that Gogarty's literary ebullience, gaiety, and preference for reverie is not merely good cheer, but is a philosophical outlook intentionally chosen for its ability to confront the darker realities inseparable from medical practise, and from existence itself. Of course, Gogarty's other works occasionally hint at the miseries he sees in his medical role, but *Tumbling* is his first significant work in which the unpleasant reality of medicine is a central, openly assessed, theme. Prof. Lyons has elegantly described the humour by which the students endure the explicit thematic presence of suffering as 'the protective comedy of medical-student life.'<sup>29</sup> This suggestion of Gogarty's

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<sup>28</sup> At one time Ely Place—a short street—housed Gogarty, Thornley Stoker, and George Moore.

<sup>29</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 229]

joyousness as being a defensive response to pain is an observation that may be, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to much of Gogarty's canon.

Gogarty goes to significant artistic lengths to interpose his medical and social observations of pain between happier depictions of the medical students' lives. This is yet another application of his juxtapositional style in *Tumbling*, where Gogarty balances such contrasts as don/student, vitality/death, examination failure/examination success. The scenes in which Gogarty notes the miseries medical practitioners encounter thus provide a context to the scenes before and after them, instead of appearing acontextually, as Gogarty's self-contained vignettes often do. It is a characteristic of Gogarty's style generally to fail to connect vignettes—yet in *Tumbling*, he does so by juxtaposition. In this sense, his observations on the slums of Dublin are a notable instance of *Tumbling's* tendency to interposition happiness and suffering. His remarks portray a grim reality made more offensive by the civic tolerance of that misery:

Dublin is a slum, an extensive and terrible slum hidden behind the shallow facades of the rarely painted shops, banks, and shabby offices in its few principal streets. There are many reasons but no excuses for this state of things...It is now a slum, and I am living in a particularly bad example of one in Holles Street which, though only a few yards behind the fashionable Merrion Square, is an awful slum. But here I must reside, for here dwell the proletariat...which means the offspring on whom I have to officiate in person while they are being born, so that I may become skilled enough to deliver the more delicate—that is, the rare—children of the rich, who do not produce reserves in sufficient quantity to combat the city's infantile mortality successfully.<sup>30</sup>

Gogarty is given to such social and political asides in his prose, and by the 1939 publication of *Tumbling* he had already made these precise points several times before, in different media. His introduction to the survey *The Milk Supply of Dublin* passionately excoriates the bad milk offered to the children of Dublin,<sup>31</sup> and his 1917

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<sup>30</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 169]

<sup>31</sup> See: D. Houston, [OSTJG, Intro.]. *The Milk Supply of Dublin*. Dublin: Plunkett House. 1918.

play *Blight* deals almost exclusively with the misery that slums beget and propagate. What is unusual in the appearance of this passage in *Tumbling* is not, therefore, the articulation of these ideas, but is instead their powerful situational effect when interposed between the passages they separate. Gogarty's denunciation of slums follows a pleasant, inebriated symposium in which Ouseley and Professor M'Gurk [Macran] discuss Hegel, and the slum protest directly precedes the scene in which the medical students drink themselves through a night of residency with 144 bottles of stout. That Gogarty wishes his readers to make a thematic connection among the three passages seems inescapable, as all three scenes share the motif of birth. The symposium concludes with Ouseley's observation '[Hegel on the continuity of the soul] is as if someone were to assure two love-sick lovers: "Cheer up! You two may be swept away, but Reproduction shall never be swept away,"<sup>32</sup> after which Gogarty deplores the conditions in which reproduction and birth occur in slums, which thoughts he follows by depicting the medicals awaiting the birth of a poor patient's baby. The sudden transformation of Professor M'Gurk's theoretical speculations on the soul's existence into the reality of slum birth is a jarring transformation, and it provides a humanising framework for the medical students' otherwise inappropriate inebriation.

Despite the (for Gogarty) unusually numerous instances of medically encountered suffering and illness in *Tumbling*, it would be incorrect to interpret their presence as a darkening of Gogarty's perspective. As we have seen, part of Gogarty's success in the novel lies in his ability to employ uncommonly explicit depictions of his medical experiences to explain that suffering against which the book's general merriment reacts. Gogarty repeatedly and explicitly expresses his preference for joy in

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<sup>32</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 168]

the face of unhappiness, so that there can be no mistaking his authorial position on the medical issues he raises. He returns to the theme frequently: not only does he claim that death is life's astringent, he also notes admiringly of Old Pease, 'He had the gift of relishing life. A gift long lost to us,'<sup>33</sup> and he italicises, for no apparent reason except emphasis, Mahaffy's observation: '*Is it not remarkable, my friend, that the savage and the ignorant laugh less and understand less of this great fund of enjoyment than civilised people?*'<sup>34</sup> Gogarty's assent is revealing despite its predictability, as his agreement pushes the point farther than Mahaffy had done: 'I was very fond of laughter. In fact, I disliked and suspected anyone who could not join in a laugh. There is something wanting in anyone who is too serious. He is uncivilised, and therefore a potential menace to society.'<sup>35</sup>

#### V: TUMBLING IN THE HAY AND ULYSSES

The literary importance of Ouseley's residency in the Holles Street infirmary, and particularly of the specific evening Gogarty depicts there, is allied with his portrayal of a character who 'could not join in a laugh.' This figure is identified only as 'Kinch,' yet he needs no other appellation to be immediately identifiable as James Joyce. Joyce had already employed this name for himself as the nickname by which Buck Mulligan refers to Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*. Although Kinch is one of the lesser figures in *Tumbling*, his few appearances have a literary significance, for *Tumbling* depicts the time, milieu, and several noteworthy characters (most

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<sup>33</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 109]

<sup>34</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 88]

<sup>35</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 88]

conspicuously, Gogarty and Joyce) that Joyce presents in *Ulysses*. It is also possible that the 144-stout evening the students spend in the Holles Street hospital, waiting for a poor woman to give birth, recreates the same incident from which Joyce created the Holles Street chapter in *Ulysses*.

This thesis will more extensively examine Gogarty's literary relations with James Joyce in Chapter 8, for Gogarty's writings about Joyce become more extensive, and more contentious, than is Gogarty's mention of Joyce in *Tumbling*. Yet there are sufficient connections between *Tumbling*, *Ulysses*, and Gogarty's experimentation with memoir that they must be addressed within the immediate context of *Tumbling*.

By the time *Tumbling* appeared, Gogarty had already depicted Joyce in *Sackville Street*, but that earlier portrait revealed little of Gogarty's reaction to Joyce. The Joyce of *Sackville Street* is a distinctly minor character. His only notable appearance in the book occurs in the Brazen Head pub, where he records Gogarty's words in his 'epiphany' notebook, then recites Jonson's famous poem 'Still to be neat, still to be dressed' to old women who sit nearby. Although the resulting portrait of Joyce is not flattering, it is not, on the whole, an offensive or indefensible depiction. It is worthy of note, however, that Joyce's brief appearance in *Sackville Street* is a restrained literary reaction from 'Buck Mulligan' to Joyce's employment of Gogarty in *Ulysses*. Gogarty later faces varied accusations of misrepresenting Joyce, envying Joyce his success, and attempting to retaliate against Joyce for 'Buck Mulligan.' One observes here, however, that Gogarty's brief depiction of Joyce in *Sackville Street* is an essentially tempered portrait, and that its presentation of a difficult, erudite young Joyce is largely corroborated by subsequent Joyce scholarship.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For Joyce and his personality around the time Gogarty knew him, see: Ellmann. *James Joyce*. [pp. 117-175].

*Tumbling* presents a more extensive portrait of Joyce than did *Sackville Street*, although even in *Tumbling* Joyce remains a minor character. Gogarty is not wholly condemnatory of Joyce: he records that Kinch ‘had a hell of a knowledge about literature, medieval and the rest of it.’<sup>37</sup> Kinch appears occasionally on the periphery of the plot, but he never approaches the textual prominence of Ouseley’s primary cronies Barney, Weary, The Citizen, and Golly. Pointedly (to those who are familiar with *Ulysses*), Joyce’s most revealing appearance in *Tumbling* is one in which Kinch needs to have the Greek for ‘manwomanly’ explained to him:

Another scream startled the air.

‘That must be one of those thick-ankled ones,’ said Vincent. ‘They are broken in pieces when it comes to childbirth.’

Nobody asked why. So I inquired.

‘It’s like this,’ [Vincent] said, and drew an oval on the tablecloth. ‘Thick ankles go with an androgynous pelvis, and an androgynous...’

Kinch emitted a loud guffaw.

Kinch had poor manners. His laughter was to disguise his ignorance of the medical term for a man-woman pair of hips, and to entice the hearer to placate him and to provide information that, once obtained, he would pose as having known. He put you in the wrong with his laugh. But I knew Kinch to the bone, and it was not well covered; so I said... ‘Vincent, let Kinch into this. He knows damn all about Greek, and he hasn’t the guts to say so but he tries to laugh it off.’<sup>38</sup>

Gogarty’s contrast is clear: Ouseley asks questions when confronted with what he does not know (‘So I inquired’), whilst Kinch guffaws in the hope of being thought to know what is being discussed. Instead of contributing to the mutuality and liveliness of discussion, Gogarty’s Kinch introduces the unpleasant disruption of hauteur. This critique of Kinch, and by extension of Joyce, is illuminating amidst the joking, limericks, and humorous camaraderie shared by the medical students in *Tumbling*—that Kinch’s laughter is a confrontational attempt to ‘put you in the wrong.’ This, in the novel’s terms, is ‘uncivilised’: Kinch does not enjoy his laughter, but manipulates

<sup>37</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 176]

<sup>38</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 175]

it as a strategy for self-concealment and deception. It is not, as is most of the laughter in *Tumbling*, a friendly, social act.

It is Kinch's unsociability that Ouseley most protests, noting it in similar terms on several occasions: 'Kinch had poor manners,' 'That was the worst thing about Kinch, his rudeness,'<sup>39</sup> 'Kinch guffawed rudely in poor Golly's face.'<sup>40</sup> Throughout *Tumbling*, Ouseley notes Kinch's inability to participate in the community of conversation. Even when he enters a conversation Kinch does not converse, but instead lectures, raising a finger and reciting the obscurities he has excavated from forgotten literature and medieval philosophy. This superior, lecturing attitude contrasts significantly with Gogarty's depiction of Mahaffy's conversation:

But that master of the art of conversation was not going to leave them long on tenterhooks. He was about to put them at their ease. He believed (what he had written) that 'the *sine qua non* of good conversation is to establish equality, at least momentarily, if you like fictitious, but at all costs equality among members of the company who make up the party.' He was most tactfully doing that when I arrived.<sup>41</sup>

Despite this conversational equality and tact, Mahaffy's learning makes Ouseley reel, feeling that he cannot escape from knowledge; real erudition can afford to be generous to its auditors. Similarly, Ouseley's drunken chat with M'Gurk about Hegelian metaphysics is surely intended to evoke an ancient symposium, where the participants drink and learn by conversation and questioning; yet, as Gogarty notes, 'But of the Symposium Kinch had never heard.'<sup>42</sup>

Whilst *Sackville Street* appears to reply to Joyce, if at all, by studied avoidance, in *Tumbling* Gogarty casually employs names, motifs, and situations that Joyce made famous. Throughout *Tumbling* the reader suddenly recognises unannounced and unemphasised connections to *Ulysses*: the reader reencounters

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<sup>39</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 279]

<sup>40</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 279]

<sup>41</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 187]

<sup>42</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 282]



'Kinch', 'The Citizen' (although Gogarty's 'Citizen' is a far different person than Joyce's unpleasant Cyclops), Holles Street Hospital, the medicals, snatches of 'The Ballad of Sinbad the Sailor,' Nighttown, the Kips, Davy Byrne, 'Purefoy' (here, intriguingly, the name of the doctor who gives Ouseley 'a high pass in Midwifery'<sup>43</sup>), and numerous other more tangential connections, such as Old Friery's habit of reading 'second-hand smutty books'<sup>44</sup> on the barrows in Dublin. Paradoxically, however, the casualness and frequency of these connections ultimately diminishes the Joycean influence felt in *Tumbling*. By freely using what had come to be known as Joycean characters, locations, events, and tropes, without directly advertng to Joyce's employment of them in his own book, Gogarty reclaims their extrinsicality of *Ulysses*. By using 'Joycean' elements casually whilst ignoring (or feigning to ignore) their Joycean impress, Gogarty asserts that he himself is no less entitled to record these people and events than was Joyce. Instead of attempting to respond to *Ulysses* as a stylistic achievement based upon their mutual memories, Gogarty wisely chooses simply to record his own memories of that period, and to correct by suggestion, not confrontation. This approach is remarkably effective, for *Tumbling* humanises the people and circumstances that Joyce impressively formalises in *Ulysses*. The result of Gogarty's strategy is thus twofold: his 'corrective' record of the era usefully strips figures used in *Ulysses* of their Joycean appropriation, yet this rehumanising of the people and the era also indirectly, and surely unintentionally, testifies to Joyce's remarkable systemisation of his youthful memories and milieu.

Although Gogarty does not directly address *Ulysses* in *Tumbling*, he seems to make reference to it in subtle details. It is difficult, for example, for the reader not to detect an unwritten word in Gogarty's observation, 'Most of the ominous words in the

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<sup>43</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 183]

<sup>44</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 133]

language are built about the vowel lowest in the scale, U. Dung, Numa, lump, turgescence, bum, rum, slum.’<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Gogarty’s previously noted description of art going astray when artists ‘keep earthbound and think things significant in the daily round are therefore themes fit...,’ cannot but suggest Joyce’s extensive elaboration of banal everyday details in *Ulysses*. It is as free of those everyday circumstances that Gogarty presents his less-‘earthbound’ memoirs of the *Ulysses* milieu. Yet Gogarty is generally inexplicit in his hints at *Ulysses*, and tends to make only faint suggestive allusions: he notes that a performer called ‘Le Greco’ appears in Hengler’s Circus, and compares the degeneracy Hengler’s introduced into Dublin to Gorgonzola, Leopold Bloom’s luncheon cheese:

To [the authorities of the Rotunda Gardens] it seems necessary to introduce a certain amount of decay into the heart of the city, as if it could only commend itself to the citizens by decomposition, as if they took the town for a cheese—and they must have taken their tastes from gorgonzola, which commends itself to those who like decay.<sup>46</sup>

We have noticed that the evening Gogarty describes in the Holles Street maternity hospital may well be the night in Holles Street described by *Ulysses* but, if it is, Gogarty rejects Joyce’s extraordinary metamorphic description in favour of a simple, conversational relation of an apparently dull evening. Again, we have also noted that Gogarty specifies ‘androgynous’ as the word Kinch pretends to know, and needs to have explained to him. Without any direct mention of *Ulysses*, Gogarty nonetheless, by his emphasis on this particular word, takes two subtle digs at Joyce—the first being that he required an explanation of androgyny, a concept that Joyce makes an important motif in *Ulysses*, and the second being the revelation that he who wrote *Ulysses* needed help with his Greek etymologies.

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<sup>45</sup> OSIJG. *Tumblng*. [p. 246]

<sup>46</sup> OSIJG. *Tumblng*. [pp. 72-73]

Because Kinch does not significantly participate in discussions, and as he only occasionally emerges from the background to join the medical students, the reader of *Tumbling* might well wonder how representative Kinch's observations of the era could be, particularly as they pertain to Gideon Ouseley—or to Buck Mulligan. One might also observe that one of Joyce's stylistic triumphs in *Ulysses* is his invigoration of the interior monologue, by which the reader may trace the meanderings of Bloom's thoughts. Gogarty's preference is to reveal characters not so much by what, or how, they think, as by recording their conversational exchanges, and noting the social atmosphere these conversations create. (Although Gogarty does not make the overt comparison, it might be noted that the conversational model Gogarty favours has not less distinguished a classical literary precedent than does the individual voyage narrative Joyce employs.) Because *Tumbling* suggests a significant cultural importance for conversation in the Dublin of the novel (and thus of *Ulysses*), it obliquely calls attention to Kinch's inability to converse openly and easily with his friends, as well as to his attempts to render their conversations monologic lectures by himself. Such an observation casts an intriguing light upon the incessant profusion of styles in *Ulysses*, for this authorial disruption of straightforward narration in *Ulysses* is, in itself, a monologic manner of controlling (a depiction of) Dublin society.

*Tumbling* cannot, of course, bear long comparison with *Ulysses*, for Joyce's novel possesses revolutionary formal innovations that Gogarty's—wisely—does not even attempt. Nonetheless, it is intriguing to note the basic recollective correction to *Ulysses* that *Tumbling* offers, which is to adjust Joyce's social depiction, not to contest 'Buck Mulligan.' 'Gideon Ouseley' is not a sanitised figure; he pawns cufflinks that have sentimental value for his mother, he visits whorehouses, he associates with drunkards of high and low social standing, and he freely admits to

having extraordinary difficulties concentrating on his studies—he notes that it is ‘so difficult for me to sit long in one place if there is a textbook in the vicinity and not a barrel.’<sup>47</sup> Yet Gogarty’s depiction of Ouseley’s society, stripped of the phantasmagoric interference of Joycean stylistics, portrays a more social, conversational, interpersonal, and affectionate Dublin than does *Ulysses*. In basic terms, both men pulled similar memories from their shared experiences to write their recollective novels. Both men argue that the ordinary and everyday may contain extraordinary revelations. Gogarty’s novel is an attempt to create an engaging, humorous recollection of the high and low companionship that lifted his proxy’s mind from the ‘daily round’ of the ‘earthbound,’ whilst Joyce’s is an extraordinary formal stylisation of the absolutely ordinary. Both men, it may be observed, succeed.

## VI: CONVERSATION

For Gogarty to portray Joyce as a minor character largely incapable of generous, civil conversation has obvious importance for Gogarty’s writings. Chapter 3 observed of *Sackville Street* that much of Gogarty’s writing is aimed at capturing the uplifting conversational atmosphere, and the social milieu, of his times, and he again pursues this pattern in the highly conversational *Tumbling*—as we have seen, Ulick O’Connor describes *Tumbling* as being Gogarty’s ‘student memoirs written in the conversational mode of *Sackville Street*.’ O’Connor is right to note the similarity of

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<sup>47</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 271]

conversational style between *Tumbling* and *Sackville Street*, for each book attempts to convey social plurality and diversity by the polyphony of conversation and exchange.

In an unusual approach to memoir, Gogarty undermines the presumptual authority of the self-depicting author by crowding both *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling* with the voices of others. Prof. Carens has offered a catalogue of the multivocal span of *Tumbling*:

*Tumbling in the Hay* is a feast of language and of voices. The witty discourse of a Trinity salon; the pedantries of the lecture hall; the mordant sarcasms of the hospital; the *betises*, the slanging and punning of the medicals; the garrulity of the pub, the cockneyisms of the racetrack; the ancient accent of the North; the jargon of the lawcourts; the Paracelsan quotations of 'Kinch'—James Joyce; the blather of the brothel; the polyphonic chatter of the Hay Hotel in the early hours of the morning; all these Gogarty mimics with an exuberance that pervades the book.<sup>48</sup>

Prof. Carens correctly observes the impressive conversational variety of *Tumbling*; what Prof. Carens does not explicitly remark, however, is a more important fact, which is the social variety inherent in his list, and in *Tumbling* as a whole.

The conversations in *Tumbling* cover as great a polyphonic register as any comparable collection in Gogarty's oeuvre. He moves easily from the monologic insinuation of a policeman asking questions that do not seek answers ('Are ye the young men that passed up Grafton Street a while ago, singing? Are ye aware that ye fell through Switzer's window and it's broke?')<sup>49</sup> to the quick-minded exchanges of wit in which Ouseley engages with Prof. Tyrrell: '[When I] looked up to find Mr Beare waiting to take me in a *viva* on Virgil, I thought that I was in the Seventh Heaven.' 'Instead of which you found yourself in the Sixth Eclogue.'<sup>50</sup> In a stylistic analogy to his narrative juxtapositions, Gogarty tends to play one social register against another, not to hold the lower to contempt, but to illustrate the conversational

<sup>48</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 149]

<sup>49</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 97]

<sup>50</sup> OSTJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 65]

vitality of Dublin. In Chapter XV, 'Oh, Mon!,' Gogarty records the subtle negotiations Barney engages in with Jimmy the pawnbroker in an attempt to pawn the watch Ouseley won by bicycling. Barney relates his adventures in Golly's pub, and his story features precisely the dialect and idioms one might encounter in pubs and pawnshops—'It's hard to cod Jimmy', "'All balls!'" Silly Barney exclaimed.'<sup>51</sup> Yet Gogarty follows this chapter with 'Good Beer and a Catholic Church' [the 'symposium' chapter with Ouseley and M'Gurk], in which he and 'the Master of those who know' discuss the existence and continuity of the soul, Hegelian dialectic, and the applicability of Lutheranism to Hegel's conception of Christianity, all in the casual basilect of the comfortably philosophical—they speak of the 'consistent and nugatory idiosyncrasies that make a person a particular *kind* of person' and note that 'Hegel's conception permits no notion of a purified, universalised, dematerialised self. Such a notion is a monstrosity of the vulgar imagination; not an identity of opposites, but a confusion of contradictories.'<sup>52</sup> Ouseley then reappears in Holles Street, with the students, in the slum.

Gogarty's artistic strength in this vocal montage is to capture the various social spheres available to an inquisitive young man in the Dublin of the early twentieth century. *Tumbling* is thus a civic portrait by extensive montage. Gogarty does not present the pubs, the prostitutes, or the pawnbrokers as being less interesting, or less contributory to Dublin society, than is Trinity College, or Arthur Griffith. As we have seen, and as we shall continue to note, much of Gogarty's literary work aims at presenting his memories through the medium of a social biography of Dublin's most engaging social exchanges, with the Gogarty figure narrating and acting as the reader's guide. By allowing himself to depict both 'the grammar of greatness' and the

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<sup>51</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 152, 154]

<sup>52</sup> OSJG. *Tumbling*. [p. 161]

'lower' elements of Dublin, Gogarty accomplishes a more compelling—because more nearly complete—civic portrait of Dublin in *Tumbling* than he does anywhere else in his oeuvre. The accuracy and breadth of Gogarty's social observation fully justifies Prof. Lyons' note that *Tumbling*, 'with its population of oddities and geniuses, each clearly presented and individually endowed with his appropriately intricate dialect or superbly modulated tones, is unique and uncontrived. Gogarty never again came so close to perfection.'<sup>53</sup>

#### VII: CONCLUSIONS FROM TUMBLING

This chapter has argued that, in *Tumbling*, Gogarty continues his fascination with the self-depicting individual representing himself through a portrait of the inspiring society of which he is a member. Ouseley here occupies a narrative role reminiscent of Gogarty's position within *Sackville Street*. In both books the Gogarty-figure is that of a dynamic, connected, and charismatic narrator, whose personality colours and informs his observations of Dublin society, but who is less interested in introspection than in revealing the conversational and social intercourse of his society. It is by these interactions that Ouseley is able to forget his 'earthbound' cares, and to repudiate the miseries faced by hospital patients, and attain to the contemplative viewpoint of 'the gods,' or the good-natured endurance of the 'medicals.' Where this generalised social portrait significantly differs between *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling* is in the different social circles each book describes. *Sackville Street* rejects the

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<sup>53</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 231]

'degeneration' of de Valera's Ireland to present the best of Irish culture and society, yet *Tumbling* offers a much more extensive social portrait by focusing upon a contrastive juxtaposition of Ouseley's differing associations, those with academics and those with the students. This technique brings a much greater civic panorama to *Tumbling* than Gogarty achieved in *Sackville Street*, allowing him to portray Trinity dons and Nighttown prostitutes with no thematic strain and equal narrative plausibility.<sup>54</sup> This social comprehensiveness gives *Tumbling* a diversity and scope for interaction unmatched by any comparable civic portrait in Gogarty's canon. This chapter has also noted that Gogarty's dramatisation of his student memories significantly reflects the world Joyce assembled in *Ulysses* but, instead of pursuing the fascination of *Ulysses* with the individual and the everyday, *Tumbling* offers a view of escaping reality through interaction with friends.

After the almost-exclusive localisation of *Tumbling* to Dublin, Gogarty's next work, *Going Native*, explicitly contrasts the Irish and the English as races and societies. Where *Tumbling* addressed itself to those social circles in which Ouseley was an integral and natural part, *Going Native* focuses its social depictions upon England, and depicts Ouseley in a social milieu that is not his own. When Gogarty returns to the themes of Dublin and Irish society, he no longer does so as a resident.

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<sup>54</sup> We should observe, however, that Gogarty nowhere writes of prostitutes or whorehouses salaciously, choosing instead a discretion welcomed by contemporary reviewers: 'Dr. Gogarty brings us into the sordid night life of Dublin at a time when many districts were questionable. He keeps, however, that eighteenth-century frankness which implies a moral, and, for all his exuberance, he maintains an agreeable discretion long lost by the modern novelist.' *Times Literary Supplement*. 25 February 1939. [p. 123]



## CHAPTER 6

### GOING NATIVE

Gogarty's second novel, *Going Native*, represents a significant departure from the general self-depicting role he delimits for himself in his earlier works. In his first three prose books, Gogarty writes of Irish society and culture from within, as though conducting the reader through his personal social circle, his Ireland; in *Going Native*, for the first time, Gogarty writes extensively as an outsider, observing another society than his own. Where *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling* both recreate a nostalgic Dublin of Gogarty's memory, and *I Follow* seeks a peculiarly Irish inspiration for the present in the Patrician past, *Going Native* follows Gogarty into exile. His reader will note further that *Going Native* has a chronological importance to his oeuvre as well, for it is set in 1938 (Gogarty is, as ever, vague with dates, yet in the first chapter he notes that Yeats has written eighteen of his *Last Poems* 'in the last week or two';<sup>1</sup> one of them is identifiably 'Under Ben Bulben,' which Yeats dates September 4 1938). *Going Native* thus captures the final moments of Gogarty's residence in Ireland, as well as incorporating the new life abroad that he begins in England. Despite his relocation to the United Kingdom, and despite his later, nearly two-decade residence in the United States, Gogarty's subsequent memoirs are notable for their thematic and locational adherence to the Dublin of 1900-1939.

On the whole, *Going Native* has disappointed critics. Prof. Lyons calls it 'the least successful of his books,'<sup>2</sup> a judgement that underestimates the extraordinary weaknesses of Gogarty's two historical novels, *Mad Grandeur* and *Mr. Petunia*. Prof. Carens notes a structural flaw in the work, arguing that 'in *Going Native*, anatomy and

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<sup>1</sup> OStJG. *Going Native*. London: Constable. 1941. [p. 11]

<sup>2</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 243]

confession, which are the medium of Ouseley, jostle the comedy of manners to which the other characters belong.’<sup>3</sup> Other critics of *Going Native* have generally treated it as a work of parodistic comedy, and have emphasised the humour of the work over its social and self-depicting aspects. Gogarty’s friend Horace Reynolds, reviewing the book in the *New York Times Book Review* of 3 March 1940, emphasises the humour of *Going Native*:

This is the most artistic book of prose that Gogarty has yet written...I was at various times reminded of Restoration comedy, Oscar Wilde, Sterne, P. G. Wodehouse, Rabelais, Thomas Love Peacock, Pope’s ‘Rape of the Lock’ and the detachment of a Myrna Loy—William Powell—‘Thin Man’ movie. But the general effect of the book is one of unity: above all the witty, gay and mischievous Gogarty contributing once more to the gayety of nations.<sup>4</sup>

Reynold’s comparisons of *Going Native* with Restoration comedy and Oscar Wilde are the most sustainable of his remarks, for the book is an amusing collection of Wildean aphorisms sprinkled on top of a rather complicated romantic farce. Yet this chapter argues that a problem inherent in *Going Native* is its inability to reconcile the comedy of type that Reynolds applauds with Gogarty’s more serious social and political observations as he compares Ireland, Britain, and, briefly, the United States. Against Reynolds’ claim that this is ‘the most artistic’ of Gogarty’s prose works, and that the general effect is ‘unity,’ one may cite the (unnamed) reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement*, who correctly observed on 13 December 1941: ‘In the eccentric sayings and doings ascribed by the author to Englishmen and Englishwomen we have failed to piece together any clear conception—even of eccentricity.’<sup>5</sup>

This chapter assesses *Going Native* in its role as a self-depicting text generally recreating Gogarty’s experiences in England in Ouseley’s comedic exile. It is divided

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<sup>3</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 169]

<sup>4</sup> Horace Reynolds. ‘A Gogartian Explorer in England’ in *The New York Times Book Review*. 3 March 1940. [p. 4]

<sup>5</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*. Saturday 13 December 1941. [p. 633]

into four subsequent sections. The first section notes that the apparent synonymy of Ouseley and Gogarty is more complex in *Going Native* than it was in *Tumbling*, for here the reader encounters the first significant outright fictionalisation in Gogarty's self-depicting prose. Moreover, in this connection, this section notes that *Going Native* contains Gogarty's only extensive depiction of women, and the only book-length interaction between a Gogarty-persona and significant female characters. It finds that, in a peculiar manner, Gogarty's most obviously comic treatment of societal depiction is also, oddly, one of his most inclusively representative—despite, of course, remaining largely focused upon a comic evocation of the leisure class. This is important in light of Gogarty's incessant interest in society and social interaction, for *Going Native* is also Gogarty's first book written as an outsider, wherein he examines his integration into a society of which he is not naturally constituent. The second section asserts that *Going Native* is a book divided by two conflicting impulses: the urge to make humorous social comment about English eccentricity, and the more serious urge to make social comparisons between Ireland and England. This section notes the significant differences between Gogarty's earlier 'Ugly England' articles and his depiction of Anglo-Irish relations in *Going Native*, and suggests that Gogarty's continuing objection is to commonality and to the mediocre; this is a side-effect of his advocacy of the 'grammar of greatness,' in that he consistently argues that the common man should openly admire superiority, and not to promote the accepted median in society that he sees in England. This section also notes that many of the themes in *Going Native* seem associable with those now considered indicative of post-colonial writing, but the section argues that the relation the book proposes between Ireland and England bears a greater relation to Gogarty's themes of inspiration and example than to post-colonial engagement. The third section observes

that Gogarty's distinction between Ireland and England lies in the notion of possessing (Ireland) or repressing (England) a soul. This notion, this section finds, is *Going Native's* terminology for the sense of wonder, enlargement, and reverie that Gogarty advocates throughout his work, here somewhat unpersuasively transposed to national characteristics. Gogarty presents a paradox for Ouseley, who is sent away from Ireland by the man who most inspires him to reverie—Yeats—yet his experiences in England convince him that he has too much of the Irish penchant for wonder to remain continuously in England. Thus this thesis argues that instead of depicting the process of Ouseley's 'going native' in England, *Going Native* depicts the gradual alienation of Ouseley from both Ireland and England. In conclusion, this section also notes that *Going Native* represents Gogarty's more open acknowledgement of his Irishness in his works, yet also rules out continuous residence in Ireland. This is an important recognition for Gogarty, for he was never to live in Ireland again. The fourth section is a brief summation of the chapter.

*I: 'TAKE MY NAME FOR EXAMPLE. IT IS ALL RIGHT AS GIDEON...'*<sup>6</sup>

In *Going Native* Gogarty again assumes the 'Gideon Ouseley' guise. Gogarty makes no explicit attempt to associate the two Ouseleys of *Tumbling* and *Going Native*, beyond maintaining the continuity of their shared name. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to ascertain conclusively whether or not Gogarty intends the Ouseley of *Going Native* to be read as the elder reappearance of the young man whose

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<sup>6</sup> OSIJG. *Going Native*. [p. 180]

university career appears in *Tumbling*. There are no direct allusions in *Going Native* to the preceding work. Nevertheless, one may observe that in *Going Native* Gogarty continues to employ the Ouseley guise, and casually to slur his own identity into that of his persona, suggesting the direct synonymy of the two. Yet, as we shall see, it is from this synonymy that the unusual difficulty of relating memoir and fiction in *Going Native* arises.

The Ouseley/Gogarty synonymy is widely apparent in *Going Native*. As they did in *Tumbling*, Ouseley and Gogarty again share the same real friends (most obviously, in *Going Native*, W. B. Yeats), the same biographical experiences (both, for example, studied at Oxford<sup>7</sup>), and the same opinions (e.g. Ouseley, on the death of friends: 'All you can do is to bear with fortitude the insufferable and irremediable pang until the knowledge that you too must share their fate becomes a comfort of sorts.'<sup>8</sup>) Yet Gogarty maintains this synonymy of himself and Ouseley even when such a connection is unacknowledged and unnecessary, as when his friend Vavasour Vennel observes 'Did not your friend Yeats class you with the "swift, indifferent men"?'<sup>9</sup> Yeats, of course, made no such remark about the non-existent Gideon Ouseley; this classification appears in Yeats's introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* as a description of Gogarty.<sup>10</sup> Vennel's conflation here of Gogarty and Ouseley<sup>11</sup> passes unremarked in *Going Native*, yet it importantly reveals Gogarty's implicit association of himself with Ouseley, beyond the more explicit associations noted above.

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<sup>7</sup> Gogarty gives Ouseley one of his own Oxonian experiences: 'I broke off remembering how they scolded me at Oxford for making a quotation in Hall.' [p. 123]

<sup>8</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 226] See, in this regard, 'Non Dolet.'

<sup>9</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 31]

<sup>10</sup> Yeats, [Ed.]. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. [p. xv]

<sup>11</sup> Gogarty repeats this association again when, at the end of *Going Native*, Ouseley marvels, 'Where are the swift, indifferent men who revelled despite ruin?' OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 290]

This overwhelming implication of the synonymy of Gogarty and Ouseley becomes problematic, however, in *Going Native*'s apparent, and sometimes outright, fictionalisation of certain known aspects of Gogarty's life. For example, Prof. Carens has suggested an apparent fictionalisation in that Gogarty presents his adventures as though he were significantly younger than he really was by the time *Going Native* appeared: 'Gogarty was actually sixty-one at the time *Going Native* was finished, but the Ouseley *persona* acts and thinks like a man twenty years younger.'<sup>12</sup> Yet this judgement may presume an excess of decrepitude in a 61-year-old, particularly one as active as Oliver Gogarty, of whom his friend Robert O'Doherty noted that 'he just was twenty-five years younger than anyone should be at his age at any particular time—in outlook, in physique and in everything about him.'<sup>13</sup> But the outstanding difference between Gogarty's and Ouseley's relations with women is an outright fictionalisation. Gogarty himself was married for most of his life; in 1906, just after obtaining his TCD medical qualification, but before performing his residency in Vienna, Gogarty married Martha Duane of Moyard, Connemara.<sup>14</sup> They were to remain married for the rest of their lives, despite their virtually complete physical separation during Gogarty's nineteen years in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

As we have already noted, Gogarty's previous prose works are essentially masculine in their depictions of society: the women in *Sackville Street* are the wives of friends, there are virtually no women at all in *I Follow*, and the women of *Tumbling* are minor figures, and they either mothers or prostitutes. The obscurity of women in his first three works of prose is startling, particularly given Gogarty's stated aspiration in *Sackville Street* to present a social portrait of Dublin 'as it is every day'; Gogarty's

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<sup>12</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 164]

<sup>13</sup> W. R. Rodgers. *Irish Literary Portraits*. [p. 143]

<sup>14</sup> See, for their marriage, Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 61]

<sup>15</sup> Their grandson, Guy St. John Williams, has published much of their preserved correspondence from this period of separation. See: Guy Williams, [Ed.] *The Renvyle Letters*. Kildare: Daletta Press. 2000.

depiction essentially omits half the population from the outset. This is particularly surprising given his general fascination with the plurality and diversity of social intercourse. Yet it would be incorrect to read this minimal portrayal of women as misogynistic, for Gogarty, when he mentions women—even the prostitutes—does so with humanity and basic good humour.

In *Going Native* there is a strange undercurrent of bedroom cruelty and sexualised pain (as the men sticking pins into their attempted conquests), but this leads to estrangement, not coition. Throughout his literary career, Gogarty's portraiture of women is generally restricted to reverence and romance, and his poetry is tellingly full of elegant, inspiring—but usually unnamed—women. This depiction of women accords with the inspirational focus of Gogarty's thought, which prefers the suggestion of a mystically feminine quality in women to the concrete depiction of an actual female personality. Moreover, regarding Gogarty's ongoing attempt to recreate in literature the 'grammar of greatness' from his own acquaintance with inspiring individuals, it is true that most of the indubitably important figures he knew were men: Yeats, Joyce, Collins, etc.; it is not, therefore, surprising that in his depictions of his social and conversational circles Gogarty largely restricts himself to male collocutors. Nonetheless, in his personal life he was also acquainted with a number of distinguished women—notably Pamela Travers, Helen Wills Moody, and Lady Leslie—whose lack of incorporation into his memoirs marks a surprising omission.

In *Going Native* Gogarty introduces women as major characters for the first time in his prose writings. This introduction not only breaks new ground for Gogartian memoir, but it also raises an extremely complex question about the associability of Gogarty with his Ouseley persona. As we have noted, Gogarty had a lifelong marriage; one of the central themes of *Going Native* is Ouseley's strangely,

and perhaps symbolically, frustrated pursuits of the novel's main female character, Parmenis. He states the matter with tautological clarity:

Did the Vicar, with his gift of sympathy and insight, see what I am only now beginning to see for myself—that I am in love with Parmenis? I must say that again just to discover what will echo to it in my mind. I am in love with Parmenis.<sup>16</sup>

As the implied year of *Going Native* is 1938, Parmenis cannot reasonably be interpreted as a guise for Gogarty's wife, whom he married thirty-two years earlier. Although it has long been suspected that Gogarty had affairs in London and New York,<sup>17</sup> one need not trawl pruriently through Gogarty's life to assess the relationship between Ouseley and Parmenis. Despite the apparent associability of Ouseley with Gogarty, it is inconceivable that Gogarty intends *Going Native* to record, in the relation between Parmenis and Ouseley, an autobiographical suggestion of infidelity. Three facts repudiate such a confessional interpretation: 1) Gogarty actively suppressed his own bawdry throughout his life, so it seems little likely that he would confess to an actual adultery in print, 2) Gogarty is, throughout his career, notably discreet about depictions of carnality, sexuality, and romance, in what he chooses to publish, and 3) he brought suit against Patrick Kavanagh's publishers for Kavanagh's suggesting, in *The Green Fool*, that he (Gogarty) had a mistress: 'I mistook Gogarty's white-robed maid for his wife—or his mistress. I expected every poet to have a spare wife.'<sup>18</sup> Gogarty's action against this passage was successful, although Kavanagh's biographer, Antoinette Quinn, has plausibly suggested that

It may well be that what actually offended Gogarty was an insulting remark a few lines earlier [than the 'mistress' line] in *The Green Fool*. When he enquired in the National Library for the address of any Dublin poet and was offered Gogarty's, Kavanagh's response was 'Is that the best you can do?' This gratuitous put-down may have prompted Gogarty to teach the provincial pup a lesson...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 166]

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ulick O'Connor. *The Ulick O'Connor Diaries*. London: John Murray. 2001. [p. 7]

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Kavanagh. *The Green Fool*. London: Penguin. 1979. [p. 228]

<sup>19</sup> Antoinette Quinn. *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*. Dublin: Gill & MacMillan. 2001. [p. 112]



Dr. Quinn's suggestion is credible, if speculative, yet there is no question that Gogarty's *expressed* objection was to the implication of his adultery, and not to his wounded vanity as a poet. What is of importance for Gogarty studies here is Gogarty's clear and almost prudish intention to disassociate himself from Kavanagh's public, literary suggestion of mistresses or infidelity. This stance, taken in 1938, renders it extremely unlikely that Gogarty would intentionally imply an affair in *Going Native* of 1941.

How, then, should Gogarty's readers interpret the recurrent connections between Gogarty and Ouseley, whilst acknowledging the obvious discrepancies between their love affairs? Although Gogarty attempts, late in the novel, to suggest that Ouseley's affection for Parmenis analogises his love of Ireland—'I also tried to make her out to be my motherland'<sup>20</sup>—this is an abrupt and inevident reading. In sexual terms, we may note that although Ouseley spends the night in Parmenis's room, he engages in more a bedroom farce than in a seduction (whilst lying in her bed they debate crossword puzzles and horoscopes: 'I, who would have given thousands to be where I am, would gladly give twice as much to be out.'<sup>21</sup>) There is thus no irrefutable imputation of adultery. Yet Gogarty does not merely suggest that Ouseley has fallen in love with Parmenis, but further states unequivocally that Ouseley is unmarried: 'Yes, there was no doubt, no way out. I must get divorced to become one of them and one with them, Yes; I concede that to myself. But how can one who is not married get a divorce?'<sup>22</sup> It is in this admission that Gogarty forces the issue of his self-depicting relation to the interaction of Ouseley and Parmenis.

The obvious answer to the marital discrepancies between Gogarty and Ouseley is merely to note that *Going Native* is a novel, and that Ouseley's relations with

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<sup>20</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 277]

<sup>21</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 193]

<sup>22</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 165]

Parmenis are fictive. The importance of this discrepancy, however, is that in Ouseley's admission that he is unmarried Gogarty makes his first textually important fictionalisation in self-depicting works. It is, if not his first such disassociation between personal history and self-depiction in his writings, certainly the first with a significant impact on the plot of the book. As we have seen, the matter itself is of little inherent interest: Ouseley does not succeed in his sexual overtures, and *Going Native* as a whole is essentially a bedroom farce cast in the guise of an amusing excursion amongst the English. Yet as a work that depicts a figure clearly associable with Gogarty, *Going Native* is unique in his oeuvre in presenting a central Gogarty figure whose experiences are significantly and demonstrably false as representations of Gogarty's life.

In this context, it is further important that *Going Native* is unusual in being Gogarty's first literary use of memory that does not make an extra-narrative attempt to *proclaim* its fictiveness—even as Gogarty begins to employ provable fictionalisations of his activities. As chapters 3 and 5 observed of both *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*, Gogarty feels a recurrent desire to utilize his memories of identifiable individuals and events in his writings, whilst simultaneously insisting that these 'characters are fictitious.' In *Going Native*, Gogarty offers an epigraph of similar implication, but different applicability:

But yet I praye to al this companye,  
If that I speke after my fantasye,  
As taketh not a-grief of that I seye;  
For myn entente nis but for to pleye.<sup>23</sup>

Gogarty's citation from Chaucer implies a spirit of friendly confrontation in the text, but no fictionalising impetus: in fact, the reality of the work is implicitly reaffirmed, as it is sufficiently accurate that it might wound, were the author's intention other than

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<sup>23</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [unnumbered epigraphic page]

‘but for to pleye.’ Yet the epigraphic passage is merely an assurance that any apparent harshness is intended only for amusement; it does not question or subvert the reality of what he presents, as do the epigraphs to *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*. It is surprising, given Gogarty’s demonstrated fascination with proclaiming the ‘phantasy’ element in his earlier remembrances, that his most obviously fictionalised memoir makes no similar effort to suggest its unreality.

In this connection, the reader of *Going Native* will also have observed that the people with whom Ouseley interacts in this book are among the least identifiable actual people in the entire canon of his memory-based writings. In most of his literary works Gogarty crowds his page with famous names—Yeats, Collins, Moore, Æ, Griffith, etc.—as part of his attempt to provide ‘the grammar of greatness’ to those who have never known it. Even when those people are not particularly prominent, they are at least identifiable—as, for example, M’Gurk as Macran. In *Going Native*, however, only W.B. Yeats qualifies as a renowned figure, and of the other characters Ouseley encounters, only the Reverend Vavasour Vennel seems convincingly identifiable with one of Gogarty’s actual human friends. [He bears a strong resemblance, including his mention of having known Ouseley at Oxford, to Gogarty’s Oxford friend, G. K. A. Bell, later the Bishop of Chichester.<sup>24</sup>]

Excepting Yeats, Ouseley, and (possibly) Vennel, the other characters in *Going Native* appear to be rather more types than individuals. They are figures evidently designed to exhibit eccentricities that arouse little alarm in the English, but which Ouseley finds confusing, humorous, and alienating. Prof. Carens, whilst suggesting that ‘doubtless the book might be read as a *roman à clef*,’ nonetheless

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<sup>24</sup> For a selection of their post-Oxford correspondence, see: Carens, [Ed]. *Many Lines to Thee*.

concludes that ‘the characters of *Going Native* [are] mostly caricatures.’<sup>25</sup> Prof. Carens is likely correct to remark that there is an element of the roman à clef in *Going Native*, as it may be that some of the individuals Ouseley encounters could be recognised by the cognoscenti as representing actual socialites. Yet this method of concealing identity, whilst possible, has not thus far been Gogarty’s approach, and he strives in his previous books to make identities clear, or pseudonyms obvious (as calling Joyce, ‘Kinch’).

One may suggest that the basic unreality of *Going Native*, particularly the farcical romantic doings of leisured society, imply that *Going Native* is to be read less as a fact-based memoir than as an amusing creative manipulation of general circumstances and situations in which Gogarty participated. In this context we note again the curious fact that in this novel Gogarty most extensively indulges the approach of fictionalised memory that he claimed for *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*, but which those two did not particularly justify, yet he clearly fictionalises elements of *Going Native*, without suggesting the fictiveness of what he depicts. In the absence of convincing identifications of the characters in *Going Native* as real individuals from Gogarty’s life—making *Going Native* the roman à clef that Prof. Carens suspects—an attempt to resolve this conundrum must remain speculative.

## II: ‘OUSELEY, YOU MUST GO!’: IRELAND & ENGLAND IN GOING NATIVE

*Going Native* itself is a strange amalgamation of three narrative aspects, two of which are closely allied: the primary aspect is the humorous fictionalisation of the

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<sup>25</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 167]

Gogarty-figure's encounter with an odd assortment of characters and circumstances. The second narrative aspect is to record the impressions of an Irishman abroad as he encounters a foreign society, that of England. The final narrative element, often arising from the second, is more serious, and sometimes appears with disconcerting acerbity from the humorous byplay of the eccentrics: it is Gogarty/ Ouseley's interest in commenting on the English as a people, and a race.

Gogarty proposes the second and third narrative aspects with a humour that, not coincidentally, explains his choice of title: 'The English for centuries have been in the habit of coming over here and becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves. It is high time that one of us returned the compliment.'<sup>26</sup> Yet he also makes clear the seriousness with which he undertakes this somewhat jocular attempt by making it a direct order from W. B. Yeats himself:

Ouseley, you must go! You must leave this country! You cannot go on filled with bitterness or chilled with contempt for the little office-seekers and rude civil servants which is all that Ireland, left to itself, has made of its freedom. The Anglo-Irish are the salt of the earth. They are being persecuted. You must fly with the wild geese. You must go. To stand still is to sink in the bog.<sup>27</sup>

Gogarty thus emphasises that Ouseley's life amongst the English in *Going Native* is not mere anthropology, but is an escape from the intolerable conditions of contemporary Ireland: 'When Decency returns or de Valera disappears, it will be time to revisit the visionary hills.'<sup>28</sup> This places the entire shift of narration from Dublin to England in Gogartian terms, for not only is he leaving behind de Valera's influence, but he is also attempting to escape the mundane, banal, and uninspiring—'little office-seekers and rude civil servants.' More important, however, is Gogarty's direct identification of Ouseley's departure with Yeats's urging, for Gogarty here presents

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<sup>26</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 15]

<sup>27</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 9]

<sup>28</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 15]

the late Yeats not merely as the foremost Irish poet, but as the embodiment of timeless and noble qualities of Ireland, living on after their betrayal:

For a living incarnation of a spirit from beyond our ordinary world was he, untroubled by the common routine and necessities of our mortality, one of the proud Immortals who somehow had touched earth like his own Oisín and had sojourned on it and walked among lesser men...He was more than a vessel of the imagination and memory of the ancient hills; he was sent among us to renew and to re-endow us with the terrible gift of dreams...Living on a solitary survival of the Pleiad that had shone in Dublin, remaining in it only because he felt it to be his duty, he had lived to see all the ideals of nationality of which he had dreamed and for which he worked shattered and their place taken, after all the mob's mock protestations of spirituality, by mean, sordid, and self-seeking schemers. His house has crashed about his head or rather, to keep to a simile more appropriate, he had touched earth, the common earth, and the weight of mortal hours had bowed him down. Romantic Ireland was dead and gone.<sup>29</sup>

This Yeats—unlike the respected, yet still personal and human friend depicted in *Sackville Street*—is here given a metaphysical association with Ireland itself; as the death of the poet comes upon him,<sup>30</sup> so too does the value of the nation that he leaves behind. 'I am at home with the heroes. And now I was losing the only one I had ever met in the flesh...About to go himself, he was ordering me to remove.'<sup>31</sup> Gogarty here explicitly describes the type of inspirational image Yeats impressed upon his mind: Yeats is a noble figure so transcendent of the common and the dispiriting 'routine and necessities' that he seems 'a living incarnation of a spirit from beyond our ordinary world.' Yet Gogarty's symbolic use of Yeats here does not extend only to his association with the Immortals; as Yeats has previously represented in Gogarty's works a spiritual transcendence from the mundane and the base, here he urges Ouseley's literal removal from the degraded condition of Ireland. His urging to Ouseley to leave the country is thus an artistically impressive juxtaposition of competing visions of Ireland: Ouseley's leaving Ireland physically is, in fact, an act of

<sup>29</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [pp. 4, 6, 7]

<sup>30</sup> '...I realised that the trend of [Yeats' last poems] all was towards death. He had recited to me his own epitaph [i.e. 'Under Ben Bulbin']'. OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 11]

<sup>31</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 13]

adherence to the spiritual 'romantic Ireland' of which Yeats dreamed, and that Yeats, for Ouseley (and Gogarty) embodies.

In relation to this spiritual Irishry in exile, Ouseley continues to emphasise his own Irishness throughout *Going Native*. This insistence assumes several forms. The most prominent, of course, are Gogarty/Ouseley's direct narrative asides, wherein he makes specific comments about his heritage:

Truth to tell, there are two Irelands; one is a geographical land of beauty; the other is a state of mind.<sup>32</sup> And what is so annoying is that they are for the native inextricably blent. The visitor may enjoy going to Ireland but no native enjoys being in it all the time. Ireland is the last place for an Irishman to thrive.<sup>33</sup>

Another frequent narrative re-enforcement of Ouseley's Irishness arises from his direct conversations with the English, as when he remarks 'You say I am a liar like all Irishmen. Have you met all Irishmen?...what you take for lying in an Irishman is only his attempt to put an herbaceous border on stark reality.'<sup>34</sup> This comment offers an intriguing view of the blend of fiction and memory in *Going Native* by suggesting for such intermingling a peculiarly Irish character; this is relatable with the claims he makes for the Irish possession of a soul, assessed in section III. Yet by far the most frequent assertion of Ouseley's Irishness derives from his observations of the English, and of their habits as they conduct their lives. As we have seen, this Ouseley is Gogarty's first self-persona who is removed for an extended period from his native context. For this reason the theme of *Going Native* might be compared with that of *I Follow*: in *I Follow*, Gogarty more closely records himself following St. Patrick than the actuality of Patrick himself, whilst in *Going Native*, Gogarty/Ouseley records less about the English character itself than about his own encounters with English

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<sup>32</sup> We should recollect that this belief also underpins Gogarty's approach to Ireland in *I Follow Saint Patrick*.

<sup>33</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 14]

<sup>34</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 198] This thought, yet again, reveals Gogarty's interest in claiming to fictionalise reality.

individuals. Again, Gogarty places himself—or at least his narrative persona—exactly in the position of revealing others by his subjective reaction to them.

In appropriate adherence with much contemporary autobiographical theory, the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* describes Irish autobiography in the Twentieth Century as frequently defining the self against an ‘other’: ‘Autobiography is not just concerned with the self; it is also concerned with the ‘other,’ the person or persons, events or places, that have helped to give the self definition.’<sup>35</sup> This distinction between the represented self and the oppositional other tends, in Gogarty’s recollective self-depictions, to be less a personal opposition than a social and cultural one. In *Going Native*, however, Gogarty grapples with the traditional ‘other’ for the Irish identity: England.

Gogarty’s treatment of England in *Going Native* is a significant departure from his earlier writings about England, and about British cultural and political empire. In 1906, whilst heavily influenced by his friend Arthur Griffith and the nascent Sinn Fein movement, Gogarty wrote a series of three articles for the newspaper *Sinn Fein*. These essays were collectively titled ‘Ugly England.’ All three articles were propaganda editorials, and their intemperate articulations continue to resonate in scholarly assessments of Gogarty:

These are the English middle-class, the common men than whom the world cannot show more ugly or more animal human beings. The class that are devouring England even as they eat its roast beef. The class whose only gospel is the news of dinner and whose only cult that of Beecham; Carter, or the fruit-salt seller, Eno: the over-fed, aperient people...This English common man is a monster of interest, unfortunately, to ourselves.<sup>36</sup>

There is no upper class in England now, the common man rules and he has put over him as his religious ideal the Cromwell: the Dyspeptic that has become deified—

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<sup>35</sup> Seamus Deane, [Ed.] *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* [Vol.III]. Derry: Field Day. 1991. [p. 380]

<sup>36</sup> OSTJG. ‘Ugly England (Part I).’ *Sinn Fein*. 15 September 1906. Dublin. No. 20, Vol. I. [p. 3]



Nero as Jupiter were preferable. And so it is: the common man rules, but out of that spirit of Puritanism which seems to be indispensable in the devolution as in the evolution of a nation, he has set up his bete noir to be his god, and now in England the Angry Righteous, the Dyspeptic is divine. I saw the bathing-suits on lines around the bathing machines fluttering like clothes down an alley in the wind (an old clothesman's alley); and this conviction of the Jew mastery of England at the same time grew stronger and more logical, England becoming Jewry....<sup>37</sup> It explained many things! That gross materialism; that shopkeeping, moneying instinct; that hatred of things generous or artistic:—make ye no graven images; that filthy sensuality, unrelieved even by gaiety; that furtive and narrow timidity, and that panic-stricken, cowardly way of taking revenge—twelve Zulus murdered to intimidate others and justify Jewry; justification by the gallows, murder with impunity a proof of the righteousness of the Lord; the gold-grubbing, the diamond-mining, the unwholesome ways of making a livelihood, which, to be wholesome, always pre-requires agriculture; that cowardice, as shown in their fear of even a foe much weaker numerically (we see this in the maintenance of so bloated a Fleet), and the corrupt, underhand, bribe-employing methods whereby 'justice' is precipitated when it is feared that poor fools like the hot-blooded Irish may become too educated or informed to bring upon themselves the moral ruin and physical decay which joining the English mercenary forces certainly involves—all are explained: the Jews are upon us? And I thought of the features of General Booth and his band.<sup>38</sup>

[We must observe here that Gogarty's embarrassing and thoughtless recitation of negative Jewish stereotypes in these articles has attracted widespread academic condemnation. This censure has been particularly strong from those who are eager to assert, by contrast with Gogarty, James Joyce's tolerance of Judaism, as expressed in his compassionate—albeit stereotypically parodistic—depiction of Leopold Bloom. But it is not wholly acceptable to present the 'Ugly England' series as Gogarty's definitive view of Judaism and anti-Semitism without also acknowledging that he lived for 51 years after these articles appeared, and nowhere again published anything like such violent or antagonistic remarks about Jews. Whilst his rhetoric here is indefensibly repugnant, and rightly attracts opprobrium—'that filthy sensuality...that

<sup>37</sup> Gogarty's ellipsis.

<sup>38</sup> OSTJG. 'Ugly England (Part II).' *Sinn Fein*. 24 November 1906. Dublin. No. 30, Vol. I. [p. 3]

panic-stricken, cowardly way of taking revenge’—it is unjust and unscholarly to ignore the absence of such rhetoric in Gogarty’s later publications. This subsequent restraint cannot justify nor excuse the ‘Ugly England’ remarks, yet it does complicate the proper condemnation the ‘Ugly England’ articles attract, and may temper the willingness of the scholarly community to proclaim Gogarty indubitably anti-Semitic.]

What is most peculiar about the scholarly reaction to the ‘Ugly England’ articles, however, is that—in the flurry of condemnation of ‘Gogarty’s anti-Semitism’—no one bothers to condemn Gogarty’s attribution of exactly these same characteristics to the English. Yet the three ‘Ugly England’ articles, taken as a whole, are clearly and explicitly aimed at the English, and not at Jews. Indeed, Gogarty submits his catalogue of Jewish stereotypes in order to note the prevalence of these traits in the ‘English common man.’ Thus, curiously, the notorious anti-Semitic elements in these articles are, in fact, essentially importations to lend force to Gogarty’s more general argument against the *English*: this makes them no more defensible, but certainly influences the argument about their intention.

A reader will observe, moreover, that Gogarty’s argument in the ‘Ugly England’ trilogy is apparently based on class distinctions within England: he heaps his disdain on ‘the English middle-class, the common men than whom the world cannot show more ugly or more animal human beings.’ Although the rhetorical force of this statement is gross, and the apparent thought behind it irresponsibly elitist, Gogarty’s argument is understandable and characteristic in the broad context of his works as noted by this thesis—Gogarty deplores commonality of any type, and idealises those people or works of art that transport one’s imagination away from the mundane and the average.

By contrast with the 'Ugly England' articles, *Going Native* presents a much more restrained, much more even-tempered approach both to England, and to the cultural relations between Ireland and England. One immediate reason for this is, of course, historical: writing in 1906, Gogarty was still a subject of the British Crown, yet when writing *Going Native*, he was not only a citizen of an independent Ireland, but had also held representative office in its Senate. Moreover, Gogarty believed that de Valera ruined independent Ireland, so that *Going Native* reflects both Ireland's attainment of independence, as well as Gogarty's subsequent disgust with the aborted result. Furthermore, in purely mercantile terms, Gogarty's intended audiences for *Going Native* and 'Ugly England' were entirely different, so that what he felt might be palatable in an openly Republican newspaper in 1906 would be clearly inappropriate, and decidedly unwelcome, in a book that would be marketed for sale to the English public in 1941. Finally, it may be presumed that the continuing process of maturation diminished Gogarty's personal tendency towards crude rhetoric between 1906 and 1941. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the most hostile opinions Gogarty ever publicly expressed about the English were long past him when he wrote *Going Native*, his most extensive assessment of another culture. This fact is also relevant to the question of whether or not Gogarty's 'Ugly England' articles should be understood to express his 'anti-Semitic' views completely for, in his expression of opinions about the English, an enormous amount of vitriol vanishes from Gogarty's rhetoric between 'Ugly England' and *Going Native*. It is possible that Gogarty's views of Judaism underwent a similar transformation.

It is perhaps because *Going Native* lacks the 'English common man' that the hostile temper of the 'Ugly England' articles essentially vanishes from the novel. In *Going Native*, Ouseley largely restricts his society to educated, wealthy, titled, or

accomplished individuals, much as does the 'I' of *Sackville Street*. Thus the extraordinary detestation evident in 'Ugly England' transforms itself into observational humour that is usually more bemused than exasperated. Indeed, some of Ouseley's harshest and most revealing criticisms are levelled at himself: 'You can see through me easily enough,'<sup>39</sup> 'Every poet is a liar. I would gladly bear the imputation so might I be equalled with them in renown,'<sup>40</sup> 'I have such ambitions and such admiration of fine things that I alone can realise how great a failure I am.'<sup>41</sup> Yet Gogarty/Ouseley's remarks about the English in *Going Native* tend generally towards innocuous social aphorisms: 'I might have known that the dog is the Third Person in the English Trinity. It takes precedence before the child for which it is frequently substituted,'<sup>42</sup> 'You cannot make yourself ridiculous in England so long as you play the game,'<sup>43</sup> 'This is the way of the English—understatement.'<sup>44</sup>

Gogarty/Ouseley's observations of the English become less aphoristic and more relevant to the study of his memoirs in his depiction of English social intercourse. As we have seen, one of Gogarty's primary interests in Irish society is the mutuality of conversation: he particularly emphasises this interplay in the heavily conversational *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*. In *Going Native*, however, the Irishman Ouseley is repeatedly surprised—unpleasantly—by the English incapacity for interfluent conversation: 'He couldn't have been at any of the good public schools else he would have had a mind-saving cliché at hand,'<sup>45</sup> 'What she wanted was an echo, not an ear, I realised,'<sup>46</sup> 'Never try to measure the feelings of Englishmen by

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<sup>39</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 185]

<sup>40</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 66]

<sup>41</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 157]

<sup>42</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 239]

<sup>43</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 102]

<sup>44</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 110]

<sup>45</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 97]

<sup>46</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 104]

their expression of emotion. If you do you will be wrong.<sup>47</sup> More disturbing to Ouseley, however, than the lack of reciprocity in English conversation is the tendency of the English to use conversation confrontationally: ‘How wonderfully a platitude can be used to convey a faintly sinister significance in England,<sup>48</sup> ““Thank you!” she says, dismissing me. I hate people who use “Thank you!” for an uppercut.’<sup>49</sup>

These observations about English conversation are not merely intended to highlight English eccentricities nor, for that matter, are they offered simply to illustrate the contrast between English and Irish conversation—although they surely serve that function as well. Gogarty’s larger point with these remarks is that English society is rarely, if ever, interactive, but instead replaces personal engagement with unstated rules, implied social restrictions, and protective traditions. Although Ouseley, having just debarked from his plane from Ireland, asserts of himself ‘All my life I have sought to meet mankind in every walk of life, and if not to sympathise with, at least to understand, my fellow men,<sup>50</sup> he is warned that an interest in others betrays a predilection for ‘low company,’ and that ‘everything in London goes in circles. It is very important that you should realise this—circles. There are little circles like little whirlpools in society, out of which nothing can flow into the next circle; once in, you must stay.’<sup>51</sup> This is entirely anathema to the interaction with one’s society Gogarty advocates in his previous works—there, he sought precisely that companionship by which one was moved out of oneself, instead of held rigidly in one’s perceptions. Yet even within the restrictions of the English social circles there is little interpersonal interaction for, even in those most idiosyncratic examples of English society, the gentlemen’s clubs, one’s ‘best chance for election is before you

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<sup>47</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 157]

<sup>48</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 65]

<sup>49</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 54]

<sup>50</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 30]

<sup>51</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 27]

are known.’<sup>52</sup> The club itself is thus Gogarty’s symbol for a society without a society: it excludes general society from membership, yet accrues members before any social interaction has shown them worthy or unworthy of their inclusion.

These conversational and interactive difficulties are central to *Going Native* for, as we have observed, this novel represents the first extensive non-Irish context for a Gogarty-persona. Ouseley’s attempts to find a place for himself in English social discourse fail at every turn, despite the general hospitality and decency he encounters throughout *Going Native*. But for Ouseley, even the flora of England is alienating: the first things he sees upon waking in England are ‘the boughs of a cedar of Lebanon’<sup>53</sup>—another transplanted indigenous elsewhere. In England, Ouseley is not merely outside his native society, but he is persistently thwarted in his attempts to form attachments in his new milieu: ‘Look at how I was treated: conjured to restraint and civil behaviour, to the nothing-too-much in all things, warned against the intoxication of poetry, ordered to submit the wild Irishry in me to discipline...’<sup>54</sup> Ouseley thus treats the social codes and precedents in England as being spiritually prophylactic restrictions upon the attainment of that transcendent view of life that he seeks.

Despite the obvious comedic intent of much of *Going Native*, the reader will certainly notice that Ouseley’s attempts to establish new personal relations in England fail so utterly that he is actually committed, by the woman he ‘loves,’ to a ‘lunatic asylum’—and even there he feels restricted: ‘it destroys confidence to talk to a psychoanalyst. They are judging you by every word.’<sup>55</sup> This is a seldom-revealed aspect of Gogarty’s thought, for his artistic preference is clearly to present individuals

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<sup>52</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 135]

<sup>53</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 43]

<sup>54</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 253]

<sup>55</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 268]

within the social groups that best reveal their personalities, and where they are comfortable, as previously evidenced by *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*. By contrast, *Going Native* reveals the persistent and repeated frustration of Ouseley's attempts to fit in, and to establish new social contact. Most of Gogarty's remaining self-depicting writings restrict themselves to the Dublin of 1900-1939.

### III: 'THE ENGLISH ARE QUEER FOLK WITH THEIR LACK OF SOUL...'

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of Gogarty's attempts to contrast Ireland with England lies in Ouseley's assertion that to live as an Irishman in England is to lose one's soul. Throughout the book, Ouseley maintains that the English have no soul, and that to live amongst them requires that he suppress or lose his own: 'If I am going to live among the English and to deal with them, I must be like them and conform. I must get rid of my soul.'<sup>56</sup> Of course, Gogarty is too accomplished an artist to mention explicitly the clear applicability to Irish colonial history of this soulless mimicry of the English, although he cannot resist the sly observation 'England has forgiven us magnanimously for all the injuries she inflicted on us long ago. It is high time now that we forgave her.'<sup>57</sup> Yet it is clear throughout *Going Native* that Gogarty perceives a social contrast between the spirited sociability of Ireland with the rigidity and personal isolation of English social tradition, and it is this contrast that perhaps best explains his notion that the Irish 'possess' a soul, and the English do not.

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<sup>56</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 18]

<sup>57</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 22]

We have already observed Gogarty's intense interest in the conversational characteristics of Irish society, but it is not only conversation in England that Ouseley finds stifling and deliberate; Ouseley directly relates his amorous entanglements with the question of the English lack of soul: 'They have love instead and lots of it. It's love that turns a man or woman into a poet, and not a soul. Instead of my turning the English into poets it is they who are turning me into a lover.'<sup>58</sup> Yet Ouseley fails as both a poet and a lover, and Gogarty recurrently links Ouseley's unsuccessful romances with poetry. The connections are explicit: when Ouseley later observes Parmenis in profile, he feels driven to compose:

Now when I see a lovely or wonderful thing that excites my imagination I am inclined to weave a rhythmic spell of words to make it stay, in spite of the hopelessness of the attempt to put a quart in a pint pot; nevertheless, I began to make a lyric:

*Why is your hollow cheek  
Lovelier than the Greek?*

until the association of ideas with the vicarage stopped me, shrank my stream.<sup>59</sup>

Despite Ouseley's interest in Parmenis, and his desire to 'weave a rhythmic spell of words,' he not only fails to copulate with her, but he cannot even produce a poem that extends beyond this original couplet. Instead of attaining the dual 'enlargement' that he seeks in the 'rhythmic spell to enlarge the spirit' that is poetry, he spends his time abed with Parmenis debating the most rigidly structured, pointlessly uncommunicative use of words imaginable—the crossword puzzle ('of all the illimitable lunacies and mental dissipations I ever saw since I read *Finnegans Wake* [the crossword puzzle] is about the worst'<sup>60</sup>). Of course, Ouseley has earlier failed to

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<sup>58</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [pp. 169-170]

<sup>59</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 183]

<sup>60</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 196]



win Malkyn, with whom he ‘wasted the night in her room talking poetry until the dawn.’<sup>61</sup>

In *Going Native*’s terms, poetry is supposed to be communicative, generous, and uplifting; W. B. Yeats is not merely a great poet, but he is also a larger expression of the Irish nation, ‘a vessel of the imagination and memory of the ancient hills.’<sup>62</sup> Yet where Yeats can express not merely himself but a timeless nobility of his nation as well, Ouseley’s attempts to introduce this element of poetry into his interpersonal connections founder when confronted with the social procedures that the English interpose as a substitute for intimacy. Even in his efforts to create these most intimate of human relationships with Malkyn or Parmenis he ‘wastes’ his time in strategic, inhibited conversations.

Ultimately, Ouseley’s repeated efforts to infuse vitality into social codes fail, and he becomes weary of sublimating his interests in spiritual elevation to accommodate English society: ‘I am doing my best to put up with them. I am trying to believe that I can live without the heroic and the fabulous. I am trying to believe that there is no necessity for the magical in a country. I am doing my best.’<sup>63</sup> Yeats provides this in Ireland, at least while he still lives, but in England, Ouseley cannot provide it by himself. This is a crucial inability, for the textual development of *Going Native* does not depict the slow assimilation of Ouseley into English society—the traditional process of ‘going native’—but instead reveals Ouseley’s *inability* to go native (that is, to alter his Irishness sufficiently to live comfortably amongst the English.) In a curious reversal, Gogarty’s one self-presentational work set almost entirely outside Ireland becomes what is likely his most determined assertion of his cultural and personal allegiance with Irish values and social habits. As he notes when

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<sup>61</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 186]

<sup>62</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 6]

<sup>63</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 289]

Ouseley is contemplating departure from England, 'Obviously you cannot tell where you were until you have left.'<sup>64</sup>

Yet if, as this thesis suggests, *Going Native* depicts Ouseley's recognition of his personal and cultural allegiances with Irish life, it must also be noted that Ireland too has failed Ouseley. The 'visionary hills' that inspire his imagination are uninhabitable until decency returns, or de Valera leaves—Ouseley seems to view these as simultaneous phenomena. Indeed, no practical reconciliation develops between Ouseley and Ireland in *Going Native*. Although England disappoints him by its inability to offer the visionary, the heroic, the fabulous, and the spiritual, the Ireland to which he returns remains the de Valeran vision of Ireland that betrayed Yeats's dreams: '[Yeats] was a man confronted at the end of his days, not alone by the apparent failure of his ideals, but by their danger and menace to all that he held dear.'<sup>65</sup> Although *Going Native* concludes with Ouseley's clear determination to revisit Ireland ('Oh, Archpoet, six weeks is enough! In a little while we shall meet'<sup>66</sup>), we know too that Yeats has suggested six week divisions between Ireland and England: 'I am convinced that the ideal life is to spend six weeks in England and six weeks in Dublin alternately.'<sup>67</sup> Ouseley thus faces the rather depressing recognition at the end of *Going Native* that he cannot truly 'go native' in *either* England or Ireland, and must shuttle back and forth at six week intervals. In this lies Ouseley's uneasy compromise between his necessity to experience the enthusiasm of wonder and inspiration, and his vulnerability to the political and social impediments to such reverie.

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<sup>64</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 266]

<sup>65</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 10]

<sup>66</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 293]

<sup>67</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 7]

It is somewhat difficult, in this context, not to detect resonances of Prof. Kiberd's post-colonial reading of modern Irish literature in his influential 1995 text, *Inventing Ireland*. To be certain, Prof. Kiberd himself makes no use of *Going Native*, and only mentions Gogarty once, and that in passing. Yet there are issues in *Going Native* that accord thematically with some of Prof. Kiberd's suggestions. One may note, for example, in the Yeatsian/Gogartian notion of dividing one's life into six-week periods that alternate between Ireland and England, a literal enactment of the hybrid, confused identity that Prof. Kiberd suggests colonised peoples feel towards their own cultures, and to that of their colonisers; he cites early Irish poets referring to their auditors as "a dhream Ghaoidhealta ghallda" (O people English-Irish).<sup>68</sup> Gogarty also addresses the inherent confusion of linguistic identity for a colonised people<sup>69</sup> in his disgusted repudiation of unprecedented Irish adopted merely to reject English:

'Don't ask me,' I said, after our long greeting, when his [Vennel's] eye caught the legend on the plane. *Aer Lingus Teoranta*. It was annoying to be pursued by a bastard language and to be associated, as it were, with a stage Irishman who insisted on staging himself.

'Favete linguis,' I prayed the scholar. 'Don't mention it. It's the stage Irishman's latest gag—words that were never heard or seen before.'<sup>70</sup>

(Gogarty's recourse to Latin is, of course, a sly rejection of English for a language long-established in Ireland, yet which does not accommodate the stage-Irishman's 'bastard...words never seen before.')

Prof. Kiberd's particular interest in subversive mishandling of colonial literary forms appears in *Going Native* as Gogarty's almost parodistic manipulation of the English social comedy, or comedy of manners; Prof. Carens sees similarities between Gogarty's handling of the 'satiric techniques of

<sup>68</sup> Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*. [p. 11]

<sup>69</sup> Kiberd notes: "The struggle for self-definition is conducted within language." Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*. [p. 11]

<sup>70</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 24]

distortion and exaggeration' in *Going Native* with the similar social satires of 'Firbank, Waugh, and Huxley.'<sup>71</sup> In these examples many of the themes of *Going Native* are associated with Prof. Kiberd's interests, notably the general interrelations of nationality, coloniality, hybridity, identity, and history.

Although Prof. Kiberd's approach offers an intriguing avenue of investigation, it does not appear that *Going Native* should be seen in any significant way as a post-colonial text in Kiberdian terms: 'In my judgement, postcolonial writing does not begin only when the occupier withdraws; rather it is initiated at that very moment when a native writer formulates a text committed to cultural resistance.'<sup>72</sup> 'Cultural resistance' is rather broad but, excepting humorous remarks, there is no evident confrontation on Gogarty's part. Indeed, Ireland fares worse in *Going Native* than does England. Gogarty's Ireland is a place of despair and betrayal, in which Yeats is dying as de Valera thrives, whilst his England is a strange and occasionally disappointing country that nonetheless treats Ouseley kindly: 'Any one is welcome to England. The tremendous resources and the genial civilisation of the Empire and its magnanimous ideas of liberty are for all to share.'<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, his intention to 'go native' makes little attempt to accommodate the English (it is peculiar that Gogarty thinks, after generations of Irishmen had indeed gone to England and adapted that 'it is high time one of us' did the same.) Far from attempting to blend in by adopting English habits and English ways—that is, going native—Ouseley insists upon his Irishness, observes the English with amusement or confusion, and makes almost no persuasive effort to adopt English habits or traditions. Ouseley is, nonetheless, broadly accepted into 'the most tremendous melting pot for races and cultures,'<sup>74</sup> and

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<sup>71</sup> Carens, *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 167]

<sup>72</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*. [p. 6]

<sup>73</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 286]

<sup>74</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [pp. 286-287]

this suggestion of a 'melting pot' raises the question of whether or not Ouseley ever needed to go native at all. It is Ouseley who cannot adjust himself to England; England accommodates Ouseley with little difficulty. But, importantly, Ouseley does not feel comfortable in either Britain or Ireland; this is less 'cultural resistance' of one society against another than it is a struggle for culture in the face of disappointment with both Ireland and England.

Whilst *Going Native* presents itself as an amusing (and sometimes quite serious) comparison of England and Ireland, there is also a wider social and philosophical critique therein that Gogarty levels at the lack of inspirational experience in the modern world generally. Many of these arguments are familiar to Gogarty's readers from his previous writings, particularly his interest in investing the present with the imaginative grandeur of the past (and, as Yeats warns Ouseley at the outset of *Going Native*, 'Grandeur is gone, Ouseley, Grandeur is gone.'<sup>75</sup>) Yet some of Gogarty's remarks about modernity and social change are merely the cranky musings of an ageing man:

If the girls and women who talk so up-to-date and glibly about thrills, when they mean orgasms, realised to what the intermittent disturbances which they call 'nervous breakdowns' were due, they would ration their thrills a little.<sup>76</sup>

Gogarty has, however, a much more substantive argument to make as well. There is nothing specifically pertinent to the Irish or the English in the following passage; what is more important than national difference is this expression's general applicability to contemporary life, and its consistency of argument with all that Gogarty has written before about the necessity to re-ennoble the modern world:

But with all the little whisperers who are creeping about at the present time—docile, terrified, and with safety-vault boxes—it is high time that some one brought back the spacious days and the spacious men of Elizabeth, or at least draw attention to the fact

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<sup>75</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 6]

<sup>76</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 259]

that it was not ever thus: that there were burly men and big Bens about who made life relishable. There was something to hold the mirror up to then. You cannot hold it up to a lot of undergrounds with little earnest fellows diving down them in the morning and, what is worse, emerging in the evening; little people who take their opinions as they take their nutriment, from tins. If their whole uneventful history stopped, *sorra* much loss would it be. They are neither a credit to history nor to civilisation. They are merely men tamed to perform for otiose money-grubbers.<sup>77</sup>

In this passage there are numerous reappearances of Gogarty's perennial fascination with the corrective power of great spirits to inspire a debased or misguided era. What Ouseley sees in the England about him is the triumph of the mean, and the suppression of the 'spacious' and the 'relishable.' Furthermore, the reader also sees in this theme Gogarty's long-standing assertion that passionate subjectivity determines factuality: 'I was thinking that, whether it was altogether true or not, it would become true if I believed it. What is truth but what people believe?'<sup>78</sup> Yet what is of particular interest to the assessment of *Going Native* as a work based in recollective self-depiction is Gogarty's presentation of Ouseley's experiences in England as an attempt to import inspiration into another country by reconnecting subjectively with that country's past. Indeed, the England that Ouseley hopes to find during his residence is not the reality of Neville Chamberlain, but the spiritual and cultural England of Shakespeare and Jonson. Intriguingly—particularly in the light of Gogarty's previous regressions in time to assert inspirational cultural and personal values in the present—the England Ouseley hopes to encounter is full of Elizabethan figures: 'I had been told by the Vicar that the descendants of Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol were to be found, if you knew where to seek, around Stratford still as large as life and unchanged from the days when their predecessors were made immortal by the immortal Bard.'<sup>79</sup> This

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<sup>77</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 234-235]

<sup>78</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 116]

<sup>79</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 234] Note here too that the figures Ouseley seeks are not the elite of Shakespeare's world, but the engaging and characterful 'under' characters—like those of the students in *Tumbling*.

attempt to reconnect with the spirit of Elizabethan England in the England of the 1930's is a peculiarly Gogartian exercise, closely recollecting his previous literary attempts to reclaim nobility for the present day by a spiritual regression into a fictional temporal past.

His effort at redemptive regression is, as depicted in *Going Native*, a failure, although he attains minor successes. Ouseley attempts to discern Shakespearean characteristics in modern England, and persuades himself that he can:

By God! It's Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly! Of course! What's the meaning in being in the Shakespearean country if you can't recognise the inhabitants? And as I turned each way to look, time waxed and waned and the girls' costumes changed and I beheld them dressed as they were in the days of Jack Falstaff.<sup>80</sup>

Chapter 3 of this thesis noted this ability of Gogarty's personae to make time 'wax and wane,' yet it is precisely this ability to penetrate modernity and to perceive the 'spacious days and spacious men' below the surface that separates Ouseley from his English associates—that prevents him from 'going native.' Although he claims to rid himself of his soul whilst in England, and 'to submit the wild Irishry in me to discipline,' it is by these very efforts that he is caught in a contradictory series of impulses. Despite longing to revive the 'spacious' imagination of the Elizabethan era in modern life ('What's the meaning of being in the Shakespearean country if you can't recognise the inhabitants?'), his attempt to invest contemporary England with Elizabethan colouring is a spiritual effort to find 'the heroic and the fabulous' in a country that believes 'that there is no necessity for the magical.' In a certain sense, it is in Ouseley's imaginative ability to perceive the Tearsheets and the Falstaffs that one finds his sole achievement in 'going native;' he alone appears able to recreate the Shakespearean world that the English inhabit, but do not discern. In the end, Ouseley recognises that his endeavour to perceive Shakespearean England in modern England

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<sup>80</sup> OSJG. *Going Native*. [p. 240]

is, paradoxically, definitively un-English, and that it reveals his position as an outsider: 'Like enough the English public will not thank me for reviving Merrie England. They couldn't stand it. They wouldn't know what to do with it if it came.'<sup>81</sup>

In this tension between the Irishman Ouseley, who seeks to revive 'the spacious days' of Merrie England, and the English themselves, who 'wouldn't know what to do with' them if he succeeds, we perceive one of the structural incongruities of *Going Native*. This misassociation is the attempt to mix Ouseley's imaginative attempt to draw inspiration from England's evocative past with *Going Native's* pretence—albeit a largely humorous pretence—of modern social observation. Because of this structure, Gogarty builds much of *Going Native* on unstable ground, for his general desire to impart an ennobling verve to life, in both Ireland and England, becomes entangled in his specific critiques of contemporary English society. Yet at the book's conclusion he has demonstrated no significant difference between the Irish and the English, save in the exceptional desire felt by Yeats and Ouseley for the noble and the timeless. Thus Ouseley's attempt to engage the greatness in the spirit of England is directly at odds with *Going Native's* more general implication of factual social contrast between Ireland and England.

Gogarty exacerbates this problem by poor historical timing, so that his depiction of Britain in *Going Native* appeared at a time when the insusceptibility of English society for wonder was a less pressing concern than the repulsion of the Wehrmacht. As Professor Carens notes:

The world with which *Going Native* deals is the world of the later twenties and the early thirties rather than England under the shadow of World War II; and the book is the fruit of Gogarty's experiences in English social circles during those earlier years.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 235]

<sup>82</sup> Carens, *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 164]



Thus the England of cocktails and bedroom farce that Ouseley encounters no longer existed; England, when the book was published, was reeling before Nazi Germany, and Gogarty's laggardly vision of England was instantly outdated: '[The English] own the earth and now they can take it easy without perpetual drill.'<sup>83</sup> Yet, despite being announced with poor timing, Gogarty's central observation in *Going Native* nonetheless remains textually supportable—that Ouseley is perhaps more akin to the spirit of Elizabethan England than are the modern English, precisely because of the spiritual and imaginative effort Ouseley is willing to invest in the revival of the inspiriting.

Prof. Carens suggests a hypothesis to account for the unpersuasive intermingling of social observation and bedroom farce in *Going Native*:

To say that these passages of Ouseley's analysis intrigue but do not satisfy the imagination is another way of saying that there is a formal defect in *Going Native*, that the continuous present and the continuous presence of Ouseley do not work here as the Gogarty and Ouseley *personae* work in *Sackville Street*, *I Follow St Patrick*, and *Tumbling in the Hay*. In the earlier works anatomy, confession, and romance, even a touch of the novel in *Tumbling in the Hay*, fuse effectively; in *Going Native*, anatomy and confession, which are the medium of Ouseley, jostle the comedy of manners to which the other characters belong.<sup>84</sup>

Yet this thesis proposes that the true 'formal defect' of *Going Native* lies not in the attempt to mix 'comedy of manners' with 'anatomy and confession,' but instead that Gogarty's intensely subjective preference for enthusiasm, inspiration, and wonder cannot easily accommodate the general social criticisms he offers without exposing their lack of real applicability. Gogarty's willingness to mix personal perception with more objective social critique is entirely characteristic, yet it results in judgements that the text itself does not truly support. When Ouseley makes critical remarks about the English, apparently based on his temperamental frustration with their inability to

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<sup>83</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 287]

<sup>84</sup> Carens, *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 169]

re-experience Elizabethan England with him, the reader of *Going Native* cannot find an appropriate referent for this exasperation:

The question is how long can I abide this civilisation, the greatest civilisation on earth? How long can I live with the pirates who have put on dinner jackets? How long can I live with the inventors of From Friday to Tuesday, the inventors of the long week-end?<sup>85</sup>

These claims of piracy and sluggishness have no real textual basis; the English welcome Ouseley, and he lives as indolent a life in England as do they. Indeed, if one excludes some humorous romantic debacles, *Going Native* is remarkable for the general decency with which the English treat Ouseley: he even, in an attempt to provoke a reaction, tells them bluntly 'that this bloody country of yours is not worthy of me,' and finds 'to my amazement, they saw my point of view, utterly ignoring my heat.'<sup>86</sup> *Going Native* is thus unusually hampered by its dual attempt to assess the English spiritually, whilst simultaneously offering an objectively pertinent social critique of England, precisely because Gogarty refuses to keep his subjective and objective viewpoints distinct. The intermixture of the subjective and objective is one of Gogarty's most common literary traits and, in as impressionistic a work as *Sackville Street*, incongruities between subjectivity and objectivity are not detrimental; but they become more troublesome when a book partially depends, as *Going Native* does, upon the credibility of its social portrait.

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<sup>85</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 290]

<sup>86</sup> OSTJG. *Going Native*. [p. 260]

#### IV: CONCLUSIONS FROM 'GOING NATIVE'

*Going Native* is one of Gogarty's lesser works. Yet this chapter has argued that *Going Native*'s place in Gogarty's self-depicting literature is important, for several reasons. Despite presenting a protagonist who is clearly associable with Oliver Gogarty, *Going Native* offers the first significant fictionalisations in Gogarty's prose. Thus he here enacts what he has been claiming for all of his recollective prose, which is the intermingling of memory and fiction. In *Going Native* the 'grammar of greatness' is embodied by the ennobling influence of Yeats, yet Gogarty demonstrates his continuing pursuit of it in Ousley's attempt to discover the 'Merrie England' of Shakespeare in his imagination. In relation to the sense of spiritual enlargement and ennoblement that the great provoke in Gogarty, this chapter has also suggested that *Going Native* presents a national identification of England with soulless rigidity and Ireland with soulful wonder. Finally, this chapter has noted that the Gogarty persona is here left in between countries, in that his openly denominated attempt to 'go native' results in a growing appreciation for his own national characteristics, yet an equal inability to reside comfortably in either Britain or Ireland for any extended period of time. This reflects Gogarty's own circumstances, as he left both countries behind and lived the remaining years of his life in the United States of America.

CHAPTER 7  
'DON'T GO MAD IN MANHATTAN':  
GOGARTY IN THE USA

Towards the conclusion of *Going Native*, when Ouseley contemplates a brief return from England to Ireland, he proposes a short comparison of England and the United States:

In America they are adolescent still and they are still 'going places' with the fresh interest and zest of children. The Englishman has been places. He has seen all the pictures. ('He has been here since Julius Caesar.') He has arrived long ago. His is a state of being. America's is a state of becoming. America is forever straining forwards. England is stationary and content. How long can this go on?<sup>1</sup>

This consideration of America occupies little of *Going Native*, and Ouseley never demonstrates any interest in 'going places' after 'going native'; the clear implication is that Ouseley returns to Ireland—for six weeks—after *Going Native* concludes. Yet this unexpected commentary upon the United States appositely anticipates the rest of Gogarty's life, for he was to spend the years 1939-1957 as a resident, and then a citizen, of the United States.

Gogarty published more prose books in the United States than he did in any other residence. Like James Joyce in Trieste and Paris, Gogarty, during his residence in America, preferred to write about his earlier life in Dublin to writing about life in his new home. This unflagging interest in Ireland, and in those whom he knew there, continues Gogarty's interest in writing about greatness and inspiration; what is illuminating, and perhaps revelatory of personal disappointment for Gogarty, is the paucity of American experiences he records when addressing those themes. For that period, it appears that

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<sup>1</sup> OStJG. *Going Native*. [p. 286]

Gogarty continued to advocate the inspiration and transcendence of great friends and good company, but that these remained, for him, largely in a remembered Dublin populated by dead companions.

This thesis treats Gogarty's years in the United States as a single group. There are reasons for objecting to this approach, the foremost of which is that the numerical majority of Gogarty's books are thereby lumped into a grouping defined by chronology, and not distinguished by individualising theme or level of achievement. Yet therein also lies the primary reason for treating the American literary productions as an appreciably related grouping: Gogarty's American books do indeed bear an unusual similarity of theme, style, and general structure, and therefore they are usefully associated. They are also of a markedly diminished quality, when assessed against his writings from Ireland and Britain. The Irish and British books, being more individualised to their themes and approaches, are more usefully separated, and each studied as distinct.

The unusual similarity that associates Gogarty's American works is primarily the result of the new literary demands placed upon Gogarty in the United States. Specifically, the type of writing in which he engaged in America was largely periodical and commercial, which altered the form itself of most of his writings. In Ireland and Britain, Gogarty's tendency had been to write extended works that, whilst somewhat episodic, nonetheless retained a general continuity of character and incident throughout. In America, however, his style changed to accommodate the interests of his publishers, so that he regularly wrote short, observational articles and essays, and then published collections of these as his book-length works.

Gogarty's time in the United States was a paradoxical period in his literary life. The paradox of these years lies in the fact that, despite writing more recollective self-depictions in the United States than anywhere else, Gogarty provided exceptionally little information about his personal activities in America. What we do know of Gogarty's doings in those nineteen years appears particularly undefined when contrasted with the dynamism and prominence of his life in Dublin. Certainly Gogarty's presence in the memoirs of others accounts for some of our knowledge of his Dublin life. Yet it is not by mere contrast with his Dublin life that Gogarty's American years seem inadequately known; there is an indubitable scholarly gap. This absence may be seen in Ulick O'Connor's 350-page biography of Gogarty, published only six years after Gogarty's death, where he records Gogarty's arrival in the United States on page 332, and notes Gogarty's death on page 349. One of the central reasons for this lack of knowledge lies, as we shall see, in Gogarty's strange division of his literary efforts once he reached America: for much of the last twenty years of Gogarty's writing life, his literary time often appears to have stopped in Dublin, in 1939.

This chapter is divided into six subsequent sections. The first looks at Gogarty's biography in the United States, as well as at the lecture tours and periodical submissions by which he earned his money in this period. The second section assesses Gogarty's representation of the United States itself in his writings, and finds that Gogarty's minimal self-depictions in the United States reveal an isolated man largely unable to establish inspiring relationships such as those he recorded from Dublin. The third section analyses the characteristics of his writings about Ireland whilst in the United States, and finds that his depiction remains similar to the point of outright repetition—by continuing his

attempt to record the inspiration of greatness through his memoirs, Gogarty returns to that period in which he encountered such transcendence most frequently: the Dublin he had depicted in his Irish books. Sections four, five, and six look severally at the three books of Gogarty's American period in which the contents themselves resemble Gogarty's other American writings, yet where an organisational principle gives them a greater individuality than Gogarty's other American writings.

#### *I: LECTURE TOURS, COMMERCIAL WRITING, AND LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES*

After one entirely mysterious visit to San Francisco in 1906,<sup>2</sup> Gogarty's visits to the United States were professional, combining literary and commercial interests. The dwindling of his medical career, exacerbated by the libel damages from the judgement against *Sackville Street*, placed unwonted restrictions upon Gogarty's finances in the mid-to-late 1930s. Quite simply, Gogarty went to America to make money, and formally organised and informal occasional lecturing became one of his staple sources of income throughout the years of his American residence. Indeed, Gogarty's presence in the United States in 1939—which resulted in his permanent residence—was in fulfilment of a contract for a lecture tour.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Prof. Lyons cautiously speculates: 'Could his journey have been in [connection with London friends who lost heavily in the San Francisco earthquake] or was it a bachelor's final splurge, or his reward for "the primary Fellowship"?' Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 60] All are possibilities, as Gogarty wrote nothing of the trip.

<sup>3</sup> Generally, an important Irish cultural resource: 'Ever afterward the cultural as well as political leaders would look to the new world for funds, for manpower, above all for a republican example. Hence the mandatory American tours not just by subsequent revolutionary leaders but also by intellectuals such as Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, and Douglas Hyde.' Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*. [p. 21]

He had undertaken two lecture tours before, in 1933 and 1937, with mixed results. Although he was well received, he fatigued when poorly scheduled itineraries compelled him to criss-cross what were, to a lifelong European, the imposingly vast interior distances of the United States: as he noted in correspondence with a friend, 'I am not human at all or a member of Society, just a mere projectile of the Pond Bureau 25 W. 43<sup>rd</sup> St. New York.'<sup>4</sup> Gogarty's later record of his experiences on these lecture tours suggests his disappointment with this type of venture:

The entire group of Irish lecturers lack money and are driven to depend upon the liberality, in fact the charity, of private citizens of the United States. The reason is simply stated: the devastating rapacity of American lecture agents...Worse than the downright 'fifty-percenters' are those agents who charge only 45 per cent but leave the lecturer to pay the train fares, then railroad him all over the union. Few agents abide by their contracts and most will resort to trumped-up charges in order to inflict more of the financial burden upon the lecturer....Misassociations are another painful experience, such as the instance in which the victim of his overzealous agent found himself lecturing on Shelley's 'Skylark' to the Hod Carrier's Union—and at a cut below the minimum arranged. This is usually timed for the end of the tour when the lecturer is too exhausted to defend himself. Frequently, in addition to all the other costs over and above the terms of the contract, there remains the necessity of employing an attorney to handle the lecture bureau.<sup>5</sup>

Despite Gogarty's obvious difficulties on these first two tours, however, he learned that he enjoyed America, and that there he could profitably undertake to lecture, or write, his opinions and memories about literary Dublin. Moreover, he apprehended that there existed in America an interested and wealthy audience for his intimate knowledge of Irish literature and Irish writers. However tedious and repetitive these lecture tours may have been for Gogarty, lecturing and writing offered him the prospect of a healthy supplemental income for his retirement from medicine.

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<sup>4</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [pp. 329-330]

<sup>5</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [pp. 179-180]



The transient nature of public speaking has, of course, rendered most of Gogarty's talks unavailable to us. Yet an unexpected glimpse of how his lectures were conducted survives in the unusual form of a 'security matter' report filed internally by the FBI in relation to their observation of Gogarty's friend, Gerald Brockhurst:

The files further indicate that OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY, Ritz Tower Hotel, New York City, addressed the KNIFE and FORK CLUB at Amarillo, Texas on December 10, 1939, his subject being poetry. After this there was an open forum during which GOGARTY was quizzed relative to the war. He allegedly stated that the 'English Government is trying to dictate to the world and this is the cause of the present war. England is trying to be more of a dictator to the world than HITLER is to Germany.'<sup>6</sup>

Although this provides little sense of what Gogarty said in his presentation, it does indicate that he was willing to indulge 'an open forum' afterwards that comprehended contemporary, and non-literary, topics, even when his theme had been 'poetry.' One will also observe that Gogarty's lecture audiences—here, the Amarillo Knife and Fork Club—were not inevitably literary, bibliophilic, or university associations.

More revealingly, the promotional brochure published by the Pond lecture agency to advertise his first American lecture tour (January to March 1933) gives an intriguing aperçu both of Gogarty's topics as a lecturer, and of his self-presentation as an intellectual commodity to the American audience. Here he offers what comes to be his stock-in-trade in the American literary marketplace: inside knowledge about great writers and literary society. Thematically, however, what we see in these descriptions of his available lectures is the continuity of his topics and impressions. He was to pursue these

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<sup>6</sup> (Author's name officially deleted under provision b7c of the Freedom of Information Act). FBI File Number: NY 100-47958 PAS. New York City, October 16, 1943. The factual accuracy of this report is somewhat suspect, as it identifies Gogarty as being 5'10", when he claimed 5'9", and gives information on his birth as 'Dublin, Ireland, 1870.' Gogarty was born in Dublin in 1878.

ideas of greatness, inspiration, art, and the liberating example of the most distinguished and colourful throughout his literary career:

### *Dr. GOGARTY'S LECTURES*

#### *Where Literature is Made*

Passionate speech is the greatest of the forms by which the imagination expresses itself. In the ancient City of Dublin resides a people with a fancy as untrammelled and a speech as direct and vigorous as the speech of Shakespearean England. To this is added a quality of rhapsody and reckless abundance unprecedented in history and unparalleled in the present day. It was from this fountain that Æ, Yeats and Joyce, Bernard Shaw and other men of Dublin drew their resources and it is to this well of the Muses that Shaw, Stephens and O'Casey would do well to return to be refreshed.

Dr. Gogarty lived with James Joyce during the time that his lyrical genius was opening out. He knows the dwellers in the depths and all the wild courage which sustains them in their sub-human surroundings which are the underworld of *Ulysses*. He knows the Immortals on the heights who owe their fame to the ebullient speech of their native City where that bravery lives which is Poetry when it turns into words.

He will tell of unknown "characters" in whom Francois Villon would have rejoiced. The odd fellows, the "cautions," the "queer ones," individualists all whose individuality, mad as it is, goes to save the soul from submergence in the mass.

#### *Incredible Culture*

In this lecture Dr. Gogarty tells of the Dons of the Nineties and their incredible culture. The culture which was incredible was in the cloisters of the three great universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin. Dr. Gogarty reveals his experiences with the old Professors under whom he worked, at Trinity College and at Oxford. These Dons, who were his friends as well as his masters, taught not by text books but by their attitude to sport and port. He tells of the incredible detachment and outlook of these Periclean people, the amused cynicism of men who, great landholders on Parnassus, were confronted by the avowed madness of modern democracy. He will expound their point of view, their passive pleasures of hospitality, good living and good conversation and contrast it with the modern conception of good living: the life of spontaneity versus the life of immobility and tradition. It is rich with amusing anecdote and personal incident.

#### *What is Poetry?*

Here Dr. Gogarty analyses the need for Poetry in the human heart and the reasons why Poetry has survived in spite of the opposition of Civilisation to Culture. Here Dr. Gogarty grades and illustrates the manifestations of the spirit of Poetry from Sappho to Vachel Lindsay.

*Ballad Poetry*

Dr. Gogarty is an ardent lover of ballad poetry and in this lecture not only tells of it but recites known and unknown ballads of the Border and of Robin Hood.<sup>7</sup>

Of Gogarty's four prepared lectures for this first lecture tour, at least three (and possibly the fourth, 'Ballad Poetry,' as well) reflect his belief in literature as the expression of ennobling example—'bravery...which is Poetry when it turns into words.' These conjoined themes form the foundation for the other typically Gogartian elements in these lectures: Gogarty's lifelong interest in the conversationality of Dublin; his faith in 'rhapsody and reckless abundance'; his advocacy of 'the life of spontaneity versus the life of immobility and tradition'; his belief in, and characteristic distinction between, Parnassian greatness and 'mad' individuality against 'the avowed madness of modern democracy'; the remarkably Gogartian qualities of his TCD friends and mentors, those 'Periclean people' who embody the 'incredible detachment' and 'amused cynicism' with which 'incredible culture' confronts modernity; and his tendency to present these issues with 'amusing anecdote and personal incident.' Gogarty's literary prose—all of it ahead of him at the time of these lectures—proved entirely consistent with this catalogue of his literary and cultural interests.

There is here a further point for observation that is a corollary of Gogarty's intense interest in speaking of literary and cultural inspiration from personal, anecdotal perspective. This is that Gogarty's assertion of authority on the *literature* of the Irish renaissance (and not just the *individuals*) lies in his personal acquaintance with the writers of important books. His claim to authority on *Ulysses*, for example, lies in having known Joyce, and in knowing 'the dwellers in the depths and all the wild courage which sustains them in their sub-human surroundings which are the underworld of *Ulysses*.'

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<sup>7</sup> Brochure, for 'Gogarty: First American Lecture Tour, 1933.' The Pond Bureau, New York. 1932[?].

Gogarty commonly makes his literary judgements based upon this individualised knowledge, or interpretation, of a writer's personality and temperament. Although the subsequent chapter will illustrate that much of the apparent error or misrepresentation in Gogarty's memoirs and literary essays arises directly from his belief that having known a writer personally gives one an authority to explicate that writer's artistic accomplishment, a reader notes here that he asserts this type of personal authority whilst almost all of the major literary figures he knew were still alive.

Gogarty's third lecture tour of America, in 1939, was long: although an exact itinerary now appears impossible to reconstruct, Gogarty made mention of the 'seventy cities...I had to do for Colston Leigh<sup>8</sup> in '39.'<sup>9</sup> Yet when Gogarty finally fulfilled the contractual obligations for this lecture tour, the start of the Second World War had rendered the Atlantic crossing perilous, and precautionary restrictions imposed on civilian travel made his immediate return to the British Isles inadvisable, if not impossible. His wife, still living in their home-cum-hotel, Renvyle House, in Connemara, repeatedly urged him not to return, as there would be danger in the voyage, and little help he could render in an empty hotel:

I sent you a cable not to think of coming over now. Apart from the danger of such a journey, there is nothing to be done here. If you are able to keep yourself in U.S.A. it is best for you to stay there, for the present anyway. Things over here are very bad. The hotel is doing no business this year—2 guests at a time.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, of course, Gogarty's presence in the United States enabled him to send parcels of tinned food, clothing, and basic supplies (tea, paper, etc.), to his wife and children: 'so far New York does not feel the war. The abundance to which the people have been

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<sup>8</sup> Colston Leigh ran the New York lecture agency by which Gogarty's 1939 tour was organised.

<sup>9</sup> O'Connor. *The Times I've Seen*. [p. 334]

<sup>10</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 5] [August 1940, Mrs. Gogarty to OStJG]

accustomed has yet a wide margin to spare.’<sup>11</sup> Unable to return to Ireland, therefore, and with persuasive financial reasons to stay in the United States, Gogarty settled into an apartment in Manhattan. Although he attempted to obtain passage for his wife and daughter to North America—‘I am doing all I can to get you both out here. I can pull strings about accommodation on the Clipper as soon as the cash comes in’<sup>12</sup>—these efforts came to nothing. Thus in these unusual circumstances, and alone, Gogarty almost by default took up residence in the city that was to be his home for the rest of his life.

A private record suggests one reason why Gogarty did not document his life in America with anything resembling the frequency or detail he employed in his descriptions of his life in Ireland and England. Prof. Lyons cites entries from a personal diary Gogarty kept erratically in 1943:

December 7<sup>th</sup>: Cold.

December 8<sup>th</sup>: Max Ryan washed out sinus.

December 20<sup>th</sup>: Met Dr. Murphy cancer expert Rockefeller Institute.

December 25<sup>th</sup>: Lunched at 540 [Park Avenue]<sup>13</sup>. Turkey, cranberry sauce, turnips, string beans, sauce, Dined 541 East 72.

Dinner ditto.

December 26<sup>th</sup>: Slept.<sup>14</sup>

This is the diary of an essentially retired man: Gogarty’s life in the United States is less well known to scholarship partially because he did less.

So far as can be established, however, Gogarty maintained a relatively vigorous retirement. Gogarty remained active in literary work throughout his time in the United States, both as a lecturer and author. His numerous periodical contributions testify to his continued industry, and in a letter he noted to his daughter that ‘outside surgery I never

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 57] [January 12, 1943, to his daughter, Brenda]

<sup>12</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 19] [April 29, 1941, to his daughter, Brenda]

<sup>13</sup> Lyons’ clarification.

<sup>14</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 252]

worked as hard. I think writing is the more exigent for it is always present to your mind.’<sup>15</sup> Apart from his writing, Gogarty gave lectures when and where he could get them, even in wartime: ‘I have to go to Chicago to address 1,500 of the ‘mere’ (which I believe means ‘pure’) Irish and take in a few lectures at small prices.’<sup>16</sup> Unsurprisingly, Gogarty also found himself being sought as an examiner, referee, or simply resource for academic studies, so that as early as 1944 Gogarty could complain, again in correspondence to his daughter, ‘People here—women usually—are writing essays for their “Masters” degrees on Yeats in his relation to the occult or any damn thing; and I am the consultant!’<sup>17</sup> Gogarty also appeared occasionally as a participant on popular radio talk shows, such as his several appearances on ‘The Mary Margaret McBride Program’ (10 December 1941)<sup>18</sup> (4 February 1954),<sup>19</sup> and on the NBC Blue Network’s ‘Information Please’ (27 February 1940)<sup>20</sup> (16 January 1943).<sup>21</sup>

Gogarty spent all of his American years as a resident of New York City, occupying (it seems) three different apartments in his time there, all of them in relatively prestigious areas of Manhattan’s Upper East Side. Although he travelled from Manhattan frequently when lecture opportunities arose elsewhere in the United States and Canada, when and where Gogarty travelled from New York City is difficult to establish, because he often used travel as an excuse to evade those he did not wish to encounter:

He delighted in mystification...Many times he arranged with me to tell certain friends and his publishers that he was in upper New York State when actually he was in Florida.

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<sup>15</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 127]

<sup>16</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 98]

<sup>17</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 108] Gogarty’s complaint here is slightly unfair, as Chapter XIII of *Sackville Street* depicts ‘the Archimandrite Yeats’ contacting ghostly spirits in Gogarty’s own home.

<sup>18</sup> Library of Congress Recording: LWO 12747 17A2

<sup>19</sup> Library of Congress Recording: LWO 15577 R83A

<sup>20</sup> Library of Congress Recording: RWA 4768 A1-2

<sup>21</sup> Library of Congress Recording: RWA 4766 B3-4

Or to say that he was in Florida when actually he was only across the river in New Jersey.<sup>22</sup>

Although never as prominent in American literary circles as he had been in Dublin, Gogarty still attained a certain position of respect in US poetry. In 1953 the Poetry Society of America recognised Gogarty by the award of their Annual Gold Medal for poetry.<sup>23</sup> He was also elected to a fellowship of the Academy of American Poets (together with Louise Townsend Nicholl, who was also elected a fellow) in 1954. Other roughly mid-century honorands of this prestigious award include ee cummings, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and John Berryman.

Much of Gogarty's American life appears to been social, just as his Dublin and London periods were; yet he left no record of his American social life comparable with *Sackville Street* or *Going Native*. It seems, however, that Gogarty maintained a personal life of some diversity and social attainment in the United States, regularly dining with friends and society figures. Although his later acquaintances were perhaps inevitably overshadowed by the lustre of his Irish friendships, he nonetheless befriended a number of prominent Americans, such as the film director Robert Flaherty and the humorist Ben Lucian Berman, and he was socially acquainted with the former American Ambassador to Britain, Joseph Kennedy. It is not known whether or not Gogarty ever met the Ambassador's son, the future president of the United States, John F. Kennedy.

Despite this social success in New York, records of Gogarty's last years almost inevitably depict him as a man isolated by his expatriation, weary of the noise of New York City, and apparently missing the sociability of Ireland. O'Faolain thought him

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<sup>22</sup> OSTJG, [Ben Lucian Berman, Intro.]. *Week End*. [p. 13]

<sup>23</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 284]

‘pathetically lonely’<sup>24</sup> the several times they met in New York. By 1957 Gogarty resolved to leave the United States, and wrote to his son, Oliver (‘Noll’) Gogarty, that he intended to return to Dublin in early 1958: ‘Next year, if I am alive, I intend to go to Ireland for good.’<sup>25</sup> Gogarty did not have that extra year, however, and died, after a brief hospitalisation, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1957, in Manhattan.

The primary impress of his years in the United States upon Gogarty’s writing was an enforced accommodation of commercial demands. His literary output took an immediately commercial turn upon his arrival in the United States: in 1941 and 1943 Gogarty published two feeble historical novels in an attempt to interest Hollywood in adapting them for the movie screen. *Mad Grandeur* and *Mr. Petunia* comprise a puzzling anomaly in Gogarty’s career because of their historical eras, their settings in a past of which Gogarty had no personal experience, and their lack of any clear associability with the themes or interests of Gogarty’s other works. His preserved correspondence suggests that he wrote them for the money he believed would follow, were he able to sell them to the studios in California. Of *Mad Grandeur*, Gogarty noted in a letter of March 3, 1941, to his daughter:

There are two ways of getting on the screen with a book. One, write a best-seller which cannot be ignored; and, two, sell a likely book before publication. This is the worse way, for it brings less money, but it obviates the chances that the book when published might not be a best-seller. I have hopes that I can get the thing sold.<sup>26</sup>

More revealingly, in a letter to his wife of July 19, 1944, Gogarty mentions why he believes this attempt to sell *Mad Grandeur* for script treatment failed, even as he justifies a similar hope for *Mr. Petunia*:

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<sup>24</sup> O’Faolain. *Vive Moi!*. [p. 353]

<sup>25</sup> 3 August 1957. Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 288]

<sup>26</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [pp. 13-14]



This novel is what they call in Hollywood a “natural.” I got the story from Mrs. Comstock about a Scots laird whose estates would go to a ne’er do well brother in the event of his having no heir. He so irritated and humiliated his wife by sending her to doctors that she slept with the first good looking man she met at a little country inn on the way back to the Highlands. Result—in eleven months when there are christening festivities she looks up and sees the partner of her liason who has returned from Canada. He has disinherited himself. Into this I wove a character who tries to get people into his mean clutches by giving them gifts. This is for the public who want psychiatry just now. Then I switched the scene to Virginia in 1820, so there is nothing to prevent it selling to the movies. Mad G. was too remote and too Irish and mentioned an invasion (Killala), so they would not buy it in Hollywood.<sup>27</sup>

Tedious and convoluted, *Mad Grandeur* and *Mr. Petunia* are easily Gogarty’s worst literary efforts. They merit mention here only because of the evidence they provide for Gogarty’s readiness—and perhaps his need—to write for economic and popular success very soon after arriving in America.

Despite the failure of the historical novels to sell as films, Gogarty’s more significant, and by far more frequent, literary efforts during his life in the United States were his contributions to periodicals. These too bear the stylistic impress of their intended publications. Gogarty’s periodical submissions may usefully be distinguished as poetry, short stories, memoirs, essays, and book reviews. The four latter categories are not precisely distinct, however, so that many of his essays and memoirs fit suitably into several categories. His remaining prose books were mostly collections of either these submissions, or similar brief essays, stories, and memoirs: *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove (and Other Portraits Grave and Gay)* (1948); *Rolling Down the Lea* (1950); *Intimations* (1950); *It Isn’t This Time of Year At All!* (1954); *Start From Somewhere Else* (1955); and *A Week End in the Middle of the Week* (posthumous; 1958). In this chapter, for reasons internal to the individual books, *Rolling Down the Lea*, *It Isn’t This Time of*

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<sup>27</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [pp. 132-133]

*Year At All!* and *Start From Somewhere Else* are all considered individually; the remaining three compendia are assessed as a collective grouping of essays.

Gogarty sold to widely differing publications, but generally to literary or society magazines of middling artistic discrimination: *Vogue*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Town and Country*, *To-Morrow*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The New Yorker*, *The Saturday Evening Post*. It is possible that the appeal to Gogarty of these large, popular journals (as, for example, *Good Housekeeping*) lay not only in their willingness to pay for submissions, but also in their national distribution—this latter consideration potentially increasing his saleability as a public lecturer. Gogarty also regularly offered poetry for publication. His verse most frequently appeared in a small Baltimore, Maryland-based journal entitled *Contemporary Poetry*. The editor of this magazine, Mary Owings Miller, later published two collections of Gogarty's verse (largely written in the United States), *Perennial* (1944) and *Unselected Poems* (1954), under the 'Contemporary Poetry Distinguished Poets' colophon.

Gogarty's continued ability to find publishers for his American work does not disguise the fact that much of this late writing was hackwork, and Gogarty knew it. As Prof. Carens observes,

When the work of Gogarty's last years was weak or disappointing, it was so in part because of the commercial nature of his enterprise. By the spring of 1944, he found himself churning out material in which he had no interest, hoping to place it in a popular magazine, a task for which he lacked the formulaic skill. A few weeks later, engaged in the same kind of work, he burst out to one of his New York associates, 'Damn potboiling. When can I write as I like?'<sup>28</sup>

The year of this incident is suggestive, for although Gogarty persevered in writing in this genre for the next thirteen years, his articles continued to resemble those of which he had

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<sup>28</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 197]

already wearied by 1944. Certainly these magazines themselves provided Gogarty and his family with a useful income, but he had no illusions about their artistic criteria, and resigned himself to publishing in such artistically mediocre journals:

Vogue has an article (much cut and edited into detached segments) of mine in the current issue. Even my title has been altered into something slangey to suit what they imagine is their readers' taste. American editors regard the American public as moronic. And they will soon be if the editors have their way.<sup>29</sup>

It is unsurprising that the contents of Gogarty's American books often unhappily reflect their origins as unrelated articles in different popular magazines. *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove* is likely Gogarty's least coherent book, mingling essays, memoirs, and stray short stories with no evident organisational principle; *A Week End in the Middle of the Week* also suffers from such disorder, but this is excusable in a posthumous collection. Gogarty fully recognised the lack of cohesion in the books he compiled from his periodical writings, and believed it to result from American book-buying preferences:

The book reviewed is only a miscellany of articles for which I have already been paid, all except three which are new stories. In America mixem gatherems sell better than in London, so Constable is not going to publish 'Mrs. Spendlove,' but another book of mine called 'Rolling Down the Lea.'<sup>30</sup>

The financial demands of commercial publication determined the shape and the scope of Gogarty's last six prose books. Nothing that he wrote in the United States equals his two most accomplished works from Ireland, *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*, although he continued to maintain his thematic focus upon the Ireland of the first sixty years of his life. What one observes in Gogarty's American works is a continual attempt to accommodate a determination to write memoirs of the inspiring and the accomplished

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<sup>29</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 84] [9 January 1944, to his daughter]

<sup>30</sup> Williams, [Ed.]. *Renvyle Letters*. [p. 181] [25 April 1948, to his wife]

within the restrictions of magazine formats, and his inability to find inspiring subjects in his American life.

The next sections of this chapter divide Gogarty's American writings into specific associations, or focus upon individual works. Sections II and III of this chapter will address issues raised by Gogarty's writings in America, and will illustrate them with certain excerpts from Gogarty's least unified collections, *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove*, *Intimations*, and *A Week End in the Middle of the Week*. Section II will address Gogarty's writings about America itself, and his representation of his own activities and friendships in the United States. It will demonstrate that Gogarty's self-depiction in memoir when recording American incidents is largely one of isolation, inability to associate, and the concomitant incapacity to elevate his spirit from mundane concerns. Section III assesses Gogarty's portraits of others whilst in the United States, and finds that they are entirely illustrative of his attempts to suggest a peculiarly inspiring quality to his subjects. Sections IV, V, and VI are addressed to the individual volumes, *Rolling Down the Lea*, *It Isn't This Time of Year At All!* and *Start From Somewhere Else*, respectively.

## II: 'AT THE MERCY OF EVERY RETARDED SON OF A BITCH': GOGARTY'S USA

In the United States Gogarty's work remained highly self-presentational, and continued his advocacy of the 'grammar of greatness' by exemplification of his friends, illustrated by incident from his earlier life. Yet when writing in Dublin, Gogarty had largely kept to his locus: although he sought to recreate and to recommend the Dublin society of the past (and of the best therein) he wrote of roughly contemporary events and friendships, and described a milieu similar to that in which he remained living whilst writing the books. In the United States he made little artistic record of his life and friends in America, preferring to concentrate upon his previous life. Because Gogarty repeatedly returned to the Dublin of 1900-1939, one of the main differences separating his Irish and his American works is one of proximity, temporal and physical. When Gogarty was writing a book such as *Sackville Street*, he interacted with numerous individuals in the book, and knew that they would read what he wrote—or would at least hear what he had written from someone who had read the book. There is almost no comparable immediacy in Gogarty's American writings. Although he appears, biographically, to have made significant and lasting friendships in the United States, Gogarty records very few of these American friendships in his prose. Moreover, as this thesis has suggested, Gogarty's frequent recourse to conversation, and to conversational asides in his informal narratives, tends to recreate the primary characteristics Gogarty valued in the Dublin of his memory—mutuality, spontaneity, and interaction. In Gogarty's American writings, by contrast, he writes of one's inability to establish communication, and the concomitant isolation of the individual. Gogarty only infrequently acknowledges that he is, in fact, no longer in Dublin, and in his writings he retreats, as he previously had, into an idealised

world of distinction, community, and transcendence. The themes, figures and, in certain instances, even the stories themselves, remain largely as Gogarty has already presented them before.

Factual descriptions of America, either in natural landscape or city portrait, are rare in Gogarty's writings. There is nothing in his American writings that compares with the evocative descriptions of the Irish landscape in *I Follow*. Yet what Gogarty did record testifies fully to his intense fascination with the sheer size and variety of the United States, as a physical entity. In America, as in Ireland, Gogarty was deeply interested in the suggestiveness of landscape to induce wonder and, as he flies over 'the vast, free American expanse,' he notes that he feels 'like a God of old.'<sup>31</sup> In America, however, it is not the natural world alone that inspires him, for he is also 'spellbound' by the manmade engineering marvels that had no Irish equivalent. These too transport him from himself, and in his late essay 'I Regard America,' he lists the 'magic towers' of Manhattan as being as much 'an expression of the country's spirit' as the canyons and mountains of the American West:

Color is an expression of the country's spirit. There is color in Colorado, in the Grand Canyon, and in the little canyon which I visited at Palo Duro near Amarillo: color on the Rockies and even in the evening sky of Manhattan. When I see the moon hung low between the magic towers of the city, I am spellbound.<sup>32</sup>

In this passage there are two connections with Gogarty's earliest prose: his unabated fascination with the spirit of a country, and the provision of authorial testimony of wonder through his eyes, as he experienced it personally. As a description of the natural world in America, this passage is exceptionally weak, for he identifies not one colour in America, nor does he distinguish the colours of a Texas canyon from those of a Colorado

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<sup>31</sup> 'High Above Ohio.' Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [pp. 93-94]

<sup>32</sup> OSJG. *A Week-End in the Middle of the Week*. [p. 21]

mountain range. Yet his purpose here transcends the description of the apprehensible to suggest the variety of natural and manmade sights in America that conduce to wonder in a suggestive mind. Again, as he does repeatedly in his Irish and British prose, Gogarty leaves the specific details of his reveries aside, and writes in advocacy of the susceptibility to wonder, and to those external and interpersonal associations that promote an enlargement of perception whereby one may see in landscape ‘the country’s spirit.’

Despite Gogarty’s capability to become enthralled by contemplation of America’s landscapes, his depictions of American society, and of the possibility of forming friendships in it, are markedly different to anything Gogarty wrote about Ireland. Throughout Gogarty’s writings in the British Isles he praises the possibilities of friendships, particularly with the distinguished or the colourful, to alleviate tedium and to give one an enlarged glimpse of reality. In Gogarty’s America, individuals are isolated, conversation is difficult, and noise is overwhelming and incessant.

In his 1950 collection *Intimations*, Gogarty groups six essays under the rubric ‘U.S.A.’ This section offers an intriguing example of the uncharacteristically dour nature of Gogarty’s record of his experiences in the United States. The first essay, ‘Noise,’ is set in the city that was now his home but, whatever New York’s capacities for engaging his fancy, Gogarty compares its sounds—unfavourably—to Hell:

Suddenly the most appalling shrieks and wailings rent the air. I thought I had heard all the noises. I thought I had achieved the bliss of tone deafness when this appalling agony of sound wailed near. No human torture could produce that audible despair, I knew. What are they torturing? And is it escaping in this direction more agonised and anguished than all the unacclimatized souls in Hell?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 146]

Despite being an attempt to obtain humour by exaggeration, this is immediately notable as an unprecedentedly grim humour for Gogarty, who usually tends towards the amusement arising from character, association, and incongruity. The only such amusement Gogarty finds in 'Noise' is in the observation that sirens similar to those that derange him also adorn the official automobile of the Mayor, who lately promoted an anti-noise campaign in the city.

That noise and disruption were indissociable from Gogarty's conception of New York is suggested by several pieces he wrote, all lamenting the noise endemic to his new home. Gogarty's detestation of noise in America, however, has an important application to his portrait of society and friendships, for it was not restricted to the occasional jackhammers and car-horns of the city. Revealingly, Gogarty's condemnation of noise excoriates particularly those disruptive noises that intrude upon discussion. He expresses his scorn especially for those machines that interrupt the conversation in his favourite social centre, pubs: Ben Lucian Berman compared the intensity of Gogarty's hatred for such jukeboxes and television sets to 'that he reserved for his Irish political enemies.'<sup>34</sup> Such hatred is evident in a poignant anecdote related by one of Gogarty's friends from America:

There were five or six of us sitting in a booth and Gogarty was telling many of his wonderful stories, and we were about to move off, but before we did so he said "Now I want to tell you this[,] a delightful story." So he proceeded to tell this story and when he was about to come to the point of the story a young man who was sitting by the bar got up off the stool went over placed a coin in the juke box, and all hell broke loose. The expression on Gogarty's face changed, and became very sad, a combination of sadness and anger, he said.

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<sup>34</sup> OStJG, [Ben Lucian Berman, Intro.]. *Week End*. [p. 7]



“Oh dear God in heaven, that I should find myself thousands of miles from home, at the mercy of every retarded son of a bitch, who has a nickel to drop in that bloody illuminated coalscuttle.”<sup>35</sup>

This incident itself, or one like it, must also lie behind his negligible poem, ‘Supersonic?’:

Life would be quite a tonic  
If in the pubs were found  
Juke boxes supersonic,  
Past the barrier of sound;  
Then you, instead of noises  
Of blare and blare and squawk,  
With unraised, pleasant voices,  
Could hear each other talk.<sup>36</sup>

Reading ‘Noise’ in the light of these instances of disrupted conversation in bars raises the story from a minor anecdote about the cacophony of New York City to a more telling exemplification of Gogarty’s view of life in the United States: in ‘Noise’ too conversation and the establishment of interrelations are rendered impossible. Gogarty is pursued ‘up and down the city of New York’ by noise, then seeks refuge in his old haunt for conviviality, a pub, but is vanquished there too: ‘Faintly I beckoned a waiter. It was useless to hail him. No one could hear amid the din.’<sup>37</sup> ‘Noise’ thus attracts our notice because of its presentation of an isolated Gogarty, unable both to establish a conversation with anyone, and incapable of transcending the irritations of the world about him.

Nowhere in his writings about America does Gogarty encounter the interpersonal milieu he described in Dublin. Gogarty’s America is not conversational. His attempt to escape from noise into a Manhattan bar offers no sanctuary, for he cannot be heard therein. But the succeeding stories in ‘USA’ also echo this concern with one’s inability to

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<sup>35</sup> O’Connor. *The Times I’ve Seen*. [p. 342]

<sup>36</sup> Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems & Plays*. [p. 293]

<sup>37</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 147]

establish communication in America, and one's resultant inability to rise above dispiriting circumstances. 'Don't Go Mad in Manhattan' records a brief incident in which a friend summons Gogarty to assist with her cook, Elka, who has lost her mind and locked herself in her bedroom. The only theme 'Don't Go Mad in Manhattan' possesses is that of failed communication, and it is suffused with such imagery: Gogarty is summoned to the crisis by a telephone call that explains nothing—'Are you dressed? Then come round at once. It is urgent. I will tell you all when you arrive'<sup>38</sup>; Elka the madwoman believes that a woman is screaming, unheard by anyone save Elka herself; Gogarty concedes 'the futility of discussing the theme of madness'<sup>39</sup>; Gogarty and his friend summon civic assistance, but for the 'hour and a half' they wait they speak only 'occasionally in whispers...the two of us and a sober cop and an insane cook sat and wore out the hours of the early morning'<sup>40</sup>; and in the end Gogarty must essentially lie to convince the cook to leave with the emergency attendants—'I would tell Elka when the wagon came for her that she was going where she might help the woman in childbirth. Cryptically and cynically true.'<sup>41</sup> To check Elka from questioning or protesting against her removal Gogarty aborts a discussion, an exceptionally rare event in his writings. Although the human pity of 'Don't Go Mad in Manhattan' renders conversation and mutuality indisputably unattractive, one notes that the isolated and laconic timbre of the story is almost unexampled in Gogarty's entire career. The effect is particularly heightened when read directly after 'Noise,' just as they are ordered in *Intimations*. Of course, this evocation of a madness that is terrifying recollects the amusingly benign

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<sup>38</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 152]

<sup>39</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 152]

<sup>40</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 154]

<sup>41</sup> OStJG. *Intimations*. [p. 154]

idiosyncrasies of the 'touched' Endymion in *Sackville Street*. In *Sackville Street*, however, Endymion's symbolic repudiation of the disordered de Valeran Ireland was inspired topsy-turvy that amused Gogarty, whereas Elka's madness is merely madness, isolating her and disheartening her friends. Yet in the symbolism of conversation in 'Don't Go Mad in Manhattan' Elka, in her madness, is the only person who has established interpersonal contact, for she, and she alone, can hear the imaginary woman crying out.

The third story in 'USA,' 'Tea With Queen Anne,' is negligible. While much less harrying of Gogarty than its two predecessors, it nonetheless again recounts a conversation depressing instead of elevating. Gogarty indulges hopes for this discussion for, as he notes, 'My hostess had great personality.'<sup>42</sup> Yet their conversation disintegrates into misstatements and misunderstandings that are socially awkward, most notably when Gogarty refers to a muslin tea bag as 'lingerie' in a joke that falters: 'When I called these little teabags lingerie, I was attempting a little joke, a little joke, nothing more. I assure you, nothing more.'<sup>43</sup> In the end, Gogarty flees: 'I was out, only just in time!'<sup>44</sup> The story itself is a trifling anecdote, although it has the virtue of recreating the descriptive style of some of Gogarty's more amusing 'interior monologues' from *Sackville Street*, wherein the reader is allowed not only to follow a conversation, but is also given Gogarty's commentary about how he interprets the conversation as it progresses. Yet 'Tea with Queen Anne' again depicts Gogarty in a situation in which conversation and interaction fail. The inability to escape cares, and the corollary inability to communicate without misunderstanding, are the dominant images of Gogarty's writing about America.

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<sup>42</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 156]

<sup>43</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 158]

<sup>44</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 160]

These three works are among Gogarty's least important stories, yet they represent a significant portion of his self-depictions in America, and they combine to present a thematic portrait of a deeply isolated and unhappy man. Not even in his attacks upon the worst manifestations of de Valera's era does Gogarty present so grim and lonely a portrait of himself in Dublin. Whether or not this bleakness is an accurate reflection of Gogarty's American life is essentially irrelevant; what is important for the thematic elements in Gogarty's work is that he presents himself in a context in which he is disappointed, and cannot establish that contact with others that he has advocated and exemplified throughout his literary work.

One of Gogarty's American stories, however, offers an unusual incorporation of Gogarty's penchant for wonder into an anecdote about Vermont, and reveals him in a harmonious and happy relationship with America. The story 'He Found The Spring' (first published in *To-Morrow Magazine*, and later collected in *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove*), is one of his more minor efforts. Gogarty describes the attempts of an old diviner to locate the source of a spring in Vermont. As a reader expects from Gogarty's earlier writings, Gogarty rigorously maintains the textual focus upon the diviner. The events of the anecdote—the hiring of the diviner, and the hunt for a new water source—are essentially rural banalities; the importance of the rural setting, however, is in its proof of the potentiality of a wonder-provoking experience even in the least promising conditions.

What fascinates Gogarty is the apparent magic the elderly diviner performs to solve a practical problem. Here yet again Gogarty relishes the encounter with another that leads to an inspiring recognition of transcendent possibility. He particularly values these

moments when they are supplied by those one would not suspect of enlarging one's experience of life—Endymion instead of Mahaffy, a rural diviner instead of Yeats. Here, Gogarty relishes the instance when an apparent outsider encounters an established system: and Gogarty himself observes these events as an outsider for, as he notes, he was only a visitor in Vermont.<sup>45</sup>

Gogarty contrives the story so that he and the diviner approach the events that collocate them with a number of symbolic associations. Both, as noted, are outsiders—the diviner must be summoned from elsewhere, and Gogarty is alien to both Vermont and the United States. Moreover, he notes that the diviner performs his task with the unassuming self-reliance of a surgeon; tellingly, Gogarty's initial analogy to place the diviner into a less mystical context is to relate his professionalism to precisely that profession Gogarty himself had sought to bring 'back to Phoebus,' medicine. 'He seemed as assured as a surgeon who is driving to an operation with a mind free from anxiety because of self-confidence and a mastery of his craft.'<sup>46</sup> Far from attempting to demystify the diviner, however, Gogarty accompanies him precisely because he wants to see something inexplicable transpire:

I knew the disapproval with which such matters as the mild magic of water-finding were dismissed by 'scientists,' jealous because there were things in heaven and earth not dreamt of in their philosophy. I wanted to see something done that admitted of no explanation. I wanted badly to see something that would burst up the scientific and mechanical theories to which all the wonder and magic of the world have been reduced in this factual age of ours. I wanted the wonder and the mystery of the time when all the world was young, restored.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 'For my part, and I was only a visitor...' OStJG. *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove*. New York: Creative Age. 1948. [p. 95]

<sup>46</sup> OStJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 97]

<sup>47</sup> OStJG. *Spendlove*. [pp. 96-97]

This clearly ties in, yet again, with Gogarty's persistent defence of wonderment as secondary reality accessible through the interaction of interesting people, and distinctly preferable to the routine of modernity, epitomised here by the rigid explanations of 'this factual age.'

As the diviner works, discovering not merely the source of water but also discerning its depth, Gogarty attempts to summon a comparably divinatory spirit in himself, so that he too may try the divining rod. Gogarty's attempt at divination is, of course, a symbolic convergence of the two men. Crucially, however, Gogarty fails:

'After all,' I said to myself, 'you are perhaps the one person left who, though trained as a scientist, does not believe in science as an explanation of a way of life.' Not a thing happened either to me or to the wand. Everyone tried. No results. In a way I was glad. I would hate to see the gift made common property.<sup>48</sup>

Gogarty's intention here is to experience something that is inexplicable, that he himself cannot do, and which implies an unexpected, timeless unity between an individual and his surroundings: 'And here was this gift, this sympathy with external Nature residing, as a remnant only, in a little unsophisticated man over seventy years of age—this understanding from the paradisaical time!'<sup>49</sup> Remembering his approach towards rediscovering Patrick in the landscape of Ireland itself, Gogarty's reader is unsurprised to note that he attempts to find water in the land by casting his thought 'back to the days when men and gods mixed and walked the earth.'<sup>50</sup> Were Gogarty able to accomplish the feat, the magic would diminish, and it is for this reason that he would 'hate to see the gift made common property.' In a sense, this little anecdote echoes much of Gogarty's writing, for it reveals Gogarty's fascination when encountering someone who can do

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<sup>48</sup> OSTJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 100]

<sup>49</sup> OSTJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 99]

<sup>50</sup> OSTJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 100]

what he cannot, and with whom his interaction has produced a sensation of transcendent association with an achronological spiritual reality. Gogarty writes of that experience to share his wonder, knowing that it will not vulgarise the initial accomplishment. Just as Gogarty's Irish writings popularise the influence of those who reveal to us 'something better than ourselves' without diminishing the accomplishments of those individuals, so Gogarty seeks to recreate the diviner's achievement without suggesting that he, or his readers, could possibly attain success in similar endeavours.

### *III: 'HOW DO I JUDGE A MAN?': INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITURE IN THE U.S.A.*

Although 'He Found the Spring' clearly integrates itself well into the generality of Gogarty's literary concerns, it is decidedly atypical of Gogarty's American writings, for it takes place in the United States. In fact, the foremost characteristic of Gogarty's American writings is their continued reliance upon Irish companions and experiences. There are many contributory reasons why Gogarty maintained this reliance into his American work: it may reflect the greater marketability of his Irish friends to the periodicals by which he made his living; or perhaps it reveals an aging man's tendency to think more of the past than of the present; it must also provide some evidence that Gogarty's life in the United States was less satisfactory to him than what he recalled from his years in Dublin. Of course, even in Dublin Gogarty often retreated intellectually into the Dublin of his youth and early maturity, so one need not read too great a poignancy in

his continuation into New York City of this recollective escape. Yet Gogarty's most prominent use of Irish memories in his American writings was for portraits of his friends: none of Gogarty's American friends was as impressive—to him or the world—as were his Irish friends and, as he repeatedly praised them as influences, it is convincing that part of Gogarty's continued excavation of Dublin subject matter was canny recourse to the foremost examples of greatness in his experience. He continued to mine his richest seam.

The new stylistic demands of periodical composition in America tended to draw Gogarty away from the conversational and juxtapositional social portraiture he attempted in his earlier books, and toward short character studies of illustrious individuals. Specifically, the acceptable length of a magazine article argued against extensive, multi-character portraiture, and the publishers (judging by what Gogarty was able to get published) most commonly accepted individualised records of his distinguished friends. Although the ever-open market for articles about figures such as Joyce and Yeats led to an anecdotal repetition that is endemic to Gogarty's American essays, Gogarty also wrote numerous testimonial essays to less prominent friends, such as 'William Spickers, M.D.'<sup>51</sup> and 'A Few with Ian.'<sup>52</sup>

Because it was Gogarty's fate to outlive most of his close friends, he had the opportunity to compose intimate character portraits that encompassed the whole of his subject's life. Predictably, however, Gogarty continued to focus his literary attentions upon those aspects of his subjects' lives that encapsulated his experience of their compelling personalities. An unusual example of this is his essay 'George Moore's Ultimate Joke,' in which Gogarty observes that Moore turned even his own funeral into

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<sup>51</sup> In: *OSTJG. Week End.*

<sup>52</sup> In: Trevor Evans, [Ed.]. *The Great Bohunkus (Tributes to Ian Mackay)*. London: W. H. Allen. 1953. [pp. 139-141]



an embarrassingly inappropriate joke: ‘...I had a shrewd idea that the principal intended [the funeral], as he had intended so many actions of his life, to be an embarrassing jest.’<sup>53</sup>

Gogarty’s unusual focus here upon Moore after his death is explicable by reference to Gogarty’s observation that the funeral was in keeping with the tenor of Moore’s life. It is the integrity of the gesture that Gogarty applauds more than the actual idea of making one’s own obsequies ludicrous. Gogarty had a relish for individualised gestures of this sort, as his own bestowal of swans on the Liffey, or his reintroduction of snakes to Ireland by importing foreign snakes, attest. For Gogarty, Moore’s funeral was worthy of remembrance because it appositely captured the spirit of the man, George Moore, and thereby created an appreciable connection between the past and the present, linking the mourners and the decedent.

Moore’s tendency to joke about everything offers a somewhat distorted example of Gogarty’s tributary depiction, for Moore’s humour inspired Gogarty to joke incessantly about Moore as well. More indicative of Gogarty’s individual portraits in America is his essay ‘James Stephens,’ originally intended for a collection to be titled *Nine Worthies* but, as this anthology never appeared, published only in the James Stephens commemorative issue (March, 1961) of the ‘Colby Library Quarterly.’ The essay wisely makes no claim to factual exactitude, as the details of Stephens’ biography were so confusing and obscure that even Stephens did not know his own date of birth. Yet Gogarty does not even attempt to guess at factual elements of Stephens’ life. Instead, he outlines an unabashedly subjective view of Stephens, as being more appropriate to so

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<sup>53</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 18]

genial a man that 'you had to be careful that the greatness of your companion [Stephens] did not escape you so natural and easy came the talk.'<sup>54</sup>

As a source of biographical information about Stephens, the essay could hardly be worse; yet Gogarty's depiction offers extraordinary testimony both to Gogarty's love of Stephens, and to the transformative impact that his personality had upon Gogarty. It also perfectly exemplifies the beliefs in greatness, friendship, and inspiring example that this thesis demonstrates Gogarty sought to transmit from his friends to his readers:

He neighbors nearer to an immortal; and I do not mean this figuratively...It may sound ridiculous in this age of pedestrianism and science to take such a view of any inhabitant of this globe of ours; but science is veering round to the miraculous, and I am far ahead of science when it comes to a belief in that...<sup>55</sup>

His body sways with song. All around him is transformed. So are his hearers. They have been swept away from worldly cares, and all that is of the earth earthy. Their souls begin to soar and sing with his; and they have entered a region where all is understandable and where their wits are sharpened and multiplied. Their surroundings vanish and they are in a green hill under the earth in a land of enchantment. I have been there and I know it...<sup>56</sup>

I would give him credit for a fortitude that is superhuman, for his power of projecting away from himself what would be tragedy for mortal men. But he is not of this earth. He is nearer to what we call Nature than any poet who ever lived...<sup>57</sup>

In these passages are precisely those elements of 'the grammar of greatness' to which Gogarty had largely devoted his writings since *Sackville Street*. The foremost element of Gogarty's Stephens is the transformative effect he exerts on those around him. In Stephens' proximity, one is communicated from daily difficulties and disappointments ('they have been swept away from worldly cares'), and uplifted to an intellectual and spiritual experience that cannot be diminished by time—in Gogarty's phrase, 'a land of

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<sup>54</sup> OSJG. 'James Stephens' in 'Colby Library Quarterly.' Waterville, Maine: Colby College. March, 1961. [p. 205]

<sup>55</sup> OSJG. 'James Stephens.' [p. 207]

<sup>56</sup> OSJG. 'James Stephens.' [p. 208]

<sup>57</sup> OSJG. 'James Stephens.' [p. 208]

enchantment.’ Moreover, he suggests that this perceptual alteration that Stephens’ example provokes is a connection to timeless qualities of the spirit for, as Gogarty asserts, Stephens is nearly ‘immortal.’ Although the reader may well respond to this enchanted depiction of an immortal Stephens—‘not of this earth’—with caution, Gogarty openly counters that ‘I do not mean this figuratively,’ and explicitly positions the miraculous against the explicable. This is unpersuasive as a depiction of Stephens, yet it is inextricably associated with the theme that Gogarty had been advancing for decades—the capacity of select individuals to provoke in others a reverie that emancipates the other from everyday concerns and provides an experience of timeless, and unaging, spiritual values.

Of course, Gogarty did not profile exclusively his Irish friends. Written of an American friend, ‘My Friend Flaherty’ is a good example of Gogarty’s remarkable ability to offer few real details about the subjects of his character studies, and yet to furnish a personal portrait by describing the propensity of his subject to enthuse Gogarty. The only practical knowledge of Flaherty that Gogarty provides the reader is his description of ‘a big, expansive man with a face florid with enthusiasm and eyes clear as the Northern Ice.’<sup>58</sup> Yet Gogarty fills the essay with his impressions of Flaherty, many of which echo Gogarty’s previous descriptions of Gogarty’s other exemplars, such as Talbot Clifton, Augustus John, and Æ. He suggests that Flaherty possesses ‘absolute faith in the nature and the fate of man, a belief that there is a hero hidden in all men, and that when we are all in the same boat the hero will steer it,’ and has need ‘of great scenes where man is

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<sup>58</sup> OSUJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 228]

elemental, and unspoiled by sophistication and machinery.’<sup>59</sup> Here again is Gogarty’s testimony about the highly accomplished, depicting the reliance of ‘we...all’ on ‘the hero.’

Gogarty revealingly does not begin the essay by mentioning Flaherty at all, but instead articulates his entirely subjective criterion for assessing an individual, ‘How do I judge a man? By the way I feel when I am leaving him. Do I come away feeling like a roebuck with antlers high, a “stag of ten”; or do I feel as if I had given him a pint of my blood?’<sup>60</sup> This is of signal importance throughout Gogarty’s work, for it suggests yet again that Gogarty’s estimation of another lies in that impression by which the other communicates a feeling of elevation or depression to Gogarty. With Flaherty too Gogarty notes, as he does so often through his work, that the great offer an exceptional opportunity to rise beyond oneself (Flaherty’s strength lies in ‘his power of making you forget the trivial things in life and look only at the elemental things that build up the dignity of man’<sup>61</sup>), and observes that ‘To the regions where his mind dwells few of us can commute, so the best we can do is take care that we do not miss him when he comes to town.’<sup>62</sup> This is almost precisely the same superhuman inspiration and example he claimed to find, in *Sackville Street*, in Talbot Clifton; it is also the warning Gogarty issued about interacting with Stephens: ‘you had to be careful that the greatness of your companion did not escape you.’

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<sup>59</sup> OSJG. *Spendlove*. [both p. 228]

<sup>60</sup> OSJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 227]

<sup>61</sup> OSJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 231]

<sup>62</sup> OSJG. *Spendlove*. [p. 232]

#### IV: 'NO MEAN CITY': RETURNING TO DUBLIN IN *ROLLING DOWN THE LEA*

Gogarty's 1949 work, *Rolling Down the Lea*, is one of his most significant self-depictions, for it is the only full-length book of Gogarty's American period in which Gogarty returns to Dublin physically. It has an added importance for this study, for it is the one portrait of Ireland he offers in which the individuals whom he has praised as embodying the 'grammar of greatness' are all dead, and he therefore considers the permanence or impermanence of an influence he has portrayed as connecting one to the timeless.

*Rolling* is particularly reminiscent of *Sackville Street*, in that it recaptures *Sackville Street*'s conversational evocation of Dublin (and Irish) life, whilst retaining Gogarty's general narrative persona of the informed, garrulous inside observer. He resurrects many of the themes of his earlier works, a perhaps inevitable reaction to returning to the city in which he had grown and lived for nearly sixty years, and to which he had devoted his literary energies for much of the intervening decade. Unsurprisingly, *Rolling* is an unabashedly nostalgic look at Dublin: 'We talked of old times and of old friends: what Irishman does not love to muster them in his talk?'<sup>63</sup>

What distinguishes *Rolling* from others of Gogarty's retrospective works, however, is the curious interaction within the narrative of presence and separation. Whilst abroad, Gogarty writes anecdotes of Dublin as though he and his reader were there; whilst in Dublin, early in his literary career, he wrote of the declining present, and retreated to the preferable companionship of his earlier years; yet in *Rolling*, Gogarty writes as a narrator in Dublin, of Dublin, as a native, but as one who cannot ignore the significant changes that transpired in his absence.

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<sup>63</sup> OSTJG. *Rolling Down The Lea*. London: Constable. 1950. [Sphere reprint 1985] [p. 56]

Gogarty's conception of *Sackville Street* depicting Dublin 'as it is every day' reappears in *Rolling* as a more general focus upon the nation of Ireland. Nevertheless, his phraseology in describing the hero of *Rolling* is strikingly reminiscent of his attribution of the heroic role to Dublin in *Sackville Street*, as well as of his description of landscape and *genius loci* in *Patrick*:

By this time it should be pretty obvious who is the hero of this narrative. It is certainly not the writer. Who then? The country is the hero, the landscape if you like to call it that, or the *genius loci*, the spirit of the place, the pull of the earth, that nucleus smasher which can transmute anything.<sup>64</sup>

Here again Gogarty articulates his concern with the inexpressible nature of a place, his belief that location has a spiritual character, and his refusal to centralise himself in his narratives, preferring to depict an individual, even himself, as a participant in his broader native community.

*Rolling* is best understood not as a Gogartian recollection of a visit, but as a personalised reconsideration of what precisely 'the spirit of the place' will be after those who exemplified greatness for him have all died. Consequently, after *I Follow*, *Rolling* is Gogarty's work most concerned with land, landscape, location, and the influence of surroundings upon the native community. Gogarty returns to an Ireland that he recognises, but which has altered much since his departure. Characteristically, Gogarty maintains his usual preference for the stateliness of the past, as opposed to the architectural mercantilism of the present. Despite continuing to believe that the Dublin he encounters is 'one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with its five squares, its domes and the Palladian architecture of its public edifices,'<sup>65</sup> he also notes with dismay that 'its principal street is vulgar and bizarre, with plaster palaces and neon lights that make the

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<sup>64</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 126]

<sup>65</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 4]

day tawdry and the night hideous.’<sup>66</sup> (This street—O’Connell or Sackville Street—has a symbolic resonance for Gogarty, as it epitomised the Dublin he loved in his first exploration of Dublin, *Sackville Street*). Yet Gogarty’s concern in *Rolling* is to provide more than mere atmospheric travel description of how Dublin looks after the war years. Instead, because Gogarty here seeks to understand what the future of Dublin’s spirit will be without his exemplars, he repeatedly stresses that the ignobility of modern Irish civic planning is not just an architectural degradation of beautiful old buildings, but is an attack against the spirit of the people.

This concern of Gogarty’s for civic cleanliness and beauty has not been adequately acknowledged, perhaps because it can appear as a political interest tangential to his literary work. Yet civic hygiene and decorum are at the heart of Gogarty’s artistic concerns, for they are logical extensions of his incessant artistic investigation of the importance of surrounding upon mentality, of the need for ennobling example, and of the self as a part of society. Just as he spends most of his literary career attempting to provide his readers with glimpses of the distinguished social community he inhabited, so he regularly promotes the beneficent spiritual influence of admirable physical surroundings.

Gogarty’s most explicit attack upon civic negligence appeared in his first play, *Blight*, which is set in Dublin’s slums. By depicting the individual pain that the civic acceptance of slums tolerates, *Blight* articulates Gogarty’s protest in terms remarkably similar to those he would use thirty years later in *Rolling*:

Until the citizens realise that their children should be brought up in the most beautiful and favourable surroundings the city can afford, and not in the most squalid, until this floundering Moloch of a Government realise that they must spend more money on

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<sup>66</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 9]

education than on police, this city will continue to be a breeding-ground of disease, vice, hypocrisy and discontent.<sup>67</sup>

Of *Blight* too it is important to note—particularly as Gogarty consistently praises the elite and the accomplished, and derives humour from admitting the accusation of being either a snob or a flunkey—that he does not attack the poor, and in fact writes monologues that decisively distinguish the poor from the conditions in which poverty compels them to live:

With noise, misery and vermin rest is impossible, not to talk of sleep. Man, woman and child must live, sleep, dress, cook and eat and wash body and clothes in this wan place. Why don't you ask us why we are huddled here together without distinction of sexes? No, ye don't! That would raise one of these questions about capital and labour that touch upon vested interest and are so embarrassing. Ye prefer the cheap and easy cant about drink. Why do we drink? Because we want to sleep, because it's cheaper than chloroform! Who could stand this living hell without drink?...Drink doesn't keep us poor; but poverty makes us drink.<sup>68</sup>

The literary importance of Gogarty's interest in clean and dignified surroundings is that it reveals the continuity of his belief that the atmosphere of a place influences the individual, and that neglect of a city is as great an assault upon the subjective civic spirit as it is an act of political irresponsibility, if not malfeasance. In *Blight*, as we see, Gogarty takes the unusually compassionate stance that the poor are not victims of their own squalor or indiscipline, but that squalor itself provokes a destructive, perpetuating mentality of hopelessness. In *Rolling*, Gogarty makes perfectly—and repeatedly—clear his assertion that the gravest effect of ignoble architecture is upon the mentality of those who live in its proximity:

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<sup>67</sup> Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems and Plays*. [p. 544]

<sup>68</sup> Jeffares, [Ed.]. *Poems and Plays*. [pp. 514-515]



Let me explain. Those born in slums have a slum outlook. They have been deprived of beauty. They have become tolerant of dirt...They permit the slum-minded when in office to spread slumdom over everything that is fine and fair, mental and physical.<sup>69</sup>

[When the Loop Line Bridge was built] they knew how deep and subtle was the damage that could be done for generations to the citizens if they were to be deprived of the beauty of their expanding river, the romance of its masts and hulls lying still in the flat light. They say that if an infant, in a foundling hospital, for instance, be left for months with a cover daily over its cot, it can never be brought up to the mental standards of the child that has been permitted to gaze about it, even though there be little comprehension in its gaze. The harm that William Martin Murphy and his gang of money-changers did to the Dubliners in depriving them forever of the view to the east can never be assessed because it has been done, and with it the power of appreciation and wonder has become atrophied...What happened to the Liffey then is happening to the principal street of the city now; and there are none to know the enormity of the crime...Vulgarity is a form of crime because it overwhelms beauty, the harbinger of a Heaven which is always open.<sup>70</sup>

In Gogarty's understanding, the creation of ugly architecture is both a civic failing and a betrayal of the *genius loci* of the city.

Although Gogarty's interest in the interaction of the civic with the individual is longstanding, it is highly prominent in *Rolling* because Gogarty is re-encountering his native city after almost a decade abroad. The Dublin about which he wrote in the United States was a creation of his recollection and opinion, so that his writing was itself engaged in a complex relationship of one man inter-influencing his native society—it forms him, and his recollections reproduce it. Upon his return, despite regretting the deaths of friends, Gogarty notes the changes in Dublin, and his objections are notably consistent with what he has written all his professional literary life. As before, Gogarty maintains that Ireland has a special atmosphere betrayed by ignorance, commonality, and de Valera, and that the dignity of accomplished individuals is wasted upon a nation that refuses to enter into community with heroes. He several times makes the point that

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<sup>69</sup> OSTJG. *Rolling*. [p. 21]

<sup>70</sup> OSTJG. *Rolling*. [pp. 40-41]

Ireland will continue to stagnate whilst it drives its best away, and refuses to recognise them when they are dead. In Ireland there is no such spirit of preservation and interaction with the great figures of the past, as Gogarty notes in his late essay, ‘The Big House at Coole’:

Not one of the Seven Woods remains, woods where on a tree you could find the initials G.B.S. or W.B.Y. or J.M.S.; but the tree may now be on a railway wagon going to supply the demand for building material, though it makes one wonder what can be worth building in a land where there is no reverence for great times and great men.<sup>71</sup>

Now, however, Gogarty has in his experience a positive example by which to compare Ireland—the United States:

In the United States the value of monuments and ancient landmarks in the march of the nation is recognised. They are cherished. Homes of great men are known and preserved. Records of the nation’s great are collected. Their statues stand. The *genius loci* is honoured so that its spirit may inform the people and act as their growing inspiration through the centuries.<sup>72</sup>

Gogarty’s point here is not only that these individuals deserve recognition, but that the great have, by their achievements, become part of the *genius loci* that surrounds and influences the mentality of the city, or the nation. Where properly recognised, their distinction becomes a permanent inspiration from the past to interact with, and inspire, the individuals and society of the present. To recognise these contributions by preserving sites or records associated with such individuals is itself a contribution to the country, by making the spirit of the country tangible; and this, in a sense, is precisely the kind of present interaction with the spirit of the past that Gogarty sought between Ireland and St. Patrick in *I Follow*. Gogarty here also, much more subtly, offers an implicit defence of his own literary productions, as most of his writings are records of precisely the types of individuals who compose ‘the nation’s great’ for the Ireland of his lifetime. Gogarty

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<sup>71</sup> OSJG. *Week-End*. [p. 142]

<sup>72</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [pp. 46-47]

seeks to preserve their example in his writings, just as the statues and monuments of America promote the models provided to that nation by their great figures.

Of course, Gogarty's frequent anecdotes about figures such as Yeats, Griffith, Collins, Æ, Mahaffy, and Moore are a form of self-promotion. Nonetheless, Gogarty is undeviatingly consistent in maintaining that he records the activities of the great to promote them to those who cannot experience their greatness at first hand. There is no reason to disbelieve this claim, and Gogarty nowhere claims disinterestedness in the reputations of his friends. In *Rolling*, however, he finds that the inability to recognise greatness has become not merely a political symptom of de Valeran influence, but a collective, lethargic, Irish amnesia. In the Ireland to which Gogarty returns, even those who are involved in cultural matters, and who knew Gogarty's heroes personally, disappoint:

When I asked [Lennox Robinson] when Yeats's remains were to be brought back from Cap Martin to Sligo, as he had willed, Lennox waived the question with, 'I don't see why anything should be "brought back."' Yet the French Government offered a battle-ship to carry the remains. That was an honour; and an acknowledgement of what the French thought of Yeats. More than his own countrymen, it seemed. Are we to make an exhibition of our boorishness and betray our inability to appreciate great art by not accepting this fine and generous offer of the French Government?<sup>73</sup>

Whereas Gogarty had previously written bitterly, and provokingly, about the Irish ignorance of the very people who should most inspire them, only in *Rolling* does he become dejected about the prospects for reversing this tendency. It is not in an angry outburst at de Valera, but in a reflective passage about the greatness of Irish artists, that

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<sup>73</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 72]

Gogarty refers to his hometown as, ‘Dublin, that stick of a rocket which remains on the ground while its stars shoot off to light the darkness and die enskied.’<sup>74</sup>

Death and absence are recurrent themes in *Rolling*, and Gogarty skilfully aligns mention of his own absence from Dublin with the people who have died whilst he was away. The death of his friend James Montgomery exemplifies this structure:

When I came to [mention] Jimmy Montgomery, the Master of the Dolphin was silent. That was enough. I knew that my old friend Jimmy Montgomery, the Film Censor, had passed away. In a moment Jack Nugent [proprietor of the Dolphin pub] changed from his solemnity and smiled.

‘Did you hear this one?’ he asked. ‘The boys went to see Jimmy as he lay dying. “How are you Jimmy?” they said. “Just hovering between wife and death,” said Jimmy with a smile.’

What better epitaph could a man have than a moment’s solemnity, and then a laugh?<sup>75</sup>

One here notes not only Gogarty’s artistic echo of his own absence from Dublin with the death of his friend, but also the well-structured manner in which Gogarty yet again insists upon the communality and importance of conversation and interaction. He hears of the death in a pub, which place, as we have seen, is often Gogarty’s locus of social interaction, and with it the possibility of a discussion that uplifts. The publican, however, informs Gogarty of his friend’s death by keeping silent—which interestingly immediately signals death to Gogarty—and also briefly symbolises the passing of Montgomery’s voice from their conversations. Gogarty’s deftness in employing this symbolism of silence and death prevents the analogy from becoming mawkish, but it also reinforces the more serious association between vitality and conversation that Gogarty illustrates by breaking the silence with a joke from the decedent. This handling of death is reminiscent

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<sup>74</sup> OSTJG. *Rolling*. [p. 3]

<sup>75</sup> OSTJG. *Rolling*. [pp. 56-57]

of Gogarty's praise of Moore's funeral, where the humour of the dead man also distracts the mourners from their gloom.

Because Gogarty's persona in *Rolling* is that of himself as a returned native investigating places he remembers, he writes more directly about himself and his activities than is his usual wont. This has the consequence that his old friends appear much less frequently in *Rolling* than they do in his other works about Ireland. Gogarty's previous works have made a virtue—indeed, have centralised—Gogarty's friends and his memories of them, but *Rolling* depicts Gogarty in an Ireland where those he most admired are gone. Of course, Gogarty still fills his narrative with memories, but although he recalls numerous people in the text, they do not share the narrative attention with Gogarty to the degree that they almost overshadow him in more anecdotal and recollective works such as *Sackville Street*. Gogarty does not place himself in their prominent textual place, but instead makes Ireland itself his subject, comparing its past with its present.

*Rolling* follows Gogarty through a journey across Ireland, beginning with an extensive passage set in Dublin, and then accompanying him as he goes to Galway, and then to Connemara. The voyage is more than physical, for as Gogarty stresses 'You do not altogether leave Dublin by crossing the island to its western side, but you leave a great deal of bitterness and acrimony behind.'<sup>76</sup> Aside from offering a respite from the vituperation of Dublin, Gogarty's Connemara possesses, as nowhere else in Ireland, Irishness as a tangible quality, both as a natural expression of wildness and a felt presence in the lives of the people. Gogarty's interest again is in his assertion of the spirit of a place, and the qualities of inspiration that location can provide. What he finds in both his

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<sup>76</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 91]

insular solitude of Heather Island, and then in the small company he finds on the mainland of Renvyle, is a closer connection to the *genius loci* than he finds anywhere else in Ireland.

Connemara is for Gogarty unaffectedly natural, and he notes that ‘One thing that delights me is that no gardener ever came here. Whatever grows planted itself; and did well.’<sup>77</sup> (This not only affirms the native ability of the Irish landscape to produce its own beauty, but may also—in its reference to the needless gardeners—be a subtle disparagement of the Dublin city planners who imposed new structures upon already beautiful locations). Of course, Gogarty’s idea of a place having an ambient spirit is nowhere better supported than by this concept of unplanted and untended natural flora, which is the literal expression of the native soil in terms immediately apprehensible to humans. When he sets aside description of the considerable natural attractions of Connemara, Gogarty’s interest is in the sense of spiritual connection with the land, and the land’s history, that he and his collocutors sense in Connemara. Gogarty is fascinated by the fact that supernatural and mythological stories are still current in Connemara, and that he can hear them in local conversation. He suggests that the collocation of locality, oral legend, and wonder is peculiarly Gaelic, and that he finds it in Connemara—as he notes of a local legend, he is ‘encouraged by the story I had heard for the evidence it gave of its insistence on the supernatural. Nothing less will satisfy the Gael.’<sup>78</sup>

As he did in his pursuit of St. Patrick, Gogarty here not only credits the legends and mythologies of a place, but he directly equates the legends he hears in Connemara with history: ‘Neglect of our legends, which are primitive history, is to blame for our

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<sup>77</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 116]

<sup>78</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 125]

ignorance.’<sup>79</sup> This assertion of the historicity of Irish legend is exact equivalence, but he accepts modification of legend, much as he did in *I Follow*: ‘If you substitute one kind of fire for another and read “cannon” instead of “Christian fire,” the account of the cracked tower is not incredible.’<sup>80</sup> What interests Gogarty, however, is the continuity of legend as a living presence from the past; the equation of history and legend is secondary to the present ignorance which that history and legend could enlighten.

In *Rolling*’s symbolism, going to Connemara is a trip outside of time, to an earlier, more purely Irish, era. Indeed, for Gogarty, Ireland is a place where time itself is experienced at a different rate than elsewhere:

There are places on this earth where time seems to be speeded up and to pass more quickly than in others. One of these places is the city of New York, where the moon appears to take a week only to slide through all its phases. Other places there are; one of them is Ireland, where from crescent to full and to crescent again it takes a lunar month. Therefore life seems longer in Ireland than in America...<sup>81</sup>

We have previously seen this interest of Gogarty’s in local lore as providing a sense of continuity with the legendary Irish past that Gogarty hopes can re-invigorate contemporary Ireland. Gogarty repeatedly emphasises, sometimes humorously, the timeless qualities of Connemara that free the spirit of chronological restrictions:

A landscape drenched after rain spread to the right and left. I remarked to the man beside me, ‘It’s rather unseasonable weather for this time of year.’

‘Sure, it isn’t this time of year at all,’ he announced.

Where else but in Connemara can you meet a man living in the Fourth Dimension and yet riding in a bus? He is travelling: so Space denies Time.<sup>82</sup>

Gogarty’s interest in portraying Connemara as timeless is not, however, romanticism for the location, nor mockery of rural simplicity. It instead participates in Gogarty’s ongoing

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<sup>79</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 122] Note here again Gogarty’s faith in oral community.

<sup>80</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 125]

<sup>81</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 84]

<sup>82</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 99]

literary attempts to seek a kind of haven in the past by establishing an easy communication between the present and the past. As we have seen, Gogarty promotes just such temporal interaction of past and present in *I Follow*, and *Sackville Street* runs backwards; in this sense, *Rolling* also moves backwards in time, as it carries Gogarty from the tawdry Dublin in which his dead friends are not commemorated, to the primordial Irish landscape of Connemara.

The attempt to define what is immutably Irish is at the heart of *Rolling*. As a returning native, Gogarty understandably gives much of his attention to the past, and to change. The interaction between memory and change leads Gogarty again to consider what is mutable and what permanent in a nation's identity. It is to be expected that a man returning to his homeland after years abroad would ruminate upon constancy and transience. What is unusual here is that Gogarty does not merely praise the past, and assert that the dead are equally present with the living; in *Rolling*, Gogarty accepts that the people and the Ireland that he knew have largely vanished. Having spent most of his literary life trying to evoke an intimate world for those who were unacquainted with it, the Gogarty of *Rolling* must recreate his own Dublin for himself, for the Dublin to which he returns is not that which he preserves in his memory.

In this sense it is unfortunate that the only extensive critical attention *Rolling* has received is a chapter of Prof. Carens' study, for Prof. Carens simply misreads *Rolling*. Prof. Carens argues that Gogarty is the centre of the narration, and that *Rolling* records another hero quest, yet this directly contradicts Gogarty's own explicit and repeated assertions about his role in *Rolling*: we have already seen that Gogarty says the hero of *Rolling* 'is certainly not the writer,' and Gogarty further notes that in 'incoherent' modern



writing, 'the author is himself the subject. Far be it from me to present myself as my own subject.'<sup>83</sup> To support his reading, Prof. Carens proposes an excessively allegorical interpretation in which Gogarty enacts a mythological hero-quest that is a 'psychic enactment of the dream-vision'<sup>84</sup> that concludes when 'the goddess, Earth herself,'<sup>85</sup> exacts a penalty that transforms the 'hero' into the 'hero-victim' in a 'universal cycle.'<sup>86</sup> This is a needlessly convolute way of asserting that, at the end of *Rolling*, Gogarty recognises that he is growing old. Gogarty's recognition of his age is important, though, because his usual assertions are that time is best judged by the heart, and not by the calendar. He appears to believe it still—'It is the mentality of a town that marks its date'<sup>87</sup>—yet his Ireland has unquestionably changed in his absence. Because of its recognition of this change, *Rolling* is Gogarty's most extensive meditation on transience, permanence, the nature of a country or a city's identity, and the role of the individual within the larger society of Ireland. Throughout *Rolling*, Gogarty attempts to resolve what the real identity of Ireland is, whether or not it will endure, and how his friends and society integrate into the permanent characteristics of Ireland.

In a work devoted to the consideration of permanence and alteration, Gogarty uses one recurrent image throughout, that of the river. He fully utilises the traditional symbolic paradox that a river is both unchanging and always different, and as he looks about Dublin for something permanent amidst the alterations, he returns to the Liffey. The title itself refers to the Liffey. He maintains that Dublin 'should have been called the

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<sup>83</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 11]

<sup>84</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 194]

<sup>85</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 194]

<sup>86</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 195]

<sup>87</sup> OStJG. *Rolling*. [p. 66]

City of the Seven Bridges,’<sup>88</sup> in recognition of the importance of the river to the city. One of the central passages of the work (which Gogarty later retitled “The Dublin-Galway Train”) is a poem with change and time at its core—and Gogarty again alludes to water and transience by titling the chapter ‘Πόντος Πει.’ Gogarty’s use of river imagery has also a secondary symbolic aspect. Gogarty is dismissive of the ‘stream of consciousness,’ which he describes as appearing ‘to be a stream with no banks, in which modern novelists flounder in default of a current or an estuary.’<sup>89</sup> Of course, the ‘stream of consciousness’ is a style to which Gogarty is antipathetic, and in *Rolling* it represents (what Gogarty believes to be) the modern taste for the formless and the ugly above the structured and the beautiful. In *Rolling*, the Liffey symbolises grace, permanence, and order, and Gogarty praises the structured banks of the Liffey: ‘The Corporation of Dublin did a great job in the days of George I when it built the granite walls that confine the Liffey’s stream.’<sup>90</sup> Here, in the eighteenth century, Gogarty finds an example of governmental promotion of change that beautifies, instead of vulgarising, the city. Of course, this example symbolically contrasts with the slum mentality he believes he has re-encountered in the Dublin to which he has returned.

It is at the end of *Rolling*, however, that Gogarty’s utilisation of the Liffey as a symbol of Dublin, and an image of both alteration and permanence, becomes most closely allied to Gogarty’s personal role in the text. As he notes in the final passage of the book,

The old town has weathered many vicissitudes without my help; and I should be the last to attribute any more to her now. There will always be new and original characters in

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<sup>88</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 4]

<sup>89</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 11]

<sup>90</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 39]

Dublin and, relying on that, I would not have the Liffey change its bed or cease from rolling down the lea.<sup>91</sup>

This is a crucial recognition for Gogarty, for he here implicitly accepts the notion of a Dublin in which he and his friends have no part, except in whatever inspirational role they may occupy for the ‘new and original characters in Dublin.’ As this thesis demonstrates, Gogarty’s prose repeatedly and insistently attempts to present a noble, and ennobling, vision of Irish life and society, based upon Gogarty’s friends, and employing his memories of their companionship to encourage and entertain his readers. At the end of *Rolling*, however, Gogarty adopts the stoical acceptance of change and death that his poetry so often reveals, yet which is much less prevalent in his prose. Yet we should note that, although Gogarty is not convinced of the necessity or beauty of the transformations altering Ireland from the country he recalls from youth, his faith in the future of Dublin is entirely based upon the most notable individuals inspiring the community: his crucial qualifying phrase for his approval of the future, ‘relying on that,’ refers to those ‘new and original’ people in Dublin’s future, who will occupy the roles of inspiration and greatness that Gogarty spent his lifetime proposing for his friends.

V: ‘UNPREMEDITATED AUTOBIOGRAPHY’: *IT ISN’T THIS TIME OF YEAR AT ALL!*

Gogarty’s 1954 ‘unpremeditated autobiography,’ *It Isn’t This Time of Year At All!*, is Gogarty’s only proclaimed autobiography, although he attempts to subvert this identification by noting that it is ‘unpremeditated.’ This undermining of factuality is

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<sup>91</sup> OSJG. *Rolling*. [p. 183]

precisely in keeping with his general literary precedents, whether the ‘phantasy in fact’ of *Sackville Street*, or the fictionalised university memoirs in *Tumbling*. Prof. Carens prefers to consider it ‘not really an autobiography at all, but a Gogartian experiment in time’<sup>92</sup> that is ‘a blend of anatomy and confession.’<sup>93</sup> This objection is perplexing, as amidst the catalogue of memoirs that are indubitable Gogartian experiments in time, only *IITTOYAA* qualifies as a proper autobiography.

Even on the formal level, *IITTOYAA*—whilst displaying Gogarty’s interest in subjective time—represents Gogarty’s closest approximation to the traditional autobiographical structure. He records the events of his life, as we shall see, with an unusual attention to himself in the central role. The work begins in his youth (an exceptional occurrence in Gogarty’s prose), and continues until the typical chronological delimitation of Gogarty’s writings, the last years of his Dublin life. Gogarty’s descriptions of his childhood, as well as the brief depictions he gives of his family, represent a period, and an aspect of his life, to which Gogarty has previously given almost no attention in his writings. Gogarty also introduces new vignettes of his established themes. For example, in *IITTOYAA* he adds to his common theme of his university years by offering a colourful assessment of his brief period in Oxford. This Oxford section is notable not only for its new anecdotal matter, but also for its attention to Gogarty as an individual: even where he accomplishes something for the collective honour of his college in Oxford, it is by the individual feat of drinking the sconce. Here again we see *IITTOYAA*’s unusual focus upon Gogarty himself. Moreover, this interest in his own development, and this focus upon his family, are strikingly at odds with

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<sup>92</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 207]

<sup>93</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 206]

Gogarty's general habit of writing about the accomplished, and their exemplary influence.

Of primary interest to Gogarty's readers is this unaccustomed centrality of his to *IITTOYAA*. The narrative development moves according to his growth and activities, so that the book begins with his youth, and follows his maturity through his university career and into adult life. This centrality may be best observed in his strikingly uncharacteristic claim, at the very beginning of the work—'I will eschew [the stream of consciousness] even at the risk of making myself the hero; using myself as the subject.'<sup>94</sup> Gogarty, as we have seen, repeatedly denies himself the central role in his memoirs; and he explicitly denies his own centrality, and with equal explicitness asserts the centrality of others, in *Sackville Street*, *I Follow*, and *Rolling*. In his previous works, it is generally the community to which Gogarty attributes narrative centrality; here, Gogarty claims that he will depict himself through that circle. He makes this connection directly:

As 'I am a part of all that I have met' you can judge me on the principle of 'show me your company and I'll tell you who you are.' Show you my company, that I will gladly do: and if I cannot keep myself altogether out of the picture the blame will be on you, for I am satisfied to sit in the proscenium, that is, the part of the theatre between the orchestra and the stage, while my company is acting: men and women some of them dead and gone but all ever present in the communion of memory; portions and parcels of the past who still guide us and carry us on. We are part of what has gone before. The past is more powerful than the present, for not only did it form us but nothing in it can be altered or destroyed. What we call the present is only a suburb of the past.<sup>95</sup>

Here Gogarty—for the first and only time in his prose—proposes the notion of himself as the central figure in his narrative.

It is because Gogarty accepts this central role for himself that he writes about his early youth and his family, albeit at no great length. What little he offers consists of

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<sup>94</sup> OSJG. *It Isn't This Time of Year At All!* New York: Doubleday. 1954. [Sphere reprint 1989] [p. 2]

<sup>95</sup> OSJG. *IITTOYAA*. [p. 2]

memories of an early house, a note of his father's death, and brief, anecdotal memories from his days in school. Even here Gogarty manages to observe Tom Kettle—one of his heroes, and one about whom he wrote surprisingly little, given his admiration for him—as one of his schoolboy associates. Although this information is new to us, we learn little from it, and Gogarty is back in Trinity College, thirty pages after his birth. Yet this diversion into childhood is an important one for Gogarty, for it both explores a previously uninvestigated aspect of his life as he records it, and it reveals, by contrast with his other works, how unadventurously Gogarty depicts himself when outside companionship that inspires him.

Despite his claims for a lack of premeditation in the structure of the work, *IITTOYAA* follows many of Gogarty's established patterns of recollective self-depiction. The aspect of *IITTOYAA* that is most typical of Gogarty's previous works is his attitude towards time. The very title itself suggests the inapplicability of traditional time to experience, in what Gogarty describes as his 'book that dealt among other things largely with the past where it isn't this time of year at all.'<sup>96</sup> Although it is tempting to see in this the retrospective tendencies of an ageing man, a reader acknowledges that throughout Gogarty's career he makes this consistent case for the superiority of experience and sensation to chronology and temporal accuracy. Yet what is unusually pronounced in *IITTOYAA* is Gogarty's complete negation of the present in preference for the past. Not only does he maintain that 'the past is more powerful than the present,' but his claim that the book deals 'largely with the past' is false, as it deals exclusively with the past. For example, in keeping with his general reluctance to record his American years in his memoirs, Gogarty completely fails to mention his life in the United States; indeed,

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<sup>96</sup> OSJG. *IITTOYAA*. [unnumbered 'Proscenium' page]

*IITTOYAA* never even reaches the year in which he left for the United States. He thus omits the most recent decade and a half of his life in what is declared to be his autobiography. In the final chapters of the work he still associates with Augustus John and W. B. Yeats.

Despite more closely approximating an autobiography than any other of his works, *IITTOYAA* remains defined by Gogarty's interactions with others. Because Gogarty here promises to show himself to his readers by showing us his company, it is unsurprising that Gogarty focuses his attention upon that period that collocated both his most impressive friends, and his happiest times. *IITTOYAA* is thus more a self-administered character-sketch than a biographically accurate autobiography; or, more precisely, *IITTOYAA* does not attempt to portray Gogarty's life with biographical precision, but attempts fidelity to Gogarty's interests and character. Most of his literary work does precisely the same thing but, as *IITTOYAA* claims for Gogarty an unusually central role, it unavoidably also suggests that this autobiography will reflect, at least partially, the major periods of Gogarty's life. But this it does only partially. That Gogarty omits the most recent decade and a half of his life is perfectly consistent with his enduring, blithe dismissal of time as a restriction on the memory, or the spirit:

It isn't this time of year at all. And why should it be? Why should a free spirit be subjected to a calendar? Why should there be workdays and holidays? Why should my winged ankles be thrust into a pair of jack boots? I did not come down from Olympus for that.<sup>97</sup>

Because Gogarty so often drew subject matter from his memories, his autobiography contains much that he has already written. His most extensive borrowing lies in *IITTOYAA*'s depiction of Gogarty's medical training in Dublin. This comes from

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<sup>97</sup> OSJG. *IITTOYAA*. [p. 1]

*Tumbling*, notably the details of his admission to TCD, his classmates the Four Halogens, the division of students into taxonomic specialties to answer oral questions posed in class, Gogarty's receipt of lobsters in that division, and the story of the doctor who mistook the redness of crossed legs for something more serious.<sup>98</sup>

On the other hand, Gogarty introduces new materials of particular interest, as they not only provide new personal histories, but many of them address eras or events of which Gogarty has not previously written. His descriptions of being young and of his early home at Fairfield are entirely new, and they make up by novelty what they lose by their lack of real insight. They are the memories of a well-loved child who was unhappy at boarding school; this has little value as literature, but tellingly illustrates the greater focus upon the self in *IITTOYAA*'s recreation of Gogarty's experiences. Several of Gogarty's stories add new details to friendships or occurrences that he has already mentioned, thus developing them slightly. The chapter 'Fugax Erythema' represents this well, for here he relates several stories (bicycle races, Mahaffy and Tyrrell) that he had recorded in *Tumbling*, but also includes new Mahaffy matter (such as the Chinese music anecdote).

The most notable example of Gogarty's new material, however, is in the political sphere. As we have seen, Gogarty frequently addresses politics in his writings, and throughout his earlier works, Gogarty rails as an outraged patriot at de Valera for his betrayals and his policies, and for killing Collins and Griffith (the latter, indirectly, by inducing exhaustion and nervous collapse). In *IITTOYAA*, Gogarty recreates his more personal experience of revolutionary politics, his famous abduction at pistol-point by de

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<sup>98</sup> It may be noted that here Gogarty tells of himself precisely the same anecdotes he attributed to Gideon Ouseley.



Valera's gunmen. In this chapter, 'You Carry Caesar,' Gogarty relates the episode with an astonishing sense of humour for one imperilled by the events he describes: whether or not he really offered to tip the driver of his abductor's getaway car, his assertion that he did reveals Gogarty's willingness to retell with comedy an event from life in which he was seriously threatened with murder. The essential elements of his record accord with contemporary accounts of the abduction: captured by housebreakers who surprised him in his bathtub, Gogarty is driven to a small shed on the banks of the Liffey where, faking a fear-induced diarrhoea, he escapes by leaping into the water. He promises the river two swans, should he escape with his life, and gives them later, commemorating the event in a poem that became the title poem of his first commercially available work of poetry. Although Gogarty's narrative tone is generally light, to emphasise the adventurous nature of the tale, he also expresses a brutal, if understandable, pleasure in receiving a bent bullet 'dug out of the spine of the ringleader who had raided my house and carried me off. O'Leary was his name.'<sup>99</sup> For the first time, Gogarty's attack on de Valera is not based upon the harm that de Valera did to Ireland, or to Gogarty's friends, but to Gogarty himself. This too reflects the unusual centrality of Gogarty in this book, and his willingness to record new, highly personal material.

The other chapter of *IITTOYAA* that similarly blends the personal and the political is 'Easter Week,' Gogarty's recollection of the Easter Rising. Gogarty admits to being excited by the insurrection, and he feels inspired by rebels' action: '...now we were in another rebellion. I felt that I was a lucky man.'<sup>100</sup> Gogarty, however, had no part in the insurrection. He is caught out of Dublin when it happens, and when he rushes back to

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<sup>99</sup> OSuJG. *IITTOYAA*. [p. 195]

<sup>100</sup> OSuJG. *IITTOYAA*. [p. 175]

read the rebels' proclamation posters on the General Post Office, he has never heard of any of the signatories—'I must ask someone about the men who issued it... I had met not one of those who had proposed themselves as the Provisional Government.'<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, Gogarty entertains no illusions about the doomed nature of the impossible rebellion, and he leaves Dublin to go back to join his family in Connemara. Although we learn almost nothing new about the rebellion—Gogarty, not having participated, and having known none of the rebels, has little to add historically—we see here yet again the exceptional centrality of Gogarty in *IITTOYAA*, for Gogarty largely restricts himself to his personal actions, whilst describing perhaps the most important civil experience in Dublin during Gogarty's lifetime.

As with so many of Gogarty's works, the effect *IITTOYAA* has upon its reader depends more upon the reader's reaction to Gogarty's personality than to what he actually describes. As an 'autobiography' of a lifetime, *IITTOYAA* is unsatisfactory, in that it entirely leaves out Gogarty's American years, and omits significant elements entirely from his life (as, for example, his writing). Yet Gogarty is perfectly consistent and open in his dismissal of strict chronological understandings of a lifetime ('My thoughts are subjected to no rules. Behold the wings upon my helmet and on my unfettered feet. I can fly backwards and forwards in time and space'<sup>102</sup>), and his 'unpremeditated autobiography' follows precisely that recollective approach Gogarty generally uses: personal preference, guided by fancy, and delimited by a refusal to dwell upon the miserable or disappointing. This is, of course, Gogarty's point. He writes this

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<sup>101</sup> OSJG. *IITTOYAA*. [pp. 180, 179]

<sup>102</sup> OSJG. *IITTOYAA*. [p. 7]

‘autobiography’ to his taste, to illustrate that one may define one’s reality by adopting a cheerful and carefree attitude, whether in the living, or the recording, of a lifetime:

If you take life too seriously, it will make you serious about everything, trivialities included. Life is plastic: it will assume any shape you choose to put on it. It is in your power to take things cheerfully and be merry and bright even though you are surrounded by melancholics who cannot imagine anyone being good unless he is unhappy.<sup>103</sup>

#### VI: ‘POLITENESS AND URBANITY’: *START FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE*

Of all Gogarty’s American works, one of the most intriguing is also one of the least ostensibly original works in his oeuvre. This book is Gogarty’s 1955 publication, *Start From Somewhere Else*, which he subtitles ‘An Exposition of Wit and Humor Polite and Perilous.’ The book itself is beset by anecdotal exhaustion, so that Prof. Carens understandably dismisses it as being ‘something like a commonplace book of jokes and anecdotes, something like a disorganised assortment of remnants from other books.’<sup>104</sup> It is certainly ill organised, but we learn more about Gogarty’s use of memory, inspiration, and example here than in most of his other books, for it lacks the dexterity and formal organisation of his earlier efforts. Gogarty reveals more here through inattention than through the matter he relates.

His stated intention for *Somewhere Else* is the particularly Gogartian endeavour both to evoke a gentler past, and to restore the conception of ‘wit’ to its proper meaning:

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<sup>103</sup> OSIJG. *ITTOYAA*. [pp. 3-4]

<sup>104</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 201]

The best we can do is to use a word as it was when it was at its best.<sup>105</sup> Now to restore 'wit' to the meaning it had when it was at its best is to use it as it was used in the eighteenth century, which is what I am trying to do. Then wit meant politeness and urbanity combined with erudition and understanding; in a word, Atticism. But, as the saying is, you cannot put back the hands of the clock. True. Then the only thing to do is to find a place where the hands of the clock are secular to eighteenth-century time. Where does the eighteenth century still linger without the squalor and the horror of the period? Where can such a place be found? In Dublin, of course...<sup>106</sup>

Here again Gogarty reveals his belief that the spirit of Dublin provides an escape from the constraints of time and of mood, and offers access to a realm defined by 'politeness and urbanity.'

A reader will immediately observe, however, Gogarty's conflation of Atticism with wit, both of which he defines as the displaying of politeness, urbanity, erudition, and understanding. This somewhat inexact collection of six virtues is nonetheless the best and most concise description in his writings of those values for which Gogarty believed he stood. These merits would also appear to be important constituent characteristics of 'the grammar of greatness' that Gogarty promotes throughout his career, for reasons of repetition that we shall observe. That these values constitute a remarkably traditional, conservative approach to conduct and aesthetics is typical of Gogarty, and he himself attributes both the virtues, and the culture he upholds, to the ennobling influence of Attic Greece. His conviction is that politeness, urbanity, erudition, and understanding perpetually define civilised conduct. Characteristically, Gogarty uses his friends to prove this point.

In *Somewhere Else*, as in parts of *Going Native*, Gogarty makes an unusually apolitical attack upon the culture of his times. In his 'Introduction' (which is little more

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<sup>105</sup> Note that even in language Gogarty proposes that 'the best we can do' is to attempt to re-connect with the precedent of 'the best' in the past.

<sup>106</sup> OSTJG. *Start from Somewhere Else*. New York: Doubleday. 1955. [pp. 15-16]

than a warning against the rapacity of literary agents) to *Somewhere Else*, Gogarty's remarks are broadly applicable to the modern world, and are not specifically pertinent to Ireland, Great Britain, or the United States: 'Beauty is debauched. The Muse is rendered profligate and prostitute. Young people are already vapid and superficial: young robots that don't know what Beauty is.'<sup>107</sup> It is against this debauchery and vapidity that Gogarty offers, again, his memories and anecdotes. He proposes them not merely as a light literary diversion, nor as evidence of an Ireland betrayed by de Valeran opportunism, but in the conviction that the people whom he knew exemplified the best of life, conduct, and companionship. As often before, Gogarty answers the problems of society at large with the ameliorative influence of those eminent individuals in whose private society he moved.

The choice of anecdotes with which Gogarty forms his 'exposition of humor polite and perilous' is telling. Predictably, Gogarty restricts himself to his associates—'I speak only of the men I know or of whom I have heard or read'<sup>108</sup>—and his claim to include 'men of whom I have heard or read' seems to extend no farther into the past than to include Oscar Wilde. For his own representation, Gogarty again adopts the role of a continuous narrator who relates his memories, but who assumes a non-centralised observational role in his anecdotes. Many of these anecdotes Gogarty has told time and again. Indeed, the repetitiveness in *Somewhere Else* of Gogarty's previously published anecdotes is remarkable. A brief survey would note: he repeats his Fasolt/Fafnir companionship with Macran from *Sackville Street*,<sup>109</sup> retells the story of Burell's 'getting

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<sup>107</sup> OSTJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 24]

<sup>108</sup> OSTJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 186]

<sup>109</sup> OSTJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 29]

stuck' on a medical exam from *Tumbling*,<sup>110</sup> repeats Tyrrell's *bon mot* about taking the precaution of arriving drunk at a bad host's home,<sup>111</sup> tells again of Joyce's penchant for the old argot word 'prats' (for buttocks) in a poem of Villon,<sup>112</sup> and recaps (from *Sackville Street*) Mahaffy's dismissal of a William Watson with the taunt that he 'never worked under a master.'<sup>113</sup> If one accepts Prof. Carens' description of *Somewhere Else* as a 'commonplace book of jokes and anecdotes,' one must also acknowledge that few of these contents are new to Gogarty's readers.

Ulick O'Connor has recorded that Gogarty, by the time he wrote *Somewhere Else*, had become repetitive not only in his literature, but also in his conversation itself:

In 1954, Gogarty returned again to Ireland. When [O'Connor] met him on this occasion...he still told his anecdotes as brilliantly as ever, and quoted with flawless precision; but now one got the impression that there were certain set pieces which he brought in, as if it was expected that he must fulfil his reputation as a master of conversation.<sup>114</sup>

Gogarty's repetitions in literature, however, are so extensive, and cover such a span of years, that they are susceptible of another interpretation than simple satisfaction of readers' expectations. Gogarty's retellings in *Somewhere Else* are, in fact, a continuation of the paradigm he has been attempting to provide throughout his literary career—those examples of 'the grammar of greatness [for] those who never knew it' that Gogarty was privileged to see personally. The anecdotal and thematic repetition of Gogarty's later years is significantly attributable to his maintenance of the same conception of his art: by using his memories of inspiring individuals as his subject matter, he became dependent upon a select collection of memories and individuals. It is unsurprising, therefore, that not

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<sup>110</sup> OStJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 43]

<sup>111</sup> OStJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 64]

<sup>112</sup> OStJG. *Somewhere Else*. [pp. 71-72]

<sup>113</sup> OStJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 91]

<sup>114</sup> O'Connor. *The Times I've Seen*. [p. 347]

only are the structural characteristics of Gogarty's anecdotes similar (he writes almost nothing of women; he emphasises others above himself; he almost invariably presents his subjects in company, instead of alone), but that he also simply reuses the same anecdotes.

The 'exposition of wit' is not motivated solely by Gogarty's general social concern with the decrease in civilised conduct, and the resultant need for his corrective examples of 'Atticism.' In the summation of the work, Gogarty makes perhaps his most extensive defence of humour as offering the spiritual enlargement he advocates:

Laughter may be a sudden triumph; it is a sudden triumph when it becomes a triumph over life. When it proves, even for a second, that we have within us something of the immortals' courageous heart or mighty mind. Something that makes us spectators of life as if we were not in its arena. Laughter it is that differentiates us from the beasts and makes us superior to the beast within us. Laughter enables us to see things under the aspect of Eternity. That is the best and most liberal laughter...Let us laugh while we may, for in the end we all shall have to walk off the big plank into the dark stuff and that will be for many a man all too soon.<sup>115</sup>

Gogarty's general claims for laughter over solemnity are well known. The reader will recognise much of Gogarty's writing in this enjoyment of life deriving from a detached attitude to it. Yet there remain two revealing points in his praise of humour. The first is Gogarty's established fascination for a moment of transformation wherein an individual becomes—or reveals—something nobler than common; Gogarty makes precisely this transformational claim for the glimpse of immortal courage that laughter offers. The second point here is the popular quality of humour. In Gogarty's formulation, laughter is ennobling, 'superior,' immortal, or even eternal, whilst life is an arena. Yet laughter can be an entirely self-generated experience of the 'aspect of Eternity,' requiring no greatness, ability, or precedent. It is open to all; yet, as Mahaffy noted in *Tumbling*, 'the

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<sup>115</sup> OSJG. *Somewhere Else*. [pp.187, 189]

savage and the ignorant laugh less and understand less of this great fund of enjoyment than civilised people.’

Gogarty’s determinedly stratified thought perceived greatness in individuality and accomplishment, and viewed commonality and mediocrity as synonymous. In *Somewhere Else*, Gogarty yet again offers his memories of friends as testimony to the possibilities of the individual. Here, however, he strangely protests against the *popularising* impulse Modernist poets have introduced: ‘they attempt to make poetry easy by bringing it within the reach of all, leveling everything: communism!’<sup>116</sup> It is Gogarty’s detestation of levelling that is important here, for it reveals a clue to what he does throughout his recollective self-depictions. His peculiar understanding of Modernism as a levelling of the best to the strata of the common, whilst odd, is one of his most revealing idiosyncrasies. Gogarty, throughout his work, attempts to reverse this ‘Modernist’ or ‘communist’ trend of pulling down or denigrating the distinguished, and strives to offer greatness to those who had never had experience of the great. Gogarty seeks to popularise distinction and eminence.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS FROM GOGARTY IN THE USA

Gogarty’s writings never recovered from his relocation to the United States. Not only did this move subject him to periodical demands to which he found it difficult to adjust his style, but it also removed him from those inspiring people and associations that

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<sup>116</sup> OSJG. *Somewhere Else*. [p. 129]



sustained him personally, and to which he devoted his writings. This chapter has assessed Gogarty's continuation of his recollective self-depictions in the United States. It has asserted that Gogarty's personal and financial circumstances caused him to alter his productivity to produce shorter, more focused, essays, instead of longer works of society-wide depiction. Yet the basic subject matter of Gogarty's memoirs did not change; he retained his fascination with the memoir as a re-evocation of the inspirational qualities he observed as the greatness of his friends. This chapter has noted that Gogarty records little of his life in America, and where he does, he depicts an isolated man, incapable of forming the social associations that he valued in Dublin. In a corollary point, this chapter attributes Gogarty's continued depiction of the people and the atmosphere of Dublin to his established desire to depict that which ennobles and inspires, in his art—and it is to precisely the most distinguished period of his life, with the greatest of his associates, that he returns. Although Gogarty's American books are often rather incoherently associated, this chapter has argued of three that they have important associative principles: *Rolling Down The Lea* depicts Gogarty revisiting Dublin, and attempting to find a permanent value of the spirit of Ireland that may endure, even if the people whom he has praised throughout his writings are unrecognised; *It Isn't This Time Of Year At All!* is Gogarty's only autobiography and, as such, it is the only work of his recollective self-depiction in which he asserts, and assumes, textual centrality; and *Start From Somewhere Else*, which is a meagre assortment of anecdotes about 'wit,' and yet which presents the values of politeness, urbanity, erudition, and understanding as being constituent elements of the greatness and inspiration he has praised through all his memoirs. The chapter has also noted that the requirement to produce short pieces for periodicals caused Gogarty to write

less social portraiture, and instead to focus more upon individuals. The next chapter will assess Gogarty's depictions of one figure whom he did not present as exemplary—James Joyce.

## CHAPTER 8

### ‘THE MOST PREDAMNED SOUL I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED’: REMEMBERING JOYCE

The literary and personal relations between Oliver Gogarty and James Joyce have been the subject of scholarship and speculation from the time that Joyce made them into literature with *Ulysses*. It is peculiar that, given the extraordinary volume of critical attention Joyce has received, no book-length study of their relationship has yet been published. Although a full consideration of their relationship exceeds the thematic boundaries of this thesis, there are here several reasons of particular necessity to assess Gogarty’s relations with Joyce as he represented them in his American articles. The first is that, from the moment *Ulysses* was published, Gogarty led a literary life divided in two—his literary fame was split between his own works, and his appearance in Joyce’s novel. Partially for this reason, Gogarty established himself in the United States as an authority on Joyce, as evidenced by his promotional materials promising that he lived with Joyce, and knew the ‘dwellers in the depths...in their sub-human surroundings which are the underworld of *Ulysses*.’ Most important, however, is the fact that many of the themes this thesis has addressed thusfar intersect in the Joyce articles. Gogarty’s depictions of Joyce, as this chapter will show, relate inextricably with his more general attempt to record the inspiring companionship of the great from his own memories: yet with Joyce, Gogarty inverts his attention to the ‘grammar of greatness,’ and instead uses his personal memories not to testify to the inspiring example of his former friend, but rather to assert the dispiriting and degrading use to which Gogarty believed Joyce had put literature, and his memories of Dublin, in *Ulysses*. In his American writings Gogarty

repeatedly maintains that Joyce's reputation represents the misvaluation of style as art ('a stampede from the touchstones and standards of literature'), and that Gogarty's personal knowledge of the man helps to expose the cultural bankruptcy of his Modernist experimentation. In a peculiar reversal, Gogarty here employs his recollective evocations of intimacy with a friend not to praise that individual, but to buttress his authority in disputing that friend's claim to greatness. Yet the contradictions between Gogarty's remembered knowledge of Joyce, and his misapplication of that knowledge to the interpretation of Joyce's work, caused enormous damage to Gogarty's reputation.

This chapter is divided into three subsequent sections, two analytical and one in summation. The first assesses Gogarty's relations with Joyce, and records his depiction of them in his recollective articles. It finds that Gogarty's method of portraying Joyce, and of portraying his aesthetic reaction to Joyce's art, is similar to that which he used throughout his career to praise those who inspired him; yet in Joyce's case, Gogarty presents his subjective impressions to illustrate why Joyce and his work are unworthy of being distinguished as great. This is a stylistic use of memoir to invert the 'grammar of greatness' by demonstrating that Joyce did not have such inspirational and ennobling qualities. The second section examines the immediate reactions to Gogarty's essays, particularly in the published responses by Padraic Colum, Mary Colum, and Stanislaus Joyce. The section finds that these three respond to Gogarty by noting that his authority derives largely from personal knowledge of Joyce, yet they assert that they too knew Joyce personally, and correct Gogarty upon factual matters. As Gogarty is impatient with such accuracy throughout his career, he is often incorrect on minor points, and Mary Colum and Stanislaus Joyce accuse him of intentional misrepresentation. The section

finds, however, that Gogarty's misrepresentations are largely explicable by reference to his style of memoir, and that those who accuse him of inaccuracy often make comparable errors in their own dismissals of Gogarty. The third section briefly summarises the findings of the chapter.

### I: 'AN ACCESSORY BEFORE THE ACT': GOGARTY AND JOYCE

Gogarty's literary relationship with Joyce is perhaps the most important non-familial relation in Gogarty's life. Primarily, of course, it affixed to him the identity of Buck Mulligan, which became his wider fame to the non-Irish Anglophonic world. Although the caricature appears to have been sufficiently precise that it was immediately and indelibly identifiable, to Gogarty's position in *Ulysses* one may apply Susan Mitchell's observation on the roles Moore's friends played in *Hail and Farewell*: 'That it is exceedingly well done will not console those who have gained through it an immortality they never coveted.'<sup>1</sup> Yet Gogarty's identification with Mulligan is secondary to his relationship with Joyce, and to his manner of writing about himself and Joyce, in damaging Gogarty's reputation. Indeed, the assumption that Gogarty's writings are simply unreliable, if not intentionally misrepresentative, has become a commonplace assertion, uniting such varied people as Mary Colum, Stanislaus Joyce, and Marvin Magalaner. It is therefore important to spend considerable space assessing this relationship, for it has not only damaged Gogarty's literary reputation, but it also directly

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Mitchell. *George Moore*. Dublin & London: Maunsell. 1916. [p. 82]

intersects with the general themes of self-presentation, memoir, accuracy, inspiration, and eminence that are the fundamental concerns of Gogarty's work, and of this thesis.

Given the subsequent literary importance of Joyce's and Gogarty's acquaintance, it is remarkable that the two men actually spent little time together. The date of their first meeting is a matter of speculation: Prof. Lyons posits 1901,<sup>2</sup> whilst Richard Ellmann proposes 1902.<sup>3</sup> We know that Joyce fled the Martello Tower in Sandycove on the morning of 15 September 1904, and soon thereafter left the country. This was the decisive break in their friendship and, although Gogarty wrote several letters in an attempt to heal the rift, their relationship never recovered.

Part of the reason for this complete separation, of course, was distance: Joyce was no longer in Dublin. After Joyce travelled to Pola, and then settled in Trieste, he slowly vanished from Gogarty's private correspondence—until the appearance of *Ulysses*. Gogarty, of course, had little reason to keep track of his former friend: whilst Gogarty went from accomplishment to accomplishment in his personal and professional life, Joyce lived and wrote in impoverished obscurity. Joyce, however, remembered Gogarty.

Despite his disgust with being identified as Buck Mulligan, as early as 1933 Gogarty was already being presented to his American lecture audiences as a figure of interest, in part, because he once lived with James Joyce, and possessed personal knowledge of the 'dwellers in the depths' of *Ulysses*. Later, when Gogarty took up residence in the United States, Gogarty's personal knowledge of Joyce placed him at the very forefront of Joycean authority in the United States, and he exploited this, writing more extensively in America about Joyce than he had in Dublin. In Ireland, as this thesis

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<sup>2</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 37 & p. 211]

<sup>3</sup> Ellmann. *James Joyce*. [p. 117]

notes in Chapter 5, Gogarty's mention of Joyce is tangential; he records Joyce as a barely-noticed figure in the larger society, and as one whose inability to engage in spontaneous, generous conversation excluded him from the main gatherings of Gogarty's books—discussions, pub chats, at-homes, etc. In *Sackville Street* and *Tumbling*, Joyce is notable as the person in Gogarty's social circle least capable of entering into the unguarded spirit of companionship. In the United States, Gogarty's essays about Joyce are stylistically similar types of memoir-essays to those he was writing there about other authors he knew, yet the Joyce articles proved calamitous to Gogarty's reputation. Prof. Lyons describes one such essay—'They Think They Know Joyce'—as having a 'catastrophic' effect on Gogarty's reputation, and cites Denis Johnston's opinion: 'It was as if Gogarty had deliberately belched at Mass!'<sup>4</sup> Throughout his life in the United States, Gogarty found himself divided between the authority his proximity to Joyce conferred, and the impolitic iconoclasm that this intimate knowledge produced.

What a reader first notices in these Joyce essays, however, is their clear associability with other personality sketches of writers whom Gogarty knew. Gogarty writes of his impressions of the subject of his essay, incorporating his memories of their interaction. The two essays in *Intimations* featuring Joyce, 'Doctors in Both Faculties' and 'James Joyce as a Tenor,' exemplify Gogarty's inveterate tendency to present writers foremost as human personalities, not in their roles as writers—and indeed, Gogarty knew Joyce almost exclusively as a friend, and not an author. His approach is distinctly informal: 'James Joyce came loping across the path with a red oblong object under his arm. We met. I asked him what he was carrying.'<sup>5</sup> Gogarty's Joyce is not a writer of

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<sup>4</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 283]

<sup>5</sup> OSTJG. *Intimations*. [p. 3]

world renown; he is someone one encounters on the street. This determination to present Joyce in casual circumstances serves numerous purposes in his essays: 1) it reinforces Gogarty's love of presenting the human side of cultural figures, 2) the casual and intimate nature of Gogarty's portraits emphasise Gogarty's claim to unusual, personal knowledge of Joyce, and 3) it punctures the aura of monastic devotion to art that Joyce cultivated, and that Gogarty viewed as affectation, or imposture.

Gogarty, however, acknowledges that Joyce eventually became more than this stray impoverished Dubliner, and admits that he became an acclaimed writer; yet Gogarty simultaneously expresses his preference for the private individual:

[Joyce's life] treated him none too well, in spite of his fame. 'To be happy is the chiefest prize,' the greatest lyric poet of all sang. And I like to think of Joyce when I knew him as a carefree student who had written *Chamber Music* before his nineteenth year and recited his poems to me in a garden near Glasnevin, or hired a grand piano to practise for the Feis. I think that he derived more happiness from his voice than from his writing.<sup>6</sup>

Gogarty's observation of Joyce is a characteristic Gogartian summation: of the most acclaimed experimental novelist of his era, Gogarty notes that he lived an unhappy life, and that his best years were those when he was 'carefree.'

Of course, Gogarty's emphasis on the personality of a writer, instead of on the writer's work, is not mere aesthetic preference, but is also professionally shrewd. To be certain, Gogarty's interest in personality is unfeigned: he evinces a greater fascination for the personalities of his friends than for their works, and when he comments on their writings, his remarks are usually general and uncritical. Yet Gogarty also had other reasons for underscoring the authority of personal contact. The most important of these lies in his position as a speaker or an author. Gogarty was extraordinarily positioned to

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<sup>6</sup> OSJG. *Intimations*. [p. 46]



offer personal insights into the characters of famous writers, yet he had no demonstrably better insight into the works themselves than any reasonably informed reader. A corollary difficulty becomes particularly awkward for Gogarty when he discusses Joyce. This is Gogarty's unwillingness to distinguish between, and thus dissociate, personal and literary interpretation.

'James Joyce as a Tenor,' however, demonstrates that Gogarty was capable of temperate and reasoned writing about Joyce long after the latter died. Nonetheless, as Gogarty lived on in the United States, Joyce's reputation continued to grow, both in critical estimation and popular interest. As someone who had known the same Dublin that Joyce knew, Gogarty soon wearied of the academic industry that, he believed, forgot that *Ulysses* was a work of fiction. This was, of course, a particular irritation for a man who was himself heavily identified with a character in that book. The more intensively scholars researched Joyce, the more irritated Gogarty felt by (what he believed to be) their gullible fervour: '[Joyce] once spent an evening with me in Holles Street Hospital and now some character in Canada is probably getting a Ph. D. for analysing his profound knowledge of midwifery.'<sup>7</sup>

In Gogarty's articles on Joyce, he entirely inverts this approach to literary utilisation of memory: instead of using private recollection to recapture and publicise 'the grammar of greatness,' Gogarty employs his memories of Joyce to undermine Joyce's growing reputation for omnipotent artistic genius. This must be partially due to Gogarty's protracted inability to separate the Joyce whom he knew in youth from the mature experimentalist author in Paris, whom he simply did not know. To Gogarty's credit, one must note that he did not seek to dissociate his personal and literary knowledge of other

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<sup>7</sup> Lyons. *Talents*. [p. 283]

friends, such as Yeats, Moore, Æ, or Stephens. The same fact would also pertain to his personal and aesthetic appreciations of artist friends, such as William Orpen and Augustus John, or his personal and political admiration for people like Griffith and Collins. Gogarty was interested in the individual *in toto*, and found artistic or political accomplishment indissociable from the individual's personality. The relevant distinction with Joyce, however, is that Gogarty both bore bad memories of Joyce, and opposed Joyce's work on aesthetic grounds; the other men he admired both personally and professionally. Unfortunately, Gogarty's readings of Joyce's work are inevitably coloured by his knowledge of Joyce as a person, and his personal knowledge led Gogarty to misread, almost completely, the fictionalising elements in Joyce's work.

Gogarty, in his three most notorious articles on Joyce, unwittingly reveals the difficulties of interpretation in which he found himself when confronted with Joyce—particularly in this later period in the United States. Gogarty's inability to dissociate his personal knowledge of Joyce from his reading is well illustrated by the article, 'James Augustine Joyce.' Gogarty's abuse is more for Joyce enthusiasts than for Joyce himself; yet a reader notices how often Gogarty's interpretation depends upon knowing Joyce's environment, and not upon the texts of Joyce's works:

The writer of this little notice was once called 'an accessory before the act' of Joyce's *Ulysses*. The United States may be called with more justice 'an accessory after the act.' Had it not been for Sylvia Beach who published *Ulysses* and Miss Wearing (sic) who endowed Joyce with a liberal allowance which enabled him to live in comfort for the first time in his life, there might have been neither *Ulysses* nor *Finnegans Wake*. He is said to have told a reader that he expected him to devote his whole life to the study of *Finnegans Wake*. What a puzzle that would be. When you think of the number of languages he had at his elbow in the various Berlitz schools and the use he made of fracturing them, and then when you think of anybody wanting to unravel the tangled skein that is hailed as all the world's erudition in disguise, the question of the sanity or even the literacy of the

Joyce enthusiast arises. When I read those who, although they never have been in Dublin, set themselves up as 'guides' to Joyce or as masters of 'the master,' I feel sorrow for their illiteracy and then anger at their presumption. I know how Joyce, who used a grim attitude long sustained when he was acting rather than 'making' a joke, would laugh at these 'fans' of his—and dupes. These are the philologists who greet him with a cheer. How grimly Joyce would smile.

This Joyce fetish is a sign of the times that saw followers of Gertrude Stein. It is also a reflection on the educationary system of the present day that permits such a stampede from the touchstones and the standards of literature. It is significant of the era of information instead of wisdom; of facts instead of deductions and of the bizarre instead of the beautiful, of disruption instead of construction, the scaffolding instead of the mansion. To the kindergarten with them all.<sup>8</sup>

Here Gogarty unintentionally reveals his attitude toward the study of Joyce, not by his impolitic disputation of the sanity and literacy of Joyce's fans, but in his derision of scholars who—'although they never have been in Dublin'—claim to know something about Joyce. Of course, Gogarty is wrong: it is neither illiteracy nor presumption to treat *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as texts that may be understood by those who do not know the author personally, nor are natives of the author's hometown. In fact, in his American essay 'American Patrons and Irish Poets,' Gogarty praised the American nation for precisely this interest and perspicuity in supporting the best Irish writers:

From W. B. Yeats to Padraic Colum, there has not been an Irish writer of distinction who has not been heartened and helped by citizens of the United States. James Stephens, George Russell (*Æ*) and James Joyce are all of this company...What neither Yeats, Joyce, nor any other poet could repay to their patrons was the knowledgeable sponsorship of their work and the introduction to the most hospitable country in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Yet the more problematic issue for Gogarty lies not in his anger at Joycean scholars, but in his simple assumption that to have known Joyce, and to have resided in the milieu of *Ulysses*, confers an additional literary authority upon a speaker or writer.

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<sup>8</sup> OSTJG. 'James Augustine Joyce.' [Unpaginated pamphlet reprinted from] *The Dallas Times Herald*. 3 April 1949. This essay is a slightly altered version of the essay more commonly available as 'They Think They Know Joyce.'

<sup>9</sup> OSTJG. *Intimations*. [pp. 172, 175]

Unfortunately, this places Gogarty in a position where much of his claim to authority—indeed, the primary distinction of his authority to speak or write on Joyce—lies in his personal knowledge, and thus in the reliability of his memory, and the accuracy of his recreation of those memories.

As this thesis has observed, Gogarty was little interested in biographical specifics, preferring subjective re-evocation. The factual laxity this attitude permits, however, permeates Gogarty's memoirs, and is proclaimed in several as mingling fantasy and fact. In his essays on Joyce, therefore, Gogarty's assertion of the supremacy of personal knowledge over scholarly accuracy is neither uncharacteristic, nor unexpected. He built his entire career as a memoirist upon just such personal immediacy. In sum, Gogarty applies the same techniques in writing about Joyce that he employed throughout his earlier prose. Yet because his essays on Joyce are disputatious of Joyce's position, and because Gogarty supports this contention by asserting the interpretive pertinence of his memories of Joyce's personality, Gogarty's impatience for precision can make him look mendacious, unreliable, or simply wrong. This is profoundly unfortunate, as it fails to account for Gogarty's approach to writing memoirs, and it discards an indubitably informed, dissentient opinion, of Joyce.

Gogarty's two most prominent essays on Joyce appeared in the American magazine *The Saturday Review of Literature*. 'The Joyce I Knew' appeared in the 25 January 1941 edition, and 'They Think They Know Joyce' in the edition of 18 March 1950.<sup>10</sup> 'The Joyce I Knew' is the more balanced of the two articles. Nonetheless, Gogarty breaks with his general practice of writing about what he wishes to approve, and

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<sup>10</sup> For ease of reference, citations from these essays will be made not to their original appearances in magazine form, but to their republication in the book, *The Saturday Review Gallery*.

makes only tangential efforts to praise Joyce—‘I never heard a voice to compare with his,’<sup>11</sup> ‘No man had more erudition at so early an age...his reading must have been as prodigious as his memory was,’<sup>12</sup> ‘And we were friends at a madcap, senseless time.’<sup>13</sup> Where he presents personal recollections of Joyce’s character, his memories are unflattering—‘He expected to be taken blindly at an undisclosed but apparently unlimited valuation while suffering from his own imagined inferiority.’<sup>14</sup>

The trouble with the essay is that Gogarty often fails to write to his theme—the Joyce he knew—and instead extrapolates from what he has subsequently learned of Joyce and Joyce’s career, then interprets that information in light of his own impressions of Joyce. This unhappily results in sheer supposition presented under the authority of personal acquaintance: ‘Joyce must have found satisfaction at the national disillusionment which followed the entry of the Republicans to power in the Irish Free State.’<sup>15</sup> The errors resultant from this approach are less damaging to Gogarty’s argument than is his unwise conflation of personal observation with speculation about the meaning of Joyce’s writing. His reading of Joyce is hostile, and he presents it as verified by personal knowledge:

With savage indignation against all that had form and was holy, Joyce, a dishevelled harbinger of the Bolshevik revolution, flung himself away from beauty and harmony to howl outcast for the rest of his life through the dark recesses of the soul.

The obstinate courage which enabled him for twenty years to keep on writing, all in longhand, a work of over a thousand pages without hope of a publisher is an outstanding proof of that unswerving belief in himself and his self-expression, which made him anything but a genial companion. He was a Dante who lost the key to his own Inferno.

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<sup>11</sup> Jerome Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *The Saturday Review Gallery*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1959. [p. 255]

<sup>12</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [pp. 255-256]

<sup>13</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 259]

<sup>14</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 258]

<sup>15</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 260]

He never, though all his life was a purgatory, passed through it to make the ascent to Paradise.

The lovely, simple notes of pure lyricism which are to be found in *Chamber Music* (named in mockery after the sound he made by kicking accidentally a night jar) died away and maniacal rage against all things established took their place in a brothel in his lacerated heart.

His unyielding, unconceding opinion of himself was to my mind hardly consistent with sanity. But then who can rage against the Divine Word or Reason and be sane?<sup>16</sup>

This is particularly Gogartian writing: one notes Gogarty's simultaneous penchant to present his temperamental opposition to what Joyce did artistically with the authority of personal observation. Thus Gogarty follows his interpretation of Joyce flinging 'himself away from beauty and harmony to howl outcast for the rest of his life through the dark recesses of the soul' with the undoubted personal authority of one who can judge what manner of companion Joyce was, and can offer the anecdote about the naming of *Chamber Music*.

The reading of Gogarty proposed in this thesis offers a persuasive explanation for Gogarty's overwritten attacks on Joyce—'a dishevelled harbinger of the Bolshevik revolution' howling 'outcast for the rest of his life through the dark recesses of the soul.' Throughout his works, Gogarty treats the inspirational and the uplifting as that which is worthy of record—in poetry, in fiction, and in memoir. His praise of Stephens noted that not only did Stephens' body 'sway with song,' but 'all around him is transformed...their souls begin to soar and sing with his.' Yet in *Ulysses* Gogarty found the Dublin he knew—and he himself included as an ancillary figure—presented in a stylistically wild work that travestied the *Odyssey* by offering the heroic role of Odysseus to the undistinguished advertising canvasser Leopold Bloom. Gogarty was therefore disgusted that Joyce should use his recollections of Dublin, and his considerable literary skills, to

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<sup>16</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [pp. 257-258]

create a dispiriting work that exhaustively catalogued commonplace occurrences whilst offering nothing that Gogarty could recognise as uplifting, or transcendent. Gogarty's apparently absurd suggestion that Joyce was 'a dishevelled harbinger of the Bolshevik revolution' therefore seems explicable, for he found the dishevelment in Joyce's stylistic eccentricities, and the Bolshevism he found in *Ulysses*'s substitution of an average man for a heroic figure.

Because he so often conflates his personal opinion of an individual with his approval or disapproval of that person's work, Gogarty found it ultimately impossible to dissociate his memories of Joyce, and of the Dublin that he and Joyce knew, from *Ulysses*. It is possible that he never attempted this dissociation. Nonetheless, this inability meant that Gogarty persistently reads Joyce through a peculiarly Gogartian aesthetic prism, as in his recognition of Buck Mulligan:

...a figure with smoke-blue eyes and glistening teeth emerges carrying shaving materials preparatory to going out to swim. The person so described is said to be myself, and it well may be, so alien is that gay, water-loving character who moved not sullen in the sweet air to all the thwarted, mad, miserable phantoms of the rest of that terrible exposition of indignation and revolt.<sup>17</sup>

Gogarty's pride in being distinguished in *Ulysses* as the only character to swim, shave, and bathe<sup>18</sup> arises from the same root as does his inability to see the other characters in *Ulysses* as other than 'thwarted, mad, miserable phantoms.' Gogarty certainly had good reason to conflate his personal and literary reactions to *Ulysses*, as he was indubitably depicted therein. Nonetheless, his reader observes that Gogarty's aesthetic opposition to Modernism, which meant that he simply disagreed with even Joyce's basic artistic methods, compounded his desire to dismiss *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as lunacy. One

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<sup>17</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 254]

<sup>18</sup> He repeats the claim: 'I am the only character in all his works who washes, shaves, and swims.' OStJG. *Mrs. Spendlove*. [p. 47]

may concur with Gogarty's formal views or not, yet this passage of 'They Think They Know Joyce' suggests that Gogarty's aesthetic antagonism to Modernism blinkered him to the artistic discoveries in Joyce's work:

Joyce's power of construction was weak, hence the obscene conjunction of *Ulysses* with the Homeric poem. As in the case of the so-called modern poets, Joyce's inheritors, a dislocated world demands a dislocated poem to describe it. But the business of the poet is to build anew and magnify, not to photograph or to hold a cracked mirror up to nature. It would be as logical to submit that you must talk broken English if you have a broken leg. This mere conglomeration without sequence has been excused by reviewers calling it the adventures of the subconscious or, contradictorily, the stream of consciousness. All an effort to give significance where there is none, and where none was intended. The fatuousness of life was what Joyce wished to convey and this he accomplished. We are told that Mrs. Bloom, for instance, means the blossoming earth. If so, why not say it, and sweetly without stench?<sup>19</sup>

'They Think They Know Joyce' is a reiteration of the themes in 'The Joyce I Knew,' and is interesting more for its vehemence than for its coherence of argument. In this essay Gogarty proposes the thesis that Joyce was an 'artist' in the 'Dublin sense': 'In the Dublin use of the word *artist* lies the key to James Joyce...In Dublin an *artist* is a merry droll, a player of hoaxes.'<sup>20</sup> Here yet again Gogarty insists that 'the key' to Joyce lies not in reading him, but in understanding his position in Irish society—or, that is, the position in Irish society Joyce held when Gogarty knew him, forty-five years earlier. Just as Gogarty's own literary time remained largely fixed on the Dublin of 1900-1939, so his interpretation of Joyce reads everything Joyce wrote through the prism of 1900-1905:

I wonder what all the worshippers of Joyce would say if they realised that they had become the victims of a gigantic hoax, of one of the most enormous leg-pulls in history. Floods of nonsense have been poured on James Joyce by those who know nothing about Dublin. The authors of these learned treatises see significances and palimpsests,

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<sup>19</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 266]

<sup>20</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 261]



connections with the nine months' gestation of the human embryo and the development of the earth, as well as parodies of authors appropriate to the theme.

I think with sorrow of the Joyce worshippers. Perhaps when we consider that their enthusiasm is the measure of their ignorance it would be folly to try to enlighten them.<sup>21</sup>

Gogarty again fails to write to his title in 'They Think They Know Joyce.' Nowhere in the essay does Gogarty remark the false conflation therein, whereby the Joyce that Gogarty claims to know is a man, and the Joyce that 'They' claim to know is the synecdoche for his writings. Although Gogarty justly writes of himself as 'I, who knew Joyce and the Dublin in which he lived and the way it treated him,'<sup>22</sup> he fails to explain why this incorporation of personal history is pertinent to the reading of Joyce. Indeed, the essay unintentionally suggests that this personal knowledge of Joyce contributes to Gogarty's misreading of Joyce's work, for Gogarty fails to see the fictionalisation that Joyce effected upon real people and events in Dublin. Gogarty sees these as distortions only. 'They Think They Know Joyce' is an aesthetic essay that Gogarty tries to write as memoir, yet he is here more insistent upon the factuality of his recollection of the past than he was in any of his own works. It fails, among other reasons, because he never justifies the insertion of his memories into an assessment of the stresses in Modernist literature, and in the cultural reception of experimental writing.

'They Think They Know Joyce' asserts that knowing Joyce personally is sufficient authority to query a strictly literary understanding of Joyce's works. This was a dangerous strategy to take for a man who had built his literary technique upon the notion of mingled invention and memory, of 'phantasy in fact.' This thesis has observed that Gogarty repeatedly asserts the element of fantasy in his Irish books, even whilst writing first-person narrative memoirs that appear largely congruent with his own life. After the

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<sup>21</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 262]

<sup>22</sup> Beatty, Jr., [Ed.]. *Saturday Review Gallery*. [p. 265]

implied challenge of 'They Think They Know Joyce,' however, the imprecision of Gogarty's writing became a matter of trustworthiness and reliability.

## II. 'THEY THINK THEY KNOW JOYCE': RESPONSES TO GOGARTY'S JOYCE

By claiming to stand upon the authority of personal acquaintance with Joyce, Gogarty left himself fully vulnerable to those who also knew Joyce, and wished to dispute Gogarty's claims. Padraic and Mary Colum questioned Gogarty in precisely this manner, and subsequently asserted their own right to personal authority on Joycean issues by titling their joint memoir, *Our Friend James Joyce*. Having read 'The Joyce I Knew,' Padraic Colum immediately replied to it in the same journal, his letter appearing in the 22 February 1941 edition of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Colum's letter properly distinguishes between Gogarty's understanding of Joyce the young man, and Joyce the writer: 'Oliver Gogarty's portrait of James Joyce in the National Library and James Joyce in his student and post-student days is quite admirable. But Oliver Gogarty fails completely in his approach to James Joyce the writer.'<sup>23</sup> Although Colum clearly positions himself as a more reliable authority on Joyce than Gogarty—for example, by noting of one of Gogarty's anecdotes, '[Joyce] assured me he never said anything of the kind'—Colum's basic point is fair-minded and correct: that Gogarty writes from a

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<sup>23</sup> Padraic Colum. 'Oliver Gogarty on James Joyce.' *The Saturday Review of Literature*. 22 February 1941. [p. 11]

perspective that conflates his impressions of the youthful Joyce with the work the mature Joyce produced.

Mary Colum's response to 'They Think They Know Joyce' is less persuasive. Slightly more than one month after 'They Think They Know Joyce' was published Mary Colum answered Gogarty with her article 'A Little Knowledge of Joyce' (in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, 29 April 1950). Mary Colum is exemplary of the tendency to treat Gogarty's occasional factual errors, and his aesthetic objections to Joyce's work, as active attempts to misrepresent Joyce:

Oliver Gogarty, whose article "They Think They Know Joyce" recently appeared in these pages, was for a couple of student years in Dublin acquainted with James Joyce in the flesh. But as he left Ireland for the Continent when he was twenty-two, and as Oliver Gogarty saw him only once afterwards on one of his temporary visits to Dublin, he had no means of knowing the mature Joyce. Not only was the man who wrote "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake" and "Portrait of the Artist" unknown to him, but he had at no time any conception of the creator who was James Joyce. The man Oliver Gogarty did know was the youthful author of a book of poems, "Chamber Music," and something of the man who wrote "Dubliners." On the assumption on the part of his readers that Oliver Gogarty knew far more than this, he has succeeded in placing all over the country in strategic positions attacks and misinformations about Joyce, his family, his friends, his readers, and his work. Whereas some of the misinformation in "They Think They Know Joyce"—such as the reference to Mrs. Carola Gideon Welcker as Mr. Giedion Welcker...—may be of no particular consequence, yet these inaccuracies indicate the confusion and misinformation that permeate the article. It is true, as Oliver Gogarty says, that floods of nonsense have been poured out about James Joyce, but the greatest complier of nonsense has been Oliver Gogarty himself. I shall take this opportunity of correcting some of it.<sup>24</sup>

Mary Colum's article exemplifies a significant shift in the reaction to Gogarty's writing, for it presents mistakes as 'misinformation,' and treats Gogarty's statements of aesthetic and personal disapproval of Joyce as 'placing all over the country in strategic positions attacks and misinformations about Joyce, his family, his friends, his readers, and his

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<sup>24</sup> Mary Colum. 'A Little Knowledge of Joyce' in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. 29 April 1950. [p. 10]

work.’ There is, in this article, an assertion of volitional malignancy and misrepresentation that is unprovable. Like Gogarty, however, Colum too wrote articles and reviewed books, so when she asserts that one of the other Irish authorities on Irish literature in New York was unreliable, and that ‘I shall take this opportunity of correcting’ him, there is a detectable element of jostling for positions of interpretive authority over Irish literature in the American market. Nonetheless, both Padraic and Mary Colum illustrate the critical predicament in which Gogarty found himself: by asserting dissentient views of Joyce’s work, and insisting upon the personal authority of having known Joyce, Gogarty could appear inaccurate, or intentionally misrepresentative, when others who knew Joyce could show Gogarty to be factually wrong.

The extremity of this combined questioning of Gogarty’s memory and his motives appears in an article by Joyce’s younger brother Stanislaus. Stanislaus Joyce and Gogarty always disliked one another, even when Gogarty and James Joyce were companionable. Stanislaus’s diaries from his youthful period in Dublin betray a distinct feeling of inferiority towards his brother,<sup>25</sup> and a resentment of those friends of James’s with whom James preferred to associate.<sup>26</sup> These diaries reveal Stanislaus’s early dislike of Gogarty, noting that ‘Gogarty is treacherous in his friendship towards Jim,’<sup>27</sup> ‘Gogarty has nothing in him and precious little character, and is already becoming heavy,’<sup>28</sup> ‘Gogarty is generally regarded as a dangerous companion. He is scarcely this until he is intimate, but

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<sup>25</sup> ‘My life has been modelled on Jim’s example, yet when I am accused, by my unprepossessing Uncle John or by Gogarty, of imitating him, I can truthfully deny the charge.’ Stanislaus Joyce, [George H. Healey, Ed.]. *The Complete Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1971. [p.50]

<sup>26</sup> ‘One thing can be said of Jim’s friends—Colum, Byrne, Gogarty, Cousins and those, that they are good liars.’ S. Joyce, [Healey, Ed.]. *Diary*. [p. 33]

<sup>27</sup> S. Joyce, [Healey, Ed.]. *Diary*. [p. 25]

<sup>28</sup> S. Joyce, [Healey, Ed.]. *Diary*. [p. 26]

he is certainly a most demoralising person intellectually.’<sup>29</sup> Later, when Gogarty and Joyce had broken, James and Stanislaus continued to note Gogarty’s personal successes with cynical observations in their correspondence.

From the beginning, therefore, Stanislaus was suspicious and resentful of Gogarty, whom he felt to be subverting James from James’s real artistic abilities. Gogarty’s claim to interpret James’s work through personal knowledge was thus doubly offensive to Stanislaus, who could also claim to know Joyce, but who further believed that one of James’s real accomplishments in Dublin was to *escape* from Gogarty’s friendship.<sup>30</sup> It was in this spirit that Stanislaus published his essay, ‘An Open Letter to Dr. Oliver Gogarty.’

Although Stanislaus’s article is little known, it is useful in that it most clearly articulates the general critical dismissal of Gogarty’s recollective writings, particularly in that it—like Mary Colum’s article—attributes Gogarty’s factual errors and inaccuracies to personal motives, and finds in these mistakes mendacity, intentional omission, or unreliable memory. Stanislaus is direct in his attack along these lines: ‘You entitled your article “They Think They Know Joyce.” As you are so sure you did, it would be advisable to try in any future article on him to be right at least occasionally about

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<sup>29</sup> S. Joyce, [Healey, Ed.], *Diary*. [p. 32]

<sup>30</sup> ‘You had privily declared your intention of making a drunkard of [James] in order ‘to break his spirit.’ ...He was forewarned, and he was old enough to take care of himself...your partial success must have been a source of great satisfaction to you, though dashed with a slight sense of disappointment owing to your utter failure to break his spirit.’ S. Joyce. ‘An Open Letter to Dr. Oliver Gogarty’ in *Interim Magazine*. Volume IV, 1954, Numbers 1-2. University of Washington, Seattle. [p. 55] It is credible that ‘the spirit’ in James Joyce that Gogarty thought alcohol would ‘break’ was not the fierce artistic devotion that Stanislaus believes it was, but instead that spirit of aloofness that Gogarty repeatedly notes as the element in Joyce’s character that prevented him from joining in sociable interaction.

ascertainable facts.<sup>31</sup> He corrects Gogarty on numerous factual points that well illustrate

Gogarty's difficulty in claiming the authority of personal knowledge:

My brother never taught in the Berlitz School in Paris. The name of the lady who financed him is not Wearing. She did not make him an allowances. My brother did not labour for a dozen years at *Ulysses* in Trieste. The offensive reference in *Dubliners*, the existence of which you doubt, was not to King Edward VII but to Queen Victoria. It was not "unlikely." I can quote it from memory: "Here is this chap come to the throne now after his bloody old bitch of a mother keeping him out of it till the man was grey."...The grant from the Privy purse could not have influenced him in any way as it was made at least two years after *Dubliners* had been published. The grant was given by Sir Edmund Gosse at the suggestion of Yeats, and the purpose, as most people interested in my brother know, was to counteract very active German cultural propaganda in Zurich during the First World War...It is equally false to insinuate that my brother was influenced in writing *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by a precarious allowance from a rich lady which made it possible for him to live in comfort for the first time, and that it was, therefore, impossible for him to stop clowning since he had begun so successfully. It is false for at least three reasons: firstly, because *Ulysses* was planned and partly written in Trieste before the First World War and carried forward to the Nausicaa episode before he received the gift; secondly, because Miss Harriet Weaver (not Wearing) did not make him an allowance, but settled a very generous sum on him outright and unconditionally; and thirdly—at least so far as *Finnegans Wake* is concerned—because Miss Weaver, if I am rightly informed, liked it as little as I did.<sup>32</sup>

Almost none of these points is of true significance in studying Joyce—it has no bearing upon an understanding of *Ulysses* whether or not Joyce's benefactress was named Weaver or Wearing—but Gogarty's claim to authority lies in precisely his ability to supply such biographical information. No matter how irrelevant the individual errors may appear, their number, and their origin in that biographical area that Gogarty asserts as his own purview, makes Gogarty appear unreliable, if not intentionally inaccurate. Stanislaus

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<sup>31</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 49]

<sup>32</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [pp. 49-50]

makes that allegation precisely: 'It is difficult to hold the balance between what you really do not know and what you are endeavoring to misrepresent.'<sup>33</sup>

Although Stanislaus's correction of Gogarty's facts appears damning of Gogarty's reliability, Stanislaus also unwittingly displays the ease of error by himself making questionable, if not entirely inaccurate, statements. When, for example, he disputes Gogarty's claim that 'nobody in England takes Joyce to be a colossus,' Stanislaus suggests, amongst other citations of praise for his brother, that 'T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf would be more or less in agreement [that Joyce was a colossus].'<sup>34</sup> Yet Woolf's reception of Joyce's work is characterised by intrigued suspicion; she memorably described *Ulysses* as being the result of 'a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples,'<sup>35</sup> and noted in her diary on 26 August 1922, 'I dislike *Ulysses* more & more—that is think it more & more unimportant & don't even trouble conscientiously to make out its meanings.'<sup>36</sup> Stanislaus unwittingly proves how easy it is for even those who knew Joyce well to get factual details wrong.

Stanislaus cleverly attempts to undermine Gogarty's tendency to assert personal knowledge as pertinent to literary interpretation: 'You are an untrustworthy guide to my brother's life and character, but criticism of his work cannot be so easily answered, all criticism being so largely subjective.'<sup>37</sup> This assertion of difference between biographical criticism and literary criticism is a subtle rhetorical tactic Stanislaus employs to separate, as Gogarty seeks to unite, the interrelation of biographical and literary criticism. Yet, here

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<sup>33</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 51]

<sup>34</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 51]

<sup>35</sup> Ellmann. *James Joyce*. [p. 528]

<sup>36</sup> Virginia Woolf, [Ed. Anne Olivier Bell]. *Diary of Virginia Woolf*. (Vol. II) London: Hogarth Press. 1978. [pp. 195-196]

<sup>37</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 52]

again, Stanislaus unwittingly reveals the difficulty of keeping such criticisms separate, as his refutation of Gogarty's article includes much abusive personal comment: he attacks Gogarty's taste ('My brother, for his part, was not so easily stirred by common or garden manifestations of beauty. He left its trappings and chocolate-box ideals to you...'<sup>38</sup>), his appearance of hypocrisy ('I read with some surprise that you are now on the side of the angels, and all for "sense and decency." I remember so well the time when you were all for nonsense and indecency'<sup>39</sup>), and even Gogarty's son ('Noll—who, I note with some surprise, is no longer naughty in his second childhood'<sup>40</sup>). Although Stanislaus's article seeks to refute Gogarty's factual inaccuracies, and to imply a scurrilous motive to these deviations, he in fact offers support for Gogarty by making his own factual errors and proving unable himself to disassociate his personal memories of Gogarty from his assessment of the article Gogarty wrote.

Stanislaus persuasively suggests Gogarty's tendency to be wrong about 'ascertainable facts.' Oddly, however, the reader notes in a different article that Gogarty got some of this information right—in 1947 Gogarty published his article, 'James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist' in *To-Morrow* magazine, and this article was reprinted in Gogarty's 1948 collection, *Mourning Became Mrs. Spendlove*. Although Stanislaus castigates Gogarty for his errors in 'They Think They Know Joyce,' Gogarty correctly reported several of these 'ascertainable facts' in 'James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist':

[James Joyce had] thought of forming himself into a company, the shareholders in which were to receive all the proceeds from his future writings. The idea was novel. The shareholders would have to keep and humor him. Already, I said, I could see them issuing an unbalanced sheet. It was left to the British government to invest the royal

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<sup>38</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 52]

<sup>39</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [pp. 53-54]

<sup>40</sup> S. Joyce. 'Open Letter.' [p. 52]



bounty of \$500 a year in him, and to a Mrs. Weaver, later, to put \$100,000 into that stock. There were worse investments than in James Joyce, Inc....It was [W. B. Yeats] and Ezra Pound who secured from Mr. Asquith for Joyce, who was then in Zurich, the royal bounty already mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

Thus several years before 'They Think They Know Joyce,' Gogarty here correctly records James Joyce's benefactress as 'Weaver' instead of 'Wearing' (although he here mistakenly records her as 'Mrs.' instead of 'Miss'), and attributes to Yeats and Pound the obtaining of Joyce's Royal sinecure.

It is evident that Stanislaus saw in Gogarty's essays an attempt by his brother's old enemy to use the authority of acquaintance to dismiss James's artistic achievements—and he was partially correct. Nonetheless, Stanislaus's depiction of Gogarty as intentionally misrepresenting Joyce is as subjective a reading of Gogarty as Gogarty's is of James Joyce. Gogarty did indeed present his memories of Joyce as relevant to the consideration of Joyce's writing yet, as this thesis has observed, Gogarty invariably presents subjective inspiration as being the true constituent of greatness, personal or artistic. From neither Joyce personally, nor *Ulysses* artistically, did Gogarty derive the sensation of ennoblement or transcendence that Gogarty equated with greatness. For Joyce to present (what Gogarty saw as) stylistically anarchic memoirs of Dublin devoted to the mediocre and the common was entirely inconsistent with everything that Gogarty believed about art and personality. For Gogarty, the obviously dispiriting qualities of *Ulysses* were perfectly supported by what he knew of James Joyce personally, and he incorporated that knowledge in his treatment of Joyce's artistic works.

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<sup>41</sup> OStJG. *Spendlove*. [pp. 46, 49]

### III. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT GOGARTY'S DEPICTIONS OF JOYCE

Gogarty's incessant blending of personal and literary judgement in his memoirs about Joyce was, as this thesis demonstrates, entirely characteristic and consistent with his aesthetics. This chapter has argued that Gogarty's essays about Joyce, whilst of little interpretative use to the explication of *Ulysses*, are nonetheless understandable as expressions of Gogarty's literary beliefs. He sought ennoblement, inspiration, and beauty in art, and devoted his memoirs to writing about just such subjective responses provoked in him by individuals. In *Ulysses*, Gogarty found incoherence and squalor formed from the memories of one he knew, and believed he could correct. Yet his corrections exposed him to the very fact about memory that he had proclaimed throughout his works—the uplifting qualities that he most admired in people and art were those that provoked a subjective reaction that was not tied to, and usually transcended, factual matters. His interest was in correctly representing the spirit of enlargement that he felt, but not the specific facts. Instead of being able to write memoirs about someone who, like Yeats or Stephens, gave him an impression of timelessness and wonder, Gogarty found himself relying upon the factuality of his memories to support a dissentient reading of a respected author.

It is distinctly unfortunate that so much of Gogarty's posthumous reputation depends upon his brief connection with Joyce; although he will never escape the influence of *Ulysses*, his work has been excessively discounted because of his few late articles about Joyce. When Joyce left the Sandycove Tower in 1904, neither he nor Gogarty had published anything of what came to be their works, yet both men's artistic

lives were defined by that day. It is ironic, however, that those critics who most forcefully defend Joyce against (what they see as) Gogarty's retribution for *Ulysses* dismiss him in the same terms that they believe Gogarty employs to dismiss Joyce. Their interpretations are as biased by negative personal impression as Gogarty's are alleged to be:

The problem of Joyce's biography is further complicated by frequent excursions into print of Joyce's personal enemies. Safe from personal rebuttal by the dead artist, bristling Dubliners like Oliver St. John Gogarty are doing their utmost to prove that Joyce's fame is an unfortunate mistake. One cannot blame Gogarty, the model for Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*, for wanting to get even with the eccentric youth who shared his Martello Tower and later revealed him in literature at his Shaun-like worst. Yet there should be a difference between legitimate revelation of Joyce's weaknesses, literary and personal, and the actual attempt to write off the entire career of the most exciting and influential novelist of this century as 'a gigantic hoax...one of the most enormous leg-pulls in history.'<sup>42</sup>

It is lamentable that there has been so little scholarly recognition that Gogarty's own weaknesses, literary and personal, do not necessitate the attempt to write off his entire career as well.

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<sup>42</sup> Marvin Magalaner & Richard M. Kain. *Joyce—The Man, The Work, The Reputation*. New York: NYU Press. 1956. [p. 24]

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

This thesis has proposed a reading to account for the foremost elements in the totality of Gogarty's writings—the depiction of himself amidst the recreation of people and events from his life. Noting the general tendency of Gogarty's recollective self-depictions to eschew confessionality and personal assessment, it has argued for a reading of Gogarty as a memoirist whose primary subject matter is the inspirational influence to wonder and transcendence that he derived from individuals, social circles, and ennobling occurrences in his life. It has allied this choice of subject matter with Gogarty's declaration, in *Sackville Street*, that he seeks to represent in his work 'the grammar of greatness' to those who have not been so fortunate in experiencing such inducements to wonder and nobility. The thesis has suggested that Gogarty associates these moments of illumination and inspiration with an experience of timelessness against the mutability of human life. This timeless association Gogarty represents in his works as a continuum in which the past and the present intermingle fluidly, as they may do in memory, uniting the dead and the living. Furthermore, it has observed Gogarty's reticence to portray those elements in his life that did not supply him with this sensation of atemporality and elevation, which results in significant omissions in his literary record of his life. The thesis has suggested that the significant imbalance between Gogarty's record of his life in Ireland and the record of his life in the United States reflects both his admiration for the people he knew in Ireland, and his relative social isolation in the United States.

To read his writings as a record of his life is to confront one of the most enigmatic aspects of Oliver St. John Gogarty, which is the significant dissociation between the

outsized qualities of his life, and the frequently disappointing merits of his literary works. Although some of his poems have won deserved recognition, and the boisterous aspects of *As I was Going Down Sackville Street* and *Tumbling in the Hay* make them engaging recreations of a time important to Ireland's literature, the total body of Gogarty's work offers only occasional glimpses of the talent so evident in Gogarty's personal achievements.

Part of the difficulty in reconciling the obvious differences in promise between Gogarty's legend and his works lies in the extraordinary praise that Gogarty received from exceptionally distinguished figures. It seems probable that, had Gogarty not been so highly hailed by the most eminent artists in his lifetime, his posthumous reputation would be higher than it is now, for it could have established itself as significant minor writing, instead of labouring under the burden of being lauded by genius. The particular irony of this situation lies in the fact that figures such as Yeats, whose generous selection of Gogarty's poems in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* attracted widespread dismissal, may in fact have harmed Gogarty's reputation by establishing too high an expectation of his strengths. For Yeats, much of the value of Gogarty's work was its exhibition of character, as he noted to his friend Dorothy Wellesley: 'he sings a brave song & so makes a whinging propaganda look ridiculous.'<sup>1</sup> Had Yeats written that in his introduction to the *Oxford Book*, instead of—or in addition to—suggesting that Gogarty was 'one of the great lyric poets of our age,' he might have inspired more critics to assess the demonstrable merits of the Gogarty poems therein, instead of provoking them with claims of Gogarty's greatness.

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<sup>1</sup> Yeats. *Letters on Poetry*. [p.128]

Gogarty is also unfortunate in that the qualities so often claimed for him by those who knew and admired him are those that are exceptionally difficult to translate into lasting literature—wit, immediate apposition of quotation or reference, unsurpassed quick-mindedness, and conversational dexterity. Although Gogarty’s writings, at their best, offer exhilarating glimpses of the quicksilver shifts of his mind, they lack the immediacy and unexpectedness that made him the centre of Dublin society for forty years. This thesis has illustrated the fascination that conversation and mutual exchange of ideas had for Gogarty, and it has noticed his unusual success in presenting his memoirs as collective, instead of individual, portraits. Yet despite the distinction of several of his books, Gogarty was not able to translate his conversational abilities wholly into any work.

Most importantly, Gogarty’s life was marked by the highest of distinction in an extraordinary variety of fields—the catalogue of his achievements is astonishing, the level of his attainments was exceptional, and the diversity of his skills perhaps unique in his era. Moreover, he embraced life with such verve that Mario M. Rossi felt in him an enthusiasm similar to that which distinguished ‘the great Italians of the Quattrocento...the enthusiasm of the man who lives with full consciousness for that admirable phenomenon which is called life.’<sup>2</sup> This led him to befriend the great, travel widely, learn to fly, save lives, escape assassination, make and spend fortunes, and generally create about himself a legendary personality. He recognised and enjoyed the tendency of legendary stories to accrue around him, as the French journalist Simone Téry noticed when Gogarty had just escaped from the IRA:

Le lendemain on le félicite :

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<sup>2</sup> Rossi, [Hone, trans.]. *Pilgrimage in the West*. [p. 105]

—Cette histoire prend des proportions de légende. On m'a dit que vous aviez nagé pendant un kilomètre. Naturellement, j'ai répété deux. Maintenant, on doit bien en être arrivé à dix ou douze...

Le docteur se met à rire :

—Qu'on ne dépasse pas cinquante kilomètres, car la rivière n'en a pas plus. Alors, ça paraîtrait un peu improbable...<sup>3</sup>

Yet in Gogarty's writings he does not match the level of accomplishment that he set for himself in so many other endeavours. Although an unusually skilled poet, and a memoirist capable of truly engaging recreations of his past, Gogarty could not attain the summit of distinction that he attained in a striking number of other fields. He was a figure of exceptional accomplishment, and a meritorious minor writer.

To Gogarty's credit, he does not claim for himself the literary importance that others claimed for him. Because he was forthright in his expressions of what he felt art should be—and what it should not be—Gogarty has perhaps developed a reputation for being more assertive of the value of his own works than was the case. Throughout his depictions of his life, he presents an amused and self-deprecating figure whose greatest pleasure is to associate with friends, either the colourful or the incomparably accomplished, and to experience the inspiration with which they fill him. Of his own writings, he tends to be openly (and jocularly) despairing, as when he observes to the Muse: 'you, though I loved you well, loved me but lightly.' This is too harsh a judgement; although Prof. Carens' assertion 'there are perhaps a hundred poems by which he will live'<sup>4</sup> is excessive, it would be an indubitable diminishment of twentieth century Irish poetry to lose such of Gogarty's poems as 'Ringsend,' 'Leda and the Swan,' 'Golden Stockings,' and 'Non Dolet.' They represent a traditional, balanced,

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<sup>3</sup> Simone Téry. *En Irlande*. Paris : Flammarion. 1923.

<sup>4</sup> Carens. *Surpassing Wit*. [p. 237]

accomplished, and ordered poetry that expresses a voice of valuable contrast to the consciously modern and experimental poetry of their time.

Gogarty's literary record of his life is shaped by his notion that art should ennoble, beautify, and inspire. His belief in the decorum literature deserved meant that intensely personal matters, however interesting, were also inappropriate for publication. For both of these reasons Gogarty omits numerous events, when recording his life, that one may wish he had written down, such as a general depiction of his life in New York, a summary of his 1906 trip to San Francisco, or more extensive recollections of James Joyce. Yet the record of his life that he left in his body of works offers collectively what he claimed for the Chinese portrait in *Sackville Street*: a depiction of an individual by focusing upon what he admired, and what he valued. Gogarty's literary self-portrait therefore reflects his life in the sincere belief he had in joy, accomplishment, friendship, and inspiration, and in the ability of individuals to transcend everyday cares and to experience, even if momentarily, what he calls 'the experience of immortality.'

By recording his life through revelatory interaction with exemplary individuals, Gogarty was forced to return repeatedly to the same people and stories that best demonstrated the inspiration and friendship he promoted. For this reason, it is widely agreed that when Gogarty died in 1957 he had largely written himself out. The general anaemia and anecdotal replication of his posthumous collection, *A Week End in the Middle of the Week*, indicates the exhaustion of his last writings. Given that Gogarty simply would not address certain topics in his life, it seems inarguable that he had nothing left to express when he died. Yet the extent of Gogarty's success in presenting his friends and his experiences to his readers may be judged by the exhaustion into which



such astonishing repletion fell. Gogarty lived a life of outstanding diversity and varied accomplishment; he befriended an astounding swath of talented individuals of the highest distinction in numerous fields; he saved lives both as a physician and as a rescuer of drowning men; he wrote poetry and prose that retains a defensible value; his political career was almost classical in its twists, successes, and failures, going from early sympathy with rebels, to an office in their state when these rebels took power, to being captured by his enemies, and eventually to a period of exile when an enemy came into power; and yet even when all his other accomplishments are added to these, it is still generally agreed that Gogarty had little if anything more left to write when he died. Although Gogarty's memoirs vary widely in their effectiveness, it is difficult to argue that they do not—in their totality—give a valuable and engaging record of a period, a literary culture, and an individual, of exceptional distinction and interest.

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### IV. MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

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Bucknell University

Colby College

Cornell University

University of Delaware

Harvard University

National Library of Ireland

New York Public Library

Personal Collection, Mr. Aidan Heavey

Personal Collection, Mr. Guy St. John Williams

Personal Collection, the author

Trinity College Dublin

University of Texas, Austin

University of Victoria, British Columbia