

Yeats and Dr Gogarty

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IN a recent study, Giorgio Melchiori has drawn attention to a number of poems by the Irish poet and wit, Oliver St John Gogarty (1878–1957) and has argued that these verses generally and one poem in particular were a verbal source for Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan'.¹ The argument is convincing; but Professor Melchiori, basing his observations on a study of Gogarty's *An Offering of Swans* (1923) does not sufficiently consider the fact that Gogarty produced eight other publications between 1916 and 1933. This gives reason to believe that Gogarty's verse may have exerted an influence on Yeats both before and after the appearance of *An Offering of Swans*. Their friendship in 1923 was already of long standing and the two poets, who first met in 1901, were to become close and life-long friends sharing, despite differences in personality, similar attitudes towards life, society, politics and art. Gogarty admired the 'Archpoet', as he called him, and Yeats envied the witty and ebullient Dr Gogarty, claiming that Gogarty's personality revealed one of those 'swift, indifferent men'² in whom he saw his opposite. He liked Gogarty's bawdy wit, his social style and diverse interests and no doubt approved of Mario Rossi's judgement on this conversationalist, surgeon, athlete, politician and poet:

... a man who recalls the great Italians of the Quattrocento. For me at least to know Gogarty was to realise the enthusiasm of the man who lives with full consciousness for that admirable phenomenon which is called life.³

Furthermore, and despite the carelessness his friend often displayed, Yeats admired Gogarty's verses, observing that the

¹ Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*, 1960, pp. 97–8.

² See Yeats's preface from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), reprinted in Gogarty, *Collected Poems*, New York, 1954, p. vii.

³ Mario Rossi, *Pilgrimage in the West*, translated by J. M. Hone, Dublin 1933, pp. 43–4.

poet sang 'a gay, stoic . . . (and) . . . heroic song'.¹ There is some truth in this, though some readers might question Yeats's conclusion: 'I . . . think him,' he wrote, 'one of the great lyric poets of our age'.²

Such Yeatsian praise is not isolated, however, and his view in *An Offering of Swans* that, Gogarty's verse, though variable, at best is beautiful, noble and joyous, may be taken as characteristic.³ In the preface to *Wild Apples* (1930) there is evidence that Gogarty's work stayed in Yeats's mind, remembered for some vivid image or a pleasing cadence:

I have not been able to forget these two years that Ringsend whore's drunken lament, that little red lamp before some holy picture, that music at the end

'. . . Of the lapsing, unsoilable,
Whispering sea.'⁴

Elsewhere Yeats refers to Gogarty's early reputation as a bawdy wit, recalling 'sayings that we all repeated' and, more to the point, the subterranean 'Rabelaisian verse that we all copied'.⁵ Such statements invite examination: but in order to determine the exact nature of Gogarty's influence on Yeats, a review of Gogarty's publications is essential, so as to establish what the *Collected Poems* (1951) does not provide: the full range of his work in poetry; and an approximate chronology of his principal poems.

Gogarty's earliest verses, chiefly bawdy, parodic, blasphemous and mocking, were composed during his Trinity College days and as a newly-qualified doctor (1898-1907). Well known to many of his contemporary Dubliners, these poems were circulated orally and in private manuscript: understandably, many of the more scatological were never printed under Gogarty's own name, though Joyce and Gogarty planned to publish a selection to be called *Cockcrows* or, alternatively, *Ditties Of No Tone*. This plan never materialized and it is difficult to discover what these poems were. However, it is reasonable to suppose,

¹ Gogarty, *Collected Poems*, p. vii.

² *Ibid.*

³ Gogarty, *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 4.

⁴ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1930, p. '4' [unnumbered].

⁵ Gogarty, *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 4.

on the strength of internal evidence,¹ that the collections Gogarty published some years later contained the majority of such youthful pieces as he still wished to see in print.

The first of these anthologies was *Hyperthuleana*, published in 1916 when Gogarty was thirty-eight: only five copies of this private edition were printed.² Two more publications appeared in the summer of 1918: *Secret Springs of Dublin Song*, an anthology of parodies and lampoons by anonymous writers, had fifteen poems by Gogarty. Perhaps because of the nature of this collection, Gogarty conceived the idea of a separate pamphlet of his more serious poems, to be published by the same Talbot Press: illustrated by Jack B. Yeats, the poet's brother, *The Ship* appeared under Gogarty's name that midsummer. His poetry, as distinct from his wit, became better known with the appearance of the Cuala Press's *An Offering of Swans* (1923): this was followed in 1924 by an enlarged English edition containing forty additional poems. These publications were succeeded by *Wild Apples* in 1928 and a second but differing edition, with a preface by Yeats, in 1930. Gogarty's first collected edition (*Selected Poems*) appeared in America in 1933, and a slightly different English version was published in 1938 under the title of *Others To Adorn*. His subsequent publications — *Elbow Room* (October 1939), *Perennial* (1946) and the English and American *Collected Poems* (1951 and 1954) are not relevant to a discussion of Yeats's sources, since the latter died in January 1939. But the individual volumes from 1916 onwards confirm: firstly that the themes and qualities Yeats admired in his prefaces were present in Gogarty's earliest verses; secondly that the correspondences between the two writers began sooner and were maintained longer than has been suspected; and thirdly that whilst Yeats undoubtedly influenced Gogarty, the classical, Rabelaisian and original elements in Gogarty's verse had both immediate and long-term influences on Yeats's work.

Of these influences, the classical are amongst the earliest and are ultimately the most important. Critics have often remarked

¹ See in particular the poems on J. P. Mahaffy, John Elwood, Carson, George Moore and Sir Horace Plunkett in *Secret Springs*; and the verses on the Kips, George O'Neill, William McElroy and 'The Muse' in *Hyperthuleana*.

² Printed by F. J. Walker, The Gaelic Press, Upper Liffey Street. In the thirties, before he went to America, Gogarty had 25 more copies printed.

that not only did Yeats's themes and attitudes change in the period between the publication of *In The Seven Woods* (1904) and *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) but so also did his use of symbol. The few verses Yeats composed between 1900 and 1910 show a turning away from Celtic mythology and the development of a new chain of images chiefly centred on Homer and specifically related to the Trojan War. T. R. Henn wonders if, at that time, Yeats was reading Homer in translation.¹ What is certain is that Yeats, who had little Latin and less Greek, had come to rely on his friend's knowledge and love of the classics developed during his days at Trinity. Early in 1904, Gogarty began work on a verse translation of Sophocles, one of many different versions Yeats was to use in the long process of interpreting *Oedipus Rex* (1926) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1927): and there can be no doubt that Gogarty provided ready references and other translations when they were required.² Yeats's own evidence suggests that he was an early admirer of Gogarty's first verses,³ many of which appeared in *Hypertbuleana*, *The Ship*, and *Secret Springs*. Here Yeats found themes reminiscent of Juvenal and Horace and references which, apart from the local and topical, tended to be predominantly classical in origin. These allusions naturally enough are wide-ranging: but a significant number of poems, particularly those subsequently printed in *Hypertbuleana*, carry allusions which Yeats was increasingly to use. The 1916 volume has, for example, three references to Centaurs, a popular symbol in both writers; and no less than four direct allusions to Troy, one to the Trojan horse, one to Agamemnon, two to Helen, one to Danae, and two to Leda.⁴

The Leda references are particularly interesting. Yeats had first shown interest in the legend in *The Adoration of the Magi* (1896),⁵ and it is clear from Gogarty's elegy on Yeats that the two poets exchanged conversations on the subject at Fairfield before

¹ T. R. Henn, *The Lonely Tower*, 1965, p. 119.

² Yeats completed a translation of *Oedipus Rex* in 1911-12, but never used it. For a note on this and subsequent translations see A. N. Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, 1968, p. 305.

³ See notes 3-5, p. 32.

⁴ Centaurs on pp. 14 and 39; Troy on pp. 19, 24, 27 and 40; Agamemnon and the Horse, p. 6. Helen on pp. 25 and 53; Hector, p. 39; Danae, p. 42; Leda, pp. 25 and 46.

⁵ Yeats refers to 'another Leda' who 'would open her knees to the swan' and begin a new age'. Quoted in Ellmann, *Yeats, The Man and the Masks*, 1960, p. 245.

Gogarty sold his house in 1912. No doubt these discussions further stimulated Yeats's imagination. But *Hypertbuleana* provides striking evidence that Gogarty was the first writer to make direct verse references to the myth, anticipating by a number of years Yeats's first indirect allusion to that 'sprightly girl trodden by a bird'.¹ Gogarty has a facetious reference to Ledaean eggs in a lampoon on George O'Neill, a member of the Feis Ceoil when Joyce sang at the Festival in 1904;² and the myth is also alluded to in the long mock-heroic 'To a Cock',³ dedicated to Augustus John whom Gogarty probably met for the first time in 1908.⁴

The latter poem is the most important poem in the collection for it apparently had a long-term influence on Yeats's work and shows striking parallels with Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan'. Like Yeats's sonnet, Gogarty's long, ironic poem is about a rape, or at least a fierce seduction by a bird: here a farmyard cock pursues a small brown hen. Gogarty mocks the bird's proud appearance and the plain character of the hen; but he also mocks, by contrasting the bird's situation with that of man and woman, his own love which is 'too pitiful, too pensive, . . . and more compassionate'⁵ than the cock's passion which is only 'gratified / By Life's fierce flashes'.⁶ It is thus the bird rather than the man who invites comparison with gods and heroes in the series of allusions to the pursuit of Helen, Grace O'Malley, Europa, Semele, the Sabine women, Kathleen (who sought the company of St Kevin), and finally Leda —

What if I could appear
 As you do, and strike fear!
 But would she fail to sneer
 Who will not heed a
 Lover? nor cry 'Absurd
 You are, but as a bird . . . !
 Is it to be inferred
 That I am Leda?'⁷

¹ Yeats, 'His Phoenix', *Collected Poems*, 1960, p. 170.

² Gogarty, *Hypertbuleana*, 1916, p. 46.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ In *Chiaroscuro*, 1962, John suggests they met when he was first invited to Coole Park to paint Yeats, p. 84.

⁵ Gogarty, *Hypertbuleana*, p. 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

The hen is ironically compared to Helen; the cock itself has a body 'all a Troy / To house desire'¹ and conjures up in the poet's mind images of brightness and fire:

. . . Not Hercules aflame —
 Not dawn to heaven,
 Came with as great affright
 As you do burning bright . . .²

Professor Richard Ellmann has recently written somewhat sceptically about many of the sources suggested for Yeats's Leda sonnet and doubts whether such studies help in understanding how Yeats combined so many different ideas in one poem:³ the dramatic moment of fierce coupling; the burning of Troy; the breaking of the city, 'corresponding perhaps to the stages of sexual breakdown';⁴ and the juxtaposition of the human, the animal and the divine. Ellmann is clearly right to insist on relevance in Yeatsian studies, but it is doubtful whether he has adequately considered the influence of Gogarty's poem. For the conjunction of all these diverse ideas is to be found in 'To a Cock'; and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the poem was a significant verbal source. The allusions referred to earlier, and the images of brightness and fire associated with the cock, give way to the presentation of the hen in these terms:

Further she cannot go,
 She falters and lies low
 Brought down by love, a throe
 That throws us all;
 Soon to be scaled and hacked
 And, like a city, sacked
 With nothing left intact
 Within the wall.⁵

Apart from the poem's relevance to Yeats, there appears to be some anticipation of a shorter piece by Gogarty: 'After Galen' appeared in *Wild Apples* (1928 and 1930):

Only the Lion and the Cock,
 As Galen says, withstand Love's shock.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ R. Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, 1964, pp. ix-x.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Gogarty, *Hyperthuleana*, p. 27.

So, Dearest, do not think me rude
 If I yield now to lassitude
 But sympathise with me: I know
 You would not have me roar, or crow.¹

This was a poem that Yeats admired enough to include in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936). As such it is possible that these lusty creatures, together with the birds in 'To a Cock' and 'The Crowing of a Cock' gave more weighty emphasis to the classical cocks of Hades which Yeats refers to in 'Byzantium' and which seemingly have strong sexual connotations.²

Apart from 'Castle Corrib',³ the most strikingly influential poem in Gogarty's next collection, *The Ship* (1918), is 'The Old Goose'.⁴ Here the references are specifically Irish, but the poem belongs to the tradition of pastoral elegy and shares with 'To a Cock' certain mock heroic elements: in short, one is again aware of Gogarty's classical preferences. The structure of 'The Old Goose', involving the ironic opposition of man, bird and hero, together with the poem's metrical form, again recalls 'To a Cock', and it is possible both poems were written contemporaneously. The circumstances under which poet and bird meet are, however, somewhat different. The scene is rustic, it is evening, and both the speaker and the goose are old. The poet, identifying the goose with those 'Wild Geese' Irish mercenaries of former centuries⁵ and, specifically with the Tuatha de Danaan,⁶ contrasts this tame creature with more adventurous wild birds, and his own domestic life with the lives of those who 'broke (life) like a shell / And won great glory'.⁷ Like the poet the bird

¹ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1928, p. 18.

² See T. R. Henn, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-7.

³ See Gogarty, *The Ship*, 1918, p. 24; C. Weygandt in *The Time of Yeats*, 1937, p. 241, wrongly assumes that the similarity in this poem to Yeats's 'admiration for austere and kingly days of old time' and the approval of 'a certain substratum of savagery' in them is derived from Yeats. In fact, though the poem was preceded by Yeats's reflections on the solitary, scholarly life inspired by his Tower (see 'Ego Dominus Tuus'), the sentiments in Gogarty's poem, written before Yeats moved to Ballylee, appear to anticipate by some years some of the themes in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' and *The Tower*.

⁴ Gogarty, *The Ship*, pp. 13-17.

⁵ As a result of the Penal Laws, they fled from Ireland to serve in foreign armies.

⁶ The heroes of ancient Ireland: the children of the goddess Dana.

⁷ Gogarty, *The Ship*: see 'The Old Goose', p. 17.

is left behind after his contemporaries have gone to join those heroes:

Who found, in fighting, truth
Before old age had youth
Repudiated.¹

Gogarty's poem was possibly sparked off by Yeats's own 'September 1913' with its reference to 'the wild geese (who) spread / The grey wing upon every tide':² but 'The Old Goose', reinforced by 'Castle Corrib',³ must have been thematically pleasing and hence particularly stimulating when, deeply dispirited, Yeats found it difficult to write. In 1918, after the death in January of Major Robert Gregory, a man like Gogarty with diverse talents and extrovert personality, Yeats attempted various poems before writing the elegies 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death' and 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory'. One such poem was 'Shepherd and Goatherd', finished in March 1918.

All these poems may be set against the background of Gogarty's work: for almost certainly the newly-married Yeats, who stayed with the Gogartys on his return from England before moving into the Tower, read Gogarty's poems and saw J. B. Yeats's illustrations before the MS. went to the publisher. To the recognized sources⁴ of 'Shepherd and Goatherd' must be added, therefore, Gogarty's 'The Old Goose' which has striking correspondences. Both 'Shepherd and Goatherd' and 'The Old Goose' are pastoral, contrast youth and age, and use a bird to symbolize the adventurous spirit which is here one day and gone the next. Yeats's bird is the cuckoo: but his

. . . speckled bird that steers
Thousands of leagues oversea,
And runs or a while half flies
On his yellow legs through our meadows . . .⁵

combines the questing and the domestic character of Gogarty's old goose. Possibly, too, Gogarty's reference to the Tuatha de Danaan, the youthful and heroic dead, immortalized in

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

² W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 1960, p. 121.

³ See note 3, p. 37.

⁴ See A. N. Jeffares, *op. cit.*, for details of these, pp. 172 and 175.

⁵ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 161.

. . . some far western bight,
Where islands rest in light
Long after sunset . . .¹

reminded Yeats of the Gaelic Tir-nan-Oge, the country of the young, a place relevant to the occult and mystic belief, central to Yeats's poem, that Gregory will in death grow younger.

Yeats's 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory', like 'The Irish Airman' (compare, incidentally, Gogarty's 'To an Aviator' in *Hyperthuleana*),² develops a further idea in Gogarty. In these poems, written by midsummer 1918, Yeats contrasts those who linger out a long, tedious existence with those who, like Gogarty's farmyard cock or the Tuatha de Danaan wild geese, 'break beauty'³ or 'break life like a shell'.⁴ These lines in Yeats's long elegy: 'Some burn damp faggots, others may consume / the entire combustible world in one small room . . .'⁵ are related to Gogarty's conclusions about the ancient Irish heroes:

Never to use life well:⁶
That is the tale they tell,
Who broke life like a shell,
And won great glory.
But you and I are both
Inglorious in sloth,
Unless our ranging youth
Redeem our story.⁷

The significance of Gogarty's *An Offering of Swans* (1923) and its relevance to Yeats's Leda sonnet have been discussed at length by G. Melchiori and there is little point in repeating his argument here. It is worth stressing, however, that Gogarty's early allusions to Leda and the Trojan fate lend greater emphasis to the impression made on Yeats by the contents of the 1923 collection. It is important to recognize, too, that *An Offering* was published by Eyre and Spottiswoode in 1924 and that the English edition

¹ Gogarty, *The Ship*, p. 14.

² Gogarty, *Hyperthuleana*, pp. 22-3.

³ 'The Cock' in *Hyperthuleana*, p. 29.

⁴ 'The Old Goose' in *The Ship*, p. 17.

⁵ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 151.

⁶ Subsequently this line was altered to 'Love life and use it well' and this version remains in all later editions. See *Collected Poems*, p. 176. In both versions the poet's approval of heroic action is clear, though the later reading is more emphatic.

⁷ Gogarty, *The Ship*, p. 17.

contained some forty poems more than the Cuala original.¹ This second publication, together with *Wild Apples* (1928 and 1930) requires particular emphasis, for it was to be a fertile source of suggestion in Yeats's mind for many years, triggering off phrases, themes, even whole poems in later Yeatsian work, so that a whole poem is sometimes subtly related to a Gogarty original.

There is a most striking example of this in Yeats's development of Gogarty's 'Good Luck',² a lyric Yeats particularly admired. Written in 1929, Yeats's eighteen-line 'Lullaby'³ differs thematically in the final stanza: Yeats also prefers a seven-syllabled line and deploys the triple rhyme scheme differently. But the three-verse structure is the same and so is the rhythm. Yeats has drawn on Greek and Arthurian myth for the first two stanzas: his lovers, Helen and Paris, asleep in a golden bed, are developed from themes and images associated with Gogarty's allusions to Milanion's golden apples, and Atalanta, the defeated runner who 'had to go to bed a bride'.⁴ The race is possibly remembered in Yeats's running of roe and doe in stanza two; more certainly, the tree imagery, wild Tristram, and the effects of the magic potion derive from Gogarty's corresponding lines on Iseult and perhaps from a recollection of 'Portrait With Background' and those 'eyes of the green of the woods that maddened Tristram'.⁵

Gogarty's 'Miracle',⁶ discarded after its appearance in the 1924 edition, is based on Aphrodite's transformation of Galatea into 'a quick chryselephantine form'.⁷ 'Chryselephantine', here unique in Gogarty, anticipates the singular use of the word in Yeats's 'Wisdom'.⁸ Henn gives as visual source for the poem a painting

¹ The second edition confirms the extent to which Gogarty was attracted to the Leda legend before Yeats's sonnet appeared. See the allusion in 'To Augustus John', *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 39. This probably antedates a four-line song alluding to Zeus's transformations in pursuit of Leda and Europa which appeared in a Gogarty play, staged in November 1919. See Gogarty, *The Enchanted Trousers*, p. 13.

² Gogarty, *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 15.

³ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 300.

⁴ Gogarty, *An Offering*, 1924, p. 15.

⁵ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1928, p. 7. Gogarty has an early poem on the King Mark-Tristram-Iseult triangle: see 'Song Made by Sir Dinadan' in *Hyperthuleana*, p. 17.

⁶ Gogarty, *An Offering*, 1924, p. 34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 246.

called 'The Annunciation',¹ but the initial stimulus may have been verbal. Yeats, always susceptible to the sounds of words, may well have remembered Gogarty's phrase and, following that, the title and the substance of 'Miracle'. Gogarty's *Carpe Diem* poem, turning on the relationship between art and life, uses a miraculous pagan quickening to warn lovers that destructive Time can 'the loveliest miracles reverse'.² Yeats's 'Wisdom' also deals with the contrast between art and life and, not entirely seriously, puts a Christian miracle into reverse by suggesting that art gives a more satisfactory image than the living creature: in short, he concludes that the sculptor's or painter's portrayal of Mary is superior to the real woman.

'Miracle' is one of many verses dedicated to 'Hermione' which appear to have struck off complementary lines in Yeats.³ Other verses were clearly influenced by Yeats's own aristocratic preferences voiced in *Responsibilities* and *The Wild Swans at Coole*. But Gogarty's development of these ideas in 'The Conquest', 'To the Lady' (Ottoline Morrell) and 'Dunsany Castle'⁴ led to Yeats's assimilating rhythmic and verbal influences in, for example, his Coole Park poems. Against stanzas four and five of 'Coole Park and Ballylee 1931' we may set Gogarty's:

There was likely hid in words
 What could never anger Fame;
 The glory of continuous swords,
 The obligations of a name . . .

and

Could I doubt that her forbears
 Kept their foothold on the sands,
 Triumphed through eight hundred years,
 From the hucksters kept their lands

("The Conquest")⁵

¹ T. R. Henn, op. cit., p. 257-8.

² Gogarty, *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 54.

³ Compare 'A Privilege' (p. 34) in Gogarty, *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, with Yeats's lines for Anne Gregory in *Collected Poems*, p. 277. Both poems are hyperbolic in their praise of a woman's hair. Gogarty's conceit, in which the head is moated like a castle by surrounding hair, is condensed by Yeats into 'great honey-coloured / Ramparts at your ear'. Yeats also seems to remember 'When the Sun Shines' (*An Offering of Swans*, p. 11) where the speaker describes one who takes 'the heaven's light / To bind about her head . . .' and suggests . . .

That solid beams of sunlight there
 Are blended with the brown.,

⁴ See *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, pp. 31, 21 and 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and from 'Dunsany Castle'

It stands for actions done and days endured;
 Old causes God, in guiding Time, espoused,
 Who never brooks the undeserving long.
 I found there pleasant chambers filled with song,
 (And never were the Muses better housed)
 Repose and dignity and Fame assured.¹

Wild Apples (1928 and 1930) provides further illustrations of Gogarty's influence. His 'Release'² uses the story of Hermes, sent to rescue Odysseus from Calypso, to illustrate how the infatuated lover may be liberated and 'for a human-hearted love / Again . . . risk the sea'.³ Remembering, no doubt, Odysseus's island prison and the winged accoutrements of Hermes, Yeats later combined visual sources and, developing the captivity theme and sea and bird imagery, centred 'Her Triumph' on the story of Andromeda and Perseus. Another poem in *Wild Apples* 'With a Coin from Syracuse'⁴ is evidently dedicated to a young horsewoman: she is presented in terms which remind one of Maud Gonne as described in 'To a Young Girl':⁵ but Gogarty's

. . . Straight in the back and bone
 With head high like her own,
 And blood that tamed and mild,
 Can suddenly go wild . . .⁶

apparently suggested Yeats's . . .

Maud Gonne at Howth Station
 waiting a train,
 Pallas Athene in that straight back and arrogant head . . .

in 'Beautiful Lofty Things'.⁷

There is a possibility that Gogarty's 'Coin Poem' played a part in influencing Yeats's choice of the Dolphin symbol in 'Byzantium' (1930) and 'News for the Delphic Oracle' (1938). The sources of Yeats's fish have been variously identified, though as

¹ Ibid., p. 14.

² Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1930, p. 30.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1928, p. 5.

⁵ See W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 158.

⁶ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1928, p. 6.

⁷ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 348.

A. N. Jeffares points out,¹ Mrs Strong's *Apotheosis and the After Life* is the direct source from which Yeats took the idea of the Dolphin as an emblem of the soul or its transit: these verbal suggestions were supplemented by copies of pictures in Rome. Nevertheless, as Henn as suggested, both the Swan and the Dolphin were complex symbols² and there is good reason to think that the personal relevance of the Dolphin as symbol reinforced its attraction in Yeats's mind. Both Melchiori and Henn have mentioned in this connection Yeats's winning of the Nobel Prize in 1924. Melchiori thinks the Dolphins in the Stockholm fountain may have stimulated Yeats's imagination;³ Henn suggests that the winning of the prize made Yeats think of Arion's Sicilian contest and of his return to Corinth.⁴ He adds that Yeats may have identified Oliver Gogarty with Arion in that the poet had once swum the Liffey to escape republican gunmen: the connection is 'far-fetched', admits Henn, 'but of the kind in which Yeats delighted'.⁵

It is plain that the search for sources as recondite as this is not without its dangers: yet two poems by Gogarty suggest that he had an indirect influence. The first, 'With a Coin from Syracuse', was one of the poems Yeats admired in *Wild Apples* (1928 and 1930). Reading it, Yeats was inevitably reminded of a senatorial task shared with Gogarty when, as Chairman of the Committee for New Coinage between 1926 and 1928, he had studied, amongst other sources, S. W. Grose's *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*. Here were depicted many coins bearing images of birds and beasts.⁶ The coin of Gogarty's poem, with its images of Arethusa and Pherenikos, Hieron's race-horse, was the result of this reading, as were Yeats's own coin allusions in 'Her Vision in the Wood' and 'Parnell's Funeral'.

For reasons such as this, Yeats must have been particularly attracted to some of the symbols in Gogarty's poem. He was, as

¹ Jeffares, *op. cit.* (1968), p. 358 and p. 497.

² Henn, *The Lonely Tower* (1950 edition), p. 211.

³ Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*, p. 213.

⁴ Henn, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

⁵ *Ibid.* The incident led to Gogarty, accompanied by Yeats, dedicating two swans to the Liffey: the title, *An Offering of Swans*, alludes to this ceremony.

⁶ See, for example, Grose's Vol. II, 1923, plates 239. 15 and 243. 22.

other poems show, often susceptible to influences conjured up by birds and beasts in Gogarty's verse.¹ Gogarty's reference to the four Dolphins surrounding the head of Arethusa —

. . . around whose throat
The curving fishes swim,
As round a fountain's brim —²

used in conjunction with the favourite Yeatsian image for moving waters, was doubtless a reminder of many shared speculations with Gogarty about the significance of the Dolphin symbol on Greek coinage. Furthermore, the poem must certainly have recalled to Yeats's mind earlier Gogarty verses which had first appeared in the 1924 edition of *An Offering of Swans*, at a time when Mrs Strong's book had become part of Yeats's reading. Many references personal to Yeats, some the subject of those conjectures by Melchiori and Henn, are combined in Gogarty's Ode 'To the Poet W. B. Yeats, Winner of the Nobel Prize 1924'.³ Drawing heroic parallels with the Roman Caesars and Cardinals, Gogarty suggests that Yeats use his Nobel Prize money to build a Dublin fountain. The poem thus conjoins allusions to Yeats's poetic achievement, the Nobel Prize, and the familiar fountain image: more importantly, the poem combines the explicit and emphatic argument that the Dolphin, because of its association with Arion and music, is the most fitting personal symbol for the poet:

For his back to a poet he gave,
And he follows at Venus' heel;
He comes from the depths at a song:
O set him on high in his place;
For he stands for what flows in the lovely and strong
And a sign of the Julian race!⁴

In the late twenties and the thirties, as his verse took on a decidedly sexual character, Yeats found a renewed interest in Gogarty's Rabelaisian verses which, as his prefaces, letters and selections indicate, had always fascinated him. Possibly Gogarty's

¹ 'To a Cock' and 'The Old Goose', for example.

² Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1928, p. 6: *Wild Apples*, 1930, p. 5.

³ *An Offering of Swans*, 1924, p. 48.

⁴ *Ibid.*

'A Pithy Prayer Against Love'¹ with its supplications to Priapus was considered too risqué for the *OBMV*: but both 'After Galen' and 'Aphorism' (later re-titled 'Ringsend') found their way from *Wild Apples* into Yeats's Oxford anthology. Yeats's remarks on 'Ringsend', quoted earlier, are of relevance here: his leaning towards these Gogartian verses should be borne in mind when considering the Villonesque and Rabelaisian elements in the Crazy Jane poems which, it has been suggested,² are derived through Synge. But the playwright died in 1909: it seems likely, therefore, that the later influence was carried through Gogarty and that the Crazy Jane poems and the Old Tom poems echo the notes sounded in Gogarty's published and unpublished bawdy and blasphemous verse. It is not inconceivable that Gogarty's 'Ballad of Joking Jesus' was such a poem. Written in 1905 and used by Joyce in *Ulysses*, the poem may well have been known to Yeats long before he came to read Joyce's novel: if so, it is certain that the flippant references to the Incarnation Mysteries³ appealed to the author of 'Leda and the Swan', 'The Mother of God' and 'A Stick of Incense'.

But there are more certain influences than this. Yeats certainly admired Gogarty's 'The Old Woman of Beare' and it was with reluctance that he omitted the poem from the *OBMV*: what had already appeared in Gogarty's *Selected Poems* (New York, 1933) was evidently felt to be unsuitable for an English anthology.⁴ However, Yeats's liking for the poem is reflected in his own verse. Like Crazy Jane, Gogarty's old woman is earthy, outspoken, and unrepentant in her encounters with the Church.⁵ She regrets

¹ Gogarty, *Wild Apples*, 1930, p. 13.

² See Jeffares, *op. cit.*, p. 375, and Henn, *op. cit.*, 1965, pp. 79 and 83.

³ The first verse runs:

I'm the queerest young fellow that ever you heard,
My mother's a jew, my father's a bird.
With Joseph the joiner I cannot agree,
So here's to disciples and Calvary.

The complete text is given in R. Ellmann (ed.), *Letters of James Joyce*, 1966, pp. 125-8.

⁴ See the essay, 'Yeats as Anthologist' from *In Excited Reverie*, ed. by Jeffares and Cross, 1965, pp. 184-6. The poem subsequently appeared in Gogarty, *Collected Poems*, 1951 and 1954, pp. 120-3.

⁵ Yeats apparently settled for Frank O'Connor's version of this Gaelic poem (see *OBMV*, 1947, pp. 398-401): but Gogarty's old woman is noticeably more bawdy, vigorous and uncompromising.

nothing in her life except old age, and her angry reflections on her changed circumstances anticipate Yeats's 'Those Dancing Days Are Gone':

Now my arms are flat and dried
Which were round on every side,
Dearer once to kings than gems,
Dearer than their diadems.¹

'The Hay Hotel', though never printed under Gogarty's own name,² appears to have sparked off the double entendre in 'The Lady's Third Song'. Here the word-play of Yeats's

When you and my true lover meet
And he plays tunes between your feet . . .³

is less apt than in Gogarty's reference to Piano Mary, a whore in the Dublin of his youth, whose nickname invites the question:

Who tunes her now between the feet?⁴

From the same stanza Yeats took an idea which he developed in *The Player Queen*. Against the description of Septimus's methods of poetic composition, made upon a woman's shoulder,

Ay, and down along my spine in the small hours of the morning;
so many beats a line, and for every beat a tap of the fingers . . .,⁵

for which F. A. C. Wilson has suggested a de Sade original,⁶ we may set Piano Mary's habits

And all the tunes she used to play
Along your spine beneath the sheet . . .⁷

Such connections with Yeats's plays are rare:⁸ but taken with the classical and Rabelaisian elements in Gogarty's verse, Yeats's observation in *Wild Apples* (1930) is given added point. Gogarty,

¹ Gogarty, *Collected Poems*, New York, 1954, p. 121.

² Parts of the poem appeared in Gogarty's novel, *Tumbling in the Hay*, 1939: the complete text is in U. O'Connor, *Oliver St. John Gogarty*, 1964, pp. 56-8.

³ W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 345.

⁴ Gogarty, quoted in O'Connor, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵ Yeats, *Collected Plays*, 1953, p. 412.

⁶ F. A. C. Wilson, *W. B. Yeats and Tradition*, 1958, p. 185.

⁷ Gogarty, quoted in O'Connor, op. cit., p. 57.

⁸ Apart from the Sophocles connexion referred to earlier, it is possible that Gogarty's *A Serious Thing*, a play performed in November 1919, touched off Lazarus's resentments in Yeats's *Calvary*. Gogarty's one-act play uses the Lazarus miracle as a symbol for resurgent Ireland, but a Roman soldier and centurion discuss at length the inconvenience of resurrection: 'It would undermine a lot of things if there were no death'. Page 17, Gogarty, *A Serious Thing*, 1919.

he wrote, 'gives me something that I need and at this moment of time'.¹ He most certainly appreciated Gogarty's gaiety and ebullience and it is possible, of course, that he referred only to these personal qualities. But after looking at Gogarty's poetry, there is good reason to believe that he was also thinking of the verse, the attraction of its themes, and the creative stimulus that it afforded.

¹ Preface in Gogarty's *Wild Apples*, 1930, p. 'i'.

The Burial of Scyld

(Beowulf 26-42 : 47-52)

Forth at the fated time fared Scyld,
 Passed into powerful protection of gods:
 Carried, as he commanded, by companions close,
 Led long by their loved king
 To seamarge the Scylding's protector.
 The harbour held the high ring-prowed ship,
 Icy, for outward trimmed: a hero's ship.
 Their loved lord they laid there,
 The giver of gold geared in the ship's bosom,
 Man mourned by the mast. Much treasure
 From far ways, freight, was put there;
 Nor heard I of keel more comely trimmed
 With war weapons, war armour,
 Blades and bright corselets; on his bosom lay
 Riches without reck that must needs with him
 Fare far into the flood's hold.
 Over the gold-giver a golden banner stood,
 High over head: him the sea must take,
 Given to the great flood; grieved their hearts,
 Mourning in mind. Men can not now
 Tell in truth, counsellors in hall
 Or men under sky, what grasped that gear.

A translation by KENNETH SEVERS