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ELIZABETH YEATS, *REVERIES OVER CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH* AND MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCE

Clare Hutton

R*everies over Childhood and Youth*, the first book of what would become Yeats's *Autobiographies*, was issued by Cuala Press in March 1916, and is widely regarded as an aesthetic triumph. Noting the "limpid flow of the prose, and the sharp edges of the framework," Roy Foster suggests that *Reveries* confirms "the centrality of WB's place in modern Irish culture," and points to the fact that the work drew in contributions from several members of the talented and industrious Yeats family (*Life 1* 526; *Life 2* 43). Elizabeth Yeats, the poet's younger sister, printed the book at Cuala Press, and included two black-and-white illustrations by her father, John Butler Yeats (a self-portrait in watercolor, and a drawing of Mrs Yeats), and the color reproduction of "Memory Harbour," a vivid and atmospheric painting by her brother, Jack (see Figure 1.1). The text, a fragmented and impressionistic narrative which subtly builds from earliest memories to moments of emergence, energy, and autonomy, covers the period up to the departure of the Yeats family from Dublin to London's Bedford Park, a move which took place in the spring of 1887 (though it flashes forward in the final sections in order to mention the publication of *The Wanderings of Oisín*, in January 1889, and the death of WB's maternal grandparents, in Autumn 1892).¹

The composition of a book of this kind involves an active recall and creative shaping of what happened deep in the past. Interestingly—and as part of a deliberate authorial strategy—*Reveries* acknowledges the difficulties of remembering, as well as the curious qualities of how memory works ("I only seem to remember things that have mixed themselves up with scenes that have some quality to bring them again and again before the memory").² Many scenes are "fragmentary and isolated" as the opening sentence suggests (*Rev 1*). Yeats uses the word "vague" repeatedly in a text which is vague in respect of dates, confused in its chronological arrangement, and open about the pain and unhappiness of early childhood ("Indeed I remember little of childhood but its pain." [*Rev 8*]). In the preface, Yeats suggests that he has not consulted "friend nor letter nor old newspaper" and is simply describing "what comes oftenest into my memory" (*Rev [x]*). The truth is more complicated. He relied heavily on Lily, the older of his two younger sisters, for family lore as well as memories,



Figure 1.1: Three illustrations and a note about 'Memory Harbour' included, looseleaf, in a flap at the back of W. B. Yeats, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1915).

as Foster argues. "He picked my brains," she told Ruth Pollexfen. "Most of the early part is my memory, not his, and I am very glad to have helped, and don't tell" (*Life* 1 527). *Reveries*, therefore, might be described as a socialized text, and bears the kind of material reading advanced by George Bornstein in *Material Modernism*, a pioneering work which argues that "meaning is transmitted through bibliographical as well as linguistic codes."³ In honouring that scholarly tradition, as well as work by Jerome McGann (particularly *The Textual Condition*) and D. F. McKenzie (particularly *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*), this essay offers a reading of *Reveries* from three perspectives: that of literary criticism (mainly in part 1), biography (mainly in part 2, and concentrated, in particular, on Elizabeth Yeats) and bibliography or material reading (in part 3). In melding textual, historicist and material approaches the aim is to offer a more total and feminist reading of the Cuala edition of *Reveries* than has hitherto been attempted.⁴ In particular I want to consider what a feminist perspective might bring to a reading of the work's bibliographical and linguistic codes by considering questions of biography and cultural memory as they relate to the women of Yeats's family, including his mother, Susan Mary Pollexfen, his sister Lily (both acknowledged in *Reveries*) and his other sister Elizabeth (who is not, despite the painstaking role she played in putting the work into print). Though virtually invisible within *Reveries*, these women were, in different ways formative for it. Recovering and considering their significance is one of the key points in this essay.

A concentration on the idea of material circumstance is another unifying thread running between the different parts. What is distinctive about the way in which Yeats writes about his formative years? What kinds of choices does he make in choosing to privilege certain kinds of anecdote and memory? How does he acknowledge the significant changes in family fortune, which occurred when he was a child? Were those changes in fortune experienced differently by the women in the family? How do the linguistic codes of the text correlate to the circumstance of its making, and to the life decisions and choices made by Elizabeth Yeats, who once described the history of Cuala as "just the history of financial struggle"?⁵ How were the decisions which Elizabeth made earlier in life (her choice of profession, for example) shaped by material circumstances beyond her control? Was her sense of material circumstance different from that of her brother and if so, how is that relevant to a reading of *Reveries*?

The bibliographical materiality of the text is relevant too: the distinctive typography achieved through the close setting of Caslon type; the moldmade Irish paper; the specially commissioned devices by Thomas Sturge Moore used in the opening pages, the plainness of the grey boards

used in the binding (see Figure 1.2). All these elements, combined with the four illustrations, communicate the sense of *Reveries* as a special book, worthy of particular critical attention, and intended, as Elizabeth Yeats told a collector of the Cuala series, for “people who really want something rather exclusive and are ready to pay for it.”⁶

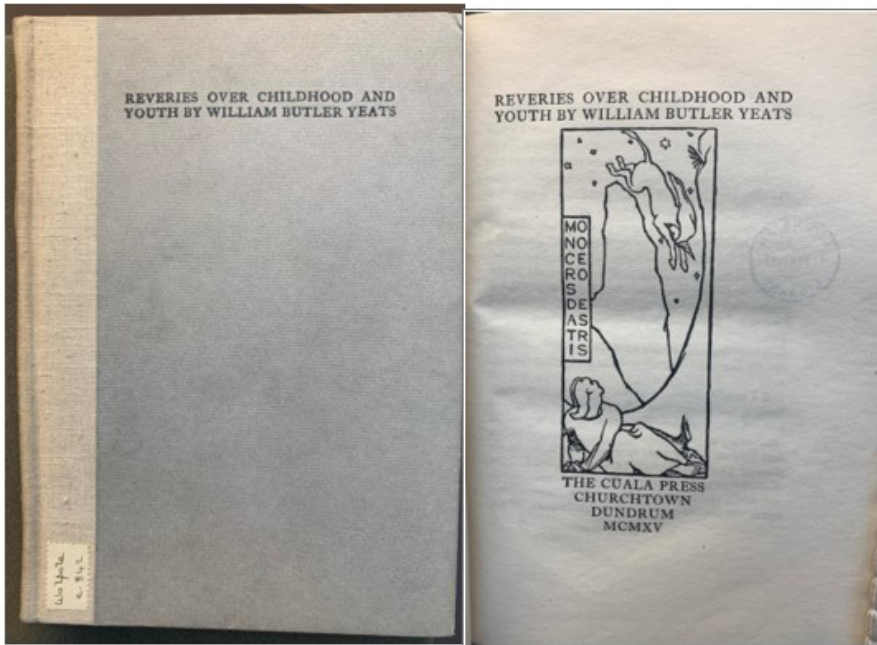


Figure 1.2: Binding and title page of W. B. Yeats, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1915). In Ireland, Yeats encountered many individuals who would have “have felt it inappropriate to publish an Irish book that had not harp and shamrock and green cover.” Cuala made a clear move against such a formula in choosing the plain grey boards and linen spine. The device used on the title page is of a leaping unicorn designed by T. Sturge Moore. It is not clear how this device relates to the content of the book.

The private presses of the 1890s and 1900s, inspired by the example of William Morris’s Kelmscott Press, were operating outside the processes and value judgments of normal commercial publishing. Cuala was no exception. There was no other private press in Ireland at the time, and not much literary publishing.⁷ The Yeatses were operating in an orbit of their own making; W. B. Yeats was his own publisher and editor and Cuala was his “literary principality,” as his father had observed as early as 1906.⁸ The fact that Yeats could proceed without any fear of editorial intervention must have been facilitating for his authorship, and his comments on *Reveries* indicate a deep absorption in the work, which he thought “vivid & strange.”⁹ The material circumstances of his authorship were highly favorable. Never having written a memoir for

publication before, Yeats was discovering his *métier* as a memoirist.¹⁰ He was, moreover, writing without any normal process of commissioning or review, without any editorial intervention or guidance, without anyone to question the structure, the emotional content, stylistic infelicities, elisions and confusions in the chronology, and the overall shape and impact of the finished work. All of these factors—all broadly construed as material circumstance—had far-reaching repercussions for the shaping of the work and are relevant to its interpretation now.

1. READING *REVERIES*

While critics may think of Yeats as a poet first and foremost, it is important to bear in mind that memoir, as Alex Zwerdling has argued, is a “separate, independent literary form—not ancillary but primary, with its own interconnected history and classic works that repay attention.”¹¹ Thus one of the questions underpinning a critique of *Reveries* is how well it reads as a work to be judged on its own terms, and not merely as a footnote to the poetry. Another relevant consideration is how well Yeats manages with what is emotionally difficult—writing the story of his early childhood, which involves negotiating potentially tricky territory. That childhood, after all, was shared with his siblings and parents. He had no need to fear his mother’s judgment: she had died, aged fifty-eight, in January 1900 and had been in serious ill health in her final years. But he did have to reckon with the sensibilities of his father, who is described in some detail alongside several of his friends, as parent, artist, and member of the family. Yeats told Lady Gregory that he had never “written anything so exciting for it is the history of my mind.”¹² He was notably more guarded with his father, choosing not “to ask your leave for the bits of your conversation I quote,” and telling him that he “need not fear that I am not amiable,” an admission which was hardly reassuring.¹³

Yeats wrote *Reveries* in the second half of 1914, as Britain entered the First World War. He told Lily that he saw the work not as “autobiography in the ordinary sense” but as a set of “reveries about the past.”¹⁴ “Reveries” is an important word for the interpretation of the text and suggests a dreamlike and episodic structure. That the work is a string of “reveries” may also be seen as a means of strategic emotional distancing from the content: Yeats as author constructing a literary work is not necessarily the same as Yeats as individual whom any family member or friend might meet. This was especially important in negotiations with his father who lived in New York, conveniently far from the place of writing. John Butler Yeats had gone to New York for six weeks at the end of 1907, and, finding it a more convivial place to reside than Dublin, he decided to stay (though he never quite made that commitment clear). He had

shared a house with his grown-up daughters in the village of Dundrum and they continued to keep his room; he never returned and died in New York in February 1922, aged eighty-two. Thus his son could keep him at arms' length. When he eventually showed the text to his father, he confessed to feeling "rather nervous about what you think" of a work which he identified, in grandiose and slightly inaccurate terms, as a "history of the revolt . . . against certain Victorian ideals."¹⁵

He knew that his father would find the portrait of Edward Dowden "unsympathetic," but he had other reasons to be worried.¹⁶ As Roy Foster argues, much of what Yeats had written about family relationships and early life in London was "directly hurtful":

In the portrait of JBY was etched all his negligence, improvidence and superb carelessness—as well as the alarm he aroused in his children. The unhappiness which pervades the book could be read as an indictment of the world created (or unmade) by the author's father, even if the implicit message was that insecurity acted as the nursery of genius. (*Life* 2 33)

In his early years, Yeats lived in a house "so big that there was always a room to hide in" but he was lonely and cowered in fear of "old William Pollexfen," his maternal grandfather, a Lear-like figure who had a "great scar on his hand made by a whaling hook" (*Rev* 2, 3). When his father is finally introduced, after pages of lengthy discussion of Sligo relatives, it is as an occasional visitor who "never went to church" and an "angry and impatient teacher" who "flung the reading book at my head" and terrifies the young child through "descriptions of my moral degradation" (*Rev* 23, 24, 33). Next comes the "realization of death." Robert, the fourth of six children born to Yeats's parents in the decade from June 1865, dies suddenly, an event foretold by his mother and a servant who "had heard the banshee crying the night before he died" (*Rev* 27). This is an interesting inclusion, and glosses over the complications of Yeats's mother's gynecological history. While there is no record of miscarriage or stillbirth, six pregnancies was clearly quite a strain for someone with fragile health. From the 1860s onwards, middle-class families were often opting to limit their size, but there appears to have been no such restraint for Yeats's parents.¹⁷ The marriage was clearly difficult as Deirdre Toomey suggests: "Susan Yeats suffered financial instability—fields and houses vanishing into a bottomless pit—her husband's marital alienation, and the death of two children," Robert (born 1870, died 1873) and Jane (born 1875, died 1876).¹⁸ Yeats appears to have understood these difficulties but writes of what happened in a deliberately opaque manner in order to present his own creativity as a triumph over adversity.

In terms of structure, *Reveries* is organized into thirty-three sections of uneven length and moves from earliest memories of childhood, through school days, adolescence, and into early adulthood. Family moves from Sligo to London to Dublin are described in some detail and link the sections. An interest in folklore, magical apparitions, and fairy and country stories is another unifying element. In Sligo, the young Yeats, who keeps a Union Jack and “thought I would like to die fighting the Fenians,” hears the “servants talking of the faeries” and sees “a supernatural bird in the corner of the room” (*Rev* 9, 12, 10). Clairvoyance (“the second sight”) is normal in this world, and so, too, is the sharing of stories, something Yeats particularly associates with his mother (*Rev* 15). Though he confesses that his memory of what “she was like . . . has grown very dim,” he vividly recalls her happiness when the family returned from London in 1881 and settled for a year or two in the fishing village of Howth near Dublin:

When I think of her, I almost always see her talking over a cup of tea in the kitchen with our servant, the fisherman’s wife, on the only themes outside our house that seemed of interest—the fishing people of Howth, or the pilots and fishing people of Rosses Point. She read no books, but she and the fisherman’s wife would tell each other stories that Homer might have told[.] (*Rev* 69)

Critics of *Reveries* have emphasised the important way in which Yeats negotiates and describes his evolving relationship with his father, but the relationship with his mother was also clearly formative. Yeats’s mother “gave value to folklore, legend, country wisdom” and a sense of “such discourses as repositories and expressions of truth and value,” as Toomey argues in her pioneering essay “Away.”¹⁹ But the effect of the way in which she is remembered in the text is to downplay her significance. Yeats’s parents only enter the narrative after “a host of Pollexfen and Middleton relatives” and his father is described before his mother in “an exceptional reversal of the usual ordering of memory.”²⁰ It is also relevant that Yeats’s account of her last years is “brief and almost ashamed in tone.”²¹ “Her mind had gone in a stroke of paralysis” is all that Yeats says of the two catastrophic strokes, which she suffered in 1887, just months after the family had relocated, for the second time, from Dublin to London’s Bedford Park (*Rev* 69). Against such passivity, Yeats’s father is judged more kindly because the poet is “an artist’s son” who has accepted that he “must take some work as the whole end of life” (*Rev* 46). The discussion of Yeats’s father, who was always “looking for the lineaments of some desirable, familiar life” and reads passages from the poets (“always from the play or poem at its most passionate moment”), provides a unity for the disparate parts in the narrative (*Rev* 73). Section XV, for example, describes a moment in the

mid-1880s. Yeats has begun “to play at being a sage, a magician or a poet” and travels to Dublin every morning with his father for breakfast and discussions about poetry at his studio: his “influence upon my thought was at its height” and “all our discussion was of style” (*Rev* 109, 104).

Money is a preoccupation which runs throughout the text. In his earliest years Yeats lived comfortably in Merville, his maternal grandfather’s house in Sligo where he learned “to judge people’s social significance by the length of their avenues,” but the sudden and inexplicable move to London, described in section V, makes him aware of his mother’s “plain dress” and “anxiety about money” (*Rev* 12, 33). The children find themselves being called names for being Irish, and Yeats longs “for a sod of earth from some field I knew, something of Sligo to hold in my hand” (*Rev* 32). At school, other boys ask what his father does and “how much money has he?” Yeats notes that his mother’s “sense of personality” has “disappeared in her care for us” and realizes that she lives without “desire for any life of her own.” Meanwhile, he sees his father developing as an artist, spending “every evening at his club” and being “the painter who scrapes out every day what he painted the day before” (*Rev* 33, 28, 32). These two images—the artist in society pleasing “a companion/Around the fire at the club,” and the artist at work “stitching and unstitching” individual poetic lines until they seem “a moment’s thought”—are images he would later emulate in the shape of his own aesthetic practice (*VP* 392, 204). The caring implications of his mother becoming incapacitated are never discussed; the one solace for her son is that the cognitive deficit that comes from her strokes liberates her “from financial worry” and she finds “perfect happiness feeding the birds at a London window” (*Rev* 69). Though Yeats’s experience is shaped by poverty—he cannot afford the toll for crossing the ha’penny bridge—he never quite states this to be the case, and admires his father’s definition of a “gentleman”: “a man not wholly occupied in getting on” (*Rev* 109, 104). He refuses to sit the “Intermediate examinations” that would give “money for pupil and teacher,” refuses to attend Trinity College, and instead chooses to spend time with new friends from the Hermetic Society “in the Kildare Street Museum passing our hands over the glass-cases, feeling or believing we felt the Odic Force flowing from the big crystals” (*Rev* 109, 103, 91, 104).

As Yeats’s social circle widens, his sense of Irish nationalism deepens, particularly after his meeting with John O’Leary, a Fenian and “the handsomest man I had ever seen” who introduced him to other important figures, including Katharine Tynan, Douglas Hyde, and John F. Taylor (*Rev* 109, 112). O’Leary brought him to Young Ireland debates and lent him books and “for the first time I began to read histories and verses that a Catholic Irishman knows from boyhood”; these influences, clearly formative, gave Yeats “all I have set my hand to since” and a conviction that what was needed was a “national literature that

made Ireland beautiful in the memory” (*Rev* 111, 119, 120). The sense of time in the closing pages is deliberately vague: many years and moves back and forth between Dublin and London are distilled into a few short cameos. At the same time, Yeats begins to write about style and self-realization and it is in these moments where the work has greatest energy and force, particularly, for example in section XXX, which deals with the need to rid syntax “of all inversions” and vocabulary “of literary words” (*Rev* 123). In a sense, Yeats is not writing of the craft and technique he discovered in the 1880s and 1890s, but is instead reflecting on his more recent work and the technique of a volume such as *Responsibilities* (1914).

The existing critical consensus is that *Reveries* is a masterpiece. Foster, for example, defers repeatedly to the power of Yeats’s “personal history” (*Life* 1 492), and David Wright commends Yeats’s “highly deliberate use of style” and shows how the effect of *Reveries* “depends on Yeats’s use of structures which imply spontaneity even while they reveal artful planning.”²² My own views are more ambivalent. While I agree with Foster that the purpose of *Reveries* is to explain “the emergence of [Yeats’s] genius” (*Life* 1 530), it is possible to detect moments of doubt in the hubris, beginning with the epigraph which dedicates the work “to those few people, mainly personal friends, who have read all that I have written,” as though to suggest that *Reveries* might not be of interest to a wider public (*Rev* [vi]). The preface sounds the same note: “My friend need not be bored” Yeats avers because “one can always close a book” (*Rev* [x]). Even the famous aphorisms of the closing paragraph can be read as something apologetic and hesitant. “I am not ambitious” says Yeats, after pages and pages in which he has described the laborious process of becoming a poet, only then to conclude:

When I think of all the books I have read, and of the wise words I have heard spoken, and of the anxiety I have given to parents and grandparents, of the hopes that I have had, all life weighed in the scales of my own life seems to me a preparation for something that never happens. (*Rev* 123, 128)

This remarkable bowing out statement, perhaps intended as faux modesty, may also be read as a sincere moment of doubt, and a kind of apology. It is also impossible to read this without a sense of historic irony. Beginning as a poet in the late 1880s Yeats had written many important poems by Christmas 1914, the date on which he signed the preface to the book, and much would continue to happen (for Yeats personally and as a poet, and in Ireland, particularly politically) in the next few years. Life might have seemed static in the opening months of the “war to end all wars,” but it had been “changed utterly” by the time of the Easter Rising, which happened just a month after *Reveries* was

published. It is also possible that the extreme political turbulence and cultural change, which took place in Ireland from the outbreak of the war, upset the energy and concentration which Yeats brought to *Reveries*, and accounts for the unevenness in its quality and tone.

In the preface to *All Down Darkness Wide (2022)*, a memoir about being gay and coming of age Seán Hewitt suggests something fundamental to the creative process of writing autobiographically:

Names and identifying features have been wholly changed throughout this work in order to protect the privacy and anonymity of individuals. In some cases I have compressed timelines and changed geographies, merged two or more individuals into one, invented characters and altered or invented certain other details.²³

Yeats was not so candid, and nor does he construct a narrative in which he appears to be so self-aware. In writing about his early life, he is confronting issues of privacy and anonymity directly, and he has to decide how to proceed in the business of naming close friends and members of his family. While prominent intellectuals and friends are named (Russell, O’Leary, Hyde, etc.), members of his immediate family are only identified by their relation, not name (mother, father, sister, brother, etc). Older acquaintances are left out too. This lack of individuating detail forces a loss of tension, and there are several sections which are too long, rambling, and unclear. *Reveries*, written at the same time of Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, which was being serialized in *The Egoist*, are often favorably compared.²⁴ In response to *Portrait*, Edward Garnett, the London publisher, identified what he described as “longueurs” (i.e., passages in need of a “good deal of pruning,” “tedious to the ordinary man among the reading public”).²⁵ The same critique could be made of *Reveries* with greater justification. But, of course, and because of the unique material circumstances in which Yeats prepared a work of the “right size for Lolly’s press,” the views of an individual such as Garnett were not sought.²⁶ By 1914, the year in which he began writing *Reveries*, Yeats had founded the Abbey Theatre, and was prominently in the public view as the author of many important volumes of poetry. By the end of 1915, when *Reveries* existed as a flurry of proofs, he was offered a knighthood, a “kindly meant” distinction which he chose to refuse, though not before he had told Lily about the offer, which came via Lady Cunard (“Please keep it to yourself as it would be very ungracious of me to let it get talked about in Dublin”).²⁷ In these circumstances it is easy to see why Yeats did not feel the need of an editor.

The history of Yeats’s Sligo ancestry, covered in sections I to IV, is interesting but there is not enough driving emotional detail. There are some remarkable

moments and individual lines, but Yeats tries to cover too big a cast, and does not commit to enough revelation in some of the portraits. It is odd that Yeats does not describe the distinctive geography of Sligo, which proved to be so important for his work. He is haughty about class (“I am delighted with all that joins my life to those who had power in Ireland”), and coy about sex (“It came upon me when I was close upon seventeen like the bursting of a shell”) (*Rev* 70, 21). In a sense, he had yet to learn how to write candidly about individuals in his life without betraying their confidence. Crucially, he is also downplaying the significance of the women in his family, including Lily who helped him significantly with remembering his early childhood, and Elizabeth who was extremely patient as the printer of the work, which was revised extensively at proof (as Yeats told Quinn “the truth is that I made so many revisions in the proof, adding in passages even & altering”).²⁸ One issue is that there is not quite enough focus on the self, something that is notably more present in the draft *Autobiographies* which Yeats began to write in the latter part of 1915, just at the point when *Reveries* was ready for publication. In that text, for example, Yeats describes himself as being “conscious of something helpless and perhaps even untrustworthy in myself”; this typescript, stored in an envelope marked “private . . . containing much that is not for publication,” also sees Yeats being much more open about sex (“I was tortured by sexual desire and had been for many years”).²⁹

As suggested earlier, Yeats controlled the dissemination of *Reveries* among family members with extreme care. He did not allow his father to see the work before it was published, but anticipated a positive response, telling John Quinn, “I am not shewing him the Memoirs for he would want me to alter things, but I expect that their publication will move him to send me wonderful letters.”³⁰ That “wonderful” is being used in this statement without any sense of irony speaks, again, to the scale of Yeats’s hubris. How could any parent, even an artist, enjoy the experience of being humiliated by the memory of the things they got wrong? When the typescript was nearing completion Yeats arranged to read the work aloud to Lily, his older sister.³¹ He deliberately excluded Elizabeth from this reading on the grounds that she “might very well be offended” and he “did not want to invite her criticism.”³² This points to the obvious and well-documented tension that existed between these two siblings and another set of questions pertinent to the reading of *Reveries*, which I intend to pursue, in detail, in the second section of this essay.³³ What would it have been like for Elizabeth Yeats to print this book? What sorts of forces shaped the material circumstances which she and her press faced? How did she feel about the emotional content of the work, and how did her brother’s memories differ from her own recollection and experience of their formative years?

II. REVERIES, CULTURAL MEMORY, AND ELIZABETH YEATS'S BIOGRAPHY

Questions about the structure of feeling and experience are easy to ask, but difficult to answer. Yeats's letters survive in their thousands and have been published in multiple versions; his sister's letters remain unpublished and scattered. There is far less archival evidence to document her life, which was lived, certainly from 1902 when the Dun Emer Press was founded, in her brother's shadow, and in service to his needs as an author. As far as I can tell, her views on *Reveries* do not survive, and in trying to build a picture, a historian is reliant on tiny little points of detail, scraps, and inferences. One such detail exists in a letter which accompanied her father's response to *Four Years*, the next volume in the sequence of her brother's autobiographical prose; there, she comments, with obvious energy and acidity, "We were not quite nonentities," the "we" referring to herself and her sister, Lily (*Life 2* 199).

As the printer of *Reveries*, Elizabeth Yeats became deeply acquainted with the text, worrying at every detail, placing commas, hesitating about the imposition of print on page. Yeats mentions a "sister" and then "sisters" often enough, but he never quite makes it clear that he had two younger sisters, and one younger brother: Susan Mary Yeats (1866–1949, and always known as Lily), Elizabeth Corbet Yeats (1868–1940, referred to as Lollie, or Lolly, by members of the family, not an appellation she necessarily relished; she always signed her work and professional correspondence as "Elizabeth"); and John Butler Yeats (1871–1957, known as Jack to avoid confusion with his father, also an artist). "You and Lolly only come in slightly" Yeats writes, breezily, to Lily, and it is clear, from contextual sources, that the memories in the work which invoke a "sister" are always about Lily, who seems to have been blessed with an excellent memory and the gift of clairvoyance, which greatly impressed her brother.³⁴ Lily is the sister who foretells the death of an uncle owing to a dream of "a wingless sea-bird in her arms"; the one who hears "some dead smuggler giving his accustomed signal"; and the one who shares WB's "longing for Sligo" and "hatred of London" (*Rev 7*, 14, 32). The omission of any anecdote invoking Elizabeth must have been hurtful, and certainly the lack of specificity about his sisters' identities is emotionally careless. The content of the book which Elizabeth Yeats printed so carefully on her brother's behalf was indeed positioning her as nonentity.

"Our mother and father occur again & again," Yeats writes in the same furtive letter to Lily, in which he requests that she "give me about four hours on Saturday morning" for the planned private reading of the typescript.³⁵ This is inaccurate. Though she clearly influenced Yeats's formative years quite considerably (through her interest in folklore and clairvoyance), Susan Yeats is not described in any great length, as noted. Yeats's failure to discuss his

mother in more detail is part of the larger pattern: *Reveries* barely considers the significance of the experience of the women in Yeats's immediate family. The year in which the family returned to London's Bedford Park after several years in Dublin, 1887, must have been formative for the Yeats siblings. They were now no longer children: WB was twenty-one when he moved back to London with his parents; Lily was twenty and Elizabeth was nineteen; it was only Jack, at fifteen, who needed to attend school, and in a very real sense, the question now facing all of them, as their mother's health began to decline, and their father's spendthrift habits became more obvious to their adult eyes, was what kinds of meaningful and paid work they could find, and what kinds of material circumstance and intimacy might shape their lives. Reflecting on his mother's death, WB commented: "My mother was so long ill, so long fading out of life, that the last fading out of all made no noticeable change in our lives."³⁶ But his sisters experienced things differently. Their mother's "fading out" had made a "noticeable change" in their lives. In all, Susan Yeats had three strokes, two in 1887 and another in 1894. It is impossible to get a precise sense of the symptoms and caring implications of each, but by 1894 Susan Yeats was confused, had stopped speaking, and was partly paralyzed.³⁷ In other words, from 1894 (and possibly from 1887) until her death in 1900, she needed to be looked after twenty-four hours a day. Servants would have undertaken some of this work, but it seems very likely that Yeats's sisters were also involved. What did it feel like for Elizabeth to be reminded of this experience through the oblique references in *Reveries*? What kind of relationship did she have with her mother? Might she have benefitted from maternal advice and guidance in the period between 1887 and 1900? Was she offended by the way in which Yeats skirted around what was clearly an important, structuring, and tragic experience for all members of the family which disproportionately impacted her and Lily? Did she regret that her mother's decline was even mentioned? How did she feel about having this kind of private information in the public domain?

Obviously, there is a sense in which we cannot know the answer to these questions, but they are relevant to the reading of *Reveries*, and we do know, from a few surviving pages of Elizabeth Yeats's diary, that she felt as though she lived on the fringes of a world designed to serve the needs of men (just as she lives on the fringe of the books she printed and did not get to critique). On the evening of November 19, 1888, she reports an evening at home when "Mr Legge and Mr Crookes came":

We had supper: melon, grapes, cheese, apples and pears. Papa, Willie and they had great talk and argument—politics, art etc. Lily and I felt dreadfully out of it. . . . I wonder do all girls feel that way.³⁸

The world of her acculturation was simply so different to that of her brother. In *Reveries* Yeats writes haplessly of refusing to go to Trinity where his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had studied, but Elizabeth had no such choice (*Rev* 91). Women did not enter Trinity until 1904. Coming of age in the late 1880s, Elizabeth Yeats faced a world in which women could not easily access a university education, did not have a vote, did not have reliable control of their fertility, and lived without much expectation of being taken seriously in the world of stimulating and valued paid employment. This makes what Elizabeth Yeats actually achieved all the more significant.

In the period between 1887 and 1902, and in the face of a precarious home situation—her mother ailing and her father’s contributions to household costs being unpredictable—Elizabeth trained as a primary school teacher at the Froebel School, and began to earn a living by teaching art in various London schools. Interestingly, she also developed a commercial interest in the teaching of art, publishing the series *Brushwork Copy Books*, which included intricate sample drawings for children to copy.³⁹ Her activity as a teacher was frenetic:

I never wanted to stop—at school at quarter to nine when I was teaching in the kindergarten—home at two for dinner and after that to Notting Hill (for Chiswick) to lectures (except when I had afternoon School) and worked always at preparations for exams etc [...] I think I got my Higher Certificate when I was twenty three or twenty four—a three year course [...] I even gave painting lessons at the same time as working for exams[.]⁴⁰

Her work generated a good income and, within the Bedford Park household she was “chief breadwinner” during the early 1890s, making more money than her other siblings, including her two brothers, who, as men, would have had greater and easier opportunities within the working world.⁴¹ Her diary of 1890 and 1891 records this, keeping a tally of what Jack and WB earned, in order to highlight her own position and the significance of her material contribution.⁴²

Why was she so motivated, and how does this experience of relentless and frenetic activity in her formative years read against her brother’s account of refusing to engage with examinations and instead doing psychical research, attending séances, and detecting the “Odic Force” in the Kildare Street Museum? On one reading, one could say that Elizabeth Yeats kept herself busy in order to have a professional autonomy away from the troubled domestic sphere. Here, it is worth bearing in mind that Lily was often ill too. Though she worked as an embroideress with May Morris at Kelmscott House between 1888 and 1894, there were lengthy periods thereafter when she was unable to work.⁴³ In being out of the house at work, Elizabeth Yeats was putting herself in a position to contribute reliably and significantly to the household economy,

something her father had failed to do (to the detriment of her mother's health). The need to help with caring almost certainly greeted her once she was home, but in the working day she enjoyed a kind of independence. In some sense, she might be characterized as a "New Woman," the kind of woman who challenged Victorian-era societal limitations in the world of work, education, and politics. But the idea of a "New Woman" does not quite tally with the available archival evidence, and the picture which emerges from her life choices.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Yeats gave up the financial autonomy and independence that she enjoyed in London as teacher and painter in her own right in order to return to Dublin and start a private press. She chose to work very closely with a brother whom she clearly found difficult, and she continued to live and work in close association with other members of her family.

For a woman of her class and generation, Elizabeth Yeats faced an unusual set of circumstances, and things did not quite work out as she might have expected or hoped. There was very little family money; the house in Bedford Park was rented and she had no property, inherited savings, or trust funds. Marriage would have enabled a new start, but neither Elizabeth nor Lily married; the loss of advice and guidance from their mother in the latter 1880s was significant. Just at the point when they might have been introduced to suitable partners from their mother's social circle, they found themselves caring for her instead (and perhaps they developed the view that marriage was a bad idea, given the impact it had on their mother). Whatever the case, there's no doubt that their mother's illness threw the domestic atmosphere into crisis, and the long years between the first stroke in 1887, and Susan Yeats's death in 1900, must have been difficult.⁴⁵ They continued to live together after their mother's death that year, but the house in Bedford Park was no longer really a family home in any meaningful sense. Jack Yeats had left home when he married in August 1894, and WB left permanently in October 1895, when he took rooms in central London. This left the sisters caring for their mother until her death, and afterward their father began to frequently leave London for long periods.

Though he had a clear sense that he wanted his children to achieve things in the aesthetic sphere, he had never taken his paternal and domestic duties seriously. Taking all these factors into consideration, it is easy to see why Augustine Henry's invitation to join the new Arts and Crafts initiative being planned in Dublin was so very attractive. Joining the Dun Emer Industries meant that the sisters could get away from the London house associated with their mother's long decline and begin afresh in Ireland where their brothers were already well established in cultural circles. It is also significant that Henry, acting on behalf of Evelyn Gleeson, was offering generous salaries of £125 each per annum, for the first two years of what was termed the Dun Emer

“experiment” (it was an experiment, and it did not quite work; after five tense years operating with Gleeson, the Yeats sisters departed amid some acrimony, and established the Cuala Press and Industries as a separate Arts and Crafts business).⁴⁶

For Lily, the decision to set up her own embroidery business, after her experience in the Morris and Co workshops, was a straightforward commitment. Start-up costs were low; the materials were easy to acquire; she possessed the necessary skill and could teach assistants easily. Elizabeth Yeats’s decision to commit to printing was a decision of a different kind. During the years when she had been in Bedford Park, she had been in the midst of an environment where there had been much talk associated with the typographical revival and ideas of design, fine printing, and the “ideal book.”⁴⁷ Neighbors and friends included Elkin Mathews (one of W. B. Yeats’s publishers), William Morris, who ran the Kelmscott Press from a house on the Upper Mall, Hammersmith, Emery Walker (Morris’s typographical advisor), Sydney Carlyle Cockerell (secretary to the Kelmscott Press from 1894 to 1898, and later the director of the Fitzwilliam Museum) and Thomas J. Cobden-Sanderson who established the Doves Bindery in 1893 and the Doves Press in 1900 (Doves being the most famous of the private presses after Kelmscott, particularly noted because of its type, which was commissioned by Cobden-Sanderson, and drawn and realized by Walker). It is likely that W. B. Yeats met most of these individuals at Morris’s house at the weekly meetings of the Socialist League, which he attended occasionally during 1888:

I was soon of the little group who had supper with Morris afterwards. I met at these suppers very constantly Walter Crane, Emery Walker, in association with Cobden-Sanderson, the printer of many fine books, and less constantly, Bernard Shaw and Cockerell. (*Au* 139-40)

Though she must have been aware of this world, Elizabeth Yeats’s experiences were very different to those of her brother: he also gained insight into fine printing and private presses through his experience as an author, as well as the many “suppers” at which women such as his sisters were not present.

Making virtue of necessity, Elizabeth Yeats found her own way forward by pursuing her training in a more obvious and open realm, as a primary school teacher and as a painter of watercolours. She undoubtedly knew something about the principles of good book design, but beyond the basics of hand composition, she knew nothing about the mechanics of how to print a book before committing to Dun Emer. She had lived close to the Kelmscott Press, and knew May Morris socially, but, as she explained to a Dun Emer subscriber in November 1903, she “had never even seen a press worked until we had nearly finished *In The Seven Woods*,” “finished” being a reference to the process

of hand composition, imposing pages, and designing layout.⁴⁸ Printing, an activity that is both costly to begin and difficult to master, remained a heavily unionized and male-dominated trade with few female participants. She would not have seen a press in action at the Women's Printing Society in London where, aged thirty-four, she spent just four weeks learning the basics. Composition, proofreading, imposition, and distribution were done by women, but the printing machines were worked (on another floor) by men.⁴⁹ Composition is relatively easy to do; it involves no heavy lifting and was therefore an aspect of the trade that women sought out, but they did so in an adversarial context. Plenty of men believed that women's "dainty fingers ought never to have been employed in handling type"; of course, the real objection lay in the fact that women worked for one-third of the standard male compositor's wage and were exploited as a source of cheap labor.⁵⁰

Training to work as a commercial printer normally involved an apprenticeship of seven years. While that was clearly too long (and was driven by the need to keep younger people on lower wages), four weeks was too short. In making the decision to set up a private press in Dublin and to train other women as printers, Elizabeth Yeats was going against the grain. It is not just a matter of gender: the decision also has to be seen within the context of her age. Compositors at the Women's Printing Society were normally apprenticed for three years, concluding at twenty-one.⁵¹ In essence, Elizabeth Yeats learned to print through trial and error, largely without assistance. Writing to one of the subscribers for *In the Seven Woods*, she explained: "I have done the whole printing of it simply with the help of two young village girls whom I have had to teach (as well as learn myself)." In the same letter, she conceded that the assistance of a pressman might be useful "as our venture progresses" but "so far I have done without—as I wanted at first to develop my own ideas and feared that they were not definite enough to overrule the ideas of an ordinary working printer."⁵²

III. REVERIES AND MATERIAL READING

Unpublished comments of this kind—documenting the fear of being "overruled" as a printer, of having to "teach (as well as learn myself)", of working without ever wanting to stop and then feeling "dreadfully out of it" when the men of Bedford Park came to supper—point to Elizabeth Yeats's formative experiences, and suggest something of the kind of memoir she might have written about her life had she developed the necessary confidence to do so. In the event, the typographical style developed for *In the Seven Woods* was the style used in all the works issued by Dun Emer and then Cuala Press, including *Reveries*, which is one of the most interesting of Cuala titles from

the perspectives of biography, cultural memory, and materiality. The interest of *Reveries* is more than the words on the page: the interest is in the total form of the book as an expressive intellectual structure and aesthetic object, in the stories of the makers behind the scenes, in the occluded collaborations, and the active and passive acts of memory connoted in the form and physicality of the work. As a reading, and in terms of method, this involves moving a step past the view that “a work’s meaning is distilled in the detail of its formal presentation” toward a bigger consideration of all the economic and social conditions which enable the act of authorship.⁵³

Reveries is the only Cuala title to include illustrations. Jack Yeats’s “Memory Harbour,” a watercolor, reproduced in color, depicts “houses and anchored ship and distant lighthouse all set close together as in some old map,” and is a kind of stylized visual analogy to the memories evoked in the prose (*Rev* 58). The Yeatses went to considerable trouble to include this with the work and clearly found Jack’s remarkable painting moving and evocative. Illustrations presented a technical challenge that was beyond the easy reach of Cuala’s small hand presses, and “Memory Harbour” was printed and mounted on black paper in London by Emery Walker, a friend of the Yeats family from 1888.⁵⁴ The material form of this image thus links different Yeatsian parishes and is another reminder of collaborations going on behind the scenes. Interestingly, this image, alongside the drawings of Yeats’s parents, is not pasted (or “tipped in”) to the body of the text, but is instead included in an envelope flap pasted to the endpaper of the inside back cover. The impression one forms from this slightly quirky bibliographical presentation is that of a cottage industry, of makers working to the best of their ability and insisting on the production of something that seems handmade, and, as Elizabeth Yeats insisted, “rather exclusive.”

Emery Walker might have advised integrating text and image more holistically to achieve a more finished look. After all, his business experience blended running a successful commercial printing company (where “Memory Harbour” was printed), with his work at the Doves Press (arguably the most important of the private presses to flourish in London at this time). He was Elizabeth Yeats’s typographical advisor, and a “pressman” whose advice she actively sought; indeed, she informed one correspondent that “without Mr. Walker’s help Cuala would never have existed at all—he advised us and helped us for years.”⁵⁵ It was Walker who told her to attend classes at the Women’s Printing Society, advised on the choice of Caslon and other necessary essentials for getting started as a private press. The Doves Press typographical style—preferred by Elizabeth Yeats to that of Kelmscott—was clearly influential for the Cuala layout a fact noted by historians of the private press.⁵⁶ Colin Franklin has argued that Cuala’s “slender books, in Caslon type, generally using red for a

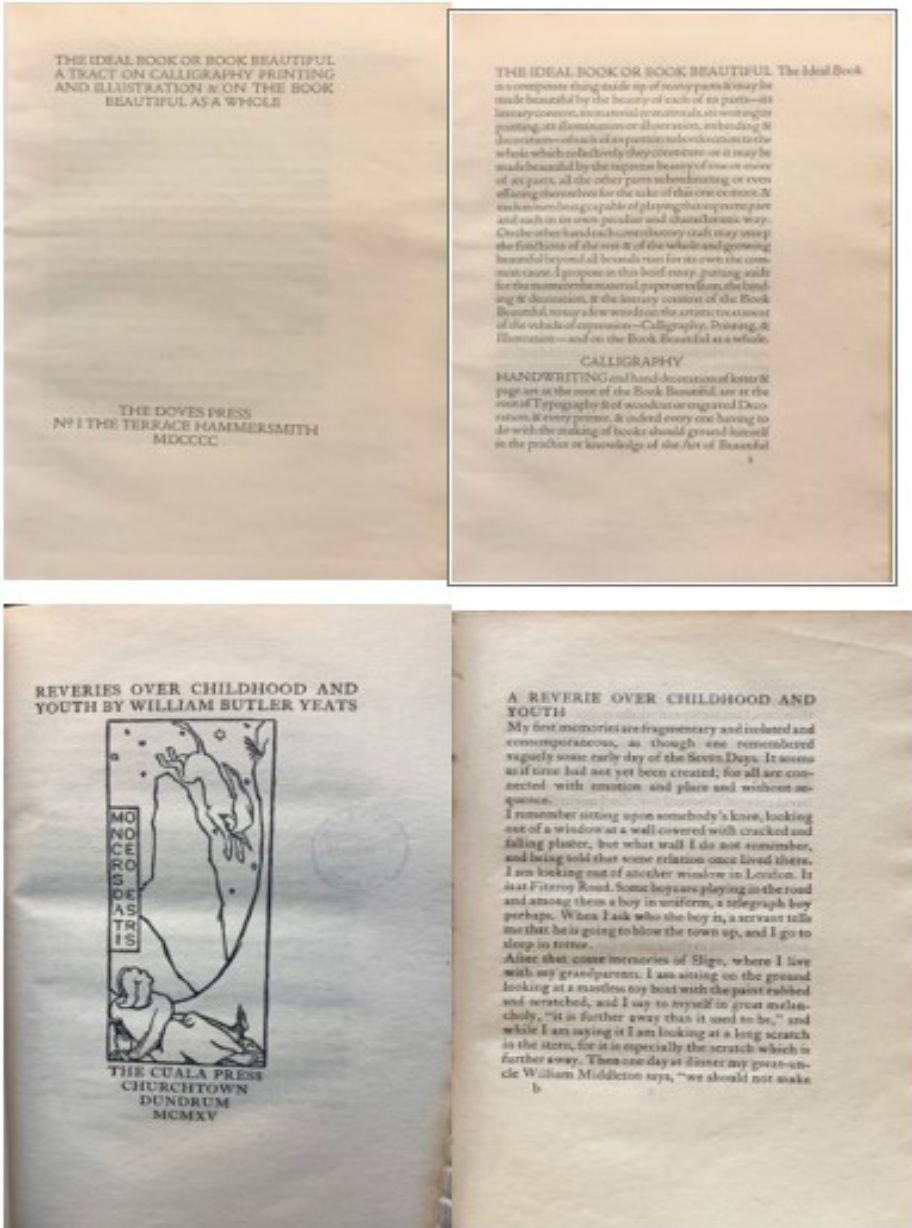


Figure 1.3: Title page and opening page of text in T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, *The Ideal Book or Book Beautiful* (London: Doves Press, 1900) and W. B. Yeats, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1915). The sense of typographical lineage is obvious in these images.

Typographically, work of Dove Press is far more achieved, but the content on which so much energy has been spent is inconsequential. Elizabeth Yeats was not an experienced printer of prose and opted not to use indentation for paragraphing. This was ill-advised and reduced the flow and legibility of the work. "Reverie" in capital letters on the opening page looks like an error.

second colour, seem a poor pale failure in the shadow of the Doves Press” whereas Roderick Cave describes Dun Emer printing as “sound and workmanlike, but with no pretensions of being fine printing.”⁵⁷ These critiques do not seem entirely fair. After all, the Doves Press (like many of the private presses) was only producing reprints whereas Cuala was producing new and original works in tricky material circumstances. Put simply, there was not enough money to buy a bigger or better press, or to experiment with a new typeface or a finer kind of handmade paper. As Gifford Lewis has argued, “Economy cramped every move the sisters made . . . including their parsimonious economy in living together” (an arrangement that appears not to have been entirely harmonious).⁵⁸

In her role as her brother’s printer, Elizabeth Yeats found herself being dictated to, told off, and patronized on a regular basis. In 1906, for example, there was a significant argument that was only resolved when John Butler Yeats intervened to tell his eldest sibling to stop being so belligerent. Advice, he suggested,

should be advice and not haughty dictation backed up by menaces. After all the press is Lollie’s business and it means our means of living. And she has often other things to consider besides the literary excellence of a particular book. There are questions of convenience and commercial expedience and policy, matters for tactful consideration not to be decided offhand by a literary expert.⁵⁹

“Our means of living” is a telling phrase: it shows that the work being undertaken by the sisters is keeping the father afloat. The issue of income lurks just under the surface; Yeats’s sisters were struggling to be self-sufficient and were also having to support their father, in an extremely unusual reverse of expected gender norms. Elizabeth was proud of the fact that her press was run by women, and proud of her capacity to earn money from meaningful and interesting work. But it is also significant that she expected contributions from both of her brothers: literary advice from WB and artistic contributions from Jack. This says much of her mentality, social conditioning, and sense of precarity. Despite years of working with success in London, Elizabeth Yeats did not quite see herself as a financially independent woman who was making her own way in the world. She saw herself as part of an extended family in which significant contributions from the men were to be expected. Her brothers’ contributions made up for the paltry and irregular financial support from her father, a fact she explains in a letter to A. H. Bullen:

I don’t consider that it was much to ask Willie to do when I asked him to be literary advisor to the Press—considering he does nothing at all for the family & never has—& this I tell you of course in confidence—my sister and I have

to keep the whole house. My father helps but only a little as he has his studio to run.⁶⁰

That her eldest brother does nothing “at all” for the family is an intriguing and sharp aside and reads instructively against the text of *Reveries* and the rather vague way in which Yeats acknowledges his own formative difficulties with money.

Editorial and material tensions were still ongoing in the summer of 1915 when *Reveries* was in proof. Writing from London—clearly rattled by a letter from his sister, which appears not to have survived, Yeats tediously explains how “one puts second proofs to various purposes but one is that one sometimes copies on to it (say) all corrections of style.” He continues: “Please always give me (& everyone who prints with you) (1) two copies of each set of proofs (2) old proofs with new (3) reasonable time for revision.” “These are the customs of the trade” he adds, as though to imply that his sister did not know her business.⁶¹ Just a week later he writes enclosing “a new chapter & a new passage for the memoir. The final chapters were not quite personal enough.”⁶² Following the hectoring missive about the “customs of the trade,” this must have been difficult to take. *Reveries* had gone through two stages of proofing and was now being significantly revised. W. B. Yeats was using his privileged editorial and familial position to break with one of the cardinal “customs of the trade”: the presentation of copy intended for publication. Presented with a new chapter and a new passage, Elizabeth Yeats had to compose the new portions, and then open existing page formes to insert the new content. All in all, this must have been laborious work.

From another perspective it is fascinating to see that the making of *Reveries* was so tricky and that Yeats was struggling to finalize a text that he had declared complete seven months earlier on Christmas Day 1914. That the work was not “personal enough” gets right to the heart of the problem: Yeats was struggling to work out how to convert his personal experience into memoir that could be publishable by his sister. When some writers find something difficult to complete, they often choose to leave it aside for a while. In this case that possibility was not appealing. It would have created a gap in Cuala’s workflow and the need for another book (either from Yeats himself or one of the few authors of whom he approved). Cuala was a shaping material circumstance for his authorship, which meant that he had to keep on writing, for better or worse. From Elizabeth Yeats’s point of view the situation was not easy either. Her brother was difficult to work with and was constantly on the move and involved in other business. The printing of *Reveries* was a particular flashpoint. Though Lily and Elizabeth lived in the same house, Yeats wrote to them separately. He was notably more comfortable writing to

Lily. In a long letter to her of February 1916, he discusses difficulties over “extravagant” proof correction, a desire “to come to an arrangement with Lolly which will prevent further disputes,” and an acknowledgment that she “has come very badly out of this transaction financially,” a phrase that seems to suggest that Cuala did not make much profit from the lengthy labor of printing *Reveries*.⁶³

Arguments in families and workplaces are not unusual. What is unusual about Cuala is that the arguments combined family and work, and that the work, nonetheless, went on. By 1916, the year in which *Reveries* was issued, Yeats was in a position to look back on what had been achieved through his editorial work at Cuala:

The Cuala Press has published under the editorship of Mr. W. B. Yeats, since its foundation in 1902 twenty one volumes, all now out of print. These volumes have been chosen because in the opinion of the editor they have an intimate connection with the literary movement in contemporary Ireland, or have for it some special value. He thinks that in the future they may seem as characteristic of their time as the “Library of Ireland” was for the Ireland of three generations ago. To some extent they are part of a reaction against certain methods of that time, and appeal to those who love beautiful literature and careful printing. [...] Amongst them have been first editions of Synge, of Lady Gregory, and of books by the editor, and selections from various distinguished Irish poets.⁶⁴

In enabling the printing of those works, and their distribution to a list of regular subscribers and enthusiasts, Elizabeth Yeats did her brother a great service. Alongside Lady Gregory and George Yeats, she deserves to be restored to memory as one of Yeats’s most important collaborators. Her legacy was more apparent when Cuala was still in operation, as is evident from a letter of condolence sent by John Masefield to Lily: “We have always felt that your sister did very much to make your brother what he was.”⁶⁵ From 1903 until her death in 1940, Elizabeth worked steadily and regularly behind the scenes, facilitating his career and enabling his authorship. In all, she printed and published sixty-two titles in the limited edition series for which he acted as editor.⁶⁶ That she did so with such tenacity and in such trying material circumstances are facts to be borne in mind in the reading of all his works from *In the Seven Woods* onwards, including *Reveries*, an important and enabling precursor for the larger and more ambitious *Autobiographies* (see **Figure 1.4**).

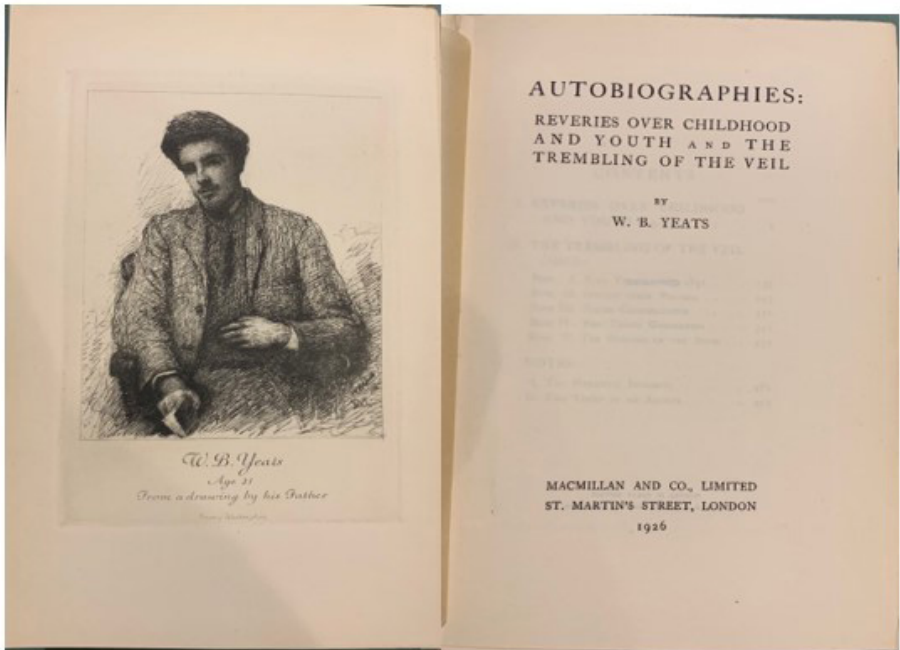


Figure 1.4: Title page and frontispiece of W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1926). Macmillan issued a commercial edition of *Reveries* in 1916. To avoid censure, Yeats issued *The Trembling of the Veil* in a private edition in 1922. He brought both texts together for this commercial edition of 1926.

NOTES

My thanks to Catriona Clutterbuck, Nick Freeman, Bez Hutton and an anonymous peer reviewer for comments on an earlier version of this essay.

ENDNOTES

- 1 In terms of chronology, Yeats intends *Reveries* to cover the period up to the departure for Bedford Park in the spring of 1887. By the time he was finishing *Reveries* he had already formed a sense of what would come next. *Four Years*, covering the period 1887–1891, was issued by Cuala in December 1921, and was the first chapter in *The Trembling of the Veil* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1922), the next volume in what would eventually become *Autobiographies*.

- 2 W. B. Yeats, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1915), 34. All references are to this edition, and are in text as *Rev.* This text is not exactly the same as the corresponding portion of *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955). The ways in which Yeats revised his text is beyond the scope of this article. The date on the Cuala edition is 1915 but the work was not issued until 1916.
- 3 George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). 7.
- 4 Existing scholarship on *Reveries* and Yeats's *Autobiographies* more generally includes both volumes of R. F. Foster's biography of Yeats as well as Joseph Ronsley, *Yeats's Autobiography: Life as Symbolic Pattern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Yoko Sato, "Reveries over Childhood and Youth: A Symbolic Autobiography," *Journal of Irish Studies* 32 (October 2017): 23–34; Deirdre Toomey, "Away," in *Yeats and Women*, ed. Deirdre Toomey (London: Macmillan, 1997); David G. Wright, *Yeats's Myth of Self: A Study of the Autobiographical Prose* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987). Of these only Toomey's work could be considered feminist in emphasis.
- 5 ECY to William Ranson, October 26, 1929, quoted in Richard Kuhta in "On the Breadth of a Half Penny: The Contribution of the Cuala Press to the Literary Renaissance," *Bookways* 6 (1993), 12.
- 6 ECY to James Healy (after July 15 before August 12) 1938, Stanford.
- 7 For traditions of literary publishing in Ireland see Clare Hutton, "Publishing the Irish Cultural Revival, 1891-1922," in *The Irish Book in English*, ed. Clare Hutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–42 (esp. 17–22).
- 8 In agreement with WBY, John Butler Yeats used the phrase "literary principality" to describe the Dun Emer Press. Joseph Hone, ed., *J. B. Yeats, Letters to his Son W. B. Yeats and Others 1869–1922*, 2nd ed. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 98.
- 9 John S. Kelly, ed., *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats* (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex Corporation, 2002) to Lady Gregory, Letter #2485 [July 14, 1914] hereafter *CL InteLex*.
- 10 W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs*, transcribed and edited by Denis Donoghue (London: Papermac, 1972) contains an earlier fragment of unpublished autobiographical prose, a "Journal" begun in December 1908, which documents his emotional life, particularly in the period 1908–1910.
- 11 Alex Zwerdling, *The Rise of the Memoir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.
- 12 To Lady Gregory, Letter #2485 [July 14, 1914]; to Lady Gregory, , July 14 [1914], #2487, *CL InteLex*.
- 13 To John Butler Yeats, December 26 [1914], #2571, *CL InteLex*.
- 14 To Susan Mary Yeats, July 28, 1914, #2494, *CL InteLex*.
- 15 To John Butler Yeats (c. December 19, 1915), #2832, *CL InteLex*.
- 16 To John Butler Yeats (late January 1916), # 2850, *CL InteLex*.
- 17 Hilary Marland, "Victorian Childbirth," created September 23, 2022, <https://victorianweb.org/victorian///science/maternity/uvic/8.html>.
- 18 Toomey, "Away," 167.
- 19 Toomey, "Away," 158.
- 20 Toomey, "Away," 137.
- 21 Toomey, "Away," 141.
- 22 David G. Wright, *Yeats's Myth of Self: A Study of the Autobiographical Prose* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 43, 44.
- 23 Seán Hewitt, *All Down Darkness Wide* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2022), 233.
- 24 Yeats finished *Reveries* while living at Stone Cottage with Ezra Pound in the early months of 1915. *Portrait* was serialized in *The Egoist* between February 1914 and September 1915. Pound had arranged for the serialization of *Portrait*; Yeats described Joyce as a "remarkable

- new talent” and *Portrait* as a “disguised autobiography” (to the Royal Literary Fund, July 29 [1915], in *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* ed. Allan Wade, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 599).
- 25 Edward Garnett (on behalf of Jonathan Cape) to James Pinker, January 26, 1916, in *Letters of James Joyce: Volume II*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1966), 371.
- 26 To J. B. Yeats December December [1914], #2571, *CL InteLex*.
- 27 To Susan Mary Yeats, [December 10, 1915], #2826, *CL InteLex*.
- 28 To John Quinn December 19 [1915], #2831, *CL InteLex*.
- 29 Yeats, *Memoirs*, 33, 19, 71.
- 30 To John Quinn, June 24, 1915, #2687, *CL InteLex*.
- 31 Arrangements for this reading were discussed in a letter to Lily of [November 11, 1914], and it had taken place by January 18, 1915, *CL InteLex*, #2549, #2583.
- 32 To Susan Mary Yeats, [November 11, 1914], #2549, *CL InteLex*.
- 33 See, in particular, William M. Murphy, *Family Secrets: William Butler Yeats and His Relatives* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995), 160f. Murphy’s account is very unfair to Elizabeth.
- 34 To Susan Mary Yeats, December 29 [1914], #2572, *CL InteLex*.
- 35 To Susan Mary Yeats, December 29 [1914], #2572, *CL InteLex*.
- 36 WB Yeats to Mabel Dickinson, May 11, 1908, *CL5*, 219–20.
- 37 The best and most detailed account of what happened is by Deirdre Toomey in an essay entitled “Away,” in *Yeats and Women*.
- 38 Excerpts from Elizabeth Yeats’s diary for 1888 quoted by Richard Kuhta in “On the Breadth of a Half Penny: The Contribution of the Cuala Press to the Literary Renaissance,” *Bookways*, 6 (1993), 12–17 (16).
- 39 These were: *Brushwork Copy Books* (London: George Philip, 1890), *Brushwork* (London: George Philip, 1896), *Brushwork Studies of Flowers, Fruits and Animals for Teachers and Advanced Students*, (London: George Philip, 1898), *Elementary Brushwork Studies* (London: George Philip, 1900), and *Elementary Brushwork Studies* (London: George Philip, 1905).
- 40 Cited in Gifford Lewis, *The Yeats Sisters and the Cuala* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 32.
- 41 Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 75.
- 42 Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 75.
- 43 Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 76.
- 44 For interesting comments on the limitations of Elizabeth Yeats’s feminism see Simone Murray, “The Cuala Press: Women, Publishing and the Conflicted Genealogies of ‘feminist publishing,’” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27 (2004), 489–506.
- 45 It is reminiscent, almost, of a plotline in a Katherine Mansfield story. See, for example ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ which shows how hard it could be for women to negotiate a way forward after a difficult parental death (Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories* ed by Angela Smith (Oxford: World’s Classics, 2002).
- 46 Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 19.
- 47 See A. J. A. Symons, “An Unacknowledged Movement in Fine Printing: The Typography of the Eighteen Nineties,” *Fleuron: A Journal of Typography*, 7 (1930), 83–119.
- 48 ECY to an unidentified recipient, November 11, 1903; Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 411.
- 49 Anon., “A Women’s Printing Society,” *The British Printer* 21 (1908), 230–31 (231).
- 50 Anon., “Ladies at Case: A Few Words about the Women’s Printing Society,” *Print: A Journal for Printing House Employés of all Grades and Departments* 1, (1896), 1.
- 51 Anon., “A Women’s Printing Society,” 230–31.
- 52 ECY to an unidentified subscriber to *In the Seven Woods*, August 11, 1903, Kansas.

- 53 D. F. McKenzie, "Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve," in *The Book and Book Trade in Eighteenth Century Europe*, eds. Giles Barber and Bernhard Fabian, (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1981), (81–126), 84.
- 54 Elizabeth Corbet Yeats's diary, December 2, 1888, quoted by Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 62. For evidence of the arrangements about illustration being made see WBY to Emery Walker, August 13 [1915], #2742, *CL InteLex*.
- 55 ECY to Geoffrey Tomkinson, March 25, 1926, unpublished, Kansas.
- 56 ECY to an unidentified subscriber to *In the Seven Woods*, August 11, 1903, unpublished, Kansas.
- 57 Colin Franklin, *The Private Presses*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), 121; Roderick Cave, *The Private Press* (London: Faber, 1971), 199.
- 58 Gifford Lewis, "'This terrible struggle with want of means': Behind the Scenes at the Cuala Press," *The Irish Book in English, 1891-2000*, ed. Clare Hutton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 509–47 (540).
- 59 John Butler Yeats to WBY, August 3, 1906; Murphy, *Family Secrets*, 128.
- 60 ECY to A. H. Bullen, October 4,,1906, Kansas. Underlining in the original.
- 61 WBY to ECY, [July 24, 1915], #2729, *CL InteLex*.
- 62 WBY to ECY, July 31 [1915] #2737, *CL InteLex*.
- 63 WBY to SMY, February 3 [1916], #2851, *CL InteLex*.
- 64 Cuala Announcements, 1916, TCD.
- 65 John Masefield to SMY, January 29, 1940; Gifford Lewis, *The Yeats Sisters and the Cuala* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 182.
- 66 For a list of the books issued see Liam Miller, *The Dun Emer Press, later the Cuala Press* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1973), 105–15.