June 2018

Jack B. Yeats: Journey in Consciousness

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Recommended Citation

Available at: https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/cejournal/vol10/iss10/1

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ABSTRACT

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) was an Irish artist and writer. His art evolved from the representational to something much more abstract. By examining six paintings covering the early, the middle, and the late periods of his life, I have endeavored to demonstrate a distinct shift in Jack B. Yeats from the mental structure of consciousness to the emergence of the integral structure of consciousness, as described by Gebser (1984). Artistic evidence of a shift in his consciousness is supplemented by a critical reading of one of his novels. Secondary sources were consulted to gain insight into the literary works that I have not read, and to explore the various contexts within which he worked and lived.

I first viewed Jack B. Yeats’s art at the Dublin City Gallery (Hugh Lane Gallery) in August of 2007, but it was a fast trip through the gallery, and I did not linger over any of the paintings. In 2009, I turned to Ireland to live; and in March of 2010, I managed to spend a day in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, which has on exhibit 23 of Yeats’s drawings, watercolors and paintings. I was intrigued with his art. His early works seemed to capture the spirit of the West of Ireland where I lived: both of the people and the landscape. His paintings became more abstract as he advanced in years. I still felt the West-of-Ireland spirit in them, but on first glance, they were blotches of color. It took study to see that figures and scenery were depicted, but they were difficult to discern through the color. I jumped at the opportunity to attend another Yeats exhibit in Sligo, the town where he spent his summers as a boy, in 2011 at The Model. The exhibit was entitled “The Outsider” and it featured his later works exclusively. While I was still uneasy with the abstractness of the work, the paintings conveyed more meaning the longer I pondered them. I wondered why he had switched to this more abstract style. I listened to the recording of a radio interview with Yeats. He was asked about this change in his style, but he declined to explain. He said that the paintings expressed everything that he had to say. The gallery’s narrative explained (I am paraphrasing the commentator) that Yeats had turned in his later years to expressionism, that he played fast and loose with form, and that he used color to express everything.

After reading about Jean Gebser’s typology of structures of consciousness, and his idea of a developmental progression from the magic, to the mythic, to the mental and finally, to the integral (Gebser, 1984; and Combs, 2009), Jack Yeats’s work immediately came to mind. I remembered aspects of his change in style that seemed to fit a shift from the mental to the integral structure of consciousness. I also wondered whether the changes in Yeats’s consciousness might have reflected a change in the dominant structure of consciousness in Ireland. Jack Yeats lived during a time of profound political and social change in Ireland. Ireland
during his lifetime emerged from 400 years of English domination to become an independent state. At the same time, the world was going through revolutionary changes in science, art, economics, and culture.

According to Gebser (1984), the mental structure of consciousness had been the prevailing structure for several hundred years prior to Yeats’s birth, and it was still going strong when Yeats started to produce art at the end of the 19th Century. At the end of that century and the beginning of the 20th Century, a new structure of consciousness began to emerge, the integral. The mental structure of consciousness is characterized by a linear conception of time, dualism in many respects (including mind/matter and subject/object duality), rationalism, materialism, individualism, and use of perspective. The integral structure is characterized by freedom from time and space. It is arational, aperspectival, diaphanous or transparent, and boundaries of all sorts dissolve—mind and matter, subject and object, and the whole and the part. Combs (2009) observes that the most valuable contribution that Gebser made to the concept of integral consciousness was finding that “it implies a harmonious integration of all structures of consciousness” (p. 138).

Gebser (1984) proposes criteria for identifying the integral consciousness as it operates in art and literature (p. 471):

1. To what extent is the irruption\(^2\) in time found in the painting? I interpret this to mean the appearance of all times at once. Shlain (1991) observes that this would happen if we were traveling at the speed of light. Gebser also suggests the idea of concretion of time, where time is combined with space to become concrete. Time becomes concrete when you perceive at once something that occurs sequentially in ordinary time. A representation of this is Marcel Duchamp’s, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, No. 2 (1912), where all the movements required to descend the staircase are depicted in a single image.

2. To what extent is there an emergent suppression of dualism? There is a melding of subject and object, mind and matter, and the individual and the universe. Lack of dualism is demonstrated by integrating other structures of consciousness: magic, mythic and mental into the integral.

3. To what extent does it have an arational, and hence aperspectival character? It is not irrational. It recognizes the merely measurable, but goes beyond it. It endeavors to portray many or all perspectives; and it recognizes ordinary logic, but is not constrained it. It is diaphanous or transparent in the sense that multiple layers of reality can be observed in a single view.

Combs (2009) suggests that in addition to the developmental structures of consciousness (which he characterizes as vertical) that it is important to also consider the horizontal aspects, which capture the perspective from which people are conscious of the world. I intend to interrogate Jack Yeats’s changing perspective through use of the quadrants suggested by Wilber as shown in Figure 1.

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2From the verb to irrupt: 1.to break or burst in suddenly. 2 to manifest violent activity or emotion, as a group of people.(Braham, 2000, p. 701)
With Jack Yeats, we have access to a vast production of art done over a long life, and we also have his literary works. He wrote a number of novels and plays. Wilber (2001) posits an integral approach to the review of art and literature, which I intend to use in this discussion. Art should be viewed within many nested and interlocking contexts. He suggests four contexts for considering art integrally: the intent of the maker; the artwork itself; the history of reception and response to it; and the wider context of the world-at-large. I have viewed many of the originals of Jack Yeats’s work in person, but I did not take notes at the time. I will not rely on my recollections, but I will call on them to supplement what I can ascertain from images. As for the history of the reception and response to his work, I consulted secondary sources describing the reception of his work during his lifetime and after. The wider context will play a role in my analysis in two ways: First, Jack Yeats was an Irish artist and writer. The Irish cultural and political context was important to his work, and therefore, should be examined for changes in its dominant structure of consciousness. Second, although he did not associate much with other artists, he was close to several English and Irish writers and poets, he traveled in America, and corresponded with Americans. It is fair to assume that he was aware of the cultural and intellectual movements of his time. I will consider what effect the wider cultural milieu may have had on Jack Yeats and his effect on it.

**Art: The First Two Contexts**

In this section, I will discuss Wilber’s first two contexts: the intent of the artist and the artworks themselves. Jack Yeats lived a long life, 1871 to 1957, and he painted right up to the end of his life. According to Pyle (1989), early in his working life he was a popular illustrator for *Punch*, *Paddock Life*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Pall Mall Budget*, *Liaka Joko*, *Chums*, *Illustrated*...
Chips, and Comic Cuts. He also drew posters, and illustrated brother W.B. Yeats’s Irish Fairy Tales. For a time his exhibited work was almost exclusively watercolors, and the change was gradual. The first oil painting that he exhibited was in 1902, but by 1910, his work was almost exclusively in oils.

I have selected six works (one in chalk and watercolors, one in pen and ink, and four oil paintings) with the intent of representing his change in style over time. Two are from the early period, 1905 and 1908. Two are from a period of transition (1922 and 1935), when his art was becoming less representational; and two were done near the end of his life (1946 and 1951), when his work was becoming more and more abstract. My argument is that Jack Yeats as a young artist exhibited mainly the mental structure of consciousness, and that his consciousness began to shift toward the integral later in his life—becoming more clearly integral near the end of his life.

This island man is standing on a mainland quay, with the island to his back. The mast of his hooker (the name for the traditional sailing vessel of the West of Ireland) rises up beside him. It is rendered in watercolor and chalk on a Whatman board, and measures 15 x 10.7 inches. Consistent with mental consciousness, it is drawn from a single perspective. The figure is the focal point and is well distinguished from the background, although the colors of the background are picked up in his clothing, face and hands. The National Galley of Ireland’s commentary on this watercolor notes, “The hill, mauve with heather, and yellow with gorse, repeats the conical shape of the man’s wide brimmed hat…” (Pyle, 1986, p. 14). The hill on the island in the background is outsized, reducing the apparent distance across the bay. By doing this, Yeats emphasizes the importance of the island in this man’s life. Like most of the Aran Islanders of that time, he would have spent most of his life on the island. The subject is typical of Jack Yeats’s work at this time, focusing on the people and the scenery of the West of Island. It was the time of the Irish Literary Revival; along with ancient myths and folktale, there was a renewed interest in Irish rural people. I will be discussing this in more detail below. The West of Ireland had not urbanized; nor was it as heavily influenced by the English as other parts of Ireland. Gaelic was widely spoken. Yeats’s country folk are portrayed as independent and heroic. It was nearing the time when the Irish would again rebel against English rule, and the Irish Literary Revival presaged the coming political actions. Jack Yeats was very much involved in
Ireland’s return to its roots. He toured the West of Ireland with J.M. Synge in 1905 (Pyle, 1989). Synge was soon to introduce the rest of the world to the Aran Islands with his play *The Playboy of the Western World*. Jack Yeats illustrated Synge’s travel books *The Aran Island and In Wicklow*, and *West Kerry and Connemara*. It was important to Jack Yeats to represent this folksy Ireland to the world, and particularly to the English. While it is the image of a plain country person on the surface, *The Man from Aranmore* conveys a message. This man of Aranmore does not consider himself subservient to the English. There is formidable strength in his character. Jack Yeats is conveying profound dualisms here: Irish versus English, country versus city, and the individual versus the crowd. Another dualism, the man versus the landscape, is there, but Yeats mutes the dualism by painting the colors of the landscape onto the man. Consistent with the mental consciousness, Yeats treats time as linear; it seems to be midday with no shadows, except under the hat brim. There is a solidity and materiality to the man and the landscape. Using Wilber’s quadrants of consciousness (Figure 1), Yeats renders this image using the Upper Right quadrant of conscious perspective. The scene at Zone #5 is depicted from the perspective of Zone #6; it is an objective view of an objective exterior world.

This work was drawn in ink on paper, and measures 8.9 x 11.6 inches. It is perspectival, and although expressionistic, it is a good representation of a traditional Irish scene. The National Gallery of Ireland commentary:

A storyteller…is holding his audience spellbound in front of the turf fire, before which a dog is slumbering. The small cottage ‘room’ (off the kitchen, where, presumably the coffin lies), with its heavy wooden beams, is undecorated, apart from the holy picture above the mantle shelf. The woman of the house stands in the doorway. (Pyle, 1986, p. 20).

Again, this is mental consciousness is at work. We view the group from a single objective point. In fact, the perspective would require that the cottage wall on this side be pulled away. Yeats creates a unity in the group by facing most everyone center front, in the direction of the
storyteller. The drawing signifies profound dualities. The unity of the group portrays the only strength the Irish have to oppose the English. The simplicity of the room and the religious picture convey the chasm between the Irish and English: poverty versus wealth, and Catholicism versus Anglicanism. A moment is captured in linear time, and space is preserved as it is experienced in everyday life. The drawing is again an example of a consciousness in the Upper Right of Wilber’s quadrant: the objective observation from Zone #6 of the external world (Zone #5).

This is an oil painting on canvas, measuring 9.1x14.2 inches. It was painted during the Irish Civil War after Ireland was granted independence from Great Britain. The National Gallery of Ireland commentary:

The loose paintwork in the surrounding view, with a relaxed broad brush, and lack of exact definition, is characteristic of the early phase of the middle period. Relieving the somber greys that clothe the rows of buildings and dock basin are the rust scarf worn by the moustached man in the foreground and the pink pieces of the draught set. (Pyle, 1986, p. 46).

Jack Yeats at this time exhibits a bit of melancholy in his work. The republic that he had so hoped for had not come to the island of Ireland; rather, independence came with the separation of the northern provinces from Ireland and a continued connected to the monarchy, with the English monarch still the head of state. To add to this misery, a civil war had broken out. The independent peasant people of The Man from Aranmore, and Wake House are replaced with seamen on the dock in Dublin. Dublin had always been more English than the West of Ireland, and the seamen do not have a tie to the land. The colors are subtler than his earlier works, as are the lines. Yeats’s figures are starting to fade into the background. A single perspective is still there, but there is perhaps less dualism than before. The figures meld into the cityscape. The ideal of the proud Irish opposing the English was not as clear at this time; now Irish were fighting Irish. Who were the villains and who were the heroes? Rationalism and time linearity are preserved with the sun setting on still solidly material figures and a realistic cityscape. The mental consciousness of Yeats perhaps is fading as the figures in Draughts fade into the cityscape.
From the standpoint of Wilber’s quadrants, the conscious perspective is in the Upper Right quadrant, with the objective observer (Zone #6) looking at a scene (Zone #5). I sense the glimmer of a multiple perspective with Yeats processing the scene also through his own consciousness (Upper Left, Zone#1), because of the sadness and loss conveyed--the sadness of Yeats himself. The mental consciousness still predominates, but is weakening.

About to Write a Letter 1935

The Irish Civil War had ended long ago, and Ireland was a peaceful place. This is oil on canvas, measuring 35.8x24 inches. The National Gallery of Ireland commentary:

What is remarkable about the painting is the richness of the colour: the scarlet of the table cover, flecked with shadows from the lamp, flickering above; the deadly white of the man’s face, his black coat and the rust of his hair; the wall behind, shaded with the green of memory, and melancholy blue, and highlighted with moments of yellow. (Pyle, 1986, p. 64-65).

This was a period when Yeats started to emphasize color over form. The eye is immediately drawn to the red table, not the man. This is not an Irish scene, but, according to the National Gallery commentary, a scene based on a love poem by John Hamilton Reynolds. Yeats has turned to more universal themes; this one is lost love. Perspective is ambiguous, and lines are less clear. I have the impression that I am seeing the table as the figure sees the table; that is, the figure and I, the viewer, are looking at the table from the same perspective. Yet, I am also seeing it from the outside as an objective observer. Dualism is breached as the table and surroundings seem ready to merge. The table is important, maybe more important than the figure. Yeats had stated numerous times that art should be based on incidents witnessed by the painter (Pyle, 1989). Yet, during this period of his life, he was thinking about memory as the painter’s tool. He said, “No one creates…the artist assembles memories” (p. 128). Painting from memory allowed him to rise above representing the scene in front of him, and to recreate a remembered scene enriched by memories from other times and places. Rather than the painting being in a moment in time, Yeats here has painted a moment of becoming. The figure is not writing a letter, but is about to write a letter. We are not sure whether to look at the man or the table. Three colors
stand out in the painting: the red of the table, the white of the man’s face and the white of a woman’s portrait on the wall. Reason competes with emotion in trying to understand this painting. There is something magical about it; it could be a scene from a fairy tale.

Wilber’s quadrants give us a useful insight here. The previous three paintings display a consciousness in the Upper Right quadrant mainly, viewing from Zone #6 into Zone #5. The consciousness’s perspective here is more complex. The entire scene can be viewed from Zone #6 (the viewer), looking at Zone #5 (the scene), but the viewer also seems to perceive the table from the viewpoint of the figure, which places the viewer in Zone #5 perceiving within Zone #5 itself. I argue that this is a more integral perspective. The dualism between the figure and the room is negated. Time is on hold and rationality is breached: reason does not allow us to be inside the picture and outside viewing it at the same time. The magic consciousness is integrated with the mental.

This is oil on canvas, measuring 20.1x 27.2 inches. Although it is a seashore scene, which Jack Yeats would have remembered well from his youth in Sligo, and the figures may be fishermen, it is a universal view of humankind going forward toward whatever fate would bring. Jack Yeats has moved away from the representational, but the work is not abstract. We still can make out human figures, a boat, a horse, land, sea and the sky. The National Gallery of Ireland commentary:

The whole painting is alive with colour, of an exuberant kind, mostly royal blue, indigo, and greens, heightened with vermillion and lemon yellow, and white. The sky, flaming with energy, is reflected in the foam of the tossing sea, and in the rich colours of the headlands….(Pyle, 1986, p. 72)

World War II had just ended. The atomic bomb had been dropped. Ireland was neutral during the war, so did not participate in it as a nation. Yet, people in Ireland understood its horror. Many Irishmen fought and died in Irish brigades of the British Army, so people in Ireland suffered real loss. There is optimism in this painting, yet it is optimism in the face of troubled skies and waters. The progress of these figures up the beach for me represents the emergence of the integral consciousness in Jack Yeats. The figures are diaphanous and luminous. You can see through them to the ground, sea and sky. They are material, yet immaterial. The picture conveys
happiness and melancholy. There is hope in the figures, yet turbulence in the sea and sky. To the right we can barely perceive a boat, and to the left, a horse. This is a transition scene. The figures arrive on the sea by boat, and are ready to travel the dry land by horse. Yet the sea/land distinction is not dualistic. The point of the painting is not only the transition from sea to land, but also the continuous journey. Yeats retains a single perspective in the painting, and we can see the horizon. He is not depicting solely Irish life now. It is human life. The struggles for independence and the tragedy of people at war stays with us, but we can still make our journey. Time ceases to matter. We see heroes on the beach, reminding us of Irish heroes like Finn McCool and Queen Maeve, but they are not Irish or English heroes. They are universal heroes. The scene is also magic in its likeness to a dream, and the connection of the figures to the sky, land and sea. In this painting, we see many of the aspects that Gebser (1984) identified with the integral consciousness. The figures are diaphanous, and there is no dualism between man and nature. There is something mythic and magical about the scene: human heroes coming out of the sea. It is not the rational and perspectival art of the mental consciousness. It is too ambiguous and dreamlike for that. It is not clear what the painting is about, but we are absorbed in it because of its colors and hint of some kind of greatness. There is again a sense of becoming. Something is about to happen, but it is indefinite in time and space. There is lightness at the left horizon, probably the rising sun, but the figures are illuminated from the bottom right; it is no time or every time. Is this Gebser’s concretion of time? I am not sure, but time is ambiguous. There is some linearity in the time, because the figures are making progress toward us. They traveled the sea, moored their boat and now walk on dry land, implying a time sequence. The past is less real than the present, because the figures become more solid as they move forward. Is the future implied? Are we viewing past, present and future in a moment? Perhaps.

Analyzing Men of Destiny in terms of Wilber’s quadrants, this scene does not allow the viewer the comfort of only the Upper Right quadrant of consciousness, viewing the scene in Zone #5 from Zone # 6. That objective view of the exterior scene is there, but it is also a dream sequence in the mind of Jack Yeats (Upper Left quadrant, Zone #1). As I look at the painting, I am drawn into it, and I experience being part of the group coming onto land. This is a Zone #3, Lower Left quadrant, experience.

This is oil on canvas, 24x36.2 inches. The Korean War is on, and it is the middle of the Cold War, but this painting seems optimistic. My impression is that it depicts Yeats’s vision of the end of life. He is 80 years old. His wife has died. He knows the end is near. Riding a horse from a place is a common theme with Yeats, in paintings and in his writing. The National Gallery of Ireland commentary:
The contrast of shade and light, clearly marked in a diagonal line, falling across the right of the picture, is beautifully managed. Touches of red, in vertical lines to right and left of the painting, and at the entrance to the tunnel, inject a forceful element into a picture that is predominantly blue, green, yellow, and white. (Pyle, 1986, p. 84)

Does this painting suggest an integral consciousness? Yeats takes a traditional approach to a single visual perspective in the painting, so he has not given up that mental technique. Yet, duality is breached. There is the diaphanous quality of the horse. It is in unity with the forest and the tunnel. The theme is a journey, but there are various ways to interpret it. In one interpretation, the horse is at one end of the tunnel of trees and the rider (figure with a saddle) is waiting at the other. The journey will begin when the horse and rider meet. In another interpretation, both the horse and rider have just completed a journey. The rider watches, as the horse turns to bid farewell as it reaches the end of the tunnel. A third interpretation is that both of the other two interpretations are correct. The journey is beginning and it is ending. In this interpretation, time is concretized, and unified with the elements of space: path, trees, horse, and rider. The painting also has a dreamlike and mythical quality to it. It is dreamlike in that the elements are indistinct and seem to meld together. It is mythical because it has the feel of a heroic journey. Surely, it is not a mundane horseback ride. The tunnel has a fairy tale quality to it as it transverses an enchanted forest. I think with this painting an emerging integral consciousness incorporates the earlier structures of consciousness. The mythic and the magical are accepted without being a constraint on the mental. The ambiguity of the scene creates its arationality. It is not irrational. Nothing is overtly contradictory, except that our mind creates contradictory interpretations of what is happening.

*For the Road* was not painted from the perspective of an Upper Right consciousness. The objective observer in Zone #6 is not taking in the scene at Zone #5. Jack Yeats painted this from Zone #1, his imagination, and possibly from #2, trying to objectively view his own imagination. I suggest this because of the double qualities of the painting--a journey that is both beginning and ending, and the horse that is individual, yet part of the forest.

I have not proven that Jack Yeats possessed an emerging integral consciousness, but the indicators of an integral consciousness are there in *For the Road* and *Men of Destiny*. I see it strongly in *About to Write a Letter* as well.

**Writing: First Two Contexts**

Jack B. Yeats wrote eight plays for the miniature theater, nine plays for the big theater (three of which were performed in the Irish theater), and eight novels. This presents us with the unusual opportunity to compare the consciousness revealed by his words with what we see in his art. I will review his literary effort from the standpoint of the first two contexts from Wilber (2001), his intent, and the works themselves. There will be no attempt to detect a chronological change in consciousness in his writing, because most of his literary works (except for the miniature theater) were written in the 1930s when, I believe, the integral consciousness had already appeared in his art. Rather, I will use his writing to either confirm or cast doubt on signs of

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3 Miniature theater was performed on small stages similar to a puppet theater, but using cardboard figures (about nine inches tall) mounted on doweling that could be moved back and forth (Skelton, 1971).
integral consciousness in his later artworks. McGuinness (1992) believes that the main characters in all of Jack Yeats’s literary works discover the virtue of releasing themselves from rational control and relinquishing the “struggle against spiritual forces of the universe, forces larger than the individual” (p. xi). Yet, they are people of “good will” who try to improve the lot of those around them (p. xi). I read one of his plays and one of his novels. Based on the summaries and comments written by McGuinness, I chose the works that interested me the most: the novel Ah Well: A Romance in Perpetuity (Yeats, 1974) published in 1942; and the play In Sand: A Play in Three Acts (Skelton, 1971) published posthumously in 1964. Purser (1991) notes that the play was written far earlier, probably in 1943. In the interest of space, I will discuss only the novel in this article. My observations regarding the indicators of Jack Yeats’s level of integral consciousness differ little between the two works.

Ah Well is a story told by Dusty Brown, a character of indeterminate age, who is new in town. He may have lived there for many years; but, unlike most of the people in town, he had not lived there his entire life. It is an E-shaped town in a valley, with a river running through it and a fountain in its central square. We are never told the name of the town, but we learn quite a lot about the people who live there. There are young people, old people, and children, but no one seems to age. Brown never hears of a birth or of anyone dying a natural death. People leave town in two ways: they commit suicide or they get on their horse and leave. Brown reflects:

One thing troubled me about these people. I never caught them saying a bad thing about any neighbor behind their back, never to me, and yet I knew that they were full of malicious backbiting. If they drew a dagger from a sheath, it drank before it was stabled again. (Yeats, 1974, p. 35)

Near tragedies happen, but no one seems to be bothered by them. Everything Brown observes about the town and its people seems to be from a dream. People do not react to situations as one would expect. Do we see the integral consciousness in this work? Gebser (1984) claims that the integral consciousness has a fundamentally different grammar. Ah Well has some of this new grammar. “Because” or “since”, and “as” or “like” are not used. Things just happen, and no one bothers to search for a reason. Nothing is like anything else. It just is. Gebser notes that this nonchalance about events in the integral consciousness is observed in scientists as well, and he quotes Sir Arthur Eddington: “Events do not happen; they are just there and we come across them. The ‘formality of taking place’ is merely the indication that the observer has on his voyage of exploration passed into the absolute future of the event in question” (Gebser, 1984, p. 504). Gebser observes that magic and myth “flourish among those poets who have authentically surpassed the mental-rational structure” (Gebser, 1984, p. 502). Magic and myth flourish in Ah Well. The story of a pirate ship coming into town and the story of a man stabbed so hard that the dagger gets stuck in the earth are mythical in their telling. People appear and disappear in the town, but no one ever notices.

Time in Ah Well is not like ordinary linear time. People do not change in age, yet people of all ages live in the town. Brown recites events in town, but we never know whether he is remembering a past event or recounting an event happening at the moment. Dualism is breached regularly. The people around Brown seem to love life, yet are uninterested in whether they live or die. He saves a young boy from drowning, but neither the boy nor his father acknowledges
that anything has happened. When he is with a group of picnic-goers, the group spontaneously decides to run down a hillside toward a precipice. Brown does not know whether they are going to go over, or stop at the edge. The mayor dies, seems to come back to life, and seems to die again, but we are never sure what his status is. For Brown the town has a diaphanous quality: “It as if I was floating over the roofs of the houses looking clear through the floors of the houses into the basements” (Yeats, 1974, p. 36). Near the end of the book Brown sums up his life and the life of the town: “I looked down by my horse’s gentle side, and in the soft ground I saw, that symbol of my life a crescent on a crescent reversed and interlaced” (Yeats, 1974, p. 85). It is the horseshoe prints of his horse going one way and then coming back, superimposed. Brown’s life and that of those around him are going forward and backward at the same time. No one ever knows which direction; yet, there is no despair in the town: “It’s just their faces were calm and waved to a pulsing calmness. Not because they were bursting with happiness, but because they knew always, awake or asleep, walking or sitting, leaning or springing up, there was happiness” (p. 28).

The story of Ah Well is told from multiple standpoints of consciousness in the Wilberian sense. Duty Brown at times is in the objective Upper Right Quadrant, observing the town in Zone #5, from Zone #6. At other times, he is giving his subjective impressions of the town from the subjective Zone #1 of consciousness (Upper Left Quadrant). At still other times, he feels what it is like to be a towns-person in the inter-subjective Lower Left Quadrant, Zone #3. When he discusses his feeling with other townspeople, he and they are conscious observers in Zone #4.

Yeats’s integral approach as indicated in his later art, Men of Destiny, For the Road and About to Write a Letter holds for Ah Well. We see the irruption of time, as Gebser (1984) terms it. Dualism is breached in the artworks and in the novel. In both the artwork and the novel rationalism is tested. It is not quite irrational, but antimonies abound. The perspectives in the case of both are multiple.

The Last Two Contexts
Wilber’s last two contexts are reception and response, and the world-at-large. Although Jack Yeats was a popular illustrator, Pyle (1989) reports that his serious artworks received only modest popular interest. For most of his life, he relied on a small group of loyal patrons. He received more critical acclaim than sales, although he was not without his detractors. During the 1930s, Yeats had exhibitions in London, and received favorable comments from prominent people such as George Bernard Shaw and TE Lawrence. His first real success came with an exhibition that he shared with Sir William Nicholson in 1942 at the National Gallery of Ireland. The sales of his paintings went well, and they were getting as many as a thousand Dubliners a day into the exhibition. It is not clear whether they came to see Yeats or Nicholson. It is fair to conclude that the serious artwork of Jack B. Yeats was never wholeheartedly embraced in Ireland during his lifetime; nor did he have a mass following in on the Continent or in America. The same can be said for his literary work. Both his art and his literature were acclaimed enthusiastically by a few—mainly figures in the Irish Literary Revival. It is safe to conclude that Jack B. Yeats did not lead a shift toward integral consciousness in Ireland, nor was he reflecting a mass change in consciousness; however, I believe that there was a change occurring in the consciousness among Irish intellectuals starting at the turn of the 20th Century.
Jack Yeats had few friends in the art community, and he did not correspond with prominent artists of his day. McGuinness (1992) writes that his friendships tended to be with literary people, among them John Masefield, C.J. Synge and Samuel Beckett. Beckett in a 1934 letter cites Jack Yeats and T.S. Eliot as creative people who are aware of “the new thing that has happened, or the old thing that has happened again, namely the breakdown of the object…the rupture of lines of communication” (p. 144). Again, Samuel Beckett, commenting on Jack Yeats’s work:

What is incomparable in this great solitary oeuvre is its insistence upon sending us back to the darkest part of the spirit that created it and upon permitting illuminations only through the darkness. Hence this unparalleled strangeness which renders irrelevant the usual tracings of a heritage, whether national or other. (Jackson, Lampert, & Fuchs, 1991, p. 9).

Beckett understood that Jack Yeats was transcending duality.

Jack Yeats was involved with the Irish Literary Revival that began at the turn of the 19th Century and continued through Irish Independence, and beyond (Pyle, 1989). The revival was led by Jack Yeats’s brother W.B. Yates and Lady Augusta Gregory. This Revival featured Irish writers writing about Irish topics. The writing took two turns. One turn was writing about Irish country folk and their lives. The other was writing about Irish mythology, folklore and the magic of the place. W.B. Yeats captured many ancient Irish tales in magazine articles and books (Yeats, 1993). Lady Augusta Gregory toured the countryside and recorded Irish folktales and myths (Gregory, 1994). Jack Yeats illustrated his brother’s writings on mythology and folklore, and the travel books of J.M. Synge. He traveled with Synge around the West of Ireland, getting more acquainted with the ways of Irish rural folks, adding to his early experience with them in Sligo. He helped edit and illustrate A Broadsheet, a periodic publication of Irish poems and ballads. Ireland and the Irish folk were the subjects of most of his art when he had permanently returned to Ireland after some years in England. He supported Irish Republicanism although he did not fight against the British or with either side in the Civil War. He had attended art exhibitions in Paris and London, so he was familiar with the art of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. He did not admit to being influenced by any of them. He always considered himself an outsider: “I have travelled all my life without a ticket…When we are asked about it all in the end, we who travel without tickets, we can say with that vanity which takes the place of self-confidence: even though we went without tickets we never were commuters” (McGuinness, 1992, p. 1-2). For subjects, he was influenced by the Irish Literary Revival, and I would say, political revival, as well. The Irish separateness that was emerging was more in line with the mental structure of consciousness. The Irish were distinguishing themselves from the English, first symbolically, then politically. Yet, separation also allowed for embracing the Irish past—which had been suppressed by the English overloads: the Catholic Church, the legends of mythic heroes of Ireland, and the magic traditions of pagan Ireland. The Irish Literary Revival embraced both rationalistic modernity and the mythical/magic tradition of old Ireland. Some intellectuals, such as James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, took steps beyond that into erasing the duality of subject and object, the need for rationality and the tyranny of linear time. Beckett recognized Jack Yeats as being within that group.
Settegast (2001) writes of a revolution in art and literature in 1910: James Joyce with *Portrait of the Artist*, T.S. Eliot with *Prufrock*, and Braque and Picasso with cubist art. Jack Yeats was still representational in his art in 1910, but he picked up the spirit and by the 1920s his lines were softening and colors were carrying more weight. He may have needed a few years immersed in representing the Irish folk. Once he reached a tipping point, he could move away from representing the Irish folk to universalizing his message—shedding the duality of Irish and the world, dark and light, life and death, subject and object. The integral consciousness was emerging in Ireland during Jack B. Yeats life, both with him and his intellectual contemporaries—certainly Beckett and Joyce.

**Conclusion**

Jack Yeats led a conventional life (Pyle, 1989). He married relatively young and had a long marriage; his wife, Cottie, died a few years before him. They had no children, but he loved children. I imagine his miniature theater plays were presented mainly to children. He never tried to be other than an artist, but his art was literature as well as graphic art. In Ireland, he is honored for his watercolors, drawings and paintings; but not for his novels and plays. In literature, he is overshadowed by his brother W.B. Yeats, Joyce and Beckett. I do not doubt that he possessed an emerging integral consciousness. His plays and his novels confirm what his paintings demonstrate graphically. Yeats as he grew older had more and more access to the universal mind posited by Shlain (1991)—the universal mind from which both artists and scientists drew their creativity. Shlain believes that artists discover the new truths first. Jack Yeats was drawing during the time of the great revelations in physics. We have no information about whether he knew anything about them or not. Surely, he knew what the average person knew. But he did not need a confirmation from physics. He understood the message. The universe is vast and complex. It cannot be understood in black and white terms. The layers are multiple and one must aim to see through them. The world cannot be understood from the individual perspective. All perspectives must be taken in. Time is not a simple linear progression, but has many manifestations. The individual cannot possibly control his or her surroundings. Event and actions in those surrounding should be experienced; and then, we should let them go.

**References**


