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# The Evolution of Narrative and the Self

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**Abstract:** Narratives bring a range of disparate behavioral modes before the conscious self. Preliterate narratives consist of a loose string of episodes where each episode, or small group of episodes, displays a single mode. With literacy comes the ability to construct long narratives in which the episodes are tightly structured so as to exhibit a character's essential nature. Complex strands of episodes are woven together into a single narrative, with flashbacks being common. The emergence of the novel makes it possible to depict personal growth and change. Intimacy, a private sphere of sociality, emerges as both a mode of experience depicted within novels and as a mode in which people read novels. The novelist constructs a narrator to structure experience for reorganization.

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O brave new world,  
That has such people in't!  
--Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, V, i.

The series of events which includes the American and French Revolutions, the invention of the novel, the rise of modern psychology, and the triumph of the lyric in poetry, adds up to a psychic revolution . . . a new kind of self, a new level of mind; for what has been happening since the eighteenth century seems more like the development of a new organ than a mere finding of a new way to describe old experience.

--Fiedler, 1966, pp. 32-33

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## **Introduction: Constructing the Self**

Consisting of a single syllable when spoken and four letters when written, "self" is nonetheless a big word, especially when used by philosophers, literary critics, psychoanalysts, and such--who often capitalize it, giving us the Self. This Self is some kind of personal essence, the underlying metaphysical being sustaining our awareness, experience, and dignity. As such, this same Self has been under extensive attack from the deconstructive and post-structuralist wings of contemporary thought (see, for example, Derrida, 1970), where it is deemed an illusion, a mere contingent construct. While I am uncomfortable with the post-structuralist style of thinking, I accept that the Self is a construct, but that does not mean it is a "mere" construct. Our mental life consists of constructs. As culture evolves, more sophisticated constructs come to replace the less sophisticated. And so it is with our selves.

One need not grapple with the arcana of deconstructive rhetoric to appreciate the contingent nature of self. The phenomenon of split-personality displays that contingency most dramatically. Here we see a biological individual with several different personalities, each having different memories and personal style. In Thigpen and Cleckley's (1957) classic study *Eve* had three personalities; Schreiber's (1973) *Sybil* had sixteen (see also Stoller, 1973); I've heard--though not tracked down --references to individuals with a hundred personalities. The splitting starts early in life and seems to be along affective lines; different selves emerge to handle different desires and emotions. In these pathological individuals it makes little sense to talk The Self as some irreducible essence, the touchstone of personal being. The process through which an individual constructs a coherent personal history and a consistent inner life has been derailed.

Given such a dramatic example of personal incoherence, what is the nature of the contrasting coherence? If we understood what consciousness is and how it works, we might be able to define personal coherence in terms of the range of experience available to consciousness. The individual afflicted with split-personality can only be conscious of a limited range of experience through each personality. There is no way such an individual can gather the full range of his or her experience to a single arena of consciousness and reflect on the relationships between these experiences. But then, Freud dared to tell us that none of us can do that, that the effective causal links between our desires and actions are often quite different from our conscious reasons. The conscious coherence of our inner lives is often a fabric of evasions, half-truths, and outright lies. But to write in this way is to write around the issue.

Consciousness remains opaque. Until science--or, more accurately, science's intellectual successor (Benzon & Hays, 1990, p. 312; Hays, 1992, p. 212)--understands it we will have to make do with such approximations as we can manage given current knowledge. There is, however, a point which is a bit deeper than this standard profession of modesty in the face of

current ignorance. As culture evolves, new mechanisms and structures of personal coherence emerge. Our biology bequeaths us a complex pile of motivational and affective machinery; but it does not bequeath us a plan for coherence. That is up to culture to create (cf. Geertz, 1973, pp. 76, 80-81).

This essay is about the role narrative plays in helping us shape coherent selves. Plays well acted and stories well told are zoos of consciousness in which we place the various beasts of judgment, action and desire so that we can observe them survive, thrive, and die. As culture evolves the zoo's buildings and pens become more complex, the relationships between the beasts more intricate. The first section of this essay sets forth some basic concepts, naming a few of the beasts and analyzing a performance by that great Elizabethan lion-tamer, William Shakespeare. I then define the concept of cultural rank and then discuss each rank in turn, concluding with some speculations about narrative at the current rank [\[1\]](#).

## Lusts and Epiphanies

Following Warren McCulloch (Kilmer, McCulloch, & Blum, 1969) David Hays and I have adopted the concept of behavioral mode as basic to motivation and emotion (Benzon & Hays, 1988, pp. 296-298; Hays, 1992, pp. 190-193; cf. Benzon, 1981, pp. 263-265). The idea is simple: there is a specific pattern of brain activation appropriate to each kind of activity. Each such pattern subserves a particular behavioral mode. Examples include feeding, exploring, courtship, fighting, and so forth.

One aspect of personal coherence is conflict between the animalistic modes, such as those just listed, and modes serving more abstract higher level goals (Hays, 1992, p. 193; on high level goals see Powers, 1973, pp. 194-201). Hays (1992, pp. 195, 209-210) has thus speculated that the four quadrants of the cerebral cortex are concerned with achieving truth, love, beauty, and justice, where these goals are seen as governing the internal coherence of the nervous systems itself. An action which is appropriate to the animal mode of, for example, fighting, might contravene an abstract goal, perhaps love or justice. Similarly, an action satisfying an abstract goal might well arouse a contradictory animal mode.

This kind of conflict is the familiar one of emotion vs. reason. Another aspect of personal coherence illustrated by an experiment performed by D. Goodwin (and reported by Fischer, 1975, p. 199). Subjects memorized nonsense syllables while drunk. When sober their recall of the syllables was poor. But when they were drunk, their recall dramatically improved. It thus seems that memory is dependent on the biochemical state of the brain. Recall of experiences is most efficient if the brain is in the same biochemical state it was in when it underwent those experiences.

Now, there is a great deal of evidence that behavioral mode is biochemically sensitive, that different behavioral modes are subserved by different biochemical substrates (Kilmer et al., 1969, Benzon & Hays, 1988). This suggests that we could have real problems of personal continuity, problems which become obvious in the extreme cases of split personalities. If records of personal experience are mode-specific, especially in the case of strongly emotionally charged experience, then how can we get a coherent view of ourselves and of our world? The world of a person who is ravenously hungry is different from the world of that same person when he or she is consumed with sexual desire. Yet it is the same person in both cases. And the apple, which was so insignificant when sexually hungry--to the point where that apple wasn't part of the world at all--becomes a central object in the world once sexual desire has been satisfied and hunger asserts itself. Regardless of the person's mode, it is still the same apple.

Achieving a continuous worldview and sense of self in the face of discontinuous experience is not simple.

To see how these two facets--ape vs. angel, biochemical specificity--of mode interact, consider Shakespeare's sonnet 129 (for details Benzon 1976, 1978, pp. 259-326, 1981). In the first twelve lines our attention is directed back and forth over the follow sequence:

**Desire:**

Protagonist becomes consumed with sexual desire and pursues the object of that desire using whatever deceit and violence is necessary: "perjur'd, murderous, bloody . . . not to trust" (ll. 3-4).

**Consummation:**

Protagonist gets his way, having "a bliss in proof" (l. 11)

**Shame:**

Desire satisfied, the protagonist is consumed with guilt: "despisèd straight" (l. 5), "no sooner had/ Past reason hated" (ll. 6-7).

The poem concludes with a curious couplet, asserting that "All this the world well knows yet none knows well,/ To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell" (ll. 13-14). Knowing that rancid meat can make you ill will prevent most people from eating rancid meat, but, says this final couplet, the knowledge that sexual desire will lead you to guilt and disgust is not powerful enough to prevent you from walking to the trap.

This cycle is easily explained using the concept of mode. Moral strictures governing honest and honorable behavior are encoded in neural structures most strongly active in a certain, no doubt cortical, mode. However, as sexual desire grows, the biochemical state of the brain changes and mode shifts; moral strictures are no longer readily called to mind; anything goes. Once desire is satisfied the brain can return to a mode in which morality is regnant. When morality sees what has just been done, morality is outraged. We can further speculate, as outrage grows, another biochemical change occurs, inducing a modal shift, and we are no longer in a cortical mode conducive to reason and morality. In giving way to outrage, morality has undermined itself. In such a mind, reason hasn't a chance. Such is the conflict between ape and angel, between the subcortical structures of the limbic system and the cortex.

In this context the apparently gloomy admission of the concluding couplet, which holds the preceding twelve lines in view and asserts that you can't escape, has a paradoxical restorative effect [2]. Intuitively, I'm absolutely sure that it works this way. Explaining how it works is another matter. Hays (1992, p. 196) suggests a deep connection between sociality and expressive culture. Taking that as our cue, we can see that the final couplet restores a sense of sociality. The horror and shame of the first twelve lines resides, not only in the violence, but in the destruction of social mutuality; the lusty animal is "not to trust" (l. 4) and "Mad in pursuit and possession so" (l. 9). The final couplet begins with the admission that "All this the world well knows" (l. 13) and, in so affirming, restores the lusty and despised animal to society. We are all like this; we know it; we can't escape. Thus the shame, guilt, and anxiety which is evoked in the first twelve lines is assuaged and order is restored (for an earlier, and more recondite, version of this argument see Benzon 1976, pp. 975-976, 980). To use Hays's terms, the relationship between the final couplet and the first twelve lines satisfies the cortical desire

for beauty and that satisfaction triggers an epiphany which "fixes" the entire experience in one's nervous system and brings about a bit of psychological reorganization. Over the long term the cumulative effect of such epiphanic reorganizations is to bring greater internal coherence to the nervous system, making subcortical ape and cortical angel more comfortable, one with the other.

Let's conclude this section by taking a closer look at mode. In Hays's terms, the process of creating and understanding such a sophisticated poem would be regulated by the right rear quadrant of the neocortex. The mode is adventure and the goal is beauty. What is being made beautiful is the relationship between the sound of sonnet 129, which we've not discussed, and its sense, which we have. The sound involves matters of rhythm, rhyme, and meter and may also directly encode the emotion-bearing essential forms discussed by Manfred Clynes (1977, see also Fonagy, 1971, 1976; for a more detailed discussion see Benzon, 1978). The sense, as we've seen, involves a stroll through the primitive modes of sexual courtship, sexual action, and disgust. Unlike the person in the process of living these experiences, the poet and readers are not deeply into any of these primitive modes. These modes are only weakly invoked, or perhaps only cortical residuals of these modes are evoked, while in the right rear adventure mode. The person actually living those lusty experiences cannot see the vicious causal connection between them, their consciousness consumed, in turn, by those primitive modes. I speculate that the poet, and reader, can endure the anxiety aroused by the partial arousal of the conflicted primitive modes at the heart of the sonnet's sense because of the pleasure in beauty achieved, the satisfaction of the cortical adventure mode, is offset against. We endure the anxiety because we know that beauty is coming. Through that beauty poet and reader can see and contemplate the vicious causal connection among the modes of the lust cycle. Thus the poem provides a vehicle in which those modes can cohere in consciousness.

This is a very complex expressive achievement, with centuries of cultural evolution behind it. The initial achievements of expressive culture are less sophisticated. But they are the foundations on which Shakespeare's achievement rests, and that achievement is, in turn, foundation for still more sophisticated vessels of expressive consciousness.

## **Cultural Rank**

I originally proposed the concept of cultural rank (Benzon 1978, 150-219) in a discussion of narrative. In subsequent discussions David Hays and I have deepened the original concept (Benzon & Hays, 1990) and applied it in different arenas (Benzon, forthcoming; Hays, 1991, 1992). Rank 1 culture is that of preliterate societies. With the emergence of literacy, Rank 2 culture emerges. Catalyzed by mathematical knowledge arriving from the Moslem world, Rank 3 culture appeared in Europe in the Renaissance. Rank 4 culture began in a number of spheres at the beginning of this century, and is now typified, in part, by the computer and its effects. Cultures of higher rank are more diverse and complex than those of lower rank. Nothing in the theory sets any limits on the number of possible ranks or requires that culture evolve toward any particular goal. In particular, not only do we *not* assume that current Western culture is the point of the entire process, we are quite convinced that Western culture cannot meet our emotional needs and must therefore be transcended. The final section of this essay addresses this challenge.

### **Rank 1: The Trickster**

The trickster is a ubiquitous figure in world mythologies and his trials and tribulations include obvious modal issues. I want to consider the Winnebago trickster cycle as presented by Paul Radin (1956). The trickster cycle has many episodes and not all episodes are told in each telling, nor are all episodes present in all cultural groups. Indeed, Radin asserts that the trickster

is admittedly the oldest of all figures in American Indian mythology, probably in all mythologies. It is not accidental that he is so frequently connected with what was regarded in all American Indian cosmologies as the oldest of all natural phenomena, rock and sun. Thus he was a figure that could not be forgotten, one that had to be recognized by all aboriginal theological systematizers. [1956: 164]

Among the Winnebago the trickster stories are sacred, with trickster being presented as the giver of culture. The story can be narrated only by those who have a right to do so, and only under the proper conditions.

The basic action of the story is simple. Trickster, the tribal chief, is preparing for war. This preparation violates tribal tradition, for the tribal chief is not permitted to go to war. While there is no explicit retribution for this, no character who says something like, "Because you have failed to observe the proper rituals, you are going to be punished," the preparations fail and Trickster ends up in the wilderness, completely stripped of culture. He then undergoes a series of adventures in which, in effect, he learns how to operate his body and his culture. These episodes are a catalog of behavioral modes, with hunger and sexuality being prominent. For example, there is one incident (Episodes 12, 13, and 14) where Trickster learns that his anus is part of his body. He had killed some ducks and started roasting them overnight. When he went to sleep, he instructed his anus to ward off any intruders. Some foxes came and his anus did the best it could, but the foxes ignored the flatulence and ate the ducks anyhow. So, to punish his anus he burns it with a piece of burning wood. Naturally he feels pain. Only then does he realize that his anus is a part of himself.

In another Episode (number 15) Trickster learns about erections:

On Trickster proceeded. As he walked along, he came to a lovely piece of land. There he sat down and soon fell asleep. After a while he woke up and found himself lying on his back without a blanket. He looked up above him and saw to his astonishment something floating there. "Aha, aha! The chiefs have unfurled their banner! The people must be having a great feast for this is always the case when the chief's banner is unfurled." With this he sat up and then first realized that his blanket was gone. It was his blanket he saw floating up above. His penis had become stiff and the blanket had been forced up. "That's always happening to me," he said. "My younger brother, you will lose the blanket, so bring it back." Thus he spoke to his penis. Then he took hold of it and, as he handled it, it got softer and the blanket finally fell down. Then he coiled up his penis and put it in a box. And only when he came to the end of his penis did he find his blanket. The box with the penis he carried on his back.

Notice that trickster's penis is, at this point, quite long, and that he carries it in a box. These things will change later on. In Episode 38 Trickster hears a voice taunting him about the way he is carrying his genitals in a box. Trickster discovers that the voice is coming from a hollow tree. He probes the tree with his penis, trying to reach the source of the voice, but to no avail. Finally he withdraws his penis and finds that all but a small piece is gone. In the next episode (39)

Trickster kicks the log to pieces and discovers the chipmunk who'd been doing all this mischief. Trickster takes the pieces of his penis and makes things of use to humans including potatoes, turnips, artichokes, ground-beans, and rice. Finally, Trickster leaves the box behind and goes on with his penis now appropriately attached to his body.

Then there is the incident (Episodes 23, 24, 25) in which Trickster hears plant bulbs asserting that anyone who eats them will defecate. Trickster wonders "Why does this person talk in such a fashion?" and, when he finally spots the bulbs, promptly eats one, fully confident that he will not defecate. He is, of course, proven wrong. At first he only breaks wind, gradually, and then building up to the point where he is being tossed into the air. Still, this is not defecation. But then defecation starts, gradually at first, but building up to the point where Trickster's excrement covered the ground to the top the tree Trickster had climbed. He fell off and got lost running around in his excrement, bumping into tree after tree until he finally found a body of water and jumped in, finally escaping from his excrement.

All of these episodes clearly involve mode-specific behavior, in particular, the bathroom and bedroom modes as Hays calls them. But why are such incidents included in the sacred stories of the Winnebago (and many other peoples)? Because those modes are a part of life and must be situated in the total pattern of human experience, a pattern ultimately governed by cortical requirements. The genes do not provide such a pattern and so culture must make up the lack (cf. Geertz, 1973, pp. 76, 80-81).

However, Rank 1 stories are not simply about mode. Recall the episode (39) where Trickster recovered the pieces of his stolen penis and used them to create various foodstuffs. The point is not directly a modal one; it is conceptual, indicating a metaphorical likeness between the male organ of generation and the foodstuffs needed to sustain human life. Whether or not this episode also establish some connection between the modes of copulation and eating/digestion, and thus make some contribution to subjective coherence, is a question we can leave to anthropological psychoanalysts. The direct conceptual connection is obvious, and its mechanism, metaphor, is the mechanism of Rank 1 abstract thought (Benzon & Hays, 1987, 1990). Much of what happens in Rank 1 stories is metaphorical, and those mechanisms have been studied by Levi-Strauss (in e.g. 1969). As metaphor is surely regulated by cortical mechanisms (cf. Jakobson, 1971, Pribram, 1971, pp. 358-359) such episodes display the more purely cognitive/cortical aspect of Rank 1 story-telling. Some of the episodes are built around animal modes, others around cortical modes.

This observation suggests a way of thinking about whole cycle, which is very loosely plotted. We don't have things happening in early episodes which are then picked up later and developed. There are coherent sequences of 3 or 4 episodes (out of 49), but there are no causal links spanning long sets of episodes. The story is thus just one thing after another; its coherence is thus quite loose. To recite the Trickster story the teller enters into story-mode and starts with the initial episode. Each episode or set of episodes is governed by some modal concern, whether animal or cortical--with our knowledge of neuropsychology, we may know that cortical modes are higher than animal, but Rank 1 narrative mechanisms make no such distinction. When a mode's story has been told, that mode terminates and another mode becomes active and is rendered into language. This continues until the repertoire of modes is exhausted--or the story-teller and/or audience is exhausted. Overall, the cycle has no theme to exhibit, no moral to be drawn. It simply is. Note however, that neither the teller nor the audience actually enters into the modes which Trickster displays--they don't get hungry when he does, nor do they break wind on cue. More likely, as indicated above in the discussion of Shakespeare's sonnet, the depicted modes are only partially activated. The story is thus a vehicle which brings a wide variety of modes to consciousness for those in the assembled band so that they can affirm their

collective humanity.

Before concluding this section I want to step back a bit and distinguish between the mechanisms of behavior and some representation of those mechanisms constructed in the cortex, the self-image (Luria, 1973, Benzon & Hays, 1988). For example, Piaget (1976) tells of young children explaining that they crawl by moving their arms, and then their legs, which is physically impossible. Children will give this explanation even while crawling, which is done by moving first one pair of diagonally opposed limbs, and then the other pair. After about seven the children give a correct account of crawling. Regardless of explanation, these children have in fact been crawling since their first year. The plan which actually executes the crawl is fine. But the verbal account is obviously not a direct read-out of that plan (cf. Nisbett & Wilson, 1977, Guidano & Liotti, 1983, pp. 131 ff.). The verbal account is presumably based on a cortical representation derived from observation of one's own behavior, the behavior of others, and, of course, whatever one is taught to think about such matters.

The works of expressive culture are the chief means by which cortical representation of motivation and affect is constructed. There is no reason to expect that such representation will be particularly accurate. The trick comes, of course, from the fact that the cortex is not an external agent. The cortex, and all the representations stored therein, is part of the mechanism of behavior. The simplified and imperfect representations of a person's own behavior thus form part of the mechanism by which that behavior is regulated and made coherent. The fact that the cortical angel has only a crude understanding of the subcortical ape is no doubt part of the conflict between them.

Thus, regardless of the real complexity of behavioral control, the Rank 1 narrator proceeds as though the modal system had only one level; the stories run though one mode after another. That is what Rank 1 cultures can understand of human behavior. To the extent that such stories are the means by which people gain inner coherence, it is clear that the modal repertoire of Rank 1 adult will be loosely organized (see Hays 1992, pp. 196-198). Such a life is governed by modal impulse; call it the Freudian id.

But as culture evolves and expressive means grow in sophistication and complexity, the cortical representation of behavior will become more sophisticated, its contribution to behavioral regulation more effective, and the sense of self more coherent.

## **Rank 2: From Epic to Oedipus**

The epic narratives of Rank 2 cultures have a more complex structure than Rank 1 myths and tales. Typically the epic will open in the middle of a sequence of events, *in medias res*, and recall events from the past as needed to explain and justify current actions. Innocent and obvious as it may seem, the mere ability to tell events out of order is significant for it implies a more sophisticated control structure than that required to tell Rank 1 stories. In the terms introduced by the Russian Formalist literary critics (see e.g. Shklovsky, 1965), in Rank 1 narratives the *plot* takes its structure directly from the *story*. In these terms "story" refers to the episodes being narrated while "plot" refers to the order those episodes are introduced into the narrative.

Before moving to a specific example, let's look at this matter in more detail. A considerable amount of psychological research and speculation suggests that we have an episodic memory which stores events in sequence (see, e.g. Tulving, 1972; Kintsch, 1974, pp. 73-102; Hays, 1981, pp. 50-56). To relate a sequence of episodes one simply: 1) starts with an initial episode, translates it into speech, and then 2) moves on to the next episode, and then 3) moves to the



next, and so on, translating each episode into speech until the last is reached. Relating episodes out of order, however, is more complex. For example, if one wants to speak the episodes in the order second, third, first, fourth, and fifth, one can't simply start at the beginning of the chain and step through the episodes in order. Rather, one has to:

1. skip over the 1st episode, leaving behind a marker A;
2. then take two episodes in order;
3. set a marker B in the chain;
4. return to marker A to pick up the 1st episode;
5. return to marker B, thus allowing you to skip over the second and third episodes this time; and
6. take the last two episodes in order.

This is clearly a more complex operation than stepping through episodes in order. One has to keep track of the episodes in the story and of the plotting of those episodes (for some technical machinery, see Benzon 1978). Those markers, A and B, are variables which *refer to* episodes. As such they are part of a metalanguage which is about episodic structure. Simple narration doesn't require such metalanguage variables [3].

Rank 2 creators and consumers of epic have this more sophisticated control structure available. And they use it, not simply for pleasure in virtuoso manipulation of materials, but to achieve coherence not otherwise obtainable. Let's work our way toward Homer [4] with some observations on the nature of epic form from Scholes and Kellogg account of *The Nature of Narrative* (1966: 208 - 210). They begin by observing that the plots of epic

are episodic, and present the deeds (or *gestes*) of a hero in some chronological sequence, possible beginning with his birth, probably ending with his death. . . . In *Beowulf*. . . the episodes are reduced to two major ones, the latter including the hero's death. In the *Iliad*, we are down to a single episode developed at length, with neither the hero's birth nor death included in the timespan of the action. . . . We can see in Homer a movement away from the traditional epic narration of the deeds of the hero. . . . The notion of starting a story with a plunge *in medias res*. . . does not merely mean to Homer . . . starting in the middle and then filling in both ends of the hero's life. . . . The deeds of Achilles, or the life of Achilles, or even the death of Achilles are not the subject of this narrative. The plot of the *Iliad* focuses on one episode in the hero's life, just as his characterization on one element of his psyche; and the subject is the same in both--anger.

I want to refocus that just a little. What the narrative is about is Achilles' character--the warrior's character, which it reveals to be a character dominated by anger. A few centuries later Plato's *Republic* would articulate a theory of the state in which three classes of citizen are considered: rulers, soldiers, laborers. These are ideal types; each has a particular character, an essence. We can think of this essence as a modal disposition. The warrior needs to be comfortable with these modes, the ruler with those, and the laborer with still a different set.

It is one thing to say that "Achilles is a warrior." It is quite another matter illustrate this anger through deeds and actions. This distinction is familiar to students of fiction as the contrast between *telling* and *showing* (Booth, 1961, pp. 3-19). In a more general context Hays and I talk of *indication* and *conveyance* (Benzon & Hays, 1987) where indication corresponds to showing (via deeds and actions) and conveyance corresponds to telling (making an explicit verbal statement). The job of Homeric narrative was to indicate the essence of such an ideal type by telling the appropriate stories in a coherent order. Plato's philosophy conveyed that essence.

Returning to the *Iliad*, Homer concentrates on one incident in Achilles' life, his pursuit of honor when his concubine was taken from him by Agamemnon. This incident and its consequences provide the threads of cause and purpose which extend from the beginning, through the middle, to the end of the narrative, giving it a coherence lacking in tellings of the trickster stories. In the course of laying those threads Homer weaves many digressions into the narrative fabric. Some of those digressions tell us about earlier incidents in Achilles's life, some about the Trojan war in general, and others about other incidents from Greek lore. By focusing on episodes in Achilles' life which don't encompass his birth and death in chronological order, Homer is able to insert a wedge between the events of Achilles' life and his style of meeting those events. Since all of the events of the story are not given in chronological order that order cannot be the main source of narrative coherence. It is Achilles' wrath which is at the center of that coherence, and that wrath is a matter of his character. Precisely because we cannot comfortably assimilate the events one after another we are forced to think about the temporal framework and distinguish it from the characters within it. In this matter the *Odyssey* --which interweaves three narrative strands, one centered on Odysseus, one on his wife Penelope, and one on his son Telemachus--is an even more radical departure from preliterate narrative modes than is the *Iliad*.

There is another aspect to Homer's digressive narrative strategy. As Norman Austin points out (1986), many of those digressions are paradigmatic examples providing past precedent for current attitudes and actions. Thus, when Nestor rises to give counsel early in Book 1 he digresses:

Yes, and I my time I have dealt with better men than  
you are, and never once did they disregard me. Never  
yet have I seen nor shall see again such men as these were,  
men like Peirithoös, and Dryas, shepherd of the people,  
Kaineus and Exadios, the godlike Polyphemos,  
of Theseus, Aigeus's son, in the likeness of the immortals.  
These were the strongest of the generation of earth-born mortals,  
the strongest, and they fought against the strongest, the beast men  
living within the mountains, and terribly they destroyed them.  
I was of the company of these men, coming from Pylos,  
a long way from a distant land, since they had summoned me.  
And I fought single-handed, yet against such men no one  
of the mortals now alive upon earth could do battle. And also  
these listened to the counsels I gave and heeded my bidding.  
[Book 1, ll. 260-273]

The point is clear, with credentials, with precedents, like these, Nestor is a man to be taken seriously. Many of the digressions on Homeric epic are like this. They bring the full range of Greek mythology and history to bear on the events currently in narration.

Handling this kind of narrative complexity requires more sophisticated cognitive equipment than that required for Rank 1 narrative. Homer couldn't simply start at the beginning of a sequence of episodes and move through to the end. Rather, he had to be able to treat one episodic sequence as the main sequence and then interweave other episodes into the narrative according to any of a variety of criteria. He used *plot* to regulate various strands of *story*. The effect of this strategy is to foreground Achilles' character against the background of the events which are told in the epic and which follow from that character (cf. Scholes & Kellogg 1966: 209 - 210). The resulting narrative structure also exhibits large-scale symmetries and

parallelisms in its arrangement of episodes which you don't find in the less sophisticated story cycles of Rank 1 (Whitman, 1986). We end up with one grand metaphor in which the main incidents of the *Iliad* form the vehicle, the supporting and background incidents are the tenor, and Achilles' character, the warrior spirit, is the ground [5]--note that in epics as rich as Homer's most of the main characters, not just the central figure, receive such treatment. To be sure, Achilles isn't quite Shakespeare's Hamlet or Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, but we see more of his character than is typical in myths or folktales, where there is no characterization to speak of. Characters in Rank 1 stories may be brave or sneaky or patient, but the stories don't reveal that to us in any depth or subtlety.

Sophocles' drama about *Oedipus the King* (c. 425 B.C.) is more recent than the Homeric epics (c. 850 B.C.) and is more sophisticated--that is, it is higher within Rank 2 [6]. As the play opens Oedipus is king of a Thebes beset by a terrible plague. Crucial episodes from the past, including the events central to the tragic action, Oedipus' parricide and subsequent marriage to his mother, are given in flashback. Many of the central episodes in the play involve inquiry and revelation; they are mental acts. And *Oedipus the King* is the drama of a man's coming to knowledge of the past events which define his place in the world without his having had any conscious participation in those events. This is quite different from the episodes in Homeric epic, where things happen--men are killed or wounded, monsters evaded, seas traversed. In *Oedipus the King*, events become known and Oedipus and his circle suffer the consequences of that knowledge. The play takes place in a mental realm that barely existed in Homer's time.

This is important. Over two decades ago Julian Jaynes (1967) published a quixotic and provocative book in which he argued that consciousness originated in Greece sometime between Homer and the Athenian Golden Age. He notes that *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: 1) contain many episodes in which humans receive direction from gods and goddesses, and 2) do not contain many words referring to mental states and actions. He takes the first observation at face value and concludes that the Homeric Greeks (and others as well) heard inner voices and acted on what they heard. He combines the second observation with the fact that such mental words were common by the time of the Athenian Golden Age and concludes that, by that time, consciousness had been invented. The inner voices were no longer necessary as their function was subsumed by this new consciousness: that is, the creation of concepts about mental states and acts gave rise to consciousness.

However skeptical I am about aspects of Jaynes's theory--for example, I baffle the thought that Sophocles was conscious while Homer was not-- something very important clearly happened in that period. For the purposes of this essay, the important observation is that mental terms were scarce in Homeric times, but not in Sophoclean (and later) times. If one has no mental terms, one can hardly attribute anything to the mind. And Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* would not have been possible in Homer's time precisely because it is a play which takes place in a mental realm. It is about mental "stuff" and its major acts are acts of knowing or denial.

In this mental arena, question of responsibility is central. Is Oedipus responsible for killing his father and marrying his mother when he did not know that the man he killed was his father, or that the woman he married was his mother? The answer seems to be "Yes, ignorance of who these people were is no excuse." The fact that Oedipus put his own eyes out suggests that he does take responsibility for his actions--that is, to preserve his dignity, he must take such responsibility and remove himself from society.

For tragedy is about the preservation of dignity in the face of inescapable shame. As Thomas McFarland (1966, pp. 114-115) notes: "In the great Shakespearean plays the protagonist always has the choice either of accepting a death that defines his life at its highest level, or of avoiding

death and descending to a lower level of life." It involves an assertion of the value of human reason in the face of the impossibility being fully reasonable. The tragic death also affirms communal norms in the face of gross violation of those norms. For the tragic hero is a scapegoat, a sacrificial victim who cleanses the community by metaphorically dissolving its transgressions in his/her (self) destruction (Girard, 1972, pp. 68-88). To permit the tragic hero to live would be to sanction intolerable behavior.

But drama is not life, it is expressive culture. The audience identifies with and sympathizes with the protagonist (and, in secondary ways, with the other characters as well). All know that Oedipus did not know what he was doing and feel that there is something that is wrong in thus punishing him. Punishment is demanded so that the claims of sociality and the cortical goal of justice are satisfied. By satisfying these goals against the claims of sympathy *the tragedy foregrounds that goal*. To the extent that the protagonist embodies and acts out forbidden impulses which are similar to our own, that identification arouses those impulses within us. When the hero is banished or dies, the force, the biochemical energy, of those impulses is transmuted (a psychoanalyst might say sublimated) into affirmation of sociality and the cortical goal of justice. Thus the tragic catharsis serves to strengthen our cortical defenses against the forbidden subcortical impulses (Hays, 1992, pp. 201, 203). But let us return to Homer's world--for Oedipus' blinding, banishment from Thebes, and miraculous death in the grove at Colonus (depicted in *Oedipus at Colonus*), are relatively late additions to the story. Those events were unknown to Homer, whose Oedipus died at Thebes where he was given the funeral games appropriate to a monarch (Kirk 1974: 164). These particular events--Oedipus' blinding, banishment, and miraculous death--are demanded by the development of Rank 2 conceptualizations which took place between the time Homer's songs were first written down and the time when Sophocles wrote his Theban cycle. Human character had become restructured so that the full tragic experience became possible.

Between Homer's time and Sophocles', the superego had become firmly established in the Greek psyche (this draws on conversations I have had with David Hays). This is certainly consistent with Julian Jaynes's account of the evolution of mind and gets a little help from Freud's comment that "The super-ego of civilization has an origin similar to that of an individual" (Freud, 1930/1962, p. 88). The Freudian superego is essentially a homunculus in the head, an agent of self-discipline watching over perceptions and actions, permitting some while blocking others and meting out rewards and punishments as necessary. The superego is what is gratified by, nurtured by, and, in a measure, created by the strategies of affective and cognitive coherence employed in Rank 2 expressive works.

Whereas Rank 1 expressive mechanisms treated all modes as being on the same level, Rank 2 mechanisms are able to differentiate between subcortical and cortical modes. The resulting expressive works yield a richer and more sophisticated account of the connections between desires, actions, and feelings. Personal coherence increases and inner lives become more stable.

### **Rank 3: Through Shakespeare to the Novel**

Rather than moving directly to an examination of the novel, the premier Rank 3 narrative form, I want to begin by considering Shakespeare. His reputation is the very highest and, however much one grants to a need to believe in Great Men, deservedly so. More than any other individual writer, he laid the foundation for Rank 3 story telling. In particular, he created a group of plays at the end of his career which provide the expressive cradle for a new sense of marriage and family life.

However, I also have a more didactic motive. It is all well and good to talk of literary evolution

and to demonstrate one type of structure at one point in time, and a different type at a later point. It would be even better to show how a particular story is told at one time and then becomes modified at a later telling. In this case we can look at what remains the same, and what changes, attributing the changes to evolution. We had a taste of this in the difference between Homers's and Sophocles' Oedipus, but we can do much better with Shakespeare, for almost all of his plays are based on stories which survive in several earlier versions. So, I want to begin with the story of Hamlet, dealing with the difference between a medieval treatment of the story and Shakespeare's proto-modern account. Then I want to consider one of his late plays and follow its plots and themes into the Rank 3 novel.

We begin with *Hamlet*. While Shakespeare's version is the one we know best, the story is considerably older. The version in the late twelfth century *Historica Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus (reprinted in Hoy, 1963, pp. 123-131) is different from Shakespeare's. The cultural level is low Rank 2 or, perhaps high Rank 1--the Dark Ages really were dark and not until the twelfth century did Europe manage to work its way back to Rank 2. Amleth--for that is how Saxo named him--faced the same requirement Hamlet did, to avenge his father's death. His difficulty stems from the fact that the probable murderer, and therefore the object of Amleth's revenge, is his uncle, and thus from the same kin group. Medieval Norse society had legal provisions for handling murder between kin groups; the offended group could seek the death of a member of the offending group or ask for the payment of *wergild* and a public apology. But there were no provisions for dealing with murder within the kin group (Bloch, 1961, pp. 125-130; cf. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1974, p. 226). Thus Amleth faced a situation in which there was *no socially sanctioned* way for him to act. In fact his situation was a less extreme version of the problem faced by Orestes in its most extreme form--how to exact vengeance on one relative for the murder of another relative. Both men are bound to avenge the death of their father; and both are similarly bound to the person they must kill. Amleth exacts vengeance against an uncle, whereas Orestes exacts it against his mother. Amleth deals with his problem by feigning madness. Being mad, he is not bound by social convention, a social convention which binds him both to his murdered father and the father's murderer. Amleth's madness allows him to act, which he does directly and successfully. He kills his uncle, the usurper, and his entire court and takes over the throne.

Shakespeare's Hamlet was not so fortunate. He is notorious for his inability to act. When he finally does so, he ends up dead. And whether his madness was real or feigned is never really clear. What happened between the late twelfth century version of the story and the turn-of-the-seventeenth century version? The change might, of course, be due merely to the personal difference between Saxo Grammaticus and William Shakespeare. However, European culture and society had changed considerably in that interval and thus to attribute much of the difference between the two stories to the general change in culture is not unreasonable. Saxo Grammaticus told a story to please his twelfth century audience and Shakespeare told one to please his audience of the seventeenth century.

Something had happened which made Amleth's madness ploy less effective. An individual can escape contradictory social demands by opting out of society. But if the contradictory demands are within the individual, if they are intrapsychic, then stepping outside of society won't help. If anything, it makes matters worse by leaving the individual completely at the mercy of his/her inner contradictions, with no contravening forces from others. That, crude as it is, seems to me the difference between Amleth and Hamlet. For Amleth, the problem was how to negotiate contradictory demands on him made by external social forces. For Hamlet, the contradictory demands were largely internal, making the pretense of madness but a step toward becoming, in reality, mad.

The difference between the story of Amleth and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* parallels the difference between the Oedipus story as it was in Homer's time and as it came to be in Sophocles. Just as the superego evolved between thirteenth century Greece and fifth century Greece, so it had to be recreated between twelfth century Denmark and seventeenth century England. The Elizabethan audience demanded defense against their dark impulses while the Medieval audience settled for some slight of hand which let the impulses work toward a happy ending.

Magnificent as he is, Hamlet is not Shakespeare's greatest tragic creation: that honor goes to Lear. But Shakespeare's dramatic career did not end with his great tragedies. He had more to say, and in a distinctly different, and more modern, mode. In the course of his career Shakespeare worked in four dramatic genres, comedy, history, tragedy, and romance [7]. During his thirties--we know little of his life before then--he worked on comedies (*A Midsummers-Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, etc.) and histories (*Richard III*, *Henry IV, Part 1*, etc.). Then his interest shifted to tragedies (*King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, etc.). His last major plays--*Cymbaline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*--combine elements of tragedy and comedy and so are sometimes called tragi-comedies; but the term "romance" is quite common and that is what I shall call them.

Shakespearean romances contain a pattern which subsequently shows up in various novels, not because the novelists were consciously or unconsciously imitating Shakespeare, but because he had, at the highest reach of his art, created a pattern which became routine at Rank 3. In all these romances there is a conflict in one generation (the tragic component) which isn't resolved until a marriage in the succeeding generation (the comedic component). This basic pattern is most clearly exhibited in *The Winter's Tale*. A pattern quite similar to Shakespeare's occurs, somewhat modified, in several novels, including Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. I want to compare *The Winter's Tale* with *Pride and Prejudice* and thereby gauge the significance of the novel, the literary genre which arose as Europe moved to Rank 3 culture [8].

Both works are plotted in two phases. In the first phase the protagonist misunderstands the actions and attitudes of others and brings about disaster. Shakespeare's Leontes has banished his wife Hermione, his oldest friend Polixenes, left his infant daughter Perdita to die, and has lost his son and heir. He has also learned, from an oracle, that it was all a mistake--his wife was not having an affair with his best friend. Austen's Elizabeth Bennet has just turned down a marriage proposal from one Fitzwilliam Darcy, a most eligible, but haughty, bachelor. Her sister Jane has been abandoned by Darcy's friend Bingley--Bingley's sister and Darcy connived to bring this about. Where we had seen the possibility of two marriages, now we see nothing.

In the second phase the estrangements of the first phase are reconciled around a marriage between characters closely associated with the protagonists. In the romance, Perdita didn't die, rather she was raised by a shepherd and courted by prince Florizel, the son of Polixenes. With Leontes' recovery of his daughter and the prospect of her marriage reconciling him with Polixenes, Leontes is recovering from his sixteen-year depression. In the final scene the gathered court sees a statue of Hermione unveiled and, as Leontes remarks on how life-like it appears, the statue miraculously does come to life (Hermione had been in hiding). Husband and wife are restored to one another and to their daughter. In *Pride and Prejudice* Darcy and Elizabeth rethink their attitudes. Darcy encourages Bingley to resume courting Jane. Lydia, a younger sister, runs off with one Wickham, whose charm hides a reckless and dishonest nature. Darcy intercedes to bring about a marriage between them, thus preserving the Bennet family honor. As the novel ends, Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane and Bingley are engaged, and Lydia and Wickham are married.

In both works we are asked to identify with protagonists who initially misjudge those around them. Their misjudgements, at least in part, were of the sort that can lead to the psychoanalytic couch. Leontes was delusional and Elizabeth, while not psychotic, was making judgments which went beyond the evidence; such judgments necessarily reflected her impulses. The feelings astir at the harsh ending of the first phase are the legacy of those projectively mistaken judgments. As we (the audience or readers) continue, we invest those feelings in the reconsideration which the focal characters undergo. That reconsideration induces us to the reorganization which Hays (1992) puts at the center of Rank 3 expressive culture. Those feelings are given new form. To further understand this reorganization we need to consider the role played by the associated marriage in the second phase.

The associated marriage forces the protagonists' attention away from their own problems. And it brings our attention to bear on the need for family integrity. But the family in question is the Rank 3 intimate family, not the medieval lineage, which was essentially a public vehicle for organizing social, political, and economic power (cf. Stone, 1977). Children assume a focal role in this intimate family (cf. Aries, 1962) to have importance independently of any economic value their labor might have or the political value to be gained by arranging marriages with other kin groups. In Shakespeare's case, the family depicted is medieval in kind, but, I'm suggesting, the psychological impact is that of the intimate family. In Austen's case, we are fully into the Rank 3 world. What happens around the associated marriage is that the focal characters establish a basis for intimacy.

Interpersonal intimacy, in the sense we understand it today, is a Rank 3 affective creation (Stone, 1977, pp. 325-404; Rybczynski, 1986, pp. 4-75). We glimpse it in John Milton's 1644 discussion of *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (see Hughes 1957, p. 703), in which he asserts that

God in the first ordaining of marriage taught us to what end he did it, in words expressly implying the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life, not mentioning the purpose of generation till afterwards, as being but a secondary end in dignity.

This conception was not commonplace in Milton's time, much less in Shakespeare's, but it was common in Austen's--and, I might add, in Austen's novels a character is judged by the quality of his or her conversation. By overcoming their pride and prejudice, Darcy and Elizabeth establish a basis for intimacy. But Shakespeare's romances laid the basis for this intimacy. And intimacy allows the self to grow beyond the shame of tragic hubris. Intimacy establishes a private sphere for sociality where individuals can talk about matters which may be forbidden in public or, if not forbidden, are nonetheless problematic for a given individual. We are so much creatures of language that for us, if it hasn't been, or can't be talked about, then it doesn't exist. Intimate conversation allows for acceptance and, through acceptance, growth (cf. Hays, 1973); it enlarges the sphere of subjective experience which can be rendered in speech and thereby enlarges the bounds of personal reality [9].

In Rank 2 society reputation and honor are paramount. When those are destroyed, the individual has no ground on which to affirm him or herself. With the emergence of intimacy and inwardness, the self is not so dependent on honor. Honor still matters, but one does have one's intimates. What cannot be born in public may be born with them.

If we turn from the similarities to the differences we can get some sense of the distance traversed from Shakespeare to Austen. In the play the tragic phase involves a rift in an extant marriage. There is a legal bond which is difficult to break; Leontes could not simply walk away

from Hermione. When they are reconciled they are only fulfilling an extant legal bond. In the novel it is courtship which is interrupted; Elizabeth and Darcy are free to part. And conversely, when Elizabeth and Darcy finally do come together, they do so freely. This suggests a shift from externally enforced actions to actions generated from within. Elizabeth and Darcy have a greater range of feeling and action under their control than do Hermione and Leontes.

There is, however, a more critical difference; this concerns the way in which the characters reconsider their situation. We never actually *see* Leontes (or Hermione for that matter) come to accept that situation and then grow beyond it. Rather, Shakespeare gives us a sixteen-year hiatus between the third and fourth act, with the Leontes' growth happening in that interval. The novel is quite different. We see Elizabeth question her attitudes and motives--and Darcy as well, though less directly. Thus one can open *Pride and Prejudice* almost at random and find passages such as:

It was not often that she [Elizabeth] could turn her eyes on Mr. Darcy himself; but, whenever she did catch a glimpse, she saw an expression of general complaisance, and in all that he said, she heard an accent so far removed from hauteur or disdain of his companions, as convinced her that the improvement of manners which she had yesterday witnessed, however temporary its existence might improve, had at least outlived one day. When she saw him thus seeking the acquaintance, and courting the good opinion of people, with whom any intercourse a few months ago would have been a disgrace . . . the change was so great, and struck so forcibly on her mind, that she could hardly restrain her astonishment from being visible.  
[Chapter II of Vol. 3]

This occurs when Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle happened to visit Pemberley, the Darcy family home, as, well, tourists, and Darcy himself shows up, to Elizabeth's initial chagrin. There is nothing particularly remarkable about this passage; and that is the point. It is not remarkable; it is typical. Elizabeth's change of heart is documented leisurely and in great detail. Where Shakespeare gives us only the Before and After, Austen gives us the growth of Becoming [\[10\]](#).

This growth, in effect, shows an imaginary person, call him/her an actor, change from one character-type, set of modal dispositions, to another. The Rank 2 actor has only one character; for that character is an essence and it is in the nature of essences that each individual have only one of them. The essence of a Rank 3 actor is not thus fixed. That essence can change; or, if you, the essence of a Rank 3 actor is no longer defined in terms of a single set of modal dispositions. The actor's essence has now become the capacity for movement in an abstract "space" of modal dispositions. Rather than being a single data point, it has become a vector [\[11\]](#).

The access to thoughts and feelings which allows Jane Austen to show her characters growing from one set of modal dispositions to another is the very stuff of the novel. If the characters in the novel are fish, then thoughts and feelings are the water in which they swim. The novel is the major literary genre which emerged with the evolution of Rank 3 European culture (for a reliable history, see Watt, 1957). Of this general evolution Leslie Fiedler (1966, p. 32-33) has said it was "the invention of a new kind of self, a new level of mind; for what has been happening since the eighteenth century seems more like the development of a new organ than the mere finding of a new way to describe old experience." The novel assumes inwardness and a sense of privacy, attitudes which emerged with the Rank 3 middle class (cf. Rybczynski, 1986). Myth, epic, and drama are all public; the stories are told, or enacted, in public. One reads novels silently, alone, and in the physical comfort of a favored chair--thus encouraging a muscular relaxation which undoubtedly contributes to the psychological effect.



In the novel, the narrator becomes part of the writer's expressive apparatus. Plays have no narrators and for the epic, myth, and folktale, the narrator is the teller of the tale. But the Rank 3 novelist is not to be identified with his or her narrator. The narrator is a creature of the fiction [12].

Narrators may be omniscient or restricted in their knowledge about events in the story, they can be a character in the story or someone outside the story, they can even be unreliable (on modes of narration see e.g. Booth, 1961). Some narrators may address the reader directly and ask for sympathy, though most do not. What all narrators do is manipulate our access to the story so that there is always distance between us and the characters, with whom we identify. This distance provides the basis, I might even say cradle, for psychological reorganization, which is the hallmark of Rank 3 expressive work (Hays, 1992). If we take psychoanalysis as a paradigm for reorganization, comfortable couch and all, then the narrator is the analyst, providing both the setting in which forbidden impulses can be expressed and the guidance needed to reorganize those impulses into a more coherent personality structure.

Finally, if we associate Rank 1 with the id, and Rank 2 with the superego, are we thus bound to link Rank 3 to the ego? That is more problematic. It is the ego's job to determine what's real. This is a job for the neocortex, which does so from humankind's inception and evolves ever more sophisticated means of constructing that crucial distinction. There is a purely cognitive aspect to this problem which has to do with determining whether or not, for example, the deer are north or south of camp, which metallic alloy will hold the sharpest edge, or whether or not there is a ninth planet. To the extent that such tasks are in the ego's domain--as the ego psychology wing of psychoanalysis maintains--that ego is basic to human nature. That type of reality maintenance is different, however, from determining whether or not, for example, the deer is your guardian spirit, your spouse's infidelity is real or imagined, or if passionate love is real or mere fiction--the problem Gustave Flaubert set for Emma Bovary. This type of reality maintenance is more to the point of this essay and, in this function, I'm willing to speculate that the ego is a Rank 3 psychological construct [13].

## Rank 4: Civilization and Its Discontents

For all its sophistication, however, the coherence of the Rank 3 self has been bought at the price of considerable emotional repression. This coherence makes it possible for us to create large complex social organizations affording a high degree of security for large numbers of people. But emotional dissatisfaction runs high. And so Rank 3 expressive culture began to break down at the turn of the twentieth century, yielding modernism in all sectors.

Some twentieth century narratives, like twentieth century music, are so dense and complex that only a specialist could love them and then, one fears, primarily because they are fertile territory for scholarly exegesis--James Joyce's *Finnigan's Wake* and John Barth's *Letters* are the first examples which come to mind. Some writers adopt the computer, as controlling metaphor (Porush, 1985). Many narratives abandon the realism which dominated the nineteenth century novel. From the stream of Virginia Woolf's consciousness and Kafka's paranoid fantasies through the magical realism of contemporary Latin American authors (e.g. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez) to such very different North Americans as William Kennedy (*Ironweed*) and Toni Morrison (*Beloved*), dreams and reverie shape the fabric of depicted reality. Other kinds of mixing blur the lines between fictional and non-fictional genres. The *ficciones* of Jorge Luis Borges partake of philosophical essay, mystical meditation, and short story. Norman Mailer (e.g. *Armies of the Night*), Truman Capote (*In Cold*

*Blood*) and others use novelistic devices to report journalistic tales. E. L. Doctrow has historical characters play major roles in purely fictional happenings in *Ragtime* and *Billy Bathgate*. Donald Barthelme has blended anything with everything in an astonishing range of short pieces; Thomas Pynchon has done the equivalent in a few long narratives of spectacular depth and breadth. Other writers-- e.g. Timothy Mo, Frank Chin, Amy Tan, V.S. Naipaul, Wole Soyinka--articulate their concerns from a limbo between Western and non-Western culture.

It is not obvious to me that any of this is fully Rank 4 narrative, though much of it is profound and moving. Rather, as I have argued in the case of music (Benzon, forthcoming), we have a rich and roiling evolutionary soup from which new expressive devices can, in time, emerge. Whatever inhabits the cultural equivalent of the gene pool is frisky indeed. But friskiness is only a necessary condition; it is not sufficient.

I do not really know where serious literature is going. Some friends, however, have made comments I find suggestive. One friend, Janet Hays, has suggested that adults, men and women, need to learn how to enact a female role in some situations, a male role in others. I believe her suggestion is aiming beyond recognizing and acknowledging characterological androgyny--that individuals of either sex have both male and female tendencies--to asserting the need for psychological and social mechanisms regulating and supporting switching back and forth from one type of role to the other. When a woman dons a business suit she would thereby undergo a transformation similar to that which occurs in phone booths for Clark Kent. A man would undergo a similar transformation upon donning a housedress or, at least, a Mr. Rogers cardigan.

Another friend, Druis Knowles, asserts that African-Americans are bicultural, acting according to one set of norms among themselves and according to different norms when among European-Americans. Sidestepping the question of just what "culture" means in "bicultural," Knowles's assertion seems similar in kind to Hays's suggestion. Both are alluding to a fairly high-level organization of personal resources, allowing one to function efficiently in diverse contexts which differ from one another in deep and extensive ways.

Most of us undergo some behavioral shifts as we move from one context to another; sociologists discuss such matters under the rubrics of role and status (see articles in Graburn, 1971, pp. 289-321). Whether these standard concepts are adequate to my purpose, however, is not at all clear to me. I know that, as a musician, I seem to adopt one mode of being when performing jazz and another when performing classical music. This difference seems to me different in kind from the difference between showing up at the office and writing technical manuals and discussing my malfunctioning refrigerator with a repair worker. The repair worker and my co-workers belong to the same culture. I'm not at all sure that jazz and classical music do--not at their deepest levels. These two cultures happen to coexist in the same society; but that coexistence is not a happy one however culturally fruitful it has been.

Another observation from my own experience seems germane. Back in my days as a university faculty member, I noticed that I was not in a really good research frame of mind until three or four weeks after the Spring semester had ended--my brain had to have one set of modes to handle the academic routine of teaching and committee work and another set for intense thinking. Transition from one set of modes to the other took time [14].

Extended vacations may well afford a similar change in modal organization. One takes a month off from work and spend two months on safari in Africa; then boards a small sailing boat and island-hops in the Caribbean for a week, and concludes with a climb up El Capitan. With all that time away from work, the mind changes and we enter different modes of experience. Reading travel books, or novels, even the best, is quite different to go there. Physically restructuring the mind requires time and a steady regime of different sensations, desires, and

acts. That "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" (Coleridge, 1817, p. 6) through which the Rank 3 reader transports him/herself to another world is but a transition between currently available modes. What happens after days and weeks of exploration has a different quality.

What has to happen so that it doesn't take weeks to get there?--rather, you step through the door and, in a manner of seconds, or minutes at the most, you are in a different world. Back in the 1960s, many of the best and brightest of a generation of Rank 3 Americans sought to make this quick leap with hallucinogenic drugs. Now a new generation projects the same desires into a polysensory and hyperkinetic cyberspace conjured up through virtual reality technology (Porush, 1993). Neither the chemical nor the electronic technology is directly to the point. The chemical technology carries grave risk. The electronic technology has yet to display long-term dangers, but we do not know what to do with it. If we knew what to do, we could realize suitable expressions in any available medium, electronic or otherwise.

In this situation we can only explore, as our ancestors before us, and theirs before them, have done. With passion, trust, attention to craft, and an intellect nourished and strengthened by love, we may emerge in a twenty-first century both brave and new. *Avanti!*

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## Notes

1. In the following analyses I focus entirely on the content of literary works, what happens and who does it, and say nothing about the linguistic medium in which they are constructed. This is certainly a weakness for, as I argued in my account of musical evolution, the manipulation of the physical medium is central to expressive works (Benzon, forthcoming). Those inclined to correct this weakness could begin with stylistics (see e.g. Sebeok, 1960, Chatman, 1971). See also footnote 10 below.

Note also that in standard literary usage plays and narratives are different genres. Were I concerned with just how these expressive works are enacted, then my casual mixing of plays (e.g. *Oedipus the King*) and narratives (e.g. *Iliad*) would be problematic--for the difference between listening to one performer recite or sing a tale and watching a company of actors mount a play is surely a significant difference. However, in this essay I'm concerned primarily with the story which is told, not how it is told. For this purpose it is convenient to call my example works narratives regardless of whether, in a more correct literary sense, a work some kind of narrative or some kind of play.

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2. We may usefully compare the logic of Shakespeare's poem to that of substance abuse, and its therapy. The lust cycle, as Shakespeare presents it, seems typical of addictive behavior. And the sonnet's final admission is much like the first of the twelve steps in the Alcoholics Anonymous therapeutic regime--an admission that one is powerless against alcohol. In an essay on the cybernetics of the self Gregory Bateson (1972, p. 309) argues that this admission "provides a partial and subjective short cut to a more correct state of mind".

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3. Werner (1973, p. 203) reports a similar inflexibility in remembering songs. And there is some anecdotal evidence that this temporal inflexibility isn't confined to imaginary narratives, that it

obtains when Rank 1 people recount incidents from their lives. In his classic study of memory F.C. Bartlett (1932/1967, pp. 264-265) tells of a problem sometimes faced by colonial administrators when Rank 1 people were asked to testify in court. The examiner may have been interested in an incident which happened in mid-day, but the witness will tell his or her story starting with the day's beginning. When the examiner interrupts and asks the witness to move directly to the incident of interest the witness will become confused and lost and have to start from the beginning.

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4. The Trojan War, if it happened at all, occurred in the period of the twelfth to fourteenth century B.C. while Homer most likely lived in the ninth century B.C. (Lattimore, 1951, pp. 18-20). The texts of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* bear all the marks of oral composition (Lord, 1960)--that is to say, they originated in an oral culture and employed the compositional methods typical of oral epic. Exactly how they came to be written down we do not know; "Homer" is just a name to which we can attach little biographical fact. Their richness and complexity, however, argue against the notion that they are, in effect, written transcripts of oral performances. Indeed, Lord (p. 149) notes that dictated texts--with the narrator telling, or singing, the tale while a scribe writes it down--are longer and "technically better" than actual performances. The process of dictation thus changes the nature of the resulting narrative. The Homeric texts, while built from oral materials, achieved a level of coherence and organization possible only through writing.

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5. "Tenor", "vehicle", and "ground" are standard terms introduced into the literary study of metaphor by I.A. Richards (1936). In "Achilles is a lion in battle" "lion" is the vehicle, the item to which the tenor, "Achilles", is compared. The ground is the similarity which justifies the metaphor. In this case the similarity is no doubt in the fighting style.

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6. In our published work on cultural rank, Hays and I have focused on the job of differentiating one rank from another. That leaves the unfortunate impression that all within a rank is of a piece. That is obviously not so and we have had extensive discussions about progress within a rank, to little conclusive effect. Chronology tells us that Sophocles came after Homer and analysis of their work tells us about what has changed. But it is difficult to go beyond that to a more abstract and general account of cultural progress within a rank. Does it proceed continuously or in stages? If in stages, how many, what are they? In either case, what's the mechanism? For now all we can say is that there is progression within each stage and all analysis must recognize that.

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7. For the basic biographic facts of Shakespeare's life, of which we have so few that finding the real Shakespeare--Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Bess herself have been favored candidates--has been a minor scholarly sport for a century, see Bentley (1961, a chronology of the plays is on pp. 230-231).

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8. For the benefit of those who aren't familiar with these works and who want a better sense of what they contain than they can infer from the main text, I offer the following summaries:

*The Winter's Tale:*

King Leontes of Sicilia is visited by his good friend king Polixenes of Bohemia. Leontes observes his wife Hermione conversing with Polixenes and mistakenly assumes a romantic liaison. Hermione gives birth to a daughter, Perdita. Leontes banishes his wife and Polixenes and orders Perdita to be left on a desert island to die. His young son, Mamillius, dies, leaving him without an heir. Then he learns from an oracle that his suspicions were unfounded. He is crushed. Meanwhile, Hermione's friend and aid, Paulina, has hidden her. Neither Hermione and Leontes know that Perdita was found by a Bohemian shepherd. So ends the first, the tragic, phase of the play.

The second, comic, phase opens after Leontes has spent the sixteen years in gloom, not knowing that his wife is still alive and that his daughter is safe. At long last he is ready to come back to life, even perhaps to marry again. Meanwhile, Polixenes's son, Florizel, sees and successfully woos Perdita. Knowing that his father wouldn't permit him to marry a peasant, Florizel takes Perdita and flees to Sicilia, with Polixenes following. Leontes receives the young couple and manages to figure out that Perdita is his daughter. Overjoyed, he sanctions their marriage and is reconciled to his old friend Polixenes. Hermione comes out of hiding and all are amazed and happy.

#### *Pride and Prejudice:*

The Bennet family, husband, wife, and five daughters in need of husbands, learns that Netherfield Park is to be leased by one Mr. Bingley, a most eligible bachelor. Bingley brings with him a friend, Mr. Darcy, who is even more eligible, but also proud and haughty (note, though these men do have first names, they aren't used much in the book). Bingley and Jane, the oldest daughter, are attracted and there are rumors of marriage. Darcy and Elizabeth, the second daughter, are also attracted; but their attraction is cloaked in apparent disinterest and verbal jousting. Others see the attraction but Elizabeth and Darcy don't know what's in their hearts. Unexpectedly, Bingley leaves Netherfield Park, leaving Jane behind with her marriage hopes dashed. Halfway through the novel, in Chapter XI of Volume II (of three), Darcy proposes marriage to Elizabeth after declaring that, against his will and judgment, and across the social gulf between them, he found himself in love with Elizabeth. She is surprised, shocked and turns him down. That ends the first phase of the novel.

In the second phase of the novel Elizabeth and Darcy spend much time re-evaluating their experience. Much of our attention shifts to Lydia, one of Elizabeth's younger sisters, and her relationship with one Wickham, a dashing young officer who is a rogue to the core. Wickham is the son of an esteemed retainer of the Darcy family and was destined for preference until he proved profligate, eventually seducing Georgianna Darcy, Darcy's younger sister. That despicable act completed his fall from familial favor. When Darcy learned that Wickham had run off with Elizabeth's younger sister Lydia, he secretly intervened and brought about their marriage, thus legitimizing the liaison and saving the Bennet family honor--Lydia herself was quite pleased, Wickham less so. This generous act convinced Elizabeth that Darcy wasn't so bad after all. As the novel ends, not only are Elizabeth and Darcy reconciled, but Jane and Bingley too. Three of Mrs. Bennet's five daughters have found husbands.

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9. My point is thus a variation on Wittgenstein's (1953) famous arguments about private language. He was concerned to show that no language can be the private creation of a single individual; that language is inherently intersubjective. My point is that once experience has been rendered into language, and thereby shared with another, that experience gains a measure of reality. [Editor's Note: See also Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, for more on language and the objectification of internal experience.--

10. In his farewell play, *The Tempest*, Shakespeare structured his story to avoid the stark contrast between Before and After. This play begins with After, as the protagonist, Prospero causes a shipwreck which brings his old enemies to him and a bridegroom to his daughter. We are told about the conflicted past, Before, in flashback. The present action of the play is devoted entirely to engineering the marriage which will allow Prospero to become reconciled to his old mates and return home.

For what it's worth *The Tempest* has been popular with Hollywood. The 1956 science fiction classic *The Forbidden Planet* was based on it [Editor's Note: and the original "Star Trek" television series in turn derives in part from *The Forbidden Planet* --PL], and Paul Mazursky attempted a more conventional update in 1982, retaining the original name. The most interesting transplantation, however, is Robert Zemeckis superb *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. There is no reason whatever to believe that Zemeckis had Shakespeare in mind, he was actually working from a novel. But, in the way that *Pride and Prejudice* bears the impress of *The Winter's Tale*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* bears the impress of *The Tempest*. In Hays's (1992) terms, *Roger Rabbit* is a work of entertainment, a Rank 2 expressive work created by Rank 3 people for broad consumption in their society.

Despite the film's name, the protagonist is a depressed alcoholic private detective named Eddie Valiant. His quest to restore his old buddy Roger to Jessica parallels Prospero's quest to secure a husband for his daughter Miranda. Just as the process of wedding Miranda to Ferdinand reconciles Prospero to his past, so too does Eddie become so transformed in his search for Roger that he rekindles his love for Delores. The power battle which drove Prospero from his dukedom is mirrored by the murder of Eddie's brother, which drove him away from Delores and toward alcohol. The magic which is the milieu of Prospero's island is mirrored in the gags and physical improbabilities of the Toons and their cartoon world.

As I said, I'm not arguing that Zemeckis was trying to remake *The Tempest*, or was even influenced by Shakespeare. I am saying that our inner lives are so much the children of his expressive works that his plots and themes turn up of their own accord.

11. In a privately circulated essay with the ungainly title of "Male, Female, and the Shape of Shakespeare's Career" I have, in effect, charted Shakespeare's own growth through such an abstract space. Focusing on a *Much Ado About Nothing*, a comedy, *Othello*, a tragedy, and *The Winter's Tale*, a romance--the order in which they were written--I show that there are consistent changes in the way Shakespeare's sets up the dramatic action in these plays. All begin with a man who mistakenly believes the woman he loves to be unfaithful. In the comedy the mistake occurs during courtship; in the tragedy it occurs shortly after marriage; and in the romance, the mistake occurs well into the marriage. If we examine the relationships between the characters, we find that it gets closer as we move from one play to the next. Consider the following table:

	<b>MUCH ADO</b>	<b>OTHELLO</b>	<b>WINTER'S TALE</b>
<i>Protagonist</i>	Claudio	Othello	Leontes

<i>Mentor</i>	Don Pedro		
<i>Deceiver</i>	Don John	Iago	
<i>Paramour</i>	Borachio	Cassio	Polixenes
<i>Beloved</i>	Hero	Desdemona	Hermione

Note that neither Othello nor Leontes has a mentor comparable to Claudio's Don Pedro. Don Pedro talked with Hero's father, Leonato, and arranged the marriage. Othello obviously arranged his own marriage to Desdemona, whose father didn't even know about the marriage. Othello has thus absorbed the mentor's function. We know nothing about how Leontes managed his marriage to Hermione, but he doesn't have anyone associated with him who could be called his mentor. Further, there is no deceiver in *The Winter's Tale* comparable to Don John or Iago. Leontes deceives himself; he has thus absorbed the function of deceiver into himself. Iago, Othello's deceiver, is closer to Othello than Don John is to Claudio. And, finally, among the presumed paramours, Cassio is closer to Othello than Borachio is to Claudio. And Polixenes and Leontes have known one another since boyhood; they are so closely identified that we can consider them doubles.

Thus relationships between key characters and the protagonist become more intimate as we move from the comedy to the tragedy to the romance--and some characters, mentor and deceiver, seem to disappear, their functions being absorbed into the protagonist. Finally, note that the protagonist becomes more powerful as we move through the sequence of plays. Claudio is a youth just beginning to make his way in the world. Othello is a mature man, a seasoned general at the height of his career; but there are men who have authority over him. Leontes is king (and father); there is no mundane authority higher than his. Perhaps this increase in power is correlated with the absorption of functions into the protagonist. The absorption of functions increases the behavioral range of the protagonist--the modes he can enact. And this increased range is symbolized by higher social status.

The changes as we move from play to play *in the order Shakespeare wrote them* are mutually consistent. Whatever it means to talk about a vector in an abstract space of modal dispositions, this pattern is an example. Note that this Shakespearean trajectory is about what happened in Shakespeare's mind over two decades. The changes which happen to imaginary characters in plays and novels are, of course, imaginary. But these changes are empathetically enacted by real people, readers and audience, over the course of hours or days. The reorganizational effect of Rank 3 literature happens on this time scale; but repeated exposure to such literature over decades may well produce the kinds of change I've noted in Shakespeare's dramatic career (see note 13 below).

Finally, some methodological comments. One, I note that the method of comparison I used in these Shakespeare plays is essentially the same as the method I use in the larger evolutionary context where we follow Hamlet from Saxo Grammaticus to Shakespeare and then the two-phase romance from Shakespeare to Jane Austen. If Shakespeare's career is moving in a space of modal dispositions, the larger movement occurs in a different space, one even deeper and stranger. That is the space of expressive evolution, which Hays (1992, p. 196) has characterized as involving the differentiation of cortical modes.

Second, while I find it convenient to use the metaphor of a mathematical space, I have no

reason to believe that, when these ideas are worked out in more detail, that the notion of an abstract space will remain useful. Maybe it will, maybe not. A measure of skepticism is in order lest such a metaphor take on a life of its own.

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12. In dealing with the novel, recent literary theorists have found the Formalist distinction between story and plot insufficient. We need something like Gérard Genette's trichotomy of *récit*, which is the narrative text itself, and which can, in this particular trichotomy, perform the conceptual labor the Formalists assign to plot, *histoire*, which is roughly equivalent to the Formalist's notion of story, and *narration*, "the act of narrative production and, by extension, the real or fictional situation in which it takes place," (Rimmon 1976: 40 - 41). It is control over this last element of the trichotomy which is so highly developed in the novel; this is where the narrator fits in. Although I have little experience with this particular conceptual scheme and so am reluctant to say much, it does suggest a parallel to my analysis of musical evolution in terms of differentiation and control over rhythm, melody, and harmony (Benzon, forthcoming). Rank 1 narrative has control over *histoire*. With Rank 2, *histoire* and *récit* are differentiated and controlled independently. At Rank 3 *narration* is further differentiated out and the artist gains independent control over it.

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13. One piece of evidence in favor of the reorganizational nature of Rank 3 psychic life can be found in George Valliant's longitudinal (1977) study of Harvard graduates. He found that, over the long-term, over decades, these men shifted from less to more mature defense mechanisms. That is what you would expect of a personality structure capable of long-term reorganization. Harvard graduates are not, of course, representative of the United States population at large; but then only a portion of that population is likely to be Rank 3 (Benzon and Hays, 1990. p. 304). But, if there is any institution which is designed to produce Rank 3 people, it is the first-class liberal arts undergraduate school, of which Harvard is an example.

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14. This speculation is too delicious to resist. Recent neuropsychological research indicates that the functional mapping of the neocortex can change over the course of weeks (Calvin, 1989, pp. 175-175; Barinaga, 1992). In a typical experiment a monkey is trained repeatedly to use a particular finger, with the result that the area of the neocortex devoted to that finger grows. There is nothing special about this particular area of the neocortex. The basic units of neural circuitry are much the same throughout the cortex (Mountcastle, 1978). Thus an effect like this is likely to obtain in all regions. If it is just a matter of repeated use, it would seem that we could get a similar effect from exercising a considerably more sophisticated task, such as intellectual creation. The more sophisticated task no doubt involves many cortical areas so that the reorganization would be more global; and such a global reorganization might well support a new behavioral modes. Thus the modal repertoire of a person might not be permanently fixed. The repertoire could change, perhaps even vary with the seasons, as an individual's daily routine changes. If that change is relatively small, then the current set of modes might "stretch" to accommodate. Where the change is great, it might be more efficient to reallocate cortical resources to support modes more appropriate to the new activities.

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