

A Kondratieff Model of U.S. Cultural History

by Edward Jayne

written 1991, revised October, 2005

According to Christ's parable recounted by both Matthew (15.14) and Luke (6.39), one blind man pulls another after him into a ditch (or bothunon). In his celebrated painting a year before his death, Pieter Bruegel the Elder extended the number to six--the leader and those he pulls after him. What we have today, four centuries later, includes our entire nation, over two hundred fifty million of us. For it seems we have all tumbled in a collective ditch as blind seekers doomed to "bothunian" catastrophe.[i] Right now American civilization is in a trough, or declivity--call it a period of transition between epochs of high achievements. Almost everything is qualitatively diminished--our art and architecture, our literature, our philosophy, our experts and public personalities, our bloated education factory, and of course our purchasable government and the endless swarm of hustlers and lobbyists it serves. We share a common dilemma, the pervasive decline of a social and political milieu whose grand destiny could once be taken for granted.

How did it happen? How could our national assets that accumulated over a hundred fifty years bring what seemed total victory in World War II and complete dominance of the free world's financial and productive resources, but only to be squandered over the duration of a mere half century? Other historic world powers--Egypt, Babylonia, Rome, the Spanish-Hapsburg dynasty, France, and the British empire--took hundreds of years to play out their decline. We've done it in fifty. What went wrong? Spiritual decay can be blamed, as can rampant bureaucracy, a spoiled middle class, and high taxation proportional to the benefits for those who pay their fair share. Crime, drugs, TV, the decline of the nuclear family, and counterproductive educational theories can also be blamed. But so, too, can free markets (i.e., cheap labor abroad), pervasive deregulation, and, as much as anything, raw plutocratic greed supported by national kakistocracy.

Probably the most basic explanation of our present economic crisis lies in the steady growth of competitive industries elsewhere in the world while our own economy has remained dependent on military-industrial investment to supplement aggregate demand. With the collapse of the U.S.S.R., however, our extravagant military budget is suddenly less justified, and we are not yet able to diversify well enough to pick up the slack. NAFTA, GATT, and other free-trade agreements might protect corporate profits by opening up both foreign markets and the supply of cheap labor abroad, but on balance this can only be at the sacrifice of American labor. As this century's proud inheritor of European hegemony, we seem threatened by the prospect of edging closer to the third world once our labor-intensive industries have been transplanted to Mexico, China, and elsewhere still blessed with a bountiful cheap labor supply.

But are prospects quite so bleak? Are we doomed to stagnation and economic decline comparable to what has happened to other fallen world powers subsequent to their loss of power? Not necessarily. With the Kondratieff theory of a 52-year long cycle in economic

growth, a more optimistic scenario may be proposed for both the American economy and its culture.[ii] Instead of predicting imminent economic and social collapse, Kondratieff theory offers a relatively favorable diagnosis by locating us at the wrong end of the current long cycle, after which substantial recovery may be expected in the relatively near future. We might find our standard of living somewhat lower compared to the same stage in previous cycles, but at least we can benefit from some of the crests and recoveries to be anticipated over the next two decades.[iii] For our problem today would be simply the unfortunate coincidence that the worst phase in the latest Kondratieff cycle has converged with the termination of the Cold War. That we lack the supposedly necessary "trough war" that has marked the inception of a growth trend in previous Kondratieff cycles does not necessarily terminate the cycle or discredit Kondratieff theory.[iv] Since the 1990 recession, substantial growth has in fact occurred in some economic sectors without the benefit of warfare, apparently confirming those versions of Kondratieff theory that dispense with the necessity of peak and trough wars except as a matter of historical coincidence.

Technically, the Kondratieff cycle may be explained as a complex endogenous oscillation that produces a recurring pattern of growth and absorption relatively independent of the random events that constitute its so-called exogenous historical influence. Like a tornado, or, better yet, like a cyclonic weather system moving eastward across the continent, the cycle seems to draw everything into its vortex, its motion through history occurring as a prolate cycloid with quicker upswings than downswings. Two decades of economic growth are followed by slightly more than three decades of absorption experienced as stagnation. Capital investment exceeds demand during periods of growth, but demand eventually catches up during periods of absorption. Growth usually (but not always) begins with a relatively small "trough" war, and absorption usually begins at or near the end of a major "peak" war. As the growth phase begins to taper off, the effort to prolong it--for example by increasing the defense budget as justified by a more aggressive foreign policy--merely brings new dislocations that intensify the shift into economic decline. Then a thirty-two year period of absorption ensues characterized by economic contraction that includes, in American economic history, a decade of stagflation and corruption (e.g., the 1870s, 1920s, and 1980s) as well as a sequence of three successive depressions before a trough war triggers a new phase of economic growth. If the Vietnam War can be described as having been a peak war after a twenty-year period of growth, this means that a trough war can be expected around 2,000 to demarcate the beginning of another two-decade period of growth.

The Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratieff first proposed his theory of a 54-year long cycle in a series of papers between 1922 and 1928, and he was rewarded for his ingenuity by being sent to Siberia, where he perished.[v] At that time Marxists enjoyed the millenarian delusion that the total collapse of capitalism could be expected within the next decade or two. However, contrary to their expectations, there was no irreparable collapse--not even when the 1929 depression occurred--and instead, as Kondratieff predicted, the same cyclical pattern has repeated itself for the next sixty years. However, the shifts and turns in the world economy have never been exactly on schedule according to Kondratieff theory, for, as Kondratieff himself explained, as much as a five-to-seven year margin of error must be taken into account for each particular cycle.[vi] As a general rule, the Kondratieff cycle seems to have been globally stable, yet locally unpredictable, surprising in its particular historic variations that are eventually drawn into the more inclusive predictability of its endogenous cyclical pattern.

After much research, the Dutch economist Jan Reijnders has argued that the existence of the Kondratieff cycle can neither be conclusively proven nor disproven based on the most rigorous investigation of the data available today.[viii] Some economists (most notably Kuznets and Samuelson) have challenged its existence, but others have supported it (most notably Schumpeter and Kahn), and today many continue to be impressed by the evidence of its occurrence as the longest and most inclusive of the business cycles. Data that seems to confirm Kondratieff theory includes growth rates in GNP, employment indexes, wage indexes, trade and production indexes, common stock indexes, consumer price indexes, and a multitude of wholesale commodity price indexes. Of course it remains to be seen whether the Kondratieff cycle will persist into the future, since it has only completed its revolution, at most, four times since it first occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century as explained by Kondratieff's original calculations.[ix] We cannot discount the possibility that its historic oscillation has been a transitional response to particular economic conditions that no longer prevail (like the shimmying of a car between, say, 65 and 68 m.p.h., that ceases once its speed accelerates beyond this range), so this particular economic cycle can no longer function as it has before--if in fact it ever did.[x] However, regardless of its future prospects, the Kondratieff cycle has been sufficiently accurate as an explanation of economic trends since the turn of the nineteenth century to justify its use in calculating the effect of economic growth upon cultural and intellectual trends over this period of history. And this is my purpose in this paper.

In retrospect the Kondratieff cycle's twists and turns seem obvious, but it is more difficult to anticipate future trends based on its cyclical predictability. This applies to U.S. economic history, especially resulting from its having occasionally deviated from European economic trends at the same time based on Kondratieff expectations. The American Civil War, for example, preceded the Franco-Prussian War by five years, and World War II and the Korean War are best seen to have served in combination as the fourth trough war for the American economy. With these relatively minor variations kept in mind, a two-hundred year Kondratieff pattern may be diagrammed for the United States as follows, with each of the four cycles listed horizontally and with the linear sequence of events for each cycle listed vertically:

	I. 1790-1848	II. 1849-1896	III. 1896-1920	IV. 1920-1965
20 yrs of growth	1790-1814	1849-1866	1896-1920	1945-1965
Peak war	War of 1812	Civil War	World War I	Vietnam
32 yrs of absorption	1815-1848	1867-1896	1921-1945	1970-today
1st depression	1819	1869	1921	1973-75
2nd depression	1825-1829	1873-1879	1929	1979-83
3rd depression	1837-1842	1887-1896	1937	1990-93
Trough war	Mexican War	Spanish-American War	World War II (& Korea)	[Iraq] ? ?

Many of these dates are arguable within a couple of years, and, as already indicated, there seems to be a latitude of from five to seven years in predictability for any of these changes to have transpired. Nevertheless, what emerges on the broadest scale is a recurring cycle of upswings and

downswings that have been punctuated and very likely intensified by the so-called peak and trough wars that marked their transition.[vii] Economic expansion has occurred during the two-decade periods of growth in both financial and cultural matters, and financial stagnation during the three-decade periods of absorption. Today, two decades after the Vietnam War (a peak war), our nation is two-thirds of the way into both economic and cultural stagnation that can be expected to persist until the next trough war followed by two decades of growth.

2. Cultural Impact

The cultural impact of the Kondratieff long cycle has been almost entirely overlooked, and, indeed, any model that depicts such a base/superstructure relationship linked with the Kondratieff cycle might seem reductive and excessively schematic--possibly smacking of astrology. How possibly, one asks, can the Kondratieff cycle bear any influence on our literary and intellectual tradition? This is a fair question, but we must remember that Kondratieff originally proposed his theory of a 52-year economic cycles as a refinement of Marxist economic theory without having attempted to take into account its base/superstructure interaction between economic trends and social and intellectual trends. However, the Kondratieff model was never intended to preclude this kind of a vertical relationship, and if the existence of a base/superstructure interaction may be conceded (as I think it should), Marxist theory necessarily extends to include the diachronic interplay between cultural as well as economic variations produced by Kondratieff's long cycle.[xi] If this be the case, I want to argue that our nation's *Erbschaft*, its unique cultural tradition worthy of study and perpetuation, can accordingly be examined in an entirely new light relevant to economic trends.

What I am proposing here is a Kondratieff model whereby the cultural superstructure in the United States has been influenced by the Kondratieff cycle, with high levels of intellectual productivity having been the product of relatively high prosperity combined with intense social turmoil during the brief interlude lasting not more than a few years toward the end of the cycle's growth phase. Though our nation's cultural history has advanced on a sustained cumulative basis since the late eighteenth century, it has also surged with extraordinary vigor at new and unprecedented levels of self-examination during these four relatively brief historic interludes when mounting social and political controversy offset by declining growth stirred superior intellectual productivity.[xii] Each time the pattern was much the same: our entire nation was swept into intense controversy about an issue or cluster of issues that seemed to be of singular importance, and the authors who helped to channel this absorption into the sense of a shared national cause could later be admired for their remarkable insights independent of the events that had inspired them. In almost all instances, however, their most remarkable achievement was in giving voice to the transition from disaffection into outright dissent. Exactly when these authors were tottering at the edge of activism--on the brink of finding for themselves a plan of action--their pursuit of an explanation short of outright praxis was the most valuable. Once they surpassed this focus, they simply became protesters engaged in a cause that eventually brought victory of one sort or another.

These four periods, which I treat as major cultural "takeoff stages," may be viewed as having consisted of epicyclical superstructure modifications at the final phase of economic growth just as the Kondratieff cycle crested preceding a peak war and three decades of relative

stultification concomitant with economic absorption. This brief interlude of intellectual controversy is easily overlooked, even by Kondratieff theoreticians. Erik Mosekilde, for example, argues that the public mood throughout the entire two decades of growth is uniformly characterized by optimism as opposed to the pessimism typical of the period of economic absorption:

The years of economic upswing [in the Kondratieff cycle] are . . . characterized not only by massive investments, rising stock prices, increasing employment and growing prosperity, but during this period of optimism society usually becomes more open and permissive, and literal political and economic ideas are adopted. Conversely, during the years of economic recession, the society often becomes more conservative and introverted, while at the same time economic inequalities increase.[xiii]

According to Brian Berry, another Kondratieff theoretician, a different and more fractious mood occurs when the takeoff stage begins to crest:

Deep-seated passions and pent-up repressions gush out in an emotional peak, a national catharsis. People seem unable to cope with mounting complications of life as the long-wave peak approaches; they have no stamina for keeping up with the accelerated rate of change.[xiv]

I would agree that a shift occurs--a very major shift that does in fact involve national catharsis as disappointment plunges into dissent. However, I would argue that there is no loss of stamina until this catharsis fully exhausts itself in social protest.

At the beginning of each takeoff stage authors and intellectuals become increasingly restive, and as prosperity continues to erode they are likely to advance from nonspecific dissatisfaction to shared righteousness against an entrenched orthodoxy. There is still the sense of living in what had seemed a stable world, but now its very stability is found unacceptable. Affluence and respectability no longer matter--alternatives are sought that entail risk and personal sacrifice. Anger intensifies both individual assertiveness and an iconoclastic urge to share this indignation with others. Radical politics begins to make sense along with a new awareness that things are going wrong and that the social contract deserves to be revised. No longer is the goal simply to be published as an author with an idiosyncratic viewpoint, but to jolt the public mind, to insist upon the need for change. This purpose gathers momentum for a swiftly widening circle of intellectuals, and critical mass is achieved for the duration of just a couple of years--months, perhaps, for any particular individual. And this outcome does not occur at the same time for different people. Each arrives on his or her own schedule exactly at more or less the same brink between dissatisfaction and angry political dissent, and with sufficient intensity for an entirely new perspective to emerge as the product of this transition. And the result is quite extraordinary. The best works of fiction, poetry, sociology, psychology, political analysis, and journalistic coverage published at this time are very likely to be enshrined for future readers as "classics" of supposedly permanent value, though of course their insight can only be accepted by subsequent generations because of their orthodox misinterpretation, their iconoclastic challenge having been sufficiently diluted to meet the conventional demands of the American public. The incipient radicalism implicit, for example, in

the writings of Paine, Thoreau, Sinclair Lewis, and Ken Kesey becomes merely "interesting," little more than the stuff of provocative college-level reading assignments. As a result these authors lose their shock value, setting the stage for new but comparable paroxysms of dissent many decades later.

The first of the American Kondratieff takeoff stages, which may be described as the **FEDERALIST**, generated the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Constitutional Convention, state ratifying conventions, and the writings of Paine, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, Madison, and Jay. Inspired by the emergent democratic ideology of the eighteenth century Enlightenment as represented by such figures as Locke, Blackstone, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, the federalist productivity in the first of the American Kondratieff cycles consists of both the legal documents and the record of public debate upon these documents that obtained the creation of our nation as a radical experiment in democracy. The later residue of the federalist perspective included the speeches of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and many of the laws and judicial decisions preceding the Civil War, when our collective identity as a sovereign nation with a central government finally supplanted the initial vision of a loosely democratic confederacy. This takeoff stage was different from all that followed in having been initiated by radical activism that extended from the American Revolution (a "trough" war) to Shays' rebellion in 1786, in response to which there was an essentially conservative reaction focussed on the effort to establish a strong central government to replace the central authority of British monarchy. What justifies the identification of this collective attainment as a Kondratieff byproduct was its swift intellectual transition, if in a reverse sequence that featured rebellion and radical victory followed by factionalist divisions in the creation of a new government. Also suggestive of the Kondratieff pattern was the central importance of this achievement just at the beginning of two decades of economic growth preceding the first of the accepted Kondratieff cycles to have exhibited a typical base-superstructure interaction. Finally, as I shall try to demonstrate later in this paper, the political focus of the federalist achievement very directly anticipated the cumulative intellectual trend among later Kondratieff phases.

The second takeoff stage, which may be described as the **TRANSCENDENTAL**, likewise deviated from the generic pattern I have suggested, but to a lesser extent, by having originated at an earlier stage in the Kondratieff cycle--in the mid-1830s--with the writings of such figures as Emerson, Ripley, Parker, Brownson, and Alcott, as well as Hawthorne and Poe, among others, who were hostile to transcendentalism without having escaped its influence.[xv] Transcendentalism's creed of radical individualism introduced to America the early nineteenth century romantic idealism of Kant, Coleridge, and Carlyle, which spearheaded and gave theoretical respectability to the public reaction against the eighteenth century Enlightenment led by such figures as Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Hume. In the United States this reaction both justified and necessitated a major departure from the federalist perspective, since it featured heightened consciousness presumably superior to the relatively narrow rights and obligations established by the federal government. By most accounts, the federalists' worst transgression was to have created the United States based on a compromise at the Constitutional Convention that permitted slavery, and this was accordingly rejected by the transcendentalists, for whom liberty consisted of intellectual freedom devoid of such compromises, not merely the freedom to do as one pleases as guaranteed by law.

The actual takeoff stage for transcendentalism occurred in the decade preceding the 1857 Dred Scott decision that accelerated the advent of the Civil ("peak") War. At first the relatively diffuse transcendentalist perspective of Emerson was dominant as represented by the productivity of such figures as Thoreau, Whitman, Fuller and Stowe. However, as political activism intensified, their public voice came to be overshadowed by Greeley, Parker, Phillips and John Brown, among others, who were more uncompromisingly dedicated to the abolitionist cause. And then came the Civil War with all its devastation, after which there was a dearth of first-rate creative and intellectual productivity for decades to come as compared to what had preceded. For literary expressiveness at the beginning of the second takeoff stage had been remarkable among the major authors now associated with the so-called American Renaissance--Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Whitman, and Emerson. Hawthorne and Melville rejected Emerson's benign transcendental inclusiveness, but their fiction is best appreciated for its Manichaeian implications that were no less transcendental, the good pitted against the evil in a nightmarish universe. Likewise, Poe's remarkable prose poem Eureka that culminated his career is best understood as a transcendental vision of love and death as explained by the expansion and contraction of the real universe. As a transcendentalist residue after the Civil War, Dickinson's poetry brought her own version of experiential freedom to bear upon miniature experience, while Twain's writings broadened it into a frontier humor that gradually evolved into embittered social dissatisfaction more attuned to the third takeoff stage. It was Emerson's personal tragedy that his career spanned transcendentalism's decline from its uncompromising radical vision in the late 1830s to the rapacious business ethic of the Gilded Age, both ideologies justified by his uncompromising individualism.

The third takeoff stage, which may be described as **PROGRESSIVE**--of the progressive era from 1901-17--is more difficult to particularize, since its scope included aestheticism, almost a decade of muckraking (1903-1910), radicalism, institutional reform, and a literary flowering that began with the discovery of European naturalism by London, Norris, Sinclair, Dreiser, and others. Also important were the new historians, the pragmatic philosophers of Harvard and Columbia, and the two economists, Veblen and Henry George, not to forget the pessimistic summing-up of Adams, Twain, Bierce, Steffens, and, after World War I, of Mencken and Van Wyck Brooks. The gold standard, women's suffrage, the graduated income tax, anti-trust legislation, minimum wage laws, the eight-hour working day, child labor laws, farm loans, government corruption, and the popular election of senators were only a few of the social and political issues that consumed public attention. Radical politics came to the fore as promoted by such figures as De Leon, Debs, and Haywood, respectively of the Socialist Labor Party, Socialist Party, and IWW, and in a sequence that accelerated over a decade from theory to anarchistic labor practices. The intellectual fervor of the progressive movement persisted beyond the First World War (the third of the "peak" wars), if modified as a largely pessimistic cosmopolitan rejection of orthodox hypocrisy.[xvi] From the very beginning the pragmatism of James, Peirce, Dewey, and Santayana emphasized what seemed an intellectual freedom that could readily be invoked to challenge bourgeois assumptions. Novelists such as Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Wolfe, and Faulkner told the stories of characters whose willingness to challenge these assumptions brought them into trouble with society at large, while poets such as Pound, Eliot, Stevens, Williams, Moore, and e.e. cummings combined this willingness with the use of avant-garde poetic technique to violate bourgeois aesthetic expectations. Stimulated by evolutionist and socialist doctrine in the late nineteenth century, this third Kondratieff takeoff

cluster finally expired by the nineteen-thirties with the false choice between the New Deal and what might be judged in retrospect as a vulgar Marxist obsession with class struggle that reduced iconoclastic insight to proletarian certitudes.

And finally, the Kondratieff takeoff stage characterized by **ALIENATION**--the fourth and most recent of these periods of intellectual upheaval--took place preceding the Vietnam "peak" War with almost classic predictability. At last a purely endogenous prototype of the Kondratieff cycle's takeoff stage was achieved from which the previous three deviated, if with successively diminished variations as the endogenous Kondratieff pattern stabilized itself. Alienationists first asserted themselves during the fifties and early sixties as existentialist outsiders isolated from society, later as radical activists vehemently opposed to the misuse of power by the federal government. Intellectuals such as Fromm, Mills, Goodman, Macdonald, Fiedler, Marcuse, and Norman O. Brown stirred public opinion with a fresh willingness to challenge received values. Fiction was dominated by entirely new voices explicitly or implicitly in the first-person singular--of Kerouac, Vonnegut, Updike, Baldwin, Roth, Barth, Kesey, Brautigan, Pynchon, and Burroughs. Investigative reporting became popular as well as the "New Journalism" of Wolfe, Didion, Reed, and Thompson. Poetry was hyper-personalized by the confessional, Black Mountain, San Francisco, New York, and deep image schools, while poets who had already established their reputations simply reinvented themselves--for example, Lowell, Berryman, Levertov, and Rich--as did major novelists such as Bellow and Nabokov. Gore Vidal, the indefatigable chronicler of American history, reinvented himself as a scathing radical essayist, as did Mailer, the somewhat floundering postwar intellectual novelist, as an activistic essayist-novelist, perhaps the most publicized literary figure in the United States for a couple of years. Drugs became popular, and rock music was invented as well as psychedelic art and light shows. The sense of alienation brought freedom to the edge of social irresponsibility and sometimes well over it, for example with Lenny Bruce and Timothy Leary as well as the literary personae of Mailer, Burroughs, Kesey, Roth, and Nabokov.

Meanwhile, a radical perspective was mounting that obliged political activism in response to the issues of Vietnam and militant black nationalism. Teach-ins were followed by troop-train demonstrations, marches, and riots. The Civil Rights movement turned to violence when the leadership of Martin Luther King was challenged first by SNCC followed by the Black Panthers. Angry encounters, riots, jailings, etc., dominated the public media, and radical journalism caught fire with subterranean radical newspapers such as *The Berkeley Barb* and such magazines as *The Realist*, *The Guardian*, *The Minority of One*, *The I.F. Stone Weekly*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Ramparts*, and *PL*, among many others. As controversy escalated, individual expression was displaced by social protest too divisive to provide a safe vehicle for permanent literary insight. In fact, literary and intellectual productivity almost entirely came to a halt between 1964 and 1969 unless it stretched its connection with overt political activism, as might have happened with Doctorow's early fiction. All in all, this fourth takeoff stage was probably less productive than any of its three predecessors, but its decade of revolt was unforgettable for anybody swept into its maelstrom of countercultural dissatisfaction.

It is again to be emphasized that the first three takeoff stages somewhat deviated from the prototypical takeoff sequence I am proposing of a half-decade's advancement from intense creative and intellectual productivity to even greater intensity linked with political activism and

the advent of a peak war that culminates the Kondratieff cycle's two-decade growth phase. The federalist takeoff stage almost immediately followed the American Revolution (a "trough" war), too soon to have been influenced by the sustained economic growth that followed. In fact, during this period of growth, which culminated with the ("peak") War of 1812, there was much less intellectual output than before, probably because the Kondratieff cycle had not yet fully stabilized itself as a recurring pattern in the North American economy. It was a bit jumbled, not fully functional yet. Moreover, the extraordinary impact of the revolutionary period from 1775 to 1789 was probably sufficient to discourage further innovation for another several decades. What more could be said at the time? Likewise, the second takeoff stage, of the transcendentalist movement, began as early as the mid-1830s, then overleapt the ("trough") Mexican War to culminate during the early 1850s. And likewise, the progressive movement survived World War I (a "peak" war) to remain almost as strong through the 1920s and early 1930s. Only with the alienationist conflagration of the 1950s and 1960s--really the swiftest of the final three takeoff stages--did the entire cultural transition both begin and exhaust itself preceding our latest "peak" war (Vietnam). Nevertheless, this fourth Kondratieff takeoff stage was the simplest and most recent, so it provides the best paradigm against which the variations of the other three may be judged and compared.

Amazingly, all four Kondratieff takeoff stages achieved critical mass in intellectual productivity within just a couple of years--not more than five or six apiece--as compared to other, less inspired stretches in our history. The tight cluster of major publications at the height of these four takeoff periods may be indicated as follows:

Federalist: just three peak years encompassed John Adams's *A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* (1787), the American Constitution and the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention (1787), followed by the proceedings of the state ratifying conventions, *The Federalist Papers* and a flurry of pamphlets both pro and con (1788), and the 1789 Bill of Rights and Judiciary Act. Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* was published in 1791-92 in England.

Transcendental: just six peak years encompassed Emerson's *Representative Men* (1850), Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), Melville's *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849), *White Jacket* (1850), *Moby Dick* (1851), *Pierre* (1852), and *Benito Cereno* (1855), Thoreau's *Week on the Concord and Merrimack* (1849), "Civil Disobedience" (1849), and *Walden* (1854), Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and Parkman's *Oregon Trail* (1849) and *Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851).

Progressive: just seven peak years encompassed London's *The Sea Wolf* (1904) and *The War of the Classes* (1905), Steffens's *The Shame of Cities* (1904), De Leon's *Socialist Reconstruction of Society* (1905), Santayana's *Life of Reason* (1905), William James's *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911), and *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912) [the latter two published posthumously], Dewey's *How We Think* (1909), Adams's *Education of Henry Adams* (1907), Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911), Mencken's *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1908), Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* (ms completed in 1908),

Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (reissued in 1907) and Jenny Gerhardt (1911), Stein's *Three Lives* (1909), Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (1911), Pound's *Personae* (1909), and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (written between 1910 and 1911).

Alienationist: just six peak years encompassed Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958) and *Pale Fire* (1962), Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) and *Herzog* (1964), Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* (1959) and *The Presidential Papers of Norman Mailer* (1963), Updike's *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959), *Rabbit Run* (1960), and *The Centaur* (1963), O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960) and *Everything that Rises Must Converge* (1964), Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), *Mother Night* (1961), and *Cat's Cradle* (1963), Barth's *The End of the Road* (1958) and *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960), Roth's *Goodbye Columbus* (1959) and *Letting Go* (1962), Baldwin's *Nobody Knows my Name* (1961), *Another Country* (1962), and *The Fire Next Time* (1963), Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959), Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), Pynchon's *V* (1963), and Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964), among many other works of fiction. The poets I have already listed were also in their prime.

Lump the peak years of these four Kondratieff takeoff stages together and not more than twenty to twenty-five years of American cultural history is included--but what a remarkable two and a half decades it was. If quality could be quantified (which of course it cannot), this grouping might represent forty percent of our nation's intellectual achievement, but within a segment approximately one-tenth of its 220-year history, entailing by rough arithmetic almost a four-to-one level of significant productivity--but probably a good deal more. How much, for example, can be dredged up in the last twenty-five years--from 1971 to 1996--that bears comparison with what was achieved during these extraordinarily productive two decades patched together from the four Kondratieff takeoff stages?

As already indicated, all four of these takeoff stages can be segmented into smaller portions, beginning with a period of non-specific intellectual dissatisfaction but then followed by a period of intense political activism linked with the advent of a peak war that signals the transition from growth to stagnation as explained by Kondratieff theory. It seems that just a couple of years of angry disorientation stirs remarkable literary and intellectual insight before the chain of events degenerates first into political activism, next into war, and finally into the war's aftermath when orthodoxy and opportunism can once again reign supreme. Transcendentalists, for example, were supplanted by abolitionists, then by the speculators and carpetbaggers of the 1870s; likewise, pragmatists were supplanted by socialists and labor activists, then by the CP organizers and New Deal Democrats of the 1930s. And, most recently, the hippies and alienated intellectuals at the turn of the sixties were supplanted by anti-war protesters, and then, after the war, by the careerists, grantsmanship artists, and tweed activists to be observed on college campuses today.

And what an amazing transmogrification now confronts us. Sixties activists were kept under federal surveillance, their phones tapped, their organizations infiltrated by spies, and they themselves jailed now and again, more or less as Paine, Thoreau, and Debs had been in earlier times. In contrast, today's cultural activists (who take pride in identifying themselves with the

sixties) are generously subsidized by federal agencies, and their politically correct "radical" disposition--affirmative, networked, and vaguely countercultural--seems as much a post-takeoff caricature as the leftovers of the three previous takeoff movements had been. Sixties activists jeopardized their careers by pursuing an inflammatory cause regardless of the consequences; today's cultural activists use their government sanctioned cause (or causes) to promote their own careers. Sixties activists flaunted themselves and made a virtue of sexual liberation; today's cultural activists prefer respectability and are deeply offended by anything even remotely suggestive of sexual harrassment. Sixties activists used profanity and declared blatant and simplistic ideas sometimes verging on the bizarre; today's cultural activists frequently resort to defensive obfuscation in the realm of theory as well as euphemistic circumlocutions toward professional advancement. Most important of all, sixties activists were able and willing to assert radical "truths" obnoxious to others; today's cultural activists are guided by fastidiousness and hate-speech avoidances so pronounced that genuine constructive speculation often seems virtually impossible.

The issues at stake during the first three takeoff stages were of crucial importance to our nation's history. Only with the fourth takeoff stage did turmoil itself seem at times just as important as the cause that justified it. That is to say, the energy that went into political confrontation was often more compelling than the particular questions under debate. Intense controversy about integration, Cuba, the Cold War, sexual censorship, nuclear holocaust, and the free and filthy speech movements quickly gave way to the more divisive issues of black liberation and the Vietnam war as if our entire society were desperately seeking a theater vast enough to accommodate its angry restlessness. I can personally recall having asked an ambitious young novelist at the staging area of a large and potentially violent 1965 protest march in Berkeley why he wasn't at home working on his fiction, whereupon he replied with obvious exhilaration that nobody was doing it, that nobody bothered to see his psychiatrist any longer--we were all here at the march, even the psychiatrists. Essentially the same must have happened, if to a lesser extent, preceding World War I, when populism, labor union agitation, muckraking, and a variety of bohemian causes gave way to radical politics and the ILWU, and then to the war issue and the choice between Bolshevism and the earlier version of democratic socialism. And again during the 1850s when the Dred Scott decision intensified the abolitionist issue and brought the entire nation to war within just a couple of years. Transcendental purists such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were solidly in support of the northern cause, while opponents such as Hawthorne and Melville were more circumspect in their support of the Copperhead movement opposed to the war. But none of them--not even Whitman--would ever again be as productive as they had been just before their attention was diverted to the abolitionist issue. In each case dissatisfaction at a relatively early stage inspired temporary insight that was later recognized to be of permanent value once it could be sufficiently diluted to make it palatable to orthodox public opinion.

3. Attitudes toward Liberty

A Promethean dedication to liberty to such an extent that one is willing to risk its penalties (jail, for example) seems to have been perhaps the most striking common denominator of all these takeoff periods. Just as the tragic figure of Prometheus was supposedly willing to invoke Zeus's displeasure in order to grant mankind its freedom from the power of the gods, our

intellectual forbears seem to have jeopardized themselves in pursuit of liberty in one guise or another during all four of these Kondratieff takeoff stages. However, major differences among these stages also suggest an overarching trend that very likely defines our nation's intellectual history as a whole.[xvii] What I think may be demonstrated is that each of these takeoff stages generated ideas and assumptions about freedom that were unique to its cycle, but that could also be located in a "deep-structure" linear advancement with a progressively more radical commitment to what Northrop Frye has called the myth of freedom as opposed to the myth of concern.[xviii] In effect, the objective dedication to political rights emphasized by the federalists was supplanted by a subjective commitment to transcendental morality, then by the progressive effort to reform social and cultural institutions, and finally by a new level of subjectively principled rebellion, this time through what seemed a rejection of all social constraints whatsoever. In other words, the guarantee of political liberties demanded by the federalists was followed a half century later by the transcendentalist pursuit of spiritual liberation, then a half century later by a libertarian pursuit of social, political, and economic reform, and finally, after yet another half century, by the willingness to challenge orthodox respectability dominant in American society after World War II.

A doubled symmetry also suggests itself in the advancement among these four takeoff stages. The shift from the progressive to the alienation stage more or less replicated the shift from the federalist to the transcendentalist stage. Whereas both the federalist and progressive takeoff stages featured the pursuit of attainable social and political modifications, the alienationist and transcendentalist takeoff stages put more emphasis upon the pursuit of individual freedom among those able and willing to confront authority. It is easy to imagine a vigorous intergenerational debate in which Emerson and Thoreau of Takeoff Stage 2 tell Paine, Jefferson, and Madison of Takeoff Stage 1 that none of their political liberties amounts to a hill of beans unless one liberates himself from within; whereupon Veblen, Dreiser, and Dewey of Takeoff Stage 3 interrupt to argue that many more social guarantees are needed in the pursuit of subjective freedom than either the federalists or transcendentalists realize; whereupon Ginsberg, Mailer, and Lenny Bruce of Takeoff Stage 4 jump in to declare that this is why they want to walk out on the entire social contract--why we should let it all hang out and do as we please.

Within the individual American citizen these four successive visions of freedom seem to interact as horizons--or stratifications--that permeate virtually everything we say or do, and often in unpredictable combinations. The father beholden to a vaguely federalist concept of liberty expressive of progressive values that are loosely pragmatic might be angered by his son's alienated life style as justified by a transcendentalist rhetoric of individual fulfillment. However, for anybody from a foreign background--say, from Europe or South America--both father and son seem quintessentially American, driven by slightly different variants of the same Promethean mythology. No less mixed in their Promethean dedication were the radical lawyers of the 1960s who defended anti-war activists by insisting upon their rights as guaranteed by federalist priorities. And no less mixed have been the many authors who have built their reputations by refurbishing an earlier vision of freedom to meet the demands of the latest takeoff stage--Robert Frost, for example, who obtained a conservative audience during the progressive stage by updating transcendental individuality. Others have anticipated future takeoff strategies while catering to those in currency at the time. For example, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, published in 1952, anticipated alienationist concerns by telling of the effort to cope with social expectations

imposed by the three earlier takeoff stages. Vestigial traces from all four strata seem, in fact, to be present in most Americans, all of us having blended them to our own particular taste in order to reduce Promethean risk to a benign and comfortable personalized orthodoxy.

This two-century dialectic upon liberty was apparently foretold by Hegel when he proposed in his Introduction to *The Philosophy of History* that the entire history of western civilization has rested upon a "progress of the consciousness of freedom." And exactly so, for what particular society in the history of western civilization better epitomizes this intellectual dialectic than our own in the United States? By historic accident American intellectual history has brought to life a better and more salient version of Hegel's dialectic than Hegel himself might have imagined, but, as Marx would--or should---have been pleased to observe, such a dialectic becomes strictly a matter of dialectical materialism once the four varying perspectives of freedom dominant in our cultural superstructure are recognized to reflect the sequence among these takeoff stages linked with the Kondratieff cycle at its economic base. As Hegel would have recognized, American intellectual history has been dominated since its beginning by the dialectic pursuit of freedom; but as Marx argued, this compulsion has been primarily---if not entirely--the product of motives primarily linked with an economic base, though, as Marx did not realize (not that he was opposed to a cyclical theory of depressions), the impact of this base has been sequentially organized on a diachronic scale through the agency of the Kondratieff cycle.

As another Hegelian aspect of the Kondratieff deep-structure sequence among takeoff stages, each new takeoff stage has brought to the fore a unique vision of liberty that negates the version preceding it by rejecting it as an *ignis fatuus*, a limited objective whose exclusive pursuit prevents the attainment of genuine liberty. Just as the one-dimensional federalist quest for political liberty was superceded--and thus negated--by the no-less one-dimensional transcendentalist quest for subjective freedom, this transcendental pursuit was superceded and thus negated in the same fashion by a one-dimensional progressive emphasis upon social justice, and in turn this progressive awareness was superceded and thus negated by the one-dimensional alienationist effort to reject all conventional standards of social constraint. It may accordingly be suggested that our nation's pursuit of liberty subsumes four more specific myths of freedom, each an affirmative expression of denial linked with the goals of its particular takeoff stage. The federalist perspective was energized by the not entirely true myth (or belief) that maximum individual rights can be at least provisionally attained by a disinterested central government organized on a constitutional basis. The transcendental perspective substituted the not entirely true myth (or belief), declared by Thoreau in his famous manifesto, "Civil Disobedience," that genuine individual freedom must be imposed by individuals who are willing and able to oppose immoral government intervention. The progressive perspective then substituted the not entirely true myth (or belief) that genuine freedom necessarily depends on institutional reform based on pragmatic need. And finally the alienationist perspective settled upon perhaps the most extravagant myth (or belief), also not entirely true, that since our freedoms are necessarily curtailed by government supportive of an immoral power structure, radical disobedience becomes a permanent obligation (as Trotsky recommended with his theory of permanent revolution) simply to prevent the excessive misuse of government authority.

There has been zigzag symmetry in this advancement among these myths of freedom, but of course this pattern of switchbacks must be subsumed to an even more basic dialectic that gives

it forward progress through history. The intermittent Promethean aspiration to give mankind its freedom (Prometheus having been punished for this folly on a presumably elevated rock) has always stood in polar opposition to a more humble bothunian tendency (the countervailing blind beggars' ditch) linked with Frye's myth of concern, the tendency of the average citizen to seek refuge in religion, patriotism, and kindred sources of emotional security. It is no accident that these more defensive versions of commitment are just as pronounced in American history as its obsession with liberty, and often enough with both poles coexisting in the American mind as if no contradiction is involved. Each takeoff stage has thus put on display a new vision of liberty attractive to the American public, but this has eventually posed sufficient threat to our collective peace of mind to justify reverting to orthodoxy once again, of course with ample lip service to freedoms otherwise too dangerous to confront. For we still have trouble enough with Thomas Paine and the Bill of Rights; any truly faithful effort to implement the ideals of Emerson and Thoreau, or of William James and Bill Heywood, or of William Burroughs and Norman O. Brown would be more than the average American mind can bear.

4. Exceptions

It is again to be conceded that numerous exceptions may be found to the model I am proposing of cultural takeoff stages linked with the Kondratieff cycle. The epicyclical pattern of cultural takeoff has exhibited even more variance than its Kondratieff economic base, three out of four times having exceeded the compass of the peak and trough wars both forward and backwards in time. There has likewise been greater literary productivity in some of the trough periods than might be anticipated based on the Kondratieff pattern. From one decade to the next an abundance of new authors has surfaced linked with new schools, new little magazines, new manifestoes, and new causes and bohémias. And many of the authors stranded between takeoff stages--Twain and Howells, for example--have displayed sufficient creativity to suggest they might have played even more significant roles if their careers had matured at better and more appropriate times. Moreover, authors such as Irving, Cooper, James, Wharton, Pound, Eliot, Santayana, and Elizabeth Bishop have somewhat escaped the influence of the Kondratieff cycle here in the United States simply because of their choice to live abroad. The literary contribution of these figures has of course been substantial, but without having exemplified the Kondratieff dynamics explained above. Likewise, certain genres--most notably formalist literary criticism (New Criticism of the 1930s and 40s, and the postmodernist structuralism and deconstructionism of the 1970s and 80s)--seem to have fallen into a countervailing pattern, vibrantly alive during Kondratieff trough years, but relatively dormant during its takeoff stages.[xix] Twice at least, for example, formalist theory has languished when our culture thrived, but only to recover once again when our culture settled into another trough period. The unfortunate analogy is with maggots--absent on the healthy body, but everywhere evident on the corpse--though of course with the important caveat (grounds for hope) that, like maggots, formalism, whatever its guise, feasts on death in the pursuit of life.

The Kondratieff trough periods also explain the long stretches of American cultural history that have been relatively devoid of significant productivity--the bothunian times during which minimalist expression has seemed ample enough. American authors during these relatively elongated periods of economic absorption have been more likely to resort to sentimentality, often by emphasizing victimization, a common theme--in fact, a *basso ostinato* of

sentimental appeal that has persistently been with us since the very beginning of our literature.[xx] From Mrs. Susanna Rowson and Charles Brockden Brown to the rampant victimology popular today in both novels and movies, there has been a pathological fascination with the struggle between innocent sufferers and their evil oppressors--whether landlords, slave owners, strike breakers, bosses, rapists, brutish husbands, or psychopathic stalkers. Almost inevitably this struggle has been hyperbolized on a Manichaeian scale, the very good versus the very bad, of course culminating in sweeping reversal and the patent vindication of the former at the expense of the latter.[xxi] Victimhood has predominated as an endlessly amplified *terminus a quo* (plot's "from which") characterized by grief and deprivation as opposed to breaking loose and fulfilling oneself as a *terminus ad quem* (plot's "to which") characterized by the attainment of the freedoms important the four Kondratieff takeoff stages. Of course many exceptions may be found at both ends of the Kondratieff cycle. For example, Uncle Tom's Cabin, written in the thick of the transcendentalist takeoff stage, was essentially sentimental in its vision of slavery, while Huckleberry Finn, written during a period of utter Bothunian stagnation, was essentially Promethean in its rejection of social orthodoxy. In general, however, the pattern seems to have held: a climate of inferior expressiveness during trough periods has encouraged the depiction of passive victimization, while Promethean defiance characterized by the myth of freedom has been more in evidence during the takeoff periods.

Also explained by Kondratieff theory would be the almost total eclipse of literary productivity during the peak and trough wars as well as its postponement immediately following these wars proportional to their magnitude--the bigger the war, the longer it has taken for literature to revive. The Civil War, for example, postponed cultural recovery longer than the Spanish American War and World War II. After World War II there was ample publicity about the contribution of such authors as Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, but nothing much happened that was new and different until the mid-fifties with the publication of Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), Ginsberg's "Howl" (1956), and Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). Extended periods of barren creativity have included the years between 1790 and 1830 despite the writings of Freneau, Irving and Cooper, and between 1860 and 1900 despite the writings of Lowell, Twain, James, Howells, Crane, and a few others. Of course serious writing may be resurrected from these two periods, but their overall productivity was relatively low, as dramatized by comparisons with the significant output of the brief transcendental takeoff stage sandwiched between them at the middle of the century. As earlier indicated, the period between 1940 and 1955 was also relatively unproductive, and so has been the period from 1970 to the present despite its immediacy for many critics today. By 1985, most authors had settled into lucrative academic sinecures, criticism had immersed itself in poststructuralist obscurity, and our magazines and newspapers had scuttled genuine investigative reporting. Specifically in the area of fiction, postmodernism had soared into its minimalist limbo devoid of an audience, multiculturalist victimology has been rigidly conventionalized, and trade press fiction had become a production-line commodity fashioned by editorial teams to maximize popular demand. Tyranny by a bored majority has prevailed in creative writing classes, in publishing houses, and among the reading public at large. For the most part, literature was, and is, dead.

5. Future Prospects

As earlier indicated, the Kondratieff cycle might finally be over with after two centuries of activity. Four tentatively identified cycles are hardly enough to warrant permanent expectations, and, for all we know, the entire cycle may settle into stagnation or finally advance into the steady growth trend anticipated by neoclassical economists. However, the present lapse in Kondratieff predictability might simply result from the omission of a trough war or from the Kondratieff cycle's lag of a couple of years beyond normal expectations, in which case our problem today can still be blamed on intellectual stultification at the bottom of the Kondratieff cycle, just at the inception of a new growth phase that would culminate in a period of Promethean accomplishment, say, by 2010 or 2015, give or take a couple of years. Otherwise right now, all is bothunian, the empty vision of bothunites. There is almost nothing Promethean in sight--Jessie Weston's Fisher King fishes in dust. Of course our writers labor with varying success to express their modest sense of alienation, but they lack anything tangible against which they can measure their dissatisfaction. Innured by almost three decades of defensive selfhood, they cannot even begin to recognize and therefore question the timidity and moral compromise that dominate their lives. Circumstances deflect their ability to define themselves except by drawing on a limited assortment of habits and prescriptions to let them play their empty game with all the rest--as writers, as critics, as journalists, as social innovators, etc. But such is to be expected at perhaps the darkest period in the Kondratieff cycle after three decades of absorption. Today's minimalists and K-mart realists (as described by Tom Wolfe)--

Carver Beattie Hempel Barthelme Leavitt Robison Erdrich Mason Moore Boyle
McInerney Ellis Leonard Lish Kennedy Simpson Baxter Tyler Ford Wolff Dubus
Oates Wideman Auster Morris Irving Price Paley Coover

are no worse off than the so-called proletarian realists during the 1930s--

Russak Gold Vorse Cantwell Lumpkin Page Rollins Burke Weatherwax Steele
Nearing Conroy Dahlberg Herbst Endor Spivak Boyd Levy Irwin Cunningham
Harrison Page Delaney Coleman Raushenbush Newhouse Zugsmith Bodenheim
Seaver Bell Marlen

or the so-called utopian romance authors of the 1890s--

Everett Moore Tincker Roberts Browne Harben Niswonger Rosewater Schindler
Welcome Holford Howard Wheeler Dillingham Chavannes Flower Craig Forbush
Rehm Sanders Merrill Caswell Edson Cridge Allen Bellamy Donnelly Shepley
Thomas Olerich Merrill Griffin Heywood Fisk Vinton Worley Bell Fiske Fuller
McDougall Simpson Williams Chavannes Crocker Grigsey Peck.[xxii]

True, the arch-bothunian trends of the 1890s were ameliorated by the output of Howells, Crane, Twain, and Henry James, and, true, the arch-bothunian trends of the late 1930s were ameliorated by the continuing output of Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Hurston, Wright, and others. And true, our current deficiency has very likely been ameliorated to a certain extent by the output of such authors as Stone, DeLillo, Doctorow, Morrison, Wolfe, and Ozick. But as a rule much less happens in these

trough periods compared to when the next takeoff stage crops up a couple decades later and a revitalized quest for freedom once again becomes the primary issue in an entirely new guise.

So what does one do, then, at the wrong end of the Kondratieff cycle? For aspiring authors who want to transcend their times, perhaps the best choice would be, like Emily Dickinson, to cultivate their own voices oblivious to bothnian fads soon enough to be swept into the dustbin of history. And for those of us who anticipate that the Kondratieff cycle stands a chance of continuing its progress for at least another revolution or two, it might be useful to prepare our successors for the next eruption of Promethean achievement worthy of our strife-begotten literary tradition. Like Walt Whitman during the 1860s and 70s and William Carlos Williams during the 1930s and 40s, we can serve as midwives of something better, if without a clear sense of what this might consist of. Our only clue is the guarantee that our rejection of current assumptions somehow foreshadows a later and more effective pursuit of alternatives rooted in the principle of freedom. Otherwise, we may only guess what rough beast it will be that slouches toward our culture's next major takeoff stage.

© 2005 by Edward Jayne. This document may be reproduced in any non-profit form without permission of the author; however, for-profit reproduction requires written permission.

<http://www.edwardjayne.com>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joseph Schumpeter, *Business Cycles: A Theoretical, Historical and Statistical Analysis of the Capitalist Process* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939).

William Thompson and Gary Zuk, "War, Inflation, and the Kondratieff Long Wave," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26 (Dec., 1982): 621-44.

Jacob Duijn, *The Long Wave in Economic Life* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983).

Paul Craig and Kenneth Watt, "The Kondratieff Cycle and War: How Close is the Connection?" *The Futurist*, 19 (April, 1985), 52-57.

Joshua Goldstein, "Kondratieff Waves as War Cycles," *International Studies Quarterly* 29 (Dec, 1985): 411-44.

John Sterman, "An Integrated Theory of the Long Wave," *Futures*, 17 (April, 1985): 104-31.

Alfred Kleinknecht, *Innovation Patterns in Crisis and Prosperity: Schumpeter's Long Cycle Reconsidered* (New York: MacMillan, 1987).

N. H. Mager, *The Kondratieff Waves* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

Solomos Solomou, *Phases of Economic Growth, 1850-1973: Kondratieff Waves and Kuznet Swings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Joshua Goldstein, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

Bruce Norton, "Epochs and Essences: a Review of Marxist Long-wave and Stagnation Theories," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 12 (June, 1988): 203-24.

Myron Ross, *A Gale of Creative Destruction: The Coming Economic Boom, 1992-2020* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

Jan Reijnders, *Long Waves in Economic Development* (Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing Company, 1990).

Brian Berry, *Long-Wave Rhythms in Economic Development and Political Behavior* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

FOOTNOTES

[i] . Throughout this paper I shall be using the nonce word *bothunian* to describe anything that expresses, shares in, or partakes of economic and cultural decline, and I shall be using its derivative noun *bothunite* (crudely translated as ditch person) to describe anybody who defends or gladly plays a role in such a trend.

[ii] . The broad history of Kondratieff theory inclusive of its liberal, conservative, and Marxist schools is chronicled by Joshua Goldstein in *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Recent contributions I have found useful include Jacob Van Duijn's *The Long Wave in Economic Life* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983); Alfred Kleinknecht's *Innovation Patterns in Crisis and Prosperity: Schumpeter's Long Cycle Reconsidered* (New York: MacMillan, 1987); Tibor Vasco, ed., *The Long-Wave Debate: Selected Papers* (New York: Springer Verlag, 1987); Bruce Norton's "Epochs and Essences: a Review of Marxist Long-wave and Stagnation Theories," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 12 (June, 1988): 203-24; Jan Reijnders's *Long Waves in Economic Development* (Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing Company, 1990); and Brian Berry's *Long-Wave Rhythms in Economic Development and Political Behavior* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Goldstein, Van Duijn, and Berry's texts include excellent comprehensive bibliographies. For a recent critique of Kondratieff theory, see Solomos Solomou, *Phases of Economic Growth, 1850-1973: Kondratieff Waves and Kuznets Swings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[iii] . Of course Kondratieff optimism can easily be taken to its excess, as exemplified by Myron Ross's *A Gale of Creative Destruction: The Coming Economic Boom, 1992-2020* (New York: Praeger, 1989). Ross failed to anticipate the latest depression, which began within months of his book's publication, and claimed the growth phase of the fifth Kondratieff cycle already began in the mid-eighties. Moreover, he did not take into account the full burden of our defense budget in recent years--as much as 85% of our total federal budget (excluding social security and Medicare) once its hidden expenditures--pensions, federal debt, State Department costs, Atomic Energy Commission costs, etc.--are fully calculated. For an alternative viewpoint, see Gore Vidal's essay, "The National Security State," in *At Home: Essays 1982-1988* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 124-30.

[iv] . The role of peak and trough wars in the Kondratieff cycle and the many theories explaining this role are thoroughly explored by Goldstein, *op. cit.* The debate whether war is endogenous or exogenous to the Kondratieff cycle (i.e., an intrinsic feature or an external event) is irrelevant to my thesis in this paper. I am primarily concerned with the actual occurrence of three "peak" wars--specifically, the Civil War, World War I, and Vietnam--that took place at the culmination of each growth phase in the American economy just before stagnation began to set in.

[v] . Kondratieff was not the first to propose a long cycle. Hyde Clarke suggested a long cycle as early as 1847, and Jevons, Wicksell, Helphand, de Wolff, Tugan-Baranowski, Aftalion, Lenoir, van Gelderen, and de Wolff explored the possibility of such a cycle before Kondratieff published his research in the mid-twenties. But it was Kondratieff whose theoretical model established the

precedent for our current research in the long cycle, so the cycle is appropriately identified with his name. For a brief history of long-cycle theory preceding Kondratieff, see Kleinknecht, pp. 2-3, and Van Duijn, pp. 59-63.

[vi] . Nikolai Kondratieff, *The Long Wave Cycle* (1925; Richardson & Snyder, 1984), p. 60.

[vii] . See Van Duijn, p. 163, for a chart that lists variations in the chronologies for major growth and recovery phases proposed by Kondratieff theoreticians.

[viii] . Reijnders, p. 52. In Reijnder's exact words, "For the moment it suffices to point out that what goes for the protagonists [Kondratieff theoreticians] also goes for their critics: The first have not succeeded in demonstrating the existence of long waves whereas the second have not succeeded in demonstrating their non-existence." In response to opponents of Kondratieff theory, Reijnders proposes a standardization of time series to eliminate perspectivistic distortion, thus suggesting "that Kondratieff's long waves are no illusion" (p. xiv--italics in the original).

[ix]. Some Kondratieff theoreticians claim to have found traces of the Kondratieff cycle as early as the fifteenth century, but Kondratieff himself concentrated on economic trends since the end of the eighteenth century. The interaction between modern industrial development and the Kondratieff cycle would necessarily be limited to this period of 200 years.

[x]. According to Gerhart Bruckmann, "It may well be that future historians will divide the economic history of man into three ages: the preindustrial age, which lasted until the end of the eighteenth century; the age of industrialization (the 200 years from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth century, subdivided into four Kondratieff cycles); and the postindustrial age, from the late twentieth century onward." See "Will There be a Fifth Kondratieff?" in Vesko, p. 3.

[xi]. Of course the current view of postmodernist Marxists has been to deny the inevitability of a base-superstructure interaction by invoking the arguments of Louis Althusser in both *For Marx* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969) and *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: NLB, 1971). In turn, Althusser derived his arguments from Engels and Gramsci. However, Gramsci's perspective was more supportive of a strong base-superstructure interaction than might be supposed, as for example in his categorical remark appropriate to the American situation today, ". . . superstructures do not generate superstructures other than as an inheritance of inertia and passivity," in *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 107. Apropos of Engels, Althusser seems to have made a very basic misinterpretation. In *For Marx*, pp. 475-76, Althusser quoted Engels' famous letter to J. Bloch of September, 1890, that production determines the superstructure "in the last instance," presumably suggesting that this limits economic variables to a final status once everything else has been calculated. However, Engels probably used the words "in the last instance" to emphasize that economic production is the most basic and inclusive influence upon every aspect of culture. This becomes obvious with the English translation in *The Selected Correspondence of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: 1846-1895* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 475. The base-superstructure debate might seem to have been extended to Kondratieff theory in the early 1920s by Trotsky in his published exchanges with Kondratieff, but by superstructure Trotsky was referring to so-called exogenous economic variables such as wars, revolutions, and

the discovery of new natural resources rather than culture and politics. See Goldstein, pp. 27-31, 40-47, for a useful summary of the Trotsky/Kondratieff debate and its continuation in recent years by Ernest Mandel and others. For a justification of the standard Marxist treatment of culture as superstructure, see Raymond Williams's chapter "Base and Superstructure," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[xii]. The expression "salient energy" is borrowed from Emerson's lecture, "The Conservative," in Emerson's *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Viking Press--The Library of America, 1983), p. 174. Emerson's distinction between Conservatism and Reform generally applies as well to differences in the public mood during periods of stagnation and economic growth, but of course Emerson does not take long-cycle economic trends into account. In *Configurations of Culture Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), A. L. Kroeber similarly traces periods of unusual intellectual productivity throughout the history of civilization without drawing any connections between these and underlying economic trends. His findings emphasize the literary achievement of the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, but he devotes only a sentence or two to its political achievement at the end of the eighteenth century (p. 722), and he virtually ignores its manifold accomplishments in a variety of fields in the early twentieth century. Also relevant to the Kondratieff base/superstructure relationship are various theories of political cycles in the United States summarized by Arthur Schlesinger in his excellent article, "The Cycles of American Politics," in *The Cycles of American History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), pp. 23-48. Schlesinger himself emphasizes a 30-year cycle in political mood extending from liberal to conservative and back again. This cycle would be roughly the length of the Kuznets cycle, half as long as the Kondratieff cycle. However, neither Schlesinger nor any of the historians and political scientists he discusses take into account the possibility of any interaction between economic and political (or cultural) trends.

[xiii]. Erik Mosekilde, Steen Rasmussen, and Maciej Zebrowski, "Technoeconomic Succession and the Economic Long Wave," in Tibor Vasko, *op. cit.*, p. 258. Frank Klingberg discusses "introvert" and "extrovert" phases in "The Historical Alternation of Moods in American Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 4, no. 2 (1952), 239-73; J. Namenwirth discusses "cyclical value shifts" in "Wheels of Time and the Interdependence of Value Change in America," in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, no. 4 (1973): 649-83; and John Langrish proposes an "optimism index" connected with the long wave in "Cycles of Optimism in Design," *Design Studies* 3 (1982): 153-56. James Shuman and David Rosenau very loosely discuss the social impact of Kondratieff waves in *The Kondratieff Wave: The Future of America Until 1984 and Beyond* (Delta, 1972), and Dorothy Swaine Thomas discusses the social impact of shorter economic cycles in *Social Aspects of the Business Cycle* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1927). But none of these books and articles specifically takes into account the impact of the Kondratieff cycle on our literary tradition.

[xiv]. Berry, p. 157.

[xv]. This brief and apparently anomalous cultural achievement was located almost exactly between the growth phases of the first and second Kondratieff cycles. It might be explained as the outgrowth of a temporary interlude of economic growth in the mid-1830s (between 1835 and 1839), thus the byproduct of a secondary price recovery in the 25-year Kuznets cycle.

[xvi]. Perhaps a partial explanation of the third Kondratieff takeoff stage having bridged World War I would be the argument of some Kondratieff theoreticians that the growth phase of the third Kondratieff cycle extended into the 1920s in the United States (as opposed to Europe) resulting from continued growth in economic output. See Van Duijn, pp. 69, 157, 164.

[xvii]. Here the word trend implies, as in Kondratieff theory, a more inclusive advancement from one cyclical phase to the next in a particular direction.

[xviii]. Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* (South Bend, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 34-55. Frye identifies the myth of concern with belief (religion, patriotism, etc.), as opposed to the verifiable truths presumably identified with the myth of freedom (pp. 36, 44). Accordingly, each of the four Kondratieff takeoff phases represents the rejection of one set of beliefs through a quest for truth that too quickly degenerates into a new set of beliefs. The Kondratieff takeoff phase thus occurs as an interlude of productive confusion when the dialectic struggle between belief and the truth fully engages the literary context.

[xix]. The rise of New Criticism spanned the period of economic absorption between the twenties and early fifties, but it gained momentum as a reaction against Marxist criticism during the 1930s and then played a dominant role in American universities between the end of World War II and the late fifties. Likewise, postmodernist criticism has persisted since the end of the Vietnam war. Those critics who played a central role during the sixties--Fiedler, Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, Kampf, Ohmann, Sartre, Goldmann, and a resurrected Christopher Caudwell--were readily eased from the spotlight when Vietnam ended and formalism was well enough disguised by French critical theory to regain its intellectual hegemony, of course with ample respects paid to Marx and Freud, if not to their most basic assumptions. See chaps. 7, 8, and 9 of *Negative Poetics* (University of Iowa Press, 1992), as well as my earlier article, "From I.A. Richards to Northrop Frye: A Brief Dialectic History of Anglo-American New Criticism." *American Studies*, Amst 22/1 (1977), pp. 107-22.

[xx]. Leslie Fiedler chronicles this tradition in both *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966) and *What Was Literature? Class Culture and Mass Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). Also useful is Nina Baym's assessment from a feminist perspective in "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors" *American Quarterly* 33 (1981).

[xxi]. Two complementary examples of this trend published in the same year, 1987, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of Vanities*, specifically deal with the victimization of an individual resulting from racial conflict. In the first instance--as tragedy--a young woman is driven to kill her child to prevent its being raised in slavery; in the second--as satire--a young man is financially ruined by a hit-and-run accident he caused to avoid being mugged. In both instances, the protagonist plays a passive role significantly different from the aggressive antisocial quest behavior typical of fiction during the alienation takeoff phase.

[xxii]. The list of contemporary authors is partially compiled from John Aldridge's *Talents and Technicians: Literary Chic and the New Assembly-Line Fiction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992); the list of proletarian realists is compiled from chapter seven of Walter Rideout's *The Radical Novel in the United States: 1900-1954* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965); and the list of utopian romance authors is compiled from Allyn Forbes's "The Literary Quest for Utopia, 1880-1900," *Social Forces*: 6, no. 2 (December, 1927).

© 2005 by Edward Jayne. This document may be reproduced in any non-profit form without permission of the author; however, for-profit reproduction requires written permission.

<http://www.edwardjayne.com>