

THE CLOCKWORK MUSE



The Predictability of Artistic Change

COLIN MARTINDALE



The Muse and the Clockwork in the *Clockwork Muse*

**A Retrospective Review of Colin
Martindale's Magnum Opus**



The Raw Data

Stylistic Change

Beneath your fair head, a white delicate neck
Inclines and would outshine the brightness of snow.
(Chénier, “Les Colombes”)

This evening a done-for sun lies on the top of the hill
.....
And he lies there, like a gland torn out of a neck.
(Laforgue, “L’Hiver qui vient”)

I love you opposite the seas
Red like the egg when it is green.
(Breton, “Tiki”)



The Muse

- **Colin's theory**
 - **Variation-selection model a la Darwin**
 - **Selection**
 - **Natural → adaptive success**
 - **Sexual → hedonic value**
 - **Variation**
 - **Regression: Maximize primary process**
 - **Elaboration: Minimize secondary process**



The Muse

- **Implications: Trends in**
 - **Arousal potential**
 - **Primary process**
 - **Stylistic change**

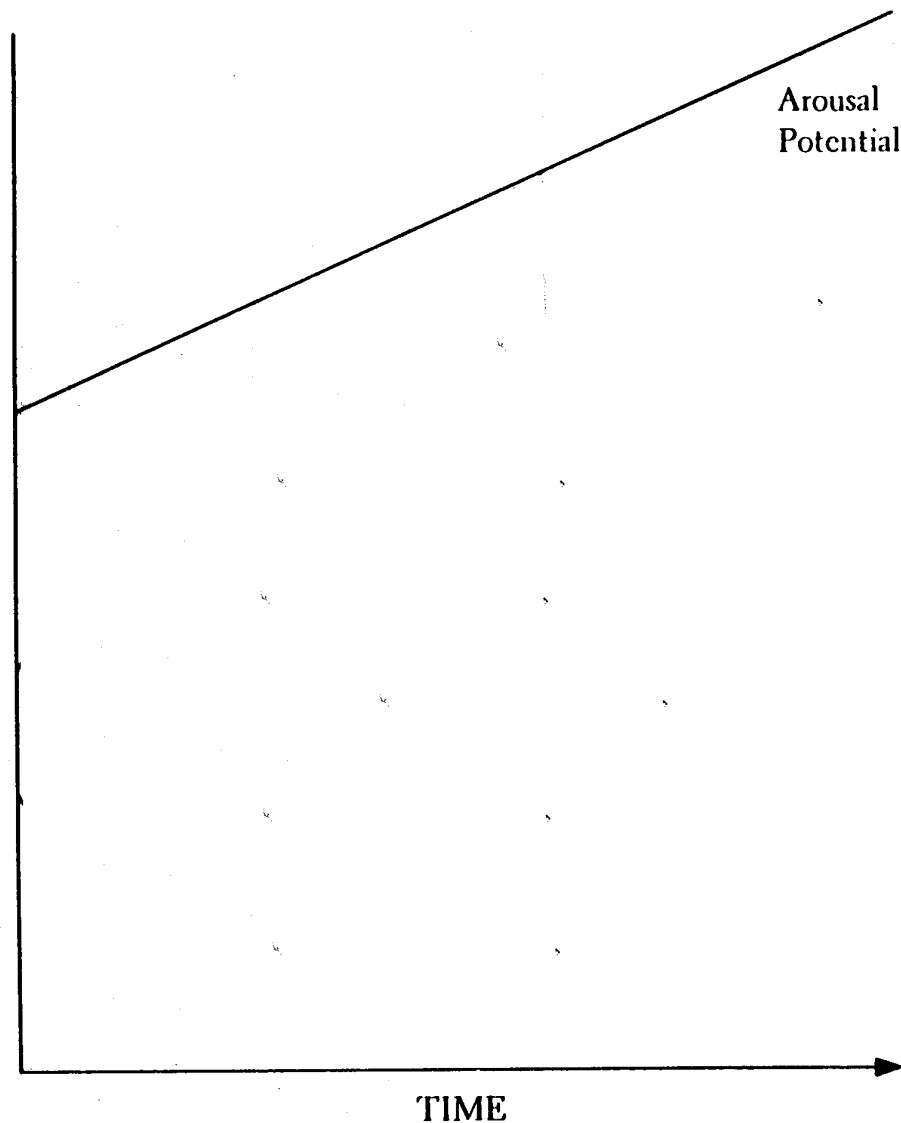


Figure 2.3 Graphic summary of theoretical predictions: in cases to which the theory applies, arousal potential should increase across time; primordial content and stylistic change should show long-term increases with superimposed oscillations. Note that primordial content and stylistic change should be out of phase: that is, the former should increase when the latter decreases, and vice versa.

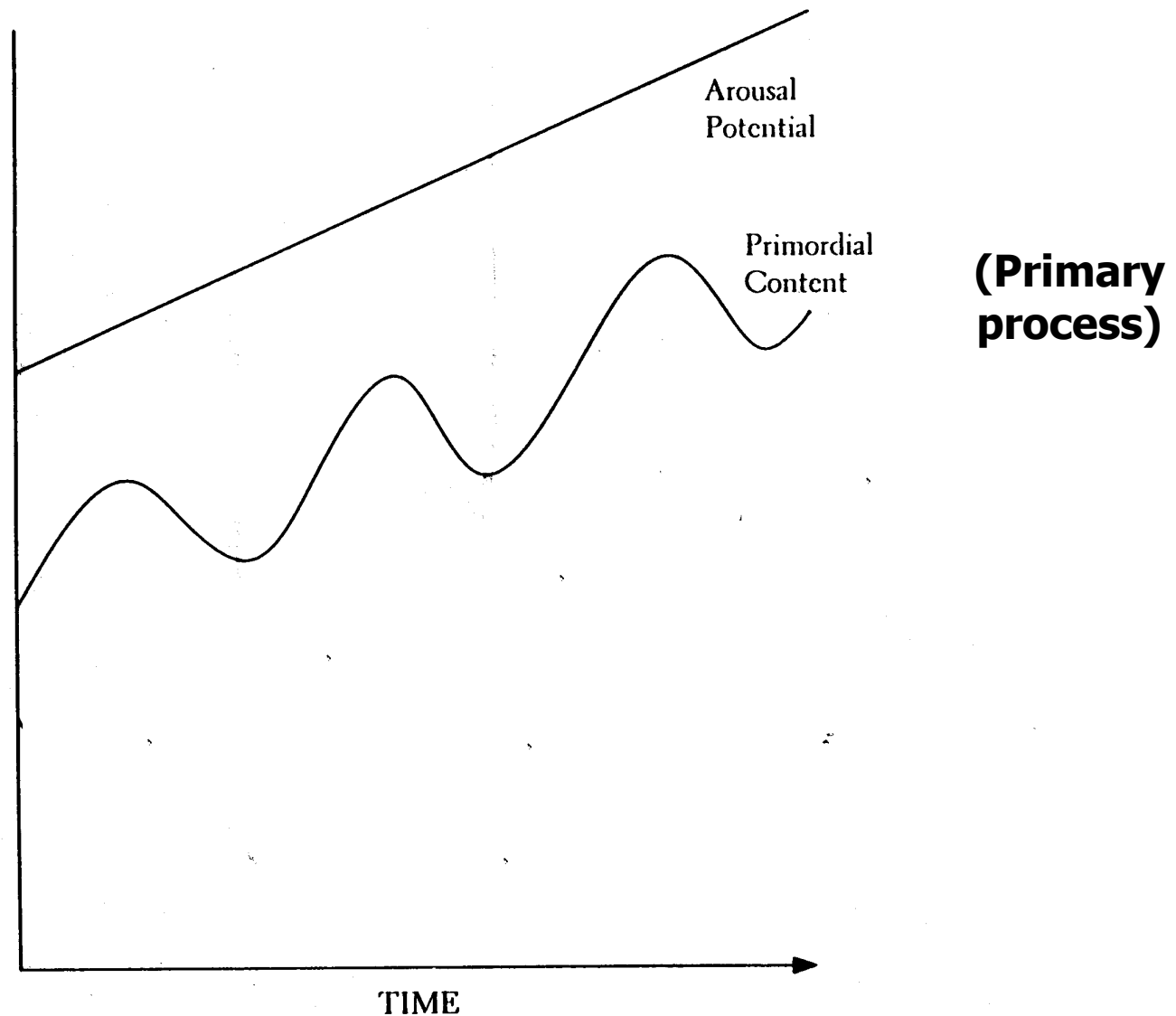


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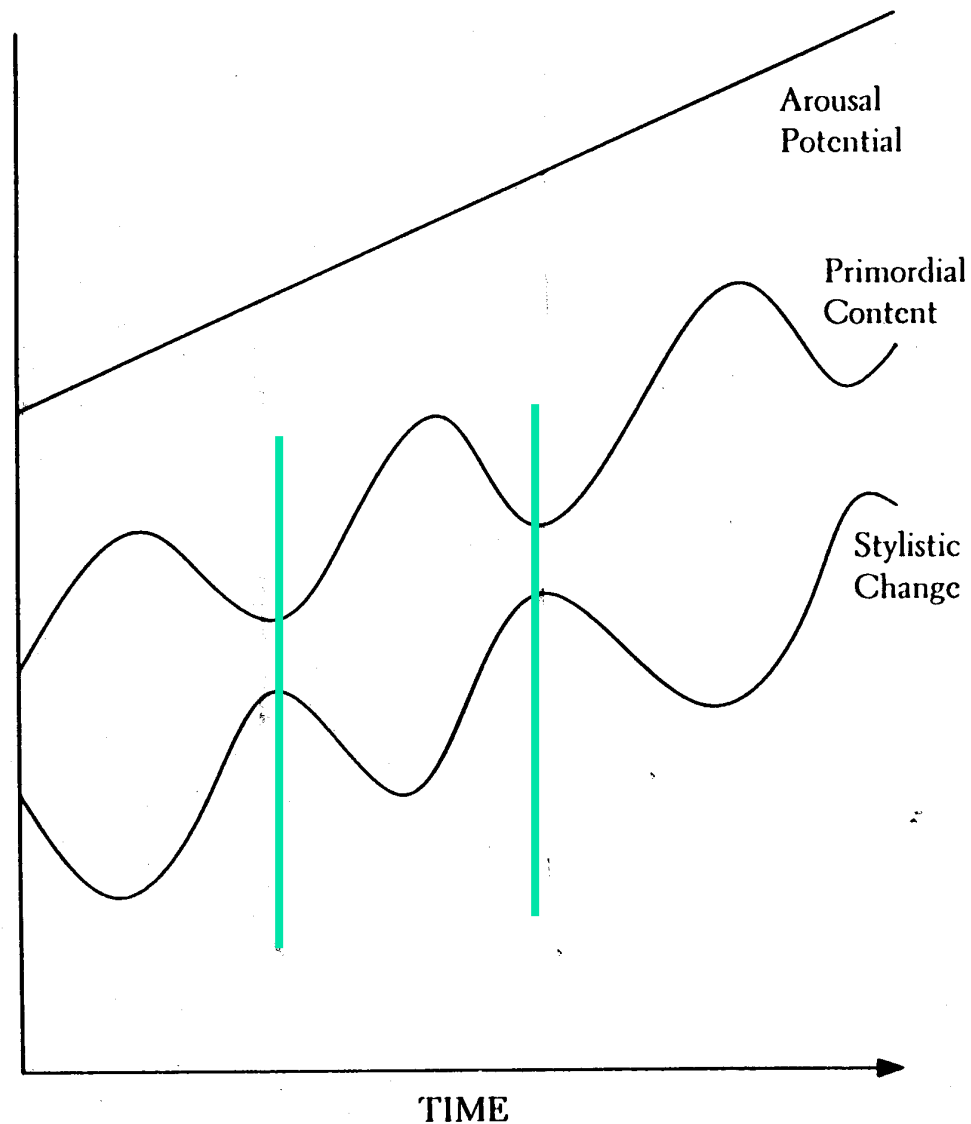


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The Clockwork

- **The research: Literary change**
 - **Content analytical studies**
 - **Poetry**

TABLE 3.1
Modern French Poets
(1770–1909)

Period F1 (Born 1770–89)

- 1. André Chénier
 - 2. Pierre-Jean de Béranger
 - 3. Charles-Hubert
Millevoye
-

Period F2 (born 1790–1809)

- 4. Alphonse de Lamartine
 - 5. Victor Hugo
 - 6. Gérard de Nerval
-

Period F3 (born 1810–29)

- 7. Alfred de Musset
 - 8. Théophile Gautier
 - 9. Charles Baudelaire
-

Period F4 (born 1830–49)

- 10. Stéphane Mallarmé
 - 11. Paul Verlaine
 - 12. Tristan Corbière
-

Period F5 (born 1850–1869)

- 13. Jean-Arthur Rimbaud
 - 14. Emile Verhaeren
 - 15. Jules Laforgue
-

Period F6 (born 1870–89)

- 16. Paul Valéry
 - 17. Guillaume Apollinaire
 - 18. Jules Supervielle
-

Period F7 (born 1890–1909)

- 19. Paul Eluard
 - 20. Henri Michaux
 - 21. René Char
-

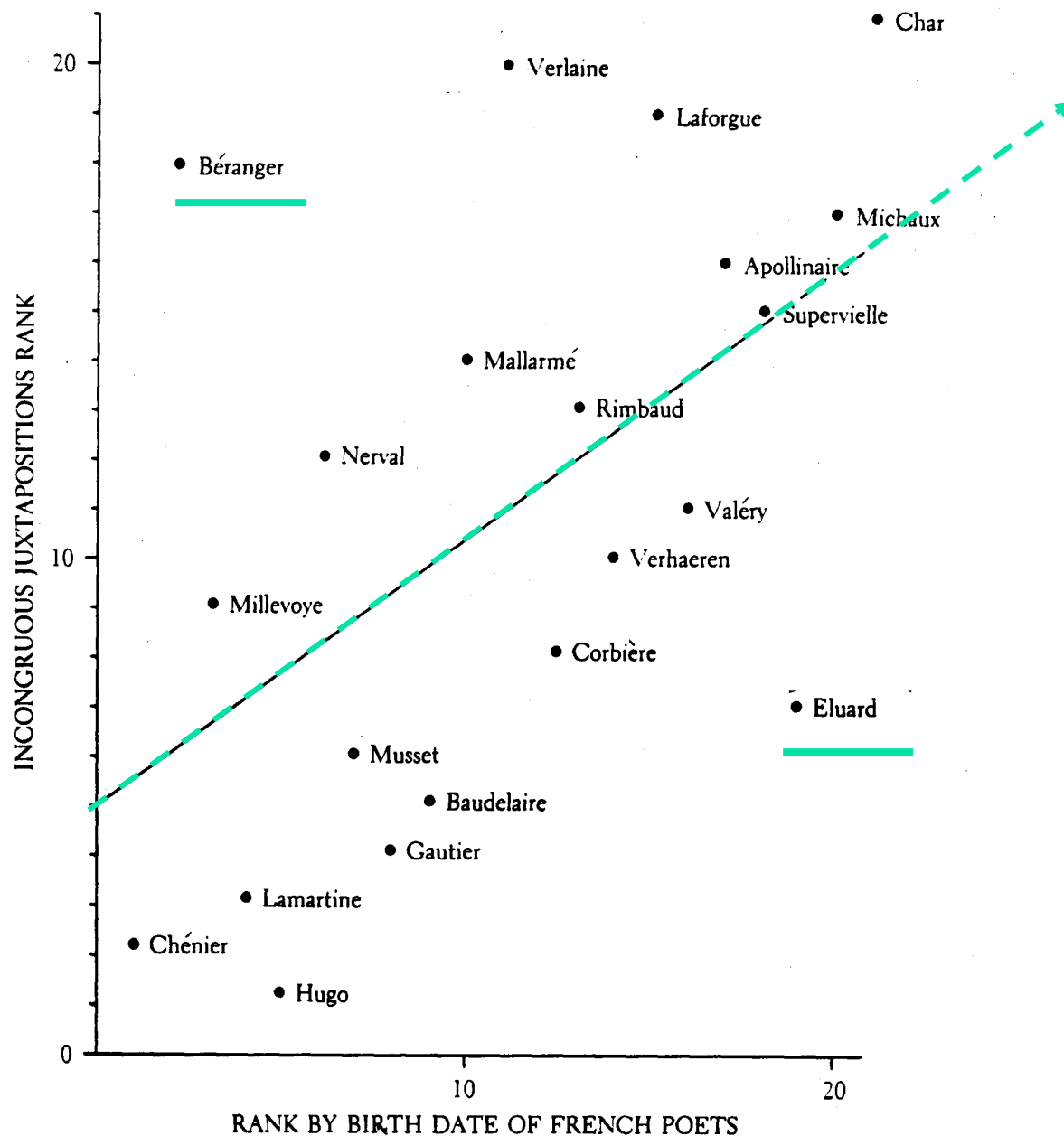


Figure 3.1 Amount of incongruous juxtapositions in texts by twenty-one French poets born between 1790 and 1909 graphed by birth-date rank. Incongruous juxtapositions increased across time. The best-fitting trend line describing this increase is shown.

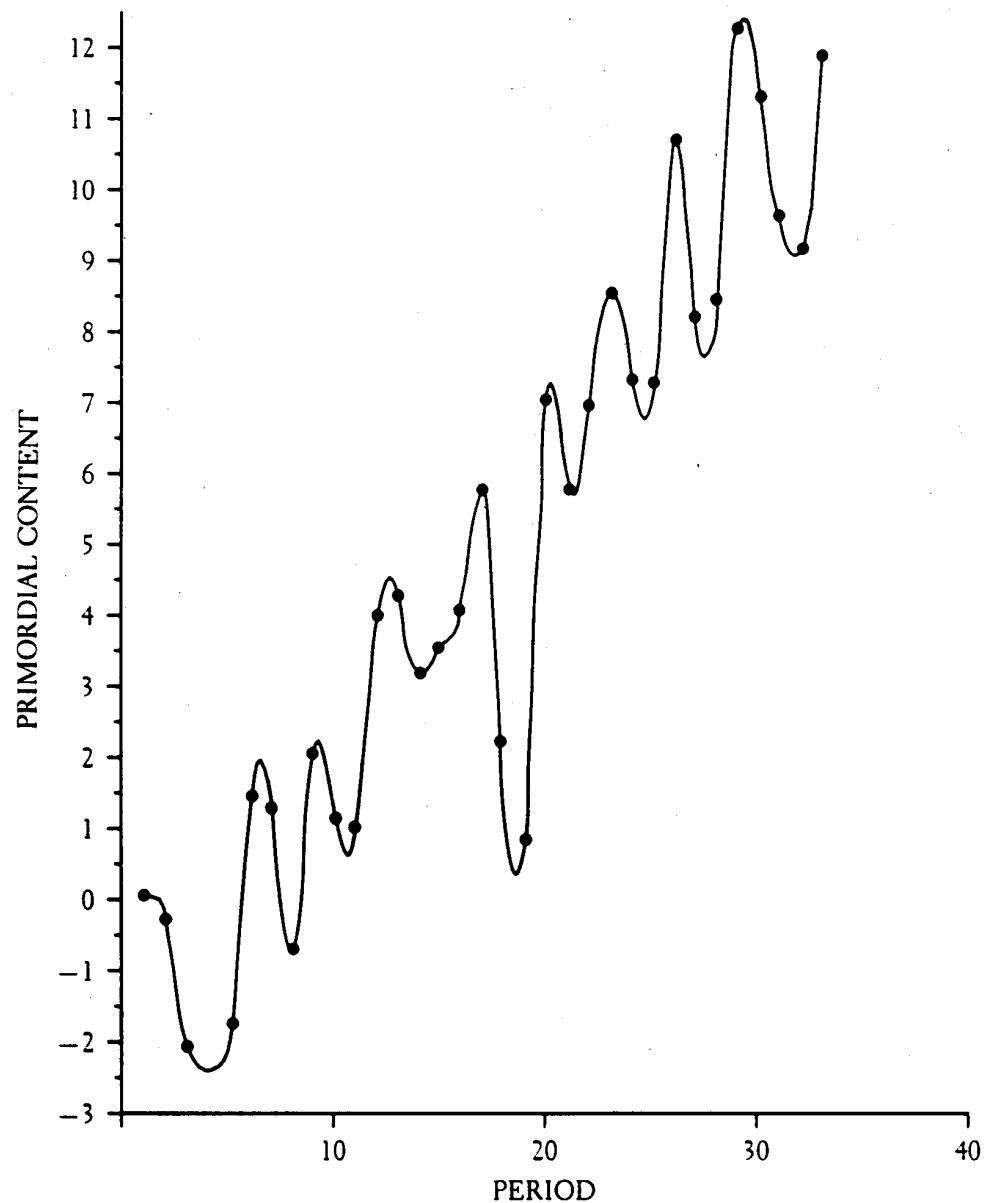


Figure 4.3 Average amount of primordial content in texts from 170 British poets born in thirty-three consecutive twenty-year periods from 1290 through 1949. As predicted, primordial content increased across time with superimposed quasiperiodic oscillations.

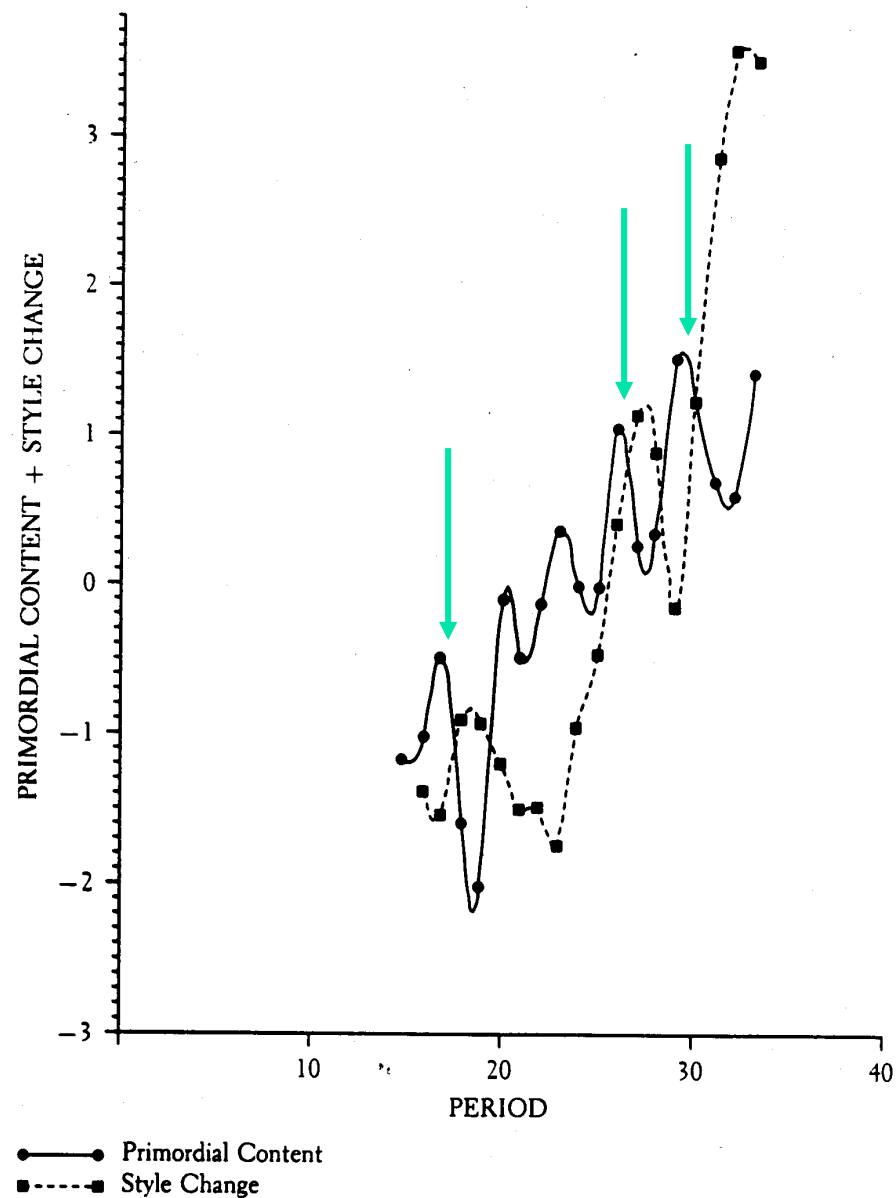


Figure 4.9 An index of stylistic change (based upon percentage of words added and dropped) and primordial content in each of twenty consecutive twenty-year periods (for poets born between 1550 and 1949). The index of stylistic change has tended to increase when primordial content decreased and vice versa, as predicted by the theory (compare figure 2.3, page 70).



The Clockwork

- **The research: Literary change**
 - **Content analytical studies**
 - **Poetry**
 - **Short stories**

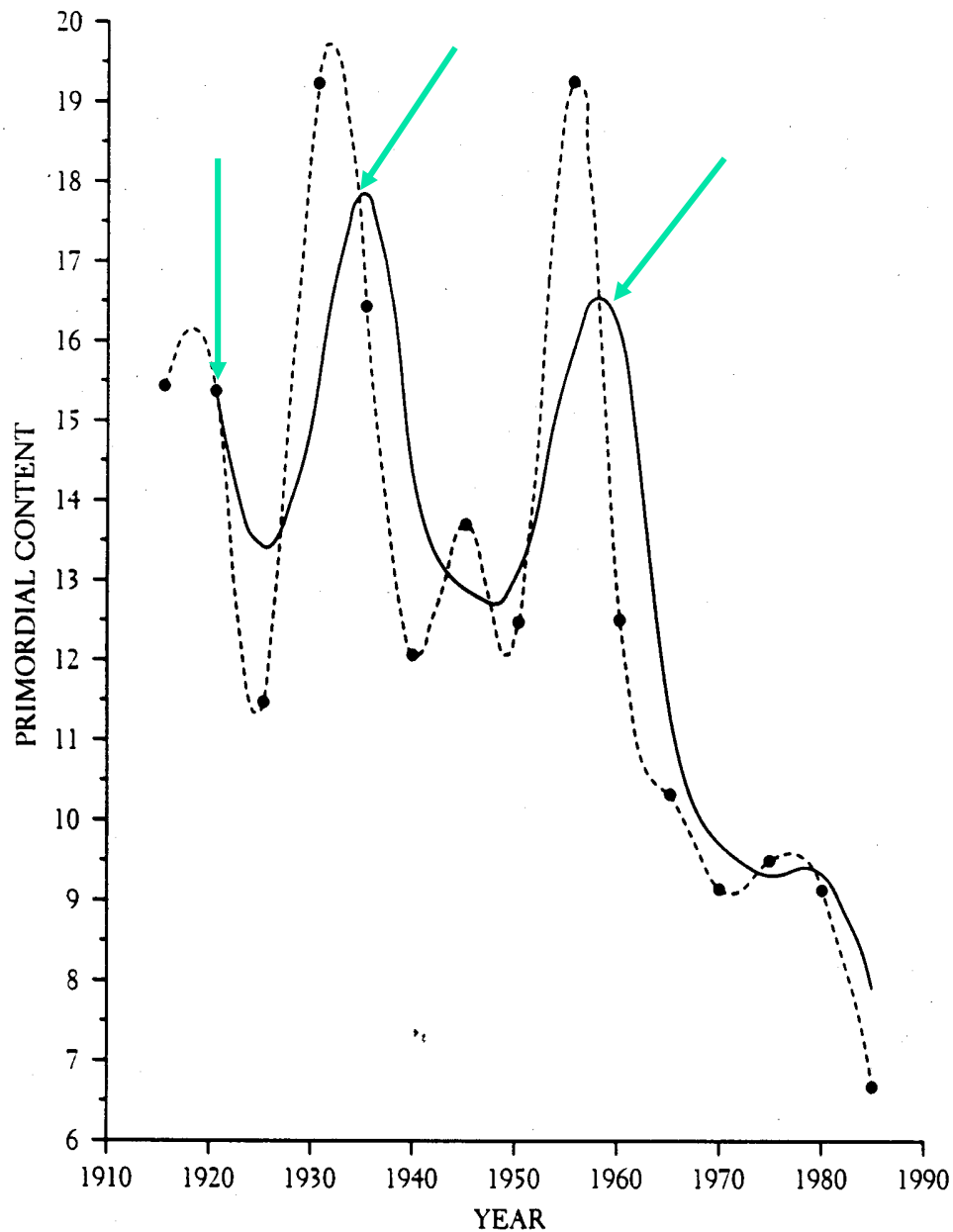


Figure 5.5 The average amount of primordial content in texts from *Poetry* magazine for every fifth year from 1915 through 1985. The solid line shows a two-point moving average that highlights the main trend in primordial content.



The Clockwork

- **The research: Literary change**
 - **Content analytical studies**
 - **Poetry**
 - **Short stories**
 - **Lyrics for popular songs**

TABLE 5.3
American Popular Songs (1950–72)

| | | |
|------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1950 | Gordon Jenkins | "Goodnight Irene" |
| 1951 | Patti Page | "Tennessee Waltz" |
| 1952 | Johnny Ray | "Cry" |
| 1953 | Percy Faith | "Song from Moulin Rouge" |
| 1954 | Kitty Kallen | "Little Things Mean a Lot" |
| 1955 | Bill Haley and the Comets | "Rock Around the Clock" |
| 1956 | Elvis Presley | "Don't Be Cruel" |
| 1957 | Debbie Reynolds | "Tammy" |
| 1958 | Tommy Edwards | "It's All in the Game" |
| 1959 | Bobby Darin | "Mack the Knife" |
| 1960 | Percy Faith | Theme from <i>A Summer Place</i> |
| 1961 | Shirelles | "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?" |
| 1962 | Chubby Checker | "The Twist" |
| 1963 | Chubby Checker | "Limbo Rock" |
| 1964 | Beatles | "I Want to Hold Your Hand" |
| 1965 | Supremes | "Back in My Arms" |
| 1966 | Barry Sadler | "Ballad of the Green Berets" |
| 1967 | Box Tops | "The Letter" |
| 1968 | Beatles | "Hey Jude" |
| 1969 | Archies | "Sugar" |
| 1970 | Norman Greenbaum | "Spirit in the Sky" |
| 1971 | Three Dog Night | "Joy to the World" |
| 1972 | Don McLean | "American Pie" |

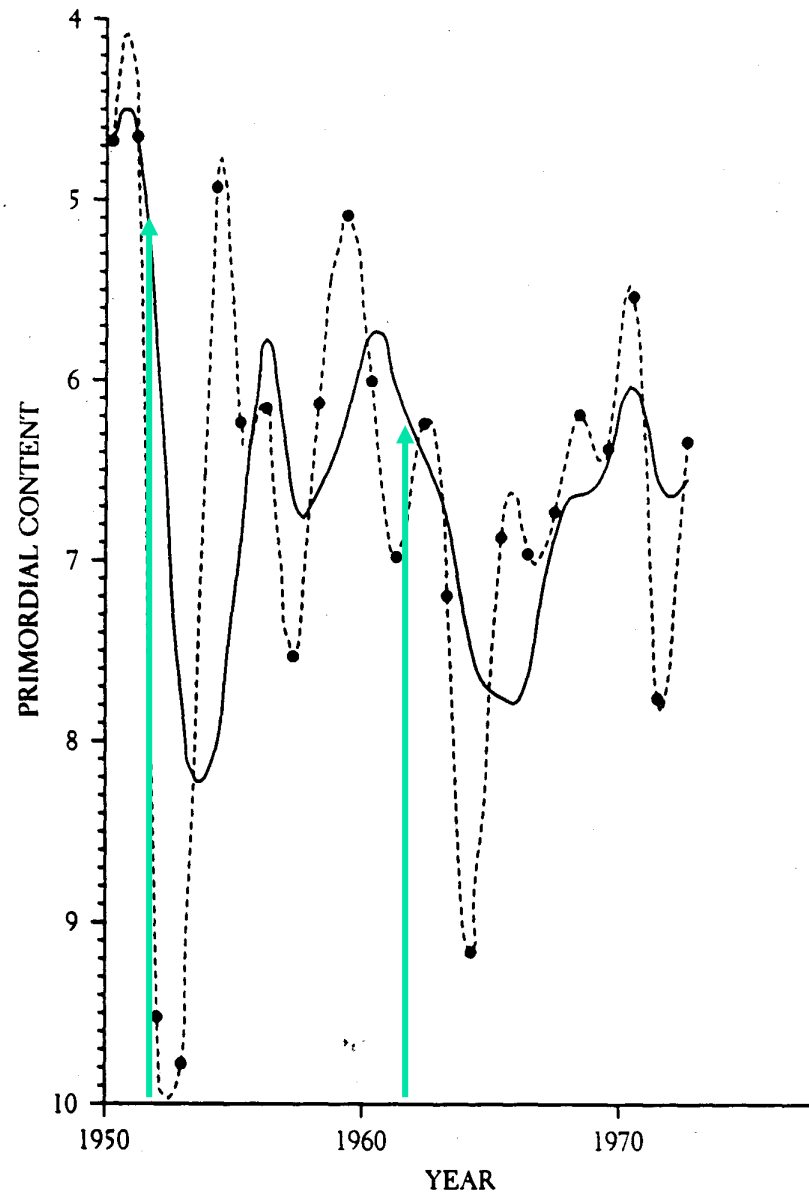


Figure 5.8 The mean yearly amount of primordial content in 230 American popular music lyrics written between 1950 and 1972. The solid line shows the three-year moving average. (Smaller numbers indicate *greater* amounts of primordial content.)



The Clockwork

- **The research: Literary change**
 - **Content analytical studies**
 - **Poetry**
 - **Short stories**
 - **Lyrics for popular songs**
 - **Literary criticism**

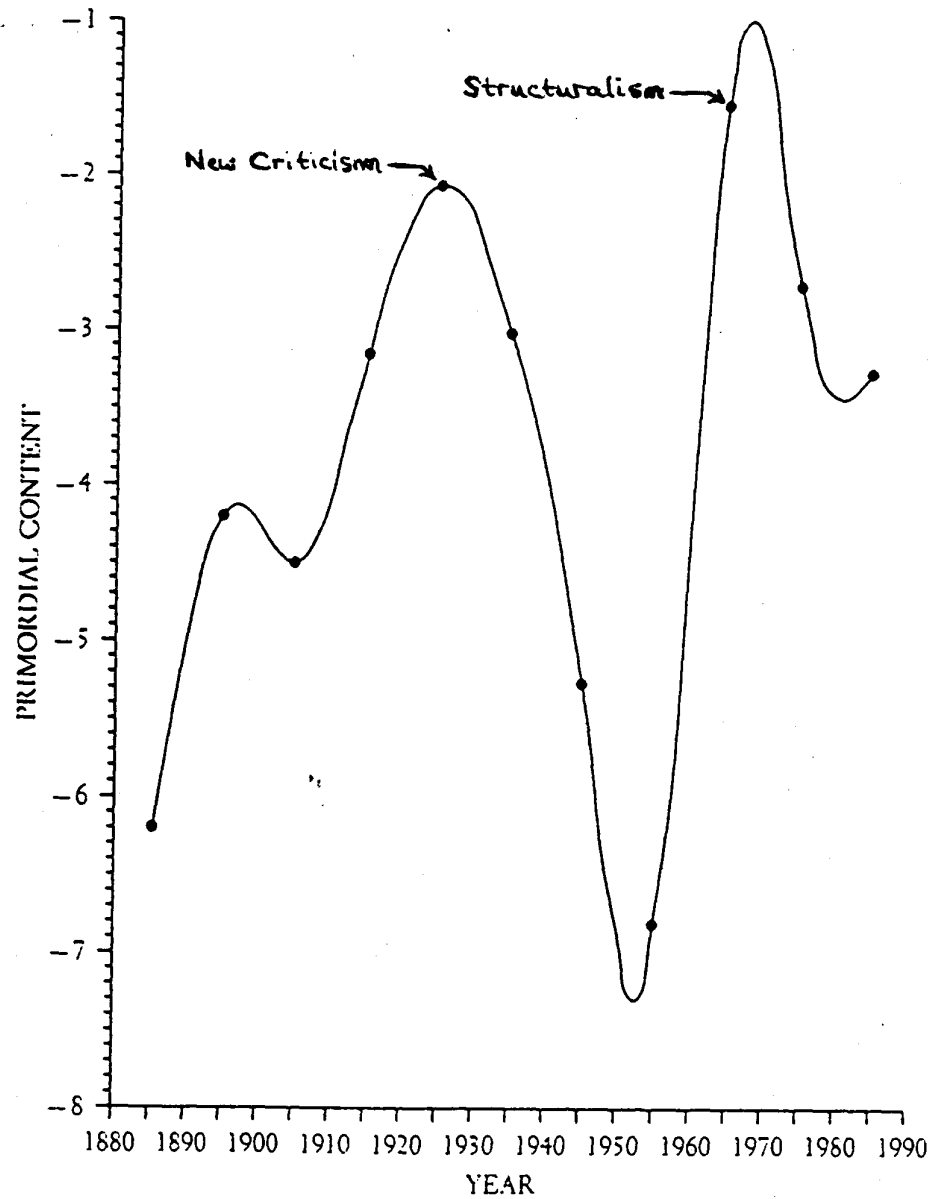


Figure 10.7 Average amount of primordial content in articles in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* for every tenth year from 1885 through 1985. Primordial content increased with the paradigm shift to the new criticism and again with the paradigm shift to structuralism.



The Clockwork

- **The research: Literary change**
 - **Content analytical studies**
 - **Experimental simulation**

A table is like _____

- the sea, quiet
- a horizontal wall
- a formicaed [sic] bed
- the platonic form
- a dead tree
- a listening board
- versatile friendship
- vanquished forest
- a seasoned man
- two chairs

A pencil is like _____

- a yellow cigarette, spreading its cancer on paper
- the headwaters of a river, flowing from the mind to the world
- a black light on nothing
- a stiletto, piercing truth
- an artist's brush, painting paper
- an ice scraper, unfreezing one's view of the world

A pencil is like _____

- the scratchy fingers of an insomniac
- a grenade: useful, destructive, yet often self-destructive
- the neck of an hourglass
- God micturating upon the cosmos



The Clockwork

- TAT stories

1. Yes, violin, someday we will create for the world, you and I—
together—some day soon. They will look at us curiously—those people—
yes, *they* will stare and wonder at our remarkable progress. *They* will say
how young and precocious we are—*they* will smile, applaud, and leave
us.—Yes, leave you with me—you fragile piece of wood—you artifact of
man—like me. (Primordial content score, based on ranks: 70.0.)

5. "I don't care if you are Liz Taylor disguised as a violin," said Samual Mousetrdr. "I mean why should I kiss you? I don't imagine it's very satisfying to kiss a hunk of wood. I'd probably get sawdust in my mouth. What do you mean—stick you under my chin and you'll turn into a beautiful woman? I'd rather you'd turn into a side street and escape the police or something. What's that? You want me to run that long thin stick across those strings above the hole? Why should I do that? One of the strings might break and the stick ram inside and if you really are Liz Taylor, nobody, much less me, would want a pregnant violin that thought it was Liz Taylor. (Primordial content score: 147.0.)



The Clockwork

- And beyond ...

Jean Baptiste Greuze *The Village Bride* 1761



photographic and realistic

Gustave Moreau *Oedipus and the Sphinx* 1864



photographic but not realistic

Yves Tanguy *Mama, Papa Is Wounded!* 1927



even less realistic

Jackson Pollock *Autumn Rhythm* 1950



neither photographic nor realistic

Taking the Measure of the Visual Arts and Music

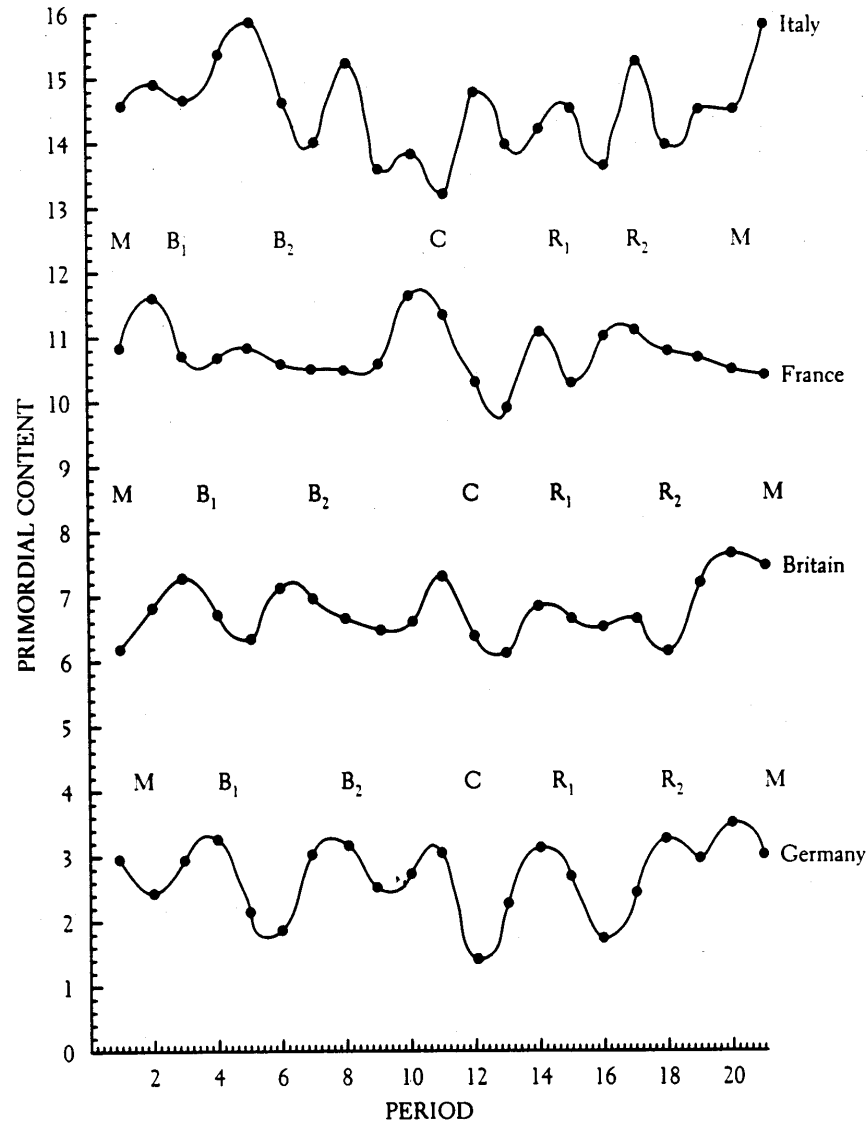


Figure 6.28 The average primordial content in 252 European musical compositions by composers born in consecutive twenty-year periods from 1490 through 1909. In most cases, primordial content declines with the introduction of new styles: M (mannerist), B₁ (early baroque), B₂ (late baroque), C (classical), R₁ (early romantic), R₂ (late romantic), and M (modern).

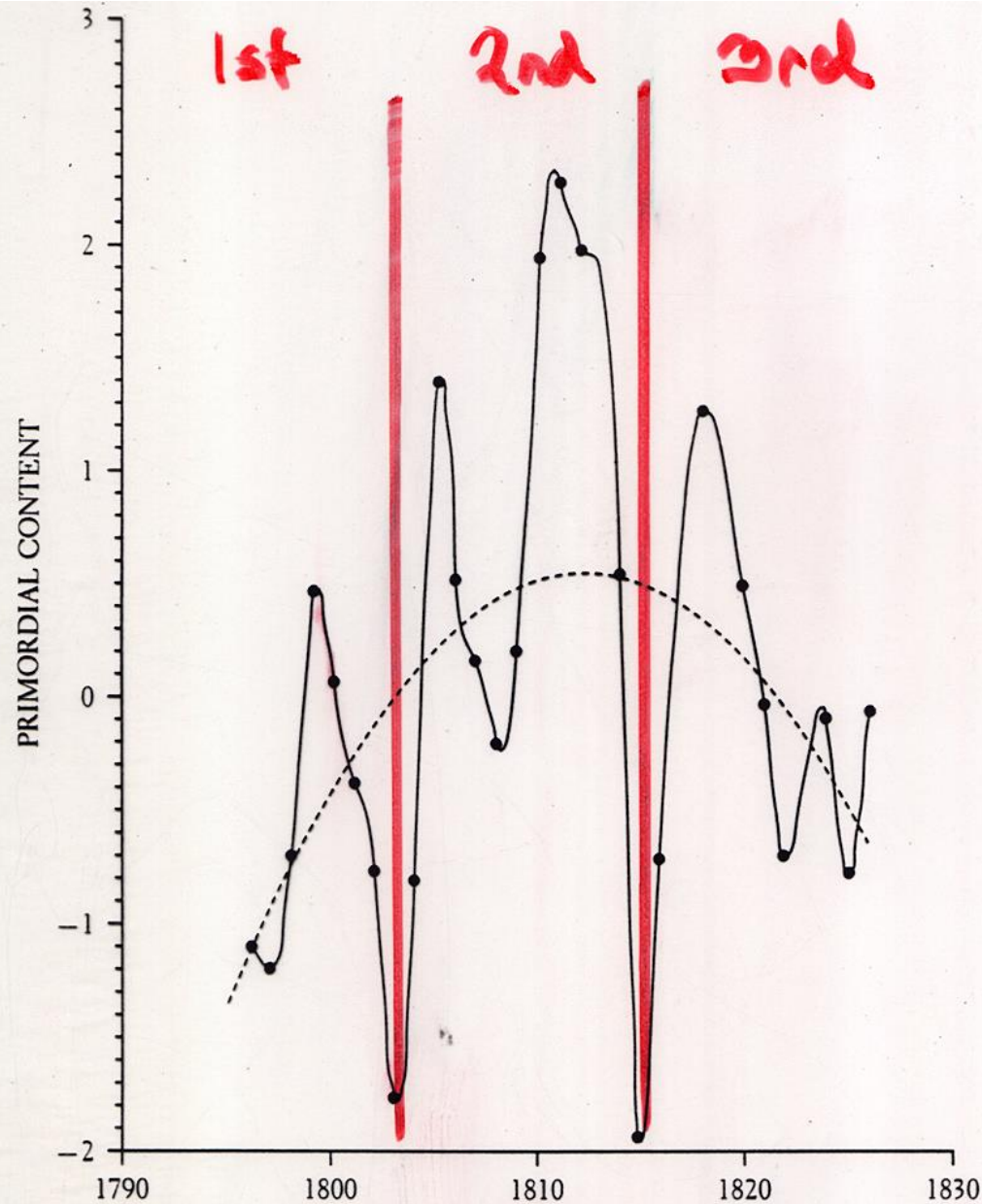


Figure 9.1 Average amount of primordial content in Ludwig van Beethoven's compositions for each year from 1795 through 1826 (two-year moving averages). The main historical trend is shown by the dashed line. Oscillations around this trend are also statistically significant (see text).

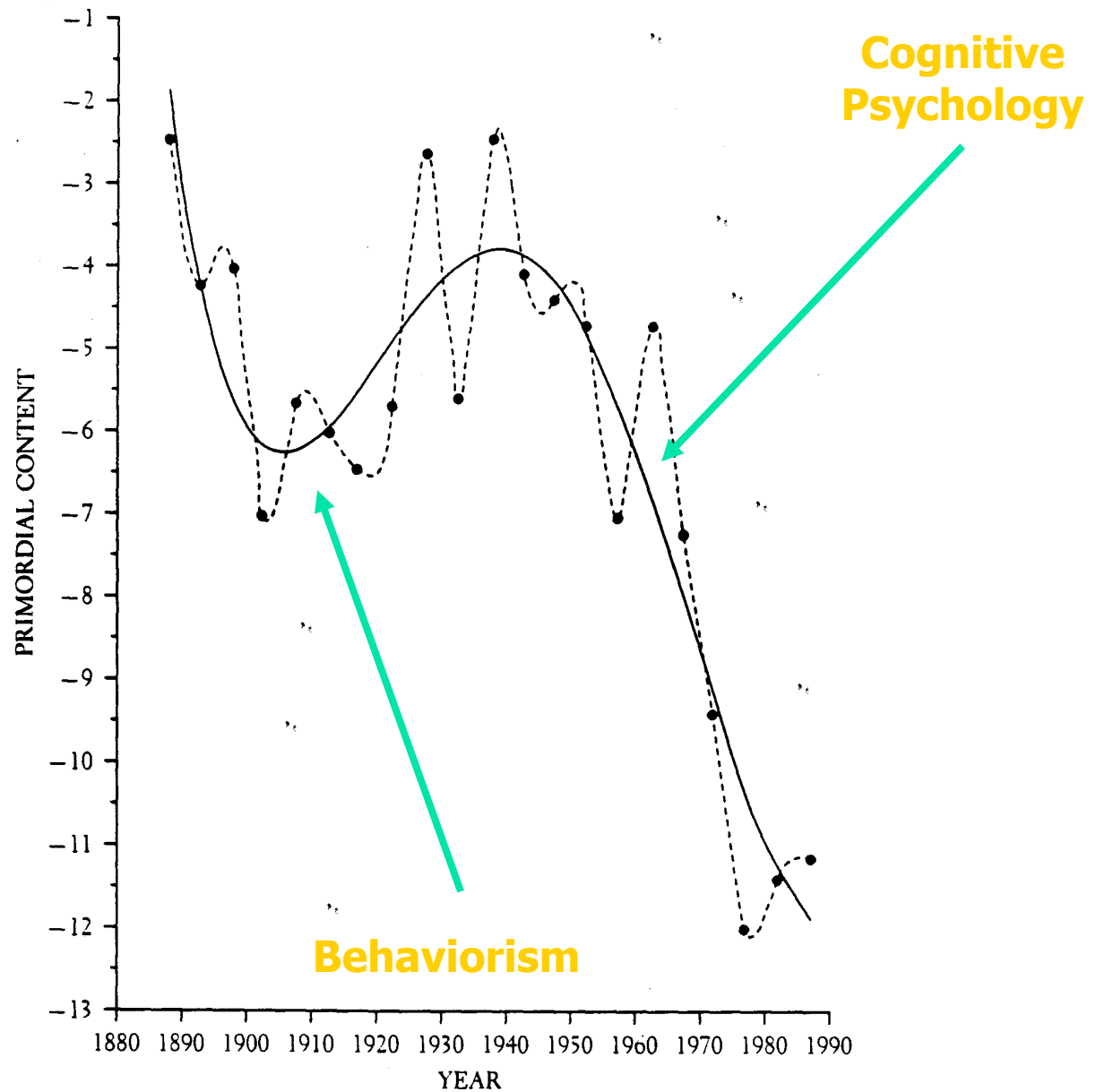


Figure 10.4 Average amount of primordial content in articles in the *American Journal of Psychology* for every fifth year from 1887 through 1987. Primordial content increased during the behaviorist paradigm shift and declined once the paradigm was established.

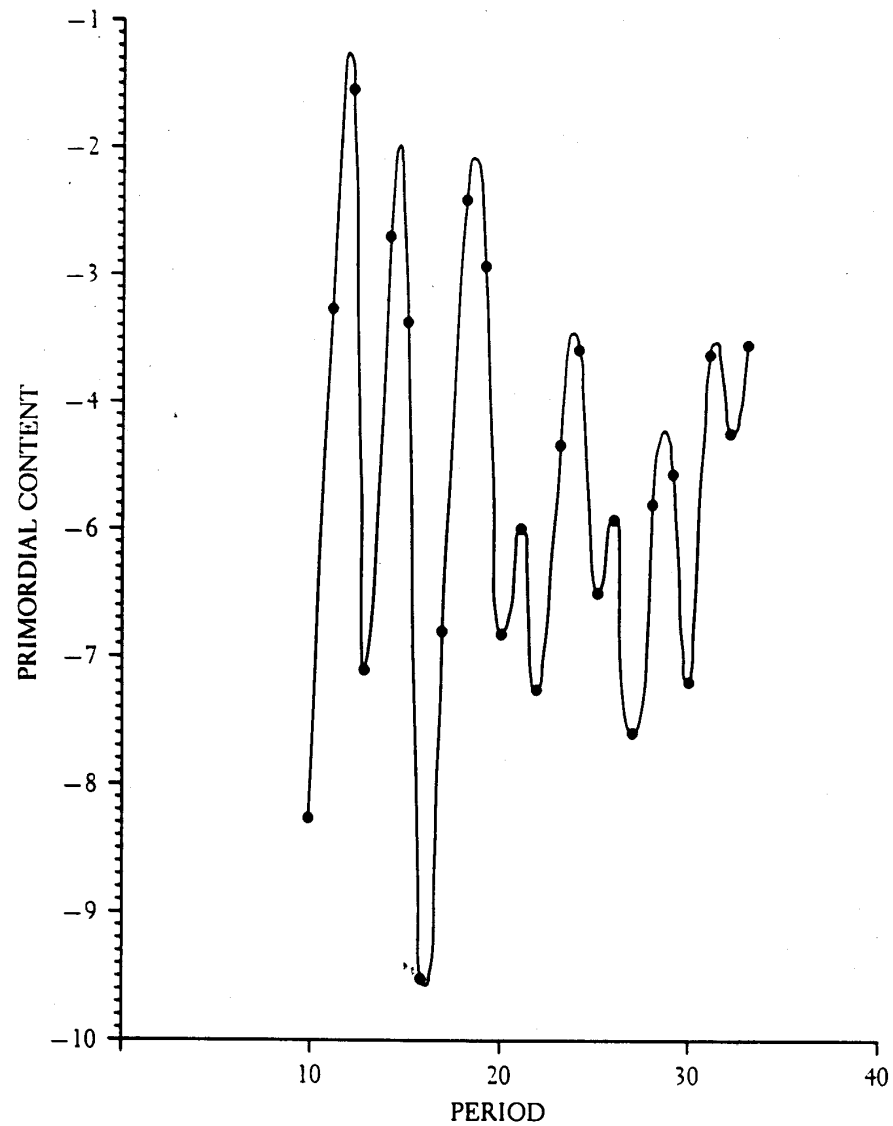


Figure 4.4 Average amount of primordial content in the British Acts of Parliament at twenty-year intervals from 1510 through 1970. The amount of primordial content is much lower than in poetry. Although there are cycles in primordial content in the Acts of Parliament, they are uncorrelated to those found in poetry.



But ...

- What about?

