

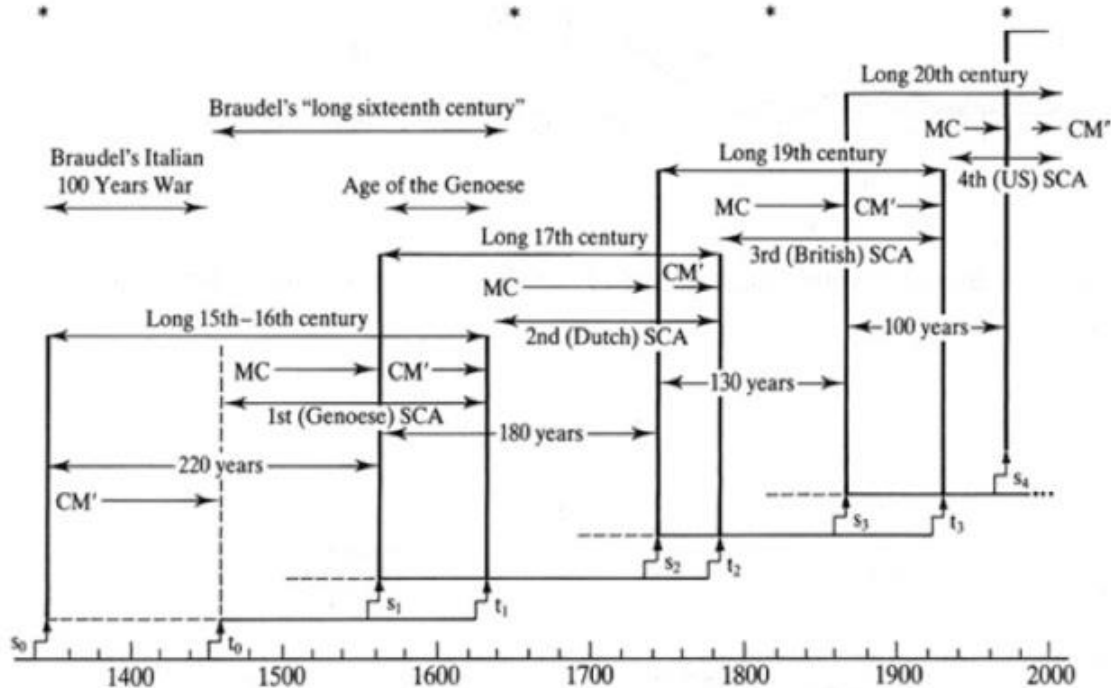
Why is Arrighi writing this book? What is the immediate event that Arrighi argues can be better understood by taking a longer-term approach and why? And what is the question he's trying to answer about this event (see esp. p1-3)

1. "Over the last quarter of a century something fundamental seems to have changed in the way in which capitalism works. In the 1970s, many spoke of crisis. In the 1980s, most spoke of restructuring and reorganization. In the 1990s, we are no longer sure that the crisis of the 1970s was ever really resolved and the view has begun to spread that capitalist history might be at a decisive turning point.

Our thesis is that capitalist history is indeed in the midst of a decisive turning point, but that the situation is not as unprecedented as it may appear at first sight. Long periods of crisis, restructuring and reorganization, in short, of discontinuous change, have been far more typical of the history of the capitalist world-economy than those brief moments of generalized expansion along a definite developmental path like the one that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. In the past, these long periods of discontinuous change ended in a reconstitution of the capitalist world-economy on new and enlarged foundations. Our investigation is aimed primarily at identifying the systemic conditions under which a new reconstitution of this kind may occur and, if it does occur, what it may look like" (1)

2. "Marx's general formula of capital (MCM') can therefore be interpreted as depicting not just the logic of individual capitalist investments, but also a recurrent pattern of historical capital as world system. The central aspect of this pattern is the alternation of epochs of material expansion (MC phases of material accumulation) with phases of financial rebirth and expansion (CM' phases). In phases of material expansion money capital "sets in motion" an increasing mass of commodities (including commoditized labor-power and gifts of nature); and in phases of financial expansion an increasing mass of money capital "sets itself free" from its commodity form, and accumulation proceeds through financial deals (as in Marx's abridged formula MM'). Together, the two epochs or phases constitute a full *systemic cycle of accumulation* (MCM')"
3. "Our investigation is essentially a comparative analysis of successive systemic cycles of accumulation in an attempt to identify (1) patterns of recurrence and evolution, which are reproduced in the current phase of financial expansion and of systemic restructuring; and (2) the anomalies of this current phase of financial expansion, which may lead to a break with past patterns of recurrence and evolution. Four systemic cycles of accumulation will be identified, each characterized by a fundamental unity of the primary agency and structure of world-scale processes of capital accumulation: a Genoese cycle, from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries; a Dutch cycle, from the late sixteenth century through most of the eighteenth century; a British cycle, from the latter half of the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century; and a US cycle, which began in the late nineteenth century and has continued into the current phase of financial expansion. As this approximate and preliminary periodization implies, consecutive systemic cycles of accumulation overlap, and although they become progressively shorter in duration, they all last longer than a century: hence the notion of the "long century," which will be taken as the basic temporal unit in the analysis of world-scale processes of capital accumulation" (6)

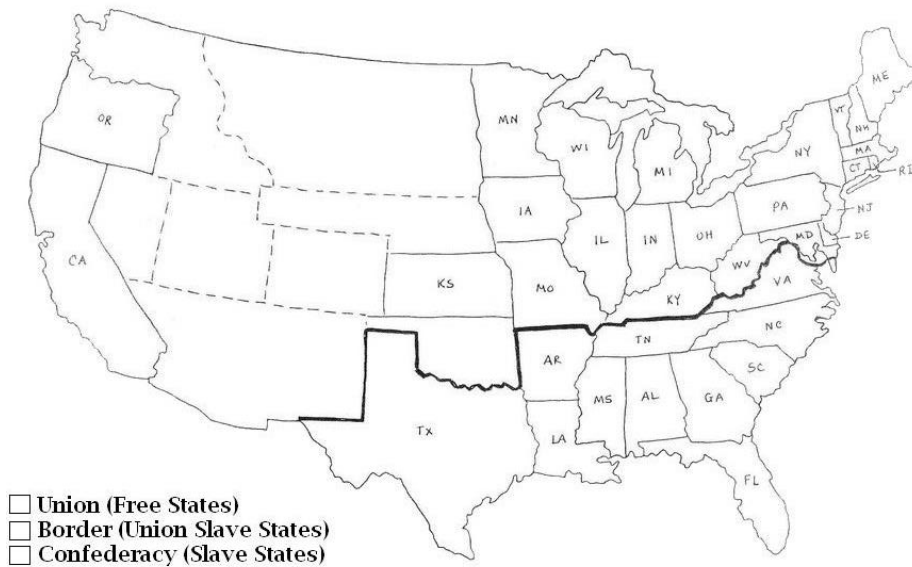
4. “Systemic Cycles of accumulation are meant to throw some light on this shadowy zone without which ‘capitalism is unthinkable.’ They are not meant to tell us what goes on in the lower layers, except for what is directly relevant to the dynamic of the systemic cycles themselves. This, of course, leaves much out of sight or in the dark, including the privileged arenas of world systems studies: core-periphery and labor-capital relations” (25)



In groups

1. How does Arrighi describe the history and expansion of the capitalist world-economy?
2. What is the comparison Arrighi draws between Marx's general formula of capitalism (MCM') and these systemic cycles of accumulation? Also, what is capitalist accumulation according to Marx and how is it different from simply commodity exchange?
3. What is a “systemic cycle of accumulation”? How many have there been thus far? What are the phases that occur within a given systemic cycle of accumulation?
4. In chapter 2, Arrighi argues that each “systemic cycle of accumulation” is underpinned by a “hegemonic” power or state (e.g. “the Genoese age” or “the American century”)? What is the importance of the term “hegemony” and why this term instead of a term like “dominance”?
5. What are the limits of Arrighi's schema? (see quote 5) And why might literary or cultural studies be useful here?

THE UNITED STATES - SECESSION OF THE STATES FROM THE UNION



1. “The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock -- to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.”
(Flannery O’Connor *Mystery and Manners*)
2. “In my time,’ said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, ‘children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else people did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!’ she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. ‘Wouldn’t that make a picture now?’ she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved [...] ‘They passed a large cotton field with five or six graves fenced in the middle of it, like a small island. ‘Look at the graveyard!’ the grandmother said, pointing it out. ‘That was the old family burying ground. That belonged to the plantation.’”
(“A Good Man” 119-120)
3. “They stopped at The Tower for barbecued sandwiches. The Tower was a part stucco and part wood filling station and dance hall set in a clearing outside of Timothy. A fat man named Red Sammy Butts ran it and there were signs stuck here and there on the building and for miles up and down the highway saying, TRY RED SAMMY’S FAMOUS BARECUE. NONE LIKE FAMOUS RED SAMMY’S! RED SAM! THE FAT BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH! A VETERAN! RED SAMMY’S YOUR MAN”
(“A Good Man” 121)

4. “She saw the man’s face twisted close to her own as if she were going to cry and murmured, ‘Why you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children!’ She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and she hit him three times in the chest” (“A Good Man”132)

Questions:

What are the characters’ different motivations and desires for the road trips? What do the characters hope to achieve through this road trip?

Where we see the old south of plantation, slavery, etc. and where we see the “new south” and how does the road link them?

What action or event leads them to the Misfit and why is this important?