

“Make way for magic!”
Continuities and changes in the portrayal of the *Refus Global* manifesto

Marie Bernard-Brind’Amour

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By: Marie Bernard-Brind'Amour

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair

Dr. Yasmin Jiwani

_____ External Examiner

Dr. Johanne Sloan

_____ Examiner

Dr. Yasmin Jiwani

_____ Thesis Supervisor

Dr. Monika K. Gagnon

Approved by

_____ Dr. Owen Chapman, Graduate Program Director

_____, 2022

_____ Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of Faculty

Abstract

“*Make way for magic!*”:
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Marie Bernard-Brind’Amour

In 1948, the Automatist artist group published the *Refus Global* manifesto, demanding liberation from Québec’s post-war conservatism. This thesis employs a critical cultural studies approach to trace the continuities and changes from 1948 to 1970 in the *Refus Global*’s portrayal as a site of affirmation and contestation of power by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice. The *Refus Global* is cast in an alternative media framework, and discourse analysis of archival research with frame analysis depicts its initial institutional repression. Next, this thesis contrasts these institutions’ adoption of the *Refus Global* in the wake of the Quiet Revolution with alternative media’s continued use of the manifesto as a tactic of resistance. An interview with journalist Françoise de Repentigny recounts her ties to the Automatist group and her firsthand experience of the era as a woman. This thesis concludes that the *Refus Global*’s portrayal as both a site of affirmation and contestation of power has ensured its longevity and legendary status in Québec today.

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Introduction

The Québec Automatist artists' group developed in the early 1940s through academic, familial, and romantic connections. In 1941, Paul-Émile Borduas, a renowned painter who taught at l'École du Meuble, began to assemble a group of young artists who sought to challenge traditional art. Students from Borduas' classes at l'École du Meuble, as well as from l'École des beaux-arts de Montréal and Collège Sainte-Marie (*Naissance du Mouvement Automatiste*), gravitated towards each other in mutual dissatisfaction with academism and a desire to challenge the dominating arts scene in Québec (Latour, 1989, p. 6). Borduas' Montreal studio and his home in Saint-Hilaire, east of Montréal, became the sites of weekly meetings where Automatist members could discuss radical social and artistic ideals in total freedom and share their art, according to art historian and Borduas biographer François-Marc Gagnon (2014, p. 7). Occasionally, the meetings would be hosted at other members' studios. During informal meetings, they exchanged on a wide range of subjects, including politics, religion, literature, and psychology. They experimented with spontaneous writing and painting, created gestural art and invented language. Over time, the Automatists developed the belief that Man should "free himself from any preconceived ideas about what he should create" and "throw himself into the void" (Gagnon, n.d., para. 1). The participants' diverse fields of study and interest allowed the group to broaden their philosophy beyond the art world: they wanted to apply these notions to all areas of life.

Not all members of the Automatist group regularly attended the meetings; however, sixteen participants made up the core of the group. These Automatists were mostly painters, including the group's founder, Paul-Émile Borduas, Marcel Barbeau (also a sculptor), Fernand Leduc (also an author and theorist), Pierre Gauvreau (also a TV writer), Marcelle Ferron (later a glass artist), Jean-Paul Mousseau, and Jean-Paul Riopelle (also an engraver and sculptor). Several poets participated: Claude Gauvreau (poet-playwright) and Thérèse Renaud-Leduc, as well as two dancer-choreographers, Françoise Sullivan (also a painter and sculptor) and Françoise Riopelle. Madeleine Arbour, a designer; Bruno Cormier, a psychiatrist; Muriel Guilbault, an actress; Louise Renaud, a lighting designer; and finally, the photographer Maurice Perron, regularly contributed their perspectives to the Automatist meetings. The ties within the group were intimate. Some were friends in their youth, like Perron and Riopelle, who had met in school before attending l'École du Meuble ("Perron, Maurice," n.d.). Some were siblings: the Gauvreau brothers and Renaud sisters. The Leducs and Riopelles were married, and Claude Gauvreau loved Muriel Guilbeault and considered her his muse (Bertin, 2009, para. 3). This close web of connections promoted open and fearless conversation that grew into a collective group philosophy: the total refusal to stand by Québec's stagnating conservative society.

Despite Borduas' recognition in the art world, no commercial gallery agreed to show the Automatists' work as a whole (Gagnon, 2014, p. 7). After several small exhibitions in makeshift locales, the young artists sought a more prominent platform to spread their "artistic solution to the socio-historical situation of French Canadians" and decided to create a catalog to accompany their next exhibition, a text that would convey these new beliefs more clearly than an exhibition pamphlet could (Gaudreault, 2003, para. 3). Riopelle had another plan. He had just returned from Paris, where he had signed the Surrealist manifesto, *Rupture Inaugurale*, and was inspired to create an Automatist manifesto in which the group could clearly share their avant-garde ideas outside a traditional gallery setting. He suggested launching this manifesto on its own, where it would be the main event (Gagnon, 2014, p. 7). Borduas agreed and got to work on expressing the

group's ideas, collaborating with other Automatists to compose several versions of the manifesto between 1947 and 1948 ("Lancement du manifeste Refus Global," 2013, para. 3).

The Refus Global Manifesto

On August 9, 1948, the Automatists launched 400 copies of the *Refus Global* at the Librairie Tranquille in Montréal, a small bookstore whose owner fervently defended freedom of expression from Church censorship ("Lancement du manifeste Refus Global," 2013). The name *Refus Global*, or "Total Refusal" expressed the Automatists' demand for total emancipation from Québec society, including from art institutions, tradition, censorship, politics, and religion—and their complete "refusal" to stand by any longer ("Automatistes," n.d.). Only the sixteen core members of the Automatist group signed the manifesto, as many casual members of the Automatists refused to sign due to the group's anti-Communist or anti-clerical beliefs. Riopelle stated in an interview that many intellectuals refused to sign at the last moment because they were either too Catholic or too Communist (Gauvin, 1995, p. 16).

Visually, the *Refus Global* was odd. Its unusual form shocked readers and critics, leaving them unsure of how to interpret its goal. Some wondered if the *Refus Global* was a practical joke, contrasting such an incendiary message with its surprisingly unprofessional-looking medium. Composed of a set of texts in separate notebooks that were gathered in an unbound cardboard cover, the "book" could have been mistaken for a simple visual arts project. Indeed, Pierre Gauvreau typed the manifesto himself and then mimeographed 400 copies on his mother's Gestetner duplicator on hand-folded sheets of white, yellow, and green paper (see Figure 1). To put the manifesto together, the signatories collectively participated in folding the documents, finishing up their projects by wrapping them in a piece of white paper on which they had printed the word "manifesto." The *Refus Global* could not quite be classified as a book—its design was closer to a folder with uneven flaps. Its cover, created by Riopelle and Gauvreau, mixed abstract watercolour and Claude Gauvreau's poetic take on the title (Raie, Fugue, Lobe, Ale) (see Figure 2). The title "Refus Global" was hand-drawn instead of printed. Before reading the manifesto, the reader had to break the "manifesto" ribbon that bound the folder and pull apart the two sides of the cardboard casing (Gaudreault, 2003, para. 6) (see Figure 3). The artists' contributions, as well as the photos and lithographs, were loosely placed and could be read in any order. In itself, this materiality and interactivity brought the reader into an unusual experience.

Thematically, the manifesto was even more unconventional and difficult to classify into one domain. Its sixteen signatories joined forces to fiercely confront the hegemony of the "Great Darkness" while contributing from their respective fields. The manifesto's quote, "we will joyfully pursue our savage need for liberation" (Allard, 1999, p. 45), encapsulated the collective driving force behind these multidisciplinary inputs: freedom from the suffocation of the "Great Darkness." The *Refus Global* was fiercely anticlerical, boldly confronting the province's ubiquitous religious powers. However, the *Refus Global* represented a break in all of Québec's ideology, not just with the Church; it attacked all of the primary points of reference for Québécois. Through art theory and inflammatory language, this group of artists criticized and "completely refused" every aspect of Québec society, all institutional powers that held them back as artists, human beings, and dreamers.

Inside its eye-catching exterior, the *Refus Global* began with Borduas' "Refus Global," the main text of the *Refus Global*, which the 15 other members of the Automatist group co-

S O M M A I R E

1.	Paul-Émile BORDUAS.....	REFUS GLOBAL
2.	COMMENTAIRES SUR DES MOTS COURANTS
3.	Claude GAUVREAU.....	AU COEUR DES QUENOUILLES
4.	Claude GAUVREAU.....	BIEN-ÊTRE
5.	Claude GAUVREAU.....	L'OMBRE SUR LE CERCEAU
6.	Bruno CORMIER.....	L'OEUVRE PICTURALE EST UNE EXPERIENCE
7.	Françoise SULLIVAN.....	LA DANSE ET L'ESPOIR
8.	Fernand LEDUC.....	QU'ON LE VEUILLE OU NON

Couverture de Jean-Paul RIOPELLE, texte de Claude GAUVREAU.

Figure 1: The inside pages of the Refus Global, hand-typed by Pierre Gauvreau (York U, 2012).

signed. He deplored the lifeless conditions of French Canadians under the oppressive influence of the Church and advocated for a total break from the past. Borduas called for a new humanity based on imagination and magic—the freedom of Automatism (Borduas et al., 1948). Next, “En regard du surréalisme actuel,” also by Borduas, indicated the Automatists’ artistic positioning, distinct from the Surrealist movement but acknowledging the influential surrealist Breton. “Commentaires sur des mots courants” followed, an unsigned lexicon of Automatist vocabulary which the artists likely discussed as a group. Claude Gauvreau’s Automatist theatrical pieces “Au cœur des quenouilles”, “Bien-être”, and “L’ombre sur le cerceau” then put the group’s ideas into play, using invented and spontaneous language. After Gauvreau’s plays came Cormier’s “L’œuvre picturale est une expérience”, a pedagogical essay on the work of a painter through a psychoanalytic lens. Françoise Sullivan’s “La danse et l’espoir” followed suit, lauding the liberatory potential of dance as spontaneous expressions of emotions. Leduc’s “Qu’on le veuille ou non” tied up the entire manifesto, mixing stylized hand-written words with typed sections in the form of a leaflet that summarized the main points of Borduas’ “Refus Global.” This leaflet form allowed it to be taken out and displayed or distributed (Gaudreault, 2003, para. 4). In addition to the text, the manifesto featured illustrations and photos of work by Marcel Barbeau, Paul-Émile Borduas, Marcelle Ferron, Pierre Gauvreau, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, and Maurice Perron, as well as often-candid photos of the Automatist group by Maurice Perron.

The homemade, self-printed nature of the manifesto, as well as its differing art forms, prevented it from being given literary status at first. Instead, critics often focused on its materiality, dismissing it as a silly art project by a group of students. Some critics remarked that its form seemed ephemeral and not suited to carry any message worth being taken seriously (Lafcadio, 1948, p. 4). Québec studies scholar and *Refus Global* expert Sophie Dubois states that the manifesto was initially “hindered by its own materiality” (Dubois, 2017, p. 96), criticized for the inadequacy of the medium for its message. Since few protest texts had been published in the form of books before the *Refus Global*, critics found it easier to “focus on the container rather than on the content” (Dubois, 2017, p. 96), whose multifaceted nature was difficult to interpret. This allowed some outlets to superficially brush off the manifesto without analyzing its complicated multidisciplinary contents.

A new outlook on the Refus Global

The *Refus Global*’s ambiguity of both form and content has led to countless interpretations and readaptations of the iconic manifesto. It has been amply studied as an avant-garde art movement (Bourassa, 1984; Couture, 1992; Gagnon, 1998; Poulain, 2000; Van Schendel, 1983), an artistic literary document (Cellard, 2016), a political statement (Warren, 2018), and a literary landmark, even an originating myth, associated with the start of Québec’s modernity (Deschamps, 1998; Dubois, 2013; Smart, 1999; Vadeboncoeur, 1963).

This thesis revisits the *Refus Global* within its quickly-evolving postwar sociopolitical context to better analyze its inception and evolution. It employs a critical cultural studies approach, more specifically within an alternative media framework, to explore this manifesto’s tumultuous journey from the ultra-conservative “Great Darkness” to the Quiet Revolution’s emancipatory push. Through this framework, this thesis traces the continuities and changes from 1948 to 1970 in the *Refus Global*’s portrayal as a site of affirmation and contestation of power by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice. This focus helps to understand the well-

known *Refus Global* manifesto through a new lens, complicating the neat narrative known in Québec today. To analyze the *Refus Global*'s portrayal upon its inception, this thesis carries out a mixed-methods approach. A critical discourse analysis of archival research conducted through the BANQ's (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) digital archives as an electronic database, followed by a frame analysis, serve to explore the State's initial reaction. As part of this thesis' critical cultural studies methodology, the manifesto's context and relationship to power is consistently analyzed through secondary historical research. An interview with journalist Françoise de Repentigny, who was a friend of the Automatist group, enriches this thesis with the contribution of her lived history. Her input allows for the exploration of the informal ties formed around the *Refus Global* that have lasted through time, as both she and her husband participated in discussions and analysis surrounding the famous manifesto. She recounts her ties to the Automatist group and her firsthand experience of the era as a woman.

Dubois has remarked that although the majority of French speakers in Québec are aware of the *Refus Global*, their knowledge remains at a surface level, relying on recognition of the manifesto as a symbol of modernity. Much of the research of the *Refus Global* treads this same path, considering its art historical impact and symbolic status, which some scholars claim has led to an oversimplified portrayal of the manifesto (Dubois, 2013, p. 88). This thesis reframes the story of the *Refus Global* within a critical cultural studies approach and alternative media framework, allowing for the evaluation of artists as a disruptive force in society. The manifesto's path is examined through the analysis of its evolving portrayal according to political and social forces, keeping in mind the fluctuating relationship of its portrayal with powerful institutional forces.

Further, research about the *Refus Global* in English is rare. Despite the commemorations of its publication every ten years, as well as frequent references in mainstream and alternative media, the knowledge of the manifesto remains mostly limited to Québec's French-speaking population. The vast majority of the sources referenced in this thesis are in French, and the interview with Françoise de Repentigny was conducted in French as well. These sources were then translated into English for this thesis. Through this research, this thesis aims to bring deeper awareness of an important part of Québec's history to a new audience, while in the process sharing the work and perspectives of other scholars that were previously only published in French.

Chapter Breakdown

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One provides a survey of the literature that contextualizes and analyzes the *Refus Global*'s relationship to power through time in Québec. It briefly discusses the "Great Darkness" historical period in Québec, followed by the Quiet Revolution era of Québec's history and the societal changes that ensued. Next, it grounds the *Refus Global*'s analysis in a critical cultural studies approach and alternative media framework, laying out the major pillars of these approaches. Finally it provides a methodological overview and introduces Françoise de Repentigny in greater depth to prepare for her contribution throughout the thesis.

Chapter Two sets the stage for the *Refus Global*'s reception by setting the stage within the historical context of the "Great Darkness", examining Québec's powerful institutions through a critical cultural studies lens. It then places the *Refus Global* within an alternative media framework. A critical discourse analysis of archival research through BANQ Digital's Québec

Heritage collection follows, accompanied by a frame analysis. Francoise de Repentigny's lived experiences adds a first-person perspective to the story of the manifesto's initial reception.

Chapter Three discusses the changes brought on by Québec's Quiet Revolution, focusing on the societal changes that affected the portrayal of the *Refus Global*. It contrasts Québec institutions' adoption of the manifesto with alternative media's use of the manifesto as a tactic of resistance. Overall, this final chapter traces the continuities and changes of the *Refus Global*'s portrayal as a site of affirmation and contestation of power as it investigates the manifesto's gradual entrenchment into Québec society as a widely-adopted force with multiple identities. Finally, this thesis concludes that the *Refus Global*'s portrayal as both a site of affirmation and contestation of power has ensured its longevity and legendary status in Québec today.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This literature review is structured according to the following research question that guides this thesis: what are the continuities and changes in the portrayal of the *Refus Global* from 1948 to 1970 by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice as a site of contestation and affirmation of power? This question is examined within the field of Communication Studies, placing this analysis of the *Refus Global* manifesto outside of its most common frames of research in art history and literature.

First, this literature review provides a short overview of the social and political context for the analysis of the *Refus Global*'s portrayal, starting with Québec's "Great Darkness" and transitioning into the province's Quiet Revolution starting in 1960. A brief survey of the scholarship that usually surrounds the *Refus Global* follows, including the discussion of its avant-garde role in Québec's art world and as a symbol of Québec's modernity.

Next, this chapter examines the theoretical positioning within which the *Refus Global*'s analysis is situated, including the critical cultural studies approach and alternative media framework. It also presents the methodologies employed in this thesis, including critical discourse analysis, archival research, and frame analysis. Finally, literature on communities of interest, interpretation and practice are explored, and Françoise de Repentigny is introduced as part of the *Refus Global*'s community of practice. Throughout this literature review, the concept of hegemony, or the authority exercised by a dominant class over a subordinate class (Hall, 1979), is used to examine the relations of power within the theoretical and methodological frameworks employed.

Setting the Stage

Published as a cry in the dark desperately calling for modernization and "globally refusing" every aspect of society, the *Refus Global* initially faced the hegemonic alliance of Québec's Church, State, and mainstream media as a repressive force. After this "Great Darkness" period, the Quiet Revolution brought substantial change to the province's institutions. This section lends historical context to the analysis of the *Refus Global*'s connection to power.

In post-war Québec, corruption, overbearing religious powers, and mass censorship ran rampant under its premier, Duplessis, in an era often considered the Great Darkness of Québec (Musée canadien de l'histoire, 2011). During this era, Prime Minister Maurice Duplessis, leader of the profoundly conservative Union Nationale government, created close personal and financial ties with the clergy (Boismenu, 2014; Dumas, 2016), allowing him to surveil the population through the Church's various outposts in education, health care, charity, and culture (Poulain, 2000). The Church's "ideological framework", combined with Duplessis' input, thus reached all corners of Québec society (Poulain, 2000, p. 16). Additionally, Duplessis and the Church maintained a level of consent from the population by framing themselves as protectors of the province against foreign threats to religion, as well as Communist infiltration, taking advantage of the population's postwar worries. Genest (1971), Allen-Mercier (2016), and Bourassa (1984) highlight Duplessis' anti-Communism laws as both a source of comfort for the population and danger for those with avant-garde or controversial ideas, such as artists.

The Church also maintained close ties to the mainstream media in order to spread its ideology: this included the censorship of mainstream media according to religious morals and the proliferation of religious publications (Demers, 2005; Hébert, 2003; Marquis, 2011; Pagé, 2010).

However, the Catholic lens characterized the French-Canadian press far beyond explicitly religious publications, with mainstream publications such as *Le Devoir* committing to the promotion of Catholic morals in their coverage of current events (Maistre, 2005; Pagé, 2010). Additionally, Duplessis utilized personal ties to the leaders of mainstream publications such as *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* to ensure the dissemination of his political discourse (Carignan & Martin, 2017; Charron & Bastien, 2012; Gagnon & Sarra-Bournet, 1997). This network of institutional ties culminated into a strong hegemonic alliance.

However, cracks were slowly appearing in this seemingly impenetrable wall of religious power. Literary historian Jacques Allard states that by the time Maurice Duplessis was re-elected in 1948, conservatism and clericalism were “experiencing considerable social and intellectual turmoil” (Allard, 1999, p. 46), and the overwhelmed Church could no longer adequately provide for the postwar “baby boom” in terms of education and health services (Poulain, 1998). Literary scholar and socio-critic Pierre Popovic stresses that contrary to the common portrayal of the *Refus Global* as a lone light in the Darkness, it is essential to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes resistance that was beginning to arise during this time (Popovic, 1987, p. 29). Taking into account these tensions is crucial to this thesis’ analysis of the *Refus Global*’s reception.

Duplessis’ death in 1959 created a crisis within Québec’s hegemonic alliance as institutional powers began to shift (Lemieux & Harvey, 2006). The Quiet Revolution started with Lesage’s Liberal government in 1960, characterized by a rupture with the past (Carel, 2008) and widespread political and social change (Curien, 2003; Seljak, 1996). Most notably, the State increasingly prioritized culture and the arts (Loszach, 2009; Potvin, 2006), giving new importance to the role of the artist (Warren, 2013). The end of Church-run education (Curien, 2003) and the decline of religious media (Laperrière, 2007; Warren, 2013) drastically changed the dominant discourse in the province. Finally, the new political technocracy transformed the way the State portrayed itself to Québec’s population (Létourneau, 1992).

Keeping in mind Québec’s trajectory through the rapid and fundamental historical changes between the Great Darkness and the Quiet Revolution, as well as the importance of societal rupture, is essential in the study of the manifesto’s oscillating relationship to power.

How is the Refus Global usually studied?

The *Refus Global* is often studied in relation to the repressive historical context of its publication through an art historical lens. In particular, it is studied as a milestone in Québec’s heavily-censored art world. Literary scholar Karine Cellard examines Québec art essays in the 1930s and early 1940s as precursors to the *Refus Global*. She points out that challenges to traditional art only became more accepted in the early 1940s in Montréal after the city’s art scene had already bypassed several avant-garde movements like surrealism and abstraction (Cellard, 2016, p. 84). Art historian François-Marc Gagnon similarly states that the Automatist movement and the *Refus Global* represented a total break with past protest art. He analyses the art and writing style found in the *Refus Global* as “essentially not preconceived and therefore corresponding each time to an incursion into the unknown, full of risk and to the pursuit of the marvelous” (Gagnon, 1998, p. 40). With regards to this “incursion into the unknown”, the *Refus Global* is often studied in relation to the French Surrealists. Their common resistance to the traditional art world is often underlined (Poulain, 2000; Bourassa, 1984), as well as the disagreements between the two groups (Van Schendel, 1983).

However, despite the growing acceptance of avant-garde movements in Montréal and the creativity of Automatism, the Automatist group created much bigger waves than these

movements by blurring the boundaries between art and politics (Warren, 2018, p. 261). They dared to get involved in politics and religion, “arrogating themselves a right of inspection that was not theirs” and trying to subject Québec to their radical aesthetic beliefs (Warren, 2018, p. 261) instead of staying within their realm. According to Québec sociologist Jean-Philippe Warren, overstepping their prescribed roles as artists was the main reason for the scandal caused by the *Refus Global*. He suggests that this decision— not the art itself— made the *Refus Global* truly avant-garde. Although this thesis does not examine the *Refus Global* through an art historical lens, examining the role of the artist in Québec is useful to examine the continuities and changes in the *Refus Global*’s portrayal.

The *Refus Global* is also frequently studied as a literary landmark associated with the start of Québec’s modernity. Dubois (2013, p. 84) notes that the *Refus Global* manifesto’s integration into both literature and history textbooks makes it one of the “originating myths” of cultural modernity in Québec”, and studies its reception and anniversaries as it integrated Québec society (Dubois, 2016; Dubois, 2017). Author Brigitte Deschamps (1998) states that the *Refus Global* has been designated as a symbol linked to the establishment of modernity in Québec, while cultural historian Patricia Smart similarly states that the *Refus Global* is a founding text of modern Québec and a significant landmark in Québec’s imaginary (1999). Finally, essayist Pierre Vadeboncoeur attributes this modernity specifically to Borduas, as he “was the first to radically break [...], he broke [Québec’s] organized paralysis, he annihilated it all at once, by his global refusal” (Vadeboncoeur qtd. in Dubois, 2013, p. 86). This thesis diversifies this simplified portrayal of the manifesto.

Applying a critical cultural studies approach

Understanding the Refus Global’s role as an avant-garde art movement and as a literary symbol is crucial to a complete portrayal of the manifesto. However, this thesis’ exploration of this cultural phenomenon foregoes these well-trodden research paths and situate it within a different analytic framework. It adopts a critical cultural studies approach to trace the continuities and changes in the Refus Global’s portrayal over time as a site of contestation and affirmation of power through a Gramscian hegemonic lens. To apply a critical cultural studies approach, the *Refus Global* must be placed within a hegemonic context, while also acknowledging the constant renegotiation of this hegemony within society.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains the Gramscian notion of hegemony as “total social authority” (Hall, 1979, p. 338) exerted by a dominant class over subordinate classes and the entire social formation. He describes hegemony not as a single ruling class, but as an alliance of dominant classes, “accomplished through the agencies of the superstructures” like the education system, the Church, and the media (Hall, 1979, p. 333). This alliance of dominant classes, or “hegemonic bloc”, maintains this social authority by “selectively integrating the interests of different social forces and class fractions” (Colpani, 2022, p. 225). According to Edward Saïd, the power of the hegemonic bloc which is exerted across multiple avenues of civil society, including schools and families, leads to the exertion of power not through domination but through consent (Saïd, 1978, p. 6). Hall agrees with Saïd’s insistence on the acceptance of hegemonic powers: he states that hegemony “depends on a combination of forces and consent” (Hall, 1979, p. 332), pointing out that Gramsci enlarges the notion of domination by “giving full weight to its non-coercive aspects” (Hall, 1979, p. 334). The Gramscian notion of hegemony is thus characterized by a constant renegotiation of power.

Sociologist Brennon Wood explains that “the mobilization of consent is a matter of discourse” (Wood, 1998, p. 401). According to Hall, discourse produces knowledge through language as a part of a coherent body of speech (Hall, 1992, p. 201), constructing topics in ways that are beneficial to hegemony (Hall, 1979, p. 332). Saïd states that Gramsci’s sense of political society reaches into all aspects of society and “saturates” them with meaning and significance (Saïd, 1978, p. 11). As it is so prevalent in all aspects of social life, discourse simply becomes “lived reality” for subordinate classes, which they end up accepting without much questioning (Hall, 1979, p. 332). As part of the hegemonic bloc, the mainstream media plays an important role in disseminating the hegemonic discourse, therefore reproducing its structure of domination (Hall, 1979, p. 346). It aligns with hegemonic messages and tells the population how to perceive everyday life, which in turn garners consent. This overview of the close relationships between hegemony, consent, discourse, and the mainstream media is essential to examining the *Refus Global*’s fluctuating relation to hegemony through Québec’s changing historical eras as it was portrayed by various groups with differing access to the dominant discourse.

Despite the tight-knit relationships between alliances of power, Gramsci’s notion of hegemony leaves room for resistance. Communications scholar John Downing states that hegemonic power is constantly “under negotiation between superior and subordinate social classes” and that it “may experience serious intermittent crises” (Downing, 2001, p. 16). Hall, in turn, brings up Gramsci’s recognition that “every crisis is also a moment of reconstruction”, going further to say that no structure of power is demolished without “attempting to put something new in its place” (Hall, 1988, p. 164). This hegemonic framing of crisis is a useful lens through which to understand the dramatic shift from Québec’s “Great Darkness” to its Quiet Revolution while concurrently tracing the flow of power in Québec society.

The alternative media framework: A new lens

As a crucial component of the critical cultural studies approach, this thesis studies the *Refus Global* through an alternative media framework. It casts the *Refus Global* as an alternative publication that was created as a site of contestation against hegemony beyond the art world, investigating the tactics it used to infiltrate the cracks in the hegemonic structure.

Communication scholars Olga Bailey, Bart Cammaerts, and Nico Carpentier (2007) assert that alternative media are “inseparable from ideology, domination and the Gramscian notion of hegemony” (p. 15), further explaining that they carry out a counter-hegemonic critique to the mainstream. Downing (2001) similarly points out the alternative media task of “expressing an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives” (p. v). Media scholar Marisol Sandoval and sociologist Christian Fuchs (2010) propose critical content as a minimum requirement in the definition of alternative media, used to point out the “dominative, and non-participatory character of contemporary society” (p. 146) with the goal of contributing to “emancipatory societal transformation (p. 148). Downing (2001) likewise asserts that transformation is the goal of radical alternative media: to question the hegemonic process, help the public engineer change, and disrupt the silence (p. 15). As part of their counter-hegemonic struggle, alternative media challenge the “unquestioning view of the world” (Downing, 2001, p. 14) that the mainstream media discourse produces through its close ties to the ruling class and its portrayal of an inevitable status quo. Downing (2001) points to the self-censorship of mainstream media professionals or “other organic intellectuals in positions of authority” (p. 15) as they unquestioningly accept standard media codes and replicate hegemony in their portrayal of everyday scenarios. Bailey et al. agree, stating that the mainstream media grants legitimacy to

dominant social values through the constant repetition of “the ideas of the main social actors” until it becomes common sense (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 16).

Alternative media utilize a range of tactics when going against the discursive strategies of the mainstream media, which are by extension postulations of hegemonic power. Sociologist Michel de Certeau describes tactics as weapons of the weak that “remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances” within the terrain of powerful institutions (de Certeau, 1984, p. 29). In the terrain of the other, a tactic uses all possible methods at its disposal to infiltrate the cracks within the dominant power (p. 35), whereas strategies produce and impose the spaces that tactics can only attempt to subvert (de Certeau, 1984, p. 30). Tactics must carry out a sustained attack to counter the hegemonic stance of strategy, taking advantage of opportunities when they arise but never keeping the winnings (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

To resist the hegemonic framework, alternative media make use of a range of tactics to “make do” (de Certeau, 1984), including unconventional organization, atypical materiality, and creative methods of circulation. According to media and culture scholar Scott Uzelman, alternative media use “community rather than state or corporate control; direct participation in media production as opposed to professionalized content creation; and [...] horizontal communication rather than hierarchical, point-to-mass communication” to counter the format of mass media (Uzelman, 2011, p. 28). Downing describes the organization of radical media as markedly more democratic than the mass media (Downing, 2001, p. xi). Another tactic to stand out from the mainstream is the use of unusual formatting, which may be both the result of limited resources and the desire to visually stray from the mainstream, possibly even shocking its audience. Media and culture scholar Stephen Duncombe (2017) states that the DIY (do-it-yourself) ethic combines these factors, adopting a distinct aesthetic and refusing to consume anything mainstream (p. 7). Like the organization and format, the distribution of alternative media tends to be creative and differ from the structure imposed by the mainstream media. For example, Duncombe (2017) describes a barter system of zines, either person-to-person or by mail, refusing to use capitalist avenues of distribution (p. 15). Alternative media may also entail taking on all the roles of producing, publishing and distribution (Duncombe, 2017, p. 10). Downing notes that radical media is often small-scale and underfunded (Downing, 2001, p. xi), which further leads to self-publishing and individuals’ enactment of a variety of internal roles. Art educator and writer Courtney Weida (2013) points out that historically, manifestos as a form of alternative media have often ascribed to these traits, working democratically and self-publishing their work (p. 68) while frequently using the striking format of a zine (Weida, 2013, p. 77). For example, Dadaist manifestos were early adopters of the zine configuration (Weida, 2013, p. 68).

As a whole, the tactics of atypical organization systems, materiality, production and distribution act as emancipatory factors and allow alternative media to make their mark while operating outside the hegemonic structure. These factors accompany the analysis of the *Refus Global* manifesto as a form of alternative media within its historical context, as well as the analysis of its adoption and portrayal by other alternative media through the years.

Critical Discourse Analysis and archival research within a critical cultural studies framework

In line with the critical cultural studies approach, critical discourse analysis and archival research, two methodologies that this thesis employs, must be addressed in relation to hegemonic structures. First, this project carries out a critical discourse analysis as formulated by linguistics scholar Teun A. van Dijk, which is “crucially interested in the social conditions of discourse, and

specifically in questions of power and power abuse” (2011, p. vii). Additionally, critical discourse analysis emphasizes the political nature of discourse, which gives particular kinds of knowledge more legitimacy and dominance over others (Jiwani, 2016). This methodological lens helps to analyze the portrayals of the Refus Global by communities of interest and interpretation in relation to the hegemonic historical context of 1940s Québec.

This critical discourse analysis is conducted through archival research to examine the Refus Global’s initial reception through Québec’s mainstream and religious media. Employing the BAnQ (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) digital archives as an electronic information database, the following chapter examines these hegemonic strategies of repression. Launched in 2015 within Quebec’s Digital Cultural Plan, BAnQ Numérique includes digital resources, Québec heritage documents, and eBooks to facilitate online archive research. As a whole, it is the digital arm of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. The BAnQ’s funding comes 81% from the Quebec government, 14% from the City of Montreal, and 5% from the federal government and its own revenue, such as room rentals, paid use of its parking lots, and income from its gift shop (Desrosiers & Lalonde, 2021). It is essential to keep this government influence in mind when analyzing the historical portrayal of an event, paying attention to the influence of power. A government-funded archive such as the BAnQ can portray only what has historically been considered worthy of archiving, as reflected by Hall and Foucault. Hall emphasizes hegemonic influence in archives, stating that the language of discourse is closely tied to power in qualifying what is true or false. Philosopher Michel Foucault similarly asserts that “power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another” (Foucault, 1980, p. 27). Those in power who create archives (for example, ‘heritage’ archives like the BAnQ) have historically enjoyed the possibility of creating narratives that further the preservation of power. History as examined through discourse analysis therefore can never be complete due to the hegemonic forces that influence available texts.

Understanding reception through frame analysis

Next, this thesis employs frame analysis to understand the results of the critical discourse analysis and categorize the strategies of repression employed by Québec’s mass media. According to Communication scholar Jörg Matthes (2009), frame analysis is a methodology that examines the portrayal of a certain issue by “exploring images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages” (p. 349). Political communication and mass communication scholars Japerson et al. tie media framing to agenda-setting, stating that the “presentation of issues in the media plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of the public” (p. 205). The amount and type of attention given to a certain topic by the mainstream media will in turn determine the importance given to it by the public. In setting the agenda, mainstream media “serve as the primary mechanism by which elite opinion is communicated to the public” (p. 205). In addition to agenda-setting, however, frame analysis also examines the nuances in how media depicts a topic to affect public opinion, not just the amount of attention it gives the topic. Journalists therefore shape reality and meaning through their coverage. Within the critical cultural studies framework, this reality-making by the mainstream media ties back to Gramsci’s description of the mainstream media as a purveyor of hegemonic discourse.

In particular, this thesis focuses on feminist scholar Deborah Rhode’s five identified frames of coverage used by the mainstream media to portray feminist issues: personalization, neglect/inattention, demonization, polarization, and blurring the focus (1995). Although Rhode applies these frames to feminist issues, she states media framing deserves greater attention from

“those interested in social movements in general” (Rhode, 1995, p. 685). She further asserts that “in any social movement, the media play a crucial role in shaping public consciousness and public policy”, stressing the mainstream media’s high level of influence towards its audience (p. 685). Working within a critical cultural studies approach, she highlights Hall’s assertion that “the press is increasingly responsible for supplying the information and images through which we understand our lives” (Rhode, 1995, p. 685). Applying Rhode’s frames to the *Refus Global*’s initial reception by Québec’s mainstream media enriches its analysis within both a critical cultural studies approach and an alternative media framework as a social movement.

Communities of interest, interpretation, and practice

In a critical cultural studies analysis, communities of interest, interpretation, and practice serve as sites of enactment and defiance against hegemonic structures. These communities, occupying varying positions in the hegemonic structure, offer differing portrayals of the *Refus Global* as a site of contestation and affirmation of power. First, a community of interest, as defined by Henri and Pudelko (2003), refers to a group of people who are connected through a topic of common interest and who “take part in the community to exchange information, [...] to improve their understanding of a subject, [or] to share common passions” (p. 478). The members of this group are more connected to their topic than to each other. For example, mainstream newspapers and journals portraying a shared topic while being affected by common hegemonic powers could account for such a community. The following chapters examine the changing communities of interest within Québec’s media landscape, identifying and questioning their portrayal of the *Refus Global*.

Next, communities of interpretation, or interpretative communities, refer to a group that understands events or labels in the same way, using similar assumptions. In *Orientalism Reconsidered*, Edward Saïd describes these interpretations as “saturated with meanings” and “overdetermined by history, religion and politics” (Saïd, 1985, p. 94). Fish’s (1980) and Lindlof’s (1988) concept of an interpretive community further highlights its emphasis on subjectivity (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 9). According to Bailey et al., these communities are heavily influenced by culture and interpret a subject in a shared way (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 10). For example, religious media may agree on the portrayal of a subject, even as their own relationship to power changes.

Finally, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s concept of “communities of practice” occupies another space in the hegemonic structure. Bailey et al. define this term as a group in which a shared practice takes place, including the mutual participation of the members involved, using communal resources (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 8). According to Lave and Wenger these communities share a common passion, interact regularly, and learn together as “the meaning of learning is configured” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Denscombe further elaborates on this concept by describing the acquisition of knowledge as these communities’ fundamental objective (Denscombe, 2008, p. 276), which can include countless exercises such as joint research or discussion. Communities of practice are especially conducive to the production of alternative media, according to Uzelman (Uzelman, 2011, p. 28).

Oral history

Through a semi-structured interview, journalist Françoise de Repentigny contributes to the analysis of the *Refus Global*’s portrayal as a member of its wider community of practice. As a journalist, she worked for *La Presse*, followed by *Le Devoir*, and then Radio-Canada

(Desloges, 2013). Her husband, Rodolphe de Repentigny, alias Jauran, was a painter, photographer, art critic, and theoretician, and was the principal author of the *Manifeste des Plasticiens* in 1955. Although the de Repentignys were not part of the creation of the *Refus Global* itself, they exchanged avant-garde ideas and art theory with the Automatist group. Further, as a cultural worker and as a friend of the Automatists, Françoise de Repentigny witnessed firsthand the repercussions and the opportunities that came along with the *Refus Global*. Françoise de Repentigny is thus ideally placed to convey the manifesto's reception, its transformation, and her views on the place the manifesto's place in Québec society today. Further, Françoise de Repentigny's oral history serves as an invaluable asset to exploring the continuities and changes in the portrayal of the *Refus Global* over time, an alternative point of view to the dominant discourse. Her ties with the Automatist group and her firsthand experience of the era as a woman add a perspective that has historically been excluded from mainstream dialogue—the lived history of a member of the *Refus Global*'s community of practice who has rarely shared her stories.

Chapter Two: The Refus Global's Publication and Reception

The *Refus Global*—a handmade, self-published artist manifesto printed in 1948—put Québec's institutions on high alert. In postwar Québec, the hegemonic bloc of the State, Church, and the mass media wielded multiple avenues of control over the province's population. Additionally, Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis' nationalist and anti-Communist discourse offered protection from external threats, tapping into the population's lingering wartime fears and securing his legitimacy as the protector of the province. However, despite the strong hegemonic alliance between Québec's major institutions and their offer of protection, rising tensions and the weakening consent of Québec's population prevented these institutions from ignoring the *Refus Global*, which sought to shock the population and push for widespread societal change. The manifesto's positioning as an alternative publication — using tactics far from the mainstream— took advantage of the emerging cracks in Québec's dominant powers as opportunities for action, disrupting the mainstream discourse and serving as a much-needed site of contestation of power. Through a revolutionary tone, avant-garde art, pamphlets, poetry, and photography, the multidisciplinary *Refus Global* used an array of tactics to reach the population and stand out from the mainstream. To attenuate the manifesto's subversive tactics, Québec's hegemonic structure responded with strategies of containment communicated through communities of interest and interpretation tied to the State.

This chapter begins by setting the stage for the *Refus Global*'s reception through an overview of the relationship between Duplessis's government, the Church, and mass media, examining it through Gramsci's concept of the hegemonic bloc. As an "alliance of ruling class factions," a hegemonic bloc exerts social control over the subordinate class through a variety of outposts (Hall, 1979, p. 332). While developing this term as it relates to the conditions for the *Refus Global*'s reception, this chapter acknowledges the specific historical context that kept these forces in power through civil society ties (Saïd, 1978). It takes a closer look at the efforts by communities of interest (Québec's mass media) and communities of interpretation (Church media and opinion pieces by members of the clergy) to legitimize this hegemonic bloc.

Next, this chapter examines the *Refus Global* manifesto through an alternative media framework, investigating how it made use of emerging cracks in Québec's society through a range of tactics. The practices of the Automatist group before and during the *Refus Global*'s publication, the manifesto's materiality, and the contents of the text, are all discussed as facets of this site of contestation against hegemony through a community of practice. The chapter then widens the community of practice to include alternative media that discussed the Automatists and the *Refus Global*. In this way, it examines the role that this broader community of practice played in spreading its counter-hegemonic message.

A critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2011) of archival research through BANQ Digital's Québec Heritage collection explores how communities of interpretation and interest within Québec's media portrayed the *Refus Global* in order to neutralize its threat against the institutional powers in place. This analysis examines these communities' portrayals of the manifesto as sites of affirmation of power by the dominant discourse, as they employed containment strategies using the mass media with the explicit backing of the Church and State. A frame analysis then categorizes these strategies.

Finally, an interview with Françoise de Repentigny as a member of the *Refus Global*'s community of practice is woven through this chapter and the analysis of the manifesto's initial reception, adding a personal perspective to the existing literature on this subject. As a young woman during the "Great Darkness" period, her firsthand experience of school and home life during this time provides deeper insight into the resistance that was growing in the province. She personally witnessed the conditions that led to the formation of the Automatists as the cultural sphere suffered from excessive censorship, causing growing tensions with the State. Her perspective provides depth to the often simplistic narrative of the "Great Darkness" as an era of Québec's history in which a dormant population blindly followed the Church, and challenges the deterministic language that often surrounds this era. De Repentigny's career as a cultural journalist also provides a first-person account of the changes that occurred between the "Great Darkness" and Quiet Revolution, and how the *Refus Global* fit within this societal transformation. Her husband, Rodolphe de Repentigny, was a journalist, painter, and art critic. As a journalist and art critic within mainstream media like *La Presse* and alternative media like *l'Autorité du Peuple*, his experience provides insight into the alternative tactics that were used prior to the Quiet Revolution by the *Refus Global*'s community of practice. Additionally, Rodolphe de Repentigny wrote the Manifeste des Plasticiens in 1955, largely in reaction to the Automatist group. He knew several members of the Automatist group, and *Refus Global* signatory Fernand Leduc was an especially influential figure leading up to the Plasticien movement. Through conversations with her husband and other Automatist members like Leduc, Françoise de Repentigny witnessed the lasting effect of the manifesto throughout the Quiet Revolution and beyond.

Part 1: The Hegemonic Landscape

Close allies: Duplessis and the Church

To understand the *Refus Global*'s manifesto as a cry in Québec's "darkness", it is crucial to survey the era's socio-political landscape. The clearest hegemonic connection between Québec's institutions was between Duplessis and the Church, who shared the responsibility of supervising the population and releasing coordinated messaging. When Duplessis' government obtained power in the turbulent post-World War II era, destabilized Québécois clung tightly to their national identity. Duplessis tuned into the population's concerns, stressing his "traditionalist and defensive nationalism," using the traditional elite and the clergy to uphold these values (Poulain, 2000, p. 16). As such, the Church's power extended beyond faith and ideology—it also functioned as a distributor of services, including healthcare, charity, education, and culture, onto which it also had the role of imposing censorship (Poulain, 2000, p. 16). The clergy thus exerted its influence over the population in a multitude of ways, enjoying economic, legal, and political privileges and surveilling the population from a constellation of outposts across Québec.

Such a close relationship between Duplessis and the Church gave these two powerful institutions the opportunity to construct a mutually-favourable discourse to spread through the clergy's influence. Together, they sought to frame everyday experiences to ensure stability and approval from the population. However, despite these close ties, the population's growing discontent towards the clergy meant that a threat to religion like the *Refus Global* also threatened the population's acceptance of Duplessis' conservatism.

The perceived danger of Communism

Two pillars of Duplessis' politics, nationalism and anti-Communism, were crucial to hegemonic stability in Québec. They helped build up the legitimacy of the strategic alliances he had formed with the Church and mass media, making a case for the necessity of his protection. As Hall (1979) puts it, legitimacy and consent are crucial in maintaining hegemonic power, allowing a certain acceptance of the dominant system by the dominated population. Saïd (1978) similarly highlights the importance of consent, pointing out that hegemony relies as much on consent as on domination. To construct his message of legitimacy, Duplessis took advantage of the population's fears, including external threats to Catholicism and the feared infiltration of Communism in Québec. He adopted the role of the "champion of religion" and "herald of autonomy" (Genest, 1971, p. 391), assuring the population that Québec would remain Catholic and that he would continue to fight for nationalism.

Duplessis also maintained a narrative of possible Communist infiltration into the province, adopting the role of "crusader of anti-Communism" and launching an all-out offensive against Communism in Québec. In its most extreme form, this Communist hunt took the form of the "Padlock Law", which allowed the State to destroy anything deemed to have Communist aims— a very loosely defined attribute — potentially sending individuals to jail and shutting down establishments, often without a trial or access to legal defense (Genest, 1971, p. 390; Allen-Mercier, 2016). This law made it challenging and even dangerous to adopt avant-garde or controversial ideas. For example, Duplessis had the newspaper *Combat* Padlocked, to which the Automatist's friends had previously contributed (Bourassa, 1984, p. 81). This control over the media allowed Duplessis to censor discussion on cultural or social issues as he aimed to prevent resistance against the hegemonic structure.

The Church and the media

As a result of Duplessis' close ties to the Church, Catholic media played a crucial role in Québec as a powerful community of interpretation. Through religious media guides, censorship, publications, and ties to the mass media, the Church influenced all facets of Québec's media, making use of its discursive power to "reproduce a constructed and preferred view of 'reality'" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 16).

This relationship between the Church and media flourished through the creation of religious publications such as *Lectures*, launched in 1946 by the Catholic Editions Fides. This magazine intended to guide media professionals (or communities of interest and interpretation) in their choice of books and in their own publications (Hébert, 2003). Until 1965, the highly-influential *Lectures* published critical judgments and moral ratings while concurrently justifying the value of State and Church censorship as cultural guidance (Hébert, 2003). This restriction was framed not as prohibiting but instead guiding or enlightening readers towards more moral selections. Such a close media supervision culminated in censorship, leading to the availability of only limited and curated sources within Québec's media landscape.

In addition to promoting censorship, the Church offered its own media alternatives. Counteracting 'immoral' newspapers, it constructed its own publications, such as *L'Action Catholique*, which "provided proof that it was possible to use news media for ideological purposes" (Demers, 2005, p. 566). Publications like *L'Action Catholique* would interpret the news and comment on its broad principles to spread "The Good" and "The Truth" (Demers, 2005, p. 566). As a whole, these religious publications aimed to enlighten all news stories with the Catholic spirit and consistently reflect the values of the Church— it saw its role as a guardian of faith (Marquis, 2011), reflecting on pressing current events.

The influence of the Church extended beyond explicitly Catholic journals and magazines. In 1957, the editors of the *Documentation française* noted that “one of the essential characteristics of the French-Canadian press resides in its militant Catholicism” (Maistre, 2005, p. 112), noting the Catholic influence even on media that was not explicitly religious. At its inception in 1910, *Le Devoir*, one of Québec’s leading newspapers, had even vowed to “defend the rights of the Church, of the race, of the homeland and of the family” (Maistre, 2005, p. 112). Continuing throughout the *Refus Global*’s era, *Le Devoir* still played the role of a Catholic voice, framing issues through Christian principles (Pagé, 2010, p. 94). As a more subtle extension of the Church, its contribution to the religious control of Québec’s population was perhaps just as present as that of explicitly clerical media. It is no surprise, then, that the *Refus Global*’s anti-religious rhetoric was torn to pieces across Québec’s media landscape— it represented the antithesis of the dominant religious messaging that told Québec’s population how to interpret the world around them.

Duplessis and the mass media: A personal touch

Stuart Hall argues that the mass media are responsible for “providing the images, representations, and ideas” around which the social totality can be grasped as a ‘whole’ (Hall, 1979, p. 340) while actively constructing the image of society (Hall, 1992). In Québec, Duplessis enjoyed a direct input in the construction of the province’s image and its major debates in politics and religion. This relationship to power was especially discernible in *Le Devoir*, which was founded in 1910 by celebrated Québec intellectual Henri Bourassa and sought to circulate nationalist, anti-British and Catholic beliefs (Charron & Bastien, 2012). It has been widely considered through time as “the newspaper of a French Canadian and, later, Québécois social and economic elite” (Carignan & Martin, 2017, p. 55). Starting in 1943, Duplessis’ party, the Union Nationale, tried to purchase and take over the newspaper, but its director Georges Pelletier refused in the name of journalistic independence. However, soon after, Duplessis began to “place his men” inside the institution, either on the board of directors or in the newsroom; these men even managed to delay the newspaper’s publication as much as they could when it contained articles that were unflattering for the Union Nationale (Gagnon & Sarra-Bournet, 1997, p. 59). This abuse of power and disregard for journalistic independence was inherent in Duplessis’ desire to control the province’s perception of his politics.

Similarly, the owner of *La Presse*, Pamphile Du Tremblay, had strong personal ties to Duplessis and his government, leading to the newspaper’s support of the Union Nationale. Founded in 1884, *La Presse* positioned itself as an independent and affordable daily newspaper for the working class. This publication’s goal was to distance itself from opinion newspapers and mouthpieces for political parties, which were very common at the time (Felteau, 1983). However, *La Presse* was in favour of Duplessis’ party for a unique reason: Since 1946, Duplessis had helped its owner, Pamphile Du Tremblay, gain full control of *La Presse* after years of legal battles against the heirs of Trefflé Berthiaume, with whom Du Tremblay had founded the publication. Throughout his leadership, Duplessis continued to help Du Tremblay with personal problems as long as he ensured *La Presse*’s respectful tone towards his government (Lemieux, n.d.). *La Presse* was an incredible ally for Duplessis, as it imposed its presence and messaging in the Québec media landscape through its high readership (Roy & De Bonneville, 2005).

Duplessis’ explicit influence and close personal ties to these mainstream publications ensured that they fulfilled their role as part of the hegemonic alliance of power in Québec,

“construct[ing] and grant[ing] legitimacy to ‘leading’ social values through constant exposure of them to the audience” (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 16). Using his ties to newspapers read by the elite, such as *Le Devoir*, the working class such as *La Presse*, and all walks of life (including isolated rural areas) through Catholic magazines, he covered the avenues of information for all of Québec’s population. Mirroring his personal relationships with the clergy, Duplessis established ties with the media in the same way to ensure that his controlled hegemonic messaging could reach the corners of Québec through the press.

Cracks emerge in Québec’s hegemonic structures

Despite the hegemonic bloc and Duplessis’ far-reaching influence, cracks were beginning to appear in Québec’s hegemonic structures. The “baby boom” following World War II demanded an increase in educational and health services, and the overwhelmed Church could no longer keep up. Feelings of contestation began to arise within the population, and by 1948, 30% to 50% of Catholic Montrealers no longer went to mass (Poulain, 1998, p. 15). As a young woman during this time, Françoise de Repentigny felt this discontent bubbling just below the surface. Popovic (1987) argues against the oversimplified version of Québec’s history that portrays the *Refus Global* as a “sudden illumination” brought to a dormant population (p. 21). Rather, the *Refus Global* reflected a growing wave of existing discontent with Québec’s institutions, especially the Church. Françoise de Repentigny’s lived history reflects this assertion. After much self-reflection, she made a decision that broke away from the norm during this period. As a teenager, de Repentigny decided to cut ties with the Church when she felt that it no longer aligned with her beliefs:

There is an author that I knew who said the clergy poisoned our lives. And that’s true, in my opinion, with all the hindsight I have. I cut all ties with the Church at 17 years old. I was going through an internal struggle, because at some point, when you don’t have freedom, you can’t evolve personally. You have to free yourself from things that are contrary to who you are in order to evolve. Otherwise you are not progressing.

You have to remember that at that time, if you did not go to Sunday Mass, you were committing a mortal sin. I remember when I told my parents—we were all outside in the garden and my mother came to talk to me. She said to me, “Françoise, you don’t have much time to get ready for mass.” You had to dress neatly then, and it took some time. I told her “I’m not going there anymore.” She was surprised, so I repeated “I don’t go there anymore, I don’t believe in it.” She didn’t know what to say anymore. She went back into the house, and there my father came out. My father, who already didn’t like priests but who was a believer— there was a difference— he said to me, “It’ll be difficult for you not to go to mass because it is not in the customs of the villages. You’ll be singled out.” I said, “It’s my decision,” and he didn’t insist. I think he was a little sad because he understood that it would be difficult for me.

Then, my older sister came to talk to me. She said to me, “Stop being silly, come get dressed, we’re going to mass”. Then she said something— and if she wanted to convince me, she really missed the mark— she said, “I don’t believe in it either, but I’m going anyway!” I told her it was up to her, but that I wasn’t coming. My family never talked to me about it after that (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

De Repentigny's recounting of her family's relationships to religion— through all their different points of view— brings to life the multitude of issues that were beginning to arise in Québec society despite the combined forces of the State, Church, and mass media. De Repentigny felt the need for personal liberation, having spent time in artistic circles, while her father was disappointed in the Church's clergy. Her sister did not feel religious but still felt obligated to attend, and her mother highlighted tradition. According to Hall, even under hegemonic conditions, "there can be no total incorporation or absorption of the subordinate classes (Hall, 1979, p. 333). Further, he states that hegemonies are never completed projects— cracks and contradictions always exist, making room for opportunities (Hall, 2013, p. 21). The conversations between Françoise de Repentigny and her relatives illustrate the contestation of power that existed within the context of a family. Despite the Church's numerous areas of power, oral history allows a glimpse into the negotiations that went on behind closed doors on a much smaller scale. It demonstrates the space for contestation that was gradually widening in the province despite the hegemonic bloc's illusion of control. This negotiation of power grew within Québec's increasingly fragile hegemonic landscape.

Part 2: The Refus Global as alternative media

The Refus Global's community of practice

At the time of the Refus Global, in both intellectual and artistic circles, there was already a movement pushing young people towards liberation. When the Refus Global came out in August 1948, it answered an urgent need. The young people of that time needed it. The Refus Global demonstrated that freedom did not exist in Québec (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

De Repentigny's lived experience once again contrasts with the popular understanding of the "Great Darkness" and the dormant population. As a cultural journalist, she witnessed these growing societal tensions firsthand. Similar to her break with religion, other members of Québec's population— especially the younger generation— began to resist the norms. To de Repentigny, the *Refus Global* was a natural outcome of the youth's discontent. In response to youth of Québec's growing restlessness within the overbearing conditions that repressed the spheres of art and culture, the Automatists sought to use various tactics (de Certeau, 1984) against the hegemonic strategies they endured by the Church and by the mass media. Examining the Automatists and the *Refus Global* through an alternative media framework provides a comprehensive view of this revolutionary group's counter-hegemonic efforts, through a range of tactics in its organization, content, and materiality.

According to de Certeau, tactics must vigilantly make use of the cracks in hegemony as an opportunity for action (de Certeau, 1984, p. 35), and the Automatists carefully chose the right timing in Québec society. Even before the publication of the *Refus Global* manifesto, the Automatists sensed this "urgent need" (de Repentigny) and began to form a community of practice. Cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger (later adopted into communications studies in Bailey et al., 2007) describe communities of practice as sharing a common passion, interacting regularly, and learning together; the Automatists wholly embodied these three main pillars. Gagnon (1992) describes the artist group's formation as

casual home or workshop meetings beginning in 1941, in which the discussions were spontaneous and flowed freely. According to Françoise de Repentigny, these meetings provided a space for free conversation outside of academic constraints and the threat of censorship. She describes these gatherings as “salons”, or home meetings in which the topics of politics, art, and literature are discussed and debated by intellectuals (Encyclopédie Larousse, n.d., para. 1). These meetings, which were popularized in 17th century France, were closely connected to reformist and revolutionary thought (Encyclopédie Larousse, n.d., para. 4). De Repentigny states that:

Mrs. Gauvreau, Claude’s mother and her brother Pierre, had a salon at her house. It was a somewhat bourgeois environment, and Maurice Perron [one of the Automatists] took a lot of photos of this group of Borduas with young painters in his salon. It was all very intimate (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

By borrowing the historical term of “salons”, de Repentigny emphasizes the importance placed on intellectual discussion and “learning together” that is also typical of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). She also calls to mind the avant-garde intellectual discussions that the term “salon” connotes. These spaces of idea-sharing and cultivating were essential to the Automatist group’s development.

Though some salons occurred at various locations as the Automatists developed their ideas, most of the meetings took place at the Automatist founder and renowned professor Paul-Émile Borduas’ home. Located in the small town of St-Hilaire outside of Montreal (Gagnon), his home was a refuge in which the Automatists could discuss their tactics for societal change. According to de Certeau, a tactic “must play on and with a terrain imposed on it” and organized within the “space of the other” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36). Symbolically and literally, then, Borduas’ country home presented the Automatists with a space to brainstorm tactics outside of the mainstream, with which they would then confront hegemonic strategies.

Many young painters studied with [Borduas] and that’s how he got to know many young painters. He had a kind of power of personal conviction. His conversation quickly— very quickly— reached these artists. It was like a matter of course (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

Through Borduas’ power of conviction, the Automatist community grew organically, comprised of like-minded individuals with similar interests. Typical of a community of practice and alternative media creators, the members of the Automatist group directly participated in horizontal communication on an equal plane. As such, an essential aspect of this group was the equal inclusion of women; according to Smart, all of the Automatist women claimed they were “totally equal in the group,” and the male Automatists echoed this account (Smart, 1999, p. 97). This equality was assuredly alternative in the conservative 1940s Québec context that did not typically grant equal roles to women, especially due to the Church’s omnipresent influence. The Automatists’ actions thus clearly embodied a community of practice.

The Automatists demand radical transformation

The *Refus Global* called for the total transformation of Québec. Its overarching goal was to challenge what Québec’s population took for granted about their society as framed by hegemonic discourse, which Bailey states “plays a crucial role in naturalizing dominant forms of

‘common sense’ (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 17). The Automatists wanted to shock the population out of its sleeplike state, its stagnancy. Sandoval and Fuchs argue that “critical content should be considered a minimum requirement for defining alternative media”, and that alternative media should fight for the radical transformation of structures of oppression through social struggles (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010, p. 146). The contents of the *Refus Global*, especially Borduas’ eponymous text “Refus Global”, unequivocally demanded radical transformation, stating that “without surrender or rest, in community of feeling with those who thirst for better life, without fear of set-backs, in encouragement or persecution, [they would] pursue in joy [their] overwhelming need for liberation” (Borduas et al., 1948).

Literary scholar Julie Gaudreault (2007) highlights the *Refus Global*’s manifesto characteristics within the realm of critical alternative media. She discusses the three stages found in manifesto rhetoric: affirmation, justification, and demonstration. With its texts “Refus global”, “En regard du surréalisme actuel” and “Qu’on le veuille ou non...”, the Automatists *affirmed* and *justified* their beliefs. Additionally, other texts like Gauvreau’s contribution of abstract poetry, *demonstrated* Automatist thought by translating its spontaneous and abstract ideals into language. As such, all of its components aimed to “contribute to emancipatory societal transformation” (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010, p. 148) as it took on the radical role of a manifesto.

The *Refus Global* acted against all facets of oppression, not just in the political sphere, which is typical of a radical alternative media group (Downing, 2001). When writing the *Refus Global*, the Automatists focused on the multiple aspects that ‘Man’ needed to be happy, focusing on freedom and spirituality. They were consequently fighting to break the chains of not only political but also spiritual oppression, with the Church portrayed as a barrier to spirituality instead of a source. Downing further describes radical media as challenging the dominant ideological framework, especially its censorship, and promising a radical alternative vision (Downing, 2001, p. 15). The *Refus Global* rallied against all forms of censorship, calling for “spontaneous and resplendent anarchy” (Borduas, 1948), striving to completely eradicate Québec’s censorship. Finally, Downing describes radical media as “trying to disrupt the silence” (Downing, 2001, p. 15); the Automatists whole-heartedly adopted the same purpose, affirming “we refuse to remain silent — do with us what you will, but you shall hear us” (Borduas et al., 1948).

The Refus Global’s tactical materiality

Beyond its subject matter, the *Refus Global*’s unusual form served as an additional tactic of resistance. According to de Certeau, tactics come from the “makeshift creativity of groups,” which rally against traditional discipline (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). The creativity in the layout of the *Refus Global* was multifaceted; it was in part due to the fact that the group had used only \$200 to edit the *Refus Global* through their own publishing company Les Éditions Mithra-Mythe. One signatory, Pierre Gauvreau, typed the texts and even printed them on his mother’s Gestetner duplicating machine to save on costs (Lapointe, 1998, p. 27). In a collective effort, the signatories hand-folded the manifesto using white, yellow, and green paper into what reassembled a folder rather than a book. It was held together by a white band that said “manifesto”, which the reader had to break before pulling apart the cardboard casing and reaching the texts and loose pictures (Gaudreault, 2003, para. 6). Although this amateurish format was in part due to the group’s low budget, it also embodied a counter-cultural stance by purposefully avoiding resemblances to mainstream media. This also served to shock journalists, which brought more attention to the *Refus Global*. Because of the absence of predecessors in its

style, the artisanal characteristics of the manifesto “upset the interpretative schemes of readers by questioning the idea that they generally have of the book as a coherent, linear and unified form” (Dubois, 2016, p. 97).

Within an alternative media framework, several aspects of the *Refus Global*'s unusual materiality are reminiscent of a zine, a “noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves (Duncombe, 2017, p. 10). According Duncombe (2017), these amateur publications are “created out of rage” (p. 18), rebelling against oppressive aspects of society. The young artists of the Automatist group, refusing every aspect of society and condemning the conditions in their province, embodied this rage. Further, zines promote the DIY (do-it-yourself) ethic, entirely bypassing commercial publication methods. Like the *Refus Global*, they are usually printed and folded by hand, and look the part. The layout varies, but often starts with a personal editorial and involves stories, poetry, and hand-drawn illustrations (Duncombe, 2017, p. 14); likewise, the *Refus Global* began with Borduas' editorial “Refus Global”, which communicated the purpose of the manifesto, including poetry by Gauvreau and hand-drawn illustrations by Riopelle.

Additionally, zines are often swapped freely (Duncombe, 2017, p. 15). This lateral circulation is reminiscent of the censored literature of the *Refus Global*'s era. De Repentigny discusses her personal experience with the informal circulation of restricted literature and the ways in which readers would thwart censorship:

Censorship was very strong in Québec. Books, like Balzac's books, were out-of-bounds. A bookseller could not sell a book by Balzac. However, there were some rather daring books published in France that managed to thwart censorship—I remember one book that went around the arts scene in Montreal. We read it sneakily, under the table, and then we passed it to others! Especially in a period of great censorship. That's what happens anyway when censorship just gets silly. At a certain point, you find ways to outsmart it (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

Challenging the cultural restrictions placed on them, citizens of Québec ignored what they considered to be excessive, and even ridiculous, oppression— especially by religious morals deciding the appropriateness of literature. The clandestine spread of controversial literature was the case for the spread of the *Refus Global* itself, of which only 400 copies were available at the Librairie Tranquille in Montreal (“Automatistes”, n.d.), but reached a much wider audience. According to Dubois, for years after its publication, the *Refus Global* traveled covertly “sous le manteau”, or under one's coat (Dubois, 2017). In all these aspects, the *Refus Global*'s tactics, especially as it pertained to its materiality, can be likened to zines, emphasizing its avant-garde alternative nature in the landscape of the late 1940s.

The Refus Global's extended community of practice

Françoise de Repentigny emphasizes the varied tactics employed by the wider community of practice surrounding the *Refus Global* through the experiences of her late husband, Rodolphe de Repentigny, alias Jauran, who was influenced by the Automatists to pen the Manifeste des Plasticiens in 1955. As a friend of many artists who signed the *Refus Global*, Rodolphe de Repentigny wanted to push its message along. He took advantage of the

opportunity to subvert the dominant messaging within the constraints of a mainstream medium. As de Repentigny recalls,

In the late 1950s, Rodolphe had been hired as an art critic at La Presse. He had been told—the newspaper was run by the director Jean Louis Gagnon, a rather prestigious man—he had told him, ‘We won’t allow you to reproduce photos of naked women, nor photos of work by the Automatists.’ Rodolphe said that was okay and he got to work. As an art critic, he worked in a section called “the artistic pages”. Then, he took advantage of the vacation leave of the director of the art pages of La Presse to test it. One Saturday, he posted a picture of an Automatist painting—it was 1951. He waited for reactions, he could have lost his job. But there was no response from management (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

Through this small but rebellious action, Rodolphe used the methods at his disposal to infiltrate the cracks within dominant power, just as the Automatists themselves had done. Even within a mainstream newspaper—*La Presse*—that was so closely tied to the government, he challenged the dominant narrative through his clever “trick of the weak” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37). Additionally, as a part of the *Refus Global*’s community of practice, he used a temporary opportunity—in this case, a vacation—to challenge a medium that still would not allow the publication of Automatist work. However, Rodolphe also found a more in-depth area of contestation in the margins in which he could regularly express his avant-garde beliefs:

*Obviously, there were subjects he could not discuss in La Presse. It was a newspaper that addressed almost everyone in Quebec, it was not an intellectual newspaper. So to make up for that, he collaborated with another newspaper of the time. A left-wing newspaper, a weekly. It was called the *l’Autorité du Peuple* [The Authority of the People]. He could say anything because he wrote under a pseudonym, François Bourgogne, so it was anonymous. People wrote to the journal, sometimes against Borduas and the Automatists, and Rodolphe sometimes responded by defending them. He admired what Borduas had suggested—to function so freely (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).*

As an alternative publication, *l’Autorité du Peuple* allowed Rodolphe de Repentigny to support the Automatists as part of its community of practice, indulging in deep intellectual discussion compared to the mainstream media. This also signals an early example of the *Refus Global* debate living on through alternative publications. Over time, this extended community of practice in the margins surrounding the Automatists and the *Refus Global* would remain crucial to its survival, especially through the mainstream media’s aggressive reception of the text following its publication.

The community of practice portraying the *Refus Global* made waves within Québec society through its range of tactics. However, “what [a tactic] wins, it cannot keep” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37). The backlash by Québec’s mainstream media was swift as it moved quickly to diminish and discredit the manifesto’s influence.

Part 3: Strategies of repression in the early reception of the Refus Global, 1948-1958

The portrayal of the Refus Global by communities of interest and interpretation

Québec's communities of interest and interpretation worked in tandem with the dominant discourse to discredit and contain the *Refus Global*. These representations of the manifesto served as sites avenues for the enactment of power. As defined by Henri and Pudelko (2003), a community of interest is a group connected to a certain topic about which it exchanges information. The group is more connected to the topic than to each other. Québec's mass media, all portraying the topic of the *Refus Global* from different angles, made up an influential community of interest under Duplessis. These media each influenced each other's coverage through similar frames, but were not usually connected to each other. Québec's communities of interpretation also repeatedly portrayed the *Refus Global* in ways that aligned with the dominant discourse. These communities understand events in the same or similar ways; according to Saïd, these groups are overdetermined by history, religion, and politics. Fish (1980) and Lindlof (1988) further highlight that these communities are very subjective and greatly influenced by culture (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 9). In Duplessis-era Québec, religious publications and opinion pieces written by members of the clergy (often in the form of letters published in mainstream media) portrayed the *Refus Global* in similar ways through corresponding subjectivities.

How did Québec's communities of interest and interpretation come together to strategically portray the *Refus Global* to diminish its impact? Through the years, the media's reception of the *Refus Global* can be grouped into dismissals of the text as merely a teenage rebellion, Catholic analyses of its meaning, political accusations, and, originally overshadowing the message of the text itself, Borduas' dismissal from his long-time professorial role at the prestigious École du Meuble. Though varied in form, all of these reactions were designed as frames to neutralize the manifesto's threat against the institutional powers in place and relegate the *Refus Global* back to the fringes of Québec society. The next section explores this combined effort by Québec's communities of interest and interpretation by conducting a critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the portrayal of the *Refus Global* before the Quiet Revolution and categorizes every newspaper and journal article found on the BAnQ's (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) digital archives database. Van Dijk (2011) defines critical discourse analysis as being especially concerned with the social conditions of discourse and its relation to power, and Jiwani (2016) emphasizes the political nature of this discourse. As such, the following categories keep in mind the hegemonic bloc and social context that affected the interpretation of the *Refus Global* manifesto.

Rebellious teenagers?

Several outlets mocked the unusual appearance of the *Refus Global* and immediately tied it to the signatories' immaturity. Borduas, the leader of the Automatist group, was 43 years old when they published the *Refus Global*, but other members such as Sullivan, Perron, Gauvreau, and Riopelle were in their early twenties. Gagnon, in the magazine *Relations*, pondered if he should "read this manifesto as the verbal drunkenness of young teenagers? If so, it is very amusing" (Gagnon, 1948, p. 292). He then took a jab at Borduas' lack of maturity, reminding his readers that "the group reflects rather the thought of Borduas, their master, who is no longer a teenager." Typical of restless youth, he said, they "want to live [...] and shout who they are and what they are and what they think", though he assured his audience this phase would pass (Gagnon, 1948, p. 293). The Catholic media ascribed their lack of maturity to "an age in life where cynicism is the rule, where hundreds of teenagers are waiting for a spark to explode the beautiful vessel of their youth, their innocence, their moral and mental balance," leading to

“cruel and dangerous madness” (Robillard, 1948a, p. 12). According to Father Hyacinthe-Marie Robillard, their youth was dangerous.

Dubois expands on this focus on immaturity by bringing up the media’s strategy of ridicule, which used ageism as the main point in its mockery of the manifesto. Portraying it as a “work of youth— curious, experimental, many even entertaining, but without real historical interest” (Dubois, 2016, p. 100), the media used infantilizing language to defuse the text’s charge. By relegating the manifesto to youthful kookiness, the media could then avoid serious analysis.

Religious backlash

Through it all, Borduas in the Refus Global, cried, “to hell with the aspergillum”. We were tired of being sprinkled with holy water (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

The Automatist group’s threats against the Catholic Church sparked panic in the communities of interpretation of religious publications. René Bergeron in *Le Progrès de Saguenay* cautioned that the *Refus Global*’s “venom,” its evil anti-Christianism and antinationalism, conveyed the words of Lucifer (Bergeron, 1949, p. 1). In *l’Action Catholique*, Father Robillard was worried that the *Refus Global* would affect Québec’s youth. “Let others make fun,” he warned, “the thought of this shipwreck and of those who could be contaminated by it takes away our sense of humor. This refusal [The *Refus Global*] is first and foremost a refusal of reason and conscience” (Robillard, 1948b, p. 6). Later, in a separate feature in *Revue Dominicaine*, Father Robillard continued his crusade. Responding to Bergeron’s article in *Le Progrès de Saguenay*, he argued that “Automatism does not come from Hades: it is a work of man, and that does not always make it any better,” using this claim to use the *Refus Global* as a “prime example that people can become completely lost without religion to guide them” (Robillard, 1948c, p. 274) He feared that the Church’s overbearing power as the population’s guide was fading. “What do we expect from a world that has become pagan, if not a return to the vagaries of paganism?” (Robillard, 1948c, p. 276), he wondered. His condemnation was republished in *La Tribune de Sherbrooke*, spreading his opinion across multiple publications and casting him as a prominent critic of the *Refus Global*.

Two years later, in *Amérique Française*, Robillard addressed complaints that he had “devoted so much work and attention” to the manifesto that it may have had the opposite effect by giving it publicity. However, he reiterated that he considered it his role to warn the population, especially the youth, against the “madness of a doctrine filled with contradictions” (Robillard, 1950, p. 50). In 1954, six years after *Refus Global*’s publication, Jean Ménard similarly published in *Revue Dominicaine* that “moral and intellectual anarchy” threatened young Québécois due to “manifestos like the ‘*Refus Global*’” (Ménard, 1954, p. 78), illustrating the manifesto’s already legendary status as a significant threat to the Church, as well as its continuing role as a frightening symbol of dissent.

Some journalists attempted to assuage the *Refus Global*’s impact by taming the manifesto’s anti-religion stance. In a letter to *Le Devoir*, critic Jacques Dubuc conceded that he felt “a sense of human outburst, the deep desire to change the ways of modern life led by self-interest, and the search for genuine life” within the manifesto, which he argued was the same as “the Christian vision” (Dubuc, 1948, p. 5). Although he agreed that it was time to abandon stagnant meaningless traditions, he asked the artists to reconsider the core of Christianity, stating

that “Christianity is not lost, as the manifesto claims; the modern historical failure of Catholicism is giving way to a new spiritual growth” (Dubuc, 1948, p. 5). In his attempt to reconcile the Automatists with the Catholic religion, Dubuc sought to reframe their convictions and convince them to leave Québec’s margins and rejoin the mainstream.

The following year, once again in *Revue Dominicaine*, Robert Elie similarly attempted to reconcile the *Refus Global* with religion through his text “Au-Dela du Refus” (Beyond the refusal). He acknowledged that he saw in the manifesto “a frank question to those who could justify these institutions and who, too often, distort their meaning precisely because that they do not tolerate opposition,” going on to state that as Catholics, they should accept dialogue with their “adversaries” (Elie, 1949, p. 15). In his follow-up text, “Au-Dela Du Refus II,” Elie continued his Christian analysis, speculating that Borduas wrote *Refus Global* in the only hope of clearing the ground and moving freely on a path where beauty and love would have some chance of meeting purity” (Elie, 1949, p. 75), which could alternatively be pursued through religion. A reply was published in *Revue Dominicaine* by Benoit Lacroix, who praised Elie for his point of view because “it perfectly represented the Christian mentality that is most comforting and humanist when facing problems like heresy and scandal” (Lacroix, 1949, p. 236). Finally, *Le Canada* published a letter from a reader that criticized Elie, stating that there was no reason for him to attempt a Catholic analysis on something that will never move society forward (“Dans le Courier”, 1949, p. 5). These outlets framed the manifesto's explicit rejection of religion into a contortion that would somehow make it fit into an acceptable mould within the Catholic narrative. As a community of interpretation, they were the first group to attempt to adopt the manifesto and to reframe its message to fit their own needs, which would become a significant tradition with the *Refus Global*.

Communists or fascists?

In the midst of the Communist hunt that lasted throughout all of Duplessis’ years as Premier, the portrayal of a Communist-influenced manifesto was just as frightening as one that threatened the Church. Father Robillard, the aforementioned fanatical critic of the manifesto, tuned into the post-war anxiety that haunted Québec by comparing the *Refus Global* to the work of previous Communist Surrealists, despite the fact that the Automatists did not have ties to this group. In *Revue Dominicaine*, he argued that “surrealism [...] is not, in its essence, a formula of art, but an attempt at an intellectual revolution parallel to the Marxist revolution and intended to complete it” (Robillard, 1948c, p. 276). He aimed to tie the *Refus Global* to the Communist politics of French surrealist André Breton, who wrote that “the goal [of surrealism] is the destruction of bourgeois and logical mode of thinking, the accession of man to the realm of surreality; this doctrine is the Automatist theory” (Robillard, 1948c, p. 274). In the same vein, René Bergeron labeled the manifesto as “intellectual Bolshevism” and alerted Quebecers that it would let Marxism into their province (Bergeron, 1949). *Le Canada* ascribed another threat to the *Refus Global*: fascism. However, fans of the manifesto were quick to send a letter to the newspaper that dared the journalists to find “a single word in the manifesto or a single gesture in [their] behavior that allowed for comparison to Mussolini” (“Ce Que Nous Dit Le Lecteur”, 1949, p. 4). By creating discourse that tied the *Refus Global* to extreme politics, Québec’s mainstream media sought to tune into post-war Québec’s trauma and echo Duplessis’s Communist hunt.

In reality, the Automatist group vehemently opposed any connection to politics. A section of the *Refus Global* explicitly stated the Automatists’ refusal to be associated with either

the Communists (those who speak of “class”) or with any other political ideology (Dubois, 2016). For example, though some members were friendly with communist journalist and art critic Gilles Hénault, they did not invite him to sign the manifesto due to political differences and, more specifically, to avoid alignment (Dubois, 2017). *Refus Global* signatory Riopelle states that the Automatists distanced themselves so strongly from Communism that they lost many potential signatories in this way (Gauvin, 1995, p. 16). Evidently, the mass media deliberately ignored this aversion to political affiliation in favor of a more controversial stance.

Borduas’ removal overshadows the message

“Of course, there were consequences in the media for Borduas himself. He lost his job—he was a teacher. Borduas put everything into the Refus Global, he put everything to his own risk and peril. There were risks, of course. There was pressure in the media to talk about the Refus Global as if it were less important than it was, but that didn’t stop people at the time from making Borduas lose his job. It was realized that Borduas’ words were dangerous. Dangerous for the society that they wanted to keep as such” (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2021).

The repercussions of the multiple debates surrounding the *Refus Global* especially affected the group’s leader, Borduas. He suffered the consequences both for creating the Automatist group and for his incendiary essay that opened the manifesto: the titular “Refus Global”. The publication of the *Refus Global* manifesto and the backlash that followed led to his dismissal from his long-time teaching position at the prestigious École du Meuble on September 4, 1948, less than one month after its release. Major outlets *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, and *Radio Monde* all mentioned the news after Borduas held a press conference to object to the “arbitrary suspension” that was carried out “without even having heard him” (“La Protestation De Paul-Emile Borduas”, 1948, p. 37). It was soon revealed that this was the work of Mr. Gustave Poisson, the Deputy Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, who had forced Mr. Jean-Marie Gauvreau, the Director of l’École du Meuble, to take action (“M. Borduas n’accepte pas cette sanction”, 1948, p. 2). “The Borduas affair” fascinated journalists. In several instances, the *Refus Global* was simply referred to as “the work at the origin of the affair” (Dubois, 2016, p. 101). The question of whether his firing was warranted led to several debates on the authority of the government and religion over academia, which overshadowed the purpose of the *Refus Global* itself. Some believed the moral issues permitted outside institutions the power to intervene. In *Le Courrier de Sainte-Hyacinthe*, journalist Harry Bernard concisely described his side of the debate, arguing that “if any man off the street amused himself with such anti-clericalism, then it would be his own business. Since it is, as in the case of Borduas, a man called to train the youth, to mark an education, there is a difference” (Bernard, 1948, p. 3).

Passionate debate ensued. Some wrote open letters condemning Borduas’ dismissal “in the name of democracy [and] individual freedoms” published in *Le Devoir*, which devoted ample room to this debate, publishing letters from both sides over several months. In late September, *Refus Global* signatory Claude Gauvreau wrote to *Le Devoir* to support his fellow group member. “French Canadians have waged enough wars for the freedom of thought and religion to deny their own,” he argued, calling the motivations behind Borduas’ dismissal “very dark” (“Lettres au Devoir: Le Renvoi de M. Bordaus”, 1948, p. 5). Finally, he fervently defended that “Government schools are non-denominational, or if they are denominational, then why aren’t

taxes levied only among Catholics?” (“Lettres au Devoir: Le Renvoi de M. Borduas”, 1948, p. 5). Cautiously, and in line with Duplessis’ influence, *Le Devoir* responded that “[its non-denominational status] does not exempt the school from enforcing basic Christian morality. The following week, as promised, *Le Devoir* let the Automatists talk back. Perron, Arbour, Gauvreau, and Jean-Paul and Françoise Riopelle defended Borduas, refusing to listen to critiques “until we formally define the specific values that Christians want to protect against the *Refus Global*” (“Les Surréalistes Nous Écrivent”, 1948, p. 9). It is important to note, here, that *Le Devoir* incorrectly labelled the Automatists as Surrealists, once again creating confusion. The saga in *Le Devoir* ended with an exchange debate aptly named “The Impossible Dialogue: Last Request for our Readers’ Patience,” which finished the conversation on a discordant note. The artists argued that *Le Devoir* consistently deliberately misrepresented their point, and they urged readers to look at the *Refus Global* for themselves. Claiming the last word, the editor of *Le Devoir* concluded that the Automatists would only “spout nonsense” if given the spotlight and that, unfortunately, any kind of dialogue with them had become impossible. By ending the saga on this note, *Le Devoir* painted the artists as irrational and extreme, subtly discrediting the ensemble of their letters and the manifesto itself (“L’impossible Dialogue: Dernier Appel à la Patience de nos Lecteurs”, 1948, p. 10).

Other newspapers and magazines took part in the debate as well in creative ways. For example, *Le Clairon* published signatory Claude Gauvreau’s compilation of interviews of Borduas’ former students, many of whom were Christians, to conclude that “the unanimity of these testimonies” emphasized “the stupefaction caused by the suspension of the great painter” (Gauvreau, 1948, p. 5). Bernard Morisset summarized clashing viewpoints in an article published in *Le Canada* to simplify the debate and its importance. He concluded that “it is unfortunate that in the province of Québec, where our individual liberties are praised by the press, the radio, and most often by the people who seek the votes of the people, we come to commit a clear attack against our own freedom” (Morisset, 1948, p. 4). He pleaded with Quebecers not to forget this injustice and continue fighting for democracy in the province.

Even after the initial heat of the debate had cooled, the *Refus Global* was consistently mentioned in tandem with “The Borduas Affair”. In 1949, Charles Doyon detailed a saga in which the École des Beaux-Arts had inadvertently published extracts from the *Refus Global*, even after having shunned its author the previous year (Doyon, 1949a, p. 4). Doyon affirmed in a later article that “real humanists, sincere democrats” should continue to defend Borduas (Doyon, 1949b, p. 4). Despite the complexity of the debates surrounding the controversial manifesto, the simplified Borduas Affair more easily retained its place in the public consciousness. It became a measure of the province’s modernity, dividing it into those who still believed the Church should have the final say and those who were ready to move on from its influence, especially within education.

The simplification of the Borduas Affair for public consumption constitutes a significant portion of Dubois’ analysis of the manifesto’s reception. She maintains that this constructed polemic dimmed the work itself, confining it only to its role as “the cause for Borduas’ dismissal” (Dubois, 2016, p. 102). Further, she contends that the discourse around Borduas as a public figure was already setting up the preliminary elements of Borduas as a myth— a hero that would later be lauded as an instigator of Québec’s modernity. Indeed, the debate over Borduas’ dismissal was a microcosm for a very current issue that was building up in society: the resistance to the State and the Church’s combined grip over the province. Though it was evident that various fringe forces were attempting to push society forward, the media was held back by

pressures to maintain the status quo and used a variety of strategies to defame the *Refus Global* and remove it from public discourse lest its ideas find footing within the province.

Strategies of repression and frames of reception

The methods used by the Québec media constituted intentional paths of discourse to discredit the *Refus Global* manifesto. These discursive frames were adopted as strategies to maintain the status quo. According to de Certeau (1984), a strategy is “organized by the postulation of power” (p. 38) and provides its own discursive space against tactics (p. 35). Communities of interest (such as mass media) and interpretation (in this case, religious media) enjoyed all affordances and resources in their own space, which was supported by the Church and State, to portray the *Refus Global* in ways that would affirm their own power to maintain the status quo for the three institutions.

Several frames of reception emerge from the previous categories of the initial portrayal of the *Refus Global*. These patterns point to and are reminiscent of feminist scholar Deborah Rhode’s five frames of coverage in the mainstream media. Examining these frames of reception in relation to the patterns that arose in the *Refus Global*’s coverage helps to further understand the strategies applied by communities of interest and interpretation as purveyors of hegemonic discourse. Despite being developed to study the portrayal of feminist issues, Rhode asserts the importance of frame analysis in relation to social movements to recognize the mass media’s efforts to discredit them (Rhode, 1995, p. 685). Using a critical cultural studies approach, she reminds us that the media plays a critical role in shaping the public’s understanding of daily life, including what to think about and how to think about it. Thinking through Rhode’s five frames—personalization, neglect/inattention, demonization, polarization, and blurring the focus—helps to categorize the *Refus Global*’s initial portrayal and recognize these repressive efforts.

In her work, Rhode applies “personalization” to the media’s focus on activists’ looks to trivialize the issue—the women who defy traditional beauty standards are subject to ridicule while those who fit the standards are deemed hypocritical (Rhode, 1995, p. 696). In this way, a person individually becomes a simplistic topic of debate instead of the broader, more complicated issue. In its coverage of the *Refus Global*, Québec’s media largely chose to focus on Borduas’ dismissal from his teaching role at the prestigious École du Meuble. Had his termination been deserved? Was he personally fit to shape young minds? By focusing on the man himself, the scope of the coverage of the *Refus Global* could remain narrow, making it easier to control the debate on only one man.

Next, neglect and inattention apply to the lack of interviews and quotes from the Automatists following the manifesto’s publication. With the exception of their aforementioned letters published in *Le Devoir*, the mainstream media had no time for their comments. Instead, they lifted their words from the manifesto, interpreted them in politically-beneficial ways, and inserted them back into debates to convey the mass media’s narrative. Without their input, the Automatists saw the *Refus Global* twisted by the media to frighten the population; for example, by portraying them as Communists or fascists despite the lack of political alignment in their manifesto (Dubois, 2017).

Rhode describes demonization as coverage “focused exclusively or disproportionately on ‘extremist’ tactics and rhetoric” (Rhode, 1995, p. 692). Media outlets focus on dramatic events and upsetting sound bites to evoke emotions in their readers. For the Automatists, demonization from the media also appeared in the literal sense. For example, *Le Progrès de Saguenay* likened the *Refus Global* to the words of Lucifer, accusing the Automatists of “spitting venom” with

their “evil little book,” their “bitter anti-Christian indictment” (Bergeron, 1949, p. 1), using disturbing religious imagery to disgust its readers. As stated by Rhode (1995), the article introduced “startling sound bites” (p. 693) in the form of quotes, compiling a flight of anticlerical statements from the *Refus Global*. Leaning into these quotes, the publication literally demonized the Automatists and portrayed them as infernal influences.

Polarization, as interpreted by Rhode, consists of the press seeking “balance” by “presenting extreme opinions on both sides of a complicated question” (Rhode, 1995, p. 701), omitting all viewpoints in between in order to create sensationalist rhetoric. This incorrectly portrays the debate, creating a media polemic. The *Refus Global* sought precisely to create a polemic—it was the point of their manifesto, to shock Québec out of its complacency and breathe some life back into its culture. Still, they wanted their message to reach Québec’s population intact, but their ideas were instead presented back to the population after being incorrectly presented by the media through the creation of false debates. This prevented the communication of the manifesto’s real message. By fabricating discursive ties between the Automatists and subjects framed to terrify the population such as Communism, while at the same time “balancing” this coverage with the publication of a few letters from the Automatists, the media ensured the Automatists’ loss in the public eye.

Finally, Rhode explains “blurring the focus” as intentionally focusing the wrong facet on an issue. In her work, she gives the example of the media’s focus on self-transformation rather than social transformation regarding media’s coverage of feminist issues (i.e., how to become a strong leader instead of addressing the structural issues that hinder female leaders). For the Automatists, blurring the focus came in the form of mocking their age, discrediting their sanity, questioning their political alliances, and most importantly, focusing on Borduas’ dismissal to sidestep the contents of the manifesto. All these facets of the reception combined to portray the *Refus Global* through distorted lenses. Through these efforts, communities of interest and interpretation aimed to prevent the manifesto’s message from reaching the incredibly discontented undercurrent of Québec society.

The combined offensive by the State, Church, and Media fought to maintain control of the Québec population’s view of their lived reality and counter the *Refus Global*’s diverse alternative counter-hegemonic tactics. The links forged between these institutions created compelling strategic narratives that portrayed the manifesto as simultaneously dangerous and ridiculous, largely managing to remove it from serious consideration by the population at first.

However, this constellation of power could not ultimately push the fierce *Refus Global* out of the minds of the Québec people. Despite the tenacious links between these hegemonic institutions, their implication in all facets of life, and the methods of repression they utilized in the media’s reception, the manifesto survived, though not necessarily in one piece. Torn apart by the media, the Automatists as an entity disbanded soon after the manifesto’s publication, with some members, like Borduas, opting to leave Québec. Still, the manifesto maintained a life of its own, and some signatories stayed active in Québec’s cultural realm. Chapter three portrays the *Refus Global*’s adoption and celebration as a symbol of the societal changes of the 1960s following Duplessis’ death, while also continuing to examine the manifesto through an alternative framework as an inspiration for resistance. More than a decade after its publication, the *Refus Global*’s message had reawakened in a new form.

Chapter Three: The Refus Global's parallel meanings

This chapter departs from a point of simultaneous hegemonic crisis and reconstruction: the beginning of Québec's Quiet Revolution following Duplessis' death in 1959, which brought a new era of modernity to the province through widespread social and political reform. Within this changing landscape, it analyzes how Québec's hegemonic bloc incorporated and repurposed the *Refus Global* to fit the new Lesage Liberal government's discourse of province-wide change, more than ten years after the manifesto's publication. This chapter examines the *Refus Global*'s changing and contrasting relationship to power as it took on parallel meanings: during this period, the manifesto became a site of affirmation of power by the State due to the new role of art and the artist as a public figure. At the same time, the *Refus Global* remained a site of contestation of power through varied re-iterations of the manifesto in alternative publications and protest media. Through these alternative portrayals, the manifesto became associated with 1960s counterculture.

This chapter begins by discussing the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, providing a historical contextual analysis of Québec's Liberal Lesage government that took power in 1960 and how this transfer of power sparked a change in how the State portrayed itself to keep the consent of the population. Through the analysis of institutional changes within the hegemonic bloc, the declining role of the Church, the new role of art in society, and an effervescent culture of protest and alternative media, this chapter traces the conditions that led to the divergence in the *Refus Global*'s relationship to power. This includes the change in the way the communities of interest (the mass media) and interpretation (government ministers, major art institutions, and even the Catholic Church) portrayed this revolutionary manifesto to beneficially harness its charge, as well as a continuation and strengthening of the use of the *Refus Global* as a tactic of dissent by its alternative media community of practice. By tracing these continuities and changes, contestations and affirmations, this chapter investigates the manifesto's entrenchment into Québec society as a widely-adopted force with multiple identities.

Part 1: Changes in Québec's hegemonic landscape

Crisis and reconstruction under the Lesage government

Premier Maurice Duplessis' death in 1959 marked the end of the province's "Great Darkness". A discursive rupture marked the population's new eagerness for change in the province, separating the exciting, illuminated "new", and undesirable, dark, and grim "old" (Carel, 2008, p. 103). This era, known as the Quiet Revolution, signified the symbolic rupture of the old hegemonic bloc, shifting the province from darkness to modernity.

Duplessis' death created a crisis in Québec's hegemonic bloc: the Church and mass media, who had enjoyed such close ties to the politician for a total of almost 20 years, were no longer connected to each other through his influence (Lemieux & Harvey, 2006). Questions emerged regarding how this strong alliance of power would continue to maintain the status quo after a long era of stability under the Union Nationale government and Duplessis; these institutions were forced to reexamine their relationships with each other and with the population. According to Stuart Hall's interpretation of Gramsci, moments of social and political crisis also entail reconstruction, and no system of power is dismantled without an attempt to replace it (Hall, 1988). Although this era seemed to suggest a threat to the hegemonic power alliance, the locus of power remained in the State as it adapted to its changing historical landscape.

Hall insists that crisis erupts from “a wide series of polemics, debates about fundamental sexual, moral and intellectual questions, in a crisis in the relations of political representation and the parties” (Hall, 1988, p. 168), culminating in a general crisis of authority. The Quiet Revolution that was arising in the province brought many of these questions to the surface as the population sought a break from Duplessis’ heavy-handed conservatism and craved modernity. This, too, is a typical aspect of a hegemonic shift, as hegemony must be constantly constructed on various sites as “points of social antagonism proliferate” (Hall, 1988, p. 168). Crisis does not mean dismantling— hegemonic powers adjust and “articulate the different areas of contestation, the different points of antagonism, into a regime of rule” (Hall, 1988, p. 168). The notion of a malleable hegemonic power that can survive and transform during crisis while retaining power was evident during this era of Québec’s history.

In 1960, Jean Lesage’s Liberal party campaigned under the slogan “C’est l’temps que ça change” (“It’s time for a change”), harnessing the rising societal tensions and promising a more modern future for the province away from the dark conservatism of its past. The Lesage government immediately modified the role of the State, taking over the functions of the Church in the sectors of health care, education, and social services (Seljak, 1996, p. 114). These wide-ranging changes prompted the name of the “Quiet Revolution” in the province— some even called this change a “mutation of species” due to the extensive changes in all aspects of society, including social structures and culture (Curien, 2003, p. 283). Especially relevant to this chapter’s analysis, the Lesage government sought to keep up with other Western democracies culturally and created the Québec Ministry of Cultural Affairs within its first year of power, showing the priority it accorded to the arts (Loszach, 2009, p. 13). This government entity was tasked with “favouring and promoting the specific cultural character of Quebec in the fields of arts, literature, and heritage” (Potvin, 2006, para. 1), marking the first time that a dedicated group watched over the Arts. This move greatly increased the institutionalization of the province’s art world.

The most startling change for Québec’s population, however, was the profound educational reform put into place by the Liberals, which affected most of the population personally and even worried many due to its intimate link with daily life (Curien, 2003). This change responded to bubbling discontent within the religious schools, granting a desired change to the population. Françoise de Repentigny remembers the patriarchal oppression of her school days, and the emerging resistance among students:

The end of religious education was interesting because there was a huge reaction in Québec. Out with the priests, the nuns, the brothers in the world of education! No more classes with priests as teachers. It was a huge change. For example, when I was in school before the Quiet Revolution, I had a teacher who made the girls fail all the exams, but the boys got good grades. But we got together and we reacted. We filed a complaint with the school and they had to make us take the exam again and we all passed. I lived it myself, what it was like in those religious schools! Without knowing it, we acted as feminists. I’m telling you, it was a real victory! (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, October 5, 2021).

De Repentigny’s anecdote showcases the cracks that were already arising within Church-run education under Duplessis. She points out the widespread sexism that permeated the educational sector, creating tensions as the students resisted the traditional system. Under Lesage, the

secularization of education eradicated the majority of tangible religious power within Québec society. Through this shift, the State rearticulated areas of contestation and points of antagonism from the population towards the Church, and implemented this resistance into its regime of rule. As previously cited, a system of power replaces avenues of power when they are contested, but the power remains in hegemonic hands (Hall, 1988). Hegemonic power transferred from the Church to centralize in the State, without giving more power to the population. Nevertheless, this new balance of power brought with the sense of renewal in the province.

The decline of the Church as a community of interpretation

Although undercurrents of discontent already existed in the province prior to Lesage's government and the Church was by no means all-powerful, the Quiet Revolution concretized the province's shift away from such extensive Church powers, almost completely removing its status as part of the hegemonic bloc. Concurrently with the secularization of Québec society, the Catholic Church affirmed its political autonomy, urged individual political choices, and encouraged citizens to involve themselves in societal debates, breaking away from the significantly more conservative messaging and political ties it had sustained under Duplessis.

The decline in readership in Catholic media followed suit, severely diminishing its influence as a community of interpretation in the media. As a result, its power to deploy repressive strategies against artistic rebellion decreased, and its discursive authority in the creation of the everyday lived realities (Hall, 1997) of the population almost disappeared. While the circulation of religious periodicals plummeted, the circulation of mass media communities of interest such as *La Presse* and *Le Soleil* increased by an astounding 200% (Warren, 2013, p. 174). In this market, Catholic publications struggled to survive. Some magazines and journals even transformed their outlook, attempting to join the Quiet Revolution (Warren, 2013, p. 174) and criticizing the "old", pre-Quiet Revolution Catholicism (Seljak, 1996, p. 118). Several publications even changed their name along with their messaging: for example, *Ma Paroisse* became *Actualité* in 1960 and the *Revue Dominicaine* gave way to *Maintenant* in 1962 (Laperrière, 2007, p. 10). Following the downward trajectory of this community of interpretation provides clear insight into the population's changing allegiances.

Some members of the Church went as far as to blame the Church for its own decline. For example, the priest François Hertel stated that Catholicism had caused French Canadians to face the past, rather than the future, for far too long (Gauvreau, 2000, p. 823). The ex-priest later moved to France, where he cultivated a community of young artists and intellectuals, including signatories of the *Refus Global*, making Hertel a part of the *Refus Global*'s wider community of practice. Françoise de Repentigny recalls her husband's friendship with Hertel during his time living in France:

While living in France, Rodolphe was close with a man who had been a priest in Montreal - his name was François Hertel. He left everything behind, he went to France and he never came back to Quebec. All the young artists and intellectuals were in Paris at the time, that's where culture was happening. They regularly went to François Hertel's house because they were all very poor young intellectuals— he invited them about once a week to have a meal. That's how Rodolphe was able to survive in Paris! When I met Rodolphe he was even wearing a suit that Hertel had given him (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, October 5, 2021).

Hertel's relationship with the young artists, despite the Church's antagonism towards them, shows the actual fluidity of societal boundaries on a smaller scale. The Church's views as an institution did not necessarily reflect individual views, especially during a period of extensive societal change.

The combination of Québec's secularization and the dissolution of strong ties between the Church and the State led to the decline of the Church as a powerful community of interpretation that had previously greatly influenced the dominant discourse in the province. This change was a crucial factor in the adoption of the *Refus Global* within the dominant discourse, including within communities of interest and interpretation. The Church's dwindling influence on the media and the State decreased its stake in the dominant discourse, and it lost the authority to hinder the adoption of the *Refus Global*'s intense anti-religious views by the mainstream. Instead, the *Refus Global*'s indictment of the Church became an asset to its discursive use in a society that was turning away from religious institutions *en masse*. This also allowed the State to use the manifesto's messaging and collaborate with its signatories to remain in tune with the narrative of modernity, without risking damage to its ties to the clergy.

The changing impact of communities of interpretation

As stated in the previous chapter, communities of interpretation understand and portray events in similar ways that are “overdetermined by history, religion, and politics” (Saïd, 1985, p. 94). As politics dictated a change in Québec society, the Church and Church-related media lost much of its influence as a community of interpretation. Meanwhile, the influence of art-related communities of practice grew as the cultural sector increasingly became a priority in the province. Ministers of culture, for example, influenced the mainstream dialogue with their portrayals of the *Refus Global* through events such as Expo 67. Art institutions such as the Musée d'art contemporain, founded in 1964, also made up a new community of interpretation whose influence rapidly increased throughout the 1960s. Again, as groups that were “saturated with meaning” (Saïd, 1985, p. 94) and greatly influenced by its historical and political context (Saïd, 1985), this community of interpretation influenced media and exhibitions such as museum retrospectives and Expo 67. Through their close ties with the state, both of these groups were tied to the hegemonic discourse, which would later lead to anti-institutional protests by young artists in the late 1960s. Keeping these fluctuating communities in mind as their influence changed within the province is crucial to understanding the changing portrayal of the *Refus Global*, especially in the mainstream media.

Part 2: Continuities and changes in the *Refus Global*'s portrayal during the Quiet Revolution

The new role of art and the artist

In 1940s Québec, the Automatists shocked the population by blurring the boundaries between art and politics (Warren, 2018, p. 261). They dared to get involved in politics and religion, “arrogating themselves a right of inspection that was not theirs” and trying to subject Québec to their radical aesthetic beliefs (Warren, 2018, p. 261) instead of staying within their realm. According to Warren, overstepping their prescribed roles as artists was the main reason for the scandal caused by the *Refus Global*. The role of the artist as a political force completely transformed in the early 1960s when contemporary art and national identity became enmeshed, absorbing art activism within the dominant discourse. Instead of arrogant artists stepping out of line, the Automatists become heroes.

With the creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961 and the Musée d'art contemporain in 1964, the State acknowledged and utilized art as a fundamental aspect of modern Québec. The priority of cultural advancement was evident: the State recognized artists' revolutionary power, and wanted this potential on their side. Gestural abstraction (an Automatist technique), in particular, became a symbol of modernity, interpreted by the political elite as a metaphor for the "French-Canadian nation's struggle for emancipation" during the Quiet Revolution (Couture, 1992, p. 15). For example, one of the early elements in the government's recognition of artistic modernity in Québec was the State's commission of Jean-Paul Mousseau's *Light and Movement in Colour* (1961), situated in the government Hydro Québec building (Couture, 1992, p. 15). As a signatory of the *Refus Global*, the celebration of Mousseau's work in the lobby of a major government building was no coincidence in the province's messaging: it had adopted the legacy of the manifesto as part of mainstream society.

A similar example involves the commission of art by *Refus Global* signatories for Montreal's metro stations: Marcelle Ferron created awe-inspiring stained glass windows for the Champs-de-Mars metro station in 1968, and Jean-Paul Mousseau later also contributed several grand works to the metro system (Andrus, 2017, p. 276). Since the development of the metro was directly tied to Expo 67, it served as an important symbol of modernity in combination with the *Refus Global*'s legacy. The use of stained glass throughout the metro system further pointed to the shift of power from the Church to the State in modern Québec, as traditional methods usually used in places of worship were instead installed in this new modern transportation system (Andrus, 2017, p. 275). Beyond the acceptance of modern art, Mousseau's mural and the Automatists' art in the metro hinted at the beginning of the State's celebration of the *Refus Global* in a controlled, commissioned way. The State diminished the manifesto's revolutionary charge and adopted the toned-down symbolism of its signatories as representatives of Québec's collective identity. With the State's appropriation of the art world for political messaging, "art and the figure of the artist" played a significant role in conveying values of freedom and social resistance as the population rejected tradition, authority and hierarchy (Loszach, 2009, p. 12).

The technocracy's interpretation of the Refus Global

In the 1960s, Québec's new technocracy settled into the province's public and political space as a community of interest. Several political figures from the modernist intelligentsia had emerged to take on ministerial responsibilities and were charged with the creation of a new discourse, a fresh way of representing Québec to better connect to its population (Létourneau, 1992). The elaboration of the technocracy's discourse characterized its own historical necessity as a mediator in the accomplishment of Québec's collective destiny through its emancipation from the Church and the traditional elite. The State portrayed modern Québec's joyful break with the past as epic struggles and dramatic face-offs, emphasizing the visionary character of the technocracy's own decisions for the province (Létourneau, 1992, p. 769). As a whole, the hegemonic discourse of Québec's modernity revolved around the idea of rupture, associating history with discontent and modernity with joy, pointing to a present that was "already on its way to mythification" (Létourneau, 1992, p. 773). The *Refus Global* represented an ideal instrument for the State to tangibly portray this rupture while illustrating its own "revolutionary" impact on the province. As such, the adoption of the *Refus Global* into the State's hegemonic discourse illustrates an enormous, previously unimaginable change in its portrayal by this community of interpretation. Québec's mass media, a community of interest, joined the State in the dissemination of its favourable new hegemonic discourse and change of storyline on the

Refus Global. According to Hall (1979), the mass media reproduces the ideological field of a society to reproduce its structure of domination (p. 346). As a community of interest, then, the mass media has the immense role to provide a basis through which subordinated groups construct an image of their lives and understand their society as a whole. Over time, the mass media naturalized the technocracy's discourse which portrayed the importance of rupture with the past, instrumentalizing the *Refus Global* as a new site of affirmation of power within the art world's new importance in Québec. By 1967, Montréal's International and Universal Exposition, or Expo 67, provided these communities of interpretation and interest the ideal platform through which to concretize Québec's symbolic emancipation, including a new appreciation of the *Refus Global*.

Expo 67 and the artistic liberatory push

At the end of the 1960s, the "new social discourse of technocracy" was still in the process of emerging, and often revisited recent history to convey its message of their current period as a turning point and as a break with Québec's past (Létourneau, 1992, p. 766). Expo 67 was a golden opportunity for Québec's new technocracy to mould the narrative of an illuminated nation to its foreign visitors, as well as to its own people, forming a "great collective narrative of modern Québec" (Curien, 2007, p. 2) through curated messaging. As a celebration of Québec's artistic liberatory push, it illustrates a shift in the portrayal of the *Refus Global* by communities of interpretation, especially government ministers, as they solicited the signatories' input and artistic contributions to illustrate Québec's culture.

The 1967 International and Universal Exposition, or Expo 67, was inaugurated on April 28, 1967, and continued until October 27, 1967 welcoming over 50 million visitors to celebrate the theme *Man and his World*. Through this spectacular event, the State took advantage of the opportunity to reinforce the message of Québec's modernity, solidifying and exemplifying the characteristics of the Quiet Revolution. The Québec Pavillion was the perfect device for this enforcement as the only pavilion where the Québec government had total control over the dissemination of this messaging (Curien, 2003, p. 196). Jean Octeau, the Director of Arts and Letters at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the commissioner of the pavilion, worked closely with all Québec ministries, asking them to present exhibition projects starting in June 1964—ample time to construct coherent discourse with the approval of the multiple representatives of these ministries. Addressing the pavilion's themes of "Défi-Combat-Elan" (Challenge, Struggle, Momentum), these projects were then approved by the Council of Ministers (Curien, 2003, p. 196), making sure that they matched the desired image of Québec to its population and to outsiders. They saw the Expo as a form of popular education (Carel, 2008, p. 104).

Part of the popular education by the Council of Ministers entailed solidifying the role of art in Québec. To do so, the organizers of the Québec Pavillion, including the involved government ministers, sought the input of the *Refus Global*'s signatories and displayed their art as representative of Québec's art scene. Most notably, Jean-Paul Mousseau's involvement in the organization and curation of the Québec Pavillion's exhibition *Modern Canadian Painting: 25 years of paintings in French Canada* (Hellman, 2005, p. 34), exemplified the new role of *Refus Global* signatories as established figures in Québec culture. Mousseau's participation in a government-curated pavilion distinctly displays the lessening of the manifesto's counter-hegemonic charge, as well as the containment of the signatories' violently anti-establishment and anarchist philosophy. Although the exhibition was a small part of the Québec Pavillion, which showcased various aspects of the province's industry and innovation, it was designed to express

the new importance of contemporary art to Québec's culture (through the affirmation of the State). Work by Marcelle Ferron, Jean-Paul Riopelle, and Paul-Émile Borduas, three fellow *Refus Global* signatories, graced the walls of the pavilion (Hellman, 2005, p. 35), incorporating the artists' symbolic roles within Québec's great narrative, while at the same time reducing their revolutionary charge to the art itself in a state-sanctioned environment. In this setting, the *Refus Global* had been adopted as a site of affirmation of power, portrayed as if to endorse a forward-looking government and used to illustrate the Pavilion's theme of "Momentum".

However, much like the *Refus Global* itself, Expo 67 also served as a site of contestation of power when it encouraged Québec's youth to take part in the social debates of the day, helping to portray Québec society as young and dynamic. Expo 67 gave new esteem to Québec's youth as a symbol of progress (Carel, 2008), creating a fresh identity for this group and serving as a catalyst for the transformation of society. This shift was a significant catalyst of Québec's culture of protest that arose in the late 1960s, challenging the State on its own discourse as leaders of the province's emancipation.

Québec's Culture of Protest in the 1960s

The emergence of Québec culture of protest in the 1960s continued and strengthened the portrayal of the *Refus Global* as a site of contestation of power through a widening community of practice surrounding the manifesto. Fernande Saint-Martin, who served as the director of the Musée d'art Contemporain, classifies this era of militancy as a delayed *Refus Global* in her 1976 essay "La situation de l'art et de l'identité québécoise" [The Situation of Québec's art and identity]. For the younger population, she asserts, the first ten years of the Quiet Revolution were a veritable exercise in "deconstructing the deceptive façades, alienating institutions, and repressive systems of thought" that had previously numbed the province's dynamism (Saint-Martin, 1976, p. 20). According to Saint-Martin, these protests physically carried out the goal that the *Refus Global* had formulated over ten years prior to the Quiet Revolution. Further, she claims that the *Refus Global*'s revolutionary potential is proof that art has the power to transform society (Saint-Martin, 1976, p. 21). Through the 1960s, alternative media associated with protests caused the re-emergence of the *Refus Global* through different forms as the manifesto anchored itself into Québec's counterculture. Dubois even considers it a template for countless "neo-manifestos" that used the *Refus Global* to situate themselves in its genre (Dubois, 2013, p. 91).

During this era, the youth of Québec grew into its role as a social class for the first time, with students considering the need to organize and take stances on, if not outright create social debates (Gagnon, 2008, p. 13). This effervescent activism led to a culture of protest, with students taking on the role of the "hope of Québec" (Gagnon, 2008, p. 19). Post-Expo, this youthful activist spirit boiled over, causing droves of protest that brought about "both interest and fear" (Gauthier, 2007, p. 30) in Québec's population. Most notably, the politicization of art and culture that Expo 67 had further encouraged artistic counter-culture movements to develop and fight back against excessive institutionalization (Elawani, 2019, p. 41). Within the spheres of the State's new involvement with the art world, activist groups used tactics of resistance to maintain an artistic combative stance against dominant government messaging.

Beginning on October 15, 1968 (twenty years after the *Refus Global*'s publication), students occupied l'École des Beaux Arts de Montréal, Montreal's fine arts school to question "authority, morality, authoritarian social structures and institutions" (Loszach, 2009, p. 13). This student strike was part of a larger wave of student protests in Québec inspired by the major civil

unrest that had occurred the previous May in France, known as May 68. For several weeks, French students and workers had taken to the streets with the aim of resisting authority and fighting against capitalism; Québec students wanted to carry on this flame (de Carvalho, 2018, p. 36). The province's new culture of protest in the spirit of the Quiet Revolution followed May 68's lead with enthusiasm (de Carvalho, 2018, p. 36).

Through their takeover of strategic space, the student art-activists occupying l'École des Beaux Arts de Montreal embodied the sense that tactics must be deployed within the space of the other and on hegemonic terrain (de Certeau, 1984). Their presence "diverted the space" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 30) that represented artistic tradition and institutions, and turned it into a site of contestation and protest. Additionally, the Beaux Arts protestors used eye-catching tactics such as building a "cemetery" on Sherbrooke Street with tombstones for values they wanted to do away with: hierarchy, the old style of education, religion, etc., attracting the attention of communities of interest in news coverage and interpretation in opinion pieces. These creative DIY tactics epitomized their refusal to subscribe to the conventions of dominant art institutions, just as the *Refus Global* itself had employed these do-it-yourself notions twenty years before. As Duncombe argues, the DIY ethic conveys the desire to make one's own culture and the rejection of the dominant culture (Duncombe, 2017). These students believed institutionalization would kill the art world, forcing creativity into overly neat structures (Loszach, 2009, p. 13). They called for anarchist self-management, deliberately echoing the sentiment of the anti-institutionalist *Refus Global*'s call for "resplendent anarchy". As Françoise de Repentigny puts it:

To me, the whole principle of the Refus Global is what Borduas called resplendent anarchy. I really like this phrase by Borduas. Change things, but in glorious ways, not in shabby ways. A lot of groups interpreted that in different ways (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, October 5, 2021).

Like de Repentigny, artist activist groups held onto the *Refus Global*'s call for resplendent anarchy throughout the 1960s.

This use of the *Refus Global* by its wider alternative community of practice as an inspiration for counter-hegemonic struggle demonstrates its continued portrayal as a challenge to power. However, these activists used the manifesto as more than just a precedent: they brought it back to life by producing the first pirate re-edition of the *Refus Global* (Thériault, 2009). They deemed it necessary to remind Québec's population of the revolutionary charge of this manifesto which encouraged the artist to "leave the slump of the sanitized and institutionalized culture" and "free itself from [...] outdated mediums", (Thériault, 2009, p. 53). By adopting it for their cause while highlighting the almost-forgotten radical aspects of the manifesto, the Beaux Arts protestors strengthened the *Refus Global*'s counter-hegemonic messaging while taking part in its community of practice. The manifesto's use in protest against the same institutions that had also adopted some of its aspects further indicates the divergent meanings that the *Refus Global* was beginning to take on.

Another artistic activist group, Opération Déclis, also saw its responsibility to re-assess the role of art in Québec society. The group planned a march, closing the Musée d'art contemporain and the Bibliothèque nationale, placing symbolic sculptures in front of each building, among other spontaneous art-action events (Elawani, 2019, p. 41). Their goals were to

question the roles of socio-cultural institutions like government ministries, museums, and art schools, examine the relationship between art and society, and rethink the role of the artist in society to take on more social and political engagement, among a long list of other aims. The group saw itself as reactivating the *Refus Global* in its own way, inheriting the manifesto's revolutionary and counter-cultural ideas (David, 1978, p. 7; Elawani, 2019, p. 10). On December 8, 1968, Opération Déclat took over the full Notre-Dame church in Montreal, reciting their short, shocking manifesto, *Place à l'orgasme*. This long list of demands called for joy, hope, adventure, blasphemy, and sexuality, and the death of dogmatism, capitalism, bureaucracy, servility, among countless other declarations (David, 1978). It adopted the most recognizable and reprinted section of the *Refus Global*: the "Make way for" pattern of the passage "**Make way for magic** / [...] / Make way for love / [...] / Make way for objective mysteries" taken from the *Refus Global* (Dubois, 2013, p. 91) and inserted their own wishes, using the well-known *Refus Global* section as a template. Along with its performance during the tactical occupation, *Place à l'orgasme* was published in the student newspaper *Quartier Latin* in early 1969, accompanied by an article titled "Du Borduas servis en purée" [Borduas served mashed, an expression referring to the simplistic representation of the matter] about whether Borduas' beliefs would have aligned with this type of activism, or if the group had oversimplified the *Refus Global*'s spirit. This debate concerning the true meaning of the manifesto, over twenty years after its publication, shows the lasting presence of the *Refus Global*'s portrayal in activist and alternative media as its community of practice continued to exchange ideas on its subject.

According to de Repentigny, the revolutionary nature of the *Refus Global* and Borduas' ideas fit well within the context of the 60s as the population of Québec was finding itself and its values:

Borduas had tried all his life to find who we are [Québec's population] as a people. What is most important to us. After some searching, we do end up knowing who we are, and we have to respect that. Borduas said that you don't have to resort to established ways of doing things, you have to invent them according to who you are (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, October 5, 2021).

Borduas' anti-establishment convictions, as highlighted by de Repentigny, continued their influence on marginal and protest groups. The *Refus Global* thus played an important role in Québec's activist circles as they searched for solid change within their society, questioning their goals and ideals. Through the multitude of appropriations by these groups, the manifesto's influence as a tool for counter-cultural dissent lived on beyond the art world. Its politicization of daily life and celebration of creative spontaneity inspired other counter-cultural groups to adopt the manifesto through their own alternative media.

The Refus Global in Alternative Media

The recurring role of the *Refus Global* in 1960s alternative print media further cemented its status as the emblematic site of contestation of power in Québec, while also deepening the divide with its parallel portrayal by communities of interpretation in the mainstream media. During the turmoil that characterized Québec in the 60s, alternative journals and magazines were springboards for new ideas and debate. Serving as the expressions of counter-hegemonic discourse and challenges to dominant frameworks (Downing, 2001), these alternative media were crucial to the efforts towards meaningful change at the level of the population in a time of

constant protests. As radical media that sought to help their audience “develop a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process” and to increase its “confidence in its power to engineer constructive change” (Downing, 2001, p. 15), Québec’s alternative media aimed to use the *Refus Global* to bolster the population’s revolutionary spirit instead of settling for surface-level institutional changes.

Faced with the constant government discourse that society was changing, these counter-cultural groups wanted a clearer political and social break with the past. From the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, the *Refus Global* was adopted by alternative press for this purpose of rupture. In 1960, *La Revue Socialiste* was the first outlet to re-publish Borduas’ “Refus Global” text (not the entire manifesto), along with the article “Une victime du conservatisme: L’Éxilé Borduas” (A Victim of Conservatism: The Exiled Borduas), indicating the manifesto’s budding association with the political left and its calls to resistance (Dubois, 2013, p. 87). Continuing in this tradition, the most-cited example of an influential alternative publication in the 60s, *Parti Pris*, soon adopted the manifesto as well. Founded in 1963, this political and cultural review is often regarded as having created a deep impact on Québec’s intellectual history (Dupuis and Rondeau, 2013, p. 31). *Parti Pris* sought to “break radically with the past and the dominant ideology” (Dupuis and Rondeau, 2013, p. 31) and adopted a revolutionary program and from the outset, portraying itself as the promoter of the revolution to create an “independent, socialist, and secular” Québec (Bégin, 2009, p. 48). As a critical publication, that is, based on the critique of the “unequal, dominative, and non-participatory character of contemporary society” (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010, p. 146), *Parti Pris* adopted the angle of a political “literature of struggle” from the outset. Along with its role as a literary journal, *Parti Pris* could thus reach both political and cultural circles, allowing for its widespread effect. In its very first issue, Pierre Maheu connected *Parti Pris* to the *Refus Global*. After speaking of the population’s collectively alienating childhood, he identified the *Refus Global* as a precursor to the magazine’s efforts (Dupuis & Rondeau, 2013, p. 31). Through the 1960s, mentions and analyses of the *Refus Global* were commonplace in this publication. For example, in 1965, *Parti Pris* reported on a comment that signatory Jean-Paul Mousseau had made on a Radio-Canada talk show, in which he mentioned *Parti Pris* as the *Refus Global*’s most qualified successors. In the title of this news snippet, the publication referred to itself as part of the genealogical line of the *Refus Global* (“Généalogie Globale”, 1956, p. 57). Similarly on the topic of the manifesto, a 1966 interview with signatory Claude Gauvreau re-analysed the manifesto’s meaning in connection to Surrealism, while also discussing other topics with the artist like love and music (Depocas, 1966, pp. 14-19). As Dubois observes, *Parti Pris* would remain a site of discussion for a filiation of authors who considered the *Refus Global* a milestone in Québec’s cultural history (Dubois, 2013, p. 88), continuing its counter-hegemonic portrayal as a symbol of struggle within this community of practice.

To close off the decade, in 1970, *Mainmise* became the quintessential alternative medium, expressing the essential aspirations of Québec’s counter-cultural youth (Warren, 2012, p. 2). It saw itself as a type of “almanac of the global village”, publishing information, essays, and opinions that would never be found in major publications such as *La Presse* or *Le Devoir* (Warren, 2012, p. 2). *Mainmise* continued *Parti Pris*’ lead in the use of the Ti-Pop movement, an ephemeral aesthetic and literary movement that used the Québec slang “joual” as the decolonization of the French language and explored self-mockery in a kitsch way (Dupuis, 2013, p. 43). Of course, the Ti-Pop movement named the *Refus Global* as its precursor, maintaining its revolutionary momentum almost twenty years later.

Parti Pris and *Mainmise* both embodied the continuation of the *Refus Global*'s counter-hegemonic positioning through their respective publications and were in large part responsible for the manifesto's continued influence in the margins. Their use of the manifesto as a symbol for the magazines' beliefs and goals exemplifies the inception of the text as what Dubois calls the "norm of the margins"—the portrayal of the *Refus Global* as a symbol of "literary lineage" to legitimize discussions (Dubois, 2013, p. 92). The portrayal of the *Refus Global* by alternative media continued through the years in Québec's intellectual magazines, including *Situations*, *Liberté*, *La Barre du jour*, *Chroniques*, and *Les Herbes rouges*, all portraying the manifesto according to their own ideological standpoints (Thériault, 2009, p. 47). The manifesto's subversive potential became a collective reference, signaling to the various alternative media's audiences that they ascribed to its line of thought. Although the *Refus Global*'s meaning was in danger of being "flattened" (Dubois, 2013; Warren, 2018) due to its reference in numerous texts of resistance, its flexible position as the "norm of the margins" has encouraged its lasting influence. The *Refus Global*'s simultaneous role as a counter-hegemonic alternative publication and as a text within the dominant discourse— thanks to the malleability of its meaning— has caused the *Refus Global* to live on through the decades.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined how the *Refus Global*'s portrayal by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice has changed and remained the same over time. To do so, the previous chapters have analyzed the manifesto within Québec's quickly changing historical context from 1948 to 1970, as the province moved away from the "Great Darkness" to the illumination of the Quiet Revolution. Extensive societal changes pushed the *Refus Global*'s portrayal into a great variety of roles by communities of interest, or the mainstream media; communities of interpretation, which fluctuated in importance between the Church, ministers, and art institutions; and finally, the community of practice surrounding the *Refus Global* which consistently challenged various outposts of power using the manifesto as inspiration. Through these portrayals, the *Refus Global* has fluctuated between a site of contestation and affirmation of power, finally settling into both roles simultaneously.

This thesis has found that the portrayal of the *Refus Global* by communities of interest and interpretation changed abruptly from the "Great Darkness" to the Quiet Revolution. The Duplessis-era communities studied in depth— Québec's mainstream media and the Church— accorded a surprising amount of attention to the self-printed, amateurish manifesto penned by a group of mostly-unknown young artists. This was unusual considering these institutions' tight personal, financial and social alliances with Duplessis, which gave them close ties to power. At the time, however, cracks were starting to emerge in the hegemonic structure as an undercurrent of discontent ran through the province, especially in the younger generation and Québécois working in heavily-censored cultural fields. As an alternative publication in the form of a manifesto, the *Refus Global* thus represented a physical manifestation of the potential threat by these groups, which endangered the province's balance of hegemonic power. This thesis has shown through critical discourse and frame analysis that these unstable societal conditions led the State, Church, and media to deem the repression of the *Refus Global* necessary, employing repressive strategies to diminish its impact.

In 1960, the Quiet Revolution began a new era in Québec with the election of Lesage's Liberal Party, which carried out extensive institutional overhauls. This thesis has found that the State's renewed prioritization of Québec's cultural sector to portray societal change led to the adoption of the *Refus Global* by the dominant discourse. The *Refus Global*, which summed up "Great Darkness" tensions pertaining to the clergy and cultural censorship, came to be portrayed by the new dominant discourse as a sign that the province had undergone a complete transformation. It thus became a site of affirmation of power, a portrayal that was further cemented as the manifesto's signatories represented Québec on the world stage during Expo 67, illustrating the province's artistic and social modernity.

Concurrently, however, this thesis has found that the *Refus Global*'s wider community of practice held onto the *Refus Global* as a site of contestation of power, continuing to portray it as a counter-hegemonic alternative publication. Its spirit of resistance lived on through protest and radical media as a parallel to its portrayal by the dominant discourse. Despite societal changes, its status as a site of contestation of power remained strong.

Future investigation: Commemorations carry the Refus Global through time

This thesis has examined the continuities and changes in the portrayal of the *Refus Global* by focusing on the time period from 1948 to 1970 and examining how the wide-reaching changes between the "Great Darkness" and Quiet Revolution affected communities' portrayals of the

manifesto. Future research on the *Refus Global*'s roles as a site of contestation and affirmation of power, as well as its varying portrayals by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice, could further expand its scope from the Quiet Revolution to present-day through the study of its major anniversaries.

Several authors have researched the *Refus Global*'s commemorations. Dubois states that the *Refus Global*'s cycle of anniversaries every decade is a phenomenon that continuously gives communities an opportunity to make a connection between 1948 and their own time, ensuring the manifesto's longevity (Dubois, 2013, p. 89). Similarly, Deschamps states that commemorations have played a key role in transforming the *Refus Global* into a "collective reminder" for the people of Québec, symbolizing their shared history and serving as a beacon of modern Québec (Deschamps, 1998, p. 176). Studying the *Refus Global*'s anniversaries through a critical cultural studies approach and an alternative framework, as this thesis has done, would lend a new point of view to the analysis of its commemorations. Mainstream media, museums, and government entities use these celebrations to highlight the values and issues that are relevant at the time, portraying a progressive image of the province. However, examining the portrayal of the *Refus Global* by alternative and activist media during its anniversaries would be a useful tool through which to examine the debates of these eras. Exploring how these members of the *Refus Global*'s community of practice portrayed the manifesto to resist hegemonic power in each decade—and in relation to which social and political issues—would present an unpolished version of Québec history.

For example, during the most recent iteration of the *Refus Global*'s commemoration in 2018, important figures from Québec's cultural sector reflected on the manifesto's legacy after 70 years. They inserted it into current debates to evaluate its current relevance. Most notably, Algonquin-French multidisciplinary artist Caroline Monnet brought up the idea of an Indigenous *Refus Global*, which she stated would "break more traditionalist, conservative, paternalistic concepts, which is somewhat what the *Refus Global* achieved at the time" (Radio-Canada, 2018, para. 18-20). In her interpretation of the *Refus Global*'s legacy, Monnet thus wielded the *Refus Global* as a symbol of avant-garde art while acknowledging its current relevance. Her application of the *Refus Global*'s spirit onto a modern form of contestation of power continued the manifesto's legacy in the intersection between art and activism. Even after seventy years, the portrayal of the *Refus Global* as an activist text lived on in its surrounding community of practice- in this case, artist-activists. In the same interview, signatory Françoise Sullivan remarked that "every decade, the question ["what to remember?"] is brought up again" which she observed "marks the weight of its heritage" (Radio-Canada, 2018, para. 2). Considering Monnet's idea, Sullivan stated that if the Indigenous community were to publish a new *Refus Global*, she would read it with great interest (para. 5). Sullivan evidently approved of the manifesto's recontextualization into a new artistic struggle, carrying on the legacy of the legendary manifesto as a site of resistance. Such activist case studies enliven research on the *Refus Global*, making the case for its continued relevance in alternative media.

Continued relevance?

Françoise de Repentigny, on the other hand, is not convinced that the *Refus Global* remains relevant. To her, the reuse of the manifesto is excessive and does not necessarily advance any social issue:

I'm not sure that the Refus Global's spirit survives today. It's a different spirit. We are closer to the United States today. We have other approaches with the new information media. All of that is changing. So I'm not sure it needs to continue. It's part of our history and our evolution, the Refus Global, but evolution can be done differently.

So to address your last question "what factors do you attribute the longevity of the Refus Global to?" I'm not too interested in answering that. The Refus Global is still there. Except we're somewhere else. It has had its effect, it's come a long way. It went a long way at a time when it was vital, then it became less vital. There was the Quiet Revolution in 1960, and then life went on in a different way. You can't just pull out the Refus Global all the time. Today's society has changed a lot since 1948, and it's still changing. The Refus Global has had its journey—it has had its good and bad effects, but it has made its way.

You could make a new Refus Global, but adapted to what is happening today. What the manifesto wanted to evolve in 1948 is different from today. It's always better to evolve anyway. If we stop evolving, we stay where we are, and it doesn't work. That's it. Borduas understood that. He shared that with the very young artists. The Automatists had all joined Borduas because the Refus Global responded to the society of the time, to the needs of that time. The needs today are different. So it wouldn't necessarily be the same (Françoise de Repentigny, personal communication, October 5, 2021).

In her reflection on the *Refus Global's* journey, de Repentigny echoes many concerns that have arisen over time about the continued study and commemoration of the manifesto. How can it continue to be recontextualized over 70 years and keep its original meaning? How can it still apply to a society that is so completely different from the world in which it was published? Is it time to retire its readaptations in favour of a "new *Refus Global*" by a new group of artists, more clearly representing current-day issues? De Repentigny's point of view is especially interesting as a member of the *Refus Global's* community of practice who is still active in the art world today. It brings about contemplation on what is to be gained from the insistence by communities of interest, interpretation, and practice on keeping the *Refus Global* current in Québec society. This question is also reflected by scholars like Dubois (2013) and Warren (2018), who believe its meaning is gradually fading. However, there is much to be gained from the study of the *Refus Global* manifesto.

Employing a critical cultural studies framework and examining the journey of the *Refus Global* through an alternative framework, as this thesis has done, illustrates wider trends in the study of art activism, and social movement as a whole. The analysis of this counter-hegemonic medium's path in a transforming province illustrates the tendency of dominant powers to adopt the avant-garde and incorporate discontent in toned-down forms. As Hall states, hegemonic powers will always adjust to defiance and "articulate the different areas of contestation into a regime of rule" (Hall, 1998, p. 168). This thesis' findings have aligned with this concept through the analysis of the *Refus Global's* adoption into the dominant hegemonic framework.

However, studying the *Refus Global* yields an optimistic message as well. Even through hegemonic conditions, changing regimes, and countless reinterpretations and uses, "there can be no total incorporation or absorption of the subordinate classes" (Hall, 1979, p. 333). The *Refus Global's* surviving revolutionary charge—its incitement of resistance, its inspiration to the

alternative— still remains, surviving as long as its polished, institutionally-approved alter-ego. Its continuing influence in the margins at the intersection between art and activism is made evident by Caroline Monnet's discussion of a new *Refus Global* for the Indigenous art world at the manifesto's latest anniversary, showing that its message lives on. Cracks in the dominant framework will always exist, and with them, opportunities for change.

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