In 1985, I served on the final evaluation committee for Quebec's province-wide history examinations, the Lionel-Groulx competition for secondary school students taking the course in national history. The principle objective of this competition is to stimulate interest in national history among fifteen and sixteen year olds, and to place them in a situation where historical reflection is required. In 1984-85, 300 to 400 young people from all regions of Quebec wrote this examination, which consists of an objective test of knowledge and a subjective exam in which students must respond to two obligatory questions. The national evaluation committee studied forty dossiers from regional winners—thirty-three conventionally written tests, four comic strips, and three audio-visual montages. This article is based upon my analysis of the thirty-three written responses to one of the required questions.

In answering a precise question on the recent history of Quebec, the participants presented a narrative account that can be summarized as follows:

From the end of the war until the end of the 1950s, Quebec was under the yoke of a man who was the incarnation of obscurantism, tradition, backwardness, and autocracy. This man, Maurice Duplessis, ruled over a society where religious authority was omnipresent, where
American capital had a stranglehold on the provincial economy, and where the practice of political patronage was endemic. The Quebeccois society of 1944-1959 was an unjust society par excellence, a society turned in upon itself, a society where the exercise of governmental power took place behind closed doors. All in all, the years 1944-1959 were a period of grande noirceur (great darkness).

Then came the transformation. From 1960 on, with the ascent to power of a closely knit group led by Jean Lesage, everything underwent an instantaneous modification. This group, and particularly this individual, the liberator incarnate, inaugurated a golden era, the Quiet Revolution of Quebec. An aggiornamento, a vigorous spirit of modernity, began to bring fundamental freedom and transported an entire society to a new plane of existence. In 1960, there was a fundamental break with the past: the history of Quebec recommenced, the givens changed, nothing was as it had been. The society reconstructed itself in its form and in its essence.

I found myself disturbed by these thirty-three winning papers, and as I read them I asked myself several questions: Why do the young, who had no contact with the individuals they are placing in the forefront of history and who did not experience the episodes they are writing about, have such extreme, polarized images of the modern history of Quebec? Why do they envisage the post-war years as a period of great darkness? Why do they consider 1960 as a turning point which marked the beginning of an era where all appeared possible? What is the origin of this dichotomized version of the past and how has this particular representation come to have such a hold on their memory?

I had some immediate answers to these questions, all of them obvious to the point of banality. For example: the narrative account of the students is but a caricature, a badly assimilated or even false rendition of a complex of otherwise credible, subtle, and objectively based interpretations. Or again: the students' account is merely a gross simplification, as their language tends to exaggerate differences that are far less extreme in reality. In sum, I thought, the problem might simply be that of age, of the vices of apprenticeship and of incompetence, linked to the difficulties of digesting a mass of facts from assigned readings and class discussions.

But such answers do not help us understand how perceptions of the past are formed. Could it be that the students' unusual memory of history poses the more fundamental question of how to understand the conditions under which a particular way of knowing appears and becomes dominant? Can these essays help us
understand how objective knowledge and collective memory combine in the formation of a historical perception? Increasingly, I came to feel that the principal theoretical issue posed by the student answers is the following: what were the precise configurations that produced their commonly held understanding of Duplessism and of the Quiet Revolution? To create, in Foucault’s term, an archaeology of such knowledge became the aim of my project.1

My argument will be that the remembrance Quebecois have of their recent history, as found in these student papers, reveals the boundaries of what was, for them, historically imaginable—the border between a thinkable and an unthinkable history of Quebec. Their responses reveal the framework of a developed social discourse—a discursive structure that can be understood as composed of a distinct problematic or essential core issue of concern, a particular shared vocabulary, and a set of common symbols and images. Emerging in Quebec life during the 1960s and 1970s, this discourse has helped to shape, retroactively, a view of the past by defining, literally, the actual “space” of the thinkable.

In so doing, the conditions for the emergence of an unthinkable history of Quebec are presented as well. By this I mean not something unreal or non-existent, but rather a history deprived of enunciative force by falling outside the hegemony of meaning of the dominant discourse—unthinkable because it is unreachable through this discourse’s problematic, language, imagery, and culture of evocation and figuration. This hegemony, far from being confined to areas of direct confrontation such as the press, current events, and direct ideological commentary, insinuates itself into the discourse of knowledge, supplying it with the themes and categories used to apprehend reality, historical and otherwise.2 To sum up: In order to explore the origin of the students’ historical memory, we must clarify the fundamental problematic through which their body of objective knowledge about Quebec from 1944-66 has been derived. This problematic, the foundation of a regime of truth, occupies a central position in the discursive complex at the core of a broader paradigm of cognition.

Our exploration begins by mapping the historical memory of

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young Quebecois through a detailed study of the thirty-three essays presented at the provincial history examination, and proceeds to a discussion of the sources of this memory. The conclusion summarizes my principal points of analysis, and develops some of the more theoretical considerations raised by this investigation.

I. A Narrative of the Past

Generally speaking, the students’ essays all take the form of a narrative that readily reveals the logical and mythological structure of the discourse at the core of their perception. But before we can examine this structure and what it may mean, we must first consider the role that the examination question itself may have played in structuring the students’ answers.

1. A Question That Shapes the Narrative

Preceded by a longer quotation taken from Dale Thomson’s very imposing biography of Jean Lesage, the question was as follows:

The attitude of Lesage and his colleagues towards the union was very positive: They saw it as a constructive force oriented towards the “renewal of Quebecois society.” . . . All the same, Lesage refused to seriously consider the eventual syndicalization of the civil service, and responded that there was another basic principle at stake: “the Queen did not negotiate with her subjects.”

In what ways was the attitude of Lesage more positive than that of Duplessis?

This formulation of the question clearly prefigures the nature of the possible response, serving as a framework for reflection, declaring its intent, and designating the boundary between what is reliable (what Thomson states) and what is less reliable (what the student thinks). Not surprisingly, almost all the students structured their responses around the key words planted by the question: positive attitude, constructive force, renewal of Quebecois society. The answers differed mainly in the way students furnished this framework of interpretation with examples they considered convincing, or how they commented upon the quotation or restated the question in their own terms. There were only a very few students who departed from the schema proposed by the question, in say-

ing, for instance, that Lesage had “no clear identity,” or that he “did not have the leadership qualities of his predecessor.” But even in these cases, the conventional polarized understanding of Duplessism and Lesagism still dominated their answers to a great extent.

Guided by a question that focused on the two men, the students first expressed the histories of the two eras through the personality of each leader, and only after that as historical episodes with a distinct substantive reality. Thus Duplessis was conservative, a friend of the capitalists, anti-union, and a dictator; he ruled over a traditional society that was asleep, immobile, closed and turned inward, without plans for the future, a society of “great darkness” literally offered up to foreign interests. Lesage was intelligent, a humanist, and even socialist (because he proceeded with the government takeover of certain private enterprises). He governed during an era of progress, an era where democracy flourished and where anything was possible, an era of renovation and restoration, the Quiet Revolution.

The question itself thus tends to preclude independent reflection on the part of its readers. In how it does this, it is a good example of the discourse of knowledge within which the eras of both Duplessis and Lesage are understood. Take the word renewal, for example: this introduces a teleological idea of progress, advance, modernity, reconstruction; the rendering of the new from the old, dysfunctional, out of style, and anachronistic. Or consider represented by Lesage and his colleagues: here the idea of collective government was suggested. As the mainspring of a larger group with a common purpose, and driven by a desire to make collective decisions, Lesage’s group was in this sense the polar opposite of the government of Duplessis, which was the incarnation of its chief, an intransigent dictator incapable of accepting any concentrations of power other than the power of the state, the Catholic church, and capital. And finally, positive attitude: this term virtually compels a favorable vision of Lesage and his government, in opposition to the suggested vision of Duplessis. The perception of the two men is thus polarized, which translates into a continual, irreducible opposition of the two eras and their respective principal characters: Lesage is presented as “ideal,” as a god, a savior, and a liberator; while Duplessis is caricatured as his exact opposite—as a devil, a tyrant, and an oppressor.
2. Narrative and the Students' Perception of History

For all of this, however, the students' answers can not be fully explained by the logical preconstruction carried in the question. Their narratives were richer and more complex than this framework would imply, running beyond it and overtaking the question in several ways: they themselves were writing from within a broader discourse of history that we need to examine more closely. My reading of the examination essays suggests three major dimensions structuring how students articulate Quebecois history at the time of Duplessis and Lesage, and consequently how they perceive its society during these periods.

a. The network of discursive interaction

First, the students' answers appeared to be more the product of deductive and logical reasoning than the result of a concerned reflection based upon placing historical facts in proper perspective. Moreover, close analysis of the answers shows them to be shaped by what I shall call a network of discursive interaction—an interactive network of words. By this I mean the construction of links between words made relatively similar through their ideal symbolic value. In one essay, for instance, we read:

Duplessis was traditionalist and nationalist, therefore completely opposed to progress. Lesage was the father of the Quiet Revolution, i.e. the era of profound change. Change=progress=positive.4

In this instance, “therefore,” “i.e.,” and the equal sign are not mere conjunctions. They exemplify, rather, a structure of logical thought articulated through deduction, and in this sense related to the logic of an equation: if x=y and y=z, then x=z.5

A network of discursive interaction is not organized randomly. In the case of Quebecois society under Lesage, it is structured around the slogan that spurred the 1960 electoral campaign of the Liberal party of Quebec: “C'est le temps que ça change,” “It's time for a change.” Other expressions are as logically consequent to

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4Taken from the students' answers, the quotations appearing in this article faithfully respect the original texts. Some additions or reformulations, bracketed, have been inserted to clarify difficult passages.

5This type of deductive reasoning is surprising since contemporary historical pedagogy has, for the past several years, been advocating an inductive procedure of contextualization, where groups are privileged in relation to particular contextual elements or developments, and where historical reasoning is favored over any other form of apprehending the past.
Quebec, 1944-1966: A historical overview

The Union Nationale party, under the leadership of Maurice Duplessis, governed Quebec from 1944 until shortly after the death of Duplessis in 1959. During these fifteen years Quebec underwent major transformations. A large number of households achieved a regular level of mass consumerism, there was a rapid commodification of natural resources, particularly those of the central-northern region, and the population became more open to the most banal influences of American culture.

The postwar economic growth of Quebec was based as much upon direct American investment as upon its own business development, which depended to a certain extent on authoritarian labor legislation. As this suggests, notwithstanding its conservative stand on public finance and budgetary equilibrium, the government came to intervene more and more in the regulation of civil society.

Seeking to solicit the support of diverse categories of voters for its program of modernizing Quebec, however, the Union Nationale presented a rather vague public face best summarized by the ambiguous expression of Onesime Gagnon, Duplessis' Minister of Finance: "Let us be traditional and progressive."

At the end of the 1950s, the inherent contradictions of Quebec's regime of growth became manifest in a severe recession. In this difficult context the Liberal Party of Quebec, led by Jean Lesage, won the elections of 1960, and remained in power until 1966. For Quebec's principal problems the Liberal Party sought solutions through a technocratic model of efficient planning and administration. A vast number of planning projects were launched, many of which came to fruition in the second half of the 1960s. Quebecois society then underwent a restructuring quite similar to that experienced in other states. In Quebec, it became called the Quiet Revolution. Following this process of technocratic restructuring, the figure of the state changed instead: social forces modified the way they enter in antagonistic relation, and new social categories emerged. Deeply undermined by the recession of 1982, the technocratic model gave way to a new movement having as its watchword "the search for excellence," which now focuses on the stimulation of competition and the increasing of productivity.
this first fundamental proposition as a corollary derived from a theorem. From this key expression, the true matrix of thought, the answer must follow a chain of linked ideas that possesses its own constructive logic and soon has no necessary connection to the reality of history, even if it may happen to coincide with this reality. The student, once started on this chain of association, imprisoned within the terms of its constructive logic, can hardly avoid producing a caricature of the past. This caricature, however, must be distinguished from that ensuing simply from an inadequate knowledge of facts: it originates in a relatively autonomous dynamic, as the next two examples help make clear:

Jean Lesage wanted the evolution of the Quebecois society, therefore the change of working conditions. For this, it was necessary to favor the unions to a certain degree. Jean Lesage wanted his country to evolve from an agricultural state to a more advanced industrial state. Promoting the unions was therefore an obligatory direction for him to take.

The arrival of Jean Lesage in 1960 was the end of the period called the great darkness of 1945-60. In this period unemployment rose dramatically, the people wanted to know if they were going to eat or whether they were to take their bowl of soup at the charity houses across Canada . . . because (the workers) who were without jobs could not benefit from unemployment insurance or from social assistance. Lesage permitted the integration of women into the workplace. Duplessis favored the installation of multinationals in Quebec and during this time the United States exploited our natural resources to their profit. Lesage was truly the instigator of the Quiet Revolution initiated in 1960.

In these two examples, the slogan “It’s time for change,” even though absent from the students’ answers, is clearly the lens through which the two societies are viewed and refigured. The image of passage from an agricultural state to an industrial state is especially germane: it has little meaning except in relation to a preconceived idea of change, since few scholars could argue that this image describes the actual situation of Quebec after the war.

Similarly revealing are the statements that the unemployed workers could not benefit from unemployment insurance before 1960, or that women were unable to enter the workforce during the same period—these are flatly incorrect historically, but totally comprehensible and comfortable within a preconceived idea of change. That is, they are natural statements for one considering this period as a precursor to something subsequent, as located on an evolutionary staircase where the year 1960 represents a kind of landing, or turning point. In this structure, there can only be
pre-1960 and post-1960, with everything before that date seen as globally bad, a kind of protocivilization, and everything after this date, the beginning of a glorious aggiornamento, seen as by definition good.

In this discursive network, the central expression through which Quebecois society under Duplessis is viewed and refigured is the "great darkness." Quebecois historiography and sociography has consecrated this expression; it is often used by professional researchers to create an image of the Quebec of this period. Over time, it has become central in the elaboration of a scientific discourse about Quebec's past. From the expression "great darkness" flows a stream of complementary words characterizing Quebecois society: traditional, asleep, conservative, backward, closed off, miserable, poor, immobile, unjust, autocratic, etc. Before having any real contact with the society they are supposed to depict, these words develop their meaning in reference to the framework from which they are derived. They have an autonomous signification, intrinsic to the interactive network to which they belong, and relatively independent of the empirical reality of history.

b. Propositional couples and binary reasoning

The second general observation arising from the analysis of the students' exam answers is that Duplessis and Lesage were systematically counterposed to each other to the extent that one is reconstructed as the reverse of the other, regardless of the specific traits of their respective personalities. There are no longer any real, historical figures. There is only a fundamental abstract opposition, unchangeable, which comes to replace the individuals themselves. The player is a puppet, and only the opposition is alive and active. The following examples illustrate my point:

Duplessis has shown, more than once, that he was on the side of the bosses . . . Lesage supported the workers, and because of this they cooperated with him.

Jean Lesage was a modernist, contrary to Duplessis who was a traditionalist. He wanted to modernize the province of Quebec, and stayed very open to the union's ideas through understanding that this would help to improve the economy and the way of life of Quebec. Duplessis preferred that all of the citizens remained ignorant of what they were deprived of.

Jean Lesage had more confidence in the Quebecois, and in their ability to develop their own economy. Contrary to this, Duplessis did not
believe in Quebecois leadership and favored foreign capital. He wanted a favorable climate for the owners, so that the Americans would be interested in investing in Quebec. Lesage was more attentive to and had more confidence in the Quebecois worker.

One could multiply the examples infinitely, but what is one to make of them? It seems that the students reason in binary structures, where the elements are indissolubly linked, leading to the emergence of propositional couples—two affirmative propositions where one is practically the exact inverse of the other. The boundary between each proposition is, in this argumentative structure, absolute: there is no room for doubt or for nuance, things are black or white, clear or opaque, good or bad. Lesage could not logically share any characteristics with Duplessis because he was conceived as the diametric opposite. The same applied to Duplessis in relation to Lesage. The same for each era, the one in relation to the other. The students' narrative account presents us with two foreign societies, cut apart, irreconcilable. In this narrative, Lesage is a heroic savior. Without roots in the past, he appeared, turned things upside down, and made everything new—veni, vidi, vici. The change was instantaneous and stunning.

c. The mythological framework of the narrative account

A third major characteristic of the students' answers is that their reasoning was framed within a teleological vision of the history of Quebec, and structured according to a political mythology in which the three principal terms are conspiracy, the savior, and a golden era. I term such a conceptual structure a sociogram, by which I mean a preconceived narrative account that molds everything and fills the "forgetful spaces" of individual memory and of personal culture. There are many such sociograms that traverse and organize discourse: the sociogram of the impoverished man who remains so because he wants to be so, the sociogram of the conspirator or traitor unmasked by a savior in the community who then establishes a new order and inaugurates a golden era. My hypothesis is that the conventionally accepted interpretation of Quebecois history after the war is inspired by this last sociogram-

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6 Elaborated by Claude Duchet, the concept of the sociogram has been taken up by Regine Robin. See her paper "Does oral history give a voice to those who are without, or is life history beyond the domain of power?" (L'histoire orale rend-elle la parole à ceux qui en sont privés ou le récit de vie est-il un lieu hors-pouvoir?), a paper presented at the Fifth International Oral History Conference, Barcelona, March 1985.
matic chain. Between this interpretation and the lived objectivity of history there is no clear line of demarcation. In effect, the sociogram is rooted in a historical reality which it nonetheless transmutes, producing an original configuration, an amalgam of legendary imagery and the veracity of facts. It is this that we find, without variation, at the core of the students' narrative accounts. Let us examine this more closely.

i. The sociogram of conspiracy

One of the dominant organizing sociograms of the students' answers, conspiracy has a particular content: the collusion between Duplessis, capitalists, multinationals, the police, and the state, all of which were against workers and citizens. In the structure of this sociogram, Duplessis is recast as "an unjust dictator starved for absolute power, who let the bosses and owners abuse the workers, who was arrogant, full of hatred and manipulative, close-minded and stupid, wanting to leave society in the darkness, authoritative and headstrong, considering the industrial workers as a mere tool, without health or feelings."

Such an historical composition of an individual, and through him the "composition of a society," comes close to what Raoul Girardet calls the myth of conspiracy, a myth with almost invariable characteristics: the secret machinations, corruption, degradation, ploys, and preoccupations of the players on stage; the presence of foreign invaders whose orders are executed by local agents; the conspirators' hold on the principal means of control and power in a society including newspapers, financial institutions, and government.7

Thus in the students' answers, Duplessis is always seen as an agent of the foreign multinationals, the exploiters of the natural and human resources of Quebec. He appears as the absolute ruler of a society he personally prevented from achieving any autonomy, a society with consequently limited horizons of thought. As the controller of the government's destiny (for was he not the incontestable "Chief?") he muzzled the press, manipulated the police, and acted in collusion with his friends, the capitalists. His maneuvers led to secret deals with the high clergy in the backrooms of government and the church. He solidified power by the manipulation of the rural vote and by recourse to tactics that were themselves

evidence of the debasement of electoral process. By smearing his adversaries with such terms as anarchist, by using force to subdue worker uprisings, and by threatening to incarcerate suspected communists, Duplessis wanted to keep all of the province in "great darkness." The measure of his power in Quebec was the backwardness in which he held the province.

No one could contest the presence of a certain truth in this formulation. As Girardet observes, "in almost all of its manifestations and expressions, [the myth of conspiracy] can more or less be grounded in relatively precise factual givens." But this is somewhat beside the point: more fundamental is the degree to which the formulation regards the Duplessis era through a historicity that is not its own. Duplessis is placed in the center of an anachronistic universe, where facts are not situated in real time but rather are subordinate to an imagery of which Duplessis is the focus. This historical imagery determines the facts that are selected, their relation to each other, and the broader representation of society composed from them.

Thus we read in the essays that Duplessis ruled over a traditional agricultural society, a society where the workers are poor and which evolves very slowly, if at all. Any observer knows that this representation of Quebec after the war does not stand up to close scrutiny. Yet it seems both logical and inevitable from the standpoint of the sociogram that plays such a determining role in the formation of the narrative account. In this sense, Duplessis and his society exist only as an anterior movement to the advent of a new order, as the antithesis of this order. Their present is only the negative inversion of that which will be their future.

ii. The sociogram of the savior

This is the second link of the sociogrammatic chain organizing the students' exam answers. Following Girardet's thesis, who in turn relies upon the work of Eliade, Dumezil, and Levi-Strauss, the myth of the savior is structured around the following characteristics: In the beginning an individual is found (invariably a man) who senses that the people—passive, inert, and helpless—need and are waiting for a leader. He draws them to himself with powerful rushes of emotion, hope, and unity. A true meteorite of history, he is the archetypal visionary, the one who knows how to guide his people towards the future. A man of destiny, a magnificent combatant, a remarkable initiator of events, he refuses to suc-
cumb to fate, but seizes it instead. He is the expression of the needs of his people at a critical moment of their history. He offers himself as a model, but a reachable model in which each person can hope to recognize himself or herself. His arrival shatters the monotony of daily life, destroys the old prohibitions, inverts communally accepted rules of behavior, and liberates forces too long dormant. He brings a definitive rupture with the past, and institutes a new order that marks the beginning of a golden era.

It is perhaps unnecessary to quote once again the students' passages where Lesage is described as a savior. For the most part, the portrait is exemplary: Lesage refused to place the destiny of the province in the hands of foreigners and capitalists, proving his extraordinary compassion towards the exploited workers to whom he knew how to listen. Particularly concerned with the needs of Quebec, he knew what was good for the province: he understood its problems and arrived already possessing the necessary solutions. His project was lucid and incontestable: renew, modernize, wake up, put an end to the “great darkness,” take Quebecois society out of the gloom. This project corresponded to the desire of the people, who placed all of their confidence in the man. In return, he helped them improve themselves, and become aware of the value they had as a people.

Once again, the entanglement of factual reality and of sociogrammatic discourse is evident. But here too, the students’ answers arise from a historicity in which one man—now, Lesage—occupies a central place. Symbol of a coherent and complete vision of the collective destiny of a community, Lesage knew what to do. A man of action above all, a knowledgeable historic subject, he embodied the solution just as Duplessis was the incarnation of evil. He was the axiomatic evidence of change, as Duplessis was the evidence of backwardness. The two extremes map the space of the thinkable.

iii. The sociogram of the golden era

This is the culmination and summation of the sociogrammatic trilogy structuring the students' narrative of postwar Quebec. The myth of the golden era structures itself, according to Girardet, around two principal axes. The first one is the fall and the degeneration of an old order, and the second is the passage to a state of enlightenment where the essential values manifested are those of innocence and purity, friendship, solidarity, and communion.
The students’ perception of the Quiet Revolution can be summarized as follows:

The period inaugurated by Jean Lesage was marked by cooperation between the state and the unions. An intelligent and open modernist, optimist, and humanist, Lesage knew how to speak to the workers, and he wanted them to achieve a better standard of living. He had complete faith in the unions, and never used violence against them. He also was attentive to the problems of the population as a whole. Rejoicing over the election of his government, the population saw its social and working conditions improve. Particularly aware of the solutions to the problems afflicting Quebec, Lesage knew what to do from his first days of power. In the course of his mandate the population awakened, the unions contributed positively to social evolution, and high finance and the capitalists were not as privileged as they were under Duplessis. Lesage put an end to the exploitation of the workers by the owners.

“We are not surprised,” professed one student, “by the great expansion of Quebecois society under his rule.” In wanting to create a new society, Lesage, at the head of a collective government, literally accelerated history. “Everything was possible, everything was bubbling over.”

This representation of Quebecois society under Lesage revolves around three axes: 1) the absence of conflict and the primacy of cooperation, 2) the end to the rule of capital and the beginning of a period of grace for the workers, 3) the birth of a society united around and collectively involved in a common project. The actual historical reality of a period in history with well-defined contours, 1960-1966, dissolves, of course, in the face of such a beatific and idealized vision. But regardless, the sociogram of the golden era fashions elements of information, true and not true, into the image of the Quiet Revolution so readily offered by the students. And inevitably, this sociogrammatically structured Quiet Revolution appears as the exact inverse of the era of “great darkness.” It is the state of grace, finally realized. It is the rupture with the past definitely resolved.

II. Searching for the Origin of a Collective Memory

This brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of this article: Why is this particular memory of the past, this way of remembering, so pervasive and controlling in the students’ exam answers? Starting with the conception that knowledge is as much cultural as it is scientific, I wish to show that the students’ nar-
rative accounts have two distinct points of origin: 1) the elaboration during the years 1960-70 of a new body of knowledge based on an emergent problematic that assumed Quebec to be an exemplary case of a society passing from traditional to modern, and 2) the emergence, from the mid-1950s on, of a social movement I shall call the technocracy, in which intellectuals occupied a privileged position by virtue of their function as producers of such knowledge. By technocracy I do not mean a professional category or even a social class, in the strict sense of the term. Rather, I refer to a social movement with fluid configurations and no necessary involvement in partisan politics, a group that saw itself as holding a value system the opposite of that taken to be represented and supported by the Duplessis regime. Its members embraced an idea of modernity defined by intellectuals who saw themselves as progressives in search of an alternative to the society defined by the then-dominant theoreticians of survival.

My hypothesis is that the technocracy’s narrative of its own history has become confused with that of the province. Indeed, the memory of the past found in the students’ essays virtually conflates the two, at the level of immanent logic, or what has been called the discursive complex. In Patrick Tort’s interpretation, this concept designates an open network of discursive and transdiscursive determinations articulated within a text. The notion of text itself is complex, in that it refers to the totality of the “words” of both scholars and non-scholars, with a scientific and an ideological discourse co-existing in each. The discourse of knowledge is therefore a combination of factual and ideological logic, formally expressed in a text whose bounds and content define a regime of truth. Captured by this frame of discourse, the students have been led to internalize and reproduce the regime of truth it represents.

1. The Elaboration of an Axiomatic Problematic

There is a special sense in which one can say that the perception the students have of the Duplessis era and the Quiet Revolution is indeed fully accurate—in that it reflects with fidelity the regime of historical truth produced by the technocracy in the course of its own ascent. We therefore need to look closely at the problematic elaborated by certain intellectuals at the heart of the technocratic movement, who understood themselves to be shapers

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of history. We need to see how this problematic functioned as a referential matrix by which they understood and represented the historical evolution of Quebec after the war.

a. Reading the situation with a view to action

In a recent work concerning the relations between science, culture, and modernity in Quebec, Marcel Fournier examines how the image of traditional and archaic French Canada, incarnated by the Duplessis regime, gradually established its hold on the collective memory, and why, inversely, all Quebecois history since 1960 has been interpreted in terms of a vision of the rise to modernity.

Fournier demonstrates that during the 1950s a new intelligentsia articulated itself, announcing its intention to redefine Quebec, to revive it with new contests, new stakes, new challenges, and a new historic meaning. They possessed a "kinship of spirit," being of the same generation. They shared a sensibility about the ensemble of problems facing Quebec, and they developed a shared program of perception, thought, and action for dealing with it. Influenced by study and travels in Europe and in the United States, they proceeded to a rereading of the history of Quebec in terms of a problematic centered on its evolution from a traditional society to a modern society.

What was critical was the place at which they situated themselves on this reconstructed ladder of time. By defining as historically necessary and legitimate the program for which they were providing intellectual direction and assuming responsibility, they legitimized their own social mobility as well. In resolutely opting for industrialism, they defined themselves as central players in the trajectory of this destiny. Theologians of modernity, they wanted to place themselves outside of the traditional ecclesiastic ideology and to define a French Canada "beyond theology and the customs of a nationalism of race."

As a function of their principal project, they began to generate

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10 It would have been interesting to explore the concept of an intellectual generation, notably elaborated by J.F. Sirinelli in his book Khôgneux et normaliens des années vingt: Histoire politique d’une génération d’intellectuels (1919-1945). (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
a new body of learning, a knowledge, the precise aim of which was to expand their vision of the meaning of history. Clearly their initial questions, their problematic, their topics of study, and their intellectual goals all helped determine the empirical content of this work. And this content, in turn, defined the horizon of their conclusions. All this made possible a challenge to the truth of established historical understandings.

b. *The meaning of history*

The Quiet Revolution refers to a complex period in which the function and the very body of the state were significantly transformed. It marked the ascent to power of a social group who, having invested in the organizational network of a party, looked to reorient the methods of development characteristic of Quebec during this era. This project became even more imperative when the province underwent, starting in 1957, a very severe economic recession. Strongly inspired by the idea of modernity and the possibility of the saving intervention of the state, this social class created its legitimacy through mobilizing the population around inspiring aspirations and stakes: participation, planning, socio-economic development, modernization, democracy, the right to well-being, and the promotion of a strong, francophone Quebec, open to the world. These notions, a true *novlangue* of a social class and of an intellectually defined cultural experience, constituted the lens through which, beginning with the arrival of Lesage in power, a convenient interpretation of the period was projected.

The technocrats who now took hold within the state apparatus as well as in other areas of power literally redefined French-Canadian society. If as a paradigmatic trilogy nationalism, agriculturalism, and messianism had led to a dead end, it was necessary to re-imagine the evolution of French-Canadian society. Industrialism, statism, and a more modern nationalism became the three keys making the renaissance of Quebec literally imaginable. The historical trajectory of French-Canadian society was viewed and reviewed through the prism of this paradigm, until it could be seen as leading to the inauguration of a new golden era. Historical time was itself reconstructed as a function of this ideal. Thus if the government of Adelard Godbout (1939-44) is interpreted as a positive phase in that it expands the idea of modernism and spreads the reformation of the political apparatus, the Duplessis period must be seen as a period of total stagnation and great
darkness in that modernization and the project of a technocratic society are rejected as values—notwithstanding the fact that in reality the discourse of Duplessis contained as many modernist sayings as traditionalist ones. If history is seen as evolving through the functioning of an ideal, and if that ideal is the dawning of a technocratic society, then history must be seen as having direction, as marching towards this end.

c. The reconstruction of time and the definition of historical consciousness

During the 1950s, intellectuals committed to the idea of progress had very little chance to advance in the social hierarchy. They criticized the Duplessis society from a vantage presuming that knowledge should be a central means for the acquisition of power within a society, real or imaginary. They viewed Quebec as backward because it did not progress according to a model of society in which intellectuals were highly visible and their competence recognized. The image of Duplessist society suggested by this critique was precisely the antithesis of what was considered the ideal of liberal democracy during this era. This implied that the passing of the Duplessis era would lead, naturally, to a time of recommencement, a time of hope made tangible and possible. But the critique of Duplessist society by the intelligentsia of the era had more than just negative signification and resonance. This critique aimed at creating an historical awareness of a social movement defined as the diametric opposite of that of its predecessors. To strengthen the image it had of itself and its project, the technocratic movement found it necessary to act not only on the level of political action, but by reconstructing, more deeply, the very notion of historical time in relation to the social framework. Thus it closely linked its formation and ascent to a moment at which a more general ineluctable movement of progress was initiated. It linked its own ascent to power to a more general inauguration of a golden era. This teleological mythic framework was the foundation of the intellectual production of the


12 It is interesting to note the extent to which the word "henceforth," as pronounced by Paul Sauvé, interim successor to Maurice Duplessis, is used by analysts in describing the period of "protochange" which characterized the one hundred days of his rule.
technocracy. A close analysis of the scientific writings and general literature dealing with the Duplessis era and the episode of the Quiet Revolution would certainly show the remarkable extent to which objective data and understandings became enclosed within this broader interactive network of connotation, signification, and interpretation—resulting in the reconstruction of the broader sociogrammatic chain. The real intellectual accomplishment of the technocracy thus became the construction of its own identity and the story of its own origin.

Even more, in the process the technocracy reconstituted itself within a broader mythic narrative, both as actor and as symbol. As a player in this real-life drama, the technocracy’s actual role was quite tentative, but as an idea, its role came to seem coherent, inscribed in an evident continuity—it embodied what Michel Maffesoli calls the “traditional development of a plan.” This narrative of ascent has epic struggles, its bloody confrontations, its complicity, and its moments of unity. It is also a narrative of justice, of a vision that is realized in liberation and the well-being of the people. Finally, it is a narrative of identity, of historical self-consciousness. It is a totalizing narrative, the foundation of a regime of truth.

In sum: the technocracy elaborated a temporal frame of reference, built a historical consciousness of “self” through the defiguration of the “other,” exorcised the original sin of the Quebecois, Duplessism, and composed a language through which everything that followed was perceived, evaluated, and identified and everything inconsistent rendered inexpressible. It constructed, that is, what can be called its own defensive memory (a negative reference, an Other, the Duplessis regime) and its offensive memory (the sense of historical self-consciousness). And it is precisely the resulting narrative of the Duplessis era and its aftermath, the technocracy’s version of its own history elaborated as a discursive complex, that we find reproduced without nuance in the exam answers of the students.

2. Within the Discursive Complex of the Technocracy

In the space available here, it would be impossible to demonstrate all these propositions, to prove with satisfaction that the configuration of the students’ narratives is in fact rooted in a problematic elucidated during the 1950s by intellectuals who gave themselves credit for the ascendant influence of reason on the col-
lective destiny of a community. This is because their creation of a discourse of knowledge involves the emergence of a new problematic and its diffusion by cultural intermediaries in all the constituent elements of the discourse—in the literary field, in cultural work, in science, philosophy, and political discourse. A full consideration would require that we examine the interactions among all these spheres, to consider them as elements in a broader intertextualilty and interdiscursivity.\footnote{For discussion of this concept, see Marc Angenot, “Intertextualité, interdiscursivité, discours social,” Revue de critique et de théorie littéraire 2, (1983), 101-112.}

What can be done here, however, is to approximate such an analysis by looking closely at the problematic elaborated by certain intellectuals at the heart of the technocratic movement, who understood themselves to be shapers of history. To do this, we will consider a text that aptly summarizes the technocracy’s social discourse, a text that in itself is a kind of incarnation of this discourse. I refer to what may perhaps be called the founding text of the technocratic movement—the essay by Pierre Elliot Trudeau, then an activist and university professor, entitled “The province of Quebec at the time of the strike.” This was the introduction to \textit{The Asbestos Strike}, an important book widely discussed at the time of its publication and for many years afterward.\footnote{The original French text of Trudeau’s introduction is more than ninety pages long, entitled “Le province du Québec au moment de la grève,” introduction to La grève de l’amiante, (Montréal: Éditions du jour, 1970 [1956]). The quotations below are from the English translation, “The province of Quebec at the time of the strike,” in \textit{The Asbestos Strike}, trans. James Boake, (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1974).}

\textit{a. The province of Quebec at the time of the strike: to historicize the negation of the Other.}

In its entirety, Trudeau’s text describes a society in contradiction with itself. The principle contradictions involve the quite evident distance between the society’s institutions and the state of its material development. The longest section of the text consists of an analysis of the principal institutions that “condition the thought of French Canadians and fix the framework of their actions.” These institutions maintain the backwardness of Quebec: they are, for Trudeau, the source of an idealistic and unrealistic theory of survival which features a blind condemnation of all social projects other than those endorsed by the “traditional elite.” But capitalists and workers, the central actors in the drama of material progress
The Asbestos Strike

In February, 1949, 5,000 miners launched a strike in the towns of Asbestos and Thetford-Mines, one hundred kilometers southeast of Montreal. The mobilization of the workers stemmed from very precise grievances: hard working conditions which caused a serious illness, asbestosis; low salaries; the claim by workers to what they felt were normal fringe benefits; and the company's disrespect for the workers right to strike. Many of these demands were central to the entire labor movement, which at that time was in waiting state, seeking to define its position in Quebec.

The strike quickly involved players not directly implicated in the conflict, in that it opened up rhetorical confrontations that involved key figures on the Quebec political scene, including Maurice Duplessis, the premier; Jean Marchand, president of an important central union, the CTCG, and Montreal's bishop, Monsignor Charbonneau. Echoed largely in the newspapers, the polemics contributed to a polarization of opinion, to raising the stakes of the conflict, and to shaping the perceptions of the larger issues for which the episode was a vehicle. More immediately and concretely, the strike dramatized the heavy-handed, provocative role of the provincial police in suppressing demonstrations, one of the sources for what became impressive evidence of solidarity between a part of the population and the miners.

In its negotiating strategy, Canadian Johns Mansville (one of the companies in the conflict) signaled its firm intention to control not just the regional manpower market, but the entire fabric of social relations and power in the company town. Its means for achieving this were classic and traditional: recourse to strikebreakers, the threat of eviction of miners from their homes, and intimidation of municipally elected officials. The government's open support of the negotiating demands of the company, especially the immediate return of the miners to work, is evidence of its intent to consolidate the monopolistic labor market in some regions of Quebec.

Lasting four months, the asbestos strike eventuated in a half-victory for the union. It ended, in the opinion of a lucid analyst of the era, Gilles Beausoleil, "when the company realized that it must, in the future, take into account the union and respect the will of the workers."
presented by history, develop in contradiction to the postulates of traditional thought. According to Trudeau, "any given list of union demands has done more to direct the destiny of our developing society than the innumerable wild imaginings of our official social thinkers."

Trudeau's text, which refers to elements of verifiable history and uses a scientific mode of writing, constitutes a long apologia for change. He depicts a society incapable of recognizing and dealing with the profound contradictions it engenders. To Trudeau, Quebec at the end of the 1950s is a world understood to be in its terminal phase. This vision determines the argumentative logic of the entire narrative: Quebecois society before the asbestos strike seemed to be clinging to a past long gone by, a society one must abandon as no longer appropriate to its era. The asbestos strike is presented as the moment where the distance between the material organization of the society and the nature of its institutions was, for once, fully understood, setting the stage for a new departure: there was a new history to be made.

b. The asbestos strike: the technocracy comes to life

Viewed as the apex of all the issues at stake in the reconstruction of society, the asbestos strike represents the veritable coming of life of the technocracy as a social movement. Or perhaps more precisely, it is the moment when the technocracy decided to appear in the fabric of the reconstructed society; the moment when it decided, a posteriori, to give itself a concrete historical identity. 1949 was the beginning of its long march into history. To quote Trudeau:

Nevertheless, the Second World War, that interrupter of tradition, produced the new awareness which has been discussed above. In various parts of the population and in several branches of human activity, groups or individuals were busy creating new structures. They did not, however, manage to coordinate their efforts, and there was a great danger that the end of the postwar period would see their scattered forces once more submerged in a relentless return to tradition. At this moment, a social disturbance on a large scale, but coming from within Quebec society itself, broke down the isolation of these groups, and provided them with a rallying point. The asbestos miners' revolt against an authoritarian company and government, at the very moment when the traditional reflexes should have resulted in obedience and submission to these acknowledged symbols of authority, seemed to be a matter which concerned everybody who believed that his hopes for the future should
be grounded in liberty. The struggle in the asbestos industry arrived on the scene like a sliver of crystal in a supersaturated liquid: the province of Quebec emerged from it clothed in new structures.15

The asbestos strike revealed to the technocracy a force capable, if given intellectual direction, of actually producing meaningful change. But this passage from potential force to effective force, and especially to effective change, would not happen by itself. Vague impulses for change had been widely sensed in the middle of the 1950s, but had not yet taken the definitive form that they now began to assume. Trudeau’s epilogue to The Asbestos Strike, could not be more explicit in this regard, organized as it is around “the past,” “the present,” and “the future.” Indeed, his work resembles a kind of manifesto, spelling out precisely what was seen to be at stake in defining and constructing the future: “A generation hesitates at the edge of engagement,” writes Trudeau, “and the present work hopes to offer it the means for defining its choices.” If the author does not go so far as to define this choice himself, he nonetheless identifies the terms of the alternative:

Let us bear clearly in mind that there is no question here of proclaiming a new regime of industrial liberty, nor of advocating socialism, still less of sketching an economic theory of plenty for all. It is simply a matter of prosaically applying the lessons of the last fifty years to the present. If we refuse to ground “the honor of doctrine” on a profound understanding of reality; if we persist in condemning every new solution ex cathedra and without an impartial examination; if we withdraw into the realm of the a priori and the unreal; if we remain content with the present-day state of things and practice a systematic cult of the past; if we refuse to examine the rich alternatives offered by the future; if, finally, we continually identify Catholicism with conservatism and patriotism with the refusal of progress, we will lose by default the game now played by all cultures, and the concept of “French Canadian,” along with the Catholicism with which it is intimately associated, will ultimately prove to be a thing of slight importance.16

Clearly, it is no longer the tradition but the future that is the measure of survival in French Canada. And it was up to new actors, not to the old theoreticians of nationalism, to define that future. The asbestos strike itself and the events surrounding it forced choices to be made that could not be delayed to a later date. It not only gave birth to the technocracy as a movement, but it also lent urgency

15 Ibid., 341.
16 Ibid., 348.
to that movement's self-proclaimed mission to bring to term a process of social emancipation already initiated. For the technocracy, historically conscious of its birth and claiming for itself a sense of historical necessity, the asbestos strike became the cornerstone of its destiny.

III. Conclusion: Discourse of Knowledge and Regime of Truth

This paper permits us to see the phenomenological unity between the collective past as represented in the memory of young Quebecois, and the technocracy's narrative of its own history, which becomes so confused with the history of the province. We have seen that this phenomenological unity is grounded in the formation of a discursive complex to which a regime of truth corresponds. The discursive complex and the regime of truth, in turn, sustain a hegemony of meaning, creating, literally, the space of the thinkable. But such hegemony requires far more than simply determining what is thinkable; it is equally necessary to preclude reality from being represented in different terms, to render what lies outside these bounds literally unthinkable. To produce a hegemony of meaning, then, is to produce the unthinkable; and it is in this sense that we can recognize the unthinkable at the center of the representation the young Quebecois have of their recent past. Their historical memory is permeated with and principally structured by the problematic, by the language formations, and by the imagery of the technocracy. These three basic structures have helped to fix a way of seeing, of representing the historical evolution of Quebec in the 1950s and 1960s.

This conclusion presents the issue of the contributions of both objective reality and ideology to the formation of a discourse of knowledge. For the technocratic thinkable is a discourse of knowledge. Here Patrick Tort's argument is relevant, for it supposes that knowledge consists of a composite of scientific statements and ideological statements, which implies that it is necessary continually to consider science in relation to the doxa. Or, to be more precise, quoting Tort, "... it is necessary to update the efficacy of ideological discourse. Which is to make one believe in the conformity of its statements with those of the science that it momen-

17 Angenot, op. cit.
This epistemological postulate is particularly valid for understanding the present situation in Quebec. During the 1950s and 1960s, researchers participated through their own work in the elaboration of a visionary paradigm. This paradigm incorporated a group of verifiable facts, but placed them into interpretative frames that provided the coherence that a social movement in its formative phase requires. Through its discourse of knowledge, the technocracy produced its own sense of historical sequence and period, and rearranged events in order to construct a chronology for which it itself was the historical product and outcome. In these processes, the construction of history and the construction of a society were fully intertwined, if not quite identical.

History has no immanent direction. That is to say, it does not have a finality that one can logically anticipate. It is not an expression of some universal rationality and it does not function as a system through which one can predict a certain evolution. History acquires coherence *a posteriori*, along with a trajectory and meaning. History, the narrative of the past, is an object of intellectual construction, based upon new facts, abstracts, significations, and logical functions in relational structures (and logical also in reference to the point at which the writer of history is located), and created from facts and episodes, be they real, out of sync, or insignificant. History has a fixed reality in one sense, but it is also a narrative full of representations that incorporate cosmogonies, the values of an era, beliefs, social consensus, a culture of evocation and of figuration. There are many histories, not one, born of the sum and the diversity of relations that the social players maintain during their time. The narrative of the past is always the result of a certain configuration of selections of factual logic which give way to the establishment of a regime of truth. As B. Jewsiewicki states, "[historical] discourse is insidious because it is reputed to speak only of facts, while it is speaking of a legitimate social order."19

Every society, every community, every social group constructs the perimeters of its time, and a sense of the meaning of its age.

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18Tort, op. cit.
To the extent a group proves able to impose this time and periodization on the members of a community or society, it can gradually impose its hegemony, in the form of a collective project and a social evolution. In this sense, the obtaining of a language consensus and the adhesion to a common historical self-consciousness within a community are two conditions necessary, if not sufficient, for the formation of an ideal totalitarianism.

The young Quebecois' perception of the historical evolution of the province during the 1950s and 1960s witnesses precisely this reconstruction of a historical framework in relation to a point of reference. The rise of the technocracy becomes the referential matrix in terms of which everything is perceived and understood. This referential matrix extends well beyond objectively grounded knowledge, to include, in equal measure, emotions, opinions, rumors, legends, apprehensions, and individual sensibilities—in brief, a collective memory.

But the concept applies to objective knowledge as well: science is not on one side, with an unaccountable collective memory on the other. There is but one reality, that of social communication: scientific discourse is simultaneously objective knowledge and collective memory, and this memory is "virtually a historical discourse which takes its place in a historiography that is part of an episteme, and from which an archaeology is possible." 20

This is why we can say that what we know of Quebecois history of the 1950s and 1960s is an inseparable blend of the thought of professional researchers, intellectual activists, direct political actors, and average citizens who had come to abhor Duplessis. Thus while it seems simple to conclude that what one knows of Quebec after the war is what is revealed to us through the discursive complex of technocracy, it is more important to go further, to observe the extent to which scientific discourse is immersed in the social discourse, that is to say in all that is said, written, narrated, and argued in the given state of society. For, in the words of Jean-Paul Hautecoeur, "Specialized and partial, scientific discourse must integrate itself with the global structure of customary meaning, and for this it must lie within the frame of the central values at the core of the order of things and of men." 21

20 Jewsiewicki, op. cit.
21 L'Acadie du discours: Pour une sociologie de la culture acadienne, (Québec, PUL, 1975), 228.
Thus the narrative accounts of the students, like those of the technocracy, belong, for all their differences, to the same area of reason and reasoning. The student and "scientific" accounts possess a paradigmatic unity and are suffused by the same doxa. In their similarity, they help us map a common space of social communication. They define the character and dimension of a common regime of truth.

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