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Minority Intellectualism in America: Lives, Literature, and  
Institutions

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
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by

Addison T. Palacios

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Dissertation Committee:

Dr. David C. Lloyd, Co-Chairperson

Dr. Joseph Childers, Co-Chairperson

Dr. Katherine Kinney

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The Dissertation of Addison T. Palacios is approved:

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Co-Chairperson

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Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Addison T. Palacios

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English

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Dr. David C. Lloyd, Co-Chairperson

Dr. Joseph Childers, Co-Chairperson

This dissertation investigates the experiences of prominent, minority intellectuals in American culture. To add nuance to critical accounts of American intellectuals that define that subject as universal and autonomous, this project introduces the race and gender into those discussions while acknowledging to the role the modern university has had in maintaining that position. Rather than argue that the university is no longer conducive to intellectual life, this project suggests that such stances negate the struggles for access to and representation in the academy on behalf of minority intellectuals. Moreover, this project questions the timeliness of such views, as they arise precisely at the moments when minority intellectuals begin to initiate structural change to the American university.

This project begins by setting the historical and theoretical foundations for how the intellectual has normally been understood by combining the work of Richard Hofstadter and Russell Jacoby with the theories of intellectualism described by writers like Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci. The introduction then turns to a case study of

William Faulkner to argue that his work questions the class and regional biases that underlie intellectualism at an historical moment when the intellectual was undergoing a radical revision.

The chapters that follow more thoroughly consider the categories of race and gender in the making of intellectuals and turns to the lives and work of Ralph Ellison, Mary McCarthy, Américo Paredes, and Tomás Rivera. The first chapter argues that Ellison used *Invisible Man* to work through the crisis of the black intellectual later discussed by theorists like Harold Cruse. The second chapter on Mary McCarthy shows how even non-academic, progressive spheres like the New York intellectual circle rely on a normative conception of intellectualism that performs a hegemonic function counter to the aims of women intellectuals. My closing chapter on Paredes and Rivera theorizes the condition of the Chicano intellectual in light of the development of Chicano studies more broadly by contextualizing the communal, educational efforts of El Movimiento of the 1960s. Read together, these sections illustrate the sociohistorical and theoretical impasses that make minority intellectualism a condition worthy of more critical consideration.

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## An Introduction and Case Study

To begin, I thought it would be important to highlight the word choices of my title. Though the exact phrasing changed a number of times, what consistently remained was the attempt to balance authorial biography with a literary criticism that paid particular attention to how the university acted upon each. While the tendency of some scholarship is to hone in on one of these, it became nearly impossible for me to separate the conditions of intellectuals represented in literature from the actual minority intellectual who created them. What started as a question on the intellectual's place in American culture gradually turned into a study on the minority intellectual's relationship with higher education, which gradually became the focus of the dissertation. As the project continued, I found that the relationship with the formal university was, for the minority intellectual, incredibly convoluted and filled with twists and turns that simultaneously pushed and pulled. Indeed, it seemed that the minority intellectuals studied here could not separate entirely from the university, and nor could they integrate into it fully.

Their lives were, in other words, a working through of the very conundrums that their literature sought to represent and, at times, overcome. The fact that their work, has largely found its way into the modern university even when, as in the case of Ralph Ellison, the author could not, only added another layer to the fraught relationship of intellectualism. Rather than existing in pure opposition, I found that the lives of minority



intellectuals exist contrapuntally to that of the institutions that signify normative intellectualism, which is, in the twentieth century and arguably today, the university.

This brings me to the next portion of my title. To be a minority often implies an ethnic dimension, where difference is met with disparity in numbers that often results in disadvantage. However, we know that that minority status is not specific to race nor is it specific to population sizes. As this project shows, our discussions of minority life have expanded to include gender, class, sexuality, even geographic region, among many other factors. Furthermore, we know that to be a minority does not only mean belonging to a small number of persons but has much more to do with having a smaller amount of influence and presence in the superstructures that maintain the social order. The works discussed here are, indeed, concerned with the minority presence in the educational sphere, including the student population as well as the larger, structural designs of campus wealth, curricula, and administration.

Yet there is another understanding of the term that I wish to keep in mind throughout this project. In “Genet’s Genealogy: European Minorities and the Ends of the Canon,” David C. Lloyd writes that whether a minority life is defined “in terms of gender, ethnicity, or any other typology its status is never merely statistically established, but involves the aspersion of ‘minority’ exactly in the sense of the common legal usage of the term for those too young to be out of “tutelage” (174). This aspect of tutoring or guardianship is a main reason why higher education becomes such a focal point in understanding minority intellectualism in the twentieth century. After all, where else is tutelage the *modus operandi* more than in schools and universities? With Lloyd’s

definition in mind, this project therefore considers how formal education has reified minority difference in a way that re-inscribes hierarchies of power under a guise of egalitarianism. Put another way, the opportunity to be tutored is, for the minority intellectual, another chance to make real the social divisions present throughout society. Thus for the minority intellectual the various spheres of education are paradoxically sites of social mobility and stasis—if not regression—which places them in a liminal space of continual oscillation.

In my view, the literature produced by such individuals is a means of working through this paradox. Much of my use of literature to explore minority intellectual subjectivity has been informed by Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*, which plays on the word "representation" to denote who and what intellectuals represent and how they are also represented. Regarding the representation of intellectuals within literature, Said argues that it is only through "modern public life seen as a novel or drama...that we can most readily see and understand how it is that intellectuals are representative of a quite peculiar, even abrasive style of life and social performance that is uniquely theirs" (14). Using James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as an example of the "sudden appearance of a new actor, the modern young intellectual," Said claims that literary representation not only reflects the position of the intellectual as it is but, perhaps most importantly for the minority intellectual, informs how it might be. When Stephen Dedalus takes on the credo of *non servium*, Said sees him as changing the very notion of what it means to be an intellectual, forming the belief that the "intellectual will not adjust to domesticity or to humdrum routine," and doing so in front of a public,

reading audience. Indeed, it is in “showing us intellectuals in action” that the novel works to define them (20).

This reading of intellectuals draws attention to the social forces that construct their social position, even when those figures appear as socially detached, uncommitted, or even exiled. In rejecting all servitude, Joyce’s Dedalus is, in fact, confirming the claim that the people, the cultures, and various institutions have on who he has been or will be. In drawing the line in the sand between himself and the world, he concretizes each and places himself in a symbiotic relationship with that which he would seek to discount. This understanding between the social function of the intellectual, complete with the people and institutions that fill society, and the individual agents themselves is an increasingly vital portion of my argument, which the literature studied confirms.

In looking at these intersections, I want to spotlight how minority subjectivity, either lived or through literary representation, counters the seemingly objective and wide-reaching term “intellectual” as normatively understood. Yet from whence does that arise? The term intellectual is a twentieth-century phenomenon, which speaks to the periodization of the work that I cover here. Since its lexical origin, the term has undergone numerous definitions and connotations that competed, mutated, and reformed depending on cultural climate. However, a consistent through line is the idea that the intellectual was defined by their autonomy or individual acumen. Yet, given what I have already discussed, criticism that rests upon this quality overlook the condition of minority intellectuals who, despite what they may desire, cannot entirely discount the institutions of cultural capital that facilitate their social roles as intellectuals.

Whether it be in the self-imposed exile and oppositional criticism discussed by Said or as the unattached social commentators described by Richard Hofstadter, there appears to be a consistent belief in the intellectual's self-appointment as such. Less attention has been paid to the social formation of the intellectual while more has been written on their social function. My argument is that there is no real separation between the intellectual and the public, or between the intellectual and institutions, if it is through the latter that the intellectual performs their function. It is common, therefore, to pit the university against the intellectual, which has led many critics to argue that either intellectuals cannot exist in the academy or that those that are within are in peril.

While the state of academia does influence the state of intellectualism, I want to question the impulses to discount higher learning's bearing on intellectual life entirely. For one, it is precisely at the moment when more minority intellectuals are beginning to reshape the structure and composition of the university that critics have begun to denounce it, which bears interrogation. Furthermore, for minority intellectuals, the university—a metonym for education in general—was not so much a consequence of their position as intellectuals but a constitutive part of it, despite claims that situate the decline of the intellectual with the rise of latter. Indeed, the works and lives I survey show a continual preoccupation with the university's role in legitimating the social function of the minority intellectual, showing that academia cannot be as easily discounted for minority intellectuals as it could be their non-hyphenated counterparts. What these chapters show is that the eras in which when the university becomes the enemy of intellectuals is simultaneously the time when minority intellectuals were setting

foot on campus, creating departments, establishing fields of study, and publishing to wider audiences than ever before. The move to individualize the intellectual and ignore the university's role in sustaining that position lessens gains sought by minority intellectuals within the academy, which are often more communal and social activist.

### **A Brief History of the American Intellectual**

To more adequately understand the condition of minority intellectuals as presently understood, it is helpful to consider the origins of the term in American culture and its protean usage. As noted earlier, the concept of the intellectual did not take on a very significant role until the turn of the century but, as we shall see, a “shift in idiom illuminates the shift in lives,” (Jacoby 107). According to Richard Hofstadter, the most widely cited, premier use of the term in the American context comes by way of the philosopher William James, who drew from Emile Zola's use of the term. Immediately after Zola wrote and published his *J'assuse* statement in *L'Aurore* in 1898, he wrote the “Manifesto of the Intellectuals,” a lesser known piece that assembled a list of writers and thinkers, including figures like Marcel Proust, who stood in opposition to the Dreyfus trials. As a public display of collective intellectualism, the manifesto marked a key turning point by viewing intellectualism as something political as well as something in which the hopes and desires of a group could be achieved. For Zygmunt Bauman, Zola's intellectual manifesto acted as a “rallying call...to resuscitate the tradition” of “men of knowledge” that the “specialized enclaves” with “partial interests and localized concerns” threatened to diminish, which further shows the impact Zola's usage had on reframing the individualism of the intellectual (qtd. in Robbins xvi). In ways not so different than

today, Zola saw increasingly narrow specialization and independent study as barriers to the collective potential of intellectuals and sought to reverse that.

It was in this context that American philosopher William James understood the duty of intellectuals. When James borrowed the term, however, the emphasis on collectivism gave way to a liberal individualism that would resuscitate the very social disinterest that Zola was writing against. In a short, personal letter written in 1898, James declared that “the ‘intellectuals’ in America must all work to keep our precious birthright of individualism, and freedom from these institutions [church, army, aristocracy, royalty.] Every great institution is perforce a means of corruption—whatever good it may also do. Only in the free personal relation is full ideality to be found” (James 100-101). As the original scare quotes indicate, James was unsure of how and if to use the term, yet he was clear that however intellectuals are to be conceived, their “precious birthright of individualism” was of the utmost importance. James would again use the term in a 1907 address to the Association of American Alumnae at Radcliffe College with a slightly augmented emphasis on individual. This time, the intellectual was not alone but part of a class, as James pronounced that “the ‘alumni and alumnae of the colleges...ought to have our own class-consciousness’—a class that James refers to as “les intellectuels” (James 1912, 319). For James, no “prouder club name” for such a group existed, demonstrating an early link between the American intelligentsia, the class positions of the wealthy aristocrats who belonged to such clubs, and the developing university. In under a decade, James was able to merge individualism with specific class interests in a way that foretells the neoliberal trends of the present, while also placing the university at the center.

The contradiction between the intellectual as a free-floating independent and as working for a class of their own forecasts the various standings the American intellectual would soon occupy. In *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley argues that although the term "intellectual" acted as a banner under which various thinkers could rally and "fight for a common cause," the intellectual at the turn of the century often returned to "his personal isolation" (221). Remembering the state of the modern intellectual of the twenties, Cowley writes that "intellectual life of America unfavorably compared with that of Europe," and that there was a tendency for American intellectuals to "to labor under a burden of provincialism" (94). Like Zola who saw specialization as a means of self-alienation, Cowley similarly saw intellectuals as working at the margins of society without having any significant social impact. For others, like editor of *The Masses* and the *Friday Literary Review* Floyd Dell, this alienation became fetishized, with intellectuals demonstrating a "habitation to, and finally the temperamental preference for such alienation," though that isolation was not necessary self-imposed (101). In *Intellectual Vagabondage: An Apology for the Intelligentsia* (1926), Dell writes that it was American culture in general that "forced upon sensitive minds by the conditions of a culture hostile to creative dreaming," which suggests that intellectuals could not, in fact, live in the type of social detachment or obscurity described by Cowley. Similarly, expatriates like Harold E. Stearns saw the effect of American culture on its growing intellectual class as being of "first-rate importance" (9). In *American and the Young Intellectual* (1921) Stearns claimed that "distinction of any kind, even intellectual distinction" was popularly viewed as a "betrayal of the American spirit" in an argument

that prefigures Richard Hofstadter's point about democratic egalitarianism and anti-intellectualism in American culture (37). Furthermore, Stearns saw a "faint aura of effeminate gentility" surrounding intellectuals, which points to both their class position as well as the gendered assumptions over who can be an intellectual. In each of these cases isolation becomes a marker of intellectualism, whether self-imposed or put upon by the prevailing cultural attitudes of the time. Yet few of these early conceptions of intellectuals address how the university might be critical for the social function of intellectuals, aside from James who saw the university as a conduit of class consolidation, for the better.

I've drawn attention to these early conceptions of the intellectual's position because they lay the groundwork for competing conceptions throughout the century. In this short history we can see the intellectual as a lone advocate for truth as well as a being who belongs to a very elite sector of society. Furthermore, there is a contradictory emphasis on the intellectual's separation from society at large and an acknowledgement on the role superstructures play in defining intellectual activity. Yet as I have said before, minority intellectuals cannot rely on that separation nor can they be entirely defined by such institutions, which adds a different perspective on the persistent question of the intellectual's role in society. Indeed, this question persists today. For instance, McKenzie Wark has recently argued in *General Intellects: Twenty-One Thinkers for the Twenty-First Century* (2017), "today's intellectual workers have to work in a different system...which in a much more refined way slots them into processes of extracting value from their work." Here, Wark begins to move away from the notion of pure intellectual



autonomy and ends with the claim that “one just doesn’t get to be a Sartre or a de Beauvoir even if one wanted to be.” This is, of course, precisely what I have been getting at, though I do not believe that is specific to today’s cultural moment. While I agree with the idea that intellectuals must be understood within their relation to capitalism, this is nothing new. While it may be true that “today one needs a day job, and usually in the university,” this takes for granted the ways the university has long been a constitutive part of intellectualism as we know it, especially for the minority intellectual. As a social signifier and beacon of cultural capital, not to mention the resources for creating and sustaining intellectual activity, the university of particular importance for the minority intellectual. For them, the university is not a given but a contended space that provides an influential means by which they might function on a grander scale on terrain that the hegemon cannot discount without simultaneously discrediting their own intellectuals.

So, one cannot just become a Sartre even if one wanted to be. Yet the notion of the self-made intellectual remains a constant across studies of the intellectual in American culture. Perhaps because of a democratic appeal of individualism and self-fashioning, the intellectual is mythologized as somehow distinct from the systems that interpellate all others. For instance, Richard Hofstadter’s Pulitzer Prize winning work *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963) is continually referred to as a foundational text on the intellectual in American culture. Hofstadter begins by elaborating on his working definition of the intellectual, which becomes clearer when he distinguishes the intellectual from other mental laborers. In this text, what distinguishes the intellectual from professionals and specialists is the intellectual’s separation from institutions as well

as the political and economic forces that structure them. In a direct counterpoint to what I've been arguing, Hofstadter's very definition of the intellectual rests upon their social detachment, which prevents him from considering the constitutive role of institutions like universities in forming intellectuals. While the authentic intellectual pursues ideas for their own sake, the "professional man lives off ideas, not for them" (27). Instead of interrogating the external forces that construct the intellectual, Hofstadter credits "spontaneous character and inner determination," and a "peculiar poise...that may be designated as playfulness and piety" as the key factors that define the subject position. Moreover, it is not even the ideas themselves that are most critically important as Hofstadter writes that it is "not in the character of the ideas with which he works but in his attitude toward them" that makes one an intellectual. Nowhere in this definition are the aspects of race, gender, or even regional difference and the emphasis on pure thought turns a deliberately blind eye towards the hegemonic formation and function of intellectuals at large.

Hofstadter is not alone in privileging the intellectual's autonomy without interrogating the privilege that makes such an argument possible. For instance, works like Russel Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (1987) lament the loss of what he views as the true, "nonacademic intellectuals" who are "an endangered species" (7). Instead, what we are left with after in the latter-half of the century are "high-tech intellectuals, consultants, and professors— anonymous souls, who may be competent...but who do no enrich public life" (x). Jacoby further states that "younger intellectuals, whose lives have unfolded almost entirely on campuses...are

inaccessible and unknown to others,” resulting in a “breach in cultural generations” that is a “danger” and a “threat.” To remedy this crisis of intellectualism, much of Jacoby’s work suggests a return to “a dwindling band of older intellectuals who command the vernacular that is slipping out of reach of their successors,” which, presumably, intellectuals of today, and particularly those within the universities, have failed to do.

Aside from the air of nostalgia that obscures the retrospective study on previous generations of intellectuals, the timing of Jacoby’s positioning of the university as the final resting place of the American intellectual is worth considering. The final decades of the twentieth century may have been the time when intellectuals became most associated with universities, to Jacoby’s chagrin, but that is also the period that witnessed the rise of minority students, faculty, and thinkers of all kinds in higher education. In his introduction to the 2000 edition, Jacoby does concede the point that for the “first time in many years a group of African American intellectuals have burst upon the scene” and cites figures like Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West as “successors to the New York Intellectuals” (xix). Interestingly, Jacoby could only give credit to these black intellectuals by attributing their status to their white forebears, and largely elides the ways university access and its networks of support have allowed for a newly visible black intelligentsia. In fact, the first run of his study does not even include the mention of black intellectuals as his text focuses solely on the experiences of white intellectuals for whom the university is no longer conducive to authentic, intellectual life.

Despite such attempts to discredit the university altogether and, consequently, the work of the growing population of minority intellectuals within it, minority intellectuals

were engaging with the public in unprecedented ways to enter and restructure higher education. For instance, my third chapter focuses on El Movimiento, a Chicano/a and Latinx student movement which drew upon community support, faculty, artists and intellectuals in an attempt to restructure higher education while utilizing its resources and cultural capital. To gloss over such minority movements to romanticize a dwindling band of older intellectuals, and to say that the university cannot uphold authentic intellectual activity at a time when Black Studies, Women's Studies, and Chicano Studies were securing their positions on campuses nationwide, actively attempts to negate the work that went into creating those fields while discrediting the intellectuals who practiced within and through them.

It does need to be stated, however, that recognizing the ability of the university to grant the cultural capital needed for minority intellectuals to become socially recognized—through a terrain that cannot be discounted unless the hegemon negates its own intellectuals—does not mean the process is an entirely joyous affair. For Roderick Ferguson, the increase in minority scholars and thinkers on American campuses did not only yield access to resources but also acted as “a ‘training ground’ for state and capital’s engagement with minority difference as a site of representation and meaning” (11). In this view, incorporation into universities also means being recognized, if not surveilled, in a way that allows state power to work “through the ‘recognition’ of minority histories, cultures, and experiences... to re-secure its status” (13). As such, “the development of the interdisciplines, broadly conceived, denoted the elaboration of power rather than the confirmation that our ‘liberty’ had been secured,” which allows the academy to become

“the handbook on the absorption and representation of those differences” (13; 27). Thus, the cultural capital gained through university engagement is not without its costs.

Yet at the margins of Ferguson’s timely argument is the critical potential that the university also has for minority intellectuals—a potential that has historically been denied to them. Rather than solely critique the politics of legitimation that re-inscribe state power through the university, Ferguson also notes that that the sites in which the university absorbs minority difference are “contradictory ones that harbor elements of their own negation” (8). My project is therefore interested in this recuperative potential, as nearly each minority intellectual in the chapters that follow either represent this in their fiction or describe it in their other writings. Unwilling to forfeit the university entirely, the minority intellectual recognizes it as a force that must be confronted, worked through, and ultimately reshaped. Despite its shortcomings, the university has largely defined the parameters of knowledge as well as its subjects while structuring the relationships those within the academy have to them. Minority intellectuals are faced with the task of reorienting the knowledge-subject relation to include them while recognizing the dangers of doing so, resulting in what Ferguson describes as the “simultaneous estrangement from and appeals to institutional power,” which creates a liminal position that drives many of the narratives discussed throughout this project (16). Moreover, if the “ethnic and women’s movements represent powerful confrontations with and evaluations of the figure of Western man...with figures like the Black, the Woman, the Asian American, the Chicano,” then we may also consider how minority presence in the academy might revise the concept of the Western intellectual altogether (31-32). The goal of this project is

therefore not to aggrandize the university but to acknowledge its role as a social signifier of intellectualism, as a medium through which knowledge is defined, and as structuring mechanism that can simultaneously isolate intellectuals while acting as a potential site of communal intellectual insurgency.

Ferguson's attention to the university in the making of intellectuals is aligned with my own thinking, which similarly addresses the institutions in which intellectual activity is practiced instead of relying on nebulous intrinsic qualities. Those familiar with the work on Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci will recognize that this was also his primary concern when dealing with intellectuals, which he outlines in his famous *Prison Notebooks*. Rather than assume intellectualism to be an innate quality as some have done, Gramsci sought to disassemble the privileging of intellectuals as an elite coterie apart from the working world by paying particular attention to the work they performed in relation to society. To expose the scaffolding upon which the intellectual has long stood, Gramsci writes that "all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (9). To get at the nature of what that function may be, Gramsci divides intellectuals into two camps, traditional and organic, which become interestingly intermingled in the case of the Western university. For Gramsci, traditional intellectuals fall into religious, scientific, or literary categories whose labors create a "monopoly of several important services" that include "religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice" and other ideological forces (7). Thus, the priest, scientist, and man of letters are traditional intellectuals in the sense that their social position has been

consistent through a longstanding “historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes. This historical continuity provides an apparent remove from modern industry and emergent fields. The university professor would also occupy this category, as their social position and intellectual authority is largely unquestioned while the emphasis on legacy and tradition is celebrated in most major universities today. Indeed, the traditional gowns, Latin phrases, and historical societies work to re-create the aura of tradition that Gramsci notes as being unquestioned and socially disinterested.

Gramsci’s other category of organic intellectuals is one in which the intellectual is directly connected to their particular class or specific industries. Rather than seek to obscure their connections to capital, the organic intellectual is a product of industry, as new spheres of modern production create alongside them “the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc.” (5). The principle function of such intellectuals is to exert an organizing capacity that would ultimately benefit the class system they emerge from by increasing class consciousness. In acting as “an organizer of masses of men” and as “an organizer of the ‘confidence’ of investors in his business, of the customers for his product,” Gramsci recognized how intellectuals could not only be thought of as a distinct class of and for itself but as integrated into various class systems. Contrary to the alienated intellectual type, Gramsci saw intellectuals as functionaries between the state and industry or as the mouthpieces through which specific class interests could be articulated. While it would be convenient to read organic intellectuals as champions of the working class that could raise class consciousness and organize for change, as Gramsci hoped they might, he also

recognized that organic intellectuals often act as “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (12). Indeed, if not for organic intellectuals the hegemony of the dominant class could not hold, and intellectuals play a vital role in organizing it. To support Ferguson’s point, the organic intellectuals of the university would similarly fulfill such a function.

Yet like Ferguson who sees a critical potential to the university despite its complicity in state hegemony, Gramsci saw revolutionary potential in organic intellectuals as well. While organic intellectuals may act as functionaries of the state, Gramsci’s schema also opens the possibility of organic intellectuals emerging from the working and subaltern classes. He saw that the organizational function organic intellectuals held as crucial for the formation of a class consciousness that would produce a cohesive worker’s movement. Like Vladimir Lenin who saw it vital that “all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals... be obliterated,” Gramsci saw it as crucial that suppressed classes elaborate their own organic intellectuals who could act as intermediaries between their class and the state, as well as between themselves and the traditional intellectuals (Lenin cited by editors in Gramsci 3-4). Indeed, these organic intellectuals should not only organize their own class but to “assimilate and to conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals” so that “any group that is developing towards dominance” might be successful (10). Thus, the category of organic intellectuals is particularly complex in that it contains both the intellectuals who might openly maintain hegemony as well as those that might harbor its change.



Helpful though they are in repositioning the intellectual within modes of production and institutions, Gramsci's categories become more problematic when considering the American intellectual. He acknowledges this and notes that "in the case of the United States" there is "the absence to a considerable degree of traditional intellectuals, and consequently a different equilibrium among the intellectuals in general" (20). The "lack of a vast sedimentation of traditional intellectuals," for Gramsci, makes it less important that organic intellectuals "fuse together" with traditional intellectuals to maintain hegemony and more so that each group "fuse together" the "culture imported by immigrants" into a "a single national crucible with a unitary culture". Thus, for Gramsci the large intellectual project of the American thinker is to initiate a cultural unity and providing the ideological scaffolding for either maintaining the social order or initiating its change. Indeed, this has long been the mission of many American universities where organic class interests become melded with traditional disinterest in a way that promotes a unitary culture. My reading of the American intellectual and the university, therefore, does not read the either as wholly traditional or entirely organic but acknowledges the constant contestation between the two both at an individual and institutional level. In other words, the university is traditional in appearance but organic in its function, and the minority intellectuals within it are similarly in between worlds.

The historical progression of higher education in America shows the dual interests in industry and culture. In fact, if it were not for the organic ties to industry, it is unlikely that academia would occupy the positional strength it does today. It was not until federal funds, prompted by the increasing demand for mental labor and knowledge management

systems, were granted that the university expanded across the nation. According to Christopher Newfield, the Morrill Act of 1862 laid the initial groundwork for universities to receive federal funding on the basis that they would be devoted to industries that promoted economic development. While initially pertaining to agriculture and mechanical arts, the Morrill Act extended to include any areas that could be rationalized to yield financial returns, offering “education unprecedented security” with the “founding of universities on a whole new scale and scope,” such as University of California system (Newfield 2003, 26). With this new funding, the university quickly became “industry’s indispensable adjunct,” marking a shift in higher education as well as in the lives of its labor force (3). As the Morrill Act continued to allow universities to expand, the “business revolution” of 1880 also necessitated “factory labor systems and large-scale bureaucratic management,” creating the “steady evolution in the knowledge management system” as time continued (115). Higher learning was set to expand in both its scope as well as its reach towards the general population at the same time that the figure of the intellectual was emerging into American culture. Thus, the traditionalism described by Stearns and others could not have been possible without an organic response to industry, which confirms Gramsci’s suspicion that the American intellectual was somehow outside of his formulation.

An example of this conundrum is found in the following case study, which looks the changes in the intellectual’s social position during the New Deal era. By contextualizing William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* within the 1930s, I interrogate the wide scale reconsiderations of how intellectuals were conceived of. In my readings of

Quentin Compson and Harvard, I argue that the novel demonstrates the limits to which intellectuals can act as Gramscian organic intellectuals when signifiers like university continually lay claim to intellectualism in general. Through making a minority intellectual of Quentin due to his regional difference, Faulkner shows the social construction of the intellectual through literary representation that New Deal accounts of the intellectual while exposing the hegemonic underpinnings that uphold the twentieth-century university.

**A Case Study on the Southern Intellectual, Harvard, and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!***

When Quentin Compson has his first conversation with Rosa Coldfield, despite having known her all his life, the experience is anything but enjoyable. For Quentin, the Coldfield home is rank with “coffin-smelling gloom,” while Rosa, resembling a “crucified child,” tells him an impassioned story that he envisions with “long unamaze” (Faulkner 4). Although the aura of melancholic despair and impotent rage of the scene is not out of place in Faulkner, Quentin’s sense of obligation to Rosa is striking. Why should a soon-to-be Harvard man feel any need to hear the tales of a known recluse?

Despite the lack of clear motivation, Faulkner emphasizes the hastiness of Quentin’s response. After receiving Rosa’s request, Quentin “obeyed it immediately” and compulsively walks through the heat of Jefferson County to answer her call (6). It is only after his journey has begun that Quentin wonders why he has been hailed. This afterthought suggests that Rosa’s initial request needs no rationalization, and that his role in her life is hardly a matter of choice. In the end, he can only decide “she wants it told,”

alluding to the story of her time in Jefferson County. In short, the novel begins with Quentin forced to represent a Southern heritage that he himself is not completely sure of, and his Harvard tuition has something to do with that unavoidable fact.

This scene does more than set the narrative ground from which the larger novel grows. The dynamic between Rosa and Quentin represents a historical moment in flux, between the devastation of the Great Depression and the New Deal programs that issued the first waves of national recovery. Rosa's stunted growth, her quiet rage, and her desperate powerlessness are qualities that might equally be used to describe the working and lower classes most affected the Great Depression. Quentin, on the other hand, represents the emerging intellectual, a figure who was poised as a source of hope and national recovery throughout the 1930s—the decade in which the novel was written. Indeed, the New Deal era drastically revised the cultural position of intellectuals, shifting away from the isolated, exilic intelligentsia at the turn of the century to a socio-politically engaged intellectual type who appeared to align with the working and lower classes in unprecedented ways.

Faulkner's novel, however, critiques that position of the intellectual by showing the class tensions inherent in twentieth-century intellectualism in general. In other words, Faulkner shows how intellectualism is mired with the very class dynamics it may seek to revise—a condition that continually poses theoretical problems for many intellectuals today. Through Quentin's involvement with Rosa, his position at Harvard, and the parallels formed between him and Sutpen, Faulkner questions if intellectuals, bound by institutions, can ever truly cross class boundaries while also showing the ways the

university remains an unavoidable signifier that regional intellectuals like Quentin Compson.

The importance of Quentin's social position as an intellectual in the novel becomes clearer when viewed within the history of the New Deal intellectual. The ruins of the Depression provided a new template for conceiving of the social responsibility of intellectuals and the tabula rasa of economic collapse pushed many thinkers into a national spotlight. Instead of isolating intellectuals, the New Deal placed intellectuals in direct contact with the public, which was aided by the proliferation of intellectual infrastructures that we recognize today. For instance, public parks, museums, libraries, and a "vastly expanded post-war university" saw substantial expansion with increased federal funding (Denning 44). Not only did these sites serve as visible sites of the presence of the intellectual, they also helped revise the cultural image of intellectualism. This public nature of intellectual sites formed a sharp contrast from the isolation and alienation associated with intellectuals at the turn of the century and ushered in an epistemological change on matters concerning culture and intellectualism.

Even the working public was well aware of the growing intellectual presence in politics. For instance, Roosevelt's use of professors, scholars, and critics was so noteworthy that it garnered media attention, as news outlets began to refer to his cadre of intellectuals as his "brain trust," drawing from the term introduced by New York Times journalist James Kieran in 1932 (Lecklider 119). Such a label is telling in that the double meaning signifies both the faith placed in post-Depression intellectuals, a "trust" in their abilities, as well as the economic valences to their work. As the brain trust developed, a

“compelling attempt to bridge the gap between intellectuals and workers” formed, narrowing the separation between intellectuals and the working masses (Fitzpatrick 427). The alienated intellectual type of prior generations quickly gave way to a more political intellectual, leading to a “uniquely long and intimate alliance of...intellectuals with the labor movement” that further aligned intellectuals with the working class (Neufeld 117). With the places of intellectual work proliferating due to a steady cash flow of federal funds, intellectuals were becoming more visible, localized, and organized.

As the thirties progressed, the New Deal continued to develop with splinter initiatives like the umbrella project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as well as more minor initiatives like the Civil Works Administration and the Federal Project Number One. These furthered the “rapprochement between intellectuals and the public” with an abundant sense of what Richard Hofstadter calls “complete harmony between the popular cause in politics and the dominant mood of the intellectuals” (214). New Deal intellectuals were therefore situated in a nexus between a popular willingness for alternative socioeconomic policy and governmental restructuring that viewed mental labor and culture as necessary for economic recovery. It was the intellectuals who could stimulate economic recovery on a productive and cultural level by supporting both the base and its superstructures. Within that paradigm, intellectuals of the thirties became the apparent saviors of the working and lower classes as well as the bridge between the state and the public.

Faulkner’s novel, however, presents a different view of New Deal intellectualism, which is more in tune with the politics of its moments than critics have regularly noted.

According to Ted Atkinson, Faulkner often appeared “out of touch” with the concerns of his day to critics and readers alike even though both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* were written during the Depression and the New Deal (Atkinson 2). Instead, the thirties are often characterized by the growing proletarian literary scene that seemed “more relevant and worthwhile,” as little magazines and self-proclaimed working-class writers seemed more in touch with the concerns of their day. During the growth of American proletariat literature, the so-called brain trust grew in size and influence. It was precisely this growth that Faulkner’s work was critiquing and rather than being out of touch with his political climate, his work engaged with it on a deep level that exposed the ideological work intellectuals did in preserving class structures at a time when, on the surface, intellectuals were the ones looked at as chief reformers. Rather than show a seamless union between those most affected by the Depression and the developing intellectual class that was poised to aid them, intellectuals in Faulkner’s work undergo “intense ideological negotiation and political struggle” where the “dialectical forces of contradiction” resist any uncritical reception of the new place of the intellectual in America (Atkinson 11). Particularly in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner shows the class processes that undergird intellectualism and shows how superstructures like the university function as sites that maintain class hegemony, despite whatever interclass alliances individual intellectuals make. For the supposedly apolitical Faulkner, intellectuals are always already a part of the dominant class and are therefore limited in any truly harmonious relationship with the dominated.

Faulkner's use of intellectualism in this way in a strong refusal of the supposed union between intellectuals and the working class described by Hofstadter and Denning. Through Quentin Compson, however, the dynamic between intellectuals and the public becomes clearer. Rather than simply state that Quentin is an intellectual, Faulkner emphasizes the institutional affiliation needed for that subject position. Indeed, if it were not for Harvard, Quentin would not be received as the intellectual he is, despite any mental capability he may have. While there are other characters who might be considered intellectuals, they lack the economic and institutional means to acquire the outward signifiers upon which intellectualism was beginning to rely upon. For instance, Rosa Coldfield as well as Quentin's father, Mr. Compson, have a preoccupation with thought and continually contemplate ideas in the pursuit of truth—attributes that could arguably be used to classify them as intellectuals. However, such characters lack the infrastructure needed to be socially and culturally understood as such and they each identify Harvard as a needed signifier to legitimize Southern intellectuals.

Indeed, throughout the novel Harvard takes on a highly prominent role. Rosa openly tells Quentin that she sought him out simply because he will be attending Harvard soon. For that reason alone, he is qualified to tell her life story and explain “at last why God let us lose the War” (Faulkner 6). Furthermore, the Harvard affiliation suggests that Quentin might “enter the literary profession” and “write this and submit it to the magazines,” which alludes to the concrete gains to be had through attending the university (5). Because of Harvard, Rosa views Quentin as a conduit through which she might represent herself to the intellectually dominant, Northern milieu that she is denied.



Despite the fact that Rosa knows very little about Quentin or his literary ability, she is able to base her estimation of him on Harvard's reputation alone, which diverts attention away from Quentin's internal intellectualism and towards the structural signifiers that enable the social function of intellectuals. Indeed, her reception of Quentin the intellectual is not unlike that of the working multitudes who, at one time skeptical of the work of intellectuals, came to rely upon them as a force that could both tell their story as well as affect institutional change.

Rosa's reliance on Quentin, however, is surprising considering her own intellectual abilities. She is, after all, the "town's and the county's poetess laureate," demonstrating a proficiency at storytelling—a skill which Quentin markedly lacks both in *Absalom, Absalom!* as well as *The Sound and the Fury* (5). Mental ability notwithstanding, her social position prevents her from becoming an intellectual like Quentin. She does not have the wealth provided by a familial legacy of slave holding as Quentin does and cannot attend a formal college. Due to her class status, she is unable to leave "a little town like Jefferson" like "so many Southern gentlemen" are doing, emphasizing her inability to access beacons of culture given her finances as well as the lack of intellectual and cultural centers in the post-bellum South. It is only through Quentin that she has connection to post-war intellectualism, which Quentin can only access through his first-year's tuition payment.

In fact, Harvard is so built into Quentin's subjecthood that Faulkner hardly refers to him without making that institutional connection clear. In both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury* Harvard is the medium through which the Compsons believe

they can renew their sociocultural and economic standing beyond the war. For instance, in *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner makes the stakes of attending Harvard clear when he notes that the family sold the “remaining piece of the old Compson mile,” the “one thing” Quentin’s “idiot brother” had loved, to pay for the first year’s tuition in a last-ditch effort to hold on to their fleeting social prominence (336). The fact that Quentin commits suicide in Cambridge, Massachusetts, also suggests that even in death his connection with Harvard is not undone. In short, without Harvard there can be no Quentin.

It is this move outward, away from personal autonomy to external institutions that is so striking about Faulknerian intellectualism. The continual focus on Harvard shows how intellectualism itself is a product of a class system in which intellectuals, despite their perceived autonomy, are ultimately of and for a particular class in the tradition of the Gramscian organic intellectual. For the Compsons, the intellectualism provided by Harvard is not only a means to promote culture in the traditional sense. In their view, having an intellectual in the family can revive their waning post-war class position, which illustrates a melding of traditional and organic ideals. In the South, the class connotations of a Harvard education were particularly pronounced, as a college degree signified a “mark of the social mobility” and acted as an “insurance policy against downward mobility” (Veysey 265-266). If, as Louis Althusser contends, the reproduction of the conditions of production is a central goal of capitalism, then Harvard for the Southerner was a means of reproducing class stratifications in a new cultural and economic climate.

What we see in the novel is the gradually overtaking of the Southern gentleman by the Southern intellectual, which was always a point of pride for the Compson men.

When traditional markers of social prominence, with slave owning being a pre-eminent sign of Southern gentility, became untenable in the post-war South, becoming an intellectual served as a new method for preserving social status. This new sign of the gentleman was no longer predicated upon wealth but upon cultural refinement and education. In the South “gentility [was] adduced as evidence of intellectuality and vice versa,” showing the interchangeability between social status and intellectualism (O’Brien 439). As intellectualism signified cultural and economic capital, universities like Harvard served a “vital social function for Southern elites” that helped young men acquire “the reputation of gentlemen” (Glover 83). The crucial transition from gentleman to university intellectual is a telling detail about the class interests backing the acculturation of Harvard attendance, which brings to the forefront the contradictions between a social disinterest and a direct tie to class.

This fact never escapes Faulkner and the intermingling between Southern gentility and the intellectual persists across novels. For instance, Mr. Compson, Quentin’s father, constantly reiterates the importance of “being gentlemen” and Rosa’s need for “a man, a gentleman” to aid her (Faulkner 8). Such gentlemen were “expected to receive the social deference of their social inferiors” and were “willing to expend considerable force to ensure it” (Kolchin 7). Though Quentin does not exhibit these traits, his social position as a Harvard man and de facto gentleman place him in a social position above Rosa. Thus, like the intellectual of the New Deal, Quentin is in a position to help the destitute by his social standing via the university. His access to one of the postwar “temples of highbrow culture” is predicated upon “social pedigree and cultural superiority,” and

places him in a position of power and obligation akin to that of the antebellum Southern elite (Soares 19). Furthermore, the fact that the Compson family sells the last remaining portion of their estate signals the transition from social prominence based on slavery to that of the intellectual class, with Harvard allowing Quentin to become part of the “collective identity of the privileged class” growing around higher education at the turn of the century.

However, Quentin’s transition into that collective identity is less seamless as the Compsons would hope. While in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Quentin is continually subject to Northern prejudice and is implored by his Canadian roommate Shreve to “Tell about the South. What’s it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all” (Faulkner 142). This is nothing out of the ordinary, particularly since it was “nobody’s first time in Cambridge” to demand that of him. This interest in his life, however, does little to make him feel at ease with his new surroundings. In fact, Faulkner deliberately makes Harvard seem foreign to Quentin, enacting what Tara Powell has called the trope of the “exiled Southern intellectual” (3). The exilic nature of Quentin’s intellectualism becomes apparent in the dormitory’s description, as Faulkner describes it as a “strange room” furnished with a “strange lamplit table” surrounded by “strange iron New England snow” (Faulkner 141). The fact that Quentin feels so out of place speaks to the exclusionary nature of twentieth-century intellectualism, which was rooted in class status as much as other non-class factors like regional difference. Faulkner likely recognized this intellectual bias, himself being a college dropout from the South, which supports his pessimistic view of the intellectual’s ability to cross class and state lines.

This intellectual bias based on regions becomes clearer as the dorm room scene continues. As Quentin continues to tell Shreve about Thomas Sutpen, the enigmatic figure that looms throughout the novel, Shreve takes on a more active role in the story's construction. Shreve quickly presumes to fill in the details of Sutpen's life himself and believes to have surmised the entire tale—a feat that Quentin has not even accomplished. Rather than hear Quentin's theories on the Sutpen lore, Shreve cuts off Quentin with the curt declaration that Sutpen “played that trump after all. And so he came home and found out” (222). Quentin, wanting Shreve to recognize that the South is not all he assumes it to be, attempts to get Shreve to wait until he is told “No...you wait. Let me play a while now” (224). The idea of Sutpen's rationales being something to play with is a drastically different interpretation than Rosa's, who sees the story as something worth staking her life on. Similarly, the Compson family views the opportunity to have a Southern man speak in a Harvard dorm as something to stake their remaining fortune on, yet Shreve's quick dismissal shows just how unrealistic their expectations are. Therefore, if Rosa and the Compsons represents the post-Depression working and lower classes who depended upon intellectuals like Quentin to both tell their story and provide a better quality of life, Shreve's surface-level understanding and generalizations speak to impossibilities of forging such a relationship. While Quentin attempts to bridge the gap between the downtrodden and those in power, his position at Harvard makes that endeavor ineffectual, particularly when that institution is filled with people like Shreve.

This intellectual dominance that Shreve the Canadian has over Quentin the Southerner was actually more pronounced in early iterations of the novel. In an early

manuscript, it was Shreve who constructed much of the Sutpen legend as he built his story around assumptions and conjectures. Gerald Langford argues that the revisions of the manuscript, most noticeably those in Chapter VI where the narrative abruptly shifts to Harvard, show that Faulkner had made a conscientious decision to place more focus on Quentin as he finalized the novel. With the revision, Shreve becomes relegated to the background as “Quentin now stands front and center” (Langford 11). By positioning Quentin as the main figure, through moving sections of the narrative from Shreve’s telling to Quentin’s internal reveries, Langford argues that Quentin “becomes the one who unlocks the old mystery,” using his mental labor to piece together his “bewildering collection of facts” (42). While this suggests that Quentin does, in fact, gain intellectual autonomy, this does not totally remove the influence that Shreve and other Northerners have in shaping Quentin’s own perception of the Sutpen legend. In fact, in the published novel Quentin and Shreve almost become indistinguishable despite whatever revisions were made to put Quentin at the center. Despite Shreve’s crassness that would separate him from Quentin, there was “no harm intended” and “no harm taken” as the two narratively construct a version of the South (Faulkner 225). Shreve’s own words blend into Quentin’s seamlessly, “without comma or colon or paragraph” as narrative control becomes shared. Rather than being antagonistic forces, they mutually construct Sutpen’s legend by “creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales” (243). In a way similar to the lower classes having to put their faith in intellectuals at the risk of having their own story misrepresented, Quentin is forced to forfeit autonomy to the northern intellectual to have the story of the South told at all.

Quentin and Shreve's joint reconstruction of Rosa's story therefore parallels the role of intellectuals throughout the New Deal, who were the presumed representatives of those from whom they were quite removed. While Quentin's direct contact with Rosa would suggest an intimate understanding of her situation, his collaboration with Shreve belies Rosa's own telling as the facts of her story and the boys' conjectures become nearly indistinguishable. This is not unlike intellectuals who, with the help of the Federal Writers' Project, conducted fieldwork and transcribed interviews for the many little magazines that proliferated throughout the 1930s. However, any information gained through that direct contact was filtered and narrated throughout the various segments of the brain trust, placing an inordinate amount of control in the hands of the intellectuals that composed it. In other words, the Harvard dorm of *Absalom, Absalom!* becomes a microcosm of the brain trust, wherein the story of the dispossessed falls into the hands of a privileged intellectual class.

It is significant that the story that falls in the hands of these intellectuals is the tale of Thomas Sutpen. The perpetually thwarted rags to riches story of Sutpen forms an apt counterpoint to the class mobility via university education that Quentin is attempting to undergo while also adding another layer to Faulkner's critique of New Deal optimism. Indeed, Sutpen's ideals are reminiscent of post-Depression class restructuring goals, wherein the most destitute can, through work and ingenuity, recreate their lives in any way they choose. However, just as Faulkner doubted the potentials of intellectuals in the brain trust, he similarly rejects the notion that class mobility can ever fully be achieved through personal autonomy. Sutpen's reliance on his own willpower is continually

undermined by the surrounding community and no matter of finance can give him the class ascension he desires. Rather, class ascendancy proves to be a systematic and generational process, just as the process becoming an intellectual is, despite the promises of the New Deal.

The story of Sutpen cautions against a fervent belief in class restructuring precisely in its ability to show how class position is over-determined. Through Sutpen's failed attempts to rise in social prominence, readers gain a vision of class that moves beyond pure economics. With this understanding, social standing is not static or contributable to one source but derives from the "ceaseless and mutual interaction between the concepts of class and non-class processes." Such non-class processes are often outside the control of an individual agent but rely upon the consent of the dominant classes.

Concerning Sutpen specifically, Gretchen Martin has argued that the reliance on external processes outside personal autonomy is most apparent in Sutpen shift from a self-made man par excellence to a life subject to a pre-existing order. She writes that when Sutpen descends from the Appalachian town of his upbringing, he also leaves "a socio-economic class status and identity founded on a principle of independence into one of dependence (Martin 401). This is not unlike the shift from being an autonomous intellectual to one relying on social signifiers like Harvard. Furthermore, Alia C.Y. Pan has argued that Sutpen's design rests upon "an economic system that depends upon material conditions beyond his control," which underscores the movement from Sutpen's rugged individualism to a dependence on non-class processes (417). Upward mobility



involves more than possession—a fact that Sutpen is never able to fully come to terms with while being an intellectual involves more than simply having ideas. These non-class processes that hinder mobility therefore become parallels to the non-intellectual processes that, in fact, make the modern intellectual in Faulkner's eyes.

One of the first non-class processes that affects Sutpen's trajectory is his lack of any verified history. Since little is known about him other than the fact that he descended from the mountains at an indiscriminate age, he does not have the pedigree needed for his desired social status. Lacking a decipherable genealogy strips him of any claim to social superiority, unlike the Compsons whose family line is known and respected in the South. This point is emphasized by Rosa Coldfield when she repeatedly says, "He wasn't a gentleman," when describing him to Quentin, making a stark contrast with the gentility that is continually ascribed to members of the Compson family and Quentin in particular (Faulkner 9). It is important to note, however, that the genealogy of gentility does not follow Quentin to the Harvard, where legacies and bloodlines follow a different social code. Thus just as Sutpen's bloodline prevents his becoming a Southern gentleman, Quentin's bloodline prevents him from assimilating into a Northern intellectual.

This lack, however, does not stop Sutpen from trying. Because Sutpen "needed respectability," an inherently social quality that his rugged individualism cannot supersede, he "tore violently a plantation" from the earth, in what would be his first act of acquisition taken in the pursuit of class advancement (5). Rosa's claim that Sutpen accomplished this on his own drastically denies the slave labor that in fact produced Sutpen's Hundred, the name of the plantation he draws his wealth from. While Richard

Godden has rightly argued that Faulkner's (mis)representations of labor work displace guilt and anxiety over the legacy of slavery, such displacement may also reflect the conditions of the laboring working class throughout the Depression and the New Deal era. That is, the "willful and wishful distortions" wherein the historical "background and its particularities" fall to the wayside are not unlike the tendency to privilege the intellectual over the working classes throughout the New Deal era (Spillers 13). Just as it is Sutpen and Quentin who are "dramatically foregrounded at all costs," the written records of the federally funded brain trust are often more valued than the lived accounts of those for whom they purportedly spoke and acted.

While Quentin attempts to overcome the lack of a familial legacy in the North through adopting European culture via Harvard, Sutpen takes a much more material approach. Lacking any familial titles, Sutpen imports "windows and doors and the spits and pots in the kitchen and the crystal chandeliers in the parlors and the furniture and the curtains and the rugs" from Europe in an excessive show of ersatz refinement (Faulkner 33). This nouveau riche spending spree, however, produces the opposite of the intended effect. Instead of reverence, the community's "last civic virtue came to a boil," as his ostentatious displays create more suspicion about his wealth, which leads to his eventual arrest (34). Civic virtue a non-class is something that Sutpen cannot buy to the same degree that the sale of the last Compson mile cannot buy Quentin a place in the Northern intellectual milieu despite having paid tuition.

Sutpen, however, begins to understand the more systematic ways class position is created and maintained. To contend with the structural forces that seemingly act against

him, he begins to enact his “design,” a term describing his ongoing process of class ascendancy. Interestingly, the emphasis that Sutpen places on this design is highly reminiscent of the elaborate nature of the New Deal, with its numerous, interconnected splinter initiatives that continued to grow as the program garnered public support. Indeed, Sutpen grows to understand class as an elaborate process and tells General Compson, Quentin’s grandfather, that he “had a design in my mind,” in one of the few times that Sutpen himself discusses his life in the novel (Faulkner 212). This design forces Sutpen to obtain the “two names, the stainless wife and the unimpeachable father-in-law” (39). Marriage for Sutpen is yet another instance of his tendency to see people “not as human [beings] but as strictly instrumental [aspects] of his design,” a tendency not unlike the instrumental role the displaced who became the objects of the Brain Trust (Casero 95).

All these attempts, however, fail Sutpen. Left with nothing else to purchase, he resorts to sheer mimicry. When confronted by a mob at his doorstep, Sutpen puts on a show of respectability to perform class. Rosa recalls that Sutpen desperately attempted to “[conceal] himself behind respectability” and use “respectability to hide behind,” similar to Harvard’s role in concealing the Compson family’s waning prominence after the war (9-10). Indeed, Quentin’s Harvard attendance is a performance of intellectualism, a mimicry of it, in the same way that Sutpen attempts to mimic respectability. As the townsfolk congregate in front of Sutpen’s doorstep, he salutes as if he had “drilled himself in secret” in a detail that emphasizes the artificiality of the gesture (35). However, the crowd immediately sees through his act and views it as a “florid, swaggering gesture” (34). While it has been argued that such “outward displays of

gentility...would be fundamental to the consummation of the design,” the fact that the design is never actually consummated speaks to the need of social consent and acceptance of such a gesture (Fury 77). In fact, such performances only reveal that he was “underbred,” an occurrence that “showed like this always ... in all his formal contacts with people” (34). No matter what he does, the self-made man cannot erase his heritage, or lack thereof, while the Southern intellectual, despite entering Northern institutions, cannot erase his.

This point about class restructuring is made clearer as more is revealed about Sutpen. As a boy, Sutpen was sent on an errand by his father to deliver news to a rich planter named Pettibone. After arriving at the front door to the plantation, a slave tells Sutpen to “never come to that front door again but to go around to the back,” an affront which changes Sutpen’s worldview forever (188). According to Dirk Kuyk Jr., this knocking is emblematic of the conditions of the Depression, wherein “plenty of nameless strangers were knocking at front doors” and that many “were sent round to the back” (21). As surely as the nameless poor of the Depression knew, Sutpen knows that his family somehow “supported and endured that smooth white house,” though his treatment suggests a separation rather than the connection he intuits. The turning away at the door forces him to realize that there is not only a “difference between white men and black ones” but a difference “between white men and white men” as well—a difference predicated on class position (Faulkner 189, 183). With this knowledge, the “innocence which he had just discovered he had” is lost.

This exposure, however, provides little clarity on what to do next. Instead, Sutpen recounts feelings as if there were two of him inside one body, signaling a trope of doubling that also takes place with the “two separate Quentins” that talk “to one another in the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage” at Harvard (5). Similar to the two Quentins, Sutpen internally argues with himself about what to do after the incident at Pettibone’s. The side of Sutpen that adheres to a pre-capitalist mode of social position dependent upon physical dominance calmly repeats “But I can shoot him.” This is tempered, however, with the sober realization that to do so “wouldn’t do no good” (190). Sutpen knows that there is no sole target, not the slave nor the plantation owner, that has rejected him but a “them in place of he or him.” (192) Like his later experience in Jefferson, the boy Sutpen confronts a system, not an object. The question that remains is how one can independently contend with that system of class and non-class processes that lie outside the realm of individual autonomy.

Sutpen concludes that to “combat them you have got to have what they have,” to obtain the “land and the niggers and a fine house to combat them,” emphasizing material acquisition which does little to grant him the social status of someone like Pettibone. His attempt to create a “design” is therefore an attempt to create a structure through which he can change the paradigm of his own social position. What his attempt lacks, however, is any guarantee that the respectable classes will consent to such a restructuring and accept him into their ranks. Yet as I have argued, Sutpen’s flawed design shows the limits of New Deal measures, which were equally unable to guarantee the concession of the

dominant class, even with an intellectual workforce initiating change in class and non-class processes.

The failure of Sutpen's design is therefore a critique of the New Deal plan and its promise to restructure post-Depression America. In *Sutpen*, readers see the mutually constitutive economic class processes as well as the non-class processes that construct one's social position. In showing how class hegemony is an ongoing process of consent, Faulkner questions the degree to which New Deal intellectuals could create such a design that could overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, Faulkner makes this critique in a way that shows how intellectuals are complicit in that which they seek to reverse by drawing attention to the class and regional biases that uphold their social position. The overdetermination of the social position in each character therefore forces us to reconsider the intellectual optimism of the 1930s.

This case study of Quentin and Sutpen sets the groundwork for the social construction of the intellectual that becomes the focus of these following chapters. In the chapter that follows, I expand on the New Deal's pivotal role in redirecting the social standing of the American intellectual while considering how racial categories impacted its influence as opposed to the regional biases outlined by Faulkner. To do so, I focus largely on Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* while placing a particular focus on the role of the college in the novel. Largely modeled on Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, which Ellison attended but never graduated from, I consider the ways debates of the influence Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have influenced theorizations on black intellectualism in general. I make the case that Ellison's novel

attempts to critique both Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, who was famously on the other side of the debate over black education in America. In neither accepting Washington's capitulation to the white demand for skilled labor nor agreeing to DuBois's faith in party politics over academia, Ellison's invisible man searches for a third option of acting as an intellectual without being beholden to the paternalism apparent in each of those intellectual arenas. Interestingly, it is only through narrative that the invisible man can act as an intellectual, which is not unlike the case of Ellison himself. I place this turn to fiction within the context of larger debates regarding black intellectualism, ranging from Harold Cruse to Hortense Spillers, while also calling into question the academy's role in supporting such intellectuals and their production.

My second chapter moves to another pivotal moment in the social perception of the American intellectual by turning a critical eye towards the New York Intellectuals. Works like Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* and Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals*, both of which are mentioned above, look to the New York Intellectual circle as the last high point of public intellectualism. These studies, coupled with the numerous biographies of the group, reinforce the opinion that the politically-charged New York Intellectuals set the current intellectual standards that have yet to be surpassed. Furthermore, such narratives rely on faulting modern day intellectuals for being too affiliated with academia and see that move as an act of escapism due to Cold War persecution. My own work questions the degree to which the standards set forth by the New York Intellectuals should be emulated and I point to the gender biases undergirding intellectualism to do so. By analyzing the life and work of Mary McCarthy, I consider the

condition of women intellectuals among the larger milieu of minority intellectuals while drawing in theories from figures like Paula Rabinowitz, Hannah Arendt, and McCarthy herself. Moreover, I draw attention to the role Vassar University plays in McCarthy's *The Group* to argue that McCarthy inverts the traditional narrative around the New York Intellectuals. In doing so, her work positions the women's university one of the only sites in which women intellectuals can enact a social function, which counters traditional narratives that position the NY Intellectual circle as the superior counterpoint to the failing university.

While the previous chapters placed the question of public intellectualism alongside the private university, this final chapter moves forward temporally and westward geographically to combine the two. To broaden this project's scope of minority intellectualism, this chapter turns towards the Chicano intellectuals in the American west. More specifically, I look at the public education systems of Texas and California, the birthplaces of Chicano Studies, to further unpack the intersections between Chicano intellectuals, the literature they produced, and the institutions that they worked through.

To do so, I compare the life and work of Américo Paredes, a figurehead of Chicano Studies, with that of Tomás Rivera who would notably become the first Chancellor of color for the University of California system. Within my readings of *George Washington Gómez* and *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, I consider the racial segregation that prevented Chicano/a and Latinx students from gaining access to higher education. In doing so, I draw links between the Los Angeles student blowouts of the 1960s and the fiction of the time to show they informed each other in a way that



emphasizes the communal aspect of Chicano intellectualism. Indeed, the influence that El Movimiento had on academia becomes a focal point of this chapter as the interplay between the public and the traditionally private realm of the university becomes emblematic of the Chicano intellectual's position within and without of academia. Lastly, this chapter emphasizes the fact that arguments against the university's ability to cultivate true intellectuals began to take place precisely at the moments that these Chicano intellectuals, and many like them, were actively fighting for their place in that forfeited ground. In doing so, this chapter provides an apt conclusion for the conflicted position of the minority intellectual in the American university and the critical potential that resides in that dialectic.

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## Chapter One: The Invisibility of the Black Intellectual

*“Ellison had the whole literary world at his fingertips to conquer with his considerable craft, but he hasn’t done it. Why?”* Harold Cruse in a letter to a colleague, September 10, 1986

*“Suddenly, I heard the school superintendent, who had told me to come, yell, ‘Bring up the shines, gentlemen! Bring up the little shines!’”* Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

As the case study on Faulkner has illustrated, the New Deal era popularly revised the cultural and political importance of the intellectual in America. However, its methods of utilizing intellectuals for state means did so in ways that reinstated racial hierarchies despite its egalitarian impulses. Indeed, it may have ushered in a new era of the intellectual, but that era did little to consider minority intellectuals. While black intellectuals like Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison reaped some of its benefits through WPA funding via the Federal Writers Project, they were ultimately reliant upon a system of white patronage steered by Roosevelt’s racially homogenous brain trust. Despite this fact, Jerry Gafio Watts reads the New Deal as a “social marginality facilitator,” which is his somewhat contradictory term for a force that helps to draw those on the margins in, facilitating their transition from the periphery to a national center. And, to some degree, this version of the definition is correct, as the Federal Writers’ Project gave black writers the “time and resources necessary to write,” without which it would have certainly been more difficult to create a visible, minority intellectual milieu (Watts 41). The other interpretation of his curious phrasing, however, is more in line with this chapter’s reading of the New Deal intellectual. As I will show, programs like the New Deal and their racial valences aided in marginalizing minority thinkers even

at the moments in which they seemed to be doing the opposite. Ellison's fiction, particularly through his representations of white paternalism, emphasizes this point.

Drawing from Watts' meaning, the growing radical Left and the Communist Party acted as marginality facilitators similar to the WPA programs. As Larry Neal notes "Left wing, particularly the Communist Party, represented one of the main means by which a young Black writer could get published," therefore tying black intellectual production to radical politics in a seemingly obligatory way (qtd. in Watts 45). This necessity of political radicalism for black intellectualism extended as "[a]n extraordinary number of black intellectuals and creative artists gravitated toward Party circles in Harlem, as members, as fellow travelers, or as participants in discussions or social events." Even Ellison himself could not avoid ties to the Party, despite his critical, and sometimes ambivalent, stance towards politics. His writing career was largely spearheaded by his numerous book reviews in Communist pamphlets and little magazines, and from "1937 and 1944 Ellison contributed over twenty book reviews to various leftist journals, including *New Challenge*, *Direction*, *Negro Quarterly*, and the *New Masses*." Indeed, Ellison's introduction to the literary circles of his time supports prominent black intellectual Cornell West's claim that Marxism is something that "black intellectuals must past through...come to terms with...and creatively respond to" (West 119). The "cathartic needs" that West identifies are only partially sated by Marxism, however, and such political identifications may "stifle the further development of black critical consciousness and attitudes." Thus, the social marginality facilitator of Leftist politics is also not without its more insidious interpretation.

Although Ellison himself had lauded Theodore Roosevelt as the “architect of the writers’ projects” that gave him a “chance to be a writer,” this chapter confronts the ways Ellison’s fiction actually offers a different viewpoint of such projects (Watts 41). *Invisible Man* in particular, when read within the context of theories of the black intellectual and higher education, question statements like Watts’s when he claims that the Writers’ Project “had not only rescued Ellison from poverty, but it also substantially increased Ellison’s exposure to the richness of black life” (41). The narrator of the novel, if read as a placeholder for the black intellectual in America, forces us to consider who was actually “rescued” in the relationship between the nation at large and the minority intellectuals who worked unseen within it.

On the one hand, Ellison’s 1952 opus *Invisible Man* questions the degree to which initiatives like the New Deal can ever provide a lasting foothold for black intellectual traditions and to what degree such initiatives act as social marginality facilitators. For Ellison, such facilitators often fail to deliver any intellectual autonomy, with the events in his life finding their representations in the novel. Despite this fact, the invisible man continually passes through various intellectual outlets yet ultimately finds failings in each, suggesting that the “black intellectual is locked in a dynamic state of antagonistic cooperation with the forces that would deny him a chance to develop his craft” (West 22). The only escape, the only viable intellectual outlet, becomes words, vibrating across the lower frequencies that Ellison’s protagonist speaks from.

However, this chapter also argues that Ellison’s proposed way out of the intertwining systems of oppression is also susceptible to the same critiques that he poses

of the intellectual venues of the academy or politics. While the invisible man escapes the white power structures in the creative space of the underground, Ellison's own life demonstrates how the work of art or the products of black intellectual labor might not be as liberated as he had hoped. Thus, this chapter also shows how *Invisible Man* was both a moment of intellectual liberation for Ellison as well as a tool with which white intellectual circles could co-opt and re-purpose in ways that confined him. By the end, we see how the growing hegemony of the New York Intellectuals grew to mimic one of the many stifling intellectual circles that Ellison represented in his fiction, and his own place within that circle proved just as tenuous as his narrator's.

The theoretical basis for conceptualizing black intellectualism in America must necessarily turn to the work of Harold Cruse, whose thinking has become a common starting ground for more modern thinkers like Cornel West and Hortense Spillers. Though *Invisible Man* was published twenty-five years prior, Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) provides a strong, retrospective counterpoint to Ellison's earlier articulation of the black intellectual's plight. Cruse's career began as Ellison's fiction career was ending, with his prose collection *Shadow and Act* being published the same year as Cruse's major work. In fact, it was precisely the type of turn towards criticism at the end of Ellison's career that Cruse's work would critique. Just as Ellison's status as an intellectual became solidified in the eyes of the white intelligentsia, Cruse's "analysis of the politics, personalities, and aesthetics that had defined Black America" shook that foundation and began to illuminate the tensions that Ellison's fiction had worked to articulate (Cruse xv).

Unlike Ellison, Cruse wrote during a time when the black intellectualism was already established in the arts and extending into other, predominantly white institutions. Yet by the mid-century, the hopefulness and potentials of programs posed to serve black intellectuals and culture began to wane. The radical Left of the 1930's slowly abandoned their posts in the following years, some due to the dismantling of the New Deal, some to the lure of academic stability, and others due to a growing awareness of Stalinist Russia. In Cruse's time the revolutionary fire of intellectuals on both sides of the color line had died down, which Cruse sought to resuscitate. Writing in the aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination and just before the deaths of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, which would leave the nation in what William Cobb describes as a "bitter crossroads" wherein America "lurched past the threshold of innocence" and into a political arena with an "increasingly radical edge," Cruse insisted upon an intellectualism rooted in praxis and political activism (xv). As Hortense Spillers writes, the "impulse of the revolutionary...was everywhere inchoate" and the actions of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party "were driven like a wedge through the black psyche," providing useful context for Cruse's staunch insistence on reviving a radical black intellectual tradition (67-68). As revolutionary impulses fomented, and the efficacy of non-violence was questioned, the threat of "apocalyptic riots, a rising antiwar movement, and the indelible, chaotic images of the Chicago Democratic Party Convention" prevented Cruse from seeing how the efforts of earlier intellectuals like Ellison had succeeded in creating any lasting change. In his view, it was the failings of the "liberals—black and white—



who'd had their origins in the Communist Party activism of the 1930's," that had let black intellectuals and their communities down.

The main fault Cruse saw with intellectuals like Ellison was their impulse towards integration, which more often than not resulted in engulfment rather than co-habitation. In believing that access to the world of art and politics allowed for a social reality of integration, Cruse argues that intellectuals gave up their "strict claim to an ethnic identity in politics, economics, and culture." On its own, access to sociopolitical and cultural institutions did little to change their structure. If anything, inclusion made the black intellectuals within those bodies "beholden to white power-structure manipulation," which can be found throughout Ellison's fiction. According to Cruse, inclusion into such institutions placed black intellectuals in arenas where they "do not know how to function within its cultural apparatus" and are therefore unable to fulfill their role as intellectuals properly speaking. While one may argue that the Harlem that was so enriching for Ellison's early development was, in fact, a site of and for black intellectuals, the funding for Harlem's development often came through systems of white patronage via the brain trust, the Works Progress Administration, and private donors, which Cruse saw an endemic to whatever intellectual and cultural autonomy was to be had.

The antidote to that situation would be, for Cruse, black representation on all levels of production. While black artists and writers may have received funding through New Deal arts programs, they often had relatively minor roles in creating and maintaining the infrastructures needed to support a lasting cultural presence. In the case of the stage, for instance, Cruse argued that an integrated cast that excluded the black

“writer, dramatist, poet, composer, designer, *et. al.*,” is not a “democratic practice at all” (Cruse qtd. in Cobb 69). Integration was therefore not synonymous with change and a more drastic restructuring would be needed to initiate any lasting and fruitful change.

This systemic view of the arts in Cruse was particularly important for him, in that it was the primary means by which he saw white hegemony sustaining itself. Even in the jazz that Ellison so thoroughly identified with as a product of and for the black condition in America, Cruse saw the underlying structures that threatened the music’s ability to truly perform the intellectual and political work for which it had the potential. Taking the Pulitzer Prize board’s decision to deny Duke Ellington recognition, Cruse argued that the denial of the prize reflected a “whole history of organized duplicity and exploitation” wherein the “complicated tie-in between booking agencies, the musicians’ unions, the recording companies, the music publishers, the managers, the agents” and so forth succeeded in reinstating social hierarchies while appearing to be progressive on the surface (Cruse qtd. in Cobb 69). Not unlike today’s use of diversity and inclusion as a smokescreen behind which lies larger, structural homogeneity, Cruse was unwilling to accept a black intellectualism that came with the baggage of white patronage.

Since Cruse, others have argued that total separation from white superstructures might forfeit the cultural capital and resources to be had on that terrain. For instance, Cornell West, in a 1985 response to Cruse’s *Crisis* titled “The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual,” argues that “[institutionalizing] more broadly black intellectual presence” is a necessary condition for black intellectual autonomy. Like Cruse, West argues for “institutional networks that promote high-quality critical habits primarily for the purpose

of black insurgency” that “put a premium on creative and cultivated black thought,” though West does not specify that those institutional networks must be largely held and maintained by minority intellectuals (West 122). In fact, by expanding more broadly in white power structures, West argues that black intellectuals could introduce counter-regimes of truth at the source to contend with the Eurocentric epistemologies.

Significantly, West sees the academy is one such site of struggle wherein black intellectualism must assert itself. He argues for black academic journals and printing presses *within* white institutions, viewing the “white bourgeois academy” as an inevitability for most black intellectuals (113). While he notes that this would be “more of the problem than the solution regarding black intellectuals,” this does not change his focus on the formal university’s hold on intellectualism—for white and minority intellectuals. This is a key deviation from Cruse’s original argument, which signals the growing role the university has had as a social marker of intellectualism as the century progressed. While Cruse was writing at a time when black presence within academia was first asserting itself and new generations of black intellectuals steeped in academic traditions was first arising, West’s latter reflections show how the white academy has increasingly positioned itself as a standard of intellectual development. For West, the academy warrants more focus than Cruse gives to it. Indeed, for West, the academy is one of the two dominant paths of black intellectual development, with the other being “the literate subcultures of art, culture, and politics”—two routes that both Ellison and his narrator go down, and with particularly harrowing consequences (110).

Similarly, Hortense Spillers has recognized the near-unavoidable presence of the academy in post-Harlem black intellectualism. Like Cruse and West, she argues that access to “certain cultural institutions and conceptual apparatus” has not been successful in creating a politically effectual black intellectual tradition (73). Instead, inclusion into such power structures “disables the intellectual on the very material ground where he/she now stands: on the side of the mainstream academy and its various ideological apparatus,” to the same degree that Cruse saw black intellectual participation in white structures as more stultifying than liberating. In this argument, academic inclusion places black intellectuals between “a putative community on the one hand and the politics and discursivities of the predominantly white academy on the other” (92). Thus, for each of these thinkers, the crisis of the black intellectual largely deals with the minority intellectual’s relationship with structures of intellectualism, whether that be the academy, politics, or the arts. Contrary to seeing their intellectualism as something internal and socially detached, the black intellectual recognizes the large-scale restructuring needed to counter white hegemonic practice.

These thinkers, however, vary in their ideas of how to achieve that. Cruse’s work lays out a ten-point plan that is largely economic, emphasizing black business and cooperative, community-based control over “political, economic, and cultural life” (Cruse qtd. in Spillers 76). West, however, sees potential in the black intellectual tradition of music and preaching as a source for critical insight, citing the “black Christian tradition of preaching and the Black musical traditional of performance” as counter-epistemologies from which structural change can arise. While Spillers agrees that

those sites do provide intellectual ground worth exploring, she argues that neither of these need to be grounded in materiality. Instead, she sees writing as the primary means to counter what Foucault would call a “regime of truth”. This faith in writing is particularly significant in that specific sites becomes less important than the matter of “how to take hold, at last, of the intellectual object of work *in language*” [original emphasis]. Taking a cue from Louis Althusser, Spillers embraces the belief that it is the “production process of the object of knowledge” via writing that allows black intellectuals a functional capacity outside of structural parameters (Althusser qtd. in Spillers 94).

This temporal return to the written word as an escape from the elaborations of white structural hegemony brings this chapter back to Ellison, a writer whose protagonist also resorts to words and words alone. Yet as I have already suggested, privileging writing itself appears, in Ellison’s life and work, to only escape structural binds at the cost of social and political engagement. Both Ellison and the invisible man saw faults with education, industry, and politics—as they are each interconnected in a system of white paternalism and hegemony—and the theorists mentioned similarly articulate a structural awareness. However, their differing methodologies on how to resolve the crisis of the black intellectual warrant more critique. Read with this theoretical backing in mind, Ellison’s novel serves as a literary litmus test of the differing theories. Within his portrayal of the state college, Ellison shows how even predominantly black education has been complicit with white interests, which questions the potentials of the academic pathway identified by West and Spillers. Furthermore, Ellison’s portrayal of the Brotherhood, a New York Communist Party, critiques the hopefulness of New Deal

intellectuals like Cruse, yet the counterpoint to the Party—the nationalistic Ras the Exhorter—points to the shortcomings in emphasizing black ownership. Furthermore, Ellison’s portrayal of the Liberty Paint Factory shows the failings of economic determinism while showing how financial measures like those proposed by Cruse are ultimately tied to other structures like that of higher education. Lastly, the fact that Ellison’s novel, and indeed much of Ellison’s career, was subsumed by a white intelligentsia, their journals, and their universities speaks to the efficacy of the written word in enacting structural change.

The first path of black intellectualism, through the academy, and its influence are particularly relevant to *Invisible Man*. After all, the trajectory of the unnamed narrator begins with a scholarship to the “state college for Negroes,” positioning academia as the springboard from which intellectual life develops (Ellison 32). Ellison places emphasis on this route by making it the starting point for the invisible man’s intellectual life. Even before the novel was published, Ellison wrote the Battle Royale scene as a short story for a 1947 issue of *Horizon* magazine, which would later develop into the fuller novel. From the start, Ellison saw higher education as a necessary medium through which black intellectuals would have to pass, regardless of the violence, metaphorical or literal, that it would cause.

Biographically, Ellison’s own intellectual life followed a similar path. While he did not take place in a formalized brawl for white entertainment like his narrator, Ellison did place himself in physical danger for his education without having had visited the campus. Like his narrator, Ellison received a scholarship to the Tuskegee Institute, which

would later become fictionalized as the novel's unnamed state college. Ellison's scholarship did not include the cost of transportation, however, and Ellison stowed himself away on railroad carts, moving from Oklahoma to Alabama, while being "fully aware of the case of the Scottsboro Boys" just two years previous (Watts 36). Far from ignorant, Ellison had been consumed with the case and had been reading about the trial of "the black hoboes" accused of raping a white woman on a train for "nearly over two years" (Jackson 92). Despite this knowledge, Ellison "hoboed to Tuskegee in the summer of 1933," according to Tuskegee schoolmate and lifelong companion Albert Murray, which marked the start of his adult education (Watts 36). And although the journey to campus was perilous, Tuskegee itself seemed to be detached from such dangers, almost Edenic, and provided a harbor from the racial violence that marked the pathway to it. For instance, when Langston Hughes visited the campus in 1932, less than a year before Ellison would step foot on the campus, he noted "no discussion whatsoever" of the Scottsboro Case, which signaled the school's reluctance to engage with current events and, at times, its intellectual backwardness (Hughes 61). Tuskegee was a safe haven and the "bold venture" it took to get there signifies the "intensity of the young Ellison's desire to obtain a college education" (Watts 36). However, this trip was not entirely by choice, given the fact that Ellison could not attend the University of Oklahoma due to legalized segregation. It is more so the case that he was forced to place himself into jeopardy to pursue what he saw as the only path to the intellectual life he desired.

However, Ellison's lived experience on campus is a far cry from his initial optimism, much like that of the novel's protagonist. When reflecting on his collegiate

past, Ellison only remarked that the instruction received at Tuskegee was “an education away from the uses of the imagination,” and “away from the attitudes of aggression and courage” that would be needed for the type of intellectual growth and accomplishment that he envisioned for himself (Jackson 145). Such a dismissive attitude towards Tuskegee provides more context to West’s claim that certain schools create a hostile climate for black intellectuals. In this case, however, it would be a historically black school that would take that role and not the traditionally white bourgeois academy. For Ellison, Tuskegee simply did not foster the environment needed to create the imaginative freedom that would lead to the next Hemingway, Faulkner, or Eliot. Such a freedom was only to be found in Harlem, in cafes and jazz clubs, and not on campus grounds, drawing in the second intellectual path that West identifies—the subcultures of art and politics. Yet Ellison’s dismissal of the intellectual merit of Tuskegee is ironic, since it was there that he was first exposed to the literary figures that defined his artistic ambitions. After all, it was under the tutelage of Morteza Drexel Sprague, a professor to whom Ellison dedicated the *Shadow and Act* collection, that Ellison and close colleague Albert Murray were first exposed to high modernism (Nicholas 30). Evidence of Ellison’s intellectual awakenings at Tuskegee remain today, with a copy of T.S. Eliot’s *Poems: 1909-1925* in Tuskegee’s library containing a checkout slip with Ellison’s handwritten name dated June 26, 1936, the same decade in which *Invisible Man* is set (Nicholas 32). Such rare and concrete evidence of Ellison’s early literary exposure, however, only furthers the question of why Ellison would claim the Institute steered him away from the “uses of imagination” when it seemed to offer the tools for shaping his role as an intellectual.



After leaving Tuskegee a year short of graduating, in large part due to illness and then the death of his mother, Ellison remained preoccupied with his experiences at Booker T. Washington's famed black college, and traces of the school continually surface in his literary oeuvre. Before writing *Invisible Man*, Ellison returned to Tuskegee in his fiction through the short story "Hymie's Bull," which dramatizes his hoboeing days as well as in "Boy on a Train," which focuses on a similar theme. In an interview between Ellison and Richard Stern, the former spoke to what concerned him when writing those stories. Ellison claims that the "ambiguity of Negro leadership during [the late 1940s]," was high and that black leaders of the forties "did not represent the Negro community," but served "their own special interests" as well as those of "white philanthropy" and "white politicians" (Ellison 1995, 37). For Ellison, Tuskegee became a site most representative of this failing. In the interview, he continues to say that Tuskegee was cloaked in a "fog of unreality" that "separated the Negro group from its leaders," as graduation weeks were filled with "high-powered word artists." Such figures were not inspiring nor were they at the forefront of social change, even though Ellison recalls them being both "black and white." Instead, such intellectuals would often visit the campus to dictate "what the Negro thought" as campus representatives "descended upon" the students, which emphasizes the hierarchical structures of academia.

Yet there is another aspect of graduation day that Ellison recalls, which gestures towards an alternative intellectual tradition and source of cultural richness. In the interview, Ellison recalls the "Negro farm people from the surrounding countryside" who would also attend graduation week, if only peripherally (38). These members of nearby

communities would often use graduation week as an occasion for celebration and “visiting among themselves as though the ceremonies across the wide lawn did not exist.” Though these visitors were certainly aware of the “impressive speeches” coming from the “big-shot word artists,” they were more concerned with the ongoing picnics and games, believing the campus’ representatives “had no connection with the lives they led.” Ellison admits that he was more attracted to the comings and goings of this community than to the academic leaders he was training under, finding the “unrhetorical activities on the old football field the more meaningful.”

This small memory of graduation week at Tuskegee is an apt encapsulation of the intellectual tensions described by Cruse, Spillers, and others. On the one hand, the academic route offers a sense of legitimation necessary to enter the dominant intellectual milieu. This route, however, threatens to reinstate racial hierarchies without regarding the interests of surrounding black communities. The other route, embodied by the countryside picnic group, offers a direct connection to black communities and culture. However, its marginal presence on graduation day represents the marginality that intellectuals from this camp face, which hinders their ability to impart visible, structural change. Ellison’s own experience confronting this intellectual crossroads therefore illuminates the choices his protagonist must face, as each endures a series of tensions that pits the black intellectual between oppressive forces and social marginalization.

The battle royal scene that enables the narrator to attend college in the first place elucidates some of these tensions. Throughout this early chapter, the boxing ring that the young boys fill becomes a microcosm of the college campus to come and stands as a

metaphorical representation of the tensions and violence that formal education creates for black intellectuals. It is no coincidence that all the boys that participate are supervised by “bankers, lawyers, judges” and even “teachers,” (Ellison 18). Furthermore, it is the “school superintendent” who starts to the fight, yelling “bring up the shins, gentlemen, bring up the shins!” in a telling detail that positions education as complicit in white supremacy. In fact, without the superintendent it is unlikely that the fight would take place at all, as he is the one that invites the narrator and the other contestants. The educational system, embodied by the superintendent, is a method of hierarchical interpolation wherein black bodies, regardless of their intellectual potentials, are hailed as objects rather than intellectual subjects.

The narrator, however, voluntarily subjects himself to the violence and humiliation of the battle royal because he still labors under the belief that he and black Americans like him are “united with others of our country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social, separate like the fingers of the hand” (15). These lines immediately recall Booker T. Washington’s famous claim that “In all things social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress,” which furthers the connections between the fictionalized college and Tuskegee (Washington 583). Moreover, it’s significant that Ellison used these lines from Washington’s 1895 “Atlanta Compromise,” as it remains Washington’s most controversial. Washington argued that black Americans should “cast down [their] buckets” to white Southerners in an act of pacification, through which “progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges” of American life will presumably follow (584). Ellison’s

narrator shares a similar mindset initially, and even sees himself as a “potential Booker T. Washington” (Ellison 18). With these references to Washington, Ellison uses the battle royal scene as an early critique of the type of education promoted at schools like Tuskegee.

Ellison was not the only one to critique Washington, as W.E.B. DuBois also famously debated the merits of the Tuskegee Institute. However, Ellison also criticized DuBois’ counterargument to Washington, which I will illustrate after describing DuBois’s own understanding of the Tuskegee problem. For DuBois, Washington’s strictly defined range of black education as well as his views towards white philanthropy and business removed any autonomy for black intellectuals. In its emphasis on vocational training, largely limited to agriculture and mechanical arts, DuBois claims that Washington’s Tuskegee Institute “set its face towards the employer and the capitalist and the man of wealth,” which forced potential intellectuals to be “adapted to the demands of those who conducted industry” (DuBois 72). In the novel, we see traces of this in the faces of the crowd, as the ringside audience is filled with titans of industry, enforcers of law, and the orchestrators of education. For DuBois, such subservience to the demands of industry is merely another method of objectifying black bodies. The physical labor of the fighters and their “back, sweat-washed forms” recalls both slavery as well as manual labor, drawing a connection between the two while the crowd represents the proverbial slave owners for whom they perform.

Yet there is more to the battle royal than a critique of Washington. The first indication of Ellison’s critique of DuBois is more veiled than his direct references to

Washington, though they are significant. For instance, the narrator notes that there are “ten of us” when referring to the group of young students (Ellison 21). While Ellison could have chosen any number of fighters to make his point about the school system, the fact that there are ten references to the DuBoisean “talented tenth,” a term first used by white Northern philanthropists and later popularized by DuBois in 1903. Ellison’s use of this figure at this moment in the novel—the moment in which a spectacle of blackness is feverishly consumed—reminds the reader of the ways even that concept was co-opted by white Northerners to address black education as a whole. While the belief in the potentials of a talented tenth was often used in support of black education, it did so in a way that was based upon exclusion. Indeed, the concept is at once a means of providing education while denying it, a contradiction not unlike that faced by the narrator’s need for education despite its racial underpinnings.

Once the match ends, Ellison more directly places the views of Washington beside those of DuBois. Even though he lost the match to the minor character Tatlock, the narrator can deliver the same speech he recently gave to his graduating class and is introduced as the “smartest boy” in his hometown (29). The speech he delivers references Booker T. Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise” speech once more as the narrator quotes the “wisdom of that great leader and educator,” Washington, which shows the narrator’s naivete as well as Ellison’s sarcasm. And like Washington, the narrator only asks that those of his race appeal to those in power, despite what it may cost them in terms of their emancipation and pursuit of freedom. Yet his words fall on ears “deaf with cotton,” symbolically eluding to the ways the legacy of slavery has extended far beyond

emancipation and has stifled the growth and recognition of black intellectuals. The narrator is only about to cut through the laughter and talking once he changes the Washingtonian phrase “social responsibility” to “social equality,” which causes a “sudden stillness” in the room (31). This juxtaposition between social responsibility and social equality linguistically brings together the opposing viewpoints of Washington and DuBois, with the former emphasizing appeasement while the latter strove for growth.

The reactions to the phrase “social equality” elicits a different response and brings to the forefront Ellison’s critique of DuBois’s methods. As soon as the narrator concludes his speech, “sounds of displeasure filled the room” and the once jovial viewers quickly shout “hostile phrases” at the narrator (Ellison 31). As a quick reprimand, the M.C. rushes forward and asks the narrator if he was “being smart,” to which the invisible man replies “No, sir!” This is ironic, given the fact just moments before the speech was given the narrator was described as the “smartest boy” in Greenwood that “knows more big words than a pocket-sized dictionary” (29). For the black intellectual, being “smart” is only acceptable when it does not pose any threat to existing race and class relations. Thus, the education gained through an institution like Tuskegee, reliant on the notion of social responsibility, creates a form of intellectualism that is palatable to white audiences due to its lack of political import. The more humanistic form of “being smart,” which contemplates social equality, is swiftly denied, illustrating Ellison’s lack of faith in DuBois’s approach. Though the rhetoric of social equality may appear convincing, for Ellison, words alone are too little to create any structural change as the audience that represents the pillars of society quickly devolves into a mob.

Recognizing this dilemma, the narrator says that “swallowing blood” made him misspeak, which the MC accepts as an excuse for not knowing his place “at all times” (Ellison 31). Instead of choosing no intellectual opportunity at all, as well as the fear of physical violence, he puts aside social equality and receives a “scholarship to the state college for Negroes” (32). Of course, this is given with the faith that the narrator will “lead his people in the proper paths” and in “the right direction,” which is determined by the “Board of Education” that funds the scholarship. Because the alternative to accepting the scholarship does not offer any opportunity for intellectual growth—in fact the other contestants only leave with five dollars, which they are electrocuted for—the narrator is forced to concede to the terms of the scholarship. Just as Washington’s educational policies bent to fit the needs of capital and its white beneficiaries, the narrator is forced to limit the scope of his intellectual horizons to gain the financial support for college.

The Battle Royal scene therefore prefigures the black intellectual’s relationship with white ideological structures. Just as the narrator cannot reject becoming a spectacle nor can he voice his dissent when given an audience, the black intellectual is similarly forced to contend with and work through the hegemonic institutes that work against him. The invisible man’s oration at the end recalls the educational perspectives of both Washington and DuBois yet does so in a way that does not allow for an easy reading of the “right” mode of thought. Instead, the acceptance of Washington’s rhetoric as well as the quick dismissal of the mention of DuBoisean equality shows how each view fails to adequately combat the white structuring of education. The former view posits an

ideological subjugation while the latter, though less ideologically oppressed, cannot compete with the coercive forces that shout at the ringside.

The dynamic between Washington and DuBois, as well as Ellison's intervention into that educational debate, becomes clearer once the narrator attends college. Moreover, the college that the protagonist attends is a historically black state college, which opens Ellison's critique towards institutions that were purportedly designed for social uplift. In my view, Ellison's critique of the black intellectual and his relationship to academy cannot be separated from the histories of black education, whose legacy informs the theories described by Cruse and others. As we shall see, the development of HBCUs, the types of funding they received, the key acts of legislature that ensured that funding, and the opportunities that they offered are vital for understanding Ellison's meditations on black intellectualism in general.

The forms of white patronage Ellison's novel continually explore are rooted in the history of black education. Early HBCUs focused on training clerisy, at the behest of the white missionaries who provided the earliest funding for black education. While one can see this philanthropy as an indication of goodwill, one might also consider the ways this promoted the value systems needed for the democratic, liberal subject that capital would depend on. Though not directly connected to industry in the way that Washington would be, subject formation via religion was no less crucial for the making of a citizenry that would benefit capitalist enterprise. In other words, educational institutions became a way of creating an obedient subject, while early black colleges also emphasized the vocational knowledge needed to meet labor demands on a manual level. In Washington's "Atlanta



Compromise” one sees the dual concerns of developing a moral culture conducive to labor demands, and much of the initial instruction at Tuskegee was limited to agricultural and mechanical arts, focusing on vocational skills needed to secure manual labor for the developing South. For the black intellectual, a cultural education was instilled not so much to uplift the race but as an ideological tool that would support the white demand for black labor in the postbellum South.

Washington’s own views were not the sole support of Tuskegee or of the other developing HBCUs. Key legislative acts enabled the development of black education but did so in a way that reasserted the ideological positions that made Washington the target of many other black intellectuals. For instance, the Morrill Act of 1862 created many of the land-grant colleges that exist today. The act required that the federal government fund states with colleges that had curricula that “included agricultural and mechanical instruction,” consequently linking the financial welfare of the state to their educational institutions (Veysey 15). Since state funding was tied to such schools, practicality rose as a qualifier of a school’s worth, and it was urged that “universities should convert their emphasis to the teaching of [industrial trade] skills” as opposed to the “citizenship-training” of an older, college tradition (70; 72).

The success of the first Morrill Act, shown through the “second wave of major foundings” happening in the 1880s and 1890s, showed both the efficacy of the federal funding as well as states’ willingness to meet those demands. This first Morrill Act, however, did little for black education. Segregation remained in place and despite the proliferation of schools, black Americans saw few advances for intellectual opportunity.

Yet the demand for skilled work continued to grow and by the end of the nineteenth century, the necessity for black laborers was undeniable. To fulfill these demands, the U.S. Congress passed the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which radically changed black education. Essentially, the act gave states benefiting from the first Morrill Act two options: either remove race as a category of college admission or dedicate a portion of state funds to the development of an entirely separate school system for people of color. Given the growing reliance on state funds, the prospect of losing all funding for “the support or maintenance of a college where a distinction of race or color is made in the admission of students” carried significant weight (7 U.S. Code § 323). While some schools continued to make race a category of admission, they did so in a way that was informal and could therefore circumvent their violation of the second Morrill Act. Gradually, the state became more ardent about these rules and many more institutions receiving state funding opted for the second choice of the “establishment and maintenance” of colleges “for white and colored students.”

Much of the funding for the first HBCUs came from this second option, which was both a sign of progress as well as an extension of white capital’s hold on black Americans. Ellison understood the more sinister side of state funding and turned a critical eye towards it through the character of Mr. Norton, a visiting donor at the college that the protagonist attends. Norton is described as a “Bostonian, smoker of cigars, teller of polite Negro stories, shrewd banker, skilled scientist, director, philanthropist” and for “forty years a bearer of the White man’s burden” (Ellison 37). These many titles make Norton more than a polymath and, in my view, he is meant to represent more than himself in a

way that is reminiscent of the crowd surrounding the battle royal. Just as the crowd represented the social forces structuring black education, Mr. Norton represents the various, and at times contradictory, forces that supported HBCUs. More specifically, the fact that he is both a shrewd banker and philanthropist point to the competing interests enforcing black education as well as their contradictory aims, which have a historical basis. For instance, the first HBCU, named the Institute for Colored Youth, was funded “through a generous donation by Richard Humphrey’s, who was a Quaker and philanthropist.” (Wiggin xi) This trend continued and the “majority of black colleges were founded by white northern missionaries and the Freedman’s Bureau” but relied on “white industrial philanthropists support[ing] black colleges financially with the intention of controlling the future of black higher education” (Betsey 113). Norton’s philanthropy therefore serves as a reminder of the early roots of black educational expansion while his telling of “polite Negro stories” and his white man’s burdens elude to the racial ideologies that pervade his altruism.

The other source of black educational funding becomes apparent in Norton as the story continues. While the narrator drives Mr. Norton through the campus, Mr. Norton explains that his destiny is somehow tied to the future of the school. He claims that the “campus is part of [his] life” and that the narrator’s “people” are “closely connected” with his destiny (Ellison 38; 41). As Norton elaborates on this destiny, he tells the narrator that it is through the students that he becomes “three hundred teachers, seven hundred trained mechanics, eight hundred skilled farmers, and so on” (45). Clearly, Mr. Norton can only conceive of black education as limited to the types of agricultural

training described through the Morrill Acts as well as an extension of white longevity. He can only think of black education in economic terms, claiming that through “living personalities” he can see what extent his “money” has been “fruitfully invested.” This emphasis on the economic potential of schools like Tuskegee echoes the industrial concerns backing black education. Interestingly, this transduction of “living personalities” into fruitful investments foreshadows what the manic veteran at the Golden Day, a bar on the outskirts of the college campus, will later tell the narrator. The vet says his confinement in the mental hospital is due to the fact that he had been trying “to change blood into money” until “John D. Rockefeller stole the formula” from him (Ellison 81). According to Scott Selisker, this line showcases “a brilliant mix of Marxian thought about the nature of labor, a celebratory nod to Charles Drew (the African American inventor of blood plasma), and a veiled criticism of white philanthropy’s agendas, as Rockefeller had been one of Booker T. Washington’s benefactors” (22). This line, among others, shows how black bodies literally service white capital and Mr. Norton’s view of higher education and his role in it is no different.

The narrow scope of Norton’s perception of the narrator’s destiny, however, starkly contrasts the narrator’s own feelings towards his education. For the narrator, the campus is an idyll and he cannot help but see his time there through a film of reverent nostalgia. While describing the college the narrator ecstatically sings out “Oh, long green stretch of campus, Oh, quiet songs of dusk, Oh moon that kissed the steeple and flooded the perfumed nights, Oh, bugle that called in the morning, Oh, drum that marched us militarily at noon” (Ellison 36). The descriptions of the college are akin to an ode,

demonstrating the affective connection the narrator has towards the campus. Even after the harrowing experiences that take place at the college through his eventual expulsion, the narrator's retrospective inability to completely detach himself to the school speaks to the importance of higher education to black intellectual formation. Just as West sees the academy as a highly attractive, if not necessary, source of legitimation for many black intellectuals, the narrator cannot entirely divorce himself from the ideal of higher education. Instead of denying the educational apparatus altogether, the narrator attempts to dissociate himself from the situation to preserve an ideal. He asks himself if the campus was "real" and "solid," or if it was nothing more than a "pleasant, time-killing dream," a dream in which the possibility of an autonomous black intellectualism can reside apart from the realities of the institutionalized racism at the actual campus.

The conflicted feelings towards the college via the narrator's idealized version of what it can stand for and the concrete realities of how it operates continues as the college's founder is described more clearly. While in a reverent memory, the narrator gazes at the statue that stands as a "cold Father" who is "lifting a veil...above the face of a kneeling slave." The concrete statue interrupts any Edenic understanding of the college by directly forcing the narrator to confront the racial paternalism that is always already present—even at the beloved campus. These physical reminders complicate the university ideal, just as Washington's faith in virtuous labor is undercut by racial codes and economic interests. Indeed, even the statue is not free from blemish, and the Founder's statue stares out with "empty eyes" that "run with liquid chalk," which is actually the recent waste of a bird flying overhead. The whiteness on the bronze statue

eludes to the racial dualities present on campus, doubled by the image of Founder and slave, with the presence of whiteness resulting in a contradictory image that is at once soiled yet more “commanding than one that is clean.” For black intellectuals, the campus is a “flower-studded wasteland,” or a contradiction wherein the academy is a site where intellectual life and death are mutually constitutive (37).

Within the novel, this precarious balance ultimately does not hold. After his involvement with Mr. Norton causes the narrator to be expelled from the school, the invisible man finds himself seeking alternative venues to use his intellectual prowess. After numerous failed attempts to get a position working for the Northern “trustees” and “men of power” who are somehow connected to the southern school, the narrator finally ends up at the Liberty Paints, a paint factory that is known for hiring black laborers (168). While this is hardly the career path that the narrator saw for himself, it is not a surprising one given the history of the fictional state college and schools like Tuskegee. After all, a job at Liberty Paints is precisely the type of job that the campus would have prepared him for. One of the first people the narrator speaks to at the factory, Mr. MacDuffy, alerts the narrator that the factory owner has been “firing the regular guys and putting on you colored college boys,” demonstrating the connection between black higher education and white capital (197). While the knowledge of his college attendance shocks the invisible man, MacDuffy quickly reassures him that “there’re about six of you guys out here already” and that “everybody knows about that.” Though the narrator had “no idea” that that was what his college education was conditioning him for, MacDuffy lets him know that it is “the wise guys in the office” who have hand-picked him for the job. The

dynamic between the wise guys and college-educated minorities answers the narrator's earlier question of how the "dignified old gentlemen" whose portraits hung in northern offices "fit in with the southern white folks, with the men who gave [him his] scholarship" (167). Being hired at Liberty Paints, however, makes clear the relationship between Northern philanthropy and the Southern college. The narrator's disillusionment therefore mimics the intellectual dissatisfaction and limited opportunities of Washingtonian education, much like DuBois, and later West, have predicted.

References to black higher learning and their link to industry continue throughout the factory scene. While being instructed on how to properly mix the mystery ingredient into the optic white paint, the narrator is handed a "white enamel graduate" into which he puts ten drops of the "brown substance" (199). This pun on the word "graduate," alluding to college education as well as a technical instrument, forms a symbolic union of higher education's role in containing and structuring black intellectualism. Just as the Battle Royale ring contains ten black students fighting for a scholarship at the behest of a white audience, the "white graduate" contains ten drops of "glistening black drops," recalling yet again the DuBoisean emphasis on the talented-tenth (200).

As the section continues, Ellison makes yet another reference to the campus and Tuskegee more directly. The narrator is told that he needs to hurry so that the factory could get this "batch off to Washington," alluding to both Booker T. Washington and America as a whole. Immediately after the name "Washington" is mentioned, the narrator wonders if that same paint is "used on the campus" and comes to a strange revelation of "how life connected up" (201). Furthermore, the narrator's knowledge of the factory,

seen through his ability to distinguish certain rooms from an engine room “for [he] had been in several, the last at college,” illustrates the connections between institutes like Tuskegee and the factory floor (212). This interplay between sites of production and the college, or the ways life connected up, shows the symbiotic relationship between southern black education and white northern capitalism once more, which calls into question the potentials of black intellectualism and the academy.

The negative potentials of this merger reach a high point with Lucius Brockway, a disgruntled black laborer whom the narrator is forced to work under. In many ways, Brockway is the Tuskegee man *par excellence* and Ellison’s portrayal of him follows DuBois’ critiques of Washington self-responsibility and labor. Ellison describes Brockway as the sole man in charge of the unorthodox and complicated task of monitoring various pressure gauges so that the entire factory can run smoothly. Despite the Herculean task of managing the “intricate network of pipes” and inspecting “the gauges and...a series of valves” that make the “guts” or the “*vee*-hicle of the paint,” Brockway works alone and quickly treats the narrator with a sense of distrust (208; 212; 214; 206). At the very site of someone entering the domain, Brockway quickly interrogates the narrator, asking him if he is an engineer sent by “them personnel fellows” to “git [him] out of here” (209). After the narrator assures him that he is not, Brockway’s fear temporarily subsides, and he begins to discuss the intricacies of his job to the narrator. Yet in a novel deeply invested in racial tensions, one would expect Brockway’s reservations and distrust to be pointed towards a figure of white authority in the same manner that the narrator distrusts the trustees and Mr. Nortons of the world. This is not,



however, the case with Brockway. Instead, his staunch individualism prevents him from viewing himself alongside anyone, black or white, which partially informs DuBois's critique of vocational labor.

Instead of viewing the narrator as a coworker or even an apprentice, Brockway focuses on his own work and proficiency. For instance, Brockway tells the narrator that he "knows the location of each and every pipe and switch and cable and wire" to the point that he can "trace it out on paper to the last nut and bolt" (216). He further emphasizes his singular importance to the company by telling the narrator an anecdote of a time "Old Man Sparland," the company's founder, personally asked him to return to the job after he was first replaced by "them so-called engineers" (215). The reverence that Brockway speaks of Old Man Sparland is not unlike the ways in which the Founder of the campus is spoken of, making further connections between the factory and the black college. The narrator, however, does not notice this as he is too astounded by Brockway's success. He can hardly believe that, in Brockway's own account, he "aint never been to nobody's engineering school" yet occupies such a central role to the factory (216). The narrator is dumbfounded as to why an "uneducated old man could gain such a responsible job," so much so that he believes that a trick is being played on him "like the trustees and Bledsoe" had done (211; 206). While the narrator initially thinks that Brockway is "dissimulating" or "pretending," he slowly begins to wonder if "perhaps he *is* the engineer" (211). Though lacking the formal certifications, Brockway *is* an engineer and his proficiency, and his dress show this. He dons a "striped engineer's cap", and uses a "heavy engineer's watch," allowing him to "[function] as an engineer" though he,

predictably, “drew a janitor’s pay” (208;211). Thus, in Brockway’s appearance and work, he becomes the Washingtonian ideal, whose individual labors become the foundation of his life’s meaning. Of course, the fact that he draws a janitor’s pay speaks to the limited potentials for advancement that comes with vocational training alone. Washington’s problematic claim that the “opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house” is therefore put into question through Brockway, whose concern for making money in and for the factory results in misanthropic individualism (Washington 382).

Brockway’s obsession with labor and its dehumanizing effects become even more pronounced as the factory scene continues. After telling the narrator about his job, Brockway makes the striking claim that he and other black workers are the “*machines inside the machine*” [original emphasis] (Ellison 217). Thus, Brockway is more of an automaton than a man. Along this line of thought, Scott Selisker has recently made a convincing argument that automata perform a satirical function through *Invisible Man*, though he curiously does not mention Brockway in his analysis. While reading the narrator as automaton, Selisker argues that the “parodically reductive image of African American automata” urge readers to recognize “the complexity and irreducibility of human experience” (23). It may also be the case, though, that the inclusion of black automata like Brockway also urges readers to recognize the effects of higher education and on black intellectualism. If so, the automaton is a consequence of the college education portrayed at the novel’s outset.

Ellison's response to Washington and DuBois becomes clearer when the factory workers' union is first mentioned. Shortly after the narrator wanders into a locker room to get his lunch, he is told to "Come in, brother" by the group's chairman (219). The repetitious use of "brother" throughout the scene, used thirty times in the span of four pages, alludes to the union party's leftist leanings and foreshadows the communist Brotherhood while ironically hinting at black fraternity—a fraternity that neither the union nor the Brotherhood recognizes. When the narrator returns to Brockway after being permitted to get his lunch, Brockway asks him what kept him so long. The narrator states that he "ran into a union meeting—" and is quickly cut off by Brockway who immediately shouts "*Union!*" before screaming for the narrator to "Git out of [his] basement!" (224). At the mere mention of the word "union" Brockway's opinion of the narrator quickly shifts, and he views him as a "two-bit, trouble-making union louse" and a "low-down skunk" (225). Yet insults are not enough—Brockway feels compelled to kill the narrator. He shouts, "I'LL KILL YOU!" [original emphasis] three times before assaulting the narrator with an iron bar, resulting in an assault that the narrator ultimately wins (226).

This visceral reaction that Brockway has at the mention of the political is significant in that it highlights the exact problems that DuBois saw in Tuskegee. According to DuBois, Tuskegee's deference towards industry consequently "neglected almost entirely the modern labor movement" (DuBois 72). As a result, the training at Tuskegee paid no heed to a matter of growing importance for the future of industry, or "the relation of the worker to modern industry and the state." In sum, the main fault that

DuBois saw with Tuskegee and its supporters is that it turned to “white Capital and not to Labor for the emancipation of the black world” which was “natural and yet how insanely futile!” Brockway’s immediate distaste for the union, up to the point of murderous assault, embodies DuBois’s argument that Tuskegee is anathema to any sociopolitical consciousness.

The first path for the black intellectual set out by West—the college—is therefore shown to be unfeasible. Through the Liberty Paint Factory, the education promoted by Washington and the Morrill Land Acts is shown to be both limiting and destructive. The emphasis on individual labor prevents figures like Brockway from recognizing the social forces that their labor serves while the violence against the invisible man shows how that form of education prevents community formation and is life threatening.

After turning away from the academy, Ellison sets his site on political activism, which is another intellectual pathway identified by Cruse. Soon after the narrator recovers from the accident at the factory, he is enlisted into the Brotherhood by Brother Jack, a communist who is looking for a medium through which to access poor, black communities. Through Brother Jack’s books and lectures, the invisible man is politically re-educated and soon takes on the role of community organizer and political agitator. Alongside Cruse’s argument, this move towards politics is in line with DuBois envisioned form of education that is neither divorced from the working conditions of the world or without a political conscience. Yet in his exploration of the DuBoisean intellectual form, Ellison also shows how that conception is unable to adequately contend with racialized political structures in the same manner that the mention of social equality

was quickly shut down at the Battle Royal. Reading the invisible man's political involvement as a literary test of this other form of black intellectualism challenges theories put forth by DuBois, West, and others.

Initially, Ellison's portrayals of the Communist Party appear as an antidote to the intellectual handicaps imposed by formal education. In fact, the way the invisible man changes his intellectual life shortly after leaving the college is in line with critiques of the actual Tuskegee, many of which were most famously announced by DuBois. In his first of several essays on black education and Tuskegee in particular, Dubois detailed the major failings he saw with strict vocation training in the short essay entitled "On the Training of Black Men." In DuBois' view, movements towards black education ultimately stemmed from the demand for the labor needed to support the "South's magnificent industrial development" to appease the "inevitable economic quandary that faces a people in the transition from slavery to freedom" (58). Industrial schools like Tuskegee therefore occupied a middle ground of appeasement on behalf of those arguing for black education, particularly from Northern philanthropists and politicians, while also providing a potential workforce for those who relied on Southern agrarian industries. Such vocational training, however, did little to provide former slaves with the tools needed to fully conceptualize their role as American citizens and did not impart the humanist training necessary for the "permanent uplifting and civilization of black men" beyond mere drudgery. In fact, the work at the industrial schools could impede progress by conditioning potential black leaders and activist to the demands of labor, thereby stifling their sociopolitical potentials and ultimately delaying racial progress. In other

words, DuBois predicted that vocational training alone would make “human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends” while an “education that encourages aspiration” remained the “privilege of white men” (58).

Yet in Marxian fashion, DuBois saw industrial training as the first step in an inevitable progression towards a more educationally and culturally equitable future. The mission to make the black population an “ignorant, turbulent proletariat” mass and “laborers and nothing more” contains its own undoing (64). Even in its most limited form, agricultural and mechanical arts planted the seeds of self-reflexive thought and consciousness, not unlike the invisible man’s time at the factory as a necessary precondition before being introduced to the union and the Brotherhood. Whatever opportunities afforded by industrial work would presumably be followed by the steady demand for “freedom for expansion and self-development.” In short, black Americans needed to be “emancipated by training *and* culture” [my emphasis] to avoid reconstituting a life enclosed within white parameters.

While DuBois noted that the “Negro college has done a great work,” he insisted that the “fundamental problem” of creating a black intellectual tradition that is neither beholden to white capitalism or socially disengaged remained. His main concern lies with the lack of a “guiding ideal of group development and leadership” as well as the establishment of “cultural life as the leading motif of the educated Negro”. According to DuBois, “the industrial school without the college was as helpless yesterday as the college is today helpless without systematic training for modern industry” (76). The

correction to this educational conundrum came by way of Marx, who had given DuBois a “new line of thought” that could remedy the perceived weaknesses of the past (102).

This turn towards Marxism as the solution to the educational problems posed in the Howard address supports Watts’ notion of the Communist Party as a social marginality facilitator. Furthermore, it also confirms West’s belief that Marxism is the medium through which many black intellectuals necessary pass through. In its ability to combine theory and praxis, its concern for the disenfranchised, and its perceived connection to the public, the Communist Party offered black intellectuals a distinct counterpoint to the exclusive academicism of other intellectual milieus. Furthermore, the support of the party provided developing intellectuals platforms that would otherwise be unavailable to them, as well as access to potential patrons who could supply them with the time and money needed for sustained intellectual work.

Though the novel does close with a negative portrayal of the Communist Party, it is important to recognize the initial attractiveness of the party for intellectuals in general and for black intellectuals in particular. Michael Denning and others have argued that in its openness to new ideas, desire for planned change, and necessity for mental labor made the Communist Party an attractive venue for intellectuals. To many black intellectuals, however, the party was also one of the few predominantly white organizations that fought for political equality on behalf of the black community. For instance, the party’s involvement with the 1932 Scottsboro case as well as its activism during the 1935 Harlem riot, which is represented at the close of the novel, made communism seem to be an active force for racial equality, not just in words but in actions. Ardent communist and

author of the 1934 *Road to Negro Liberation*, Harry Haywood, openly claimed that the “Communists *alone* are the only *true champions of Negro freedom*” [original emphasis] and that it is through “alliance with the white toilers and...the leadership of the Communist Party” that the “establishment of equal rights” for all could be achieved (Sundquist 198-199). Such faith in the racial potentials of the party are also present in Will Herberg’s 1934 essay “Marxism and the American Negro,” wherein Herberg claims that it is a “delusion” that the so-called “Negro question” could ever be “solved within the framework of capitalism” or with the “benevolent aid of the white capitalists themselves” (203). The Communist Party promoted an entirely new system wherein the so-called Negro question could, presumably, be answered. In other words, it was believed that the “white heat of class war will burn out the corruption of race prejudice” (204).

This initial hopefulness and faith in the party is immediately present in the novel while, at the same time, is shown to have uncanny parallels to the narrator’s time at the state college, which suggests that the initial optimism towards the party is misguided. As the invisible man stumbles upon the tragic scene of an elderly couple being evicted from their home, their belongings strewn about in the winter cold, he immediately feels drawn to the crowd that surrounds the scene. When the narrator asks who the men who are removing the belongings are, one bystander tells him that “those guys doing all the toting ain’t nothing but trusties,” forming an aural reminder of the trustees who the narrator similarly found to be complacent in black dispossession (Ellison 269). Tensions rise, and the crowd threatens to remove the men by force as the narrator is placed on the precipice of action. He feels as though his “head would split” as he becomes “afraid and angry,



repelled and fascinated,” and “seemed to totter on the edge of a great dark hole” (275). He is drawn like a moth to a flame to this form of political involvement seemingly against his own fears or reservations.

To do this, the narrator relies on his education and the speakers he saw at the college. Upon the footsteps of the home, the “shock-absorbing phrases” of the school find their way out, and the narrator implores the crowd to “learn from that great leader...that wise leader...down in Alabama” (275-276). This wise man, a reference to the fictional Founder as well as to the Washington of Tuskegee, was evoked so that the audience would be compelled to do the “legal thing, the law-abiding thing.” The narrator’s move towards appeasement and pacifism enacts a problem that Ellison saw with educated black writers who, “sought to wed the passive philosophy of the Negro middle class to the militant racial protest of the Negro masses” (Ellison qtd. in Jackson 234). For Ellison, such writers only caused the “energy of the whole people” to become “perverted” to the ends of a particular class—and not to their own. While this rhetoric of the “law-abiding thing” was permitted by the audience of the battle royal, the Northern crowd of black neighbors and passersby is angered by the reference. One woman goes as far as to call that wise leader a “handkerchief-headed rat” in a voice that was “boiling with contempt” (Ellison 276). In the face of an immediate, concrete situation, the ethos promoted by the college and leaders like Washington are not only ineffective but are also a source of outrage as the impracticality of the narrator’s college education comes to the forefront.

And just as Ellison sought out mentors like Richard Wright to acculturate him to the ways of the North, the invisible man equally relies upon the communist intelligentsia

to establish himself. Even before the narrator meets Brother Jack, the CP member who becomes his mentor, Marxism finds its way into the narrator's speech. Though the narrator has no knowledge of communism, he begins his transition to political radicalism by asking, "*What is to be done?*" [original emphasis]. This question references both the Chernyshevsky novel as well as V.I. Lenin's infamous pamphlet, wherein the importance of a political vanguard party and its intellectuals is outlined (277). Elements of Marxism continue to surface as the narrator asks, "where did [the evicted man's] labor go?" as he gestures towards the furniture and knickknacks that are thrown outside. These words rouse the crowd to action, too much in fact, and a quick riot ensues which the narrator quickly flees from. He notes that it had become "too much" and had "gotten out of hand" while asking himself what "had [he] said to bring on all this" (284). The power of Marxist rhetoric, even when it is unintentional, appears to have a physical impact in a way that the earlier rhetorical tradition gained at the school could not. This immediate reaction shows the potentials that party involvement appeared to offer black intellectuals, whose words could now not only receive a platform but could be used to start tangible effects.

Shortly after the unintentional speech on dispossession and labor, the narrator meets Brother Jack, the leader and organizer of the Communist Brotherhood. Brother Jack explains to the narrator that the reason the invisible man that the reason the elderly couple "reminded [him] of something" was because they were "agrarian types...ground up by industrial conditions" (290). That is, the powerless and evicted couple was

reminders of the subjugation that inevitably awaited those at the college, a college wherein the agrarian type was preserved by leaders like the Founder and Mr. Norton.

Yet just as there were fervent black intellectuals in support of the party, there were also those that saw the party as another means of control, in which black lives meant little more than resources upon which white power structures could be supported. For instance, writers like James Weldon Johnson had more reservations about any unbridled faith in the party and cautioned against “childlike trust in the miraculous efficacy...of any economic or social theory of government” (Johnson 141). Others like Claude McKay, whom Ellison met but was never able to cultivate a fruitful relationship with, openly denounced the motives of the CP. In 1938, McKay published the essay “Negro Author Sees Disaster If the Communist Party Gains Control of Negro Workers” in the *New Leader*, which took a far different tone than his earlier writing on Communism (Jackson 204). In fact, McKay’s distrust of the CP and its supporters, whom he found to be “simpleminded,” find its resonance with the narrator’s grandfather, whose letters for the narrator contain the words: “To Whom It May Concern...Keep This Nigger-Boy Running” (Jackson 204; Ellison 33). For some, the CP was little more than another tool that promised false hope while cultivating black dependence on white power structures.

This critique of the Communist Party is voiced directly by the character Ras the Exhorter, a West Indian nationalist who slowly gathers support throughout the novel. Unlike the narrator, Ras is not beguiled by the possibilities afforded by the Brotherhood and ardently strives to not only separate himself from it but to actively destroy it. While

Ras is often read as a fictional representation of Marcus Garvey, namely due to his dialect and strident nationalism, I would like to broaden the critical interpretation of his character. That is, we might see Ras's nationalism as a desire to create a black intellectual milieu distinct from white institutions, which appears very difficult in both the novel and in Ellison's historical context. This is supported by the fact that it is not exactly the Brotherhood or Communist Party that Ras is so critical of so much as it is the narrator's education and those providing it. For Ras, the main problem facing black intellectuals is what Louis Althusser deem Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and their effects on the invisible man. For instance, during their final confrontation before the fictional riot, based on the actual Harlem Riot of 1935, Ras argues that the injustices in the North are only made possible by "young black men with plenty education" [sic] (Ellison 371). He then asks the narrator and Clifton, another young black communist, where their "black intelligence" is before ultimately condemning them to take their "corrupt ideology and eat out [their] own guts," thereby positioning their education as the cause of their self-destruction (375). The narrator's history at a black state college makes this apparent lack of "black intelligence" all the more salient. Ras's critiques of education continue until he can tie the narrator's education to his political present by shouting "I ahm no black educated fool who t'inks everything between black mahn and white mahn can be settled with some blahsted lies in some bloody books written by the white mahn in the first place" (375-376). For Ras, these "bloody books" of the state college and the Brotherhood ultimately serve white capital—capital that Ras believes to "bleed black blood" (371). The educational apparatuses that the narrator contend with, be they through the

school or the Brotherhood's pamphlets, are always already a failed path towards intellectual autonomy in that they ultimately disseminate and maintain white hegemony.

Ras's critique of the narrator, in its ability to unite the narrator's past with his present, is particularly salient given Ellison's own understanding of his intellectual development. According to Eric Sundquist, Ellison's eventual separation from the Communist Party allowed him to see a "parallel between the constraints of the party and those of Tuskegee Institute" (16). In a letter to Richard Wright, Ellison wrote that his own disillusionment with the CP allowed him to see anew "many of the things which I was becoming aware during [his] bitterly isolated college experience," demonstrating the link between two major turning points of Ellison's intellectual development (Fabre 208). Even radical politics could not provide an escape from the racial paternalism of the early Tuskegee days, which only seem to rearticulate themselves in Ellison's life as they did his narrator.

This re-articulation becomes more apparent as the novel continues. As the narrator enters the Chthonian, the hotel where the Brotherhood holds party meetings, he notes, twice, that he feels as though he "had been through it all before" (Ellison 300). In the same way that the black students are merely entertainment for rich white patrons at the battle royal, at a posh hotel the narrator is also paraded around the Brotherhood in a way that disregards his individual subjecthood. The narrator asks himself if he is a "man or a natural resource," a question strikingly similar to the claim DuBois made about the student's trained at Tuskegee or the Golden Day vet's argument about Rockefeller turning black blood into capital. These links reach a high point when Brother Jack tells

the narrator how he will have to be re-educated due to recent political unrest. In front of the gathering crowd, Brother Jack asks the narrator the simple question: “How would you like to be the new Booker T. Washington?” (305). Before an answer is given, the inquiry then turns into an imperative— “you shall be the new Booker T. Washington,”— fulfilling the narrator’s early dream, before the battle royal, in those “pre-invisible days” when he “visualized [himself] as a potential Booker T. Washington” (307;18). With the mention of Washington, it becomes clearer that the tragedy of state college is doomed to be repeated as a farce through the Brotherhood. Despite the narrator’s own resistance to this imposed role, as he internally declares “to hell with this Booker T. Washington business,” his position within the Brotherhood makes any alternative infeasible (311). Much like at the case of the college, the narrator feels obligated to contend with a structure that undermines black intellectualism even when, or perhaps especially when, it appears to support it.

For if it was not for the Brotherhood, the narrator could not have access to the new political and intellectual milieu that Brother Jack introduces him to. Furthermore, the salary provided by the Brotherhood, a weekly allowance of sixty dollars a week, makes the party even more necessary. For the narrator, the bills that were “crisp and fresh” serve as a quick reminder of the immediate benefits of party involvement and temporarily disband any lingering reservations about the Brotherhood (Ellison 316). Moreover, that money would quickly be put to use paying Mary, a matronly figure who supports the narrator in New York, for “back rent and board,” thereby allowing party funds to directly improve the lives of those they purport to serve. The funds would also provide the

narrator the time and materials needed for sustained intellectual labor, keeping him from resorting to washing dishes at the YMCA, a job that Ellison himself had during his first months in New York before he was a commissioned writer for small, Leftist magazines (Jackson 165). Just as the financial opportunities promoted by the college as well as its access to educational materials positioned it as a gateway to intellectual development, the Brotherhood's economic backing, political ties, and new epistemological system equally make it a seemingly unavoidable pathway towards a new intellectualism—one that offers new content than that of the college but, unfortunately, repeats its form.

The narrator's question of "how far could [he] trust [the Brotherhood], and in what way were they different from the trustees," therefore articulates a tension apparent in any black intellectual forced to contend the dominant intellectual paradigms of twentieth-century America (Ellison 316). This was a question that was often discussed by Ellison and Wright, suggesting that despite their success these two authors also felt their intellectualism to be contingent. For instance, Wright's 1938 story "Bright and Morning Star," first published in *The Masses* and later reprinted in *Uncle Tom's Children*, questions the degree to which a "relationship beyond the condescension, patronage, mockery, and duplicity" could ever be cultivated across the color line while Ellison's portrayal of the invisible man answers that question in the negative (Jackson 206). Ellison's own conflicted relationship with Tuskegee, as well as his later involvement with the CP, certainly made him sympathetic to such a quandary, and his continual tightrope walk between intellectual circles across the color line suggests that he was never able to solve that question entirely.

Yet why should the black intellectual feel compelled to engage with these oppressive forces, particularly when they have continually shown themselves to be alike even in their difference? Ellison offers an answer through his narrator. The invisible man believes that the party offers “the only historically meaningful life” available to him and that if he leaves it, he would be “nowhere” (Ellison 478). In short, the Brotherhood offers a way out of invisibility. Such a belief seems extreme, given his relatively limited exposure to the party, but it is a telling detail about the sense of legitimacy that such minority intellectuals find lacking. The party’s potential to provide a “historically meaningful life” echoes Jerry Gafio Watts’ arguments about the communist party as a social marginality facilitator, or a force that could lessen the marginality people of color face in predominantly white society. The narrator’s feelings towards the Brotherhood should not be viewed solely as a romantic ideal about the possibilities offered by communism, but as an instance that shows the black intellectual’s need to substantiate their social position through vehicles like the CP. Without such an affiliation, the black intellectual risks the sort of obscurity present in figures Ras or even the Golden Day vet.

In this way, the narrator’s choice to join the Brotherhood is hardly a choice at all. On the one hand, the narrator can join the Brotherhood and gain access to the resources needed to become the intellectual leader he envisioned himself at since the days at the college by becoming the new Booker T. Washington. On the other hand, the narrator can refute the Brotherhood outright, though this would mean returning to certain poverty and to “plunge outside history” (Ellison 377). In short, the invisible man is caught in an



intellectual double-bind—a condition that minority intellectuals face when forced to contend with white power structures that promise progress, though only of a certain kind.

The appeal of the first option, becoming the new Booker T., was something that Ellison had to come to terms with. While the narrator's education is mainly imposed from without, through figures like Bledsoe and through Brother Hambro, the "Brotherhood's chief theoretician" who causes the narrator to work "harder than [he'd] ever found necessary at college," Ellison's own education was more self-driven (357). In a personal letter to Wright, Ellison wrote that he was determined, based on his own volition, to "study until I can quote Marx till I'm blue in the face," illustrating both the seriousness of his new form of study as well as his eagerness to prove himself to the older, more established writer (Jackson 228). While Ellison's own Leftist leanings also motivated him to take on the task of reading the newest translations of works like *The German Ideology*, this study brought him closer to Wright and enabled him to talk publicly about *Native Son*, which had taken New York by storm. Just as the narrator's training further draws him into the Brotherhood, as well as its privileges, Ellison's own training guaranteed him "a new role in their [his and Wright's] circle of friends and activists." Ellison's post-Tuskegee re-education in Harlem is therefore not unlike the invisible man's, in that each shows the lengths to which black intellectuals alter personal autonomy for some measure of affiliation needed for a historically meaningful life.

Yet as the narrator's time with the Brotherhood comes to an end, Ellison's own involvement with the Communist Party and its intellectuals also came to a close, though less abruptly. To be sure, there were many reasons why Ellison distanced himself from

the CP, ranging from the House of Un-American Activities purging of minority artists and writers of the “WPA to make it right-wing and lily white” to the increased exposure of Stalinist Russia (Jackson 215). However, the lack of care for the individual was also a leading cause of Ellison’s departure as he found the degree of intellectual freedom in journals like *New Masses* to be limited in scope and too dedicated to hardline doctrine than theoretical inquiry. This was a primary reason while Ellison set his sight on the *Partisan Review*, and its circle of New York Intellectuals, for its blend of “politics, high art, and autonomy” (210). While mired in Marxist study, Ellison contemplated if “the writer who accepts Marxism [has] the freedom to expound a personalized philosophy,” illustrating the author’s desire to preserve intellectual autonomy that Marxist doctrine seemed to deny (228). For all its rhetoric of liberation and freedom from oppression, Ellison began to find the CP to be just as intellectual stifling as Tuskegee.

The invisible man equally desires intellectual freedom, though his departure from the Brotherhood is more sudden and consequential than Ellison’s own distance from communism. In my view, Ellison intentionally makes the narrator’s break with the Brotherhood so momentous to emphasize the novel’s central quandary: how to be a free black intellectual in America. The difficulty in doing this becomes clear once the narrator wishes to “express an idea,” a seemingly simple desire (Ellison 470). This, however, is not permitted. Brother Jack reminds the narrator that he was “not hired to think” and that it is the Brotherhood that “[furnishes] all ideas” (470). He also claims that “ideas are part of our apparatus,” once again positioning the Brotherhood as an Althusserian ISA. For this apparatus, black bodies are viewed as political objects, or how those who “worked on

certain jobs, offered so many votes, and provided so many marchers for some protest parade” could be accessed (507). Apparently, even the political black intellectual, the kind envisioned and embodied by DuBois, risks becoming a material resource to the same degree that the students at the college willfully but unknowingly resigned themselves to white servitude, if only in a different form.

Yet what other options are there? With the failure of the academy to promote a liberated, black intellectualism, as well as the limited potentials of political radicalism, the narrator has exhausted the terrain of intellectual possibility described by earlier educators like Washington and DuBois while also those of later theorists like West and Spillers. For Ellison, this liberated intellectual space is only found underground, which becomes both a space of freedom and entrapment. Once the Harlem riot of the novel begins, the narrator finds himself caught in the middle of the chaos, narrowly escaping his apprehension by Ras, and dives down an open manhole to avoid two white civilians that want his briefcase. As the narrator taunts the men from below, one of them closes the manhole cover on him, shouting “You goddam black nigger sonofabitch” before letting the “cover settle over the manhole with a large clang” (566). Unable to escape the next morning, the invisible man wades in the dark before igniting his high-school diploma “with a feeling of remote irony” before moving on to burn Clifton’s paper doll and letters from Brother Jack (568). Soon, the narrator falls into a feverish state of “neither of dreaming nor of waking” and envisions himself as a “prisoner” of those who had “run” him, as the images of “Jack and old Emerson Bledsoe and Norton and Ras and the school superintendent” gather around to castrate him (569). After waking from the dream, the

narrator realizes that he cannot return to Mary's or even go above ground. As a result, he resolves to stay underground to "try to think things out in peace" by taking up "residence underground," thereby allowing the story to come full circle to the underground lair that the novel begins with.

The underground, however, does not provide a permanent peace. For the narrator, it is "the mind, the *mind*" that grows restless with an energy that neither "gin, jazz...dreams" or "books" could appease (573). This restlessness is what compels the invisible man to write his life story, for "without the possibility of action" all knowledge becomes "lethargy" (579). To combat this complacency, the narrator resolves to "shake off the old skin and come up for breath," as he declares that the "hibernation is over" (580). In fact, the invisible man notes that he has "overstayed" his hibernation and that resurfacing would be the "socially responsible role to play" (581). This last line is particularly significant, in that social responsibility is a term that the narrator uses in his confrontations with the Brotherhood as well as at the start of the novel during the battle royal speech. Thus, even resurfacing, though necessary, does not promise complete freedom from subjugation, as the narrator will still have to "play" a particular role, and the circular structure of the novel, starting and ending with the underground, cast a further cloud of doubt on whether that emergence into full autonomy is ever achieved.

One wonders, however, why the underground should be so synonymous with inaction. In fact, there are marginal, subaltern sites throughout the novel where action does take place. For instance, the Golden Day bar at the campus' outskirts is where the narrator is first exposed to the falsities of the college as well as new perspectives on race

via the disabled vet. Such underground sites are also present in the narrator's time in the North and are evident when he tells Brother Tobitt, a fellow party member, that the "gin mills and the barber shops and the juke joints and the churches" contain a "whole unrecorded history" of which the Brotherhood, the so-called authorities on historical matters, are unaware (471). In fact, before going underground the narrator visits some of these sites and catches glimpses of marginal spaces that offer possibilities of intellectual autonomy. While undercover as the enigmatic zootsuiter named Rinehart, the narrator goes to a juke joint and to a church. While at the Jolly Dollar, the narrator says that there is "something working on me, and profoundly" as he takes in the scene just before his disguise as Rinehart almost causes a confrontation. Once he leaves and enters a church, he realizes that that Rinehart is also a reverend there, which forces the narrator to see the "vast seething, hot world of fluidity" he is in, demonstrating a renewed understanding of the liminal position that he has been in all his life (498). If it is true that "outside the Brotherhood we were outside history; but inside of it they didn't see us" then Rinehart, "both mind and heart," embodies that dynamic of being both within and without yet uses that to his advantage. Such a revelation is only made possible through the underground, be they the juke joints or the sewers, which lends an air of intellectual possibility to these sites despite the social responsibility that pulls the black intellectual out of them.

Yet Ellison himself seems unable to have encapsulated the fluidity of Rinehart and while he respected the subaltern cultures of gin and jazz, he was continually pulled out of them by a perceived call to action. In my view, it was the aesthetic that allowed Ellison to occupy a safe middle ground between social responsibility and the freedoms of

the underground and his insistence on the work of art alone characterized much of his later career. However, Ellison failed to ever emerge for this aesthetic underground and, in many ways, it proved to be just as intellectually captivating as the institutions that his novel critiques.

By 1946, Ellison had largely turned away from the proletarian magazines and book reviews that had spearheaded his career and almost entirely devoted himself to a literary career, viewing literature as the only suitable method to become a free intellectual. In the words of his biographer, Ellison changed his vocation from “art critic to artist” at this time and left “the cloister of Harlem, the Communist Party...and leftist journals where he had been successful” (Jackson 326). This dedication to literature enacts West’s third contemplation of black intellectualism—the subcultures of art. Yet the turn towards the aesthetic did not, however, provide the escape from the white paternalism that the invisible man and Ellison sought. While the invisible man’s time underground allows him to write the novel, Ellison’s own time spend crafting his opus was steeped in racial dynamics like those at Tuskegee and the Communist Party, as his funding through the WPA and involvement with the New York Intellectual scene show. Furthermore, the apparent autonomy provided by the artwork often came at the cost of political activism, detracting from the “possibility of action” that the narrator sees as a necessary compliment to his literary life. The artistic pathway of black intellectualism is therefore not immune to white paternalism any more so than the college or political routes. Indeed, the more Ellison distanced himself from radical politics and racial critique, the more he was welcomed into the dominant intellectual fold of the 1940’s and 1950’s—an event not

unlike his narrator's acceptance into dominant intellectual milieus at the cost of his agency and political potential.

As Ellison's literary popularity grew, he was introduced to a new, predominantly white literary subculture. While his early career was established through black fraternity through his relationships with Hughes, Wright, Alain Locke, and the staff of the *Negro Quarterly*, Ellison's more established career, the one that is commonly recognized today, was composed very differently. After his mentorship under Wright ended, Ellison took to Kenneth Burke as his new intellectual mentor and the older critic introduced him to other crucial circles with a "willful amnesia of the black presence in America" (Jackson 351). In fact, this new circle, which included publishers from Random House as well as figures like Alfred Kazin and Albert Erskine, saw Ellison's politics as endemic to his position as a novelist, claiming that he had undergone "too much racial pain to...express himself as a novelist" (352). While the political radicalism of the Left in the 1930's was formerly believed to be a source of artistic vitality, by the late 1940's those same politics were quickly dismissed as tangential to the true work of art.

This depoliticization of art was partly due to the rise of New Criticism, while outlets like the *Partisan Review* often placed politics above race. The separation between art and politics grew and Ellison "accommodated the separation" to establish himself among the developing New York Intellectuals, who gradually became Ellison's intellectual outlet apart from Wright. For a newer generation of black intellectuals, the *Partisan Review* became the preeminent avenue towards intellectual legitimation and social recognition. In fact, it was within the pages of the 1935 July-August issue of the

*PR* that Ellison was introduced, by way of Hughes, to the work of a young Richard Wright. In the 1950's, James Baldwin believed the *PR* to be to the life line toward what the invisible man might call a historically meaningful life, as Baldwin saw the magazine as "very important" to his life and that it was not "too much to say that they [Philip Rahv and the editors at *PR*] saved my life" (Jackson 429). Though Ellison had previously distanced himself from that journal, preferring instead to align himself with political journals like the *New Masses* or more racially driven ones like the *Negro Quarterly*, the growing influence of the New York Intellectuals and the rise of New Criticism made those politically charged venues increasingly untenable. In the end, it was the *Partisan Review* that would receive the first finalized draft of the prologue to *Invisible Man*, which was published in the 1951 January-February issue. The critical success via *PR* introduced Ellison to the "New York intellectual and artistic crowd...that increasingly mattered" to him, positioning the New York intellectual milieu and its literary institutions as another social marginality facilitator (434). And such an affiliation had a payoff. In 1952, at the recommendation of Saul Bellow and Alfred Kazin, Ellison was awarded the 1952 National Book Award for Fiction, an honor for which his old literary idol, Ernest Hemingway, was also nominated. Thus, the more Ellison submerged his racial politics beliefs beneath the primacy of the aesthetic, the more he was brought into the dominant intellectual fold of the 1950s.

The division between the white intellectual milieu of New York and that of the racially focused minority intellectuals and artist is clear in *Invisible Man's* critical reception. While the novel marked Ellison's entry into the largely white paradigm of the



*Partisan Review*, some saw this success as intellectual defeat. For instance, Irving Howe saw the novel as pandering to a particularly form of individualism that was, at the time, a “favorite notion of literary people”—particularly those at the *PR* (437). More critically, Lloyd Brown saw Ellison as a “Judas” to the black population and that the novel was nothing more than a duplicitous attempt to interject the writer into the literary elite (427). Saul Bellow’s high praise of Ellison in his 1952 review of the novel certainly lent Brown’s criticism credence. Bellow applauded the fact that Ellison departed from the “normal way for Negro novelists to go at their problems,” and that he did not adopt “a minority tone” (Bellow 608). It appears then the more acceptable minority tone is one that is silent in matters about their problems, which yet again shows a pervasive paternalism surrounding the black intellectual that even the safe space of art is not immune from.

It is perhaps fitting that after the success of *Invisible Man*, Ellison returned to Tuskegee, not as a student, but as an invited speaker. After all, how different was his success and popularity from that of the famed Booker T. Washington, whose rise in intellectual prominence relied on his ability to skew black intellectualism in favor of white politics? Indeed, one might read Ellison’s success with the New York intellectual milieu of the 1950’s, its journals, and its institutions, as re-articulations of the very dynamics that the invisible man never seems to escape. The opportunities afforded by Ellison’s connection to NY intellectuals certainly allowed his voice to remain in critical conversations today, but those same opportunities were also the driving forces behind Ellison’s growing conservatism—an occurrence that has largely been a subject of

negative critique. For some, the New York intellectual stratum was as much as dead-end for Ellison as it was a gateway, and the scarcity of his literary output after *Invisible Man* suggests that, in the end, he was never able to fully resurface.

The following chapter focuses precisely on the growing prominence of the New York Intellectuals. In doing so, it shows how in the place of the university, this circle became another critical marker of intellectual legitimation. Yet like the university, minority intellectuals in that group, which includes women and people of color, were similarly repositioned in racial and gendered hierarchies. Thus, the goal of this following chapter is to demythologize the New York Intellectuals by examining the life and work of the most well-known woman of the group—Mary McCarthy.

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### Chapter 3: Women Intellectuals and Lady-Writers

*“Before McCarthy, if [she] did not become a ‘happy housewife,’ the intelligent woman had two roles: the Wise Virgin and the Romantic Victim...Her achievement was to invent herself as a totally new type of woman who stood for both sense and sensibility; who was both coolly and professionally intellectual, and frankly passionate...Maybe, as the editor of Cosmo was to put it much later, we could have it all.”* New York Review of Books June 11, 1987

*“There’s another thing, Miss MacAusland.” He leaned forward. “Publishing’s a man’s business. Book publishing, that is. Name me a woman, outside of Blanche Knopf, who married Alfred, who’s come to the top in book publishing. You find them on the fringes, in publicity and advertising...No. Publishing’s a man’s business, unless you marry into it. Marry a publisher, Miss MacAusland, and be his hostess.”* Gus Leroy to Libby MacAusland in *The Group*

By the time minority writers like Ralph Ellison were publicly affiliated with the New York Intellectuals, that group had already established itself as an authority on the culture and politics of the thirties and forties. For many, the New York Intellectuals and their metonymic journal, *Partisan Review*, became an emblem of the new intellectual forming from the aftermath of the Great Depression. Personally affected by the economic crises, this new generation of intellectuals could not afford the disinterest that characterized the turn-of-the-century American intellectual and instead made sociopolitical commitment a hallmark of intellectual life.

The growing radicalism of the 1930s, the expansion of socialist ideals into government programming via the New Deal, and increasingly public nature of intellectual activity culminated to form a new structure of feeling supporting the once enigmatic intellectual. According to Richard Hofstadter, a figure associated with the New York Intellectuals since his days with the Workers Party, the “idea of alienation...had played itself out” and was replaced by a sense of political commitment and duty (416).

As the Depression “brought the American intellectuals home” from abroad, where they found a “new need for brains of the country, and a new respect for them” (414). This new social standing and government support encouraged a view of intellectuals that did not prioritize the alienated individual and encouraged intellectuals to conceive of themselves as their own social group or class. And soon, the *Partisan Review* became the “house organ of the American intellectual community,” forming an uncommon nexus between intellectuals, the public, politics, and culture (394). No longer following the dreary paths of solipsistic misanthropy or, worse, that of the sterile university, the *PR* circle appears to mark a highpoint of intellectual autonomy and vigor that was free from the institutional hierarchies described in previous chapters.

While this chapter does not seek to discredit the history of the *Partisan Review* and the New York Intellectuals that became associated with it, this chapter does interrogate the increasingly popular view that the *PR* group should be looked towards as the pre-eminent model of American intellectualism. Furthermore, this chapter takes to task the stance that the group’s opposition to the university is laudable or even a possibility for the minority intellectual while also considering the position of minority intellectuals within the group. While the previous chapter delineated the experiences of black intellectuals among the New York intellectuals, this section more thoroughly considers gender as a social marginality facilitator, in the negative sense. By positioning Mary McCarthy in the center, this chapter views her fiction as a critique of the intellectual homogeneity of these iconoclasts while situating her writing among theorizations of the intellectual woman specifically.

In general, there is a large-scale critical tendency to elide the condition of women intellectuals at all, as most text presume a universal stance when speaking of those subjects. However, that objective viewpoint has allowed for the erasure of women from intellectual history, which holds concrete consequences. According to Lucindy Willis, four common touchstones of intellectual history—Julian Benda’s *The Treason of the Intellectual* (1928), John Holloway’s *The Victorian Sage* (1953), George de Huszar’s *The Intellectuals* (1960), and Russell Jacoby’s *The Last Intellectuals* (1960)—all lack any sustained discussion of women intellectuals. Moreover, Richard Hofstadter’s nearly 500-page watershed text *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, which discusses the influence of the New York Intellectuals and their impact on modern life, only mentions McCarthy once. Daniel Aaron’s well-known *Writers on the Left* (1961), which provides a wholistic view of the American Leftist intelligentsia, contains “no chapters or subchapters devoted to women” and only occasionally mentions a woman more than once (Teres 175). Likewise, James Gilbert’s *Writers and Partisans* (1968) elides the presence of most of the women within the *PR* and only gives sustained focus on Mary McCarthy, making her more of an anomaly than a member of a larger group of intellectual women. Other texts, like Alexander Bloom’s *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (1986), focus solely on the *PR* boys without considering the influence women like McCarthy had on the journal and the men who were the face of it.

Russell Jacoby prioritizes the male intellectuals in his study while also placing weight on the New York Intellectuals, which notably included women. His study credits the “coming-of-age of intellectuals” for their initiative in starting publications like the

*PR*, for which there are no modern parallels (12). Indeed, the arrival of the New York intellectuals was so momentous that they stand as a temporal marker as they through the post-war decades into a “swing period between two intellectual types: independents and bohemians receded before academics and professionals” (73). The New York intellectuals therefore stood as a middle ground between those two types, making them the “last public intellectuals” who “defined a cultural politics” due to their “genius,” leading to the unfortunate belief that “few younger intellectuals have arisen to challenge the old guard” (77). Though Jacoby concedes that “the work of fifties intellectuals may appear more impressive than it actually was or is,” his own work does little to counter the growing narrative around the circle as setting an intellectual standard that today’s intellectuals fail to reach—particularly if those intellectuals are associated with the modern university.

With works like Hofstadter’s or Jacoby’s, as well as the accumulated memoirs of Alfred Kazin or William Phillips, who’s respective *Starting out in the Thirties* and *A Partisan View: Five Decades of Literary Life* remain staples of the period, it is not difficult to see how the era of the New York Intellectuals has become a focal point of twentieth-century American intellectual history. Such retrospective glances have done little to recognize the contributions, or even presence, of figures like Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt, who were both very much a part of that critical circle. Instead, the term “*PR* boys” is used to refer to the group, so much so that the label used by the same women that it excluded. Indeed, the “head boys” of the thirties through the fifties that are

looked at as the spearheads who guided the intellectual into a new relation with the public (Herbst qtd. in Rabinowitz xxi).

While it may be true that they re-directed the public opinion of what it means to be an intellectual, they did so in a way that re-articulates the same hegemonic formation that their own work sought to undo. Mary McCarthy, however, remains an outlier and perhaps for that reason her position within the New York intellectual circle is too often ignored. Her work, namely *The Group* (1963), introduces the question of gender into discussions of the intellectual while her lived experiences within the *PR* group illustrate a very different perspective than critics retrospectively writing about the period have. Moreover, McCarthy's work asks what intellectual venues are, in fact, available for women and interestingly turns towards the university as a site wherein women intellectuals can actually function as such, despite the criticism coming from the *PR* boys about the value of the college campus. Particularly in *The Group*, the university becomes a site in which the minority intellectual can develop as well as articulate their emphasis and it is rather the case that the world beyond the university is the one which stifles the intellectual life of women. Such a reading supports my argument that the contested space of the university may be viewed as optional for the white, male intellectual but for the minority intellectual the university is more often a necessary marker of cultural capital and legitimation.

Not unlike the case with the black intellectual, fiction becomes the medium through which minority intellectualism can be practiced regarding McCarthy. Through the novels, McCarthy was able to communicate a contrapuntal understanding of mid-



century intellectual life by contrasting ideas of progress with stunted opportunity and inner unrest. In doing so, her work shows the structural limitations that prevent women from socially functioning as intellectuals as they fulfill “paradoxical roles that promised freedom yet delimited its possibilities,” while identifying the external structures that structure intellectualism (Keyser 3). Like the Vassar of her work, literary production and criticism becomes the heterotopic space that temporarily suspends male intellectual hegemony until publication, which places the work into the male spaces that her work critiques. McCarthy’s own fallout with the *PR* boys after her major publications, however, suggests that venues beyond the arts are needed to maintain a social space for women intellectuals, which calls for the type of systematic reform described by minority intellectuals throughout this project.

### **Partisans and Dark Ladies**

When the *Partisan Review* first appeared in 1934, it did so under the auspices of the John Reed Clubs, which funded the efforts of William Philips and Philip Rahv. Despite this party affiliation, the first publication of the nascent *PR* sought to distinguish itself from the “flurry of journals, manifestos, debates, and icons” of the Left as its creators clearly saw something lacking in the intellectual milieu of the time (Denning 61). According to an editorial statement on their first publication, Philips and Rahv declared that the newly founded *PR* was a deliberate response to the “narrow minded sectarian theories and practices” of publications like the *New Masses*,” which came after the dissolution of the earlier Communist publication *Masses* (Glaberson 75). However, the John Reed Clubs disbanded soon after the first publication, which forced Philips and

Rahv to either discontinue their project *Partisan Review* or find funds elsewhere.

Fortunately, the two were able to re-instate the journal with the aid of several wealthy, left-leaning patrons, which allowed them to continue the work without having a definite political party tied to their name.

Philips and Rahv welcomed this freedom from a definite political party, though that reliance on individual patrons meant less stable funding for the future. In the first run of the re-instated *PR*, they argued that “the case of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party,” and that this detachment ultimately served their intellectual freedoms that would, in turn, improve the state of revolutionary literature at large (Laskin 34). This focus on the revolutionary potential of literature distinguished the *PR* from other magazines and journals of its time, as many of the more hardline Marxist publications focused more on political journalism than the arts. Soon, the focus on literature would expand to culture in general, which would lead to a wider audience as well as influence of its contributors. In *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World*, whose gendered title is a telling detail, Alexander Bloom argues that the new *PR* “started as a magazine dedicated to radical literature and then rededicated itself to radical culture, only outside the world of proletarian literature and Communist party politics.” (6) In his view, what distinguished the *PR* group from either the staff at *New Masses* or the increasingly prominent New Critics was that the editors “held out for the preeminence of art, not devoid of social context but reflective of it.” For many, the new *PR* was the dialectical counterpoint to the bottom-up policies of the economic determinism of the so-called vulgar Marxists of the time.

While multiple forms of art critique filled the pages of the *PR*, the “specific literary medium” soon became a priority that led to the emphasis of “literary criticism—both theoretical and applied” (Teres 41). In its literary focus, the *PR* also distinguished itself as it “heroically defended the modern and the modernists,” which were often at odds with the socialist realism favored by proletarian magazines (Denning 120). Soon, *Partisan Review* became more literary than political as it formulated its own “practice of literary and art criticism” that developed into a general “cultural critique,” though the editors would likely argue that their cultural critique *was* political (423). Thus, the revival of the *Partisan Review* not only marked a break from a source of funding; it also marked a new, critical direction for the magazine that would place literary criticism at its forefront.

It may be because of this emphasis on the arts over party politics that a figure like Mary McCarthy, who had limited experience with politics and the Left, became affiliated with the magazine. In the journal’s early days, McCarthy admitted to being intimidated by its subject matter as well as its principle editor’s own viewpoints and attitudes. When McCarthy first met Rahv and others, she was overwhelmed and “found that it was over my head” (McCarthy 1993, 23). For the hard-headed and, at times, elitist McCarthy, such an admission of doubt is rare, but it speaks to the intellectual authority and high-mindedness surrounding the New York circle, even in their early days.

Once the journal made culture the well from which a political revolution could sustain itself, McCarthy was able to see the journal as an opportunity to apply her interests in literature and politics. During her time at Vassar University, which is

uncoincidentally the setting of her breakout novel, McCarthy distinguished herself as a student and was inspired by the work of figures like John Dos Passos, whose work balanced the political with the literary aesthetic in a way that McCarthy's own fiction would grow to. As the new *PR* was beginning to become the paramount journal for the Leftist intelligentsia, McCarthy was introduced to Rahv and she soon became a part of the group. Through Rahv, she met the rest of the boys and in 1937 she became a member of the editorial board, which included an "all-star lineup" of figures like Delmore Schwartz, Edmund Wilson, Wallace Stevens, Lionel Abel, James Agee, Dwight Macdonald (Laskin 34).

While the men took on the more serious matters of the journal, McCarthy, relatively unknown and less politically committed, was given the task of writing and editing essays on theater (35). Theater was the least consequential subject in the eyes of the rest of the board, and McCarthy's inclusion at all was more an act of appeasement rather than a stepping stone into some of the more studied aspects of the journal. In McCarthy's own words, theater was "of no consequence" and could therefore safely be placed in the hands of the female tyro without the fear that her voice might come to represent the journal's. The most significant writing was reserved for the men, as editors and as subjects, and "when it comes to interviews, a category that includes those individuals the magazine's editors deemed most interesting and important, only 4 of the magazine's 53 interviewees have been women" (Teres 18). Even the seemingly inconsequential work like theater reviews was hard to come by for women trying to enter the dominant intellectual paradigm and just "12 % of the 750 articles, illustrations, and

commentaries” issued by the editorial board through all the journals were written by women (176-177). These gender biases of the mid-century will come as no surprise, but the imbalances of the journal are noteworthy within the context of American intellectual history in general and the New York intellectuals. Few, if any, of the studies that both applaud and call for a return to this era acknowledge the role of gender in the making of the intellectual. McCarthy’s absence from their accounts, as well as the relative absence of women in the *PR*, speaks to the minority status of women intellectuals.

Although McCarthy was as adept and well-read as other members of the board, her welcome was hardly hospitable. In her view, McCarthy claims that “Philip imposed [her] on the others. And they were not altogether pleased,” demonstrating the insular qualities of the all-male board (Laskin 33). And even though she was one of the first figures to help establish the revitalized *Partisan Review*, had presence in editorial meetings, and influenced the minds of those most synonymous with the New York intellectuals, her influence rarely receives notice. McCarthy herself recognized her relative absence in the *Partisan Review*’s history by noting that “none of the histories I’ve looked at tells how I happened to be on the magazine.” According to McCarthy, if she had not been previously married to the actor, Harold Johnsrung, who later became the inspiration for the fictional Harald Peterson of *The Group*, it is uncertain if she would have been included at all—she was given the theater assignments simply because she dated an actor. Thus, her starting role within the journal was determined not only by her abilities, interests, or expertise but was more often aided by the men who she had relationships with. For women intellectuals, it seems, having access to effectual outlets

required a male conduit even during a time when women intellectuals “were in the process of achieving unprecedented visibility in the metropolitan public sphere as they circulated among male-governed formations.” (Gambrell 186). Perhaps it was simply because of this “unprecedented” nature of women’s public intellectualism that *PR* founding editor William Philips was able to believe that “there was no real discrimination,” racial or gendered, in the journal (Laskin 18). Yet by McCarthy’s own accounts and others, there was a definite “air of masculine clubbiness” to the group where women were “seldom treated as equals” (Cooney 13).

Much like the case of black intellectuals, this marginalization and invisibility was not new for most women intellectuals. Rather, that marginalization that McCarthy experienced within the *PR* group and its histories reflects her minority intellectual status. As an outlier, an anomaly, and an unrelenting critic, McCarthy was both within and without of the critical, intellectual turning point defined by New York literary radicalism. Contrary to claims that define intellectualism as an inner quality, independent of social and cultural factors, McCarthy’s relationship with the New York intellectual circle emphasizes the gender codes that delineate the parameters of intellectual institutions, whether they be in the form of a campus, a journal, or the publishing house.

Though McCarthy is often singled out when women are, in fact, discussed in terms of mid-century intellectual history, it is far from the case that she was the only intellectual woman of her time. For instance, Hannah Arendt, Tess Slesinger, Diana Trilling, Eleanor Clark, Elizabeth Hardwick, Midge Decter, Ann Birstein, and Susan Sontag were also later affiliated with the *PR* and went on to have substantial careers of

their own (Teres 174). Yet it is also noteworthy that “Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Hardwick, Jean Stafford, Hannah Arendt, Diana Trillin” were “married to a prominent male writer or thinker, yet each attaining considerable prominence in her own right” (Laskin 15). This is not to say that these women were not capable of their own success. Rather, this shared trend of many of the women New York Intellectuals highlights the unstated but present patriarchal codes that structured that intellectual life. Furthermore, such prominent men are often spoken of as a group, as in the case of Bloom’s *Prodigal Sons*, while the women mentioned above are rarely spoken of with the same degree of cohesion. Apart from McCarthy’s relationship with Hannah Arendt, with whom she famously had a lifelong correspondence and friendship, intellectual women in the *PR* were often viewed as solitary or in direct competition with each other, as if there was only one spot available for an intellectual woman. Similar to Roderick Ferguson’s view of a diversity that appears progress but enforces division and separation, the tendency to pit women intellectuals against each other ultimately served the dominant intellectual milieu.

For many, Mary McCarthy came to define this leading role that those after her would come to emulate—if not by choice then by the pressures of those who ran the intellectual club of the time. In fact, there was a term for the combination of scything wit and posh acculturation that became McCarthy’s trademark—the “Dark Lady.” This so-called Dark Lady was “mysterious and fearsome woman who could tantalize an entire generation of (male) intellectuals,” and her role within the group was often viewed more as an antagonistic outsider than an intellectual equivalent and colleague (Teres 177). In

addition to being an outlier, the Dark Lady was, by necessity, someone “clever, learned, and elegant, someone who wrote scandalous fiction, and produced ‘family-type’ criticisms” (Showalter 23). One should also note that, ironically, the “Dark Lady was actually a White Lady,” which introduces the intersections of race and gender with respect to minority intellectualism.

In a sense, the Dark Lady’s job was to bridge the perceived gap between domestic life and the intellectual concerns of the group, linking the two worlds of the personal and the political. This emerging intellectual type was meant to be between two worlds, belonging to neither, while providing male intellectuals a glimpse into a world that they would otherwise prevent themselves from seeing. The men of the New York circle saw such figures and the domestic fiction they produced as a sort of “reporting back” wherein the more marginal sphere, the home, was to be studied, analyzed, and delivered to the perceived center. In a relationship similar to colonial enterprise, the intellectual metropole could then control and reshape the domestic experience for its own ends without relegating any of its authority to the members of the marginal sphere. Thus, becoming the Dark Lady was a double-edged sword wherein the “confidence and authority that came from being part of the New York intellectual family in the first place” both granted the woman a platform for sociopolitical engagement, and the role of the domestic in it, while also placing those experiences under the auspices of the male critics and the editorial boards they controlled. Failing to become that intellectual character type, however, meant sacrificing the authority that allowed women to be socially recognized as



intellectuals, leaving them little choice in the matter. Being the Dark Lady was therefore not so much a choice as a prerequisite.

This is not to say that being the so-called Dark Lady was an entirely submissive position. Despite however inauthentic or limiting the role was, there were also advantages to the scandal, wit, and secrecy that defined it. Through writing about what was perceived as marginal activity—the apparently dull tedium of ordinary life— these women could write about the personal turmoil, flaws, and hypocrisies of the increasingly mythic lives of intellectuals, whose public personas become more monolithic with each publication that nostalgically recalls their influence. Indeed, their outsider position became “an advantage for critical distance in the face of a corrupting establishment that remains predominantly male,” as women like McCarthy could gain a new perspective on the group as an outside looking in, utilizing the vantage point of marginalization for subterfuge (Keyser 162). Through writing about “marriage, divorce, sexuality, abortion, maternity, adultery,” these women could challenge the “abstraction, dogmatism, and arrogance” of the male-driven intellectual scene while exposing the ways that the *PR* circle, which was “always concerned with organizing others,” organized itself (Teres 180). In relegating women like McCarthy to the margins, the *PR* boys unwittingly gave them the tools needed to expose them.

Indeed, Mary McCarthy epitomized the Dark Lady. Elizabeth Hardwick, another notable woman in the thriving intellectual milieu, wrote that “confidence and indignation” coupled with a “great measure of personal attractiveness and a high degree of romantic singularity” allowed a woman like McCarthy a career of “candor and

dissent” (Laskin 15). McCarthy’s combination of an acerbic wit and stylistic sensibility founded this intellectual type that would set the standard for women involved within the *PR* to come. According to Norman Podhoretz, McCarthy stood as the “Grande Dame” of this “dignified status” and that her successor would have to be equally “clever, learned, good-looking” and “capable of writing...criticism as well as fiction with a strong trace of naughtiness” (154). It is worth noting that on the list of qualities for being the Grande Dame of American letters, being capable of writing comes *after* being good-looking and that that writing itself should have a coquettish naughtiness. A similar focus on appearance and gender was later applied to Susan Sontag who was described as a “literary pinup,” “our unofficial hostess of letters,” and a “leftist vestal virgin” (Rollyson 305-307).

There are many more instances that show that physical appearance partially determined a woman’s role among the *PR* circle and, by association, her role as an intellectual. Speaking candidly, Jacob Epstein, an editor and pupil of Lionel Trilling, stated that one of the first determining factors in women’s intellectual as conceived of by the *PR* was “whether they were good-looking and if you could sleep with them” (Laskin 19). With McCarthy in particular, her looks and her relationships with prominent intellectuals like Philip Rahv and Edmund Wilson could overshadow her actual work, which becomes a pattern for the intellectual women of her fiction. For instance, when describing McCarthy’s critical history Lionel Abel notes that “Mary was talented and beautiful and hardworking,” showing a compulsion to temper McCarthy’s intellectual prowess with a description of her appearance (Laskin 44). Alfred Kazin similarly

emphasized her physical features by recalling that she was a “sharply handsome twenty-eight-year-old Vassar graduate” while Norman Podhoretz described her as a “Vassar girl and a very pretty one at that” (Stwertka 30). In each case, McCarthy’s attractiveness appears to have granted her access to the group’s inner circles, showing that women intellectuals were not free from the normative codes of their times and the seemingly progressive, leading intellectuals of the time were not free from enforcing them.

Yet if looks were a tool with which to enter the male intellectual sphere, those same attractive qualities also worked against women intellectuals. For instance, *PR* editor William Barrett claiming that no one would “would have surmised that this striking and vivid girl would prove to be one of the most brilliant women and formidable intellectuals of her time” (Laskin 35). Why, exactly, no one would have surmised this remains unclear though one can readily see the misogyny underlying the statement. Moreover, being an intellectual did not give women any freedom from objectification. For instance, McCarthy was often used as “bait” and to “woo” figures like Edmund Wilson into contributing to the *PR* in its early days (Laskin 48). Being the Dark Lady therefore meant something other than simply being an intellectual. To be the Dark Lady was to both transgress as well as reify the gender codes the underlie the universal intellectual and was at once a position of strength as well as inhibition.

### **Theorizing Women Intellectuals**

It should be noted that much of the discussion of the Dark Lady was done by the *PR* boys, without the input or perspective of the women who received that designation. However, the term is useful in understanding the particularity of women intellectuals to

expose the ways intellectualism itself has been hegemonically structured throughout the twentieth century. For while the non-gendered term “intellectual” implies a universality, the history of the *PR* circle described above demonstrates a “masculinity coded as intellectualism” (Keyser 141). To speak of the intellectual in general terms therefore “signifies masculinity through its absence of gender ascriptions” to the same degree that feminist linguists have showed with other seemingly gender-neutral terms (Rabinowitz 44). The woman intellectual is a marginalized figure who disrupts the appearance of objectivity that the universal intellectual evokes. She is, in short, always already an oppositional figure in the intellectual world.

While much has been written about the non-gendered intellectual in society, less critical attention has been paid to the unavoidable role that gender plays when discussing women intellectuals. For instance, in her discussion of women writers throughout the Depression, Paula Rabinowitz attempts to reconcile existing theories of intellectuals, most notably from Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault and Raymond Williams, with women, which none of the mentioned theorists adequately contend with. According to Rabinowitz, the dual categories that each theorist posits— the organic versus the traditional, the specific versus universal, and committed versus aligned—do not consider the ways gender affects those categories. Instead, they focus on intellectual function and the superstructures that order their activity without considering the ways that specific institutions are themselves gendered.

Furthermore, Rabinowitz argues that the dichotomies posed such theorists mirror hierarchical gender dichotomies wherein the former category—traditional, universal, and

aligned—mimics the role of the “mother soothing a child after its father’s anger,” since this form of intellectualism “assumes the disembodied voice of a conciliator” who ideologically strengthens hegemony through their apparent universalism (43). The objectivity of the traditional intellectual takes on “maternal qualities and feminized forms,” which presumably makes them weaker or ineffectual. Yet by the New Deal era, this feminized form of intellectualism was far out of fashion and an intellectualism synonymous with political activism and social engagement, a more masculine intellectualism, was in demand. For instance, the intellectual of the New Deal was thought to be the “son of working class parents, who himself worked in the lumber camps,” which signals a shift from the effete aestheticism of turn of the century intellectuals to a form that prioritized populist grit (45). Thus, femininity was associated with an outmoded form of intellectual activity, which set women intellectuals up as being ineffectual or out of touch.

However, the passivity associated with women intellectuals is, in Rabinowitz’s estimation, an error. Instead, she views the woman intellectual as an oppositional figure who works to revise understandings of the objective through confrontation. She argues that the “female intellectual who defines herself by her gender” occupies the same position of the type of intellectual who “speaks for a particular position in opposition to the hegemonic,” which is to say that the woman intellectual is more organic than traditional. Because of the “subcultural space” that she occupies, the woman intellectual “becomes the embodiment of the organic intellectual by virtue of her situatedness as a (re-productive) body.” Rather than acting for a class interest, as Gramsci’s understanding

of organic intellectualism implies, Rabinowitz argues that women intellectuals act for and represent their gender. Though McCarthy herself did not identify with the feminists concerns of her day, and was often critiqued by feminists because of it, her presence among the *PR* boys signaled a disruption of the normative intellectual order.

Yet as I have suggested here and in previous chapters, occupying that oppositional space can be unstable, isolating, and even destruction. The liminal space between the spheres of the domestic and structures of intellectualism cause woman intellectuals to be “doubly alienated” and, consequently, “cannot reclaim a maternal identity,” according to Rabinowitz (15). While McCarthy’s own life shows that the maternal identity can be reclaimed, the double alienation described by Rabinowitz comes through in McCarthy’s memoirs and fiction. In fact, it is precisely in McCarthy’s ability to articulate the tensions between domestic belonging and intellectual fulfillment or the “double binds of embodiment and intellect” that makes her work critical for understanding the social conditions of women intellectuals in general (Keyser 15).

This double-bind can be better understood within the context of what Alice Gambrell, drawing from Elizabeth Gross and Teresa de Lauretis, refers to as “insider-outsider” activity. According to Gambrell, women like McCarthy can be described as “insider-outsider intellectuals, whose value [consists] in their simultaneous distance from and intimacy with the subjects of their own inquiry” (4). In Gambrell’s view, women intellectuals neither stand in clear opposition to hegemonic paradigms, as Rabinowitz argues, nor do they situate themselves harmoniously within them. Instead, she argues that “insider-outsider practice...affiliates itself in *multiple* ways” and is, in de Lauretis’s

words, “*within and against*” the dominant paradigms [original emphasis] (14). McCarthy shows that one can occupy these positions simultaneously in that she was both a part and apart of the leading intellectual organ of the time. By occupying this middle ground, women’s intellectual practice becomes a complex, ongoing process between both the domestic and the highbrow as well as between belonging and marginalization within intellectual communities. Moreover, Gambrell notes that insider-outsider activity is not entirely determined by individual agency but also, “perhaps especially, by the situation in which one produces work and makes that work public” (22). This attention to the specific mediums through which work is produced refocuses attention to apparatuses like the *Partisan Review*, which shaped the work of women like McCarthy while determining the degree to which that work entered the public sphere.

### **Women Intellectuals in McCarthy’s Fiction**

In what follows, I apply these theoretical concepts to McCarthy’s fiction to argue that her work questions the social function of intellectuals while introducing the aspect of gender into that line of thought, which fills in a critical gap in intellectual history. The concerns of the women in her novels, the limited structural support they have for the intellectual lives, and the uneasy relationship between educational opportunity and lived experience embody the type of insider-outsider activity described by de Lauretis while the neither-here-nor-there liminality of the women becomes representative of a larger discourse on minority intellectuals. Such a reading complicates the simplistic take that McCarthy’s critics had of her fiction, as many were quick to read her as a “lady-writer,” whose fiction was more suited for the pages of *Mademoiselle*, a magazine that

McCarthy's fiction mockingly references. Particularly during the initial publication of *The Group* and *The Company She Keeps*, what rose to the forefront of critique was the overwhelming materialism of her work, the itemization and categorization of brands and appliances, and the tittering gossip between characters. Though these aspects are certainly present in her fiction, they form a deliberately superficial veneer that belies a more nuanced, intellectual complexity. In doing so, her narratives often oscillate between the two worlds of inner high-mindedness and outer vapidness as McCarthy reconciles the sociocultural responsibilities of the intellectual with the gendered limitations of postwar America.

Of all the members of the New York intellectuals, McCarthy's popular success stands as one of the most prominent. The 1963 novel *The Group*, which took eleven years to complete, had a first printing of 70,000 copies and "sales in hardbound and paperback of over five million copies," making the novel "by far her most successful" (McCarthy 1995, 144). Though her other novels like *The Company She Keeps* and *The Groves of Academe*, were largely successful, it was *The Group* that made McCarthy a "household name" (xx). However, the peer response to her novel was less enthusiastic than the sales figures would suggest. After *The Group* "catapulted McCarthy into the limelight" she was also placed into a "line of fire from fellow intellectuals in New York," which largely included the members of the *PR* (144). Soon after the publication of *The Group*, Alfred Kazin wrote *Starting Out in the Thirties*, a memoir of his own intellectual development. Within the book, Kazin took the time to single out McCarthy and attack both her writing and her character with accounts that affirmed his belief that "she had, I thought, a wholly



destructive critical mind” while she “instinctively leaped with cries of pleasure” at any perceived sign of weakness or shortcoming (Stwertka 28). Even McCarthy’s close friend, Dwight Macdonald, remarked that “most of the intellectuals I’ve talked to, or read, about *The Group* think it is the old Mary, cold and bitchy and superior” (30). Clearly, the success of *The Group* was less than celebrated among her male counterparts and it was not long before critiques of her fiction extended to McCarthy herself. In a personal letter to a colleague, Macdonald “why does she [McCarthy] have to be so goddamned snooty, is she god or something?...The trouble is she is so damned superior to her characters, sneers at most of them and patronizes the rest” (Stwertka 20). In short, popular success of McCarthy’s work brought her into a new realm of readership while simultaneously ousting her from the literary circle she once belonged to.

As criticism of *The Group* grew, McCarthy found herself with few supporters within the dominant New York intelligentsia. Significantly, one of her remaining allies would be another woman intellectual whose own social standing would similarly be questioned—Hannah Arendt. Like McCarthy, Arendt was essentially dismissed by the very circle of supporters that had initially been the foundations for the intellectual prominence in America. After the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt faced a large backlash from the Jewish community, which many NY intellectuals belonged, and they similarly voiced their discontent. According to Carol Brightman, who edited the ongoing correspondence between Arendt and McCarthy from 1949 to 1975, the scathingly critical, and personal comments McCarthy faced after *The Group*, were “exceeded only by the attacks hurled at Hannah Arendt,” which emphasizes the degree to

which successful, independent intellectual women were treated within the largely male group (McCarthy 1995, 144). In Arendt's view, the response to McCarthy's novel, and presumably her own, was "sparked by jealousy and fanned by group-think" that culminated around the *Partisan Review* (xx). This "group-think" placed considerable power in the editorial board to either welcome new members into the fold or to cast them out with little resistance.

In response, McCarthy admitted that she was "depressed by what seems to me the treachery of the New York Book Review people," in a rare confession that shows the extent to which her abundantly male contemporaries could shape her own intellectual life. McCarthy continued to say that she was left "bewildered and disoriented" by the backlash she faced, and she surmised that the real concern of the intellectuals her day was the "desire to make a sensation" rather than to affect any cultural and political change. In her view, the "literary and intellectual world" had turned into a "series of Happenings," signaling a distance between the radically-charged, formative years of the NY intellectuals and their later status as intellectual gatekeepers. It is also significant that neither McCarthy nor Arendt saw the critical attacks as directly related to the work itself but was rather the manifestation of a personal dislike and opportunism. In this view, the reaction to their work appears as less a critical enterprise that serves culture at large than one in which women intellectuals are punished for overstepping their bounds.

Yet what was it about *The Group* that could spark such vitriolic reactions from male contemporaries and massive success from a largely female reading public? Originally published as a short story in 1954, *The Group* was embroiled in scandal from

the start as it infamously begins with a main character, Dottie, being told, “Get yourself a pessary” (McCarthy 58). Lines like these encapsulate McCarthy’s signature ability to meld brash frankness, quotidian domesticity, and pensive self-reflection that would come to define the novel. This short story, commonly referred to as the “Dottie story,” later became the third chapter of the full novel, while subsequent sections were published in other journals like the *New Yorker* and the *Avon Book of Modern Writing No.2*. The full novel is set in the 1930s at the height of the New Deal and recounts the lives of eight Vassar graduates—McCarthy’s own alma mater and one of the first institutions to grant women degrees—in separate but intertwining sections. The common thread that links their disparate trajectories, aside from their graduating class, is their ongoing negotiation between their intellectual abilities and the limited venues beyond the longed-for campus from which they can act as intellectuals.

Throughout the text, Vassar is nostalgically evoked as the one site in which any intellectual autonomy, exploration, or opportunity was available and is continually juxtaposed with the gendered limitations of an era in reform. While each of the figures ultimately grow to lead very different lives, each illuminates some aspect of the intellectual opportunities available to women of thirties and of McCarthy’s own life. These intellectual pathways vary in scope and range from the lead figure Kay’s torturous domestic life with the failed playwright Harald, to Libby MacAusland’s struggles to enter to New York literary scene, and to Lakey’s life as a bohemian expatriate. Though Vassar is a focal point throughout the novel, by the time the narrative closes, it is no longer the campus that unites the women but the loss of Kay. The series of vignettes closes as Kay’s

funeral is held shortly after an unjust stint in a psychiatric ward due to the machinations of the abusive Harald. Yet by the end there is a sense of resolution as Lakey abandons the belligerent Harald in the middle of Kay's funeral procession to rejoin the group in New York. While the ending suggests a hopeful future for the group free from the damaging influence of pseudo-intellectuals like Harald, that optimism is tempered by the reminder that for women there are few viable options to socially function as intellectuals, and Kay's funeral suggests a larger death of intellectual opportunity.

Part of the way McCarthy highlights the liminality of women intellectuals is by placing the domestic, private experiences of the women alongside their memories of Vassar. Throughout the novel, it is not uncommon to see the women's conversation shift from the difficulties of hosting a dinner party to differing opinions on aesthetic theory or their reception of FDR's latest projects. According to McCarthy, the "ideas of the period concerning architecture, city-planning, house-keeping, decoration, and art" fill the women's lives and rebound off each other, which resists the persistent dichotomy drawn up between the intellectual life and that of the domestic (Abrams 44).

However, the juxtaposition between the quotidian and the erudite is not always harmonious. Often, McCarthy deliberately places what she called the promise of "progress in the feminine sphere" in tension with the dissatisfactions of life after, and due to, Vassar. According to Sabrina Fuchs Abrams, most of McCarthy's fiction is focused on women intellectuals whose historical context is not yet ready to support their inner potentials. For Abrams, the failings of McCarthy's heroines stem from the fact that they are "*both* intellectually superior *and* self-sacrificing" which makes them "realistic

representation[s] of the ambivalent position of the woman intellectual in postwar America” (34). Along this view, Abrams argues that McCarthy’s portrayal of women intellectuals “explores the conflict between professional success and personal self-doubt,” though very few of her characters achieve the professional success they initially set out for (35). While Abrams notes the nuances and tensions of intellectual women throughout the century, her argument reiterates the viewpoint that intellectualism is a largely internal process, as self-doubt and self-perceived superiority form the cornerstones of the postwar woman intellectual in her estimation. Though the women in the novel certainly display this tendency, limiting the scope of McCarthy’s project in this way reiterates the solipsistic tendency of defining the intellectual by their inner abilities. In my view, this does not leave room for the structural ways intellectualism becomes socially legitimate—a quality that McCarthy’s experience with the *PR* boys would have made her well aware of. Furthermore, this viewpoint does not consider how that self-doubt is a consequence of structural limitations and, instead, views it as a character flaw. While Abrams does eventually show how male characters act as foils to women intellectuals, she does not thoroughly regard the ways that the male-centric structures of the professional world also contribute to—and can be the cause of—the ambivalence she sees. It is rather the case that McCarthy is invested in the superstructures that create and maintain the subject position of the woman intellectual in addition to their internal qualities.

It is easy, however, to attribute the failings of the characters to their own internal flaws, and McCarthy herself was hardly sympathetic to them. In fact, McCarthy called the fictional ladies members of a “retarded social group” that, instead of “remaking itself

in a new, 'progressive' image" ends up hard-hearted and ruthless (Abrams 45). Similarly, Elaine Showalter claims that the women in the novel are "empty at the core" despite—or perhaps because—of their education (213). According to Showalter, "nothing - not education, not politics, not technology, not sex - can jolt these somnolent young women, these sleeping beauties, from their Vassar tower into dynamic growth," which negatively characterizes university-educated women of the time. Yet part of the reason why these Vassar women are empty is precisely because they have never been "free to experience themselves without the screen of male authority" in their domestic or intellectual lives. In fact, one could argue that the reason why the women continually romanticize their time at Vassar, complete with their compulsion to identify themselves and nearly everyone else that they come across with their graduating classes, is precisely because the school represents one of the few spaces in which male authority is limited. The heterotopic space of the women-only campus allows the characters intellectual lives in a way which other intellectual venues cannot.

Since Vassar, or the memory of it, determines so much of the women's stunted lives, it is possible to read education itself as being the primary antagonistic force of the novel. For some, the book did not represent a new generation of women intellectuals without institutions beyond the campus, but merely served as a sign that "higher education made women aggressive and neurotic" (Showalter 214). McCarthy acknowledges this perception of educated women throughout, and the characters themselves begin to internalize the negative stigmas associated with their tuition. One character, Priss, acknowledges that "Vassar girls, in general, were not liked...by the

world at large,” due to both the economic standing that school stood for, with the campus being a “symbol of superiority” as well as the general ideological outlooks of its graduates (McCarthy 1991, 30). A similar sentiment is echoed by Dottie, as she considers how “college...had been almost *too* rich an experience” as McCarthy uses the double meaning of rich to again allude to the class position of Vassar attendances as well as the apparent excess of their intellectual enrichment (37). Even an older alum, Mrs. Prothero, mother of the jubilant socialite “Pokey,” claims that the women can be “quite highbrow” and “quite the intellectuals,” as if that is a character flaw. Indeed, the intellectualism brought on in their college years is something they “must blame Vassar for” (207). Even Norine, a member associated with but outside of the titular group, contends that her “Vassar education made it tough for me to accept my womanly role,” once again positing education as the source of social conflict (443). Norine even says that with all the comforts that domestic life affords her, it is only a matter of time before she begins “discussing the Monophysites or the Athanasian Creed or Maimonides” (444). When asked if she thinks that her education was a “mistake” she answers with the definitive “completely,” and resigns herself to the belief that she is “crippled for life” (445). Through these references, we gather can gather the following about Vassar attendance: it made you a socially recognizable intellectual, it assumed a class position, lent an air of elitism, and that all of this was more crippling than enabling, particularly in terms of maintaining gender normativity.

It is strange, though, that the women should target Vassar for their failings when it is the world beyond the campus that is inhospitable to their positions as intellectuals.

After they graduate, each of them finds the professional opportunities available to women as being far from the expectations they had for themselves before they graduate. Yet while on campus, they are able to imagine lives of possibilities, as “Libby MacAusland had promise from a publisher; Helena Davison...was going into teaching...Polly Andrews was to work as a technician in the new Medical Center; Dottie Renfrew was slated for social work in a Boston settlement house; Lakey was off to Paris to study art history...Pokey Prothero...was getting her pilot’s license” while Priss Hartson got a job with the National Recovery Act, which presumably entailed the financial security and social standing that many of the women were accustomed to (11). In each of these careers, there is a practical application of their skills gained at Vassar as well as a level of social service, which contradicts the self-centeredness and elitism surrounding their education. The one outlier in this case is Kay, who opts for the more normative role of the mid-century woman. Instead of entering applying her education in a socially constructive way she takes a job at Macy’s, “along with the other picked college graduates” at the suggestion of her fiancé, the struggling, alcoholic playwright Harald, whom is believed to be based on McCarthy’s first husband, Harold Johnsrud (2). In her submissiveness to Harald and her career choice, Kay follows the most traditional path of the women of the group by forfeiting any intellectual aspirations for domestic conventions. Although the other women eventually fall into traditional roles, they struggle to maintain their professional careers where intellectual fulfillment is still a possibility. Kay, however, devotes her life entirely to Harald and her role as his wife,



which prevents her from acting as an intellectual at all, signaling that the realm of the domestic alone is not sufficient for maintaining an intellectual life.

Though not as severe as Kay's experience, very few members of the group actualize the aspirations they held during their college days. Libby MacAusland, for instance, does eventually become professionally successful—more so than any other character—and becomes a literary agent. However, as the quotation from this chapter's epigraph suggests, her future as a “high-powered literary agent” was also accompanied by the reminder that intellectual outlets like the New York publishing industry were male dominated spheres where women were marginalized despite whatever ability they had (314). Immediately after graduation, the initial hopefulness Libby held that was dependent on a verbal promise of a publishing connection did “not exactly materialized” (231). What she finds is that the young man who had made this promise to her was inflating the extent of his influence, which suggests that the intellectual opportunity for her was merely a means of seduction. While Libby's relationship with the young man is not discussed further, she does eventually meet an editor, Gus LeRoy, though his reception of her is similarly disappointing. LeRoy, a terse and unattractive man with Communist sympathies, is often seen reading the *New Masses*, *Anvil*, or “still another with the peculiar name of *Partisan Review*,” and initially takes little interest in Libby's own aspirations for copy-editing (237). This direct reference the *Partisan Review*, and the slight quip at its title, forces a parallel between McCarthy's own experience with the journal and that of the fictional Libby. And like McCarthy, Libby is eventually assigned the task of writing reviews, though the novel shows this more to be an act of charity and

annoyance rather than a recognition of her skill. . Unknown to LeRoy, Libby is quite capable as “her background was perfect for a berth in publishing: fluent reading knowledge of French and Italian; copy editing, proofreading, and dummied as editor in chief of the Vassar literary magazine; short-story and verse-writing courses good command of typing—all the tools of the trade” (232). However, Libby also knows that, for women, appearance will also have an unstated influence on her success. She notes that the “presentation” of her prose also mattered, and she takes care to type her reviews “triple-spaced on a kind of sky-blue typing paper...and stapling them in stiff blue cover.” Such a detail not only establishes the sensibility of the Vassar woman, whose emphasis on appearance enforces their elitism, but also remarks upon the persistence of gender expectations when it comes to matters of the mind. That is, one would hardly find it believable if a male character were to place a similar importance on the color of his manuscripts, yet viewed in the context of McCarthy’s entire project, this attention to sky blue paper reflects the unstated critical criteria of women entering publishing. The remarks made by Kazin and MacDonald that put McCarthy’s appearance on as high a pedestal as her actual work serve this point as well.

In an attempt to make herself more marketable, Libby later takes on a translation assignment that she is unqualified for. Libby is initially tasked with translating an Italian novel because of her proficiency in Italian that was learned at Vassar. Interestingly, this detail forms another parallel between her and McCarthy, whose *Stones of Florence* and *Venice Observed* were large successes. The novel Libby is assigned, however, is written in an old dialect that she cannot decipher correctly. As a result of the botched translation,

LeRoy dismisses Libby from the publishing house. While his actions are understandable, given her horrendous review based on faulty translation, the reasoning he gives her are less founded. After Libby prods LeRoy for a full explanation of why he is firing her instead of simply reassigning her, he eventually agrees to “give it to [her] straight” (253). He recommends that she “look for some other kind of work” even though she has “real writing talent” (254). The problem, then, is not so much with her intellectual ability but something outside of her control. He suggests that she write for “one of the women’s magazines,” believing that “straight publishing” is too much for Libby to handle. For Libby, such declaration is devastating, given the fact that she views book editors like LeRoy as “kings” who like “had the power of life and death in their hands” (246). When asked, specifically, what it was that prevented her from succeeding in the literary world—or at least LeRoy’s—the book editor cannot actually find an answer. LeRoy admits that he doesn’t know how to explain his reasoning or whether he has even figured out “what’s wrong.” The best he can surmise is that she doesn’t have “the knack” or “the nose” or even the fact that she might not be “hard-boiled enough.” At last, he ends with the claim that Libby is “essentially a sympathizer,” a consequence of the feminine faculties, which presumably would serve her with the women’s magazines but not an established publishing house. Indeed, after portraying Libby as ultimately too feminine for publishing, he lets her know that “[publishing’s] a man’s business” where women, who tend to be “old maids mostly” can only really succeed “on the fringes” (254-255). The one woman that LeRoy does employ is referred to as his “galley slave” who is, admittedly, “underpaid.” Clearly, not only does Gus LeRoy have an opinion about

intellectual women who seek to enter the male-dominated superstructures that organize intellectual activity, but when he does consent to their employment the conditions are poor. For him, Libby is just another girl hanging on until she “finally [finds] someone to marry,” which presumably means the end of her literary career (256).

LeRoy’s reaction is important because his response to represents the ways gender influences intellectual activity and how the dismissal of intellectual women requires no explanation. Furthermore, the individual misogyny of LeRoy is not the only matter of concern in the passage, as Abrams’ argument suggests. Rather, the focus of the section is how that misogyny has become institutionalized, with the respectable publishing houses maintaining their hegemonic position by delegating women to other spheres, like the so-called women’s magazines. And indeed, Libby leaves the straight writing to the male publishing houses and ends up working for *Mademoiselle*, though it was *Vogue* that was most formative for McCarthy’s early interest in print culture. Yet Gus LeRoy’s response to Libby is also strikingly similar to the critical response to McCarthy’s work. LeRoy’s claim that there is some indescribable knack that she lacks is symptomatic of his idea of what types of writing women are suited for. In his eyes, Libby will only ever be a “woman-writer,” for whom there is a specific place in the larger publishing world. *The Group* was similarly viewed as a “trivial lady writer’s novel” because of its domestic concerns and what some view as overbearing materialism (Emre 46). Because the novel contained no extended male characterization, it became associated with women’s magazines, which was the “kiss of death on the high culture pronunciamento” (Miller 184). Even fellow women intellectuals echoed this claim, as Lillian Hellman, whom

McCarthy had a long-standing legal feud with, referred to McCarthy as a “lady writer, a lady magazine writer,” even though she had written a nearly 500-page novel (Kiernan 540). According to Norman Mailer, who scathingly critiqued the work and McCarthy as well, noted that although McCarthy was “our first Lady of Letters” the book was not fiction to be admired but a “lady-book,” which would not hold any critical interest for the generations to come. The response to McCarthy’s success was therefore not unlike the response that Libby receives from LeRoy—she is at fault not for her writing so much as for her gender, which cast a shadow over her work.

There is only one character whose gender does not prove to be an impediment to her intellectual interests, and that character is largely absent from the novel. Lakey is the most revered member of the group though for most of the novel she is abroad earning a doctorate at the Sorbonne, where she is presumably free from the types of institutionalized gender barriers posed towards intellectual women in the States. Furthermore, her lesbian relationship with the enigmatic Baroness Maria d’Estienne suggests that Lakey belongs to a different cultural milieu with an altered understanding of gender conventions. It is fitting then that she is the one who is finally able to do away with Harald, as she has already abandon patriarchal standards in her own life. However, the fact that she must go to Europe to do this only accentuates the limited opportunities for intellectual women of twentieth-century America.

These minor success stories, though significant, are overshadowed by the largely autobiographical tragedy that Kay Strong’s life becomes. It is Kay’s story that opens and closes the novel, with her wedding and funeral encasing the lives of the group. During the

wedding, the women recall that at Vassar, Kay was an opinionated, and rebellious woman who was “discovered” by Lakey as a young sophomore (McCarthy 15). Unlike other members who presumably fell into the group by chance and common interests, Kay was sought out by the most highbrow and influential of the group, Lakey, which establishes her importance early on. Part of the reason why Lakey seeks her out is the fact that Kay is incredibly frank and unafraid to dole out critiques—even towards herself. This unabashed, critical tendency imparts Kay a confidence that makes the others believe that she “was usually right” about most matters and, if she wasn’t, she “always *sounded* right,” which allowed her to be so “absolutely disinterested and unconscious of hurting your feelings” (55). For the Vassar class of ‘33, Kay Strong was best described as “blunt, natural,” and “unconscious” in delivering her opinions and criticisms (15).

Like McCarthy, Kay is also one of the least conventional, both in practice and in theory. While remarking on how untraditional Kay’s wedding is, taking note that she “had not even bothered” to have her own parents at her wedding, the classmates describe Kay as a “hard-driving, authoritative young woman” who believed that “love...was an illusion” (3). Sharp and critical, Kay represented an intellectual type that, even for the recent batch of Vassar graduates, was both abrasive and refreshing. According to Dottie’s mother, even the Vassar faculty believe that “this new crop of girls was far less idealistic, less disinterested, as a body of educated women, than their mothers had been,” demonstrating the New Deal shift in intellectualism discussed at this chapter’s opening (226). Kay’s apparent insensitivity and harsh judgements make her McCarthy’s literary doppelganger and these qualities make her a desirable for the group. In this sense, her

intellectual opportunities are aided, not hindered, by her critical demeanor. Beyond the campus, however, that same insensitivity would become her downfall, as it was with McCarthy herself. The difference in response stems from the fact that Kay does not disrupt the intellectual hegemony of the campus the way that McCarthy did for the *PR* circle. These cases are inverses of each other, with what is viewed as a strength at the feminine intellectual site of the school becomes a deficiency that threatens belonging in the racially-coded intellectual outlets outside of Vassar.

Yet Kay and McCarthy share another similarity. According to Carol Gelderman, McCarthy's biographer, one word consistently stands to characterize McCarthy and, presumably, women intellectuals like Kay who exercised the critical faculties: "bitch." For instance, Gelderman recounts the times that John Aldridge referred to McCarthy's novels as being stuffy with "cerebration and bitchiness," while Paul Schlueter similarly characterizes McCarthy's work as "reflective of the modern American bitch." (Gelderman xi). Like the fictional Kay who was unconscious of the feelings of others, McCarthy has been described as "compulsively frank" to the point where it is commonplace to describe her words as weaponry (Stwertka 28). As noted, her contemporaries did not shy away from the term, with Kazin and Macdonald both using the phrase to characterize one of the few intellectual women of their coterie, and this tendency extended to other critics as well. Later in her career, after the success of *The Group* and her subsequent ousting from the inner circle of New York intellectualism, McCarthy was referred to as "Our leading bitch-intellectual" by Hilton Kramer while a later piece in *Esquire*, the self-proclaimed male-centric publication, wrote that

McCarthy's life and fiction has defined the "Modern American Bitch," in phrasing strikingly similar to Schlueter's (30-31). This epithet extended to her characters as well, with Malcolm Cowley referring to Margaret Sargent, the female protagonist of *The Company She Keeps* who is most clearly modeled on McCarthy, as the "perfect bitch" (29). The fact that McCarthy used the word to describe her own characters, whom she consciously modeled on aspects of herself, signals her awareness that for the intellectual women such a term is par for the course. In *The Company She Keeps*, Margaret Sargent's husband later faults her for "acting like a bitch" but then later surmises that she could never be anything else (McCarthy 2003, 276).

If Kay Strong is a "bitch" in the same way that Margaret Sargent is, then McCarthy is showing the difficulty of functioning as a critic—as an intellectual—while being a woman as well. While the militant surnames of her female protagonists like Strong and Sargent place them in positions of authority and masculinity, the lived realities of those characters bely that agency. The cold reservation that served Kay in Vassar does her no good in the world beyond the women's campus.

Kay's own tragic ending suggests the lack of intellectual futures left for the women in the novel and, presumably, of its readers. As the novel closes, Kay has a drunken fight with Harald, which is uncannily similar to one McCarthy had later in life with Edmund Wilson. While defending herself, Kay, who had already received a black eye from Harald, threatens him with a breadknife before she ends up locked in a closet. Due to the shouting and thumping, several elevator boys and police inquire in what initially seems like Harald's undoing. However, Harald manages to fool them with a



poorly constructed lie—he tells them they were rehearsing a play. That is all the authorities need to convince them and soon Kay is left in the house with Harald once again. As soon as his anger subsides, he coaxes Kay out of the closet and tells her he will take her to a “regular hospital” where she could “rest and read and listen to the radio,” (McCarthy 1991, 398). By the time she arrives, Kay soon finds that she was, in fact, taken to “an insane asylum.” In the psychiatric war, Kay is stripped, restrained, and shocked with no immediate release in sight.

She soon finds that the only way she can leave is if she sees a psychiatrist, tells him her story of how she received her injuries, and then have that story receive a “confirmation from Harald” (406). Indeed, much of her release depends on the therapists “careful study” and whether or not Harold “thinks it’s warranted (417). In short, her sanity is in the hands of the men around her. There is, however, a small glimmer of hope while at the ward. Kay finds that Polly, a member of the Vassar group, works at the hospital. Through Polly’s aid, Kay can spend more time voicing her side to the psychiatrist, yet “even this limited assertion of female strength is done indirectly through the male institutional authority” (Abrams 47). In contrast to the all-women’s college, the psychiatric ward is built upon male authority while Kay’s captivity within it emphasizes the limited autonomy for intellectual women beyond the campus.

Though Kay does eventually leave the hospital and go on to secure a divorce from Harald, her life afterwards is not much better. Unable to hold her position at Macy’s, which hardly provided for her while she was with Harald, she takes to “airplane-spotting...from her window at the Vassar Club,” keeping an eye out for the “*Luftwaffe*”

that she believes will one day “wipe out New York or Washington” (McCarthy 465). One could read this as a renewed sense of political investment when liberated from her domestic servitude to Harald, or perhaps even a symptom of the paranoia instilled through a life with him. The rest of the group simply views her activity to spite Harald. While performing her volunteer duty one day, Kay falls down a flight of stairs and dies, though some members of the group consider the possibility that her death was unintentional. Suicide or not, the women note that Harald had “become a fanatical America Firster,” and come to view Kay’s death as a “a cruel irony” of having enlisted in a “rival campaign” (467). Even in death, Kay is not freed from Harald’s influence and her potential suicide is not an act of agency so much as it is reaction to Harald’s influence.

The fate of the group, and Kay in particular, speak to the limited range of possibilities available to women intellectuals in the thirties as well as McCarthy’s own time. While the New Deal era was the time when Alfred Kazin and others were first “stepping out” into their intellectual positions, the same could not be said for the women of the time. In “The Vassar Girl,” McCarthy writes that “The Vassar Alumna uniquely among American college women is two persons—the housewife or matron, and the yearner or regretter” (202). Kay encapsulates both roles, while showing that neither pathway leads to the intellectual satisfaction that her life as one of the elite Vassar girls promises. As a wife, she undergoes continual abuse and has no constructive way to apply her education. Yet apart from Harald, she is either chosen for menial jobs or held in other patriarchal structures, such as the asylum, where she both regrets her education and yearns for release. In Norine’s words, Kay is crippled for life in any path she chooses.

In her application for the Guggenheim Fellowship that allowed McCarthy to finish the novel, she wrote that “In a certain sense the ideas are the villains and the people their hapless victims” (Gelderman 252). What then, are we to make of the women intellectuals of her works, whose lives demonstrate the structural dependence of the seemingly autonomous intellectual while also drawing attention to the gender codes that are masked by the subject’s apparent universality? Much like the black intellectual who is caught between a matrix of opposing forces of legitimation and disqualification, the woman intellectual of McCarthy’s fiction is caught in a state of crisis, of being neither within the home or the professional intellectual world. Just as her characters struggle to find an intellectual footing, McCarthy’s own position within the *PR* circle speaks to the insider-outsider activity described by theorists, which complements larger discussions of the minority intellectual in America. Rather than ideas, for intellectual women the male-dominated superstructures that maintain the social position of the intellectual are the real villains, even when those structures appear as the counterpoints to hegemony. For that reason, traditional sites like Vassar become, for McCarthy, heterotopic spaces of intellectual autonomy that suggest that for all its biases, the university may in fact be one of the few spaces where minorities may act as intellectuals.

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## Chapter VI. El Movimiento of the Chicano Intellectual

In 1952, editorial board members of the *Partisan Review* held a symposium entitled "Our Country and Our Culture," which placed focus on what the intellectual's role in America had been but also what it would be. A statement prefacing the meeting read "The purpose of this symposium is to examine the apparent fact that American intellectuals now regard America and its institutions in a new way. Until little more than a decade ago, America was commonly thought to be hostile to art and culture. Since then, however, the tide has begun to turn, and many writers and intellectuals feel closer to their country and its culture" (Dorman 189). This new relationship to the intellectual's institutions, particularly those associated with culture, would become clearer as the century progressed, and the postwar university soon became the site most synonymous with the American intellectual.

For some, the Cold War shift towards the apparently safe harbors of academia was the apathetic end to what had once been a politically robust and intellectually vigorous period. However, such a reading does not consider for whom, precisely, the university is a safe and even accessible place. Furthermore, the belief that the university is antithetical to true intellectual practice takes university affiliation, and its ability to create journals, publishing houses, fellowships, and whole fields of study, for granted. To claim that one does not need the university to function as an intellectual assumes that all intellectuals can be readily recognized as such, which negates the institutional legitimation needed by minority intellectuals.

It is also important to note that at the precise moment that critics such as Jacoby are seeing a downward turn of the American intellectual, more minority intellectuals, students, and departments were most apparent. That is, the same historical juncture in which the lauded New York intellectuals were being replaced marked a time when minority intellectuals were gaining a substantial foothold in academia and its attendant cultural capital. By the 1960s, the intellectual opportunities and academic access portrayed by Ellison and McCarthy, were just beginning to become accessible for minorities on a wide scale. With that growth in access in mind, we must read Jacoby's belief that the academic intellectual is a contradiction as a reaction to the reshaping of the modern university, in which the normativity of whiteness was beginning to falter.

Some of the most apparent moves to diversify education, and therefore reshape what was meant by the academic intellectual, happened in the American west. Particularly in Texas and California, high profile court cases and demonstrations gradually coalesced into what was colloquially referred to as "El Movimiento," a movement that was largely composed Chicano/a and Latinx intellectuals, students, and artists. Throughout the 1960s, El Movimiento provided a platform Chicanos to voice their discontent with their educational rights and opportunities. Rather than walk away from academia as critics have suggested to do, these intellectuals were trying to march in, and this chapter considers that history alongside the Chicano intellectual's rise in prominence—particularly in the university. Thus, the University of California system as well as the University of Texas at Austin become important focal points for this chapter in that they served as major nodes of a nascent Chicano studies that would reshape, and

be shaped by, Chicano/a and Latinx intellectuals. Drawing on the histories of Chicano Studies, or Mexican-American studies as it was known in Texas, within the context of Roderick Ferguson's recent work, I trace a line through El Movimiento to Minority Study in general.

After providing the historical context for the Chicano's presence in academia, I turn towards to major figures of Chicano Studies. First, I look at the life and work of Américo Paredes, whose novel *George Washington Gómez* provides an early critique of Western education while also pointing to the absence of Chicanos in universities. I use Paredes's own life and foundational role, alongside others, in creating the Mexican-American studies program at UT Austin, to compare his representations of Chicano intellectuals to his own life as one. In doing so, I argue that the ultimate goal of Guálinto, the protagonist of *George Washington Gómez*, to become the organic intellectual he is intended to be is precisely what Paredes sought to fix with his academic role.

Similarly, I read Tomás Rivera's role as the first Mexican-American UC Chancellor alongside the Chicano intellectualism theorized in his essays and novella ...y *no se lo tragó la tierra* to explore the role the university has had in sustaining minority intellectualism. Though written much later than Paredes's 1930s novel, ...y *no se lo tragó la tierra* nonetheless touches on the histories of racism and segregation shown by Paredes and the history of El Movimiento. As I discuss his rise in academic prominence, I draw attention to the ways Rivera refused to see the intellectual in isolation, as the content and formal strategies of his novella show. However, the ways the university administration actively worked against his efforts to both draw in the Mexican community to the



university as well as extend the university's influence into that same realm points to the structural ways Chicano intellectualism is curtailed. As I close this chapter, I contrast the intellectual possibilities envisioned in Rivera's work with his own life as an organic intellectual whose curriculum vitae starts with migrant field work and ends with a chancellorship. Though the progression demonstrated in the curriculum vitae is certainly noteworthy, his early death at 46, suggests the limits of that progression. Unfortunately for Rivera, leaving the fields did not mean leaving a world where structures of racism acted upon his health and mind.

Unlike previous chapters, this portion of the project benefits from archival work that adds a new perspective to these authors. The Américo Paredes archive held at UT Austin's Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection contains a vast array of papers, ranging from personal correspondences, documents between institutions like the Ford Foundation, notes, and a manuscript copy of *George Washington Gómez* with light editing. As I will show, Paredes was hardly alone in his attempt to integrate Mexican culture into the realm of academic study, and his letters to other prominent Chicano intellectuals, Rivera included, show the importance of informal intellectual communities beyond the campus. The Tomás Rivera archives at UC Riverside, the campus where he was Chancellor, similarly shows the importance of community and intellectual practice. Of particular note are correspondences between Rivera and other members of the Academic Senate, which illuminate many of the struggles he had with campus officials, though posthumous statements have sought to obscure these. Because there is no current,

complete biography of Rivera, many of the details of his life are supplemented by the archive.

### **A Historical Account of El Movimiento**

Not unlike black intellectuals, Mexican-American intellectuals have had a contentious relationship with formal education in that they recognize both its necessity and its role in maintaining cultural hierarchies. Likewise, Mexican-Americans have a long history of segregated education that informs this critical stance, though that history is less pronounced than the strict color lines that divided white and black schools. The popular notion that educational segregation existed only between white and black would only increase with the widely publicized *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954, leading the public to “think of education reform as black focused, stressing busing and later black administration” (Quinones 164). In fact, there is a long legal history of Mexican-Americans challenging the covert segregation that happened in schools, which often took place under the guise of remediation. Instead of segregating Mexicans on the basis on color, Chicano/a and Latinx students were placed into remedial or special education courses, to which their command of the English language formed the basis of those judgments. Under this criterion, approximately “90% of the schools in Texas were racially segregated by 1930” though the rationales supporting that segregation emphasized intellectual deficiency rather than racism (Valencia 9). Indeed, it is likely because racial segregation was rooted in what was deemed ineptitude that such high degrees of segregation were possible. Mexican-Americans could appear to be white, and

even be included on a census as such, but their surnames and accents could be reframed into racial segregation despite skin tone.

Many Mexican-Americans, however, recognized this new practice of racial discrimination and sought legal recourse, demanding that their children be allowed to attend the white schools that were, not coincidentally, the best equipped and staffed. For instance, the earliest court case led by a Mexican-American, *Romo v. Laird* (1925), best represents the administrative response to desegregation during that time. In response to Adolpho Romo's claim that the school unfairly denied his children their right to attend the new Tenth Street school, instead placing them in the Eight Street school that had no state-certified teachers, the Tempe School District argued that their response to Romo's request to admit his children was purely "due to pedagogical reasons" (Valencia 14). They argued that "because the Mexican American children were Spanish speaking, their English language development needs could be best met in a segregated school setting" thus circumnavigated the state law that prohibited segregation on the basis of race but permitted it for "instructional reasons." Romo's case against the Tempe School District was ultimately successful and his children were allowed admittance though no legal basis for desegregation was established after the case.

Unfortunately, *Romo v. Laird*, though successful, was more the exception than the rule. Court cases would continually be brought against school administrations that racially segregated their campuses on the basis of remediation. Many of these most notable cases took place in Texas and Southern California. For instance, *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930) similarly argued for equity, combating the unofficial

yet clear designation of “white” and “Mexican” schools. Though ultimately unsuccessful, and the possibility of a rehearing was denied, the case was a landmark moment in Chicano/a intellectuals taking political action. In response to the *Salvatierra* case, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) organized community protests, issued publications, and secured pro-bono legal support for their cause. Years later, this same organization would be a critical source of support for *Delgado v. Balstrop Independent School District* (1948), which successfully ended in the ruling that separate schools for Mexicans violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Though it would be years until this ruling was actually enforced, the success of the case provided the legal basis for future arguments, such as *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* (1971), and raised public support for Chicano/a and Latinx educational causes. It is not surprising, then, that Paredes’s Guálinto would be encouraged to become a lawyer at the start of the novel, as many Chicanos were beginning to see the courtroom as a means of change. In the novel, Guálinto’s family learns that a lawyer moves to their pueblo with the aim of fighting for Mexican rights, and his mother proclaims “He’s a lawyer and wants to help his people? That’s it! That’s what Guálinto is going to be when he grows up.” (Paredes 65). From the start, Guálinto’s intellectual path is set in service of *his* people, yet my reading of the novel will show just how complicated this matter becomes when formal education and inclusion becomes the basis for intellectual growth.

Mexican-Americans in Southern California continued to organize around educational issues while seeking legal recourse for reform. For instance, the *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946) case, which occurred several years before *Brown*, has

been cited “as a precedent for the major desegregation cases of the 1950s” (Quinones 302-303). Originated by LULAC in response to the initial curtailing of the Texas cases, the *Mendez* case equally argued that segregation was unconstitutional, and it enlisted the aid of the NAACP as well as Thurgood Marshall, who later successfully argue the *Brown* case before the Supreme Court. Perhaps most importantly, this case resulted in the ruling that segregation was itself unconstitutional. That is, the ruling did not result in Mexican children being deemed “white” and therefore able to attend the better equipped and staffed schools, but that “a paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality” and that it “must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage” (Rosales 200). Such a community effort that would require minorities to collectively respond to institutional practices of racism would become foundational to the intellectual practice envisioned, embodied, and represented by Chicano intellectuals to come. These Californian court cases and the grassroots support that brought them to fruition undoubtedly informed intellectuals like Rivera’s own attempts to reform and reshape higher education. While it may be the case that white intellectuals can act autonomously, even within institutions, the collective efforts around higher education have shaped Chicano intellectualism by imparting a populist ethos and community-driven motivation to it.

Though many of these cases focused on elementary schooling, in part due to the compulsory nature of it as well as the necessity of basic skills, these legal actions alone do not paint a complete picture of the changing Chicano/a and Latinx structure of feeling towards education. Moreover, the measures that these communities took to reform

education did not always follow a traditional, legal pathway and instead relied on grassroots activism that brought together students, community members, faculty, and leading intellectuals. Throughout the 1960s, high school and college students mass walkouts, commonly referred to as “blowouts,” that demonstrated the ongoing discontent with educational practices even after formal legislation had been established. Across the West in Crystal City, Texas; Denver, Colorado; and East Los Angeles, California, students marched out of school to stress the need for “equality *and* quality,” demonstrating that academic inclusion was not always synonymous with opportunity (Quinones 166). In the spring of 1968, a series of blowouts occurred in Los Angeles, in which “thousands of high school and middle school students went on strike for a better education” in a committed and demonstrative display that challenged the assumed Mexican view of education (Martinez 165). The first large-scale, university-level Chicano student movement took place at San Jose State University, which was soon followed by the San Francisco State student strike that has since become “the most protracted student strike in American history” (166). The strike allowed for continuous community contact and spurred the formation of other student groups like ‘the United Mexican American Students, the Mexican American Student Association, MECha (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), [and] the Mexican American Youth Organization.” Like earlier legal cases that received aid from local communities, the interplay between the student movements and formal organization signal a constitutive relationship between organic movements and traditional formations.

This history of communal reform is often overlooked, however, as the educational efforts during this time are largely defined by the Berkeley protests of the sixties. Clearly, though, Chicanos were also pushing for university reform in a way that challenges the critical view that the post-Cold War university was not something worth holding on to. Contrary to the argument that the intellectual could no longer be function in the university, such activism suggests that the university was actual vital for Chicano intellectuals. As the various programs for higher educational reform began to gather, they gradually began to fall under a common banner--“El Movimiento,” or “The Movement” (Anderson 306). Eventually, the movement was able to secure a substantial foothold in the UC system with the drafting of El Plan de Santa Barbara in 1969, which marked a major step towards initiating a lasting, structural reform to higher education for Chicanos (Martinez 196-197). Like Harold Cruse’s seven-point plan, El Plan also contained seven key points for “the self determination of [the Chicano/a] community” (Martinez 196-197). The points of El Plan were wide-reaching, and contained the following: 1. The recruitment, admission, and counseling of Chicano students. 2. The recruitment and hiring of Chicano faculty, administrators, and staff. 3. The formal study of Chicano culture and history in all its unity and diversity in terms of recognizable cultural categories. 4. Support programs for Chicano students. 5. Chicano research programs. 6. Chicano publication programs. 7. Cultural and social action programs in and for the Chicano community.” (Quinones 169). In other words, El Plan called for a Chicano studies department that would “provide a coherent and socially relevant education, humanistic and pragmatic which prepares Chicanos for service to the Chicano

community and enriches the total society.” Rather than argue for a change in curriculum alone, it is important to note El Plan’s emphasis on staffing changes, publication venues, and community outreach, moves towards what Rodrick Ferguson has called the “redistribution of material and social relations,” which current measures of diversity elide while framing inclusion as an indication of equity (204).

Though not all its aims were met, El Plan did force the UC system to reconsider its stance towards its surrounding Chicana/o community as well as recognize the institutional demands of Chicano intellectuals. Notably, the UC Chicano Steering Committee was appointed in 1969 in the hopes of continuing the work set out by El Plan. The steering committee extended throughout the UC System, held quarterly meetings, and included faculty and students alike based on committee membership to discuss “national organization building and participation, Chicano studies at other institutions, bilingual programs, funding, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), hiring in the system and affirmative action” and “community relations” (Soldatenko 62). Over the course of six years, the UCCSC compiled the *UC Chicano Task Force Report*, which was released in 1975 and offered “an institutionally legitimate way for Chicano studies to incorporate community service and therefore fulfill its activist aim.” In addition to the community activism that the *Report* sought to include, it also worked to highlight “the continuing discrimination against Mexicans in the University of California system” (Quinones 153). While some saw the task force and the report as a major step in what would become a long march through institutions, others were less enthusiastic about the task force’s potential. Rather



than readily accept UC recognition as an achievement, others saw it as a sign that one-time activists had “begun to accept the logic of the university system” and, in turn, foreclosed the possibility of changing it (Soldatenko 62).

This split view of the El Movimiento’s transfer from a community-oriented and organically formed intellectual formation and its eventual institutionalization via the rise of Chicano studies and UC oversight speaks to a larger theoretical division of the Chicano intellectual. On the one hand, the organicity of the former offers a level of autonomy and fluidity that allows for responsive and adaptable organization. On the other, such a formation’s separation from formal institutions limits its resources and ability to fulfill demands such as those outlined in El Plan, which, are critical for the formation of a socially-recognizable intellectual cohort.

Chicano intellectuals of the latter-twentieth century were therefore faced with their own crisis, which entailed working with the university without succumbing to it. Speaking more broadly, Lisa Lowe has identified this particularity by arguing that “institutionalization provides a material base within the university for a transformative critique of traditional disciplines and their traditional separations, and yet the institutionalization of any field or curriculum that establishes orthodox objects and methods submits in part to the demands of the university and its educative function of socializing subjects into the state” (Ferguson 35). Indeed, the “material base” of the campus and the “transformative critique” of traditional education was a concern of Chicana/o intellectuals and students alike, as the history of student activism shows. Furthermore, it could not be denied that institutional funds could create publishing

venues, academic programs, cultural centers, and other intellectual venues. The cost of this all, however, is the continual threat of visibility and, to borrow Denise Ferreria de Silva's term, engulfment, which threatens the politically-committed intellectual. As Rodrick Ferguson has argued, the history of minority inclusion into higher education may be read as a way "...power worked through the 'recognition' of minority histories, cultures, and experiences, and how power used that 'recognition' to re-secure its status" (13). In this reading, formations like EL Plan, the UCCSC, and the task force report denote "elaboration of power rather than the confirmation that our 'liberty' had been secured." Through recognizing the demands of Chicano intellectuals in forms like El Plan, "power made legitimacy and recognition into grand enticements" instead of gains to be had. For Chicano intellectuals who recognized the importance the university held in their function as intellectuals as well as the potentials returns towards the community it could offer, there appeared to be two choices. They could either "read an American hegemony as structurally unassailable, leading to the conclusion that there was only one choice—a wholesale rejection and separation. Or Chicanos could choose to contest an American hegemony by reconceiving and restructuring society through the Mexican American experience" (Martinez 211). Yet as we shall see, the latter route, too, could result in wholesale rejection and separation, though not on the part of the Chicano.

### **Theorizing the Chicano Intellectual**

The minority intellectual's choice between institutional affiliation and intellectual independence has been a consistent theme throughout this project and is, in my view, a more complex process of negotiation than has been regularly considered. Regarding this

liminal position, the Chicano intellectual is no exception. For instance, figures like Oscar Zeta Acosta struggled to bring together the distinct poles of contrasting cultures and belonging to form an “Americano” dream, wherein a “satisfying synthesis” of the two options and communities could lead to “a radically new citizen-subject” (Martinez 180). Yet Acosta never did believe he achieved this and instead would continually opt for total alienation from both the academy and the Chicano community. Others, however were unwilling to accept obscurity as a viable option. Chicano intellectual and Quinto Sol publishing house founder Octavio Romano V. worked through this dualism in his essay “The Historical and Intellectual Presence of Mexican-Americans” in an effort to synthesize these two poles. Within the piece, Romano V. demonstrates that between the Chicano intelligentsia there existed “a distinction between those who opted to remain within the ‘American’ framework (Pochos, Assimilationists, and so on) and those that had the ‘courage’ and ‘foresight’ to operate from a separating remove (Confrontationists, Chicanos, and so forth)” (Martinez 192). Moreover, Romano V. notes that even for the so-called assimilationists who worked within the university, their presence elicited “a potential dual alienation” from “the Chicano community and toward the university and the elites of society” (Quinones 174). This dual alienation of being *ni de aqui, ni de alla*, or neither from here nor there, is a persistent trait of the minority intellectual whose presence in the university calls into question their roles as organic intellectuals. Though figures like Ramon Garcia can see themselves as “organic intellectuals in the Gramscian mode,” they must also note they are “also marginal within [their] own Chicano culture and community. Therefore, it’s a question of double marginality” (Dernersesian 124).

Though the organic Chicano intellectual functions on behalf of their marginalized community, they also serve the organic function of elaborating the values, needs, and culture of the state, which may, in fact, be antithetical to their original purpose.

This intellectual double bind is at the heart of the intellectual projects and lives of Américo Paredes and Tomás Rivera. Rather than see the university as something that only compromised their position as organic intellectuals, they sought ways to reform it from within while retaining ties to the larger Chicano community beyond campus. However, they did so with the knowledge that their “incorporation has always been a reason for meditation, scrutiny, and awareness.” (Ferguson 40). Like Ferguson who sees minority inclusion into higher education as “both disruptive *and* recuperative of existing institutions” through their “simultaneous estrangement from and appeals to institutional power,” each of these Chicano authors sought to secure a place for Chicano intellectuals within the academy while also seeking to actively change, reform, and disrupt it (16). Recognizing their academic position as “a site of contradiction,” Paredes and Rivera attempt to enact an intellectualism that neither assimilates to nor rejects higher education and they do this, like the other minority intellectuals discussed throughout this project, through their literature. Rather than be confined by a “narrowly conceived individual identity” that would ultimately result in “exclusionary communities,” these authors used their texts to imagine how this merger between two worlds—which is, not coincidentally, the title of Paredes’ poetry collection—might be possible (Martinez 180).

The desire to unite academia and the Chicano community stems from the political commitments of the Chicano intellectual. For such intellectuals, the functional capacities

offered by academia are tools through which their own organic intellectualism could serve a social function. As evident in El Plan de Santa Barbara, “colleges generated intellectuals and intellectual materials,” which included “conferences, journals, literary festivals, and art exhibitions” that ultimately “invigorated efforts of community enhancement.” (Quinones 339). In this case, the access provided by academia does not feedback on itself to return intellectual production to its site of origination but is a medium through which that production reroutes itself outward. And, in some cases, this aim was successful as “university-related efforts strengthened civic organization and cultural mobilization and, ultimately, the intellectual and ideological resources of the community.” While Rodrick Ferguson outlines the coercive potentialities of such involvement, this does not negate the fact that the “Mexican American university-educated intelligentsia had social and intellectual impacts on reform efforts in the Mexican community,” which includes the emergence and concretization of Chicano Studies as a viable field of study.

Paredes and Rivera each recognized this potential and had specific visions for how the Chicano intellectual could best utilize these resources. For Paredes, academia was a way to rearticulate Chicano culture for Chicanos and white audiences alike, as his anthropological work on corridos and ballads formed the foundational steps towards Chicano studies. Throughout his career at the University of Texas, Austin, Paredes actively sought the creation of various ethnic studies departments and campus initiatives while his own work gradually introduced Chicano subjects into broader, academic conversations. However, Paredes did not see the university, or American schooling in

general, as a harmless good. In his watershed novel *George Washington Gómez*, the public school becomes the ultimate site of assimilation, and the promise of an organic intellectual who attempts to reshape, or even overtake, academia is ultimately unfulfilled. Though readers do not get to follow the protagonist to college, for reasons I describe later, Paredes's novel makes a clear correlation between the Western academy and an assimilative project that prevents the formation of Chicano intellectuals. Thus in my reading, *George Washington Gomez* becomes a theoretical meditation on the relationship between Chicano intellectuals and formal education while Paredes's own life actually counters the narrative of the text, thereby offering a model of intellectualism that is lacking in the novel itself.

Rivera similarly balanced critiques of Western education with acknowledgements of the Chicano community's need to benefit from it. More than Paredes, Rivera continually highlighted the university's importance for Chicano intellectuals, which is unsurprising given his role as the first Chancellor of color of the University of California system. In a posthumous publication in 1986, titled "The Role of the Chicano Academic and the Non-Chicano Community," Rivera explicitly states what he believed to be the function of the Chicano intellectual and the academy occupies a significant role. Rivera writes that the "Chicano academic aided the Chicano community in establishing itself, which is what the community wanted" while providing "intellectual, social, political, cultural and economic" leadership (Rivera 34). However, Rivera also claims that the "most important" thing for Chicano intellectuals to do is "establish individual goals for excellence in teaching, research or creative activity and service to the academy." In this

pursuit, the Chicano academic and intellectual “should be fiercely individualistic and independent” so that they might retain “the greatest possibility of success” (35). Clearly, Rivera saw the academy as a critical site of struggle in which the Chicano must ardently work to distinguish himself. Furthermore, Rivera is adamant about tying the concerns and aims of the individual, preserving them even, while still reconciling that individualism with a larger community for which the minority intellectual ultimately serves. For Rivera there is little distinction between the Chicano intellectual and the broader community, though the individualism espoused in his essay is initially unsettling. Because the Chicano intellectual is always already a part of the community, Rivera can see individual pursuit as a continuation of community efforts, even when they are done independently.

Neither Paredes nor Rivera are willing to partition the intellectual into a separate realm apart from the concerns of the everyday, and they continually make their protagonists confront their larger community. However, in doing so they also emphasize the need for critical separation and solitude for intellectual formation. For that reason, Rivera can claim that “the culture of the community...prevails in the Chicano academic” while at the same time arguing that it is the solitary Chicano academic that “must do what he or she knows best” while establishing “himself or herself as an authentic member of the academy” (36; 41). While the rhetoric of authenticity is problematic in that it repositions the university as a site of legitimation, this shows the critical role the university has played in allowing minority intellectuals to function as intellectuals. Echoing the contradictory position described by other Chicano intellectuals, Rivera writes that the Chicano intellectual is “a dichotomy, a quivering contrast with a judge-

penitent attitude, who seeks answers for humanity, hoping somehow that what he or she effects does reach the community from whence he or she came” (37). As a result, the Chicano “lives in contrasts (como una salamandra) between the world of ideas, creativity, knowledge forefronts.”

In my reading, both the form and content of Rivera’s novel *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, grapples with the question of the Chicano intellectual’s role in the community and the academy. The distinct vignettes interlock to form a completed narrative, though that continuity is never explicitly stated, much like the individual intellectual is a part of a more cohesive whole that is the Chicano community. Throughout the novel, the unnamed protagonist acts as an organic intellectual who organizes the separate pieces of the novel into a comprehensive whole, while his trials in the American school system point to the obstacles faced by emergent Chicano intellectuals. As I close my reading of the novel, I argue that unlike Paredes’s novel that was written before El Movimiento and therefore lacked a sense of intellectual futurity, the optimism relayed in Rivera’s novel reflects the growing Chicano presence in academia. The counterpoint to this optimism, however, is Rivera’s own lived experiences at the UC, which is a fate far less congenial to an academic, Chicano intellectual life than his novel suggests.

### **Américo Paredes and the Tejano Intellectual**

Américo Paredes remains a monumental figure in both the academic and literary world, where his fame was first brought to light due to his academic achievements. Paredes’s early success came with his anthropological study of Mexican folklore, most apparent in *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (1958). Within



that work, Paredes would combine his love of music, Mexican culture, literary talents, and his academic training in what today would be looked at as a model of interdisciplinary cultural studies. The critical reception of *Pistol* created a lasting legacy within academic and larger, cultural spheres, positioning Paredes as “the foremost U.S. literary figure and cultural studies intellectual of Mexican ancestry” during the latter half of the century as well as today (Limón 1). According to Jose Limón, an English and anthropology professor and former graduate student of Paredes who Paredes advised at UT Austin, Paredes’s ballad work established his place as one of the “primary founders of the institutional academic enterprise called ‘Mexican-American studies’,” which was the university’s designation for what is now known as Chicano Studies. As a testament to the lasting effect that *Pistol* has in reforming cultural studies to include Mexican subjects and authors, George Lipsitz argued that there “is nothing that any cultural studies theorist of the 80s and 90s formulated about culture that was not already present in one form or another in Américo Paredes’s *With His Pistol in His Hand* in 1958” (Dernersesian 196). Indeed, many others similarly echoed the lasting impact of Paredes’ work, with a particular regard for the ways it reshaped academic fields. To return to the original point of how minority fields of study shape, and are shaped by, those who practice within them, the legacy of Paredes’ text elucidates an instance of minority intellectuals fulfilling the aims of earlier movements and initiatives by creating new academic pathways.

Just as Paredes’s work on the Mexican ballad and its cultural relevance marked a turning point in an existing field of study, his life and future works were equally influential in defining what it meant to introduce a Chicano cultural heritage into

academia. Though Paredes is not normally associated with El Movimiento and the student blowouts, he was, in fact, inspired by them and became more involved as his career progressed. According to Limón, it was through the “direct outgrowth of the militant Chicano movement of the 1960s” that Mexican-American scholars in Texas, including Paredes, saw “the creation and development of Mexican-American studies.” This responsiveness of the university to public demand was precisely what organic intellectuals of El Movimiento had hoped for and was also a sign to Jacoby and others that the university had gone awry (7). The student activism of the 1960s continued to influence Paredes and in 1967 he developed, with other students and faculty, a “research center dedicated to the study of Mexican-American life,” which was similarly being argued for by other organizations like LULAC (Limón 182). In later years, Paredes was asked what influenced his literary return and he claimed it was academic scholarship, “teaching classes in Greater Mexican topics, and working with young students in the Movimiento” that inspired him (Paredes to Sharon Reynolds). Even the preface to his poetry collection *Between Two Worlds* notes it was “a young mejicano intelligentsia” that “had coalesced into a Movimiento Chicano” that allowed Chicano literature to be born (Paredes 1990, 9).

Public activism inspired Paredes to view his role within the university as a means to change critical discourse about Mexican culture and also as a way to introduce institutional change. For instance, in 1970, Paredes became the founding director of the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS), which has been called his “most extended public involvement as an intellectual” as well as his “most important public,

institutional achievement” (Limón 184-185). This substantive accomplishment took place at the same time Paredes was working with the movement by “attending meetings, advocating to the administration, helping to draft position papers, [while] traveling to coordinate with similar efforts throughout the Southwest” (182-183). These efforts continued as Paredes worked alongside other Chicano intellectuals like Rodolfo Alvarez. Even after receiving a rejection from the National Endowment for the Humanities, after which Alvarez told Paredes “no matter what the quality of our projects, we don’t seem to be able to get funded,” the two continued to work with large-scale research institutions (Alvarez to Paredes November 19, 1973 ).

The largest of these was a Ford Foundation project, titled “Chicano Education: Its Historical Antecedents, Current Condition, and Prospects for the Future,” that was submitted in 1972 on behalf of the Chicano Association for Educational Development (CAED). The project would ask the question “How do institutions deal with the realities of the Chicano experience?”—a question which Paredes’s *George Washington Gomez* takes head on—while drawing on the inference that “it has been a sad, but very real, fact that the more advanced the educational system unit, the more it ignores or rejects the Chicano experience, and anything related to it” (Ford Foundation, 1971-1972). Furthermore, the project proposal noted that “the Black intelligentsia has a higher proportion of mature scholars” but “by contrast the Chicano intelligentsia is still struggling to be recognized, let alone receive the massive amounts of aid that is necessary to face the challenge.” To remedy this, participants in the project envisioned “an independent autonomous organization staffed by Chicano intellectuals appointed by

CAED” that would “involve itself in the critical evaluation of existing educational programs aimed at the Chicano community...as well as in the exploration of new ideas for the expansion of educational opportunities for Chicanos.” Clearly, many of the more formal aims of the Ford Foundation proposal are consistent with the earlier sentiments reverberating through the grassroots Movimiento, which signals Paredes’s attempt to tie together his institutional foothold with the aims of a broader community.

Recognizing Paredes’s lifelong concern with Chicano education is important for a few reasons. First, attention to Paredes’s involvement with the wider movement reconsiders his role within that history. To do so would reconsider his work’s importance to the fields of study that the student movements were arguing for. Although Paredes’s texts have largely fallen out of favor within Chicano studies today, largely due to their limited attention to gender differences and overall heteronormativity, *George Washington Gomez* remains, I argue, an important study of the past and future of Chicano intellectualism. I make the case that the novel articulates the sentiments that underlie El Movimiento’s foundation by engaging with the question of the Chicano’s position within formal education and the historical role education has played in sustaining racial hierarchies. In a similar manner, advocates of the movement continually sought to reconcile their aspirations of academic inclusion and representation with histories of educational segregation and opposition.

Furthermore, looking at Paredes’s shifting political engagement and campus activism also informs the major ideological decision that lies at the heart of the novel. That is, the protagonist Guálinto (also known as George) is faced with the choice of

becoming the educated man that his family and community want him to be though to do so means distancing himself from them. Consequently, that distance prevents him from fulfilling the very purpose he originally set out for, leaving him in a liminal position that ultimately proves to be untenable. That is, Guálinto is poised to be an organic intellectual, whose role is rooted in community, yet he can only achieve that function by entering into traditional intellectual institutions. Paredes, too, embodied these dual roles as he functioned “as a kind of organic intellectual” that became “an initial model for a new generation of Mexican-American college students” (Limon 119). Yet unlike his protagonist, Paredes was able to reconcile this difference by drawing together the disparate worlds of academic study and a community-driven culture. The question of why, exactly, Guálinto is unable to achieve this when Paredes was seemingly able to, particularly in his later life, becomes important for understanding Paredes’ larger meditation on Chicano intellectualism in the American west. In my view, the novel questions the limits by which an organic intellectualism is possible for minority subjects when their fulfillment of that role necessitates a movement through the very structures which challenge their existence. Indeed, like Ellison’s invisible man, Guálinto becomes the figure through which the intellectual life is examined with particular attention to the superstructures that, in fact, construct that life.

*George Washington Gomez* begins with the birth of the protagonist as he is given the name Guálinto, which derives from the name “Washington” spoken with Spanish inflection. In keeping with the bildungsroman tradition, we follow Guálinto from his childhood up to his adult life, while a particular emphasis is placed on his most formative

years where, not coincidentally, the Texas public school system takes on a particularly vital role. Throughout Guálinto's life, his uncle, Feliciano, assumes the role of his father, Gumersindo, who died at the hands of Texas rangers or *ranches*. Feliciano himself is an ex-member of an informal Mexican militia that fought rangers in small, grassroots battalions in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War. Due to a promise made to Guálinto's dying father, Feliciano keeps the circumstances of Gumersindo's death a secret while subsequently hiding his own rebellious past. Throughout the course of Guálinto's life, he is encouraged to become an educated man of the people, though his experiences in the classroom place him at odds with both education and the people. In school, he is subjected to psychological torment, assimilationist practices, racial segregation, and, at times, physical violence. Yet his time at school also gives him a critical language with which to contend with these forces while introducing him to a close coterie of other Mexican-American students who provide him with the support necessary to survive the Texas educational system of the 1930s.

By the novel's final section, ironically titled "A Leader of His People", Guálinto turns away from the very support system that enabled him to become the educated man his mother and uncle had hoped he would be. After receiving a scholarship and going to college, Guálinto, who insists on being called "George," returns to his hometown an entirely different man. He visits home with his wife Ellen, a white sociologist with her Master's degree from Colorado whose focus is on the Mexican migrant labor of Texas. Upon his homecoming, Guálinto meets up with his old friends to find that they have become politically involved and are spearheading a grassroots movement to place the

first Mexican-Americans on an upcoming mayoral ticket. Rather than receive the support from Guálinto that they expect, George tells the group is told that their plans are futile and that he is only there to survey land. As the novel ends, Feliciano gets Guálinto to confess that he is not simply a lawyer but an Army lieutenant specializing in counter-intelligence, which reveals that he has visited home in the interests of border security instead of a family visit. With WWII on the horizon, Guálinto tells Feliciano that the government is concerned that the Rio Grande is a hotbed for insurrection and foreign infiltration. As a result, the political fervor of his old classmates makes them his current targets. For Feliciano, this new career and overall ideological shift in Guálinto marks his separation from his cultural upbringing entirely, and the novel ends with Feliciano coldly telling Guálinto that he wishes that there is an afterlife so that he could talk to his father about his son. While Guálinto laughs this off and says that he never took his uncle for a joker, Feliciano flatly states that he isn't, signaling the uncle's utter disappointment in the so-called leader of his people.

Throughout his life, the public educational system of Texas plays a particularly critical role in Guálinto's development. In many ways, his education is something akin to a prophecy that he must fulfill, which indicates the critical role formal education plays in the development of minority intellectuals. To become a "great man among the Gringos" like the George Washington he is named after, Guálinto is encouraged to not only excel in primary school but to succeed in college—a rare aspiration among the Depression-era lower class and particularly those of Mexican descent (Paredes 16). Any good fortune that happens to the family is interpreted as a sign that this destiny will be fulfilled, such

as the moment when Feliciano gets a relatively high paying job tending bar for American soldiers while providing political aid to the local Judge Norris. For the family, this new income is a sign that God is helping them so that “Guálinto can go to school and to college and become a leader of his people as Gumersindo wanted” (40). Guálinto’s life plans are laid out much in advance while his formal education quickly becomes the conduit through which this destiny is fulfilled. Indeed, much of whatever money came to the family goes directly to education, with Feliciano being the principal provider. Paredes notes that Feliciano feels compelled to “make as much money as he could... [a]ll for his nephew’s education” that would enable him to “be a learned man in order to help his people” (49).

In order to do so, however, he must “learn his letters the Gringo way,” despite Feliciano’s desire for him to go to an *escuelita* first (49). This is a particularly significant detail in that *escuelitas*, or little schools, grew out of segregated schooling for Mexican-Americans. Instead of denying their children an education, Mexican-Americans created their own informal school systems to better prepare their children, which indicates both a hopefulness for social mobility in the younger generations as well as a knowledge of the institutionalized racism that prevented it. Paredes expands upon this theme in a historical cutaway—one of many asides from the narrative that contextualize socioeconomic and education forces informing Guálinto’s experience—and explains that only “those ambitious Mexican parents...sent their children for a couple of years or so to *escuelitas*, literally ‘little schools,’ where they learned the rudiments of the three Rs” (116). There is a slight mocking tone towards those ambitious enough to create an alternative school



system while the reference to the three R's—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic—suggests that the *escuelitas* imparted vital training needed to impart literacy. Moreover, the training given at the *escuelitas* was a means to combat the racialized laws that allowed segregation on the basis of pedagogical necessity. Even if families could only send their children for “a couple of years or so,” Paredes draws attention these early communal efforts to challenge the structural racism of schooling.

If the eventual blowouts of the 1960s are an indicator of continual inequality after legislative reform, then Guálinto's actual school experience is an early example of why those later student movements were necessary. At the elementary level, Guálinto is exposed to educational racism that would continue throughout his academic career and, as the end of the novel indicates, have a lasting effect on his relations with the two disparate identities that the Mexican-American intellectual comes to have. For instance, before his first day at school Guálinto is told to “Remember to act nice,” and to “[b]e a gentleman (107). Of course, this means staying away from “those hoodlums” he lives around. For his mother, Maria, this temporary separation is worthwhile because “any complaints from the profesora” threaten Guálinto's life trajectory on the “road to an education, which would make him a great man someday.” However, Maria has no experience with the American school system herself and assumes that complaints will come only from the authority figure and not her son.

Yet the opposite is the case. In his first grade class, Guálinto is continually tormented by his teacher, Miss Cornelia, who physically and emotionally berates him at every opportunity. She frequently beats the boys in class while making it clear that the

“CH, the LL, and the N...do not belong in the American alphabet” and that this “is not a Mexican school” (123). Unlike the *escuelita* that would impart a bilingual education and see knowledge of the Spanish language as a strength and not a deficiency, the American school’s strict rules regarding language reflect the basis for segregation. What is ironic is that Miss Cornelia is actually the designated teacher for any students with Spanish last names due to her own Mexican background, which shows that school segregation was not limited to students but extended to faculty as well. Paredes makes this clear when he writes that “racial segregation was the rule in the educational system of Texas” and this was done through dividing each grade into “high” and “low” sections—or what we might recognize today as student tracking (116). These “low” students, such as Guálinto, were not only placed in violent classrooms but the level of instruction and resources was also below the standard. Miss Cornelia’s actions against the students, which may be read as her internalized racism as a result of having undergone a similar treatment, indicate her own anger at the limited intellectual opportunities for adults as well. Just as the children are criticized on the basis of race and language, Miss Cornelia is similarly treated and the “Anglo teachers made fun of Miss Cornelia’s English” behind her back—a tendency that she also passes on to her students (133).

Schooling is therefore a clearly traumatic site of intellectual development that deters whatever interest Guálinto had in becoming the so-called man of the people he was meant to be. For that reason, some critics have targeted Feliciano as being complicit in the oppression and assimilation of the Texas school system. After all, it is Feliciano who takes Guálinto to register for school in “Dear Old Gringo School Days,” the third part of

the novel. Even after the physical abuse at the hands of school teachers becomes evident, Feliciano continually insists on Guálinto attending and doing well in school. After a particularly gruesome incident where Guálinto is attacked by a teacher and retaliates, Feliciano goes to the school with a doctor and lawyer to confront the administration. Rather than seeking legal recourse, Feliciano tells Maria that they had met the school halfway and that they will “keep quiet about the beating and Guálinto goes back to school after Christmas as if nothing happened” (Paredes 146). The trade-off to this compromise is that Guálinto will be moved to “high second” the following year instead of the low tier second grade class which the “the Gringo school board” had previously said was a “pedagogical necessity” (148). The mainstreaming of Guálinto into the sections reserved for white students is enough to forgive the welts Guálinto comes home with, demonstrating a telling exchange of violence for educational access. For this reason, critics like Mendoza have argued that ‘George’s [Guálinto’s] ultimate emergence as a traditional intellectual of the hegemonic order...follows a pattern set for him by his uncle’ (Limón 28). In this reading, it is Feliciano who steers Guálinto into a path of assimilation while limiting the scope of intellectualism to the traditional patterns prescribed by predominantly white institutions.

Yet it is ironic that Feliciano should adhere to a traditional intellectual pathway when, for many, he is the model Chicano intellectual who follows an alternative route and is the true organic intellectual. Despite his role in shaping Guálinto’s complicity with the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon state, Feliciano models an organic intellectualism rooted in community and lived experience. Most importantly, Feliciano manages to do with

without undergoing the internal conflicts that lead to the dual identity that Guálinto/George struggles with. While there are “many Guálinto Gómezes” that form “two clashing forces” locked in “eternal conflict,” Feliciano retains a whole sense of identity (Paredes 147). Throughout the course of the novel, Feliciano actually “learns to function in the community’s economic and political system while maintaining his ‘Mexican’ sense of self...to the extent that Feliciano counters assimilation into the new ‘Anglo’ culture by cultivating his organic borderlands roots, he lives out the spirit of the corrido tradition” (Limón 28) Thus, Feliciano appears as an “intelligent, rational, forward-thinking, practical person if not an outright admirable figure.” Indeed, Paredes himself admitted that by the end of the novel Feliciano became “more and more important” and that he is a “much more appealing character than Guálinto Gómez” (Paredes qtd. in Limón 35). Feliciano is therefore a contradictory figure that represents the start of Guálinto’s eventual distancing from his cultural community as well as a paradigmatic example of the Chicano intellectual that Guálinto needs.

I want to suggest that the contradictory readings of Feliciano are important for understanding the paradoxical position of the minority intellectual who can neither accept nor reject traditional intellectual venues. While Jose Limón argues that Feliciano is not to be held accountable for Guálinto’s ultimate transformation into the Army soldier and government informant George, I believe that such a view detracts from the insistence Feliciano has on Guálinto’s schooling, which is a significant factor in Paredes’ larger statement about the Chicano intellectual. That is, the juxtaposition between Feliciano and Guálinto illustrates Paredes’ understanding of the imperative for organic intellectuals to

make the long march through traditional intellectual institutions as well as the potential effects of doing so. Feliciano recognizes the intellectual authority granted by university affiliation that his own organic intellectualism, though socially important, cannot confer upon itself. He also knows that minority intellectuals must secure a place in traditional intellectuals venues if there is truly ever going to be the structural reform Guálinto's school friends, the literary corollaries of El Movimiento, seek. Though no longer fighting a physical war of tactics and maneuvers, we can understand Feliciano's motives as his fight in what Antonio Gramsci would term a "war of position," where organic intellectuals "attempt to forge unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives" (Mouffe 180). Feliciano had already secured economic stability as well as political influence through his work with Judge Norris. Next, he sought to use Guálinto as a conduit through which Chicanos could complete intellectual objectives to better position Mexican-Americans in the war against white hegemony.

In some ways, Feliciano was successful in this endeavor. Limón correctly observes that "[f]or all of its flaws, the local educational system prepared the boy to attend a major university," which presumably would be without the flaws of the public schools, while also fostering a "critical outlook on society" (Limón 29). Guálinto does learn to critique his public school where he is also able to function as an orator, as he can assemble Chicano students and direct them with ease. This potential for leadership continues later in life when El Colorado, Guálinto's closest friend, recalls the times Guálinto would "argue with the teachers in school" (Paredes 250). While Guálinto shrugs this off by saying that he was simply getting rid of anger, El Colorado says that all of the

Mexican students are angry but that Guálinto “can speak about it,” that he has “that gift” that will “get people to listen.” (205) For that reason, El Colorado insists that Guálinto go to college and return to Jonesville so that their community can “quit being driven like sheep by the Gringos.” In this sense, the school system gave Guálinto the means to develop his organic intellectualism. However, in doing so it also imposed a separation from the Mexican community and privileged white normativity to the point that Guálinto becomes consumed by it.

However, this gift is all but abandoned by the novels close. While much of the novel is spent focusing on Guálinto’s early years in school, there is remarkably little that describes his time in college. The last scene before Guálinto returns home as an adult man is that of his graduation, where the principal of his high school wants to talk to him “about going to the University” (275). To this request, Guálinto dismissively replies “Let him call, the sonofabitch,” which suggests his distaste for anyone related to the administration of public schooling as well as the unlikelihood of him continuing his education. The next time the novel returns to Guálinto, we are told that his time was spent “getting his degree and being admitted to the bar,” yet this is all that is said about his college experience (284). This gap in this intellectual bildungsroman serves as a dividing line between the two Guálintos. While the young Guálinto was eager to distance himself from schooling, which was little more than an extension of the state, the older Guálinto embodies the total commitment to it via his career as an FBI informant.

This stark shift comes suddenly and, for some readers, is a flaw of the novel. Why would Paredes not only leave out the college years that so much of the novel builds

to while also including such a radical shift in Guálinto's life with little explanation? In my view, Paredes made this choice for two reasons: to illustrate the effects of formal education on minority intellectuals that takes place before adulthood as well as reflect the state of Chicanos in higher education during the time the novel was written. Just as the first Chicano student movements first gained traction at the high school level, Paredes focuses on Guálinto's boyhood education to establish the significance public education plays in the formation of minority intellectuals due to the ease of access and cost. In emphasizing the early, covert segregation, Paredes draws attention to the state-mandated, public forces that acted upon would-be intellectuals before they could even envision themselves as such.

It is also likely that Paredes chose to emphasize the early school days while completely eliding Guálinto's actual college experience because he himself had yet to imagine what any substantive Chicano presence on a university campus would look like. Paredes began writing the novel in 1936 and completed the first draft, which is the published version, in 1940, yet the text would not reach its publisher, Arte Publico Press, until 1990. During that time, Paredes would not have had a model for a thriving Chicano presence at an American college and would not be able to represent that experience in the novel. In fact, Paredes admitted as much in a private correspondence and said that "the problem was that, though I could send Guálinto Gomez to the University of Texas, I could not go with him" (Paredes to Sharon Reynolds). Furthermore, Paredes notes that if he were to write the novel at a later time after Chicanos like himself had asserted themselves in academia, he could have "ended the novel with Guálinto Gomez sallying

forth to fulfill his destiny as the leader of his people and the founder of the Movimiento Chicano,” which further establishes the influence of El Movimiento on Paredes’s concept of Chicano intellectualism. Instead, the novel represents what was familiar to Paredes’s own upbringing and, presumably, of his readers. Thus, what appears as a deficiency of the novel is rather an educational deficiency wherein the state of Chicano intellectualism at the university level had not yet been defined.

Thus, college finishes the assimilative project started in the early school years. Paredes recognized that unless there was a Chicano presence in all levels of education, the process of creating organic intellectuals that could not only function within but actually change intellectual superstructures would ultimately fail. His life’s work at UT Austin as well as his commitment to Chicano studies was an attempt to reshape the intellectual life so that “the degree of consciousness and organization” of the Chicano community by its own organic intellectuals could be raised (Mouffe 180). If only Paredes finished the novel before his protagonist went off to college, George might have remained Guálinto and the man of his people could have become a reality.

### **Tomás Rivera and the Institutional Chicano Intellectual**

Like Paredes, Tomas Rivera also wrote about and practiced a Chicano intellectualism that recognized a complex and nuanced relationship with traditional intellectual institutions. Furthermore, Rivera also started his academic career in the southwest. During his time as a high school teacher throughout Texas, Rivera earned degrees from Southwest Texas Junior College and Southwest Texas State University while continuing his education to receive a Ph.D. in Romance languages at the University



of Oklahoma. Alongside working as a professor of literature—a title that he was reluctant to ever abandon—Rivera occupied a number of administrative posts, which shows Rivera’s understanding of the structural changes needed to institute the type of Chicano intellectual life that he envisioned. Before becoming the first Chancellor of color, as well as the youngest, for the University of California, Riverside, Rivera acted as the Executive Vice President at the University of Texas at El Paso and as Vice President of Administration at the University of Texas at San Antonio (Lattin 150).

During his time as Chancellor, Rivera was proud of having been raised by Don Florencio Rivera and Dona Josefa Hernandez de Rivera, who worked fields for the majority of their lives. Rivera’s curriculum vitae up until his final post as Chancellor included his own farm work in his employment record, stating that “Up to the time I started my teaching career, I was part of the migrant labor stream that went from Texas to various parts of the Midwest. I lived and worked in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Dakota” (Lattin 54). Rather than acknowledge his history of migrant labor to gain sympathy, or worse, pity, Rivera’s decision to include this non-academic employment suggests that it was no less valuable in shaping his role as an educator and administrator than his other positions. According to Rolando Hinojosa, one of Rivera’s closest colleagues and friends, the choice to include this on his CV “pointed to Tomás’s manner in facing life squarely” and that he did not “attempt to profit, in any way, by its inclusion” (64). Rather, Rivera included this contrasting element as a means of remembering his own progress as well as “the lack of educational opportunities for

many of his contemporaries that influenced him to a high degree during his lifetime,” many of whom who would never leave the fields of his youth.

Unlike Paredes’s Guálinto who later comes to feel shame about his familial past, Rivera’s CV shows an unwillingness to abandon history even when it seemed incommensurate with his future. Rivera used the academic document as a way to express the tensions and trajectories that his semi-autobiographical novel *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* would also attempt to bring to the surface. Thus the bookends of his employment, beginning with a migrant past and ending with an unprecedented academic height, signal both the potential of social mobility offered by higher education as well as the inseparability of cultural identity from Rivera’s conception of the Chicano intellectual.

Despite his untimely death on May 19, 1984, at 48 years old, Rivera left a lasting influence on campus as well as beyond. In addition to his numerous posts with associations of higher education, like the American Council on Education and American Association for Higher Education, Rivera was the founder and president of the National Council of Chicanos in Higher Education. This effort to create academic programs with a specific emphasis on Latinx and Chicano/a communities continued throughout his career, with formations like the Tomás Rivera Institute for Public Policy on Chicanos in Higher Education at Pomona College carrying forward Rivera’s spirit for campus reform. For Rivera, his prominence was simply another tool to create institutional frameworks that could sustain a Chicano intellectual presence, which he had grown up without.

Rivera’s public involvement was not limited to these formal associations but also extended to his personal life, even when his stature in literary and academic circles would

seemingly preclude direct public involvement. For instance, the guide to the Tomás Rivera archive housed at UC Riverside begins with a former colleague noting the many letters Rivera received asking for his aid. Such request ranged from reviews on literary drafts or scholarly work but also contained requests for letters of recommendation for academic positions, grants, and other awards. Instead of dismissing these abundant requests—sometimes from complete strangers—Rivera “responded to these and countless other demands on his time” (Guide to the Tomás Rivera Archive). We can assume that Rivera felt a personal responsibility to these requests that extended beyond his duty as Chancellor to his role as an intellectual in general. Indeed, what this work shows is an intellectual commitment rooted in community contact and serving diversity beyond inclusion.

For Rivera, one could not be an intellectual if one was not at the same time actively involved in structural reforms that were themselves rooted in the communities from which that intellectual came. Like the organic intellectuals that, through institutional means, perform a function tied to their spheres of origin, Rivera’s many roles demonstrate a desire to do the same despite the wide gap between being a Chancellor and being a farm hand. Furthermore, the work Rivera was doing was fulfilling the demands set forth by El Movimiento. The latter’s demands for increased student support was met by Rivera’s commitment to student programs and culturally-responsive fields of study, which were specifically geared towards meeting the demands of a postwar student body.

The pace with which Rivera managed to institute change while rising in academic ranks is in keeping with his professed intellectual ideals. As I have noted, Rivera had a

keen interest in academic excellence with the aim of becoming an “authentic member of the academy.” In his inauguration speech on April 28, 1980, Rivera continued this theme of excellence by noting the “excellent memories” he had had on campus, the “very excellent research” of the faculty, and committed himself to continuing UCR’s reputation as an institution “that is second to none in excellence” (Lattin 45). Despite this utopic vision of UCR and the Chicano’s position on campus, his inaugural address also noted the “trying moments” he faced on campus. Rivera politely stated that the “courage and independence” of the predominantly white faculty meant working with “people of independence,” which could be “a most trying thing” (Lattin 45).

There were, in fact, a number of “trying moments” that Rivera underwent as he tried to institute the changes called for in *El Movimiento*, though many of these were not made public until his death. Even then, there were posthumous attempts to mollify that history. For instance, during Rivera’s tenure as Chancellor, fields like Chicano Studies and Black Studies were continually under threat. Partly in response to high profile court cases like the *University of California v. Bakke* Supreme Court decision (1978) as well as diminishing state funds, fields of study that were deemed to be less exclusive were also viewed as less desirable and profitable. While Chicano Studies was less exclusive by virtue of its size, other programs like UC Riverside’s growing Agricultural Sciences department rose in favor due to its potential monetary return to the school as well as its ability to turn away students, which imparted a level of prestige that more nascent fields could not compete with.

Being aware of the trend to transfer the business logics of exclusivity and profitability to academic study, Rivera drafted a strategic plan to preserve Chicano and Black studies. In an effort to defend these so-called minor fields from the looming prestige of UCR's Agricultural Experiment Station (AES), Rivera balanced his intellectual aspirations and the political and economic realities of the research institution. Despite the university's claim towards the cultivation of the full individual, Rivera's plan to widen the margins of academia was met with resistance. For instance, the Chair of the Academic Senate and Professor of Earth Sciences Michael Woodburne fervently rejected Rivera's plan on the basis that it was "MISLEADING AND UNREALISTIC TO MAINTAIN THAT UCR NOW IS, EVER WAS, OR EVER SHALL BE, A GENERAL CAMPUS [original emphasis]," which suggests that the inclusion of fields like Chicano studies somehow diminished the quality of research taking place elsewhere (Woodburne to Rivera). Moreover, the resistance to general knowledge is particularly striking given the mission of the UC system as a whole, and its growth stems directly from the need for a general education. This attitude extended to other faculty members from the sciences and came to a height in Donald T. Sawyer's claim that "To advocate the continued development of marginal programs (those without a distinguished faculty that is engaged in research and graduate education) in the interest of increased enrollments is akin to the inclusion of a diseased prostitute on an Olympic team in the interests of fund raising" (Sawyer to Rivera). It is clear that fields like Chicano studies and those associated with it were not only viewed as out-of-step with the existing campus culture but were, indeed, a

disease that would quickly contaminate the perceived purity, which is to say whiteness, of the existing campus.

However, nearly all accounts of the university's response to Rivera's plans remain unpublicized. Furthermore, no complete, written biography of Rivera exists that might emphasize his position within and without of the rest of the academic senate. In place of a biography, we have posthumous remembrances which conceal the actual attitudes towards Rivera. One of the few collections on Rivera is *Tomás Rivera 1935-1984: The Man and His Work*, which contains an address given by James H. Abbott. In his address "So Proud of You Forever," Abbott writes that Rivera's confidence led him to be "impatient with cumbersome committees," as if the first Chancellor of color would shirk the opportunity to institute the types of administrative changes the student movements of the sixties dreamed of (Lattin 72). Despite his apparent distaste for committee work, Abbott claims Rivera still "adhered to democratic processes" and that he did not want "minorities relegated to a minority world." In Abbott's retrospective account, Rivera preferred that students and faculty alike be "well-educated first and minorities second," which reifies a dichotomy between education and minority subjectivity that Rivera himself refuted.

Abbott continues to claim that Rivera's attitude of placing scholarship before race "no doubt contributed to *his plans* to abolish both the program of Chicano Studies and Black Studies...a decision *he made* without fear, because *he believed* that it was the best decision for everybody [my emphasis]." This posthumous declaration leaves no room for Rivera to contest this statement while also removing any culpability from the university

by placing the decision solely with Rivera. Furthermore, the claim that dismantling some of the few minority academic strongholds was the best decision for everybody prefigures the post-racial rhetoric of the current moment that attempts to cover targeted affronts with a blanket of equanimity.

The recorded history of Chicano and Black Studies at UCR reveals is a far different scenario than the one described by Abbott. Rivera did not, in fact, support the Academic Senate's decision to combine these distinct programs into a more generalized Ethnic Studies department. A May 10, 1984 letter from Executive Vice Chancellor Carlton Bovell, shown below, reveals that Rivera had initially refrained from speaking out against the attacks on Chicano Studies. In his memo, Bovell writes that for two years Chicano and Black studies had been under review for a "unconscionably long period" though Rivera was largely silent because of the standing rule that "final decision resided with the Chancellor," which precluded his ability to comment on matters while the subject was being reviewed (Bovell to Faculty). To remove Rivera's powers as Chancellor, Academic Senate Chair Woodburne, the same figure who claimed it that UCR would never cater to a general education, petitioned Rivera's authority to the UC Office of the President. Ultimately, the "Academic Council of the Faculty of the University" found that UC Riverside was in "violation of the standing orders of the regents in having delegated to the Chancellor, in 1980, final authority in deciding on the disestablishment of academic programs" (Bovell to Faculty).

MAY 10, 1984

AS SENATE CHAIR WOODBURNE HAS JUST ANNOUNCED, THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY, ON THE ADVICE OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JURISDICTION, FINDS THAT THE RIVERSIDE DIVISION IS IN VIOLATION OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE REGENTS IN HAVING DELEGATED TO THE CHANCELLOR, IN 1980, FINAL AUTHORITY IN DECIDING ON THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS. THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JURISDICTION HAS RULED THAT THE AUTHORITY RESIDES WITH THE ACADEMIC SENATE AND CAN NOT BE DELEGATED. THIS RULING WAS IN RESPONSE TO A LETTER FROM CHANCELLOR RIVERA TO THE COMMITTEE REQUESTING A RESOLUTION OF JURISDICTIONAL AUTHORITY IN THIS MATTER, AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL SUGGESTED THAT THE SENATE HAS SOLE AUTHORITY. SHORTLY AFTER RECEIPT OF THE CHANCELLOR'S LETTER, THE CHAIR OF THE FACULTY OF ALL NINE CAMPUSES ALSO ASKED FOR A LEGISLATIVE INTERPRETATION.

ON MAY 11, 1982--2 YEARS LESS A DAY AGO--DEAN WARREN WROTE TO PROFESSOR HAYWOOD, CHAIR OF THE PROGRAM IN BLACK STUDIES AND ON OCTOBER 5, 1982, TO PROFESSOR MIRANDE, CHAIR OF THE PROGRAM IN CHICANO STUDIES WITH TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS, IN BOTH CASES, THAT THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS LEADING TO THE DEGREES BE DISCONTINUED, THAT MINORS BE ESTABLISHED, THAT THE FACULTY BE ASSIGNED TO THE DEPARTMENTS IN WHICH THEY HOLD JOINT APPOINTMENTS AND THAT THE COURSES IN EACH PROGRAM BE REVIEWED TO DETERMINE WHICH SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. HE ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT THE NON-ACADEMIC FUNCTIONS OF THE PROGRAMS BE IDENTIFIED AND SUBSUMED BY THE APPROPRIATE NON-ACADEMIC OFFICES AT UCR AND THAT A PORTION OF THE SUPPORT BUDGET OF EACH PROGRAM BE PLACED IN THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES RESEARCH FOR ETHNICALLY RELATED PROJECTS.

FOR THESE TWO YEARS THE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN UNDER REVIEW--AN UNCONSCIONABLY LONG PERIOD, AND MY ROLE HAS BEEN GUARDIAN OF THE PROCESS. AS TOMAS RIVERA AND I HAVE SAID REPEATEDLY, THE FACT THAT THE FINAL DECISION RESIDED WITH THE CHANCELLOR PRECLUDED OUR COMMENTING ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WHILE THE REVIEW IS IN PROCESS. THE PROCESS WAS NOT TO BE BIASED. NOW THAT THE UNIVERSITYWIDE SENATE HAS RULED THAT FINAL ACTION IS THE PREROGATIVE OF ONLY THE SENATE, I CAN SPEAK TO THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

TO THOSE WHO FEEL THAT THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF THESE TWO PROGRAMS WILL YIELD RESOURCES--IT WILL NOT. THE FACULTY--THE 1.67 FACULTY IN BLACK STUDIES AND THE 2.5 FACULTY IN CHICANO STUDIES--WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO THEIR COGNATE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD THE SENATE VOTE TO DISESTABLISH THE PROGRAMS. THE TWO PROGRAMS, AT THE PRESENT TIME, COMMAND ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THE ACADEMIC SUPPORT BUDGET ALLOCATED TO THE COLLEGE. NOT ALL OF EVEN THIS SMALL FRACTION WOULD BE REALIZED AS SAVINGS SHOULD THE PROGRAMS BE DISESTABLISHED. TRANSFERRED FACULTY REQUIRE TRANSFERRED BUDGETARY SUPPORT.

This is page one of Carlton Bovell's letter to the faculty in May of 1984. This facsimile was provided to me personally by Dr. Carlos Cortes, Professor Emeritus of History at UCR.



It is hardly a coincidence that this standing administrative authority was only brought into question during the term of the first Chancellor of color in UC history. As a result, Chicano and Black Studies were disestablished in 1982 despite the cautions from each of the department chairs.

Since the Senate decision had already been met, Executive Vice Chancellor Carlton Bovell was able to speak freely on the matter after the damage had been done. Bovell claimed that not even a small fraction of funds gained by dismantling the program would return any notable savings to the campus and that “if these programs are closed, then the sole avenue for minority faculty recruitment would also be closed.” Additionally, Bovell noted that “an essential support service, counseling center, and base of identity for Black and Chicano students” would also disappear, with the continuation of courses reflecting the growing diversity of higher education being in jeopardy since “the continuation of these courses is guaranteed only by the continuation of their present academic homes.” There was little to be done by the time Bovell had the freedom to make these pronouncements, however, and Rivera was equally left with few options of recovery.

I’ve drawn considerable attention to this point of contention in an attempt to both revise a history as well as give a more in-depth treatment of Rivera’s intellectual project. Given his knowledge of the university’s role in creating and sustaining Chicano intellectual life, it is important to acknowledge the obvious, and sometimes subtle, ways that the university responded to his attempts to reshape it. Furthermore, his understanding of the importance of community, the need to tie the solitary nature of intellectual work to

a larger audience, is in line with his commitment to minority programs of study that could benefit from an academic footing. Indeed, Rivera saw Chicano Studies as a conduit through which Chicano intellectuals could exert influence in ways that the presumably neutral intellectuals of the white academy had been doing for centuries. This, however, was met with incredible resistance, as his life was quite literally cut short at the same time that his efficacy as Chancellor was waning. The backlash to Rivera's presence refutes the claim that the university has no bearing on intellectual life, as the reactionary and covert schemes to disempower him speak to what a vital space the university actually is.

Yet as the other minority intellectuals in this project have shown, literature often becomes a space of articulation where intellectual life can be theorized while the forces that seek to diminish it can be combated, critiqued, and reimagined. Similar to Paredes' novel, Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) is aligned with the bildungsroman tradition and focuses on a young Chicano as he navigates a school system that ultimately rejects him. Yet unlike Paredes' novel, Rivera's work disrupts the conventional coming of age narrative with vignettes that divide the unnamed protagonist's trajectory. Composed of fourteen shorter sections, Rivera weaves the life of an unnamed narrator, a young Chicano boy, within the lives of migrant families whose own paths come to define his own. In an introduction of the novel's first printing, Herminio Rios C. writes that the opening section "serves also to introduce the fictional narrator who will reveal what he saw and heard" while the closing section is best read as "a recapitulation, a synthesis and at the same time an expansion of the thirteen anecdotes" (xv-xvi). While Rios C. suggests

a temporal reading of the book's layout, stating that the "opening and closing are not indented in table of contents, suggesting that they contain the 12 sections, or months, that form the 'lost year'" of the protagonist's life, my own reading considers another relationship between form and content. In my view, this structural decision on Rivera's part is in keeping with his larger intellectual project, which was consistently engaged with integrating the individual within a larger, communal context. Like the independent Chicano intellectual whose work must be tied to a community in a mutually constitutive way, the novel's formal arrangements create an implicit unity through a shared cultural context.

The initial pages of the first printing also contain visual material that is relevant to the twentieth-century Chicano intellectual, showing that the project of articulating Chicano intellectual consciousness was not limited to text but extended across the arts. Before any text, there is a large printing of a mural by Malaquias Montoya, a major artistic figure in the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, that depicts young school children alongside migrant workers. While discussing the mural's placement in the first edition, Teresa B. Rodriguez writes "Acaso valgar comparar '...y no se lo tragó la tierra' con un mural gigantesco. El autor logra a traves de al palabra lo que el pintor crea sobre un muro. Es decir, toma todos los elementos de una experiencia los gramenta por completo—creando lo que Picasso llamaria 'descrucciones'—para despues reordenarlos de tal manera que surge una nueva sintesis al final" [It's appropriate to compare the work to a large mural. The author achieves through words what the painter creates on a mural. That is, he takes all of the elements of an experience and fully engraves them, creating

what Picasso would call “deconstructions,” so that he might reorder them in a manner that results in a new, final synthesis] (Lattin 134). Thus the multiple narratives presented visually in a mural, itself a communal form of artistic expression, achieve a formal unity to the same degree that Rivera’s text does despite its modernistic fragmentation.

Following Montoya’s mural, there is a note describing the work’s origin. The message states that “Quinto Sol Publicaciones presents this work by Dr. Tomás Rivera. It is the winning entry in the First Annual Premio Quinto Sol literary award for 1970. Signed Octavio I. Romano-V. PhD, Andres Ybarra, Herminio Rios C., Gustavo Segade.” This line is significant for a few reasons. First, Quinto Sol was the premiere publishing venue for Chicano intellectuals and was also responsible for publishing *El Grito*, a journal that grew directly out of El Movimiento and provided a platform for Chicano activists and intellectuals. Chicano/a writers like Rudolfo Anaya, Alurista, and Lorna Dee Cervantes continue to cite the press as foundational to their own positions as artists and intellectuals, and the press’s support of Rivera’s work further establishes the link between Chicano intellectualism and the history of El Movimiento. It is also significant that Quinto Sol is not an academic press, and one would expect a university publisher to contract Rivera’s work as he had already been an established academic by the time of the novel’s publication. Second, the fact that Rivera’s text was the first to win the Annual Premio Quinto Sol award is indicative of both the novel’s literary merit and formal innovations but also the support it received from the Chicano community. Unlike Paredes’ text that took decades to find early readership due to the lack of any publishing venue, the Chicano community’s support of Rivera’s work and the Chicano-led

publishing house shows the continued need for intellectual venues that a university foothold would help to provide. Lastly, just as there is no individual intellectual apart from their community, Rivera's magnum opus contains the various names and institutions necessary for its fruition, which detracts from the tendency to view intellectual production in isolation. Rather than being an individual work of genius, the forewords and the mural portray a different version of intellectualism; one rooted in community while allowing for independent thought and reflexivity.

The opening and closing sections of the novel bracket the other twelve vignettes and provide the clearest representations of the novel's protagonist. Described only as "him," the opening chapter titled "The Lost Year" shows the budding intellectual attempting to recount the past twelve months, which become the next twelve sections of the novel. Within this opening, the boy is shown trying to remember the past but that just as he thought "everything was clearing up some, he would be at a loss for words" (Rivera 83). Despite this inability to accurately recall or to voice what he remembers, he becomes aware that "he was always thinking and thinking and from this there was no way out." The repetition of thought and its persistence is the first indication of the boy's latent intellectualism while also suggesting that thought will somehow become the remedy for lost time. Initially, however, the mental fatigue of thinking, and paradoxically "thinking about how he never thought," forces his mind to "go blank" and "fall asleep." Yet before sleeping, he "saw and heard many things," which also creates a contradiction between sleeping and waking, between not thinking and thinking constantly.

The next section is, presumably, one of the many things the boy saw and heard, as the reader is thrust into a new, untitled story section. Readers are shown a quick scene of a young Chicano, likely the same boy from the opening, who remembers his mother's tendency to leave water under his bed "for the spirits," before quickly moving into the next titled "The Children Couldn't Wait" (85). In this section, Rivera depicts a migrant family whose children work alongside their parents, not unlike Rivera himself. The boss in the vignette only brings the workers "a bucket of water" twice a day, which forms an objective correlative to the previous glass of water, despite the fact that the heat that had set in "with a severity" (86). The heat is too unbearable for the children to wait for their water, and it forces them to take water from the tank designated for cattle even though the boss has told them not to. Their overseer, however, is aware of the children's ploy and waits until a large number of them are gathered before firing a rifle in their direction to give them "a scare." This scare, however, ends with one of the children having a "hole in his head" as the once coveted water "began to turn bloody" (87). If we recall that just pages before Rivera was writing of a young Chicano intellectual attempting to order his thoughts, the following scene of another Chicano with a bullet in his head emphasizes the material realities that disrupt Chicano intellectual life.

Rivera follows with the next untitled vignette—a pattern he repeats throughout the collection—that features another death. In this case, Rivera shows a mother worrying about her son whom she has not heard back from in months. The only thing that she knows of him came from a "letter from the government" saying that he was "lost in action" (89). The death of the child in "The Children Couldn't Wait" foreshadows this

lost son, which once again creates a thematic continuity between sections. Despite this official government correspondence, the mother finds solace in the words of a séance leader who claims that the son is “just fine,” which recalls the motif of spiritualism established in the section “What his mother never knew...” The primacy of cultural, spiritual knowledge over formal documentation continues in “A Prayer,” which shows that same mother praying that her son return from “Korea safe and sound” (90). In each case, there are opposing epistemologies as Rivera juxtaposes a cultural knowledge with Western intelligence in a way that discounts neither.

Soon, however, narrative continuity is broken, as the next untitled section turns to a discussion between two migrant workers. In the brief vignette, two men discuss their coming trip to Utah, though one doesn’t “trust the man that’s contracting people” to work there (91). The other who is more confident about the coming work and the opportunities that it might provide attempts to provide more assurance to his cautious counterpart. When the latter asks where “such a state” is, the former tell him that is it “somewhere close to Japan,” which ends the conversation. This East Asian reference creates a minor link to the previous section while also showing the incomprehension the migrant worker has towards his own life. While one Chicano died abroad, another migrates to work in a state that is equally foreign.

The discussion between migrant workers that implies a lack of formal education soon becomes the subject of the succeeding section “It’s That It Hurts”. This section returns to a narrator similar to the boy portrayed in the opening and shows a young Chicano struggling with the decision to tell his parents that he was expelled from school

for fighting. The boy notes that he is not entirely at fault since he was provoked as it is “always the same in these schools” (92). In this section that most clearly focuses on public education, the consistent theme is that it is “embarrassing and angering” for Chicanos. That is, moments like school officials “poking your head for lice” while everybody “just stares at you up and down” are commonplace and the physical confrontations that follow are also expected. The novel’s first representation of public schooling in the American West—though unstated, the school is likely in California as the boy compares this school to one in Texas and migratory work patterns would move towards the coast— is not unlike the trauma encountered by Paredes’ Guálinto. What we find across Chicano and Latino writing on Western education shows that experiences such as those depicted here are more the rule than the exception.

The schoolyard trauma continues as the narrator recalls being asked to read but that he couldn’t, that “no words were coming out,” which draws a link between him and the novel’s opening that showed the protagonist at a “loss for words” (93;83). In fact, it is likely that this unnamed speaker is the same protagonist that the story opens and closes with, given the age of the speaker as well as their word choice. Furthermore, this scene shows how the power dynamics between Chicanos and school officials become extended to peer to peer interactions. As the narrator debates his potential expulsion, he remembers the fight “wasn’t all [his] fault” because another student had aggressively told him “I don’t like Mexicans because they steal” (93). Meanwhile the “older boys who already had mustaches and who were still in the second grade started pushing us against each other” (94). This detail clearly introduces the persistent racism towards Chicanos



through the white student's words while the detail about the older students provoking the fight points to the unofficial segregation of public schooling. These "older boys" with mustaches are likely references to other Chicanos who have been held back on the basis of language proficiency, which was the dominant method of sidestepping official legislation against segregation. Encouraging the fight therefore becomes a manifestation of their anger and lack of autonomy as they re-enact the violence done upon them, much like the case of Paredes's Miss Cornelia.

Once news of the fight reaches the principal, Rivera shows how the racism of the student parallels that of the school administration. Rivera includes the one-sided conversation of the principal and an unknown caller, presumably a superintendent, as the former asks what to do about the situation. The principal states that they—the narrator's parents—could "care less if I expel him...They need him in the fields" (94). However, we know from previous vignettes that the field is even more lethal than the school, so it is unlikely that there is any safe space for young Chicanos. Furthermore, Rivera counters the principal's assumption that the parents do not value his education in that same vignette. First, the boy's constant worry about being expelled shows that his family has an investment in his education and he notes that "everyone at home wanted [him] to go to school" in a manner akin to Paredes's Guálinto. Second, this vignette flashes back to an earlier conversation between the boy's father and his grandfather, wherein the father proudly states that his son will be a "telephone operator" when he "grows up and finishes school" because he is "smarter than anything" (95). The key to achieving this sign of social mobility, however incremental, is the very thing that subjects the boy to physical

and emotional abuse. Despite this, the father can only pray that “god helps him finish school so he can become an operator,” a job free from the harsh environment and manual labor that literally kills the characters throughout the novel, which strongly contradicts the principal’s assumptions about Mexican values.

By this time “It’s That It Hurts” closes, the internal debate of whether or not the boy will be expelled indicates a larger discussion of the Chicano’s position within the Western academy in general. The narrator continues to ask himself “What if it’s not true” while answering with the contradictory “Maybe not. *Sure, it is*” (95). This becomes condensed to the repeated phrase “*No, yeah*” which also makes up the final line of the story. This contradiction points to the ambivalent relationship Chicanos, like the young narrator, have had with schooling and its bearing on their intellectual potentials. For the question of whether or not he should go to school, whether he can still become what his family wants, or if he could continue to learn without school, the answer we are left with is “*No, yeah.*” Not unlike the split views in *El Movimiento* regarding Western education, its necessity, its reform, or the possibility of an entirely separate system, the narrator is unable to come to any conclusive answers. Instead, he comes to recognize that very ambivalence as a condition of his status as a developing minority intellectual: *No, yeah.*

Many of the remaining sections similarly focus on other formative experiences of the boy’s life, like his first communion, while others depict the unsafe living conditions he lives in in order to go to school. For instance, in “Hand in His Pocket” the narrator recounts staying with family friends until school let out—presumably because he had to relocate to a further school due to his expulsion. At the home, he is forced to eat rotten

food while witnessing the murder of a “wetback” at the hands of his caretakers (100). However, the boy endures this silently because “all that [his] parents wanted was for [him] to finish school so [he] could find a job,” which continues the theme that education is synonymous with trauma as well as social mobility (101). Between these moments, other vignettes chronicle the lives of migrant workers. At times, these show a sense of community and shared experience, such as the seemingly hopeful yet pessimistic “When We Arrive,” while others emphasize the ways migrant workers are exploited and abused, as in “The Portrait” and the titular vignette “And the Earth Did Not Devour Him”. Thus Rivera punctuates episodes of the nascent Chicano intellectual with snapshots of the lived conditions of his people in a formal balance that weaves together the development of the individual with the spatial and cultural movement of a broader community. Instead of resulting in a rupture of discontinuity, what we are left with is a union between the two, as the tale of the individual becomes inseparable from the lives around him.

This formal quality that parallels Rivera’s concept of intellectualism becomes most apparent in the closing section “Under the House”. In this final section, Rivera returns to the boy protagonist that the text began with. However, in his initial state the boy is shown thinking, trying to recount what he comes to call the “lost year”. In “Under the House,” a year has gone by and the boy is hiding under a house that he passed “on his way to school” to process the trauma of “how the teacher would spank him for sure because he didn’t know the words” (148). While under the house, the boy is covered with fleas, dirt, and cramped in the dark. However, he is “very comfortable in the dark” and is “unafraid” because the space gives him a “feeling of security.” These details correlate to

the graveyard that is the halfway point between home and school in the earlier “It’s That It Hurts,” wherein the boy contemplates his expulsion on his way home. In each case, death and entombment are linked to schooling yet they are also that which will allow the boy to organize his thoughts. Indeed, Rivera shows that that space—either the graveyard or its metaphorical representation under the house—is not necessarily an end but can act as a potential safe haven and site of rebirth. The boy takes this optimistic view by noting that he could “come here every day” so that “no one can bother [him].” Not unlike Ellison’s invisible man who finds solace in the isolation of the underground, Rivera’s protagonist notes that he can “think in peace” here, that he can “think very clearly in the dark,” apart from traditional sites like the school. While the opening shows the narrator trying to discover a lost voice calling to him, he is able to discover these voices through the underground. While figurative interred, he recalls his father, church, the murdered son of a migrant worker who only wanted water, war, sweet bread, and the fields. Under the house, each vignette blends as all the separate voices collect in his thoughts in an unbroken stream of consciousness.

For Rivera, this is the work of Chicano intellectuals. The boy ends his recollection with his own voice, stating that he would “like to see all of the people together” to “embrace them all...talk to all of them again, but all of them together” (151). As opposed to an intellectualism that prioritizes solitude, Rivera’s Chicano intellectual act as a permanent organizer who relies on organic ties to a community that constitutes, and is constituted by, that very intellectual. Under the house, the community elaborates its needs through the intellectual who articulates them in a new cohesive whole, which imparts

upon the community a collective consciousness. After noting that by “being alone” he can “bring everybody together,” the boy’s meditative state is interrupted by children “throwing rocks at him” while a woman “was trying to poke him with some boards.” This interruption is significant in that it signals Rivera’s unwillingness to allow the Chicano intellectual to exist in complete separation from the world around him. Just as Rivera stated that the Chicano intellectual must never lose contact with his community, the boy is unable to retreat under the house forever—he “had to come out.” Like the Platonic prisoner who emerges from the cave to achieve a new state of consciousness, the boy crawls out from under the house having made “a discovery” (152). What he finds is a way of becoming the organic intellectual that can “discover and rediscover and piece things together” despite the school systems attempt to divide, segregate, and antagonize. This is not to say that the boy will no longer become educated. What is important for Rivera’s Chicano intellectual is the ability to use that education as a means of connecting and making sense of the lived experiences of their community even if that education actively worked against that community. This final section closes with the boy climbing a tree and imaging “someone perched at the top” of a distant palm waving to him “so that the other could see that he knew he was there.” This final act of recognition confirms Rivera’s belief that the Chicano intellectual must not exist separately from either the hegemonic forces of formal education nor from their community, but that they must actively work to find a vantage point to bring them together.

Thus the protagonist of Rivera’s work ends in a very different position than Paredes’ Guálinto. However, these differences are two sides to the same intellectual coin.

The ultimate removal of Paredes's Guálinto from his community, particularly after he goes to the university, demonstrates how the assimilative project of Western schooling prevents the emergence of the type of Chicano intellectual imagined by the author. The very fact that Guálinto's final transformation into George happens while he is at college speaks to the lack of Chicano presence in academia that Paredes himself was only beginning to fill. In examining Paredes' foundational role in institutionalizing Chicano studies and the small network of support that gathered around him at UT Austin, it becomes clear that he was invested in preventing precisely what his protagonist undergoes. His life's work, coupled with the student movements of the 1960s, served to create the possibility of having Chicano and Latino leaders and intellectuals without having them succumb to the assimilative project of academia that his protagonist had. He did this not by forfeiting a right to university access and representation, but maintained that the university was a space worth fighting for at precisely the moments when critics were attempting to discredit it.

Similarly, Rivera was unwilling to write the university off as something endemic to authentic intellectual practice. Rather, Rivera recognized the crucial role that the university—particularly the public university—played in establishing the social function of minority intellectuals. He knew that, for the society beyond the campus, having a foothold in academia provided a legitimation that could work against the marginalization enforced in nearly every other aspect of life. And instead of seeing academic study as something done in complete solitude, he continually saw active participation in the wider community as a necessary component of Chicana/o intellectualism. Unwilling to view

either one separately, Rivera's work unites the individual intellectual and those traditionally outside the boundaries of academia to form a synthesis that his own life came to represent.

If *George Washington Gómez's* ending shows the negative potentials that the university can have in the formation of minority intellectuals, then Rivera's texts shows how that oppression might be worked through to emerge to a world of hopeful possibility. The Chicano intellectual holds on to a hope that emerges from the underground, the house, and the field, and finds its way into the parts of the world overlooked by the academy. He does so not to reject those marginal spaces, but to draw them in, to make them known to themselves, and to reshape that very institution without being devoured by it.

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