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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Stephen J. Bain entitled "The Position of the Intellectual in the 1950s: Case Studies of J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Mary Jo Reiff, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Charles Maland, Mary Papke

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Charles J. Maland

Acceptance for the Council:

Vice Chancellor and Dean of Graduate Studies

THE POSITION OF THE INTELLECTUAL IN THE 1950S:

CASE STUDIES OF J. D. SALINGER AND AYN RAND

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Stephen Joseph Bain

May 2005

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, brothers, and Leigh Ann.

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I wish to thank all those who helped me complete my Master of Arts degree in English. I would like to thank Dr. Mary Jo Reiff, Dr. Charles Maland, and Dr. Mary Papke for guiding me through the process of writing and serving on my committee. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Kirsten Benson, Mary Stokes, David Bain, and Leigh Ann Clarke who helped me make sense of my ideas when they looked bad. I would like to thank Mr. Zachary Smola and Ms. Anna Guenther who helped push these ideas in their earliest stages and for acting interested in this project. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my deepest appreciation for my family and friends, whose encouragement and support made this thesis possible.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the historical and social factors that influenced American intellectual life in the 1950s, and to apply these broader, cultural influences to case studies on two American writers working in the 1950s: J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand. Research involved diverse readings in biography and literary criticism concerning the two authors as well as interpretation of the authors' works themselves.

Despite having opposing philosophical, aesthetic, and intellectual ideals, J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand typify the position of the intellectual in the 1950s because they share the conflicting needs of acceptance and superiority. While the two authors define intelligence in radically different ways, both attempt to escape the existential crisis of post-war life by offering solutions to the intellectuals' unique dilemma that emphasize intellectuals' roles as artists and economic producers.

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I. Introduction

American intellectuals are pulled in two directions by the divided structure of the American economic and political systems. Democracy and capitalism have competing aims. Democracy advocates a belief in equality. Capitalism, on the other hand, encourages competition and a struggle for supremacy. The contrast between the two motives, one for egalitarianism and one for dominance, has a tremendous effect on the mentality of highly intelligent individuals. American identity is based on one's ability to fuse the ideological imperatives of both systems. Intelligence makes this difficult. Intellectuals have been given the ability to succeed because of their mental gifts, but the presence of these gifts contradicts the notion of true equality. Dragged in two directions, the American intellectual's position in the world becomes difficult. He is praised for what he can bring to the economic table, but he suffers at the hands of those who demand equality and strike out against him because his intellect reveals equality to be a myth. He becomes an outsider because of the very thing that makes him useful. His intelligence acts thus as both a gift and a curse.

The carrot of success is balanced by the stick of criticism, and this reality creates a particular psychology in intellectuals. The intellectual develops conflicting needs: a need to feel superior and a need to feel accepted. Every intellectual has to balance these two needs if he or she is to walk the tightrope of American life. These opposing needs make the intellectual question his relationship to society, and he asks himself whether he should embrace his desire for superiority and focus on himself or embrace his need for acceptance and offer his assistance to others. Every American intellectual must make this

decision and the cultural, political, and social atmosphere in which the intellectual lives pulls him toward one side or the other.

The 1950s were a time when intellectuals were suffering attacks for their violation of the democratic belief in equality on an unprecedented level. For some intellectuals who sought greater equality among Americans, the 1950s were a hostile time. The decade was one of conformity, and many Americans demanded equality. People had to keep up with the Joneses, but any advantage in the form of superior intelligence was viewed as elitist. The political connections intellectuals had formed during the 1930s under FDR were no longer tight, and politicians like Joseph McCarthy saw an opportunity to win public favor by picking on intellectuals. Intellectuals are a minority, and they did not attract political support because they were not going to win anyone an election, as Adlai Stevenson's failed bid for the presidency attested. McCarthy became the bully in a schoolyard fight, and as would be expected of the weak nerd, intellectuals backed down. They retreated to the protective enclaves of the universities where they could attempt to influence the next generation.

However, while the intellectual was being attacked socially and politically, he was in demand economically. The United States had entered the Cold War, and it was as much a battle of economies as it was a battle of politics. Here, the intellectual could make enormous contributions. He was able to advance science and technology, and intellectuals gifted in these fields thrived during the post-war years.

The intellectuals writing in this decade became a reflection of the decade itself. Two of the most prominent and popular writers of the decade were J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand. As intellectuals these two artists exhibited the defining characteristic of the

American intellectual: the conflict between the need to feel superior and the need to feel accepted. In their need to feel superior, both writers criticized the world and other intellectuals. This forced them to divide the world into two parts: the part that was with them and understood them, and the part that was against them and caused their misery. Their condemnation of others and need to feel superior became so pronounced that they decided to leave society, and both writers became recluses during the decade. While they criticized society, there remained a need to be accepted by society, and their books became a way for them to gain attention and acknowledgement for their superiority. When they failed to get the recognition they felt they deserved from the people from whom it would mean something (intellectuals rather than the public), they escaped into the fictional worlds they had created in order to maintain their superiority. Later, Rand and Salinger attempted to make those worlds come to life by developing cult-like followings among very young intellectuals who could be easily manipulated to view them as the gods they thought they were.

Ironically, these two writers who shared so many personality traits developed diametrically opposing philosophies in their writing, and these works become the legacy they left for the world; they are the ideas for which each will be remembered. Both writers attempted to provide intellectuals with self-help books designed to facilitate living in the 1950s. In *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger embraced the egalitarian side of the intellectual's decision. Incorporating his unique religious beliefs in his fiction, Salinger instructs the intellectual to learn to love his fellow man and to work for his improvement. In the stories, he resists the path he took personally and argues that the intellectual should not hide from the world but accept it with a love that allows him to show the truth of the

world to those who are less adept. In contrast to Salinger's noblesse oblige, *Atlas Shrugged* shows Ayn Rand viewing the intellectual's position from a capitalist stance. She succumbs to the lure of superiority and encourages the intellectual to work for himself and to show no concern for society. She fails, then, to recognize the intellectual's gift as a gift, she sees no responsibility on the part of the intellectual to society. This thesis will explore the ways that Salinger and Rand embodied the dilemmas of American intellectual life in the 1950s and represented the central tension between acceptance and superiority in their respective works.

II. The Climate of Intellectual Life in the 1950s

In his Cold War era book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, the critic Richard Hofstadter distinguishes between the *intellect* and *intelligence* by saying *intelligence* is "an excellence of mind that is employed within a fairly narrow immediate and predictable range" and that it is universally admired; *intellect*, on the other hand, is "the critical, creative, and contemplative side of the mind," which shows itself in the form of evaluations and separates humans from animals (25). While Hofstadter's semantic juggling act has its merits, *intelligence* and *intellect* have almost identical meanings in the common parlance of the times. To separate the two is unnecessary, and it is easy enough to say that both terms simply mean the quality of one who has a high degree of mental ability (*smarts* or *brains*, if these common terms are preferable). By extrapolation, *intellectuals* are individuals who enjoy using their high mental ability on an everyday basis to interact with the world and who often make a living by trafficking in the exchange, application, or creation of ideas. Their desire to use their minds directs them into assuming diverse roles as scientists, political advisors, business executives, critics, teachers, and artists, but despite their range of influence, these individuals exist in very small numbers, and, if one is to believe the statistics about gifted children, people with exceptional mental ability make up less than 3% of the American population.

America's intellectual minority has always received a lukewarm welcome from the public, and being smart in America is a burden that is infrequently discussed. Being smart handicaps people in different ways, but there is one common difficulty shared by almost all intellectuals: a tension created by their opposing need to feel superior and need to find social acceptance. The presence of this tension is the defining characteristic of the

American intellectual. Very early in life, intelligent children realize that they are different from their peers, and their peers make the same observation. The intellectual becomes disconnected from his peers because his mental gifts to do not allow him to see the world the same way as others. Deviation from accepted norms usually lead to exclusion and ridicule, and intellectuals suffer social isolation due to their minority status. The torment and ostracism of intellectuals is so prevalent that American culture captures it in a stereotype: the nerd. American society often depicts the intellectual as the physically weak, ugly, and clumsy, socially awkward or shy, and romantically hopeless victim of the American teenage ideal.

The intellectual's isolation forces him into a decision between choosing to work toward acceptance or choosing to remain distant and feel superior. Richard Hofstadter expressed the nature of this paradox when he said, "the truly creative mind is hardly ever so much alone as when he is trying to be sociable" (426). His decision between these two approaches to his dilemma is never absolute, and he can often vacillate in his decision based on the moment. Additionally, the two needs can often fold in on one another and become almost inseparable. For example, his need for recognition could serve both as a sign of his need for acceptance and his need to feel superior. The challenge of the intellectual's life is finding a way to negotiate the competing pulls of superiority and social acceptance, and the battle between these two needs becomes the defining characteristic of American intellectual life.

Most intellectuals rarely question their own exceptionality. For them, the question is what they should do with it now that they have it. One way intellectuals answer this question depends in large part on where they think they get their intelligence.

If they view their intellect as an unearned blessing, then they often feel a need to help society by repaying the debt, and they work toward integration with society despite its rejection of them. If they attribute their intellect to their own efforts, then they feel no obligation to the society that rejected them, and they may work toward advancing their own interests. Regardless of whether they work for themselves or others, the self-esteem gained by successfully performing important work may lead to arrogance (Shils 45). Arrogance becomes the first of a whole host of other minor characteristics that arise from the competing needs found in the intellectual. His failure to find a balance between the competing pulls can lead to frustration and unhappiness with the world and a failure to form stable personal relationships in the world. These problems are rarely discussed because complaining about these problems makes someone sound arrogant or pathetic. The best way to think about the situation is to imagine a model who complains about being good looking. The automatic disgust of those not as good looking is easy to imagine, and sympathy is almost impossible.

Intellectuals have always felt the opposing pulls of superiority and social acceptance, but the socio-historical situation in which they live significantly influences the degree to which they are pulled to one side or another. The 1950s in America were a particularly troubling time for intellectuals. One of the catchwords used to describe the spirit of the time was *anti-intellectual* because intellectuals had fallen out of favor with the government and with the public, and intellectual life suffered attacks on multiple fronts largely due to the fear of the communist threat that dominated the decade. As Merle Curti has pointed out, the intellectual's role requires him to criticize, experiment, and bridge cultures, and these three qualities opposed American attitudes during the

beginning of the Cold War (270). America had to defend its economic and political ideologies; thus America embraced egalitarianism and conformity on a massive scale. This widespread belief in egalitarianism and conformity intensified America's hostility toward the intellectual and increased the tension within intellectuals between needing to feel superior and wanting social acceptance. America's intellectuals were put in an awkward position of deciding whether to be America's protectors or critics during the Cold War. Since the Cold War was a time of competing ideologies, it is necessary to show how America's dominant ideology shaped intellectual life.

American Political Ideology and the Intellectual

The beliefs inherent in a democracy create serious problems for intellectuals. Democracy rests on the foundational values that "all men are created equal" and that every citizen should play an active role in political life. The American democratic system emerged from a profound reaction against the European class system, which favored an aristocratic elite and devalued the contributions of individual citizens. Jefferson's noble assertion of equality has been one of the United States' greatest achievements, but its misapplication in the public sphere has led to devastating ramifications for intellectuals.

Democracies guarantee everyone equal rights under the law, but this does not mean that everyone is automatically endowed with equal talent or abilities. Unfortunately, equality in rights has often meant uniformity in behavior. This drive toward sameness leads America toward mediocrity and an ever-increasing interest in the average (Molnar 276). The intellectual automatically becomes an outsider because high

intellectual ability is inherently anti-egalitarian. To identify someone as smart necessitates identifying someone else as dumb, and the truth of this claim undermines the belief in equality. To overcome this contradiction, people often change the standard by which intellectual ability is measured so that equality can be maintained. Equal education comes to mean equal intelligence, and there is a widespread belief in America that any educated individual can be classified as an intellectual (Molnar 277). Intelligence is more than acquiring knowledge, and, when education fails to produce equality, a different reaction emerges that has a greater effect on the intellectual's position in democratic society. Recognizing the impossibility of eliminating the discrepancy between degrees of intellect and being unwilling to question the democratic ideal of equality, the public begins to question the necessity of an intellectual life.

To many Americans, an intellectual life is elitist and reminiscent of the aristocratic leisure class, which the country opposed from its very founding. A false dichotomy exists in democratic systems between men of action and men of thought. The Protestant work ethic adopted by most Americans encourages physical work over thought, and anyone who has time to spend in the impractical world of ideas separates himself from this working class. Contemplation is reserved for those who do not have to work, so there is a connection made between intellectuals and the wealthy class. This brand of thinking was put to use in a number of American elections dating back to Jefferson, including the presidential election of 1952, and continuing through today, but it had its strongest exemplar in the presidential race between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson in the 1820s. As Richard Hofstadter notes, "As popular democracy gained strength and confidence, it reinforced the widespread belief in the superiority of

inborn, intuitive, folkish wisdom over the cultivated, oversophisticated, and self-interested knowledge of the literati and the well-to-do" (154). Jackson courted public opinion by characterizing himself as being like the public and a man of action. He won the election, and this led to his opposition adopting a similar stance, and anti-intellectualism became part of the democratic myth (Hofstadter 161).

In addition to being considered elitist and useless, the rewards of intellectual ability put intellectuals outside the myth of the American Dream, a promising myth that was questioned in the 1930s but was gaining ground in the 1950s. Being endowed with a special gift prevents a lot of struggling, and rarely does the intellectual need to pull himself up by the bootstraps since his intelligence has prevented him, in many ways, from being down in the first place.

Intellectuals are very aware of their differences from the public, but they, too, have bought into the ideal of equality. Because many intellectuals view their mental abilities as a gift of nature and not as a sign of personal achievement, they feel an obligation to repay or give thanks for the present they have received and to balance the advantage they receive from their intelligence (Curti 277). That is, to overcome the stigma of living a life of thought, many intellectuals adopt a service mentality in an attempt to find social acceptance. In their desire to compensate for the "useless" activity of intellectual life, intellectuals attempt to put their minds to use for the good of the collective (Molnar 267).

Despite the efforts of intellectuals to work for the common good, a tension remains between the intellectual and both the public and those in authority (Shils 32). The dilemma of the American intellectual is that he is rewarded for his gifts but finds

himself disturbed by egalitarian theories; he knows better, and while he admires the drive for equality, his need for superiority makes him question or dismiss the values of his society (Molnar 280-81). Even though they are not the only ones capable of such observations, intellectuals have a greater capability to recognize problems in a society and a greater willingness to voice their opposition to these issues. Further, their ability to criticize accurately makes some intellectuals a threat to the established order; Karl Marx and Charles Darwin are both examples of this type of intellectual. The public and its leaders who represent or have a stake in maintaining the status quo resent the change intellectuals advocate. This resentment, in part, creates the paradoxical position of the intellectual in a democracy: the intellectual is ridiculed when he is not needed and resented when he is needed too much (Hofstadter 34).

American Economic Ideologies and the Intellectual

Like democracy, a capitalist economic system presents challenges to intellectuals. Inherent in a capitalist system is a belief in individual effort and an emphasis (some would say overemphasis) on material gain. In many ways, the egalitarianism demanded by democracy conflicts with the individualism inspired by capitalism. Whereas democracy advocates a belief in equality, capitalism encourages competition and a struggle for supremacy in the market. On its face, such an economic system would seem to benefit intellectuals who have a higher level of intellect and therefore have more to offer a respective employer and so have a greater potential for survival in the capitalist system. While this is certainly true, and many intellectuals have met with great success

in the working world, the emphasis on wealth also changes the way in which intellectuals must operate in a capitalist system.

As Tocqueville pointed out in the early nineteenth century, capitalism creates a "spirit of gain" in the American mentality, and this attitude diverts the mind away from imagination and thought and toward a pursuit of wealth (35). To function in the system, intellectuals must make money, and this task is accomplished primarily through action and not through thought. Those thinkers who do practice intellectual exploration do so with financial aims in mind. Consequently, the mind becomes fixed on the development of purely material objects and away from the abstract study of art, science, and literature (Tocqueville 37). The areas in which intellectuals most frequently have interest and ability are thus discouraged because for a skill to be regarded as good, it must prove to be both useful and profitable. This emphasis on material culture shows a marked preference for things over ideas and action over thought, and for the intellectual, the focus on material culture merges with democratic expectations of service.

The service mentality expected of intellectuals promoting America's democratic ideals finds its purpose in a capitalist system. Capitalism demands that the intellectual not work solely in the service of truth but in the service of the economic system. As Tocqueville pointed out, the grandest effort of the intellect in a capitalist democracy is to save money (45). In European aristocracies, the pursuit of science gratifies the mind, but in America science is used to gratify the body by both saving labor and providing financial gain (Tocqueville 45). This difference in mentality severely limits scientific exploration in America because such research must be successful and worth the investment, which can be severely limited by an employer's resources. Bound by his

duty to his employer, the intellectual is valuable to the capitalist system because his mind can be used to generate money, and his acceptance is based almost purely on utilitarian grounds. If he is unable to provide such services, he is easily expelled, along with his research.

The fear of expulsion in a capitalist system creates the side effect of specialization. In an effort to feel superior and make themselves indispensable to the system, intellectuals increasingly limit their focus to a specific kind of knowledge that only they can provide. As an expert, one knows fewer things, but the things one knows, one knows very well. This has the unfortunate effect of increasing the distance between intellectuals and the public (Curti 275). However, once the intellectual is removed from the world of pure ideas and placed in a highly specified field, the intellectual's threat to society diminishes. Specialization prevents an intellectual from performing his most necessary task, being a critic. If the intellectual's mental ability is directed toward specific economic goals, and he is compensated for the work he is doing, he is less likely to seek change. He becomes invested in the system and the status quo that is now working in his favor. Essentially, wealth becomes a way to "tame" intellectuals (Hofstadter 397).

American Historical Factors and the Intellectual

While democracy and capitalism are ideological systems that influenced the public's reaction to the intellectual in the 1950s, a number of historical factors have shaped the public's reaction as well. Several major figures and events in the nineteenth and early twentieth century exacerbated the separation between the intellectuals and the

public and deserve a brief mention. Each of the following historical matters promoted hostility toward intellectuals in its own way.

The frontier experience, for one, fed the fires of utilitarianism that led to anti-intellectualism in America (Curti 263). Life in the frontier demanded two key qualities that were lacking in many intellectuals: action and versatility (Curti 264). Those who conquered the West were largely illiterate, and they championed heroes who were men of action like the mythic Paul Bunyan (Curti 263). Formal education, the haven of the intellectual, provided very little aid to survival in the West.

Later, two scientists in the nineteenth century helped advance human understanding but further damaged intellectuals' already tarnished reputation. The work of Sigmund Freud had a negative effect on intellectuals' popular appeal. Freud's theories had a tremendous influence on the art and literature of the early twentieth century, but their influence made many modernist works "unintelligible to all but the initiate" (Curti 274). By making art seem esoteric, Freud's ideas ended up feeding a belief in intellectual snobbery, and the public's backlash against their exclusion reinforced its anti-intellectual position.

William Leuchtenburg in his historical overview of the intellectual position identifies Darwin's work as another major factor in the rift between intellectuals and society (10). The deeply religious public was reluctant to accept Darwin's evolutionary theory because it conflicted with the Bible's explanation. Those who agreed with Darwin's theory "challenged the authority of the Bible, weakened the presumption of life after death, and inevitably cast doubt on the whole idea that man's life was meaningful as part of a meaningful universe" (Leuchtenburg 10). As a result, science began to distance

itself from its former supporter, the church. In doing so, the rationality of science conflicted with the faith of the church, and the public repeatedly valued faith over reason, the tool of intellectuals.

While individual scientists exercised one level of influence, the birth of the social sciences had an even greater effect. According to Leuchtenburg, the rise of the social sciences in the 1880's was the most damaging event to the intellectual's image in society (12). The widespread belief that "elected officials were too often corrupt," which was found on many university campuses, created a "pressing need for well-trained, non-partisan leaders comparable to Old World aristocrats" (Perry 347). As Fredric Howe put it, "America, with no leisure class, was to be saved by the scholar" (quoted in Perry 347). The intellectual social scientists were happy to escape their economic role in society and enter one of government service instead. However, the social scientists questioned many of America's sacred institutions and "challenged the supremacy of the business man and politician" by becoming government administrators (Leuchtenburg 12). These administrators influenced the political outlooks of a number of politicians and, by 1912, had become a major factor in the presidential campaigns, leading Woodrow Wilson, for instance, to profess his fear of "a government of experts" that thought of themselves as "the only men who understand the job" (quoted in Leuchtenburg 12).

The economic disaster of the Great Depression called for new political voices, and the social scientists' level of political involvement increased with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Brain Trust." Under FDR, intellectuals gained the ear of the president, and they overturned many of the traditional views of government and economics. Those who formerly held power in government felt threatened and lashed out against the

intellectuals, since they felt it dangerous politics to attack the popular president (Leuchtenburg 14). To turn over politics to the experts meant that politicians were themselves incompetent, and such an impression damaged their position of power (Hofstadter 203). Accordingly, the Brain Trust was criticized for undermining the ideals of the republic and taking risks without concern for their effects. The pressure intellectuals felt led to doubt and self-criticism over their inability to fix modern problems (Perry 353).

World War II gave intellectuals an opportunity to make amends, and Roosevelt reinvested in intellectuals' potential. During World War Two, the government made a massive investment in brains, and that investment paid dividends in the form of the computer, radar, and the atomic bomb (Pells 10). These successes demonstrated the power intellectuals were capable of holding and the level of influence they could exert. Unfortunately, these advancements in the intellectuals' position in the 1930s and early 1940s led to a backlash in the 1950s, and two social conditions specific to the 1950s profoundly affected the social position of the intellectual in that decade: the push for conformity and McCarthyism.

1950s Conformity and Intellectual Life

The 1950s were a time of American prosperity. As Richard Pells has pointed out, the atomic bomb insured a certain level of dominance in world affairs, and the limited war damage America suffered in the homeland, compared to that of Europe and Asia, allowed the country to focus on sustaining the flourishing economy rather than on rebuilding (52). America was a success story, and America's victory in the Second

World War and its subsequent economic growth left many Americans content. This success story left little room for the intellectual whose need for superiority demanded he be recognized as an individual. Outside of the communist threat, there was very little to fight against and very little support for change to be gained from a passive public, and any criticism intellectuals lodged against society was considered unpatriotic (McWilliams 19). Middle-class values dominated the 1950s, and, as Richard Pells explains,

> The signs of its dominance were everywhere: in the election returns[,]...in the credit card economy, which kept millions of consumers surfeited with goods and permanently in debt; in the ...interstate highway systems which facilitated mobility (and also the rootlessness) of an increasingly white-collar population for whom job transfers and commuting distances were emblems of success; in the indistinguishable ranch houses[,]...in the exploding birth rate, the child-centered nuclear family, the mounting concern over education as a means of social advancement[,]... in the growing reliance on television and high fidelity phonographs as the principal forms of information and amusement; and in the booming sales of tranquilizers to sooth the multiple anxieties that still discomforted the prosperous bourgeoisie. (184)

These middle-class values were not the values of the intelligentsia who largely maintained cosmopolitan lifestyles, but "the intellectual had no choice but to confront the problems of the American middle class" (Pells 184).

Trapped in a society that demanded sameness and that was growing increasingly antagonistic toward intellectuals' differences and critiques, many intellectuals of the 1950s withdrew from a social or public life and moved toward the private life of the self. Intellectuals had two options: they could submit themselves to the growing American culture of uniformity, or they could strike out on their own. Faced with a difficult decision, many intellectuals abandoned loftier aspirations of government involvement in favor of mainstream jobs as supervisors or developers or university professors. As Carey McWilliams points out in his article "Official Policy and Anti-Intellectualism," there was

a clear separation in the 1950s between "intellectuals" who participated in the world of ideas and "intellectual workers" who devoted their intelligence to specific tasks. McWilliams correctly points out that the 1950s were a bad time for intellectuals but the best ever for intellectual workers (18). The jobs intellectuals took showed the capitalist tendency to force intellectuals into specialized knowledge. Many intellectuals of the 1950s were happy to become specialists because specialization simultaneously separated them from the public and made them a useful and happy part of the system; they were thus insulated from the criticism of the public (Curti 280). Unfortunately, by taking up these less prominent roles, intellectuals helped fuel the anti-intellectualism of the period by remaining quiet or hidden within the culture.

In sharp contrast, the growing sameness of the American climate led some intellectuals to search for an identity separate from the American whole, and this quest again put them outside the American standard. Intellectuals who fought against conformity appeared as deviants, and there were several attempts to control this deviation. One obvious and overt attempt was McCarthyism, but there was another more subtle way of thwarting the intellectual's effort at change. Fear of the intellectuals' deviation from the norm led to the invention of the myth of the absent-minded professor, a softer variation on the nerd stereotype. The absent-minded professor acted as an easy straw man for society to belittle, but it also provided some intellectuals with a mask to hide behind (Thompson 48). Those who refused to be ridiculed in caricature were forced to develop their own identities, and this created intellectuals who turned away from public life and toward a life of the self. If the 1930s saw the intellectual's search for community service, then the 1950s witnessed his search for privacy.

Whether they accepted jobs or not, a growing number of intellectuals became spiritually crippled. The jobs they had did not satisfy them, and the money they made did not bring them joy. The gap between material wealth and spiritual poverty was psychologically devastating, and psychoanalysis became the vogue in public discourse (Pells 189-90). In their race to protect themselves, intellectuals suspected that they were losing their individuality as the country moved closer to a patriotic and conformist national image. This thought was supported by the intellectual's belief that the growing media culture "robbed people of their self development" as it supported conformity and encouraged escapism (Pells 235).

Toward the end of the decade, the rampant conformity of the era led to a form of anti-conformity that remained anti-intellectual in its design. The bohemian or Beat movement during the late fifties failed to provide any redemption for the intellectual because the Beats and their followers worshipped the anti-intellectual ideals of irrational mysticism, primitivism, carelessness, and incoherence (Pells 378). While the Beat movement would gain momentum in the 1960s, very few intellectuals of the 1950s considered it as substantial or attractive.

McCarthyism: Bullying the Nerd

Another movement that failed to attract much support from intellectuals of the 1950s was McCarthyism. No single committee or event can capture the spirit of repression and suspicion that McCarthyism empowered. To understand this, one must look at the diversity of ways McCarthyism showed itself to the public. As Richard Pells has pointed out, this included:

> the security checks, loyalty oaths, and attorney general's list of subversive organizations[,]... the trials of Alger Hiss, Communist party leaders, and the Rosenbergs[,]...the campaign of 1952 in which conservatives charged Democrats with being "soft on Communism"; the congressional exposes of Communist infiltration in Hollywood, television, newspapers, churches, universities, and public school; the efforts of intellectuals and legal scholars to narrow the limits of academic freedom and civil liberties in an era of espionage, sabotage, and conspiracy. (263)

Looking at some of these events individually will help unmask the anti-intellectualism that the movement inspired.

The 1952 presidential race between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson has been characterized as a battle between the intellect, represented by Stevenson, and philistinism in the form of Eisenhower (Hofstadter 3). Stevenson was an intellectual and had the support of many of the intellectual elite, but appealing to the intellectual minority never wins elections. As Andrew Jackson discovered in the 1820s, it is far easier to win support from large numbers of people by criticizing intellectuals. Eisenhower followed Jackson's lead. He was not an intellectual but a military leader, and his campaign emphasized his distance from "the ivory tower" (Hofstadter 227). For example, his fondness for literature did not extend beyond the western (Hofstadter 4). Eisenhower's victory revealed the American public's view of the intellectual, and Eisenhower was not far behind in seconding the public's decree. Speaking at a Republican party meeting in 1954, Eisenhower chided "wisecracking so-called intellectuals," defining an intellectual as "a man who takes more words than are necessary to tell more than he knows" (qt. in Hofstadter 10).

Along with becoming the butt of the executive branch's joke, some intellectuals suffered the humiliation of being brought before the House on Un-American Activities

Committee during its investigations of communist infiltration in Hollywood and universities. One's response to testifying before HUAC became a "rite of passage" for intellectuals in the 1950s (Pells 301). As Richard Pells has explained:

> [A] person who received a HUAC subpoena had three equally unpleasant choices: He could invoke the First Amendment and challenge the committee's authority to inquire about his political ideas and associations thereby risking a possible prison sentence for contempt of Congress; he could decline to testify about himself or others by claiming the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination, thereby avoiding jail but casting himself as uncooperative, probably guilty, and automatically unemployable; or he could submit to interrogation, give the committee the information it craved, accept its power to subject him to humiliation, and continue to work in his chosen profession. (306)

The decision to name names was a difficult one for the artists and teachers brought before the committee, but one's willingness to name names identified those who were worthy of redemption in the eyes of HUAC. In exchange for naming names, however, an individual had to endure the chastisement of his intellectual peers (Pells 315). One of the major concerns for intellectuals about HUAC was that its power of censorship extended beyond an author's work and into his personal life. Not only could his work be removed from society, but his person could be as well (Pells 282). A number of teachers and artists lost their jobs and were blacklisted based on their testimony before HUAC.

The separate hearings for Alger Hiss and Robert Oppenheimer gave further proof of the specter of anti-intellectualism inherent in McCarthyism. Alger Hiss was an intellectual who had been a New Dealer and State Department employee. He was accused of passing secrets to the Soviets, was found guilty of lying to HUAC, and sentenced to four years of prison. The intellectual community divided over the Hiss case. Some praised the court's decision, and Hiss became a scapegoat for all of the guilt they felt about their own communist sympathies during the 1930s. Others, like Adlai

Stevenson, vehemently defended Alger Hiss. One case that invoked a unified intellectual front was the security hearing of Robert J. Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer had served the government faithfully and frequently from the time he was director of the Los Alamos project that developed the atomic bomb. A colleague's personal resentment of Oppenheimer generated questions over Oppenheimer's loyalty and led a 1954 hearing to decide whether or not his security clearance should be revoked. Two separate but equally unjust evaluative committees found that Oppenheimer was not disloyal but was a security risk. This judgement shows the mounting fear of the intellectuals' power in the 1950s. While Oppenheimer himself was not dangerous, what he knew and was able to do were dangerous. Despite his years of government service, Oppenheimer was persecuted. Once his usefulness as an intellectual no longer existed, he lost his position.

McCarthyism seemed to target intellectuals particularly. Most of the victims of McCarthy's inquisition were members of the entertainment world, the state department, the universities, and the scientific community -- all areas that had drawn significant numbers of intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s. In these arenas, the intellectual's influence on the country's affairs had escalated rapidly. Not surprisingly, there were those who felt threatened by the intellectuals' rapid rise to power. In many ways, Richard Hofstadter is right when he says McCarthyism was revenge for the New Deal; "scorn for the 'brain truster'... raised a crop of petty tyrants and ambitious cynics who [sought] to be 'brain-busters'" (Hofstadter 41, Clapp 33). One would be hard pressed to disagree with editor S. Stansfeld Sargent's proclamation of McCarthy as "the most prominent anti-intellectual" ever (4).

McCarthy became a successful demagogue because he provided America with what it needed at exactly the right time. While McCarthy's criticism of intellectuals was loud, it would have remained weak if there had not been a public that was primed to listen to it. McCarthyism caught on among the middle class who felt a powerlessness due both to the conformity of the time and the fear of America's vulnerability. The debate over the success or failure of the New Dealers had set the stage for an attack on intellectuals from conservatives, and the public's rising fear of communism triggered their assault. Communism terrified the American public. They had been promised mastery of the world by science and democracy, but the Russians' atomic bomb and the rise of the Cold War prevented the fulfillment of that promise and led to widespread fear and feelings of helplessness (Macbeath 11). A number of events exacerbated the public's mounting fear in the 1950s. In 1948, a successful Communist coup took place in Czechoslovakia. In 1949, Russia announced it had also developed an atomic bomb, and China became a communist nation. In turn, America solidified its relationship with Western Europe with the formation of NATO in 1949. However, in the early years of the fifties, the Korean War fed the tension between the two superpowers of Russia and the United States. Feeling uneasy and afraid, the public turned to someone who would provide them with easy answers, and McCarthy provided the public with assurance in a time of crisis.

McCarthy fought communism with authoritarianism. As a number of writers of the time pointed out, the McCarthy hearings led to a blurring of the distinctions between America and the totalitarianism of Stalinist Russia. Both reveled in nationalism, glorified the common folk, and relied on men of action (Pells 336). Totalitarianism has never been

good for intellectuals, who rely on freedom to work and whose work is to question commonly held beliefs and institutions. As can be seen in the recent war on terrorism, a country's involvement in war, whether hot or cold, demands a unified front, and criticism brings hostility on the critic as it did the intellectuals in the 1950s. Rather than challenge official policy and accept the resulting attack, most intellectuals were intimidated into acquiescence or silence (McWilliams 19).

American Education and the Intellectual

Toward the end of the decade, intellectuals began to see some changes. The public's interest in intellectuals changed considerably after the launch of Sputnik in 1957. These changes took place primarily in the arena of public education. After the satellite's launch, fear of Soviet supremacy led to a re-evaluation in how children were taught. Intelligent youth were regarded as one of America's greatest weapons in the fight against communism.

As of the early 1950s, gifted education in America had quite an abbreviated history. In the 1860s and 1870s, a few states began tracking programs that accelerated the rate at which gifted students were taught, and similar, locally-based initiatives provided some extra assistance to gifted students up to the 1920s. By 1920, two thirds of school systems in larger cities had some program for gifted students (Davis and Rimm 4). At this time, developing ways to measure intellect took on greater importance than developing programs in schools (Gallagher and Weiss 13). While scholars like Sir Francis Galton had begun research on intelligence in the 1860's, the most important figures in intelligence research were those who created IQ tests. These tests have their

roots in the work of French scientist Alfred Binet who in the 1890s tried to develop a way to identify "dull" children so that they might be given special training. Eventually, Binet's tests were used to identify general mental ability. In 1916, Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman modified Binet's work to develop "the forerunner of all American intelligence tests, the *Stanford –Binet Intelligence Scale*" (Davis and Rimm 5). The ability of Terman's test to measure high IQ led to an interest in extraordinarily high scorers in the period between 1925 and 1950, most notably in the work of Leta Hollingsworth, who attempted to show gifted students that they could develop relationships with less talented individuals.

Outside of these few studies, work with gifted students practically died during the 1920s and 1930s due in large part to two reasons: an increased belief in egalitarianism and a redirection of focus encouraged by the troubles of the Great Depression (Davis and Rimm 4). This meant a return to general and conformity-enhancing education. As the critic Theodore Brameld has discussed, the educational system is a microcosm of the wider culture, and ideas present in the greater society will be reflected in the educational system of that society (36). During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, schools were vehicles for the democratic and capitalistic ideals of American society, and this fact made them, ironically, anti-intellectual.

In America, common schools were founded on economic aims rather than the pursuit of knowledge (Hofstadter 305). Schools' goals were to take a heterogeneous group of students and instill in them national identification by making them literate and giving them the minimum education they needed to function as citizens (Hofstadter 305). This led schools to favor practical knowledge in the form of life skills and vocational

training over rigorous academic curricula. This trend only strengthened in the twentieth century with progressive education. Compared to 1910, 41% fewer students were taking Latin in school in 1949; 30% fewer students were taking algebra, and subject specific sciences classes dropped by 48% (Hofstadter 341). The range of curricula choices was shrinking as well. Instead of fostering intellectual growth, the hallmarks of education became citizenship, efficiency, and practicality, and those who were intellectually curious began to be treated as pariahs (Pells 203). Good students were not those who were smart but those who were "well behaved." Further, in the early years of the Cold War, the fear inspired by a communist threat created a fear of teachers' influence, which led to a further constriction of subjects to be studied and a curtailing of educational experimentation; this period saw the addition of a new negative, the suspension of teachers who did not conform (Brameld 36).

Russia's announcement that it had sent an unmanned satellite into orbit in October of 1957 led to a reawakening of interests in education, especially in regard to the intellectually gifted. Sputnik called America's gifted youth into service and brought a much-needed change in educational thinking, now arguing that "today's gifted are tomorrow's leaders" and "society needs these individuals' gifts" (Davis Riesman 2, Gallagher and Weiss forward). As America asked itself how the Russians had surpassed it, this inquiry led to rapid changes in education, most notably the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which offered scholarships in practical, high need areas like math, science, and foreign language but which also demanded loyalty oaths stating that one would not work against the government from those who received such awards. Similarly, there was an increasing interest in reports detailing how gifted children had

been ignored, such as the 1950 Educational Policies Commission's report that stated that this neglect was leading to "losses in the arts, sciences, and professions" (Davis and Rimm 7).

While Sputnik resulted in a greater interest in the type of education offered on the elementary and secondary levels, the atomic bomb had already begun to influence the way the government viewed the university. Similar to changes brought about by previous wars, World War II brought an increased interest in the benefits of science. Before World War II, there was a low technological level of expectation concerning the developments scientists made. Increasing the level of technological study required greater financial backing than most businesses could afford. Additionally, the research that was done relied heavily on successful, marketable outcomes and prevented sharing between rival corporate interests. To facilitate technological growth, the "cost and conduct of research needed to be socialized," and this was most easily done by the nation developing patronage of the universities (Lewontin 8-9). In 1944, Roosevelt asked for recommendations on "how to continue the wartime relationship between the state and science" (Lewontin 13). In 1950 the National Science Foundation was established with a budget of $100, 000, and by 1961 this budget had grown to $100 million with 85% of that money going to universities for research (Lewontin 15-16). This influx of funds led to an increase in the number of scientists, and university faculties grew.

While science did gain support from the government, it did little to change public opinion, and for intellectuals, the "pursuit of science had not made man sane or improved relations to his fellow man" (Thompson 48). This was a responsibility scientists usually left to their colleagues in the humanities. Unfortunately, the study of English during the

1950s "struck an ambivalent posture of disengagement" largely due to the widespread use of New Criticism as a form of inquiry (Ohmann 77). New Criticism insisted on the autonomy of the literary work and severed the text from history (Ohmann 77). Literature was separated from the world and was studied and appreciated for its artistic merits rather than its contributions to political or psychological understanding. Essentially, English was a "pastoral retreat" from the turmoil of 1950s antagonisms; many scholars removed themselves from the entanglements of social involvement and failed to provide ethical and moral solutions for themselves or society (Ohmann 73).

Conclusion

While antagonism is inherent in the lives of intellectuals, the 1950s were a time when the public's hostility toward intellectuals was soaring. It was, in short, a particularly challenging time to be an intellectual in America. The socio-historical atmosphere intensified intellectuals' tension between working for social acceptance and helping others and rejecting society in an effort to protect themselves and to retain superiority. This tension was exacerbated by the climate of the Cold War that expected allegiance to the competing ideologies of democracy and capitalism. Democracies encourage equality and discourage the individuality of intellectuals, but also ask that they strive for social acceptance and responsibility. Capitalism encourages competition and fosters the development of the intellectuals' need for superiority, but it also quiets them with money. During the 1950s, intellectuals were asked to serve both ideologies, but no matter which one they chose to embrace, the intellectuals suffered for neglecting one of the needs in their psychological make-up. Pulled in opposing directions, their lives in the

1950s were frustrating, and many intellectuals assumed quiet private lives waiting for the hostility of the decade to blow over.

Not all of the intellectuals in the 1950s remained silent or hidden. Two major writers appeared during the 1950s to evaluate the nature of intellectual life in America and to raise questions about what the intellectual's position in society should be. As intellectuals, J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand reflected their age both in their work and as individuals; their lives and the stories they created serve as case studies in the ways intellectuals adjusted to life in the 1950s. Both writers exhibit the opposing needs that define intellectual life, and both worked personally and professionally to find a way to reconcile the tension caused by those contrasting pulls. While they adopt similar attitudes toward the world, the advice they give intellectuals could not be more different.

III. J.D. Salinger: The Recluse Who Loved the World

No writer is more synonymous with the 1950s than J. D. Salinger. He is one of the most popular writers of that time, and almost all of his major works were published in that decade. The time period in which Salinger worked was filled with possible subjects for a writer, but during the latter half of his publishing career, he continually returned to the same topic: what it means to be an intellectual in America. By the time this topic appeared in his fiction, he had spent a lifetime attempting to answer the question for himself. In a rather odd but telling choice of words, the critic James Lundquist says, "Salinger's ideas on the true and the false in American culture, his religious solutions to the crises of alienation and isolation, and his overriding sentimentality may have had more impact on *the American brainscape* than anyone yet has taken into account" (1, italics mine). While Lundquist does little to explain what he means by the term "American brainscape," what he is clearly talking about is Salinger's effect on American intellectual identity. Lundquist's study also outlines the dilemmas of the 1950s intellectual who had to find a position for himself in the face of the inherent antagonisms of American life, to overcome alienation, and to explain his heightened sensibilities to himself. As Lundquist suggests, Salinger's works address these issues directly, and his stories offer intellectuals a way to make sense of the world; however, to understand fully his relationship to the position of the intellectual in the 1950s, one must consider both his work and its creator. That is, Salinger's life and work are both products of and reactions to developments in the American intellectual identity during the age in which he wrote. His life and his fiction, especially the Glass stories, show the conflict between a need to feel superior and a need for social acceptance that typify American intellectual life.

While personally Salinger's need for superiority controlled his life, in his writing, Salinger embraced the democratic ideal of equality from a spiritual base and argued that intellectuals needed to change their notions about the nature of intelligence and work for acceptance in society, despite its failings and hostility, because intellectuals have the ability to bring about change.

The origins of Salinger's struggle with intellectualism go back to the earliest stages of his life. From early on in his childhood, Salinger exhibited dissatisfaction with the world, and he made repeated attempts to remove himself from it. He preferred his own company to associations with people and lived the life of a loner or outsider. Even as a very young man, his belief in his own superiority caused him to resist conformity and strike out on his own. A childhood friend said, "He wanted to do unconventional things. For hours, no one in the family knew where he was or what he was doing; he just showed up for meals. He was a nice boy, but he was the kind of kid who, if you wanted to have a card game, wouldn't join in" (*Time* 11). In addition to being a loner among his peers, Salinger was a loner in his family. There was a strained relationship between Salinger and his father, and the two often argued, especially about school.

Salinger's educational experiences laid the foundation for his rejection of traditional intellectual definitions. His lack of success in school led to hostility toward the academy that only grew stronger later in life. The hallmarks of the progressive education found in public schools were egalitarianism and conformity, and that meant teachers paid little attention to any student who was creative or strong-willed. Salinger's individuality and need for recognition put him outside the norm advocated by the school, and rather than nurture his gift for writing, the schools labeled him "solemn" and often

gave him bad grades in deportment (Alexander 33). He was already an outsider by nature, and rather than embrace the curricula of conformity, he distanced himself further from others and nursed his loner mentality. Failing to find any stimulation in school, he never bothered to distinguish himself as possessing an outstanding mind or strong work ethic. His grades were average, and his IQ, which was measured first at 104 and later at 115, was only slightly above average (Alexander 42). His lack of success in school disappointed his father, and, consequently, Salinger's father constantly tried to find a place where his son could succeed by enrolling Salinger in a number of schools, both public and private, as he matured.

While Salinger never found recognition as a student academically, he did attract attention for his artistic talent. While his grades in most subjects were average at best, he did show a greater level of achievement in English. During his teenage years, Salinger began experimenting with writing, and his teachers and fellow students quickly recognized his ability. He worked on school publications at both of the schools he attended during his teenage years and wrote stories with the aid of a flashlight during the nights (Hamilton 30). Writing became the way Salinger, the outsider and loner, got attention and distinguished himself as separate from and superior to his peers. These early successes fueled his desire to become a professional writer, and he enrolled in college with that intention.

While he did develop an interest in writing, it never led to any increased interest in his general education or any greater attraction to people. After graduating from military school, he enrolled in New York University but withdrew within a year due to poor grades. After a brief attempt at being an apprentice in Europe in his father's import

business, Salinger returned to the U. S. to give college one more try. He enrolled at Ursinus College, but never really connected with anyone at the school. He had few friends, and those who did know him claimed he "didn't really fit in," that he was "standoffish" and "almost a recluse" (Alexander 50). While he was in school, Salinger's anti-social behavior only broadened the gap between him and his fellow co-eds. As one former acquaintance at Ursinus said, "He was very much a loner. I don't think he gave himself to others, nor did he consider that others had much of value to offer him....He seemed so dissatisfied.... His manner was nasty. His remarks, if any, were caustic" (Hamilton 44). As his fellow student observes, Salinger's distance from people indicates a sense of superiority that was building in Salinger during his early twenties. Salinger based these feelings of superiority on his confidence as a writer, and his desire to improve as a writer led him to leave Ursinus after nine weeks after telling a friend, "I have to be a writer. I have to. Going here is not going to help me" (Alexander 52). College proved to be as unfortunate an intellectual experience for Salinger as high school had been, and these experiences left him with the belief that most of the academy had very little to offer him.

Because writing was integral to his intellectual identity, Salinger felt the need to learn as much about it as he could; this was the only reason he attempted college for a third time, but now he had very specific aims in mind. Responding to Whit Burnett's reputation as an outstanding teacher, Salinger thought he could get some help from his creative writing class at Columbia University. Salinger took the class twice for no credit and eventually attracted the attention of Burnett who, in 1940, offered Salinger his first chance at publication in the magazine he edited, *Story*.

This event marked the first major achievement in his life, and it codified a number of Salinger's beliefs about intelligence. Like many intellectuals, Salinger's suffered from a paradoxical view of the world due to a battle between his need to be accepted by society and his need to be superior to it. Ian Hamilton describes this characteristic when he says that there was a "near-intolerable strain between the 'anxious to be loved' side of Salinger and the other, darker side, the need to be untouchably superior" (33). Having failed in traditional intellectual endeavors, Salinger sought recognition in other areas in which he could feel superior and redefine what it meant to be smart. Writing became a way for him to fulfill both desires simultaneously. That is, writing was the way the loner and outsider got attention, and it also allowed him to feel smart. His talent for writing thus became the integral component of his intellectual identity, but by associating intelligence with artistic talent rather than knowledge, Salinger created a problem for himself. Praise from the world in the form of publication and critical attention meant he was both accepted by society and judged better than those members of society who were not matching his accomplishments, but the possibility of rejected publications and critical dismissal had to be avoided if he was to maintain his sense of superiority and level of acceptance.

In the beginning, associating success in writing with intellectual recognition worked well for Salinger. The publishing world's reception of Salinger in the early part of his career was quite positive. Critics saw him as an up-and-coming talent, and during the 1940s, he was able to publish successfully in magazines like *Harper's*, *Collier's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post.* Publications in these magazines showed Salinger's interest in achieving recognition from the greatest number of people. Having rejected the

usefulness of the university and desiring to separate himself from it, Salinger was initially more interested in "the world of mass entertainment (movies, plays, big-circulation weeklies, even radio) than with the world of Letters" (Hamilton 37). During the early 1940s, Salinger was quite happy writing for Hollywood and New York and not the academy, and he would often tailor his stories to pander to popular tastes (Alexander 68).

While Salinger was working on his career as a professional writer, he was also gaining experience in a second job as soldier. Not surprisingly, this job did not give him the same feelings of happiness that he found working as a writer. Salinger's experiences in World War II showed him the ugliness and corruption of the modern world, and the war became the most important event in developing his future writing. While he had enlisted much earlier, Salinger was a combat soldier from the war's American beginnings on D-Day through its end. He acted as a member of the Counter Intelligence Corps, and it was his duty to disrupt lines of communication and to uncover and interrogate Gestapo agents in cities and towns through which the Allied Armies moved. Salinger's skepticism about the world benefited him as he performed his duties as a soldier, but the task also made his skepticism grow. Salinger saw action in the battle for Hurtgen Forest, which "all the histories agree ... was one of the toughest and bloodiest episodes of America's European war" (Hamilton 87). Largely due to battles like the one for Hurtgen Forest, Salinger's Fourth Division of the 12th Infantry saw "at least fifty to sixty casualties a day (with ten or more dead); some days the casualties reached two hundred" (Alexander 102). Visions of the war's victims would have shocked and horrified the young Salinger, and these personal experiences must have been coupled with the larger event of the European war: the Holocaust. Salinger's father was Jewish, and his

grandfather was a rabbi, and while he did not talk about it, the horrors of genocide would have certainly shattered Salinger, who was already on the brink of an mental breakdown. Immediately after the war, Salinger suffered a pretty severe mental breakdown; the Salinger who emerged after the war was not the same man he was when he enlisted.

As his biographers note, the war made him "depressed, angry, and unable to cope with the routine nature of ordinary life" (Alexander 108). The realities of World War II conflicted greatly with Salinger's need to belong but contributed in important ways to his superiority complex. Acceptance by what was essentially an ugly world became meaningless and showed corruption in an individual. For acceptance to mean anything, it must come from a world of beauty, and Salinger believed such a world remained even though it was constantly under attack by the corrupt world. After his nervous breakdown, Salinger divided the world in two both personally and in his writing. This divided world has been noted by all of the major scholars of Salinger's work, including critics like Warren French, James Lundquist, and Ihab Hassan, but it has also been noted by those who knew him personally, namely Joyce Maynard and Margaret Salinger. On one side is the favored, "nice" world of sentimental misfits with whom Salinger classified himself. Whether they are characters or real people, Salinger wants them to resemble him as he likes to imagine himself: intelligent, misunderstood non-conformists who are trapped and suffer in a spiritually unsympathetic world. This "nice" world is an idealized one of innocence, perfection, and imagination, and is often represented in his writing as the world of children. In contrast and opposition, the other side is the "phony," vulgar world of reality, which has parallels in Eliot's "Wasteland" or Fitzgerald's "valley of ashes" (French 39). The people in this world are corrupted by their own insensitivity, egos,

greed, pretension, shallowness, ignorance, inferior intelligence, or spiritual apathy. It is the imperfect adult world of humanity and contains all those whom Salinger distrusts or dislikes. As French points out, the two worlds are mutually exclusive, and no compromise can exist because accepting the vulgar world means one must compromise one's integrity and accept conformity; there is no middle ground possible (44). If one does accept the real, imperfect, hypocritical world, one willingly accepts the stigma that comes along with it, and that leads to exclusion from the "nice" world, a situation experienced by many of Salinger's personal associates.

Dividing the world so neatly into two opposing camps makes connecting with those who inhabit the disfavored world almost impossible. While he was distant and aloof as a young man, after the war, his anti-social tendencies strengthened and turned into hatred, and since he saw most of the world as corrupt, there were plenty of things to hate. Both Joyce Maynard (Salinger's former lover) and Margaret Salinger (Salinger's daughter) outline lists of items that Salinger hated or distrusted. In his letters to Maynard, he listed literary prizes, reviews, New York intellectuals, artiness in writing, writerliness, and writers who court image (Maynard 97). Along with those he hated came those who should not be trusted: readers, physicians, agents, editors, the people at *The New York Times*, political leaders, therapists, feminists, gurus, jazz musicians, people posing as artists, and people posing as friends (Maynard 129). To this laundry list of antagonists, untrustworthies, and irritants, Margaret Salinger adds at different points in her memoir communists, invalids, charities, imperfection, and occasionally ethnic minorities (Margaret Salinger 179). Listing all of the things he hated provided him with a way to showcase his own superiority, but with so many people and things to hate,

suspect, and avoid, the world becomes pretty vacant. Salinger contemplated leaving it to become a monk, but he could not shake his desire to find acceptance (Margaret Salinger 11).

Salinger's division of the world created a man who saw the world as ugly because he wanted to see it as innocent. Having turned his back on almost everyone, Salinger had to create characters that would fill the vacuum created by his rejection of society. These characters live in the "nice" world with Salinger as they combat the "phony" world. These characters are almost identical to one another, and they share a disease William Wiegand calls "banana fever." According to Wiegand, the typical Salinger hero is a non-conformist who suffers a spiritual illness due to a "surfeit of sensation" that overwhelms him because he fails "to discriminate between 'important' and 'unimportant' experiences to determine which to retain and which to reject" (Wiegand 126). These characters are aware of a world that could be, and living in a world with this awareness but without its realization makes their lives misery (Wiegand 128). This condition attracted young intellectuals of the 1950s to Salinger because they saw themselves put into print. Like Salinger and his characters, the young intellectuals saw flaws in society that did not need to be there, and therefore they criticized society. They felt drawn toward egalitarianism, yet knew it was not true; they felt alienated, resisted conformity, and sought to establish identities of their own.

As his pendulum swung toward an intensified attitude of superiority after the war, Salinger's publications in popular magazines before the war became a sore spot for him. The war had led him to view the world as a corrupt place, and acceptance by the corrupt readers of popular magazines was no longer able to satisfy his desire to be regarded as a

good writer. In order to avoid corruption and showcase one's superiority over the common ilk, one had to publish in reputable magazines. In 1948, after publishing a few of his works, *The New Yorker* offered him a contract, and Salinger thought he had arrived as a writer for intellectuals. In 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* was published and immediately became a topic of discussion among young intellectuals. These two achievements satisfied Salinger's intellectual ego, but they also opened him up to attacks from critics and intellectuals who now paid particular attention to his writing. Some American writing between the wars was heavily influenced by the Modernist writers, who had already given birth to the "literary intellectual," writers whose work was separated from the commercial public and demanded the heightened study found only on university campuses (Hamilton 37). By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the academy expected writers to follow the example set by T. S. Eliot, the model that guided many professors' and poets' work. Unfortunately for Salinger, writers who failed to live up to the standards established by the university suffered the intense scrutiny of university scholars, especially after the introduction of New Criticism. Salinger was subjected to much stricter criteria than he had been when he was simply a popular writer. Further, his popularity as a writer and his personal distance from the intellectual community created a tension between him and the critics. Salinger's intellectual sense of himself depended on his ability to write and to be applauded by his readers, and negative criticism from a scholarly audience would be devastating to his psyche. Writing became both Salinger's salvation and his curse, and simple, long-term answers to his problem were hard to find. In order to remove the sting of criticism, he would have to develop a way to feel superior even to university intellectuals.

As one sees from the above discussion, the conflict between Salinger and the intellectual community had been building for some time, and the war only intensified Salinger's criticism of intellectuals. World War II showed Salinger the limitation of intellectual understanding and deepened anti-intellectual sentiments that had been building in his earlier life. Like many of the other systems that had provided order and stability in the early twentieth century, the academy had shown itself incapable of providing a solution to the problems of modern life. Many writers after World War II had a very different experience than those writers who experienced the First World War. Whereas the lost generation was disenchanted with the world after World War I, the survivors of World War II "had to be something else because they were never *enchanted* in the first place" (Lundquist 4). For Salinger, the Modernist intellectual movement had failed in its hope of finding a meaning for humanity in a fractured world, and rather than discovering workable solutions, intellectuals had contributed to the absurdity of the world by aiding military advancements. During the war, intellectuals and government had colluded when it came to science, but neither politicians nor scientists addressed the ethical and moral dilemmas of post-war life. Post-World War II alienation gave rise to the existential movement among the French intellectuals, but theirs was not the philosophy Salinger chose to embrace. Even so, his dilemma was the same as that of the existentialists, exemplified by the following question: "what replaces the idol which once provided a set of answers for human conduct, the question of how men act with morality and love if there is no idol to prescribe the rules" (Wakefield 187). Intelligence did not allow an individual any greater relief from the corruption of the world; in fact, it made its reality all the more obvious. For Salinger, thinking about the world forced him to admit

to its ugliness and corruption and to recognize his impotence when confronted with its absurdity. However, Salinger's superiority complex prevented him from acknowledging his lack of control, so a solution had to exist separate from the world of thought. Since traditional intellectuals were incapable of providing workable solutions to his existential crisis, Salinger embraced some of the ideas found in the rising tide of post-war anti-intellectualism and turned away from the failed and decadent Western intellectual tradition and its belief in rational solutions to the problems of the world.

If thought was not the answer to the problems of modernity, Salinger had to consider the ways that he differentiated himself from the rational world. As he had as a young boy, when he could not succeed in the intellectual arena, he turned again to his talent as a writer to provide him with a way to find truth and beauty in the world. By the late 1940s, Salinger had developed an aesthetic theory that opposed the Modernists' balance between sensibility and rationality and returned to the Romantics' belief in intuition and imagination. According to Salinger, insight does not come with rationality or knowledge but is a special blessing that comes only when one clears away the logical explanations of the corrupt world. True understanding is not made by man but "comes directly from God: The artist merely serves as an instrument" (Alsen 99). Genius artists are born, then, not made, because they are endowed with the ability to tap into a special world beyond consciousness wherein inspiration and understanding originate without the need for logical conclusions. They are able to see more than others and can uncover the world's beauty behind the corruption (Alsen 103). For Salinger, there was a tremendous difference between artistic intellectuals and academic intellectuals. By relying on intuition and unconscious realization, Salinger's view of art emphasizes the discovery of

truth through revelation over the formulation of truth through rational deduction. While an artistic theory of this kind has similarities to theories of Plato, the Romantics, and the American Transcendentalists, by emphasizing intuition over knowledge, Salinger retreated from what he saw as a corrupt intellectual tradition that had been in place since the Renaissance. For Salinger, the true intellectual is the spiritually gifted intellectual and not one who reaches understanding through reason. Salinger could feel himself superior to intellectuals by showing that clear thought is not the ideal but that intuitive talent is; he thus plays to his own abilities and alters what it means to be intelligent. Critics like Warren French, Eberhard Alsen, and Ian Hamilton see this artistic theory originating in Salinger's story "The Inverted Forest," which appeared in *Cosmopolitan* in 1947; it becomes the foundation for almost all of his later works, including the Glass stories, and also explains in part his turn toward Eastern religions.

There seems to be a direct connection between Salinger's turn toward the East and his existential crisis after his experience during World War II. In his writing before the war, there is almost no mention of Eastern religious texts, and, then, in the late forties, Salinger began giving friends reading lists on Buddhism (Lundquist 26). In the very early 1950s, he began his affiliation with the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center in New York. Salinger was not the only intellectual who found guidance in Eastern philosophy. In 1949, D. T. Suzuki began offering the English-speaking world translations of Buddhist texts, and within a decade, it was not uncommon for many educated people to have an interest in Eastern philosophy. This movement toward Zen among intellectuals was so prevalent that it led one writer to say that Zen was the "religion as the opiate of the intelligentsia" (Robert Elliot Fitch, qtd. in Davis 41). Salinger began to study the Eastern

religions before the Beat Generation writers, a group he found pedantic and untalented, had popularized them. His early association with and advocacy of Eastern thought thus allowed him to give himself credit for, in his words, "getting the whole rotten faddish thing going" (Maynard 149). Salinger studied Eastern thought quite rigorously, and he assembled his understanding of Eastern thought by uniting commonalties from a number of different faiths.

The three Eastern religions that take primary importance in Salinger's later work are Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and Advaita Vedanta Hinduism, but he also frequently makes references to the Christian mystics like Meister Eckart, who shared many of the Eastern religious views of the world. While the faiths Salinger draws from are all distinct, many of the ideas they express overlap. Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and some of the Christian mystics all advocate the oneness of God, which composes all things and prohibits any explanation because it is beyond language. God can only be felt rather than known. God's universal presence also implies an interconnectedness of everything. Since God is present in all things, everything (and everybody) is equal and beyond moral condemnation. Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, teaches this principle by showing how the two sides of any duality are mutually dependent, or, as he puts it, "Something and Nothing produce each other" (58). To make distinctions or see the world dualistically is to see only part of the whole, and it is therefore not the true path because it is only part of the greater whole. Because they rely on making distinctions, action and traditional knowledge actually hinder true understanding. The more one knows, the more distinctions he makes, and the farther he glides from the path of true understanding. With this principle in mind, many of the Eastern religions figure children as wiser than adults

because they know less, make fewer distinctions, and therefore see a more complete picture of the whole.

Since intuitive understanding takes precedence over knowledge, these religions attempt to find ways of escaping the rational world and advocate adults becoming like children. Zen also encourages meditation, which releases an individual from his conscious mind in an attempt to perceive the world unconsciously or intuitively. Through unconscious meditation, the Zen practitioner attempts to reach a greater level of insight into the world that James Joyce called epiphany but the Zen Buddhists call "satori." By achieving satori, one touches his Godly essence.

In Hinduism, meditation is only one of four paths or "yogas" an individual may take to achieve spiritual advancement. Bhakti yoga emphasizes a path of love and devotion; karma yoga is a path based on work and service; jnana yoga is the traditional path of the student and monk since it is the path of study and knowledge; raja yoga is Salinger's Advaita Vedanta branch's own addition, and it is a path of concentration, meditation, and self-control (Alsen 150-157). The yogas are intended to coincide with the different stages in life one progresses through as one grows older. According to Hindu belief, there are four stages, "asramas," in life, and they come with different responsibilities. A Hindu should start as a student studying texts and gaining knowledge, become a householder and devote himself to his family and community until he retires to study again, before becoming a monk and teaching others. While the asramas and yogas work in co-ordination, individuals may choose any path to follow because they all achieve the same end, awareness of the true state of the world that is hidden behind the illusory world, "maya," one perceives on a daily basis (Alsen 144).

Another concept found in Eastern religions significant to Salinger's work and thought is detachment. Since the world is illusory and interconnected, one should not strive after specific goals. One should not act with conscious striving but should act through inaction by aligning oneself to the natural order of things. One should limit connection to the world and rely on intuition rather than ego in making decisions about the world. One should work without regard for praise or congratulations but because one cannot help but work.

By embracing the philosophy prescribed by these various Eastern religions, Salinger fortified his unusual ideas about intelligence. These religions offer a very different definition of what it means to be intelligent and thus what it means to be an intellectual. They show a marked difference between the way Salinger viewed the world when compared to the Western intellectual tradition. Salinger chose to follow these faiths, and in doing so, he went beyond simply opposing intelligence and began to ridicule it. The intellectuals' virtue of logical thinking and rationality turns into a vice that prevents true understanding. Since rationality and logic obscure God's unifying presence, rational truth becomes the enemy of spiritual truth, and the two cannot reach the same ends. Salinger's own artistic ability to "feel" and "intuit" is more valuable than the intellectual's ability to "think" and "know." Revelation becomes the path to learning rather than thought, and the heart replaces the mind as the central organ (French 74).

By the middle of the 1950s, Salinger sorely needed a way to feel superior to the intellectual community. *Catcher in the Rye* had opened Salinger to critical attack from the academic world, and as Salinger's aesthetic theory and religious study began to infuse his work after the novel, the critical community began to praise Salinger less. Salinger's

Romantic sensibilities, which relied on a close connection between the author and his work, conflicted with the academy's move toward the New Criticism, which attempted to divorce the author from the work. Nevertheless, his belief in Eastern philosophy allowed him to endure criticism and rejection by the academic world and remain superior to his intellectual critics. As Ian Hamilton puts it, "When critics fail to grasp what he is up to, or when Ivy League intellectuals wax superior about his low-grade education, he can now answer them with the scornful radiance of the otherwise-impelled" (Hamilton 134). The Eastern religions allowed Salinger to battle intellectuals on his own terms; he changed the rules of engagement and made the contest a spiritual rather than a mental battle. By stepping outside intellectuals' comfort zone and natural ground, Salinger both irritated and intimidated his critics (Hamilton 134).

Rejecting a society that he saw as corrupt and antagonistic and growing increasingly separate from conventional society due to his religious study, Salinger began to isolate himself. His need for superiority overtook his need for social acceptance, and, starting in 1947, Salinger made a series of moves that took him farther and farther away from the intellectual hub of New York City. First, he moved from his parents' home in Manhattan to Tarrytown, and afterwards he made another move to Westport, Connecticut. His final move took place in 1953 when he became a citizen of the now famous small town of Cornish, New Hampshire. In Cornish, he bought a farm and an unwinterized house that initially had no plumbing; as his biographer writes, "it was far enough away from normal civilization that he could live his life in seclusion" (Alexander 168).

Along with his physical separation from the world, Salinger tried to remove himself topically as well. He refused to allow any biographical information about him to be published with his works, refused to grant interviews, and refused to allow himself to be photographed. These demands remained in effect for the rest of his publishing career with very few exceptions. While Warren French suggests that Salinger's chosen seclusion indicates his "inability to make social adjustments expected for mature members of society," other critics have called it an affectation and suggest that Salinger kept himself in the public eye by emerging often enough to remind everyone that he wanted to be left alone (French 32, Alexander 302). Whatever his motivation was for becoming a recluse, Salinger shut himself away from a world he had come to hate and deride.

From his isolated farm in New Hampshire, Salinger answered his academic and intellectual critics by publishing "Franny" in 1955. If the intellectual community was divided about how it viewed Salinger, he did not reciprocate its confusion in how he regarded the academy and the type of intellectual it sponsored. Salinger's short story "Franny" was an indictment of the Western intellectual tradition. "Franny" accomplishes this overarching goal in three separate ways. First, the story redefines what it means to be an intellectual by creating another representation of the typical Salinger hero who must fight the world of intellectual corruption. Second, "Franny" mocks and satirizes the traditional intellectual, and, finally, the story provides a spiritual solution to the problem of living in a corrupt world.

Franny is another example of the typical Salinger hero as defined by Wiegand, and as such she has a number of the characteristics Salinger liked to see in himself. She

is frustrated with the world she lives in, and this frustration has made her bitter and put her at odds with everything: her school, her friends, her boyfriend, her work as an actor, and herself. She is "so sick of pedants and conceited little tearer-downers [she] could scream" and wants very much to meet someone she can respect more than she likes ("Franny" 17). She hates the uniformity and hypocrisy of standard society in which people "look like everybody else, and talk, and dress and act like everybody else" ("Franny" 25). Franny sums up her assessment of the world when she says it is a place that is "just so tiny and meaningless and – sad-making" because it is full of egotistical people who want "to get somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be something interesting" ("Franny" 26, 29-30). This world has become disgusting to her, and she wants to become a nobody to escape her own desire for praise and recognition. As her repeated apologies and self–critical remarks show, she recognizes that what she is saying is not the right way to think, but she cannot help feeling the way she feels. Her anger at herself and with other people has forced her to make a decision about what to do about it.

Franny's reaction to the world is the one shared by Salinger's entire band of misfit intellectuals, and it is one that struck a chord with a number of younger intellectuals. Franny's boyfriend Lane "epitomizes the self-centered, pseudo-intellectual qualities" that people like Franny and Salinger struggle against (Lundquist 122). Lane serves as Franny's foil, and he is her opposite in every way imaginable. He is conceited, logical, snotty, self-absorbed, selfish, cold, emotionless, and in love with his own intellect. His ego is fueled by Franny's presence because he has found himself "in the right place with an impeachably right-looking girl" (Franny 11). He is not interested in his date but in what his date brings to him. Throughout their time together, he never listens to her, and

rather than being sympathetic, he tries to argue with her about her own feelings. Like Franny, Lane is a college student, but unlike Franny he has swallowed the attitude and regimen whole. Franny calls him a "section man," an apprentice aspiring to the title of professor, and his love for the university lifestyle makes everything he says stink of pedantry. For example, when talking about a paper he has recently written, he says, "I honestly thought it was going to go over like a goddam lead balloon, and when I got it back with this goddam '*A*' on it in letters about six feet high, I swear I nearly keeled over" (Franny 12). He peppers his speech with references to famous writers and foreign words and wants very much to be looked up to for his sophistication. The general impression one has of Lane is that he is image without substance. Lane is a parody of the academy, and in his exaggerated form, he becomes a straw man that leaves the reader with an obvious choice when making a decision between Lane and Franny.

The differences between Salinger's brand of intellectual and the traditional intellectual emerge during a pair of conversations about art and religion. Salinger emphasizes the importance of these two conversations by having Franny break down after each; these become the conversations that lead Franny to decide to leave society. It is Lane's position on the issue of art that starts Franny's physical breakdown. When Lane attempts to praise two "poets" in Franny's school's English Department, Franny objects and offers Lane a very different view of art. According to Franny, the men Lane respects are not "*real* poets" but "people who write poems that get published and anthologized all over the place" ("Franny" 18). When pressed by Lane, Franny says that to be a real poet one must "*leave* something beautiful after you get off the page" and the ones Lane likes "don't leave a single, solitary thing beautiful" ("Franny" 19). Instead of

beauty, Lane's writers get inside a person's head and leave "*some*thing there" equivalent to "terribly fascinating, syntaxy *droppings*," and an achievement of this kind is not worthy of respect ("Franny" 19-20).

Franny's arguments about poetry are an articulation of Salinger's aesthetic theory and describe the conflict between the artistic intellectual and the academic intellectual (Hamilton 142). Poets should not "invent" their art, but they should "discover" it. According to Salinger and Franny, real poets activate a reader's emotions and his sense of awe and wonder; they appeal to the heart of the reader and not his mind. Content takes precedence over form, and feeling and intuition rather than intellectual ability are the important qualities of a good reader and good writer. Lane's ability to criticize a work and break it down intellectually, as he does in his paper on Flaubert or his discussion of Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare, interferes with his appreciation of the work. Salinger is not so subtly attacking the New Criticism, "syntaxy droppings," becoming common practice on college campuses in the 1950s.

Franny's reaction to Lane's contrasting opinion about poetry sends her to the ladies' room where she cries and recovers her composure after pulling out her copy of *The Way of the Pilgrim*, the book that becomes the topic of the couple's next major dispute. Reflecting the way Salinger felt about Eastern religions, Franny loves this book and sees it as offering her a way to escape the egotism, hypocrisy, and hostility of the world. The book outlines a path toward a mysticism by which one can become attuned with God by "praying without ceasing." According to the book, if one continually repeats the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me"), the physical repetition eventually moves sentiment inward and grants a person God consciousness.

The whole time Franny is explaining the content of the book, Lane acts absolutely uninterested; instead, he attacks his frog legs and comments about their effect on his breath. Eventually, Lane does offer commentary, and, naturally, it is disfavorable. He thinks only a fool would believe such rubbish, and that the prayer is possibly dangerous and easily explained through the science of psychology. Lane's dismissal of mysticism leads Fanny to pass out, and when she wakes and escapes Lane's presence, she begins to recite the Jesus Prayer.

This second discussion is a reader's introduction to Salinger's brand of mysticism, and it also shows the difference between the rational intellectual and the spiritually gifted intellectual Salinger admires. In line with her belief in intuitive art, Franny wants to have an intuitive spiritual awakening. She feels this is a way to escape her frustrations with herself and others. She sees the prayer as a way "to purify your whole outlook and get an absolutely new conception of what everything is about" ("Franny" 37). The bonus is that she gets to "see God," someone she could respect. The Jesus Prayer thus offers her a way to escape the troubling aspects of life, and it becomes a weapon to fight the analytical world of New Criticism (Fielder 59).

Even though one is able to escape the confines of intelligence, she must still live in a corrupt and hostile world, and all spiritually gifted intellectuals must find a way to survive. The solution Franny reaches at the end of the story is condemnation and escape. Lane's criticism of Franny's aesthetic and his rejection of her belief in a spiritual solution to her problems become the impetus for her removal from intellectual society. Confronted with the horror of people like Lane, Franny removes herself from their company. Since she has not chosen to think like Lane, the reader can be proud of Franny,

but she has also chosen a solution very few people could follow or would want. She has found a way to fight corruption in the intellectual world, but it demands becoming a recluse and forsaking the world and residing on another sphere of existence. She has let her superiority get the better of her. Essentially, she never confronts her problems head-on because she can overcome them through a religion without faith. Franny's solution works, but it is not practical for anyone but a special few.

As was its intention, "Franny" created even more tension between Salinger and the intellectual community, and as the number of Salinger's critics grew, he turned deeper into religious study and a life of isolation. "Franny" became a much discussed book in the quarterlies, and the story added to the growing commentary on *The Catcher in the Rye*; as Ian Hamilton has pointed out, "between 1956 and 1960, no fewer than seventy pieces... appeared in American and British magazines" about Salinger and his work, and some of these articles were not laudatory (Hamilton 166,155-56). Salinger spent more time finding new, obscure religions that could provide him with a measure of peace and a sense of superiority in the face of the intellectual community's rejection of him. In addition to the Eastern religions that remained a staple of his reading, Salinger studied Kriya yoga, Christian Science, Dianetics, and "something having to do with the work of Edgar Cayce" at different points during the 1950s (Margaret Salinger 95). Salinger thought studying these religions or faith systems would improve his writing, which was something he spent more and more time doing in a quest for perfection. To facilitate his concentration, Salinger began isolating himself from his new family by retiring to a concrete bunker behind his house where he would write all day and was to be disturbed only in an absolute emergency (Alexander 188). Writing talent and intuitive

understanding were how he defined intelligence, and he had to practice them regularly if he was to remain smart.

Having rejected the outside world because of his need to feel superior and separate from its corruption and criticism, Salinger needed to find praise and acceptance somewhere else. Since the outside world was unable to provide him with people he could like and respect, he created imaginary friends to achieve this end. As Salinger progressed as a writer, the number of people who qualified for inclusion in the "nice" world grew extremely small. Because Salinger's standards for inclusion were designed to keep others out, almost no one qualified except himself, his characters, dead artists, and saints. It was a world of ghosts, or, as his daughter calls it, "a club of unbeing," wherein if one cannot stand the living, one attempts to merge with the dead or imagined (Margaret Salinger 425). Rather than abandoning his own idea because it failed to allow for a workable reality, Salinger entered the world of his imagination, and he began to write his own reality. The most important citizens in this imaginary world are the members of the Glass family, a group Salinger created in 1955 by tying a number of his favorite fictional characters together.

Because they fulfill all of the requirements Salinger has for inclusion in the "nice" world, the Glasses are a family with whom he can identify; indeed, he idolizes them. As a number of critics have pointed out, the Glass stories did not become unified in Salinger's mind until after he had written two of its major tales. Neither "Franny" nor "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" makes reference to other members of the family, and they can each stand as stories in their own right without the rest of the Glass stories. When Salinger published "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" in 1955, he began to assemble the

separate world in which the Glasses live. He develops family histories and complex chronologies to tie the originally unconnected stories together. He becomes so connected with his imaginary world that he begins to write himself into it. One of the characters he creates, Buddy, functions as his own alter ego, and the two share a number of similarities including being the reclusive author of Salinger's work. While each member of the Glass family has his own individual identity, they are all examples of Salinger's typical hero. The Glasses thus become Salinger's "landsmen" in a world that does not understand or appreciate him. As Joyce Maynard defines it, a "landsman" in Yiddish literally means "a person who comes from the same place, back in the old country," but it also has the connotation of being "someone with whom you find a connection of the heart and soul," someone who "understands" and "register[s] what happens in similar ways" (Maynard 80). It is Salinger's term for those who provide him with social acceptance. Salinger's fictional landsmen became more valuable to him than real people were because they accepted and understood him, and the value he placed on them justified his escape into his imagination.

"Zooey" became the next step in his anti-intellectual journey by moving away from his obligation to remain faithful to the objective world. As John Updike has pointed out, "Franny" is the last time that Salinger attempted to connect his writing to the outside world of reality. By the time he wrote "Zooey" in 1957, he had moved totally into the world of his own imagination (Updike 55). While Updike supports his observation by referring to the enormous detail Salinger uses to describe his world, a more obvious example of the constructed nature of this world is the characters themselves. Every member of the Glass family is a super-intellectual, and each possesses some quality that

makes him super-human. Zooey, for instance, has a photographic memory and "once got over an unhappy love affair by trying to translate the Mundaka Upanishad into classical Greek" ("Zooey" 60). Seymour is the world's greatest unpublished poet who graduated from Columbia with a Ph.D. before he was twenty. Franny has a temper tantrum at the age of ten because she sees Jesus as a mean person and rejects his teachings in favor of Buddhism ("Zooey" 165). All seven of the Glass children acted as panelists on the radio show *It's a Wise Child* and "had been fair game for the kind of child psychologist or professional educator who takes special interest in extra-precocious children" ("Zooey" 54). By giving his characters these remarkable attributes, Salinger is not creating smart people that can be found everywhere in the world; he is, instead, creating prodigies that appear once in a lifetime, even though they seem to make up an inordinately large percentage of the population of Salinger's imaginative world.

Salinger's characters are not the only way Salinger shows he has entered an imaginary world. Salinger suggests that readers not look at the work as a story but as an intimate look at the workings of the Glass family. "Zooey," he writes, "isn't really a story at all, but a sort of prose home movie," which suggests that the story should be taken as real when it is not ("Zooey" 47). Another way the story shows Salinger blurring the line between imagination and reality is the odd connection between the narrator and the author. Buddy acts as Salinger's mouthpiece directed at the outside world. For example, when Buddy acknowledges that a story about "religious mystification" can only "expedite, move up, the day and hour of [his] professional undoing," he seems to have an awareness of the critical reception Salinger was receiving at the time ("Zooey" 48). Salinger/Buddy goes on to say that "people are already shaking their heads over him" and

any further use of the word "God" would be "a sure sign that [he is] going to the dogs" (Zooey 48). The blurring of the line between the world of his fiction and the real world is most obvious when he has his narrator (who is himself) object to interpretation of the story (he has written) given by his character (he has created). According to Buddy, this is not a religious story, as Zooey has described it, but "a compound, or multiple, love story, pure and complicated" ("Zooey" 49). These characteristics suggest that Salinger had abandoned any connection to the objective world of reality and taken up residence in his own imagination.

One does not need to recognize that Salinger has entered into the imaginary world to understand how "Zooey" relates to Salinger's struggle with intellectual identity. "Zooey" is the sequel to "Franny," and it contains a reaffirmation of many of the ideas expressed in the earlier story. That is, "Zooey" picks up Salinger's assault on traditional scholars and thinkers where "Franny" left off. Rather than trying to explain her problems with the academy to Lane's unsympathetic ear, Franny rants to her brother. Franny's disregard for college continues to be attributed to the academy's problems with ego, and, according to her, "college [is] just one more *dopey, inane* place in the world dedicated to piling up treasure on earth" ("Zooey" 146). She adds to this complaint that going to college is no longer about acquiring wisdom but about acquiring knowledge. To Franny and her creator, knowledge and wisdom are two separate things, and it is disastrous that college de-emphasizes one and favors another. Because college focuses on knowledge over wisdom, she considers it "a disgusting waste of time" ("Zooey" 146).

Similar to the way he used Lane in "Franny," Salinger creates another intellectual straw man. This time it is the befuddled Professor Tupper, a visiting professor from

Oxford and a "terribly sad old self-satisfied phony" who purposely musses up his hair before class ("Zooey" 127-128). Franny quite literally hates him and makes faces at him in class because he is both egotistical and unenthusiastic. As was the case with Lane, no reader could like Professor Tupper, and he emerges as a caricature and parody of the intellectual who can be easily criticized.

Franny is not the only Glass child to have significant problems with the academy. In his letter to Zooey, Buddy outlines a number of grievances he has with the educational system. He has refused to get advanced degrees because "all the ill-read literates and pedagogical dummies [he] knew had them by the peck" ("Zooey" 58). In addition to his condescension toward those with higher education, Salinger establishes a fundamental difference between writers like himself and the professional intellectuals of the academy. As a writer, Buddy considers himself a "professional aesthete" who is forced to teach lower-level writing courses because "the cards are stacked against" him because he does not accept their logical view of the world ("Zooey" 59). The man responsible for Buddy's underwhelming duties is "Dean Sheeter," and his very name suggests Salinger's view of the academy itself.

Like his brother and sister, Zooey agrees that the academy is flawed. Referring to Lane, Zooey says he has no love for "white-shoe college boys who edit their campus literary magazines" or those who exhibit their "hot little Ivy League intellect" ("Zooey" 98). Zooey agrees with "ninety eight per cent" of his sister's disdain for higher education but also claims there are a few who are not "faculty charm boys" but are "great and modest scholars," thereby making an exception for teachers like his brothers Buddy and Seymour ("Zooey" 161). Despite Zooey's rescue of a few, the rest of the academy is

"lethal as hell," and "everything they touch turn[s] absolutely academic and useless" ("Zooey 162). Zooey ends his discussion of the educational system by agreeing that "the enemy's *there*" ("Zooey" 163).

Having recognized the educational system's problems earlier in life, Buddy and his older brother Seymour proposed an alternate form of education for their two youngest siblings. Having read exhaustively the writings of Eastern religious leaders, Buddy and Seymour took Franny and Zooey's education into their own hands, and rather than "begin with a quest for knowledge," they educate them by putting them on "a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge" ("Zooey" 65). Instead of giving them the classics of Western literature, science, and philosophy, they hold back the light of knowledge evident since Adam and Eve's fall until they were able "to conceive of a state of being where the mind knows the source of all light" ("Zooey" 65). Franny and Zooey got a steady diet of writings by saints and enlightened men of the East including Jesus, Gautama, Lao Tzu and Sri Ramakrishna. After teaching their brother and sister about these thinkers, the two younger siblings were left to find the classics on their own, and Seymour and Buddy rarely checked up on how Franny and Zooey were getting along.

Because of this upbringing, Zooey now considers himself a "freak" and holds his two brothers responsible ("Zooey" 103). Not only are they intellectuals, but their brand of education has made living in the world more difficult for both Franny and Zooey rather than easier. Both of them constantly battle against the imperfect world of reality having been trained to conceive of a world before the fall, an idealized world of happiness and beauty. By establishing this history, Salinger casts Franny's breakdown in

a whole new light. It was destined to happen not simply because she was smart but because she was brought up to honor entirely different values in the world.

Read together, "Franny" serves as the prologue to "Zooey." "Franny" becomes the explanation of a problem that is solved in "Zooey." By rejecting the world and receding into the spiritual realm, Franny has made a serious mistake because this escape does not address the issue of ridding the world of its ugliness. She succumbs to her superiority and does not address the root cause of her unhappiness. Her escape accepts defeat by denying the possibility of a beautiful world, and as Zooey's observation of the little girl and her dog proves, "there are still nice things in the world" ("Zooey" 152). Furthermore, removing oneself to a reclusive life places the responsibility on the victim and not the attacker. Consequently, "Franny" emerges as the story of an intellectual's fall, and "Zooey" is the story of her redemption. Because "Zooey" offers a solution to the problems faced by post-war intellectuals, numerous critics from Warren French to Joan Didion have complained that "Zooey" is not art but something closer to a self-help book for upper-middle-class intellectuals (French 148, Didion 79). French and Didion are right in their assessment of the book as a self-help work, but rather than being a flaw, this is the story's greatest value.

Zooey's solution unifies all of Salinger's opinions, obsessions, and personality traits and requires Salinger to establish a number of ideas before he delivers his solution. Salinger must first re-establish the problem of intellectual life. Zooey's problem with the world is almost identical to Franny's: Zooey finds himself at odds with the world. As his mother says, he does not "know how to talk to people [he doesn't] like" ("Zooey" 99). Zooey owns up to his mother's criticism and tells her that he "can't even sit down to

lunch with a man anymore and hold up his end of conversation" without getting "bored or so goddam preachy that if the son of a bitch had any sense, he'd break his chair over [Zooey's] head" ("Zooey" 104). Like his sister and Salinger, he must constantly battle his own narcissism. Franny also recognizes the similarities between her condition and her brother's. She says, "we're not bothered by exactly the same things, but by the same kind of things, I think, and for the same kind of reasons" ("Zooey" 144). Zooey's condition has created a number of issues for him. Buddy's letter, which Zooey is reading in the tub in an effort to find some advice to give his sister, shows how Buddy was concerned for Zooey much like Zooey is for Franny. Buddy has heard that Zooey meditated for hours while he was in college, and this causes Buddy some concern. Like Franny, Zooey seems to have dabbled in a spiritual escape to his problem with the world. Zooey's attempted solutions have not proven successful, and his emotional and mental struggles have manifested themselves physically in the form of an ulcer ("Zooey" 141). He hates the way he judges people because it makes him wake up furious in the morning and go to bed furious at night ("Zooey" 137). Zooey's intellect and lack of patience with insensitive, unthinking, and unspiritual people has led him to a spiritual crisis similar to his sister's, but Zooey's answer is not the Jesus Prayer.

The second idea Salinger must re-establish is his aesthetic theory of art. Like all of the Glass children, Zooey is an artist; he is an actor. Zooey's attitude and ability in his chosen profession conflict with the accepted conventions of his fellow artists. Like the academy, the entertainment world is full of hypocrisy, falsehood, simplicity, and triviality because it lacks the touch of true intellectuals. Zooey makes fun of almost every part he receives and criticizes the writing he performs as "down-to-earth," "simple,...untrue,

and... familiar enough and trivial enough to be understood and loved by [its] greedy, nervous, illiterate sponsors" ("Zooey 135). Because art done for entertainment must pander to the tastes of the masses, it becomes as trite and simplistic as the poetry Franny hates is uninspired and false. They are the opposite ends of the art spectrum but equally distasteful. Television, Broadway, and Hollywood fall short because they make the mistake of thinking "everything sentimental is *tender*, everything *brutal* is a slice of realism, and everything that runs into physical violence is a legitimate climax" ("Zooey" 140). This is a mark of that art form's stupidity, but it also lacks proper aesthetic criteria. Buddy laments that while he has seen "competent" and "inspired" productions of *The Cherry Orchard,* he has never seen a "really beautiful" production of the play, and Zooey shares this sentiment ("Zooey" 61). Acting, like poetry, requires an understanding of beauty and an imagination that almost no one has; therefore, it, like the other arts, suffers from being well-done or good but without ever achieving greatness. Zooey and his sister have the ability to make their art beautiful, but they are unhappy because no one else can. The difference between Franny and Zooey and other actors is their ability to tap into the world of imagination or consciousness beyond simple understanding. Their outstanding ability becomes, however, a curse.

Rather than hating and rejecting the world, Zooey realizes that for him and his sister to be happy, they need to create a world that they can live in, a world of beauty that would not frustrate and embitter them. Assuming an ascetic spiritual life devoted to prayer like Franny is attempting to do with the Jesus Prayer does not remove corruption and ugliness from the world. The only way to remove ugliness from the world is to teach

people about beauty. Since an understanding of beauty is a gift from God, and not everyone is granted this gift, the artist's job is to show beauty to him.

To reach a point where they can use their skills for the sake of the world, Franny and Zooey have to overcome their anger toward it. Therein lies the significance of the Fat Lady. When Zooey reveals his secret that the Fat Lady is "Christ Himself," he is expressing the oneness of God taught by the Eastern religions. If one believes that God is present in all things, then everyone is part of God; they are all equal and therefore worthy of love. It does not matter if she is the worst representative of the corrupt world, which is the impression both Franny and Zooey have of her; she, too, is part of God and worthy of redemption. This kind of thinking echoes Christian teachings found in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus instructed his followers that "as you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). "The least of these" is personified by Seymour's Fat Lady. The first step toward salvation is recognizing the meaning behind this lesson and loving all people despite their flaws. As Ihab Hassan points out, by accepting the Fat Lady as the embodiment of Jesus, "the vulgarian and outsider are reconciled...in the constancy of love," and the intellectual outsider can begin to live in the world (158).

The second step toward salvation is devotion to art that is as beautiful as it can be. To achieve this, one cannot rely on the reactions of the corrupt world because these are essentially meaningless. The Eastern religions' belief in detachment becomes the best policy to adopt. As Davis has pointed out, Western love avoids detachment and relies on involvement, and this puts Zooey in a bind because his personal relationships are not founded on love but judgment, and the criticism his judgment involves destroys the

image of the Fat Lady (Davis 46). The proper answer is to love with detachment. If one is an artist, working for work's sake without regard for praise or condemnation has the same benefit as the Jesus Prayer of allowing one to escape the ugly world, but it has as well the added benefit of bringing beauty into the world. Instead of devoting oneself to thought, one should devote oneself to artistic expression, which is the only way to transcend the world's corruption. Zooey's argument is an expression of the Hindu belief in karma yoga. Work is the path to salvation.

Zooey's solution allows Salinger to satisfy his joint need for superiority and acceptance. Salinger and Zooey condemn the world as inferior but choose to save it through their superiority. This is something that traditional intellectuals who do not understand beauty cannot do; only Salinger's brand of artistic intellectuals can bring beauty into the world. It is possible for the intellectual artist to embrace the world, but it is meaningless to strive for acceptance by the world since it is corrupt. The detachment advocated by Zooey's solution allows Salinger to say he loves the world while he keeps it at arm's length. As Henry Anatole Grunwald explains, "To love everyone can mean loving no one" (xxii). Salinger can continue to judge the world and remove himself from it as long as he is producing works of true beauty for that world.

Conclusion

Salinger embodies the essential characteristic of all intellectuals: a struggle between the need for social acceptance and the need to feel superior. The conflict is so embedded in Salinger's psyche that his personal and professional life offer separate arguments about how the intellectual should reconcile the tension between these

opposing pulls. Personally, Salinger fell victim to his own need for superiority. He left the world and took up residence in his own imagination where he could escape the hostility and disappointment the world presented him. In his quest for superiority, Salinger defined himself and his heroes against intellectuals who retreated into the academy where they failed to provide any practical solutions to the intellectual's moral and spiritual dilemma, preferring to complain with impunity. In doing so, Salinger unfortunately embraced some of the anti-intellectualism of the 1950s in his own idiosyncratic way. For Salinger, intellect is not simply a societal matter; it is a personal matter and, more specifically, a spiritual matter, and therefore it carries all of the weight of life and death. Happiness can be found only in replacing rationality with intuition and feeling and loving people despite their flaws. This is the lesson Salinger taught in his Glass stories. For all of his personal faults, Salinger correctly saw the 1950s as a particularly antagonistic time for intellectuals who were being attacked on multiple fronts, and through his work, he tried to find a position for the intellectual amid the hostility. His work will serve as his legacy, and in his fiction, his characters avoid the trap he fell into personally. Zooey represents the intellectual who works toward integration within the world based on his acceptance of the democratic ideal of equality. While Zooey finds his belief in equality through religion and not political ideology, its significance is not therefore diminished.

IV. Ayn Rand: The Strike of the Superior

J. D. Salinger was not the only author interested in the problems of intellectual life who developed an enormous following in the late 1950s. Ayn Rand, the author of *Atlas Shrugged*, was equal in popularity, but her writing is in diametrical opposition to Salinger's work. The novel's tremendous and sustained popularity makes it hard to ignore as a cultural text, but *Atlas Shrugged* is hard to regard as a serious work demanding attention for its artistic value. Mimi Reisel Gladstein and Robert Webking suggest that the easiest way to regard the book is as "influential fiction" (73-74). Gladstein and Webking's assessment of the book is accurate. The success of her novels propelled Rand toward becoming "probably the most widely known woman intellectual in America with the exception of Margaret Mead" (Smith 23). Like many other intellectuals, including J. D. Salinger, Rand exhibited an internal struggle between seeking society's approval and a need to feel superior to it, the defining trait of intellectuals of the 1950s. Rand's writing demonstrated in particular how she was drawn toward her need for superiority, and she, too, attempted to provide intellectuals with a way to find a place in society by asking them to embrace their superiority and demanding that the public do likewise.

Like Salinger, Rand's life and work embody the competing draws of intellectual identity, and to understand her reaction to the position of intellectuals in the decade, one must approach her work with an understanding of her unique biography. The events in her life and her reaction to them led her to create *Atlas Shrugged.* The 1950s were a struggle between the competing ideologies of capitalism and communism, and no American writer in that period viewed the struggle with greater interest or importance

than Ayn Rand. Rand's definition of the intellectual closely connects intellectual life to business and economics. In doing so, she justifies the intellectual's right to selfishness and recasts his decision to become a private citizen as an act of patriotism. *Atlas Shrugged* articulates Rand's need for superiority by attacking the modern intellectual's reaction to world events and by attacking the public's reaction to intelligence.

Rand's intellectual struggles began in her childhood. Alissa Rosenbaum was born into a relatively wealthy family in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1905, and from the very beginning, she demonstrated the characteristics of an intelligent child. Rand had taught herself to read by the time she entered school and frequently asked questions of her parents in an effort to gain knowledge (B. Branden 7). When she entered school, she did quite well and got high marks in her subjects, especially math, but she never really got along with other children. The young Rand found it impossible to make connections with people due in large part to an arrogance founded on her belief in her own superior intelligence. Further, she had little tolerance for emotion and far too serious an attitude to connect with others, and rather than trying to overcome her issues with people, she dismissed them with an air of contempt (Branden 17). Her parents chided her for her anti-social behavior, but they also constantly praised her for her intellectual successes (B. Branden 5). Intelligence became her sole measure for evaluating others and herself, and her own intellect became something she rarely questioned and always staunchly defended. For her, intelligence was moral value, the difference between being good and being bad, and this attitude underwent very little alteration as she matured into adulthood (Branden 7).

Literature became the way Rand escaped from the disappointments of the world. Unable to find people who met her standards in the world, she read to find people who lived up to her standards. The young Rand read adventure stories, and in one of these stories, "The Mysterious Valley," she found a person who embodied all of the characteristics she felt were lacking in real people. Cyrus, the hero of the story, is the English equivalent of an adventure hero like Indiana Jones, and Rand's devotion to Cyrus was so strong that he became the measure by which she judged other people. In an interview with her biographer, she said, "What [others] were interested in didn't matter at all to me, because I knew something much higher. The story ["The Mysterious Valley"] made the reality around me more bearable, because it made concrete the reality of what I valued" (B. Branden 13-14).

Eventually, the young Rand realized that she did not have to live in a reality another created; she could create her own by telling stories. She decided at the age of nine that she was going to be a writer (B. Branden 14). The belief that another world separate from the real world held the key to her finding others like her whom she could respect and admire and who would accept her for who she was stayed with her for the rest of her life.

While Rand's childhood established many of the psychological characteristics she would exhibit later in life, her teen years provided her with the cause she was to champion until her death. Rand witnessed the Russian Revolution first hand. Her father, who was a chemist and a self-made man of some wealth, had his business seized by the Russian state shortly after the revolution. Rand and her family, thus, were victims of the revolution. Rand's reaction to these horrors of the Russian Revolution led to the

development of her major theme: the individual versus the collective. According to Rand, "It [Communism] meant living for the State. I realized they were saying that the illiterate and poor had to be the rulers of the earth, *because* they were illiterate and poor.... It was the demand for the sacrifice of the best among men, and for the enshrinement of the commonplace, that I saw as the unspeakable evil of communism" (quoted in B. Branden 22). Rand developed a "cold, unforgiving contempt" for anyone who could accept the idea of collectivism (Branden and Branden 157). This reaction is not surprising given Rand's need for superiority and inability to interact with others socially. As Jeff Walker points out, "For an unsociable personality, Communism constitutes the nightmare of compulsory sociality in its least attractive form" (243). Communism refused to recognize Rand as the architect of her own superiority, and it failed to give her the credit she felt she deserved. Communism's failure to see her as great made it not only wrong but evil.

High school provided her with another alternative besides literature, capitalism. Fearing the revolution, Rand's family fled to the Crimea, which was still largely under the control of the White Army and not the Communists. Because the Communists did not determine the curriculum in Crimean schools, Rand was able to learn about American government and history (Mayhew 72). In high school, Rand remained an outsider socially, largely due to her obsession with ideas (and herself) (Branden and Branden 160). High school saw her continuing a trend that she had developed earlier in life. The solution to being rejected by a society that failed to recognize her superiority was to reject the real world and turn to literature. In high school and college, she found solace in the writings of Victor Hugo. Much like her earlier hero Cyrus, Hugo's rebel, Enjolras, in

Les Miserables, became a person whom she could admire because he did not succumb to the depression surrounding him (Branden and Branden 158-159). However, no hero like Enjolras emerged to save Russia from the Red Army, and the Crimea eventually fell to the Communists in 1921. Rand and her family returned to St. Petersburg, which by that time had been renamed Petrograd.

Rand entered the university of Petrograd in 1921, and her vocal opposition to Communist ideology got her blacklisted during the student purges. She was eventually re-instated with the help of a group of foreign scholars, and she finished in 1924 with a major in history and a minor in philosophy (Mayhew 74). College was important to Rand because it introduced her to two thinkers who shared her views of the world: Aristotle and Nietzsche. As Ronald Merrill writes, "She was attracted by Nietzsche's view of the heroic in man and his denunciation of collectivism and altruism" (21). Nietzsche allowed for the presence of superiority and argued against religion because it favored the weak over the strong. Nietzsche thus held a number of views Rand found appealing, but he failed to embrace reason enough to suit her tastes, so she turned to Aristotle: "She was profoundly impressed by Aristotle's theory of knowledge and his definition of the laws of logic; she rejected completely the mysticism and collectivism of Plato" (Branden and Branden 165). Aristotle influenced her writing as well as her thinking: "She reads Aristotle as justifying the importance of literature by explaining that history represents things only as they are, whereas poetry (literature) represents them as they *might be* or *ought to* be" (Gladstein 82). Aristotle's advocacy of reason and artistic theory made him her favorite philosopher, but he was always to play second fiddle to her own belief in herself. Rand's final examination in philosophy foreshadowed how her need for

superiority would dictate her views of life. When her professor asked her why she disagreed with Plato, she arrogantly replied, "My philosophical views are not part of the history of philosophy yet. But they will be" (Branden and Branden 165). Evidently, Nietzsche had a greater influence on her life than she gave him credit for.

As the Russian populace began adjusting to life under Communism and accepting what was happening around them, Rand realized that Russia was no place for her (Branden and Branden 168). Motivated by what she had heard in college and high school and desiring an escape from the oppressions she felt in Russia, Rand moved to America in 1926. Her move to the United States gave her a new name, but she retained her old personality. Having arrived in the country during the Roaring Twenties, when American business was in full swing, Rand became heavily influenced by the predominant attitude exhibited during the decade, "the cult of the self" (Walker 233). In America, she had found a place that valued the individual, and she mimicked American behavior to show her loyalty to what would become her adopted homeland. American advertising had a tremendous influence on the way she presented herself. Since smoking, dieting, and a boyish appearance were fashionable for women in 1920s America, Rand copied what was en vogue, assimilating American cultural images (Walker 233).

While she adopted the look of the American woman, she embraced the thoughts of 1920s' business theory, which was "very much in fashion, and echoed in popular culture" (Walker 288). The business theory of the 1920s, advocated by writers like Charles Fay and Ben Hooper and later reassumed by business activists of the 1940s like John Gall, the president of the National Association of Manufacturers, was an "explicit defense of selfishness" and individual rights for businessmen who were regarded as the

true leaders of the nation (Walker 288-289). The 1920s' business theorists advanced beliefs in superiority similar to those Rand appreciated in the writings of Nietzsche whom she had discovered in her university days. Rand came to view America as an ideal because its economy allowed the superior to succeed, and its government insured the freedom necessary for advancement; her love for America had very little to do with a democratic belief in equality. Her belief in 1920s' business theory as a reaction to the horrors of collectivist thinking automatically made their way into her writing.

After a brief stay with relatives in Chicago, Rand moved to Hollywood, hoping to find work as a writer. She was able to find a job in the movies, but, for the next fifteen years, her success as a writer was limited at best. The writing she did both for the movies and for publication was not received well, especially during the 1930s when the philosophy she advocated was not appreciated. Her early writing for film were criticized as being "unrealistic, 'improbable,' not 'human' enough for popular audiences" (Baker 5). Her literary efforts shared a similar fate to her screenplays, but she did find some success in theatre during the 1930s. Her 1934 play, *Night of January 16th*, opened in Hollywood and eventually did a brief run on Broadway. While the play was praised for its unique twist of having members of the audience serve as the jury for the trial that is at the center of the play, Rand hated the alterations made by producers of her play. Despite her displeasure over the play, its popularity did allow her to sell her first novel, *We the Living*, which was a direct attack on the Russian system. Not surprisingly, the novel did not sell well in an era when many Americans had a more receptive attitude toward Communism, and critical reception of the book was mixed (Baker 11). Her second attempt at writing a novel, *Anthem,* received even less attention and failed to find

an American publisher until after the publication of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged.*

The mid-1930s were the beginning of Rand's war with the intellectual community that was to last until the end of her life. The origins of this war were twofold. First, she felt the intellectuals failed to recognize her greatness as a writer, and this showed her how low they had fallen. Second, intellectuals were generally left leaning, and in the 1930s, some had even embraced Communist ideology, something Rand absolutely abhorred.

Rand's Artistic Differences with Intellectuals

Rand's early works were not then readily accepted by the intellectual, cinematic, and literary worlds, and this fact put greater distance between her and society. In order to maintain the sense of superiority she had based on her intelligence and her ability to write, Rand created an artistic theory that critiqued what the intellectual community valued and played up the qualities of writing in which she excelled (Walker 120). Further, since the intellectual community had rejected her, she rejected it.

Rand's theories of art were extensions of the philosophies she had embraced in college. Rand's aesthetic theory completely contrasted with the literary movements presumably gaining ground in the mid-century, and with each successive effort in writing, it solidified and became more antagonistic toward the intellectual community. Rand positively hated the state of literature and art in the post-war period. In her words from *The Romantic Manifesto*:

> The composite picture of man that emerges from the art of our time is the gigantic figure of an aborted embryo... who crawls through a bloody muck, red froth dripping from his jaws, and struggles to throw the froth at his own non-existent

> face, who pauses periodically and, lifting the stumps of his arms, screams in abysmal terror at the universe at large. (130)

Rand was able to come to this deduction about the state of art and literature without reading much of it. She read very little literature or philosophy and, instead, relied on others to tell her about the writers she criticized (Walker 80, 223). When *Playboy* asked her what she thought of Nobel Prize winning author William Faulkner, she replied, "Not very much" (*Playboy* 116). Instead of Faulkner, the writer she liked best and with whom she felt the closest connection was the detective writer Mickey Spillane.

According to Rand and her spokesmen, the problem with the literature created by her contemporaries was that it was a continuation of Naturalism. Naturalism was bad because it failed to show man's potential. It argued that man was trapped by determining factors beyond his control, and rather than paint man "as he ought to be," it painted him as he was. Expressing her disdain for convention and conformity, Rand said, "I did not start by trying to describe the folks next door - but by inventing people who did things the folks next door would never do. I could summon no interest or enthusiasm for 'people as they are' – when I had in my mind a blinding picture of people as they could be" (quoted in Branden and Branden 87). Naturalist writers were akin to journalists and photographers, but they should have been closer to sculptors, creating an ideal (Branden and Branden 98, *Playboy* 115). To Rand, art had a philosophical base, and it should be judged by the image of man it projected, its "sense of life" (Baker 122). Based on this idea, Rand classified herself as a "Romantic Realist." She considered herself a "realist" because "she wrote of this world and present day problems," and she considered herself a "romantic" because "her work is concerned with values, with the essential, the abstract,

the universal in human life, and with the projection of man as a heroic being" (Baker 121, Branden and Branden 88). By adopting such odd definitions of these two literary schools, Rand showed the depth of her study of literature, but forgiving her the responsibility of knowledge allows one to make sense of what she said. She thought that the Romantic school portrayed man in a heroic rather than a tragic sense, which she liked, but it made the fatal error of getting sidetracked by emotion rather than reason. She saw it as her duty to redeem Romanticism from this mistake, and in doing so, she thought she could save art from "degenerating into a sewer, devoted exclusively to studies in depravity" (*Playboy* 115).

The modern, post-modern, and existential writers of the period experimented with narrative and form in the novel genre, but Rand was unable to understand what they were doing. Rand puts all of her effort into creating plot and characters. These two elements are done with a heavy hand in her work, but the clarity of her expression separated her from the intellectual community and ingratiated her to the middle class (Olster 304). Unlike many of the more experimental writers of her time, Rand found an enormous audience. Rand's success as an author thus highlighted the gulf between the intellectual community and the American public (Mayhew 77).

While Rand was disappointed at the American intellectual community's failure to recognize her greatness as a writer in her early work, she was not dismayed enough to stop writing. In the mid-1930s she began working on *The Fountainhead*, but again, her work was not warmly welcomed. The novel was purportedly rejected by twelve different publishers who cited as reasons for its rejection that it was bitter, that it rejected the prevailing political climate, that it was too intellectual, and that they believed such a book

would not sell despite being "a work of almost genius" (Branden and Branden 198, 200). Rand's attitude toward publishers who rejected her novel was expressed well by her first biographer and friend Barbara Branden.

> Listening to him [an editor], Ayn Rand's feeling of shocked revulsion was not directed at the decision, but at the reasons for it. She had not known that there was something much worse than men who rejected a book because, by their literary standards, they thought it was bad. Such men were merely stupid or dishonest. They had not reached the moral degradation of men who rejected greatness *because* it was greatness, who rejected a book not because it was bad but because it was *too good* --who consciously preferred mediocrity. (Branden and Branden 201)

Attributing her rejection to her greatness is a sign of Rand's megalomania and typical of her attitude toward others and herself. Rand finally found the Bobbs-Merrill Company, which published *The Fountainhead* in 1943.

The publishers who had rejected the novel were right on one count, but they were wrong on the other. The critical reception of the book was not good, but the public's reception of the book was solid. While initial sales were slow, the book eventually became a best-seller in 1945 when it sold 100,000 copies, and Rand was able to sell the film rights for $50,000 (Baker 51, Branden and Branden 207). By 1948, 400,000 copies of the book had been sold, largely due to word of mouth, and the film version of the novel, released in 1949, elevated sales even farther (Branden and Branden 208). Many of those who bought the book were young, impressionable intellectuals who were attracted to the ideas and force found in Rand's argument. These fans were to seek her out later in life, and they were to become the community in which she found acceptance. The older intellectual community, in turn, panned the book as it had Rand's previous writings.

Rand's Political Differences with Intellectuals

Before leaving Russia, Rand had been told by a family friend that: "If they ask you in America – tell them that Russia is a huge cemetery and that we are all dying slowly" (Branden and Branden 171). Having failed artistically to achieve intellectual acceptance and to inform America of Russia's struggles, Rand attempted to educate the public politically, and so she became a public figure during the 1940 election, campaigning for Wendell Willkie. Rand hated all forms of collectivism, and Rand expressed what would become the popular view among the public that the programs started as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal were the beginning of a slippery slope toward collectivism and a system of government that did not allow for individual recognition. What was worse was that during the thirties and the depression, the American intellectual community had embraced these collectivist ideas. Having seen the dangerous reality of the "Russian experiment" first hand, before Stalin had raised the suspicion of the international community, Rand was shocked at the Communist sympathy widespread among American intellectuals of the 1930s (Mayhew 77). She felt America needed someone who "spoke in defense of capitalism," and she thought Willkie was that man. Rand and her husband worked for the Willkie campaign as rally speakers, and Rand loved the experience but realized most conservatives were timid and anti-intellectual in their pursuit of capitalism. Willkie followed this conservative trend, and, by the time of the election, she had become disappointed by Willkie's willingness to compromise. When Roosevelt won, she returned to writing *The Fountainhead* but with a new purpose.

Her political activism returned after she finished *The Fountainhead.* She joined the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals in 1944 and wrote a pamphlet called "Screen Guide for Americans" in 1947. The tract basically warned the movie-going public that innocent movies were laced with tiny bits of propaganda intended to make people embrace the idea of collectivism. Later that same year, she testified as a "friendly witness" during the House on Un-American Activities Committee investigation of the "Hollywood Ten." While she thought that HUAC was "a bunch of fools, way out of their depth," she also felt "that there was no other way to call public attention to the conspiracy that was going on" (quoted in Mayhew 83). Despite her view of HUAC, Rand was looking for recognition from anyone who would listen, and the testimony provided her with an opportunity to bash other artists and announce her superiority. The committee basically used Rand to outline the ways in which the movie *Song of Russia* obscured the truth about events taking place in Russia during the 1940s. She detailed the many ways in which the movie was a false depiction, despite its claims to represent the truth (Mayhew 156). Her political opinions influenced her answers to some of the committee's questions, and she vehemently opposed the suggestion that it was in the country's interest for Hollywood to paint a favorable image of Russia during World War II.

As could be expected of a spurned intellectual, the failure of Rand's public attempts to change liberal American minds led to her become a recluse during the late 1940s and most of the 1950s (Baker 67). She wanted recognition from intellectuals and the public, and when society did not live up to her expectations, she again turned to her writing as a form of escape, just as she had done as a child. She rarely left her house and,

instead, spent enormous amounts of time creating what she would consider her masterpiece, *Atlas Shrugged* (Branden and Branden 220). She decided that the book would be the culmination and expression of all of her ideas about politics, economics, philosophy, art, and religion. It took her thirteen years and over 700,000 words to find a precise, dramatic expression of her philosophy. The book was to serve as a handbook for "the new intellectual" that she hoped would find a place in American society, and Rand's theories were "a reassertion of the beliefs and values of industrial capitalism and rationalism in response to so much negative fallout from the ideologies, pseudosciences, therapies and religions that pretended to replace them [the capitalist and rationalist ideologies]" (Walker 67). As such, they had enormous appeal to young intellectuals looking for guidance in the post-war world.

Rand provided, then, the guidance young intellectuals sought. Her ideas were easy to follow, and she shared their general view of the world. Indeed, Rand's ideas and her "ethic of self-sufficiency and achievement [were] intoxicating to the sons and daughters of the middle class, graduating college at the end of the Eisenhower era" (Tuccille 17). They rejected the conformity and lack of drive expressed by the status quo that overlooked the individual and his needs and accomplishments, but they feared the condemnation of others if they voiced their objections (Tuccille 18). Alienated and disenfranchised, these young intellectuals were looking for recognition. Rand's vocal opinions and refusal to conform struck a deep chord with these young intellectuals, and they saw Rand as "a voice crying out alone against the prevailing *zeitgeist* of political and economic collectivism" (Gladstein 97). The group of intellectuals who were coming of age during the late 1950s saw Rand as their advocate, and she was about to give them all

of the firepower they needed to take on anyone who failed to recognize their individuality and superiority.

Atlas Shrugged and the Strike of the Superior

Rand's life showed how she struggled with intellectual needs, and her novels resolved the tension those needs created, but her work shows a very different side of intellectual life than the fiction of Salinger. If intellectuals in the 1950s had to find a place for themselves between the two competing claims of capitalism and democracy in the American system, Rand fell solidly on the side of capitalism and its manifestation in the intellectual: the need for superiority. In light of the need to exhibit one's superiority, the system that allowed those of effort and ability to rise is the best system, and, therefore, she became the champion of laissez-faire capitalism. Capitalism encourages competition, not co-operation, and it puts the emphasis on the individual, not society as a whole. Because intellectuals have a natural mental ability that fosters success beyond that of the common man, intellectuals should thrive in capitalist systems since capitalism allows them to demonstrate their superiority in what Rand thought was a fair fight. Without the encumbrance of responsibility for others, the intellectuals' greatness can shine more brightly.

Rand's tying the intellectual to economics is particularly timely given America's position in the Cold War. The Cold War was perhaps more an economic battle than it was a political battle, and America needed intellectuals to support its economic policy. Rand filled that need by acting as a capitalist propagandist. If America were to succeed in the Cold War, it needed the aid of intellectuals, and Ayn Rand was able to supply the

argument necessary to attract them to the cause. While almost no American intellectual voiced pro-Communist opinions during the 1950s out of fear of McCarthy and horror at Stalin, many of them retained a liberal political stance. In order to get their full support politically, Rand attempted to appeal to them personally, and she pandered to their need for superiority by arguing that capitalism offered the best chance at personal success. By arguing a pro-capitalist position, she justified an intellectual's decision to become a private citizen but made it possible for intellectuals to recast their selfishness and need for superiority as patriotism.

As a Russian immigrant, Rand had an usually high personal interest in the outcome of the Cold War. Since she had been a victim of the Communist state, she wanted to see that system fail. Her work became a way for her to play the role of Cold Warrior, a role she was more than happy to play. To accomplish this goal, Ayn Rand defines the intellectual in economic terms in *Atlas Shrugged* and attempts to mend the rift between the intellectual and business that had been present in American literature (Hofstadter 233-234). The novel's heroes are all intellectuals who are also successful businessmen and businesswomen. They are the captains of American industry. Dagny Taggart runs Taggart Transcontinental Railway, Francisco d'Anconia is a copper magnate, Hank Rearden is a steel and metal manufacturer, Ellis Wyatt is an oil tycoon, and John Galt is an inventor who worked for Twentieth Century Motors. Rand argues that these men and women become successful because they apply their mental powers to the jobs they hold. As John Galt says, "Every man is free to rise as far as he's able or willing, but it's only the degree to which he thinks that determines the degree to which

he'll rise" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 988). Economic competition is not a problem for them because they have the skills to succeed in any competition.

Rand sees the true intellectual as a businessman because he is a producer, a creator, and, therefore, the "permanent benefactor of mankind" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 988). These men are the driving force of civilization, and, for this reason, Rand uses symbols of motion and industry, like trains and motors, to represent the mind throughout *Atlas Shrugged.* Because intellectuals are responsible for all of civilization's progress, through their inventions, and all of society's wealth, through their formation of jobs, they are the world's titans, the men and women who hold up the world. According to Rand, those who are not part of the elite class better damn well realize that these intellectual businessmen helped pull society out of the muck. In his speech to the American people, John Galt expresses this attitude concisely:

> The man at the top of the intellectual pyramid contributes the most to all of those below him, but gets nothing except his material payment, receiving no intellectual bonus from others to add to the value of his time. The man at the bottom who, left to himself, would starve in his hopeless ineptitude, contributes nothing to others above him, but receives the bonus of all their brains. (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 989)

True to her need for superiority, Rand demands a chorus of thank yous to fall from the lips of the common man who is basically worthless without the support of the elite few. As Kenneth Smith has pointed out, by adopting such an attitude, "it is hard to see why sterilization and the extermination of the unfit are ethically wrong" (28). As will shortly be seen, *Atlas Shrugged* seems to suggest that they are not.

Society can avoid this degeneration by recognizing intellectuals' superiority. As was true in Rand's personal life, the intellectual wants recognition for his greatness

materialized in his product or idea. Most often this recognition takes the form of money. According to Francisco d'Anconia, "man's mind is the root of all the goods produced and of all the wealth that has ever existed on earth....Wealth is the product of man's capacity to think" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 387). Indeed, wealth is the sign of the true intellectual, and the intellectual's importance is grounded in the idea that "money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 387). The amount of money an individual has is directly relative to his value in the world. The business leaders are solely responsible for creating the wealth they amass; no one else has any right to claim it. Their products are not the only things they produce. Because they are the leaders of successful companies, they are also responsible for creating all of the jobs necessary to support that company. Rather than the leaders expressing any gratitude to the labor force for allowing the business intellectuals to achieve their goals, the labor force should show their appreciation to these business intellectuals for their livelihood.

To represent their view of the world, the intellectuals in the novel propose a new symbol for intellectual life, the dollar sign. The symbol appears on everything associated with life in the valley, even its cigarettes. The last image in the novel, as the intellectuals return to the world after it has been purged of its depravity, presents Galt tracing the sign of the dollar in the air. Owen Kellog explains the sign's significance to Dagny as they try to restart a stranded train: "It stands--as the money of a free country--for achievement, for success, for ability, for-man's creative power--and precisely for these reasons, it is used as a brand of infamy" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 637). While it is viewed as symbol of corruption by the majority of the population, the inhabitants of Galt's Gulch proudly wear

it as a "badge of nobility" that they are "willing to live for and, if need be, to die" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 638). The dollar sign is the representation of all of the qualities Rand's intellectuals value: wealth, selfishness, exchange of value, freedom, rationality, and atheism. In Rand's mind, the dollar sign is preferable to the cross. In her *Playboy* interview, she said the cross is "the symbol of the sacrifice of the ideal to the nonideal" (*Playboy* 113). Jesus represents an ideal that was sacrificed to men who were nowhere near his equal, and this is a sign of "torture" (*Playboy* 113). The idea of sacrifice is utterly abhorrent to Rand because it fails to recognize value and subverts superiority.

Embracing the dollar sign as the ultimate symbol for the intellectual demonstrates Rand's position on the competing draws of capitalism and democracy, and exhibits as well her staunch support of superiority. In this regard, Rand directly conflicts with J. D. Salinger's argument in "Zooey." In "Zooey" Jesus is regarded as "the most intelligent man in the Bible" because he "knew -- *knew* -- that we're carrying the Kingdom of Heaven around with us, inside, where we're all too goddam stupid and sentimental and unimaginative to look" (Salinger "Zooey" 170-171). To Salinger, the intellectual has an obligation to his fellow man because both share God's omnipresence and are therefore equal. Rand disregards any such notion of equality. She sees intelligence as a product of one's efforts and not a blessing that he has done nothing to earn, which, if it were true, would necessitate a duty to society. While Salinger's symbol of the Fat Lady indicates that intellectuals should attempt to show man the world's beauty and act as society's guides and teachers, Rand's symbol of the dollar argues that each person is responsible for finding truth on his own, and so the intellectual's only obligation is to himself.

By removing any notion of equality, Rand feels justified in her hatred of her fellow man. Those who fail to give intellectuals their due call forth their wrath and their disdain, and this is the dominant view held by the author and her band of intellectual businessmen. The hatred Rand felt for society seethes out of every page of the book. Almost all of the novel's reviewers comment on the contempt Rand seems to have for her fellow man. In her review of *Atlas Shrugged,* Patricia Donegan notes how the novel "proceeds from hate" and mentions how Rand has a "morbid fascination" in destroying the world (156). Similarly, Granville Hicks states that he thought the book was "written out of hate" despite Rand's assertion of her "love of life" (5). Hicks goes on to state that it might be common for people occasionally to think the world would be a better place with the human race wiped off it, but questions someone "who sustains such a mood through the writing of 1168 pages and some fourteen years of work" (5).

Illustrating her hatred for common man, throughout the book, Rand mercilessly kills a number of people who fail to recognize their debt to the elite and those who fail to live up to Rand's "rational" standard. For instance, when the diesel locomotive pulling Taggart Transcontinental's Comet fails, a politician late for an important meeting demands a coal-burning engine be used instead. All of the company officials know this is a bad idea, but because they fear upsetting the politician, the train makes the change, and while traveling through a long tunnel, all of the passengers on the train suffocate on the engine's fumes. The politician's demands are shown to be obviously stupid, and he ignores the advice of wiser men, but Rand makes sure he and everyone else gets their comeuppance. Rand goes through three pages of passengers outlining why they deserved

to die and how the responsibility for the accident is shared by each of them. For example:

> The woman in Roomette 10, Car No. 3, was an elderly schoolteacher who had spent her life turning class after class of helpless children into miserable cowards, by teaching them that the will of the majority is the only standard of good and evil.... The man in Bedroom H, Car No. 5 was a businessman who had acquired his business, an ore mine, with the help of a government loan.... The woman in Roomette 9, Car no 12, was a housewife who believed that she had the right to elect politicians, of whom she knew nothing, to control giant industries, of which she had no knowledge. (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 567-568).

In this passage, Rand effectually makes a list of the type of people whom she would like to kill, and then she kills them. To emphasize that the tragedy comes from a failure to recognize the superiority of the business intellectual, "the flame of Wyatt's Torch was the last thing they saw on earth" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 568). Wyatt's Torch acts as a symbol of the intellectuals' frustration with society, and its presence in the scene is an "I-told-you-so" directed at the public, reincarnated later in the book by Francisco d'Anconia's billboard exclaiming "Brother you asked for it" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 858).

While the deaths that occur in the train disaster are caused because no one listened to the voice of reason, later in the book, the intellectuals become directly involved in murdering those who fail to meet the standards of the elite. During the scene in which Dagny, Francisco, and Hank try to effect John Galt's release from capture, they shoot a guard because he hesitates too long in giving them the information they need. Rand's description of the event is macabre: "Calmly and impersonally, she [Dagny], who would have hesitated to fire at an animal, pulled the trigger and fired straight at the heart of a man who had wanted to exist without the responsibility of consciousness" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 1066). While Rand would argue that life without thought is hardly life, the

scene shows that what this really means is that the unthinking public is a lower form of life than any animal and therefore *unworthy* of life.

These two scenes show the depth of Rand's contempt for her fellow man, and it is an attitude shared by all of the citizens of Galt's Gulch. Since the rest of humanity is not worthy of life, it need not be considered, and intellectuals should base their approach to life on "rational self-interest," a fancy way of saying "selfishness." Rand's intellectuals feel absolutely no obligation to society; they have obligations only to their individual selves. Perhaps, as one critic argues, Rand is able to imagine these horrendous acts because she and her intellectuals in *Atlas Shrugged* are in a position of arrested development: "Rand's vision of the world was set when she was quite young, and she varied little from it as she grew older" (Gladstein 29). The intellectuals basically throw a tantrum because they do not get the attention they want. If the world is evil and worthless and fails to recognize the value of intellectuals, it is easy to withdraw from society. Withdrawal is her solution to the problem of being an intellectual in a world that does not understand intellectuals and which intellectuals do not understand. While Salinger expressed a similar view of life in "Franny," he went on to write "Zooey" and showed his increasing maturity professionally, even if he did not show it personally. *Atlas Shrugged* carries the intellectual only as far as Franny was able to go on her own. None of the supposedly smart people in the novel is able to develop a more mature outlook.

In order to maintain the moral intensity of her argument, Rand must simplify every aspect of the novel. This starts with her definition of intelligence. Intelligence is not an amalgam of different attributes and modes of understanding; for Rand, it can be

boiled down to one characteristic: the ability to reason. Rand's definition of intelligence is clearly a reaction against a growing trend in the 1950s to associate intelligence with emotion. As critic Clara Thompson points out, during the middle of the twentieth century, a "new emphasis appeared -- namely, the importance of personal emotional experience," and it was thought that "insight with the appropriate emotional value could produce change" (48). Rand and many other intellectuals saw this trend as anti-intellectual and made concerted pleas for a return to reason. During John Galt's radio address, he says, "Man cannot survive except by gaining knowledge, and reason is his only means to gain it. Reason is the faculty that perceives, identifies, and integrates the material provided by his senses" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 942). Reason supercedes all other modes of understanding, including intuition or emotion, both of which Rand thinks must be justified by reason to be of any value whatsoever. Conscious rationality is so prevalent in the minds of her heroes that they do not sleep, they "surrender the responsibility of consciousness" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 802).

By defining intelligence as the ability to reason and demanding that this be the sole motivation for one's actions, Rand narrows the capability of man's mind to ludicrous extremes and dismisses whole worlds of intellectual achievement because, as Galt says, "thinking is man's only basic virtue" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 944). for instance, intellectuals who have any religious affiliation get labeled "mystics," and, because they fail the test of virtue, they are unworthy of a true intellectual's attention.

Intelligence is not the only thing Rand defines in simple ways. Like all propaganda, everything in her novel and in her view of the world is cast in black or white. She sees no problem in bifurcating the world in this way. As Galt says, "There

are two side to every issue: one side is right and the other is wrong, but the middle is always evil" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 978). While Rand is entitled to a view of the world based on absolutes, she goes too far when she claims that reason is the sole path to discovering the truth in the duality of the world. The critic Kenneth Smith argues quite nicely that "logic and reason can be used to 'prove' almost anything, that the use of reason in itself proves nothing. For logic and reason have very little to do with establishing truth" (25). Ironically, by ascribing completely to a rational approach in her ideal world, Rand creates intellectuals who act in very strange ways. Among her intellectual coterie, no one ever has a dispute. When they interact with others who are their equal in business, they respond with surprise and happiness, and they seem to recognize immediately the other's greatness. None of these heroes attempts to swindle one another because they all understand the nature of "value," and each approaches the other as a "trader." For example, throughout the novel, three of Rand's heroes fall in love with Dagny Taggart, but rather than fight for her, each steps aside rationally recognizing Dagny has made the right choice for her new partner. This is simply hard to swallow.

Rand's belief in a world composed of dualities without grays has an adverse effect on the validity of her novel, but it allows her to elaborate the position she takes concerning how intellectuals should react to the world. As Patricia Donegan pointed out in her review of the novel, Rand only has two kinds of characters -- heroes and villains:

> The good ones, and in Miss Rand's terminology 'good' is synonymous with 'able,' are all beautiful, clear-eyed and intelligent, singularly endowed physically and well as mentally. The bad ones are characterized by flabby jowls, bloodshot eyes and other unpleasant physical characteristics. The bad ones are not able. (156)

By drawing her characters using such clear demarcations, Rand gives the reader very little opportunity to judge for himself (Walker 323). Further, her narrative intrusions demand that the reader dismiss the characters she wants him to dismiss and adopt an attitude similar to her own. For instance, a character might express a lack of understanding, to which she will add that this statement was made "in the tone of a mystic who implies that a lack of understanding is the confession of a shameful inferiority" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 812). This kind of comment justifies the intellectuals' strike and their demand for recognition of their superiority.

Not surprisingly, intellectuals who do not share her simplified views or resist her ideology become her enemies, and she attacks them as readily as she attacks the common man. Like Salinger, Rand uses *Atlas Shrugged* to take knocks at other intellectuals, especially those in the academy, artists, and scientists. Rand's attack balances volleys directed toward the general intellectual community and volleys directed at specific institutions that sponsor intellectuals. Taking a page from HUAC, Rand accuses the intellectual community of sponsoring Communism. In *Atlas Shrugged,* politicians discuss whether intellectuals will object to the restrictive points of the government's new economic control measure, Directive 10-289, and Rand offers her view of the modern intellectual:

> Your kind of intellectuals are the first to scream when it's safe -- and the first to shut their traps at the first sign of danger. They spend years spitting at the man who feeds them -- and they lick the hand of the man who slaps their drooling faces. Didn't they deliver every country of Europe, one after another, to committees of goons just like this one here?... Did you hear them raising their voices about the chain gangs, the slave camps, the fourteen-hour workday and the mortality from scurvy in the People's States of Europe? No, but you did hear them telling the whip beaten wretches that starvation is prosperity, that slavery is

> freedom, that torture chambers are brother-love.... Intellectuals? You might have to worry about any other breed of men, but not about modern intellectuals: They'll swallow anything. (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 512-513)

Directive 10-289 is a move toward an extreme totalitarian, Communist state, and through its mention, Rand is criticizing intellectuals for their allegiance to Communism during the 1930s and World War II. They have contributed heavily to the fall of society (depicted in the novel) because they failed to see the horrors of the system.

After attacking intellectuals in general, Rand directs her hostility toward specific intellectual groups, namely the artistic world and the scientific community. Rand's representation of the contemporary author is Balph Eubanks, a writer who thinks life's essence is suffering and plot is primitive vulgarity (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 130-131). Furthermore, he insists that "only those whose motive is not money making should be allowed to write," and literature that shows man as heroic is laughable (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 130-131). All of these assertions directly contradict Rand's aesthetic philosophy, and, while it is debatable whether or not she succeeds, Rand expects the reader to view Eubanks and writers who may be like him as ignorant.

In addition to the artistic community, the scientific community suffers Rand's attack. Rand derides scientists for working in government-sponsored positions like the State Science Institute where they are asked to create weapons like Project X and the torture machine. The government supported scientists in this way during the 1950s, but rather than view this as a positive for intellectuals, Rand thinks it is terrible. Her reaction is in line with common complaints against intellectuals generated by the creation of the atomic bomb. In Rand's mind, science should not be used to create weapons; it should be

used to create money. Science should have no connection to government but only connections to industry.

Attacking intellectuals in this way reveals two aspects of Rand's personality. First, it shows the disdain with which she viewed the world. Second, it allows her to feel superior. Ironically, after attacking intellectuals so viciously, she wanted at least one of them to recognize her accomplishments, and she certainly wanted them to support her negative view of Communism.

When she discusses education in the novel, Rand shows a mixed reaction to the events of the 1950. She rightfully attacks progressive education for its anti-intellectualism, but she also beats on the academy for advancing the liberal ideals of intellectuals. Throughout the novel, Rand sprinkles in little jabs that insinuate the worthlessness of contemporary colleges and schools. Rand's primary criticism is that progressive education fails to teach a morality based on reason, which contributes to the world's corruption. For example, the government man sent to keep an eye on Rearden "had no inkling of morality; it had been bred out of him by his college; this had left him an odd frankness, naïve and cynical at once, like the innocence of a savage" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 342). Dagny shares Rearden's view of education but takes it a step further to attack colleges' advocating of concern for others and not the self. During her discussion with the tramp, she remembers the intrusion of "modern college-infected parasites who assumed a sickening air of moral self-righteousness whenever they uttered the standard bromides about their concern for the welfare of others" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 614).

By failing to teach rational self-interest, colleges have created a nation of parasites with the morality of savages. Society's moral failures are a direct result of

schools teaching a flawed approach to the world. When the young man Rearden had previously criticized dies defending Rearden during a riot staged by the failing government, Rearden's eulogy makes clear that the young man's education was to blame for his previous ignorance, and he then lodges an attack on education in general. By teaching any boy aphorisms that criticize reason, contemporary education "devotes the child's education to the purpose of destroying his brain, of convincing him that thought is futile and evil, before he has started to think" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 923). This learned helplessness is not just taught to the very young, but it is drilled into people's consciousness throughout their years in school. During his major speech, John Galt expresses his agreement with Rearden when he says that inside any college classroom "you will hear college professors teaching your children that man can be certain of nothing, that his consciousness has no validity whatever, that he can learn no facts and no laws of existence, that he's incapable of knowing an objective reality" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* 967). According Rand's three heroes, the curriculum of the contemporary college includes lessons on conformity and faith and fails to recognize an objective reality. While schools are supposed to be places of intellectual freedom that value thought, the lessons students learn contribute to their own ineptitude. For this reason, the professors who believed in intelligence and reason, like Galt's philosophy professor Dr. Akston, leave the university, preferring to be short order cooks than corruptors of the young.

Reactions to *Atlas Shrugged*

Ayn Rand's reaction to *Atlas Shrugged* was as indicative of the intellectual's position in the 1950s as the content of the book itself. When Rand finished *Atlas Shrugged*, she thought she had written a book that would change the world. Her feelings of superiority again emerged during the editing of the book. When her editor asked her to reduce the size of the book, Rand refused, saying, "Would you cut the Bible?" (B. Branden 292). In the months before the book's publication, she told her friends that she was "challenging the cultural tradition of two and a half thousand years" (B. Branden 294). Despite such arrogant claims, Rand anticipated the novel's rejection by the intellectual community on the basis of its unreality. She warned her publishers that "they were not to expect a single favorable review from today's intellectuals, most of whom share the premises of her villains" (Branden and Branden 234). In support of this claim, she included a postscript directed at the reader in which she said, "I trust no one will tell me that men such as I write about don't exist. That this book has been written –and published -- is my proof that they do" (Rand *Atlas Shrugged* "About the Author"). The novel's postscript and her warning to the publishers demonstrate the circular reasoning Rand used to maintain her feelings of superiority. She prevented attacks on her work by calling its potential critics "villains," and praised herself and protected the book by claiming she was like the intellectuals in her book. She most definitely was, but this fact was not necessarily a compliment. Furthermore, the validity of her characters was insured by nothing other than her own superiority. They existed because Ayn Rand said they did; the book was accurate because it was what Ayn Rand thought might happen.

As shaky as her defense was, Rand was right. *Atlas Shrugged* was panned by almost every reviewer who bothered, but the public felt differently. As was the case with *The Fountainhead*, the public loved the book, and she sold 125,000 copies in the first year (Baker 17). However, the public's praise meant very little to Rand because she had wanted the recognition of her intellectual equals. Her need for superiority had grown so great that only the intellectuals' praise could satisfy her. As numerous Rand scholars have explained, Rand went through a severe depression in the years following the publication of the novel (Merrill17, Walker 250, B. Branden 301). The depression emerged not so much as a reaction to the attacks themselves but from the fact that no one stood up to defend her, "no one with a public name, a public reputation, a public voice, to speak for her in that world which was vilifying her, to defend her, to fight for her, to name the nature and stature of her accomplishment" (B. Branden 301). Since she had helped the world with her book, she believed, Rand hoped for acceptance and approval, but when it did not come, all she had to fall back on was her self-absorption.

Rand's coterie of young intellectual followers eventually rallied to her aid, and this counter-reaction was the beginning of the Objectivist movement (Walker 138). Rand needed someone to prop her up and give her the approval she craved, and a close knit group of fans turned disciples she called the "Class of 43" (after the year *The Fountainhead* was published) tried to give her what she needed. In the early years of the 1950s, some of Rand's readers of *The Fountainhead* sought her for personal guidance. Rand nursed this following from the beginning in an effort to find the approval she had failed to receive after publishing her early novels. Shortly after *Atlas Shrugged* was published, Ayn Rand became a sort of god to this group, and they decided that they

needed to spread the word of her greatness. Each of the members of the "Class of 43" came out with comments praising Rand. Her Objectivist followers considered her "a more advanced species of humanity" capable of astounding mental acrobatics (Walker 78). Similarly, *Atlas Shrugged* was considered "the most original and challenging novel of our age," and despite its length, "there is not one superfluous paragraph and not one extraneous word" (Branden and Branden 5, 127). Such comments as these helped Rand recover from her depression, but they also fed her arrogance. These comments were the beginning of the Objectivist movement, a cult of personality designed around Rand that saw its rise at the end of the 1950s but remains in existence to this day.

Conclusion

Ayn Rand's fiction is what she will be remembered for, and it continues to seduce some young intellectuals down the path of selfishness. Rand failed to find a balance between her need for superiority and her need for acceptance. Unfortunately, her need for superiority dominated her life, and this fact crippled her socially. The picture of Ayn Rand that emerges after reading her work and studying her life is one of a nerd on a playground who wishes for the day when she is older and the boss of the bully who is shoving her around. Rand called for retribution because she could not forgive society for the treatment she received, and she could not temper her arrogance with humility. Unlike the philosophy proposed by Salinger in his works, Rand's philosophy was not a practical solution to the problems of intellectual life in the 1950s. Her brand of intellectual is no intellectual at all but merely an arrogant thug who does not support the heavens but, instead, grinds away the easy targets he sees beneath him. She is the intellectual

godmother of such crooks as Ken Lay, Bernie Ebbers, and Denis Kozlowski – the captains of industry who, in the days of Enron and Worldcom, look less noble than they may have in the 1950s or in one of her novels.

V. Conclusion

During the 1950s, America was committed to presenting a uniform national identity that showcased the country's superiority over its communist opponent. To do so, America needed the help of its intellectuals, but it often found that intellectuals resisted the very idea of conformity that was promoted during the age. In turn, intellectuals suffered widespread attacks that were designed to limit their objections or bully them into service. As is always the case, the country's literature incorporated these social and historical struggles. American writers added their voices to the chorus of intellectual voices trying to find a position for the American intellectual at mid-century, and no two writers sang louder than J. D. Salinger and Ayn Rand.

To find a position for themselves in American life, intellectuals must strike a balance among a plethora of competing draws. As Socrates pointed out, knowledge *is* virtue, which means intelligence cannot be reduced to simple definitions that align it too heavily with either emotion or rationality; instead, helpful definitions of knowledge incorporate "both rational *and* irrational experience" and demand ethical consideration (May 43). As intellectuals become aware of their talents and find workable ways to define their gifts, they realize that this process of defining requires them to balance the competing needs for social acceptance and superiority that are largely attributable to the contrasting political and economic ideologies that fuel the American national image.

Salinger and Rand both failed as intellectuals because they failed to find workable definitions of intelligence that allowed them to reconcile the essential tension of intellectual life between the need for superiority and the need for social acceptance. In their personal lives, their need to feel superior overcame their need for social acceptance

and led them to see the world as an ugly place. While both writers experienced personal failure, in their writings, they show the opposing intellectual viewpoints of the 1950s. As a writer for *The New Yorker*, Salinger addressed his arguments toward intellectuals and showed the internal struggles intellectuals face as they try to find a place for their talents in the world. He concludes that intellectuals must love the world and work for its improvement despite antagonism from the public. In contrast, Rand addressed her argument to the public rather than intellectuals. Her battle was an external one between the public and the intellectual, and she demanded that the citizenry at large acknowledge the contributions of intellectuals or suffer the consequences. While Salinger is able to express a solution to the intellectuals' problem that he was unable to achieve personally, Rand's personal beliefs remain consistent, and the mentality expressed in her novel is as inevitably faulty on a critical scale as it was for her privately.

Despite their personal failings as intellectuals, Salinger and Rand expressed the frustrations and disappointments felt by young intellectuals, and their success in this arena has given them a legacy that extends well beyond the 1950s. The work they produced has had a tremendous influence on successive decades, and even now, the two writers have a cult of followers who think that each writer has the answers to all their problems. The questions the two writers raised in the latter half of the 1950s became questions considered by the greater American public, and their works anticipated a change in the public's attitude toward intellectuals that is most notable in the development of gifted education but which can also be seen in the increasing desire for information and education in the current age.

Despite the change in attitude toward intellectuals in recent decades, the issues intellectuals faced in the 1950s were simply a heightened version of the issues intellectuals have always faced in America. America's inherent distrust of intelligence has allowed Salinger and Rand's writing to remain as poignant today as it was in the 1950s. Intellectuals will always need help finding a position for themselves in American life, and Salinger and Rand's writing will always be there to provide a solution (no matter how faulty that solution may be). However, their work should also serve as an introduction to the struggles of gifted individuals, not as a final statement. Each intellectual must find his or her own way of negotiating the conflict between the need for superiority and the need for social acceptance, and the only way to fail is by refusing to see the answer as a necessary compromise between the two.

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