

Boswell's Johnson—Branden's Rand "The Passion of Ayn Rand" in Historical Perspective

by Louis Torres

... And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his Life; which, great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect. To be as he was, is indeed subject of panegyric enough to any man in this state of being; but in every picture there should be shade as well as light, and when I delineate him without reserve, I do what he himself recommended, both by his precept and his example.

—James Boswell

The Life of Samuel Johnson, 1791

* * *

... Those who worship Ayn Rand and those who damn her do her the same disservice: they make her unreal and they deny her humanity. I hope to show in her story that she was something infinitely more fascinating and infinitely more valuable than either goddess or sinner. She was a human being. She lived, she loved, she fought her battles, and she knew triumph and defeat. The scale was epic; the principle is inherent in human existence.

—Barbara Branden

The Passion of Ayn Rand, 1986

As the first, and thus far the only, book-length biography of one of the major novelists and most original thinkers of our time, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, by Barbara Branden, must command serious attention—particularly so in this journal, which bases its editorial philosophy on Rand's esthetic principles.

Rand, who died in 1982 at the age of seventy-seven, is best known to the general public as the author of the enduringly popular novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). But she is also the author of several important volumes of essays, and the founder of the original philosophy she called Objectivism. Proclaiming, in essence, "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute," Rand's philosophy—introduced in her novels and systematically developed in her nonfiction works—challenged fundamental aspects of the predominant Western ethic of the past two thousand years. As a result, she has been one of the most controversial, and least understood, writers and thinkers of our age.

The underestimation and misinterpretation of Rand's ideas has been apparent even in the spate of largely favorable reviews in the general press since the publication of Branden's biography, which made the *New York Times* best-seller list for five weeks. The brief description of the book on that list, for example, characterized Rand as the "founder of a cult"; while a reviewer for *Library Journal* erroneously referred to "Rand's right-wing philosophy" and termed her an "important conservative thinker," with no reference at all to her novels or to the unique philosophical system she created; and reviewers in *Commentary* and the *Times* devoted most of their allotted space to spurious critiques of Rand's philosophy and fiction. (See "On Responsible Criticism," page six.)

That Rand's biography has been written by Barbara Branden—who was the philosopher-novelist's intellectual protégé and intimate friend for nineteen years, until their stormy break in 1969—adds immeasurably to its import and interest for the general reader, but poses special problems for Rand's legion of admirers. Branden has been regarded as an enemy of Rand's philosophy by the "official" guardians of Objectivism ever since Rand broke with her, following a long professional and romantic involvement and bitter rupture with Nathaniel Branden (psychologist and author), then Barbara's husband. The extramarital affair between Rand (married to Frank O'Connor) and Nathaniel (twenty-five years her junior)—which figures centrally in the biography, where it is revealed publicly for the first time—is understandably a highly sensitive issue, especially among Objectivists and other admirers of Rand. Their reactions to the publication of Branden's biography have run the gamut—from well-reasoned criticisms and enthusiastic expressions of tribute to a terse announcement of refusal even to read the book, and scurrilous, fallacy-ridden attacks on Branden's motives, integrity, and personal worth.

Much of the criticism leveled at Branden has ignored the fact that she has fashioned a work in the best biographic tradition. In her approach to life-writing—both in her attitude toward her subject and in the specific biographic devices she uses—Branden follows in the footsteps of a long line of worthy predecessors, stretching back to antiquity and representing nearly every historical era since.

EDITORIAL

Boswell on Johnson

Departing somewhat from our usual practice, we present, without further comment, the following excerpts from James Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson:

To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task. . . .

As I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years; as I had the scheme of writing his life constantly in view; as he . . . from time to time obligingly satisfied my enquiries by communicating to me the incidents of his early years; as I acquired a facility in recollecting, and was very assiduous in recording, his conversation . . . ; and as I have spared no pains in obtaining materials concerning him . . . and have been favoured with the most liberal communications by his friends; I flatter myself that few biographers have entered upon such a work as this, with more advantages. . . .

Having said thus much by way of introduction, I commit the following pages to the candour of the Publick. . . .

* * *

The character of Samuel Johnson has, I trust, been so developed in the course of this work, that they, who have honoured it with a perusal, may be considered as well acquainted with him. As, however, it may be expected that I should collect into one view the capital and distinguishing features of this extraordinary man, I shall endeavor to acquit myself of that part of my biographical undertaking, however difficult it may be to do that which many of my readers will do better for themselves. . . .

Man is, in general, made up of contradictory qualities. . . . In proportion to the native vigour of the mind, the contradictory qualities will be the more prominent, and more difficult to be adjusted; and, therefore, we are not to wonder, that Johnson exhibited an eminent example of this remark which I have made upon human nature. At different times, he seemed a different man, in some respects. . . . stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart. . . . He was afflicted with a bodily disease . . . ; and with a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy. . . . We, therefore, ought not to wonder at his sallies of impatience and passion at any time; especially when provoked by obtrusive ignorance, or presuming petulance; and allowance must

"And, surely, when it is considered, that, 'amidst sickness and sorrow,' he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind . . . we must be astonished at his resolution."

—James Boswell

be made for his uttering hasty and satirical sallies even against his best friends. And, surely, when it is considered, that, "amidst sickness and sorrow," he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind . . . we must be astonished at his resolution. . . .

. . . His superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what may be called the art of thinking, the art of using

his mind; . . . so that knowledge . . . was, in him, true, evident, and actual wisdom. . . .

* * *

Such was Samuel Johnson, a man whose talents, acquirements, and virtues were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence. A

Biographic Antecedents

As early as the first century, the Greek biographer Plutarch (for centuries the West's principal source of knowledge about the ancient world), wrote his *Parallel Lives* of historical and mythical Greek and Roman statesmen and generals, elucidating their virtues and shortcomings with an end to ethical instruction, but dramatically transforming his material through gesture, anecdote, and dialogue.

Beginning with Bishop Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, there is a long tradition of Lives written by individuals closely associated with their subject. In his *History of the Franks*, Gregory captured the personalities and characters of the great figures of his era, illustrating the "strange reaches and passionate depths of human behavior" (as Paul Murray Kendall notes in *The Art of Biography*) in scenes full of dramatic detail, often enlivened by his own presence on the stage with his actors.

One of the most moving examples of this biographic tradition is the *Life* of Sir Thomas More (lord chancellor of England under Henry VIII)—written by his son-in-law William Roper. (Roper's work is known indirectly to modern audiences through Robert Bolt's inspiring adaptations of his material for stage and film in *A Man for All Seasons*.) It is through a succession of intimate scenes (in which Roper himself sometimes plays a part)—with the King, various court officials, and members of More's family—that Roper vividly depicts More's internal conflict, between his duty to conscience and devotion to truth, on one hand, and his duty to King and love of life and family, on the other.

In the seventeenth century, there was a marked increase in awareness of, and curiosity about, the inner workings of human personality and character. And ethical questions regarding life-writing were asked for the first time: How much of a man's life ought to be revealed? Should his private letters be made public? Is it proper to divulge his sins and reveal his weaknesses, as well as delineate his virtues and accomplishments? Possessed of a judicious sense of history and ethics, biographers like John Dryden, in his *Life of Plutarch* (1681-86), conceived of biography as a branch of history, as an account of "the lives of particular men." In history proper, Dryden noted, one is led only into the rooms of state. In biography, he maintained,

you are led into the private lodgings of the hero . . . and are made familiar with his most private actions and conversations. . . . with his passions and his follies, and find the Demy-God a man.

(Neither "goddess" nor "sinner" but a

"human being," Branden says of Ayn Rand.)

Boswell's Johnson

James Boswell (1740-95), Scottish lawyer and man of letters, is best known to posterity for his celebrated biography of Samuel Johnson. And Johnson (1709-84)—critic, essayist, lexicographer, poet, and biographer in his own right—is known largely through Boswell's *Life*, widely acknowledged to be a classic of biographic literature. So much so that "Boswell" has become a generic term meaning "an

"life," and *graphein*, "to write"—was first used. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines biography as "the history of the lives of individual men, as a branch of literature." But just as biography is not history in the strictest sense, neither is it, precisely speaking, a form of literature equivalent to drama, poetry, or fiction, although it may incorporate aspects of each of these forms. Kendall suggests that since biography "represents imagination limited by truth, facts raised to the power of revelation," it may be defined as "the simulation, in words, of a man's life, from

"If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."

—Samuel Johnson

assiduous and devoted admirer, student, and recorder of another's words and deeds," and its derivatives—the verb "Boswellize" and the adjective "Boswellian"—have likewise entered the English language.

As a biographer, Boswell learned from Johnson, who was a great believer in the shared sensibilities of all human beings. Johnson observed:

We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by dangers, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure.

Johnson maintained that the biographer should emphasize the subject's private activities and thoughts, "where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue." And he was highly critical of those who "adorned [their subjects] with uniform panegyric" so that they were distinguishable only "by extrinsic and casual circumstances." "If we owe regard to the memory of the dead," he argued, "there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."

Boswell, like others before him and Branden after, was a deliberate "artist-biographer" (a type defined by James L. Clifford in his illuminating study *Biography As an Art*), combining fictional and dramatic devices within a framework of historical accuracy and moral truth. As a recorder of conversation he excelled; he had a genius for recounting the dramatic detail that would indicate the most telling traits of character; and he did not hesitate to interject his own appraisal when he thought it relevant.

Biography Defined

Though the craft of life-writing has been practiced in the West for more than two thousand years, it was not until the seventeenth century that the term "biography"—from the Greek words *bios*,

all that is known about that man"—a more useful definition, in my view, than that offered by the *O.E.D.*

One of Ayn Rand's singular intellectual contributions to our time was her insistence that terms must be precisely defined, and that valid definitions are derived from direct observation of particulars. On that basis, we can see that Kendall's definition overlooks two elements essential to the Lives written by Plutarch, Roper, and Boswell—indeed to all biography: first, the element of selection involved in the act of writing; and second, the very individual personality or character which influences each biographer's choices. All this suggests an alternative definition of biography—one I base on Ayn Rand's excellent definition of art from *The Romantic Manifesto*. If art is, as defined by Rand, "a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments," then biography may be defined as a *selective, written re-creation of the life of an individual from the particular point of view of the biographer*.

Branden's Rand

In her Introduction to *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, Barbara Branden forthrightly presents her credentials and candidly states her point of view—that of a young protégé who became an intimate friend and early "official" biographer, later an estranged and embittered "enemy," and yet later a compassionate if distant admirer ("the pain had lost its keenness; the wonder had endured"). In thus opening (and eventually concluding) her account with an intimate self-revelation, she not only gives readers a clear perspective from which to judge the veracity of her *Life* of Rand but also courageously exposes details of her own life to public scrutiny. Indeed she acknowledges, in effect—with the artless candor that characterizes her whole account—that Rand's biography is, in some measure, her own autobiography.

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Branden's Rand

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"The life of Ayn Rand was the material of fiction," Branden begins. "But if one attempted to write it as a novel, the result would be preposterously unbelievable." Yet, skillfully drawing on her own close relationship with Rand and on nearly fifty hours of taped interviews with her (a wealth of material which, as one reviewer has observed, make the book read at times like Rand's autobiography), as well as on extensive research (including some two hundred interviews), and often employing a fictional writing style honed under Rand herself, she creates a biography that springs fully to life.

In Chapter One of the Prologue, for example, Branden recreates the day Alice Rosenbaum (Rand) was born

in one of the most beautiful and cultured cities on earth—in the wake of one terrible carnage and amid the ominous warnings of a vaster and more savage carnage to come. It was a sophisticated, glittering world—that was slowly descending into hell.

On February 2, 1905, the day of Alice's birth, St. Petersburg sparkled in the rare winter sunshine. . . .

It is but the first of many semi-fictional evocations of people, places, and events which pull the reader into an ever-widening tale of epic proportions.

Tracing the seventy-seven years of Rand's life, Branden often chooses to focus on the inner person. Thus we have psychologically penetrating glimpses into Alice's lonely childhood in the twilight of czarist Russia; her precarious adolescence under the Communist regime, which she loathed; and her nearly thwarted emigration to America in 1926, at the age of twenty-one, when she began to forge a

her fierce self-confidence, encouraged and supported her efforts.

Stirrings of Genius

One of the most illuminating aspects of *The Passion of Ayn Rand* is Branden's account of the maturation of Rand's literary genius from its budding in childhood, through the mastery of a new language, to its full flowering as she grapples with the creation of her ideal hero, culminating in the formulation of a unique philosophical system.

The first story the precocious Alice read that did not bore her was about a resourceful French detective who pursues a dangerous jewel thief, overcomes all obstacles, and catches his man in the end. Contained in that story was the essential element of all the literature she would love, and of the novels she would write—the battle between good and evil.

At about that time, Alice began to write stories herself. As Branden narrates: "She would sit in school, barricaded behind a book, scribbling furiously at her latest adventure, wanting only to be left alone, to write, to devise dangerous exploits for her characters." An irresistible image—one of many—of the future philosopher-author of *Atlas Shrugged*. Another: a quiet afternoon in the summer of 1914, with Alice browsing through a French magazine of boys' adventure stories. One, "The Mysterious Valley," catches her attention, and she begins to read. Many years later, the mature Ayn Rand would describe her response to the story thus:

. . . The kind of feeling I had for [the hero, Cyrus] still exists, it's in essence everything that I've ever felt for Roark [the hero of *The Fountainhead*], Galt [the hero of *Atlas Shrugged*], Nathan [Nathaniel Branden], Frank [her husband], or all my values. There's nothing that I can add in quality to any important love later on that

spent an unusually happy interlude. The bright days she passed there, mountain climbing with an intelligent, daring young boy, became the inspiration for one of the rare descriptions of childhood in her fiction, that of Francisco and Dagny in *Atlas Shrugged*. As she relates this episode, Branden slips in, almost as an aside, a revealing remark Rand made many years later: "When we parted, I firmly intended to meet [that boy] again when I grew up. . . . Sometimes, to this day, I wonder what happened to him." This seemingly casual remark sounds a leitmotif that will echo through Rand's life—her unfulfilled quest for an ideal man. If she could not find such a man in real life, however, she could create him in her fiction, and could attempt (with tragic consequences)—as Branden gradually reveals—to create him in her life.

Atlas Shrugged

The greater portion of *The Passion of Ayn Rand* is devoted to the events surrounding the writing and publication of Rand's major novels—*We the Living*, *The Fountainhead*, and *Atlas Shrugged*. By virtue of her extensive interviews with Rand (which included detailed discussions of the novels) and her intimate friendship with the novelist during seven of the fourteen years spent writing *Atlas Shrugged*, Branden knows as much as anyone about Rand's literary method and style and the genesis and intent of the themes and characters of her novels—though mention should also be made of Nathaniel Branden's astute analysis of the novels, which was published with Rand's approval in 1962 as the principal portion of *Who Is Ayn Rand?* (for which Barbara wrote the brief biographical essay).

In particular, Barbara Branden's richly detailed account of Rand's life during the creation of *Atlas Shrugged*—from the evening in 1943 when the novelist first conceived the idea, through its eventual publication in 1957—is a noteworthy contribution to literary biography. For those fourteen years, Branden writes, "*Atlas Shrugged* was the center of [Rand's] life and thoughts, alive within her as her battle cry, her armor and her holy grail." In John Galt, the novel's principal hero, Rand concretized her vision of the ideal man, going far beyond the elemental requirements of character, plot, and theme to formulate a complete philosophical system and a narrative of staggering complexity. While Galt is the ideal vehicle for Rand's philosophy, Hank Rearden is the far more interesting character in human terms (and, thus, the greater favorite among many readers). Unlike Galt, who is fully formed at the outset and struggles only with an antagonistic world, Rearden is torn by inner conflicts as well, and grows to resolve them in the course of the novel—as Branden points out.

Branden's chronicling of Rand's Promethean struggle and ultimate triumph

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Branden's chronicling of Rand's Promethean struggle and ultimate triumph in the creation of *Atlas Shrugged* drives home the enormity of the novelist's achievement.

new identity, choosing first the name Ayn (from a Finnish writer whose work she had never read but whose name struck her fancy)—pronounced to rhyme with "mine"—and later Rand (from the Remington-Rand typewriter she had brought with her from Russia). Through episodes of her early years in Hollywood—where she met and began to work for Cecil B. DeMille (her youthful "ideal of the American screen")—we begin to see the impact of her powerful personality. DeMille was one of many individuals throughout her life who, captivated by her intensity and intelligence and impressed by

wasn't contained in that. Except that being the first, the intensity was almost unbearable. I was a woman in love in a serious sense. . . . Cyrus was a personal inspiration, a concrete of what . . . a man should be like. . . . What I called "my kind of man" . . . began with that story. Intelligence, independence, courage. The heroic man.

That summer, the nine-year-old Alice resolved to become a writer.

That summer, too, Alice traveled with her family to the Swiss Alps, where she

Branden's Rand

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in the creation of this monumental work drives home the enormity of the novelist's achievement. Wisely, Branden also shows that the years of titanic effort were relieved and rewarded by occasional moments of exhilaration—as when Rand drove the engine of The Twentieth Century Limited, a bit of research that contributed to one of the most thrilling episodes in the novel.

Personal Tragedy

It was in 1950, halfway through the creation of *Atlas Shrugged*, that Rand first met Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, who were then young undergraduates. She was instantly attracted to these youthful admirers, and the calamity of her subsequent affair with Nathaniel was the greater for the intensity of her relationship with Barbara, which—incredibly—continued for years after the affair was acknowledged. To this unhappy narrative, which has the depth and inexorability of Greek tragedy, Branden brings all her humanity, insight, and honesty. Some of Branden's detractors have questioned the propriety of her intimate revelations about Rand, a woman who exhibited a profound sense of privacy in her lifetime. Far from being prurient in nature, however, Branden's account is fundamental to an understanding of Rand, who placed enormous philosophical as well as psychological importance on sexuality in her fiction as in her personal life.

As related by Branden, the dramatic climax of the affair, and of the biography itself, is a scene of cataclysmic emotion, in which Rand unleashes all her fury upon Nathaniel, for having betrayed her—while Barbara stands helplessly by and Frank O'Connor sits slumped in numb passivity. The scene is overwhelming in its impact on the sympathetic reader, who has come to feel compassion for all the players in the course of Branden's narrative.

Ultimately, it is Frank O'Connor—gentle, unassuming, considerate—who emerges as the most endearing and touching character of Branden's narrative. Not at all like the hero of Rand's imagination, he nevertheless seemed to fill a vital need in her. Yet, for all her genuine love of him, he never achieved true selfhood in her overpowering presence. Not until late in his life, at the age of fifty-eight, did he discover painting—something he could claim as his own—and a kind of sanctuary at the Art Students League ("the one place," he said, "where I'm liked for myself"). Branden portrays him with sensitivity and profound affection. Their final brief, chance meeting in the elevator of the building where both lived—"the most painful moment of all the painful moments of that year," Branden recalls—must surely be one of the most deeply felt vignettes in biographic literature.

Rand's Views on Art

Barbara Branden has publicly stated that one of her principal motives for writing her *Life of Rand* was to separate the often negative influence of her personality from the positive value of her philosophical principles. Nowhere is this more needed

Manifesto]. Yet if one of her young friends responded as she did to Rachmaninoff . . . she attached deep significance to their affinity. . . .

Rand was relentless in her attempts to persuade those around her who held

Though some may continue to question Branden's motives and veracity, posterity will, I believe, grant her a well-earned place alongside her illustrious predecessors—Plutarch, Gregory, Roper, Johnson, and Boswell—who wrote not panegyrics, but Lives.

than in the sphere of esthetics, to which Rand made an immense theoretical contribution but in which she wrought havoc with her often arbitrary, inherently contradictory, judgmental pronouncements on the arts and on individual artists, writers, and composers—pronouncements which frequently revealed significant gaps in her knowledge and understanding.

Rand not only convinced Branden (and others in her circle) of her own peremptory views on Van Gogh ("too undisciplined" to be great), on Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* ("deeply malevolent"), and on Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (too "profoundly tragic" to be acceptable), but excoriated the "grim, unfocused malevolence" of Rembrandt; Shakespeare's "abysmal failure" to present human beings with free will; and Beethoven's "tragic sense of doom." She also dismissed all Impressionist painting as "murky and unfocused," and most of literature as "anti-Romantic and unstylized." In short, her taste in the arts did not leave her followers much to like.

It is worth noting that, among Rand's friends and admirers, only two individuals—novelists Erica Holzer (author of *Double Crossing*) and Kay Nolte Smith (whose most recent novel, *Elegy for a Soprano*, deals, interestingly, with the theme of the tyranny of genius)—have achieved any artistic prominence, in both cases only after their personal relationship with Rand ended. On the other hand, there has been an endless stream of tediously pretentious, superficial imitations of Rand's heroic sense of life among her admirers.

Particularly in the field of music, Rand's personal predilections explicitly contradicted her theoretical constructs on the subject. In Branden's words:

. . . She began to demand fidelity even in those areas that she herself had defined as subjective. . . . She had said, and continued to say, that the validity of one's musical tastes could not be philosophically demonstrated: not enough was understood about the mechanism by which music was interpreted by the brain and translated into emotional responses [see "Art and Cognition" in *The Romantic*

dissenting views that only her tastes were valid. When even such long-time intimates and colleagues as Joan and Allan Blumenthal (she is an accomplished painter and teacher; he is a psychiatrist and former concert pianist) emphatically disagreed with her sweeping dismissal of such composers as Handel, Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, she incessantly lectured them on the "psychological and psycho-epistemological errors in their tastes." Far more damaging, she sometimes went so far as to reject not only the differing views on art but the people who held them.

The Fountainhead Is Ayn Rand

Significantly, Branden chooses to end her *Life of Rand* with a fifteen-page survey of the enormous range and depth of influence Rand's ideas have had in our time. In an impressive enumeration of the men and women who have been inspired by Rand, and of their achievements in nearly every sphere of endeavor—an enumeration held together by the repeated phrases "the fountainhead is Ayn Rand," and "her impact can be found in . . ."—Branden makes clear her own final assessment of her subject.

* * *

While *The Passion of Ayn Rand* is not without flaws (occasionally lapsing into overly ornate prose, unsupported assertions, or factual errors), Branden's achievement (much like Rand's own) far outweighs any shortcomings. For she succeeds in bringing to life one of the most complex creative geniuses of our age. Hers is likely to remain the definitive biography of Ayn Rand. Future attempts may be cast from different points of view, adding new perspectives and details, but none is likely to more dramatically or convincingly recreate the unique and complex woman who was Ayn Rand, or more movingly demonstrate the essential beneficence of her intellectual legacy.

And, though some may continue to question Branden's motives and veracity, posterity will, I believe, grant her a well-earned place alongside her illustrious predecessors—Plutarch, Gregory, Roper, Johnson, and Boswell—who wrote not panegyrics, but Lives. A

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Selected Works by Ayn Rand

Fiction

- Anthem*. London: Cassell and Company, 1938; revised edition, Los Angeles: Pamphleteers, Inc., 1946; Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1953; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1946.
- Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Random House, 1957; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1959.
- The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction*. New York: New American Library, 1984; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1985.

- The Fountainhead*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1952.
- We the Living*. New York: Macmillan, 1936; London: Cassell and Company, 1937; New York: Random House, 1959; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1959.

Esthetics

- The Romantic Manifesto*. New York: World Publishing Company, 1969; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, 1971.

Author's Note

For the past twenty-seven years, I have been an active, independent Objectivist. First as an eager student, and then as an enthusiastic advocate and propagator of the fundamental principles of Ayn Rand's philosophy, I have attended over these three decades innumerable lectures given by Rand and her associates (including Barbara and Nathaniel Branden), and have become personally acquainted with a number of the individuals most closely associated with her during her lifetime.

Moreover, I have drawn profound and lasting inspiration from Ayn Rand's novels. And I am incalculably indebted to her for her definition of art and for her formulation of related esthetic principles. They form the theoretical foundation on which *Aristos* is based, and also inspired and informed my teaching of English and esthetics on the high school level for many years. *Aristos* is most emphatically not an "Objectivist" publication, however, and I explicitly disavow many of the specific pronouncements Rand made on the arts.

Acknowledgment

Special credit is due to Michelle Marder Kamhi, Associate Editor of *Aristos*, for her invaluable contribution to both the content and the presentation of this article.

On Responsible Criticism

A letter from *Aristos* regarding a review of *The Passion of Ayn Rand* was published in *Library Journal*, February 15, 1987. In it, we praised the reviewer's positive comments about the biography, but also corrected his serious misrepresentation of Ayn Rand.

The *New York Times* does occasionally listen to reason. The best-seller listing of Branden's biography at first described Ayn Rand as the author of *The Fountainhead*, but a subsequent listing added the words "and founder of a cult." A letter from *Aristos*, pointing out that the concept of individualism (antithetical to cults) is central to Rand's philosophy and novels, caused the *Times* to drop the erroneous characterization (as *Aristos* was informed by a member of the newspaper's Book Review staff).

Aristos

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