Centenary Symposium, Part I
Ayn Rand: Literary and Cultural Impact

The Illustrated Rand

Chris Matthew Sciabarra

Introduction

This issue of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* marks the beginning of a two-part Centennial Celebration of Ayn Rand's legacy. Born on 2 February 1905,[1] Rand lived an extraordinary life, while leaving an indelible mark on intellectual history. That this journal was founded —and that it's now, in its sixth year of publication, indexed by over a dozen scholarly abstracting services—is just one small indication of the extent of her influence.[2]

This Fall 2004 Centenary Symposium focuses broadly on cultural and literary impact—whether it be Rand's impact on culture and literature (see essays by Jeff Riggenbach, Matthew Stoloff, and the current one) or the impact of culture on Rand (Cathy Young and Bernice Rosenthal) or the inspiration that Rand provides for literary theory (Stephen Cox), literary method (Erika Holzer), poetics (Kirsti Minsaas), and a cultural renaissance (Alexandra York).

In the Spring 2005 issue, we will feature our second Centenary Symposium, "Ayn Rand Among the Austrians," which will focus on the engagement of Rand with Austrian-school thinkers in economics and social theory.

Rand and the Academy

Rand's admirers revel in the fact that two decades after the author's death, sales of her combined works continue at a brisk pace. But Rand's impact can be measured in ways far beyond book sales, as the exponential increase in scholarly and popular references to the author illustrates (sometimes *literally*, as we will soon see).

Of course, mere *mentions* of Rand do not necessarily translate into

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influence, especially when many of the mentions are *negative*. But there is truth to Oscar Wilde's maxim, as enunciated in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "[T]here is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (Wilde 1994, 19). The fact that Rand has so profoundly entered the Zeitgeist is something that needs to be celebrated. What we are witnessing is nothing less than Rand's cultural ascendancy as an iconic figure.[3]

In the scholarly world, Rand's thought has been the subject of serious treatment in more and more journals, encyclopedias, texts, and books.[4] Her ideas have been discussed in a wide diversity of publications: *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*; *American Philosophical Quarterly*; *Aristos: The Journal of Esthetics*; *British Journal of Political Science*; *Catholic World*; *Choice*; *College English*; *Commentary*; *Cycnos*; *Developmental Review*; *English Journal*; *Germano-Slavica: Canadian Journal of Germanic and Slavic Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies*; *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*; *The Humanist*; *Impact of Science on Society*; *International Journal of Social Economics*; *International Review of Economics and Ethics*; *Journal of Business Ethics*; *Journal of Canadian Studies*; *Journal of Clinical Psychology*; *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*; *Journal of Libertarian Studies*; *Journal of Philosophical Research*; *Journal of Popular Culture*; *Journal of Reading*; *Journal of Thought*; *Journal of Value Inquiry*; *Library Journal*; *The Monist*;[5] *New University Thought*; *Nomos*; *The Occasional Review*; *The Personalist*; *Philosophical Books*; *Philosophy Research Archives*; *Policy Review*; *Political Studies*; *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*; *Reason Papers*; *Religious Humanism*; *Resources for American Literary Study*; *Social Justice Review*; *Social Research*; *Teaching Philosophy*; *Theory & Psychology*; and *University of Windsor Review*.[6]

Articles on Rand are also making their appearance in various encyclopedias and reference works, including *American Authors and Books*; *American Novelists of Today*; *American Philosophers 1950–2000* (a volume of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*); *American Writers*; *Contemporary Authors*; *Contemporary Literary Criticism*; *Contemporary Novelists*; *Contemporary Women Philosophers*; *Encyclopedia of Ethics*; *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; *Encyclopedia of World Literature*; *Handbook of American Literature*; *History of American Thought*; *Oxford Companion to American Literature*; *Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*; *Twentieth*

Century Authors; *Women in World History*; and the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of the Counterculture*, *Encyclopedia of Libertarianism*, and *Encyclopedia of New York State*, among others. Excerpts from Rand's work are also included in anthologies in economics, political science, sociology, philosophy, and business, while full-length book studies are being published by trade and university presses alike—an upsurge in scholarly attention that has been noted by such periodicals as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the now-defunct *Lingua Franca*. Even *CliffsNotes* includes three Rand titles in its series.

Rand and Popular Culture

In addition to the encouraging growth of Rand references in scholarly circles, there has been a remarkable growth in such references throughout popular culture. That development is not measured solely by her influence on authors in various genres—from bodybuilder Mike Mentzer to fiction writers Edward Cline, Neil De Rosa, Beth Elliott, James P. Hogan, Erika Holzer, Helen Knode, Victor Koman, Ira Levin, Karen Michalson, Shelly Reuben, Kay Nolte Smith, L. Neil Smith, Alexandra York, and so many others.[7] It is measured also by the number of Rand-like characters or outright references to Rand that have appeared in fictional works of various lengths and quality. Among these are works by: Gene Bell-Villada (*The Pianist Who Liked Ayn Rand*); William Buckley (*Getting It Right*); Don De Grazia (*American Skin*); Jeffrey Eugenides (author of the 2003 Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Middlesex*); Mary Gaitskill (*Two Girls, Fat and Thin*); John Gardner (*Mickelsson's Ghosts*); Laci Golos (*Sacred Cows Are Black and White*); Sky Gilbert (*The Emotionalists*); Rebecca Gilman (*Spinning into Butter*); Terry Goodkind (books in the *Sword of Truth* series, such as *Faith of the Fallen* and *Naked Empire*); David Gulbraa (*Tales of the Mall Masters*; *An Elevator to the Future: A Fable of Reason Underground*); Robert A. Heinlein (*The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*); Orlando Outland (*Death Wore a Fabulous New Fragrance*); Robert Rodi (*Fag Hag*); Matt Ruff (*Sewer, Gas, and Electric: The Public Works Trilogy*); J. Neil Schulman (*The Rainbow Cadenza*; *Escape from Heaven*); Victor Sperandeo (*Cra$hmaker: A Federal Affaire*); Tobias Wolff (*Old School*);

and, finally, Tony Kushner, whose play *Angels in America*, adapted for HBO, includes a discussion of the "visible scars" from rough sex, "like a sex scene in an Ayn Rand novel" (Kushner 1994, 4.8.112).

The Kushner drama is not the first time that Rand's name has been heard on television, however. Rand has made her way into countless television programs. From questions on game shows, such as "Jeopardy" and "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," to the canceled Fox series "Undeclared," and such other series as "Columbo" (a 1994 episode with William Shatner, "Butterfly in Shades of Grey"), "Home Improvement," "The Gilmore Girls" (*two* episodes: "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" and "They Shoot Gilmores, Don't They?"), "Frasier," and "Judging Amy," the Rand references are plentiful. In Gene Roddenberry's sci-fi series "Andromeda," there is a colony called the "Ayn Rand Station," founded by a species of "Nietzsch-eans." In Showtime's "Queer as Folk," a leading character, free-spirit Brian Kinney, is described as "the love-child of James Dean and Ayn Rand." And the WB's "One Tree Hill" showcased Rand's work in an episode entitled, "Are You True?" The main character, Lucas, is given *Atlas Shrugged* by a fellow classmate. Increasingly frustrated by his basketball troubles, Lucas is told "Don't let 'em take it: Your talent. It's all yours." By the end of the episode, we hear Lucas's voice-over as he walks to the basketball court: "Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark." Reading from the John Galt speech, he tells us: "Do not let the hero in your soul perish."

Rand's presence on television is not restricted to live action dramas or sitcoms. It has also been felt in cartoons. In a "Futurama" episode entitled "Second That Emotion," the character Bender holds up *Atlas Shrugged* while commenting that, in the sewer among the mutants, they find "nothing but crumpled porn and Ayn Rand."[8] In an infamous "South Park" episode called "Chickenlover," *Atlas Shrugged* is presented to Officer Barbrady, who has recently learned how to read, and who, upon seeing the massive size of Rand's novel, laments his achievements in literacy.[9]

More philosophically astute, perhaps, are the Rand references on "The Simpsons," the longest-running animated show in television history.[10] As William Irwin and J. R. Lombardo (2001, 85) tell us in

The Simpsons and Philosophy:

> [I]n "A Streetcar Named Marge," Maggie is placed in the "Ayn Rand School for Tots" where the proprietor, Mr. Sinclair, reads *The Fountainhead Diet.* To understand why pacifiers are taken away from Maggie and the other children one has to catch the allusion to the radical libertarian philosophy of Ayn Rand. Recognizing and understanding this allusion yields much more pleasure than would a straightforward explanation that Maggie has been placed in a daycare facility in which tots are trained to fend for themselves, not to depend on others, not even to depend on their pacifiers.

Rand, Branden, and Illustrated Media

Another barometer of Rand's cultural ascendancy is the extent of her permeation into that other illustrated medium: comics.[11] Rand (1995, 386) had recognized the comic strip as a legitimate literary exercise in fiction, "a variation of stage or movie technique," which can successfully dramatize ideas. In fact, her own introduction to Romantic literature was *The Mysterious Valley* (1915) by Maurice Champagne, a richly illustrated adventure story serialized in a boys' magazine. The illustration of its hero, Cyrus, so impressed Rand as the perfect *physical* embodiment of her ideal man, that she admitted to Barbara Branden (1986, 12) that the appearance of all of her own heroes was a derivative, "completely taken from that illustration."[12]

Interestingly, psychologist Nathaniel Branden was similarly attracted to illustrated media as a youngster.[13] He remarked that such media "are a kind of child's projection of the heroic." So it is unsurprising that Rand herself would exert some influence on those comic artists who have extolled heroic and super-heroic values in physical, symbolic, and metaphorical ways. The comic hero, like the Randian hero, revels in his "outsider" status. "They are all the outsiders," Branden observes.[14] "They are all doing good work, but are, in many ways, unappreciated, misunderstood or even opposed"

(in Hagen 1992b, 37).

Branden's favorite childhood heroes—the Lone Ranger, Superman, Batman, and, later, the Scarlet Pimpernel—were all "masked," "disguised," or "invisible" men.[15] Rand once told Branden that, as he aged, he had clearly "kept the same values—daring, audacity, independence"—while "adjusting the form of their expression. . . ." But she was perceptive enough to see that the disguised heroes of Branden's youth struck a chord in his own feelings of isolation (Branden 1999, 48–49)—characteristics felt, perhaps, by those who have responded with equal passion to Rand's fiction, as they search for a visible manifestation of their values.[16]

Given the passionate responses that illustrated fiction has inspired, it is perhaps no surprise that Rand herself understood the importance of using such media to spread her ideas. She had authorized King Features to produce an illustrated condensation of *The Fountainhead*, long before its production as a film.[17] The serial began its run on Christmas Eve, 1945. "The Illustrated *Fountainhead*" was syndicated in over thirty-five newspapers, domestically—in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, and San Francisco, and, globally—in Caracas, La Paz, and Buenos Aires.

Michael S. Berliner explains (in Rand 1998, 3) that due to the increasing popularity of *The Fountainhead*, King Features had proposed to syndicate an illustrated condensation of the novel. Rand "oversaw the whole process, writing much of the copy for the thirty installments. By contract, she had the right to approve the artist's proposed visualizations of the characters, to approve a general outline of the scenes, and to approve and edit 'every word' of the condensation. She was also guaranteed that Roark's speech would occupy at least one day of the series." The serial is not an authentic comic strip of sequential art, but more along the lines of illustrated prose. Rand admired the illustrations of artist Frank Godwin.

The Fountainhead was not the only illustrated Rand work. Rand had been convinced of the multimedia potential of *Anthem* as well. On 5 September 1946, she had written to Walt Disney—with whom she served as a member in the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (B. Branden 1986, 199)—in the

hopes of persuading him to translate the book into "stylized" animation. Cecil B. DeMille had suggested that she contact his niece, choreographer Agnes DeMille, to produce a ballet based on *Anthem* (Rand 1995, 317).[18] *Anthem* was eventually dramatized for radio broadcast in September 1950 (Rand 1995, 475, 479), and was adapted as an illustrated work thereafter.

The illustrated *Anthem* appeared in June 1953, in the last issue (volume 14, number 4) of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. Frank Robinson (1999) explains that both *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Fantastic Novels* included covers and interiors by Virgil Finlay, Frank R. Paul, and Lawrence Sterne Stevens ("Lawrence"). Book reprints in the science fiction genre were featured regularly in these publications. When *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* passed into the hands of another publisher, however, "readers were startled to find" a movement away "[f]rom the pulp novels of Abraham Merritt, George Allan England, Ralph Milne Farley, and Austin Hall," and toward "Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Lord Dunsany, William Hope Hodgson, G. K. Chesterton, Jack London, and Ayn Rand" (102). Lawrence was the illustrator for the *Anthem* issue, which was identified as "A Classic by Ayn Rand (Author of 'The Fountainhead')."[19]

Rand's impact on illustrated media goes far beyond the adaptation of her work; her ideas have had a significant influence on many writers and artists in the comics industry, as well as illustrators and cartoonists. And Nathaniel Branden suspects that this influence will grow. "It will be felt, and often it will show up in ways that people will not necessarily know. That's the nature of the universe," he adds. "Nobody, each time he says or does something, can announce all of the influences of his life. But . . . I'm quite convinced [Rand's] influence will persist" (45).

It does persist: in the classic 1991 Revolutionary comics series, by writer Patrick McCray and artist David Lloyd, *Elvis Shrugged*, which asks "Is Elvis alive?" with the same air of mystery as "Who is John Galt?"; in the work of cartoonists, such as James Cox and Allen Forkum (see Forkum 2002);[20] in the *Atlas Shrugged* spoof, "Kiki Shrugged," by cartoonist Peter Abrams at Sluggy Freelance;[21] in the *Atlas Shrugged* "sequel," *Atlas Shrugged 2: One Hour Later*, part of Bob

the Angry Flower's "Classic Literature Sequels";[22] and in the work of comic book writers and artists, such as Steve Ditko, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Barney Steele, and Bosch Fawstin (2004), as well as David Anthony Draft, publisher of *Comics Interview* (see Hagen 1992b, 36).

Steve Ditko and Frank Miller

No comic artist has been better known for incorporating Randian themes in his work than Steve Ditko, co-creator, with Stan Lee, of "Spider-Man."[23] Among Ditko's comic book heroes, one will find Static,[24] The Creeper, The Blue Beetle, and Mr. A (as in "A is A"), as well as the faceless crime fighter known as The Question,[25] whom Lawrence (2001) has characterized as the quintessential Ditko character reflecting "the artist's Objectivist beliefs."[26]

Ditko emerged from—and shaped—the "Silver Age" of late '50s, '60s, and early '70s comic book art. His work is in keeping with that era's use of the comic genre as a "vehicle for consciousness-raising every bit as much as popular films and television shows" (Skoble 2003, 185).[27]

Consciousness raising in comics was not always the norm. In the Golden Age, which began around 1939 and extended through the '40s, comic book superheroes were a virtual arm of the government war effort, doing battle against European and Pacific enemies. Later, psychiatrist Frederick Wertham conducted studies into abnormal behavior in young people and, in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), claimed that American youth had been corrupted through their consumption of comic books, which depicted latent homosexuality (Batman and Robin), fantasies of sadistic joy (Superman), and un-woman-like behavior (Wonder Woman). This prompted Estes Kefauver's judicial committee to hold congressional hearings in 1954 on the subject of "Comic Books and Juvenile Delinquency." Fearing government censorship, the Comics Code Authority emerged to self-police the industry (Kroopnick 2003). Perhaps recalling this 1950s attack on that industry, Rand herself had expressed exasperation with those "[m]odern intellectuals [who] used to denounce the influence

of comic strips on children . . ." ("The Comprachicos" in Rand 1975a, 232).

The naysayers were at least partially correct in their assumptions. As Paul Buhle (2003, B7) suggests, the increased interest in the impact of comics derives from the fact that "mass culture, from the early moments when we could take it in as children, has affected us." Buhle, who founded the journal *Radical America*, recognized in '60s comics an "underground" art form that encapsulated "resentment toward, and resistance of, authority in all forms," which "added up to a barely visible political aesthetic" (B9). The '60s superhero revival had collided with the counterculture, mirroring its rebellion and dissent. Alan Moore, who has been characterized as "the most acclaimed writer currently working in mainstream comics" (Wolk 2003, 9), observes that Ditko's brilliant artistry in particular—from "his psychedelic 'Dr. Strange'" to the "teen-angst of Spider-Man"—appealed to many in the left-wing counterculture, despite the fact that his explicit ideology was Randian and "right wing."[28] Indeed, despite Moore's left-wing anarchist predilections, and his view of "Ayn Rand's philosophy [as] laughable" and elitist, he recognized the Randian nature of Ditko's "political agenda," and retained the utmost "respect for Ditko" and for his ability to express that agenda with an "uncompromising attitude." In the *Watchmen*, Moore actually resurrects Ditko's Mr. A and The Question (whose "real" name was Victor Sage) through the character Rorschach, whom he portrays as a raving right-wing vigilante (Cooke 2000).

In a way, Ditko's appearance, like Rand's, was of a unique historical moment.[29] As Rodney Schroeter (1987, 51) remarks:

> In the late '60s the mainstream media made a most astounding discovery: Comics could deal with "relevant" issues. . . . Steve Ditko did not limit himself to specific current-event issues. He explored the values and philosophies behind them, and their wider consequences. Nor was he content to simply denounce something bad; he offered positive alternatives. As such, he surpassed what most of the relevant comics attempted. Many comics stories dealt with racism.

> Ditko attacked the underlying cause of racism: Collectivism, the idea that the individual is nothing while the group is all. In place of collectivism, Ditko espoused individualism, the idea that a person should be considered on his merits alone, not on the basis of his race, his tribe, or nationality.

In this respect, Ditko was a consummate *radical*, seeking to go to the *root* of social problems. In attacking government corruption, he focused on its roots in philosophic pragmatism. In attacking war, he focused on the illegitimacy of initiating the use of force (51–52; Ditko 1985, 36–38).

Ditko's prose is indisputably Randian, motivated by a profound concern for life and for an uncompromising devotion to justice. In *Safest Place in the World*, for example, Ditko (1993) exposes the dynamics of a society that persecutes freethinking individuals, by showing how even the oppressors become victims themselves, at the mercy of anyone who wants to get ahead through the unearned—through backstabbing, betrayal, and paranoia. Ditko (1985) rails against those who proclaim there are no absolutes. He rejects the doctrine of "hatred of the good for being good" (19). He proclaims the virtues of justice wherein "every man be recognized for what he is and be treated accordingly, his virtues praised, his vices condemned" (29). In Ditko's stories, "[n]o man really escapes justice because[,] *psychologically*, no man escapes himself! Irrationality is injustice to *oneself! Reality is the ultimate justice!*" (105).

There is, perhaps, no better way to grasp Rand's influence on Ditko than to simply let Ditko speak for himself. The following passages appear in Volume 1 of *The Ditko Collection*, and they are all taken from Ditko's "Mr. A"—which is drawn, appropriately, in sharp blacks and whites:

> I don't abuse my emotions. I have no mercy or compassion for the aggressors . . . only for their victims . . . for the innocent! To have any sympathy for a killer is an insult to their victims. (8)

> Fools will tell you that there can be no honest person! That there are no blacks or whites. . . . That everyone is gray! But if there are no blacks or whites, there cannot even be a gray. Since grayness is just a mixture of black and white! So when one knows what is black, evil, and what is white, good, there can be no justification for choosing any part of evil! Those who do so choose, are not gray but black and evil . . . and they will be treated accordingly! (4)

> Justice demands that man's principles be fixed in terms of good and evil, black and white! Man is not infallible! He is not to be judged black, if after unwittingly committing an error, he takes measures to correct it! But any man who deliberately commits an evil act will be so judged and treated accordingly! No man shall profit from choosing to be evil at the expense of those who choose to be good! (9)

And in a passage inspired by a speech from *Atlas Shrugged*, given by the character Francisco d'Anconia (see Rand [1957] 1992, 410–15), Ditko's Mr. A extols the virtues of money:

> Only fools will tell you that money is the root of all evil! Money is the tool of exchange, a tool that first must be made before it can be used, begged, stolen or earned! And it has to be made by the productive abilities of men! Is that evil? Money is made by, and the rightful tool of, honest people! For people who can exchange their abilities for an equal value: Money! And that money is exchanged for an equal value in products and services provided by other men's abilities. Is that evil? Beggars and thieves exchange nothing for their wants and demands of someone else's earned wealth, nor the cheats and corrupters who knowingly deal in the inferior, the illegal, and the non-value for a true value: Money! And that is evil! (Ditko 1985, 9)

If Ditko is the gold standard by which to measure Rand's impact

on comics, Frank Miller—famous for the Batman "Dark Knight" series, Daredevil series, and Ronin series—follows closely behind. This may be surprising; Nathaniel Branden, for instance (in Hagen 1992b, 35), was deeply impressed with Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*, but very surprised to hear that Miller owed *any* debt to Rand because "his view of life seems to be rather dark."[30] Miller's Randian influence is less political than it is aesthetic and literary, insofar as he constructs single-minded, intransigent characters. He credits Rand's *Romantic Manifesto* as having helped him to define the nature of the literary hero and the legitimacy of heroic fiction (in Hagen 1992a, 10).[31] And in an "Afterword" to *Martha Washington Goes to War*,[32] Miller expresses his debt to Rand even more explicitly:

> We all borrow from the classics from time to time, and my story for this chapter in the life of Martha Washington is no exception. Faced with the questions of how to present Martha's rite of passage and how to describe the fundamental changes in Martha's world, I was drawn again and again to the ideas presented by Ayn Rand in her 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Eschewing the easy and much-used totalitarian menace made popular by George Orwell, Rand focused instead on issues of competence and incompetence, courage and cowardice, and took the fate of humanity out of the hands of a convenient "Big Brother" and placed it in the hands of individuals with individual strengths and individual choices made for good or evil. I gratefully and humbly acknowledge the creative debt. (in Miller and Gibbons 1995, 137)

Quite clearly, that "creative debt" to Ayn Rand is widely owed by many scholars, writers, and artists. When Rand has become so embedded in the American psyche that her ideas are filtered through encyclopedias and textbooks, cartoons and comics, fiction and film, I think it is safe to assume that she has not only survived, but flourished. And for those who are enamored of Rand's *philosophy*, the cultural apex will be reached when her *ideas* are so embedded in the

American psyche that they will have brought about a veritable intellectual revolution.

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Notes

1. The actual date of Rand's birth is 20 January 1905, according to the Julian calendar, in use in pre-revolutionary Russia.

2. For a discussion of this journal's progress, see Sciabarra 2003b. An earlier, much briefer, treatment of the issues discussed in the current essay can be found in Sciabarra 2003e.

3. For discussion of Rand's impact on other aspects of popular culture, including her impact on the rock band Rush and on progressive rock music in general, see Sciabarra 2002; 2003c.

4. For recent surveys of Rand scholarship, see Sciabarra 1998; 2003a; 2003d.

5. See especially Smith 1992, in which Douglas Rasmussen acted as an advisory editor. This issue of *The Monist*, on teleology and values, includes essays referencing Rand by Harry Binswanger and Douglas J. Den Uyl.

6. For a further bibliographic listing of sources, see Gladstein 1999 and, online, The Objectivist Reference Pointer (maintained by Matthew Stoloff at <http://home.netcom.com/~magnus2/>) and The Objectivist Reference Center (maintained by Richard Lawrence at <http://www.noblesoul.com/orc/index.html>). A further listing of "Ayn Rand Research Sources on the Web" can be found on the website of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* at <http://www.aynrandstudies.com/jars/links.asp>.

7. For a provocative exchange between two of these authors, see York 1983; Holzer 2003a. See also Holzer 2003b. There are other authors who claim to have gone through a Rand phase, while not having been influenced by her philosophical or literary legacy. See, for example, Prescott 2003.

8. See <http://www.geocities.com/theneutralplanet/transcripts/season2/2ACV01.html>.

9. See <http://home.arcor.de/pla-scripts/scripts-203.htm>.

10. Insightful commentary on *The Simpsons* is offered by literary and cultural theorist Paul Cantor (in Carson 2003), who admits to having been influenced by Ayn Rand.

11. A full defense of comics-as-art-form is beyond the scope of this paper. However, something needs to be said in response to the assertions of those writers—such as conservative John Podhoretz (2004), self-confessed "anti-comic-book snob"—who dismiss comics as "the most immature and illiterate of cultural forms," "the province of powerless boys . . . a cultural embarrassment because the common culture has unthinkingly and stupidly accepted them as an art form." Podhoretz views this acceptance as the "natural outcome of the youth-worship that took over American culture in the 1960s . . ." (Interestingly, this is the same kind of attitude

directed against "adolescent" expressions of admiration for Rand, which are dismissed as a vestige of "youth.")

In truth, however, comics provide a kind of mythology for the modern age. They are generally defined as "sequential art." A more detailed definition is provided by McCloud 1993. Taking a cue from master comics artist Will Eisner, McCloud defines comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). He roots the medium in epic stories, which were pictured on walls among the ancient Egyptians and the pre-Columbians, or in tapestries (e.g., the Bayeux Tapestry), or even in "collage novels" (such as those of Max Ernst). McCloud celebrates the visual iconography of the comics form; his book is a fine introduction to the topic. See also Carrier 2001.

Another important development in the comics art form is the rise of the graphic novel. See especially McGrath 2004, which characterizes the graphic novel as "the comic book with a brain . . . It is its own thing: an integrated whole, of words and images both, where the pictures don't just depict the story; they're part of the telling" (30).

12. There is also a "Cyrus" (Cyrus Smith) in Jules Verne's similarly titled book *The Mysterious Island* (1875), and a similarly heroic historical figure, the Persian king Cyrus, who was greeted as a liberator in ancient Babylonia, and who allowed 40,000 Jews to return to Palestine in 537 B.C.E. Thanks to Joseph Maurone for these points.

13. Leonard Peikoff tells us too that, as a child, he had a "mammoth collection of comic books. . . . I was on that intellectual level. I had every Captain Marvel, Superman, and Batman . . ." See Little 2004.

14. On "outsider" and "insider" perspectives in Rand's fiction, see Cox 1999.

15. One geographic parallel between many of the classic superheroes and Rand's protagonists should be noted: Kidd (2002) points out that Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man each occupied New York (though the first two portray the city as Metropolis and Gotham City, respectively). See also Hermann 2004. Rand's characters in both *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* act out many of their dramas with New York as backdrop.

16. Branden notes too (in Hagen 1992, 43) that most superheroes, even Roark and Galt, are orphans, expressing a "very, very American . . . idea," even if some of these characteristics transcend American culture. "Part of the American vision is that the individual can create himself, can invent himself. And I think that the way that you dramatize independence is by showing the lack of the usual external resources or sources of help that average people have. So what you do is, you dramatize self-sufficiency and independence and self-invention." Branden admits he doesn't "know enough" to support one further contention, but he thinks that the "emphasis on aloneness" might even be "part of our frontier heritage," partially derivable from Native American Indians, "[b]ecause I suspect that a lot of what we call 'uniquely American' is fed by kind of subterranean waters by at least some aspects of Indian culture." Branden also has this to say about the power of comics: "If they inspire you—if you use it as energy to live more heroically in real-life, adult terms—then they have performed one of the most important services of romantic art. But if instead they become merely a kind of alternative reality, where in your dreams you're somebody daring and brave and courageous, but in your actual life you are a mediocrity who never aspires to anything at all challenging . . . [t]hen the problem is that they helped you stay passive, rather than inspire you to become active. . . . It all depends on the context, and it all depends on what the individual makes of the experience of reading the stories" (41).

17. It should be noted that the Japanese translation of *The Fountainhead*, published in July 2004, has a cover illustration by Nobuyuki Ohnishi, an artist famous

for that classic form of Japanese animation, anime. Ohnishi's *Fountainhead* cover is from an oil painting of the New York skyline (he is equally famous for his paintings and drawings of the skyscrapers of New York, post-9/11).

In addition to its illustrated version, *The Fountainhead* was also adapted for the screen by Ayn Rand in 1949, a film version starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Discussions about a remake have been bandied about for years, with both director Oliver Stone and actor Brad Pitt expressing interest. See <http://www.theatlasphere.com/metablog/000131.php>.

Other Rand works have had successful film adaptations. An acclaimed Italian film version of *We the Living* made its debut in 1942. The film rights to *Anthem* have been purchased by Jim Snider and Kevin O'Quinn (see <http://www.theatlasphere.com/metablog/000027.php>), while film rights to *Atlas Shrugged* have been acquired by Crusader Entertainment, LLC (see <http://www.objectivistcenter.org/articles/annc_atlas-shrugged-film.asp>).

18. It has also been reported that Rudolph Nureyev expressed interest in doing a ballet on the story. And writer Joan Kennedy Taylor tells me that Rand had even approached her father, celebrated composer Deems Taylor, to write an opera based on *Anthem*. For a variety of reasons, the project never came to fruition.

19. Though there is no evidence in Rand's published letters or journals that she authorized the *Anthem* adaptation, the illustrated version clearly states, on page 12, "Copyright 1946 by Ayn Rand," and, on page 13, "Reprinted by permission of the author." The issue of this magazine that featured *Anthem* also included a short story by Ray Bradbury and Henry Hasse entitled "Pendulum," as well as an illustrated version of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. It is all the more ironic that this latter work was included alongside *Anthem*, considering Rand's own repudiation of "the [James] Joyce-Kafka amendment," which sullied literary romanticism (Rand 1975b, 141). Thanks to Robert Campbell for reminding me of this.

Other libertarians have had their work illustrated for popular consumption. See, for example, a condensed version of Friedrich Hayek's book, *The Road to Serfdom*, which appeared in *Look* magazine ("The Road to Serfdom in Cartoons," in Hayek 1999, 63–81).

20. There is also a comic called "Scoop Smith" <http://www.paprikash.com/lou/galt.jpg>, which includes a character, "Dr. John Galt," but I've been unable to substantiate any influence—either way—between the artist, Charles Clarence "C. C." Beck, and Ayn Rand. Of course, there was a Scottish poet named John Galt.

21. See <http://www.sluggy.com/daily.php?date=010115&mode=weekly>.

22. See <http://www.angryflower.com/atlass.gif>.

23. On this topic, see also Price 2003. I invited Steve Ditko to participate in this *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* symposium; he respectfully declined for the same reason that he once articulated publicly: "I never talk about myself. My work is me. I do my best, and if I like it, I hope somebody else likes it, too" (Ditko 1985, iv).

24. On Ditko's "Static," see Ditko 1989; Schroeter 1998. Also see Schroeter 1987, which surveys Ditko's work from his '50s horror and science fiction to today. As my colleague Aeon Skoble reminds me, Static is filled with Fountainhead-ish themes on the nature of the self and of love and relationships.

25. In *The Dark Knight Strikes Again*, Miller resurrects "The Question" and returns the character to its Randian roots: "I'm gonna use The Question, and it's gonna be Steve Ditko's Question," not some pale version thereof, he explained. "I want to have Ditko's Ayn Randian point of view as part of my story" (see Brownstein 2000). And so, in that work, The Question engages in a debate with the Green Arrow, who derides him as "Mr. Atlas-Shrugged-Is-The-Word-of-God." The Question retorts: "I'm no Ayn Rander! She didn't go *nearly* far enough!" (Miller and Varley 2002, 246). The Question has also made a 2004 television debut in a new

Cartoon Network series, "Justice League Unlimited."

26. Ditko's artistry is outside the scope of the current paper. But it has had a wide impact, extending even to "psychedelic art," which was influenced by Ditko's late '50s illustrations for "Dr. Strange." Strausbaugh (2003) remarks (in his review of Schumer 2003): "Isolated and enlarged, a single tiny panel by Steve Ditko from a 1964 issue of 'The Amazing Spider-Man' approaches the gloomy monumentalism of a Rothko." By contrast, Schroeter (1987, 52) extols the virtues of "Ditko's art" for "its use of expressive anatomy . . . grace . . . suppleness . . . Ditko's figures are both strong and graceful, a combination found in classical Greek sculpture."

27. Skoble (2003, 186) emphasizes the reciprocal connection between popular culture and social change. He writes that "all social problems depend for their successful resolution on grassroots-level changes in people's thinking, a shift in general perception from the bottom up, as opposed to edicts from the top down. . . . Comic books both reflect trends in social change and help foster social change."

28. Of course, "right-wing" here does not mean "conservative." Politically, however, Ditko is closer to libertarianism—though Schroeter (1987) makes the bizarre claim that both Ditko's and Rand's ideologies are "definitely *not* libertarianism" (52); I suspect that Schroeter is working with Schwartz's (1986) view of libertarianism as "the perversion of liberty," rather than as the modern manifestation of classical liberalism, the political ideology of voluntarism.

29. For a look at Rand's corpus within its specific historical context, see Sciabarra 1995.

30. A whole study of the Randian and libertarian tendencies in "Batman" would take us well beyond our current scope. But the subject is fascinating. Roderick Long points out (in a personal correspondence, 11 October 2003) that the explicitly Randian and libertarian tendencies in Miller's "Batman" work (see the various "Dark Knight" series: Miller 1989; Miller and Varley 2002) have extended to other Batman contributors. Mike Barr ([1987] 2002, 47), for example, puts Francisco d'Anconia-like words in the mouth of Batman (who is speaking to Commissioner Gordon): "Commissioner, very soon now you're going to curse my name. Order my capture. Wish me dead. Against that, I can only say . . . I swear to you—by the cause I love—that I am your friend."

The Batman comics have also given birth to the anarchistic character, Anarky (whose "real" name is Lonnie Machin), created by Alan Grant and Norm Breyfogle. Grant and Breyfogle were inspired by Alan Moore and David Lloyd's fascist-fighting hero, whose independence of spirit fuels a left-anarchist antistatist revolt in *V for Vendetta*. Anarky's Randian-like dialogue is evident, however:

> Cast your mind back to when you were a child. Remember how life shone out from within? How everything was new and full of golden hope? And then "they" got to you. The politicians—the priests—the philosophers—the parasites! This is politics: "Do what you're told or we'll punish you." This is religion: "Suffer misery now so you can be happy after death." This is philosophy: "The universe came from nothing and will one day return to it." None of these doctrines stands up to rational analysis. ("Metamorphosis, Part 1: Does a Dog Have a Buddha Nature?," *Anarky Miniseries* #1 [May 1997], reprinted in Grant 1999, 118–19)

> Quoting Einstein out of context, they say that good and evil are relative; that there are no moral absolutes. They lie. Only two laws are needed to change the entire universe: Never use initiatory force, and never cheat. The people who run our world constantly break both. ("Metamorphosis, Part 2: Revolution Number 9," *Anarky Miniseries #2* [June 1997], reprinted

in Grant 1999, 142)

> Aristotle believed that man is basically good, decent and noble. If left to his own devices he'll seek individual happiness within an orderly society. For Aristotle, human life and sovereign consciousness were the universe's greatest values. But Plato believed man is a wild and savage beast, incapable of self-discipline. To manage him for his own best ends, man needs rulers—kings, governments, priests, presidents. For Plato, human life is worthless, to be endlessly sacrificed to "higher" causes and ideals. Which one do you think the world followed . . .? ("Metamorphosis, Part 2: Revolution Number 9," *Anarky Miniseries #2* [June 1997], reprinted in Grant 1999, 150)

> In harsh economic terms, there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who produce goods, services and values . . . and those who don't. . . . Intentional non-producers are parasites. To hide their parasitism, they employ the techniques of deception, coercion, and naked force. Parasites can never create. They can only destroy. ("Metamorphosis, Part 3: The Economics of the Madhouse," *Anarky Miniseries #3* [July 1997], reprinted in Grant 1999, 173)

> And here's a quotation from Anarky's father:

> He's fifteen years old, for pity's sake! Look at these books—! He should be sneaking copies of *Playboy* around, not Bakunin and Marx and Ayn Rand! ("Anarkist Manifesto," in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat #41* [August 1995], reprinted in Grant 1999, 93)

Thanks to Long for these references. See also Long's "Anarky" page: <http://praxeology.net/anarky.htm>.

Rand is, of course, not the only libertarian to be found in Batman comics. See, for example, Pope 1998, 4–5, which discusses the Nazi confiscation of "the property of a certain economist, Ludwig von Mises, an Austrian Jew from Vienna." A Nazi character derides Mises for being "critical" of policy; he will "personally oversee inspection of the contents of the seized library," because "it is believed [Mises] is working on a new book which hopefully we can prevent," part of the goal of "keep[ing] unpopular ideas out of the hands of the people." (On the Nazi looting, Soviet capture, and eventual rediscovery of the Mises library, see Ebeling 2004.)

31. On Rand's fiction, Miller (in Hagen 1992a, 22) has argued "that *The Fountainhead* may have been her finest work, because I think *Atlas Shrugged* tended to collapse under its own weight." Given the weightiness of the John Galt speech, Miller thinks that Rand didn't understand "how well her ideas were getting across in *Atlas Shrugged*. She was almost like a comic-book writer who uses too many captions . . . when the pictures are already doing the job." Miller notes too that he appreciates Rand's definition of humor, where, as Hagen puts it, "you laugh with the hero, and not at him" (22).

32. See also Miller and Gibbons 1990.

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