Chapter IV
Celebration of Patriarchy in Ayn Rand’s Fictional writings

Ayn Rand published four novels and one play. Her fictional works follow similar plot and thematic patterns. We observe in each work an exceptionally able individualistic protagonist battling against what Ayn Rand saw as evil: ‘the idea of mediocrity and collectivism’. Notably, of Ayn Rand’s five protagonists, three are women. Her fictional works should ideally have ended the anticipation for a balanced representation of the various images of women, because in American literature, images of liberated and successful women were few and far between.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ayn Rand’s female heroines because of their active, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated character profiles should have brought cheer to the feminists. At last, here was a woman novelist who had put a stop to ‘the neurotic, manipulated and exploited female’ (Gladstein 681) image, which had become the mainstay of American literary fiction. Margaret Mitchell’s epic novel Gone With The Wind is an apt example, where Scarlet O’Hara is portrayed as a conceited, neurotic, possessive egomaniac, out to manipulate and ensnare the male protagonist Rhet Butler in her web. Washington Irving’s Rip Van Winkle is another novel where his harridan wife Dame Winkle harries about the amiable Rip Van Winkle to the point where he prefers to chance the dangers of the woods and wild beasts in order to take a nap rather than sleep in his bed at home.

Her theme and plots were also a far cry from the traditional plot and theme pot-pourri of frontier life, slave trade, American war of Independence, the Civil War and the heroism of America during the two World Wars and America’s valorization of it. The female characters in these tiresome theme novels were given routine marginal, domestic and
servile image profiles. Tolerable independence and success was righteously bestowed at times, but the overall picture was one of obsequiousness and intellectual hollowness.

However, a critical analysis of Ayn Rand’s fiction indicates that far from presenting active, assertive, successful and sexually emancipated heroines with a revolutionary and novel theme instead of the jaded themes and plots of American fiction, Ayn Rand’s fictional works are no less guilty of feminist charges. Her heroines and plots in fact do more harm than good to feminist cause.

As pointed out earlier, this study, employing a feminist viewpoint to analyze the works of Ayn Rand, reveals that Ayn Rand despite being a woman reinforces stereotypical images of women in her fiction, making her works all the more distressing to a gender conscious reader. This chapter will focus on the contradictory crosscurrents of meaning in her works and attempt to show that her fictional works are really about what they appear ‘not’ to be about. Her novels are all about female servitude — intellectual, political and sexual which has been made amply clear by her views of feminity and the goal of her writing. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated by Ayn Rand in her philosophy is the conviction that women should stand in divine awe of the primal force, the superior male. Speaking to Edwin Newman, she said that ‘I am a man-worshipper,’ and ‘women who do not accept the superiority of men are really not feminine’ (Baker118).

Marxist feminists are of the view that women are a ‘class’ in themselves just as the working class and are a subject of the ruling class, which happens to be bourgeois as well as male. This ruling patriarchal capitalist class subjugates women two-fold — gender wise and economically. In some countries the subjugation is made even more complete by the factors of race and caste.
Employing Marxist feminist viewpoint, which has been discussed in detail in chapter II of this research study, it can be said that in Ayn Rand’s fiction her female protagonists, despite their being assertive, active, independent, successful and sexually emancipated have through their women’s bodies – through ‘their use, consumption and circulation’ (Irigaray 212), provided for the legitimation of a patriarchal–capitalist social life and culture. This production and commodification of women as signs and exchange value of man’s desire (masculine sexuality), according to Marxist feminists, ‘presides over a social order’ that dehumanizes women.

A second characteristic feature of Ayn Rand’s heroines is their willingness to be mistresses to more than one man. James T. Baker calls this the ‘Tosca theme’, with Marxist feminists seeing in this another instance of the idea of woman as a commodity, that of a woman who gives herself sexually to one man to save another. Marxist feminists see in this a confirmation of their assessment of the status of women in a patriarchal capitalist social order, where, based on their ‘natural value’ and ‘social value’, women are assigned the roles of mother, virgin and prostitute. However, Ayn Rand explains this particular intentional/contrived promiscuity in reference to her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’, where the goal is important and not the means to achieve it. For Ayn Rand, what others called ‘crass promiscuity’ or ‘infidelity’ was what she saw as the sexual emancipation of her heroines.

She was indifferent to legal or moral concerns. For her ‘sex’ just like any other asset in life was ‘material’, which should be used or exploited when need arises. To many readers and critics such ‘an ethics would lead to hedonism’ (Robbins 12). This franchising of sex is common to all of Ayn Rand’s heroines –Kira Argounova in We The Living, Dominique Francon in The Fountainhead, Dagny Taggart in Atlas Shrugged and Karen Andre in Night of January 16th.
We may also understand this ‘Tosca theme’ with reference to Simone de Beauvoir’s classic exposition of the duality of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as a fundamental category of human thought, as played out in Ayn Rand’s fiction. For Beauvoir, societies are organized on the assumption that man is ‘self’ and woman ‘other’. We notice that Ayn Rand was unapologetic about man being the normative value in nature. Thus, man is defined by his relationship to reality, whereas woman finds meaning by her relationship to man, implying she is the ‘other’.

The implications of such a duality are calamitous to women, for the ‘self’ treats ‘other’ either as a supplement or a threat. If a woman is conceived of as a supplement to man, she becomes the recipient either of his phobias (weak, emotional) or a complement to his personality. K. K. Ruthven notes that ‘the supplementary woman may find herself set on a pedestal as the object of chivalric attentions, worshipped, in return for surrendering her autonomy and serving the man’s interests (as mistress, muse, wife, or power behind the throne). If however, the ‘other’ cannot be coaxed into supplementarity... she becomes the victim of the ‘self’s’ misogyny... and rape and murder are the unsublimated practice’ (42).

A third feature of Ayn Rand’s stories and a highly frightening one is the depiction of the ‘rape-encounters’ between the heroine and hero at their first meetings. Howard Roark in The Fountainhead rapes Dominique Francon at least twice in the novel, B’jorn Faulkner in Night of January 16th rapes Karen Andre when she comes for a job interview and she remains his business partner and mistress for the rest of his life. In Atlas Shrugged John Galt’s first sexual experience with Dagny Taggart is a ritualized rape in the tunnels of Taggart Transcontinental. For Ayn Rand these were not rapes, but the ‘magnetic drawing’ of two like or strong personalities. In Atlas Shrugged Francisco D’Anconia tells Hank Rearden about his theory of sex:

‘But, in fact, a man’s sexual choice is the result
and the sum of his fundamental convictions. Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life. Show me the woman he sleeps with and I will tell you his valuation of himself. ...He will always be attracted to the woman who reflects his deepest vision of himself, the woman whose surrender permits him to experience—or to fake—a sense of self-esteem. The man who is proudly certain of his value, will want the highest type of woman he can find, the woman he admires, the strongest, the hardest to conquer—because only the possession of a heroine will give him the sense of an achievement, not the possession of a brainless slut. ...Love is our response to our highest values—and can be nothing else. ...just as an idea unexpressed in physical action is a contemptible hypocrisy, so is platonic love—and just as physical action unguided by an idea is a fool’s self-fraud, so is sex when cut off from one’s code of values....sex is the physical expression of a tribute to personal values’ (460-461).

In For The New Intellectual, the first non-fictional publication of Ayn Rand, composed of passages from her four major fictional works, she tries to give coherence to her philosophy of Objectivism by taking passages from the novels and explaining their philosophic contents. To the intelligent reader they may appear very pat and prescriptive, but one also senses her trying to emphasize moral unity in her fiction and Objectivist sense of life. One of the essays titled ‘The Meaning of sex’ (99-101) is a verbatim copy of the conversation between Hank Rearden and Francisco D’Anconia in Atlas Shrugged.
For Ayn Rand, ‘sex is the effect and expression of a man’s sense of his own value... the woman whose surrender permits him to experience—or to fake—a sense of self-esteem’ (FTNI 99). A superficial reading of the passages may not raise alarm, but a focused and critical reading of the text reveals how Ayn Rand is sanctioning the violence in her sexual encounters by arguing how the ‘possession of a heroine (woman) will give him (man) the sense of an achievement’ (FTNI 99). With reference to this predication we can see how the ‘rape scenes’ for Ayn Rand are ‘romanticized, symbolic, head on clash of two strong personalities. The rapist is conquered just as the victim is...’(Gladstein 23). Ayn Rand considered these to be very ‘glorious scenes’ and years later, when during a radio interview she was asked about these rape scenes in her novels, she replied, ‘If it’s rape – its rape by engraved invitation’ (Branden 134).

However, many critics and readers with a ‘raised consciousness about the nature of rape’, find this symbolism unpalatable. James T Baker finds in Rand’s ‘theory of sex’ strong hints of sadism and masochism which eloquently, if not mysteriously, reveal the personal perversions of Rand’s heroines. Her equation of lovemaking with violent sex—Dominique Francon in The Fountainhead considers sex best when the rapist holds his victim in utter contempt (119) and also the fact that Dominique preferred extramarital rape to conjugal lovemaking—appears very strange, almost perverse. In fact the ‘personal perversions’ of Ayn Rand’s heroines, by implication, speak of women everywhere (Baker). For feminists these ‘rapes’ reinforce women’s degradation in a patriarchal power structure where men (self) in their misogyny ‘rape’ women (other) in order to force women to surrender their autonomy and serve man’s interests. For Marxist feminists these ‘ritualized rapes’ only confirm how in a patriarchal capitalist society, women are ‘commodities’, to be used, consumed and circulated for their value, enhancing the ‘wealth’ among men. As ‘products’ the exploitation of women in patriarchal society is justified by Ayn Rand when she says how ‘only the possession of a heroine (woman)
will give him (man) the sense of an achievement…’ (FTNI 99), and also how her possession stimulates ‘wealth’ when she is circulated in society.

It is to be noted how in Ayn Rand’s novels, the female protagonists are ‘circulated’ from one man to another, which from a Marxist feminist angle is the validation of ‘woman as commodity’: a utilitarian object with a value index. The ‘rape scenes’ by Ayn Rand also explain her valorization of ‘man’ as the normative value to which all ‘other’ beings must look up and derive their meaning from. Thus, her anti-feminism takes anti-female direction, where Ayn Rand produces her heroines as objects for sadistic humiliation, and their ‘rape’ is an expression of this humiliation. In Ayn Rand’s novels, this sado-masochistic construction of woman construes male-female as a master–slave relationship, and thus presents us with a heroine who is raped and humiliated.

Ayn Rand unmistakably reinforces the macho myth argument that violent sex and rape far from being criminal and abrasive behavior are actually every woman’s secret desire. This is made clear through Dominique Francon’s talk of ‘sex’ being best when it is accompanied with violence. These rape scenes completely ‘dehumanize’ women as an object or commodity at the mercy of what Beatrix Campbell calls ‘phallic imperialisms’ where women are oppressed economically as well as physically, for in ‘patriarchal capitalism’ that is their destiny.

Although Ayn Rand metamorphosed later into a philosopher whose ideas always ignited her readers, either for or against her, she was initially a fiction writer. It was through her works of fiction that the majority of readers are introduced to her essential concepts. Most people familiar with Ayn Rand know her specifically for her two major novels – The Fountainhead (1943) and Atlas Shrugged (1957) and as the author of the play, Night of January 16th (1934).
Ayn Rand’s fiction is her foremost achievement and all of Ayn Rand’s major literary works follow similar plot patterns, protagonist profiles and thematic content. Leonard Peikoff, the inheritor and executor of Ayn Rand’s intellectual work, has collected in The Early Ayn Rand, her unpublished works, from the period of her arrival in USA in 1926, to the time she was writing Night of January 16th and We The Living six years later. These stories provide an interesting window through which to view the development and of her ideas on different subjects under discussion.

The first of these stories, written in 1926 is The Husband I Bought. The story’s protagonist is Irene Wilmer, who very closely follows Kira Argounova of We The Living while her husband Henry Stafford is an early version of Leo from the same novel or perhaps Howard Roark of The Fountainhead.

In this short story we notice what was to become the raison d’etre of Ayn Rand’s fictional works: ‘hero-worshiping’. Henry Stafford loses his wealth and Irene marries him, pays off his debts, thus ‘buying’ herself a husband. She loves, rather worships Henry so much that when he falls in love with another woman, she fakes infidelity and is granted a divorce. The end of the short story is rankling from a feminist perspective for we see Irene, kneeling before Henry’s photograph in tribute to this ideal man.

We see here a strong, intelligent, assertive and active woman who was definitely like a breath of fresh air, against the stale, traditional, stereotypical images of women circulated and reproduced in literature. However, the ebullience was short lived, for the heroine was a ‘hero-worshipper’, worshipping the man who brings out the best in her, with the Ayn Rand supposition of ‘a woman is defined by her relationship to a man...’ being applied. The element of sado-masochism, which later was to become the hallmark of Ayn Rand’s works, is already evident.
Between 1927 and 1929 Ayn Rand wrote two more short stories ‘Good Copy’ and ‘Escort’, which were full of the prosaic basic ingredients (romance, murder, etc.) with virtually no philosophic content. However, a marked characteristic of Ayn Rand’s writing by now was ‘the thrill of trying to buy a man’. One of Ayn Rand’s most instructive short stories from which we get the heroine who will franchise herself for the happiness of her hero is ‘Red Pawn’ which was published in 1932. ‘Red Pawn’ is the story of a young woman who sets out to free her husband from prison by any means necessary. She assumes an identity, and becomes a mistress to the prison’s commandant, Comrade Kareyev. This was to become a familiar theme in Ayn Rand’s later fiction, what some would call her ‘Tosca theme’ (Baker 33), that of a woman who gives herself sexually to one man to save another.

In her major fictional works, these ideas, plots and themes are to be repeated. We will now take an overview of Ayn Rand’s fictional works and tried to see how she almost unashamedly celebrates the institution of patriarchy in her writings. For the sake of coherence, will take her works according to their year of publication and not popularity.

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Night of January 16th (1936): is Ayn Rand’s first professional writing. She originally titled it as the ‘Penthouse Legend’, but its Broadway presentation was titled Night of January 16th and the name has remained. It is a gripping drama about the mysterious death or disappearance of Bjorn Faulkner and the trial of Karen Andre, the protagonist, who is his secretary and mistress and is accused of his murder.

For Ayn Rand, this was to be a ‘sense of life’ play. Bjorn Faulkner is presented as a free-wheeling, world-class entrepreneur whose financial kingdom was in dire straits at the time of his death. Two versions of his mysterious death are presented in court. The prosecution blames Karen
Andre and her lover ‘Guts’ Regan to have blackmailed and murdered Faulkner when he refused to give them the money they were asking for. The defense contends that Faulkner’s marriage to Nancy Whitfield was a sham as he never liked or loved her and he used himself as a collateral so that John Graham Whitfield, Nancy’s father, would extend a ten million dollar loan to him.

At the end of Act II, in a dramatic reversal, ‘Guts’ Regan, the gangster and alleged lover of Karen Andre, shows up to announce that Bjorn is really dead. He explains that he, Bjorn and Karen had planned a fake suicide so that Bjorn and Karen could disappear with Whitfield’s money. Regan contends but Faulkner’s bookkeeper verifies that fact that Whitfield found out about the money being embezzled. Regan accuses Whitfield of murdering Faulkner. The jury is left to decide whether a respected banker and his socialite daughter or a secretary-mistress and her gangster lover are telling the truth.

Karen Andre, the female protagonist is a typical Ayn Rand heroine, for whom Bjorn Faulkner is a ‘god-like hero’ to be served with her mind, soul and body. For Ayn Rand, the play was a presentation of the ‘sense of life’ which she defined as a person’s ‘emotional, subconsciously integrated appraisal of man’s relationship to existence’ (Baker 39) and in Night of January 16th, this ‘sense of life’ is Karen Andre’s feelings for her ideal man.

We may note that the ‘sense of life’ presented in this play is consistent with those presented in her novels. Karen Andre like all of Ayn Rand’s heroines is active, independent, sure of herself and her ideas, clear with the direction she wants her life to take and sexually emancipated. However, a close analysis of Karen Andre’s character and personality reinforces the feminist argument that Ayn Rand demeans and diminishes women and feminity morally and intellectually through the offensive
images she projects upon them. This celebration of patriarchy by Ayn Rand demeans and dehumanizes women at large. In scene I of Act I, Karen’s character profile is thus described: ‘One’s first impression of her is that to handle her would require the services of an animal trainer, not an attorney...’(NJ16th 22).

During her questioning in Act II, Karen’s masochistic perverseness is evident when she narrates her ‘rape’ at the hands of B’jorn Faulkner: ‘he seemed to take a delight in giving me orders. He acted as if he were cracking a whip over an animal...I liked it ... then he asked me suddenly if I had ever belonged to a man. I said, no, I hadn’t...'(NJ 16th 82-83). When Karen refused his offer of a thousand kroner’s to have sex with him, he threatens forcing himself on her, ‘he said if I didn’t, he’d take me...he did’ (NJ 16th 83).

This continual reference to Karen as if she is an animal and not a human being, tantamounts to refusing to attribute to women any spiritual and intellectual profundity. She is ‘an ‘object’ at the hands of man’s mercy, to be used, consumed and exploited. Since man in an androcentric patriarchal dispensation is the ‘meaning’ and ‘signifier’, women’s feelings are inconsequential and Ayn Rand celebrates this patriarchal subversion. For Karen Andre, B’jorn Faulkner is ‘an ideal man’ whom she served as a secretary, mistress and confidant.

The character of Nancy Lee Faulkner, the other female character in the novel, brings back what the feminists should call the ‘neurotic, manipulated’ stereotypical image of women into focus. She is presented as a cold, manipulating nymphomaniac, determined to get Bjorn Faulkner at any cost. She offers herself, her sexuality to be precise, for his agreeing to marry her and in return he would get ‘the extension of a certain ten million dollar loan...’(NJ 16th 85).
Nancy Lee Faulkner’s commodification may be understood better with reference to the ‘use, consumption and circulation’ theory where her body is used as a bartering object between Bjorn Faulkner and her father John Graham Whitfield. Nancy Lee Faulkner demeaned herself by asking Bjorn to marry her and thus provide their marriage as a collateral to her father for extending the loan. This incident may be seen in terms of women’s ‘conditioning and socialization’ in a patriarchal setup where a woman’s primary function is to facilitate and make the conditions of a social and cultural life possible. Patriarchal societies function on the basis of ‘systems of exchange’, where according to Luce Irigaray, ‘women’s bodies- through their use, consumption and conditions- provide for the conditions making social life and culture possible’ (Oliver 212). In the process they become an unknown ‘infrastructure’ and thus are instrumental in stimulating wealth among men. We observe Karen Andre’s use of and traffic between her husband and father in a similar vein. The exploitation of Nancy Lee by Bjorn Faulkner is more in economic terms for as a commodity, she is two things at once: a utilitarian object and a bearer of values (economic exchange value).

We thus see in Night of January 16th, how Karen Andre and Nancy Lee Faulkner, through their ‘sense of life’, contribute in lending support to the forces of patriarchy. We may add that the ‘sense of life’ presented in this play is consistent with those of the novels. The novels, in fact, deal with more than a ‘sense of life’, they involve a ‘conscious philosophy’ i.e. a conceptually defined view of man and of existence.

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We The Living (1936) is Ayn Rand’s first novel. Written between 1931 and 1933 and published in 1936, the plot of We The Living concerns a young woman’s struggle to fulfill her desires under the stultifying structures of the Soviet system. The central figure of Kira Argounova in this novel was to become the arch model for her later fictional works. Andrei Taganov and Leo Kovalensky, the two male protagonists, can be
viewed as the prototypes of Howard Roark and John Galt.

The story of *We The Living* revolves around Kira Argounova, and her family’s exile and return to Petrograd after the revolution. The small industries run by her family are confiscated by the government under a nationalizing scheme and this gives Ayn Rand a chance to introduce her ‘state versus the individual’, pattern here. As soon as she enters the technological Institute she meets a young communist leader named Andrei Taganov. She spends the college hours with him, while her nights are spent with an unregenerate aristocrat named Leo Kovalensky.

Andrei likes and loves Kira while her amorous feelings are heavily titled towards Leo Kovalensky. Kira’s relationships with Andrei is platonic, but when Leo contracts consumption and must go away to the Crimea, if he is to live. Kira is determined to save him. She pretends to love Andrei to secure money from him and thereby forces Leo to go to a sanatorium in the south. This was to become a familiar theme in Ayn Rand’s later fiction, where a woman gives herself sexually to one man to save another and as pointed out earlier James T. Baker terms this peculiarity of the Ayn Rand theme as the ‘Tosca theme’. The second half of *We The Living* deals with the corruption of Leo and the heroism of Andrei. Leo’s return from the Crimea shows his spiritual and intellectual graph falling while Andrei’s faith in the Soviet system is seen shaking. Oddly enough, Kira is attracted to Leo in his ‘fallen’ state even more than she was earlier.

Glimpses of Ayn Rand’s feminine masochism are evident here. Andrei sets out to expose the corruption in the Soviet system and during his investigations he discovers that Kira is living with Leo and she only pretended to love him (Andrei), rather she used him to help another man. Andrei far from feeling bitter or remorse promises to save Leo from the net he (Andrei) has cast to apprehend the bourgeois saboteurs and their patrons in government. At a communist party gathering he delivers a speech that sounds more like Howard Roark’s. In the later novels Howard Roark
and John Galt were to represent his idealism.

Kira Argounova is Ayn Rand’s first fully developed heroine and she was to be the model for later Ayn Rand heroines: active, assertive, fiercely independent, career conscious and sexually emancipated. Unmindful of her material surroundings, she wants only to be allowed to fulfill the best that is in her. Such focus and determination was to be the attribute of all of Ayn Rand’s heroines. However, despite creating such a positive image of a heroine Ayn Rand taints this image with Kira’s ‘hero-worshiping’ of Leo and forcing her (like all her other heroines) to bow to masochistic impulses.

As observed earlier, while superficial readings of Ayn Rand’s works may not reveal her ‘celebration of patriarchy’, a closer reading exposes just that. In the novel *We The Living* violence accompanies sex, ‘... but he tore her off the ground, and then she arched limply in space... her breast at his mouth’ (*WTLL*113). For Leo, Kira is nothing more than ‘an object’. She deifies him and is always ready to please him, ‘Leo threw his coat in a corner... it was torture. Waiting. Three days – and three nights’ (*WL*121). For Leo, Kira is a product, which he ‘consumes and uses’, and when he gets a better proposition, he leaves her. Leo shifts into Tonia’s apartment after Citizen Morozov leaves town. Morozov has left Tonia a nice little sum of money and she is going for a rest and vacation in the Caucasus’s. Tonia asks Leo to go with her to which he agrees:

‘He’s left Tonia...he’s left her a nice little sum of money... she’s going for a rest and vacation in the Caucasus. She has asked me to go with her. I have accepted the job... the great gigolo of the U.S.S.R.!... She’s an old bitch...she has the money and she wants me...’(*WTLL*423-424).

Kira worshipped Leo, and for him she became a mistress to Andrei. When Leo had to be sent to the Crimea for recuperation and there was no money with them, Kira went to Andrei. She saved the money he gave her, because
she thought of someone at home who needed it. She took the money’ (WTL179). For all her worshipping and sacrifice when Leo gets to know about her liaison with Andrei and wants to go away with Tonia he arrogantly and contemptuously calls her, ‘you little bitch!’ (WTL422). We observe here how Kira’s body is nothing more than a commodity, which is two things at once, a ‘utilitarian object’ for Leo and Andrei to use, consume and circulate between them and a ‘bearer of value’, for as a mistress to Andrei, she receives money in return. In fact she gives herself sexually to Andrei only for the money she will get.

We further observe that Kira and Leo’s relationship is akin to a slave and masters: ‘he approached her and his hand closed over her throat and he jerked her head back to hold her lips to his. There was a contemptuous tenderness in his movement, and a command, and hunger; he was not a lover, but a slave owner...’ (WTL312). With Andrei too her relationship has a similar refrain, ‘you won’t miss me... I’ve made you happy, haven’t I?’ (WTL237) and when she tells Andrei, ‘Andrei when you told me you loved me, for the first time, you were hungry. I wanted to satisfy that hunger’ (WTL265).

Kira Argounova’s worshiping of Leo and becoming a mistress to Andrei and sexually bowing to both of them is a fine example of ‘celebration of patriarchy’ in the novel. Kira’s sexuality is exploited by the two male heroes and Kira’s compliance just like the other heroines in Ayn Rand’s fiction, is founded on the notion ‘that whether premarital or extramarital: the man’s inner life is a privilege to share...’ (Ellman119).

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Anthem (1938) : was Ayn Rand’s second novel of only seventy seven pages, published in England in 1938 and it was only in 1946 that an American edition was published when Pamphleteers, a right wing publishing house,
brought out an abridged paperback edition. Originally conceived of as a play while Ayn Rand was at university in Petrograd. Anthem has retained a theatrical quality unto itself. We observe in this novel the economic and political ideology of capitalism for which she would become famous later through The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged.

While all of Ayn Rand’s works are famous today, one may agree with Mimi R. Gladstein writing in The Ayn Rand Companion when she says that ‘If any of Rand’s works becomes a staple on high school reading lists, it will be this book’ (34). Anthem is a brief novel about a dystopia, a collectivist state where conformity and drudgery are the norm. Ayn Rand’s utopia was to be a place where men will hunt and women admire them, where men will be the life force and women its worshippers. Anthem was the beginning for the opera to come, composed of The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged.

The story is written in the form of a journal kept by a man of the future, living in a collectivist state; a state where people do not have names but numbers. His is equality 7-2521 and viewed suspiciously by the elders of his society. Much of the pleasure of the story is derived from the reader’s use of their imaginations as they fill in the gaps in the hero’s knowledge of the ‘unmentionable times’ before the ascendance of the collectivist state. Equality 7-2521 wants to be a scholar and this desire of his brings him on a collision course with the Council of Vocations. For his impudence he is punished to become a street sweeper.

However, Equality 7-2521 manages to hoodwink the elders and quench his thirst for knowledge when he discovers a tunnel, a remnant of structures from unmentionable times. He goes there to study manuscripts, stolen from the clerks, in his bid to tinker with the chemicals and dissect animals.
Committing another ‘sin of preference’, he falls in love with Liberty 5-300 whom he sees in the fields. He is twenty-one and she only seventeen and before this he has known women only during the ‘Time of Mating’. She returns his love for like any Ayn Rand heroine she knows her ‘hero-man’ when she sees him. Out of his passionate love for her comes a desire to say the Unspeakable Word ‘I’ for which the punishment is burning at the stakes.

When Equality 7-2521 escapes from the city she follows him into the Unchartered Forest. Liberty 5-3000, who is now called the Golden One, says: ‘we have followed you...Do as you please with us, but do not send us away from you. Then they knelt, and bowed their golden head before us’ (A 82-83). For Ayn Rand servility and submissiveness of her female protagonists was actually ‘woman trying to find meaning’ for after all ‘woman is defined by her relationship to man’. Equality 7-2521 learns to hunt like a man, while Liberty 5-300 learns the pleasures of looking into a mirror, presumably like a woman, bringing to the fore the stereotype of women being vain and dependant on the man for protection and provision. When they find a place and Equality 7-2521 tells her that this is their place, she says to her Lord and master: ‘Your will be done’ (A 19).

From a manuscript he has found in the house he takes the name Prometheus and gives to Golden One the name Gaea, for he is to be the source of light, while she is to be the Mother Earth: ‘her name was Gaea...for you are to be the mother of a new kind of gods’ (A 99). Luce Irigaray the eminent feminist critic writes that in a patriarchal social order which is founded on the exchange of women, ‘as mother’, woman’s value is in the reproduction of children (and of the labor force). Her reproductive value underwrites her exchange value in the social order. As mothers their responsibility is to maintain the social order by ‘reproducing children’ and thus ‘the labor force’.
In *Anthem*, ‘the compliant stereotype’ is also once again visible, where the man’s inner life is a privilege to share. As a servant to her lord and mother to his children, Liberty 5-3000 fulfills two sub-divisions of this stereotype.

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The *Fountainhead* (1942) : By 1932, Ayn Rand had committed herself to leading a crusade against collectivism, which she viewed as anti-life. The *Fountainhead*, the third novel Ayn Rand wrote, started in 1937, finished in 1942 and became her first bestseller. The *Fountainhead* narrated the tale of ‘the individual’ against ‘ a state run by men without taste’. By 1945 The *Fountainhead* was on the bestseller list. In 1949 a film version of the story was released. Though the story was born in the 1930s, The *Fountainhead* does not deal with politics or economics or world affairs.

It is the tale of Howard Roark, an architect, and his fight against the system, which is devoid of taste (socio-culturally and politically). The story begins with Howard Roark being expelled from the Architecture Institute and his telling the dean how he should have left the place years before, for he cares not what others think of him or his work. Peter Keating, his senior and best student of the Institute comes to him for advice that very day, which also happens to be the graduation day.

From the first pages we see ‘the individualist’ and ‘the second-hander’, the man who thinks for himself and the man who does not, and Ayn Rand plays them off against each other. In New York City, Roark and Keating seek employment in firms, which could not be any further apart. Keating is working with Francon and Heyer, a formidable corporate name in architecture, while Roark works as job assistant to Henry Cameron, the first man to have built a skyscraper, but now unemployed and destitute. Keating outmaneuvers other architects to become Francon’s chief designer, while Roark sinks lower in destitution.
Gail Wynand, Ayn Rand’s only truly classical tragic figure, is a man with qualities like Roark mixed with those of Keating. He is a self-made man and owns a financial empire and a newspaper named ‘Banner’. Ellsworth Toohey writes a feature column on architecture called ‘One Small Voice’ in Wynand’s ‘Banner’ and Ayn Rand presents him as ‘the altruist’, the humanist who really covets for power. For Toohey arts should reflect the will of the people whereas Dominique Francon, another columnist, who writes on interior decoration, and is Guy Francon’s daughter, is in a perpetual snit against the shallow tastes and conventions of her society.

Roark is not known to either of them and after Cameron is forced to retire, Keating hires the former. Roark refuses to work on a joint project and leaves. He gets a commission to build a private home and his isolation is broken.

Meanwhile Keating meets and falls in love with Dominique despite the fact that he has promised to marry Catherine, Toohey’s niece. However, later he decides not to marry her because she is simple and homely and unlike Dominique will be unable to help him rise and grow in his career. This is the first instance in the novel where the ‘social value’ between Dominique and Catherine is exploited and consumed by a male character in the novel. Keating’s decision of marriage is a very good example of how, from a Marxist feminists angle, ‘as commodities, women are thus two things at once: utilitarian objects and bearers of value’ (Oliver 214). Catherine was ready to give up everything for Peter Keating — her career, her simple ways to marry him. Peter demands of her to: ‘Quit your damn job tomorrow... you must be ready to start then’ (TF 368) and Catherine replies ‘yes Peter’ (TF 368).

Ayn Rand maintained that true femininity is ‘hero-worship’ and ‘man is defined by his relationship to reality, woman by her relationship
to man’ (Branden 18). In the character portrayal of Catherine Ayn Rand’s belief is given practical bearings and it is not difficult to see how she demeans woman as ‘products’ or ‘commodities’ to be used by men. Devoid of any profound intelligent essence, their only true essence is in finding meaning through their ‘man–worshiping’. We shall observe more instances of this celebration of patriarchy when we discuss the character of Dominique Francon. To continue with a brief sketch of the novel, Roark gets commissions now and then. Meanwhile Toohey gains a lot of power in the world of architecture and Roark is commissioned to build the Stoddard Temple for Hopton Stoddard.

Dominique, out of contempt for Peter, marries him and not before long leaves him to marry Gail Wynand. Peter’s franchising of his wife and Dominique’s willingness to put herself at Gail’s service, were he to give Peter Keating the commission to build Stoneridge, appears morally petrifying. This barter of ‘commission’ for ‘woman’ is one of the most unsavory episodes in the entire novel. It implies complete dehumanizing of woman.

Dominique marries Gail because of some sado-masochistic, pleasure-contempt she feels for him. Roark meets Gail when Gail wants him to build a temple to house and enshrine Dominique and a beautiful friendship develops between Roark and Gail. Baker views this as ‘a strange non-physical homoerotic relationship between Roark and Wynand, a love affair that dwarfs any hetero-sexual affairs in Ayn Rand’s fiction’ (55).

Peter Keating, whose stars are in eclipse, tries to make a comeback. He bids for and gets to build a low-cost housing project called Cortlandt. Roark is the architect, while Peter has to execute the designs without any change in them. However, Peter is unable to keep his part of the bargain and Roark sets explosives and destroys the buildings. Wynand throws the entire weight of his newspaper and financial empire behind
Roark in his defense. The jury gives its judgment in favour of Roark and he is ready to build Cortlandt according to the original plan. Dominique leaves Wynand and marries Roark. The end of the story is supposed to be Ayn Rand’s celebration of ‘the individual’. It is very beautifully suggested by the identification of Howard Roark with sky and sea – traditionally the symbols of vastness, depth and eternity. ‘She saw, on the fence surrounding New York’s greatest building, a small tin plate bearing the words:

Howard Roark, Architect... She saw him standing above her, on the top platform of the Wynand Building. He waved to her. The line of the ocean cut the sky. The ocean mounted as the city descended. She passed the crowns of courthouses. She rose above the spires of churches. Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark’ (TF 679-680).

The Fountainhead is perhaps the best novel Ayn Rand wrote. It is not as simple as it first appears. One cannot fail to view Ayn Rand’s celebration of ‘individualism’ as a celebration of patriarchy. Dominique Francon, the female protagonist in the novel is far from being active, assertive, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated. She rather has overtones of the ‘neurotic, manipulated or exploited female’. We observe how through the dialogues and actions of Francon, Ayn Rand ‘celebrates patriarchy’.

Thus when Dominique asks Howard Roark to come and set the marble slab at the fireplace of her bedroom, he sends another man to fix the marble to which Dominique refuses permission. Later Roark meets Dominique and annoys her with his indifference towards her. Three days after the episode, Dominique is sitting in her bedroom when Roark comes into her room unannounced. The following description follows:
‘He came in. He wore dark clothes... then he walked to her. He held her... her legs jerked tight against his, his mouth on hers... she tried to tear herself away from him... her fists beat against his shoulders... she felt his lips on her breast... she fell back against the dressing table... He had thrown her down on the bed and she felt his hands moving over her body... then the sudden pain shot up, through her body, to her throat, and she screamed. Then she lay still’ (TF 217-218).

This rape of Dominique Francon is painful; but Ayn Rand’s valorization of it is unpardonable.

‘But the act of a master taking a shameful, contemptuous possession of her was the kind of rapture she had wanted... that she had found pleasure in the thing which had happened... that was the degradation she had wanted...’ (220).

Further, rather than expressing outrage at this forced violation of herself, Dominique gloats:

‘I’ve been raped... I’ve been raped by a red headed hoodlum from a stone quarry... Through the fierce sense of humiliation, the words gave her the same kind of pleasure she had felt in his arms’ (TF 220).

Later in the novel Dominique goes to Roark and pleads to him, ‘I want to sleep with you... (273). ...Then he got up, he walked to her, her mouth on his, in a surrender more violent than her struggle had been’ (TF 274). Dominique gets some sort of a masochistic pleasure from the rapes and she sleeps with Roark whenever she hurts him. She becomes his mistress.
Towards the middle of the story we observe Dominique Francon Keating being used by her husband in a most shameless fashion. Peter Keating wants the Stoneridge commission and he asks Dominique to take a proposition to Wynand, ‘I should like you to give that commission to my husband. I understand...unless I agree to sleep with you in exchange. If you consider that a sufficient reason– I am willing to do it’ (TF 437). Gail Wynand buys Dominique from Peter Keating for $250,000 and gives him the commission to build Stoneridge.

Ayn Rand’s ‘sense-of-life’ and the women’s place in it is revealed when Dominique says:

‘.... she felt the answer in her body... she thought that it was not a matter of desire, not even a matter of the sexual act, but only that man was the life force and woman could respond to nothing else... and she was responding not to the act nor to the man, but to that force within him’ (TF 483-484).

Through the character of Dominique Francon, Ayn Rand very forcefully presents her idea of feminity and tries to show how ‘man is defined by his relationship to nature, woman by her relationship to man’. Apart from her philosophical treatises, The Fountainhead is the only novel in which Ayn Rand has unequivocally showed her contempt towards women. For Mimi R. Gladstein, Dominique Francon, ‘is an interesting case study in perverseness’ (36). ‘Rape’ is not only forceful physical violation of women and their bodies but also a political act of male supremacy. As Simone de Beauvoir talks of ‘self’ and ‘other’ we see how man conceives of himself as the ‘self’ or ‘natural’ and women as the ‘other’ or ‘unnatural’. The ‘self’ treats ‘other’ as a ‘supplement’ or a ‘threat’. Her ‘supplementary role is of a mistress, wife or goddess.
In this case ironically it is not only the ‘self’ i.e., Howard Roark, which treats the ‘other’ i.e., Dominique Francon as a mistress, and consequently as supplementary to the ‘self’, but also the ‘other’ i.e., Dominique who gleefully accepts that supplementary position. A feminist reading will see Dominique’s response as a result of patriarchal brainwashing of not only a woman’s mind but also of her ideas and reactions to her own sexuality.

Ayn Rand celebrates this characteristic feature of the patriarchal predication. Dominique is mistress to Roark and her rape at his hands is celebrated as ‘humiliations which are pleasure giving’ for man is after all ‘the life force’. Dominique Francon’s commodification can also be understood along Marx’s analysis of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth, which can thus be understood as an interpretation of the status of women in a patriarchal society.

Moreover, the feminist argument and specifically the Marxist feminists for whom society and culture are based upon the exchange of women — where their bodies through their use, consumption and circulation make the socio-cultural life of a patriarchal capitalist society possible — is also proved correct. Dominique Francon’s being a mistress and specifically how Peter Keating exploits her when he puts her on the market in order to obtain the Stone ridge commission is striking. This traffic of Dominique’s sexuality by the male characters as an ‘economic issue’ whose exchange produces wealth (commissions or plain carnal pleasures) amongst them is best understood as Dominique’s commodification, her being a ‘product’ or ‘object’ for Roark, Keating and Wynand. She has become ‘an object’ or commodity’ whose possession is in the nature of ‘wealth’ for the male characters.

* * *


Atlas Shrugged (1957): is a novel which narrates the tale of 'the individual' against 'a collectivist state. Published in 1957, this is Ayn Rand's last novel and also the most voluminous, and the one she and her followers considered her best. It has since become the holy text of the Objectivist movement. Ayn Rand was fond of quoting it and considered The Fountainhead to be a preview to the main feature.

Atlas Shrugged is the story of four heroes and one heroine. The men are three former college classmates, Francisco D'Anconia, Ragnar Danneskjold, John Galt and Henry Rearden (Hank), who is in many ways like Howard Roark. The woman is the irrepressible and unforgettable Dagny Taggart.

The story takes place in a vaguely defined future, as America follows Europe and the world down the long, hopeless path towards socialism. While The Fountainhead did not deal with economic or political issues, in Atlas Shrugged they are central to the plot and theme. For Ayn Rand capitalism celebrates life while collectivism negates life. In Atlas Shrugged, the four heroes and Dagny Taggart join forces with hundreds of other intelligent, freedom-loving capitalists and workers to halt and reverse this slide towards socialism. To do this they go on strike, withdraw their services and walk away from duty. Their action may also be viewed as 'Robinhood' in reverse, for they are against altruism, sacrifice and humanism. Their purpose is to make the world safe for capitalism.

Henry Rearden is an industrialist and inventor of a new form of metal, stronger and more durable than any before it. Like Howard Roark, he is despised and ridiculed for his originality. When he refuses to share the new metals formula with the state, he is put on trial. He refuses to speak and defend himself. As the story progresses his presence fades. Though he is married, Dagny Taggart is his mistress.
Francisco D’ Anconia and Ragnar Danneskjold, two fascinating male character’s, have been given very marginal roles. Francisco’s job is to take gifted men out of industry in order to destroy socialism. He and Rearden develop a friendship and passion for the same girl, Dagny Taggart, which is reminiscent of the Wynand-Roark friendship in *The Fountainhead*. Francisco is also Dagny’s lover.

John Galt, the technological genius, who broke the chains of servitude and inspired all the Atlases to shrug, is the hero of the novel. For two-thirds of the novel John Galt remains a shadowy figure, almost mythical figure. His name is a household question ‘who is John Galt?’ He is only found when he wants to; his hiding place is of the ultimate importance to the future of mankind. Through an extremely long speech at the end of the novel, Ayn Rand spells out the tenets of her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’: the necessity of choice, virtue of selfishness, and the importance of individualism. She also talks about capitalism, mysticism, altruism and the concept of Original Sin.

Dagny Taggart, Ayn Rand’s most dynamic heroine is also one of the most heroic female protagonists in American fiction. She comes out as an active, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated female character. On account of Dagny Taggart and her character, many critics have described *Atlas Shrugged* as ‘a female fantasy novel’. She is intelligent, and strong of spirit and action, independent and according to many critics she brings a completely new perspective to the image of women in American literature.

Dagny runs Taggart Transcontinental railroad in the face of ineptness and corruption that the socialist system throws her way. As institutions and industries fall by the wayside of ‘the collectivist march’, Dagny sets about to rebuild one of Taggart’s old and by now defunct line. It is during this task that she contacts Hank Rearden, the steel tycoon.
They become lovers and in unison battle to keep the economy from collapsing.

Dagny’s quest to find the inventor of an abandoned motor she finds in an old factory occupies her and the plot of the story to the very end. The answer to where all the capable people are going and ‘who is John Galt?’ is revealed to us.

The plot and Dagny’s personality does have the potential to make the feminists ecstatic, but Atlas Shrugged, can not be considered to help out the feminist cause. Despite the success, assertiveness and independent spirit of Dagny, and the sexual attention she receives from three male protagonists in the novel, a feminist reading will view the book suspiciously. There are attitudes towards women and feminity in the novel that are offensive. It is not only Ayn Rand’s criticism of collectivism that is offensive, it is the implication of Dagny’s freelance sex and her ‘rape’ by John Galt in the tunnels of Taggart Transcontinental Railroad that is truly shocking.

Dagny Taggart’s associations with Francisco D’Anconia, Hank Rearden and John Galt, far from illustrating her sexual emancipation are in fact disconcerting to the ordinary woman. Moreover Dagny’s attitude towards her associations is not very ennobling from a feminist angle. While Dagny’s ‘sex life’ may substantiate Ayn Rand’s ‘theory of sex’ about which Francisco D’Anconia lectures to Hank Rearden (460-461), the implications of Dagny’s attitude are far from being positive for women.

We observe the ‘commodification’ of Dagny Taggart and her ‘rape’ by John Galt, which is indicative of masochistic perverseness. Despite her strong and positive personality, the mask keeps falling from Dagny. The apotheosis of a liberated and successful woman makes a sorry reading. In fact all of Dagny Taggart’s first lovemaking instances with
John, Francisco and Hank have resonances of a rape like situation than consensual sex between two individuals.

For Ayn Rand, after all, ‘sex is best when accompanied with violence’ and ‘when the rapist holds his victim in utter contempt’ as Dominique explains in The Fountainhead. Dagny submits to Francisco D’Anconia on their first sexual experience as:

‘she knew that fear was useless, that he would do what he wished, that the decision is his, that he left nothing possible to her except the thing she wanted most – to submit’ (AS 107).

Dagny’s asserts that she just wanted to submit to him because:

‘...of his power to reduce her to helplessness by the pleasure he had the power to give her.’(AS108).

This submitting to his power for the pleasure he ‘gets’ and her feeling of pride when Francisco calls her his mistress is far more than:

‘the pride a woman is supposed to experience at being granted the title of a wife ’(AS108).

It confirms the feminist predication of how women are supplementary ‘to men’, ‘objects’ of their desire.

Later she becomes a mistress to Hank Rearden and surrenders to him only to become ’an instrument of his pleasure’. She takes pride in being ‘the railroad executive who was a woman he owned’ (AS 266), and when he clasps the bracelet on her wrist, ‘she bent her head down to them and kissed his hand’ (AS 266) invoking images of a master–servant binary of feminist criticism where man is the centre of all things. For Dagny, Hank Rearden was ‘in the manners of an owner...’(AS 348) and all her assertiveness and independence is exposed as a sham when she submits to Hank Rearden saying, ‘Hank, I ...I’d give up any thing I’ve ever had in my life, except my being a...a luxury object of your amusement’ (AS 352).
Dagny’s assertion of only wanting to be ‘a luxury object’ for Rearden’s amusement provides strength to the Marxist feminist assumption of how women as ‘commodities’ are thus two things at once: utilitarian objects and bearers of value. Dagny Taggart is an object of amusement for Rearden and for Francisco a bearer of pleasure.

* Atlas Shrugged also has the ‘glorious rape’ where John Galt rapes Dagny Taggart on their first encounter:

‘then she was conscious of nothing but the sensations of her body… that she knew nothing but the motion of his body and the driving greed that went reaching on and on, as if she were not a person any longer… and she gasped and lay still…’(AS 888).

The rape of Dagny for Ayn Rand is ‘a sensation of physical pleasure’ and it ‘contained her worship of him, of everything that was his person and his life—…’(AS 888). These glorified rapes can best be understood as Ayn Rand’s misogyny, for her male aggression is always played in terms of women becoming objects of sadistic humiliation. What is more perverse is the masochistic pleasure her heroines take in this humiliation. This coupling of sex and violence ‘reinforces the macho myth that every woman secretly wants to be raped’ (Innes 23-30) and justifies the feminist opposition to such misogynistic fiction.

In Atlas Shrugged we observe Ayn Rand’s celebration of patriarchy through her female protagonist’s submission as mistress to three men and her valorization of the situation: ‘I am proud that he had chosen me to give him pleasure…’ (AS172). To conclude the discussion on Atlas Shrugged, we may say that a Marxist-feminist reading reveals disturbing attitudes towards women and feminity in the novel.

* * *
The discussion of her different works very clearly suggested that for Ayn Rand, man was the normative force, the center of all things and ‘woman’ gets meaning through her relationship with man. This relationship is not one of equals but a master-servant relationship and Dominique Francon in *The Fountainhead*, eloquently puts Ayn Rand’s ‘sense of life’ when after her marriage to Gail Wynand she muses to herself how she will be unable to hold this barrier of indifference and asexuality towards him because

‘...she knew that this barrier would not be held between them, and that she had no power to hold it. She felt the answer in her body, an answer of hunger, of acceptance, of pleasure. She thought that it was not a matter of desire, not even a matter of sexual act, but only that man was the life force and woman could respond to nothing else; that this man had the will of life, the prime power, and this act was only its simplest statement, and she was responding not to the act nor to the man, but to that force within him’ (TF469).

From a feminist angle, the implications of such a ‘sense of life’ present woman as a ‘negation of man’, where ‘man alone is the paradigmatic metaphysical concept and women are merely inferior instances of this concept’ (Irigaray202). One observes how Ayn Rand in her fictional works thoroughly complements patriarchal repression of women and female sexuality by turning women into the raw materials that fuel man’s projects. Ayn Rand’s celebration of patriarchy treats women to be a slave to men’s desires and sexual needs. We also observe how the male sex assumes itself to be the generic civil subject and subordinates women to a hierarchical, patriarchal economy where women are destined to a ‘second class’ existence.