

THE FOUNTAINHEAD by Ayn Rand

To Frank O'Connor

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Introduction to the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition

Many people have asked me how I feel about the fact that *The Fountainhead* has been in print for twenty-five years. I cannot say that I feel anything in particular, except a kind of quiet satisfaction. In this respect, my attitude toward my writing is best expressed by a statement of Victor Hugo: "If a writer wrote merely for his time, I would have to break my pen and throw it away."

Certain writers, of whom I am one, do not live, think or write on the range of the moment. Novels, in the proper sense of the word, are not written to vanish in a month or a year. That most of them do, today, that they are written and published as if they were magazines, to fade as rapidly, is one of the sorriest aspects of today's literature, and one of the clearest indictments of its dominant esthetic philosophy: concrete-bound, journalistic Naturalism which has now reached its dead end in the inarticulate sounds of panic.

Longevity-predominantly, though not exclusively-is the prerogative of a literary school which is virtually non-existent today: Romanticism. This is not the place for a dissertation on the nature of Romantic fiction, so let me state--for the record and for the benefit of those college students who have never been allowed to discover it--only that Romanticism is the conceptual school of art. It deals, not with the random trivia of the day, but with the timeless, fundamental, universal problems and values of human existence. It does not record or photograph; it creates and projects. It is concerned--in the words of Aristotle--not with things as they are, but with things as they might be and ought to be.

And for the benefit of those who consider relevance to one's own time as of crucial importance, I will add, in regard to our age, that never has there been a time when men have so desperately needed a projection of things as they ought to be.

I do not mean to imply that I knew, when I wrote it, that *The Fountainhead* would remain in print for twenty-five years. I did not think of any specific time period. I knew only that it was a book that ought to live. It did.

But that I knew it over twenty-five years ago--that I knew it while *The*