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Adapting *The Fountainhead* to Film

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INTRODUCTION

In 1943 Ayn Rand was hired by Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., to write the motion picture adaptation of her novel *The Fountainhead.* The finished film, based on Rand's script, was released in 1949.[1] However, the script's development phase—one supervised by producer Henry Blanke[2]—did not involve Rand alone. Hollywood studios rarely entrusted their film adaptations to the authors of primary works; multiple writers frequently were employed. In addition, studio executives, producers, directors—and censorship boards—contributed to the shaping of final scripts. Rand's experience at Warner Bros. was no exception.

Indeed, during Rand's tenure on the project, Warner Bros. hired two other writers to create separate, competing adaptations of *The Fountainhead.* These writers were familiar with the novel and Rand's initial screenplay. Their alternative versions are revealing, not only of a process unfolding behind studio walls but of Hollywood's general attitude toward the controversial book and its ideas—an attitude against which Rand was steeled to fight.

The fact of these three competing versions posed a basic question: Would the film adaptation of *The Fountainhead* remain "*The Fountainhead*" that Rand originally conceived?[3]

AYN RAND'S FIRST DRAFTS

When Ayn Rand first considered adapting the novel, her goal was book promotion. While early sales of the novel appeared promising, she considered her publisher's marketing effort inept. Convinced that book sales of 100,000 copies would ensure that the novel reached its core readership, she imagined that a film adaptation would increase the likelihood of such sales.[4]

Story departments of Hollywood studios evaluated newly published works in order to determine their screen potential. When Warner Bros.'s own synopsis of *The Fountainhead* came to the attention of Henry Blanke, one of the studio's most distinguished producers, he was initially unimpressed. It remained for Barbara Stanwyck, a political conservative under contract to Warner Bros., to persuade Blanke to read the actual book. This transformed Blanke's opinion of the story. His enthusiasm led to its purchase by Warner Bros, and to his assignment as its producer. Rand's contract included the opportunity to write the preliminary script. However, in keeping with standard Hollywood practice, the studio reserved the right to make changes of any kind and at any time.[5]

Although pleased with her contract and the potential book promotion, Rand expressed reservations about *The Fountainhead*'s suitability as film material. In fact, she was certain that the book was *not* ideally suited, and she identified several problems with the novel. First, the biographical nature of the story encompassed an overly expansive eighteen-year period of time. Second, the novel's events were predominately psychological. The "direct climax," as she put it, did not occur until the novel's final part. Nonetheless, Rand thought that the novel could be made into a good, technically acceptable film. And toward that end, Blanke directed Rand to draft a literal adaptation that would include as much of the story as possible. He envisioned a "play form" script out of which a shorter version would be crafted.[6]

Rand began her preliminary notes in December 1943. She focused on the story's action, i.e., the *events* intended to carry the theme of her story. Her mature views on literary action and theme are presented in *The Romantic Manifesto* and are worth recalling here.[7]

In her *Manifesto* Rand writes that a fictional story about men's lives has to be presented in action, i.e., in terms of events. Events are the "building blocks of a novel." It is by exercising "selectivity in regard to events" that a literary artist manipulates and recreates reality. "The means of exercising that selectivity and of integrating the events of a story is the plot." A plot is "*a purposeful progression of logically connected events leading to the resolution of a climax.*"[8] Literary events are not random. They add up to and express a central topic, or *theme.* A "cardinal principle of good fiction," she writes, one applying equally to plot-novels and their film adaptations, is: "*the theme and the plot of a novel must be integrated*."[9]

To achieve such integration, an important transition between selecting a theme and devising a plot is the work's "plot-theme." Rand defines plot-theme as "the central conflict or situation of a story—a conflict in terms of action, corresponding to

the theme and complex enough to create a purposeful progression of events." And further: "The *theme* of a novel is the core of its abstract meaning—the *plot-theme* is the core of its events."[10]

Ayn Rand's effort to adapt *The Fountainhead*—i.e., to re-craft the novel's action—began with two key statements. First, she defined the "general theme" (elaborating this even further in an undated note as "Specific theme, as presented in the screenplay"). Second, she set out the screenplay's plot-theme.

She would define the theme of her novel as: "Individualism versus collectivism, not in politics but in man's soul."[11] The novel's events express this theme over the full range of human affairs: politics, creativity, love, art, a view of life and the world. Each character embodies aspects of either *individualism* or *collectivism.* The novel's 694 pages (in the original hardback edition) provide the widest possible scope for the characters and their actions. However, film adaptation requires condensing, omitting, or restating the novel's events and/or introducing new ones. from her notes we learn that what apparently governed the selection of these events was a reworking of the theme. While the theme remained essentially the same, she appeared to narrow it somewhat, creating, in effect, a new principle governing the condensing of the novel's action.

In notes dated December 13, 1943, Rand defined the restated theme of her script as: "Man's integrity."[12] Elaborating the theme "as presented in the screenplay," she writes the following:

> Independence—as against obeying the wishes of others, as against the "social" spirit, which is: Keating, who tried to live by public polls; Wynand, who tried to use the mob; Toohey, who consciously used collectivism for the purpose of gaining power and enslaving mankind.
>
> Therefore, Roark's speech must summarize the above, give it a statement—the *good* is not the *social*, but the *individual*, not the herd-instinct, but independence; to live for yourself or for others is an issue of the spirit, the choice between one's own judgment and the surrender of one's judgment, between integrity and mental prostitution. The form of a society will be the result of this basic issue.[13]

Turning to the story's plot-theme, or the "core of its events," she sets out the following:

> Howard Roark, an architect, a man of genius, originality and complete spiritual independence, holds the truth of his convictions above all things in

> life. He fights against society for his creative freedom, he refuses to compromise in any way, he builds only as he believes, he will not submit to conventions, traditions, popular taste, money or fame. Dominique Francon, the woman he loves, thinks that his fight is hopeless. Afraid that society will hurt and corrupt him, she tries to block his career in order to save him from certain disaster. When the disaster comes and he faces public disgrace, she decides to take her revenge on the man responsible for it, Gail Wynand, a powerful, corrupt newspaper publisher. She marries Wynand, determined to break him. But Roark rises slowly, in spite of every obstacle. When he finally meets Wynand in person, Dominique is terrified to see that the two men love and understand each other. Roark's integrity reaches Wynand's better self, Roark is the ideal that Wynand has betrayed in his ambition for power. Without intending it, Roark achieves his own revenge—by becoming Wynand's best friend. Dominique finds herself suffering in a strange triangle—jealous of her husband's devotion to the man she loves. When Roark's life and career are threatened in a final test, when he becomes the victim of public fury and has to stand trial, alone, hated, opposed and denounced by all—Wynand makes a supreme effort toward his own redemption. He stands by Roark and defends him. Wynand loses, defeated and broken by the corrupt machine he himself had created. But Roark wins without his help—wins by the power of his own truth. Roark is acquitted—and Dominique comes to him, free to find happiness with him, realizing that the battle is never hopeless, that nothing can defeat man's integrity.[14]

With theme and plot-theme firmly in mind, Rand was ready to begin writing. The first 33 script-pages were delivered on January 15, 1944. Over the course of five months, the studio logged eight additional deliveries, with the final one occurring on May 27, 1944.[15]

Blanke was impressed with the professional quality of her work.[16] In a letter to Archibald Ogden, her Bobbs-Merrill editor and great champion, Rand stated that Blanke "loves *The Fountainhead*, he admires my style of writing, and he is crazy about Roark. He says there is no one in Hollywood who can write dialogue as I do. Whatever he decides to do with the story later,

this much I can hold to his credit."[17] In a letter to Richard Mealand, her former boss and story editor at Paramount Pictures, she wrote, "I realize that I can't tell what will happen later, but so far everything has been wonderful for me."[18] Near the end of her work on her first draft, she wrote to Frank Lloyd Wright, whose architectural esthetics (but not his life or philosophy) was shared by Howard Roark, that given Blanke's enthusiasm, she was no longer "too afraid" of what Hollywood would do with her book. She was willing to take a chance. And though a "ruined screen version" was still a possibility, the film would still attract readers to the book, where she had stated her full case.[19]

Ayn Rand's first draft of the screenplay was 283 pages in length.[20]

Her opinion of the result was divided. Imposing the cinematic form and the screenplay style appropriate to Warner Bros. on her novel was not difficult. However, from a personal point of view, the assignment proved "boring." Although Rand enjoyed devising the script sequences, the process meant rehashing a story properly told in another medium. Yet, despite these reservations, Rand knew she "would fight to the death" to complete the adaptation herself.[21]

On the other hand, the studio's reaction was uniformly positive. In a June 1944 letter to Archibald Ogden, she describes Blanke's "complete enthusiasm and understanding of the story and no mention of changing it, ruining it or vulgarizing it. I wrote the whole script—and he made no changes whatever, except minor technical ones, which were very valuable—but no story changes at all." Although Rand was aware that the front office might impose changes at any time, that likelihood seemed improbable. "I won't repeat the compliments I got on the script—but it was really wonderful. Blanke was crazy about it."[22] In a letter to Jack Warner she wrote how glad she was to have carried out the novel's adaptation, "preserving its theme and spirit, without being asked to make bad taste concessions, such as a lesser studio would have demanded."[23]

Rand reaffirms her confidence in a second letter to Frank Lloyd Wright. "Mr. Blanke is as anxious as I am to prove to the world that an honest picture with a great message *can* come out of Hollywood."[24]

However, Rand did not realize the cost of such proof. From December 1944 to March 22, 1948, the day the studio called her to confirm that she would write the final script—less than four months before the start of filming—the studio's choice of writer remained undecided.[25] Meanwhile, two other writers at Warner Bros. had written—or actually *were* writing—separate adaptations of *The Fountainhead*, inserting their own, very different messages.

THE THAMES WILLIAMSON VERSION

By the summer of 1944, preliminary work on the film version of *The Fountainhead* came to a close. After the completion of the initial drafts, the project became one of the many studio literary properties vying for production.

The resumption of interest by Warner Bros. in *The Fountainhead* occurred nearly six months after Ayn Rand completed the initial script.[26]

Director Mervyn LeRoy—newly engaged under a long-term contract—persuaded the studio to let him direct what was now considered an important studio property.[27] He recalled: "For weeks, we had gradually whittled away at the book's 754 pages and had forged what I think was an excellent screenplay."[28] Under LeRoy's stewardship, the forging of the screenplay appears to have been assigned to writer Thames Williamson.[29] Williamson's notes, treatment, and 61-page script survive from a two-month period of work, which ended on April 3, 1945.[30] LeRoy called the project a "war casualty." Like many films at the time, its development was halted by the "War Production Board, because the sets . . . would use too many strategic materials." LeRoy recalled his failure to direct the film a "bitter disappointment."[31]

Williamson's analysis and script sample indicate the unrealized direction of this "casualty." He appears to write in direct response to Rand's own presentation of "man's integrity." Since the brunt of Williamson's suggested revisions involved Dominique, Rand's basic approach to the character is worth reviewing.

In Rand's script, the events or literary building blocks are a series of "entities" linked by their "actions." But the series comprising the story is not a random one. The underlying entities are conscious human beings, and the actions they undertake reflect their fundamental values. And because the story is fiction, not journalism, their goals are subject to increasing conflict and potential frustration at every stage of the story. The characters' personal stakes intensify, and their motives are clarified. This sequence continues until the specific issues motivating the characters in the first place reach their climax and are resolved.

For example, Dominique is a character with a passionate interest in integrity and a bitter contempt for a world she regards as incompatible with integrity. In Rand's script, Dominique is introduced criticizing Keating and her father's architecture for its lack of originality. She then flees from their world of convention by sequestering herself in her father's county home. Rather than escaping, she finds herself confronting Roark, a character who won't allow her to temporize. She chooses to engage him. Later,

she discovers that his character matches his physical presence. This heightens her conflict: it is the tension between a man she wants and her belief that such a man is not possible in the world she despises. Thereafter, Dominique decides to destroy Roark before the world can wreck him. She does this by offering up her own self-destruction. Yet, when she attempts to destroy herself by marrying Wynand, her marriage brings her into closer contact with Roark and his integrity. The issue for Dominique sharpens. Ultimately, given her character (and actions), she faces a fundamental choice: losing what she really values (Roark) versus discarding her mistaken view of the world. She chooses Roark. But even this decision, made with total serenity of spirit and inner confidence, is, nevertheless, a decision made when the stakes for both Roark and her are at their highest. This is the period after Roark's arrest and before his trial, when his future imprisonment is a real possibility.

Rand draws Dominique's character in an extremely calculated, romantic literary style; nothing is accidental. This is true of all of her characters, whether they are seeking independence in order to pursue the work they value (Roark) or are seeking to instill dependence and, therefore, control over the people they fear (Toohey).

Man has free will. He has the capacity for choice, and his choices matter. And he chooses according to his values. These elements are essential to a literary school Rand called "romantic." Rand considered herself a Romantic Realist.[32]

Williamson appears drawn to the realism side, at least to the extent that he makes an effort to stay within the basic confines of the story. However, his own style is the opposite of Rand's romanticism. Instead, Williamson is a *naturalist.* Whereas Rand's script contains a plot (i.e., a logical progression of events) and a specific theme uniting these events, Williamson removes the plot entirely. Instead, his literary building blocks are not entities linked by their actions (and purpose); they are entities distinguished by their randomness. These entities are still conscious human beings, but the actions they undertake no longer reflect their fundamental values. There are no fundamental values. His story is at best a chronicle: not fiction but quasi-journalism; in effect, his *report* on *The Fountainhead*.[33]

Williamson begins with a general assessment of Rand's script. In his preliminary notes, he observes that in order to "keep the story clear, straight and absorbing" most of the dialogue should be rewritten, much of which "is now either stuffily intellectual, too obvious, out of character, out of focus, or just plain over-written." While anticipating the inevitable shortening of the script—for instance, he suggests omitting the Stoddard Temple and other

"scenes not contributing to the central story line"—the bulk of his analysis concerns the "all-important attitude of Dominique towards Roark."[34]

How does Williamson recast this attitude? What is her motive? Without the conflict between Dominique's passionate devotion to integrity and her mistaken belief that the world is set against integrity—and the plot built from that conflict—what other conflicts are possible?

Williamson begins by identifying three:

First, according to Williamson's preliminary notes, Rand's script has Dominique objecting to Wynand's friendship with Roark out of "jealousy." However, this "is a trivial and confusing motive; she should object because Fate and Roark are turning Wynand into a deserving husband, and since she is Roark's woman she cannot bear the resulting implication."[35]

Second, Williamson also notes that Rand's Dominique overcomes her fear of the world and, after years of estrangement, Roark learns the news. However, Dominique still remains Wynand's wife, a fact that Rand missed turning into conflict:

> Dominique, now having morally earned Roark, must want to leave Wynand for Roark; Roark, always strong and fair, refuses her because Wynand has proven himself a man and therefore does not deserve to be sold short.[36]

Third, Williamson observes that Rand's Dominique is "deeply moved" by Wynand's effort to defend Roark after the dynamiting of Cortlandt. But Williamson asks: "What is her feeling?":

> In the script it is neither clear nor properly exploited. Wynand should be played by a very attractive actor, who in this scene appears to be winning Dominique away from Roark. *This is a vital switch.*[37]

(At this point, as added character note, Williamson writes: "About twice, in richly moving poignant scenes, Roark should employ a pet name for the girl—for instance Dommie or Neeki.")[38]

A close comparison of Rand's script and Williamson's synopsis reveals other changes with respect to Dominique.

In Rand's script, Dominique and Roark begin their love affair under antagonistic circumstances. The encounter is touched by irony. Ultimately, Dominique is attracted to more than Roark's brute physicality. The irony is dramatized by Roark's obvious intelligence as a mere quarry worker replacing the broken marble. It is also present in the sharp, knowing exchange between

Dominique, on horseback, and Roark, on foot, which occurs after he has spurned her by not returning to re-set the marble himself. These dramatic exaggerations are made plausible—and the irony real—because of the extreme intelligence and sensitivity of the characters involved.[39]

Williamson's interpretation is different. The characters are totally recast: "Bored and restless," Dominique goes to her father's granite quarry, where she encounters Roark. She "entices" him to her home with a "tale" of a job. Roark comes but spurns her. Williamson notes: "Omit his lecture on marble, in order to keep him apparently a workman." Roark "sends Pasquale to do the inset job, the enraged Dominique seeks Roark out and makes a monkey of him, he follows her home and rapes her." Thames notes: "Omit the device of Dominique on horseback slashing him across the face—this is dime-novel corn."[40]

In Rand's script, Dominique encounters Roark at a party and discovers his true identity. She expresses her admiration for his Enright House design. Later, Dominique comes to Roark's apartment, confessing her love for him. She also reveals what she regards as the hopelessness of his effort to build according to his principles. She declares she will destroy Roark before the world does.[41]

Again, Williamson recasts the situation. When Dominique comes to Roark's apartment, he redefines the motives of both characters. "In this scene, Dominique's antagonism toward Roark is purely personal and sexual, arising from wounded pride when she finds she cannot twist him around her feminine finger." Wishing to leave, "she is held by her passion for him. Even as she gives in, however, she says she will break him—Roark laughs and proceeds to collect his flesh."[42]

Williamson proposes a major change for Roark as well.

In Rand's script, Roark dynamites Cortlandt—and the public's fury against Roark flows into the courtroom, where Roark goes on trial. In his own defense, Roark gives a speech presenting the philosophy of individualism, including its view of human survival and the importance of firsthand creativity. Roark derives a case for his own innocence in view of the deliberate destruction of *his* work.[43]

While Williamson writes that adhering to the final portion of Rand's book is proper, nevertheless, "the whole dynamiting business will have to be done differently. . . . As it is, it would ruin the picture." He explains:

> Roark's long and academic defense is not legal argument, does not come to grips with the indictment against him, and very possibly would not even be permitted in a court of law. The judge

> would certainly instruct the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty; even if an emotionally swayed jury were to vote for acquittal, the audience would refuse to accept such a verdict. The audience would probably consider Roark outrageously and criminally high-handed, and—in these days of housing shortage—they would go out of the theatre thinking him nothing short of a monster.[44]

Williamson ends his notes on *The Fountainhead* "more and more convinced that it can be a great picture—and this without sacrificing or changing of any of the fundamental values of the book."[45]

The real question is: What did Williamson regard as those "fundamental values"?

The answer is not clear. Interestingly, though, one comment does indicate a fundamental value in Williamson's approach. Noting that when Wynand agrees to reverse the position of the *Banner* on Cortlandt, thereby indicating Wynand's failure to

> live up to Roark's ideals, Roark's character requires him to now want to take Dominique away for his own, but the girl . . . is retained by her compassion for Wynand. . . . *Fate has blocked Roark and Dominique once more,* and they are freed only when Wynand kills himself.[46]

According to Rand, "fate" is an essential attribute of literary *naturalism.* Fate determines that circumstances outside a writer's control will, ultimately, shape a story and propel its characters. In such a universe, free will is absent. Williamson approaches Rand's script not as a moralist presenting a new approach to integrity, but as a journalist, reporting on the characters' psychologies (and actions) without wider significance. Rand's integrated plot structure is omitted. There are no significant goals. The characters derived from Rand's story no longer (and can no longer) embody anything beyond the moral commonplaces in life, as Williamson reports them.

As a result of Williamson's journalistic perspective, no combination of intelligence and sensitivity will make the dramatic situations in Rand's script convincing. Such situations are unseemly exaggerations or "dime-novel corn" when compared to more "realistic" explanations of human behavior, such as Dominique's "wounded pride" or Roark's impulse to "collect his flesh."

To summarize Williamson's naturalism: The reason that Roark and Dominique are fated to join each other after Wynand's

suicide, or that Roark should appear a criminal "monster" when defending himself philosophically also explains why Williamson found Rand's original script "stuffily intellectual, too obvious, out of character, out of focus" and "plain over-written." The reason is the empty pretense at a self-determination that human beings simply do not possess.[47]

There is no evidence that Ayn Rand read Williamson's script.[48] However, in a letter to Blanke composed six months after the work described above, Rand addresses issues very similar to those raised by Williamson. Her letter is an almost point-for-point rebuttal of Williamson's view of her script's story structure, romanticism, and intellectual content.

Rand calls her letter to Henry Blanke a "postscript to the script of *The Fountainhead*." After acknowledging the "truly inhuman . . . awful landslide of contradictory opinions possible," she writes that her own letter is her

> attempt to stand by you in spirit in a battle that is mine, too, but which I will not be present to share. This letter is in the nature of ammunition that I'd like to give you. I'd like you to refer to it when you find yourself in doubt and under fire.[49]

The Fountainhead, she continues, "is in a class of its own." It is "constructed like a very delicate and complex mechanism." Any inept handling "will make it collapse into junk." The literary mechanism or *form* that Rand refers to is Romantic Realism. In what could be a direct reference to Williamson's naturalism, she writes:

> The method of romantic realism is to make life more beautiful and interesting than it actually is, yet give it all the reality, and even a more convincing reality than that of our everyday existence. Life, not as it is, but as it could be and should be.

Noting that her approach cannot succeed without full understanding of this method, she writes that the contemporary school of writing "aims at cheap journalistic realism—trying to represent life 'just like the folks next door.' Any touch of that approach would destroy *The Fountainhead*."

The characters of *The Fountainhead* "are unusual people who do unusual things." (Williamson would probably describe such characters as being "over-written.") And audiences will accept such characters only when they are presented consistently. However, if these characters "are weakened and diluted" through humanizing, journalistic touches, "they will become unreal, false—and silly."

The whole of her script has been "stylized to a heroic scale." The script will not survive tampering "by people who mean 'vulgar and common place' when they say 'human.'" Heroes on this scale do not "have toothaches, don't act like the folks next door and don't use dialogue like: 'Gee, it's swell.'" (The parallel in Williamson is Roark's use of "Dommie or Neeki.")

In an interesting (unanticipated) reference to Williamson's criticism of Rand's dialogue as "stuffily intellectual," Rand writes:

> I know that you will be subjected to a deluge of advice, suggestions, interference and criticism, all of it to the effect that "The characters aren't human—their dialogue is too literary—the whole thing is too intellectual—it won't play well—it's not a *regular* movie—etc." I know it because I have gone through all that before. *That* was precisely the kind of opposition I found when I submitted my book to publishers. Twelve publishers rejected it. They rejected it because they said it was *too intellectual to be popular*.

The "practical moral" to be drawn is that the novel "represents something totally new; what it represents is wanted and liked by the public; but since it is so new, it frightens and bewilders all the so-called experts." Rand offers a "specific rule" to follow throughout production:

> Whenever anything is suggested, just ask yourself: *is this the way it's usually done in pictures?* If it is, you can be certain that it's wrong for *The Fountainhead.* Whenever anything is criticized because *it hasn't been done before*, you can be certain that it's the right thing.

The most "pernicious" of possible tampering, she warns, would consist of trying to please those who admire *The Fountainhead* and those who dislike it. The essence of this position is: "We don't have to worry about the book's admirers—we've got them anyway. Now let's appease the dissenters and we'll get everybody." Rand writes: "*This* is the worst of all possible courses to take—the most surely fatal. It never works that way. It works exactly the other way around. You don't please everybody—you lose everybody. It's what's known as 'sitting between two chairs'"

She also writes: "You must believe the thesis of *The Fountainhead* in regard to its production. That thesis is not just fiction and it does not apply just to architects: *man must act on his own judgment*."

One paragraph, though, dramatizes the dangers ahead:

> You have a Stoddard Temple on your hands. Unless everyone whom you select to work with you and whom you allow a voice in the production shares the spirit of Roark—what you'll get will be a Home for Subnormal Children.

As a "war casualty," the Williamson script died before it had the opportunity to present "unusual people who do unusual things" in a journalistic manner, portraying "man as he is." A second adaptation, however, would offer a view of man as he "ought to be"—and with its writer basing that ideal on the philosophy expressed by the *villain* of the novel.

THE HARRIET FRANK JR. VERSION

From December 1945 to February 1948, work on *The Fountainhead* appears to have been placed on hold.[50] Rand would not learn about the resumption of production plans until she read the studio's own notice in the Hollywood trade press.

On February 18, 1948, Warner Bros. announced that King Vidor would direct *The Fountainhead.*[51] Several days later the studio announced that the film's scenes would be shot in New York City, Chicago, and Rio de Janeiro. On April 1, Warner Bros. announced that Rand would begin scripting the screenplay. These announcements, however, omit an eleventh-hour effort by another screenwriter to adapt *The Fountainhead.*[52]

On March 23, 1948, Harriet Frank Jr. submitted 17 pages of character and script analysis, followed on March 30 by a 33-page screenplay sample of *The Fountainhead.* These materials—partly delivered to the studio on the very day Rand herself entered the studio to begin final work on her own script—could not have been more opposite philosophically from Rand's.[53]

Unlike Williamson, Frank made Roark, not Dominique, the focus of her criticism—and this criticism would result in a major revision of the ethical and political content of the script.

In Frank's view, Roark as presented in the book is "completely divorced from his human relationships." He "is not concerned with public opinion, the opinions of the people for whom he builds, the attitudes of his critics, or even the solicitude of his friends." Rather than jelling into a character of "heroic proportions," Roark "becomes a sort of automaton, rarely moved to compassion, and even less frequently to love." This affects his relationship with Dominique "in almost a pathological way. He is happiest when she is threatening to destroy him, which indicates a sort of masochism." As a corrective, Frank suggests that in presenting "a man who has great integrity, who believes in the

freedom of the artist. . . . [it] should be apparent that he must also be a man of great human warmth." She recommends including "a sense of humor" and evidence of being "subject to disappointment and anger, the same as any other man." Such character attributes will not "impinge on his creative drive or his convictions. . . ." rather, they will "lessen somewhat the absurdity of a man who at every turn delivers his opinions as though he were handing down the Ten Commandments."[54]

On the other hand, Dominique is "as pure a case history as one might find in any textbook on psychology." Her goal to destroy Roark is "a thin cover-up for a passion for self punishment." This "censurable and pathological" behavior, even if allowed on screen, exhibits a "degree of abnormality" that would be "incomprehensible to most audiences." Frank, however, offers an explanation. Dominique's background could include a relative, such as her mother, who "had tried desperately to rise above the limitations of her social background and had tried to express herself artistically and had died trying." This would explain Dominique's conviction that "it is not worth the struggle to be an honest human being." When Dominique falls in love with Roark, she realizes that he is a man "who 'will die trying.'" Frank explains that because Dominique "has been reared and educated in a parasite background among phonies, she knows how quickly they can reduce Roark to financial and artistic disaster." Convinced that Roark's struggle is futile, Dominique "would rather see him unrecognized and unsung . . . than be forced against the wall. She cannot endure a repetition of what she has seen once in her lifetime." Thus, "It is only when she becomes convinced that Roark's enormous strength will carry him though that she returns to him."[55]

Wynand's character, she writes, "is drawn as a man whose chief amusement in life is a destruction of honest human beings." Upon meeting Roark, "a man whom he cannot destroy," Wynand, "[c]ontrary to any basic psychology," becomes Roark's "devoted admirer, and through this admiration he becomes regenerated." Frank concludes that this progression is "sheer nonsense and completely out of character." Though Wynand lacks "scruples," his character is not entirely evil. His "lack of a moral code" is the result of his "arduous climb from the slums of New York City," which has determined "the only methods that he knows." A man of "consuming vanity and a kind of self-possessed arrogance . . . ," Wynand regards himself as "invulnerable, until he meets a woman with whom he falls in love." After realizing that Dominique "belongs to another man, the veneer of civilization drops away from him and he reverts to type." Wynand's "contempt for humanity makes him Roark's natural enemy."[56]

Peter Keating and Catherine Halsey are subjected to comments of narrower scope. She recommends that Keating be depicted with "greater viciousness and greater pathos." Catherine, who appears "almost feebleminded" in the novel, should "become one of those unattractive women whose great tenderness of heart and courage make her attractive. It is her struggle to preserve a weakling [Keating], to lend him her own strength, that makes their love story interesting and moving."[57]

About collectivist critic Ellsworth Toohey, Frank writes the following, which I present in its entirety:

> Miss Rand's boogy-man, is much too much involved politically. Unless you wish to embark upon delicate political matters, it would appear to be a wiser course to transform him into a slightly feminine, witty "yes" man to Gail Wynand.[58]

Curiously, in seeking to avoid "delicate political matters," it appears that Frank kept such "matters" flowing rather delicately beneath the surface of her scenario, by indirection rather than open statement. Like Williamson, Frank constructed her story on "social realism." But unlike Williamson, who stayed away from morality altogether, Frank embraced whole-heartedly the very philosophy of collectivism attacked in the novel.

The first sign of the politicization of Frank's analysis is her note that Dominique "has been reared and educated in a parasite background."[59] Other examples follow.

In Rand's script, the story opens with Roark, an architect in private practice, seeking a new commission. Roark is portrayed as an entrepreneur trading his services in exchange for money. This portrayal is a corollary of Roark's independence. He is both able and willing to exchange value for value and to earn profits in a free market. The commercial nature of his work is no barrier to the practice of his art; it actually facilitates it.[60]

In Frank's scenario, the story opens as Roark's six-month effort to win the Frink National Bank commission is foundering. Roark refuses to compromise his plans. "He is unable to do so, because of his basic integrity and a fierce desire to do his creative work as he sees fit without the encumbrance of convention or *the compromise of commercialism*."[61]

In Rand's script, Dominique, a columnist for the *Banner*, criticizes Keating and her father's firm for its lack of originality. Rebuffing Keating's personal interest, Dominique explains that she neither wants nor expects anything of value from the hypocritical and conventional world around her.[62]

In Frank's scenario, Dominique, a "cold blooded, intelligent, dissatisfied young *aristocrat*," is introduced driving

with Peter Keating to her Connecticut estate. She is "running away from her *oppressive social background* and her pending marriage to Gail Wynand," urgently seeking to "escape *the artificiality of her life*." Although Keating is interested in Dominique, she dismisses him.[63]

In Rand's script, Dominique protests the destruction of the Stoddard Temple's physical and spiritual integrity. By marrying Wynand, who was responsible for the temple's destruction, she hopes to destroy him as well as herself. When Dominique meets Wynand, they compare basic motives; Dominique seeks to preempt integrity because the world will not permit it to exist; Wynand seeks to destroy man's pretense at integrity in a world he presumes to control. But their meeting reveals an underlying similarity: they both observe a suppressed respect for integrity and a desperate need to see it in others. This unexpected compatibility creates a certain mutual respect. Thereafter, they agree to marry.[64]

In Frank's scenario, the aspiring, albeit twisted respect for integrity (and each other) exhibited by both Dominique and Wynand is removed. Now Dominique goes to Wynand, telling him "that they are cats out of the same alley and that they might as well be married. [Wynand] is amused at her lack of romanticism, quite willing to accept her on any basis whatsoever."[65]

In Rand's script, Peter Keating is a minor character, one introduced and developed only as required by the screenplay. Keating is Roark's professional foil. He is not important enough to expand into a major role. As a complete parasite, he is a spiritual and productive dead-end.

In Frank's scenario, Keating is not only accorded prominence in the story—"with greater viciousness and greater pathos"—he is also the means through which a minor character in the novel (who does not appear in Rand's version of the screenplay) is given a new and significant role in the screenplay. Roark returns to his New York office. A young woman waits to see him. It is Catherine Halsey, Keating's secretary, who is also in love with Keating. Catherine explains that she understands Keating for what he is, "a social climber." Further,

> she knows that his attentions to her in the past have been born of propinquity, but she doesn't care. She has come to Roark because Peter is in trouble. There is a possibility that he could be the designing architect of the huge Cortlandt project. She bets he could get the commission, except for one thing: he has been drunk and on the town for weeks and is afraid that like a surgeon with shaky hands, his designs will carry no authority. She tells Roark that she knows about his relationship to Peter and that

> Peter is not worth saving, except that if he recovers she feels he might marry her. She faces Roark calmly and tells him with touching honesty that some women learn that they cannot afford the luxury of being loved for themselves. She is one, but she doesn't care.
>
> Roark is profoundly moved by her innate integrity.[66]

In Rand's script, Keating attempts to build Cortlandt Homes, a housing project advanced by the collectivist Toohey and stymied by a major design problem. When Keating discovers that he cannot solve the problem, he asks Roark to design Cortlandt and to allow Keating to place his own name on the project. Roark knows that he would never be able to get past Toohey. Nevertheless, Roark is intensely interested in the design challenge. Roark agrees to Keating's request provided that Cortlandt is built as Roark designs it. However, Roark is not finished until Keating understands Roark's primary motive fully: Roark's goal is his work done his way, and does *not* involve any possible beneficiary of the housing project.[67]

In Frank's version, Roark's motive is changed radically:

> by some fluke, Keating has a chance to do what [Roark] has always wanted to do. [Roark then] explains . . . with great intensity what this housing project can mean. How he can complete it cheaply; how he will *introduce beauty to people who don't know the meaning of the word. They can live in it and with it*, etc., etc.[68]

And further:

> The plans are altered. The costs of the building soar. The whole intent of the project is now distorted, and with it *Roark's idealistic dream of a new way of life for a great many people.*[69]

Roark looks for Keating and finds him at the housing project. "They fight—an accident results from a kerosene lantern. The Cortlandt project burns."[70]

In Rand's script, on the day of Roark's defense, "a mob of feet are rising up broad marble steps. . . . The people who speak are loose-faced, nasty, sensation seeking-types." Some remark that they hope to see Roark in "jail for life" or working "in a jute mill." Inside the courtroom, Toohey states: "I want to see Roark in jail. You understand? In jail. Behind bars. Locked, stopped, strapped—and alive." After being sworn in, Roark delivers a five-and-a-half-

page speech defending his actions according to the philosophy of individualism. He is acquitted. Wynand commissions Roark to build the Wynand building and then commits suicide.

The final scene begins with a long shot of the building under construction. The unfinished "top part of the steel skeleton is still naked. . . . It is a long white streak slashed through space, the tallest structure in the world, a thing of magnificent power and beauty." Dominique enters a lift that moves up the side of the building on top of which stands "A tall, gaunt, proud figure, the heroic figure of man's creative genius."[71]

In Frank's script, Roark's trial is "preceded by small vignette scenes in which *we see the people Roark's work has reached, those who were to live in the housing project.*" His admirers boycott "the *Banner*." ("Wynand still has contempt for the *small people.* They will bend to his will.") The trial proceeds and "the accusers give their testimony. . . . Roark has no defense, except his own final speech. Couched in very simple terms, he tells them that he never could have set fire to the project, and why. In his own defense he makes an eloquent plea." Roark is found not guilty.[72]

It is now spring, and Dominique enters a lift on the side of Cortlandt Homes, "a la the Peter Cooper Village" in New York City, where she rises into space and up to the figure of Howard Roark standing atop a public housing project.[73]

To summarize Frank's adaptation of *The Fountainhead*'s moral plot-theme: the creator is a man of "great integrity" and "human warmth" who defends the "freedom of the artist," the nature of which is defined by his moral obligation: while open to "disappointment and anger, the same as any other man," the artist pursues his vision in the face of great obstacles, overcoming "the compromise of commercialism" in order to serve the welfare of others.

A moral obligation based on self-sacrificial service to others, where the primary moral beneficiary is not one's self, but others, is an altruistic obligation. In the West, the primary intellectual source of the ethics of altruism is Christianity. While Frank's script does not adapt *The Fountainhead* into *The Passion of the Christ*,[74] it does incorporate ideas from the catechism of Christianity's secular equivalent: Marxism. Among these ideas are: the wealthy as "parasites"; the fascist domination of "small people"; the attack on "commercialism," i.e., capitalism; one's "social background" as the source of one's morality—and in a rich integration, the introduction of the explicitly self-less Catherine Halsey as a significant moral ideal and the idealization of the public housing project as humane habitat.[75]

Ultimately, Warner Bros. did not choose the Frank adaptation.

However, decades after her stillborn effort, Frank would successfully complete a more congenial adaptation. In 1979 Frank received an Academy Award nomination for best-adapted screenplay from another medium for *Norma Rae.* This pro-union-themed motion picture is described in *Film and the American Left: A Research Guide* as "one of the most prominent films about organized labor in the history of American cinema, probably exceeded only in this sense by the anti-union *On the Waterfront*."[76]

There is no record of Ayn Rand having read or commented on Frank's script for *The Fountainhead*, and of course there is no possibility of it having exerted any influence on Rand's screenplay.[77] In any case, Rand's final script preserved the philosophical conflict between individualism and collectivism: Roark builds Cortlandt for his own selfish reasons, not out of altruistic concern for its future occupants, and Toohey retains his communist political sympathies.

AYN RAND'S FINAL DRAFT

Ayn Rand's return to the project was, in her view, the result of the studio's basic uncertainty over the book and its audience. The studio "did not know what to make of the book"; therefore, they "didn't know what would ruin it and what would or would not antagonize my readers. That was my great protection."[78]

Rand's first task was to review her early script, which she had not read in four years. After doing so, she discovered that the script was too literal in its approach. Without the book's context, the "same scenes, without all the rest of the complicated structure, lost their power. It showed my writing was much more integrated than I expected. To achieve an equivalent effect," the scenes had to be rewritten.[79]

For the next several weeks, Rand worked closely with Blanke and Vidor. At Blanke's request, the beginning of the script was revised to simulate the opening of the book. Also, the Stoddard Trial sequence was eliminated. Keating (now engaged to Dominique) was moved earlier in the story. Wynand was moved earlier as well, becoming the catalyst for the breaking of Keating's engagement to Dominique.[80]

A lengthy note by Rand analyzes Dominique's psychology during her scene at Roark's apartment following the Enright House opening. It suggests that character psychology remained a major concern. She viewed the scene as dramatizing "the entire progression of Roark's and Dominique's love affair in the book. Dominique's part in the scene gives her a chance to show every

aspect of her character." "Dominique's basic conflict," writes Rand,

> is the violent conflict between her passion for Roark and her despair. The more she admires him, the more certain she is that he will be destroyed. She is so hurt herself that she is driven to hurt him, but her cruelty to him is only an extreme expression of her love. We must be certain that there is never a touch of feminine cattiness, vanity or malice in Dominique's performance. She defies Roark because she worships him. She defies him for the pleasure of seeing him master her. Her real desire is always to see him win.

Roark's reaction to Dominique's cruelty and despair is

> to sweep all her objections away simply by showing her the greatness of their love for each other. To him, the world can never be a threat and can never stand in the way of his own happiness.
>
> It is only when Dominique falls down on her knees and starts pleading with him that he realizes completely the extent of her despair. Then he understands that he cannot force her into his own attitude toward life, which she will have to learn herself. He acts toward her on the same principle as he acts in his professional career. He wants a voluntary acceptance, he will not force his ideas on anyone.[81]

Work on the script progressed rapidly. Rand revised it without great difficulty.[82]

In an April 1948 letter to Isabel Paterson, Rand mentions the possibility that the studio might retain her to make further script changes throughout the actual filming: "I'll tell you in person how many things have happened to justify your prediction that the studio will not be able to ruin the story. You said that the idea of the story would protect itself—and so far it has done just that."[83] The prospects for preserving the intellectual integrity of her story looked promising. She wrote to DeWitt Emery that her screenplay would result in the work of the "the first truly pro-American picture ever produced. . . . If all goes well, as I hope, you will see a real 'Manifesto of Individualism' on the American screen. I don't have to tell you how much the country needs it at present."[84] Then to Archibald Ogden, she wrote that her script "has been completed in a blaze of glory. Everyone is very happy about it, both the studio and myself. If all goes well, as it has so far, the

picture will be great. The actual shooting is scheduled to start on July 8th."[85]

Rand recalled that she was willing to compromise with Blanke and Vidor on a scene if their recommendations were merely "artistically dubious" (but not ideologically wrong). She reserved all her "intellectual thunder" for the philosophic issues. She recalled that in that arena "they were really scared of me."[86]

One final writing task remained: the resolution of the dynamiting of the Cortlandt Housing Project and its defense at the trial in Roark's speech.

On June 12, 1948, less than three weeks from the commencement of filming, the "revised Temporary Script" was completed. Work on the "Final script" began. The process consisted of Rand, Blanke, and Vidor "reading the script aloud and discussing every possible cut or change for the final editing." At this point, the major critical issue became the content of Roark's speech. Rand wrote that "[t]his is the most difficult thing to write in condensed form, and the most dangerous politically and philosophically, if written carelessly."[87]

In the novel, Roark's courtroom speech is the abstract explanation of the climax of the novel, the dynamiting of the Cortlandt public housing project, a project altered without his consent. The destruction of Cortlandt links all the major characters and their themes, from Toohey to Wynand.[88] The speech defends Roark's actions according to a specific philosophy—the philosophy of individualism, which defends a man's right to his own life and work. This defense, however, proved a greater bone of contention in the creation of the screenplay than the explosive beginnings of Roark and Dominique's love affair.[89]

Without Roark's explanation, the dynamiting becomes a purely criminal act. A major studio could not permit itself to defend dynamiters. Therefore, a proper explanation was necessary. However, the only reasonable explanation was one according to Rand's philosophy. Yet, in the eyes of Hollywood authorities, such an explanation was even more fearsome.

The speech, writes Rand,

> had to be written as carefully as a legal document. I had to weigh every word, every thought—in order not to leave any loopholes which would permit anyone to accuse us of some improper ideology. I had to make every idea crystal clear, cover every possible implication, guard against any chance misunderstanding, avoid any possibility of confusion. I did it—and preserved the dramatic and literary qualities of the speech at the same time.[90]

Explaining Roark's actions meant breaking with the altruistic moral precepts of Judeo-Christianity, and thus with both the liberal left and the conservative right. Only on a basis of rational egoism can individuals successfully defend their inalienable right to life and property.[91]

In 1943, during the early phase of the script's development process, Rand wrote that "Blanke has given me no objections and no restrictions, except on the sex side—we'll have to be careful of the Hays office and treat such scenes as my famous rape scene through tactful fade-outs."[92] Rand recalled that the Production Code Administration (a.k.a. the Hays Office) had greater reservations over the philosophical content of Roark's speech than over the sexual interaction between Roark and Dominique.[93] Both producer and director were supportive but remained silent. They turned to Rand for a defense.[94]

The speech was revised a total of six times. From June 14 to September 8, eight conferences were convened in order to discuss the speech. Participants included representatives from the Warner Bros. front office, the Production Code Administration, the producer, the director, Gary Cooper's attorney, and Rand's attorney.[95]

The gist of the objections was Rand's doctrine of individualism and her rejection of self-sacrifice as a moral ideal. A letter from the Production Code Administration official, former judge Stephen S. Jackson, to Jack Warner captures this concern:

> The basic objection to the philosophic concepts of this story seems to stem from what appears to be a confusion in the conflict of two ideas. On the one hand, there is the condemnation of the subordination of the dignity, idealism, and intellectual freedom of the individual by what is characterized as "collectivism." Such a control and regimentation of individuals by force of an authoritarian state or regime is obviously repugnant to the American concept and to sound principles which recognize the dignity of the individual. The antithesis to this ideology as set forth in the story is absolute individualism, which, according to the ratiocinations set forth in the script, is absolute and supreme. The confusion seems to arise in characterizing the voluntary submission of one's intellectual attainments to the welfare of others as being the same as involuntary subjugation of individual rights and prerogatives. Self-sacrifice is regarded as the same as enforced subordination to collectivistic control.

> The error in such a thesis would not be of such importance in this script were it not for the fact that *this doctrine of the absolute supremacy of individualism—even to the point where it is in derogation of the rights of others and a crime against the laws of society, is formally condoned and approved by the court in the acquittal of Roark.*
>
> This unequivocal and unconditional approbation of Roark's serious violation of the law and transgression of the rights of others *is too flagrant an instance of presenting something which is wrong as being right to warrant approval under the express provisions of the Production Code.*
>
> It is suggested, therefore, in an attempt to preserve, as far as it is possible to do so consistent with the Production Code, the theme and structure of the story, that the correct position with respect to Roark's actions be set forth in the script. Whatever means the writer wishes to employ to effect this change is, of course, not the concern or prerogative of the Production Code in any way to dictate.[96]

The waiver of the prerogative to dictate philosophical content was ambiguous. As an organization, the Production Code Administration was an offspring of private persuasion and government force. In point of fact, the administration maintained *de facto* dictatorial control over the content of motion picture scripts. At the time of *The Fountainhead*'s production and eventual release, motion pictures were not considered a constitutionally protected form of free speech. (The Supreme Court reversed its position on this matter in 1952.)[97] Thus, without Production Code approval, a completed motion picture faced arbitrary re-cutting by state and local censorship boards, or even outright prohibition.[98]

Rand's initial meeting with Production Code Administration officials, which, according to Rand, included a Catholic scholar, illustrates the administration's prerogative.[99] While supposedly non-sectarian in their moral viewpoint, the officials raised objections of a decidedly religious nature against Roark's speech. Rand recalls:

> [T]he Catholic expert, apparently, did not quite know how to phrase his objections. In other words, it was very clear to me he objected to the philosophical content but had no right to state it that way. And so he began talking about such things as, "Well, the speech is really materialistic." So, I ask him, "How can you say that?" And I point to

> Wynand's speech [the editorial on behalf of Roark that states man's self is his spirit]. . . . And here is this man saying, "Oh, that was a wonderful speech. We have no objection to *that* speech. But, you see, Roark's speech sounds materialistic."

The PCA official did not object to Wynand's speech because it contained the word "spirit." Ironically, Rand recalled Wynand's speech as being "much more philosophically objectionable to their viewpoint than the whole of Roark's speech."

As a result of this meeting, Blanke told Rand: "Take all the time you want, and include . . . any of the things he thinks he was confused about. . . . You explained them so well, now include all those explanations." Rand continues her narrative:

> They came a second time with the new version. And here we got into a discussion with this man, and I was telling him, "Well look, the speech advocates reason." And he began to say . . . "Well, it might be offensive to many religious people, to their religion." And I said, "How can it be? Thomas Aquinas, the great champion of reason?" That knocked the props from under him. He obviously knew nothing about Aquinas, besides knowing that that is an official Catholic saint. And anytime I told him, "Now here is what Aquinas said . . . here is the Aristotelian line"—I gave him a few explanations—he had to agree to everything.
>
> But the crucial point came when he . . . said, "Well, this isn't the Catholic viewpoint," something like that. I said, "Are you saying that you are going to censor or judge this speech from the point of view of whether anything agrees or disagrees with the Catholic Doctrine?" He retreated, but so fast, Blanke was about to jump in. And the man knew he had put his foot in [his mouth].[100]

By clarifying its philosophic content, Rand expanded the length of the speech. At approximately six and a half minutes, it is one of the longest in Hollywood history. Rand recalled that the Production Code Administration actually "did me a favor."[101]

Eventually, the objections from all parties were satisfied, including, for the moment, the studio front office. The filming was completed in September 1948. Warner Bros. received Production Code approval on November 24, 1948.[102] Rand's adaptation of *The Fountainhead* was shot intact.[103]

In a letter to John Chamberlain, Rand recounts her personal reaction to these events:

> My experience with the movie has been perhaps even more miraculous than with the book. I wrote the screenplay myself, preserving my theme and philosophy intact. For the first time in Hollywood history, the script was shot verbatim, word for word as written. . . . [Such a picture] will be—not some weak, compromising, middle-of-the-road script—but the most uncompromising, most extreme and "dangerous" screenplay they ever had. I think this is an illustration of the power of an honest idea to reach people and to accomplish things which no amount of force or collective pressure could accomplish.[104]

CONCLUSION

A modern skyscraper of "sculptural simplicity" stands alone against what appears to be empty sky. The camera tilts upward "stressing the impression of immeasurable height and triumphant soaring." Suddenly a hand comes into the frame, "a beautiful hand with strong, masculine fingers," which closes "possessively over one of the building's set-backs."

Thus begins Rand's original 1944 screen adaptation.

The camera pulls back and reveals Roark as he is described in the novel, with a "hint of suppressed elation in his face" while he looks at the model of his building. A voice comes over the shot: "Well, Mr. Roark, the commission is yours."

The camera pulls back further, revealing the Manhattan Bank Company and three bankers seated at a table. On the table are the model and a pile of "architectural plans and drawings." The men congratulate Roark on his "beautiful job." They note his tremendous struggle and the fame-establishing opportunity the commission represents. Roark acknowledges their remarks "calmly and solemnly."

Then one of the bankers reaffirms their offer, "on one minor condition."

The building's exterior is of no known style. It is "too original." And on this account "the public won't like it." Not wishing to alter the plans in any way—the plan's ingenuity being the selling point of Roark's project—they offer, instead, a "softening" adjustment to the building's exterior. A cardboard form is slipped over the model, replacing the "beautiful modern simplicity" with what becomes a "grotesque, offensive parody" in

the Classical style. “We must always,” says the chairman soothingly, “compromise with the general taste, Mr. Roark. You understand, I’m sure.”

In the scene, Howard Roark does *not* understand. And, as the historical record shows, neither did Ayn Rand.

Speaking for Rand, Roark throws off the Classical cardboard form and explains that honesty in men or in architecture requires that each be of “one piece and one faith.” Roark says: “A man doesn’t borrow pieces of his soul. A building doesn’t borrow hunks of its form.” He also states:

> No two materials are alike. No two sites on earth are alike. No two buildings have the same purpose. The purpose, the site, the material determine the shape. Not borrowing, copying and stealing.

This same principle applies to Hollywood adaptations. Three screenwriters adapted *The Fountainhead.* Their approaches differed, sometimes radically. Yet, for each writer, the assignment contained the issues depicted in Roark’s confrontation with the committee of the Manhattan Bank. And the historical record shows what happened when two of these writers did not share the original writer’s esthetic philosophy or general philosophy. They ended up “copying” the story naturalistically (Williamson) or “stealing” an opposite philosophy (Frank).

“Of course, we wouldn’t alter your plans in any way,” states the chairman of the bank. “It’s the beautiful ingenuity of the plans that sold us on the building.” So too with Warner Bros. It was the enormous success of the novel—and its continuing and growing popularity throughout the 1940s—that kept the project a possibility. And the screenwriters hired by Warner Bros. to adapt the work faced that possibility where their own integrity mattered most. Paraphrasing Roark, the purpose of the job was to erect a building called *The Fountainhead*, from one site to another, from literature to film, using the materials and concepts proper to its final shape, according to the story’s original purpose or theme.[105]

The writers had to judge—and enact—the theme for themselves, subjecting their finished pages to the question posed by the chairman: “You see? It doesn’t spoil anything. *Does it?*”

Fortunately, the writer who answered correctly also became the screenwriter of record—thereby insuring that *The Fountainhead* would remain “*The Fountainhead*.”[106]

NOTES

1. Production Company: Warner Bros.–First National Pictures Inc.; producer: Henry Blanke; director: King Vidor; screenplay: Ayn Rand, from her novel *The Fountainhead*; principal cast: Gary Cooper as Howard Roark; Patricia Neal as Dominique Francon; Raymond Massey as Gail Wynand; Robert Douglas as Ellsworth Toohey; Kent Smith as Peter Keating.

2. Henry Blanke was born in Berlin, Germany, December 30, 1901. He joined Universum-Film AG (UFA) in Berlin and became personal assistant to Ernst Lubitsch. His career at Warner Bros. spanned more than 30 years, during which time he worked as a producer on such significant films as *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Juarez*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre.* "With the coming of sound Warner's became a major studio. Quickly Blanke moved into third position of power at the studio, behind only the founding brother Jack and Warner's ace assistant Hal Wallis. When Wallis left for Paramount in the mid-1940s, Blanke had no rival other than the brothers Warner themselves. He would leave the company only when it was sold to outsiders in the 1950s." Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast, eds., *The International Dictionary of Films & Filmmakers: Volume 4–Writers & Production Artists*, 4th ed. (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), 100.

3. Omitted from this essay is a discussion of the overall filmmaking process, including other aspects of preproduction, as well as production and postproduction. Also omitted is an examination of the promotion and release of the film, including a look at the commercial and critical reaction, plus the re-make history. These and other topics will be addressed in my book, currently in preparation, on Ayn Rand, Hollywood and *The Fountainhead.*

4. Jeff Britting, *Ayn Rand* (New York: Overlook Press, 2004), 68.

5. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives). The contract between the Bobbs-Merrill Company and Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., November 3, 1943, includes the following wording: "Without in any way limiting any of the other provisions hereof, the Purchaser shall have the absolute and unlimited right for the purpose of any photoplays produced or distributed hereunder to make such changes, variations, modifications, alterations, adaptations, arrangements, additions in and/or eliminations and omission from said Writings and/or the characters, plot, dialogue, scenes, incidents, situations, actions, language and theme, therefore, . . . as Purchaser, in its uncontrolled discretion may deem advisable. . . ." (Section 17); File No. 2872—"The Fountainhead" Story File [Part 2] (Warner Bros. Archives, USC).

6. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives). By contrast, Rand thought that her novels *We the Living* and *Atlas Shrugged* would make excellent films.

7. Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975).

8. Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 82.

9. Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 85 (emphasis in the original).

10. Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 85. She defines art as a selective recreation of reality that expresses an artist's view of himself and his relation to the world. See *Romantic Manifesto*, 19.

11. Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Signet, 1963), 62.

12. David Harriman ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Plume, 1999), 234.

13. Harriman, *Journals of Ayn Rand*, 235.

14. Harriman, *Journals of Ayn Rand*, 234–35.

15. File No. 1904, "The Fountainhead" Story; Misc. (Warner Bros. Archives, USC).

16. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

17. Michael S. Berliner, ed., *Letters of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 105.

18. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 123.

19. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 112.

20. Ayn Rand, first draft: "The Fountainhead," *Special Collections*: 9-A,W,F,F,M-5a (Ayn Rand Archives); at least four drafts exist, but these do not include partial revisions, including some alteration made on the set during actual filming. See Rand to Collins, September 18, 1948, *Ayn Rand Papers*: 123-26-15-G (Ayn Rand Archives), 8.

21. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

22. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 152.

23. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 147.

24. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 114.

25. Rand to Alan Collins, September 18, 1948, *Ayn Rand Papers* (Ayn Rand Archives), 1.

26. A blurb written by Louella O. Parsons mentions director Mervyn LeRoy and Warner Bros.: "'The Fountainhead,' by Ayn Rand is the attractive bait that brings him there to direct it before he starts "The Robe" next August for Frank Ross. That's big news, my friends. The Rand novel is a hot property." January 22, 1945, Louella O. Parsons, Motion Picture Editor, International News Service, *Ayn Rand Papers*: 100-23-35 (Ayn Rand Archives).

27. Meryvn LeRoy was born in San Francisco in October 1900. His first effort as director was *No Place to Go* (1927), earning him the nickname "The Boy Wonder" of Warner Bros. LeRoy produced MGM's classic *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939 and *The Bad Seed* in 1956. Over his career LeRoy would direct 13 different actors in Oscar-nominated performances. LeRoy died in September 1987. Source: John Wakeman, ed., *World Film Directors, Volume One, 1890–1945* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1987), 651–57.

28. Mervyn LeRoy and Dick Kleiner, *Mervyn LeRoy: Take One* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974), 153.

29. Thames Williamson, described by the *New York Times* as a screenwriter/short-story author, wrote such works as "Next Time I Marry," 1938 (short story); *Cheyenne*, 1947 (screenplay); *Escape Me Never*, 1947 (screenplay); *The Last Bandit*, 1949 (screenplay); *Brimstone*, 1949 (screenplay); "The Savage Horde," 1950 (short story);

A *Bullet Is Waiting*, 1954 (screenplay); *Taming Sutton's Gal*, 1957 (screenplay).

30. "The Fountainhead" production files (Warner Bros. Archives, USC).

31. LeRoy and Kleiner, *Mervyn Le Roy: Take One*, 153.

32. Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 167.

33. See Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 23.

34. Thames Williamson, "Analytical Memo on the Subject of *The Fountainhead*," January 31, 1945 (Warner Bros. Archives, USC), 1.

35. Williamson, "Analytical Memo," 1.

36. Williamson, "Analytical Memo," 1. For Rand's view of the conflict between romantic competitors and its proper resolution, see Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, Thirty-fifth Anniversary paperback edition (New York: Signet, 1992), 741.

37. Williamson, "Analytical Memo," 2 (emphasis added).

38. Williamson, "Analytical Memo," 2.

39. Ayn Rand, first draft, 44–53.

40. Thames Williamson, "The Fountainhead" Story—Outline of Treatment, March 3, 1945, Warner Bros. Archives (USC), 4.

41. Rand, first draft, 69–87.

42. Williamson, "The Fountainhead," 5.

43. Rand, first draft, 226–29, 264–69.

44. Williamson, "The Fountainhead," 14.

45. Williamson, "The Fountainhead," 15.

46. Williamson, "Analytical Memo," 2 (emphasis added).

47. For Rand's views on volition and determinism in literature, see Rand, *Romantic Manifesto*, 100–102.

48. Various clippings mention LeRoy (*Ayn Rand Papers*: 100-23-35 [Ayn Rand Archives]) and a copy of Rand's script, dated January 20, 1945, is inscribed with LeRoy's name (*Ayn Rand Papers*: 102-23-27 [Ayn Rand Archives]).

49. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 242–48. Unless otherwise indicated, quotes in this section come from this letter.

50. For an overview of Rand's life and professional activities during this period, see Britting, *Ayn Rand*, 68–77.

51. King Vidor was born in 1894 in Galveston, Texas, and is regarded as one of the great directors of the silent cinema. "Vidor succeeded during most of his long career in working within the context of the commercial studio establishment without ever compromising either the artistic quality or the strong social awareness of his films." After making his name with such critically acclaimed silent films as *The Big Parade* (1925) and *The Crowd* (1928), thereafter "Vidor was principally recognized as a highly successful director of ambitious prestige subjects alternating with bizarre melodramas. . . . *The Citadel* (1938), *Northwest Passage* (1940), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Ruby Gentry* (1952), *War and Peace* (1956), *Solomon and Sheba* (1959)." Dr. Roger Manvell, ed., *The International Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1972), 494.

52. Miscellaneous media material, possibly all from "Spot News Daily Wire Service" from Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., NYC, File 12734, "The Fountainhead" Legal (Warner Bros. Archives, USC).

53. An accomplished writer, Frank, along with her writing partner and husband, Irving Ravetch, wrote a string of well-known films, including *Hud*, *Stanley and Iris*, and *Murphy's Romance*. The writing team was described by *Architectural Digest* in the April 1990 "Academy Awards Collector's edition!" as having come of age "during the depression . . . their customary escape from the grim scenery around them was, as for so many people in America in the thirties, the picture palace." Her professional efforts began at Warner Bros, in the 1940s, when she was employed to "'masculinize' the dialogue for a Dane Clark boxing picture, and she wrote *Silver Bullet*, an Errol Flynn western directed by Raoul Walsh." In an interview prepared for the release of *Murphy's Romance*, Frank stated that as far as their selection of subjects, "[w]e're committed to do what we do, and we pick our projects carefully because we want to do work we have convictions about" (Columbia Pictures, *Murphy's Romance*, 1985, media kit bio). See Harriet Frank Jr., Biography File (The Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences).

54. Harriet Frank Jr., "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis and Scene Outline," March 25, 1948, The Fountainhead production file: F-85/1904 (Warner Bros. Archives, USC), 1.

55. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 2–3.

56. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 3–4.

57. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 4.

58. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 4.

59. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 3.

60. Rand, first draft, 4–10.

61. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 5 (emphasis added).

62. Rand, first draft, 25–33.

63. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 7 (emphasis added).

64. Rand, first draft, 155–67.

65. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 10.

66. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 11–12.

67. Rand, first draft, 204–9.

68. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 13 (emphasis added).

69. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 15 (emphasis added).

70. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 16.

71. Ayn Rand, first draft, 260–83.

72. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 17 (emphasis added).

73. Frank, "The Fountainhead, Character Analysis," 17.

74. Distributor: Newmarket Films; director: Mel Gibson (2004).

75. In Rand's view, such collectivists as Marxists merely substitute society for God as the object of worship and the collector of sacrifices. See Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought* (New York: New American Library, 1989), 114.

76. M. Keith Booker, *Film and the American Left: A Research Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 293.

77. A "Notice of Tentative Writing Credit," listing Rand, Williamson, and Frank Jr. as writers, is among Rand's papers. The form is a notification that gives the various parties an opportunity to "protest" proposed credits. Rand's "on screen" as of August 10, 1948, is: "Novel and Screenplay by Ayn Rand" and suggests that she was at least aware of the other writers. *Ayn Rand Papers*: 105-23-54 (Ayn Rand Archives).

78. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

79. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 403.

80. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

81. Harriman, *Journals of Ayn Rand*, 234–39.

82. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

83. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 216.

84. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 396.

85. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 400.

86. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

87. Rand to Collins, September 18, 1948, *Ayn Rand Papers*, 8–9.

88. This is also true in the novel. For insightful commentary, see Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), 430–32.

89. The Production Code's concern with *The Fountainhead* script addressed such sexual/moral matters as female modesty, illicit relationships, and lustful thoughts. See Production Code Administration Files: The Fountainhead (W.B., 1948), Special Collections (Margaret Herrick Library).

90. Rand to Collins, September 18, 1948, *Ayn Rand Papers*, 10.

91. See Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: New American Library, 1964), and Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: New American Library, 1966).

92. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 105.

93. "The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of American (MPPDA) was formed in 1922 primarily to defend the film industry against censorship. Will Hays was appointed and remained president of the organization until his retirement in the mid-1940s." Thereafter, the organization was renamed the Motion Picture Association of America. The actual Production Code was created in 1930. Its administrator was Joseph I. Breen. Quote from "Motion Picture Association of America/Production Code Administration–Records" Finding Aid, Inventory by Barbara Hall and Val Almendarez, 1985; Special Collections (Margaret Herrick Library).

94. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

95. Rand to Collins, September 18, 1948, *Ayn Rand Papers*, 9. The final speech and the evolution of its language and arguments are outside the scope of this present study.

96. Stephen S. Jackson, "Memorandum for the Files, June 30, 1948, Re: The Fountainhead, Production Code Administration Files: The Fountainhead (W.B., 1948), Special Collections (Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) (emphasis added).

97. *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. vs. Wilson, Commissioner of Education, et al.*, 343 U.S. 495 (1952).

98. This situation potentially jeopardized a studio's financial investment. The alternative was to comply or fight the code—the latter alternative, according to Rand, was too frightening a prospect for "timid" Hollywood executives. See Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

99. This was likely Joseph I. Breen.

100. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

101. The examination of these revisions is outside the scope of this essay. However, the resolution of Roark's defense also involved the issue of intent, a point clarified by the judge in his charge to the jury. Under the administration's guidance, Rand prepared a lengthy statement, excerpts from which are quoted here: "The defendant has admitted his act. The question which you must now decide is whether a criminal intention was involved. Did the defendant consider his act as wrong and did he intend a deliberate violation of the law? . . . If Howard Roark had an opportunity to seek redress through lawful channels, but resorted to violence, instead—then he is guilty of a deliberate crime. If the chance of a recourse to law was denied to him—then he acted in protest against the violation of his rights. . . . If you find that an essential factor in establishing this crime, namely that of intent, is lacking, you may recommend acquittal providing that the property rights of those who may have invested their funds innocently, are protected by adequate compensation." This charge was shortened considerably in the final script. Production Code Administration Files: The Fountainhead (W.B., 1948), Special Collections (Margaret Herrick Library).

102. PCA Approval, Certificate: 13358, November 24, 1948, Production Code Administration Files: The Fountainhead (W.B., 1948), Special Collections (Margaret Herrick Library).

103. Except for her script, Rand disliked the finished film. And while the film was shot as written, the studio unexpectedly deleted a line from Roark's speech in the final cut of the film: "I came here to say that I am a man who does not exist for others."

104. Berliner, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, 415. As to Rand's reaction to the finished film, which was not favorable, see Britting, *Ayn Rand*, 71–72.

105. Rand, first draft, 2–4.

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