



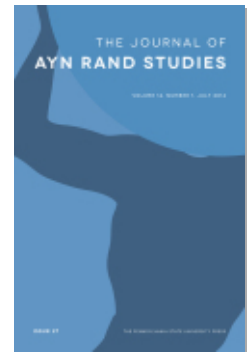
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Why James Taggart Is No Prince Charming: Ayn Rand and Fairy Tales

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Why James Taggart Is No Prince Charming

Ayn Rand and Fairy Tales

CAROLINE BREASHEARS

ABSTRACT: This article examines how and why Ayn Rand uses fairy tales as intertexts in her novels. It argues that she evokes and revises fairy tales to exemplify the metaphysical values that her novels resist. For Rand, fairy tales like “Cinderella” are problematic because they typically endorse conventionality over the truly heroic. She therefore associates them with secondhanders and villains. She rejects their message that mindless conformity leads to happily-ever-after, and she exposes how fairy tales can be formidable vehicles for promoting the senseless. She reinforces her point by contrasting them with her revisions of myths, which she associates with heroes.

I. Introduction

In *The Fountainhead*, Peter Keating wins the Cosmo-Slotnick building contest and is celebrated as the “Cinderella of Architecture” (Rand 2005, 186). In *Atlas Shrugged*, Cherryl Brooks and James Taggart announce their engagement and appear in a media blitz as the “Cinderella Girl” and the “Democratic Businessman” (Rand 1957, 392). Such allusions to “Cinderella” might seem nothing more than brief satires on the media, Rand’s way of underscoring how

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clichés dominate newspapers and distort reality. Indeed, literary scholars have paid scant attention to Rand’s engagement with the motifs and structures of fairy tales.

Yet readers have examined many of Rand’s other intertextual references, finding them significant. Kirsti Minsaas (2007, 131), for instance, has analyzed how Rand’s novels rework several myths—including Atlas, Prometheus, and Phaëthon—to reverse their tragic endings and to celebrate heroic achievement. “Rand’s intellectual style,” Peter Boettke observes (2007, 186), “was one that often began with a conventional icon, appropriating it, and then inverting it.” In this context, Ayn Rand’s use of fairy tales is worth exploring. What was her view of fairy tales? How do they function as intertexts in her fiction, and how do they relate to Rand’s larger messages about individualism and freedom?

As I will show, Rand uses fairy tales to exemplify the metaphysical values that her novels resist. “Art,” she explains, “is a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist’s metaphysical value-judgments” (Rand 1975, 8). For Rand, fairy tales like “Cinderella” are problematic because they typically endorse conventionality over the truly heroic, a feature arising from several of the genre’s formal properties: its “everyman” protagonist, its implied determinism, its plots rewarding conformity and reliance on “godparents.” When Rand evokes fairy tales, she therefore associates them with secondhanders and villains like Ellsworth Toohey who use them to “enshrine mediocrity” (Rand 2005, 665). She rejects their message that mindless conformity leads to happily-ever-after, and she exposes how fairy tales can be formidable vehicles for promoting the senseless.

Rand’s fairy-tale allusions and revisions—her “hypertexts,” to borrow Gérard Genette’s term—become more meaningful when read against their sources, or “hypotexts.” At the same time, Rand invites readers to compare and contrast them with another set of hypertexts: her revisions of myths. Rand draws upon myths and legends for protagonists matching her ideal of the individualized hero, but she rejects the pessimism of mythic plots, many of which punish heroes for their pride. Ultimately, she reworks myths as well as fairy tales to affirm her vision of art as it should be. In her ideal world, true heroes can rise and live happily ever after—but only when they replace secondhand narratives with their own plots.

To illuminate Rand’s intertextual use of fairy tales, I begin by examining why she chose them and why they are particularly effective for her purposes, especially when paired with myths. I then draw upon theories of intertextuality to demonstrate the variety of ways in which Rand alludes to, revises, and even creates fairy tales in three works: her notes for the unwritten novel “The Little Street,” *The Fountainhead*, and *Atlas Shrugged*. I suggest that Rand’s use of myth and fairy tale reflects her Romantic Realism and demonstrates a literary

sophistication often underestimated by scholars.¹ This article therefore joins the work of critics like Michael Simental (2013, 96) in giving Rand's literary writing the attention it deserves.

II. "Heroes Don't Have Toothaches": Genre and Rand's Sense of Life

Rand's use of intertexts reflects her sense of life and her concept of what art should be and do. By "sense of life," she means "a pre-conceptual equivalent of metaphysics, an emotional, subconsciously integrated appraisal of man and of existence. It sets the nature of a man's emotional responses and the essence of his character" (Rand 1975, 14). She explains by contrasting things that might appeal to an individual: "a heroic man, the skyline of New York, a sunlit landscape, pure colors, ecstatic music—or: a humble man, an old village, a foggy landscape, muddy colors, folk music" (16). Rand clearly preferred the former, disliking anything—such as fairy tales and conventional children's stories—that seemed to celebrate mediocrity.

Her comments on the stories that appealed to her as a child capture this distinction. Rand wrote, "At the age of seven, I refused to read the children's equivalent of Naturalistic literature—the stories about the children of the folks next door. They bored me to death" (160). Among the stories she disliked were those in a French children's magazine to which her mother subscribed: "sentimental, rambling tales of helpless orphans and cruel stepmothers and gray-haired, kindly godmothers" (Branden 1962, 152). Rand's comments on Madame B. A. Jeanroy's story *La Marraine de Carlino* (*Carlino's Godmother*) are particularly revealing: "[T]he first serial I read was about some little orphan boy's adventures in search of his godmother. That I remember is the story I gave up. It just bored me, I think it was sentimental slush, as I can remember now" (Bucko 2009, 13). While lacking the magic and compression of fairy tale, the story resembles a fairy tale in other ways. First, the plot features a "rise" trajectory, which Ruth Bottigheimer (2009, 10–11) identifies as one of two overarching plots of fairy tales (the other is the "restoration" trajectory). In this kind of plot, the hero occupies the middle or even the very lowest level of the social hierarchy; he subsequently struggles through challenges (such as a cruel step-parent) and rises to the very pinnacle of happiness, achieving wealth and status. In Jeanroy's tale, Carlino is poor and becomes comparatively rich. In addition, this story resembles a fairy tale in its fanciful twists (a gypsy's daughter turns out to be the granddaughter of a prominent man, and Carlino does find his French godmother) and its conventional moral about charity (32). Most significant is its emphasis on the godmother. Bucko summarizes: "Carlino's grandmother insists that to succeed or be happy in life, one must know either

one's godfather or godmother" (25). This point resembles the conclusion of Charles Perrault's "Cinderella," which has two morals. The first praises kindness as well as beauty; the second is that courage, wit, and good sense alone are not enough: one must also have godfathers or godmothers.²

As an adult, Rand acknowledged that the fairy tale as a genre was "justifiable" in conveying messages. She argued, "If you invent stories like 'The Magic Carpet' or 'Cinderella' or 'The Sleeping Beauty,' even though the means are fantastic and in those cases literally metaphysically impossible, what justifies the story is the fact that you by that means project some message, some idea, some issue which is rationally applicable to human beings" (Rand 1958, Lecture 12). However, Rand continued to dislike fairy tales and children's stories that extolled mediocrity, a dislike evident in her notes on Ellsworth Toohey, the villain of *The Fountainhead* who prefers the average over the extraordinary. In her journals, she made notes as she developed his character, describing his "great interest in folklore" and the supremacy of "folk art" over any other (Rand 1999a, 107).³ Later she sketched, "His great enthusiasm for and preoccupation with books on children and animals, such books as *Ferdinand* or *Tapiola*, such movies as *Snow White* and all of Walt Disney."⁴ It would be Toohey who'd find philosophical significance in Donald Duck. Why? It's not Donald Duck that he's boosting. It's philosophy that he's destroying" (193). Toohey rejects heroism by preferring protagonists like Snow White, who embodies conventional goodness and domesticity. For instance, she befriends a bevy of forest animals, agreeing with them that when things go wrong, one should sing a song. She then invades the dwarfs' cottage, where she and her posse clean everything from dishes to underwear. "Whistle while you work," Snow White warbles encouragingly. While baking pies, she falls prey to the Wicked Queen's promise that "a magic wishing apple" will produce her heart's desire (Snow). Vapid and comatose, pristine in her "sleeping death," Snow White is the perfect protagonist for Toohey.

It is also natural that Rand depicts Toohey as liking Robert Nathan's *Journey of Tapiola* (1938), a short novel that presents talking animals as a means of ridiculing heroism and individualism.⁵ It focuses on a Yorkshire terrier, Tapiola, who spends most of his day hiding behind Mrs. Poppel's sofa. Hearing a critic speak of heroes, he ventures into the world to "find something heroic to do" (Nathan 1938, 12). His heroism consists of hiding in trash cans, retreating from a cat who tries to adopt him, and fleeing from dogs who mistake him for a bunny. His one moment of glory occurs when he confronts a beetle, a self-described "rugged individual" who refuses to yield the road and accuses Tapiola of being a communist (80, 81). The beetle hurls himself toward Tapiola, who leaps away, causing the beetle to fall on his back, ultimately the prey of ants. Clearly individualism is a self-defeating ideal, and the idea of a hero is as ridiculous as

Nathan's terrier. Tapiola learns that "what I really want is a quiet domestic life, under the sofa, with the little rabbit at my side" (114).

Rejecting such "sentimental slush," Rand preferred stories of grand adventure and heroism, stories such as her early childhood favorite, Maurice Champagne's *La Vallée Mystérieuse* (Paxton 2004).⁶ Unlike fairy tales and novels such as *Journey of Tapiola*, Champagne's novel celebrates courage, ingenuity, and justice. Those qualities are embodied in its hero, Cyrus Paltons, who provided a model for some of her later heroes. As Shoshana Milgram observes, "In creating Roark, she gave him the qualities she had treasured in Cyrus: his self-confidence, his leadership, his competence, his imperturbable serenity in the face of obstacles" (Milgram 2007b, 183). Rand's sense of life drew her to stories of grand adventure and away from fairy tales.

Fairy tales, as Rand must have later realized, have generic features that both reinforce conventional values and oppose her own aesthetic and moral ideals, which are closer to those found in myths. Indeed, fairy tale and myth are related genres, and a review of their generic features evinces the genius of Rand's pairing. As Bruno Bettelheim (1989, 35) observes, fairy tale and myth both offer models for behavior, particularly in rites of passage.⁷ Or, as Mircea Eliade (1963, 202) puts it, the fairy tale "repeats, on another plane and by other means, the exemplary initiation scenario" that characterizes myth. Both forms convey deep meanings and "speak to us in the language of symbols representing unconscious content" (Bettelheim 1989, 36). Likewise, Bettelheim's emphasis on "the language of symbols" points to the stylistic similarity: both genres include only those details essential to the tale.

Despite such similarities, these genres differ in ways that make them ideal to use as foils. One difference is character. As Bettelheim observes, a myth suggests that an experience is unique to the individual in the story (40). The heroes therefore have particular names, such as "Theseus." A fairy tale, on the other hand, "makes clear that it tells about everyman, people very much like us." The protagonists of fairy tales might not even have names, and when they do, they are descriptive. Cinderella's name comes from her appearance: she is always dirty from the hearth. Indeed, as Vladimir Propp (1968, 20) demonstrates, what matters is not a character's identity but a character's function, and fairy tales contain a limited number of functions (31) recycled throughout the genre. Rand (1958, Lecture 12) conveys a similar sense of fairy-tale characters, like "the good fairy and the bad fairy," as representing "moral abstractions" rather than individualized human characteristics. Such differences between fairy tale and myth can illuminate Rand's choices in her own writing.

Rand's stated goal in her writing was "*the projection of an ideal man*" (Rand 1975, 155). In this respect, Rand's novels differ significantly from fairy tales, which present the triumph of the everyman. While Rand never addresses these

generic differences explicitly, she reveals her awareness of them in a letter on 6 December 1945 to Henry Blanke, the producer of the film adaptation of *The Fountainhead*. She urges him to keep *The Fountainhead* “stylized to a heroic scale” and to avoid any “humanizing” touch. She explains, “[I]f we had a homely little painting, say a still from Disney’s *Snow White*, and if we painted a handkerchief tied around Snow White’s cheek, because she had a toothache—it would not destroy the picture, but only give it a cute touch of humor.” On the other hand, her novel concerns heroes, who must be presented as such: “Heroes don’t have toothaches, don’t act like the folks next door and don’t use dialogue such as: ‘Gee, it’s swell’” (Rand 1997, 243).

What distinguishes Rand’s hero from the protagonist of a fairy tale is not just his individuality and daring but his choices. Man is born without the knowledge of either material values or values of character: “He has to discover both—and translate them into reality—and survive by shaping the world and himself in the image of his values,” Rand (1975) observes (162). This view of the individual hero is very much at odds with the everyman protagonist and the determinism of fairy tales. Rand (1982, 133–34) critiques those values in “An Untitled Letter,” where she reviews Marshall Cohen’s review of John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*:

Observe that Mr. Cohen’s (and the egalitarians’) view of man is literally the view of a children’s fairy tale—the notion that man, before birth, is some sort of indeterminate thing, an entity without identity, something like a shapeless chunk of human clay, and that fairy godmothers proceed to grant or deny him various attributes (“favors”): intelligence, talent, beauty, rich parents, etc. (Rand 1982, 134)⁸

Since these attributes are distributed “arbitrarily,” winners do not deserve their success. Rand notes that such theories reflect “the enormity of that envy and hatred for the man of ability which are the root of all altruistic theories” (134). Rand’s villains are inevitably deterministic as well as envious.

The different characters of fairy tale and myth also lead to variance in scale. That difference is neatly captured by Joseph Campbell (1973, 37–38), who outlines a “monomyth” for both genres in which the hero or his world lacks something significant. In fairy tales, the stakes are lower (a missing ring, for instance), but in myth the world could even be on the brink of ruin. Typically, the hero of the fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph, and the hero of myth a world-historical, macrocosmic triumph. Whereas the former—the youngest or despised child who becomes the master of extraordinary powers—prevails over his personal oppressors, the latter brings back from his adventure the means for the regeneration of his society as a whole. A tale such as “Cinderella” charts the

progress of a protagonist whose task has more focused consequences, such as triumphing over wicked stepsisters, while a myth such as “Prometheus” focuses on a mission of global significance, such as bringing fire to humanity.

These genres also convey different worldviews. As Eliade and Bettelheim note, heroic sagas and myths tend to be pessimistic, while fairy tales are optimistic (Eliade 1963, 199; Bettelheim 1989, 39). Myths often humble their heroes, suggesting that despite their achievements, they should be less proud. Prometheus is chained to a rock and tortured daily; meanwhile, Cinderella lives “happily ever after.” Indeed, as Bottigheimer observes, the happy ending is a feature of the fairy tale and often consists of (re)gaining social status and wealth (Bottigheimer 2009, 9). Given Rand’s values, these genres presented problems. While approving the heroes of myths, she disliked the plots that punished them for their pride, which was one of the key virtues of her philosophy (Rand 1964, 27). As a result, when myths appear as intertexts in her novels, she often inverts them to reinforce the triumph of the hero. On the other hand, Rand could hardly approve of a fairy-tale plot that ends by glorifying mediocrity or reliance on godparents. Her novels often invert these plots, too.

Rand could have chosen any number of intertexts, yet she most often draws upon well-known myths and fairy tales. “Cinderella” was an obvious choice, given its focus on rising (as her characters attempt to do) and its endorsement of conventional virtues and rewards. For instance, Cinderella embodies patience while she endures her stepmother’s persecution.⁹ She readily forgives her stepsisters’ cruelty, even finding them courtiers to marry (Perrault 1967, 164). She triumphs by marrying the prince, a man at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Yet these aspects of the tale hardly reflect Rand’s ideals, and Cinderella’s behavior at times contradicts them. For instance, Cinderella not only acts humble: she performs her humility when she chooses to sit in the ashes.¹⁰ When her stepsisters go to the ball without her, Cinderella does not act but instead cries. Her godmother fixes her problem by giving her clothes for the ball, where Cinderella deceives the prince, allowing him to believe that she is a princess. At the last ball, she breaks her contract with her godmother to return before the stroke of midnight. While the tale celebrates Cinderella’s rise, it does not attribute that elevation to heroic qualities. This trajectory contrasts markedly with that in Rand’s adulatory biography of Pola Negri, which reads like an anti-Cinderella story. “Unattractive,” with “no taste in clothing,” Negri launched a successful career as an actress and married an aristocrat, Count Dambski. When he insisted that she retire, Negri refused: “One autumn night the Countess Dambskaya ran away from the castle, having decided never to return” (Rand 1999c, 33–34). While Rand valued the proud, ambitious Negri, fairy tales reward the more conventional Cinderella.

Rand may also have chosen “Cinderella” due to its popularity as an intertext in multiple media sources. Fairy tales were common inspirations in the film industry in the early twentieth century, as Rand would have known from studying film at the State Institute for Cinematography in Leningrad as well as from her later work in Hollywood. According to Kristian Moen (2013, 115), “Cinderella” was “one of the most frequently adapted film subjects of the time.” Rand’s first boss in Hollywood, Cecil B. DeMille, even reworked “Cinderella” in three films: *The Dream Girl* (1916), *The Golden Chance* (1915), and its revision as *Forbidden Fruit* (1921), which ends with the hero bringing the heroine a slipper (Higashi 1994, 84–86, 92–100). Not surprisingly, Rand’s movie diary indicates that she was unimpressed by the last film, which she saw in 1923 and ranked only a 2 on her 5-point scale (Rand 1999b, 173). In drawing upon these traditions, Rand builds upon readers’ familiarity with their characters and plots and calls attention to the popular fantasy of a spectacular rise.

Many fairy tales and myths are so well known that the characters’ names and key phrases are metonyms. As Catherine Quick (2011, 598) observes, “As a persuasive tool, metonymy allows a rhetor to tap into shared associations with his or her audience.” As such, metonyms have tremendous rhetorical power. She explains with an example of a politician referring to “a big bad corporate wolf” who threatens jobs: “Because of the audience’s traditional associations with the phrase ‘big bad wolf,’ the charge resonates not only in the situation of the speech, but taps into the emotions of fear and threat to innocence represented by the wolf in the fairy tales” (599). Politicians can use metonymy to establish a sense of community: “The metonym attempts to create a shadow-tradition to convince the audience that they and the speaker have that shared experience” (599).

Rand examines such conventional associations in her use of intertexts. For instance, “Midas” can function as a metonymic trigger, prompting readers to think of foolish men whose greed brings their ruin; “Cinderella” connotes an individual whose kindness and patience are rewarded by spectacular success. As I will show, Rand’s villainous characters use these associations to establish a bond with their audience, to promote their ideals, and to bring down their enemies. But when Rand’s heroes invert myths, they disrupt those associations, challenging that community, and forcing the audience to resee conventional wisdom—to think individually about the meanings of those tales. Rand herself, reworking both genres, achieves a new model. She refuses to celebrate mediocrity or to diminish the hero by portraying him with a toothache. In her final novels, she projects her hero into a world in which courage and achievement are rewarded. First, however, she underwent a process of defining that world and its hero.

III. “A Clear, Straight Soul”: “The Little Street”

Rand first uses a fairy tale in her fiction in 1928. At that time, she made notes for a novel, “The Little Street,” which she soon abandoned because, David Harriman (1999, 20, 23) explains, “The project was too alien to her deepest premises” in reflecting a malevolent universe. Nonetheless, the notes show patterns that Rand developed in her two best-selling novels in relation to characters and themes. Most notably, Rand (1999a, 30) alludes to a fairy tale in describing one character, Hetty: “A clear, straight soul. Like the ‘Prince-Flower.’” Harriman (1999, 30) suggests that the reference may be to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s “The Carnation,” also translated as “The Pink Flower.” Although the particular text (German or a translation) that Rand used is unknown, her notes about plot and character have clear parallels to this fairy tale. She expands on her first description of Hetty: “(The model for the girl: the ‘Prince-Flower,’ qua modern; and myself, qua weak—the idealistic, longing side of me)” (Rand 1999a, 31). Here Rand introduces the female character who admires greatness but lacks heroism herself, a character who appears in variations throughout her novels and plays.

Rand’s comparison of Hetty to the girl in “The Pink Flower” is especially apropos given the plots, for both prove loyal to the heroes. In “The Pink Flower,” the unnamed maiden loves the prince, who has been kidnapped by his father’s cook due to the special power granted him by an angel: anything he wishes for magically appears, including a luxurious castle. But the cook, now living the life of a nobleman, fears that the prince might return to his father, so he urges the maiden to murder the prince. She refuses again and again, even when the cook threatens to kill her (Grimm and Grimm 1992, 284). Like this stalwart maiden, Rand’s Hetty loves the protagonist of “The Little Street” and “is always ready to take his side against everybody” (Rand 1999a, 30). When he is condemned to death for murder, she sneaks into the governor’s house to beg him to pardon Danny. He refuses and threatens to send her to a penitentiary (46). When Danny escapes from jail, he flees to Hetty, who shelters him in her home until her mother threatens to call the police (30).

While Hetty and the maiden are loyal, they both lack the strength and intellect to pursue their own goals. In “The Pink Flower,” the prince invites the maiden to return to his father’s court with him. She hesitates, “It’s a long way off, and what shall I do in a foreign country where nobody knows me?” (Grimm and Grimm 1992, 284). Yet they do not wish to be separated, so he turns her into a pink flower and puts her in his pocket, where she remains until nearly the end of the tale. Likewise, Rand (1999a, 30) further describes Hetty: “Very sensitive. Lonely. Not a strong, ambitious career woman, but—a woman. Bewildered by life. Unable to adapt herself to things as they are. In the end, left aimless,

with nothing to live for and a terror of living—showing how empty a place this world is for one who does not and cannot share its vices and vicious virtues.” In this respect, Hetty is an earlier version of the more complex Cherryl Taggart in *Atlas Shrugged*. Both are sympathetic figures, hero-worshippers who lack the ability to succeed in a world they perceive as malevolent. Neither achieves the happy ending of her fairy-tale model.

Rand’s notes also confirm that even from the beginning, she associated her protagonists not with the “everyman” of fairy tales but with superior individuals of history and literature. In “The Little Street,” she describes the protagonist, Danny Renahan, as “born with the spirit of Argon and the nature of a medieval feudal lord.”¹¹ He is an egoist at war with the world, a young hero who “has the true, innate psychology of a Superman” (26, 27). The phrase “innate,” as Harriman notes, suggests a kind of determinism that Rand later rejected (Harriman 1999, 21). In *The Fountainhead*, we continue to hear echoes of Nietzsche’s influence, though she connects her hero most explicitly with mythic figures, such as Prometheus. By *Atlas Shrugged*, the Superman has given way completely to heroes framed in relation to myths.

While Rand was not drawn to the unnamed protagonist of “The Pink Flower,” she may have been intrigued by other aspects of the Grimms’ tale, including the cycle of appropriating another’s labor while persecuting that individual. In this tale, the cook enjoys the beautiful castle created by the prince but fears the prince will leave him, so he plots the prince’s murder (Grimm and Grimm 1992, 284). This theme appears in Rand’s novels, along with another point especially relevant to *Atlas Shrugged*: clearly the prince could have used his wishing ability to leave the cook at any time, but he remains passive until the attempted murder drives him to reject his role of victim. He then turns the cook into a dog and returns to his kingdom (Grimm and Grimm 1992, 284). Rand never depicts her heroes as vengeful magicians, but she does explore the nature of persecution as she portrays her ideal man.

IV. “And Whether Roark Has Wings”: *The Fountainhead*

Rand’s first fully realized ideal man appears in *The Fountainhead*, a novel in which she expands her use of fairy tales. She reworks them to satirize conventional ideals, to critique secondhandedness, and to illuminate the difference between mediocrity and her true hero, whom she associates with the Nietzschean Superman and mythic figures. Most obviously, she alludes to “Cinderella” when Peter Keating wins the Cosmo-Slotnick building contest. The media print photographs of Keating’s handsome face at the head of articles reiterating clichés about “poverty, struggle, aspiration and unrelenting toil that had won their reward; about the faith of a mother who had sacrificed everything

to her boy's success; about the "Cinderella of Architecture" (Rand 2005, 186). Keating's drawings of the "most beautiful skyscraper on earth" are reproduced in the papers, and he "was photographed with a famous prizefighter, under the caption: 'Champions'" (186, 187). The inspiration for the "prizefighter" may have been James Braddock, who was dubbed by Damon Runyon "the Cinderella Man" when he won a boxing match against Art Lasky in 1935 (Hague 2005, 118), just one year before Rand began work on *The Fountainhead*. As Braddock's most recent biographer observes, during the Great Depression "Braddock became an everyman hero at a time when America desperately needed one" (1–2). In this context, Rand satirizes the media's reliance on "Cinderella" to glorify sacrifice and the success of the everyman in winning a competition—particularly a competition judged by a committee.¹²

The satire is especially poignant in relation to the film industry, because the sponsor is Cosmo-Slotnick Pictures of Hollywood. As Moen has demonstrated, "Cinderella" and similar fairy tales were often used to describe the stars who performed in fairy-tale films, thereby creating a parallel between the heroine's arc and the actress's life. For instance, the actress Marguerite Clark said in an interview that she grew up with fairies and had dreams: "And it seems like a fulfilment of those dreams that I am now able, in the picture, to depict fairy rôles to delight the hearts of other small people, such as I was, and to make their dreams come true" (Moen 2013, 136). In this context, Peter Keating's depiction as a Cinderella is simply another media construct "to delight the hearts of other small people."

Rand charts the trajectory of this everyman by revising "Cinderella." To revise a fairy tale, Jack Zipes (1994, 9) explains, means examining something wrong in the original work and improving the tale: "As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's view of traditional patterns, images, and codes." Rand uses three strategies that can be categorized using Genette's taxonomy of hypertextuality. First, she uses "diegetic transposition," updating Perrault's late seventeenth-century tale to early twentieth-century New York (Genette 1997, 304). The new setting enables her to modify meaning through "pragmatic transformation," or altering the actions of the fairy tale (311–12). The tale's meaning also changes through the "devaluation" of the Cinderella figure: assigning negative values to Cinderella/Keating's character and actions (343). Through such changes, Rand encourages us to question the implicit message of "Cinderella" that one finds happiness by possessing superficial markers of success: wealth, status, and marriage to an elite figure. This traditional ideal is embraced by Peter Keating, who, as a secondhand, refuses to define or pursue his own objectives, instead focusing on appearances. However, Keating is worse than Perrault's heroine because he lacks even her superficial virtues. To frame his path, Rand loosely follows the structure of the most famous variant, Charles Perrault's "Cinderella," which features a fairy godmother.¹³

The modern setting enables Rand to track Peter Keating's professional as well as personal rise, beginning with his career in Part I. After graduating from Stanton, Keating goes to work at the firm of Francon & Heyer, where he occupies a low position in the drafting room, the equivalent of Cinderella's servitude. However, while Cinderella is persecuted by her wicked stepmother for her beauty and virtue, Keating gains favor by pandering to Guy Francon's vanity, the implied parallel thereby devaluing Cinderella (Rand 2005, 43). Within one year, Keating gains "the whispered title of crown prince without portfolio. Still only a draftsman, he was Francon's reigning favorite" (Rand 2005, 57). Yet Keating, like Cinderella, must compete with his generational equals. His not-so-wicked stepsister is his coworker, Tim Davis. But whereas Cinderella is forced to work, Keating manipulates Davis into letting him assume his responsibilities "secretly, at first, then openly" (57). And just as Cinderella sits in the ashes, emphasizing her lowly work, Keating reveals his assistance "with an air of naive confidence which implied that he was only a tool, no more than Tim's pencil or T-square" (57). Davis is fired, and Keating assumes his place. In this context, "Cinderella" is about climbing by posing as a hardworking victim.

Rand also suggests that "Cinderella" promotes a focus on deception completely in keeping with secondhand values, a point most evident in Rand's revision of the ball scene. Whereas Cinderella wants to go to the ball hosted by the prince, Keating is eager to enter "The Most Beautiful Building in the World" contest (172). Lacking talent, Keating—like Cinderella—relies on the labors of a "fairy godmother." In Perrault's tale, the godmother transforms mundane items into an extraordinary equipage: a pumpkin into a gilded coach, mice into dappled horses, a rat into a coachman (Perrault 1967, 159–60). Likewise, Howard Roark reshapes Keating's confused plans into a magnificent design: "Roark talked, explained, slashed lines through the plans, untangled the labyrinth of the theater's exits, cut windows, unraveled halls, smashed useless arches, straightened stairways" (Rand 2005, 172). Unlike Cinderella's godmother, Roark is motivated by the work itself rather than Keating's well-being. Neither Cinderella nor Keating feels skittish about a little extra help.

Likewise, both Cinderella and Keating focus on appearance. When the godmother presents the equipage, Cinderella asks whether she has to go in her ugly clothes.¹⁴ The godmother transforms Cinderella's ragged outfit into a bejeweled dress of gold and silver.¹⁵ Likewise, when Roark finishes revising the building plans, Keating begs one more favor: "And the elevation?" (172). In architecture, the elevation (or "façade") is the view of a building from one side—the dress, so to speak. Keating has planned a Renaissance elevation for his twentieth-century building because juries like columns and one jury member especially prefers the Renaissance (171). Roark erupts over this violation of the building's integrity but nevertheless alters Keating's drawing (172). The result

is precisely the compromise that appeals to the Cosmo-Slotnick jury, which awards him the prize.

Keating's victory catapults him to a professional happy ending, partnership in Francon & Keating, thereby concluding Part I of the novel and completing the fairy tale's "rise" trajectory. By exposing Keating's plots and reliance on Roark, however, Rand prompts readers to reconsider the values informing "Cinderella" and tales like it: the celebration of mediocrity, deception, and appearance over integrity. In Perrault's tale, Cinderella rises because her godmother gave her glamorous clothes, because she poses as a princess and the prince finds her attractive—not because she works hard. Rand therefore critiques Perrault's final moral as especially appropriate for the secondhanders: to get ahead, one must have godfathers or godmothers.

In Part II, Rand varies "Cinderella" to demonstrate her concept of secondhandedness as personal as well as professional. Keating abandons his fiancée Katie to marry Dominique Francon, the daughter of the ruling "king," Guy Francon, and the elegant woman desired by many. Rand alters the meaning of this fairy-tale marriage. In Perrault's "Cinderella," the prince seeks out the heroine in her home because he wants to marry the best, symbolized by her glamorous appearance and her perfect foot, which fits the glass slipper. In Rand's novel, Dominique visits Keating's home, offering marriage because he is the worst she knows—the secondhanders in contrast to her beloved Roark. In Perrault's "Cinderella," such a marriage is by definition the height of success: the prince's status is everything. Rand exposes what such adherence to conventional ideals really means, for Keating loves not Dominique but the resulting publicity and jealousy of his peers (330, 381). The result is far from happily-ever-after. The last half of the novel reverses the rise of the "Cinderella" tale by charting Peter Keating's professional, physical, and spiritual fall. He sells Dominique to Gail Wynand for a building commission; his architectural firm dwindles to a single floor; he gains weight; he "drank often, without joy" (587, 589). Keating, unwilling to think for himself, simply resigns himself to the downward spiral just as he had passively accepted the false messages of success in "Cinderella."

Keating is the foil to Rand's protagonist, Roark, whom secondhanders attack for his heroic qualities: originality, integrity, pride. Two of the assaults attempt to undermine Roark's heroism by portraying him as a ridiculous character in a fairy tale. First Athelstan Beasley, "the court jester of the A.G.A.," publishes a column in the A.G.A. Bulletin:

Well, lads and lassies, here's a fairy tale with a moral: seems there was, once upon a time, a little boy with hair the color of a Hallowe'en pumpkin, who thought that he was better than all you common boys and girls. So to prove it, he up and built a house, which is a very nice house,

except that nobody can live in it, and a store, which is a very lovely store, except that it's going bankrupt. He also erected a very eminent structure, to wit: a dogcart on a mud road. This last is reported to be doing very well indeed, which, perhaps, is the right field of endeavor for that little boy. (174)

This story exemplifies Genette's notion of "architextuality" in evoking conventions of a genre (the fairy tale) rather than reworking a particular example. For Genette, architextuality involves a "silent" relationship that is articulated most often in only a taxonomic designation (Genette 1997, 4). Here Beasley labels his story "a fairy tale with a moral." He uses the familiar phrase "once upon a time," and gestures toward the child audience associated with nineteenth-century fairy tales, calling his readers "lads and lassies." Meanwhile, he belittles Roark by referring to him as the classic fairy-tale protagonist: an unnamed "little boy." There is no attempt to depict character, only a brief description of his hair as orange like the iconic pumpkin. The tale's compressed structure of three attempts (three being a magical number) recalls that of tales like "The Three Little Pigs," in which two of the protagonists fail to construct tenable houses.¹⁶ The third try, of course, succeeds—though in this case, it suggests that the building should be humble and regressive: "a dogcart."

What is most disturbing about this fairy tale is Beasley's insistence that Roark's hubris be punished. Beasley's tale therefore acquires significance in relation not only to the genre of the fairy tale but to conventions of heroic tales and myths. Given Rand's early admiration of Nietzsche, it is possible that she had in mind a scenario from the Prologue of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. A "gaudily-dressed fellow like a buffoon"—also translated as a "jester," like Beasley—emerges during a performance by a tightrope walker (Nietzsche n.d., 33).¹⁷ The performer reaches the midpoint on a rope stretched between two towers, a rope that can be seen as "stretched between the animal and the Superman" (29). The buffoon, connoting tradition, ridicules the performer: "What dost thou between the towers? In the tower is the place for thee, thou shouldst be locked up" (33). The jester then leaps over the performer, who loses his nerve and plunges to his death. To reach his potential, Nietzsche argues, man must overcome tremendous and even deadly opposition. *The Fountainhead* reinforces this message, for Beasley is the voice of convention attacking Roark for his innovative architecture: he wants Roark safely in the tower, a mediocre figure rather than a Superman.

Likewise, the novel's villain, Ellsworth Toohey, draws upon a fairy tale to attack Howard Roark's design for the Stoddard Temple. In his November 2 column in *The Banner*, Toohey revises a passage from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, a book that Carroll presents in his Introduction

as a “fairy-tale” (Carroll 1994, 171, 172). Full of nonsense, the book refuses to present life rationally. “Carroll sees all of life as a game, whose rules we must learn by comic trial and error,” Camille Paglia (1994, xii) observes. “Despite our best intentions, reality often proves refractory or rebellious.” The stanza that Toohey selects and updates, replacing two phrases (“sealing wax” and “pigs”) with Roark’s name, is one of the most famous passages of nonsense from “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” a poem that Tweedle-Dee recites to Alice:

The time has come, the walrus said,
To talk of many things:
Of ships—and shoes—and Howard Roark—
And cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether Roark has wings. (Rand 2005, 348)

By situating Roark in a poem from a fairy tale, Toohey establishes the terms on which his battle against Roark will be fought. As Toohey explains to Dominique, “[Y]ou can never ruin an architect by proving that he’s a bad architect,” so he turns to ridicule and attacks Roark’s morality. The strategy works because one cannot fight the unreasonable. “The senseless is the major factor in our lives,” Toohey says. “You have no chance if it is your enemy” (356).

Toohey’s choice of this stanza is also significant given its context within Carroll’s poem and Toohey’s own role in securing Roark’s commission for the Stoddard Temple. In Carroll’s poem, the Walrus makes this speech after he and the Carpenter have lured a number of young oysters down the beach for a “pleasant walk,” only to eat them for dinner (Carroll 1994, 228, 232). The Walrus hypocritically “weeps” for the oysters into a handkerchief, which he holds in front of himself so that the Carpenter cannot see how many oysters he eats (232). Likewise, Toohey arranges for Stoddard to hire Roark, luring him into designing a masterpiece. Once erected, the temple becomes Toohey’s excuse to destroy Roark through his own publicity campaign and Stoddard’s lawsuit for breach of contract and malpractice (Rand 2005, 350). Walrus-like, Toohey pretends to support “simple decency” even as he manipulates everyone to bring down the hero (349).

Toohey furthers that goal by undermining the very ideal of a hero, updating Carroll’s poem to ask “whether Roark has wings.” While Roark’s flight of genius could link him to the aspiring Icarus, Toohey prosaically compares him to a fly. He is nothing more than “an overambitious amateur,” a man whose temple outrageously suggests “self-exaltation” rather than instilling “a sense of abject humility” (349). Toohey builds upon Carroll’s fairy tale to establish a tale of humiliated hubris, a tale followed by *The Banner’s* editor, Alvah Scarret,

who “wrote many clever things about the Tower of Babel that could not reach heaven and about Icarus who flopped on his wax wings” (352). At Toohey’s urging, he also prints the photograph of Roark at the opening of the Enright House, “the photograph of a man’s face in a moment of exaltation,” with the caption “Are you happy, Mr. Superman?” (352). As earlier, Rand juxtaposes the average character of a fairy tale with the concept of a hero.

The caption and an earlier quotation clarify that Toohey is also explicitly resisting Nietzsche’s idea of the Superman: “It is not our function—paraphrasing a philosopher whom we do not like—to be a fly swatter, but when a fly acquires delusions of grandeur, the best of us must stoop to do a little job of extermination” (348). As Shoshana Milgram and Lester Hunt observe, Toohey paraphrases Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, specifically “On the Flies in the Market Place.”¹⁸ By demoting Roark to one of the flies, Toohey also tries to invert Nietzsche’s scenario, which Rand replicates in many respects. Specifically, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra warns that the flies (average people) do not comprehend the great creators (like Roark) but are drawn to the showmen or “actors” (Toohey). Toohey uses his column to incite his audience to vicious attacks. “To upset—that meaneth with him to prove. To drive mad—that meaneth with him to convince. And blood is counted by him as the best of all arguments,” Zarathustra warns (Nietzsche n.d., 67). The actor drives the “poisonous flies” into a frenzy of sucking the Superman’s blood, attempting to drain him (67–68). Toohey’s flies are the ministers, journalists, women’s clubs, mothers, actresses, society women, and college professors, all writing furious editorials and letters deriding Roark’s architectural masterpiece (Rand 2005, 351). Like Nietzsche’s flies, Roark’s attackers therefore punish him for his virtues (Nietzsche n.d., 68). Roark stoically endures the punishment, embodying Zarathustra’s warning: “Exhausted I see thee, by poisonous flies; bleeding I see thee, and torn at a hundred spots; and thy pride will not even upbraid” (68). Indeed, Roark wastes less time thinking about his enemies than Toohey, who is one of the “cowardly” of Nietzsche’s tale: “They think much about thee with their circumscribed souls—thou art always suspected by them!” (68). Yet Rand departs significantly from Nietzsche’s message, signaling the philosophical break that Milgram maps in this novel (Milgram 2007a, 36). Nietzsche’s Zarathustra concludes, “Flee, my friend, into your solitude—and thither, where a rough strong breeze bloweth. It is not thy lot to be a fly-flap” (Nietzsche n.d., 69). Rand, on the other hand, shows Roark standing firm.

In contrast to Toohey and the media, Roark and Dominique prefer mythical heroes. Dominique tells Alvah that she once got a statue of Helios, the personification of the Sun: “I think I was in love with it.” She then famously “threw it down the air shaft,” breaking it to keep anyone else from seeing it (Rand 2005, 142). This is precisely what she tries to do in sabotaging the career of

Howard Roark, whose brilliance renders him godlike. The final scene of the novel reverses Dominique's destruction of the statue, for she visits Roark at a building site, riding the outside hoist to the top of the building, where Roark figuratively occupies the place of the sun: "Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark" (727).

Again and again, Rand associates her heroes with mythical heroes because they are the creators, the individuals punished for their grand achievements rather than the everyman of the fairy tale destined to accomplish a personal rise. Howard Roark signals this at his final trial, where he evokes legendary heroes punished for their daring: "Prometheus was chained to a rock and torn by vultures—because he had stolen the fire of the gods. Adam was condemned to suffer—because he had eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge" (710). Unlike Adam and Prometheus, though, Roark ultimately triumphs, proving that he does indeed have wings. Whereas Rand revises "Cinderella" to challenge its conventionality and morality, she reverses the myth of Prometheus to affirm the triumph of man as he should be. This juxtaposition of myth and fairy tale becomes even more explicit in *Atlas Shrugged*, where Rand broadens her scope from Roark's story to "the world's story—in relation to its prime movers" (Rand 1999a, 392–93).

V. "You Self-Made Princes": *Atlas Shrugged*

In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand aligns fairy-tale values with the looters and moochers, who use popular narratives to extend their control and bring down the good characters, both the heroes and the "everyman" they supposedly wish to help. Rand makes this argument most explicit by creating parallel narratives of two characters who desire to rise: Cherryl Brooks Taggart, "the Cinderella girl," and Hank Rearden, a hero associated with mythic figures like Prometheus and Atlas. Ultimately, Rand shows that heroes can rise and live happily ever after only when they revise the plots—literary as well as sociopolitical—that chain them.

Rand evokes "Cinderella" in the subplot focused on James Taggart and Cherryl Brooks. Rand modifies both the Cinderella and Prince Charming characters, whom she had in mind from the early stages of planning this novel. Her journal entry on 10 April 1946 lists under "Characters Needed": "James Taggart's wife ('the Cinderella Girl'). She may be an example of the average woman going to pieces without spiritual guidance (and going through hell with J. T.)" (Rand 1999a, 406). Cherryl is what Genette identifies as a "reevaluation" of character (as opposed to Keating's devaluation), possessing more admirable qualities than her model (Genette 1997, 350). Cherryl is Cinderella as she could be: independent and with a strong sense of life. Cinderella patiently endures

her stepmother's cruelty, crying while her stepsisters traipse off to a ball, but Cherryl resents being "the only one of the seven of us that kept a job" (Rand 1957, 261). The woman next door says it is her duty to help them, but Cherryl dismisses this altruistic ideal. And instead of waiting for a godmother to fix her problems, Cherryl buys a train ticket for New York, a place where people "do things" (261). For her, leaving is not a way to escape from work or to seek a husband but to raise herself. She takes a job at a dime store, where she meets James Taggart.¹⁹

Their encounter replaces Cinderella's first ball and transfers the role of deceiver: it is not Cherryl who masquerades as a mysterious princess but James who poses as the heroic businessman, the equivalent for Cherryl of the modern prince.²⁰ But James is the opposite of Prince Charming, exemplifying Genette's concept of "transvaluation" (Genette 1997, 367). He is a looter who despises achievement, defining a human being as "A weak, ugly, sinful creature, born that way, rotten in his bones" (Rand 1957, 264). He readily appropriates the glory for Dagny's success on the John Galt Line, even as he criticizes Dagny's and Hank Rearden's achievements. His complaints here and elsewhere (389) reveal the values that Rand later critiqued in her "Untitled Letter," specifically the sense that winners do not deserve their good fortune because they are born with unearned attributes (Rand 1982, 133–34). This meeting initiates a relationship between James and Cherryl, a relationship that stifles Cherryl while ostensibly leading to her fairy-tale "rise."

In the second part of this tragedy, detailed in the chapter "The Aristocracy of Pull," Cherryl continues trying to rise through her own efforts in spite of James's covert resistance. For instance, Cherryl asks James to help her find a better job, but he ignores her request (Rand 1957, 389). She also shows initiative when James takes her to an elegant reception. Unlike Cinderella, Cherryl does not wait for a fairy godmother to supply her dress. Cherryl "spent her year's savings on an evening gown of bright green chiffon with a low neckline, a belt of yellow roses and a rhinestone buckle" (390). While Cinderella's dress impresses the other ladies, who plan to copy it (Perrault 1967, 161), Cherryl's gown inspires only "astonished glances" (Rand 1957, 390). James enjoys her awkwardness, which he sees as evidence for his deterministic worldview: people cannot rise on their own. He even emphasizes her gaucheness, such as when he gives her an emerald bracelet and makes her wear it with her shabby black dress. Parading her as a bejeweled pet, James incites gossip at the elegant reception, where guests compare Cherryl to Caligula's horse (Caligula reputedly gave his horse Incitatus a necklace and threatened to make him a senator) (390).

James frames their subsequent engagement and marriage as a fairy tale, a narrative that enables him to control Cherryl and to exalt his public image through press releases and interviews. His intention is underscored by Rand's

notes on their relationship in her journals, where she refers to “the ‘Cinderella Girl’ campaign” (Rand 1999a, 515). In the novel, “The huge spreads of full newspaper pages, the articles in magazines, the radio voices, the newsreels, all were a single, long, sustained scream—about the ‘Cinderella Girl’ and the ‘Democratic Businessman’” (Rand 1957, 392). This narrative evokes the biographies of starlets published in journals such as *Motion Picture Magazine*. For example, a profile of the actress June Caprice “describes how ‘Cinderella came to New York’ after being ‘discovered on her way from school one day, and captured for screen purposes by the Fox Film Company.’”²¹ In this context, Cherryl becomes a cliché, the poor girl “discovered” and elevated by someone else.

While the media campaign flusters Cherryl, the more worldly characters recognize Taggart’s publicity stunt. Lillian Rearden tells Hank that they must attend the wedding because “There isn’t any better show in town—nor better publicized” (385). At the wedding, some guests act accordingly, with Francisco greeting Cherryl “as if she were the bride of a royal heir” (405). James uses the wedding to promote himself as the new Prince Charming, first evoking “Cinderella” in telling reporters that “Love will conquer any barrier and any social distance,” and then saying that he exemplifies the movement to replace the aristocracy of money (392). Before he identifies the replacement, Francisco famously supplies the term for him: they are “the aristocracy of pull,” those who control people rather than producing anything (404).

This point situates James’s allusion to “Cinderella” within political as well as social and literary contexts. James evokes “Cinderella” as a way of establishing rapport with his audience, of affirming conventional values even while presenting himself as the new, non-materialistic Prince Charming. Meanwhile, he loots and mooches, using others for the admiration and wealth that he refuses to earn. For Rand, this is only the latest in a long line of false “aristocratic” behavior, as Francisco clarifies in his speech: “Yet through the centuries of stagnation and starvation, men exalted the looters, as aristocrats of the sword, as aristocrats of birth, as aristocrats of the bureau, and despised the producers, as slaves, as traders, as shopkeepers—as industrialists” (414). From Perrault’s prince to James Taggart, the looters have used the very producers they hated while appearing to disdain money. Francisco warns, “Run for your life from any man who tells you that money is evil” (412).

The wedding reception ends with an uncanny parallel to “Cinderella.” Cinderella flees the first ball just before midnight to avoid being unmasked in her servant’s garments. Likewise, James Taggart hears that d’Anconia stock will crash and rushes wildly from his own wedding reception, eager to find his stockbroker before he loses the figurative shirt off his back. Like Cinderella, Taggart knows that it is only a matter of time before his true self is exposed. The motif of time resurfaces, with Lillian Rearden asking just after the party,

“What time is it?” Hank thinks that “It’s running out” but then responds, “Not yet midnight” (423).

In the third chapter focused on this subplot, “Anti-Life,” time does run out for Cherryl, leading to a tragic inversion of “Cinderella.” As James’s wife, Cherryl works hard to rise, such as through her etiquette lessons.²² Like Cinderella, she does not expect a godmother to give her the requisite elegance through magic. And much to Jim’s chagrin, Cherryl comes to attract “admiration” at parties (874). Even as she rises, she loses her illusions about James and his world: “She felt as if she had climbed a mountain toward a jagged shape that had looked like a castle and had found it to be the crumbling ruin of a gutted warehouse” (875). Facing that warehouse, Cherryl not only rejects James’s world but begins to lose her sense that she can choose a different one.

But not only is Prince Charming’s palace a ruin—so is the man. Cherryl discovers that James is a looter who tries to hold her by appealing to her pity. When James offers to purchase “the crown jewels of the People’s State of England” (870), Cherryl refuses these looted symbols of royalty. Interestingly, the draft of the novel clarifies why James finds the idea so appealing: “Just think—the royal crown jewels of England, ending up on the neck of an ex-shopgirl from the five-and-ten!”²³ James finds the idea ludicrous because his sense of life cannot tolerate the concepts of individual heroism or rise. His whole purpose is to bring down the achievers, as Rand clarifies when Jim arrives home, eager to celebrate his latest “stunt” (869). Rand describes his scheme in a brilliant exposé of rent-seeking, tracing a series of parties and government deals that will enable his corporation to acquire control of d’Anconia Copper on 2 September (864–66). Rand’s politics in *Atlas Shrugged* is, as Bryan Caplan (2007) has already shown, “pure public choice” (216), and here she revises her fairy tale to reinforce that point. When Jim invites Cherryl to celebrate his supposed victory over Francisco, a victory he justifies as a mission to help the underprivileged, she refuses.

The chapter and fairy tale conclude with Cherryl’s rejection of James and his world. Ultimately, she discovers that he is not only a looter but an adulterer (with Lillian) who married her to keep her from rising (Rand 1957, 903). Like Cinderella, Cherryl dashes away, realizing too late that time has run out: “[I]t was long past midnight . . . and she thought: If she worked, if she struggled, if she rose, she would take a harder beating with each step of her climb, until, at the end, whatever she reached, be it a copper company or an unmortgaged cottage, she would see it seized by Jim on some September 2” (905). Unlike Cinderella, who flees on one elegant slipper to avoid being exposed as a fraud, Cherryl limps through the slums on a broken pump to escape from one (905). She has apparently taken Francisco’s warning to heart: “Then she ran, ran by the sudden propulsion of a burst of power, the power of a creature running for

its life" (908). Running to her death, Cherryl rejects the values promoted by "Cinderella" and the looters.

Whereas James Taggart uses "Cinderella" to keep Cherryl down, other villains evoke myths to persecute the novel's heroes. For instance, Lillian Rearden torments her husband with the examples of Nimrod and Icarus after learning that he is having an affair. She says, "I want you to look at me and to learn the fate of the man who tried to build a tower to the sky, or the man who wanted to reach the sun on wings made of wax—or you, the man who wanted to hold himself as perfect" (431). For villains, myths are examples of hubris, evidence that those who soar too high will get burned. The example of Icarus is especially poignant, since in Ovid's version of the myth, his father Daedalus gives him wings made of feathers and wax but warns him to "fly a middle course" (Ovid 1995, 188). But Icarus soars so high that his wings melt and he plummets to a watery grave, a victim—according to conventional wisdom—of aspiration. Likewise, the media attack the ambition and wealth of the banker Michael Mulligan: "[A] newspaper columnist of the humanitarian clique nicknamed him Midas Mulligan and the tag stuck to him as an insult" (Rand 1957, 316). Again, the myth is chosen because it undercuts Midas's achievement, portraying the desire for wealth as foolish and self-defeating. Midas wished that everything he touched would turn into gold, a wish that Bacchus grants (Ovid 1995, 262). However, the result is that Midas cannot even eat, and he prays to the gods for forgiveness. In the sequel, Midas goes to the forest, where he demonstrates that he "still was stupid" in preferring the music of Pan to Apollo (263–64).

As in *The Fountainhead*, the heroes of *Atlas Shrugged* reject these endings that humiliate pride. What differs in *Atlas Shrugged* is that they also explicitly revise myths and legends, demonstrating that the first step toward freedom is to update the narratives used to persecute them. In Mulligan's case, he legally changes his first name to "Midas," committing "the one unforgivable sin: he was proud of his wealth" (Rand 1957, 316). Later he, like his mythic forerunner, retreats from society—to Rand's new Atlantis—but enjoys without punishment the music he prefers, by Richard Halley.²⁴ Halley and Midas are of course recruited to the valley by John Galt, whom Francisco describes as "Prometheus who changed his mind. After centuries of being torn by vultures in payment for having brought to men the fire of the gods, he broke his chains and he withdrew his fire—until the day when men withdraw their vultures" (517).

In crafting this new tale of Prometheus, Francisco alters the identity of Prometheus's tormentor, who in the classic myth was Zeus. This change, Mimi Reisel Gladstein (2000) observes, implies that "humanity has not appreciated the gift of fire and therefore Prometheus is withdrawing it. This is consistent with the themes of the novel" (35). I would add that Rand also suggests that

revision of these myths is essential to achieve a society in which individuals thrive. Galt recognizes this point by reworking the final stage of the hero's journey, when the hero returns and bestows a boon on humanity (Campbell 1973, 30). The usual result of this gift, described by Joseph Campbell, is "the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world," a flow that might be represented in a variety of ways, such as the circulation of food or "a streaming of energy" (40). Galt stops that flow of life: he withholds the motor, which would provide energy; he withdraws the mental energy that makes life possible; he allows the villains of the world to stop the circulation of food. By foregrounding how her heroes rewrite mythic structures, Rand reinforces that the true hero is a creator. "Bad art is, predominantly, the product of imitation, of secondhand copying, not of creative expression," Rand observes (1975, 30). While villains and secondhanders rely on the old tales, such as "Cinderella" and Icarus's defeat, Rand's heroes revise them to reflect their values.

In modeling this strategy, Galt and his allies present a powerful message central to Rand's objectives. In her course on fiction, Rand (1958, Lecture 4) advised,

Train your mind to think in terms of essentials and to know what is essential in any given issue or moment or book you are reading or in your own life. If you see what is important for a good plot-story, believe me . . . it is a million times more important for your own life. You yourself do not want a life which is a plotless story, nor a badly constructed story. You don't want a life which is a series of unrelated episodes with no progression, no purpose, and no climax.²⁵

To live a purposeful life is, to some extent, to plot one's own life story. The success or failure of the characters in *Atlas Shrugged* is tied to their ability to do just that.

Hank Rearden must learn this lesson, which Francisco begins teaching him through the myth of Atlas. He famously asks Rearden what he would do if he saw Atlas bleeding but "still trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength." The answer is "To shrug" (Rand 1957, 455). Rearden's odyssey toward shrugging off his burden has parallels with Cherryl's journey, particularly given their unhappy marriages (Hunt 2007, 59; Milgram 1996a, 14). Their spouses keep Cherryl and Rearden down by insisting on conventional narratives. James controls Cherryl by framing their relationship as a "Cinderella" story in which she should be grateful for an elevation she could never deserve. Lillian chains Rearden by claiming his pity, ridiculing his accomplishments, and casting him as a fallen Icarus. Both James and Lillian insist that their spouses can never really rise. Lillian scoffs, "You never rose out of the ore mines, that's where

you belong—all of you self-made princes of the cash register” (Rand 1957, 430). Rearden and Cherryl both learn to reject their narratives, but they are not equally capable of revising them.

Rand makes this point most clearly in the parallel chapters in which they go on strike: Cherryl in “Anti-Life” and Rearden in “The Concerto of Deliverance.” In these chapters, both repudiate the looters’ pose of stealing from the producers while pretending to work toward the public good, and both come to realize that the looters depend on the sanction of the victim—their willingness to work, to rise, to do something to save everyone (905, 987). With new wisdom, both turn to people they had once believed their enemies, but now apologize to for their mistakes—Cherryl to Dagny, Hank to Francisco (887, 998). Both also come to realize that their spouses, who have engaged in a passionless liaison together, seek the anti-life. Their turning points are dramatized by violence: Cherryl accuses Jim of being a killer, and he strikes Cherryl in the face; one of the rioters at Hank’s mill, where Tony has been killed, clubs Rearden’s skull from behind (904, 996). They respond by going on strike, signifying their rejection of the looters’ world. At this point, however, their trajectories diverge. As Milgram (1996a, 11) observes, the difference is that Cherryl lacks “a conscious grasp of the roots of her implicit values,” so she cannot prevail against the evil that threatens her. Cherryl runs toward her tragic death (a “private strike,” Milgram notes), while Hank abandons his mills (Milgram 1996b, 28).

The different endings reflect not only their difference in philosophical development but their ability to revise the narratives in which they become embedded. Cherryl begins as purposeful in shaping her life story but gradually loses her belief that there is something to which she could rise.²⁶ Having fallen for James’s twisted fairy tale, she cannot imagine a different trajectory for the rest of her life. She confides to Dagny,

You see, I had never expected anything like my marriage to Jim. Then when it happened, I thought that life was much more wonderful than I had expected. And now to get used to the idea that life and people are much more horrible than anything I had imagined and that my marriage was not a glorious miracle, but some unspeakable kind of evil which I’m still afraid to learn fully—that is what I can’t force myself to take. (Rand 1957, 891)

Cherryl’s philosophical limitations prevent her from creating her own happily-ever-after, but her sense of life prevents her from accepting James’s ending. She therefore preserves her spirit by removing herself from the world. The tragedy of this good but ordinary woman demonstrates how the looters’ mission hurts average people—not just the “undeserving” titans of industry.

Rearden, on the other hand, not only rejects Lillian's world but writes a new ending to the myth of Icarus. When Hank leaves the meeting about the Steel Unification Plan, the metaphor of a mountain climb recurs: "It was as if, by an effort of years, he had climbed a mountain to gain a distant view and, having reached the top, had fallen to lie still, to rest before he looked" (987). Unlike Cherryl, who is devastated that the castle she imagined is a warehouse, Hank clears his vision and realizes that if his beloved mills no longer serve his values, then they "were only a pile of dead scrap, to be left to crumble, the sooner the better" (988). After confronting the mob at his mills, he faces Francisco, who resumes their former conversation about Atlas shrugging (999). Rearden joins him, helping to rewrite the hero's journey with his cohorts in Atlantis.

In some ways, Rand's story parallels Rearden's. Like Rearden, she was smart and determined to make something of herself, a point evident in Rand's journey from Russia to America. In 1926, she wrote to a Russian friend, assuring him that she had not only made it to Riga but, contrary to some expectations, had reached America: "The only thing that remains for me is to rise, which I am doing with my characteristic straight-line decisiveness" (Rand 1997, 2). Rand's rise was not only spectacular but built on her insights about the values of many popular plots, particularly those of myths and fairy tales. For her, both are flawed—fairy tales in rewarding mediocrity, and myths in punishing pride. In her fictional worlds, she exposes those problems through using tales such as "Cinderella" as intertexts and in rewriting them to show what they really do and should mean. Cinderella's "rise" is not so glamorous; Prince Charming leaves a lot to be desired; and Icarus can finally soar to the heights he should reach.

NOTES

I am grateful to a number of people for inspiration and assistance. This project began with a suggestion from Sarah Skwire that I participate in a session on literature and economics at the Public Choice Society conference (2012), where Pete Calcagno kindly included me on his panel and offered criticism of a portion of this paper. I also thank Richard Ralston for sending me a copy of Bill Bucko's *Ayn Rand's French Children's Magazines* and Michael Paxton for clarifying points related to Ayn Rand's early reading. Finally, special thanks to Steve Horwitz for providing feedback on a complete draft, and Shoshana Milgram for sharing her insights, pointing me toward useful sources, and sending me copies of some of her articles. Her comments on my draft were invaluable. Any mistakes remain my own.

1. One scholar, for instance, observes that Rand has "won a niche for herself on the fringes of political respectability," but as an artist, "her contribution is nil." Indeed, he adds, "there is nothing that a self-respecting writer might learn specifically from her screeds other than how *not* to write" (Bell-Villada 2004, 242).

2. "Pour votre avancement ce seront choses vaines, / Si vous n'avez, pour les faire valoir, / Ou des parrains ou des marraines" (Perrault 1967, 165).

3. As Chris Matthew Sciabarra (1998) and Jennifer Burns (2009) have observed, some of the published materials related to Rand are unreliable. In the biography *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, Burns includes an “Essay on Sources,” in which she observes, “the published versions of Rand’s letters and diaries have been significantly edited in ways that drastically reduce their utility as historical sources” (Burns 2009, 291). In using the *Journals* and *Letters*, I am therefore less interested in precise historical details and more focused on their content in relation to Rand’s literary inspirations and aesthetic ideas. In these respects, they remain useful, if not ideal.

4. While Rand associated Toohey with Disney’s films and characters, she also seems to have appreciated his innovations as a filmmaker. She even sent Walt Disney an advance copy of the first American edition of *Anthem*. Her letter to him on 5 September 1946 invites him to consider making a film of her “novelte” (Rand 1997, 317).

5. In her journals, Rand does not expand on her note that Toohey liked *Tapiola*, nor does she include any summaries or comments on Nathan’s *Journey of Tapiola*. We therefore lack direct evidence that Rand had read this novel. However, in connecting this book with Toohey, who opposes individualism, it is clear that she was aware of its values.

6. Barbara Branden (1962) first noted Rand’s love for *The Mysterious Valley* in her biographical essay “Who Is Ayn Rand?” (153). In her full-length biography, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, she provides further details about the authorship and Rand’s love for this work (Branden 1986, 12–14).

7. While Bruno Bettelheim’s work with children has generated controversy, his sense of the symbolic function of fairy tales remains influential, and his arguments about the difference between myth and fairy tale are in line with those of other scholars, including Mircea Eliade.

8. I am grateful to Shoshana Milgram for pointing me toward this source.

9. “Le pauvre fille souffrait tout avec patience” (Perrault 1967, 157).

10. “Lors-qu’elle avait fait son ouvrage, elle s’allait mettre au coin de la cheminée, et s’asseoir dans les cendres” (Perrault 1967, 158).

11. As a hero, Danny differs significantly from the murderer who inspired his character, William Edward Hickman. Rand makes this point explicitly in her notes, describing Danny as “[t]he outside of Hickman but not the inside. Much deeper and much more. A Hickman with a purpose. And without the degeneracy” (Rand 1999a, 27).

12. Rand carefully recorded what Frank Lloyd Wright, one of her models for Roark, said about a jury as “a hand-picked average” (Rand 1999a, 119). Such juries reward the average.

13. Disney’s film adaptation, also inspired by Perrault’s tale, did not appear until 1950.

14. “Oui, mais est-ce que j’irai comme cela avec mes vilains habits?” (Perrault 1967, 160).

15. “Sa Marraine ne fit que la toucher avec sa baguette, et en même temps ses habits furent changés en des habits de drap d’or et d’argent tout chamarrés de pierreries” (Perrault 1967, 160).

16. Although there is no evidence, it seems likely that Rand would have known about Disney’s phenomenally successful *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), which won the 1934 Academy Award for best animated short film.

17. While Rand used the 1924 translation by Thomas Common, it is interesting to note that Walter Kaufmann translates “possenreisser” as “jester” (Nietzsche 1978, 19).

18. Hunt 2006, 99–100n2; Milgram 2007a, 16–17.

19. As Shoshana Milgram observes, Cherryl resembles Dulcie, the protagonist of O. Henry's "An Unfinished Story," in both situation and a fairy-tale allusion (email correspondence, 3 July 2013). Dulcie is a shop worker who agrees to go to dinner with Piggy, a wealthy man who preys on poor young women. At one point, Dulcie looks in a mirror and sees "fairyland and herself, a princess, just awakening from a long slumber" (Henry 1920, 182). She breaks the date with Piggy, though the narrator suggests that she might later agree to another (Henry 1920, 184). Since O. Henry was one of Rand's favorite authors, it is unlikely that the parallels are mere coincidence.

20. Compare Francisco's earlier comment to Dagny that "the only aristocracy left in the world" is "the aristocracy of money" (Rand 1957, 90).

21. Another article cast Lila Lee's rise to stardom in similar terms: "Many a Cinderella has found her way to fame and fortune thus unexpectedly in the world of make-believe" (Moen 2013, 122).

22. Rand emphasizes that effort even more clearly in an episode that she drafted but omitted from the final version, noting that Cherryl "had never worked as hard in the dime-store nor at her course of typing as she worked at the job of discarding every habit she had formed and learning how to walk, how to speak, how to dress, how to run a household on a monthly budget a hundredth part of which she had never held in her life before . . ." (Rand 1946–57, Reel 6, Folder 4: 67–68).

23. Rand 1946–57, Reel 6, Folder 4: 44–45.

24. Halley also reworks a myth, composing an opera in which Phaëthon succeeds instead of perishing (Rand 1957, 68).

25. I thank Shoshana Milgram for pointing me toward these excellent lectures.

26. This point is even more explicit and heartbreaking in Rand's draft. When Jim asks if she would rather return to the gutter, she replies, "No, Jim, I wouldn't. The gutter was all right, because I always thought that one could rise out of it. But if I went back to it now, I . . . I'd know that there's no place to rise" (Rand 1946–57, Reel 6, Folder 4: 95).

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