*I*

# The History of *We the Living*

## *Chapter One*

# From *Airtight* to *We the Living*

## *The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel*

By Shoshana Milgram

*We the Living* follows Kira Argounova from her arrival in Petersburg, eager for the "streets of a big city where so much is possible," to her death on Russia's border, where she smiles "to so much that had been possible." The journey in between dramatizes the contrast between Kira's passion for life and the living death of the collectivist state in which she refuses to remain. The project of this chapter is to trace another journey, that of Ayn Rand in creating her first novel.[1] By examining the manuscripts in the light of the writer's original plan and the published versions, I want to describe her artistic choices as she labored to be true to her own vision of what was possible to her in fiction at this time. The revisions—omissions, additions, and modifications of style and content—show the novelist in the process of developing her literary method and sharpening her conceptions of her theme and characters.

Ayn Rand had worked on her first novel from 1929 on. In a notebook, she outlined the novel's plot and sketched the essentials of the characters and background features she expected to need in order to develop her theme: the individual versus the masses, as seen in the country where the struggle was most dramatic and most tragic. The title of the novel was to be *Airtight: A Novel of Red Russia.* For several years, while working at odd jobs and in the RKO wardrobe, she was able to work on her novel only in slivers of time, sometimes accomplishing no more than a paragraph a day. But after she sold the screen treatment *Red Pawn* (in synopsis form) to Universal Studios in 1932, she was able to work more continuously. Her steady work on the novel took place primarily in two stints, each of several months. On April 18, 1933, she began rewriting the first part of the book, of which she had written several chapters; she completed this task on October 11, 1933. She began writing part 2 on December 28, 1933, and completed it March 9, 1934, revising the manuscript once by May 22, 1934, and at least once more by mid-November, 1935. As she explained to Gouverneur Morris, her friend and a fellow writer, she edited it in the face of her publisher's impatience.

> The book was sold during the first weeks of my play [*Night of January 16th*] and I have been terribly busy, giving it a final editing. Macmillan, who are going to publish it, did not want any changes made, no cuts or alterations of any kind. But I wanted to revise it once more and make a few minor changes which, I think, improved it.[2]

We know the dates on which she began and completed the writing of the two parts of the novel because Ayn Rand marked these dates on the first draft. We know, too, that her agent Jean Wick was submitting the first part of the manuscript to publishers—and transmitting to the author the accumulating negative feedback—during the months of the composition of the second part, as well as after the completion of the novel. And we know her response to the suggestion, in October 1934, that she work with a collaborator:

> Anyone reading my book must realize that I am an individualist above everything else. As such, I shall stand or fall on my own work. . . . It is merely the feeling of a person who takes pride in her work. At the cost of being considered arrogant, I must state that I do not believe there is a single human being alive who could improve that book of mine in the matter of actual rewriting. . . . I would prefer not only never seeing it in print, but also burning every manuscript of it—rather than having William Shakespeare himself add one line to it which was not mine, or cross out one comma. I repeat, I welcome and appreciate all suggestions of changes to improve the book without destroying its theme, and I am quite willing to make them. But these changes will be made *by me*.[3]

It is no surprise to read these strong words from the future author of *The Fountainhead.* Earlier in the same letter, Ayn Rand explained what she meant about the theme: the novel is not primarily a love story, but the story of what the masses do to the individual. Hence the background—the depiction of existence in the Soviet Union—is in fact crucial to the theme, and not merely the setting for a romantic triangle. And because Ivan Ivanov, the border patrol soldier who shot Kira, epitomizes the evil of the Soviet Union, his biography is coherent with the theme, and "one of the best things in the book"—and not to be cut, whatever cuts must be made.[4]

Ayn Rand's statements about what most mattered in this book provide a context for looking at the changes she made. So does the fact that, after the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, she revised *We the Living* one more time, while stating that the changes were minimal (xvi–xvii). In spite of the numerous revisions she performed, she was consistent in her purposeful dedication to her theme: the conflict between the masses and the individual. She was, however, continually learning how to write better. In the selection of episodes and descriptive details, she always emphasized the destructiveness, in everyday life, of the principle of collectivism; all of the changes—including the cuts—are consistent with that emphasis. In the characterization of Kira as the individualist and of the two very different men who love the individual in her, Ayn Rand always emphasized Kira's passion for life and the way both Andrei and Leo are drawn to a woman whom the course of their respective lives would have led them to avoid. Here, too, all of the changes—including the philosophical discussions and romantic encounters—are consistent. And, as a writer still struggling with acquiring a foreign language and practicing a new craft, she did not automatically choose the best words or details on her first try—but she knew what she was trying to do, and she kept trying. In a sense, the cliché is true: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

In studying the changes, we have a wealth of material, but not a full or clear record of the creative process. The "Airtight Notebook" contains plot outlines, character lists, a list of questions to be considered in developing a character, descriptions of important characters, historical facts, and facts about daily life pertinent to the theme. The nearly complete first draft (which begins with the note: "rewriting started April 18, 1933") is a combination of typed and handwritten pages; some, if not most, of the typed pages appear to be from a still earlier draft.

The end of the first chapter and the beginning of the second are missing; there are also some loose pages, none of them from the missing chapters, and some of them labeled as inserts (i.e., pages that could be placed into the draft) and others duplicating material that is present in the draft. In this draft, new pagination begins with the fourth chapter of part 1 and again with the start of part 2; as the manuscript proceeds, the typed pages decrease (ending entirely after page 59 of part 1, chapter 5), and the handwritten pages take over. The second draft, undated, is typed, continuously paginated, and relatively clean, but far from identical to the published version.[5]

The manuscripts do not speak for themselves. With the first draft, it is not clear where the rewriting began or when particular handwritten changes were made (on the handwritten pages and on the typed pages). Ayn Rand's notes about revising the first fourteen chapters appear to have been written after the appearance of those chapters in the existing first draft. (She writes: "Cut out 'no' sequences;" these sequences are still here.)[6] Nor is it clear when the second draft was produced. Possibly it is the one she completed by May 22, 1934, a few weeks after finishing part 2. But given that her agent was contacting publishers before the completion of part 2 of the novel, it seems likely that there would have been a clean, typed draft of part 1; such a submission copy could be what is now the first part of the existing second draft, or it could be lost. And given that the published version is different from the second draft, there would have to have been at least one additional draft (perhaps the one she completed by mid-November, 1935).

But regardless of the dates on which the changes were made, we can see, from the words on the page, that Ayn Rand at one point expressed herself in one way, and then chose a different way. Therefore, even without the full history of all changes, the existing documents show Ayn Rand, the artist, at work. By looking at the changes and attempting to infer the reasons she made them, we attend to her intention and her skill. And some of the omitted passages are well worth reading on their own account.

## REVISIONS IN THE DRAFTS: BACKGROUND AND SECONDARY CHARACTERS

In the "Airtight Notebook," Ayn Rand listed among the proposed characters a professor, who was to represent the best of the old world. In part 1, chapter 4, she wrote, but crossed out, a description of such a professor:

> "Beauty is the sublime individual experience," lectured a professor of Esthetics with a graying beard and childishly clear, blue eyes to a crowd of sheepskin coats and leather jackets, who blew on their frozen hands in an auditorium that had not been heated.

She followed this paragraph with two others featuring spoken remarks, both of which serve to contrast the professor's pronouncement:

> "We are the vanguard of the New Proletarian Culture," harangued an unshaven student standing on a pulpit of the experimental laboratory, before a row of students and jars of pickled intestines.
>
> "Only a pound-and-a-half today, comrade. But it's nice bread, it's almost white," said the student clerk in the University cooperative handing Kira a loaf of

> bread the color of the sawdust on the floor. . . . (first draft, part 1, new pagination beginning with chapter 4, 8–9)

The professor, who explicitly links beauty with individualism, is distinguished ("graying beard") and youthfully innocent ("childishly clear, blue eyes"). The student, who speaks for the militant masses, is unkempt ("unshaven") and vehement yet tedious ("harangued"). The clerk, who implements the rationing decreed by the representatives of the masses, is inaccurate (misrepresenting the color of the bread) and, at best, foolish (implying that the alleged quality of the bread compensates for its small quantity). One can see how the brief paragraphs would have supported the theme of the conflict between the individual and the masses. Yet, given that the theme is well developed elsewhere, one can also see that these paragraphs did not fulfill a unique function, and could be cut without loss. Nor did the single sentence quoted from the professor do more than gesture at the nature of his teaching.

Ayn Rand made a second attempt to describe the esthetics professor, in the first draft of chapter 6 of part 1:

> "The spirit of beauty is higher than the spirit of religion. It is the triumphant hymn of man to his own sacredness. It is the sublime claim of a god-like being to transcend all gods."
>
> Professor Leskov had the blue eyes of a child, the blond beard of a Greek statue, the sunken chest of a consumptive and the chair of the History of Esthetics at the State University of Petrograd. His lectures were held in the largest auditorium, but he still had to turn his eyes, occasionally, down to the floor, in order not to miss any of his audience: for part of that audience had to sit on the floor in the aisles. No auditorium had ever been large enough for Professor Leskov's lectures. There were few red bandannas in his audience, and few leather jackets. Professor Leskov had never been known to explain the Venus de Milo by the state of the economic means of production in ancient Greece. He was known to speak Latin better than Russian, to talk of each masterpiece of art since the beginning of history tenderly and intimately, as if children of his mind, and to shrug in surprise when his learned colleagues in the Scientific Academies of Europe called him great. He spoke his lectures fiercely and solemnly, as if he were delivering a sermon, and the silence of his auditorium was that of a cathedral. (first draft, 92–93)

The professor expresses a view of art as a hymn to human greatness, a hymn that makes men greater than gods, as art itself is greater than religion. The description, moreover, reports that the circumstances of his lecture match his point: his lecture style has the fierceness and solemnity of a sermon, and the audience—a very large audience—responds with the respectful silence appropriate to a cathedral.

This description repeats the childish blue eyes of Ayn Rand's initial description; and adds to it. In this version, the beard suggests not only distinction, but the glory of classical Greek art ("the blond beard of a Greek statue"), which was indeed one of his subjects. We are told, too, that he was extraordinarily popular, but that the students who crowd the benches and aisles of his classroom include few Communists. For Marxist esthetics, they would have to go elsewhere.

The professor has a clear role in relation to the novel's theme, and the scene has other functions as well. Kira attends this class, and the professor notices her.

> Kira sat on the edge of a bench in the first row. Sometimes, the childish blue eyes roving over the auditorium stopped for a short second on the wide, gray ones under strange, broken eyebrows. (first draft, 91–92)

She gains spiritual support: not only from works of art, but from a human being who has made the study of art his life's work.

Why did Ayn Rand, in revising, omit Leskov as a character and a lecturer? One possible factor is that the subject of the lecture had to change. After the first draft, Ayn Rand changed Kira's major subject from history to engineering; and a course on esthetics would be a less likely choice for her. And making Leskov a spiritual ally of Kira would have raised questions: What happens to him? Doesn't his existence contradict the presentation of Soviet society? If such a man is still allowed to draw crowds, how doomed can Russia be? Why does Kira not seek him out later? Had Leskov remained in the novel, as a representative of the individual, he would have had to be integrated into the plot, that is, destroyed—physically or spiritually or both—as happens to all within any society in which the masses rule. To leave him intact would have violated the novel's theme; to trace his destruction might have risked overloading the novel's structure. To introduce him would have been to start a trail the novel was not designed to travel.

Somewhat similar considerations may be relevant to the omission of a speech made at the election meeting of the Students' Council, and of the introductory material that served as background for that speech. In the second draft and in the published versions of the scene, Ayn Rand contrasts the two factions of students. "One side wore the green student caps of the old days, discarded by the new rulers, wore them proudly, defiantly, as an honorary badge and a challenge; the other side wore red kerchiefs and trim, military leather jackets" (71). In all versions, the first speaker is Pavel Syerov, who asserts that science "is the weapon of the class struggle." And in all versions, Pavel Syerov later comments to a neighbor, "So that's the kind of speeches they make here. What a task we have awaiting us!" (72).

In the first draft, Ayn Rand provided much more information about the first type of students, and about the university.

> They were cheerful, reckless, and defiant. Their clothes were older than those of most pedestrians outside, and dirtier; their manners—graceful and assured as those of heirs to an old clan. They were haughty, and patronizing, and contemptuous toward the new, small [?] group that called itself "proletarian students," that wore leather jackets and red bandannas and claimed factories and villages as their former homes. The University had a Communist cell. It had spies among the students, said rumors. Those who wore the faded, green student caps of the old days, as an honorary badge and a challenge, sneered at rumors and talked of the freedom of science. [*crossed-out*: The State University of Petrograd had been the first to greet the spirit of freedom and the last to lose it.]
>
> [*crossed-out*: If one studied history, one could study history, Kira found. There were a few obligatory subjects, enforced by the red band outside: "historical materialism," "history of socialist movements," "constitution of the R.S.F.S.R. [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic]," a few others. The rest were free to choice [*sic*].]
>
> There was a Students' Council elected at students' meetings. Kira attended the first election of the year. (first draft, chapter 5, 13–15, paginated in a fifteen-page sequence in between chapters 4 and 5)

In the later versions of this scene, Kira attends because she has met Comrade Sonia Presniakova, and intends to vote against whatever Sonia supports. In the initial version, she attends with her cousin, Irina Dunaeva, and together they hear the speech that follows Syerov's.

> Irina stuck her pencil into the corner of her mouth and her strong hands clapped like a firecracker into Kira's ear.
>
> "Applaud," she commanded in a whisper. "That's one of *ours*."
>
> A tall young man stood on the pulpit, his two hands grasping the desk as if to keep himself posed there for a second in a sweeping flight [?]. He had thrown a green student cap on the desk before him, like a glove challenging his adversaries.
>
> "Comrades," his strong voice boomed with the distinct, cultured enunciation of a future lawyer addressing a courtroom, "my honorable predecessor said that he had been left for centuries to rot in the darkness of ignorance. I believe him."
>
> The defiant applause seemed to be addressed directly to the leather jackets and red bandannas.
>
> "He needs a little lesson in history. Our students have always been fiery enemies of tyranny. In the Czar's day, our green caps often turned red under the guns of street riots and white in the snows of Siberian exile. The spirit of our youth has never been enslaved by authority. That spirit is still the same. We have a good nose for tyranny, no matter what color that tyranny is wearing."
>
> Loud applause rolled down to the round, pink-cheeked face of the speaker. His immaculate coat and snow-white collar were worn with the elegance of a gentleman of Western culture; his high boots were a concession to the times, but a concession obviously expensive and polished to a mirror-shine.
>
> "We are here to study. We are here to fight for the freedom of science from a red harness. The spirit of freedom lost by the country has always lived within these halls. And it is yet to be remembered. When we leave this University, we'll go . . ."
>
> ". . . to jail!" came a menacing voice from somewhere in the audience.
>
> "Order!" the president of the meeting commanded sternly.
>
> "Yes, we might go to jail. We've heard that threat before. Funny, it was used by the Czar's gendarmes!"
>
> Irina pointed to a slight, young man with a nose too long for his narrow, consumptive face, at the speakers' table in a whispered conference with the pale comrade Syerov.
>
> "I'll draw that one," whispered Irina. "He's a good type."
>
> Comrade Syerov was saying to the good type:
>
> "So that's the kind of speeches they make here." (first draft, 45–47)

The initial version, like the others, concludes with Syerov's comments to a soft-spoken, ominous neighbor, who assures Syerov that the day belongs to the secret "internal front" of Red Culture. But only the first draft supplies the speech on which Syerov comments, as well as a description of the speaker. By omitting the speech and removing a character, Ayn Rand saves space, and keeps the focus of the scene on Kira, who is not interested in politics. If the novel featured the speech, we would be wondering if it would motivate Kira to fight, and, if not, why not. The speech is in keeping with the novel's theme, but, given that it had no effect on the

central story line involving Kira, removing it did not create a hole (except for readers who may have wondered what, specifically, was meant by "the kind of speeches they make here").

It is possible, too, that the nameless student, whose "strong voice boomed with the distinct, cultured enunciation of a future lawyer," has some connection with Sasha Chernov, whom we do not meet until chapter 2 of part 2. In the "Airtight Notebook," Ayn Rand listed as one of the characters "Sasha—old fighter student." The student speaker may have originally been intended to be this character.

In the novel, though, Sasha is given a more prominent role than the notebook would indicate. A history student expelled from the university, he engages in covert revolutionary activities. He and Irina are in love; when Victor betrays them to the G.P.U. to bolster his party standing, they are each sentenced to ten years in Siberia, in separate camps.

Whether or not Ayn Rand originally thought of the student speaker as Sasha, and then removed his speech when she gave him a more active role, we can see that removing the speech does not diminish the novel, and that enhancing the character's role strengthens the novel. The Sasha/Irina subplot, after all, is coherent with the theme: they are among the individuals who are in conflict with the masses, and destroyed by collectivism. The main plot—the triangle of Kira, Leo Kovalensky, and Andrei Taganov—entails destruction of a more philosophical nature. Only Ayn Rand could have written the story of Kira, Leo, and Andrei as exemplifying the individual versus the masses. Other writers—and historians—have chronicled the destruction of Sashas and Irinas. But the fact that their story is more commonplace—tragically so—than the one Ayn Rand invented does not make it bromidic. Ayn Rand gives their relationship great emotional intensity, not only in Irina's speech about her life as a sacred treasure (which Ayn Rand refers to, in the introduction to the 1959 edition, as the "sanctity of life" speech, the statement of the novel's meaning), but in the couple's long, last farewell.

That this sort of intensity was not Ayn Rand's original plan for Irina is clear from the description of the character that appears in the "Airtight Notebook":

> A representation of the best in the average girlhood. Dependable, energetic, calm. Ambitious, beautiful. Serious. A certain amount of cunning and calculating. Unsettled and open to influence. Starts with hard work and high hopes. Gives up—or dull hopelessness. Marries an older man, bald-headed and divorced, marries without love, even without money, just for some sort of relieve [*sic*] in her hard, drab existence. (Representative of the average "working girl")

The original plan for Irina was coherent with the novel's theme: whatever was good in Irina was destroyed in Soviet Russia. It does not appear that the original plan for Sasha went beyond his role as an example of the "old" sort of student; he is not given, in the "notebook," the sort of paragraph-length descriptions Ayn Rand writes for such characters as Antonina Platoshkina and Rita Eksler. But the final plan for Irina and Sasha expressed a poignant loss, advanced the plot (by developing conflicts for such characters as Vasili Dunaev, Victor Dunaev, and Marisha Lavrova Dunaeva), and answered the question a reader might have asked (Why don't they fight back?)—all without interfering with the central line, the story of Kira and her lovers.

We see, then, that Ayn Rand's original plan—for Irina and for a revolutionary student speaker—was good, but that the ultimate result was much better.

Comparing the first draft with the later drafts, we see many cuts involving details of Soviet life. The longest passage, which can be found in the first draft of chapter 5 of part 1, is paginated separately from the rest of the chapter. It has been reprinted in *The Early Ayn Rand*

under the title "No," a word featured in each segment.[7] A series of vignettes—some of them quoting propaganda, others presenting bread lines or theater posters—illustrate the drabness and deprivation of everyday life in all areas, from clothes to culture to chimney cleaning. In her notes for revising this chapter, Ayn Rand wrote: "Cut out the 'no' sequences—except house meeting."[8] In the second draft of this chapter, much of this material is gone. Leonard Peikoff observes: a few "elements of this montage were retained in the novel, in the form of brief paragraphs integrated with the development of the story. Evidently, Miss Rand judged that a separate extended treatment would be too static."[9] This statement makes sense; there is, in fact, no montage sequence of similar length in the novel.

Ayn Rand, to be sure, used montage effectively, at the end of chapter 16 of part 1, in a series of vignettes each prefaced by "Because." In both chapters, the incidents show a principle exemplified in a variety of settings. It was important to Ayn Rand to show, as she put it in the "Airtight Notebook," "*all the mass* manifestations of humanity in general and the Russian revolution in particular." But the montage in chapter 16 is not only briefer than the one planned for chapter 5, but explicitly linked to a crisis in the life of a major character. In removing the "no" vignettes, Ayn Rand was eliminating material that, however appropriate given her theme, took up too much space in her novel as it was developing.

Not only in the montage passage, but elsewhere as well, Ayn Rand shortened or omitted incidents used to convey the ugliness of everyday life. One such incident, which appears (lightly crossed out) in the first draft of chapter 1, shows an envy-driven betrayal, as reported by a woman on the train carrying the Argounov family back to Petersburg:

> "They still have plenty to eat, sometimes, though, the damn counter-revolutionaries," the woman in the red bandanna commented, "I know it on first-hand information. I had a friend and she was working in a family. Had all the cooking to do, and the dirty underclothes to wash, and the three brats to comb with a fine comb every day, too. She got a miserable pittance of a wage. And she knew that they had the cellar stuffed full of white flour, and sugar, and millet. She was a smart girl, my friend was, and she figgered, why should she work for what she was getting. So she went and reported them. It was all confiscated, and they shot the old man for concealing food products, and my pal got one third of everything in the cellar. Wasn't that smart?" (first draft, 17)

The anecdote is pertinent to the picture of Soviet life, but the point it makes is already implicit in another incident that takes place on the train itself (the woman who hides in the lavatory to eat fish). The first draft of the chapter includes several similar passages about the train's various passengers. Ayn Rand, in her notes about revising, writes that the scene needs to feature Kira more (and, hence, the background less).

Additional cuts in background material involve omitting some explicit references to Marxist theory. In chapter 6 of part 1:

> Kira sat at the table with a book on "Historical Materialism."
> ". . . and the class which holds the means of production dictates to society its own superstructures of morals, religion, philosophy. . ." (first draft, 112)

In the later versions of the scene, Kira is shown reading an engineering text. Granted, as an engineer she would be less likely to be reading a textbook on a subject such as historical

materialism, but describing the book more briefly allowed Ayn Rand to state that Kira was distracted from her reading by thoughts of Leo—without engaging in polemic on another topic.

She considered, but rejected, the idea of presenting the polemic in the context of Leo's studies. Leo, too, was—in the first draft—taking courses in Marxist theory, along with Greek philosophy and the history of the Crusades. From the first draft of chapter 11:

> Leo went to the university and listened to lectures about words twenty-two centuries old said by men in white togas on forums of white marble, and about the shape of steel armours that swayed [?] on charging stallions sparkling under Palestine's sun, and about the crosses over the armours, and about the hearts under them, and he had to listen, also, to lectures on "Historical Materialism." A very assured young professor told them that all historical processes are to be explained by the "economical development of the people and the means of production," that class struggle is the backbone of history, "all of us young historians of a new ruling class have to acquire, first of all, the proper ideology of proletarian scientists with which to approach the study of the world's history, for we—young, fresh, new, free from the sentimental prejudices of musty bourgeois professors—know that the kettle on the stove of a housewife and the needle in the hands of a shoemaker mean more to the course of history than any fancy curlicues [?] in the hands of a Napoleon who is nothing but a puppet on the great stage of class struggle." (first draft, 273)

The published version reports only: "He was studying history and philosophy at the Petrograd State University" (1936, 154). Ayn Rand ultimately decided that her novel did not need a critical account of the negative content of a Marxist education.[10]

Ayn Rand similarly removed another explicit attack on Leo's university education, which was mentioned in contrast with a favorite writer of hers, O. Henry, whom Leo was reading—in the first and second drafts of chapter 14.

> "It's a new American author," he told her, "O. Henry. Splendid writing. The city of New York has six million inhabitants. You meet someone in a subway and you say 'Hello.' It must be delightful—a subway."
>
> He was smiling, half lazily, half ironically, a new smile that Kira had noticed lately; a smile she did not like, a sharp, uncomfortable smile.
>
> "I don't feel like going to the University today," he answered her question lazily. "Why be reminded of Proletarian Dictatorship when one can read something more amusing and in better taste?" (first draft, 372; second draft, 253)

Leo's attitude here is cynical rather than passionate in his disdain for "Proletarian Dictatorship," and there was abundant evidence elsewhere of this trend in him. Nor does his attraction to O. Henry, by itself, serve to sharpen his characterization or to do more than remind the reader that Leo prefers American and European culture to Russian culture, another fact that is well established elsewhere.

Additional cuts in background material, also related to culture, occur in remarks made by Victor and Rita Eksler. In the first draft of chapter 12 of part 1, Victor comments at a party on a contemporary novel: "Remember the scene where she tells her lover that she's no virgin and has had an abortion? That's the Russian new woman for you" (first draft, 301). In later versions of

the scene, he refers to the novel only vaguely. Ayn Rand originally intended for him to speak approvingly of a novel that praised a woman for being sexually experienced and for having an abortion—although, as we later learn, the woman he eventually marries believes it necessary to conceal such facts from him. The reference would have functioned both as an indication of Victor's hypocrisy and an illustration of what Ayn Rand referred to in the notebook as the "intentional vulgarity" of literature—both of which are established elsewhere. At the same party, Ayn Rand wrote, then crossed out, a remark by Rita Eksler, which appears to be delivered as if it were a cultural commonplace: "'Sexually and psychologically,' said Rita, 'there's no difference between the impulses of men and women'" (first draft, 307). Given Rita's personal conduct, her denial of a double standard implies that the "impulses" are to be given full rein, and that both women and men should be promiscuous. (She, at least, is no hypocrite).

Victor and Rita are themselves a kind of background material, as examples of decadents, empty of values, who succeed in the new Soviet world. It is not surprising that Ayn Rand considered matching them up. In a scene written for the first-draft version of chapter 15 of part 2, they are having a secret affair:

> Victor got a twenty-four hour leave of absence from the Volkhovstroy. He arrived in Petrograd in the same train compartment with Rita Eksler. Rita Eksler crossed her long legs in very sheer foreign stockings and pulled a fluffy silver fox closer to her little nose white with genuine Coty powder, and asked:
>
> "Couldn't I, really, darling?"
>
> "No," said Victor imperiously, "under no circumstances, Rita. We can't be seen together. What do you want to drag yourself to that funeral, anyway? It's no fun. And then, my wife will probably be there. They all will."
>
> "Haven't you divorced her yet?"
>
> "I have. Last week. She's had her notice of divorce by (first draft, 514)[11]

Although the union in depravity of Victor and Rita fits the world of *We the Living*, the focus of the chapter is Andrei's funeral; their affair is not distinctly pertinent to that event, nor is it necessary for the novel. As is the case with other omissions in the background material, one can see why Ayn Rand wrote it in, and also why she left it out.

Looking at the changes Ayn Rand made in the novel, we see that, for the most part, she wrote more than she needed (as she was to do in later novels, especially *The Fountainhead*) and then removed what she did not need. In some cases, notably the speech by a student revolutionary, narrative events (i.e., Sasha's revolutionary activities) fulfilled the function of the statement that was omitted. She preferred showing to telling, as she was to explain in her lectures on fiction writing,[12] and this preference accounts for many of her artistic choices, as the manuscripts show.

## STYLISTIC REVISIONS

Many of the changes visible on the pages of the drafts show Ayn Rand working to improve the precision of her diction and the smoothness of her syntax. In the first draft of the second chapter, for example, when Victor suggests that Kira work in a Soviet office, his father asks: "Do you want her to become a reconciled slave?" (first draft, 62). The phrasing is awkward, and does not

sound like English; it is also a more explicit challenge to Victor than is typical of Vasili at this point. In the second draft, "Victor, you don't really mean that" is enough.

She also worked to add vividness to her writing. Later in the scene, when Alexander Argounov says he will not take a Soviet job:

> "That's the spirit, Alexander!" Vassili [*sic*] Ivanovitch proclaimed triumphantly and shook his hand, stretching his big fist across the table, with a dark glance at Maria Petrovna. (first draft, 52)

But consider the second draft:

> Vasili Ivanovitch dropped his spoon and it clattered into his plate; silently, solemnly, he stretched his big fist across the table and shook Alexander Dimitrievitch's hand and threw a dark glance at Maria Petrovna. (second draft, 27)

For the second draft (which is the same as all later versions), Ayn Rand adds details of action and sound (dropping the spoon, the sound of clatter) and structures the syntax of the sentence for greater drama. Even the substitution of "threw a dark glance" for "with a dark glance" is an improvement, making the glance more active.

Compare the first and second drafts of her introduction of Irina:

> Irina, her daughter, came flying into the anteroom, tall, slender, eighteen, with huge eyes and the transparent skin of her mother's youth. [*crossed-out*: with a face that laughed, danced, and moved so much one did not have time to notice whether it was good-looking or not.] (first draft, 48)
>
> A door crashed open behind her and something came flying into the anteroom; something tall, tense, with a storm of hair and eyes like automobile head-lights; and Galina Petrovna recognized Irina, her niece, a young lady of eighteen with the eyes of twenty-eight and the laughter of eight. (second draft, 23)

The revised version (which is the same as all later versions) includes not only more sound (crashing door) and a sharper description (combining sensory details and metaphoric language), but also two kinds of suspense. First, we wait to find out what the "something" is (instead of being told, as in the first draft, that the person entering is Irina). Then, instead of simply learning her chronological age, we wonder why she is, in spirit, several other ages as well.

In some cases, Ayn Rand writes a general statement in a draft, then replaces it with specifics. In the second draft of chapter 4 of part 1: "Visitors were rare. Galina Petrovna was eager to share her news and hopes, while Kira looked impatiently at the city lights in the window" (second draft, 60). The published versions of this scene replace the summary statement with Galina's actual "news and hopes."

Revisions are often made to be more concrete, but not always. From the same scene, compare the following:

> "Any time I'll enter a Union with that scum, you can have me cremated and feed the ashes to the pigs!" (first draft, 53)

> "When I have to take Soviet employment," said Vasili Ivanovitch, "you'll be a widow, Marussia." (second draft, 27–28)

The grotesque image, which is not necessary, is excluded from the second draft and from all later versions. The point is that union membership is a kind of death, or worse. Sometimes revisions involve the removal of adverbs or adjectives. Consider the following, from chapter 6 of part 2. When Leo looks at Kira, dressed for the wedding of Victor and Marisha, he "took her hand reverently, as that of a lady at a Court reception, and kissed her palm lasciviously, as that of a courtesan" (first draft, 153; second draft, 442). For the first published version, Ayn Rand removed the superfluous adverbs: he "took her hand, as that of a lady at a Court reception, and kissed her palm, as that of a courtesan" (1936, 360). And for the revised edition, she improved the syntax and the emphasis, too: he "took her hand, as if she were a lady at a Court reception, and kissed her palm, as if she were a courtesan" (297).

The stylistic revisions visible on the pages of the manuscripts are evidence of Ayn Rand's continuing purposeful labor. One could learn from them all. I will conclude this section with multiple versions of passages from the novel's third chapter, entirely devoted to Kira.

The first draft version of the description of Kira's eyes reads as follows:

> Kira's eyes were dark gray, the gray of clouds from behind which the sun can be expected at any moment. [*crossed-out*: There was a silent, sparkling laughter in them, and a profound joy of more than laughing gaiety.] From under her strange eyebrows that seemed broken in the middle where their straight, thin line made a sharp angle, they looked at people quietly, directly, a little defiantly in their straightforward calm that seemed to tell men her sight was too clear, and none of their favorite binoculars were needed to help her look at life.
>
> [*crossed-out*: Her eyes were candid and open, radiant with the distant reflection of what they seemed to see; no mystery clouded their thought. But men looked into her eyes like into a sea whose waters stood still transparent as air to reveal a sunken treasure, but so deep that the bottom could not be seen.] (first draft, 86)

In revising this passage, Ayn Rand crossed out a reference to treasure below the sea (an early anticipation of Atlantis), as well as a general description of Kira's laughter.

The second draft reads as follows:

> Kira's eyes were dark gray, the gray of storm clouds from behind which the sun can be expected at any moment. They looked at people quietly, directly, with something that people called arrogance, but which was only such perfection of deep, confident calm that it seemed to tell men her sight was too clear and none of their favorite binoculars were needed to help her look at life. (second draft, 38)

In revising the passage further, Ayn Rand specified that the clouds were storm clouds (perhaps a link with the storm of Irina's hair) and removed the "broken eyebrows," which were a feature of Kira's description in the first draft only. Perhaps she decided that the words did not convey the image she wanted. She also deals with the apparent incongruity of "defiantly" and "calm." Kira is self-possessed and self-sufficient, and does not think of others enough to "defy" them; "arrogance" is the name given to her calm by others. The best features of the description are there from the start; the revisions are mere polishing. The first published version is the same as

the second draft (see 1936, 36); for the 1959 edition, she shortened "such perfection of deep, confident calm" to "a deep, confident calm" (44).

Consider the revision of the description of Kira's mouth. In the first draft:

> Kira's lips were thin, long. Silent, they were cold, indomitable, and men thought of a walkure with lance and winged helmet in the sweep of battle. But a slight movement made a wrinkle in the corner of her lips—and men thought of an imp perched on top of a toadstool, laughing into the faces of daisies.
>
> No one dared the thought of a kiss upon her proud, forbidding mouth of a priestess. But she smiled, [*crossed-out*: and her smile, slow, tender, delicate, was like a flower whose arrogant fragility invited a hand to crush it,] and men doubted the nature of the goddess she was serving, (first draft, 86–87)

The second draft is nearly the same. The spelling is changed (from "walkure" to "Valkyre"), and the paragraphs are combined. For the first published version (1936, 36), though, the sentences about the priestess are removed.

The sentences about the priestess were designed to convey the contrast between two states of Kira's appearance. In the one, she appears forbidding; in the other, she is tender. But the sentences, as written, do not convey a clear meaning: in what sense did men doubt "the nature of the goddess she was serving"? (For Ayn Rand, moreover, a woman as priestess—as, for example, in the notes for *The Fountainhead*—is serving not a goddess, but a god.[13])

The earlier sentences, which also convey a contrast, were excellent in the first draft. The contrast here is like that of the storm clouds and the hint of sun, in the description of Kira's eyes. The image of the Valkyrie, which is a tie to Kira's Viking (a brief reference in the published versions, a cherished legend of Kira's in the drafts) and perhaps a reflection of the warrior-princess Kriemhild in the Ring saga (dramatized in film in Fritz Lang's *Siegfried*, which Ayn Rand judged to be "as close to a great work of art as the films have yet come").[14] The laughing imp is dramatically different—in scale and mood—from the Valkyrie, and can also be integrated with Irina's farewell sketch, drawn on the train, for Sasha.[15] The description is stronger when it includes the clear Valkyrie/imp contrast and excludes the less-clear priestess contrast.

The existing drafts show literally hundreds of stylistic revisions, and it is likely that the missing pages and drafts would show many more. Given that, as we have seen, Ayn Rand devoted so much attention to revising the content of her background material and the style of her prose, it is not surprising to see in the drafts evidence of significant revisions in the content of the central story line: the character of Kira, her love for Leo, and her relationship with Andrei.

## REVISIONS IN THE MAIN STORY LINE: KIRA AND HER LOVERS

The most important change in the content of the characterization of Kira is the change in her career. In the first draft, Kira announced to her family, on their first night back in Petersburg, that she would be going to the university:

> "What will you take?"
> "History."
> "Why history?"

> "Less boring than anything else." (first draft, 63)

In the second draft, she is planning to be an engineer; the reasons she states—there (33–34) and in the 1936 version (31–32)—emphasize objectivity: "It's the only profession where I don't have to learn one single lie. Steel is steel. Every other science is someone's guess, and someone's wish, and many people's lies." (In the 1959 version, "one single lie" became "any lies," and "Every other science" became "Most of the other sciences" [42].)

When Victor accuses her of being antisocial and neglecting her duty, her response, in the first draft, is simply:

> "Anyone in particular you have a duty to in society, Victor?"
> "No. The whole."
> "If you write a whole line of zeroes, it's still—nothing." (first draft, 63)

In the second draft, and in the published versions, the exchange is as follows:

> "To whom is it I owe a duty? To your neighbor next door? Or to the militiaman on the corner? Or to the clerk in the co-operative? Or to the old man I saw in line, third from the door, with an old basket and a woman's hat?"
> "Society, Kira, is a stupendous whole."
> "If you write a whole line of zeroes, it's still—nothing." (second draft, 33–34; 1936, 31–32)

In revising this early scene, Ayn Rand makes Kira more thoughtful. Kira is more articulate—but not improbably so—on the subject of the theme, the individual versus the collective. Kira also has a better reason for choosing a subject: engineering is more objective. Justifying her choice by saying it is "less boring" than other subjects is the sort of explanation that might be suitable for Leo, who has begun to give up, but not for the passionate Kira.

In giving Kira the aspiration to be an engineer, rather than to study a subject selected only because it is "less boring" than others, Ayn Rand significantly improved the characterization, which—since Kira in the novel represents the individual—significantly enhanced the dramatization of the theme. The characterization, to be sure, was already strong in the first draft. Most of the revisions are omissions of paragraphs or scenes that would be entirely appropriate for the final version of Kira, and that seem to be cut primarily for space.

Chapter 3 of part 1, which we have already examined for stylistic revisions in the description of Kira's appearance, includes several incidents, sooner or later cut from the novel, that illustrate Kira's independence and courage.

Ayn Rand wrote, but crossed out, a description of Kira as a toddler measuring herself against the statue of Apollo:

> Through the winter of her first years, she . . . waddled across the big rooms and measured her height with the white marble statue of Apollo on the landing of the main stairway, her ambition set on growing to be his size. (first draft, 87)

The image is appealing and symbolic: Kira wants to be the greatest and highest. But Ayn Rand wrote, in all later versions of the chapter, that Kira "climbed to the pedestals of statues in the parks to kiss the cold lips of Greek gods." Kira is ultimately presented not as *being* the marble Apollo, but as *loving* him.

Shortly after, the first draft has two versions of a scene involving Kira's climb to a height. The first version, which is crossed out, reads:

> In a niche high up in the wall of the stairway was a tall Gothic window opened over the city. The janitor could reach it only with the help of a big ladder. After a long search of the house, Kira, at the age of five, was found, one day, up at the window, gravely watching the city. She had climbed into the niche, accidentally pushed the ladder away, and was found twenty feet above the stairway landing. Galina Petrovna fainted. (first draft, 87–88, typed)

The incident shows Kira's daring and curiosity, but also a carelessness and an obliviousness regarding realistic danger. The second version, which immediately follows the other, reads:

> At the age of five, Kira found her way to the highest and murkiest of the mansion's attics, pushed aside the long step-ladder—its only means of communication with the world below, and, peering down from behind a dusty, broken trunk, delivered an ultimatum to her frantic elders: she refused to play with a little crippled relative of whom the family's compassion had made a general idol.
>
> [*crossed-out*: The step-ladder was put up in place, but Kira was never asked to play with the cripple again.] (first draft, 88—a handwritten page following the typed 88)

This time Kira has pushed away the ladder deliberately, and is using the situation in order to bargain with her family. Her refusal to play with the crippled relative (i.e., someone who is valued for negative reasons) merely because the child is weak indicates her desire for positive values.

The second draft of this incident, which corresponds with the published versions, is much shorter:

> When she refused to play with a crippled relative of whom the family's compassion had made a general idol—she was never asked to do it again. (second draft, 39–40)

There is no climb, no stepladder, no threat. The most important point is that Kira wanted to live her life for her own sake—and that she was allowed to do so. Ayn Rand originally planned a number of incidents (Kira at age five, seven, etc.) in several paragraphs. Instead, she allotted a sentence to each childhood episode for this age span, reserving a longer treatment for the later years.

Ayn Rand devotes several paragraphs, for example, to Kira's time alone at the Argounov summer residence. All versions contain descriptions of her rafting through whirlpools on the river, and listening to sparkling musical tunes from the casinos below the hill. The first and second drafts also contain the following:

> Sometimes she got up at dawn for a swim in the river. A light cape wrapped tightly around her body, she ran to her rock that hung high over the water. Above the hills the sky was a pale pink, like the faint glow of blood through a white skin. The river ran dark and cold, a long steel blade that had slashed a hill in two. Kira

> threw her cape down. Her naked body, pink as the sky, cut through the cold air, through the gray of the hills into the river far below. Two furious spurts of water darted up, like two huge white wings that flapped open once after the flight and fell closed again. (first draft, 92; second draft, 41)

The scene did not appear in the published versions—perhaps cut for space, with the rafting scene being sufficient to convey Kira's sense of adventure—but readers of *The Fountainhead* will note that Ayn Rand did not abandon the idea of a nude swim, in a similar setting. The lake at Stanton "was only a thin steel ring that cut the rocks in half,"[16] as the river here was "a long steel blade that had slashed a hill in two."

The characterization of Kira, with regard to love and sex, was designed to contrast conventional sentimentality about love with Kira's indifference to the same (because Kira, without knowing it, wanted to love a hero). The drafts show that Ayn Rand originally intended more detail about this contrast. For example, here is a passage that appears only in the first draft:

> At the age when, their arms around each other, girls wander down garden lanes in the evening, whispering to each other their first, breathless confessions, Kira had no need to share, no flowers pressed in a book of verses, no fortune teller's prediction of her future husband's name. When classmates asked her in a whisper the greatest question of their young world: "Have you ever been kissed, Kira?" they were answered by the shake of a head with a lazy, indifferent smile.
>
> In the early spring of her graduation, Kira walked to school every morning past a [lovely?] house with carved white columns and grilled windows. It had been a nobleman's mansion transformed into a White Army prison. Kira noticed a prisoner [*crossed-out*: behind the bars of] in a basement window. He was a young Bolshevik officer of the Red Army. She watched him every morning, his two strong fists clutching the bars, hair thrown back, lips in one thin line on a pale face, grimly set against a silent despair. She liked his face. Once, she smiled at him. He answered. She passed by the white prison every day and he waited to see her pass. They waved to each other. Then, one day, he disappeared. She never bothered to find out where he had gone. (first draft, 94–95)

Kira's interest in the Bolshevik officer imprisoned in the mansion is juxtaposed with her lack of interest in conventional romance. The implication is that a man like that, strong and grimly defying despair, might attract her, but that the men she has met have not. This point, though, is made clearly enough elsewhere in the chapter, and through incidents that achieve multiple purposes.

We are told that Kira's mocking attitude discourages the intentions of conventional young men with humid eyes (who remind Kira of snails slithering up her bare legs). This description of Kira's mocking attitude also makes the point that young men are attracted to her, that her lack of concern with romance is not any sort of "sour grapes." We are told that she is fascinated by the silhouette of a soldier guarding an oil well, and by the sight, in a stage play, of a tall, young overseer cracking a whip. The description of the soldier guarding the oil well is a link with engineering. The description of the overseer also makes the point that Lydia, by contrast, empathizes with the peasant victim cringing under the whip. Hence the paragraphs about Kira's indifference to the subject of kissing, and her exchange of smiles with the Bolshevik prisoner, are consistent with the characterization, but their point is dramatized elsewhere.

The same is true for the details, in the first draft only, about a book Lydia read and offered to Kira. "It told of a dashing young officer seducing a beautiful Duchess on the satin pillows of his bedroom. Kira yawned and threw the book under the bed" (first draft, 95). The text as it stands describes Lydia's preferred reading as "books of delicate, sinful romance," which is sufficient to identify their nature.

The description of Lydia's book would have stood as a specific contrast to the one book Kira treasured, an English novel about a Viking, hated by both the king and priest of his own land, who "lived but for the joy and the wonder and the glory of the god that was himself" (49). The first and second drafts include a longer version of his story, which appears, condensed from several pages to a few sentences, in the published versions. The second-draft version, reprinted in *The Early Ayn Rand*, celebrates the Viking's conquest of a sacred city and offers a vivid image of his final triumph:

> Alone over the city, his clothes torn, the Viking stood on top of the tall white tower. There was a wound across his breast and red drops rolled slowly down to his feet.
>
> From the ravaged streets below, conquerors and conquered alike looked up at him. There was much wonder in their eyes, but little hatred. They raised their heads, but did not rise from their knees.
>
> On the tower stairs the slender queen-priestess of the sacred city lay at the Viking's feet. Her head bent so low that her golden hair swept the steps and he could see her breasts as, breathing tremulously, they touched the ground. Her hands lay still and helpless on the steps, the palms turned up, hungry in silent entreaty. But it was not mercy they were begging of him.[17]

The writing here, and throughout the story, is eloquent. Ayn Rand condensed the legend, probably for reasons of space. (Readers of *The Fountainhead* will notice that she did not abandon the image of a conqueror at the top of a tall tower, worshipped by a slender, golden-haired priestess.)

Kira's Viking, throughout the composition of the novel, stands as Kira's ideal; in the drafts, she thinks of him in her dying moments. Given that the legend includes a romance, it is not surprising that the Viking became her romantic ideal, at least subconsciously. Hence the legend, when included, supported the very features of Kira's characterization we have been examining: her longing for a hero, and her indifference to the ordinary.

The chapter in which Ayn Rand establishes Kira's characterization ends, in all versions, with two opposing conclusions: the omniscient narrator reports that Kira "entered [life] with the sword of a Viking pointing the way and an operetta tune for a battle march," and the Soviet official states that the goal of her life is "the brotherhood of workers and peasants." The incidents within that chapter—the ones that remain and the ones that were removed—support the incongruity of those conclusions. In the next two chapters, she meets Leo, and then Andrei. Her relationships with them bring the incongruity into focus.

Kira's relationship with Leo is crucial to his characterization. Leo's role in the novel was, as Ayn Rand wrote in the "Airtight Notebook," to be a man "too strong to compromise, but too weak to withstand the pressure, who cannot bend, but only break." He was, from the standpoint of the theme, an individualist in spirit who was broken by living in a society ruled by the spirit of the masses. The "breaking" takes the form of giving up on the best within him. But the best within him—which would properly include productive work—is represented in the novel only by

Kira. By the time we meet him, he seems to have already given up on everything else. In order for the reader to recognize that Leo is a great value, Ayn Rand needs to make evident in the novel what Kira sees in Leo, what Leo is to and with Kira.

Although Leo is given a background (much briefer than Kira's or Andrei's), he exists in the novel almost entirely in relation to Kira. We rarely see him without her. When he goes to the sanatorium to be cured of tuberculosis, the narrative perspective does not go with him; nor does the novel accompany him to prison. We do not even see him at the theater or at Antonina Platoshkina's apartment until Kira tracks him down. And except for rare, isolated instances, the novel does not enter his consciousness.

Leo's downward path is apparent not only in his willingness to accept his own physical death (in part 1) and his spiritual death (in part 2), but in some aspects of his treatment of Kira along the way. It is shocking to hear his rudeness to Kira or to see Rita Eksler draped over Leo at a party, or Vava Milovskaia locked in his arms in the apartment he shares with Kira. (One cannot imagine any other Ayn Rand hero, whatever the provocation, conducting himself in this manner.) The challenge in creating the characterization of Leo was to evoke the height from which he falls, to show why his decline is a tragedy. And given that he has already fallen, to a large extent, by the time we meet him, the depiction of his relationship with Kira has to do the job of showing what he once was, what he could and should be, by making evident why Kira would have loved him, would have seen him as her hero, would have formed an image of his essential nature so strong that she would cling to it, and to him, in spite of all that followed.

If the novel does not show us why and how Kira loves Leo, we do not know who he really is. There simply is not enough of Leo in the novel apart from the relationship from which to judge his heroic qualities. Hence it was very important to convey that love, and the drafts show that Ayn Rand worked hard on it. The most heavily edited portions of the description of Leo are his first two meetings with Kira and their sexual encounters. Ayn Rand wrote, in her notes on revising the early chapters, that the meeting of Leo and Kira needed to be much better. And, although she ultimately judged her work here to be less than her best—she said that she had not been able to convey Kira's feeling for Leo as well as she had wished[18]—we can see, from the drafts, the effort she put forth and the improvements she made in trying to show Leo through Kira's eyes. Kira's perspective was, in the novel as it developed, the only way to show the true Leo. No one else—certainly not Leo himself—saw him as a hero. But Ayn Rand did, and tried to show how Kira did.

The key aspect of the introduction of Leo is that Kira immediately recognized him as the image of her hero, and, almost simultaneously, recognized that their relationship would entail a struggle between the glory of his spirit and the depths of his despair. In the first draft, the immediate recognition is accomplished by a reference to Kira's Viking. Finding herself at night in the red-light district, she moves nervously to the corner.

> And then she stopped.
>
> [*crossed-out*: For coming down the street she saw a face. And it was the face of the Viking.]
>
> He was tall; his collar was raised; a cap was pulled over his eyes. His mouth, calm, severe, contemptuous, was that of an ancient chieftain who could order men to die, and his eyes were such as could watch it. They were the eyes of a Viking who drank at sunrise over the ruins of a sacred city. (first draft, 24)

The second draft (66) omits the crossed-out sentences, but retains the reference to the Viking's eyes.

When she realizes that he believes her to be a prostitute, she thinks again of the Viking, because buying the services of a prostitute does not comport with the nobility of her Viking. In a sentence crossed out in the first draft, she wrote: "She studied the man behind the Viking's face; the face that could not deceive her" (first draft, 26).

The 1936 version omits all specific references to the Viking; the reference to an "ancient chieftain" (56) would not, by itself, lead a reader to think of the Viking who had been mentioned as being the hero of Kira's favorite story. But the references to the Viking were originally designed to cash in on the legend we associate with Kira. In the drafts, she loves this man at first sight because he is her longstanding image of her highest value. She is, in a sense, not seeing him for the first time—she has seen him all her life.

But Ayn Rand decided to shorten the Viking's legend, and to remove—from this scene and from Kira's death scene—the references to the Viking. Without the references, we have only the fact that Kira likes his face, and that he is calm and severe (like her other images of the hero, e.g., the overseer and the soldier guarding the oil well). But faces can be misleading. Kira, within the novel, has already been disappointed by a face she liked. On the day she returned to Petersburg, she looked straight into the eyes of a young soldier whose eyes "were austere and forbidding like caverns where a single flame burned under cold, gray vaults," but who "looked at her coldly, indifferently, astonished," noticing only that her eyes were strange and that "she wore a light suit and no brassiere, which fact he did not resent at all" (30—substantially the same in other versions). Kira "turned away, a little disappointed, although she did not know just what she had expected" (30). People do not always live up to their faces.

In omitting the Viking, Ayn Rand dispensed with one of the devices she had intended to use in dramatizing Kira's attraction to Leo. But she presents, with emphasis, the core of Kira's worship of this man. She asks him to take off his cap so that she can look at him. The next sentences in the published versions read: "Her face was a mirror for the beauty of his. Her face reflected no admiration, but an incredulous, reverent awe" (62). Her face is a mirror twice: it reflects his beauty, and it reflects her awe. His beauty—of soul as of face—allows her to experience awe, the ecstasy of hero worship she craves; her awe allows him to experience his own beauty. This is the nature of the bond between them.

Most of the scene consists not of description, but of dialogue. The drafts show that Ayn Rand made major improvements from the first draft to the second. The first draft, for example, reads:

> "Teach me all you know. I want to go down, as far down as you can drag me."
>
> "I have a lot to teach you," she said simply, without a smile. (first draft, 31–32)

In the second draft, she replies instead (as she does in the published versions):

> "You know, you're very much afraid you can't be dragged down." (second draft, 70)

Kira, in the first draft, does not challenge Leo's expressed desire for self-degradation, and she leaves open the implication that she might assist him in this project.

When Leo asks Kira who led her into prostitution, she says: “A man.” The first draft continues:

> “He disappointed you?”
> “No. Only for a short second.”
> “He left you?”
> “No. He’ll never leave me.” (first draft, 33)

In the second draft, as in the published versions:

> “Was he worth that?”
> “Yes.”
> “What an appetite!”
> “For what?”
> “For life.”
> “If one loses that appetite, why still sit at the table?” (second draft, 70)

In both cases, she is in fact speaking of Leo. When she says, in the first draft, that he will never leave her, she does not have a reason for saying that. In the second draft, when she says he was worth it, she means that she is willing to pay the price for whatever the night will bring. Leo’s follow-up in the second draft allows him to appreciate her appetite for life and allows her to ask him an important rhetorical question.

When the subject changes from Kira to Leo, the first draft reads as follows (Leo speaking first):

> “I know many people who don’t like me.”
> “That’s good.”
> “But I’ve never known a person who said it was good.”
> “You look as though you should live on a desert island.”
> “I was beginning to like you. Don’t start giving me compliments. I’ve heard enough of them.”
> “Sorry. It *was* a compliment. But very few people would think it so. What would you rather hear?”
> “I’d like to hear that I look like a Soviet clerk who sells soap and smiles at the customers.”
> “No, you wouldn’t like that. And you couldn’t do it.”
> “I couldn’t. I have nothing to sell. But myself. And no one wants that.”
> “I might.”
> The scornful arc rose slowly. “Want to reverse our positions? Well, what price have you to offer?”
> She raised her face to a ray of light.
> “Look into my eyes,” she said very seriously.
> He bent close to her.
> “What do you see there?” she asked.
> [*written over the following lines*: “They’re beautiful.”
> “I have no other mirror to offer you.”]
> “What do you see there?”
> His face was so close she could feel his breath on her lips.

> "My own reflection."
> "That's the price I'll offer you."
> His face did not come down. He moved away. Suddenly, he asked:
> "*Are* you a . . . street woman?" (first draft, 34–37)

The second draft, which is substantially the same as the published versions, is much improved. Instead of apologizing for offering Leo a compliment, Kira surprises him with the true statement that he has in fact known one person who thought it was good not to be liked, and that that person is himself. The second draft also sets up more directly Leo's doubts that Kira is a prostitute. Instead of the mocking discussion of selling himself (which may have been intended as a foreshadowing of his ultimate condition, as a gigolo), instead of spoken words about Kira's function as Leo's mirror, the second draft has Leo saying that he is ordinary ("I'm just like any other man you've had in your bed—and like any you will have") and Kira stating: "You mean you would like to be like any other man. And you would like to think that there haven't been any other men—in my bed" (second draft, 72).

All versions end with Leo saying that he wants to see Kira again, but that they cannot be in touch. Instead, he says, he will meet her again in a month, if he is still alive, and if he does not forget. Syntactically, the two subordinate clauses are of equal weight, in spite of the enormous difference in the nature of the implied possible obstacles. This sentence becomes a leitmotif of the relationship, in all versions. During the month of waiting (until October 28 in the first draft, and November 10 in the second draft and subsequent versions), Kira is described in all versions as thinking frequently of his statement (as she listens to the playing of the "Internationale" for the fifth anniversary of the revolution, in the first draft; as she reads her books, in the other versions).

The period of waiting is described most extensively in the first draft:

> She never had any thought of him beyond the one that he existed [*crossed-out*: and that thought was an end in itself]. She could not tell whether the torture of waiting was a delicious pain or a happiness too agonizing to bear; it was a sacred ordeal which she bore calmly, reverently; for every time her heart pounded suddenly, cruelly, without reason, she knew it was a pain tying her to him. (first draft, 68)

The second draft and the first published edition have only the first sentence: "She never had any thought of him beyond the one that he existed" (second draft, 87; 1936, 65). In the 1959 version, Ayn Rand adds the sentence: "But she found it hard to remember the existence of anything else" (67). For the second draft, Ayn Rand removed the references to Kira's heart pounding "cruelly, without reason" and to Kira's reverent relish for the torture and pain that tie her to Leo. It is possible that she removed the sentences because they are not clear. If, as stated, Kira did not know whether the torture was pain or happiness, then why would she identify as pain the feeling of her heart pounding? The sentences express powerful emotion, but not in a clear way. Ayn Rand first restricted her description of Kira's thoughts about Leo to the fact that she thought of Leo only that he existed; she ultimately added the fact that Kira thought about Leo almost exclusively. Looking back on the novel, she stated that she had not portrayed Kira's feelings for Leo effectively. This paragraph may be an example. Nothing in Kira's feeling here pertains to Leo specifically. The final version speaks of the total absorption of love, but does not characterize either Leo or Kira.

Their second meeting, again heavily edited, leads, in all versions, to a plan for another meeting, and a modification of his signature statement to "I'll be alive—because I won't forget." The scene itself, in all versions, shows Leo's despair, his expressed wish not to see, not to aspire, and his belief that his relationship with Kira will rescue him from spiritual peril. Looking at the first draft in the light of later versions, we see how Ayn Rand tightened the dialogue (in the sentences spoken by both Leo and Kira), made Leo's despair more specific to his time and setting, included the element of Kira's career (and the hopeful ambition such a career implies), and removed explicit references to Leo's being "afraid" and in need of Kira's "help."

In the first draft, for example, Leo says to Kira:

> "How can you tell what I am? I might be many things, you know. I might be a fugitive murderer. I might be a spy of the G.P.U. I might be a hunted counterrevolutionary. I might be a bandit who'll kidnap you—and—"
>
> The look in his eyes stopped her breath.
>
> "Or," he continued with a light smile [indecipherable], "I might be worse than all that: I might be honorable and disappoint you."
>
> "It happens, that none of these makes any difference: I don't care who you are." (first draft, 77)

All later versions are substantially the same as the final version:

> "There are a few things you don't know about me."
>
> "I don't have to know." (82)

The revision is more economical, and avoids distracting or tantalizing the reader with questions about what Leo might be. The point is that Kira knows, by looking at him, what she needs to know.

In the first draft, Leo explains why he likes Kira:

> "[*crossed-out*: I like you, because I like those who'd wear felt hats to a concert hall and an opera hat to plough a field. I like a street walker who can act like a decent woman and a decent woman who can act like a street walker.] I like you because you did something for a reason which no one dares, for the sole reason of wanting to do it."
>
> "[*crossed-out*: That isn't unusual. I've always done it. What else can one do?] Haven't you always done what you wanted?"
>
> "Just once: today."
>
> "And before today?"
>
> "Before today I've never wanted anything. Life isn't worth the desperate chance of a desire." (first draft, 78)

The later versions, which are very different from this, are substantially the same as the final version. In these versions, Leo tells her that he likes her, but instead of saying why, asks her what she is doing at the Technological Institute. After she tells him about the glass skyscraper and aluminum bridge she wants to build, he questions the value of effort and creation, and says that he has no desires except "One: to learn to desire something" (*We the Living*, 83).

Ayn Rand, in revising, first removed Leo's description of Kira as a mixture of different styles; such a sentence might have fit into a narrative description of Kira, but does not fit the

context here. Leo has not actually seen Kira showing such a mixture of styles. Nor does it seem likely that he would explicitly identify the fact that she acted on a desire as something unique to Kira. And, although it makes sense that he might express a wish to learn to desire (as he does in the second draft and later versions), it does not make sense for him to say he has never wanted anything. The subtractions from the first draft are clearly improvements.

So are the additions. When Kira speaks of her skyscraper and bridge, he states that building might have been worthwhile in the past, and might be worthwhile again in the future. He admits the value of values, even though he despairs of the chance of achieving values in his current world.

In the first draft, the difference between Leo and Kira is that being in Soviet Russia matters to Leo, whereas to Kira it is insignificant:

> "We live in Soviet Russia, don't we, Kira? We'll get used to many things. If—we live."
>
> "I suppose we live in Soviet Russia," said Kira, "or, perhaps, it's South Africa. I don't know. I've never bothered to find out."
>
> He laughed softly.
>
> "But won't it find you, child?"
>
> "I don't know. I've never understood why people worry so much about such little things as what one eats, or what one wears, or where one lives." (first draft, 79–80)

The second draft and subsequent versions do not retain this part of the conversation. Although it is true that Kira is described, favorably, in terms of the trivial things that she does not allow herself to regard as important, in this novel the food and the clothing and the geographical location are literally and symbolically detrimental to her happiness—and indifference to them is not an entirely appropriate response.

The first draft continues:

> "What's more important, Kira?"
>
> "To sit here with you. To hear you say 'Kira.'"
>
> He moved closer. She felt his breath on her cold cheek; and she bent her head a little—toward him.
>
> "And will my little Kira always be as brave as that?" he asked very softly and very seriously. "Will she have enough to help someone who is very much afraid of the 'little things?'"
>
> She whispered: "Yes, Leo."
>
> "It's a difficult task, Kira."
>
> She looked at him. Every line of his face was like a drink; and she felt intoxicated.
>
> She got up. She stood between him and the light and the poster on the corner. She laughed.
>
> "What's difficult, Leo? To stand between you and bread cards, and linseed oil, and proletarian brotherhood? I'll thank them for existing if I'm to be your shield."
>
> He got up, too, and stood looking down at her.

"And I'd face them laughing like you do if I had the shield of a girl from a life as it is not being lived."

He heard how still she stood, as if his eyes were holding her on a leash. He smiled and released the reins.

"Just the thought of you," he said softly, "will be the shield—for a month." (first draft, 80–81)

In the later versions, there is no discussion of what is or is not important, and, if there were, Kira would have been able to speak of her work—and not only of Leo—as something important to her. In the later versions, Leo does not speak of being afraid, or of needing help. Instead, he expresses a wish for blindness, in order to avoid the suffering that sharp sight brings. "If only one could lose sight and come down, down to the level of those who never want it, never miss it" (*We the Living*, 83). When Kira tells him that he will not succeed in this quest for blindness, he says: "I don't know. It's funny. I found you because I thought you'd do it for me. Now I'm afraid you'll be the one to save me from it. But I don't know whether I'll thank you" (84). Whereas Kira's protective role in the first draft was to stand (symbolically and literally) between him and what she sees as unimportant (life in Soviet Russia), her role in the later versions is to protect him from a more serious and important threat, the quest for self-destruction.

The documentary evidence of Ayn Rand's work shows more revisions of the first two meetings of Leo and Kira than of any other episodes involving Leo. The revisions show an attempt to give him more stature and to remove less-than-successful passages conveying Kira's feelings. Although Ayn Rand judged him as morally superior to Andrei, she did not ultimately allot as much space to his characterization as she did to Andrei's (which will be discussed presently). Within the novel, he is less an individual to be examined in his own right, than a value held by Kira. From his expressed thoughts at the time of the second meeting (in either draft), the likely outcome for him is clear: for him to depend on Kira as a shield is a losing proposition. For Kira, nonetheless, the relationship is a significant value. Leo—for reasons that the novel does not fully dramatize—represents the spirit of the Viking, the spirit of life itself. Hence, as she walks through the snow to her unconquered death, she calls to him, the "Leo that should have been," and she wears her mother's wedding dress as she imagines a union with the man who should have been her mate. He fulfills this function in the novel in spite of the fact that Ayn Rand did not develop (or significantly revise) his characterization.

The most important revisions in his characterization, accordingly, pertain to his romantic encounters with Kira and her thoughts about him. The first draft contained more details suggesting pain. For example, the first-draft depiction of their first embrace reads: "Her shoulders creaked when he bent her backwards and his kiss was a wound" (first draft, 133). The second draft removes the creaking shoulders: "His kiss felt like a wound" (second draft, 128). The first-draft depiction of another kiss, in a sentence removed for the second draft, reads: "His mouth bit into hers as if he were to suck the blood of her lips" (first draft, 188).

The account in the first draft of their first night together includes the following:

He sat on the bed and held her across his lap. She did not know how long they sat thus, nor what they said. She remembered he repeated: "We are free . . . free . . . free. . . ." and when he did not say it, the waves repeated it lashing the creaking boards. She wondered if it really hurt when she bit his lips.

His breath flowed under her collar; where it stopped her blood picked it up and carried it further. When his hand followed his breath—she was not startled.

> When he tore off her blouse and the shirt strap buttoned on her shoulders, she lay back and watched his dark hair at her throat.
>
> She hissed: "Take off your sweater."
>
> [*crossed-out*: Her voice was harsh; her face was grim, without a smile, like his.] She heard her heart beating against his skin. His skin smelt like warm milk. She felt her breath at his nostrils and parted her lips slowly, as in a snarl. When his hand rose from the top of her black stockings,[*crossed-out*: she lay very still so that his fingers would find the way] nothing moved in her but her heart against his, even though his fingers hurt a little.
>
> [*The intervening section, in which he removes her underwear, is similar in all versions. The scene ends*.]
>
> She lay very still, as he had left her. [*crossed-out*: He had pushed her legs apart and she did not draw them together.]
>
> His legs felt like a warm liquid against hers, [*crossed-out*: and she wondered whether they had taken their skin off, too. Then she stopped wondering. There is no line between pain and ecstasy.] Her hair fell over the edge of the bed, and she remembered that his name had three letters. (first draft, 202–4)

The revisions made directly on the first draft show Ayn Rand's removal of the harshness and grimness in Kira and the explicit reference to a painful ecstasy, as well as some physical details. For the second draft, Ayn Rand removed even more; for example Leo does not hold Kira on his lap, Kira does not order Leo to take off his sweater, his skin does not smell like warm milk.

In revising this sexual scene from the 1936 edition for the 1959, Ayn Rand continued the same editing trend: she removed additional physical details,[19] and, in the aftermath of this scene, she removed a reference to pain. In the 1936 edition: "In her body there still was a pain which held him close to her" (1936, 141). In the 1959 edition, pain is not the price of intimacy: "Her body still felt as if it were holding him close to her" (127).

A similar process of progressive editing can be seen in the description of Kira's worship of Leo later in the novel, in chapter 7 of part 2. In all versions, Kira sees Leo after a shower, naked from the waist up, in "one of the rare moments when he looked what he could have been." In all versions, he approaches her with "contemptuous tenderness in his movement, and a command, and hunger; he was not a lover, but a slave owner." After this phrase, in the first and second drafts:

> She could feel a whip in his fingers; and the feeling it gave her was more than human ecstasy. Under his hands, she felt as if she were less than the building would have been to her had she stood, ruling and imperious, on the scaffolding; she wanted to be crushed; she wished she were lying still under a real whip in his hands. (first draft, 223g–223h; second draft 494–95)

In the 1936 version, the reference to "more than human ecstasy" is gone, as is the less-than-clear image of her feeling "as if she were less than the building": "she could feel a whip in his fingers. She wanted to be crushed; she wished she were lying still under a real whip in his hands" (1936, 398). The 1959 edition removes the whip entirely, while retaining the point, common to all versions, that Leo is "the only motive she needed," i.e., that he represents the spirit of the Viking, a life that is a reason unto itself, and Kira's worship of him means loyalty to her own life.

From her first thoughts about this novel, Ayn Rand had imagined its climax: Andrei coming to arrest Leo and discovering Kira's dresses in his apartment. In the arrest scene, Ayn Rand originally intended to describe both men in approximately equal detail, to stress the contrast between Leo's defiant confidence and Andrei's stunned grimness. In all versions, Leo plays the host and speaks with wit and poise; in all versions, Andrei is stern and expressionless. In the first draft:

> Leo walked leisurely to the mirror, adjusted his tie, straightened his hair, with the meticulous precision of a man of the world dressing for an important social engagement. [*crossed-out*: He pressed a few drops of eau-de-cologne into his handkerchief and folded it neatly in his breast pocket. Then he put on his hat and overcoat.]
>
> Andrei stood waiting [*crossed-out*: without a movement. His face was like that of a mummy that could no longer wear an expression and his skin looked like death]. (first draft, 432–33)

Ayn Rand, for the second draft (620) and the 1936 version (490), changed the "eau-de-cologne" to "toilet water"; for the 1959 version, she removed the scent entirely and added a sentence—"His fingers were not trembling any longer" (399)—to show his self-control at this point, as opposed to the slight perturbation he observes in himself at an earlier moment: "He noticed that his fingers were trembling" (399, and all earlier versions as well). This scene marks the last point in the novel in which we see the Leo Kira loves. After his stay in jail, his demeanor is different. When he returns home, he asks for clean underwear and telephones Antonina Platoshkina; regarding Kira, he does no more over the next two weeks than kiss her violently, with effort. After jail, his eyes are "dead," and the pull of memory—"If you're still alive, and if you don't forget"—is the convulsive kicking of a dead insect. But in this scene, the last glimpse of Leo as hero, Ayn Rand originally intended to contrast him with Andrei. She changed her mind, and wrote more about Leo and less about Andrei. Along with improving the description, she gave Leo the center of the stage for his farewell to Kira, and, in essence, to his best self.

The contrasts between the two men, however, are an important element in the novel. As Kira's lover, Andrei represents a contrast—in her romantic response—to Leo; as Kira's interlocutor, Andrei represents—in his ideas—a contrast to Kira herself.

Regarding Andrei's romantic relationship with Kira, Ayn Rand contrasts Kira's feeling for him with her immediate, unquestioned, and unending love for Leo. Kira does not realize that Andrei is romantically interested in her until he avows his passion, and she never returns his love. A change in the introduction of Andrei shows Ayn Rand taking care, in this context, to remove the implication that Kira finds Andrei attractive.

In the first draft, Andrei accidentally walks into the room where Professor Leskov is lecturing; he sees Kira, and remains. When she sees Andrei, she observes his hand, the strength of which she finds attractive; the hands of Leskov, too, are described as evidence of a noble spirit.

> A strong hand, Kira thought, the kind of hand that a man likes to see on a gun and a woman on. . . .
>
> Professor Leskov's hands were pale and freckled. He waved them in a sweeping gesture as he shouted into his audience, as a challenge, of the marble glory of ancient gods. (first draft, 94)

In this scene, Kira is aware of Andrei as a man, and she likes what she sees of him. In the second draft and in later versions of this scene, Kira's response to Andrei is less personal. Seeing his hand, she observes that it seems "all bones, skin and nerves," but she does not think of where a woman would want to see that hand, and she makes no mental connection between his hand and the hands of a lecturer she admires. In editing the scene, Ayn Rand removed the suggestion that Andrei's hand made Kira think of a caress.

In the first-draft version of their evening at the theater, Ayn Rand had Kira implicitly disavow any attraction to Andrei:

> The voices in the dark theater sang triumphantly of a life where joy and sorrow were both only beauty. Kira closed her eyes. Then she could see other eyes looking into hers and feel the kiss in her palm. She thought, once, that she was not fair to Andrei. But not once did she think she was being disloyal to the man for whom she was counting the minutes and hours by being here with Andrei. [*crossed-out*: Her loyalty to the man for whom she was counting the minutes and hours was like death: beyond question.] (first draft, 125–26)

This paragraph appears in no other versions. What it says, though, is consistent with the other versions: Kira loves Leo first and alone, and, although she recognizes Andrei's romantic interest in her, she has no such response to him. The probable reason for removing the paragraph is that, with no evidence anywhere of Kira's attraction to Andrei, there was no need to explain that point.

Kira discovers, twice, important facts about Andrei's feelings for her, both times in scenes of great emotional power, substantially the same in all versions. When Kira hears Andrei's confession of passion, she learns that he desires her desperately, and she realizes that becoming his lover would allow her to obtain the money she needs to save Leo's life. In the first draft, Ayn Rand wrote, then crossed out, a description of Kira's attitude at that moment: "against the wall, with the pride and defiance and last despair of facing a firing squad" (first draft, 496). The description could have been used in a contrast with Leo's poise upon his arrest, or with Andrei's attitude at the time of his suicide, and pride, defiance, and despair convey well the elements of Kira's emotional situation. But the sentence, as written, could imply that Andrei himself is the firing squad, and neither Kira nor the novel regards him that way. Andrei is making no claims, is asking for nothing. Kira initiates their sexual relationship. This scene, like the later scene in which Kira comes to Andrei's room after Leo's arrest, is sympathetic to Andrei, and links him with Kira.

When Andrei initially tells Kira he desires her, she says, in all versions, "I didn't know," and, when Kira ultimately tells Andrei she sold herself to him to save the life of the man she loves, he says, in all versions, "I didn't know." He tells her that he admires what she has done and would have done the same for the woman he loved, for her; then she—again, and like him—knows something that she did not know, "something she had seen suddenly, clearly, fully for the first time" (*We the Living*, 405). The image of the firing squad does not fit Andrei—not, at any rate, in his relation with Kira.

In all versions, Ayn Rand shows positive qualities of Andrei in his relationship with Kira, who comes increasingly to respect him, but Kira never considers leaving Leo for Andrei. The only hint at any point in any version that Andrei constitutes any temptation to Kira occurs in the 1959 version of the novel. On the night Kira goes to the movies with Andrei, when his investigation of Leo is under way:

> Kira had made a date with Andrei. But when she left the tramway and walked through the dark streets to the palace garden, she noticed her feet slowing down of their own will, her body tense, unyielding, fighting her, as if she were walking forward against a strong wind. It was as if her body remembered that which she was trying to forget: the night before, a night such as her first one in the gray and silver room she had shared with Leo for over three years. Her body felt pure and hallowed; her feet were slowing down to retard her progress toward that which seemed a sacrilege because she did desire it and did not wish to desire it tonight. (381)

In the 1936 edition (as in the drafts), the passage includes the phrase "by the touch of hands and lips that had been eager and hungry and young again" (which is omitted in the 1959 edition) and ends early with "seemed a sacrilege" (1936, 368). In both cases, she sees her encounter with Andrei as a sacrilege, by contrast with her passionate night with Leo; the 1959 edition, however, points out that the encounter with Andrei constitutes a sacrilege not—as one might have assumed from the 1936 edition—because a loveless, purchased encounter is always a betrayal of romantic passion, but because her own desire for Andrei (a desire that is apparently not a new experience for her) seems to her—tonight, though not at other times—to desecrate her love for Leo. What this passage appears to be implying is that Kira has come not only to respect Andrei, but to desire him, even though her feeling for Leo is of a different and unquestioned order.

Although Ayn Rand's revisions in the romantic relationship of Kira and Andrei show her omitting suggestions of Kira's attraction to Andrei, she chose to include such a suggestion in the final version of the novel. The exception, however, shows the force of the rule. Kira resists the attraction, and implicitly affirms instead her love for Leo. Even when Kira is drawn to Andrei, he has no chance against Leo—and this fact is immensely significant, in the novel, as a device to characterize and emphasize the spiritual bond between Kira and Leo, the man with the Viking's face, the man who always meant to her, whatever his fears and self-betrayals, the spirit of reverence for life.

Most of Ayn Rand's revisions regarding Andrei, however, pertain to his philosophical discussions with Kira. These conversations, which begin as the duels of opponents and continue as mutual explorations, encompass the most explicit consideration of ideas in the novel. In the drafts, and from the first to the second edition, Ayn Rand edited them heavily, for style as well as content. Her task here was to show a conflict, but it is not a conflict between the entirely correct ideas of Kira and the entirely incorrect ideas of Andrei, particularly since the ostensible topic of conversation is often politics, a subject in which Kira disclaims interest and, moreover, one on which Ayn Rand, during the writing of the novel, had not fully developed her own ideas.

Although Andrei begins as a spokesperson for the Soviet state, Kira is not a spokesperson for Ayn Rand's complete response to it. Kira, as we shall see, opposes the Soviet state on the grounds of its collectivism (vs. individualism), but without addressing the issue of physical force. Her remarks, therefore, are sometimes philosophically incomplete, or confusing in implications. In dramatic context, however, Kira's speeches, often in direct response and contrast to Andrei's, show her attempting to identify the premises that separate them, along with the values—courage, passion, and dedication—that draw them together. (Kira, after all, does not engage in extensive ideological debate with Victor Dunaev or with Comrade Sonia; they are not worth her time.) In editing, Ayn Rand worked to make Kira's statements clearer without making them indicative of an understanding beyond Kira's explicit grasp. In examining the drafts, I noticed not only

changes from the first to the second, but additional changes, not marked on the manuscripts, between the second draft and the first published edition (which leads me to assume that some of Ayn Rand's work was done on pages now lost to us).

Although all of their conversations show Andrei learning from Kira the value of life, I will focus here mainly on Ayn Rand's revisions of two of these discussions, and then on the editing of Andrei's speech to the Party Club, in which he quotes Kira directly and then explains what he has learned.

The first draft of Kira's first conversation with Andrei includes the following:

> "Six years ago," said Kira, "I could have given you a ride in father's carriage."
>
> "Six years ago," said Comrade Taganov, "you'd have had to drive for me to the Putilovsky factory."
>
> "You've traveled fast and a long way."
>
> He shrugged lightly. "Oh, night work. Plenty of candles and very little of sleep."
>
> "And plenty of ambition?"
>
> "No. Hatred."
>
> "That takes courage. Any stops in your way?"
>
> "Yes. The Red Army. Do you object to that?"
>
> "No. Not as long as you haven't worked for the Cheka."
>
> "I have worked in the Cheka."
>
> Her arm did not leave his. She said only: "I won't say that that takes courage."
>
> She expected a speech of wrathful indignation. He answered very simply:
>
> "Don't you really think that it does? Anyone can sacrifice his own life for an idea. How many know the devotion that makes one capable of sacrificing other lives?"
>
> He expected a horrified protest. She answered calmly. "You're right. I never thought of that." (first draft, 99–100)

Kira appears to admire Andrei's dedication, and, although she initially objects to the Cheka, she admits that sacrificing other lives requires devotion, and she does not excoriate him. Note that Ayn Rand describes them as surprising each other, Andrei surprising Kira with his lack of defensiveness, Kira surprising Andrei with her understanding that killing people can be evidence of high devotion. After some discussion of their studies, there follows a two-page insert, which continues the subject of the Cheka and explains why Kira accepts Andrei's involvement. She objects to collectivism because it glorifies the weak.

She said:

> "I never mind the means. It's the end."
>
> "Too strong for you?"
>
> "No. Too weak."
>
> He looked at her again, calm, inquisitive. She explained: "I don't like the unfinished, the hesitant, the humble."
>
> "Nor the meek, nor the [*crossed-out*: lame in spirit] ailing [?]," he agreed.
>
> "The hardest of metals is the most precious. Why not be as just to men?"
>
> "The hardest and highest shall rule the world."

"For their own sake."

"No—for the collective."

"Of the weak and the ailing [?]."

"No. A collective raised by its leaders—and the only thing that can raise leaders."

"There's no such thing as a collective. There are only great numbers of small wrongs."

"There is a spirit in numbers."

"I don't believe in any spirits."

"I don't either—in that sense."

[*crossed-out*: They looked at each other. It seemed that the words they thrust at each other were hooks drawing them closer together.

He said:

"Religion is like a strong girdle. You put it on for support and pretty soon you discover that your muscles have become too flabby to function alone."

"I believe in strong muscles."

"And strong nerves."] (Insert to first draft, 101)

The cancelled section of the insert presents an opposition to religion (because it weakens people) as something they have in common. There follows a crossed-out section in which Andrei expresses his dedication to what he sees as a glorious mission, and Kira replies that human joy is the enemy of his mission.

[*crossed-out*: She said: "There's one thing I don't like about the University; this bridge you have to cross. It's so long."

"I'll have to cross it tonight," he said cheerfully, "meeting of the Communist cell."

"Don't you ever get tired?"

"I haven't time to get tired. I'm taking two courses—history and law. Then, there's the Party work."

"What do you have for nerves?"

"Cat guts, I think. You see, we can't lose time. We're living at a period that's like a world's dawn. And the rays of the sun that's rising project, on a gigantic radius, our every second into centuries of accomplishments for the generations to come."

"Where did you read that?"

"I didn't. You may—someday."] (first draft, 101)

As they walk, they see a poster for a production of *Rigoletto.*

[*crossed-out*: "That," she pointed at the blue letters of the poster, "is your worst enemy."

"Why?"

"Music. Lights. Laughter. A butterfly against your ponderous machine guns."

"Certainly. A world without sweat and sighs, a world of joy in every muscle and every breath. . . ."

"Isn't that the worst challenge to your grim proletarian ideas?"

"You love life, don't you? And you hate Communism because of it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I love it, too. And I serve Communism because of it—to bring life down to pavements within everyone's reach."

"You might spill it—on the way down."

"Not if one's hand is steady."] (first draft, 103–04)

We can see in this first-draft scene some key elements. Andrei is portrayed as admirable in his dedication. Ayn Rand distinguishes between the means Kira accepts (i.e., the Cheka) and the goal she cannot accept (i.e., serving the weak); she points out that Andrei expects Kira to be critical of the means, but that Kira instead criticizes the end. Both Kira and Andrei oppose religion, because it fosters weakness. Kira states that joy (as expressed in music) is the worst enemy of the Soviet state. Andrei states that they both love life, and that he will bring life to all. Kira warns him that he may threaten the spirit of life. In later versions of the scene, Ayn Rand improves her treatment of these elements. She reserves for later occasions the consideration of religion and music, and concentrates on three matters: Andrei's dedication, the unacceptable end versus the acceptable means, and the love of life.

In the second draft, Andrei's dedication is presented through quick questions-and-responses, leading up to an important issue (the contrast between duty and desire) that is only implicit in the first draft.

"Do you like to skate, comrade Taganov?"

"I never have. Never had the time."

"Do you like to ski?"

"Never had the time."

"Do you like to swim?"

"Yes. I've done that once."

"Once? In your whole life?"

"Yes. In the whole of it."

"I think it must be horrible to do nothing but what you have to do."

"Yes. It must be horrible. I've always done only what I wanted to do." (second draft, 111)

In the 1936 edition, in the course of a similar—but more relaxed—conversation, Kira leads Andrei to explain why he views his dedication as a personal matter:

"I thought that Communists never did anything except what they had to do; that they never believed in doing anything but what they had to do."

"That's strange," he smiled. "I must be a very poor Communist. I've always done only what I wanted to do."

"Your revolutionary duty?"

"There is no such thing as duty. If you know a thing is right, you want to do it. If you don't want to do it—it isn't right. If it's right and you don't want to do it—you don't know what right is—and you're not a man."

"Haven't you ever wanted a thing for no reason of right or wrong, for no reason at all, save one: that you wanted it?"[20]

"Certainly. That's always been my only reason. I've never wanted things unless they could help my cause. For, you see, it is my cause."

"And your cause is to deny yourself for the sake of millions?"

"No. To bring the millions up to where I want them—for my sake." (1936, 92)

This passage, which does not appear in either of the existing drafts, shows that Andrei's commitment is based on a cause he considers essentially personal. The discussion of doing what one wants uses language Ayn Rand had, in the drafts, given to Leo to describe what he admires about Kira (on the evening they first meet).

The next point is the issue of means and ends. In both the second draft and the first edition, this discussion begins with a question from Kira: "And when you think you're right, you do it at any price?" The second draft continues:

"I know what you're going to say. You're going to say, as so many of our enemies do, that you admire our ideals, but loathe our methods."

"I loathe your ideals. I admire your methods. I don't know, however, whether I'd include blood in my methods."

"Why not? Anyone can sacrifice his own life for an idea. How many know the devotion that makes you capable of sacrificing other lives?"

She looked at him. She said slowly, simply;

"I've never thought of that. Perhaps you're right."

"Why do you loathe our aim?"

"Because I don't know a worse injustice than justice for all. Because I loathe men."

"I'm glad. So do I."

"But then . . ." (second draft, 112)

Contrasting this version with the first draft, we see that Ayn Rand allows Kira to say a bit more about why she objects to the aim, that is, the "injustice" of "justice for all"; as readers of later versions of this scene, we recognize that Ayn Rand has not yet given Kira the words to express what is wrong with the Soviet state. Instead, in the second draft (as in the first), Ayn Rand concentrates on Kira's acceptance—her admiring acceptance—of the methods. This time, the Cheka appears only implicitly, and Kira expresses reservations about the "blood," leaving unexpressed what exactly she admires about the methods.

The 1936 edition begins with a slightly expanded version of this passage:

"I loathe your ideals. I admire your methods. If one believes one's right, one shouldn't wait to convince millions of fools, one might just as well force them. I don't know, however, whether I'd include blood in my methods." (1936, 92–93)

We note the new sentence: Kira approves of forcing fools to go along with what one believes to be right. What does she mean by "force"? Given that she (again in this version) expresses reservations about "blood," it appears that "force" might mean something other than physical force. But since "force" is presented as an alternative to "convince," it is hard to know what, other than physical force, it could mean. The new sentence appears to be part of Ayn Rand's continuing effort to sharpen Kira's condemnation of the Communist end by contrasting this

reaction with her enthusiasm for the Communist means; the new sentence, however, is confusing (and was removed for the 1959 edition).

The exchange continues, much as in the second draft:

> "Why not? Anyone can sacrifice his own life for an idea. How many know the devotion that makes you capable of sacrificing other lives? Horrible, isn't it?"
>
> "Not at all. Admirable. If you're right. But—are you right?"
>
> "Why do you loathe our ideals?" (1936, 93)

At this point, instead of simply saying that the aim is to serve weakness (as in the first draft) or that the worst injustice is justice for all (as in the second draft), Kira expresses herself in many powerful paragraphs that do not appear in either draft. She attacks the claim that man must live for the state. She states that "the best of us" live for our own sake, for something private and inviolable, "something in us which must not be touched by any state, by any collective, by any number of millions" (1936, 93). Eventually, too, she says that the worst injustice is justice for all, by which she appears to mean that the state attempts to "make people equal" in defiance of the reality that they are not the same. Ayn Rand later edited these paragraphs further, removing for the 1959 edition (89–90) the confusing implication that the millions should be sacrificed for the few (which, to judge from the pattern, is Kira's inversion of the expected statement, and is not offered as her considered formulation of her own position). Ayn Rand also removed the sentence about the injustice of justice for all; as she commented in response to a letter from Nathan Blumenthal (later known as Nathaniel Branden), it "is a bad sentence when taken out of context."[21] These new paragraphs do not appear in the drafts at all—or at any rate not in the drafts we have.

I'll conclude the consideration of Ayn Rand's editing of Andrei by looking at his speech to the Party Club. He begins with a quotation from Kira's speech to him (after he learns of her relationship with Leo): "you've locked us airtight, airtight till the blood vessels of our spirits burst!" He goes on, though, to address the subject he and Kira had considered in their very first conversation, the love of life. Having confronted what he himself has done to the woman he loved, and having understood that his cause has essentially done to the spirit of life what he has done to Kira, he grasps at last that the ideal she loathed is indeed loathsome.

In the first and second drafts (the second is shorter and tighter, but they are substantially the same), Andrei considers the value of the individual, the value of life:

> We came as a solemn army to bring a new life to men. . . . We thought that everything that breathed could live. Can it? And aren't those who can live, aren't they too precious to be touched in the name of any cause? We've taken thousands of lives. In those thousands—were there three that could have lived? [*crossed-out*: There aren't many of them and so they don't count with us. But should they count? Or are the cobblestones all that should count? Is any future worth any manure?] Is any battle worth the life of one good soldier? What cause is worth those who fight for it? And aren't those who can fight, aren't they the cause itself and not the means? (first draft, 457, ellipses added)

He then states that the Soviet state has acted to destroy life, and he points out that collectivism is the enemy of life:

> Listen, you consecrated warriors of a new life! Are we sure we know what we are doing? In the name of life—what are we doing to life? We're driving men with the bleeding whip through the furthermost of all agonies to lash them into the perfection of a new humanity. But what of that new humanity? Do we want the crippled, creeping, crawling, meek, hand-licking, broken monstrosities we'll create, the new freaks breathing a new gas? Are we not castrating life in order to perpetuate it? [*crossed-out*: What is life? Does a man live when another man stands by his side? When two men stand by his side? When ten men surround him? When a million men march and his feet shuffle after theirs? Or is it something in him alone that lives, something that is his, and that cannot be shared and should not be shared? Haven't we taken something so delicate and sacred that one should handle it only with a surgeon's (glove?) and torn it out with bare fingers with dirty fingernails bitten off?] (first draft, 458)

Finally, he attacks the goal itself (as Kira had attacked it, in their first conversation).

> Anything is permitted to us if we're right. [*crossed-out*: We're right if our aim is right] But our aim? Our aim, comrades? What are we doing? Do we want to feed a starved humanity in order to let it live? Or do we want to strangle its life in order to feed it?" (first draft, 459)

These are remarkable paragraphs—and they would be impressive from the pen of any writer. They show what Andrei has learned from the full measure of his experience with Kira. But these paragraphs were not good enough for Ayn Rand. In the 1936 edition, we see (in addition to edited versions of these paragraphs) new statements, reminiscent of those in the 1936-edition version of his first conversation with Kira, about the private, reverent sacredness of the individual's life. In the first edition, Andrei says:

> No one can tell men what they must live for. No one can take that right if he doesn't want to face a monster, a horror which is not for human eyes to bear, Because, you see, there are things in men, in the best of us, which are above all states, above all collectives, things too precious, too sacred, things which no outside hand should dare to touch. . . . Every honest man lives for himself. . . . You cannot change it because that's the way man is born, alone, complete, an end in himself. You cannot change it any more than you can cause men to be born with one eye instead of two, with three legs or two hearts. No laws, no books, no G.P.U. will ever grow an extra nose on a human face. No Party will ever kill that thing in men which knows how to say 'I.' (1936, 501, ellipses added)

In the paragraphs that appear in the 1936 edition (and which do not appear in the drafts), Andrei identifies the principle of human life: man is an end in himself. In the person of Andrei, Ayn Rand expressed—defiantly, and in the face of the enemy—a perspective on the theme of individualism that was key to the novels that were immediately to follow: *Anthem* and *The Fountainhead.*

But Andrei's speech in the 1936 edition—vastly improved from the drafts—still had room for improvement. In the 1959 edition, the paragraph quoted above reads as follows:

> No one can tell men what they must live for. No one can take that right—because there are things in men, in the best of us, which are above all states, above all collectives! Do you ask: what things? Man's mind and his values. . . . No laws, no Party, no G.P.U. will ever kill that thing in man which knows how to say 'I.' You cannot enslave man's mind, you can only destroy it. (408, ellipses added)

Ayn Rand revised Andrei's speech one more time, not long after completing *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), the novel that was the ultimate answer, on the deepest level, to the enslavement of the human mind. And, as one more element of the revision, she removed the sort of statement about the ends justifying the means ("We are right if our aim is right," "Anything is permitted to us if our aim is right") that had survived the first draft, the second draft, and the 1936 edition.

An examination of the progressive improvements in *We the Living* shows Ayn Rand, in her first novel, unwavering in her commitment to achieve emotional power and philosophical clarity. As Kira lived her life in the spirit of the Viking, knowing always that life was a reason unto itself, so Ayn Rand wrote, and rewrote, her novel in loyalty to her noble theme and to the characters she had invented to dramatize it. She was to write in *Atlas Shrugged*: "To hold an unchanging youth is to reach, at the end, the vision with which one started."[22] In *We the Living*, Ayn Rand wrote her book until it was entirely hers. And now, of course, it is ours as well.

## NOTES

1. In my articles in this volume, I refer to the writer as "Ayn Rand," which she chose as her pen name, and which is the only name under which she published in English. She did not make public her reasons for selecting this specific name; it was, however, the only name by which she presented herself as a writer and speaker. Therefore, I too prefer to use the full name in a similar or related context (including articles about the creation of her fictional work). The scholars of the Mark Twain Project at the University of California refer to both Samuel Clemens (the personal and biographical name) or to Mark Twain (the selected pen name), but never to the truncated "Twain" alone. Although I understand that "Rand" is shorter and thus more convenient, I appreciate the editor's willingness to allow me to use the name the writer herself selected.

2. Michael S. Berliner, ed., *Letters of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 23.

3. Berliner, *Letters*, 19.

4. Berliner, *Letters*, 18.

5. The drafts of *The Fountainhead*, by contrast, consist of a nearly complete, handwritten first draft (missing only one chapter); a typed second draft beginning in part 2, chapter 7, and continuing to the end; two sets of 1943 galleys; and a set of 1968 galleys. For a discussion of some aspects of the revisions in those drafts, see my "Artist at Work: Ayn Rand's Drafts of *The Fountainhead*," *The Intellectual Activist* 15, nos. 8–9 (August–September 2001) and "The *Fountainhead* from Notebook to Novel: The Composition of Ayn Rand's First Ideal Man," in Robert Mayhew, ed., *Essays on Ayn Rand's* The Fountainhead (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 3–40. For information about the manuscript of *Anthem*, see my "*Anthem* in Manuscript: Finding the Words," in Robert Mayhew, ed., *Essays on Ayn Rand's Anthem* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 3–23. For information about the manuscript of *Atlas Shrugged*, see my "Who *Was* John Galt? The Creation of Ayn Rand's Ultimate Ideal Man" and "The Spirit of Francisco d'Anconia: The Development of His Characterization" in Robert Mayhew, ed., *Essays on Ayn Rand's* Atlas Shrugged (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 53–78 and 79–103.

Regarding references to unpublished material: The "Airtight Notebook," which is held in the Ayn Rand Papers of the Ayn Rand Archives, is not paginated or dated. My references to "Airtight Notebook"

are taken from this holograph text; I have also supplied page references to David Harriman, ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1997), in which the notebook entries are published in part. The drafts of the novel are housed in the Library of Congress; copies of the drafts' pages can be found in bound volumes held in the Ayn Rand Archives (where I consulted them). Each of my references to the first draft and to the second draft will be followed by "first draft" and "second draft" respectively, plus the page number(s).

Regarding references to published material: "1936" (together with pagination) refers to the first published edition of *We the Living* (New York: Macmillan, 1936); and, following the format for chapters in this collection, page numbers from there on refer to the 1959 revised edition of *We the Living*, as found in its currently most accessible form: the 1996 sixtieth anniversary paperback edition. However, in a few cases, it was necessary to give "*We the Living*" followed by page number(s), to make clear that I refer to this paperback edition, and not to one of the drafts.

6. "Airtight Notebook," David Harriman, ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1997), 60–62.

7. Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction* (1984; revised and republished, New York: Signet, 2005), 231–36.

8. "Airtight Notebook," published in part in Harriman, *Journals*, 61.

9. Peikoff, *Early Ayn Rand*, 194.

10. For information about Ayn Rand's educational experiences at the university, see my "The Education of Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky" in the present volume.

11. Page 514 cuts off at this point, and page 515 is omitted. The manuscript continues with page 516.

12. See Ayn Rand, *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers*, Tore Boeckmann, ed. (New York: Plume, 2000), 97.

13. "Airtight Notebook," published in part in Harriman, *Journals*, 89.

14. Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 72. On Ayn Rand's film-viewing in Russia, see my "The Education of Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky," in the present volume.

15. For more on Kira's laughter, see Robert Mayhew, "Kira Argounova Laughed: Humor and Joy in *We the Living*" in the present volume.

16. Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943; Signet fiftieth anniversary paperback edition, 1993), 15.

17. Peikoff, *Early Ayn Rand*, 239.

18. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

19. As discussed in Robert Mayhew, "*We the Living*: '36 & '59," in the present volume, pp. 226–27.

20. The 1959 version omits "of right or wrong, for no reason at all" (89).

21. Berliner, *Letters*, 463.

22. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957; Signet thirty-fifth anniversary paperback edition, 1992), 669.