Chapter Four

The Education of Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky

By Shoshana Milgram

Describing her novel *We the Living* in 1958, in a "Foreword" written for its republication, Ayn Rand[1] said that it was as close to an autobiography as she would ever write. Kira Argounova's values were hers; the events of Kira's life, however, were not (xvii). The setting and background of the novel correspond, in general, to those she herself had encountered in Soviet Russia in the 1920s.[2] This setting and background vividly convey an intellectual environment that was, for the most part, hostile to an individual of intelligence, ambition, and independence. The purpose of the current essay is to provide biographical and historical information relevant to her own educational experiences, experiences that were in turn relevant to her portrayal of the education of the characters Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky, and to her later development and writing.

The young Ayn Rand enrolled at the University of Petrograd (also known then as Petrograd State University) in the fall of 1921, for a three-year degree program in the Historical/Pedagogical Faculty.[3] Although she had decided at the age of nine to be a writer, she chose as her major field of study not literature, but history, in order, she said, to gain "an objective knowledge of man's past."[4] Her curriculum, which I will discuss below in more detail, required her to study, in addition to lectures and seminars in her major, required courses in the history of philosophy, and in the history of Communism. After completing her university degree, she enrolled in the State Institute of Cinematography, where she took courses in such subjects as film makeup and stage combat—while at the same time educating herself in the subject by taking advantage of the policy of access to free tickets to movies.

These experiences are reflected in her first novel, but not without alteration and selection. In composing *We the Living*, she initially wrote (in the manuscript) that Kira intended to study history, as she herself had done, but she changed Kira's studies to engineering, the field of study of Lev Bekkerman, who was the first man Ayn Rand loved.[5] Leo Kovalensky, Kira's lover in the novel, is identified as studying history and philosophy at "Petrograd State University" (136). Her own educational experience is thus transferred to Leo, and Lev Bekkerman's educational experience is transferred to Kira. And, although neither character enrolls in film school, the novel has references to cinema and, twice, places Kira in a movie theatre.

We the Living, then, incorporates, reflects, modifies, and expands upon some aspects of its writer's real-life experiences during her student years, and provides insight into the concerns of the young student, as well as anticipations of the writer she became.

When she began her studies at the University of Petrograd, she was sixteen, and had recently returned to her birth city after three years in the Crimea. Her course work included

classes in philosophy, psychology, logic, French, and biology, in addition to courses in her major (on the history of Greece, Rome, France, England, and the Crusades); she also studied such required Soviet subjects as Historical Materialism, History of Socialism, and General Theory of the State Structure in the RSFSR and the USSR.[6] Judging from the transcripts (and consistent with her statement that some of her teachers were "well known"), her teachers included N. A. Gredeskul, and E. V. Tarle. Judging from the names that appeared in her later writings, she was familiar with at least the names (and perhaps also the reputations) of such professors as Nikolaĭ Ivanovich Kareev and Lev Platonovich Karsavin.[7]

The universities at this time were uncomfortable places to study, hostile both to the spirit and to the body. The established professors had to contend with new requirements, new colleagues, and new fears (of arrest, imprisonment, and enforced exile). Academic disagreements were not limited to the academy, but could lead to deprivation and death.[8] An example from *We the Living*: Professor Gorsky was deemed guilty of "conspiracy" (128); Admiral Kovalensky, Leo's father, was executed for hiding him in his home. The physical environment, too, was chilly; the classrooms frequently lacked heating and electricity.[9] These circumstances are reflected in Ayn Rand's descriptions of student life.

In the published text of *We the Living*, we spend relatively little time inside the classroom. We learn almost nothing specific about Kira's engineering classes at the Technological Institute, or any other courses. One description of a lecture, for example, does not identify even the subject matter (although we are told that it is a course for beginners):

> Kira was listening to a lecture at the Institute. The auditorium was not heated; students kept on their overcoats and woolen mittens; the auditorium was overcrowded; students sat on the floor in the aisles. (87)

The description of the content of a class makes clear that the propaganda outweighed the information about engineering, and that Kira needs to educate herself by thinking, on her own, about engineering.

> She noticed many red kerchiefs in the crowds of students and heard a great deal about Red builders, proletarian culture and young engineers in the vanguard of the world revolution. But she did not listen, for she was thinking about her latest mathematical problem. (55)

In another class, there is some information about the subject matter, but it is presented in terms of Kira's thoughts about Andrei Taganov:

> But when she sat in a long, cold room and listened to lectures about steel, and bolts, and kilowatts, she straightened her shoulders as if a wrench had tightened the wire of her nerves. She looked at the man who sat beside her; at times she wondered whether those words about steel beams and girders were not about his bones and muscles, a man for whom steel had been created, or, perhaps, it was he who had been created for steel, and concrete, and white heat. . . . (169)

Yet, although the content of the lectures is not described with specificity, the setting stands, for Kira, almost as a symbol or a work of art, reminding her of the work she has chosen:

> The cold, badly lighted auditoriums were a tonic to her, with the charts, drafts and prints on the walls, showing beams and girders and cross sections that looked precise, impersonal and unsullied. For a short hour, even though her stomach throbbed with hunger, she could remember that she was to be a builder who would build aluminum bridges and towers of steel and glass; and that there was a future. (202)

And, although the description merely alludes to the subject matter, her work at home is filled with the same dedication and joy: "She sat, the book between her elbows on the table, her fingers buried in the hair over her temples, her eyes wide, engrossed in circles, cubes, triangles, as in a thrilling romance" (55).

Similarly, in the novel, we do not learn about the specific content of Leo's classes, although we are told that he was (like the young Ayn Rand) studying history and philosophy (the latter, he says mockingly, because it is a science not needed by the Soviet state [155]) and that he did attend class. For example: "Leo was late. He had been detained at a University lecture" (186).

The drafts, however, contain some brief but more content-specific references to university classes, material that reflects Ayn Rand's assessment of her education: her appreciation of some courses, and her condemnation of the prevalent Marxism in others. I will use these references as a springboard to describing her educational experiences, as well as some references, in her published writing, to relevant material. In the drafts of part 1, chapter 11, Leo's courses in Marxist theory are contrasted with his courses in ancient philosophy and the history of the Crusades (all of which are courses Ayn Rand herself took).

> 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."[10]

A transcript indicates that she took a "special course" on the History of the Crusades, a course that was part of her major study, listed fifteenth (and thus probably in the second year), and she passed her exam on May 30, 1923. The name of her professor is indecipherable. Although she did not provide details about this course, she did mention that, within history, she specialized in the Middle Ages. She chose this period because "it seemed more romantic" and, "above all, the most opposite from Soviet Russia and modern history." Seeking "a broad, generalized view" and being "extremely contemptuous of anything immediate, as being short-ranged," she thought that the Middle Ages were "far enough," and, moreover, were "the beginnings of European history." She was "quite a patriot for European culture—Europe as opposed to Russian." In recalling her studies, she mentions that for the "special detailed courses in medieval history and seminars," she "had to read even Latin documents and struggle with a dictionary." In the draft of the novel, she does not show Leo struggling with a dictionary to read Latin documents, but, rather, listening to exciting lectures. The reference to lectures about "charging stallions sparkling under Palestine's sun" is a dramatic, colorful hint of the romantic glamour she sought and found in the subject matter of history that was neither modern nor Russian.

In her writing, she referred to the Crusades primarily in terms of the lowercase, that is, a passionate battle for principle. Vasili Dunaev's fight to allow Irina and Sasha to be sent to the same prison camp is described as his "last crusade" (342). In *The Fountainhead*, the building of Monadnock Valley "was a crusade" (*The Fountainhead*, fiftieth anniversary edition, 508). This—rather than the specific political agenda—is what the Crusades meant to her. *We the Living*, however, contains two direct references to the Crusades. Both are descriptions of Andrei: "The grim lines of his tanned face were like an effigy of a medieval saint; from the age of the Crusades he had inherited the ruthlessness, the devotion, and also the austere chastity" (150); and, "Andrei walked down, his body slender, erect, unhurried, steady, the kind of body that in centuries past had worn the armor of a Roman, the mail of a crusader; it wore a leather jacket now" (311).

The actual lecture course on the History of the Crusades, however, was probably not colorful. In remembering the classes, she said that she was bored by "the process of listening to lectures," that the professors "lectured from their own textbooks, so that they did not give you anything new in class." Some of them were "very good professors," "famous European names." But the teaching method, combined with the difficulty of walking three miles to (and from) school through the snow while wearing shoes with holes in them, meant that she attended mostly the seminars, not the lectures, and "took all the examinations from the textbooks."[11]

The reference to "words twenty-two centuries old said by men in white togas on forums of white marble" is similarly a colorful tribute to the value of the subject of ancient philosophy, and not necessarily a reflection of the atmosphere of the course lectures. The course in question is one that Ayn Rand described as follows:

> In the first year, we had a special course on Ancient Greek philosophy, with which philosophy had to start, naturally. And the pre-Socratics I barely remember. I think they probably spent a couple [of] chapters on them. But the whole course was a very detailed study of Plato and Aristotle. And there . . . the equivalent of a semester was the whole year, from Fall to Spring. So it was a very good and difficult detailed course, because we really had to know them thoroughly.

This course appears seventh on her transcript, *Istoriîâ mirovozzrenič* [History of World Views], for which her exam grade was recorded on April 30, 1923, as "highly satisfactory." The signature is an illegible scrawl.[12]

Given that her description of the course emphasized the content of the textbook (and given that she said she learned primarily from the textbooks), I have attempted to identify the book in question. Unfortunately, university curriculum records for these years, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, are absent or incomplete.[13] *Russkaîâ filosofiîâ*,[14] an important resource for information about the faculty and textbooks in Russian universities, does not include information after 1918. My identification, therefore, is tentative, but represents an examination of all of the possible candidates. From the World-Cat database, I compiled a list of all Russian books on ancient philosophy or Greek philosophy that had been published by 1921. I also consulted the bibliography of Frances Nethercott's *Russia's Plato*.[15] I then ordered copies through Inter-Library Loan, and examined every one. Most of the books devoted the bulk of the space to writers other than Plato and Aristotle. Only one book was "a very detailed study of Plato and Aristotle," with relatively little space devoted to other writers. This book was *Lektŝii professora A. I. Vvedenskogo po drevneĭ filosofii* (1911–1912), published by the University of Petrograd, and written by Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskiĭ, chair of the Department of Philosophy, and a

frequent teacher of the course on the "History of Ancient Philosophy" (1896–1897, 1907–1908, 1909–1910, 1911–1912, 1915–1916, and 1917–1918), and also, at least once, of a special course on Plato and Aristotle (*Russkaîâ filosofiîâ*, 71–76).

This book is a record of coherent notes of Vvedenskiĭ's lectures in teaching the course, which amount to 373 pages. Approximately the first hundred are devoted to an introduction to philosophy, followed by such figures as Anaximander, Empedocles, and Protagoras. We then move to Socrates (plus Antisthenes and others), for the next hundred pages. Plato is covered on pages 207–305, followed by Aristotle, who occupies most of the rest of the book. Students are directed to supplement the textbook with pages 231–377 of the Russian translation of Wilhelm Windelband's *History of Ancient Philosophy*, translated into Russian in the 1890s, under the supervision of Vvedenskiĭ himself.[16] At least half of the book, then, concerns Plato and Aristotle, and more than that if Socrates is included as part of the treatment of Plato. The textbook contains abundant quotations, that is, it includes not merely summary or paraphrase, but excerpts from the philosophers' writings. The textbook, moreover, includes a sixteen-page single-space outline of the course, keyed to the pages in the textbook and in Windelband, and offering direction to students in preparing for an examination on the subject.

What importance did the philosophy textbook have for Ayn Rand? By her own testimony, the book led her to hope that Aristotle might be a potential intellectual source and, in effect, an ally, which she had not thought before. Here are some of her own words on the subject:

> I know I approached college days with the vague idea—not a conviction but more a question mark or an impression—that *Aristotle* is what I would be against, because he is against ideals. It was almost in that kind of form. But only as vague speculation. I hadn't looked into the question at all. Well, I discovered him in my first year in college. It was the first course in philosophy I had, which was ancient philosophy. . . . And that's when I fell in love with him.
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> From the first things I began to read about him, I knew that that's the philosopher I agree with. What I didn't agree with is, in effect, what I don't agree with today: the whole issue of the metaphysics, the Prime Mover, and teleology. But all my judgment of philosophy at that time I suspended, I held in a hypothetical form only, because I felt I cannot judge them from merely a course with reading of excerpts from them.

Although she had already had some familiarity with Aristotle from a logic course in high school, she had inferred that she would disagree with much in Aristotle: she had heard that Plato was an idealist (which she thought meant: in favor of having ideals) and Aristotle was the opposite. In her university philosophy course, she took a closer look at what Aristotle said, and she loved what she saw: in other words (in *her* words), reason and reality. The philosophy textbook did not lead her to these ideas—these were already her ideas. But the book led her to believe that Aristotle might be worth reading, because these were his ideas, too.

She did not wish, however, to rely on the textbook, and she expressed two related reasons for deferring judgment. Here is what she said:

> To really understand [Aristotle], or Plato for that matter, I would have to someday read the originals, not in Greek, but . . . I must read their *works* in order to know where they start. Because taking them up as was presented in the course, it seemed in midstream. They seemed to start in the middle with the questions, you

> know, of universals or particulars. And why don't they start earlier? Even at that time, I thought they should start with defining what *are* concepts, why do they make such a fuss about them. I literally remember thinking that. Because it seemed incredible why should they start with this issue. That is, I grasped immediately that the issue is important, but I assumed that it's a course for beginners and that this is why the philosopher's basic premises, or their start, is omitted. And that we're given just the results and that I shouldn't judge in midstream. But I was fully convinced on the basis of what I did judge, that I'm against Plato and for Aristotle, but for Aristotle with reservations, subject to further reading.

In order to go beyond the textbook, she believed she would need to read the philosophers firsthand, so that she could see what their fundamental ideas were, including their definitions for the terms they used. She concluded that she could not judge philosophers definitively from a textbook containing only excerpts. The textbook, moreover, began in midstream, without basic premises or definitions; she intended to go on to read the originals (and she did), and to engage in what she later called "philosophical detection" as a means of grasping the fundamentals and implications of a philosopher's views.

It is beyond my scope in this article to consider all of her comments on Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers. I will note only that in the 1940s she read much of Aristotle "in person," as she put it, in the Random House edition of his collected works;[17] that she wrote extensive comments (in preparation for reviews she wrote, published in *The Objectivist Newsletter*) in the 1960s on John Herman Randall's *Aristotle* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1960) and on *A History of Philosophy* (a later book by Wilhelm Windelband).[18] Moreover, she wrote, in a short essay "About the Author" written to accompany the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*: "The only philosophical debt I can acknowledge is to Aristotle. I most emphatically disagree with a great many parts of his philosophy—but his definition of the laws of logic and of the means of human knowledge is so great an achievement that his errors are irrelevant by comparison." The section titles in *Atlas Shrugged*, her final novel, are a tribute to Aristotle and his principles: "Non-Contradiction," "Either-Or," and "A Is A."

The brief reference (quoted earlier) to lectures Leo attended on ancient philosophy mentions colorful visual details (togas, white marble) rather than the philosophical content or the demeanor of the professor. In the novel, there is no description of the person who taught the course, or of the examination. Ayn Rand, however, told a story about this professor, a story that has become famous and controversial:

> He was a famous Platonist, . . . and . . . an international authority on Plato. He was an old man by that time, white hair. And he had the reputation of, to begin with, being contemptuous of all students, but particularly women students. And he despised the fact that women were now admitted. And the rumors preceding the final examinations in the Spring were that he very seldom passed anybody the first time. That usually he was supposed to be very temperamental and that he would pass but one out of five students. All the others he would demand that they come back again. You didn't have to take the course again, but within a certain period of time you would have to take a new exam. And that they said he did it on principle, just to make people study. And particularly he would be hard on women. . . . And he somewhat despised students generally. That is, he expected

> real scholarship, and he was contemptuous of having to allow for anybody's ignorance. So he was kind of a terror, or had the reputation of that.
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> [As for the exams themselves, they] were all verbal exams, with the exception of papers for the seminars. And we had little books where they entered the subject and the Professor signed. And you could have three marks: Perfect, Passing, or Failure. And, Failure you had to take it over again. And when my turn came . . . all he was asking was Plato. I had hoped that he would give me some questions on Aristotle. And he didn't ask me a single question on Aristotle. They were all on Plato. And I recited very dutifully. I knew exactly what the theory was. And he asked me . . . what was Plato's view of this or of that and I would explain it. And finally he looks at me, slightly sardonically, and he asks, "Tell me, you don't agree with Plato, do you?" Now I had not said anything, but I think he gathered it by my tone of voice. And I said, "No, I don't." He asked, "Will you tell me why?" And I answered, "My views on philosophy are not part of the history of philosophy yet, but they will be." And he said, "Give me your book [the exam book]." Which I did, and he signed it and handed it back to me without a word, said "Goodbye, next person." And I looked in the book, and it said "Perfect," and I passed it on the first exam.

The anecdote makes several dramatic points: the complete preparation of the young philosophy student, the thorough examination by a professor who inferred the student's own views, and yet persisted in questioning her exclusively on a philosopher with whom she disagreed, the young person's ambition and self-confidence, and the professor's acknowledgment that she knew the facts about Plato's views.

A controversy about this anecdote stems from the name she gave to this professor, when she told the story nearly forty years after the event. The name she recalled was Nikolaĭ Losskiĭ, who was indeed a philosophy professor at approximately that time, but who is not a perfect match for the story.

The inconsistencies with the anecdote include the following: Nikolaĭ On-ufrievich Losskiĭ (1870–1965) was not an internationally known Platonist. He was not terribly old: He was fifty-one years old at the time, and was to live to be ninety-five. He did not have white hair. A photograph of him taken in 1922, the year of the course, shows dark hair.[19] He was not known to be a holy terror, or to object to women students. There is no evidence for any such objections, and there are no reports of his being an ogre in the classroom or at examinations. Also, Ayn Rand recalls that her philosophy course was a full-year course; in 1921–1922, Losskiĭ had not only been excluded from university classrooms (by decree of M. N. Pokrovskiĭ, according to Losskiĭ's memoirs), but was sick in bed much of the year, especially in fall 1921, and unable to teach a full-year course.[20]

The inconsistencies disappear if the professor in question was in fact the aforementioned Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskiĭ (1856–1925). He was indeed an internationally known Platonist, and had much experience teaching the university's ancient philosophy course. In fact, during the years covered by *Russkaîâ filosofiîâ* (i.e., 1889–1918), he was the only person to teach the course other than Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin, who is listed as teaching the course only once, 1915–1916 (when Vvedenskiĭ was also teaching the course). According to Losskiĭ's memoirs (212), Vvedenskiĭ was one of the few pre-Revolution faculty members permitted to teach in 1921–1922. He was sixty-six years old, and was in fact to die within two years. He was,

moreover, known to be a holy terror, in his treatment of students and even of other faculty members. Losskiĭ himself, who had been a student under Vvedenskiĭ and later a colleague, wrote extensive memoirs, which provide much relevant information about Vvedenskiĭ. Losskiĭ, for example, reports that Vvedenskiĭ raised objections to Losskiĭ's master's thesis, and later tried to block Losskiĭ's promotion to full professor in philosophy. Losskiĭ has much to say about Vvedenskiĭ's personal animosity toward him, about the exhausting five-hour master's exam (held in public, moreover), and about Vvedenskiĭ's vow that, while he lived, Losskiĭ would never have a chair at the university. Losskiĭ, too, commented on Vvedenskiĭ's insistence on teaching all of the required courses (and this course in ancient philosophy was a required course). Vvedenskiĭ was loved by some students, hated by others, especially after he publicly ridiculed students who rushed to join the Bolsheviks, calling them "sheep." He also habitually told students that they should take all of their courses from him, or none: they should not mix and match.[21] After the Bolshevik Revolution, Vvedenskiĭ found himself in some political jeopardy, because of his mockery of the Bolshevik students, but he had regained a public position by the time of Ayn Rand's first year at the university.[22]

Vvedenskiĭ, therefore, is a better match than Losskiĭ for the anecdote about the grouchy Platonist. And if he were teaching the course in ancient philosophy, he is likely to have assigned (or lectured from) the textbook he had written. For all the years before 1911 (the year his text was published), *Russkaîâ filosofiîâ* indicates that he taught from Windelband and Zeller; after 1911, it is stated that texts will be announced in class. It appears likely that the text for the course was written by Vvedenskiĭ; there is no other candidate for the textbook. This likelihood tends to support my surmise that Vvedenskiĭ, the author of the textbook, was the internationally known Platonist described in Ayn Rand's anecdote, and thus the inspiration for Leo's lecturer in the course about words spoken twenty-two-hundred years ago by men in togas on forums of white marble.[23]

The third of Leo's courses was "Historical Materialism," represented by a quotation.

> 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)

When Ayn Rand, in a biographical interview, discussed her university requirements, she described this course as follows:

> The Soviet subjects at that early stage, when they had not taken the universities over completely as yet, were, very mercifully, not many. There were about four, I think, in the three years, which were required courses for all university students. One of them was "Historical Materialism," which was the history of the Communist philosophy. . . . They had an official textbook—which was sort of

> like the Bible for all students, and everybody had to know it. . . . It started with Plato, the next big stopping point was Hegel, then Marx and Lenin.

She commented that the book was "quite opposed to Aristotle. But that had not yet penetrated into the curriculum."

The textbook in question, I believe, was Nikolaĭ Ivanovich Bukharin's *Teoriia istoricheskogo materializma*: *populîârniĭ uchebnik Marksistkoĭ sotŝiologii* [literally: Theory of Historical Materialism: Popular Textbook of Marxist Sociology], the standard textbook (first published in 1921) for the course in historical materialism. Her description of the book fits Bukharin very well, and does not correspond with any other book of the time known to me. Plato and Hegel appear in the role of the undesirable Brand X, the voices of idealism (by which Bukharin means unlimited subjectivity, or the denial of "the external world, i.e., the existence of things objectively, independently of the human consciousness").[24] Idealists, in his view, are ultimately solipsists (there is nothing outside the self) or religious (there *is* something outside the self, and it is supernatural). He brings up Plato early in the book, as "the founder of philosophical idealism" (57); Hegel is "the greatest philosopher of idealism" (59). The only alternative to philosophical idealism, according to Bukharin, is philosophical materialism. Marx, therefore, is presented as the solution to the ills promulgated by Plato and Hegel: Marx is praised for advocating materialism instead of idealism, and for insisting that contradictions (which in Hegel's dialectic were merely a transitional phase) are a permanent element of development. Bukharin refers several times to Lenin's writings, for example, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (32). Lenin, however, did not return the favor; he never referred to Bukharin in his published writings, and, as Stephen F. Cohen comments, "we may be fairly certain that his objections to *Historical Materialism* began with the subtitle" (i.e., with the reference to sociology).[25]

The book's opposition to Aristotle is evident in Bukharin's statement that when Aristotle wrote of the principle of causality in nature, he was endorsing not only the existing social hierarchy (of slaves and slave owners), but also the power of a "divine will" or "divine plan," which he said Aristotle took to be the source of that causality (23).

The book is thus indeed, as Ayn Rand said, a history of the Communist philosophy, not in the sense of a history of the movement, but in the sense of presenting the tenets of Marxism as the culmination, and correction, of all previous thinking, which is dismissed as bourgeois, and hence mistaken. Bukharin presents the book as the only proper sociology, that is, "proletarian social science"—a "philosophy of history" or a "method" for studying history.

The key identifier in her description, however, is her statement that the course textbook was an official textbook. As Stephen F. Cohen writes, "More than any other single work, *Historical Materialism* established Bukharin as the party's major theorist and probably the foremost Soviet systematizer of Marxism in the twenties."[26]

So: what did the young Ayn Rand take from this book? As little as possible. Although her grade in this course was "highly satisfactory," her rejection of its ideas was implicit in her life and explicit in her writings. In the passage from the draft, Leo's negative judgment is clear, from the contrast between the course in "Historical Materialism" and the courses on the Crusades and ancient philosophy. In chapter 14, moreover, Leo explains that he would rather read O. Henry than go to the university to hear about "Proletarian Dictatorship."[27]

The published text of the novel includes several more references to Bukharin-like views of "historical materialism." At a student meeting by Pavel Syerov, one of the novel's villains:

"We have outgrown that old bourgeois prejudice about the objective impartiality of science. Science is not impartial. Science is a weapon of the class struggle" (71).

Another passage: At a meeting of excursion guides, Kira hears a pep talk with some familiar words: "We, excursion leaders, are a part of the great peace-time army of educators, imbued with the practical methodology of historical materialism, attuned to the spirit of Soviet reality, dedicated to . . ." (295), or, in the 1936 version (358): "We, excursion leaders, are a part of the great peace-time army of educators. We are not windy, drooling, sentimental bourgeois preachers of drawing-room civilization. We stand firmly with both feet on the soil of a new country, imbued with the practical methodology of historical materialism, attuned to the spirit of Soviet reality."

Back at her apartment, Kira finds her roommate Marisha Lavrova preparing to give a club lecture the next day on "Historical Materialism," and therefore painfully busy with reading and memorizing: "The relationships of social classes can be studied on the basis of the distribution of the economic means of production at any given historical . . ." (250). Marisha is probably reading not *Historical Materialism* itself, but the elementary version, *Azbuka Kommunizma*, or *The ABC of Communism*, cowritten by Bukharin with Evgeniĭ Preobrazhenskĭ and designed for workers, or for rank-and-file party members. This text is mentioned within *We the Living* several times. For example: At a meeting of the Marxist Club in the library of the "House of the Peasant," Kira reads aloud her thesis on "Marxism and Leninism": "Leninism is Marxism adapted to Russian reality. Karl Marx, the great founder of Communism, believed that Socialism was to be the logical outcome of Capitalism in a country of highly developed Industrialism and with a proletariat attuned to a high degree of class-consciousness. But our great leader, Comrade Lenin, proved that . . ." (Notice that here, as with Marisha's reading, the passage ends with an ellipsis, as if to imply empty repetition, or the Russian equivalent of yada-yada-yada.) The narration then explains: "She had copied her thesis, barely changing the words, from the 'ABC of Communism,' a book whose study was compulsory in every school in the country. She knew that all her listeners had read it, that they had also read her thesis, time and time again, in every editorial of every newspaper for the last six years" (205).

The book is mentioned again, when we hear one side of Andrei Taganov's conversations as he sits in the library of the Lenin's Nook of the Club of Women Houseworkers in the suburb Lesnoe: "No, the 'ABC of Communism' is not in. I have your reservation, comrade." After dealing with eleven more questions, he says, again: No, the 'ABC of Communism' is not in. I have your reservation, comrade" (424).

We can infer from these passages Ayn Rand's negative judgments of Bukharin and his work. Such judgments are fully consistent with her views. Whereas *Historical Materialism* stated—as did Marx and Marxists—that economic and class relations are *primary* and all other ideas are derivative, she had, even as a teenager, identified reason and individualism as personal values and as universal fundamentals, on which other ideas depend. Apart from the specific political and economic content of the writings of Bukharin and other Marxists, what was salient in this text was what counted as being a philosophy of history. She disagreed, explicitly and absolutely, with this view of what counted. In *The Fountainhead*, for example, she attributes to her villain, Ellsworth Toohey, a form of economic determinism: "He demonstrated that there was no such thing as free will, since men's creative impulses were determined, as all else, by the economic structure of the epoch in which they lived" (p. 78, in fiftieth anniversary edition). And when Homer Slattern speaks up for "dialectical materialism," Toohey states that mysticism and

dialectical materialism are "superficially varied manifestations of the same thing" (554). For another example, see the 1964 essay "Is Atlas Shrugging?":

> . . . history is not an unintelligible chaos ruled by chance and whim—historical trends can be predicted, and changed—men are not helpless, blind, doomed creatures carried to destruction by incomprehensible forces beyond their control.
>
> There is only one power that determines the course of history, just as it determines the course of every individual life: the power of man's rational faculty—the power of ideas. If you know a man's convictions, you can predict his actions. If you understand the dominant philosophy of a society, you can predict its course. But convictions and philosophy are matters open to man's choice.
>
> There is no fatalistic, predetermined historical necessity. *Atlas Shrugged* is not a prophecy of our unavoidable destruction, but a manifesto of our power to avoid it, if we choose to change our course.
>
> It is the philosophy of the mysticism-altruism-collectivism axis that has brought us to our present state and is carrying us toward a finale such as that of the society presented in *Atlas Shrugged.* It is only the philosophy of the reason-individualism-capitalism axis that can save us and carry us, instead, toward the Atlantis projected in the last two pages of my novel.[28]

In this passage, Ayn Rand not only expresses her anti-Bukharinist position, but also explains how *Atlas Shrugged* served to illustrate her position. The historical materialism of the course Leo Kovalensky was required to take, a course taken by Ayn Rand herself, was denigrated repeatedly within the novel, and was ultimately attacked and refuted emphatically, fundamentally, and explicitly in Ayn Rand's published writings.

She specifically cited this very course in a description of Nikita Khrushchev's answer, in 1959, to a question about "the grounds of his faith in world communism." Speaking in Russian, he "began to recite the credo of dialectical materialism in the exact words and tone in which I had heard it recited at exams, in my college days, by students at the University of Leningrad. He had the same uninflected, monotonous tone of a memorized lesson, the same automatic progression of sounds rather than meaning, the same earnest, dutiful, desperate hope that the sacred formulas would come out correctly."[29]

The drafts of *We the Living* contain, in addition to references to Leo's studies, some references to Kira's specific courses. One of these, crossed out on the page, pertains to the curriculum in general, and reflects the stage in the novel's composition when Kira was to be a history major, like Ayn Rand, rather than an engineering student. From the draft:

> [*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 RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic]," a few others. The rest were free to choice [*sic*]. (first draft, chapter 5, 13–15, paginated in a fifteen-page sequence in between chapters 4 and 5)

Also in the first draft (112), she is described as studying from the text: ". . . 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 and in the published novel,

Kira is shown studying an engineering text instead. The list of "obligatory subjects" (the same courses Ayn Rand was required to take, and the courses that appear on her transcript) directly reflect Ayn Rand's experience: that there were required Soviet courses, that they were courses she would never have voluntarily selected, and that they were, fortunately, few.

The manuscript version of part 1, chapters 4 and 6, includes references to Kira's classes with Leskov, professor of the History of Esthetics, who was intimately familiar with art "since the beginning of history" and who spoke reverently of beauty ("the sublime individual experience," "the triumphant hymn of man to his own sacredness," "the sublime claim of a god-like being to transcend all gods"), in crowded (but unheated) classrooms.[30] Nothing in the records of the young Ayn Rand's educational experience corresponds to the class of Professor Leskov. This lecture and this professor, however, represent what she would have wanted to find, and what was in fact the antithesis of the prevailing view of art in the university, as seen in the quotations from Leo's lecture and in other passages about "historical materialism." Professor Leskov, according to the draft, "had never been known to explain the Venus de Milo by the state of the economic means of production in ancient Greece."[31]

There is no direct origin for this course in Ayn Rand's university record. If there is a direct origin for this professor, it is not clear who that person might be.[32] The name "Leskov" was well-known in literature: Nikolai Leskov, author of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, was a famous nineteenth-century writer whose stock, under the Soviets, had begun to decline. The fictitious Professor Leskov is popular with the students who crowd his lecture hall, but his popularity does not extend to the Communist students ("few red bandannas in his audience, and few leather jackets"). The name may have been chosen to suggest a writer who was similarly unpopular with Communists, and the professor himself may have been invented (as an example of one who would be anathema to the Soviet), or a composite of professors, including the charismatic art historian and philosopher Lev Karsavin (brother of the ballerina Tamara Karsavina), exiled from Russia in 1921 on the "philosophers' steamer."[33] Leskov's view of art, moreover, is directly opposed to that taught in "Historical Materialism," and, if included in the novel, Leskov's lecture (attended by Kira) would have been a direct contrast to the lecture in "Historical Materialism" (attended by Leo), and thus would have contrasted the best with the worst available within Petrograd university classrooms.

The university education of Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky, in *We the Living*, is cut short. Neither Kira nor Leo earns a university degree; they are expelled, as part of the "purge" of "socially undesirable persons" (209). Ayn Rand, although originally listed as a candidate for being purged, was allowed, along with other students who had only one more year to go, to return to the university, and to graduate. Moreover, she was able to continue her studies elsewhere, for the first year of a two-year program at the State Institute of Cinematography, then only five years old. Although her educational experience there does not have a strict equivalent in the novel, the references and allusions within the novel to the world of cinema are reflections of Ayn Rand's own background, and I will therefore describe them here, with an indication of the biographical basis and the subsequent impact on her writing.

The novel quotes Lenin's statement about the importance of film: "COMRADE LENIN SAID: 'OF ALL THE ARTS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE FOR RUSSIA IS THE CINEMA!'" (382). In applying to film school, Ayn Rand had written: "I believe that film will have a great future, and I want to work in this most interesting art form."[34] Because the school provided free passes to all movie theaters, she was able to go to the movies much more frequently, and she did. In 1925, judging by her movie diary, she saw 117 movies.[35] Although no

one movie represented fully her view of life, she found in movies, as she later recalled in a biographical interview, "an ideal, right here on earth, and the kind of men and women that I could like." She cherished the glamour, purposefulness, and adventure she found in the movies, and the images of Western cities, featuring glittering skyscrapers. Her top favorites, each of which she saw several times, were Fritz Lang's *Siegfried* (1924), Joe May's *Das Indische Grabmal* ([The Indian Tomb] 1921, with a screenplay by Fritz Lang), and Jacques Tourneur's *Isle of Lost Ships* (1923, from a novel by Crittenden Marriott). She admired the art of Fritz Lang; she relished the dramatic adventure of *The Indian Tomb*, and she found, in *Isle of Lost Ships* (with Milton Sills), the vibrant exuberance she had come to associate with the United States.

Although her first-year curriculum did not emphasize writing, she sought an opportunity to publish her writing on film, and succeeded. Her sixteen-page pamphlet on Pola Negri, published anonymously in 1925, was one of the first in the Kinopechat' series of books on film actors; the pamphlet pays tribute to the actress's passionate ambition and colorful unconventionality. Ayn Rand also wrote a sixty-four-page book, *Gollivud: Amerikanskiĭ Kino-Gorod* [Hollywood: American Movie City], published by Kinopechat' in 1926, under the name "A. Rozenbaum"; one of her points was the contrast in directorial vision between the romanticism of Cecil B. DeMille and the naturalism of D. W. Griffith.[36] At this time, studying film and writing about film meant, typically, being enthusiastic about foreign films. The celebration of Western actors and films in the Kinopechat' series aroused the unwelcome attention of Soviet censorship, and the publisher was encouraged, not at all subtly, to publish more about Russian actors and films and less about the foreigners.[37]

In the first year of her two-year program, she studied logic, cinematography, art, stage combat, film makeup, and dance. As part of their training, students were photographed on 16mm film to see how they spoke and acted. They were also inspected regarding their knowledge of politics (for example: the difference between capitalism and communism, and who was who in government). Ayn Rand, however, did not wait around to be inspected at length. She did not return for the second year of the program. By the middle of the next academic year, she was off to continue her career preparation, and her life, under conditions of freedom in the United States.

We the Living, however, contains film references that reflect her early interests, judgments, and experiences with the cinema.

On Nevsky, we are told, there is a large film poster: "A huge cotton billboard stood leaning against a building, presenting the tense face, enormous eyes and long, thin hands of a famous actor painted in bold brush strokes under the name of a German film" (242). Conrad Veidt, a famous German actor, fits this physical description exactly. He headed the list of Ayn Rand's favorite actors.[38] Veidt was the star of *The Indian Tomb*, one of the first films she saw when it became available at the second-run movie houses. She saw it five times (in ten evenings, because the film was in two parts). "I would go chasing anywhere, on the outskirts, where it would be released again. That was one of the first that I saw. That was the reason why—for my last year in Russia, and getting ready or hoping to come to America—I decided to go to that movie school, to learn the technique of movies and production generally." Seeing this film made a great impression on her—not only inspiring her to go to film school, but also leading to one of her early scenarios, which she described as "Blatantly inspired by *The Indian Tomb*." The character played by Conrad Veidt was "Prince Ayan," and this name may be a reason for the choice (which she never explained) of the name "Ayn."

Another reference appears in a conversation with Irina Dunaeva, Kira's cousin and the character who delivers what Ayn Rand called the "sanctity of life" speech (350). Irina has seen

an American film, "in which women wore spangled gowns without sleeves—and there had been a shot of New York at night—real skyscrapers, floors and floors of lighted windows on the black sky—and she had stayed through two shows to see that shot—but it had been so brief, just a flash" (142–43).

Yet another film reference appears in a description of Leo. Leo Kovalensky, dressed in "immaculate dinner clothes," is described as taking "Antonina Pavlovna's arm with a gesture that belonged in a foreign film scene." His clothing and his gesture are equally inappropriate in Soviet Russia. Kira looks at him "as if he were a being from many centuries away" (333).

As Leo's gesture reminded her of a foreign film, so an image from a German film conveys, for Kira, the essence of "abroad," the opposite of Russia:

> Somewhere there was a border and it had to be crossed. She thought, suddenly, of a restaurant she had seen, for the flash of a second, in a German film. It had a sign over the door, with plain, thin letters, nickel-plated letters, insolent in their simplicity, on dull white glass—"Café Diggy-Daggy." They had no signs like that in the country she was leaving. They had no pavements like that in the country she was leaving. (457)

The phrase "Diggy Daggy" is the beginning of a comic aria, composed of nonsense words, sung by Colas in Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne.* (I have not been able to identify a film source for a café by this name.) The reference suggests the cheerful humor of the German comedies of Ernst Lubitsch and Victor Janson, directors of films Ayn Rand saw in Russia in the 1920s.[39]

A more extensive reference is a description of the film *Red Warriors*, advertised as the "NEW MASTERPIECE OF THE SOVIET CINEMA! . . . *A gigantic epic of the struggle of red heroes in the civil war!* A SAGA OF THE PROLETARIAT! *A titanic drama of the heroic unknown masses of Workers and Soldiers!*" Although Kira would prefer to see a different film, the only alternative ("an old, unknown picture with no stars, no actors' names announced," and unpromising "faded stills") has no tickets available for the next two shows. The alternative is a "foreign picture"—and is sold out, for that reason. Kira and Andrei enter the "Parisiana," where Ayn Rand attended many films (foreign as well as Russian).[40] They find the theater nearly empty, in the middle of the show. There is "no plot, no hero," just a series of images of assorted garments and footwear: "a mob of ragged gray uniforms," a "mob in patent leather boots," "a mob of bast shoes," "a mob of dusty boots" (383–85). As Kira watches, however, the images on the screen are intercut, in the novel, with her conversation with Andrei, who warns her to stay away from Leo Kovalensky and who, when questioned, says that he is working on a new investigation.

The film they are watching is grim and gray, but the juxtaposition of the film with the drama of their own story constitutes the sort of dramatic crosscutting for which D. W. Griffith was famous. As she watches the lifeless march of the anonymous masses ("marching without stirring, marching without muscles, with no will but that of the cobblestone pulled forward under their motionless feet, with no energy but that of the red banners as sails in the wind, no fuel but the stuffy warmth of millions of skins"), Kira sees these images as representing the power of Andrei's party to destroy all that matters to her in life: the man she loves.

The film itself is intended to be typical of the worst of Soviet propaganda. The technique of crosscutting, however, is one she had observed in films. She had studied the work of Griffith. His *Intolerance* is the first item in her movie diary; her book *Gollivud Amerikanskiĭ Kino-Gorod*

[Hollywood, Movie-City] refers to *The Birth of a Nation* and describes him as the "first great figure among the best American directors"; at "the dawn of American cinematography, he led it down a new road and showed it new methods."[41] In spite of her preference for Cecil B. DeMille's romanticism (by contrast with the naturalism of Griffith's subjects), she acknowledged his skill; in this scene about a bad film she conveys her grasp of the merits of Griffith's technique, also seen in the "Because" sequence (228), a montage of instances of human wretchedness, and the "No" sequence cut from the draft.[42]

Another extensive reference to the world of film is the description of the American film *The Golden Octopus*, directed by Reginald Moore and censored by Comrade M. Zavadkov (174–75). Kira attends with Leo. The audience is intensely eager to see it: "the crowd tore forward, . . . squeezing in through the two narrow doors, painfully, furiously, with a brutal despair." The film opens with a trade union "comrade" assigned to recover documents stolen by a "capitalist"; the scene is rendered with shoddy cinematography. "Hell!" whispered Leo. "Do they also make pictures like that in America?" But the middle of the film portrays, with the help of sharp photography and in spite of the distraction of confusing subtitles, a plot, enacted by graceful and purposeful people, about the search for a missing will. "On the screen, gay people laughed happily, danced in sparkling halls, ran down sandy beaches, their hair in the wind, the muscles of their young arms taut, glistening, monstrously healthy." The film ends abruptly; the subtitle states that the "hero renounced the joys of a selfish love into which the bourgeois siren had tried to lure him, and he dedicated his life to the cause of the World Revolution." Kira concludes: "I know what they've done! They've shot that beginning here, themselves. They've cut the picture to pieces!"

Several aspects of this episode reflect Ayn Rand's experiences. The most important has to do with the perceived quality of the Russian film footage. As a frequent viewer of films during her time at the State Institute of Cinematography, she considered the German and American films generally superior (by a large margin) to the Russian product. Her ratings in her movie diary show this, and her top favorites—*The Indian Tomb*, *Isle of Lost Ships*, and *Siegfried*—were not Russian. She judged Russian films as generally inferior to the foreign imports, and in this judgment was not alone. And, understandably, the Russian footage shot in order to change an American plot into a story acceptable to the Soviets would likely be even more inferior than usual.

Another relevant aspect is that the Russian censored version changed not only a key plot element (the hero is seeking his uncle's missing will, not trying to recover business documents stolen by a capitalist), but also the evaluation of the hero, the heroine, and their romance. For the most part, the subtitles were responsible for the alteration, with some help from the occasional use of replacement actors. And thus the American story—of triumph, purpose, beauty, joy, and love—was transformed into an acceptable Soviet story of self-sacrifice and renunciation, a story that contradicted the evidence of the audience's own eyes, but that passed the rigors of censorship.

Ayn Rand herself, while in film school, had considered trying to reverse the process. Through a connection (a fellow student, who offered her "Communist Party protection, in effect"), she considered trying to "use this kid to get into the Soviet movie industry and sell them anti-communist scenarios . . . [like the political plays under the Tsars] with secret political messages that the audiences would understand." Because she received a passport to leave, she did not try this method. Fortunately. "And of course, you know, I would have been dead within a year; that's for sure."

The spirit of the American film that Kira and Leo see matches that of the films Ayn Rand saw while she was in film school, the ones, at any rate, that she preferred: "it was the perfect free existence for purposeful men. It was the sense of adventure, and self-reliance, individualism, men accomplishing things."

The contrast between Leo's and Kira's reactions to the screening of *The Golden Octopus* also reflects Ayn Rand's background. Leo, immediately disappointed with the shoddy technique and anti-capitalist ideas of the film's opening, asks (perhaps in disbelief, perhaps in contempt) if such films are made in America—in other words, if nothing is better anywhere else. This is close to a spirit of cynicism, pessimism, and resignation. Kira's response, after seeing the whole film, is to recognize what has happened: that the opening is the Soviet film, and the American film is entirely different. Her relevant conclusion is that the bad ideas and bad photography belong "here," but that films—and everything else—are different "there," and there is where she intends to go. And this was indeed Ayn Rand's plan, while in film school: to go abroad to live as an artist, to make films and to make a life.

One additional result, perhaps, of Ayn Rand's education in film is the physical description and demeanor of Kira Argounova:

> 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 a deep, confident 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 . . . Kira's mouth was thin, long. When silent, it was cold, indomitable, and men thought of a Valkyrie with lance and winged helmet in the sweep of battle. . . . Kira's hair was short, thrown back off her forehead, light rays lost in its tangled mass, the hair of a primitive jungle woman over a face that had escaped from the easel of a modern artist who had been in a hurry: a face of straight, sharp lines sketched furiously to suggest an unfinished promise. . . . Kira had strange eyebrows; she could lift them in such a cold, mocking smile, while her lips remained motionless—that the young men's love poems and intentions froze at the very roots. (44–47)

The reference to the Valkyrie may have been suggested to Ayn Rand by Brunhild, a Valkyrie, in Fritz Lang's *Siegfried*, one of her top favorite films in Russia, and one she continued to rate as the cinema's top achievement. (She thought, moreover, that the hero should have chosen Brunhild, not Kriemhild, as his wife.[43]) But the features (thin mouth, tangled hair, contemptuous glance, mocking smile, insolence) also suggest Pola Negri, about whom Ayn Rand wrote, during her last year in Russia, a short book, her first published work.

> She is a woman with dark, tragic eyes, which are narrowed in a wearily derisive way, and a mysterious contemptuous smile even in the most joyful screen moments. . . . Her type is the proud woman-conqueror. . . . Her heroines exemplify everything in a woman's character which is proud, insolent, occasionally crafty, and always victorious.[44]

Stills of Pola Negri, especially in Lubitsch's *Sumurun* (one of the films about which Ayn Rand writes), show her tangled hair, her thin lips, her eyebrows (shaved and painted over in black),

and her proud, defiant stance. Pola Negri fits well the name Ayn Rand gave to the theatrical adaptation of *We the Living: The Unconquered.*

The education of Ayn Rand in Russia—the course in ancient philosophy that led her to investigate Aristotle, the course in historical materialism that she rejected at the time and ever after, the background in the study of history, the carving out of her own choices within a required curriculum, the explorations of cinema from the standpoints of viewer, commentator, and creator—was a source for several specific references within the manuscript and the text of the novel *We the Living*, and thus for the education of Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalensky. And as her education continued in the years to come—in the form of self-education, passionately focused—she escaped Russia in every possible sense, and pursued the future that Kira had chosen and of which Russia had robbed her: “a future of the hardest work and most demanding effort” (50).

NOTES

1. The writer's birth name was Alisa Zinov'evna Rozenbaum (as rendered by the 2011 Library of Congress Romanization of the Russian). "Rosenbaum" is a conventional equivalent of the Russian, but is not the transliteration according to the Library of Congress system. In my articles in this volume, I refer, as I have explained in note 1 of chapter 1, to the writer as "Ayn Rand."

2. The time span of the novel is 1922–1925; Kira is born in April, 1904. The analogous time span for Ayn Rand, who was born on February 2, 1905, is roughly 1923–1926. She herself, however, was a university student during the years 1921–1924, having enrolled at the age of sixteen.

3. For information about her degree programs, I rely on her transcripts, in the Ayn Rand Special Collections (Box 2 and Box 3) at the Ayn Rand Archives and on her biographical interviews, conducted by Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, tape recorded, New York City, December 1960–May 1961, especially Interview no. 5 (December 30, 1960), Interview no. 6 (January 2, 1961), and Interview no. 7 (January 15, 1961). For information about the various names of Russian universities, see appendix 2, Peter Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*: *Students, State, and Community in Leningrad, 1917–1941* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), 277–78.

4. "About the Author," *Atlas Shrugged* (unpaginated in Plume edition).

5. For information about changes made in the drafts, see my "From *Airtight* to *We the Living*: The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel," in the present volume. For information about Lev Bekkerman, see Scott McConnell, "Parallel Lives: Models and Inspirations for Characters in *We the Living*," in the present volume.

6. The exact list and sequence of courses is not possible to ascertain from the multiple transcripts, which are inconsistent with each other and which appear inaccurate at least in some respects. The dates of exams, for example, are different from one transcript to another, and the signatures of several different examiners appear to be in the same handwriting. However, the courses listed here appear in all transcripts.

7. Karsavin is the name of the brave White soldier encountered by Andrei Taganov at the Battle of Perekop (110–113). "Kareyev" (a possible transliteration of the Russian name) is the name of the commandant, also known as the "Beast," in the screen treatment *Red Pawn*, published in Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction* (1984; revised and republished, New York: Signet, 2005), 154–227. N. I. Kareev is mentioned in Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*, and several other sources. Lev Karsavin figures prominently in Lesley Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (NY: St. Martin's, 2006).

8. For conditions at the university in the early 1920s, see Pitirim Sorokin, *Leaves from a Russian Diary, and Thirty Years After* (Boston: Beacon Pres, 1950).

9. For information about Russian education, see Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

10. For more information about this passage, see my "From *Airtight* to *We the Living*: The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel," in the present volume.

11. George Gamow, a university physics student during the same period, and later a distinguished physicist, was interviewed in 1968 for the Center for History of Physics of the American Institute of Physics. His interview, available online for reading (http://www.aip.org/history/ohilist/4325.html) but not for quoting, is consistent with Ayn Rand's reports about her education, including the examination system, the possibility of taking and passing exams without having to attend lectures, and the requirement for all students in all fields to take exams in materialism and in the history of the Revolution.

12. The dating of the exam signatures does not mean that she took the course (or even the exam) at or around the time indicated. She states that she took the course in her first year, i.e., 1921–1922, and a course listed seventh would belong to the first of three years, assuming that the courses are listed in

approximate order. The title of the course appears to be a new version of the traditional title, "Istoriâî drevneĭ filosofii" (History of Ancient Philosophy), under which the course appears in earlier years.

13. According to Konecny, *Builders and Deserters,* the Central State Archives contain course outlines for the university for 1923 (317 no. 7). However, the "course outlines in the early 20s were quite general (more concerned with following established pedagogical methods of the period) and did not include a lot of specifics. They become more detailed in the 30s." (Peter Konecny, letter to the author, June 9, 2008.)

14. *Russkaîâ filosofiîâ: filosofiîâ kak spetŝial'nost' v rossii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Rossiĭskaîâ akademiîânauk: Institut nauchnoĭ informatŝii po obshchestvennym naukam, 1992), especially 71–76. This book does not include information about the years after 1918.

15. *Russia's Plato: Plato and the Platonic Tradition in Russian Education, Science and Ideology (1840–1930)* (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 215–216.

16. The 1888 edition of Windelband's *Geschichte der alten Philosophie* [*History of Ancient Philosophy*] was translated as *Istoriâî drevneĭ filosofii* by students of the Vysshie Zhenskie Kursy, under the direction of Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskiĭ. The translation appeared in 1893, with a second edition in 1898 and a third edition in 1902 (Nethercott p. 29 no. 24, p. 52, and also p. 216—the information indicates that the translation was "edited twice in the 1890s"; this appears to mean that it appeared twice in the 1890s, i.e., 1893 and 1898). In the fourth edition (1908), Aristotle is covered on pages 183–239.

17. See her letter (July 26, 1945) to Isabel Paterson, *Letters of Ayn Rand,* ed. Michael S. Berliner (New York: Dutton, 1995), 179.

18. For information about her comments on Windelband, see the marginalia in her copy of Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy: Greek, Roman, and Medieval* (Volume 1), translated by James H. Tufts (NY: Harper, 1958). Her comments, underlinings, marginal lines, and marginal comments (e.g., "??!") can be found in pages photocopied from her copy of this text, and housed in the Ayn Rand Papers at the Ayn Rand Archives. The most interesting comments were published in *Ayn Rand's Marginalia,* ed. Robert Mayhew (New Milford, CT: Second Renaissance Books, 1995, 35–36). Windelband's book was reviewed by Leonard Peikoff in the publication Ayn Rand coedited, *The Objectivist Newsletter* 3.9 (September 1964). For information about her comments on Aristotle, see the marginalia in her copy of John Herman Randall, *Aristotle* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960). Her comments, underlinings, marginal lines, and marginal comments can be found in pages photocopied from her copy of this text, and housed in the Ayn Rand Papers at the Ayn Rand Archives. In addition, she wrote thirteen pages of notes covering such matters as "Randall's flaws (which have to be disclaimed)"; these notes are also in the Ayn Rand Papers at the Ayn Rand Archives. Comments from both sources were published in *Ayn Rand's Marginalia,* ed. Robert Mayhew, New Milford, CT: Second Renaissance Books, 1995, 9–34. Randall's book was reviewed by Ayn Rand in *The Objectivist Newsletter* 2.5 (May 1963).

19. Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War*, prison photograph of N. O. Lossky, unpaginated, between pages 178 and 179.

20. Losskiĭ, *Vospominanâî: zhizn' i filosofskiĭ puĭ'* (Munich, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968), 212, 214. This memoir (which can be translated as "Reminiscences: Life and the Philosophic Path") has much information about Losskiĭ's experiences at the university and in his final years in Russia, especially 87, 99, 119–121, 129–133, 216, and 328 n. 25.

21. For an account in English of the notorious master's exam, see Serge Levitzky's review of Losskiĭ's memoirs, published in *Russian Review* 29.2 (April 1970): 226–228. From the review:

> Highly interesting is the story of how Lossky defended his master's thesis. His teacher, Professor Vvedensky, had developed a strong resentment toward his former pupil because of Lossky's "deviation" from Kantianism. During the public dispute, Vvedensky almost crushed Lossky, and only the resourcefulness with which the latter defended his thesis saved him from public disgrace. Vvedensky's animosity toward Lossky was, incidentally, the talk of St. Petersburg academic circles. Vvedensky went so far as to

> announce that during his lifetime Lossky would not get a professorship at St. Petersburg University. In fact, due to Vvedensky's hostility and narrow-mindedness, Lossky remained a Privat-Dozent (roughly assistant professor) in spite of his philosophic achievements and fame, and was not appointed full professor until 1916. (227)

22. Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War*, 103. For more information about Vvedenskiĭ's career, see *Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskiĭ i ego filosofskaâ ėpokha* (Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press, 2006). This is an edited collection of essays about his life and work, 150 years after his birth. A relevant article is A. V. Malinov, "Vvedenskiĭ kak istorik filosofii," 36–72, which identifies the focus of his teaching, including his emphasis on Plato in the course on ancient philosophy, and which refers to several books by him, including lectures on the introduction to philosophy (read to students at St. Petersburg University in 1890), notes on the history of Greek philosophy (put together according to his lectures by students in the second and third courses at the Historical-Philological Institute in 1890–1891), lectures on Immanuel Kant (based on lectures to the Higher Women's Courses in St. Petersburg, 1902–1903), lectures on the history of new philosophy to the Higher Women's Courses (1898–1899), lectures on the history of modern philosophy to the Higher Women's Courses [date not given], lectures on psychology at St. Petersburg University (1908).

23. Chris Matthew Sciabarra has written two articles about the transcripts, the first based on a transcript that supplied only the names of courses, and the second incorporating information from additional transcripts. These articles are "The Rand Transcript," *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 1.1 (Fall 1999), 1–26, and "The Rand Transcript Revisited," *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 7.1 (Fall 2006), 1–17. He had previously written about Ayn Rand's education in *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1995), which contained information about Losskiĭ and speculations about his contact with, and impact on, the young Ayn Rand. His articles itemize the courses listed on the transcript; his articles and book offer information about the curriculum and the faculty, and attempt to explain the discrepancies between the information in Ayn Rand's anecdote and the facts about Losskiĭ. His work refers to important sources of information about Russian universities (including *Russkaîâ filosofîâ,* which provides information about the professors, the courses, and sometimes even the times and locations of classes and of the professors' office hours) and about Nicolai Losskiĭ (including his *Vospominanâi* or memoirs, some of his philosophical writings, and *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Nicolas Lossky,* established by his sons B. and N. Lossky (Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves, 1978). Sciabarra was also in contact with Losskiĭ's family and with Hélène Sikorski, the sister of Vladimir Nabokov and of Ayn Rand's childhood friend, Olga. Some of his conclusions are problematic.

Other than the lists of courses that appear on the transcripts, which correspond to what can be found in the Ayn Rand Special Collections at the Ayn Rand Archives, the information needs to be checked for accuracy. For example, Sciabarra writes in his 1999 article (at which time he had seen a transcript that listed the courses without indicating the exam results) that courses at the university at this time were graded pass-fail (1999, 2). The source for this statement is a single page in a dissertation (Peter Konecny, *Conflict and Community at Leningrad State University, 1917–1941*, Dissertation University of Toronto, 1994, 201); that page, however, does not even contain information about the years of Ayn Rand's attendance, nor does the dissertation state, on this page or anywhere else, that courses were graded pass-fail. This page contains a chart indicating the failure rate reported in 1927 for students in different years of their education, that is, how many first-year students failed versus how many second-year or third-year students failed. The focus was the increase in the failure rate from year to year. The page does not, however, state that there were only two grades, passing and failing. It is not true that courses were graded pass-fail. Instead, as Ayn Rand said, and as the transcript shows, there were three possible grades. Students who passed an exam received a grade of "satisfactory" (or the equivalent, "completed the course") or, in rare cases, "highly satisfactory"; the system, in other words, recognized superior performance. Ayn Rand received the superior rating on eleven courses, including the one featured in the story about the Platonist professor. Her transcripts, however, do not record her having graduated with any particular honors degree; she did not claim—in writing, or in any recorded interviews, including the

1960–1961 biographical interviews—to have graduated with honors. Sciabarra states that her "claim to Barbara Branden (1986, 54) that she had 'graduated from the university with the highest honors' remains unconfirmed" (1999, 2). Given that there is no evidence that she made such a claim (and that the book *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, which does not identify all of its sources, does not in fact state that Ayn Rand was the source of the information), there is no claim to confirm. Ayn Rand did, to be sure, say that she had received the highest grade on her ancient philosophy exam; that assertion is confirmed by the transcript.

In Sciabarra's second article on the transcript (at which time he had seen an additional transcript, which indicated the grades), he writes that courses were "usually assessed" pass-fail (6), and gives as the source his own article, which was itself unsupported by evidence, and is inconsistent with the full transcript itself.

The articles and especially the book contain discussion of Losskiĭ and the anecdote. Sciabarra attempts to reconcile the discrepancies between the information provided by Ayn Rand about the professor who taught the course in ancient philosophy, and the information available about Nikolaĭ Losskiĭ. The book (87–90), for example, explains that, although Losskiĭ was barred from regular university teaching, he could have taught at the university annex, and Ayn Rand could have enrolled in classes there. However, there is no explanation of important contradictions between Ayn Rand's description of her professor and the known facts about Losskiĭ (e.g., that she recalled him as an internationally known Platonist—a fact, moreover, that is pertinent to the story—when he was not an internationally known Platonist, or that she would have recalled his having the reputation of being a holy terror and repeatedly failing students when this was not the case). There is, moreover, no explanation of how a man who, by his own account was at death's door for more than half the year could have taught a full-year course. In fact, Sciabarra states that the professor's illness "kept him at home, intermittently, from the fall of 1921 through March of 1922" (*Ayn Rand: Russian Radical*, 90), and, in the 1999 article, he reports having "speculated that *if* Losskiĭ had taught any college-level courses in the 1921–1922 academic year, it would have to have been offered in the spring semester" (7). But—according to Ayn Rand's recollection and to records of the course as offered in most years for which records exist—this was a full-year course. In 1909–1910, for example, Vvedenskiĭ taught the course four hours per week for the full year. In 1907–1908, he offered it in the fall semester only, for six hours per week.

There remains the question of why Ayn Rand mentioned Losskiĭ's name (saying that she was certain about the last name, though not the first). She had an excellent memory in many respects; she did not, however, always retain names. When she was interviewed by *Mademoiselle* (for "Disturber of the Peace: Ayn Rand," an article published in May 1962, 172–173, 194–196) she did not recall the name of Maurice Champagne, the author of *La Vallée Mystérieuse,* the adventure novel she read in childhood that greatly impressed her and that provided her first glimpse of a literary hero.

There is no indication that she had tried, over the years, to remember the name of the professor. Judging from the questions she was asked in the interview, she had previously referred to him only as "the Platonist professor." The name Losskiĭ, however, was familiar to her from her attendance at the Stoiunin Gymnasium, founded by his in-laws, and located on the lower floors of the building where Losskiĭ and his family lived. Her association with this gymnasium can be traced through her memory of studying there along with Olga, sister of Vladimir Nabokov, and can also be confirmed by a letter of January 2, 1927, from Ayn Rand's mother (Carton no. 062, Ayn Rand Papers, Ayn Rand Archives), mentioning someone who knew her daughter at Stoiunin, and who sends regards. For information about the gymnasium, see Chamberlain, *Lenin's Private War*, 18.

She had also seen Losskiĭ's name in print. In the biographical interview, she comments: "I have even seen books by him [the man she believed was her former professor] advertised here in the *New York Times Book Review*, translated." Losskiĭ's *History of Russian Philosophy* (New York, International Universities Press, 1951) was reviewed in *New York Times Book Review* by Sidney Hook (December 9, 1951). I believe that seeing the review may have led her to substitute a name she had seen in print for the name of her actual professor.

Sciabarra writes: "There is another hypothesis that one could suggest: Rand may have remembered the examination incident perfectly, but not which professor was involved" (*Ayn Rand, Russian Radical*, 90; in note 61 on 398, he credits this suggestion to Stephen Cox). I consider it reasonable to believe that she remembered both the examination incident and the professor's nature and reputation (a nature and reputation that are key to the story), but not the professor's name.

Given that Losskiĭ was very ill during the time of the full-year course and does not match her memory of the teacher, it is highly unlikely that Losskiĭ was the teacher. It is more likely that she substituted a name she had seen recently for a name she had not heard or thought of for nearly four decades.

24. Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*: *A System of Sociology*, translated from the third Russian edition (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), 56. I am quoting from the English translation, which I have checked with an early Russian translation: *Teoriîâ istoricheskogo materializma: populîârniĭ uchebnik Marksistkoĭ sotsiologii* (Moscow/Leningrad: Gosu-darstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923).

25. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888–1938* (NY: Knopf, 1971), 114.

26. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 111. Cohen is "reasonably sure it [*Teoriâ istoricheskogo materializma*] is the book Rand encountered at the university" (letter to the author, May 20, 2008).

27. See my "From *Airtight* to *We the Living*: The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel," in the present volume.

28. Reprinted in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet, 1967, 165).

29. "To Dream the Non-Commercial Dream," *The Ayn Rand Letter* II.7 (January 1, 1973), 6.

30. For further information about possible reasons for the omission of passages, see my "From *Airtight* to *We the Living*: The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel," in the present volume.

31. Ayn Rand saw the Venus de Milo when she was in Paris in 1926. She had two postcards of this image (Ayn Rand Papers, 011–43A), and she referred to it in "Art and Cognition" in *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 50: "Observe the manner in which the softness, the smoothness, the pliant resiliency of the skin is conveyed by rigid marble in such statues as the Venus de Milo. . . ." It was, she said, her "favorite statue" (Q & A, Ford Hall Forum, November 14, 1971; *Ayn Rand Answers: The Best of Her Q & A*, ed. Robert Mayhew [New York: New American Library, 2005], 225).

32. Sciabarra (2006) suggests that Nikolaĭ Losskiĭ is a model for Professor Leskov (12–13). I had considered this possibility. The Platonist professor was the only one Ayn Rand had ever mentioned, and "Leskov" was the only professor named in the manuscript of *We the Living*. However, "Leskov" does not match any of Ayn Rand's professors, and certainly not the Platonist professor, whom she recalled as a holy terror and contemptuous of students. Nor does Leskov match Losskiĭ.

Sciabarra identifies, as possible common features, that Leskov and Losskiĭ are both serious, and were both opposed to Soviet teachings. But any fictional character Ayn Rand would have created for this context would have been serious and opposed to Soviet teachings; no particular professor would have been needed to serve as model. Sciabarra refers to the parallel of physical descriptions and names. But the parallel of names is not close, and the physical descriptions are not significantly parallel. Sciabarra mentions that Losskiĭ, like Leskov, has blue eyes, and, at this time, might have had a "sunken chest," and that Losskiĭ's graying beard would be a match for Leskov's "blond beard." He comments that Losskiĭ (according to his granddaughter's report of an oil painting, and a photograph, the same one included in Chamberlain's books) had auburn hair. It is not clear why he mentions this; given that Leskov's hair color is not identified, and given that the color of the hair of Ayn Rand's professor was white. I consider it unlikely that Losskiĭ is a model for Leskov.

33. According to Chamberlain's book-length history of this episode (*Lenin's Private War*), Lenin deported more than two hundred intellectuals he deemed dangerous to the Soviet state. Chamberlain

draws on Losskiĭ's memoirs and includes the story of Ivan Lapshin (whose name appears on one version of Ayn Rand's transcript as her teacher of logic).

34. Application for admission to State Technikum of Film Arts, Ayn Rand Special Collections (Box 2), Ayn Rand Archives.

35. The lists of the films she saw from 1924 to 1929—with ratings from 0 to 5+, and with the names of directors and actors—was published in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*, edited by Michael S. Berliner, translated by Dina [Schein] Garmong (Marina del Rey, CA: Ayn Rand Institute Press, 1999). This volume includes an undated list of her favorite actors and actresses (with checks indicating how many of their films she had seen). Both are reproduced in facsimile as well.

36. Both texts are available in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*, where they are reproduced in facsimile and in translation.

37. For the history of Kinopechat', including the forced retirement and suicide of its founder and director, see Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1992.

38. *Russian Writings on Hollywood*, 216–17.

39. The source for information about films Ayn Rand saw is her movie diary, published in *Russian Writings on Hollywood.* See, for example, films 10, 43, and 47.

40. The source for information about the locations of films Ayn Rand saw is her movie diary, published in *Russian Writings on Hollywood.* See, for example, films 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, 37, 54, and others.

41. *Gollivud Amerikanskiĭ: Kino-Gorod* in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*, 82 (in translation), 15 (in the original 1926 booklet, reproduced on 53 in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*).

42. For the "No" montage passage cut from the draft, see Peikoff, *The Early Ayn Rand*, 231–36.

43. Of *Siegfried* she wrote that it was "as close to a great work of art as the films have yet come" ("Art and Cognition," *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, revised edition, NY: Signet, 1975). The reason for its greatness, she said, was the style: "every inch of the film is *stylized*, i.e., condensed to those stark, bare essentials which convey the nature and spirit of the story, of its events, of its locale." Regarding Brunhild and Kriemhild, she wrote, in unpublished notes, that the story was "Psychologically false. Brunnhilda, the villainess, should have been the heroine of the story and is its best character—she should have been Siegfried's woman—not the little clinging vine whom he chose (and who, incidentally, in Part II, turns into a monster)" (March 31, 1967, 034–20C Ayn Rand Papers, Ayn Rand Archives).

44. *Pola Negri* in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*, 31–32 (in translation), 3–4 (in the original 1925 booklet, reproduced on 19–20 in *Russian Writings on Hollywood*).