

Chapter Seven

Publishing *We the Living*

By Richard E. Ralston

FINDING A PUBLISHER

Ayn Rand energetically involved herself in every detail of publishing and promoting her books. She early on discovered that this was necessary if she was to reach what she later called “my kind of readers.”¹

She met a Hollywood writer, Gouverneur Morris, who liked her screen treatment, *Red Pawn* (which she sold to Universal), and her play *Night of January 16th*. She showed him the manuscript of *We the Living*, which he also liked, and sent to Jean Wick, his agent in New York.

Ayn Rand soon tired of hearing nothing from this agent but occasional news of rejection without explanation. She did not leave matters in her agent’s hands. She knew how the unique characteristics of her novel should be presented to publishers, and so gave her ideas to Wick in great detail, as in this letter of March 23, 1934:

When I first began work on *Airtight* [*We the Living*], the quality which I hoped would make it saleable, quite aside from any possible literary merit, was the fact that it is the *first* story written by a Russian who knows the living conditions of the new Russia and who has actually lived under the Soviets in the period described. My plot and characters are fiction, but the living conditions, the atmosphere, the circumstances which make the incidents of the plot possible, are all true, to the smallest detail. There have been any number of novels dealing with modern Russia, but they have been written either by émigrés who left Russia right after the revolution and had no way of knowing the new conditions, or by Soviet authors who were under the strictest censorship and had no right and no way of telling the whole truth. My book is, as far as I know, the first one by a person who *knows* the facts and also *can tell* them.

I have watched very carefully all the literature on new Russia, that has appeared in English. I do not believe that there has been a work of fiction on this subject, which has enjoyed an outstanding and wide popular success. I believe this is due to the fact that all those novels were translations from the Russian, written primarily *for* the Russian reader. As a consequence, they were hard to understand and of no great interest to the general American public, to those not too well acquainted with Russian conditions.

Airtight, I believe, is the first novel on Russia written *in English by a Russian*. Throughout the entire book, I have tried to write it *from the viewpoint of*

and for the American public. I have never relied on any previous knowledge of Russia in my future readers, and I have attempted to show a panorama of the whole country as it would unfold before the eyes of a person who had never heard before that such a country as Russia existed. It is not, primarily, a book for Russians, but a book for Americans—or so I hope.

I have also attempted to show, not the political struggles, theories and ideals of modern Russia, of which we have heard so much, but the everyday human lives, the everyday tragedies of human beings who are not or try not to be connected with politics. It is not a story of glamorous grand dukes and brutal Bolsheviks—or vice-versa—as most of the novels of the Russian Revolution have been; it is the story of the middle class, the vast majority of Russian citizens, about whom little has been said in fiction. It is not the usual story of revolutionary plots, of GPU spies, of secret executions and exaggerated horrors. It is the story of the drudgery of life which millions have to lead day after day, year after year. Our American readers have been crammed full, too full, of Russian aims, projects and slogans on red banners. No one—to the best of my knowledge—has spoken of what goes on every day in every home and kitchen behind the red banners. . . .

I would like to mention that the qualities I have described are not the aim, theme or purpose of the book, but I have gone into them in such detail only because I believe they are valuable sales points. I may be quite mistaken and these suggestions may have no value. But since you were kind enough to express the desire to hear them and since these “sales points” have been in my mind all through the writing of the book, I felt that I should share them with you and let you judge their worth. . . .²

These suggestions were valuable, but their value was probably lost on Wick. It took many years for Ayn Rand to find an agent with any understanding of whom they were dealing with. Her agents tended to be more understanding of the misconceptions of publishers than of the insights of their client, Ayn Rand.

Ayn Rand experienced the challenges facing any first-time author in finding (1) an agent willing and able to present the book to publishers and (2) a publisher. H. L. Mencken read a copy of *We the Living* sent to him by Gouverneur Morris, and identified another problem, which Ayn Rand passed along to Wick on June 19, 1934:

Mr. Morris has received a letter from Mr. Mencken in regard to my book *Airtight*. I am quoting from his letter: “I agree with you thoroughly that it is a really excellent piece of work, and I see no reason whatever why it shouldn’t find a publisher readily. The only objection to it, of course, is the fact that it is anti-Communist in tone. Most of the American publishers, who print Russian stuff lean toward the Trotskys. However, that is an objection that is certainly not insuperable.”

In view of this, Mr. Morris has suggested that we try to submit the novel to Dutton, for they have just published a nonfiction book entitled *Escape from the Soviets*, which is violently anti-Soviet and, from what I hear, a great best-seller. Evidently, Dutton are not pro-Communist and I am very happy to know that neither is the public, and therefore an anti-Soviet book has a chance of success.

In his letter, Mr. Mencken has offered to send the book to any other publisher we name, if Knopf have not taken it, and Mr. Morris has written to him, suggesting Dutton. If it is convenient for you, you may get in touch with him about this.

I have been waiting to hear about Knopf's decision and, if they have rejected the book, I will appreciate it if you would let me know the reasons they gave.

I realize that we have to take into consideration the publisher's political views when submitting the book. But, if Mr. Mencken is right and the political angle is the only one that stands in the way of a sale, I certainly refuse to believe that America has nothing but Communist-minded publishers. I will appreciate it if you will let me know the reactions to the book from this angle.³

The contact with Mencken, whom Ayn Rand had admired for some time, resulted in an exchange of letters, one of which places her tactical difficulties in finding a publisher in the context of what was, in 1934, a remarkable confidence in the enduring impact her writing would have. On July 28, she wrote to him:

I am sure you understand that my book is not at all a story about Russia, but a story of an individual against the masses and a plea in defense of the individual. Your favorable opinion of it was particularly valuable to me, since I have always regarded you as the foremost champion of individualism in this country.

This book is only my first step and above all a means of acquiring a voice, of making myself heard. What I shall have to say when I acquire that voice does not need an explanation, for I know that you can understand it. Perhaps it may seem a lost cause, at present, and there are those who will say that I am too late, that I can only hope to be the last fighter for a mode of thinking which has no place in the future. But I do not think so. I intend to be the first one in a new battle which the world needs as it has never needed before, the first to answer the too many advocates of collectivism, and answer them in a manner which will not be forgotten.

I know that you may smile when you read this. I fully realize that I am a very "green," very helpless beginner who has the arrogance of embarking, single-handed, against what many call the irrevocable trend of our century. I know that I am only a would-be David starting out against Goliath—and what a fearful, ugly Goliath! I say "single-handed," because I have heard so much from that other side, the collectivist side, and so little in defense of man against men, and yet so much has to be said. I have attempted to say it in my book. I do not know of a better way to make my entrance into the battle. I believe that man will always be an individualist, whether he knows it or not, and I want to make it my duty to make him know it.

So you can understand why I appreciate your kindness in helping me to put my book before the public, for—if you will excuse my presumption—I consider myself a young and very humble brother-in-arms in your own cause.⁴

Mencken answered her a few days later: "I sympathize with your position thoroughly, and it seems to me that you have made a very good beginning in *Airtight*. I see no reason whatever why

it should not find a publisher and make a success. Certainly the time has come to turn back the tide of Communist propaganda in this country.”⁵ On August 8, she replied and asked him to send the book to Dutton. Dutton turned it down with a routine rejection letter (which still exists in the Ayn Rand Archives). (In one of the many ironies of her relations with publishers, Dutton, as a part of Penguin, became the publisher of *We the Living* fifty-five years later.)

Knopf also rejected the manuscript. Writing to Wick on July 19, 1934, in response to this news, it appears that the problem was ideological:

I quite agree with your suggestion about my coming to New York. I do believe it would be advisable and very much to my advantage. But as I mentioned in my last letter, I am at present working at the Paramount Studio on an original story of my own and I do not know how long I am going to be held here. As soon as I finish this assignment, I will try to arrange to go to New York, if I find it possible. Frankly, the financial angle is the only circumstance that is keeping me from it, for I have been anxious to move to New York for a long time.

As to the opinion of Mr. Abbott at Knopf’s I can see his point of view and I can understand his hesitation, particularly in regard to the length of my novel. However, if I had a chance to do it, I would like to point out to him that he is greatly mistaken on the subject of the book being “dated.” In the first place, the book does not deal with a “temporary” phase of Russian life. It merely takes place in the years 1922–1925, instead of the immediate present, but it deals with the birth of conditions which are far from gone, which still prevail in Russia in their full force, which are the very essence of the revolution. In the second place—and this may sound paradoxical—*Airtight is not a novel about Russia*. It is a novel about the problem of the individual versus the mass, a problem which is the latest, the most vital, the most tremendous problem of the world today, and about which very little has been said in fiction. I have selected Russia as my background merely because that problem stands out in Russia more sharply, more tragically than anywhere on earth.

However, I quite agree with you that it would not be advisable to press that point with Knopf’s at present, and I mention this only in case you find yourself confronted again with the same objection.⁶

Abbott, the editor at Knopf, was undoubtedly following the standard line of “Red Decade” intellectuals (noted by Ayn Rand and others) that any unfortunate incidents in Soviet life were “temporary” and in the past—and that *now* everything was fine and progressive. This line was faithfully reported from Moscow by the *New York Times* during this period (i.e., from the early 1930s, when millions of Ukrainian and Russian peasants died during Stalin’s collectivization of agriculture, to the purges and show-trials of the late 1930s).

Other publishers who read and rejected the manuscript included Little, Brown & Co., Longmans, Green, Viking Press, Bobbs-Merrill, Farrar & Rinehart, and Simon & Schuster. The reader for Simon & Schuster was Clifton Fadiman, who reported: “It has its points, but it is far too long and tortuous. I read parts of it with interest but as a whole it did not grip me.” A literary magazine, *Forum*, rejected the book for serialization because it was “much too gloomy.”⁷

Appleton-Century-Crofts came close to taking the book. Their editor in chief, Barry Benefield, was a novelist himself. In comments to Wick and later at a luncheon with Ayn Rand

in New York City, he explained at length how he would rewrite the novel. Ayn Rand's point-by-point response is included in an October 27, 1934, letter to Wick:

I have received your letter today and I have thought it over carefully from every angle. I greatly appreciate all the details of the matter which you have given me. Here is what I have to say: I certainly would not go so far as to demand the book be published exactly as it is or not at all. I am quite willing to make all the cuts and changes that may be required to improve it. But I do insist that the theme and *spirit* of the book be kept intact. Therefore, I must explain in detail exactly what I mean.

I am afraid that I cannot agree with Mr. Benefield's idea of the book. It is *not* a love story. It never could be. In fact, I believe, personally, that the love story is the least interesting thing about it. Mr. Benefield may be right about the fact that I have too much background in it and I am willing to cut it some. But that background is more essential than the plot itself for the story I want to tell. Without it—there *is no* story. It is the background that creates the characters and their tragedy. It is the background that makes them do the things they do. If one does not understand the background—one does not understand them.

And Mr. Benefield is completely mistaken about the fact that the American reader “has a fair knowledge of existence in Leningrad during the time covered by the novel.” The American reader has no knowledge of it whatsoever. He has not the slightest suspicion of it. If he had—we would not have the appalling number of parlor Bolsheviks and idealistic sympathizers with the Soviet regime, liberals who would scream with horror if they knew the truth of Soviet existence. It is for them that the book was written.

The principal reaction I have had from those who have read the book is one of complete amazement at the revelation of Soviet life as it is actually lived. “Can it possibly be true? I had no idea that that's what it was like. Why were we never told?”—those are the things I have heard over and over again. Those are the things I wanted to hear. Because the conditions I have depicted are true. I have lived them. No one has ever come out of Soviet Russia to tell it to the world. That was my job.

I repeat, I may have too much of it in the book and I am willing to cut it down some. But I also repeat that it must stand as a most important part of the novel—*not* merely as a setting for a love story. I have never heard one person say that he was *bored* while reading the book. I have tied my background firmly to the structure of the plot. But that background *has to* be there.

Furthermore—and here we come to the most important point—has Mr. Benefield understood the idea of the book? *Airtight is not* the story of Kira Argounova. It is the story of Kira Argounova *and* the masses—her greatest enemy. Those masses—and what they do to the individual—are the real hero of the book. Remove that—and you have nothing but a conventional little romance to tell. The individual against the masses—such is the real, the only theme of the book. Such is the greatest problem of our century—for those who are willing to realize it.

I feel I must explain one point to Mr. Benefield—a point of the greatest importance. Mr. Benefield wonders why I stop in the last chapter to present the biography of the soldier who kills Kira Argounova. That stop, in my opinion, is one of the best things in the book. It contains—in a few pages—the whole idea and purpose of the novel. After the reader has seen Kira Argounova, has learned what a rare, precious, irreplaceable human being she was—I give him the picture of the man who killed Kira Argounova, of the life that took her life. That soldier is a symbol, a typical representative of the average, the dull, the useless, the commonplace, the masses—that killed the best there is on this earth. I believe I made this obvious when I concluded his biography by saying—quoting from the book: “Citizen Ivan Ivanov was guarding the border of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.” Citizen Ivan Ivanov *is* the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. And that Union killed Kira Argounova. Kira Argounova against citizen Ivan Ivanov—that is the whole book in a few pages.

I am willing to do some cutting and I believe I could cut out about fifteen thousand, perhaps even twenty-five thousand words. That would be the most. Cutting it down to 100,000 words would be impossible.

I agree that the title may not be a good one and I am entirely willing to change that.

As to the matter of a suggested collaborator, I give you full authority to refuse at once, without informing me, any and all offers that carry such a suggestion. I do not care to hear of such offers. I consider them nothing short of an insult. 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. I hope you do not consider this as a beginner’s arrogance. 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 human being alive who could improve that book of mine in the matter of actual rewriting. If anyone is capable of improving *that* book—he should have written it himself. 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 must be made *by me*.

The time is certainly ripe for an anti-Red novel and it is only a question of finding the right party to take an interest in it. I do not believe that we will get very far with publishers who disapprove of or try to diminish the political implications of the book. These implications are its best chance of success. If you remember, Mr. Morris in his letter to Mr. Mencken, referred to the book as the “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin of Soviet Russia*.” That is exactly what the book was intended to be and exactly the angle under which it must be sold.⁸

Whether Benefield “understood the idea of the book” or not, it was becoming clear to Ayn Rand that Wick did not. In late 1934, Ayn Rand moved to New York City in preparation for the Broadway production of *Night of January 16th*. After meeting with Wick—who was primarily an agent for magazine writers—she was even more dissatisfied, and decided to make a

change. Mary Inloes, the Hollywood agent for her play, had recommended New York agent Ann Watkins, and Ayn Rand went to see her. Watkins represented a number of prominent writers, including Sinclair Lewis. She read the novel, liked it, and agreed to represent it.

Watkins sent *We the Living* to Macmillan. Stanley Young was enthusiastic about the book and fought for it, but associate editor Granville Hicks (who turned out to be a member of the Communist Party) fought strongly against it. But the president of Macmillan, George P. Brett, read the book, and recommended its publication. Years later, Ayn Rand recalled that Brett had said that he did not know if they would make money on it or not, but that it was a novel that should be published. This represented a short window of opportunity for Rand during the “Red Decade.” Two years later, Brett was dead, and Macmillan rejected Rand’s novella *Anthem*, because “the author does not understand socialism.”⁹ Twenty-one years later, Hicks wrote a vicious review of *Atlas Shrugged* for the *New York Times*.

SELLING WE THE LIVING

We the Living was well down on Macmillan’s “list” in 1936. They did little to market it and only included it in a couple of advertisements with other books. As should come as no surprise, Ayn Rand did not leave marketing and promotion to her publisher. Although she was not yet comfortable at public speaking, she took on a heavy schedule of lectures (including one at the Talk of the Town Club on West 67th Street in Manhattan). Further, she tirelessly provided interviews: on May 5, 1936, the *New York Post* published a substantial interview with a photograph; on June 15, the *New York American* published a prominent interview with a photograph of her with her husband, Frank O’Connor; and, on September 6, the *Boston Post* published a full-page interview with a rotogravure color illustration of a scene from *We the Living*. In all of these interviews, Ayn Rand painted a picture of the realities of daily life in Soviet Russia.

The April 1936 issue of *Book-of-the-Month Club News* contained a promotional paragraph about the book—not at all usual for a first novel:

We the Living, (\$2.50), is another book which is at once a good story and the picture of an unfamiliar world—the chaotic world of Russia immediately after the Revolution. It deals with an aristocratic family, reduced to abject poverty, but still keeping up its old allegiances and ideals, until the daughter falls in love with a young man of her own class but of less strength of character, who breaks under the strain of post-revolutionary conditions and involves her in tragedy as well. The book does justice to the virtues of revolutionists of the best type, but it goes farther than most in portraying the insincerity and brutality of the Red government in its struggle to establish itself; and it carries the conviction of being a faithful picture.¹⁰

This favorable, if inaccurate, description (Kira’s family was middle class) is revealing in the defensive wording employed for the benefit of “revolutionists of the best type,” and outright comic in the understatement that the book “goes farther than most in portraying the insincerity and brutality of the Red government.” Such were the times.

The first printing of 3,000 copies sold out in eighteen months—with most sales at the end of this period. By that time Macmillan had destroyed the plates, although by contract they were

obligated to keep the book in print for two years. Ayn Rand discovered this when she tried to get more copies for her own use. She immediately put Watkins on the case. Because Macmillan let the book go out of print, all rights reverted to Ayn Rand. They offered to issue a second edition, but only if Ayn Rand signed a contract for her next novel on the same terms—a \$250 advance. Ayn Rand considered this, but after the failure of Macmillan to support the first edition of *We the Living* with significant advertising, she wanted a publicity guarantee for the next novel. Watkins asked for a publicity guarantee of \$1,200, but Macmillan would not agree to this. Thus Macmillan lost *We the Living* and, as it turned out, *The Fountainhead*. Unfortunately, this resulted in *We the Living* remaining out of print in the United States for more than twenty years.

EUROPEAN EDITIONS

Curiously, *We the Living* received a better welcome from Ayn Rand’s British publisher, Cassell & Co., Ltd., who published it in 1937, and kept it in print for many years. They also went on to publish *Anthem* in 1938—for which no American publisher was found for many years. Desmond Flower of Cassell was eagerly awaiting her next novel (*The Fountainhead*) before it had a US publisher, as seen in his January 22, 1940, letter to Ayn Rand’s London agent, Laurence Pollinger:

I am returning to the attack on the subject of Ayn Rand not because I think there is anything you can do which you have not already done, but because I want her to be fully cognizant of the facts which led me to say in my last letter that there was a good market for her next novel going begging.

We the Living, published in January 1937, is the only novel in our list which is still selling at the original price—exactly three years later. This is remarkable. We reprinted it again in the early summer last year, still at 8/6d, and the copies are steadily going out. Simpkins were in for more again last week. This shows an astonishing and gratifying interest on the part of the public, and I know I am not wrong in saying that we could have a really big success if we could get a new book from her.

I should be grateful if you would let her know these facts, because they may encourage her to get on with the job!¹¹

As an indication of how well *We the Living* did in Europe, consider the circa 1948 document, entitled “The Publishing History of *We the Living*” that Ayn Rand wrote for an agent attempting to sell the US motion picture rights to the book. After recounting the story of the Macmillan sales in the United States in 1936–1937, she summarized foreign sales:

In England, *We the Living* was a huge success. It went into edition after edition. I kept receiving royalties for it for *ten years*, up to about a year ago, when it went out of print due to the paper shortage in England. Cassell’s, my English publishers, informed me that they intend to reissue the book, still in its full-price, original edition, as soon as they get the paper.

In Denmark, *We the Living* has been selling for ten years, was interrupted for a year during the war and is now selling again. Recently, I received a \$4,500 check for Danish royalties. For a country as small as Denmark such royalties are an eloquent indication of the extent of the book’s success.

In Italy, *We the Living* was a smash hit. That was the reason for the piracy of the book by an Italian movie company. The first report which I received about this piracy, from an American connected with the American Embassy in Italy, stated that the picture of *We the Living* was sensationally successful in Europe. I have no exact information about the details of this as yet.

Now, this is what the book has done to-date. Can you name another obscure novel—which went unnoticed in this country and so could be considered a flop—that had a history of this kind? If not, isn't this worthy of some serious thought and aren't there some conclusions to be drawn from it, as I shall presently point out?

Against the above, there is one fact which may be listed as a real failure, and that is the stage production of this novel, titled *The Unconquered*. I shall take just half the blame for that; the book was not proper stage material. As to the way it was produced—anyone who saw it on the stage would have to judge for himself whether what he saw had any relation to the book or not.

I have not mentioned the political aspects of the history of *We the Living*, and of what was done to kill it. The time has now come for you to realize for yourself the kind of secret sabotage that anti-Communist writers have had to endure for years. The rest of the country is realizing now.

The conclusions I have made about *We the Living* and its possibilities are as follows:

Just as *The Fountainhead* was rejected by *twelve publishers* who considered it non-commercial and predicted that it would not sell, until I found one editor who had the intelligence to understand the value of the book—so *We the Living* needs to find one man who is capable of forming an independent judgment about its actual merit and to act accordingly. *We the Living* may be a lesser book than *The Fountainhead*—but, on a smaller scale, it has potentialities which have not been touched and I intend to see that it gets its full chance.

The time is right for it now, and the political opinion of this country is overwhelmingly on my side. I want to find one person in the picture industry who would be the equivalent in mental stature, of the editor of Bobbs-Merrill. If such a person can be found and will make a picture of *We the Living*, I will have the book re-issued, and we would have—before the picture is released—a ready made best-seller to help the screen version. The demand for the book is huge right now, I get requests for it from readers constantly, and I understand that it is almost impossible to get a copy of the book in the second-hand market. If no picture is made now, I will probably re-issue the book after my next novel.

What I should like you, as my agents, to consider is this: my entire career has been and will probably always be on this same pattern. All the rules, judgments and estimates which apply to and are derived from the experience of other writers, work in reverse in my case. I shall probably always find most of the pseudo-intellectuals among the average editors or producers, against me—but I have the public. The things I write are not the trite, easily-obvious successes that remind people of ten other best-sellers. I will always be met with doubt from the safe-playing, standard-minded persons, and will always need to find one

independent man to deal with. The public will do the rest for me, as it has invariably done before, when given the chance.

I fully realize that this is a difficult and unconventional undertaking for you—to attempt to sell, merely on its merit, a book which has been tagged as a failure. The history of *The Fountainhead* is my reason for insisting that it has to be done, and my illustration of the possible consequences of the potential rewards involved for both you and me.¹²

PUBLICATION AND SALE OF THE SECOND EDITION

While she hoped for a production of a motion picture,¹³ Ayn Rand did not look for a new publisher for the book after *The Fountainhead* was published, as she explained in a progress report on the writing of *Atlas Shrugged* to her agent Alan Collins at Curtis Brown on December 30, 1950:

I would like very much for you to take over certain properties, as I have not been too happy about the manner in which they were handled by the Ann Watkins office. The most important one of them is my first novel, *We the Living*. It was published by Macmillan in 1936, but the American publishing rights have reverted to me. There is now a great demand for this novel. I keep getting letters about it constantly, and Bobbs-Merrill have been after me for several years to let them issue a new American Edition of it. I have refused, because I don't want to have it issued as a follow-up to *The Fountainhead*, since, being an earlier novel, it would be an anticlimax at present. But I want it to be reissued shortly after my new novel is published, and I would like to make arrangements for it at the time I sign the contract for the new novel, whether it will be with Bobbs-Merrill or another publisher. Therefore it will be much better if both novels are handled by you.¹⁴

After the publication of *Atlas Shrugged* by Random House in 1957, there was understandably no difficulty in securing the new (revised) edition of *We the Living* from Random House in 1959.¹⁵ In 1960, the first paperback edition was published by New American Library—now a part of Penguin Group (USA), which since 1989 has also been the hardcover publisher.

By this time a “new” novel by the author of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* effectively sold itself. Three million copies of *We the Living* have been sold since 1959—a remarkable sale for a book whose plates had been destroyed by Macmillan before the first printing of 3,000 copies sold out in 1937.

Perhaps the most eloquent refutation of those who tried to smother the book in America during the “Red” 1930s occurred in 1993, when *We the Living* was published for the first time in Russian, in the city in which the story was set, St. Petersburg. It has since been published in French, Greek, Italian, Slovenian, and Spanish editions. In 2010 Penguin Modern Classics in London published the first British edition in many years. In 2011 the New American Library is publishing two seventy-fifth anniversary editions in recognition of *We the Living*'s universal theme of the evil of totalitarianism, wherever and whenever it is a threat.

NOTES

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1. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
 2. Michael S. Berliner, ed., *Letters of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 4–6.
 3. Berliner, *Letters*, 10.
 4. Berliner, *Letters*, 13.
 5. Quoted in Berliner, *Letters*, 14.
 6. Berliner, *Letters*, 12.
 7. Unpublished material in the Ayn Rand Archives.
 8. Berliner, *Letters*, 17–19.
 9. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
 10. *Book-of-the-Month Club News*, April 1936.
 11. Unpublished, in the Ayn Rand Archives.
 12. Unpublished, in the Ayn Rand Archives.
 13. This hope was never realized. On the pirate Italian version of the novel, see Jeff Britting, “Adapting *We the Living*,” in the present volume.
 14. Berliner, *Letters*, 488.
 15. On the differences between the 1936 and 1959 editions, see Robert Mayhew, “*We the Living*: ’36 and ’59,” in the present volume.