

II

We the Living as Literature and as Philosophy

Chapter Eleven

We the Living and Victor Hugo

Ayn Rand's First Novel and the Novelist She Ranked First

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Ayn Rand loved the novels of Victor Hugo. She loved his work when she discovered it in her childhood; she loved it when she reread his novels throughout her life; she loved it when she paid her highest tribute to his genius, calling him “the greatest novelist in world literature.”¹ She said: “I love the work of Victor Hugo, in a deeper sense than admiration for his superlative literary genius, and I find many similarities between his sense of life and mine, although I disagree with virtually all of his explicit philosophy.”² Her love not only went far beyond the respect of one artist for another, but also outweighed her disagreement with his explicit ideas.

A complete account of her love for Hugo would take into account her public commentary on his work: her analysis of his prose style in her lectures on fiction-writing, her introductions to editions of Hugo’s *Ninety-Three* (*Quatrevingt-treize*) and *The Man Who Laughs* (*L’Homme qui rit*), her remarks in numerous lectures and essays (some reprinted in *The Romantic Manifesto*). Her unpublished commentary, also extensive, includes more than twenty pages of notes on *Ninety-Three* and more than thirty pages of a translation of the opening of *The Man Who Laughs*.

Even in nonliterary contexts, she quotes him more than she quotes any artist other than herself. In her preface to the 1968 edition of *The Fountainhead*, for example, she quotes from a letter he wrote about the public neglect of *The Man Who Laughs*. “If a writer wrote merely for his time, I would have to break my pen and throw it away.”³ The title image of “The Comprachicos” (1970)—an indictment of the spiritual torture of children at the hands of contemporary educators—is drawn from the second chapter of the same novel (in which the torture and deformity are literal).⁴ In “From the Horse’s Mouth” (1975), she quotes from book 5, chapter 2 of Hugo’s *Notre Dame of Paris* (“This will kill that”) to describe the relationship between two works: an 1898 book by Friedrich Paulsen praising Kant and the 1897 play *Cyrano de Bergerac* of the previous year.⁵ She quotes Hugo in the conclusion to her 1972 article (“The Stimulus and the Response”) about B. F. Skinner’s *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

In *Les Misérables*, describing the development of an independent young man, Victor Hugo wrote: “. . . and he blesses God for having given him these two riches which many of the rich are lacking: work, which gives him freedom, and thought, which gives him dignity.”

I doubt that B. F. Skinner ever did or could read Victor Hugo—he wouldn’t know what it’s all about—but it is not a mere coincidence that made him choose the title of his book. Victor Hugo knew the two essentials that man’s life

requires. B. F. Skinner knows the two essentials that have to be destroyed if man qua man is to be destroyed.⁶

The current chapter is far from a full account of the parallels between Ayn Rand's art and that of Hugo; it is not the last word on the subject, but rather the first (of any length) by anyone other than herself. My purpose here is to examine several important features of *We the Living*, her first novel, in the light of the analogous features in Hugo's novels and to consider, when available, her commentary on those features of his novels. What will emerge, I hope, is evidence not only of her admiration for Hugo and her affinity with his approach to life and art, but also of her originality, highlighted by her differences from him. *We the Living*, as we shall see, has parallels with the work of Hugo—but it is never imitative. Instead, the near parallels themselves show her distinctive style and story.

GRANDEUR AND HEROIC SCALE AGAINST A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What Ayn Rand loved about Victor Hugo, when she discovered him in her early teens, was that he made “everything important and he feature[d] that which is dramatic and important.”⁷ She felt, she said, that *Les Misérables* was so “grand scale that I became almost possessive about that book” and thought of “anything from *Les Misérables*, whether the name Jean Valjean or Gavroche or any of the lesser characters [as] the souvenirs of my loved ones. Everything was holy to me in that sense.”

In later years, she was to point repeatedly to the nobility of his estimate of man: as a writer, he was the “nearest to creating the kind of people and events I would like to observe or live with.”⁸ In spite of the differences between his concretes and convictions and hers (differences she recognized implicitly from the beginning), she thought of his universe, his sense of life, as fundamentally the same as hers. The artistic universe of Victor Hugo and Ayn Rand is one of larger-than-life characters engaged in life-or-death conflicts about issues of world-scale significance.

This is true, moreover, even in *We the Living*, which is superficially an exception in that it appears to be of more limited scope and has, as one of its purposes, the goal of publicizing specific circumstances regarding life in Soviet Russia. Indeed, in a note to her publisher, she had written: “I have been asked why I wrote this novel. I think the answer is obvious. I have seen Soviet life as few writers outside Russia have seen it.” The implications of this “obvious” answer—that it, the reason behind her intention to describe Russian life under communism—are contained in the following paragraph of the same statement:

Also, if one takes even the swiftest look at the world today, one cannot help but see the greatest, most urgent conflict of our times: the individual against the collective. That problem interests me above all others in my writing. No country on earth offers such a startling and revealing view of that conflict as Soviet Russia. Hence—*We the Living*.⁹

Her subject, in other words, was not merely the conditions in one country, but a significant, large-scale conflict.

In her foreword to the 1959 edition of the novel, Ayn Rand makes this point explicitly, and repeatedly:

We the Living is not a novel “about Soviet Russia.” It is a novel about Man against the State. Its basic theme is the sanctity of human life—using the word “sanctity” not in a mystical sense, but in the sense of “supreme value.” (xiii)

We the Living is not a story about Soviet Russia in 1925. It is a story about Dictatorship, any dictatorship, anywhere, at any time, whether it be Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, or—which this novel might do its share in helping to prevent—a socialist America. What the rule of brute force does to men and how it destroys the best, will be the same in 1925, in 1955, or in 1975. . . . (xv)

Although the novel’s target includes the specific collectivism of Soviet Russia, its scope is not limited to that target.

Her point about the theme of her first novel is the same as one she makes about Hugo’s *Ninety-Three* (set at the time of the Vendée revolt of 1793):

The fact is that *Ninety-Three* is not a novel about the French Revolution.

To a Romanticist, a background is a background, not a theme. His vision is always focused on man—on the fundamentals of man’s nature, on those problems and those aspects of his character which apply to any age and any country. The theme of *Ninety-Three* . . . is: man’s loyalty to values.

To dramatize that theme, to isolate that aspect of man’s soul and show it in its purest form, to put it to the test under the pressure of deadly conflicts, a revolution is an appropriate background to select. Hugo’s story is not devised as a means of presenting the French Revolution: the French Revolution is used as a means of presenting his story.¹⁰

Hugo himself points to the large-scale significance of his fiction in several places, notably *Les Misérables*:

Le livre que le lecteur a sous les yeux en ce moment, c’est, d’un bout à l’autre, dans son ensemble et dans ses détails, quelles que soient les intermittences, les exceptions ou les défaillances, la marche du mal au bien, de l’injuste au juste, du faux au vrai, de la nuit au jour, de l’appétit à la conscience, de la pourriture à la vie, de la bestialité au devoir, de l’enfer au ciel, du néant à Dieu. Point de départ: la matière, point d’arrivée: l’âme. L’hydre au commencement, l’ange à la fin.

[The book the reader has now before his eyes—from one end to the other, in its whole and in its details, whatever the omissions, the exceptions, or the faults—is the march from evil to good, from injustice to justice, from the false to the true, from night to day, from appetite to conscience, from rotteness to life, from brutality to duty, from Hell to Heaven, from nothingness to God. Starting point: matter; goal: the soul. Hydra at the beginning, angel at the end.] (Part 5, book 1, chapter 20)¹¹

Ayn Rand's first novel is like Hugo's novels in having an abstract theme concerned with the projection of human greatness. Her first novel—more than any of her later novels—is also like his in dramatizing that theme against a historical background with clear political implications.

The historical background in *We the Living* appears in several ways, all reminiscent of Hugo. One is the use of mini-essays on cultural phenomena such as the Primus stove (134) and the song “John Gray” (155–156), which are analogous to Hugo's mini-essays on the Notre Dame Cathedral (*Notre Dame of Paris*, book 3, chapter 1) or street slang (*Les Misérables*, part 4, book 7). Another is the presentation of vignettes and images involving characters other than the principals; we see, for example, posters proclaiming the country's new name (USSR) and children marching and singing (162). Analogies in Hugo include the description of the Paris Convention in part 2, book 3 of *Ninety-Three* and the description of aristocratic decadence in *The Man Who Laughs* (part 2, book 1, chapter 4). A third means of conveying the historical background is a mini-essay that takes a long historical view and presents the setting symbolically, that is, the extended description of Petrograd that opens part 2 of *We the Living* and that is analogous to Hugo's portrait of Paris in *Notre Dame of Paris* (book 3, chapter 2).

But Ayn Rand's historical background is not Hugo's. Even in these passages, she is more purposeful, in a specifically literary sense, than Hugo. She integrates the background more closely with the narrative and the theme. Hugo often appears to be offering the reader information simply because he himself is interested, regardless of the purpose at hand. When Jean Valjean and Cosette take refuge in a convent, Hugo seizes the opportunity to inform us about the conditions in convents, including the nuns' dental history (*Les Misérables*, part 2, book 6). The description of Parisian politics in *Ninety-Three* is detailed and fascinating. It could stand alone as an analysis of political movements—and, in fact, it should. When Ayn Rand offers similar information, she uses it to help us grasp something significant about the characters and their story. If she tells us about the history of the Primus, we see Kira struggling to use it, and we recognize how a stove can be a tool of spiritual suffocation. The posters announcing the country's new name greet Leo and Kira when they return from a weekend in the country—by which we understand that the respite they experienced was temporary, illusory. The “No” sequence, as originally designed, followed the same pattern of using background material to make vivid the story line of the main characters.¹²

The description of Petrograd, by Ayn Rand's own account, was written in the style of Hugo—and is the weaker for it, in being overemphatic. The positive portrait of Petrograd, moreover, is not integrated with the story line and action in the way that other features of the background are. The novel, to be sure, begins with Kira's return to Petrograd and her belief that it is a place where “so much is possible.” One might say that it is presented as a “best case”: if even Petrograd is airtight, then there is no hope for a better life anywhere in Russia. But Ayn Rand's description of Petrograd is indeed more like one of Hugo's descriptions of a city than like one of her own (e.g., Dominique's view of New York from the Staten Island ferry, in *The Fountainhead*¹³). It stands alone better than it fits in. The point of view is external to the characters.

And yet even here, where Ayn Rand is most like Hugo, she also takes a step toward her own style of writing. Peter the Great, founder of the city, was a dictator, and the city's history includes his exercise of force: “No willing hands came to build the new capital” (238). Without either endorsing or condemning his use of force, the novel underlines the purposefulness of his goal, his persistence in achieving it, his refusal to submit. “An implacable emperor commanded into being the city and the ground under the city” (238). Petrograd was “the city raised by man

against the will of nature” (239). She emphasizes the contrast between the man-made and the natural:

Cities grow like forests, like weeds. Petrograd did not grow. It was born finished and complete. Petrograd is not acquainted with nature. It was the work of man.

Nature makes mistakes and takes chances; it mixes its colors and knows little of straight lines. But Petrograd is the work of man who knows what he wants. (241)

Peter’s character and his founding of the city are integrated with the novel’s theme and characterizations, if not with the plotline. The adjective “implacable” links Peter with Andrei Taganov (386) and, implicitly, with the “steady and irrevocable” step of Kira’s Viking¹⁴ and with the “calm, severe” Leo Kovalensky (61). The city was raised by the “will of a man” (238); in personal allegiance to that sort of purposeful creation, Kira frequently watches the process of construction, “red bricks and oaken beams and steel panels growing under the will of man” (47). The contrast between the man-made and the natural (a contrast that is to the advantage of the man-made) is explicit in an exchange between Lydia and Kira:

“How beautiful!” said Lydia, looking at a stage setting. “It’s almost real.”
“How beautiful!” said Kira, looking at a landscape. “It’s almost artificial.”
(48)

And, most powerfully, the description of the city as “the work of man who knows what he wants” is integrated with Kira’s impassioned declaration to Andrei:

I was born and I knew I was alive and I knew what I wanted. What do you think is alive in me? Why do you think I’m alive? Because I have a stomach and eat and digest the food? Because I breathe and work and produce more food to digest? Or because I know what I want, and that something which knows how to want—isn’t that life itself? And who—in this damned universe—who can tell me why I should live for anything but for that which I want? (404)

The city described as “the work of man who knows what he wants” is thus linked with the heroine who declares that knowing what she wants is the spirit of life itself. Although Ayn Rand criticized the description of Petrograd as written too much by Hugo’s method rather than by her own (a subject I will discuss shortly), she integrated it more effectively into her novel than Hugo did in similar artistic situations.

The mature Ayn Rand, to be sure, had a stronger conceptual grasp of the meaning of life, of the morality of life, and would not have had a heroine maintain, without qualification, that it is right to live for what one wants (a formulation that does not distinguish between rational self-interest and subjectivism). Her philosophical understanding of her theme grew in the years after her first novel, as she explains in her foreword to the 1959 edition. The “essence of my theme” appears in Irina’s thoughts about the sanctity of life, the “sacred treasure” of life:

Now it’s over, and it doesn’t make any difference to anyone, and it isn’t that they are indifferent, it’s just that they don’t know, they don’t know what it means, that treasure of mine, and there’s something about it that they should understand. I

don't understand it myself, but there's something that should be understood by all of us. Only what is it? What? (xiii)

While writing *We the Living*, Ayn Rand says, "I knew a little more about this question than did Irina, but not much more. . . . It was not until *Atlas Shrugged* that I reached the full answer to Irina's question" (xiii–xiv).

Victor Hugo, whom Ayn Rand described as a sense-of-life writer, did not make similar intellectual progress. "He never translated his sense of life into conceptual terms, he did not ask himself what ideas, premises or psychological conditions were necessary to enable men to achieve the spiritual stature of his heroes."¹⁵ Asking those questions—identifying the ideas, premises, or psychological conditions required for the heroic human ideal—became part of her own life work as a philosopher-novelist. In her first novel, we see her projecting human greatness and dramatizing—against a historical background—a large-scale, abstract theme, as did Victor Hugo. She has surpassed him regarding the integration of the background into the rest of the novel, and, by her focus on the individual, she has identified a deeper theme than Hugo ever did. She was to make further advances in both of these, as she was to do regarding human greatness as well, specifically by creating her own kind of heroic figures.

HEROIC PROTAGONISTS—AND ANTAGONISTS

Ayn Rand loved Victor Hugo's vision of man, of the human capacity for greatness. She did not, however, admire most of the men he created. "I was enormously impressed, . . . yet I was very aware that there isn't a character in *all* of his writing that is what I would want a man to be." Regarding the characters of *Les Misérables*, she commented: "No character like Jean Valjean could appeal to me—not anybody who, no matter how grandly presented, was really intended to be an average man. And Marius I resented very much. . . . He was a stuffed shirt. He was just a meaningless, sentimental young man. I, incidentally, resented sensitive young men in fiction enormously." The romance of Marius and Cosette was "mush."¹⁶ In *We the Living*, Ayn Rand conveys that resentment through Kira: "She had the same feeling for eating soup without salt, and for discovering a snail slithering up her bare leg, and for young men who pleaded, broken-hearted, their eyes humid, their lips soft" (47). Victor Dunaev, for example, may well have reminded Kira of a snail: at night in the Summer Garden, he told her "he had always been unhappy and lonely, searching for his ideal, that he could understand her, that her sensitive soul was bound by conventions, un-awakened to life—and love" (59). (Kira is indeed sensitive—but not in ways Victor understands.) Sensitive young men are especially distasteful in the role of suitors. The "eminent young poet" in *The Fountainhead* who offers Dominique a ride back from a party to her country house has "a soft, sensitive mouth, and eyes hurt by the whole universe. . . . As they drove through the twilight she saw him leaning hesitantly closer to her. She heard his voice whispering the pleading, incoherent things she had heard from many men."¹⁷ Another snail, another instance of Marius-like mush.

Within the same novel, though, was a character Ayn Rand admired, "the only one that had a personal sense of life meaning for me." That character was Enjolras, leader of the young revolutionaries, "a man of exclusive, devoted purpose."¹⁸ Hugo emphasizes his serenity, his austerity, and his integrity. Although *We the Living* does not satisfy the goal of her writing—that is, does not project an ideal man—all three of her principal characters display significant resemblances to her favorite Hugo character.

Kira Argounova, to begin with, is described as having the signature quality of Enjolras: heroic devotion to a purpose. When she announces that she intends to study building at the Institute, even those who disapprove do not expect to stop her. “You can’t argue with her,” says her mother; “She always gets her way,” says her sister (42). She never notices what she eats (36) or what she wears (39). She decided to be an engineer “with her first thought about the vague thing called future” (50). When she walks through the snow with Leo to the ship by which they intend to escape, she moves continually forward, fighting the wind, fully aware that life “began beyond the snow” and that only going forward will take her there (121). She maintains her hold on her values: when she stands in the line for bread (“She thought that somewhere beyond all these many things which did not count, was her life and Leo,” [199]), when she attends a lecture (“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]), when she struggles to retain her awareness of her important values and her hope that she will achieve them, telling herself often: “Well, it’s war. It’s war. You don’t give up, do you, Kira? It’s not dangerous so long as you don’t give up. And the harder it gets, the happier you should be that you can stand it. That’s it. The harder—the happier. It’s war. You’re a good soldier, Kira Argounova” (207).

Her Enjolras-like one-track purposefulness is in the tone of her voice, which has “the intensity of a maniac’s” when she says the word “Abroad” (444). It is present when she sits on a train feeling “as if her body were only an image of her will and her will—only an arrow, tense and hard, pointing at a border that had to be crossed” (453), when she walks through the snow (as she did before, with Leo) and tells herself, over and over, that she has to “get out,” when she reminds herself, “You’re a good soldier, Kira Argounova, you’re a good soldier and now’s the time to prove it” (461). She dies, as does Enjolras, as a good soldier, and with a smile of spiritual triumph. The events of Kira’s life are not parallel to the actions of Enjolras; she makes no public speeches, leads no men to die on barricades, and disclaims any concern with politics or revolution. But in portraying Kira’s attitude to her own life, Ayn Rand stresses the dedicated, one-track purposefulness she admired in Enjolras.

In the case of Leo Kovalensky, the contrast between him and Enjolras is, at first, more vivid than the comparison. When Kira meets him, he is dedicated to no purpose; Soviet Russia has drained his capacity for dedication, and his love for Kira does not restore it. Nonetheless, the physical image of Leo suggests Enjolras: “His mouth, calm, severe, contemptuous, was that of an ancient chieftain who could order men to die, and his eyes were such as could watch it” (61). Enjolras was described as “sévère” and his lower lip as “dédaigneuse” [disdainful] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1);¹⁹ he too is able to order men to die, and to watch their deaths. Ayn Rand, moreover, originally intended to associate Leo directly with Kira’s Viking. In the first draft, Kira is said to recognize, coming down the street, the face of her Viking, the hero of her favorite childhood book, a man who is indefatigable and uncrushable (i.e., like Enjolras).

The face and body of Leo, then, link him to Enjolras, a connection suggested repeatedly. The young Leo is associated with the marble statue of Apollo: “The tutors, and the servants, and the guests looked at Leo as they looked at the statue of Apollo in the Admiral’s studio, with the same reverent hopelessness they felt for the white marble of a distant age” (138).²⁰ Kira too associates his body with marble and a god: “His body was white as marble and as hard and straight; the body of a god, she thought, that should climb a mountainside at dawn, young grass under his feet, a morning mist on his muscles in a breath of homage” (186). Later, his face is “white as marble” (307). Enjolras is introduced in terms of marble: “C’était l’amoureux de

marbre de la Liberté” [He was the marble lover of liberty] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1).²¹ Enjolras has the “immobilité de marbre” [marble immobility] (part 4, book 12, chapter 8).²² When he is about to kill an enemy, there is a tear on his “joue de marbre” [marble cheek] (part 5, book 1, chapter 8).²³ And Enjolras, like Leo, is associated with Apollo: “C’était de lui peut-être que parlait le témoin qui disait plus tard devant le conseil de guerre: ‘Il y avait un insurgé que j’ai entendu nommer Apollon’” [Perhaps it was of him that the witness spoke who said afterward before the court-martial, “There was one insurgent whom I heard called Apollo”] (part 5, book 1, chapter 23).²⁴

Kira, who loves Leo at first sight and forever, sees in him “what he could have been, what he was intended to be” (326). That Leo in action is not more like Enjolras than he is, is the direct result of the poisonous world in which he lives and of the ideas that poison it.²⁵ And *We the Living*, in a sequence of passages, underscores the significance—in the context of that world—of a man’s having a face and body that suggest an Enjolras.

When Hugo introduces Enjolras, he describes his face and form, and comments that he would attract female attention, but that a woman who tried to attract his attention in return would be disappointed. If any grisette—intrigued and charmed by his youthful figure, unruly curls, and fresh lips—“eût eu appétit de toute cette aurore” [felt a desire to taste all this dawn], Enjolras would have brusquely rejected any such advances (part 3, book 4, chapter 1).²⁶ This sort of rebuff has a counterpart in *We the Living*. Compare it to Ayn Rand’s description of Leo, seeking work, standing in a line of defeated men.

He stood among them, tall, straight, young, a god’s form with lips that were still proud.

A streetwalker passed by and stopped; and looked, startled, at that man among the others; and winked an invitation. He did not move, only turned his head away. (172)

The first draft of this scene even includes the words “dawn on his forehead,”²⁷ which is similar to “toute cette aurore” [all this dawn], Leo looks like Enjolras, and evokes a similar response, to which he responds similarly.

This scene, however, has a sequel later in the novel. A customer in Leo’s store “stopped involuntarily, for a brief, startled moment, looking at the young man who had entered. . . . She . . . knew that she could not have many occasions to see that kind of young man on the streets of Petrograd” (293). She “looked straight at him, softly, defiantly.” This time, Leo’s response is different: “He answered with a glance that was an invitation, and a mocking insult, and almost a promise” (293–94). When he leaves the shop, he sees her waiting for him. “He hesitated for a second; then smiled and turned away” (294). The transition from the first scene to the second traces the decline of the Leo who should have been Kira’s mate, or the man who should have been Enjolras.

This pair of scenes, in the first draft, had another matching scene, in connection with Andrei. When Kira and Andrei are dining at the Garden:

A woman with a very red mouth and a slow, very graceful walk, her hips and stomach thrown forward, her shoulders slouched back, passed by their table and stopped for a brief second to look at the scar on the forehead of a man whose likes she did not see there often. She shrugged and walked on, but she threw a glance back at the child in the red dress, who had conquered the unconquerable.²⁸

In all three scenes, a woman who appreciates men, a woman we otherwise do not know, observes that a man is distinctive. The scene with Andrei, which Ayn Rand decided to omit, makes one point that is significantly different from the scenes with Leo: here, the emphasis is on the observer's respect for Kira, who has attracted a man hitherto romantically indifferent. Leo, by contrast, has considerable experience with women, although he truly loves no one but Kira. But Andrei, before Kira, has had no such experience. Comrade Sonia describes him as "the kind of saint that sleeps with red flags" (95). He has marched, in the uniform of the Red Army, "as a man walks to his wedding" (107). Enjolras is similar in having loved his cause as other men might love women. The name of Enjolras's metaphorical mistress is "Patria"; he has no other sweetheart (part 5, book 1, chapter 14).²⁹

In this respect, Andrei is more like Enjolras than is Leo. And even when Andrei is attracted to Kira, he initially retains his outward austerity: "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).

Andrei Taganov is in fact like Enjolras in a number of important respects. Consider the description of Enjolras as soldier of the revolution: "Il n'avait qu'une passion, le droit, qu'une pensée, renverser l'obstacle . . ." [He had one passion only, justice: one thought only, to overcome all obstacles] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1).³⁰ Enjolras is described as one for whom will and action are one: he "avait cette qualité d'un chef, de toujours faire ce qu'il disait" [had this quality of a leader, always to do as he said] (part 5, book 1, chapter 2).³¹

For Andrei, as for Enjolras, his life has been his dedication to his cause, without compromise, hesitation, or doubt. As he says to Kira: "If you know that a thing is right, you want to do it. If you don't want to do it—it isn't right. If it's right and you don't want to do it—you don't know what right is and you're not a man" (89). He is as devoted, and as implacable, as Enjolras, even after he has grown to love Kira and to experience through her a personal joy in life. He asks Kira not to talk with him about the case against Leo: "I'm expecting the highest integrity from the men I'm going to face. Don't make me face them with less than that on my part" (386). When Kira nonetheless asks him to drop the case, he turns to her with "the implacable face of Comrade Taganov of the G.P.U., a face that could have watched secret executions in dark, secret cellars" (386).

The execution performed by Enjolras is not secret, but he acts with equally stern resolution and with the strictest adherence to principle. When Enjolras sees Le Cabuc, ostensibly one of his men, kill an old doorkeeper without reason, he immediately announces that Le Cabuc must prepare to die. Enjolras's profile is "implacable" and "grec" [Greek], his gaze "convaincu et sévère" [determined and severe], his serenity "redoutable" [fearful], and his purpose clear: "nous sommes sous le regard de la révolution; nous sommes les prêtres de la république, nous sommes les hosties du devoir, et il ne faut pas qu'on puisse calomnier notre combat" [we are under the eyes of the Revolution, we are the priests of the Republic, we are the sacramental host of duty, and no one can defame our combat] (part 4, book 12, chapter 8).³² In their pride in their purity, and in the purity of their pride, Enjolras and Andrei speak a similar language.

In describing Enjolras, Hugo invokes Antinous, a Greek page who became the last of the Roman gods (part 3, book 4, chapter 1), and Themis, a Greek god of justice and human rights (part 4, book 12, chapter 8). In describing Andrei, Ayn Rand refers to Romans and crusaders:

A street lamp beyond the tall window threw a blue square of light, checkered into panes, on the wall by the staircase; little shadows of raindrops rolled slowly down

the wall. 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.

Its tall, black shadow moved slowly, across the blue square of light and raindrops on the wall. (311)

Ayn Rand mentioned this passage as one that she considered especially effective.³³

An incident with Enjolras, finally, is in part parallel with a striking episode in Andrei's personal history. Enjolras—with sorrow but without hesitation—is responsible for the death of a man he respects, an artillery gunner who has killed two of Enjolras's men, and wounded three. The gunner is described as very young, blond, handsome, with an intelligent air. Combeferre, Enjolras's comrade in arms, says: "Figure-toi que c'est un charmant jeune homme, il est intrépide, on voit qu'il pense . . . il a un père, une mère, une famille, il aime probablement, il a tout au plus vingt-cinq ans, il pourrait être ton frère" [Just think that he's a charming young man; he's intrepid; you can see that he's a thinker . . . he has a father, a mother, a family; he's in love, probably; he's twenty-five at most; he might be your brother]. Enjolras responds: "Il l'est" [He is].

But when Combeferre asks that they not kill him, Enjolras responds: "Laisse-moi. Il faut ce qu'il faut" [Leave me alone. We must do what we must]. Then, he acts.

Et une larme coula lentement sur la joue de marbre d'Enjolras.
En même temps il pressa la détente de sa carabine.

[And a tear rolled slowly down Enjolras's marble cheek.

At the same time he pressed the trigger of his carbine.] (part 5, book 1, chapter 8)³⁴

Perhaps the most dramatic aspect of this scene is the simultaneity of his actions: he shoots and weeps at the same time.

An analogous episode in Andrei's life occurs after the battle of Perekop. Andrei walks for many miles with a White soldier, whom he eventually discovers to be Captain Karsavin, "one of the last names to fear in the White Army" (110), a leader with buckets of Red blood on his hands. As the two, both wounded, walk together, struggling to reach any sort of camp, they develop a respect for each other's tenacity. Andrei physically supports his enemy, almost carrying him, even though doing so makes the walk harder for him. As they approach a camp that turns out to belong the Reds, Andrei recognizes the "young, indomitable face." Karsavin, who looks white in the light of dawn, speaks of his childhood; he is the son of a mother who would not let him see the sunrise because she worried about his health. Karsavin asks Andrei to shoot him, which Andrei cannot do. What he does instead, at Karsavin's request, is to give him a gun, and to walk on, hearing in the background Karsavin's shot.

Whereas the other parallels with Enjolras simply show that Ayn Rand dramatized in Andrei some of the features Hugo attributes to his hero, this instance shows how she improved upon Hugo. The notion that one's enemy in war may be in some respects a brother in spirit is a commonplace of war literature; Hugo makes the scene more dramatic by having his hero show an emotion incongruous for him (a tear on his marble face). Ayn Rand makes the scene even more dramatic by having Andrei "show" emotion by keeping the memory to himself—he is said not to like to talk about how he got the scar he received in this battle. Hugo uses dialogue

between Enjolras and his companion to dramatize the victim's family ties and the bond the hero feels between himself and the man he kills. Ayn Rand makes the family ties more dramatic by having the victim himself refer to them—not generally, but concretely, with a memory of his mother and his mornings. Ayn Rand makes the bond between Andrei and Karsavin more dramatic by showing how they earned each other's respect in action, whereas Hugo stresses instead the contrast between Combeferre's impulse to be merciful and Enjolras's commitment to his battle. Most significantly, Ayn Rand concludes the scene not with the conventional (one soldier shoots his enemy) but with two principled choices (Andrei will not betray his own code by shooting a soldier who ought to be treated as a prisoner, but he will not withhold from a man he admires an escape from intolerable capture and torture) that achieve the same result.

The Karsavin episode, moreover, is the first of two suicides that matter to Andrei (the second is that of Stepan Timoshenko) and that precede his own. For Andrei is not privileged to die the heroic death of Enjolras (Ayn Rand's favorite scene³⁵). He is not entitled to die Enjolras's death, in the context of *We the Living*, because not only is he not the novel's hero, but he is actually one of its villains.

His ideal—in his explicit statements, in his conscious convictions, and in his actions as an agent of the GPU—is an evil ideal, the ideal of collectivism. That his love for Kira—and for the individualist, life-loving spirit she embodies—contradicts his chosen ideal creates a conflict for him, one that ends in tragedy. This sort of contradiction is dramatized in Hugo's fiction, in two characters who are officially villains, but whom Hugo treats with dignity and dramatic color. Andrei, in other words, has qualities in common not only with Enjolras, but with Claude Frollo in *Notre Dame of Paris* and Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*.

Andrei, like Frollo, is austere, implacable, and chaste—until he becomes passionately obsessed with a woman who represents the opposite of the ideal that has governed his life. Ayn Rand has analyzed in detail a speech in which Frollo avows his love for Esmeralda; she pays tribute to Hugo's style and contrasts it with her own. Later in the present article, I will discuss her style and his, and at that point will also contrast Andrei's love for Kira with the priest's love for the gypsy.

Here, I want to consider Ayn Rand's comments on Javert, some of which are pertinent to her characterization of Andrei. When she first read the novel, she “considered him very much the villain” and “was very much out of sympathy with him throughout.” His regard for the law, which stood for “society or tradition or the status quo,” was, in her view, a highly unworthy motivation, of which she strongly disapproved. She approved, however, of his letting Jean Valjean go, and of his suicide: “he acquired stature for me” when “he broke [the law] and [underwent] that struggle in his soul I took that incident to be [that] the right wins. And that he atoned nobly for his errors.”³⁶

As described by Hugo, Javert is the epitome of the implacable. He sounds, in fact, significantly like Enjolras: “Il était stoïque, sérieux, austère. . . . Son regard était une vrille. Cela était froid et cela perçait” [He was stoical, serious, austere. . . . His stare was cold and piercing as a gimlet] (part 1, book 5, chapter 5).³⁷ He has “la sérénité intrépide de l'homme qui n'a jamais menti” [the intrepid severity of the man who has never lied] (part 4, book 12, chapter 7).³⁸ He is, like Enjolras, a man of marble. “C'était le devoir implacable, la police comprise comme les Spartiates comprenaient Sparte, un guet impitoyable, une honnêteté farouche, un mouchard marmoréen” [It was implacable duty; the police as central to him as Sparta to the Spartans; a pitiless detective, fiercely honest, a marble-hearted informer] (part 1, book 5, chapter 5).³⁹

In the long chapter “Javert Déraillé” [Javert Off the Track] (part 5, book 4, chapter 1), Hugo depicts, at length, Javert’s bewilderment at two actions: that Jean Valjean, the convict, has spared Javert’s life, and that Javert, the man of the law, has released the man he has spent his life pursuing. Hugo writes that Javert could not understand himself, that his “code n’était plus qu’un tronçon dans sa main” [code was no longer anything but a stump in his hand].⁴⁰ He thinks: “Cela ne pouvait durer ainsi” [This could not go on].⁴¹ He writes a note, his last. He goes to a parapet overlooking the whirlpool of the Seine. He stands calmly.

Tout à coup, il ôta son chapeau et le posa sur le rebord du quai. Un moment après, une figure haute et noire, que de loin quelque passant attardé eût pu prendre pour un fantôme, apparut debout sur le parapet, se courba vers la Seine, puis se redressa, et tomba droite dans les ténèbres; il y eut un clapotement sourd; et l’ombre seule fut dans le secret des convulsions de cette forme obscure disparue sous l’eau.

[Suddenly he took off his hat and laid it on the edge of the quay. A moment later, a tall, black form, which from the distance some belated pedestrian might have taken for a phantom, appeared standing on the parapet, bent toward the Seine, then sprang up, and fell straight into the darkness: there was a dull splash; and the night alone was admitted to the secret convulsions of that obscure form which had disappeared under the water.]⁴²

Andrei too acted against the ideal he had served, atoned for his actions, and took his own life instead of either continuing or altering its course. His disillusionment with the ideal of collectivism has been ongoing. Whereas Hugo spends ten pages describing Javert’s thoughts on a single night, Ayn Rand has shown Andrei progressively seeing, stating, and disowning his errors—in conversations with Kira about the nature and purpose of life, in saving Leo by blackmailing Syerov, in calling the party committee to account for the evil goals of collectivism. By contrast with Hugo’s depiction of Javert’s spiritual “derailment,” Ayn Rand’s analysis of Andrei’s transformation is not only more philosophical, but more tightly integrated with the rest of the novel.

The suicide itself has the calm deliberateness of Javert’s, and is a similarly private act. Andrei piles up his books, burns the relics of his romance with Kira, and writes a note, his last. “There was only one shot, and because the frozen marble stairway was long and dark and led to a garden buried in deep snow, no one came up to investigate” (428). In evaluating her artistic success in *We the Living*, Ayn Rand singled out this sequence as one in which, through understatement, she achieved what she attempted.⁴³ And we see that although Andrei does not die the heroic, smiling death of Enjolras, he has some qualities of Enjolras (as did Kira and Leo), and his death has the tranquil dignity of the death of Javert, and more.

TIGHT PLOTTING

When Ayn Rand looked back on her first reading of Hugo, she recalled being impressed by his “plot inventiveness”;⁴⁴ she mentioned the episode of the bishop’s candlesticks in *Les Misérables*, but did not dwell on or analyze the plot of that novel or any of the others. In her lectures on fiction writing and in her published essays on Hugo, however, she pays a great deal of attention to his plots and plot-theme integration. She considered plot “the crucial attribute of the novel,”⁴⁵

and she worked hard at constructing her own plots, including the novel at hand, which she considered her most tightly plotted novel.⁴⁶ What she said about Hugo's plots and her own is pertinent to our subject: the connections between Hugo and *We the Living*.

Speaking of Hugo's *Ninety-Three* (and, by implication, of all his novels), she commented that the excellence of his plotting derives from integration: "Hugo's inexhaustible imagination is at its virtuoso best in an extremely difficult aspect of a novelist's task: the integration of an abstract theme to the plot of a story."⁴⁷ The events in the narrative all feature the theme, and these events, logically connected, compose a plot. In her analysis of *Ninety-Three*, she emphasizes the way all episodes and all characters dramatize the theme, and she shows how the climax resolves the plotline.

In her lectures on fiction writing, she provides a similarly detailed analysis of the plotting of *Notre Dame of Paris*. Starting "from scratch," she shows how the plot-theme of the novel could be developed, step by step, from a "germ" of an idea (a priest in the Middle Ages), by identifying and intensifying a conflict—and then she comments that Hugo himself would not have needed to develop his plot-theme step by step: "The inexhaustible ingenuity for plot shown in his plays indicates that writing and conflict were nearly synonymous to him. He had such a grasp of the nature of conflict that its projection became automatic."⁴⁸ Every event in the plot supports the plot-theme. The structure is unified: "Every incident of *Notre-Dame de Paris* is ruled by the same principle: make it as hard as possible for the characters, and tie the lesser characters' tragedies to the main line of events."⁴⁹ And the climax, which she analyzes at length, is "a resolution in action of their [Quasimodo's and Frollo's] conflict of values."⁵⁰

In her comments on *We the Living*, she points to the same virtues, in this context, that she praised in Hugo. The novel's plot depends on conflicts of values among individuals; the progression of its events is designed for maximum conflict; its climax derives from, and resolves, the key conflict. Of the nature of the plot, she states:

By contrast [with *Anthem*, which has no plot], *We the Living*, my most tightly plotted story, has not only a social message, the evil of a collective society, but also a conflict among specific persons. The story is not "Kira [the heroine] against the state"; the villain is actually Andrei, along with such lesser representatives of the communist system as Syerov, Sonia, and Victor. Had it been "Kira against the state," the story would have been plotless.⁵¹

Regarding the maximizing of conflict, she points out that the specific plot-theme of *We the Living* is a more dramatic version of the "trite plot-theme: the woman who sells herself to a man she does not love for the sake of the man whom she does love." Such a conflict, as in the opera *Tosca* is, according to Ayn Rand, "good, but simple, one-line"—and hence inadequate for her purposes:

Now ask yourself how one can make it harder for the characters. Suppose the woman sells herself, not to a villain who forces her into it, but to a man who really loves her, whom she respects and whose love she takes seriously. He does not want to buy her, and she must hide from him that it is a sale—but she has to sell herself to save the man she really loves, a man who happens to be the particular person the buyer hates most. This is a much more dramatic conflict—and it is the plot-theme of *We the Living*.⁵²

The climax of *We the Living* is the scene in which Andrei discovers, while arresting Leo, that Kira is Leo's mistress; this sequence includes the scene in which Kira throws in Andrei's face her pride in what she has done, and the scene in which he proclaims to the party committee the life-centered values he has learned from Kira. The climax thus resolves, at once, the conflicts of individuals and the conflicts of ideas.

A full analysis of the plot structure of *We the Living* is beyond the scope of the present chapter. Such an analysis would show how the novel builds suspense by postponing the revelation of the truth about the romantic triangle, how it heightens dramatic conflict by making Andrei in some respects nobler than Leo, how it emphasizes the specific agony of Kira's unbearable position by comparing it with Irina's as she faces what amounts to a death sentence ("Well, kid, I don't know which of us needs more courage to face the future," 350), and how it provides numerous opportunities for additional comparisons and contrasts, involving characters both major and minor.

Consider, as a small example, the novel's three pregnancies: Marisha Lavrova aborts an unwanted pregnancy; Comrade Sonia Presniakova exploits pregnancy to blackmail Pavel Syerov into marriage; Vava Milovskaia accedes to pregnancy as part of her general surrender to lethargic despair. Or consider, as a larger example, three variations on prostitution. Leo tries to buy Kira; Kira later sells herself to Andrei; Leo ultimately sells himself to Antonina Platoshkina. Contrasts between major and minor characters—for example, the battle of Melitopol, at which Andrei takes a big risk and Syerov makes a big speech—are significant, as are the points of contrast (the multiple versions of "If I'm still alive, and if I don't forget") and continuity within characters: addressing the party committee, Andrei's voice "rose, ringing, as it had risen in a dark valley over the White trenches many years ago" (409; cf. 109). Nothing in this novel is accidental or irrelevant.

TRAGIC ENDINGS

Although Ayn Rand's later novels had tragic elements (e.g., Wynand's self-betrayal in *The Fountainhead*, and the death in *Atlas Shrugged* of Tony, the "Wet Nurse"), *We the Living* is the only one of her novels to have a tragic ending. She commented on tragic endings in Hugo and in her own first novel, emphasizing the similarity in the approaches to tragedy:

The justification for presenting tragic endings in literature is to show, as in *We the Living*, that the human spirit can survive even the worst of circumstances—that the worst that the chance events of nature or the evil of other people can do will not defeat the proper human spirit. To quote from Galt's speech in *Atlas Shrugged*: "Suffering as such is not a value; only man's fight against suffering, is" . . .

In *We the Living*, all the good people are defeated. The philosophical justification of the tragedy is the fact that the story denounces the collectivist state and shows, metaphysically, that man cannot be destroyed by it; he can be killed, but not changed or negated. The heroine dies radiantly endorsing life, feeling happiness in her last moment because she has known what life properly should be.

. . .

Victor Hugo, who usually has unhappy endings, always presents his characters' suffering somewhat in the way that I do in *We the Living*. Even if a

particular character meets with disaster, the tragedy and pain are never complete; they are not, metaphysically, the final word on man.⁵³

Tragic endings show that nothing, not even death, can conquer the spirit of life, that disaster and suffering are tests over which the soul can triumph. Why, though, were tragic endings characteristic of Victor Hugo and atypical for Ayn Rand? She states:

Most of his novels have tragic endings—as if he were unable to concretize the form in which his heroes could triumph on earth, and he could only let them die in battle, with an unbroken integrity of spirit as the only assertion of their loyalty to life; as if, to him, it was the earth, not heaven, that represented an object of longing, which he could never fully reach or win.⁵⁴

This description applies well to many of the deaths in Hugo's novels, including that of Enjolras (who dies in physical battle, and with a smile on his face). Jean Valjean says he is dying happy; his deathbed is attended by the spirit of the bishop who instigated Valjean's spiritual redemption. Dea and Gwynplaine in *The Man Who Laughs* seek paradise regained not "ici-bas" [below], but "là-haut" [on high] (part 2, conclusion, chapters 3 and 4).⁵⁵ Gauvain in *Ninety-Three*—"debout, superbe, tranquille" [erect, proud, tranquil]—has on his bright face "joie pensive" [pensive joy] (part 3, book 7, chapter 6);⁵⁶ his departing soul mingles with that of Cimourdain, who dies at the same moment.

Enjolras and Gauvain have prophesied a glorious future on earth, and Hugo suggests that they will find glory in heaven. As novelist, however, he conveys neither of these states of glory. Instead he implies that the heroes' lives are such that they have already experienced what they will see in heaven and what others will eventually see on earth. Ayn Rand's equivalent might be the statement: "Anyone who fights for the future, lives in it today."⁵⁷ In her fiction, though, she typically shows the achievement of values, and the continuing fight for them. Why, then, does *We the Living* have an ending closer to that of a Hugo novel? Because Soviet Russia, in this novel, is analogous to the earth in a novel by Hugo. As Hugo believed that no triumph was possible on earth, so Ayn Rand knew that no triumph was possible in Soviet Russia.

Hugo imagined a mystical "beyond" where heroes would receive their due and would be reunited with those they love, and some of his tragic deaths imply that the characters had in their sight this other realm. For Ayn Rand, who is no mystic, the relevant other realm is a real place, "Abroad," and Kira, as she dies, imagines she is going there, to see again the man she loves.⁵⁸ *We the Living*, to be sure, does not imply that Kira will reach this place or that the person she expects to see is actually there. Ayn Rand removes the mystical implications of Hugo's ending while retaining his power and his point: It is worth living while one is alive, even though death is always the end and often too soon.

She was calling him, the Leo that could have been, that would have been, had he lived there, where she was going, across the border. He was awaiting her there, and she had to go on. She had to walk. There, in that world, across the border, a life was waiting for her to which she had been faithful her every living hour, her only banner that had never been lowered, that she had held high and straight, a life she could not betray, she would not betray now by stopping while she was still living, a life she could still serve, by walking, by walking forward a little longer, just a little longer. (463)

Kira, the good soldier, dies at dawn. In the draft of the novel, Ayn Rand associated that death with the triumph of the Viking who had been Kira’s lifelong inspiration.

A Viking had lived, who had laughed at Kings, who had laughed at Priests, who had laughed at Men, who had held, sacred and inviolable, high over all temples, over all to which men knew how to kneel, his one banner—the sanctity of life. He had known and she knew. He had fought and she was fighting. He had shown her the way. To the banner of life, all could be given, even life itself.⁵⁹

Kira’s thoughts at the time of her death were, Ayn Rand said, “in a way” the thoughts that she herself had had when she and her family were held up by bandits on their journey to the Crimea. As Kira reflected on her life, on her song, on her love, Ayn Rand had held in her mind the death of Enjolras, smiling, serene, unbroken: “Now if they are going to shoot, I want to die as well as he did . . . that’s what I want to be thinking of last—not of Russia nor the horrors.”⁶⁰

STYLE

Ayn Rand, by her own account, labored over the use of language in her first novel, and was not entirely satisfied with the result—not only because she was not able, at first, to devote full time to writing, not only because she was still gaining control over English, and not only because she was not certain how much she needed to write in order to be clear to the reader, but also because, at times, she was writing too much in the style of the writer she most admired. A full analysis of the style of *We the Living* would include detailed reports regarding such aspects as syntax, diction, metaphor, and rhythm—in the multiple versions of the text⁶¹—as well as comparisons and contrasts with Ayn Rand’s later writing (and, if relevant, the prose of other authors). The present chapter will be limited to the following: some specific features of Hugo’s style that have counterparts in *We the Living*, the passage in *We the Living* that Ayn Rand considered to be too much like Hugo, a passage in *Notre Dame of Paris* that she analyzed and contrasted with her own writing, and the nearest equivalent in *We the Living* to the artistic function of the episode Ayn Rand cited as one of her favorites in *Les Misérables*.

Hugo, to begin with, frequently described characters as if they were combinations of individuals, sometimes contradictory in nature. In *Les Misérables*, for example, he writes:

Cette Thénardier était comme le produit de la greffe d’une donzelle sur une poissarde. Quand on l’entendait parler, on disait: C’est un gendarme; quand on la regardait boire, on disait: C’est un charretier; quand on la voyait manier Cosette, on disait: C’est le bourreau.

[This Thénardiess was a cross between a whore and a fishwife. To hear her speak, you would say this was a policeman; to see her drink, you would say this was a cartman; if you saw her handle Cosette, you would say this was the hangman.]
(part 2, book 3, chapter 2)⁶²

Her husband “avait le regard d’une fouine et la mine d’un homme de lettres” [had the look of a weasel and the air of a man of letters] (part 2, book 3, chapter 2).⁶³ In *The Man Who Laughs*, the doctor on the Matutina boat is said to have “le sourcil d’un trabucaire modifié par le regard d’un archevêque” [the brow of an incendiary tempered by the eyes of an archbishop] (part 1, book 2,

chapter 2).⁶⁴ One parallel passage would be the description of Kira as alternately “a Valkyrie with lance and winged helmet in the sweep of battle” and “an imp perched on top of a toadstool, laughing in the faces of daisies” (44). Another would be Kira dressed for Victor’s wedding—“severe as a nun, graceful as a Marquise of two centuries past”; Leo, in effect, adds two more characters: he “took her hand, as if she were a lady at a Court reception, and kissed her palm, as if she were a courtesan” (297).

Hugo frequently commented on the relationship (harmonious or contrasting) of body and soul. In *Notre Dame of Paris*, for example, it is observed of Frollo and Quasimodo that the soul of one is like the body of the other (book 4, chapter 6); Josiane, in *The Man Who Laughs*, similarly asserts, with pride, that she is a moral monster and that Gwynplaine is a physical monster (part book 7, chapter 4). The child Gwynplaine was one “qui, pygmée par la stature, avait été colosse par l’âme” [who, a pygmy in stature, had been a colossus in soul] (part 2, book 5, chapter 5).⁶⁵ Of Kira, we are told that it “seemed that the words she said were ruled by the will of her body and that her sharp movements were the unconscious reflection of a dancing, laughing soul” (44). Of Uncle Vasili, we learn that “his backbone had been as straight as his gun: his spirit as straight as his backbone” (35).

Hugo’s sentences and paragraphs cover the extremes of terseness and length. On the one hand, he has one-sentence paragraphs and rapid-fire question-and-answer dialogue. Examples include the episode of the shipwrecked comprachicos in *The Man Who Laughs* (part 1, book 2), the conversation between Lantenac and Halmalo in *Ninety-Three* (part 1, book 3, chapter 1), and that between Cimourdain and Imânus later in the novel (part 3, book 4, chapter 8). Parallels in *We the Living* would be the first meeting of Leo and Kira (part 1, chapter 4), parts of the death scene of Maria Petrovna (part 1, chapter 14), and Andrei’s meeting with the executive of the Economic Section of the G.P.U. (part 2, chapter 12).

On the other hand, Hugo also has—for times of great emotion—long, private speeches of appeal and even longer public speeches of inspiration or rebuke. Examples of the private speeches include those of the recluse in *Notre Dame of Paris* (book 11, chapter 1) and Michelle Flécharde in *Ninety-Three* (part 3, book 5, chapter 1). Examples of public speeches include those of Enjolras in *Les Misérables* (part 5, book 1, chapter 5) and Gwynplaine in *The Man Who Laughs* (part 2, book 8, chapter 7). A parallel private speech is Kira’s appeal to the commissar (part 1, chapter 16); a parallel public speech is Andrei’s address to the party committee (part 2, chapter 13).

Another of Hugo’s devices is a contrast built on syntactic parallelism. An example from *Ninety-Three* is Lantenac’s statement to Halmalo, the brother of the sailor who carelessly released a cannon, then bravely stopped it. Lantenac, after awarding the sailor a high rank, had ordered him shot. “Ton frère avait été courageux, je l’ai récompensé; il avait été coupable; je l’ai puni. Il avait manqué à son devoir, je n’ai pas manqué au mien” [Your brother was courageous; I recompensed that. He was culpable; I punished that. He had failed in his duty; I did not fail in mine] (part 1, book 3, chapter 1).⁶⁶ In this instance, as is frequently the case with Hugo, the style dramatizes the contrast.

One example from *We the Living* is the death of Andrei’s mother: “Some said it was the wooden trough that had killed her, for it had always been too full; and some said it was the kitchen cupboard, for it had always been too empty” (105). An example from the dialogue is Andrei’s explanation to Kira and Leo: “Syerov has powerful friends. That saved him. But he’s not very brave. That saved you” (420).

Although the stylistic features mentioned here are not unique to Hugo, they are characteristic of him, and he was the writer Ayn Rand most read and admired (although not uncritically). Looking back, she commented, as follows, on the process of influence:

My mind would work in those literary forms which had most impressed me. Because I could not yet have any of my own, not on a first novel. And the first novel took care of that influence. . . . And I was very aware, even epistemologically, that my mind seem[ed] to follow at times his kind of pattern, because the field of expressing myself [was] totally new to me. And what I [was] learning in the process [was] how to form my own methods of expression. And only at times would it run into those methods which had impressed me so much in his case. . . .

Such an approach, she thought, was “almost necessary” for a beginner: “this is the way you would think of expressing yourself, because that’s the most forceful way you had ever seen and you have not yet developed your own methods.”⁶⁷

By way of contrasting his method with her own, she commented:

If you compare *We the Living* to *The Fountainhead*, you’ll see the difference. A certain kind of over-assertive, over-editorial, and slightly over-dramatic turn of sentences, particularly the description of Petrograd in *We the Living*. I think it is as near as I came to being influenced by Hugo. That description is very much his influence on me; that is not the way I would write today.

She criticizes Hugo for “wild or broad assertions,” for “wild or inexact figures of speech.” She also points to her changing evaluation of the passage in question:

I thought by the time I was finishing it that the description of Petrograd was well done. But today [1960] I don’t particularly like it, or rather, I can objectively say, yes, it’s fairly well done for what it is. But it’s the one passage that shows Hugo’s influence. So the style is not mine; it’s not the method natural to me.⁶⁸

Hugo’s influence is evident not only in the matter of content—the five pages she spends describing the history and appearance of a city—but in what she terms the “over-assertive, over-editorial, and slightly over-dramatic turn of sentences.”

Earlier in this chapter, in the context of the novel’s historical background, I tried to show that Ayn Rand’s use of history in this passage, while unusual for her, was more closely integrated with the novel as a whole than was typically the case for parallel passages in Hugo. Even when she is somewhat like Hugo, she is also unlike him, and more like herself. The same is true in this context. She does not commit all of the stylistic excesses she criticizes in Hugo. Although I do not know what she would have considered “wild,” I myself would consider “wild” such assertions as “Un éléphant que hait une fourmi est en danger” [An elephant hated by a worm is in danger] (*Man Who Laughs*, part 2, book 1, chapter 9)⁶⁹ or “Qui a soif de flatterie revomit le réel, bu par surprise” [he who thirsts for flattery vomits the real, when he has happened to drink it by mistake] (*Man Who Laughs*, part 2, book 9, chapter 2)⁷⁰ and such figures of speech as “Figurez-vous l’abîme, et au milieu de l’abîme une oasis de clarté, et dans cette oasis ces deux êtres hors de la vie, s’éblouissant” [Imagine to yourself an abyss, and in its centre an oasis of light, and in this oasis two creatures shut out of life, dazzling each other] (*Man Who*

Laughs, part 2, book 2, chapter 5).⁷¹ A reader can appreciate the color of such sentences, but no reader would expect to find such sentences in Ayn Rand—even in *We the Living*.

We do, however, see sentences such as “The palace looks like a barracks; the theater looks like a palace” (239). Hugo specializes in such incongruity: “On l’avait d’avance fiancé à une plaie guérissante. On l’avait prédestiné à être consolé par une affliction. La tenaille de bourreau s’était doucement faite main de femme” [They had affianced him beforehand to a healing wound. They had predestined him for consolation by an affliction. The pincers of the executioner had softly changed into the delicately molded hand of a girl] (*Man Who Laughs*, part 2, book 2, chapter 4).⁷² The mature Ayn Rand would convey incongruity with more subtlety, for example, “The Top and the Bottom” in *Atlas Shrugged* (part 1, chapter 3): a penthouse restaurant has the physical and moral darkness of a cave, while a basement cafeteria is its opposite in every sense.

The Petrograd passage describes four black statues of men with horses: in the first, the horse threatens to crush the man; by the last, the “beast is tamed” (239). The statues together “may be the spirit of Petrograd, the city raised by man against the will of nature.” Hugo specializes in attribution of symbolic meaning to physical objects, such as the stone monument, a monstrous Egyptian elephant, based on an idea of Napoleon’s (*Les Misérables*, part 4, book 6, chapter 2). For her own literary purposes, the mature Ayn Rand would not comment on existing statues or buildings, but would invent appropriate objects, such as the Stoddard Temple in *The Fountainhead*.

She comments, in general, that her style, contrasted with Hugo’s, is “much more calculated, much more conscious, much more intellectual, and more economical.”⁷³ She makes similar observations in a specific context: her analysis of Frolo’s avowal of love to Esmeralda in *Notre Dame of Paris* (book 8, chapter 4). This analysis, accompanied by Ayn Rand’s own translation of Frolo’s speech, is worth reading in full.⁷⁴ To summarize: she praises Hugo’s exact concretization of Frolo’s pain and the essence of his conflict (as a priest in love with a pagan gypsy): his awareness that what he desires is impossible, combined with his decision to try to win her anyway because he cannot fight his passion. Along with praising Hugo’s virtues, Ayn Rand also indicates his deficiencies: the repetitions, the interference of the narrator’s commentary, and the fact that the character would not be capable of the literary speech Hugo places in his mouth. Hugo is, she says, “much freer” in his presentation than she is in that “he does not strive for minute precision or tight economy of intellectual content” as she does.⁷⁵

When she lectured on this material, she was asked about a possible parallel between Claude Frolo’s speech here and Hank Rearden’s to Dagny at Ellis Wyatt’s house, and she agreed that there was a resemblance.⁷⁶ In both, an austere man confesses to a passion he has tried to suppress, a passion that contradicts his explicit convictions; she had earlier mentioned that, when she first read *Notre Dame*, her attitude about Frolo’s passion for Esmeralda “would be, in effect, [her] attitude towards Rearden.”⁷⁷ But before Rearden, there was Andrei. In examining his avowal to Kira in the light of Frolo’s speech to Esmeralda, we will see that Ayn Rand gave him some of the qualities not only of Enjolras and Javert (as discussed earlier), but also of Frolo—and she did so, as we would expect, not in imitation, but in her own way.

Andrei is like Frolo in several respects. As Frolo’s religious code forbids any relationships with women, Andrei’s dedication to his cause has precluded any romantic involvements. Both of them, however, have developed violent passions, and the objects of their obsessions are distinctly unsuitable. The least appropriate choice for Frolo is a pagan gypsy; the least appropriate choice for Andrei is a woman who defies (or at least denies) his cause, a woman

who “is everything [he] always expected to hate” (232). And these choices are impossible for an additional reason: the men have reason to expect rejection. Frollo knows that Esmeralda loves a dashing soldier, and he sees the “squalid cassock of a priest,” with all that it represents, as an inadequate substitute. Andrei feels that he has nothing to offer Kira because his life “represents twenty-eight years of that for which [she feels] contempt” (232).

We the Living sums up the situation of Andrei’s avowal as follows: “It was not an admission of love, it was the confession of a crime” (231). The sentence applies equally well to Frollo’s avowal. Frollo, moreover, tries first to kidnap Esmeralda, and then to have her arrested, so that he can possess her; Andrei has a similar thought: he thinks of having Kira arrested for the same purpose. Frollo pleads “Have pity, young girl”;⁷⁸ Andrei imagines Kira “crying for pity as [he had] been crying to [her] so many months” (232).

And Ayn Rand does, literarily, what she praises Hugo for doing: she conveys the “intense passion and conflict” by means of concretes. Whereas Hugo has Frollo imagine the girl’s feet dancing on his prayer book, Ayn Rand has Andrei say:

To see you, and laugh with you, and talk of the future of humanity—and think only of when your hand would touch mine, of your feet in the sand, the little shadow on your throat, your skirt blowing in the wind. To discuss the meaning of life—and wonder if I could see the line of your breast in your open collar! (231)

But Ayn Rand eliminates the flaws she observes in Hugo. Andrei, unlike Frollo, is not overliterary or overarticulate. He speaks with the directness of the austere soldier that he is, and with the slight awkwardness of a man unaccustomed to the subject he speaks of here for the first time: “I’d take you—and I wouldn’t care if it were the floor, and if those men stood looking” (232). Her style is more economical, avoiding repetition, whereas for Hugo less was never more: Andrei’s confession is less than one-third the length of Frollo’s.

Another contrast lies in the difference between Ayn Rand’s conscious control of her craft and intention and Victor Hugo’s uneven control. The characterization of Andrei—the villain who is also noble—was part of the design of *We the Living*; he was intended to represent the best supporter of a corrupt ideal. Hugo, by contrast, apparently created a sympathetic villain in spite of himself.

Although the priest does terrible things in the novel, one is never convinced that he is a total villain. Hugo obviously intended him as a villain, but, psychologically and philosophically, he was not sold on the idea. This conflict between Hugo’s conscious convictions and his deepest, subconscious view of life shows in his style.

If Hugo’s full conviction had been that the priest’s passion is evil, the priest’s way of speaking of his passion would have been much less attractive.⁷⁹

The contrast between these parallel scenes in *Notre Dame of Paris* and *We the Living* shows how Ayn Rand, in depicting a situation similar to one dramatized by Hugo, derived emotional power from concretes, as did he, while avoiding his flaws and applying the scene to a more coherent characterization.

A final aspect of Hugo’s style that is relevant to *We the Living* is the recurrent object or motif, introduced early and recalled continually at key points. Two examples are the bishop’s candlesticks in *Les Misérables* and the message in the flask in *The Man Who Laughs*. Although

Ayn Rand does not analyze the recurrent use of these devices, she mentioned being impressed by the way Hugo introduced both of them.⁸⁰ Regarding the scene in which the flask remains on the surface of the sea, after the comprachicos drown, she writes: “To appreciate the full meaning of that scene, one has to read the rest of *The Man Who Laughs* and discover the nature, as well as the enormous consequences, of the message in that flask.”⁸¹

The motif or object can be an aid to integration. Hugo wants the reader to remember that the bishop gave Jean Valjean the candlesticks in order to “buy” his soul, and to notice that the candlesticks are consistently associated with the hero’s best self. Indeed, it is a moral turning point when Jean Valjean almost destroys the candlesticks, and realizes what he would be destroying if he did so. The hero ultimately dies with the light of the candlesticks on his face.

The corresponding devices in *We the Living* are the story of the Viking and the “Song of Broken Glass.” Whereas the candlesticks were a gift from a bishop, who assigned them their meaning, Kira’s story and song are chosen values, whose meaning she herself assigns. In editing the novel, Ayn Rand shortened the story of the Viking and removed the literal references that were originally designed to appear later (when Kira first glimpsed Leo’s face and when she died). But she retained all references and allusions to the song.

The song is introduced as part of Kira’s background, as the symbol of something she expects of life, something other than the work of being an engineer. “The other thing which she expected, she did not know, for it had no name, but it had been promised to her, promised in a memory of her childhood” (50). That memory, we learn, is one of the songs she heard from a casino below as she sat on a cliff, songs that “had a significance for Kira that no one else ever attached to them” because she heard in them “a profound joy of life” (50). There follows a description of the song she “selected . . . as her, Kira’s, own” (51), “sharp blows,” “quick, fine notes,” “slow notes,” and “the leap into the explosion of laughter.” The song is the promise. “A lonely little girl on a slippery rock listened to her own hymn and smiled at what it promised her.” The “hymn” is also a military march (a term Andrei will later use to describe Kira herself): “Kira Argounova entered [life] with the sword of a Viking pointing the way and an operetta tune for a battle march” (51).

She hears the song again on the night she meets Leo, in the red-light district. “It was the song of a nameless hope that frightened her, for it promised so much, and she could not tell what it promised; she could not even say that it was a promise; it was an emotion, almost of pain, that went through her whole body” (60). In the first draft, Ayn Rand wrote, then crossed out the following line: “As a soldier at the sound of his anthem, Kira stood at attention, smiling up at the window.”⁸² The references to the “soldier” and the “anthem” associate the song with Kira’s ongoing battle for life. Then, as in the novel, Kira looks at the sky and sees in the clouds the splinters of broken glass, as if her song, her personal universe, has become the actual physical universe. The song ends not with the laughter characteristic of the song, but with “someone’s loud laughter,” that is, with laughter characteristic of the red-light district. Kira, recognizing where she really is, tries to escape. “And then she stopped” (60). In the first draft, Ayn Rand wrote, then crossed out, the following line: “For coming down the street she saw a face. And it was the face of the Viking.”⁸³ The song was intended to be associated both with the Viking and with what Kira sees when she looks at Leo.

Kira refers to her song as she and Leo walk through the snow to the ship in which they hope to escape from Russia. They mention concretes, including lipstick, champagne—and the “Song of Broken Glass.” The song is associated with everything they expect to find in their life abroad.

The song returns to Kira, subtly, on the morning after her first night with Leo. They are caught trying to escape, and he is in the hands of the G.P.U., but she still hears her song. “She should be terrified, she thought, and she was: but under the terror there was something without name or words, a hymn without sound, something that laughed, even though Leo was locked in a cell on Gorokhovaia 2. Her body still felt as if it were holding him close to her” (126–27). Although Ayn Rand does not mention the specific song, the word “hymn” has been used for Kira’s song, and the laughter, too, is part of the “Song of Broken Glass.” Even the fact that the “something” is “without name” is characteristic of the song (“nameless hope,” 60) and the promise it represents (“it had no name,” 50).

Kira thinks of her song when she dances with Leo at Vava’s party; Lydia plays “John Gray” and Leo speaks of how they would dance together, abroad. “She closed her eyes, and the strong body that led her expertly, imperiously, seemed to carry her to that other world she had seen long ago, by a dark river that murmured the ‘Song of Broken Glass’” (156). Her song is again associated with Leo and with the hope for a human life, abroad.

Another reference to the song is the comparison with a song in Kálmán’s *Die Bajadere*, which Kira and Leo see together. The operetta song has the quality of the promise: “a music that laughed defiantly, panting, gasping, hitting one’s ears and throat and breath, an impudent, drunken music, like the challenge of a triumphant gaiety, like the ‘Song of Broken Glass,’ a promise that existed somewhere, that was, that could be” (208). And although this song in *Bajadere* has the quality of laughter associated with the “Song of Broken Glass,” Kira sobs.

The song itself is heard again in the European roof garden. Kira sits there with Andrei, their first meeting in two weeks. Kira has not been free to see Andrei because Leo has returned from the Crimea. The orchestra is playing *Bajadere*, the operetta Kira had attended with Leo. When she comments on the music, it is likely that Leo is not far from her mind. Andrei, without context, asks her if Leo is in love with her, and tells her he does not trust Leo and hopes she doesn’t see him often. Perhaps the operetta music makes him think of Leo, or perhaps it is the way Kira looks when she hears the music. Kira then asks Andrei to ask the orchestra to play the “Song of Broken Glass.” When the orchestra plays Kira’s song, she looks sad (much in the way that she sobbed at the performance of *Bajadere*), and explains her reaction in terms of disappointment:

It’s something I liked . . . long ago . . . when I was a child. . . . Andrei, did you ever feel as if something had been promised to you in your childhood, and you look at yourself and you think, “I didn’t know, then, that this is what would happen to me”—and it’s strange, and funny, and a little sad? (277)

It’s much more than “a little sad.” Lying to both of the men who love her, forbidden to pursue the work she intended to make hers, Kira grieves at the chasm between the promise and the fulfillment, between what she wants and what she has. And because she does not know how to fight her battle, she hears in her song—her hymn, her anthem, her march—a lament for the hope that is slipping from her grasp.

But in the novel’s final scene, even as she dies, she hears her song, “as a last battle march” (463), and she does not grieve. The “Song of Broken Glass,” as always, has notes that “laughed, laughed with a full, unconditional, consummate human joy.” And the music, as before, is associated with the promise: “But the music had been a promise; a promise at the dawn of her life. That which had been promised her then, could not be denied to her now.”

In the penultimate paragraph, Kira realizes that the promise of the song is and has always been the spirit of life. “She had known something which no human words could ever tell and she knew it now” (464). That is the “something without name,” the thing that “had no words.” “She had been awaiting it and she felt it, as if it had been, as if she had lived it.” What she expected, what she was promised, has come to pass—in her spirit if not in a full span of years.

“Life had been, if only because she had known it could be, and she felt it now as a hymn without sound. . . .” The “hymn without sound” is the phrase used to convey Kira’s feeling when Leo was at Gorokhovaia 2; it is the “something that laughed”; it is her “Song of Broken Glass,” the song she first heard when she sat on a cliff over a “silent river,” when a star seemed to drop into that river, as “the summer sun sank behind the hills” (50). She hears it now as a snowy plain stretches into the sunrise, which looks like “the faint, fading ghost of a lake in a summer sun.”

Ayn Rand, as I have noted, intended to include the Viking as well in this scene. Although she removed the paragraph and the explicit reference, she retained the reference to Kira’s “banner”—“her only banner that had never been lowered, that she had held high and straight, a life she could not betray” (463)—which is associated with the Viking. The Viking in her story had refused the banners offered by the king and the priest; instead, “on the tall mast, lashing the wind, was his own banner, that had never been lowered.”⁸⁴ Like Kira’s.

As the bishop’s candlesticks are with Jean Valjean through every stage of his moral regeneration, so Kira’s symbols—the song and the story that encapsulates the promise of life—are with her throughout.

AFTER WE THE LIVING

Ayn Rand did not learn from Victor Hugo the fundamental premises of her art. By her own account, she had already formed in her mind “the idea that a story had to present its theme in terms of action” and “that a story had to have some important theme apart from just action.” But he was the supreme exemplar of those fundamentals: “He was the first and the best illustration of that technique—on the grandest scale.”⁸⁵ Because she loved his novels and wanted to be able to do what he did, she used some of his methods in her first novel, as she was developing her own. *We the Living* “took care of that influence.” But she still had Hugo in mind when she thought about what she had written.

While planning *The Fountainhead*, she reread and outlined *Les Misérables*, to see how Hugo had structured and focused a long narrative. When, years later, she spoke about Enjolras, she commented that a scene of his was “actually the Wynand-Roark in spirit.”⁸⁶ She was referring, I believe, to his death scene (her personal highlight, as I’ve noted) and specifically to the fact that Grantaire, after sleeping through most of the action on the barricades, awakens to see Enjolras facing the firing squad and promptly asks permission to be shot along with him. Hugo had introduced Grantaire as an unlikely friend for the idealistic Enjolras. “Le scepticisme, cette carie sèche de l’intelligence, ne lui avait pas laissé une idée entière dans l’esprit” [Skepticism, that dry rot of the intellect, had not left one entire idea in his mind] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1).⁸⁷ And yet:

Grantaire admirait, aimait, et vénérât Enjolras. . . . Sans qu’il se rendît clairement compte et sans qu’il songeât à se l’expliquer à lui-même, cette nature chaste, saine, ferme, droite, dure, candide, le charmait. . . . Ses idées molles, fléchissantes, disloquées, malades, difformes, se rattachaient à Enjolras comme à

une épine dorsale. Son rachis moral s'appuyait à cette fermeté. Grantaire, près d'Enjolras, redevenait quelqu'un.

[Grantaire admired, loved, and venerated Enjolras. . . . Without understanding it clearly, and without trying to explain it to himself, that chaste, healthy, firm, direct, hard, honest nature charmed him. . . . His soft, wavering, disjointed, diseased, deformed ideas hitched onto Enjolras as to a backbone. His moral spine leaned on that firmness. Beside Enjolras, Grantaire became somebody again.] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1)⁸⁸

When he rises from his drunken stupor to see Enjolras facing the firing squad as if “l'autorité de son regard tranquille . . . contraignît cette cohue sinistre à le tuer avec respect” [the authority of his tranquil eye . . . compelled that sinister mob to kill him respectfully] (part 5, book 1, chapter 23),⁸⁹ Grantaire wants to share that authority and that respect. He wants literally to be beside Enjolras, even now. Recognizing that to die with Enjolras would be an honor and a privilege, he asks permission, which Enjolras graciously grants. Smiling, Enjolras extends his hand.

The “Wynand-Roark in spirit” is the transfusion of values from a great man to one who has not lived up to his own potential for greatness. The love the lesser man feels for the greater one carries with it the hope that it is not too late for the two to join hands and minds.

And perhaps there was also a place in *The Fountainhead* for some elements of the physical image of Enjolras, he of the “dédaigneuse” [disdainful] mouth (part 3, book 4, chapter 1),⁹⁰ with “cette chevelure tumultueuse au vent” [his hair flying in the wind] (part 3, book 4, chapter 1),⁹¹ a “grave jeune homme, bourreau et prêtre, de lumière comme le cristal, et de roche aussi” [severe young man, executioner and priest, luminous like the crystal and rock also] (part 4, book 12, chapter 8).⁹² In the opening pages of *The Fountainhead*, Ayn Rand introduces her hero, her ideal man, Howard Roark. He is standing on a rock, on stone that “glowed, wet with sunrays,” as the “wind waved his hair against the sky”; his face has “a contemptuous mouth, shut tight, the mouth of an executioner or a saint.”⁹³

She commented, in 1958, on the influence Hugo had had on her. When (as discussed earlier) she was asked about a parallel between Claude Frollo's avowal of love to Esmeralda in *Notre Dame of Paris* and Rearden's morning-after speech to Dagny, she replied that she, too, had noticed the parallel, but not at the time she wrote *Atlas Shrugged*.

Now I had read this novel originally between the ages of fourteen and sixteen somewhere. I had looked at it once in Hollywood, after the Rearden scene was written. I had not thought of this speech in relation to Rearden's speech until I was translating it [for the lecture], and yet the influence is tremendous. It's tremendous. It's directly Hugo's influence.

But do you see in what sense I was not copying him? There is no single sentence that you would say is taking his concretes, but the essence of the drama was there. . . . Wouldn't I have thought of the drama of Rearden's speech even without ever reading this book? Possibly. But that is not the point. The point is that I was very aware at the time I read this in my teens, [that] this is a tremendously important scene that I liked, that the conflict of a man torn between a love which in fact is proper because of wrong premises—which is how I interpreted him, even at that age. The drama of that remained with me as a very strong impression. Therefore by the time I needed the scene, like Rearden and

Dagny, that value literarily was already in my mind. I would be attracted emotionally, literarily, to that kind of scene. You see, that's the way an influence works.⁹⁴

In this chapter, I have tried to show how the influence may have worked, as Ayn Rand, in her own first novel, created her own form of some of the literary values she loved in the novelist she ranked first.

NOTES

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1. Ayn Rand, "What Is Romanticism?" in *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 119, and "Introduction to *Ninety-Three*," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 154.
 2. Ayn Rand, "Art and Sense of Life," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 43.
 3. Ayn Rand, "[1968] Introduction," *The Fountainhead* (New York: Signet fiftieth anniversary paperback edition, 1993), v.
 4. Ayn Rand, "The Comprachicos," in *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, Peter Schwartz, ed. (New York: Meridian, 1999).
 5. Ayn Rand, "From the Horse's Mouth," in *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1982; Signet paperback edition, 1984).
 6. Ayn Rand, "The Stimulus and the Response," in *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, 151. The passage appears in part 3, book 5, chapter 3: ". . . et il bénit Dieu de lui avoir donné ces deux richesses qui manquent à bien des riches: le travail qui le fait libre and la pensée qui le fait digne" (*Les Misérables*, ed. Marius-François Guyard, 2 vols. [Paris: Garnier, 1966], I, 817).
 7. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
 8. Ayn Rand, *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers*, Tore Boeckmann, ed. (New York: Plume, 2000), 176.
 9. David Harriman, ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1997), 65.
 10. Rand, "What Is Romanticism?" in *Romantic Manifesto*, 121.
 11. Guyard, II, 489–490; Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, translated by Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee, based on the translation by C. E. Wilbour (New York: Signet, 1987), 1242. Quotations from Hugo will appear first in French, the language in which Ayn Rand read him, and then in English; the references, too, will be first to the French edition, then to the English.
 12. Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction* (1984; revised ed., New York: Signet, 2005), 231–36.
 13. Rand, *The Fountainhead*, 309–10.
 14. Peikoff, *Early Ayn Rand*, 237.
 15. Ayn Rand, "Introduction to *Ninety-Three*," *Romantic Manifesto*, 158.
 16. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
 17. Rand, *The Fountainhead*, 209.
 18. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
 19. Guyard I, 773; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 648.
 20. The sixtieth anniversary edition of *We the Living* contains a typo here: "from" instead of "for."
 21. Guyard I, 773; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 649.
 22. Guyard II, 347; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1116.
 23. Guyard II, 442; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1200.
 24. Guyard II, 499; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1251.

25. For discussion of Leo Kovalensky's moral character, see Onkar Ghate's "The Plight of Leo Kovalensky" in the present volume.
26. Guyard I, 774; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 649.
27. First draft, 351 of pagination that begins with chapter 4 (Ayn Rand Archives).
28. First draft, 105 of pagination that begins with part 2 (Ayn Rand Archives).
29. Guyard II, 457; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1213.
30. Guyard I, 773; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 648.
31. Guyard II, 417; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1178.
32. Guyard II, 346–47; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1115–16.
33. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
34. Guyard II, 442; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1200.
35. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
36. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
37. Guyard I, 214; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 171.
38. Guyard II, 343; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1112.
39. Guyard I, 214; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 171–72.
40. Guyard II, 581; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1323.
41. Guyard II, 581; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1322.
42. Guyard II, 590; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1330.
43. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
44. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
45. Ayn Rand, "Basic Principles of Literature," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 82.
46. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 37.
47. Rand, "Introduction to *Ninety-Three*," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 157.
48. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 35.
49. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 39.
50. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 40.
51. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 37.
52. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 38.
53. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 174–75.
54. Rand, "The Esthetic Vacuum of Our Age," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 125, and "Introduction to *Ninety-Three*," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 160.
55. Victor Hugo, *L'Homme qui rit*, 2 vols. (Paris: Nelson, 1960), II, 419, 427; *The Man Who Laughs*, translated by Joseph L. Blamire (Cresskill, NJ: Paper Tiger, 2001) 564, 569.
56. Victor Hugo, *Quatrevingt-treize*, ed. Jean Boudout (Paris: Ganier, 1963), 489–90; *Ninety-Three*, translated by Frank Lee Benedict (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1988), 388–89.
57. Rand, "Introduction," *Romantic Manifesto*, viii.
58. In "The 'Inexplicable Personal Alchemy'" (1969), reprinted in *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, Ayn Rand discusses the meaning of the word "abroad" for Soviet citizens: "if you project what you would feel for a combination of Atlantis, the Promised Land and the most glorious civilization on another planet, as imagined by a benevolent kind of science fiction, you will have a pale approximation" (125). My thanks to Robert Mayhew for bringing this passage to my attention.
59. Peikoff, *Early Ayn Rand*, 240.
60. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
61. See Shoshana Milgram, "From *Airtight* to *We the Living*: The Drafts of Ayn Rand's First Novel," and Robert Mayhew, "*We the Living*: '36 & '59," in the present volume.
62. Guyard I, 456; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 378.
63. Guyard I, 457; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 378.
64. *L'Homme qui rit*, I, 114; Blamire, 77.
65. *L'Homme qui rit*, II, 191; Blamire, 411.

66. Boudout, 72; Benedict, 56.
67. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
68. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
69. *L'Homme qui rit*, I, 323; Blamire, 219.
70. *L'Homme qui rit*, II, 389; Blamire, 545.
71. *L'Homme qui rit*, I, 377–78; Blamire, 255.
72. *L'Homme qui rit*, I, 374; Blamire, 252.
73. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
74. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 98–104.
75. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 104.
76. The source here is Ayn Rand, *Fiction Writing: A Thirteen Lecture Course*, taped in 1958 (Second Renaissance Books, 1994), Lecture 8.
77. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
78. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 99.
79. Rand, *Art of Fiction*, 101.
80. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
81. Ayn Rand, “Introductory Note to *The Man Who Laughs*,” *The Objectivist* 6 (December 1967).
82. First draft, 23 in pagination that begins with part 1, chapter 4 (Ayn Rand Archives).
83. First draft, 23 in pagination that begins with part 1, chapter 4 (Ayn Rand Archives).
84. Peikoff, *Early Ayn Rand*, 239.
85. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
86. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
87. Guyard I, 784; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 657.
88. Guyard I, 784; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 658.
89. Guyard II, 499; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1250–51.
90. Guyard I, 773; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 648.
91. Guyard I, 774; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 649.
92. Guyard II, 348; Fahnestock, MacAfee, Wilbour, 1116.
93. Rand, *The Fountainhead*, 15–16. For further discussion of Enjolras in relation to Howard Roark (and John Galt), see my “Three Inspirations for the Ideal Man: Cyrus Paltons, Enjolras, and Cyrano de Bergerac,” Robert Mayhew, ed., *Essays on Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006) 177–99.
94. Rand, *Fiction Writing: A Thirteen Lecture Course*, Lecture 8.