

## **“The Best of Times, the Worst of Times”**

### **Ruminations by Henry Mark Holzer and Erika Holzer about Anne C. Heller’s *Ayn Rand and the World She Made***

Ayn Rand was one of the most intriguing, complex and seminal American thinkers of the Twentieth Century. For seven decades—from her 1905 birth in czarist Russia’s St. Petersburg, to her 1982 interment in New York’s Kensico cemetery—she was the vortex around which she drew family, friends, acquaintances and lovers, sometimes to their benefit, sometimes to their detriment.

As the subtext of Heller’s biography reveals, for all those people around her, including Hank and Erika Holzer, close relationships with Rand were, as Charles Dickens wrote in *A Tale of Two Cities*, the best of times and the worst of times.

Heller begins her biography with Alissa Rosenbaum’s 1905 birth in St. Petersburg, Russia, and ends with Ayn Rand’s 1982 death in New York City at the age of seventy-seven. Heller has structured her book in strict chronological order, beginning and ending with Rand’s birth and death, albeit with interspersed non-chronological lesser events. This enables the reader to see Ayn Rand’s development as person, woman and writer.

Heller’s book is divided into sixteen discrete time periods, each having significance to Alissa/Ayn’s life and times. The beginning “Russian” chapters, certainly the most important in the book, reveal “Who is Alissa Rosenbaum?” They identify the virtues and values the young woman developed in that alien czarist and soviet world and tenaciously held throughout her life.

For example, the world into which Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum was born consisted of few, if any, countries that respected individual rights, had legitimately representative governments, possessed free market capitalist systems, and functioned under an objective rule of law. Indeed, Alissa’s birthplace, St. Petersburg, was a boiling cauldron of the opposite, exemplified by what Heller calls “the most anti-Semitic . . . nation on the European continent.”

Heller’s prodigious research about Alissa Rosenbaum—through primary sources, historical materials, and personal interviews—portrays a child understandably living in constant fear of being terrorized at the whim of the czar’s government operating under the most subjective “laws” imaginable.

But if life under the czarist regime was at least tolerable, Heller dramatically makes clear in her Russian chapters that following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, living became intolerable.

These preliminary chapters are important for several reasons.

First, the chapters launch Heller's overall approach to her biography: the integration of Alissa's personal experiences and conditions in Russia's monarchical-statist system with the fictional events and characters Ayn would create decades later in America. By means of this integrative technique, Heller reveals many of the important influences on Alissa Rosenbaum that would find expression later in Ayn Rand's personal and professional life.

For example, Alissa's mother was apparently a lightweight social climber with a cruel streak. Heller connects that characteristic with *We the Living*, Rand's quasi-autobiographical first novel ". . . [where] the heroine, Kira Argounova, views her mother as an unprincipled conformist."

Another example: According to Heller, a cruel trick by Alissa's mother caused the four- or five-year-old child to conclude that ". . . anything she liked had to be *hers*, not her mother's, the family's, or society's, an attitude that readers of her [decades-later] 1943 novel *The Fountainhead* will recognize . . ." (Emphasis supplied.) (Heller could have added that Alissa's need to have hers be "*hers*" would apply years later to Ayn's romantic relationship with her protégé, the married Nathaniel Branden.)

An anecdote in Chapter Two is instructive concerning "*hers*" and "*hers*." According to Heller, "[Conrad] Veidt, a German Jew [later to play Major Strasser in *Casablanca*], became her favorite movie actor . . . . Veidt was a screen idol in Russia, and Rand's infatuation with him brought out a trait that was present from early childhood: intellectual possessiveness. When people she didn't know or like spoke admiringly of Veidt, she felt anger, she recalled. *She* had chosen him; other people weren't worthy of him. Not for her was a 'heart like a pavement, trampled by many feet'." (Emphasis in original.)

Not just in these foundational chapters, but throughout *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, Heller adduces facts about Alissa, her attitudes, and her conduct which are directly related to Ayn's later writing. This technique is remarkably effective in uniting the person and her work—an accomplishment reminiscent of architect Louis Sullivan's *Autobiography of an Idea*.

Second, and equally important, Heller puts in place building block principles and attitudes upon which will rest much that she later reveals about Rand.

For example, Alissa recognized that though they were members of the bourgeoisie, her family's existence as Jews was politically and economically tenuous because of the absolute power held by the czar.

She disdained the social aspects of her family's life; "had few friends and little inclination to make new ones"; "was physically inert in an era of passionate belief in physical exercise"; had a "solitary, even anti-social nature."

"The intensely thoughtful child was not only solitary, but she was also awkward and offbeat. She remembered being aware that her extreme shyness and violent intensity put people off, but she was sure that such social awkwardness was merely a technical fault and that other people were wrong not to understand and appreciate her. She was self consciously different from others, as if by choice. But she was painfully lonely."

There are many more examples. Heller notes that "[I]n her twenties and thirties [Rand] would construct a universe of moral principles built largely on the scaffolding of some of these defensive childhood virtues." (Even accepting Heller's evaluation *arguendo*, "largely" is an overstatement.)

The third reason Heller's Russian chapters are important is because of her extensive discussion of Alissa's awakening to the existence and nature of heroes. (This material is so intriguing that Heller's explication about the heroes of Alissa's childhood and her tracing their influence into Ayn's adult novels suggests that a Ph.D dissertation or even an entire book is waiting to be written on that subject alone.)

"At the age of eight or nine, just before creating her own first stories, [Alissa] read two children's books that electrified her hopes and helped to set her course; one of them would become a kind of template for some of her most famous work. The first, a mini-biography . . . recounted the lonely girlhood of Catherine the Great, the late-eighteenth century czarina who, half a century after the reign of Peter, brought the ideas of the European Enlightenment to Russia. It presented Catherine as an unusually bright little girl who was overlooked and underestimated by her aristocratic family and friends because she was odd and homely: 'something between a misfit and an ugly duckling,' as Rand remembered."

It's not hard to understand why the young Alissa Rosenbaum reacted so strongly to the qualities of Catherine the Great. Nor, given Alissa's sense of her own intelligence, why she saw for herself greatness in the future.

The same year, 1914, Alissa ". . . encountered a boys' serial adventure story called *The Mysterious Valley* . . ." The protagonist was "a dashing British infantry captain named Cyrus Paltons."

According to Heller, "[I]t was the sexually charged character of Cyrus who fixed the story permanently in her mind. She probably spent hundreds of hours poring over the drawings and descriptions of the dashing hero who for her became the equivalent of an adolescent heartthrob. He was her 'exclusive love,' she said,

from the age of nine until the age of twelve . . . He provided an aspirational remedy for her sense of isolation. With Cyrus as her secret lover and perfect soul mate [at age nine!], she successfully moved outside the circle of others' conventional reality. \* \* \* "In homage," Heller writes, "she would name Kira Argounova, the protagonist of *We the Living*, for Cyrus, 'Kira' being the feminine version of 'Kirill,' which is the Russian variant of 'Cyrus'."

Heller identifies how Ayn would later draw upon Cyrus for her fictional heroes. "As a mature writer, she patterned her most explicitly erotic male characters after Cyrus, including Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* and John Galt in *Atlas Shrugged*."

The importance of Heller's explication of Alissa's fictional Cyrus and Ayn's fictional Roark and Galt (and, in real life, her husband, Frank O'Connor) cannot be underestimated because important events in Rand's later life would, for better and worse, be derived from Alissa's love of Cyrus.

"As [Alissa] approached adolescence, started school, and began to write, her feeling for Cyrus was of 'unbearable intensity' and practically all-consuming. She worshipped Cyrus—and she also identified with him, just as she did with Catherine the Great."

Consider the potent, even explosive, mixture of the two characters in the heart and mind of the adolescent Alissa: A woman, Catherine, who shed her country's centuries of primitive backwardness and opened it to the values of the European Enlightenment. A man, Cyrus, ". . . brave, purposeful, and . . . 'arrogant,' a characteristic that will become a marker for Ayn Rand's future heroes. He is also handsome. The original pen-and-ink illustrations show him as, in Rand's words many years later, 'my present kind of hero: tall, long-legged, wearing soldier's leggings but no jacket, just . . . an open-collared shirt, torn in front, open very low, sleeves rolled at the elbows and hair falling down over one eye.'"

There were other influences. Victor Hugo, ". . . the only novelist she ever acknowledged as having influenced her work." Fredrich Nietzsche, to whose *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Alissa responded because of "his heightened language, his brilliance, his bold critique of Christianity, and his principled admiration of Jewish thought."

Heller provides many additional facts in her two Russian chapters about the early life of Alissa Rosenbaum, identifying the child's virtues and values, exploring the internal and existential forces that contributed to them, and tracing them into Ayn Rand's later life.

The Russian chapters are followed by Alissa's emigration from the Soviet Union, and then by others providing great detail about her life in the United States.

We knew Ayn Rand for about four of those years, in the mid- and late-Sixties, although each of us had read her novels before then.

A few months short of Hank's sixteenth birthday, he saw *The Fountainhead* at a local movie theater in New York City. On a level somewhere between conscious and subconscious, the film made a deep impression on him (although at the time he was not conscious of why).

A few years later, Erika, a Cornell freshman, read a copy of *The Fountainhead* her mother had given her—and was stunned by the heroic larger-than-life Howard Roark. Besides the uncompromising young architect, she found three other characters memorable: Peter Keating, the second-hander; sweet-natured Katie, the love of his life whom he helped destroy; the utterly fascinating villain, Ellsworth Toohey. Erika's overall response to the novel was that it was a paean to individualism.

A few years later, in the summer of 1956 after nearly seventeen months in Korea, Hank boarded a troop ship at Inchon for a sixteen-day voyage to the West Coast. An enlisted man and prone to sea sickness, he knew the trip would be very unpleasant. As hundreds of returning soldiers settled into their below-decks dormitory, he noticed a seaman loading raggedy paperback books into a carton. There, Hank realized, was a partial reprieve from what awaited him for sixteen boring days on the Pacific Ocean.

The seaman intended to throw the tattered books overboard, but first Hank could take as many as he wanted. Going through the carton, Hank noticed *The Fountainhead*, remembered the movie he'd seen five years earlier, and grabbed it and fifteen other paperbacks to support a one-book-a-day distraction from the dungeon-like dormitory, ersatz scrambled eggs, and constant pitching of the ship.

Hank read *The Fountainhead* at least twice. This time, given the texture and other differences between the film and the book, given that he was five years older, and given that he'd just spent the last two years in the army, his reaction to the novel was more conscious.

*The Fountainhead's* dramatization of creativity and individualism struck a loud chord. During his time overseas, Hank had "found" himself as an adult while doing top secret intelligence work at Eighth United States Army Headquarters.

Upon return home in July 1956, he soon learned that *The Fountainhead's* author was about to publish another novel. When *Atlas Shrugged* appeared in October 1957, Hank bought one of the first copies. Like so many other readers during the past half-century, he devoured it—and it, in turn, changed his life by making explicit many things he had understood previously only on an inchoate level.

In the spring of 1958, during our second year in law school, Hank gave Erika a copy. He told her *Atlas Shrugged* had been written by the author of *The Fountainhead*, and that it would change Erika's life.

It did.

After reading *Atlas Shrugged* straight through, with barely time for sleep or meals, Erika felt as if the novel had somehow clarified and integrated every important aspect of her life.

A few years later, we learned that in New York City Nathaniel Branden was giving lectures on Ayn Rand's ideas. After "passing" a personal interview conducted in Branden's apartment, we were allowed to attend the lectures. A huge added bonus, he informed us, was that "Miss Rand" would appear in person to answer questions from the audience about her philosophy.

Erika found herself going into alert mode during the Q & A whenever Rand talked about fiction writing, then going home and, in her spare time, writing "practice pieces"—various fictional scenes, each with a different purpose. One night she shared her growing pile with a curious friend, Allan Gotthelf, who showered her with lavish praise. On a first-name basis with Ayn Rand, Gotthelf offered to show her Erika's practice pieces.

Apparently impressed, Rand invited Erika to discuss her fledging fiction-writing efforts. On that momentous occasion, as Rand opened her apartment door, Erika was in such a heightened state of excitement that she'd neglected to bring anything to write on, let alone a tape recorder. Rand laughed, handed her a pen and some three-hole lined paper, and they sat down together on the living room couch.

Rand's favorite practice piece (and Erika's) was a long law-related scene. Rand proceeded to give her line-by-line feedback.

Rand pinpointed specific metaphors and adjectives.

She went out of her way to make sure Erika understood *why* the practice piece worked so well, zeroing in on a line of pickets outside the courtroom ". . . *their lips eerily mouthing a monotonous chant that could no more break through the barrier of soundproofed walls than [the hero] had been able to pierce the soundproofed minds of the opposition.*"

She explained why this passage came across so authentically: "The word 'eerily' in regard to the monotonous chanting is just how it would feel seeing those moving lips but hearing no sound."

She clarified why Erika's description of a crowd as '*small, smug and slightly amused*' was not only effective but unusual to find in the writing of a neophyte:

“This is a good combination of adjectives, Erika. Writers have to be *very careful* in selecting adjectives in a string; the idea is to be non-repetitive. You did that well.”

She praised Erika for her description of courthouse guards: “. . . *two rows of uniformed resistance.*” Rand said, “It gives the reader a telling visual image which has the *added* value of capturing the way your lawyer protagonist would have been aware of those guards.”

She complimented Erika at length on her “foreshortening” throughout the practice piece. “You’ve grasped—at least subconsciously—how to insert a great deal of meaning in very few words,” Rand told her with the hint of a smile. “You give readers what they need to know without making it obvious. *That’s* what good exposition is all about! You’ve managed to slip into these paragraphs a load of information without burdening your narrative.”

She characterized as “eloquent” such formulations as “. . . *a glance, like a warm handshake*” and “. . . *the concealed door behind the Bench burst open with a muffled crack.*”

Ayn Rand spent *hours* with this “neophyte” on half-a-dozen practice pieces! Throughout, she was warm and generous with her time and advice, telling Erika that she had talent and encouraging her to keep at it.

It was time to leave. They shook hands at the door. “Good premises,” Rand said, warmth in her smile.

Erika and Hank continued to attend Branden’s lectures. After Rand’s formal Q & A, while she autographed books, we would invariably approach the podium to listen in on still more questions and answers and occasionally ask some questions of our own. Knowing we were lawyers ([www.henrymarkholzer.com](http://www.henrymarkholzer.com); [www.erikaholzer.com](http://www.erikaholzer.com)), from time to time Rand would ask us a legal question related to something she had been asked.

When not long after, Nathan (as we always called him) and Ayn began *The Objectivist* magazine, Hank suggested to Barbara Branden that they obtain a trademark registration on the name and recommended a lawyer. Barbara was grateful for his idea and for the referral.

Post-lecture questions of ours, and answers by Nathan and Ayn, morphed into random off-site casual conversations, which turned into a few offhand discussions of practical legal matters.

One day in the mid-sixties Nathan asked Hank if they could talk privately. He readily agreed.

They met at Branden's apartment, where he explained that the growth of his lecture series and associated business activities had, after years of a post-*Fountainhead* hiatus, placed Ayn in the public spotlight. As a result, she needed a lawyer who could protect her, provide legal advice, and generally run interference from admirers and detractors alike. Nathan asked Hank to become Ayn's "intellectual bodyguard."

Hank accepted the retainer with alacrity. (It was understood that his law partner, Erika, would participate in representing Ayn.)

It was not then apparent that becoming Ayn Rand's "intellectual bodyguard" would immediately plunge us into the vortex that was Ayn Rand.

At the time Hank was retained, we had been exposed to Ayn Rand's ideas through *The Fountainhead*, movie and book, and other of her writings, by having read *Atlas Shrugged* several times, and from Nathan's lectures on "Basic Principles of Objectivism," as well as from Ayn's post-lecture Q & A sessions. We had also been exposed to Ayn in person after Branden's lectures.

And, of course, Erika spent that wonderful evening when Ayn had critiqued her practice writing pieces.

In sum, for the few years before Nathan's offer to Hank, we had been immersed in Objectivist ideas, had a passing relationship with him and his wife Barbara, and had had some personal contact with the towering intellectual giant whose ideas had given our personal and professional lives clarity and meaning.

Now we were to act as Rand's lawyers and embark on what for us would be "the best of times and the worst of times. It would be a professional relationship with a woman whom we greatly respected and whose ideas had already profoundly impacted our lives.

As lawyers, we represented Ayn Rand in all her legal affairs (except for literary, financial and tax matters). Essentially, as Barbara Branden has accurately characterized our professional relationship with Ayn, it embraced "everything to do with Objectivism," a heavy portfolio indeed. (Heller errs by mischaracterizing our legal representation of Ayn Rand as handling merely intellectual property infractions.)

For a couple of those years, we and Ayn were friends.

Although Heller captures some of those halcyon days, there is much more to tell about "the best and the worst" that we and others experienced.

For example, Heller mentions Ayn's visitors having "exhilarating" sessions with her, beginning after dinner and ending at dawn. We experienced that often



because, in deference to our famous client, we never asked Ayn to come to our office. Instead, we made “house calls.”

Every week, unless something urgent needed immediate attention, *The Objectivist* and NBI staffs and Ayn’s secretary would collect everything of a legal nature that had arrived and send it to our office. Erika and I would deal with whatever could be summarily disposed of without Ayn’s input. The rest we would take to her.

Our evenings followed a set routine. Hank would remove a document from his briefcase and describe it. Sometimes Ayn would read it. Sometimes she would explode in anger. Sometimes she would ask us a legal question. Sometimes she would solicit our opinions on a policy question. By about 9:00 PM, we’d be finished with the legal business.

As unpleasant as some of the legal problems were—e.g., plagiarism, intellectual property issues, unauthorized use of her name—the benefit of our three-way dialogues was literally inestimable.

Anne Heller and others have written at length of Ayn Rand’s razor-like analytical ability. But unless one has experienced it first-hand, as we did many times, it is impossible to capture in mere words. Suffice to say that Ayn framed questions precisely, relevantly and causally, that she instantly integrated facts, and that she quickly grasped legal principles and the implications of policy issues.

Many times a legal subject would arise about which she had not a scintilla of knowledge. Ayn would ask a logical series of fact and law questions, pause for a moment while she sifted and rearranged the data in her mind (one could almost hear the gears turning), and then summarize the analysis in a brief cohesive statement. During countless hours of this almost Socratic dialogue, it was not always evident who was learning more from whom. Speaking for ourselves, the experience sharpened our own abilities to ascertain facts, synthesize data, and—most important—to think in principle.

Surely, of all our time with Ayn, those evenings were the *best* of the best of times.

Only once during our legal representation did we have to sue someone. *Rand v. Hearst Corporation* was not only an interesting case but, once again, another important learning experience. Here’s the short version.

A hardcover book by Eugene Vale entitled *Chaos Below Heaven* was published. The *San Francisco Examiner* review compared Vale with Rand saying, in effect, that if someone liked Ayn Rand they would like Eugene Vale. No problem so far.

Avon Books, a division of the Hearst Corporation, published the paperback.

But on its cover, Avon put the Rand-Vale comparison, thus using Rand's name to help sell Vale's book.

When Hank brought the matter to Ayn's attention, she was apoplectic and asked what could be done. A lot—at least so it seemed.

New York had a law prohibiting the use of a living person's name, photograph or likeness for purposes of advertising or trade without their written consent. Violation of the statute was punishable by an award of civil damages.

Ayn asked what our chances would be if she sued. We told her the statutory language could not be clearer. That the few cases which had interpreted the law had not yet addressed a factual situation like that presented by Avon's use of her name on Vale's paperback. That if justice prevailed we should win.

In giving us the green light to sue Hearst, Ayn went out of her way to reassure us. The judicial process reeked with subjectivism. Many judges were relativists, altruists, collectivists, statist. Some were venal and corrupt. She cautioned us not to expect too much; that even though we were right we would not necessarily win. All we could do is try our best.

We won in the trial court, the judge ruling that the law was clear as written, that the facts were not in dispute, and that the publisher had no defense.

Hearst appealed. At the oral argument before four judges—which Ayn attended with Frank, two friends and Erika—it was quickly clear that the judges either didn't understand or didn't care, despite the clarity of Hank's presentation.

At our *post mortem*, Ayn reiterated her earlier caution: Let's not expect anything; let's just wait and see.

The appellate court reversed the lower court, in an indefensible 3-1 opinion—even though the dissenting judge laid bare the shallowness of the majority's arguments and conclusion. In essence, the majority ruled that despite the statute's plain intent and unambiguous language, Ayn Rand was a public figure and since Avon's "speech rights" were involved, her name was public property.

Ayn was neither surprised, nor angry. It was just another example of injustice, to be noted but not allowed to go down too far. Think Howard Roark.

We then appealed to New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, consisting of seven judges. Again, Hank's oral argument could not have been clearer, nor his answers to the many questions from the bench any more persuasive.

Months passed with no decision. Finally, the court merely affirmed the earlier appellate court, not even bothering to write an opinion.

Ayn's reaction was the same. We were right, Avon and the two courts were wrong. We had done our best, but the kind of mindless stupidity and indefensible premises she'd fought against her whole life had prevailed. For us, her attitude and composure was truly Roarkian and something to emulate in our own lives.

But legal matters were only part of the evenings we spent with Ayn.

Usually, we discussed everything imaginable—from altruism to zoning. No subject was off limits, especially fiction writing.

For Erika, the hours spent on legal problems gradually proved far less exciting than the ones devoted to fiction. After the always gracious Frank O'Connor served coffee and one of Ayn's rich desserts, Erika—mindful of Ayn's generosity regarding the practice pieces she'd written a few years earlier—couldn't resist bombarding Ayn with question after question about *The Fountainhead* and especially *Atlas Shrugged*.

At that time, Erika had no intention of becoming a novelist, wanting only to understand more fully why *Atlas* had had the power to transport her to another world, one which, from her very first reading, had made her feel utterly complete.

What Erika didn't realize during these sessions with Ayn was that, as a result of her eager endlessly probing questions, she was about to embark on a journey that would lead her to forsake the law completely in favor of writing. Nor could she have predicted that, as a result of these ongoing discussions with Rand that would develop into four years of mentoring, Erika would be the only person privileged to learn to write fiction at Ayn Rand's knee. (See [www.erikaholzer.com](http://www.erikaholzer.com)).

What kind of a fiction-writing teacher was Ayn Rand? In a word, inspired. Her enthusiasm, her gift for imparting the knowledge and skills she had painstakingly acquired, her unstinting patience in explaining a single point or an entire methodology, the generosity with which, time and time again, she guided Erika from error to enlightenment, all these qualities were the mark of a person who was a born teacher.

It is difficult to describe Erika's exhilaration during those writing discussions, or how meaningful it was to her when she realized that Ayn was enjoying herself.

One evening we asked Ayn about the 1941 Italian movie version of *We the Living*, and she provided some details that were not well known. We asked her why someone didn't find the film, restore it, and have it released in the United States and elsewhere. She told us the film was lost. Trying to find it in Italy or anywhere else would lead to a dead end. We pressed. What if we could find it, then what? Well, Ayn said, we'll restore it, obtain a distributor, and release the film. But no one would find it, she predicted. (For complete information about

the film, the new DVD, and documentary about how *We the Living* was found and restored see <http://wethelivingmovie.com/history.php> and [www.wethelivingmovie.com](http://www.wethelivingmovie.com).)

In the summer of 1968, we found the original negative that had been in the cameras when the Italians made *We the Living*.

The rest is history.

Heller writes that in 1972, the film “. . . became available to art-house audiences *thanks to the efforts of three of her admirers*” (emphasis supplied). Apparently, the reader is supposed to fill in for himself the thirty-one year gap between 1941 and 1972 when, magically, “an artful splicing together” turned four-plus hours of celluloid into a tight, nearly three-hour-long English language subtitled film. For the record, *it was the Holzers alone who rescued We the Living from oblivion, and later furnished financing for its restoration and release*).

During our quest to find *We the Living*, we had kept Ayn apprised of our efforts. Though she had been skeptical about our finding it, our search brought her great pleasure.

As Heller correctly noted, when soon after World War II Ayn saw a print in Los Angeles “. . . she loved its stark, old-fashioned beauty and was especially pleased by Italian actress Alida Valli’s superb performance as Kira.” As Ayn wrote on several occasions, and as Heller noted, *We the Living*, both book and movie, were important to Ayn because of its anti-collectivist, anti-Communist, anti-fascist message. It was her ideological and sentimental attachment to the film version of *We the Living* that largely motivated our search.

When we called Ayn from Rome to inform her that we’d found and purchased *We the Living*, and when in late August 1968 we brought it to the United States, she was extremely pleased—even though, unknown to us, she was then enduring one of the most painful times of her life, perhaps *the* most painful.

The satisfaction we experienced professionally working with Ayn, and in a business relationship concerning *We the Living*, was exceeded by the personal relationship we inevitably developed with her.

When the three of us were alone, Hank and Erika shared with Ayn an interest in stamp collecting. We would often spend an evening in her apartment filling pages. Sometimes we three ventured downtown to purchase stamps—all the time talking non-stop. Those random conversations were akin to sharpening a knife on a stone as our ability to analyze and synthesize was constantly being honed by Ayn’s brilliance, even when discussing the most innocuous of subjects.

We were often in her company in small social groups, mainly consisting of friends and admirers who had found Rand through *The Fountainhead* and who had been close to her while she was writing *Atlas Shrugged*.

Although Ayn was the center of attention, contrary to what Heller has implied Rand did not monopolize conversations. Serious discussions involving everyone present ranged over ethics, economics, politics, aesthetics and more. It was like being in Galt's Gulch.

One episode in particular stands out. Heller writes: "In a 1969 essay, Rand described watching in 'exaltation' as [on July 16, 1969] Apollo 11 streaked skyward from Cape Kennedy." Ayn's experience, and profound extrapolations from that event (she attended thanks to Alan Greenspan), were memorialized in the September 1969 issue of *The Objectivist* in an article entitled simply "Apollo 11."

Upon Ayn's return from Cape Kennedy and before she wrote that article, she accepted our invitation to invite a few friends (the post-Branden breakup remnant) to our apartment for a first-hand report. Again, it was exhilarating to hear in person what she had seen and experienced, and hear her answer the small group's many questions. Ayn was animated, cogent, and colorful. As usual, she saw philosophical implications in Apollo 11 that none of us had realized. It was, once again, living in an electrically charged rational universe.

There are many more examples of these "best of times." Regrettably, however, they are colored by events which exemplify the "worst of times."

Heller has written extensively about how some men and women once close to Rand (and in certain instances, Branden, her expressly anointed proxy) suffered at their hands. Some examples.

Edith Efron was the "defendant" in a trial held in absentia. Heller writes: "Efron, who had been close to Rand for a decade, was tried . . . for gossiping, or lying, or refusing to lie, or flirting; surviving witnesses couldn't agree on exactly what she did, except that it was related to the many rumors by then circulating about Branden and [his married lover]." Murray Rothbard was treated with similar callousness over allegations of plagiarism.

Daryn Kent, an aspiring actress, was the victim of an especially cruel trial. Kent, who had a romantic relationship with Leonard Peikoff, was brought before what Barbara Branden has characterized as a "kangaroo court." In Kent's case, she was summoned to appear before Ayn, Nathan, Leonard—even Frank O'Connor. The indictment was of Daryn's psychology, with Branden as the prosecutor (as well as a judge and a juror). Said Kent: Branden "dissected every move I'd made and everything I'd done, and ended up concluding that I was an Ellsworth Toohey [arch-villain of *The Fountainhead*] and a queen bee in sexual matters."

According to Heller, when Branden made “a particularly trenchant point, Rand clapped her hands, applauding like a child.”

Kay and Phil Smith, long-time associates who staged Rand’s play *The Night of January 16<sup>th</sup>*, were excommunicated because “Kay Smith altered or cut a line, or a few lines (how many is not clear), of Rand’s dialogue . . .” Robert Hessen, Rand’s “tireless advocate and helper,” was excommunicated (but later reinstated) because the book service he ran with his wife listed Kay Smith’s first novel.

Joining the Smiths and Hessens as objects of Rand’s ingratitude were American relatives who sponsored her emigration from the Soviet Union, sheltered and fed her in Chicago, facilitated her move to Hollywood, introduced her to Cecil B. DeMille, and helped support her financially; the Henry Hazlitts who, when Rand urgently needed money, had taken her “under their wing, into their social circle, and gave her all the work they could find”; Isabel Paterson who intellectually mentored the younger Rand and insisted to Archie Ogden that he publish *The Fountainhead* (and made it possible for her to ride in a locomotive with her hand on the throttle!).

Frank O’Connor, Ayn Rand’s husband of fifty years, suffered these wrongs—callousness, cruelty, ingratitude, and more—longer and to a far greater extent than anyone who ever had a personal relationship with Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden.

When the O’Connors decided to move to California, Frank, considered by everyone who knew him to be a kind, gentle human being, discovered a thirteen-acre farm in California’s San Fernando Valley which became their home. There among acres of orange groves, Frank raised peacocks and other small animals and “grew gladioli and alfalfa as a paying business.”

Although, according to Heller, Rand “was pleased that her husband had become ‘chronically and permanently happy’ in his outdoor life,” eventually she took him back to New York and life in a small and plain apartment, which Frank accepted with his customary grace. As Heller notes, he had believed in Rand all through the years when “. . . she was almost without hope, and he had always put her writing first.”

In New York, as Nathan, Barbara, Heller, and others have written in too-salacious detail, Ayn and her protégé became lovers. Although much has been written about Ayn’s arguments in support of Frank’s cuckolding, Nathan’s motivation for the affair, and Barbara’s passive acquiescence, there is virtually nothing to explain why Frank accepted this humiliating violation of his marriage. All we know, according to Heller, is that when Frank returned from his menial job in a florist shop and Ayn sprung on him that she and Branden were in love and wanted to spend “private time” together, “Frank paled.” He raised his voice saying, “I won’t be part of this.” However, once Barbara agreed to the arrangement, Frank went along.

But private time together wasn't enough for Ayn and Nathan. Weeks later, "... she and Nathaniel received their partners' permission to meet for sex twice a week." As Heller put it, "... Frank O'Connor quietly waived his marital rights," leaving their apartment as Nathan arrived for the twice-weekly trysts.

Heller writes that Rand's fifteen-year secretary, Barbara Weiss, had come to believe that her employer "... was not, after all, unconscious of the turbulence and pain she had caused in the lives of people who had cared for her, including Frank. 'She just robbed him of everything,' the secretary said . . . ."

As to Hank and Erika, three episodes exemplify just how badly Rand and Branden could treat others: (1) the *Verdict* magazine affair, (2) Rand's breakup with Branden, and (3) our "excommunication" by Ayn.

(1) It is significant that Heller makes no mention of *Verdict* magazine, especially in light of her many hours spent interviewing the irrepressible Nathaniel Branden. We surmise that he doesn't remember the *Verdict* episode because Branden's deplorable conduct in that affair was just another one of his prosecutions of "Students of Objectivism."

In 1964, a group of us pumped up by Rand's ideas—especially as propounded in *Atlas Shrugged* and presented in Branden's lectures, as well as by the forthcoming national elections—wanted to "do something" intellectually and politically constructive. After several meetings and much discussion, we decided to publish a magazine.

Some funds were raised, Hank became publisher, Erika senior editor, and other men and women, accomplished in their own fields, became involved: a lawyer, an editor, an English instructor, a communications specialist, an art director, a research scientist, an interior designer, a public relations executive, an advertising expert.

*Verdict's* inaugural issue was published in October 1964, a few weeks before the presidential and congressional elections.

The entire cover consisted of the magazine's name and a large photograph of a handsome, well dressed young Negro man—wearing a campaign button that said "In '64, Goldwater for President."

On the inside front cover there appeared the following statement:

## **To Our Readers**

On August 17, 1962, 18-year-old Peter Fechter was shot to death by Communist police while attempting to climb the narrow strip of wall that separates East from

West Berlin.

His crime: He wanted to be free.

On January 8, 1964, the United States agreed to ship large amounts of American wheat to the Soviet Union.

Its goal: Brother love.

At this moment, you are reading the first issue of VERDICT, written by people who did not see those two incidents as separate and unrelated--by people who did see the glaring contradiction.

Their purpose: *To link events by means of ideas.*

One idea that links the ghastly incidents above is that contradictions, inconsistencies, and betrayals are not in anyone's rational self-interest.

The world of ideas is suffering from too many words. Loose words, ill-defined words, unsupported words. Words in defense of collectivism in politics, depravity in art, and uncertainty in morality. Words often designed to befuddle rather than clarify, brainwash rather than convince, intimidate rather than explain.

Now it's time for VERDICT.

VERDICT plans to judge--and fully expects to be judged in return.

The standard which determines the selection, coverage, and treatment of subjects can only be *indicated*--and not explained in full--in such a short letter. Ours is the individual as the supreme good. We ask you to follow our pages over the months and see whether we consistently live up to it.

**In** practice this means to defend:

§ The individual's right to his own life and to all the decisions which further his life, at no one else's expense.

§ The right to private property and the translation of that right into the only politico-economic system that guarantees it: Capitalism.



§ A foreign policy which is affirmatively and intelligently anticommunist, and a patriotism that recognizes a "clear and present danger" both at home and abroad.

§ Objective law as a defender of personal freedom.

§ Education, both at home and in school, which emphasizes knowledge about the physical universe, man's need for knowledge **to** make that universe work for him, and the importance of productive work and rational pleasure as the source of personal happiness.

§ Artistic values which stress man's potential greatness.

If you agree with our principles, if they are yours, go out and actively promote them by getting and giving subscriptions to VERDICT. We reject the idea of living on the handouts of which unsuccessful magazines resort to. We have something to offer and fully expect the market will bear us out.

Intellectuals--the opinion formers--have vilified business and industry. Thus, it is only intellectuals that can repair the false split, so widely accepted, between pursuits of the mind and the creation of material comforts. When businessmen become convinced that intellectuals do not *have* to be their enemies, they will begin to support their supporters. They will want to advertise in VERDICT; we urge our readers, in all cases where the choice is otherwise equal, to buy the products of our advertisers.

Now, start reading our magazine--and start gathering the evidence that will permit you, too, to render *your* VERDICT.

HENRY MARK HOLZER  
Publisher

**The influence of Rand and Objectivism on *Verdict* was obvious. Some of the articles in its first issue were: "Freedom and Choice," "Seven Hundred Million Chinese Can Be Wronged," and "The Triple Revolution: The Revolt Against the Mind." The issue also contained book and movie reviews.**

**Subsequent issues were in the same vein, attempting to use our understanding of Rand's ideas as the basis for commentary on current political, legal, economic and cultural issues. No plagiarism was intended. None existed.**

For example, *Verdict's* February 1965 issue contained a lengthy essay/review by Clytia C. Montllor, an accomplished writer and editor, entitled "Selfishness." It began with a boxed attributed quotation of Rand's observation that "[t]he attack on 'selfishness' is an attack on man's self-esteem: to surrender one, is to surrender the other." Credit was given where credit was due, along with an *explicit* acknowledgement of *Verdict's* philosophic base, Objectivism.

Clytia received the following letter, dated April 23, 1965: "Dear Clytia: Thank you for your review of The Virtue of Selfishness in the February issue of "Verdict." As an author, I appreciate the things you said. As a philosopher, I was pleased to see you handled it so well, without any ideological slips or vague formulations that could have misled the readers. With my best wishes. Cordially."

The letter was signed, "Ayn."

By the time Clytia received Ayn's complimentary letter, *Verdict* had published five issues. They contained serious commentary, essays, articles, reviews, and letters from an Objectivist, and non-Objectivist, perspective: individual rights, free-market, laissez-faire, limited government, strong national defense.

We were all "out there," working entirely *pro bono* and *doing* something in pursuit of our shared values.

But not for long.

Enter Nathaniel Branden, the house "psychotherapist" to "Students of Objectivism."

While it beggars belief that Branden, possessing only a masters degree in educational psychology (let alone Ayn Rand), could have thought he possessed the professional ability to practice psychotherapy, Branden not only did so, but he used his status to intimidate his and Rand's "Students of Objectivism."

Heller has said that Branden was Ayn Rand's "enforcer." He was. One way he kept his "students" hewing to straight Objectivist dogma was by pulling psychological rank. (A favorite expression of Branden's, said with a smile but in deadly seriousness, was: "you are being watched, and judged.")

Using the dual authority of his status as a putative psychotherapist and his actual position as Rand's "intellectual heir," Branden monitored the conduct and premises of his "students."

One day, Hank received a summons from Branden for the *Verdict* senior staff to appear at his apartment where, in those days, he conducted much of his business.

When we arrived, Branden was in his typical supercilious, posturing role as “Mr. Objectivism.” After making clear that he was speaking for Rand, he launched an attack on everyone’s psychology, our “bad premises,” and our “second-handedness”—all because of our publication of *Verdict*.

Branden summed up our serious (and thus, in Objectivist terms, immoral) transgressions with the indictment that we were guilty of wanting “*Rearden metal without Rearden*”—meaning, in Objectivist-speak, that by predicating our publication on Rand’s ideas, we were somehow using purloined property. In effect, stealing from her.

As absurd as this charge was on its face, and as much as it was yet another instance of Branden’s intellectual and psychological bullying, coming from him—especially as Rand’s designated spokesman—it affected all of us terribly. It also spelled the beginning of the end for *Verdict* magazine.

While not the worst of times for Hank and Erika, the *Verdict* episode was certainly among them.

*Verdict* was just one of the many examples of Branden’s highhandedness, his patronizing airs, his power lust, and his manipulations. During those days of Objectivism in New York City he callously left in his moralizing wake many decent, serious men and women who flagellated themselves because they could not be like him, Rand, and others in their tight circle.

(2) The story of how we found the Italian movie version of *We the Living* has been told often—but not by Anne Heller—most recently in a new DVD documentary (see [www.wethelivingmovie.com](http://www.wethelivingmovie.com)). All Heller has to say about the film is a casual, passing reference that it “. . . with English subtitles, [somehow] became available to art-house audiences, *thanks to the efforts of three of her admirers.*” (Emphasis supplied.)

The fact is that in 1968, Hank and Erika Holzer found and purchased the film in Italy. We emphasize that fact here again because the end of the Italian chapter of *We the Living*’s rescue story segues into Rand’s break with Branden, in the aftermath of which Hank (and to a lesser extent, Erika) played a major role.

The story of the Rand-Branden affair, its improbable genesis, and its cataclysmic ending, has been hashed and rehashed, the primary sources being the Brandens’ own books. There is no need to reiterate that sordid story here except to explain what role we played in its aftermath, why one aspect of it doomed our relationship with Ayn, and what that episode reveals about her.

Heller writes that “[t]here are many who remember the period that followed.” No doubt. But only a handful of people were *directly* involved in the events that followed: Ayn Rand, Nathaniel Branden, Barbara Branden, Wilfred Schwartz,

Robert Berole, Elayne Kalberman, Harry Kalberman, Leonard Peikoff, Allan Blumenthal, Joan Blumenthal, and of course Frank O'Connor—and the Holzers.

Not all of these individuals were involved in every event that occurred. This is important to understand because of all that has been written over the years about the aftermath of the Rand-Branden break, much of it is not only hearsay, but is also factually untrue.

Of these thirteen people, only *six* played major roles in the period between our return from Rome with *We The Living* and publication of Ayn's "To Whom It May Concern" statement explaining the reasons for her break with Branden. Those six were Ayn, Barbara, Wilfred, Allan and the Holzers.

Of the six, only *four*—Ayn, Barbara, Hank and Erika—were deeply involved in the event that would end our relationship with Ayn some fourteen months later.

We returned from Rome on August 23, 1968. The next day we met with Ayn in her apartment, intending to regale her with the story of how we'd found the film, negotiated for its purchase, and bought it from two Italian movie wheeler-dealers. And to discuss what happened next. Despite the jet lag, we were riding high.

When Ayn answered the door, instead of the enthusiasm that we anticipated, she seemed morose. After we took our usual seats on her living room couch, Ayn Announced with no preliminaries: "There's something I have to tell you. I have broken with Nathan."

Heller writes that we "asked no probing questions."

We didn't.

After all, it was *Ayn Rand!*

We were stunned. Ayn offered no explanation other than to say that Branden had acted immorally and had lied to her.

Ayn told us that the break ended their partnership in *The Objectivist*, a legal entity separate from NBI, and then asked some business and financial questions.

Hank replied that he couldn't answer them thoroughly until he had seen the magazine's tax return or a financial statement. Either that night or soon thereafter, Ayn produced a copy of the latter. When Hank noticed that on *The Objectivist* books there was a loan receivable from NBI to *The Objectivist* in the amount, not of \$25,000 as Heller erroneously claims, but of \$16,000, he asked Ayn about it.

First, Ayn asked for an explanation of what the receivable was for. Hank told her it appeared that NBI had borrowed \$16,000 from *The Objectivist*, and that the loan was duly recorded on the financial statement. Ayn said she knew nothing about it.

From Hank's perspective, that was that. He had no way of knowing whether or not Ayn knew about the loan. Nor did he have any information concerning what the loan was for, what its terms were, what repayments had been made, or anything else about it.

Contrary to what has been written elsewhere—and strongly but negligently suggested by Heller—Hank neither then, nor ever, said or implied that Branden had done anything underhanded or that the loan was inappropriate. For one thing, as stated, Hank knew nothing about *The Objectivist's* legal arrangements between Ayn and Nathan in general, or about the \$16,000 loan in particular. As a matter of fact, years later when Branden's nephew asked Hank if he thought Nathan was a "crook," Hank replied, "Your uncle was many unwholesome things, but certainly not a crook."

Three significant events followed.

Heller writes that Rand refused to assign to Branden copyrights on articles he had written for *The Objectivist*. *This is categorically false.*

A few days after Ayn had broken the news of the break to us, a meeting was held in Ayn's apartment. Present were Barbara Branden, Wilfred Schwartz, Allan Blumenthal and the Holzers. The purpose was to resolve outstanding Rand-Branden business issues. Ostensibly, the six of us were on the same side. Principally, the task was to have Nathan turn over to Ayn his interest in *The Objectivist*, and he was waiting upstairs in his apartment to sign the necessary papers. (At the same time, he was to sign a document I had drafted on Barbara's behalf, which was then of considerable personal importance to her.)

Equally false are statements later made by Branden and others that Hank somehow violated an ethical duty to Nathan by continuing to represent Ayn under these circumstances. Recall that Nathan had recruited Hank to represent *Ayn*, not him. During those years while Hank represented Ayn, and various corporate entities such as *The Objectivist*, he *never* represented Nathaniel Branden personally.

While Erika remained with Ayn, the four of us went up to Nathan's apartment.

It was not a pleasant event.

Nathan was no longer the pompous, pretentious "intellectual heir" who for years had bullied his "students." He was seemingly defeated in spirit, mind and body.

His major concern was copyrights on the articles he had authored for *The Objectivist*.

*Hank carried the explicit message from Ayn—unequivocally reiterated then and there to Nathan by Barbara, and at least one of the others—that the copyrights belonged to him.*

“How do I know that? How can I be sure?” Nathan bellowed.

“Because I’ll be there,” Barbara answered. These are verbatim quotations.

Nathan signed.

This is why, as Heller correctly but snidely writes, Ed Nash was able a year later to publish Branden’s *The Psychology of Self-Esteem* “without copyrights” and “without any trouble from Rand.” Whatever Ayn felt at the breakup, whatever ill she wished Nathan, it was inconceivable that she would appropriate his property—and though she could have, she did not.

Afterward, in the presence of Erika and the others, Ayn expressed profuse gratitude for what Hank had accomplished.

She would often express her gratitude, in word and deed, in the days ahead.

Next, Hank and Ayn labored to formulate what would become her written statement to the NBI students and the readers of *The Objectivist*, “To Whom It May Concern.” Many difficult hours went into its structure, wording, and tone. Hank also vetted it for legal issues, as did Ayn’s literary lawyer. Others still close to Ayn read drafts. The essay speaks for itself, and need not be reiterated here.

What must be emphasized, however, is that during the breakup period, Ayn knew why she’d really broken with Nathan, *yet she kept Hank completely in the dark.*

He was her lawyer—her “intellectual bodyguard,” trusting her, putting aside other legal work, being paid a pittance, risking his reputation—yet Ayn adhered to her incomplete, misleading story about Nathan’s immorality and lying.

Some time later, Ayn was made aware of what it had cost Hank, in various ways, to have stood with her during the breakup crisis. Her response—and this is a direct 1968 quote, which Hank remembers some forty years later—was that “[T]here will always be a place in my heart for you next to Archie Ogden (the Bobbs-Merrill editor who had saved *The Fountainhead* from possible oblivion).”

While “To Whom It May Concern” was being prepared, an event occurred which presaged Ayn’s split with us.

Our law office was in the Empire State Building, which housed NBI in the lower level.

One afternoon, Hank received a frantic call from Elayne Kalberman, Nathan's sister, who was engaged in moving *The Objectivist* staff and property out of NBI's office. Heller writes that Elayne "asked" Hank to come downstairs. Elayne's memory fails her. She was highly agitated and said that Nathan was screaming, often incoherently.

When Hank arrived, he found Elayne, her husband Harry, and Barbara in a small conference room opposite Barbara's office. Nathan was just outside, standing on a chair or stool, literally drooling and shouting "Tell him! Tell him!" as he pointed at Hank. It was surrealistic.

Hank kept asking Elayne, Harry, and Barbara what Nathan was trying to say. Hank and Barbara then went into her office. She closed the door, sat behind her desk, and began talking but saying nothing intelligible. It was evident Barbara wanted to reveal something important, but was having difficulty doing so. She spoke in almost stream of consciousness: "Ayn. Me and Frank. Nathan. Ayn. The two of them. Frank. Me. Everyone knew. That's what he means."

After considerable prodding, Barbara revealed that Ayn and Nathan had been lovers.

Hank was stunned.

He didn't believe her.

Once again, it was *Ayn Rand!*

He went home, called Ayn, and reported what he'd witnessed and what Barbara had alleged. Whether Ayn asked Hank what he thought, as Heller has written, or asked him "What did you say?," as he now recalls (the latter seems more likely), there never has been any doubt about Hank's reply. He said: "*Nathan?* Yick!" Meaning, it was inconceivable to Hank that *Ayn Rand* could have a romance with *Nathaniel Branden* whom Hank, and many others, had long considered unsavory.

Although Hank and Erika didn't know it then, from that moment on their days with Ayn were numbered. Perhaps not in weeks, but certainly in months.

And that is what happened.

(3) Recall the Rand-Branden purges, excommunications and drumhead trials. Not all the indictments were grandly "philosophical" in nature. Many were based on "immoral" thoughts or actions. The Efron trial, for example, was over some

minor matter. What had concerned Rand and Branden was not the transgression itself so much, but rather that no one had called it to their attention.

Quoting Joan Blumenthal, Heller writes “Right and wrong . . . moral and immoral—those were the words being used all the time . . . .” Heller adds that: “Said a longtime NBI staff member, ‘Moral judgments were *required* if you were a moral person. It was terrible.’ (Emphasis in original.) As Heller quotes Hank: “Most people were walking on eggshells. \* \* \* If you said something that was unknowingly immoral you’d be devastated. She’d look at you with those laser eyes and tell you that you had a lousy ‘sense of life’.”

Recall, too, that Hank was Ayn’s “intellectual bodyguard,” charged with not only protecting her from the world at large, but also from straying friends and admirers.

These considerations—the sin of silence, the presence of immorality, and his job of protectiveness—led Hank to call to Ayn’s attention something which gave her an excuse to end our relationship *because of Hank’s earlier reaction that Ayn’s longtime lover was an object of disgust.*

For about eighteen months—from the August 1968 Rand-Branden breakup to our January 1970 “excommunication”—although the Rand inner circle had shrunk, a few admirers from the periphery were allowed in.

Among them was a person who came to Hank, Ayn’s “intellectual bodyguard,” with a story that a certain married individual in the circle was having an affair with someone outside it.

Putting aside the moral, let alone psychological, requirement of fidelity in a marriage (except of course for the O’Connors and Brandens, who somehow had been above all that), the question bedeviled Hank as to whether Ayn should be told that someone personally close to her was having an extra-marital affair. Had Hank been just another friend, he would have regarded “who was doing what to whom” as none of *his* business, let alone *Ayn Rand’s*.

For weeks Hank and Erika struggled to decide whether he had a duty to tell Ayn.

Recall that he would not know about the Ayn-Nathan affair until many years later. Nor whether the insider-outsider gossip was true or false. (It turned out to be false.)

Hank decided to tell Ayn, and he did.

Ayn called a meeting. She railed at us for breaching the couples’ privacy, and issued a “qualified” excommunication. Qualified, because she uncharacteristically “left the door open.” Hopefully, in time, we would see the



error of our ways—doubtless after much soul-searching and even psychotherapy with one of Branden’s psychotherapist disciples.

Despite Ayn’s unprecedented offer, we chose never to walk through that door.

Our “best of times and worst of times” with Ayn Rand were finished.

There is an unpleasant, yet revealing irony here. Heller accurately relates how Ayn forgave Barbara for lying to her about Nathan’s infidelity and other subjects: “Rand met with Barbara,” Heller writes, “and, in effect, forgave her for protecting Branden. Where there were divided loyalties, she [Rand] said, it was understandable that a man-worshipping woman would stand by the man she had married.”

Barbara was thus off the hook for long complicity in, including lying about, her ex-husband’s longtime deception of Rand, whom Nathan (and Barbara, for that matter) purported to love.

But Hank—who at worst had made a good faith error of judgment, who had told Ayn something he thought he had a duty to tell her—was excommunicated (along with Erika, for good measure).

We were, of course, excommunicated *not* because of what Hank had done in repeating gossip, but because he had earlier expressed his visceral disgust at the idea of a Rand-Branden liaison, and because the crisis with Nathan—by then having played itself out—Ayn no longer needed him, or anyone else for that matter, as an “intellectual bodyguard.”

But no matter how the Holzers were sometimes treated, they never lost sight of Ayn Rand’s heroic personal conduct in pursuit of her ideas. Properly understood and consistently implemented, those ideas could serve as the foundation for an intellectual and political renaissance in her adopted country.

Revisiting the period of Ayn’s life in which we had a role brings us back to Anne C. Heller’s *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*.

Apart from Heller’s infrequent but unseemly, and sometimes snide, editorializing—e.g., Rand’s “fragile understanding of American due process,” “the New Deal’s economic policies . . . may have helped to save capitalism”—the book’s major flaw is Heller’s failure to adequately deliver on what she promises in her Preface: “. . . to document how Russian and Jewish culture and history color some of the most interesting features of [Rand’s] character and work.” Even aside from the vagueness of this stated goal, and even granting that Heller’s Russian chapters shed considerable light on the culture of that time and place, there are two problems with her book.

First, Heller offers little *direct* linkage between Russian (let alone Soviet) culture and Rand's "character and work."

Second, there is no linkage at all between Jewish culture and Rand's character and work.

That said, Heller's structure is solid, her research thorough, considerable fairness is reflected throughout her book, and her writing is excellent—often moving.

"[S]he fulfilled the mission she had lived for: to create her ideal man and a microcosmic ideal world in which he and all other 'real people' could breathe freely and love passionately—and love most passionately those whose strength and values most resembled her conception of her own. Nevertheless, the critical backlash in which [*Atlas Shrugged*] thrashed and almost sank darkened her outlook and shriveled her spirit, and she had no additional goal to ignite her drive and occupy her mind."

"If *We the Living* had exposed the lethal effects of totalitarian state power on the best and most spirited individuals in a closed society; if *Anthem* had charted an escape from the tyranny of brotherhood; and if *The Fountainhead* had defined the struggle of a free, active, self-reliant individual against a culture of suffocating conformity, then *Atlas Shrugged* extended the perspective to reveal a new ideological and social order, one in which those who are independent, purposeful, creative, and proud no longer have to fight or suffer."