

Title: The Russian Film Writings of Ayn Rand: Roots of a Romanticist Conviction
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It was the life-long conviction of Ayn Rand that a writer of fiction should present interesting, great characters – not the ordinary “folks next door.” Her fictional heroes are unconventional, great men and women. While Rand attended the Soviet State Institute of Cinematography (1924-25), she wrote several essays that were subsequently published in Russia. Two of them were *Pola Negri*, a biography of the silent film actress, and *Hollywood: American City of Movies*, a pamphlet about the Hollywood film industry. This paper shows that her grand-scale goal in characterization was already established by her Cinema Institute period: she presents Pola Negri and the director Cecil DeMille as grand-scale persons and artists.

In *Pola Negri*, for example, she contrasts Negri, who “always portrays the strong, powerful... woman-conqueror,” with the “syrupy-sweet [actresses], each identical to the next like lozenges from the same box.” In her own play *Ideal*, the heroine (a actress) is described in similar terms: “Kay Gonda does not cook her own meals or knit her own underwear ... She is not kind to her dear old mother—she *has* no dear old mother. She is not just like you and me. She never was like you and me.” In *Pola Negri*, Rand points out that Negri clashed with a commandant who detains her at a foreign border, and subsequently married him. In *Red Pawn*, Rand’s heroine has a romance with her enemy, a Communist commandant.

Although the persons Rand wrote about in her Cinema Institute period were not fictional, I will show that the selectivity she exercised in describing them is the same as she exercised in her later career and that she believed that real people, too, may be “larger than life.”

References

Rand, Ayn. *Russian Writings on Hollywood*. Marina Del Rey, CA: Ayn Rand Institute Press, 1999.