

HOLLYWOOD'S CASE AGAINST MONOGAMY

Why Must Love And Marriage Be Different In Hollywood?

IT has become a fixed idea with the vast motion-picture audiences all over the world that Hollywood marriages are like Hollywood sets—elaborate and short-lived; changed as often as a star's mind. When a Hollywood star marries for the first time, there is always a great to-do about it. "The first time? Not really!!" It seems almost as if the poor bride or bridegroom had broken some strange code in confessing that since reaching Hollywood he or she decided to enter into the bonds of matrimony for the first time.

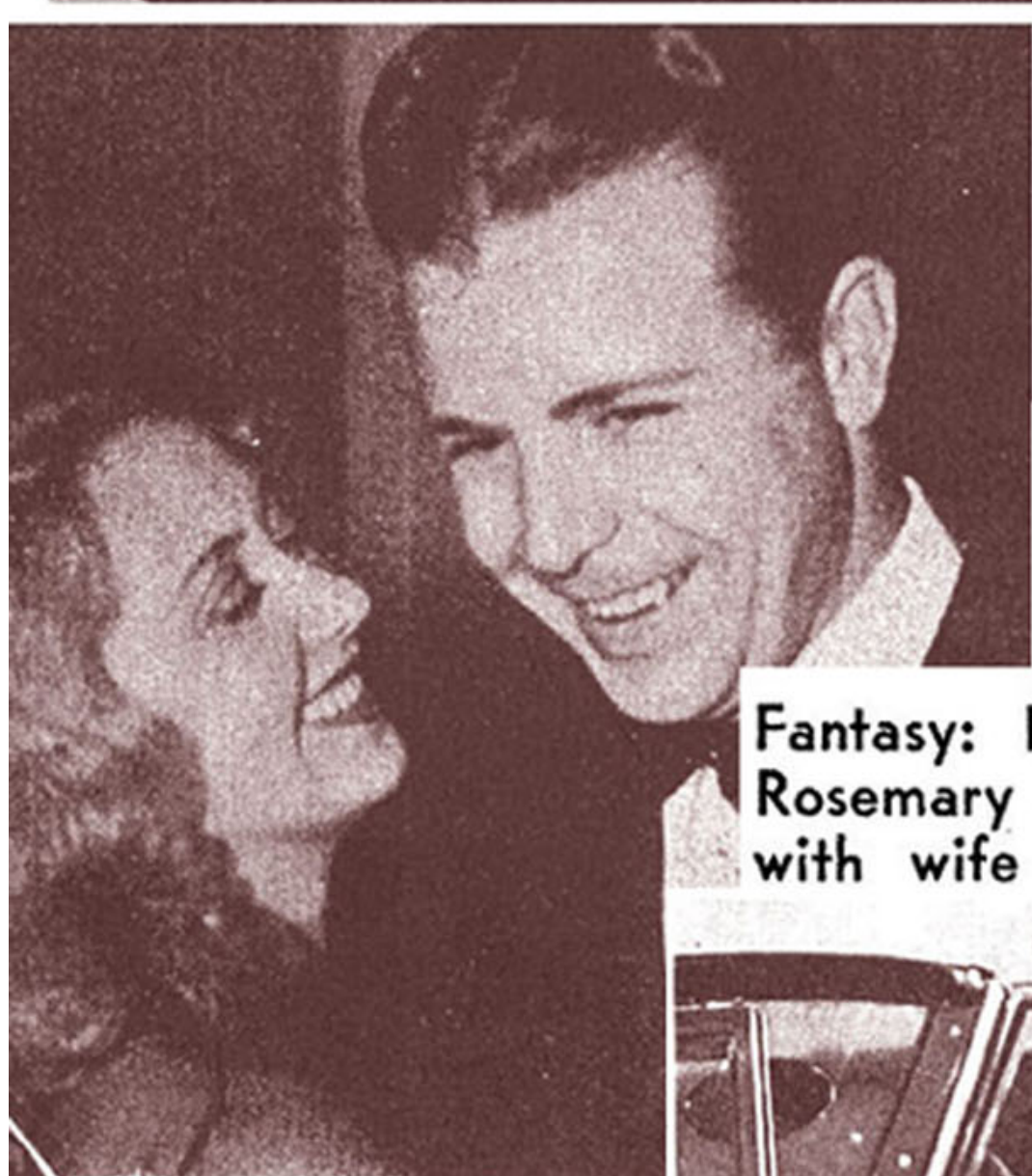
It is true that many of the screen stars have been married more than once, and it will continue to be true, I suppose, as long as there are screen stars.

It is equally true that the ladies and gentlemen of our social register and of what Cholly Knickerbocker has named Cafe Society are equally apt to change husbands and wives with the climate and modes, but they are more or less scattered about the globe—New York, London, Paris, the Riviera, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore—while the stars are concentrated under the fierce white arc light of publicity in a little place called Hollywood, which hasn't a post office, I understand, and is merely a state of mind—and part of Los Angeles.

It would be, I think, interesting to inquire why the stars marry so often, and there are, I believe, any number of reasons. In these very reasons you will find Hollywood's case against monogamy—a case built up by the peculiar problems of Hollywood people.

Take some of the girls, for instance—the majority of them come to Hollywood very young; some have had stage experience, most of them have not. Some have won beauty contests, or been models, or danced or sung in night clubs. Some have had practically no professional experience. Extremely youthful, lovely and talented, they are flung into this little exciting artificial world . . . and, when one considers the superficiality of Hollywood life, one wonders how they keep their heads at all. (Continued on page 88)

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Fantasy: Dick Powell and Rosemary Lane. Reality: with wife Joan Blondell



Clark Gable, the great lover of the screen; Allan Jones and Joan Crawford — all three examples of why Hollywood has a definite case against monogamy

Many of them do not keep their hearts. They fall in love with other ambitious youngsters, naturally and sweetly and inevitably, and they marry. And life goes on, work goes on, and the girl grows older and so does the boy. And perhaps one is more successful than the other, and the other can't take it. Or perhaps they were simply too young for marriage, too dazzled and too much in love with love to know what it was all about. So they part; and eventually are divorced.

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Joan Crawford pictured during her 1939 divorce



(image added)

ANOTHER type of marriage which takes place in an early stage of development is the marriage of ambition. Many girls in Hollywood have married, shortly after their first contract, in order to get ahead faster. They marry men with money, or influence, or good jobs; they marry established players, directors, producers. And this type of marriage also goes on the rocks.

Then there's loneliness. And don't think you can't be lonely in Hollywood. Or there's the boy or girl back home with whom the aspirant star was in love before he or she came West, and old love and old loyalty not yet outgrown, but soon to be, perhaps. Oh, there are all sorts of reasons for these young, early marriages—love, ambition, loneliness, propinquity, loyalty, and sometimes fear—fear of failing, fear of being alone, fear of missing happiness.

In a land, almost legendary, where love-making is bread and butter, it is natural that the dividing line between fantasy and reality sometimes grows very faint. You keep on acting and you keep on making love even after the cameras have stopped grinding.

The climate in Hollywood is stimulating, the talk in Hollywood—almost entirely of pictures and picture people—is stimulating. Everything is fast-moving, and exciting and hurried—and artificial. You don't talk about hundreds of dollars, you talk about millions of dollars. You don't say that Mr. So and So is rather in love with Miss Whoosit—you say that Mr. So and So is madly, passionately in love with Miss Whoosit, that it is The Great Love of His Life. And after a while, he believes it.

The studios help along the illusion, in various ways. For instance, when they have a promising couple of young featured players under contract, they are delighted, for publicity purposes, to suggest, hint and foster a romance between the two. Sometimes this artificially engendered, make-believe romance turns into something real . . . at least for the time being.

Another way in which the studios play Cupid is through the clauses inserted in some of the younger stars' contracts, which forbid them to marry for a certain number of years. It's the old story of Adam and Eve and the apple. Tell a youngster that he or she can't marry and it's the one thing in the world he or she wants to do!

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(image added)

It has often been asked, cynically, why do the stars bother to marry so often? Why not a love affair and be done with it? Why all these elaborate elopements—advance notices given to the papers? Why take on even the semblance of the solemnity of vows before God and man—or at least a judge or someone at Las Vegas?

The answer is simple enough. We all want domesticity, a home, children, a place apart from the white lights. And certainly when one of our many marrying stars marries for the third or fourth time, it is still with the idea that he or she is an average human being and domesticity and slippers by the fire-side is the real thing.

The trouble is that most stars aren't average human beings. For that reason the rôle becomes difficult to play after a while.

Yet, in a great many cases, the second or even third marriage of some of the stars has turned out—as far as we know, and as far as they have gone—to be happy and to give every promise of endurance. This definitely goes against our average belief in monogamy—and it is the interesting contribution to human behavior that Hollywood offers the world to consider. This is, possibly, because, having experienced failure, these exotic people have at last found success, in perfectly complementing each other. In other words, they have achieved a marriage of maturity that happens to be the right one after several marriages of fumbling immaturity.

Now and then, we find the case of a star—usually a woman—who grows up in phases. She may marry several times, she usually does, and each time she marries the man who complements that phase . . . she runs possibly the whole gamut which I mentioned earlier. She marries first for young love, secondly, for ambition; and then, perhaps, for intellectual companionship; and after that for something else again.

A great many average women have wished, in their secret hearts, that they, too, could change husbands with their moods or with the development of their own personalities, but the average woman can't manage several marriages during her lifetime.

Certainly there is no reason for us to condemn or to praise the all-change-partners method.

What the everyday boy or girl or man or woman must realize is that just as

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imported cars, twenty-carat diamonds, swimming pools, race horses and trunks of clothes are not to be his or her lot, neither are many marriages.

The average home is not run on a Hollywood basis. You can't be excused by temperament or talk of genius or of being above the average man-made law.

Every man or woman reaches a point when he or she says "I can't stand it another minute!" The thing which precipitates this feeling is not always a big thing—it isn't always brutality or drunkenness or adultery or dis-honesty—it's more than likely something quite trivial—the way a man whistles through his teeth, the way a woman lies about the cost of her hats. It may be too much mother-in-law, or too much money or plain incompatibility or anything at all. But such moments of I-wish-I-were-free come very often in all marriages. Only the routine of daily life forbids rushing out to a lawyer. The children, lack of money, what people will say—those points must be considered.

But the Hollywood stars, when they feel this mood coming over them, are in a position to rush to lawyers. In the first place, they don't have to think about what the neighbors will say, and they don't have to think about money and they don't, as a rule, consider the children, if any.

From the Hollywood star's viewpoint, then, they thus avoid monotony. For many of them, the women particularly, it does seem to mean that the overthrowing of monogamy in favor of many marriages creates stimulus and development.

I have watched a few of these women stars, past forty, who seem to be, in their reaction to several marriages, still young girls. In each new love they seem to find the eternal promise of their girlhood.

There is another thing to be said for them, too. By refusing to hold to marriages that make them unhappy, by not turning a hypocritical face to the world and murmuring that all is well with their love when the opposite is true, the stars do get a kind of realistic honesty.

I do not believe this makes them happy. I feel that the lonely shoals we often see them landing on at the middle years of their rather hectic lives may come from this very attitude; yet the sheer honesty of it is, and should be, somehow admirable.

A GREAT many men and women—almost all of us in fact—have all the less paying potentialities of the stars. That is to say, most people have temperament in some form or another. The average Mr. and Mrs. can't express it, that's all . . . not, that is, on the screen or stage, in words or with paint or music. They get just as fed up, of course they do, and they have moments in which freedom from all bonds appears the most desirable thing in the world.

But public opinion is not so lenient with Mr. and Mrs. as with Star and Starlet. Nor is money usually so plentiful. And besides, there's the office to go to in the morning—and so the mood passes, is forgotten and married life goes smoothly on until the next time.

People who live through these minor

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crises together have achieved a real marriage. There are lots of them—growing up together, growing close, growing into a companionship of give and take, of tolerance and honor.

Stars rarely have to learn, or do learn tolerance, or the joy of give and take. After all, they are, essentially, the darlings of the gods. They were born with more than most of us have—more beauty, more energy, more charm, more temperament.

But because of these very reasons they are denied the simpler joys of the rest of us. So thus they learn how to remain the world's great lovers, without ever quite attaining the simple peace by which they could become married friends for life.



PHOTOPLAY

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