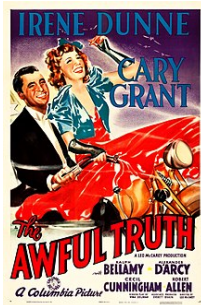


Hollywood: Her Story May 2024 ENewsletter Movies Involving Divorce

Divorce is a fact of life in America for many families. Thus movies often address this topic through focusing on the impacts on the characters featured. In this newsletter, we highlight some of the movies over the years that have revolved around divorce.



In the 1927 silent movie, *Children of Divorce*, the divorces of their parents many years prior yield difficult circumstances and tragic results for three adults. **Clara Bow** and **Esther Ralston** played two women leads who are good friends, although one knowingly marries the man whom the other loves. Actress and sex symbol **Clara Bow** appeared in another 1927 movie, *It*, that led to her being called “The It Girl” with “it” describing a specific allure possessed by the person. Bow was the first or second box office draw in every year from 1927 to 1930. At one point, she was receiving 45,000 fan letters each month. Bow made the transition to talkies but retired in 1933 to ranch with her husband. She has been featured on a U.S. postage stamp. **Esther Ralston** was called “The American Venus” and was one of the highest paid film stars during the silent film era. Actress **Hedda Hopper** also had a role in the movie. In 1938, Hopper began writing a gossip column for the *Los Angeles Times*. She wrote that column for 28 years and had a famous rivalry with another gossip columnist, **Louella Parsons**. The film itself is held by the Library of Congress as part of the Silent Feature Film Survival Database.

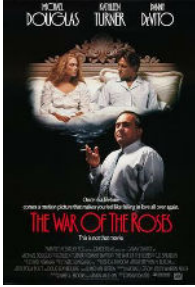


Actress **Irene Dunne** played the lead role in the 1937 movie *The Awful Truth*. The plot involves a wealthy couple who decide to divorce but then interfere with each other’s romances. For this role, she received one of her five Oscar nominations for Best Actress in a Leading Role. Dunne originally planned to be an opera singer but didn’t have success at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Instead, she performed in musicals on Broadway until she was scouted by the movie industry. Dunne began her film career in 1930 and received her first Oscar nomination in 1932 for *Cimarron*. Her last film role was in 1952. Dunne was chosen as a delegate to the United Nations by President Eisenhower. At the invitation of Walt Disney, she christened the Mark Twain Riverboat at the opening of Disneyland in 1955. An active humanitarian, Dunne received numerous awards and honorary degrees after her retirement. She received the Kennedy Center Honors in 1985.



Actresses **Meryl Streep** and **Jane Alexander** both appeared in the 1979 movie *Kramer vs. Kramer*. This movie tells the story of a couple’s divorce involving a young son and the ensuing custody battle. The movie received nine Oscar nominations and won five, including Best Picture. Meryl Streep won the Best Actress in a Supporting Role Oscar, while Jane Alexander was also nominated in the same category. Streep is the most-nominated actress in Academy history with 21 nominations and has two additional acting Oscars. She said, “I speak out about women because I am one. I see pay inequity and disparity in pay at the very top of our industry and at the bottom. And I see it in every industry and across cultures . . . I don’t think about ‘empowering women’ – it’s about enhancing humanity.” For Jane Alexander, this nomination is one of four acting Oscar nominations that she has received. She is also an actress on the stage and on television and served as the Director of the National Endowment of the Arts. She has won two Emmys and a Tony.

The 1989 movie *The War of the Roses*, starring **Kathleen Turner**, tells of a divorcing and dueling couple fighting over their material possessions. Turner began her entertainment career on stage in 1977. Her breakout role was in the 1981 movie



Body Heat, which led to her being considered a sex symbol. Turner has been nominated for two Oscars, an Emmy, and a Tony. She is still active in the entertainment business today. Previous Oscar nominee **Polly Platt** served as executive producer for the movie. Platt's 1984 Oscar nomination was for Best Art Direction – Set Decoration for *Terms of Endearment*. Platt was the first female accepted into Hollywood's Art Director Guild and was widely known for being a mentor. Said of her, "[Polly] couldn't walk into a gas station without mentoring somebody. Movies are a team sport, and she made teams function. She would assume a maternal role in terms of really being there. The film was everything, and ego just didn't exist." The editor for the film was **Lynzee Klingman**. Over her four decades in the film industry, Klingman has been nominated for the 1976 Best Film

Editing Oscar for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.



Actresses with whom we are very familiar starred in the 1996 movie *First Wives Club* in which three divorced women who knew each other in college decide to exact revenge on their ex-husbands. The three scorned women are played by **Goldie Hawn**, **Diane Keaton**, and **Bette Midler**. Actress and producer **Goldie Hawn** won the 1970 Best Actress in a Supporting Role Oscar for *Cactus Flower*. Nominated for the Best Actress Oscar for *Private Benjamin*, Hawn has been producing movies since 1980. Actress, director, and producer **Diane Keaton** won the Best Actress Oscar for *Annie Hall* and has three additional nominations. Keaton has a Tony nomination and two Emmys for a career that has spanned over five decades. When the Kennedy Center honored **Bette Midler** in 2021, they said she was "an artistic tour de force and America's Divine Miss M." She "has enjoyed an unrivaled and prolific career, entertaining millions with her wondrous voice and

trademark comedic wit." A singer, actress, comedienne, and author, Midler has won Grammys, Emmys, and Tonys and has been nominated for two Academy Awards – *The Rose* (1980) and *For the Boys* (1992). Dame **Maggie Smith** had a supporting role in the movie. A British acting icon and a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, Smith won her first Best Actress Oscar in 1970 for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. She won again in 1979 for *California Suite* and has a number of additional nominations. An Oscar winner for Best Supporting Actress for her work in *Pollock*, **Marcia Gay Harden**, who has a role in the movie, is still in the entertainment business more than four decades after her first film. Oscar-winning costumer designer **Theoni Aldredge** did the costuming for this movie. Aldredge said, "What you do is enhance it, because the costumes are there to serve a producer's vision, a director's viewpoint and, most importantly, an actor's comfort. To me, good design is design you're not aware of." Aldredge also designed costumes for Broadway productions and has been nominated for and won Tony awards for her work.



Nancy Meyers directed and wrote the 1998 movie *The Parent Trap*. The plot involves twin girls separated at birth who meet at summer camp and decide to reunite their divorced parents. Also a producer, Meyers shared the 1983 Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen Oscar for *Private Benjamin*. Goldie Hawn, who starred in that movie, said that it was "a big deal because women at the time weren't usually put in lead roles without a strong male counterpart." Diane Keaton praised Meyers, saying, "She's a pioneer with regard to representing older women. She's the only one delivering the fantasy for women over 55." Meyers is still actively making films.

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

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