



# What GARBO *Thinks* of HOLLYWOOD

*By Katherine Albert*

**A** WISE man in one of his profound moments said that it isn't what people say that matters—it is what they do!

And it's lucky that this is so. For the actions of Greta Garbo, even without the speech that she withholds so energetically, gives us the key to the strange mosaic that is this stranger woman from over the Northern sea.

It has been said of Garbo that the story of her conquest of America is that of the neurotic triumphant.

Don't misunderstand the word "neurotic." A neurotic person is not always one given to neurotic tremors or other obvious symptoms. A neurosis may often find its outlet in moodiness—aloofness—and an escape into a dream world.

An escape into a dream world! Or a world of the screen?

Could Garbo love Hollywood? Does it fit into the dream world where she finds rest for her spirit? Instead of courting it, she avoids and shuns it. She takes no part in its life. The beauties of our Western land leave her unmoved. She was not even impressed by the noble, majestic Yosemite. She ordered her chauffeur to drive faster through its glories.

"Those mountains are pretty high," was her comment.

The obvious thing to say is that she is two personalities rolled into one.

There is that person up there on the screen. And then there is the Swedish girl called Greta who likes her native food and loves anchovies, is always cold, suffers from insomnia, wears bedroom slippers between scenes, loves jazz music but hates dancing, is five feet, 6 inches tall, weighs 125 pounds and wears size seven double-A shoes, likes solid substantial furniture and hates feminine ge-gaws, but adores children, has a big hearty laugh, likes to hear funny stories, invests her money wisely and is frugal as a Scotchman, but is terrified of meeting strange people and is actually timid and embarrassed in a crowd.

The screen Garbo is somebody else, a vague, exotic mystery woman.

It is not true that the publicity department has built up a Garbo myth, but it is true that the busy press-agents at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer have helped the idea along. And the fact that she does not grant interviews and that she draws within herself and keeps secluded is as good a stunt as sending a lion around the world. However, Garbo really IS mysterious, although she hates the legend about herself.

What goes on within her mind as she paces up and down the set, back and forth, you nor I will ever know. She may be thinking the most profound of thoughts. She may only be

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The two Greta Garbos that make up one of the most romantic and glittering figures in all screen history. At the left is a plain girl, with simple tastes, who lives her own life and minds her own business. She likes children, and funny stories, and is timid in a crowd. At the right is the other Garbo—glittering, mysterious, exotic. The Greta of the screen whose allure is so powerful a magnet that she is talked about by millions of fans

wondering if her herring will be chopped properly for dinner. It is more amusing to believe that she is contemplating life and cosmic love.

about her strikes her as strangely funny. When she once read a very high-brow treatise about herself in a national magazine she closed the book and said:

“But what does it all mean?”

She cannot, you see, reconcile herself to the illusions that people have about her. She does not believe herself mysterious.

Hollywood, I think, amuses her ironically more than anything in her life.

She will break out into a loud guffaw at upset dignity.

One very pompous actor who played in a picture of hers walked across the set one day, tripped on a wire and fell sprawling. She could not control her mirth.

She shows her feeling for the average Hollywood party by not attending them. One of the reasons is that she is truly terrified of people *en masse*.

And another reason is that she knows the stories that are always circulated about her when she makes an appearance.

**S**HE has, by now, acclimated herself to California, a gesture that was difficult. She adores the sun—is, in reality, a sun worshipper and loves to have it pour over her lithe, long body. But she likes cold days best. Somehow the driving heat of Hollywood enervates her and always has.

And, although she loves the ocean and lived at the beach when she first came to California, the constant roll of the ocean gets on her nerves.

She has, however, decided to move back to the beach. She lived for a time in a rented house in Beverly Hills, but moved from there to a house of Marie Prevost.

She discovered that the noise of the electric cars passing close by annoyed her, so she is leaving that place.

Certainly she must have a profound contempt for all of the exhibitionist qualities she finds in Hollywood.

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Howard Greer, the dressmaker, says that she is the only star customer he has who insists upon selecting her clothes in a closed fitting room, away from the prying eyes of even the people she knows.

Garbo is not one to dissemble. She shows plainly what she feels and is the most deeply temperamental woman in Hollywood. That does not mean that she flies into tantrums. She has never been known to do that, but she is subject to a thousand moods. When she is in dark spirits she sits apart and will not inflict her misery on others. She simply makes herself miserable. She either talks not at all or a great deal.

**S**HE has no place in the life of Hollywood. She has never adapted herself to it. When she thought she was in love with Jack Gilbert she was more social than ever before, because Jack is such a social person. Then, she went out occasionally, learned to play tennis and made some of the conventional gestures. She doesn't even do that now.

But Hollywood has been kind to her and I think she appreciates this. It has brought her wealth and fame. The wealth doesn't mean a great deal to her, since she lives as simply as a hermit, and I believe that she is afraid of the fame. She feels that it is a Frankenstein that will some day destroy her. She reads all of the stories that are written about her and one day she remarked to a friend:

"See, they say nice things about me now. But if I some time make a bad picture and if I am no longer popular you will see they will say I am not a good actress, and other bad things as well."

She is like a caged lioness on the set, and before she does an emotional scene she walks up and down the stage.

Between scenes she sits hunched over in a chair with an old sweater thrown about her shoulders, like a prize fighter ready to go into the ring.

Garbo will continue to remain an enigma in Hollywood.

But she is really no enigma at all.

She will continue to go her way alone, for she is essentially an alone person, an introvert and a neurotic, a woman not at all amazing to herself

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but amazing to those who watch her.

There is almost as much hysteria about her in Hollywood as there is in the rest of the world. Stars beg to meet her. Hostesses try to lure her to their parties. But Garbo does not like parties.

Nobody is kidding Garbo. She does not overlook the fact that the reason she is so desired is because she is so inaccessible.

She may be bewildered over the men and women who do not know her but who clamor to add her to other social lions in their drawing rooms.

But she understands it better now.

Ever the onlooker at life, she sits back and smiles a sophisticated smile at the irony and smallness of it all.

**I**T is probable that in her heart Garbo despises Hollywood.

How can it fit into her ambition to be a stage star in Berlin, Paris and Vienna? She does not say much about her own Stockholm—probably because there she is not considered truly great, lacking, as she does, years of stage training in her own land.

What part can Hollywood have—save as a gold mine—in Garbo's greatest dream? That is the house she is going to build at Sallsgon—beautiful island-dotted lake near the Swedish capital.

There, on a cliff high above the blue water, she'll rear her castle, and from its doorway she can look down upon the world.

Hollywood?

What more can it be to Greta Garbo than a means to this cherished end?



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