

## Why Marriage Fails: Reflections on Communism By Valle Hansen

The past two or three decades of cohabitation have seen statistics and numbers and facts and theories galore pertaining to the current divorce rate, marriage rate, single-parent-family rate, bicoastal-family rate, working-mom rate, and the death-by-loneliness rate. There's actually even a Web site called [divorcerate.org](http://divorcerate.org), which, incidentally, is where I'm getting (and misconstruing) all of my facts, mostly because it sounds so official.

"50% of all marriages end in divorce."

This statement, while often taken somewhat erringly at face value, has been the impetus behind countless speculations and conjectures about what in the name of God has happened to our society. Where went those high standards and noble principles that the founding fathers of this nation tried so unflinchingly to instill in us? Where are the Christian values the Catholic Church has spent centuries raping, pillaging, and crusading for? And, of course, the number-one question of the twenty-first century: Who is to blame?

These concerns, of course, presuppose that divorce is a negative and relatively new phenomenon, something resulting from the moral turpitude and decline of our basic human drives and values. But that shall be addressed later. Let us first glance into the theories abounding about what the hell we are doing wrong. Is it because mommies aren't staying home anymore? Is it because wifeys aren't turning a blind eye to their cheating hubbies? Is it because Mercury is in retrograde?

Some say that marrying for love is the problem. Gone are the days of dowries and childbearing hips; a "practical" marriage is a thing of the past. Much as we've progressed in pretty much every way over the last hundred years, our penchant for believing that idyllic love conquers all (read: money, sex, power, politics, etcetera) is actually quite a regression, of sorts. I think Goethe said it best with, "Love is an ideal thing; marriage is a real thing. A confusion of the real with the ideal never goes unpunished." Germans are, by nature, very cynical.

Others contend that divorce attorneys have manufactured a sense of malcontent so that they can make lots of money and sleep with lots of high-class hookers. Increasingly, this sentiment sounds less and less like an Oliver Stone conspiracy theory and more like a realistic assessment of the importance of success. "Why are divorces so expensive? Because they are worth it."

Another school of thought resides in the idea that society today prefers the easy way out. "Marriage is hard," our parents (most of whom are themselves divorced) tell us. "It takes a lot of work." "Pick a good one." While I suppose it is possible that people have just become unimaginably lazy beyond all of our wildest dreams (technology notwithstanding), I'm not sold on this idea. Ruining

children's lives, splitting bank accounts, paying alimony, and being judged by your cohorts are all so overrated these days.

Psychics say it's because your soul wasn't aligned with your muse; dentists say it's because you didn't wear your retainer as long as you were supposed to; professors say it's because you didn't sleep with them when you had the chance; Russian mail-order brides say it's because they just wanted a ticket to the US. Everybody's got a theory; everybody's got an angle; and everybody's got a scapegoat. It's actually pretty remarkable from a sociological standpoint.

While these conjectures all certainly have their foundations in reality, they're all wrong. I know this because I have actually singlehandedly figured out what the problem is, and it's got nothing to do with the fact that AIDS exploded all over the sex scene just before OJ killed his wife, which happened at precisely the same time the institution of marriage decided to fall apart.

Much like our geographical and ideological counterparts the Russians, married people have finally come to their senses and chosen to stop deluding themselves. Much like Communism, it's almost like a rite of passage; you have to go through it yourself to realize that it just isn't going to work out the way you thought it should. Much like most theories in general, marriage is good in theory. As America's most famous redneck Will Rogers once said, "Communism is like Prohibition: It's a good idea but it don't work." Insert "marriage" here.

Communism is good in theory because it welds itself to the perception that all men really are created equal. (Little-known fact: Thomas Jefferson was also a Communist.) It allows for survival of the group rather than survival of the fittest. (Well-known fact: Charles Darwin was not a Communist.) It puts self-interest and self-preservation behind a sense of solidarity and oneness within the "commun"ity. (Fact: The Buddha invented Communism.)

Communism fails in practice because all of the above goes wildly against human [read: American] nature, which is a reality that a lot of Communists have recently decided to face, sort of. Contrary to popular opinion, humans are not perfect. This is where the disclamatory phrase "He's only human" comes into play. As one indignant blogger put it, "I am not going to think a lazy cow who sits on her fat a\$\$ watching soap operas and game shows while smoking cigarettes and swilling soda—for example—all day is my equal."

Similarly, marriage is an institution that centers around hallucinations of juxtaposing the ideal with the real (to revert back to Goethe and the Germans, which is very circular in itself, much like marriage. And Communism.). Marriage is good in theory because marriage is what we are supposed to do. It's what's expected of us. And, of course, it sounds like such a dynamite idea, when you're in the throes of love and passion and fear of loneliness. But so did drinking the Kool-Aid. And we all know how that worked out.

Marriage fails in practice because our expectations of it are delusional. People feel disappointed, dejected, betrayed, bewildered. For some reason,

people have been getting married for centuries, even though basically all of literature and all of history and all of art (extremely sweeping generalizations are what make theories become practices) prove that this should not be the case, at least not in the sense that we're led to believe. Because, while literature and history and art are busy making marriage a terrible idea, they are simultaneously imposing impossible expectations upon it. Does life imitate art? Does history repeat itself? Newland Archer married Meg because he was supposed to; he was miserable. Bill Clinton married Hillary [presumably] for political reasons; they seem to be doing splendidly. Scheherazade had to bait her king with stories so he wouldn't kill her because he thought all women were cheating whores. The point is: Communists believe that people can transcend their inner ids; Marriagists believe that people can ignore their inner ids.

So what, you may be wondering, is the solution to this "new" "problem" of divorce and drama in these United States? What is our future? Is there hope? The world [read: America] celebrated, rejoiced, and hallelujaed when Communist Russia demised into a million little pieces. Should we knock down the Great Wall of Marriage and get rid of it once and for all? Probably, but then there would just be another McCarthy scandal waiting in the wings. And besides, society, while it has come a "long way" what with the dawning of the age of the self and such, is not exactly "ready" to say good-bye to the past. Which is understandable.

The way I see it, there are two [realistic] options open to us: Either we persevere, fight fire with fire, keep getting married and then divorced and then remarried; or, we lower our expectations, thereby eschewing the possibility for disappointment, thereby reinstating the institution of marriage. I'm probably going to go with the former, just for form's sake. If nothing else, it will make parents everywhere proud.