

Marrying absurd essay



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Joan Didion's essay "Marrying Absurd" is a comical review of Las Vegas and its wedding business. It gives the reader a more in depth look at the things they always expected were happening in Nevada but were never concerned enough about to do the research. While I already knew most of the information in the essay, Didion presented it in such an entertaining, sarcastic manner that I was never bored. Without coming right out and saying just what she thought of the industry she told us exactly how she felt about the Las Vegas "spur of the moment" way of life by choosing her words very carefully. All of these services, like most others in Las Vegas...are offered twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, presumably on the premise that marriage, like craps, is a game to be played when the table seems hot" (Didion 91). She seems to hold the opinion that marriage is more sacred and should not be entered into so lightly, and therefore disagrees with the Strip chapels and their practices. Her essay tries to show the reader just how ridiculous the idea is in order to steer them away from rushing into such important decisions.

Didion shares stories about her observations of wedding parties to demonstrate this point. "one night about eleven o'clock in Las Vegas I watched a bride in an orange mini-dress and masses of flame-colored hair stumble from a Strip chapel on the arm of her bridegroom, who looked the part of the expendable nephew in movies like Miami Syndicate. 'I gotta get the kids,' the bride whimpered. 'I gotta pick up the sitter; I gotta get to the midnight show.' 'What you gotta get,' the bridegroom said, opening the door of a Cadillac Coupe de Ville and watching her crumple on the seat, 'is sober'" (91).

However, she does attempt to explain the appeal of the Strip chapels to those of us who already find them silly. It's as if she is forgiving those who fell into the trap that Las Vegas had set for them. "but Las Vegas seems to offer something other than 'convenience'; it is merchandising 'niceness,' the facsimile of proper ritual, to children who do not know how else to find it, how to make the arrangements, how to do it 'right'" (91). Noting the word "children" you can see that Didion views those who utilize the services of the chapels as innocent, naive, and don't know any better.

Didion ends her essay in the most effective way possible, with one last story to tie it all together. The picture of the wedding party sipping pink champagne (minus the bride who is too young to do so) is classic and illustrates her points without her having to reiterate them. By mentioning that the bride was several months pregnant she shows that the Las Vegas wedding is probably not the real desire but the necessity, demonstrating that drunken impulse is not the only thing that draws in customers for the Strip.

Didion closes out with a quote from the blushing bride: "It was just as nice... as I hoped and dreamed it would be" (92). Very few women that I know dream of a "nice" wedding. Magical, romantic, perfect, elaborate even, but never nice. Didion really made her point with this one. I found this essay very effective with getting its point across but I also think that it wouldn't ring so true if a man read it. Women understand what it means to have a disappointing wedding, even if they aren't married because most of them have had theirs planned since they were little girls.

If she were to revise this essay she should cater to men also. The most effective way to do that would probably to play up the “ ball and chain” aspect of marriage but with divorce as common as it is today I’m not sure even that would work. Overall I really enjoyed this work and agreed with Didion entirely. It was also a nice break from some of the more academic essays and a fresh way to inform but also to entertain.