

Love, Inc. Dating Apps, the Big White Wedding, and Chasing the Happily Neverafter

Laurie Essig

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Of all the figurative flavors of Kool-Aid to keep you from facing reality, perhaps the most popular is the belief that falling in love quickly leads to a life lived happily ever after. Sorry, Cinderella, it takes a little more than having your love light turned on to find contentment here on planet Earth.

But the allure of romance is strong, as you certainly know. Laurie Essig, author of *Love Inc.: Dating Apps, the Big White Wedding, and Chasing the Happily Neverafter*, likens it to an ideology: religion-like in its power to suck the oxygen out of everything else going on in the world, including politics, global warming, and Kim Jong-un threatening to nuke Hawaii.

What are the driving forces behind this escapism? In fact, it seems romance is viewed by many as a balm to escape from a grim, hyper-competitive society. Unfortunately, the search for love distracts us from pitching in to make the world a better place.

Essig points to the tumultuous Clinton versus Trump presidential election in 2016. Guess what the fourth most watched channel on television was during election week. The Hallmark Channel. It had more primetime viewers than MSNBC, astoundingly. And it's not only the entertainment industry taking advantage of romance. Advertisers use the dream of bliss to sell us wedding rings, shampoo, minivans (for the happy family), and so on. We're all a bunch of hopeful saps, and the world may suffer for our love-struck giddiness.

MATT SUTHERLAND (March/April 2019)

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