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White Space, Banana Ketchup & Karaoke: A Review of Kimberly Alidio's *After projects the resound*



I was introduced to [Kimberly Alidio](#) at Effie Street in Silverlake, Los Angeles, at a quaint reading in the backyard of a professor's house. I was intrigued by the book Alidio held in her hands—a sky blue volume with a longhaired figure on all fours, seemingly ingesting or expelling pink and orange confetti. Soon I was even more jarred and enthralled by the pieces she read aloud, poems speaking, stuttering, and singing about empire, migration, diaspora, and queerness—subjects I had become familiar with as a queer Filipina American and budding academic. [After projects the resound](#) (Black Radish) does not only interrogate these concepts, but transforms them, remakes them, and melds them through reverberating word play, experiments with sound, and even through the strategic use of white space. The final stanza in “All the Pinays are straight, all the queers are Pinoy, but some of us” demonstrates this:

I will never not

want to be violent with you (dare you to say

this isn't love, queen)

pray for

her resurrection every easter

“I'm just so bored and so pretty and not white” (66)

Although you may need to take a second to comprehend what is occurring, the sleek alliteration of the “w” and “n” sounds in the first two lines allows the poem to roll off your tongue, a slow, accentuated, but nevertheless pleasurable foray into the complexities and obscurities of Pinxy queerness. The enjambments, line breaks, and spaces in between help anchor and pace the reader, allowing us to appreciate the various intonations of sound. These rhetorical, sonic, and spatial devices showed me that I did not need the convenience of clarity to enjoy and appreciate Alidio’s work. Her delightfully playful and musical words and sounds, for me, emulate the witty banter between Pinxys as we process the intersections of Catholicism, queerness, and brownness together in conversation.

The rest of *After projects the resound* is just as clever and pleasing to the ears. Alidio provides a critique of U.S. empire through the terrain of pop culture, as illustrated in “Our lady of the banana ketchup:”

a UFC a Jufran a Mother’s Best

a torta a hipster a hotdog spaghetti

a hater a sweeter tomato (16)

I’m sure all Filipinxs are familiar with the sweet, tangy taste of banana ketchup but until reading Alidio’s book, I was unaware of the history of this cherished and highly popular condiment. Perfected during World War II by Pinay food technician [Maria Y. Orosa](#), an abundance of bananas were used to substitute the shortage of tomatoes for ketchup during the war. With this, Alidio shows how the squabbles of empires (WWII being one of many) can completely alter the course of culture in the name of production and survival. We can locate the hidden and subtle currents of U.S. empire through everyday things, like the bottle of UFC banana ketchup sitting in my parents’ pantry. In addition, Alidio alludes to how the concoction of Filipinx spaghetti (a banana ketchup and hot dog infested dish of pure and undeniable goodness) has its roots in U.S. colonialism. “Our lady of banana ketchup” makes us wonder what other artifacts of empire are hiding in our everyday consumption of food and culture.

Alidio continues her astounding play with the intersections of empire and popular culture with “I wanna be your dog,” a reference to The Stooges’s head banging single. *After projects the resound*’s musicality is indisputable in the last few lines of the poem:

So messed up I want you

Here in my room I want you

Now I wanna be

Eaten by

Igorots at St. Louis

Now I wanna be

Eaten by

Igorots at St. Louis

Well

C’mon (56)

After finishing this poem, I had to read it again—or rather, sing it this time to the groove of Iggy Pop. While singing about dog eating may be unsettling for a few folk, I enjoyed the mischievousness and deviousness this singsong poem afforded, and it is definitely one of the cleverest references to the [1904 St. Louis World’s Fair](#) I have encountered. Not many people are aware that indigenous Filipinxs (the Igorots) were exhibited like artifacts and animals at this world’s

fair, easily becoming one of the most popular attractions with their savage war dances and grotesque habits, dog eating rumored to be among them. What do we do when the darkest and most grotesque moments in Filipinx/American history come to the surface? What do we do about the fact that dog eating has become so legible when others think about Filipinx/American-ness? The speaker of this poem encourages us to sing about it, to pronounce it, to reclaim it in creative and transformative ways that allow us to locate and critique the currents of U.S. empire. And what better way to do it than through witty poetry and fun karaoke-esque tendencies? If we're going to talk about empire, we might as well do it through subverted pleasure.

After projects the resound is a metamorphosis, the aftermath of a dissertation-turned-monograph-turned-poetry. Alidio shows there is more than one way to produce cultural critique. The terrain of culture has the capacity to criticize, remake, celebrate, and eat itself in the most astonishing ways.

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