

Kim Kardashian's Marriage – A review

"The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images."

4th Thesis - The Society of Spectacle

When asked about why he decided to write and direct films, Guy Debord would always recount stories of his youth in Cannes where, in the sweltering heat, and with nothing better to do, he would go to the cinema, only to walk out half way through most films. They bored him stiff. He was however, by this point in his life, very interested in Marxism and soon enough, true to his later revolutionary fame, Debord chose not to be passive. Enter, stage left, - the Letterist movement of Isidore Isou with whom he spent months planning, organizing boycotts and orchestrating campaigns of negative criticism directed at Charlie Chaplin.

Soon enough the immensity of his struggle against the public relations leviathan that was Charlie Chaplin made itself clear and they relented. Further adding to his disillusionment, by this point in time, the Letterist movement found itself torn apart by internecine struggles and schisms. After intense months of soul searching and inner debate, Debord decided that the best approach was to create an alternative to the things he hated, his debut film, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*.

Similarly, and in a world just like Debord's, immune to such entities as fame, public adoration and success (the world of contemporary British poetry) an almost equivalent project is undertaken by Sam Riviere. His 2015 collection *Kim Kardashian's Marriage*, a sequel collection to the successful *81 Austerities*, consists of 72 short poems - one for every day of Kim's marriage to Kris Humphries - and explores the idea of celebrity in a postmodern reality.

Like *81 Austerities*, it was born from the blog entries on Riviere's website and a collage like method that uses search engine results to create the poems. Like *81 Austerities*, it is a thoroughly post-modern collection that stays true to the desiderata of such a paradigm, matching form and content to reveal something about the discourse itself, i.e. the titles of the poems are permutations of words: American, beautiful, girlfriend, grave, dust, and ice-cream. To me they seem to exist as signposts that force the reader to formulate inquiries about the copy-paste nature of a society, 24 hour news channels and the mind numbing repetition of syndicated television.

In terms of poetic craft, throughout the book Riviere manages to stay away from introducing ideas of beauty and/or profundity in his language by means of metaphor, image and poetic technique but tries to subvert the notions themselves by means of structure, dividing the collection into sections named after Kardashian's make up routine i.e. primer, highlight, powder, etc. This in turn achieves an ironic distance that questions the superficial nature of all our definitions, of beauty or poetry or both.

This idea resonates with the fact that products are the main concerns of both the author and the protagonist of this collection (all the poems are written in a Kim like voice) endlessly investigating such concept as sunglasses, hard-core, ice-cream and commodified feelings. What is unclear, like with many such postmodern attacks on the 'System', be it the literary establishment or society in its entirety, is what to do with the flaw after it was identified. How do we correct it?

The collection is unquestionably a victory of rationality over sensibility and it functions as a fair diagnosis and analysis of contemporaneity but I believe that in its very nature lie the seeds of its undoing, being topical rather than general and current rather than durable.

Despite its many valuable additions to our range of questions, *Kim Kardiashian's Marriage* succumbs to the very thing it criticises as it ends with:

*"You have stalked this blog,
You must really like me.
Message me anytime
Even if you just want to talk.
I blog about whatever I want."*

Is it irony, or is it surrender? We don't know, what we do know is that Debord film, a succession of narrative and silence over solid black and white screens, ends with a 24 minute long black-screen silence.