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GALATEA RESURRECTS #27 (A Poetry Engagement)

Presenting engagements (including reviews) of poetry books & projects. Some issues also offer Featured Poets, a "The Critic Writes Poems" series, and/or Feature Articles.

Saturday, December 10, 2016

AFTER PROJECTS THE RESOUND by KIMBERLY ALIDIO

JESSICA GONZALEZ Reviews

After projects the resound by Kimberly Alidio
(Black Radish Books, 2016)

In *After projects the resound*, Kimberly Alidio engages in a poetics of relentlessness. Poems like "All the Pinays are straight, all the queers are Pinoy, but some of us" boast a cadence that could not feel more familiar, taking on a language of fragment and subconscious rhythm that is unmistakably current. Whether the poems shout in a similar vein as knee-jerk, 140-character tweets ("LOL YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS DECOLONIAL INDIGENEITY" / ... LOL AGENCY AND THE COURAGE TO SPEAK") or ring out decidedly in the midst of a quieter chaos ("just give me a pen and long hours and an IV line stuck into my arm. I'll write it down"), Ms. Alidio presents an intuitive language pieced together by Filipino history, societal commentary, a queer, female, Filipino-American experience in the United States. The result is masterful: a collection of poems that are thumping declarations, intoxicating in their at-surface ambiguity and affirming in their ultimate power.

Yet the voice in these poems continues to ground everything, reassuring that to be one's self should never be such a brave and commemorative act but instead, something inevitable and unquestioned. The whole of existence, after all, is an "accident". The reader is left with both a helplessness and a self-remembering. Ms. Alidio muses on the self and the "accident" of existence in "Doll":

"I like to pretend I'm a giant
my numbness is a publican mood
I hover over my girlfriends grooming them with identical bowl cuts
settling needs small-scale operations not ornaments
when I see a real-life chair I think
what makes this work is the accident of my size"

"Doll" explores the complicated landscape of the personal ("the accident of my size"; "my numbness is a publican mood"), fusing it with a merciless, humdrum external ("anatomies highways"; "mass migrations mass produce at a scale beyond the eye"). The repetition of sounds and rhythms enforce a delicious monotony. The reader is given an explanation, but she may still feel an important, yet poignant and implacable loss by the end.

"I was born for a stricter regime" further explores feelings of discontent with the "mainstream's peace" and feeling lost in a terrain of white noise, paranoia, and overconsumption. The speaker scorns "this loose place of acoustic guitar mass and grape juice", feeling she was "trained long before birth to be a soldier of something". "Exiled", "a constellation", "missing you" "dreaming", "fraud" all fight with each other until poem's end:

"a wife of someone's
a link to some underground
a constellation
ready for the call
exiled from the cell
Embedded
missing you
Dreaming the word"

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Realizing that “terror is the mainstream’s peace”, the speaker subsequently admits that s/he is “lost / the mall is starting to make me forget”. The language acknowledges, ultimately, the strength of poetry while at the same time deriding poetry for its lack. This relationship between reader and poem begs the question: will we always be this helpless, this tortured, this distracted?

Similarly, in “Certain is a kind of desire”, the speaker insists, “Let’s disinvest from any cause / Let’s reconcile to making useless texts that refuse a certain sense of orderly argument”. Throughout the poem, there are momentary musings on “the immigrant colony”; “the melting pot” that ultimately becomes “crippling indeed”. This disconcerting notion is soon remedied by the “walking together / In this writing and reading / Sensate connections already possible / A little willing to be possessed by things”.

However, there exists no easy resolve within the line. Ms. Alidio hints at historical tensions that will, perhaps eternally, affect this generation and all forthcoming. Ms. Alidio expertly marries important postcolonial narratives with the basest and truest of human cravings in a way that is heart-stinging yet somehow, temporarily healing. Her poems are at once an unlearning and an unwavering focus on the past -- “The distant sadness”. Reading her, I felt unalone.

Jessica A. Gonzalez is an editorial assistant and freelance writer and translator based in New Jersey and New York. She recently graduated from Rutgers University with a BA in English and also writes poetry.

Posted by EILEEN at [10:30 PM](#)

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