

Kimberly Alidio: After Projects the Resound

somethingonpaper.org/algo.html



Review by Megan Heise

(BLACK RADISH BOOKS, 2016)

From the moment I first held it in my hands, I knew Kimberly Alidio's debut full-length poetry collection, *after projects the resound*, would be magical. After reading the collection, its magnetism emerged from all parts working together to paint a picture of the legacies of colonialism. This work stands on its own, as well as part of a greater community of diasporic writing, to critique a supposedly "post"-colonial world via the interstices of lineage, diaspora, and identity.

While not artificially broken into disparate sections, the placement of Alidio's long poem, "Certainty is a kind of desire" directly in the middle of the collection makes it a sort of natural hinge from the thematics of legacy and lineage found before (and within) it, and the introspection of the pieces (within and) after fast-forward the text out of history and into an undoubtedly modern world. The idea of lineage and ancestry, while a thread through the collection as a whole, stands out in this first third of the book, most notably in poems such as "Memoir," where Alidio writes specifically about the Filipino diaspora, or "Servants," composed of found language from newspapers regarding slavery in America. Alidio skillfully weaves the painstakingly personal with broader strokes of shared experience, in a self-aware manner quick with both critique and gentleness. She writes, "This is exactly what gentleness is / dragging everything up whole."

This is, at its essence, Alidio's project in *after projects the resound*—dragging everything up whole. She states that "mass migrations mass produce at a scale beyond the eye / any one person gets lost along the way / but a story projects domesticated edges." This seems to suggest that, while mass migrations are inherently so *mass* that they tend to escape human comprehension, the inverse, the zeroing in on one single person's story, can do a disservice as well, can enact what could be understood as the *violence* of domestication. Alidio's collection seeks to dismantle this violence: what she refers to as "transient global amnesia." Nothing but the whole will work, and that requires broad strokes as well as pointed details.

If the broad strokes of history, migration, and colonialism are laid out in the first few poems of

the book, the later poems build on this to bring the vivid detail of current realities to the fore. There is no doubt that *after projects the resound* is a deeply personal work from beginning to end, but the poems appearing at the latter seem to shift from the realm of memory into a vividly pointed modernity that questions what comes next. This line of questioning finds Alidio “Wondering whether the new generation of iPhone cameras is any better at capturing dark/skinned faces, especially under harsh auditorium lights,” and asking via found language, “Is 2008 like 1929. Is family detention like internment. Is deportation like deportation. Is calling a place a territorial possession like building a soft hospice.”

While some of these questions are intentionally rhetorical, Alidio seeks to answer honestly about life as a writer. “So our writing ventriloquizes the place / From which we write / The place of our body,” she writes. She plays with the concept of the/a body, writing that “we...The exhausted object have no body of work” and clarifies that “The train doesn’t stop where I’m healing.” The confession continues: “I will be truthful I am lost,” and “I am running out of writing implements / they want to know how I run.” Part of reconciling this sense of lostness, of exhaustion, running, and healing is situated in an incredibly current techno-reality. Alidio LOL’s in one poem, uses Google in another, and begs the modern-day question of a social-media-saturated world: “Does public vulnerability count as a brand.”

In the Afterword, she notes: “this book was written in a collapse of a project.” Its collapse is perhaps where its magic is most potent. Words, phrases, sentences collapse on one another. Concepts crumble beneath the weight of critique, yet the vividness of reality emerges, like a plant winding its way out of concrete. *after projects the resound*, born of a collapse, enacts collapses of colonialism, of the notion that the world in which we live right now is somehow “post”-colonial. It disrupts the binaries of self and other, foreign and familiar, of shared and specific human experience, to give way to something else. While that something may not yet be fully formed, the pages of Alidio’s first full-length collection are brimming with a potential of longing, yearning, and acting for that new and better world.