

GOSPELS OF DEPRESSION

Pamilerin Jacob



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*for @ibukunoluwa82
& many others tortured into eternal silence*

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Zion s p r e a d e t h forth her hands

& there is none to comfort her

- *Lamentations 1:17*

I'm praying to the sky &

I don't even know why

- *Lil Peep*

Tomorrow, I may find slight breath again

but I swear, it's just to say goodbye

- *Adedayo Adeyemi Agarau*

Genealogy (of Stigma)

the book of the generation of Stigma, the daughter of Fear, the son of Ignorance.

& Ignorance begat Insecurity & Insecurity begat Shame & Shame begat Fear & Fear begat a mother uprooting her son's tongue when she finds sadness in his mouth & a father feeding him holy verses for medication & a brother frying stew with anointing oil & a priest wringing faux confessions from his throat & a brain soaked in chili sauce, eating itself & a body rearing lightning in its bones

& a therapist organizing

deliverance sessions

& a flower eating up bees,

& a door refusing to hold hands

with the wall,

& a lover tearing your shadow

from your body,

& Fear begat Stigma

& Fear begat Stigma

& Fear begat...

Joyful Mystery 01: The Annumbciation

today, the monochrome tv fell off the wall

like a roach swatted & all the grey poured

out

onto the rug foamy

a skull split open memorizing air

& the silence it holds

presenter had laughed too hard, had colours

in his teeth had broken a proverb in two

& an angel leapt out to warn him

woe unto you woe unto y-

grey pouring from a skull

split open by an angel

meant to deliver good news

say, blessed are you among mad men

say, the numbness behind your eyes

is pain's prelude

First Miracle or the First Attempt at Preaching to a Knife

& there came a leper to him, beseeching him, & kneeling down to him, & saying unto him, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean

- *Mark 1:40*

my eyes ripen slowly, like a mango

pulpy, two yolks glued

to my face

if thou wilt ...

light is a razor, fleecing the

pupils

if thou wilt ...

I scratch my eyes with a knife

& light changes colour

if thou wilt ...

blood gushes from my nipples

& the dogs lick it off

knife, hide your glint

in my wrists

& watch my palms glow

with a red sermon a warm miracle some of us are sieves

unable to keep the blood in.

Salmon on the Mount or Why I am Deaf to Beatitudes

body, glued to bed / like roots

to

earth

eyes sealed / like a bag of chips / ears

falling

off

like leaves

into an ulcer:

swimming like fish

in magma

in my head, is Sheol / all the demons are old / & bored / clawing behind the eyes / in my lineage / women lay eggs / & the men fry it for breakfast / the ones that survive become children / become semicolons / half-dead, half-dynamite / fully broken / the widest river in a village is a child / always eating / gobbling ancestral sorrow / uncle [] ironed my tongue when I was 7 / now all my words come out flat / weightless / my prayers are ruptured balloons / never high enough to reach heaven / & tomorrow

when my father says / you are healed / -as he does- / I'll say no /

in our lineage / the only healing we know / is the silence of a bell

when it loses its testicle:

we were born howling.

Feeding the 800,000

800,000 people die by suicide every year

- WHO

death too,

is a philosophy

enticing the body

with silence curdling breath in lungs

&

die is also a noun, singular say,

I roll my soul like a die gamble my life

for five pills & two therapists

say to the mountain

be thou removed

& Durojaiye

will delete himself

like a word document

from the family

whenever a soul unties itself

from the body

it learns a new hunger

a philosophy of yearning

twelve basketfuls

of wishes & regrets

stigma “justification” survey

kindly tick all options you agree with:

people who die by suicide are

cowards

attention seekers

selfish

stupid

infidels

going to rot in hell

not needed anyway

should have their bones fed to dogs

Luminous Mystery 04: Trans-disfiguration

(an interview)

therapist: on a scale of 1-10, how strong
is the impulse to cut?

patient: I suck at measuring / but I can tell you for sure / the blade has a voice /
soft as tissue paper / has a smile / that slices my skin / without
my consent / sometimes I even-

therapist: I'm going to have to stop you right there. you seem to be avoiding
the question. let's try colour reading. here,
a red cardboard, how does this make you feel?

patient: like silence / the corpse of a little boy, stiff / its blood blackening /
in its veins / like a pot left for too long / on the stove

therapist: here, a green cardboard. how does thi-

patient: a cactus / it makes me feel like a cactus / everyone I hug leaves
a little lesser / punctured / my love language is angst

therapist: & yellow?

patient: reminds me of the phlegm / clogging my saviour's throat /
in a dream / whenever he wants to say / *peace be still* / [to me]

therapist: ok, do you follow your instincts? pay attention to the
chaos in your soul?

patient: my first instinct is to die / & I follow it daily / but /
death is an elusive lover / like a housefly / like a shadow /
falling into a dark room

therapist: how much darkness is too much darkness?

patient: when the body becomes a god / feeding only on salt water /

when the eyes begin to see salvation / in a nail gun / when a car
shapeshifts into a coffin / when your favourite word is...

therapist: is what... is what...?

patient: ...tie hard

therapist: tired?

patient: no, t-i-e-h-a-r-d / tie hard

therapist: but those are two words...

& what is being tied

& who does the tying

& who is being tied

patient: the noose

/ you

/ us

therapist: what...?

[apoCRYpha]

...the voice of one CRYing in the wilderness

- *John 1:23*

my tears are bowling balls / forcing their way out the eyes / acerbic / & I carry my face like a medal / polish with pig fat / my bones are noodle strands / soft, & delicious /

death is a prophecy in the blood...

my grief is elastic enough / to be a hot balloon / a flying thing / a bat / navigating the labyrinth of the body /

I have a destiny halved like the moon...

a tongue restless like a rattle's tail / there are no handwritings on the wall / only nails. & nails & nails & nails & a hole / I crawl into / every time the saviour says

come

my body

is an oracle

without a

chief priest

a garden of trauma

overrun with memories...

Sorrowful Mystery 03: Crowned with Tons (of Meds)
in my country...

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

there are more coffin makers than psychiatrists

& they wonder why

we “*choose*” funerals.



“Present your bodies a living sacrifice...”

Romans 12:1

Searching for Love in a Father's Mouth

(for K.)

all my life, I have been dipping my hand

into a viper's mouth

in search of honey...

The Lore of the Fig Tree

~~in this poem~~, the boy is a fig tree

sun-gazing, learning

the culture of light

~~in this poem~~

his saviour does not curse him

for having scars instead of fruits

does not choose

a donkey over a child

~~in this poem~~, the boy is a fig tree

leafless / fruitless / bleeding sap

like a punctured sachet of water, leaking

in this boy, there is poem breathing

the boy

learning to say, *save me*

save me

without choking on his spit...

The Mechanism of Forced Gratitude

gratitude is a rehearsed ritual:

to wake on a morn, & pout the lips

in reverence of breath, say

I salute the white deities in my blood

fighting the war of sanity, my

genes picking my side, as I feud

this ancestral disease, a body black

within & without, wilting

from cranium to ankle, shapeshifting.

in June, I am a lizard wreathed in hibiscus

in October, a jagged stone for sharpening

machetes. I want to be able to

weave metaphors of my hallucinations

say, Providence is a careless child, toying

with recipes in its mother's kitchen, say, I

thank Providence for sprinkling germs

in my brain. in December, we kill hens
& bury feathers in the earth

then wait for another to grow
to cure the annual hunger.

Glorious Mystery 04: The Assumption (of People When I Say I am Mentally Ill)

lazy incompetent lazy lacklustre lazy loser lazy retard lazy
uselessuselessuseless lazy crazy

lazy redundant lazy loony lazy

lazylazylazy filth lazy nincompoop lazy unwanted lazy crazy

lazy coward lazy filth lazy vapid lazy monochrome lazy

lazy insignificant lazy dull lazy mad lazy bland lazy vomit crazy

lazy insipid lazy millipede lazy entropy lazy lazy loser entropy lazy

lazy millipede lazy insipid lazy crazy vomit lazy bland lazy mad lazy dull lazy insignificant lazy

lazy monochrome lazy vapid lazy filth lazy coward lazy

crazy lazy unwanted lazy nincompoop lazy filth lazylazylazy

lazy loony lazy redundant lazy

crazy lazy uselessuselessuseless lazy retard lazy loser lazy lacklustre lazy incompetent lazy

There are no Emergency Rooms for the Soul

I'll plant a garden on top

where your hurt stopped.

- *Danez Smith*

the sky is the safest place to hide a song
to hide a heartbreak the remains of a war

in my language, the difference between *war*
& *medicine* is in the pronunciation

meaning, there were times I asked
the sky for war, instead of healing

i hold my god by the chin, & beg for a word
but in my language, the difference between

word & poison is also in the pronunciation
my god is memory, & I worship with tears

laughter is a viral disease, I am immune to.

I carve my destiny out of dust & breathe

onto the thing, but it never moves

it holds my breath in its chest

like a trophy, & now I know

what it means when they say

he died on his feet, I know

how the sky gathers spirits onto itself:

the wind is a rake

combing through the earth, in search

of mispronunciations...

Song of the Dead

...because disappearing is riotous

& the earth will make fruits

of your skin, without consent.

if you look

back, *you will turn*

into an arrow...

or a fan blowing grief

into your mother's eyes.

the grave is a library of bones

 a skeleton is an article of faith

say, death is the only wall that breaks

when light touches it

returning to dust is the only way

to be invisible

& we know the clouds only burst

when a ghost is crying out for water,

nothing is really alive

except a prophecy.

Mr. (Good) Friday

here, in the ward / Mr. Friday sings a redemption song / *oluwa dara / oluwa dara / oluwa dara / o dara* / & my demons dance / holding his hands /

fingers, brittle from years of kneading pain /

lips heavy with a sonorous gospel / Mr. Friday combs his hair /

five times a day / a ritual of cleanliness / quiet litany / of a body / learning

to grasp the tenets / of normalcy / sometimes the visitors / laugh / & Mr. Friday /

sings back at them / *good evening sir / good evening sir / good evening sir*

thank you sir God bless you / thank you sir God bless you / thank

you sir God bless you / don't be annoyed / don't be annoyed / good evening sir good evening sir

the story is that [& I speak as a pseudo-historian]

once upon a child

Mr. Friday ate a butterfly without cooking it

held his own throat over the flame

& all that's left now of his vocabulary

is a song & recurrent apologies

some days, I envy this

to have my tongue washed clean with

grief till all that's left of me is music...

The Lunatic Ticks for a Liberal Star

(For C.)

I count my days like naira notes

& lavish them on you &

though the edges of my nights

are afire

you are the legal tender of my dreams

I slice my throat like an apple

& feed you poems, & feed you heresies

you wash with warmth

my blackest thoughts, paint my brain

with hope. you

say, *I'm here to stay,*

your insanity is my sanity

I say, *there is nothing sane about affection*

I love best when eating from the bowl

of psychosis, I count my days with the letters

of your name, I tally our fights

on the spine of amnesia

say, I choose to forget the acid

taste of anger, I cling to beauty shimmering
in your eyes like a blood moon

I cling to laughter pouring from your mouth
like a shower. you have a home in my bones

a nest of voices. I am a mountain
& you, a distant light, dancing in darkness

flipping through the universe, in
search of my song.

this affection is as
palpable as varicose veins
glaring as a forehead tattoo

your kisses leave flowers
in my teeth.

Self-Portrait as an Eternal Wound

the spirit never stops growing &

death happens when it outgrows

the body. when it gets claustrophobic

& ejects itself, like a cassette.

I suck darkness from the night sky

with a syringe, & inject the wound

spreading across my chest, my spirit

pulsating at the frequency of an owl's cry.

I sprain my ankle, trying to reach

for the moon atop the kitchen cabinet, I

want to skin the moon, slice it

into my fruit salad

satiate this spiritual longing, this one-way sojourn

my soul stretched thin like a trampoline

hallucinations bouncing, endlessly

the body gets smaller, & I know the wound

will soon move out of it, but

if I must beg for healing, I do not

want it:

my spirit is my deepest wound.



Pamilerin Jacob is a young Nigerian poet & mental health enthusiast. His poem was shortlisted for the Ken Egbas Prize For Festival Poetry 2017. He writes to ease internal turmoil & also to shed light on the struggles of the mentally ill. Pamilerin's writings have featured in the anthology "These Words Will Cure a Dead Man" by Spring Literary Movement 2016, 7th issue of the PIN Quarterly Journal, 2017, WRR Poetry, The Quill Babcock, Praxis Magazine amongst others. Some of his poems appear in the Best "New" African Poets 2017 Anthology, all under the name (Olawale Ibiyemi). He graduated from Babcock University in 2018, wherein he co-created a writer's club called LOUDMAG; a platform for all young writers to share ideas & grow in skill. Pamilerin lives in Sango-Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. He is a staunch believer in the powers of critical thinking, Khalil Gibran's poetry & chocolate ice cream.