

Exploring Religious Grief In Sadiq Dzukogi's *Your Crib, My Qibla*

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Abstract

This study explores religious grief in Sadiq Dzukogi's *Your Crib, My Qibla* (2021) and examines how poetry articulates Bereavement at the intersection of faith, psychology, and personal loss. The collection of poems commemorates the poet's deceased daughter and presents grief as both an emotional and spiritual crisis. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia, Erich Linderman's psychological model of acute grief and John Bowlby's attachment theory, the study interprets the poet persona's experience as one marked by complicated grief, existential despair, and separation anxiety. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates how Dzukogi employs religious imagery such as the Masjid, prayer, the Shahada, and burial rites to dramatise the tension between faith and anguish. Rather than presenting religion as a stable source of consolation, the poems reveal moments of spiritual conflict, unanswered prayers, and perceived divine silence. The father's grief is expressed through visceral metaphors, cyclical wounds, imagined futures, and role reversals that disrupt the natural order of life and death. Ultimately, the study argues that *Your Crib, My Qibla* redefines religious devotion through suffering, portraying grief as a transformative yet destabilising force that reshapes identity, faith and the meaning of survival.

Key Words: Acute grief, Dzukogi, Religion, Death, Prayer

Introduction

Grief is one of the most universal yet deeply personal human experiences. It may arise from loss, commonly the loss of a loved one, but also the loss of relationships, home, health, community or imagined futures. Specific events may trigger grief and unfold as a psychological, physical, and at times spiritual process by which individuals attempt to integrate the reality of loss into their lives. Granek (2010) sees grief as a process that occurs within the individual psyche and can be described in psychiatric or psychological constructs. Jokoby (2012) explains further that "grief is a social emotion since it emerges from relationships, attachments, expectations and obligations" (p. 680). Pop-Jaroanova (2021) explains that the period of grief is quite normal and is a very human response to loss (p. 9). Grief can be severe or mild depending on the psyche of the bereaved at the time of the loss. It could come in the form of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD), also known as Acute and Complicated grief or Anticipatory grief. Hall (2014) describes acute grief as accompanied by deep sorrow, disbelief, and a sense of loss. Neimeyer (2019) suggests that the strength and length of acute grief symptoms differ based on several factors that shape both the impact of the loss and the grieving process. These include the nature of death, an individual's background, their relationship with the deceased, their coping strategies, and the level of support available within their social community. The core symptoms of PDG are intense yearning or preoccupation with the deceased, combined with severe emotional pain related to the loss (e.g. difficulty in accepting the death, anger or bitterness, a feeling that life is meaningless. Zetumer et al (2015) further describe complicated grief as clinically significantly distressing and impairing due to unresolved grief. He also reveals that people with Complicated grief manifest continued yearning for the deceased, feel anger, bitterness and shock. (p. 22).

Anticipatory grief, as the name implies, is a form of grief which is not sudden or quite shocking after a loss. Reynolds and Botha (2006) define anticipatory grief as "a term describing the grief process that a person undergoes before a loss actually occurs" (p.15). Gilliland and Fleming (1998) opine that anticipatory grieving had a potentially adaptive role in post-death Bereavement. They think that when an individual loses a close relative and is aware of the impending loss, the grief becomes anticipatory. For a loss to be anticipatory, there must be foreknowledge about the loss.

In most cases, People who suffer from anticipatory grief cope better than those whose loss comes suddenly. The bereaved persons are already prepared for the loss. For this study, grief is looked at from the point of view of complicated grief, Bereavement in the context of religion, on the occasion of the loss of a loved one. Grief can vary from one religion to another. It can also provide a reliable framework for grief through rituals and prayers for the grieving, which offer great comfort during mourning periods. Through these prayers and rituals, certain levels of comfort are achieved, in the hope that the dead will have a better chance and experience in the afterlife with the creator, who possesses a higher power. Religion may have positive or negative impacts on the grieving individual. Positively, the spiritual beliefs in the religion can lend larger meaning to the loved one's life and death, such as believing they are in a better place or will be united after death. Rituals performed for the dead can provide a source of succour to the grieving individual. Religion, being a communal entity, can also provide help and emotional support through religious communities. These supports can include meals, listening and assistance with daily tasks.

The concept of religious grief emerges from the intersection of religion, psychology and the humanities as scholars seek to understand grief not merely as an emotional response to loss, but as a complex experience shaped by spiritual beliefs and cultural meanings of illnesses and death. It recognises the inadequacy of any single discipline to explain human suffering. Literature, especially poetry, memoir, and illness narratives, plays a crucial role in theorising religious grief. Writers articulate experiences of loss that are spiritual, revealing emotional contradictions—faith versus despair, hope versus reality. In this study, the focus is on Islam. In many Muslim contexts, burial rites and grief processes are often regarded as deeply private experiences. Azhar (2019) examines Islamic approaches to coping with loss and death, explaining that death is viewed as a passage that reunites the beloved with the Divine. After death, specific supplications are recited, including *du'a* and *Al-Istirja*. The body of the deceased is not left unattended, as this is considered improper. Islam prohibits cremation and discourages burials in public cemeteries. The deceased is typically buried within three days.

Before burial, the body undergoes a ritual purification known as *ghusl fiqh*, carried out by family members of the same gender: men wash male bodies, and women wash female bodies, with exceptions made for spouses and parents of young children. Following this cleansing, the funeral prayer (*Salat al- Janazah*) is performed, usually in a mosque (*Masjid*) after the afternoon prayer (*Zuhr*) (Hasan & Salim, 2007).

Within Islamic tradition, expressions of grief are generally expected to be restrained, as loud wailing and excessive lamentation are discouraged. Women in particular are often advised not to attend burial sites to prevent overt displays of mourning. The formal mourning period is commonly observed for up to forty days (Hasan & Salim, 2007). Ajao, Adeyemo and Aroyewun (2025) explain that "In Hausa culture, grief coping is shaped by Islamic beliefs and a strong sense of communal solidarity. Religious leaders offer spiritual guidance, and neighbours bring food and household items. Eulogies and poems help mourners to express their emotions and preserve memories" (p. 109).

This study is necessary because of the limited scholarly attention to how poets integrate religious discourses in their representations of grief. More studies have focused on the prose genre of literature and on psychological discourses related to acute and anticipatory grief. The main objective of the study is to analyse how poetry articulates grief and Bereavement at the intersection of religious beliefs. By using Saddiq Dzukogi's *Your Crib, My Qibla*, one comes to terms with the traumatic effects of losing a child and the implications of lingering grief over a period of time. Dzukogi's poetry collection was deliberately selected for its thematic relevance to the exploration of religious grief. His poems examine the intersection of faith, psychology and personal loss. The poems selected for the study include: "Wine Glass", "Cave", "When he Says Your Name", "Sufficient", "Burial Sheet", "Waterlog", "Shattered", "Shahada", and "A Song in the Mouth of a Ghost". These poems

were purposely selected because they reflect the idea of religious grief in Islam following personal loss.

Literature Review

Critical discourses on grief in Nigerian literature have focused mainly on the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and psychological pain caused by migration and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region. Okuyade (2010) attempts to re-examine the poetry of the Nigerian Civil War to bring to the fore the disasters it brought upon Nigerians and to caution the generation that did not experience the war, especially the youths, on the dangers of resolving socio-political crises through violence, even if some crises cannot be resolved without one.

Awuzie (2021) discusses grief in third-generation Nigerian poetry about the Civil War. Awuzie portrays Diala in his poetry collection, recreating war experiences to justify the Biafran agitation. He does this through the use of historical artefacts, proverbs, symbols, and intense, gory images, and shows how these images cause grief for the war's victims. Okwuokei & Iloilo (2021) explore grief as a traumatic manifestation in characters from the Niger Delta region in Habila's *Oil on Water* and Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. In their paper, they assert that acute grief and anticipatory grief in the forms of hopelessness, helplessness, fear and guilt bring about trauma on the main characters in the novels.

Also, Ilechukwu (2023) explores the physical and psychological effects of cultural hybridity resulting from migration in Adichie's "Zikora" and how it leads to grief. Adopting Kübler-Ross' Grief model, the study reveals the four stages of grief as they affect the main character, Zikora. Muhammad, Muhammad, and Lawal (2024) explore the idea of profound grief in the family setting in Yewande Omotoso's *Unusual Grief*. Grief is analysed through the adoption of Freud and Bowlby's theories. The relationship between their paper and this study is that both studies adopt similar theories and discuss the idea of grief. However, the genre analysed is prose, and it does not in any way explore the role of religion in grief experiences.

Lakanse (2026) is the closest study to this study. It is similar in that it employs poetry to depict personal loss, as in Gbenga Adeshina's *Painter of Water*, as in this study. Dzukogi's *Your Crib, My Qibla* and Adesina's *Painter of Water* were written in response to personal loss, and Lakanse adopts Freud's theory of Bereavement to account for grief. At the same time, this paper explores grief that breeds an emotional and spiritual crisis.

The reviews above depict the depth of grief studies prevalent in Nigerian literary studies. The studies focused on personal loss, familial loss, the psychological impacts of the Nigerian Civil War, the psychological effects of the Niger Delta region's devastation on the people of the region, and the psychological effects of cultural hybridity on immigrants. However, this paper focuses on religious grief on the occasion of the loss of one's child, involving personal grief.

Theoretical Framework

The study draws on Sigmund Freud's theory of Bereavement, Erich Lindemann's Psychological model of grief, and John Bowlby's Attachment theory. The choice of these models is based on the idea that the grief experienced by the poet persona in the poetry collection is sufficient. Freud's theory of Bereavement is one of the earliest psychoanalytic explanations of grief. Articulated in his 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholia", the theory distinguishes normal mourning from pathological grief (melancholia) and conceptualises Bereavement as an intrapsychic process involving loss, attachment, and psychic energy. Freud sees mourning as a natural and necessary response to loss (death, separation, or loss of abstraction, such as a homeland or ideals) (p. 243). He explains that mourning includes profound sadness and withdrawal from the external world, preoccupation with the lost object, temporary loss of interest in the world and absence of self-reproach. Melancholia, on the other hand, involves intense self-reproach and feelings of worthlessness, unconscious identification with the lost object, and risk of self-harm or suicide. Freud

argues that “the distinguishing features of melancholia are profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activities and the lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree...”(p. 244). Lindemann’s psychological model of grief is one of the earliest clinical frameworks for understanding grief as a normal adaptive psychological response to loss. The model was developed in the mid-20th century and laid the foundation for modern grief theory and bereavement studies. Lindemann, a psychiatrist, introduced his model in his 1944 study “Symptomatology and management of acute grief”. He sought to distinguish normal acute grief from pathological grief, emphasising that grief is not an illness but a psychological process that can become disordered if unresolved. According to Lindemann, acute grief is characterised by identifiable psychological and somatic symptoms that include tightness of the throat, breathlessness, fatigue, preoccupation with the image of the dead, guilt related to actions taken or not taken, hostile reactions, anger, irritability, resentment, loss of patterns of conduct (disruption of daily functioning and social roles).

Bowlby’s attachment theory follows a series of stages. Bowlby’s theory asserts that Bereavement occurs in four phases. They include the numbing phase filled with intense anger, distress and may last for weeks. The second phase involves a yearning for the lost one alongside feelings of confusion, anger and anxiety. The third phase involves disorganisation, a sense of despair, withdrawal, and indulgence in deep sadness. The fourth and final stage may involve reorganisation and recovery. (Bowlby, 1973; 1980).

Intense Emotional Turmoil in Dzukogi’s *Your Crib, My Qibla*

Intense emotional turmoil involves feelings of profound sadness, painful dejection and feelings of distress toward the loss of a loved one. In the poem, “Wine Glass”, the poet persona laments the loss of Baha, whose life is cut short as a toddler. The lines below explore these feelings:

It bites him how your life happened
like an hourglass with only a handful of sand
This split to the seam of his body, a split
of darkness that will kill him, but squeezes
adrenaline into his veins, so he lives
through the pain of your absence. He is not alright
to speak. (p. 16)

The poet persona, through a simile, compares the pain the Father (Abba) of the dead child feels to an almost-empty hourglass and likens it to the feeling of one’s body being split, which evokes the finality of life. This foregrounds the intense level of torment and turmoil the pain causes to the bereaved.

Another poem which reveals the level of profound sadness is “Cave”. In the poem, the poet persona presents grief not as a process that moves towards resolution, but as a cyclical, inescapable wound. The persona’s emotional turmoil is conveyed through images of burial, darkness and emotional falsity, all of which intensify the psychological weight of losing a toddler. The persona reveals:

No healing exists
beneath the ground. We suffer
only the weight of the living and a sea of longings
below the darkness of deep water. (p. 50)

The phrase in the first line, “No healing exists”, suggests the father’s rejection of consolatory narratives which imply religious, cultural or psychological inclinations that promise restoration after

loss. The phrase “beneath the ground” evokes burial, finality and irreversible separation. These images collapse hope and imply that death is not a transition but an abyss. The grieving father sees survival as a punishment. By referring to “the weight of the living”, he sees grief as heavier for those left behind than for the dead. This reverses the usual focus on the deceased and centres the suffering of the bereaved parent, revealing the fact that life continues, but in continuation breeds oppression. “In six days, the wound of loss will reopen and bleed / and clot and bleed and clot” (p. 50). From the lines above, the wound metaphor presents grief as physical trauma. The persona’s reference to “six days” reveals certain ritual cycles, anniversaries or weekly remembrance, indicating that grief renews itself predictably. This reveals that healing is temporary and somewhat deceptive, as there is no closure. The persona’s turmoil lies in this relentless reactivation of sorrow. The last three lines of the poem highlight religion’s role in providing solace to grieving parents. The persona reveals that: “...the next time he walks into the Masjid / knowing a bullet / drags him closer to God than to prayer” (p. 50). The persona’s reference to the “Masjid” signals entry into a sacred environment, a space traditionally associated with comfort, prayer, and divine nearness. However, the line suggests hesitation, and he sees returning to the mosque after intense sorrow in grief as not simple; it has become an emotionally charged act. The sacred place becomes a threshold between despair and faith, memory and survival. The last line reveals a striking paradox. The prayer (Salah) is the pathway to closeness with Allah. The grieving father sees the bullet as a symbol of violence, martyrdom, or traumatic death, which brings one closer to God more directly than ritual devotion. In this situation, Abba may be expressing a crisis of faith, in which forms of prayer feel inadequate in the face of overwhelming grief. Rather than abandoning his faith, the grieving father reinterprets it. His grief deepens his consciousness of mortality and divine reality. The Masjid is no longer merely a place of routine devotion but a space haunted by the awareness of death.

Intense emotional turmoil is also expressed in the poem “When He Says Your Name”. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet’s persona reveals the new habit Abba has formed following the loss of his dear daughter. Life has become meaningless, and he finds himself in deep emotional turmoil. The lines below reveal his state of mind:

Your crib, his cathedral
where he kills time doing nothing.
Sometimes where it’s difficult to say,
he stuffs his body with grief.
Parents want to be buried
by their children. In the streets he wonders
what it means to attend such a rite (p. 60)

In the first line of the stanza, “Your crib, his cathedral” is striking. A crib is a symbol of innocence, nurture and beginnings. A cathedral is associated with solemnity, ritual and death. Through the poet persona’s use of the cathedral, the idea of religious grief is introduced as he sacralises the space of loss. What ordinarily should have been a place of growth becomes a sacred site of mourning. This metaphor suggests that the child’s short life has turned the dramatic space into a shrine of grief. The home is no longer ordinary but has become a place of painful reverence and memory. The poet persona reflects on the grieving father’s emotional paralysis in the line, “where he kills the time doing nothing”. The grieving father is suspended in inactivity. Time suddenly feels burdensome rather than progressive. Idleness in this context does not imply laziness but the hollowness that follows devastating loss. The last two lines, “parents want to be buried / by their children...” introduce a powerful cultural and existential reversal. Traditionally, parents expect to die before their children. Burial by one’s children symbolises the natural order of life. The death of an infant or child disrupts this order. This underscores the unnaturalness and injustice of such loss.

The poet persona further reflects Abba's emotional turmoil in the poem "Sufficient". He laments thus:

He wants to swallow
The God that let his child slip away wants to fill it
slide down his throat and disgust like the bone
he swallowed by mistake (p. 51)

The lines above present grief which is violent, visceral and spiritually conflicted. The lines capture emotional turmoil not through calm reflection but through disturbing bodily imagery that reveals anger, disbelief and a crisis of faith. The first two lines express intense anger directed at God. Rather than seeking comfort in divine presence, the father desires to consume God. The poet persona reveals the father's wish to control or overpower God, attempts to internalise or annihilate the source of his pain and rebellion against divine authority. In the last two lines, the persona uses the feeling of a bone lodged in the throat to convey the suddenness of the child's death and how the death, like a bone, scratches and obstructs. The bone metaphor suggests choking, suffocation and nausea. Just as a bone causes physical distress, grief becomes an intrusive presence inside the father's body. Emotional turmoil is expressed in the succeeding stanza below:

You are holding it the wrong way,
her mother said, in a voice sodden with tears---
the piece from grandmother's Quran
that says Allah is sufficient---verses laid inside
a lamb's peel, dried, stitched, and given its own skin.
Grandmother said it would eat his insatiable grief
until something good grows from it—a butterfly,
A thing bred out of a crawling ugliness. (p. 51)

The lines above further present grief as both overwhelming and in need of containment. The poet's persona expresses his grief through an emotional connection, drawing on Islamic spirituality for solace. The first two lines, "You are holding it the wrong way/ her mother said, in a voice sodden with tears", establish a tone of sorrow mixed with instruction. "Voice sodden with tears" is a metaphor that suggests not just weeping, but speech saturated and almost drowned in grief. At the same time, the act of correcting how the object is held introduces a subtle symbolism of guidance, even in deep mourning; there is a 'right way', hinting at religious or cultural knowledge being passed on as a means of coping.

Furthermore, the "piece from grandmother's Quran / that says Allah is sufficient" is deeply symbolic. The Quran fragment functions as a sacred talisman, embodying faith in Allah's sufficiency—a central Islamic idea that God alone is enough to sustain the believer through hardship. By involving generational voices (grandmother and mother), the poet persona uses ancestral continuity as a device, showing how faith traditions are inherited and become tools for enduring grief. The description of the object "verses laid inside/ a lamb's peel, dried, stitched, and given its own skin" vividly conveys tactile imagery and extends the metaphor. The Quran verses are physically encased, as if a wound were being dressed. The 'lamb' carries religious connotations of innocence and sacrifice, which parallel those of the lost child. The expression "it would eat his insatiable grief" introduces personification and metaphor. Here, grief is depicted as devouring yet, paradoxically, as something that can itself be consumed by the sacred object (the Quran). This emphasises the endless, consuming nature of loss, while the idea that verses of the Quran can "eat" grief reflects a belief in the healing and absorptive power of divine words.

Existential Despair

Persons in grief express existential grief through numbness, feelings of worthlessness, and despair. In the poem "Burial Sheet", the persona presents grief not as loud lamentations but as internalised, suffocating anguish, revealing a father trapped in existential despair after the loss of Baha. First, the image in the lines "He smells the floor / to sense her scent" conveys desperate longing and denial. Smell is the most intimate and memory-laden of the senses. The succeeding line: "hones his anguish / into a sharp nail" introduces a striking metaphor. Anguish becomes something tangible, sharpened and weaponised. Grief is no longer just an emotion; it becomes an instrument of self-inflicted suffering. The image in the lines "presses it / hard against his neck" heightens the intensity of the existential despair. The neck is a vulnerable part of the body, associated with life and breath; pressing a "sharp nail" against it symbolises the urge toward self-destruction or the feeling of being choked by grief. However, the act stops at "presses"- there is no actual wound described. This suggests numbness rather than paralysis. He is suspended between life and death, between feeling and emptiness. The pain is so overwhelming that it produces emotional numbness.

Another poem that describes intense numbness is "Water Log". In the dialogue between Abba and his mother: "When mother whispered 'what does not kill you---' / I replied, 'turns me into a living corpse'" (p. 93). The initial line echoes a familiar consolatory proverb often associated with resilience, linked to Friedrich Nietzsche's idea that "what does not kill me makes me stronger". In ordinary circumstances, the saying suggests endurance and growth through suffering. The tone indicates fragility and an attempt at comfort. The mother represents society's expectation that grief can be survived and eventually transcended. Abba's response violently overturns their expectation: "turns me into a living corpse" presents a metaphor that captures the essence of numbness. A living corpse is a paradox: physically alive yet emotionally dead. The image of a living corpse suggests emotional paralysis, absence of joy or vitality and existence without meaning. The death of Baha does not physically kill her father but annihilates his inner self.

"Shattered" is another poem that reveals the psychological collapse resulting from a despair so intense that it distorts the mind, faith, and the body. This is seen in the following lines:

The mind turns into a hem,
a black hole where escape is a prayer
that is never answered.
Prayer is now the dark
side of light, a night
so impenetrable, heavy
with a silence that tears the neighbourhood
his skin, his entire body (p. 36)

In the first three lines above, grief is portrayed as a total psychological implosion. The metaphor of a "black hole" describes depth, darkness and inescapable gravity. Since the black hole absorbs all Light, the Father's mind swallows every hope, reason, and clarity, without a chance to escape. The only option is to escape, and the act of escaping becomes equated with "a prayer", yet that prayer is never answered. This conveys spiritual abandonment. Baha's father feels pain and abandonment by God. The silence of heaven intensifies his despair. The next lines deepen this crisis of faith: "Prayer is now the dark / side of light, a night / so impenetrable". In reality, darkness is temporary and will eventually give way to dawn. However, the poet persona rejects that comforting binary. The night is not temporary but absolute, impenetrable darkness. Grief has dismantled the reassuring belief that suffering leads back to light. Darkness in this context has become permanent and suffocating. In addition, the lines express religious grief as a crisis of faith, where sorrow over loss evolves into spiritual desolation and a sense of divine abandonment. In the poem, prayer is typically a source of

comfort and a means of connecting with God. Prayer here becomes synonymous with escape, and even that escape is never answered. Abba's repetition of "prayer" further intensifies this spiritual crisis. Instead of being a bridge between the mourner and God, prayer becomes a reminder of absence. He challenges the common religious belief that suffering is temporary or redemptive. The absence of a divine response is not abstract; it wounds physically and emotionally. Abba expresses religious grief through unanswered prayers, spiritual darkness and the collapse of religious certainty.

Separation Anxiety Response

Separation anxiety response involves yearning for the lost one, confusion, preoccupation with the images of the deceased and attachment. In Dzukogi's collection of poems, Abba yearns for Baha and preoccupies himself with several images of her. He does this through imagined futures and events which fill his thoughts every time. He teleports himself into these utopian images filled with bliss, joy and fulfilment. In the poems, Baha's death triggers a continuous yearning for her father. In the course of this yearning, her father imagines the future with Baha at several stages in her growth. He does this through images of Baha that show a severe attachment. The yearning for one's loved ones is seen in the poem "Shahada. In "Shadada", the poet persona presents a deep meditation on separation anxiety expressed through religious images and the painful yearning of a parent confronting the death of a child. The father refuses to accept the finality of death by reconstructing a world where the natural order is reversed, and separation is undone. This yearning is expressed in the lines below:

Today, Baha is not dead. Her tears reveal deep
for him. He prays his daughter's hand turns
The sponge that would wash his corpse----
The rite of passage pressed into her forehead
A prayer mark from birth----
In the dream state, he's dying. She passes
on the Shahada into his mouth after her
tongue formed the words. (p. 53)

The opening line of the poem establishes the idea of a psychological defence mechanism: denial. He yearns for Baha and suggests a role reversal. "He prays his daughter's hand turns / the sponge that will wash his corpse". In many African and Islamic cultural contexts, burial rites are sacred responsibilities typically performed by the living for the dead. Here, Abba imagines his daughter performing his funeral rites instead of the other way around. This inversion expresses yearning in two profound ways. They include a longing for natural order, which involves parents dying before their children and the desire to remain connected through ritual intimacy. In the second stanza of the poem, the act of washing a corpse in Islamic tradition (ghul al mayjit) is deeply personal and sacred. By imagining his daughter performing this rite for him, the speaker symbolically restores continuity and refuses the propter caused by her death. The title of the poem, "Shadada"---the Islamic declaration of faith, is traditionally recited at the point of death. It prepares the soul for transition. In this context, the father imagines his daughter guiding him spiritually, placing sacred words into his mouth.

Another poem that foregrounds separation anxiety is "A Song in the Mouth of a Ghost". In the poem, the poet persona presents Abba's grief not as a single emotional outburst but as a sustained, imaginative yearning. Her father constructs alternative futures for his dead child using imagined growth and fulfilled milestones to resist the permanence of death. In the first few lines of the poem, the persona presents images of domestic, innocent and ordinary events. Thus:

This is a time he won't forget---- you
pouring your brother's watercolour on the linen...
You are 12
In other images, you are 16, 20, 31, married
playing with your toes, as you did with his,
Your children are fully fledged,
have children of their own (p. 61)

From the lines above, the act of spilling watercolour has brought back a yearning for his innocent Baha as a little toddler. By anchoring the memory to a specific age whenever possible, the poet freezes time. The poet also expands his memory into possibility. He sees Baha "in other images you are 16, 20, 31, married". These are not mere memories but mere projections. Abba mentally ages Baha through adolescence, adulthood and marriage. This imaginative extension reflects profound yearning, relentless images of Baha's future. By envisioning the child at 16, 20, 31, he symbolically resists the interruption of life's natural progression. These images reveal important milestones in a child's life, including youth and self-discovery at 16, early adulthood at 20, maturity and stability at 31, and social fulfilment through marriage.

Furthermore, Abba laments the loss of generational continuity in the lines "your children are full-fledged,/ have children of their own". These lines extend the imagined future even further to grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The projection across multiple generations reveals the magnitude of the loss; the father not only mourns a child but also an entire lineage that has been erased.

Conclusion

The exploration of religious grief in Dzukogi's *Your Crib, My Qibla* reveals that Bereavement, particularly the loss of a child, is not only a psychological experience but also a profound spiritual confrontation. Through the lenses of Freud, Lindermann and Bowlby, the poet persona's mourning reflects symptoms of complicated grief, emotional paralysis, yearning, anger, and existential despair. However, Dzukogi's work moves beyond clinical frameworks by situating grief within Islamic ritual and symbolism, thereby foregrounding religion as both refuge and site of crisis. Prayer becomes fraught with silence, the Masjid transforms into a threshold between despair and hope, and the Shahada signifies both spiritual continuity and painful separation. The poems resist simple consolatory narratives and instead portray grief as cyclical, embodied, and spiritually destabilising. Within this destabilisation lies a reconfiguration of faith: devotion persists, even when certainty collapses. The collection of poems ultimately demonstrates that religious grief does not negate belief but reshapes it, compelling the bereaved to negotiate meaning in the face of absence. Thus, Dzukogi's poetry contributes significantly to Nigerian literary studies by illuminating the intimate, sacred and psychologically complex dimensions of personal loss.

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