

# Other People's Depression

---

SELIM ÖZDOĞAN (translated by SPENCER HAWKINS)

My depression is not like other people's. Theirs is better, for whatever reason. Mine could be too light or too heavy, too big or too small, too long, too thin, too deep, too flat. Whatever the problem is, it's not as good. I know that much. But I still can't know anything beyond that although I do try to learn more. It is not easy to learn when I can't see a reason to put my feet down next to the bed. Nothing is easy at this point, but I've still tried.

I tried to learn what »endogenous« depression means. Endogenous, something that comes from within with no knowable external cause. I don't know what interior they are talking about. I don't see anything there but darkness. I have learned how to behave in behavioral therapy, what the serotonin receptor does, how tricyclic antidepressants work, what a regeneration process in the prefrontal lobe is. I have taken the steps that are supposed to help. I have ventured outside. I have spoken up about it. I have accepted that it is an illness. I have tried therapists. I've tried everything. I have even gone jogging four times a week for three months.

Maybe this body doesn't know about endorphins or the other hormones that it could dispense to make me feel good. No one knows. When they don't know, they say endogenous. That sounds better than: we have no idea!

Maybe this body is just a costume that someone dressed me in, and I know what I have to do so that others believe that I am a person just like them. I can't always get it right.

I almost never get it right. I mostly just lie around. I am not sad or tired or worn out. I'm not in despair or burned out. I don't consider myself useless or unloved. I don't consider myself at all.

Every time I wake up, I am surprised that I am still in this costume that thinks, that can think and see and hear and read.

I read. Most of the time I read, but books don't help. Especially not the books about other people's depression. Other people talk about their experiences in therapy, present an interior perspective on their illness, they search for meaning, and torment themselves. The books are supposed to give hope, build up courage, produce a feeling that you are not alone. So they say.

But all I see is that other people's depression leads to success. They manage to get out of bed. They make it not just to their writing desks, but they fill page after page. They write full of melancholy and defiant humor. They write about fear, failure, and the search for love. Theirs are tales of luck and sentiment, of their constant battle with a devastating illness, of being overwhelmed with life, of phases that pass and return. They write about suicide attempts, the downward spiral of negative thinking, the inability to share their experiences, of fear and of