

WHEN LIGHT DEPARTS

By Ikeogu Oke

Some, when light departs, ask:

“Whence does darkness come?

To where does it go?

Shall it burn on the lamp post

Of another life

Away from our eyes

In a world

Whence light never departs,

Always burns with gold and crimson rays?

But darkness never comes to hearts

Which light has warmed with golden deeds,

Has warmed with virtue’s gold and crimson rays;

Nor does light depart there from.

Like a ship-light in life’s eternal sea,

Shines their beams of good works in such hearts.

CREATED DIFFERENT

*For Goodluck Jonathan**

“History will vindicate the just.”

– Nnamdi Azikiwe

Even great trees can fall
And the rose trampled on by brutes.
They would not let you rule
Who think to rule their birthright
In a land that revels
In being cruel to itself
– A gleeful masochist.

When you came
I wrote you a poem;
And now you're leaving
I write you another poem – this –
For I believed in you
And still do.

The jury of history
Is sitting on our case
And shall vindicate us.

And we cannot wish or do ill
To those who have wished
Or done us ill,

For we are
Created different.

*The Nigerian President whose tenure expired on May 29, 2015

HOPE AT THE DAWN OF DESPAIR

Hope is a drizzle of acid doubts
That corrode the mind with fear.

I lay asleep and the fear kicks me
Awake with his boots to my shin.

A grimace knots my face
With furrows of taut flesh.
I wince.

“When shall it become?” a drunken question
Asks itself, its voice ventriloquial,
Its words borne to my nose
On a dancing breeze of stale breath,
Its stench of mystery flowing to my ears,
A flying carpet of mere wind,
“When shall our healing come?”

THE MOUNTAINS MARCH BEFORE ME

The mountains march before me
Going to Mohammed.

Seven in all they are led by Kilimanjaro,
And snowcapped are their tropical peaks
In these months of the harmattan,
Mountains whose lips could kiss the clouds.

The earth shakes with each drag
Of their beastly feet, and boulders
Shear off their sides and crash
Into the valley where the mumbling
Faithful count their beads.

A FUTILE FLIGHT

In vain you run from me,
For I am truth.

I must catch up with you
Or you will never stop running.

Who can run forever
Even from the truth
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They hate to face?

Only my embrace

Can break the chain

That binds your soul.

EPISTEME