

Poetry Series

**Shachia Oryila**  
**- poems -**

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# Shachia Oryila()

Shachia Oryila is a blogger, freelancer, translator, media consultant, publisher, professional writer and editor. He has been writing professionally for many years now and has a number of published and unpublished works. He is currently working on a historical novel and a collection of poetry which will soon be published. He is also collecting ten thousand Tiv proverbs, aphorisms, metaphors, sayings and idioms which he hopes to post on a daily basis. For many years now he has taught English, Literature in English, Communication and Language courses to A-Level and O'Level students. With his 'Writers & Editors' Kitchen', he has indulged in freelance editing, hired book reviewing projects, paid public speech, profile and citation writing consultancy, event anchoring, for clients and referrals, among others.

# A Cry For Help

We're poor  
diseased by years of neglect  
naked save for the pairs of  
tattered shorts we've on  
and these stained fabric-rags  
for shirts against the elements  
bare-footed only for the pairs  
of oversized footwears  
made from disused tyres.  
If we've leaders they had  
mortgaged our future  
long before we burst forth  
if we've chiefs they lack  
the spark to guide or lead  
only to fan embers of hate  
and violence among subjects.  
If we got rights as spelt out  
in notes handed by jackboot boys  
or penciled down by new masters  
it's to be seen and not heard.  
The wisdom in our fleshless skulls  
day or night doesn't count at all  
theirs decide our fate.  
We're confirmed Lords of Gutters,  
Generals with full slave insignias  
against our wishes and dreams;  
if we've government now or ever  
as the radios, tellies and papers  
remind those who could afford  
it's emeshed in loud corruption  
and couldn't hear our banging  
and barking by the door for help.  
If we find a toll free home  
among the parks or sacks tonight  
in the open on verandahs  
or fallen roofs or broken walls  
we shall gladly answer the call  
where our services are courted  
by those in tinted homes and cars

we daren't go closer in daytime  
to settle whatever scores  
lured by the synthetic scent  
of craps notes never seen  
that our new position bring.  
What do we do but to  
take to a decent trade.  
It's not least comforting  
to point a hind quartres  
anymore at some folks  
as long as we can put food  
on the table.

Shachia Oryila

# A Fisherman's Dilemma

It's no longer a cruise sail  
In our leaky and unmended boat  
I'm cowed by the waves' fury  
Should we go on,  
I may need to ask  
The fisherman on the paddle  
If he's got in his toolkits  
Lines, hooks, sinkers and lifejacket  
The marks of a true fisherman.  
Fishing on the high sea as I see  
For whales, sharks, and catfish  
Is not the same as draining  
Glasses of gin daily at Mammy.  
It's foolhardy to bet with the sea  
If you couldn't tame the elements.  
I've been on the loops five days  
I couldn't wait four more nights.

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# Chalkboard General

We now roll out the drums  
Amidst fine songs and dance;  
Let champagne pop out and  
Palm-wine bubble with freshness  
And with stomachs filled with  
Fried chicken, fish and beef  
We share small talk and chop  
As we wash off this tortuous road  
To become a Chalkboard General.

This isn't a party for recants  
Lest you fill our eyes with tears  
Or your heart aches and loathesome  
About the roughness up the road;  
Of fair weather friend or top General  
Who, in his swamps of torments  
Peered at you with magnetic lorgnette  
And for a moment felt a swab  
Leaving your sinus cavity beneath  
Cowed by the growls of unwelcome  
As you stepped into the office  
To seek answer to a knotty puzzle.

It's a party of endless chants  
With music, drumming, and dancing;  
ceaseless clapping and stamping of feet  
By friends, well-wishers and family  
Honking and nodding in affirmation  
To the deeds of the On-High. Today,  
As you sit beaming with smiles  
Some dancing kukure, others alanta  
Yet others makossa and Gangnam Style  
Your tutors are thumping their chests.

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## If Your...

If your torchlight  
Could shine as bright  
As a dull yellow bulb, or  
For once like the deep yellow lights  
Of a bush lamp now in vogue  
Listen! Our space would become  
As white as teeth after a whitewash!

If your candlelight  
Could burn as smoothly and as quickly  
As a polythene caught by fire  
On a windy harmattan afternoon or,  
Oyei inferno over charred scores  
Of scoopers in half a second a mile  
Sure! Our world would become  
A veil of neon and lush at night!

If your juicy contracts-  
the idling of men-at-work  
in helmets, overalls and jungle boots  
unable to morph a track  
through a spot since hands changed money  
or, the presence of heavyless-duty machines  
broken down or abandoned by the roadside  
and overtaken by weeds and rodents  
followed by a faking of innocent faces-  
were as sweet as words, mek and ouni  
Trickling down your honeycomb  
When you traded words for votes  
Bet! Sugar now would be everyone's name!

If your tortoise steps were  
As brisk as the chameleon's  
For all the years white-caps resumed  
Where they stopped decades ago  
When jackboot boys dipped their fingers  
In the full pot of soup late at night  
Believe! Not even the wind  
Could dry a jet of spit before

We arrive Maiduguri from Lagos on foot!

If you could watch without blinking,  
Watch without dozing, watch without smiling  
As lovers are wont day and night;  
If you could sift the bin of shredded evidence  
The dirty exit tracks of millions or billions  
And put fillers to the gushy stash of cash  
The crooks should bargain their ways behind bars:  
A decade to the one who went with a penny  
A generation to the one who moved a kobo  
A millennium to the one who coveted a naira,  
With all life-long savings and assets seized  
And no paltry slap on the wrist as substitute.  
If you could watch with no flicker of eyelid  
Note this! Even the eagle would doff  
The sharpness of the cricket's vision!

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# Is This What Parting Means?

My mind went blank  
as I stared into the abyss  
tortured by thoughts of farewell  
boulders of tears stood in my eyes  
and coursed down my cheeks  
leaving in its sticky paths  
erosion of pains and sadness  
which made the soil of love  
infertile to nourish love-green.

The doors to the way of love  
had been locked against me  
and the keys flung in the sea.  
I swore to drain off the waters  
I swore to swim against the tides  
and fight amphibious creatures  
till I find the way to your heart  
even if it meant to stand against  
heaven, earth and the nine hells.

I fought to stay afloat  
in the deep ocean of love  
but the ebbs and the tides waged  
a ceaseless war and deflated  
what was left of the love's jacket  
that kept me atop the sea.  
I had but to ask:  
'Will I again walk the solid paths  
of your tempting world of beauty  
with its bitterness and sweetness?  
Will I? '

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# Our Bequeath

We want power  
we were born on its runways  
crawled on its runners  
defecated on its runners  
walked on its runners  
dictated those to match on  
its runners for dozen dozen years.  
It now runs in our veins  
we know its make or mar  
it's coated with sugar and honey  
clothed in torn trinkets of lies  
and gold deposits of hate.  
To enter its gates we need  
to turn our backsides  
those who approach it face-face  
never make it to its gates  
save with a tissue of charm  
so we are told.  
What do we do but to  
hire some thugs with a fortune  
buy people's conscience  
with an ounce of salt.  
If we could trade skilfully  
in Religion and ethnic wares  
prized in provision stores lately  
in our world's nooks and crannies  
we might dispense with  
as much as half the total cost  
and turned every loss gain  
we are told.  
Every offer's on the table  
a million naira to the officials  
they go smiling to the banks  
to cook the books  
and another to the silk and wig  
to pound the books  
the arguments should go on  
they say  
for years and appeal to fools

and amuse us too.

To the man with a fat button  
on the belt-loop at the centre  
of his back trousers AK47  
to muzzle rebellious tendencies  
in dreams, speeches or actions  
to prove to be on top of situation  
while criminals hold daily court  
and turn towns and villages  
into killing, kidnap and theft fields  
who gives a damn?

To the antics of opposition  
urging everyone this time  
to vote  
to secure  
to escort  
to wait  
until the whistle is blown.  
who?

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# The World's Angel

I stood under the umbrella tree  
on a cool and breezy night  
waiting for an angel.  
dozens of years had gone by  
as one tried to outshine another  
in this game of Romeo and Juliet.  
as we longed and waited  
soon a light shone in front.  
in its illumination I sensed  
the flashes of slivery fabric  
in the the slobe lights. I sighed  
here come the one and only  
angel the world vigillied in wait.

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