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**Editor's Note:**

Simply put, Said Samatar treats us yet again with another masterpiece! Weaving together a literary, yet concise biography of B.W.Andrzejewski, capsuled in Europe's colonial history at the turn of the last Century, skillfully juxtaposed to the powerful poetry of the Sayid Mohamed Abdula Hassan, otherwise known by the British as "The Mad Mullah," this piece affords us a peak of Said Samatar's intellectual depth. In reading this piece, one is encountered with a difficult judgment of whether Said Samatar is a literary author or a superb historian.

Perhaps, the inescapable outcome of a close read of this piece, in our judgment one of the best pieces that Wardheernews carried in its four years of existence, is that he is both!

The author's command of the architecture of writing is vivid: Said, like an accomplished Venetian architect, walks us through the painful growing days of a young Polish boy, the late Andrzejewski, and his yearning for Somali literature, only to pick his building blocks in the way to construct a superb piece. The product is like a fine architecture and a well-designed building, say one designed by the likes of Gary Frank that speaks many vernaculars; the piece evolves through the contours of literature, history, poetry, scholarship, before it delivers its main message - a powerful eulogy of a dear scholar most Somalis consider to be the "**father of modern Somali language.**" Each reader would look at the piece from a different angle, just like a fine architecture, and still get his/her own message.

Said is an author, a scholar, a literary and a superb social historian, all in one, whom Somalis lately began to speak of as a "**national sheeko Xariir,**" or an exquisite story teller, of course to underscore their enjoyment of his writings, most of which are featured in these pages. Said is unquestionably eloquent, and this piece is a delight to read.

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## Remembering B.W. Andrzejewski : Poland's Somali Genius

*Samatar, Said S.*

### Research in African Literatures.

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Remembering B.W. Andrzejewski: Poland's Somali Genius

Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas,

Ease after warm death after life, does greatly please.

Edmund Spenser

On 1 December 1994, Bogumil Witalis Andrzejewski (familiarily and affectionately known as Goosh by friends and admirers) died at the age of 72 after a distinguished literary career. His death ended the remarkable life of a man who began with so little and achieved so much. This mild-mannered scholar, who lived to become the world's greatest authority on Cushitic languages and literature and whose pioneering scholastic method revolutionized the study of oral literature on both sides of the Atlantic, was catapulted by fate across continents to belong, improbably, to three rather different countries: his native Poland, which he had fled in early youth in circumstances akin to the apocalypse; the England of his prime life that gave him an education, a job and a devoted wife; and the Somalia of his professional life that brought out the full play of his academic genius. In view of his turbulent beginning and later versatility, Goosh may well have approved of the above lines from Edmund Spenser which were "cut in the stone that was raised on the tomb of Joseph Conrad" (Zabel 1), another remarkable Pole whose biography by Zdzislaw Najder (Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle) includes a chapter that bears the title of "Poland's English Genius", thus inspiring the titular variation of this piece.

Like Conrad, Goosh was a man who strove -- and triumphed -- against the buffeting waves of destiny. Born in Poznan, Poland, on 1 February 1922, his father was a skin and fur merchant of lower-middle-class means. His mother hailed from a landowning family that nevertheless lost their property and peace by the turn of the century, no doubt owing to the Poles' seemingly hopeless and perversely perennial insurrections against Czarist Russia. (Parenthetically, Conrad's family too knew its share of plunder by Czarists, bringing to mind the Poles' proverb of an almost existential nature: "God almighty is in heaven, the Pope is in the Vatican, but the Russians are across the bridge!")

Goosh's mother fell ill when he was seven and died in 1939 when he was seventeen. The person in his family who appears to have had the greatest impact on the intelligent but impressionable boy was a maternal grandmother whom he recalled, years later, as "a wonderful narrator and a reciter of stories and poems." (1) To the end of his life he "still remember[ed] vividly some of her stories and poems" ("Biographical" 1). The internalization of poetry and the poetic temper that he absorbed from his grandmother would be transferred to a love of, and devotion, to Somali poetry.

Goosh began school at Poznan, but owing to "some lung trouble," he was sent to study in Zakopane in the Tatra Mountains for a healthier climate. In 1939 Goosh turned seventeen when his world exploded with the outbreak of the war, resulting in the siege of Warsaw, which "lasted

a month" ("Biographical" 1), forcing the starving and out-of-ammunition Polish garrison to surrender in the midst of a fearful epidemic. The patriotic young Pole, who would not submit to the humiliation and torture of a German forced labor camp, opted for a perilous escape to Palestine, journeying clandestinely -- and illegally -- through Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey. "The journey," he recalled years later with characteristic equanimity and understatement,

involved many hardships including arrest by the police on several occasions, hunger and sleeping in the open air in freezing weather... With a friend I had an amazing escape from an internment place in Hungary when I crossed the Balaton, one of the largest lakes in Europe, over the ice during a snow storm at night. This lake seldom freezes altogether but luckily it happened to be an exceptionally cold winter. The journey took about 12 hours, walking against a strong wind, and was only possible because some kind people gave us a luminous compass and provisions for the journey. ("Biographical" 2)

It appears that the super-cold winter turned out to be the angel of mercy that prevented the surface from cracking and thereby sending them to death in the icy depths.

In Palestine, after a hasty slipshod military training, Goosh was ordered to an army unit in Egypt in August 1941 to defend the besieged town of Tobruk. He fought well and survived the action without much damage to his person other than a minor wound. Having recovered in a British military hospital, he was recommended to enroll in an officers training school, "but did not complete the course," Goosh tells us modestly "on account of lack of talent in that direction" ("Biographical" 2). Poetry, not soldiery, was apparently the young man's forte. While slipping between internments in Hungary, he managed, incredibly, to teach himself some English "using a German book called 'English in 30 Hours Without a Teacher'" ("Biographical" 2). Goosh indefatigably worked up his English proficiency in Palestine by practicing it with Australian and New Zealand soldiers in Palestine and by August 1942 acquired good enough command of the language to serve as an interpreter, a field for which "there was a great demand since most members of the Polish Forces did not know any English" ("Biographical" 3).

In July 1942, Goosh's Polish unit was detailed to escort German prisoners of war on the Queen Mary bound for New York, and, by an ironic twist of fate, troops of the nation that made his beloved Poland captive were now his own captives. On the return journey to Europe on an American troop ship, an attack of jaundice practically incapacitated him; yet he recovered soon, sufficiently to join a Polish artillery unit from which he was transferred to the air force, but he came down again with a serious illness and, in consequence, was assigned from that point on to administrative duties. In October 1945, Goosh was granted final leave from military service and he enrolled, after passing an entrance exam, at Oxford for a degree in English language and literature on a scholarship for "any Polish student and was offered by a Catholic organization called the Newman Association, as a gesture of solidarity with the Polish people, in view of the systematic extermination of Polish intellectuals by the Germans on occupied Poland. [He] was selected on the grounds of my academic record and because [he] had achieved a certain degree of acclaim as a poet, writing in Polish" ("Biographical" 6-7). Modest of abilities in military service, Goosh finally found his calling in literature. In 1944 the young handsome Pole with the tremulous gait, translucently green eyes, cupped-out cherubic ears, and melancholy yet cheerful countenance (pardon the oxymoron) met his future wife, Sheila nee Weekes, at a Polish-English hospitality party. Two years later they married and the elegant English wife with the gracious

manners was to become an indispensable helpmate, a loving sustainer, and eventually an academic co-laborer.

The war ended and the Poles who suffered catastrophe during it did not regain their independence after it, the Nazi occupation having been replaced by a Stalinist tyranny under the new Polish Communist regime. Fearful of persecution in the new totalitarian Poland and sorely needing to lend economic support to his family that was in desperate shape (the mother died just before the war and the father was broken in ill health and his business ruined beyond repair), Goosh prudently realized the principle that charity began at home. After a one-year stint as a teacher in a school for Polish refugees, he fortunately began to take the academy seriously, and his rising linguistic and literary talents were handsomely rewarded when he received a post-graduate research scholarship as a linguist, to develop a scientific script for Somali language under the dual auspices of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies and the Department of Education of the then British Somaliland Protectorate. This was to launch his distinguished career as an expatriate master in the Somali language and a ground-breaking pioneer in Cushitic studies. In 1948, Goosh embarked on his post-graduate work, completing the theoretical part of the program in 1949, then sailing for Somaliland in 1951, accompanied by wife, Shiela. They set up shop in Sheikh, some fifty miles inland from the coastal town of Berbera, and with the assistance of an indigenous research partner, Muusa H. I. Galaal, set to work to develop "a system of writing for a previously unwritten language" ("Biographical" 8). In fact, the system of writing that he developed with the active partnership of Muusa Galaal and Ahmed Shire was so well worked orthographically as to meet the idiosyncrasies of Somali phonetics and was chosen, hands down, from a number of competing systems as the official orthography adopted to make Somali a written language for the first time in 1972.

Steadily, single-mindedly, and with a labor of love rare among academics, Goosh continued to work on Somali, acquiring, in time, a masterly command of the language, in addition to getting considerable expertise on Oromo (formerly Galla), a Cushitic language related to Somali. In 1952 Goosh joined the faculty of the School of Oriental and African Studies (of the University of London) as a lecturer in Cushitic languages and literatures, a post he held with distinction, first as lecturer, then as reader, and ultimately full professor. In 1982, in the face of the severe fiscal crunch that hit the British Academy owing to the Scrooge-like squeeze put on it by Thatcherism, an "appeal was made to older teachers to take an early retirement" ("Biographical" 8). In a gesture, very much vintage Goosh -- considerate, generous and altruistic -- he obliged by retiring in order to make way for incoming younger faculty. This was not without its silver lining, however, for it freed him from the obligations of teaching, the bondage of bureaucratic paperwork, and the tedium of endless committee chores that professors often chafe under.

Although by this time he was racked by the pains of the illness that was to claim him, he was free at last to devote himself with prodigious energies to the research and writing on Somali and Oromo literatures that earned him the reputation as the world's foremost authority on these literatures. His researches into these fields have been so extensive and ground-breaking and his scholastic method so distinct that taken together they constitute a new school in the study of oral literature. It is to the "Andrzejewski School" that I now turn to discuss briefly.

Those familiar with the daunting task of translating the poetry of one language into another are painfully aware of the demanding challenges involved in such an effort. Simply stated, the central problem concerns the dialectical relationship between literal and literary translation. All poetic translators must face this problem with judgment and discretion in the measure of their

remaining faithful to the environment and inner vitalities of the original. A literal translation of works in languages like English and Somali -- languages informed by so alien worldviews -- would no doubt result in a nonsensical gibberish. Consider, for example, this extract from Muhammad Abdullah Hasan, "the Mad Mullah" of British colonial literature, Somalia's great mystic-warrior-poet, from his poem "Gaala-Leged," or the "Scourge of Infidels," judged by critics as the "finest of his noble lines":

1. Eebow geyiga oo dhan waa, nala ka guulaaye,
2. Waa noo gedleeyaan dadkii, gaalada ahaaye,
3. Eebow giriig kolay ku tahay, nala gamuunneeye.
4. Go'na lagama qaadine dulmey, nagu gelaayaane,
5. Gabbaad kale hadday noo helaan, waa gam'i lahaaye,
6. Eebow waxay nagu gabreen, diinta soo gala e.

1. Allah we are pushed from the entire flatness,
2. The infidels threaten us from all sides,
3. Even the Greeks shoot arrows at us.
4. And we did not take a piece of cloth, they'd only oppress us,
5. If they could find other reasons we would have slept,
6. They hobbled us for telling them to enter the faith. (Sheikh Jaama' `Umar `Ise 228)

This literalism so trivializes the letter and the spirit of the original as to offend a Somali's -- for that matter, any aesthete's -- literary temper and tastes. The intended meaning of the above gobbledygook would go something like this:

1. O Lord, we are hemmed in and harassed on all sides,
2. The European infidels have joined in alliance against us,
3. Even the Greeks would hurl lethal projectiles at us.
4. And they would oppress us without cause,
5. And we'd be satisfied if only they could show any cause for persecuting us,
6. O God, they turned against us solely because we entreated them to come to the faith.

Not perfect, but at least intelligible. Andrzejewski possessed an uncanny knack for compromise between the sense and substance of the original and the imperatives of poetic coherence in the translation. This is what I have chosen to call Andrzejewski's happy medium, the brilliant gift for striking a balance between over-literalism -- which makes a poem nonsensical in the translation and over-literariness, which greatly departs from the spirit of the original -- that marks Andrzejewski's enduring contribution to the study of oral literature. It may be an exaggeration to say that all works in contemporary translation from oral poetry bear Andrzejewski's indelible imprimatur; but the case can certainly be made that the translational work in recent years of students of African folklore in general and of African oral arts in particular displays, unmistakably, the fingerprints of his hand. This creative flair for the happy medium, for balance between the demands of the original and dictates of coherent translation, was struck in *Somali Poetry: An Introduction*, coauthored with the eminent British social anthropologist, I. M. Lewis,

a work of intelligence and ability that marks the first systematic, scholarly study of Somali poetry. Consider, for example, the tact and sensitivity with which the authors introduced and handled in this memorable book Sayyid Muhammad's famously mocking diatribe on Richard Corfield, the dashing, arrogant colonel who commanded the British Somaliland Protectorate Camel Corps and fell in a battle against warriors of the Somali Dervish nationalists against colonial powers. "This poem," the authors tell us,

was composed to celebrate the death of Richard Corfield in the battle of Dul Madoba...on 9 August 1913, when a large party of the Dervishes surrounded and launched a fierce attack against the camel detachment which Corfield commanded. Corfield had been sent to Somaliland to organize a camel constabulary to restore some order out of the chaos which had followed the ill-fated policy of coastal concentration pursued by the British government between 1910 and 1912. His field of action was, however, firmly restricted to protecting the main clans friendly to the British within a limited area. He was to avoid engagements with the Dervishes as far as possible. But Corfield was a man of courage and determination and in the events which led to his death at Dul madooba disregarded order. In the battle he was struck in the head by a Dervish bullet and apparently died instantly. Consequently, the savage manner of his death described exultantly by the poet seems to be exaggerated. (Somali Poetry 70)

With an obscene gloating unworthy of a living warrior over the fall of a dead one, the Sayyid exulted in the "Englishman's death" thus:

You have died, Corfield, and are no longer in this world,

A merciless journey was your portion.

When, Hell-destined, you set out for the Other World,

Those who have gone to heaven will question you, if God is willing;

When you see the companions of the faithful and the jewels of  
Heaven,

Answer them how God tried you.

Say to them: `From that day to this the Dervishes never ceased their assaults upon us.

The British were broken, the noise of battle engulfed us;

"With fervour and faith the Dervishes attacked us.'

Say: `They attacked us at mid-morning.'

Say: `Yesterday in the holy war a bullet from one of their old rifles struck me.

And the bullet struck me in the arm.'

Say: `In fury they fell upon us.'

Report how savagely their swords tore you,

Show these past generations in how many places the daggers were plunged.

Say: "Friend," I called, "have compassion and spare me!"

Say: `As I looked fearfully from side to side my heart was plucked from its sheath.'

Say: `My eyes stiffened as I watched with horror;

The mercy I implored was not granted.'

Say: `Striking with spear-butts at my mouth they silenced my soft words;

My ears, straining for deliverance, found nothing;

The risk I took, the mistake I made, cost my life.'

Say: `Like the war leaders of old, I cherished great plans for victory.'

Say: `The schemes the djinns planted in me brought my ruin.'

Say: `When pain racked me everywhere

Men lay sleepless at my shrieks.'

Say: `Great shouts acclaimed the departing of my soul.'

Say: `Beasts of prey have eaten my flesh and torn it asunder.'

Say: `The sound of swallowing the flesh and the fat comes from the hyena.'

Say: `The crows plucked out my veins and tendons.'

Say: `If stubborn denials are to be abandoned, then my clansmen were defeated.'

In the last stand of resistance there is always great slaughter.

Say: The Dervishes are like the advancing thunderbolts of a storm, rumbling and roaring.'  
(Somali Poetry 72-74)

As the authors point out above, this savage detailed description of the inhuman desecration of the body of a dead warrior, though not unknown in the violent history of Somali warfare, did not in the particular event of 1913 take place, but stems, rather, from the poet's flight of imagination and the brash touch of his poetic license. But an argument over historical accuracy is for another context; what counts here is the extraordinary skill and sympathy with which Andrzejewski and Lewis translated this rather daunting poem into simple lyrical English lines. While the translation sounds a little flat and unpoetical in comparison to the Somali original, Andrzejewski and Lewis have triumphantly retained enough of the original's poetic ring and much of the conceptual scheme.

In much the same way Andrzejewski, throughout his venture with and forays into Somali poetry and prose in a career spanning forty years, has made accessible a considerable body of Somali oral literature to countless non-readers of Somali, thereby making "a place in the sun" for Somali poetry. His latest serious effort, *An Anthology of Somali Poetry* coauthored with companion and co-laborer, Shiela Andrzejewski, reveals the same technical virtuosity and aesthetic reach in converting Somali poetry into English that has become the hallmark of his pioneering hand. Witness, for example, Andrzejewski's way with the work of the pastoral poet Raage Ugaas, dubbed the "wise poet" and ranked by Somalis as one of the preeminent masters in their rich pastoral poetic heritage. In the poem "A Broken Betrothal," the wise poet laments the loss of his lady love:

Sore are my ribs, sore are the very bones of my spine --

Bones which are to men as a support-pole is to a hut --

And dammed up and unseeing are my eyes.

Only God knows fully the hurt that makes me wail like this!...

I grieve over my sorrow like a young girl  
Whose mother has gone to rest in the other world  
And whose father has brought home another wife  
And made the girl sleep at the entrance of the new wife's hut.

(Anthology 9)

I am a man whose betrothed was made to accept another --  
I am a man who has seen a spring full of water  
But whose thirst must stay unquenched forever.

I should think that these lacerating jeremiads of grief and heartbreak over the loss of a loved woman transcend the boundaries of class and culture and argue for the universalist principles of being human that made Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism a prominent branch in modern anthropology.

Andrzejewski's literary technique of the "happy medium" in translation has influenced mightily and inspired meaningfully a generation of Somali literary circles and translators, both native and expatriate, the crop of craftsmen now busy in the field including the very solid and versatile American folklorist John Johnson, the Somali critics Ahmed Farah Ali "Idaajaa" and A. A. Afrah, and the folklorist Hersi Farah Magan, the Italian Somalist Francesco Antinucci, and of course the writer of this piece, to mention a few. We all owe an enduring debt to him for showing the way into the methods and manners of grappling with the arcane art of putting Somali poetics into other languages.

As powerful as is Andrzejewski's methodological imprimatur on Somalists, his global impact on the modern study of oral poetry is likely to be even more remarkable. Up until he arrived quietly on the scene, the dominating theory in the nature and evolution of oral poetry was that of the "Formulaic School," first advanced by Milman Perry and subsequently comprehensively articulated by his student Albert Lord in his memorable *The Singer of Tales*. Perry and Lord discovered a handle on a problem that baffled scholars for years as regards the composition and presentation of the Homeric epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*: how was it possible, baffled scholars asked themselves, that a poem thousands of lines long (*The Iliad* counts 15,000 and *The Odyssey* 12,000) could be delivered extemporaneously in its entirety from memory? While musing over this puzzle, the scholars noticed the plethora of words, epithets, stock phrases, and "ready-made groups of words" that recur repeatedly throughout the poem: "Achilles, son of Peleus," "grey-eyed Athene," "many-counselled Hector," "rosy fingered-dawn," etc. From this and from further content analyses, the scholars concluded, rightly as they were to be proved, that these poems were composed from formulae -- a ready-made store of epithets and stock phrases that the poet has learned beforehand and only links end-to-end into a complete line at the very moment of presentation to a live audience. From this was born the theory of "composition-in-performance," the demonstration that an oral poet, far from memorizing his/her text in advance, composes by improvisation, delivering lines even as he instantaneously creates them. Contemporary oral poetry of Yugoslavia, a region where the tradition of composing oral epics still thrives vibrantly, was seen to be composed on the same principle.

It may be said at the outset that the discovery of the formulaic technique was a stroke of genius as an analytical tool. It gave scholars a penetrating insight and a powerful handle on how

literature was created and how it managed to survive, indeed thrive, in the ages before the dawn of the technology of writing. The theory seemed to have explained, once and for all, how oral poetry is made, preserved for posterity and transmitted over time and space. Perry and Lord have done a good day's work by this contribution. But then there jumped a fly into the ointment.

Advocates of the formulaic system made what turned out to be a leap in the dark, by claiming the formulaic to be the compositional principle underlying all oral poetry. In doing so, they nearly discredited a good analytical tool by making too much of it. Thus no less an authority than the Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics offers this on the matter:

Fluidity of text, or to put it in reverse, the absence of a single fixed text, arises from the technique of oral composition, which the poet learns over many years, no matter which genre of verse is in question. It is a technique of improvisation by means of "formulas," phrases which say what the poet wants and needs to say, fitted to the varying metrical conditions of his tradition. These "stereotyped" phrases have often been thought of as the building blocks from which the poets construct their lines. Actually, they are probably not so stereotyped as was at first thought. For one thing the "formulas" pervade the poetry; every line and every part of a line in oral poetry is "formulaic." (591; emphasis added)

Every line and every part of a line in oral poetry is "formulaic." This sort of discourse became the sanctified dogma on both sides of the Atlantic, thereby turning "formula" into the "holy grail" of oral poetry explaining the compositional principle of all oral poetry in all ages. Then Andrzejewski came along and blew a gigantic hole through the exaggerated claims of the "Formulaic School." From a lifetime of research and reflection into Cushitic Oral poetry (the Oromo, `Afar, **Somali**, "a nation of poets") Andrzejewski convincingly established that **Somali** poetry, for one, is neither formulaic nor composed in performance, nor multi-authorial in composition. That is, **Somali** oral poets create their works prior to performance and present it before an audience entirely as a memorized text, and that subsequent presenters of the same poem aspire for a word for word memorization in performing it to other audiences. Thus in **Somali** Poetry, Andrzejewski and Lewis observe cogently:

While we may admire Somali poets for achieving worthwhile results in the very difficult medium of Somali prosody, we are no less impressed by feats of memory on the part of the poetry reciters, some of whom are poets themselves. Unaided by writing they learn long poems by heart and some have repertoires which are too great to be exhausted even by several evenings of continuous recitations. Moreover, some of them are endowed with such powers of memory that they can learn a poem by heart after hearing it only once, which is quite astonishing, even allowing for the fact that poems are chanted very slowly, and important lines are sometimes repeated. The reciters are not only capable of acquiring a wide repertoire but can store it in their memories for many years, sometimes for their lifetime. We have met poets who at a ripe age could still remember many poems they learnt in their early youth.

In the nomadic interior whole villages move from place to place and there is constant traffic between villages, grazing camps, and towns. Poems spread very quickly over wide areas and in recent times motor transport and the radio have further accelerated the speed with which they are disseminated.

A poem passes from mouth to mouth. Between a young Somali who listens today to a poem composed fifty years ago, five hundred miles away, and its first audience is a long chain of reciters who passed it one to another. It is only natural that in this process of transmission some

distortion occurs, but comparison of different versions of the same poem usually shows a surprisingly high degree of fidelity to the original. This is due to a large extent to the formal rigidity of Somali poetry: if one word is substituted for another, for instance, it still must keep to the rules of alliteration, thus limiting very considerably the number of possible changes. The general trend of the poem, on the other hand, inhibits the omission or transposition of lines.

Another factor also plays an important role: the audience who listen to the poem would soon detect any gross departure from the style of the particular poet; moreover, among the audience there are often people who already know by heart the particular poem, having learnt it from another source. Heated disputes sometimes arise between a reciter and his audience concerning the purity of his version. It may even happen that the authorship of a poem is questioned by the audience, who carefully listen to the introductory phrases in which the reciter gives the name of the poet, and, if he is dead, says a prayer formula for his soul. (Somali Poetry 45-46)

As the above makes unmistakably clear, verbatim memorization together with individual authorship -- two defining characteristics which, by the argument of the "Formulaic School," should not be true for oral poetry -- sanctioned by an unwritten copyright law -- marks the essence of Somali oral verse. In establishing this decisively, Andrzejewski has performed a great academic service, at once liberating the study of oral poetry from the stifling clutches of the "Formulaic School" and opening the way to new vistas of oral method and theory across cultures.

The youthful refugee from wartime Poland, washed up alone, penniless, and sick on the shores of England, rose from the ashes of despair and indigence to become not only the world's preeminent expert on Cushitic poetry but also a global iconoclast shattering, with ability and insight, the China store of constrictive theories that might well have stymied the freedom of myriad approaches to the exploration of unwritten verse.

Though I was born and raised in the vibrant and awesomely harsh traditions of Somali culture (I did not learn to read or write until the age of sixteen), I would venture to opine that Andrzejewski would have approved of, in keeping with his winsomely good humor and appreciation of Somali notions of versification, this short doggerel poem of mine dedicated to his memory. The quintuplet stanza structure is an attempt, however inadequate, to imitate Sayyid Muhammad's legendary poetic style of the triplet-line verse design:

Poland geesigeedii Poland's hero

OO Goosh la oran jirey The beloved named Goosh

Soomaalida gargaaroo he who helped the Somalis

Far u gaar afkeeda ah By crafting a script for their tongue

Ku hirgaliyey dunidaba That gave it respect in the world

Hohey geeridiisii Alas, by his death

qarankeen la gaasiran Our nation is stunted forever

Qoraxdiina gaabatay And the sun has stunk low

Gabbalkiina waa dhacay and darkness engulfs us

Geeridaas daraadeed On account of his death

Geeriyey magacaa ba' O Death, thy name be damned

Geeriyey magacaa ba' O death, thy name be damned  
Geeriyey magacaa ba' O death, thy name be damned  
Sowdigaa na gassiray Look how you've deprived us  
Geesigii markaad dishay! When you slew our hero!  
Iskaga naso godkaagaa Rest in thy grave  
Garashada nafyahay weyn Thou Great Soul  
Iskaga naso godkaagaa Rest, rest, rest  
Garashada nafyahay weyn Thou Great Soul, rest  
Koombadaas isagaar Rest in thy ashen can.(2)

#### NOTES

(1). "Biographical Notes," received personally from B. W. Andrzejewski, 1991, p. 1. Hereafter cited as "Biographical."

(2). Andrzejewski's body had been cremated and the ashes collected in a small jar.

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