

Renata Rusek-Kowalska

In Memoriam Marek Smurzyński (1954–2009)

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of our colleague and friend Dr. Marek Smurzyński, a distinguished Polish Iranologist and an associate professor of Iranian studies at the Institute of Oriental Philology at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (Poland).

Dr. Marek Smurzyński was born in 1954 in Łódź (Poland). He graduated from the University of Łódź with a MA degree in Polish philology (1977) and then from the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw with a MA degree in Persian language and literature (1986). During his studies at the University of Warsaw he also worked as an interpreter for the Polish Company Budimex in Isfahan (1982–84). Having completed his Iranian studies in Warsaw, he pursued his interest in Persian literature at the University of Tehran. In 1993 he graduated from Tehran University with a MA thesis on *Ali Shari'ati (Olgu-ye ma'nā šenāxti-ye mafbum-e harekat dar nevešte-bā-ye doktor Ali Šari'ati)*. His interests evolved subsequently towards Medieval Sufism, as he conducted his PhD research into the poetry of Sanā'i and received a PhD degree from Tehran University in 1997 (*Tasbih-e enteqādi-ye Seyro-l-'ebād elā-l-ma'ād-e Sanā'i-ye Qaznavi va sāxtār-e tamsili-ye ān*, unpublished).

In 1997 Marek Smurzyński returned to Poland, where beginning in 1998 he worked as a senior lecturer in Persian language and literature at the Jagiellonian University. Finally, in 2007 he was appointed an assistant professor at the University's Department of Iranian Studies. In the meantime he acted as a certified translator of Persian language and as an oral interpreter during official visits and press interviews. In 2005 he went for a few months to Kabul to serve as a linguistic assistant in ISAF/NATO.

In February 2008 he was diagnosed with leukemia. Since then he had struggled bravely with the disease, to which he unexpectedly succumbed on 12 December 2009. He leaves his wife and a nine-year old son.

As an Iranologist, Dr. Marek Smurzyński showed a wide range of interests which extended from Medieval Sufism to the postmodern Iranian novel, the anthropology of text, theoretical problems of translation, the history of Iran, Islam and the philosophy of politics, as well as Kurdish film and modern Afghanistan. Among his numerous publications one can mention: "Il romanzo postmoderno nell' Iran postrivoluzionario" (The Postmodern Novel in Post-Revolutionary Iran), in *L'Iran e il tempo. Una società complessa*, ed. by A. Cancian (Rome, 2008); "The

Veiled Text in the Islamic-Persian Textual and Its Authoritative Power,” in *Texts of Power: The Power of the Text. Readings in Textual Authority across History and Cultures*, ed. by C. Galewicz (Kraków, 2006); “*Seir al-‘ebad elal-ma’ad of Sana’i* from Ghazna as a Poem of Initiation,” in *In the Orient Where the Gracious Light... Satura Orientalis in Honorem Andrzej Pisowicz*, ed. by A. Krasnowolska, K. Maciuszak and B. Mękarska (Kraków, 2006); “The Parataxis of Persian Narration and the Problems of the Segmentation of a Translated Text,” in *Oriental Languages in Translation*, ed. by A. Krasnowolska, B. Mękarska and Z. Zaborski (Kraków, 2002); “The Description of Spatial Relations in the ‘Aql-e Sorkh of Shehab al-Din Yahya Sohravardi as Mystical Mind Training,” in *Erzählter Raum in Literaturen der islamischen Welt/ Narrated Space in the Literature of the Islamic World*, ed. by R. Haag-Higuchi and Ch. Szyska (Wiesbaden, 2001); “Paradigms of Movement in Ali Shariati,” *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies*, 6 (1989).

Apart from his academic career, Marek Smurzyński was also an active participant in Iranian cultural life and a talented translator committed to promoting Persian literature in Poland and Polish modern poetry in Iran. Though his approach to Iran, its culture and literature was very personal, he was nonetheless always able to maintain a theorist’s distance to his objects of analysis, putting them in wider perspective.

A witty and erudite man, gifted with theatrical skills which he first showed in student theatre in Łódź, Marek was a popular companion in every assembly which he adorned with his inner light and charisma. Now, as his light has gone, our world seems somehow grayish and empty.

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