

## **Niepewność/Uncertainty**

*Adam Mickiewicz*, translated by **Karolina Minkiewicz**

*Gdy cię nie widzę, nie wzdycham, nie płaczę,  
Nie tracę zmysłów, kiedy cię zobaczę;  
Jednakże gdy cię długo nie oglądam,  
Czegoś mi braknie, kogoś widzieć żądam;  
I tęskniąc sobie zadaję pytanie:  
Czy to jest przyjaźń? czy to jest kochanie?*

*Gdy z oczu znikniesz, nie mogę ni razu  
W myśli twojego odnowić obrazu?  
Jednakże nieraz czuję mimo chęci,  
Że on jest zawsze blisko mej pamięci.  
I znowu sobie powtarzam pytanie:  
Czy to jest przyjaźń? czy to jest kochanie?*

*Cierpiałem nieraz, nie myślałem wcale,  
Abym przed tobą szedł wylewać żale;  
Idąc bez celu, nie pilnując drogi,  
Sam nie pojmuję, jak w twe zajdę progi;  
I wchodząc sobie zadaję pytanie;  
Co tu mię wiodło? przyjaźń czy kochanie?*

*Dla twego zdrowia życia bym nie skąpił,  
Po twą spokojność do piekieł bym zstąpił;  
Choć śmiałej żądy nie ma w sercu mojem,  
Bym był dla ciebie zdrowiem i pokojem.  
I znowu sobie powtarzam pytanie:  
Czy to jest przyjaźń? czy to jest kochanie?*

*Kiedy położysz rękę na me dłonie,  
Luba mię jakaś spokojność owionie,  
Zda się, że lekkim snem zakończę życie;  
Lecz mnie przebudza żywsze serca bicie,  
Które mi głośno zadaje pytanie:  
Czy to jest przyjaźń? czyli też kochanie?*

*Kiedym dla ciebie tę piosenkę składał,  
 Wieszczy duch mymi ustami nie władał;  
 Pelen zdziwienia, sam się nie postrzegłem,  
 Skąd wziąłem myśli, jak na rymy wbiegłem;  
 I zapisałem na końcu pytanie:  
 Co mię natchnęło? przyjaźń czy kochanie?*

When you're not before me, I don't sigh or cry,  
 I don't lose my senses when I see you;  
 However, whenever I don't get a longer stare,  
 Something is missing, I need to see someone;  
 And missing you, I ask myself the question:  
 Is this friendship? Or is it love?

Once I lose sight of you, I cannot once  
 In my mind renew the image of you;  
 However, sometimes because of my desire  
 The image is close in my mind  
 And I repeat the question:  
 Is this friendship? Or is it love?

I've suffered before, but the thought did not cross my mind  
 To come and pour my sorrow before you:  
 Walking with no destination, not keeping an eye on the road,  
 I do not know how I will find your hidden corners;  
 But once I arrive, I ask myself the question;  
 What led me here? Friendship or love?

I would not hold back my life for you,  
 I would descend to hell, to keep you calm  
 Although my heart is not bold with lust  
 I would be your health and calm  
 And once again I ask myself the question:  
 Is this friendship? Or is it love?

When your hand is placed upon my palm  
 A wave of blissful calm envelops me  
 It seems as though a light sleep will end my life:  
 Yet, the lively beating of a heart wakes me,  
 And loudly asks  
 Is this friendship? So also love?

When I was composing this song for you,  
 The prophetic ghost did not take over my tongue.  
 In awe, I was unaware  
 What provoked my thoughts, how I stumbled upon these rhymes,  
 And at the end I inscribed a question:  
 What was my inspiration? Friendship or love?

When translating from the language of origin to the language you want to translate into, you come across many struggles, especially when it comes to vocabulary. You are automatically limited when it comes to the amount of words you can choose from. Adam Mickiewicz' original poem *Uncertainty* has such a beautiful and systematic rhyme scheme that makes the poem flow when read aloud. So naturally translators will try and keep that rhyme scheme whenever translating, in order to keep that aspect of the poem true. However, with keeping to the rhyme scheme you are limited in your vocabulary. When I looked at various old translations I realized the translators picked words that fit into the rhyme scheme and meant more or less what the original poem was about -- but they had no passion, and were not as captivating to read as the original. With my personal translation I wanted to capture the passion Mickiewicz is known to write in.

Mickiewicz is a poet who chooses powerful words that make readers feel emotions as you read. His poem *Uncertainty* is about the adoration and lost love between him and a woman. His repeated questions at the end of each stanza urge the reader into a state where they feel what

thoughts are running through his head and feel the split he feels when it comes to the feelings the poet has towards this woman. With the other translations I looked at, the questions were formed as “Are we friends? Or should I call this love?”

However, if translated exactly from Polish to English, the translation would be “Is this friendship? Or is this love?” A small word such as friendship and friends can change the meaning of an entire poem. Friendship is more of an emotion and a friend is a person. Mickiewicz is talking about the feeling he gets when thinking of this woman, not what he physically has with her.

A struggle I had with the translation was finding that exact wording, that conveys the same emotion from Polish into English. Many times foreign languages have a word that is so powerful, so meaningful, however there is no equivalent word in the English language. While reading through the original Polish poem, I realized that we have words in Polish that are irreplaceable by English words. There may be words with similar meaning, but not the exact meaning and definition needed in order to convey the proper feeling of the word. This was also because the poem, especially towards the end, was written in ‘old Polish,’ which would be the equivalent of Shakespearean English, so aside from not knowing the proper word to choose into English translation, it was also difficult to even grasp the understanding of the Polish word.

Translating a poem into a new language comes with struggles not only for the translator but also for the reader, because if a reader of no background on the language of origin reads website-based translated poems of Mickiewicz, they might think it's so beautiful, but in reality they are only getting half the beauty because only half the beauty can be translated through words. The meaning is lost in translation. – **K.M.**, March 27, 2018.

