

Dear All,

First of all, thank you so much for taking up a challenge of translating my poem from English to Polish. There were 18 of you who decided to do it and this very fact puts you all in a special category of people with inquisitive minds. Such attitude will lead you to success in your professional life.

It was not an easy task to pick a winner. I believe that that you did not do it just for the award but also to have a chance to learn something about English language. I also think I owe you some explanation of criteria that I have used to make my choice of the best translation. So here is couple of thoughts and ideas I want you to take away from this exercise:

- Never ever use Google translation app to translate a poem; it may work when you order a pizza but not here. Years ago, Russians attempted to write a translation computer program between English and Russian and back to English. After they fed into the translator a poetic phrase by Lady Jane Wild – “the spirit is strong but the flash is weak” the computer returned a phrase “we still have some vodka but we are out of sausage”. Got it?
- That is why “heartbeat of life” is probably more “puls życia” than anything else
- By the same token “listening to tolling bells through a cracked window” does not mean that the window was broken but rather “uchylone, lekko otwarte”; I think only Julia Sadowska got this one right.
- Finally, always try to get under the skin of a language, search for a real meaning of words beyond their dictionary definitions, learn idiomatic expressions and don’t be afraid to translate them into a phrase that sounds totally different but means the same (e.g. “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”, which in Polish would be “wszędzie dobrze gdzie nas nie ma”). Therefore, when Hania Kontowska wrote “*Z głowami pełnymi pragnień wiedzieliśmy wszyscy, że chcemy podążać za marzeniami*” – she said it better than me, even though with different words.

Most of your translations were good but two of them definitely stand out due to their deep feeling of true meaning of expressions and a courage of authors in writing their own poems. They both followed the meaning of the original poem but to their own drumbeat.

These two translations were by Julia Sadowska and Hania Kontowska.

I felt that choosing one over the other would be unfair so I ended up funding another award of 500 zł. I believe thought that this is money well spent if it will motivate some of you to go beyond your English textbook and open a window into this enormously rich culture and literature by picking up some English books on your own. My first English book that I read on my own was “Short Stories” by Ernest Hemingway. I really recommend it!

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