

MARIA PRUSSAK 



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1432-8368>

IBL PAN

maria.prussak@ibl.waw.pl

THE UNSTABLE TEXT OF *PAN TADEUSZ*

Abstract

The article discusses the changes introduced by the successive editors of Adam Mickiewicz’s narrative poem to the text version published by the poet himself. The most important one is undoubtedly the addition of the poem considered the “epilogue” to *Pan Tadeusz*, allegedly lost by Mickiewicz. No less radical are the interventions consisting in supplementing the text with fragments from the autograph or with the poet’s later additions made to the already printed text, as well as in corrective conjectures in instances regarded by the publisher as slips of the pen. The article compares the surviving authorial versions of the text, demonstrating that Mickiewicz himself treated his work as a continual process and tested new solutions on various occasions; however, there is no evidence that he intended to introduce them into the printed text.

Keywords: autograph, conjecture, text modernization, authorial intention, text dynamics

Today, it’s easy to find both authorial editions of *Pan Tadeusz* (Paris 1834 and Paris 1844) on online databases. The careful observer certainly notices how much these texts differ from the epic prepared for us by contemporary editors. Even if we accept the traditionalist editorial choice to modernize spelling and punctuation (a practice increasingly questioned by textual specialists), a surprisingly high number of departures from the original text remain. I will not delve into the differences between various spelling conventions, still it is worth drawing attention to the phenomenon Teresa Winek

described in her book on the print history of *Pan Tadeusz*. Commenting on an 1860 edition compiled by Julian Klaczko and Eustachy Januszkiewicz, she notes,

certain changes allowed a good deal of the poet's language to 'slip away.' For example in the first edition, 'Pan' is written with a capital letter when connected to professional positions and aristocratic titles. In the 1860 edition, it is written in lowercase, eliminating the pomp of the names and reflecting instead contemporary feelings towards the nobility's so-called 'titlemania' (Winek 2011: 91).

Within five years of the poet's death, publishers had already begun to alter the linguistic intuition of the author to reflect their own values.

Editors working on the text without Mickiewicz's input considered it their duty to both bring the text closer to future generations of readers and to overhaul what they deemed to be mistakes and omissions, usually on the basis of editorial intuition alone. In result, they diverge further and further from the work's first run. Neither of the authorial editions contain the poem now known as [*The Epilogue*] of *Pan Tadeusz*. It was first placed in the work in 1860, initially printed as a prologue. When Klaczko and Januszkiewicz found a rough draft of a poem beginning with the incipit, "What it is to muse about in Paris" – corrected by the poet to "This is what I muse about in Paris" in Mickiewicz's archive, they believed they had discovered a fragment of the epic.¹ The recollection of the land of childhood might have struck them as clearly connected to *Pan Tadeusz*, offering sufficient ground to combine the two texts. However, they deemed that the opening originally deleted by Mickiewicz to be more suitable, and thus decided that this discovered fragment must have been a prologue. A reference to reading "The Tale of Wiesław" would later serve as yet another argument for combining the poem and the epic.² By the end of the century, another compelling piece of evidence appeared; the draft was linked to a sentence in a letter to Antoni Edward Odyniec in Dresden. The addressee connected a line about

¹ „O czym-że dumać na paryskim bruku” to „O tym-że dumać...”. Whenever possible, English quotations come from Bill Johnston's masterful translation *Pan Tadeusz: The Last Foray in Lithuania* (Mickiewicz 2018). However, given that Maria Prussak analyzes differences of word choice between Polish versions of Mickiewicz's text, it is important to look at the Polish language examples included [Translator's note].

² *The Tale of Wiesław* – a pastoral romance set against the backdrop of the Kościuszko Uprising was written by Kazimierz Brodziński in 1820 and had a profound influence on Mickiewicz [Translator's note].

Kazimierz Brodziński to another letter from Mickiewicz, dated September 28th, 1835, and published in the newspaper *The Family Chronicle (Kronika Rodzina)* on June 19th/July 1st 1870: “If Brodziński is still with you, greet him for me. Although I don’t know him personally, you know how highly I respect him. There was a passage for him at the end of *Tadeusz*, but due to its sudden printing and certain marital problems at that time, I didn’t have time to correct and situate the epilogue. I left it for a future edition (if there is one)” (Mickiewicz 1870: 293). Today, publishers print this fragment from a letter dated after the 21st of July 1835 and the word *Epilogue* is inscribed in the penultimate sentence in italics with a capital letter (Mickiewicz 2003). Leopold Méyet, who had physical contact with the manuscript and was the first to separate the cited passage from a letter from September 29th, also wrote *Epilogue* with a capital letter (Méyet 1906). Because the original manuscript has been lost, it remains unclear how the poet used the word. Still, the contemporary orthographical updates (the use of italics and a capital letter) endorsed a title that the author had never used in any fragment of the draft. It then became an established convention that the poem had to be printed at the end of *Pan Tadeusz* and titled “Epilogue.” Philological suppositions became the basis for other indisputable conclusions, and the choices of publishers and commentators serve to justify themselves.

These two separate, arbitrarily arranged discoveries created a text that began to live a life of its own, as Teresa Winek describes in great depth. Treating the first printing of the poem, she concludes definitively, “this prologic positioning necessarily embedded the poem into the organic whole of the epic” (Winek 2011: 272) although both the necessity and organicity of this decision remain in question. Because the poem is a rough draft and a few stanzas were noted on the margins, each publisher must decide which final shape the work will take and when to add marginalia. The editorial acceptance of unverified facts and doubtful suppositions about authorial intent is embodied in an assertion made by Zbigniew Jerzy Nowak in the most recent trade edition of the epic, the so-called anniversary print: “This poem was created in the spring of 1834. Mickiewicz called it the *Epilogue* (in a letter to Antoni Edward Odyniec from the 21st of July 1835) and planned to add it to *Pan Tadeusz*, but he never managed to finish or publish it” (Mickiewicz 1995: 418). In this sentence, the editor arbitrarily chooses “This poem” as his subject and fixes its genre, despite the fact that he has no evidence that the cited letter addresses the poem in question. Further, Mickiewicz scholars note with increasing frequency that “This poem” shares more commonalities

with Mickiewicz's later poetic works, rather than with *Pan Tadeusz* (see, for example, Stefanowska 2001, 335–350).

The second, no less significant problem stems from the fact that Mickiewicz's posthumous publications contain many words and even entire lines that are different from authorial editions. The textology of *Pan Tadeusz* – which could form an entire library of scholarly inquiries – fixed Mickiewicz's epic in the anachronistic line of thinking that all authorial publications were spoiled by various errors, and it is the editor's task to correct them according to the supposed intentions of the author (which would seem to exist in a liminal zone, somewhere outside of the physical document). The reconstruction of authorial intent usually hinges on the synthesis of traces of a wide range of authorial choices made in different documents over the course of years, if not decades. In this school of editing, the scholarly ambition of each editor is to identify and correct previously unnoticed errors, as well as to enter into a polemic with the previous editions and rejecting the unjustifiable choices of their predecessors. The changes introduced into *Pan Tadeusz*, starting with the Warsaw edition of 1858 appear, disappear, and come back again. In result, there cannot be a definitive, scholarly text of the work. Instead, there is the epic published by the author, dissimilar versions by editors, handwritten documents, and excerpts from lost manuscripts.

With enough patience, one could compare the textual apparatus of sequential printings in order to study the process of “repairing” the text damaged – in the opinion of academics – by the proofreader, the typesetter, and authorial neglect. The textual apparatus of nineteenth century printings rarely survive, so one would be required to collate later editions. Furthermore, very few readers of Mickiewicz's works notice their instability; rather, we read and interpret the version we happen to have. Editorial debates, it would seem, interest editors alone. Contemporary readers are faced with at least three different versions of the text with details that can vary quite significantly. They might reach for the text first edited by Stanisław Pigoń in 1925 for the National Library Series and reissued after the Second World War in the national and the jubilee editions, or for Konrad Górski's edition in the fourth volume of *The Complete Works*, or for Zbigniew Jerzy Nowak's jubilee print. Each of these versions exists in both academic and trade printings aimed at a popular audience.

A fundamental question raised in editorial debates still goes unanswered: what arguments are convincing enough to deemed editorial decisions irrefutable? The connection of a sentence from a letter to Odyniec with the discovered

draft of a poem is certainly not one. Still, it would be difficult to imagine a contemporary printing of *Pan Tadeusz* without its so-called epilogue. The authority of prominent Mickiewicz scholars, the tradition of the text – so often called upon to defend radical emendations such as this one – belong to a different discussion. They are more relevant to a study of the epic’s reception history than a discussion of its authorial form. Instead, these revisions should be regarded as expressions of editorial intent and the work’s function in social history; they are not justifications for a hypothetical reconstruction of the author’s intent, because the intent is accessible to the researchers only to the degree in which it was reflected in material documents. Only typos, faulty syntax, and broken rhymes can be treated as irrefutable arguments. And nothing else, as a rule. Eight such errors have been noted in the errata added to the first edition and several more have been described since. Other emendations tend to cite the author’s sources as justification and include the editor’s explanation of why the changed version is better from the point of view of textual cohesion. This is where a crucial problem appears – what is meant by cohesion? Does it refer to the specific text in question or a sense constructed by the researcher on the basis of various different sources?

Editors also make arbitrary corrections when faced with what they perceive as an undeniable factual error on the part of the author. Falling into this category is a change made in the 1868 edition compiled “by the author’s children.” This alteration was never questioned; instead, it has been justified in various different ways.³ Władysław Mickiewicz (or someone authorized by him) changed line 941 in Book Four, a scene describing the dogs Bobtail and Falcon as they pursue a rabbit. In the author’s text – confirmed in print and manuscript – the lines read:

Dust behind him, dogs behind dust, from afar it would seem,
That hare, dogs, and hounds were one:⁴

In the 1868 edition the second line became, “That hare, dust, and hounds were one.”⁵ This is the version readers have encountered for the past 150 years without noticing that the corrected form is phonetically less felicitous than

³ This change is considered so obvious that even Teresa Winek failed to mention it in her study of changes to the work in subsequent editions.

⁴ “Pył za nim, psy za pyłem, zdaleka się zdało // Że zając, psy, i charty jedne tworzą ciało”.

⁵ “Że zając, pył i charty jedne tworzą ciało”. Above are my own rough translations of the line, since Johnston’s version is tricky to incorporate into a line-by-line comparison. Here is

the original. All subsequent publishers explained that Mickiewicz had rewritten the text himself and inadvertently repeated the word “dogs” („*psy*”) instead of “dust” („*pył*”) because, after all, the phrase “dogs and hounds” is a senseless tautology, especially given that only hounds run after the hare. This emendation would even be used as an example in editorial handbooks from that of Konrad Górski to Roman Loth (Górski 2011 [1975]: 21–22; Loth 2006: 76). Yet another question arises: does an editor have the right to correct the author’s blatantly obvious factual errors? In this case, however, there is no mistake to correct, given that the phrase “dogs and hounds” was used in Mickiewicz’s era. Tomasz Chachulski has noted several times that a similar construction can be found in Adam Naruszewicz’s letter to Mierzejewski (whose first name remains unknown): “Let him try, so that I, having such forests, could have game for the winter, foxes and wolves for pelts, because I know that he raises hounds and dogs for himself, digs traps for wolves, shoots foxes and derives profit from it himself, and I am left with nothing” (Naruszewicz 1959: 436). Marek Piechota – commenting on Chachulski’s contribution to this discussion – has noted many more examples of the phrase in the language in use at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Nevertheless, Piechota prefaces his argument in defense of the editorial emendations of *Pan Tadeusz* that have been accepted by the most prominent scholars of Mickiewicz’s textology with the article’s subtitle, suggesting a hypothesis which must be proven: “the famous *lapsus calami* of Mickiewicz studies and its alleged classical origin.” (Piechota 2014). The phrase’s origin could only be deemed “alleged”, because it does not support an accepted reading by Mickiewicz scholars or because Piechota believes historic etymology has less value than 150 years of textual tradition shaped by an anonymous editor and the publishers of subsequent editions.

Not a single explanation connected to the emendation suggesting that only hounds chase hares can be backed up with material documents. Both hounds and dogs are numbered in the group returning from the hunt and the hare could “smell the hunters and dogs” behind him.⁶ In order to support the decisions of subsequent editors, in the National Library Collection

Johnston’s translation, for reference: “Behind it was dust; behind that, dogs; the men // Who watched saw hare and dust and dogs as one” [Translator’s note].

⁶ „czuł z tyłu myśliwych i psiarnie”. In Johnston’s translation (Mickiewicz 2018: 151): “Indeed the hare, ears cocked like horns, had smelled//The hunt behind it, and had crossed a field.” [Translator’s note].

Stanisław Pigoń added a rather absurd footnote to the opening lines of the hare chase. So it begins (in Johnston's translation):

A cry of "tally-ho!" broke off the tale.
 A hare had been flushed, and bounding on its trail
 Were Bobtail and Falcon, brought along in case –
 On the way back – there might be hares to chase. (lines 924–927).

The footnote to line 926 offers a new justification: "*dogs* – clearly meant to indicate hounds. Dogs were of no use on a rabbit chase" (Mickiewicz 2012: 237). According to this line of argument, the author's "*dogs*" can be read in various ways; sometimes as hounds, sometimes as "dust." Clearly, editorial speculation and justification can prove boundless.

Much more frequently, however, editors compare print and manuscript versions of the text. A significant number of examples indicate that new editions return to textual versions from the manuscripts that pre-date print editions. The editor then defends this choice, which is usually deemed to be a more justifiable interpretation of a line. The change most frequently of all has to do with a single word. For example, in the first print of *Pan Tadeusz*, lines 81 and 82 of Book Three – a description of Zosia feeding the village children in the garden – read: "Not knowing that the intruder from the other way // drew close, slipping like a snake through the grass."⁷ Returning to the wording of the original manuscript ("not *seeing* that the intruder"), Górski offers a detailed defense: "Because all of Zosia's attention is focused elsewhere, she does not see the intruder coming from the opposite direction. Thus, the emphasis is placed on the act of watching. An acceptance of the 'not knowing' version would make one wonder who she should know this, given that she isn't looking around. Her mistake lies in her inability to see what she could see, despite her heightened awareness" (Górski 1969: XXXII). This weak argument – that Zosia doesn't look because she doesn't know – could not win the approval of other editors, who used the version of the line found in the first print; those who read the Pigoń or Nowak editions will learn that Zosia didn't know. The basic problem

⁷ „Nie wiedząc, że napastnik już z przeciwnej strony / Zbliżył się, czołgając się jak wąż przez zagony”. In Johnston's translation: "The gooseberry bush had rustled – unaware // That the intruder had by now drawn close // The other way, slipping snakelike through the grass." (Mickiewicz 2018: 81) [Translator's note].

remains that an editor's deference to personal interpretation can encroach upon the structure of the given text.

One could discuss ad infinitum changes introduced on the basis of the authorial manuscripts and question the reintegration of lines that never made it to print. Another, equally unconvincing source of emendation can be found in some copies of the 1844 print, as Mickiewicz rewrote various words. Three such books have been known to exist; two offer handwritten notes from the poet (one of them, belonging to Eustachy Januszkiewicz was destroyed during the war), while the third contains Mickiewicz's notes, as dictated to Aleksander Chodźko. Editors deemed some of these corrections to be the final authorial intent, binding to later editors. They never considered that they may reflect the author's changing intent as well as ideas that emerged decades after the poem was finished. I will mention only three of a dozen examples of such changes that made it into contemporary prints (with the exception of editions compiled by Stanisław Pigoń).

Describing Wojski's concert, Mickiewicz initially focused his attention on Wojski, the horn player; in the first print and in Pigoń's editions, line 666 of Book Four reads: "And he played, the horn like gale with unbroken breath // carries music into the wilderness."⁸ Years later, the poet tried to capture what was happening inside the instrument as Wojski played; he crossed out "unbroken" („*niewystrymany*") and replaced it with "whirling" („*wirowaty*") in Teofil Lenartowicz i Eustachy Januszkiewicz's copies of the text.⁹ Górski and Nowak likewise incorporated this correction in their respective editions. Following the example used by editors in 1858, 1860, and 1868, they write: "the horn like a gale, with whirling breath." (each print employs different punctuation).¹⁰ In Januszkiewicz's now-lost copy of the text, described by Pigoń in a separate study (Pigoń 1928:41), Mickiewicz eschews the gentle "rustling" („*trzpiałstwo*") of a female turkey (her response to an uncouth Tom Turkey, Book Five, verse 63) for a much harsher "grumbling" („*gderanie*"). This alteration – taken up by Górski and Nowak – reduces the visual richness of the scene, as "rustling"

⁸ „I zagrał: róg jak wicher, nie wstrzymanym dechem, //Niesie w puszcze muzykę” In Johnston's translation: "It sounded; with unbroken breath he played. //The echoing music filled the forest..." (Mickiewicz 2018: 140) [Translator's note].

⁹ A copy with the author's notes can be found in Winek 2011: 371.

¹⁰ „róg jak wicher, wirowatym dechem” [Translator's note].

likewise indicates a flapping of wings according to its definition in the contemporaneous Linde dictionary.¹¹

Mickiewicz also changed entire lines of text in copies of the final print made during his lifetime. For example, in the first print of Book Seven: The Council, Bartek “the Prussian” is described thus: “In his far-off travels, he saw much of the world; // he read newspapers attentively, followed politics // his views were of no small help to discussions” (verses 6–8).¹² Based on these authorial changes, Eustachy Januszkiewicz replaced the last line of the cited verse with “in Maciek’s absence, he usually chaired discussions” in his 1860 edition, thereby slightly diminishing Bartek’s role.¹³ Pigoń returned to the version found in the first print without offering a footnote, while Górski and Nowak incorporated Mickiewicz’s change of the line. Readers typically do not concern themselves with such details; still, most are not aware that each copy of the text is slightly different. A separate issue is the addition of handwritten fragments of text which were not included in the first print or differ significantly from it. More often than not, *Pan Tadeusz*’s most interesting passages are cut out according to the principle that the work “ought to be shared with as many readers as possible” (Winek 2011:83). Initially included in excerpts at the end of the work, these passages were later treated as alterations of the texts and printed in footnotes or critical appendixes. Fragmented in this way, these manuscripts lost their integrity, and the passages functioned outside of the original context.

Posthumous editions of *Pan Tadeusz* – the sum of both the author’s wishes and editors’ corrections to the not absolutely perfect authorial text – should not be seen as the most important symptom of the text’s instability. Rather, these editions *result* from the work’s instability, as well as the long-prevailing concept of academic editing. Jerzy Starnawski defines this type of editing in a 1992 reprint of his handbook: “the editor is not just a scribe who compares prints to the author’s text or the first print. As so often happens, he might also have to act as a detective. An investigation by the editor-detective is most needed when the text suffers obvious damage, where by introducing

¹¹ Pigoń produced an academic text describing Januszkiewicz’s copy of *Pan Tadeusz*; (Pigoń 1928: 41).

¹² „W podróżach swych dalekich, wiele zwiedził świata; / Gazet pilny czytelnik, polityki świadom, / Mógł więc nie mało światła udzielić obradom.” In Johnston’s translation: “He’d seen the world, had traveled high and low. // He followed politics, always read the news – // Those present could profit amply from his views” (Mickiewicz 2018: 222).

¹³ „W niebytność Maćka zwykle przewodził obradom” [Translator’s note].

a single link or correction we make it fully legible” (Starnawski 1992: 53). Herein lies the crux of the matter: the editor must render a work legible. But what measure can he use to assess legibility outside his own intuition? The true instability of the text – underappreciated by the practitioners of academic editing – results from the actions of an author for whom the process of writing continues after his work has been printed.

Contemporary thinking about texts reverses the traditional order. First and foremost, there has been a move away from compiling various textual documents into a single text. The new school of editing abandons the practice of constructing variants of the texts that the author never wrote. Contemporary editing valorizes all of the author’s inputs, examining them as evidence of work on the text, as traces of ideas as they appear or vanish, of the search for the best possible solution. It is this very process that interests researchers more and more frequently. The author’s documents are valued differently; the work sent to the printer might be seen as a caesura. If authorial corrections to a printed text cannot be proven to be an unrealized copy of a new edition, they are given less importance than the official published version which does not mean they should be ignored. *Pan Tadeusz*’s paper trail is relatively diverse. It consists of rough drafts, a substantial section of the autograph, two authorial prints, and a proof-reading copy described by Pigoń and destroyed during the Second World War, which reveals that the author made significant corrections on that stage, such as deleting entire passages.

The excerpts Pigoń copied from this text illustrates another problem: it’s difficult to determine the meaning of Mickiewicz’s editorial changes based on a few words taken out of their larger context. In his analysis of the proof-reading copy, Pigoń comments on the poet’s license:

It is worth noting the cases where the poet refines the stylistic fabric of the work; banal, jarring words and phrases are softened and elevated (...) In a scene in Book Nine, he alters the details of the incident being described, as well as the stylistic robe of its expression. Originally, Płut (Book Nine, line 299) ‘He grabbed Telimena’s hand // And with a big kiss clasped her white breast, // and then Tadeusz slapped his mug.’ In the poet’s proof copy, ‘white shoulder’ replaces ‘breast’ and ‘face’ replaces ‘mug,’ changing the specific sound of the maturing work (Pigoń 1928: 29).¹⁴

¹⁴ „... chwycił Telimeny rękę / I szerokim całusem w białą pierś jej klasnął, / Gdy Tadeusz, przypadłszy z boku, w pysk mu trzasnął” [Translator’s note].

Once again, Mickiewicz abandons a blunt phrase. Notes placed at the end of modern editions comparing the replacement of “shoulder” for “breast” and “face” for “mug” do little to reveal the bawdiness of the scene, which ultimately provokes a battle between the Polish nobles and the Muscovians; the author’s corrections make the conflict much harder to justify.

Other documents related to *Pan Tadeusz* include: the so-called Lenartowicz edition, a an 1844 print with Mickiewicz’s handwritten notes that belongs to a private collection (Teresa Winek includes copies of the pages with notes from this edition in her book), another edition from the same print with notes dictated to Aleksandr Chodźko by the poet in 1851, and excerpts copied by Pigoń from the destroyed Januskiewicz book, which, according to Pigoń, contains four indisputable corrections rendered by the poet in 1847 as he began his preparations for a new edition of his works. And one must not neglect to mention short fragments of the invocation, written in albums after the work’s publication (see Zgorzelski 1998: [141], [143], 163, 164, 223–224); finally a recently discovered sheet of paper – given by the poet to Ambroży Grabowski, a Kraków collector – which contains the first forty lines of the invocation poem with minute, though important differences from the printed version (Prussak, Rączka-Jeziorska 2018).

The task of the contemporary editor is twofold: to restore *Pan Tadeusz* to Adam Mickiewicz and to expose readers to the remaining documents related to the text – not only so they will know what they are reading, but also so that they can familiarize themselves with the compounded structure of the epic; the author never considered the work finished, although he did choose one version to share with readers. In this way, interested readers could learn about the process of working on the text, rather than the unilateral decisions of editors as they decide which steps of this process expresses the true intentions of the author. Handwritten documents were usually private, being either the personal notes of the poet or intended for specific individuals. Today, they should not be analyzed as potential changes for a forthcoming edition, but rather as a record of Mickiewicz’s endless contemplation of his own text, of an intensive exercise in form, and of the dynamics of a changing work.

Readerly interest in this record can be seen in Stanisław Radwan’s recently published interview with Jerzy Illg. Delighting in the rhythmic mastery of the poem, Radwan claims:

Once I asked myself: why did the poet write it in such a way that it is completely definite? There are thirteen syllables “Li/two, oj/czy/zno mo/ja, ty jes/

teś jak zdro/wie” but only seven words: “Litwo, ojczyzno, moja, ty, jesteś, jak, zdrowie.”¹⁵ It’s an amazing block of thirteen syllables, but why did the poet use that order – and not just because of the caesura? He could have written: “Ojczyzno moja, Litwo...,” “Moja Litwo, ojczyzno,” or “Moja ojczyzno, Litwo...” I recited them aloud: they don’t hit the point, excite, move forward” (Illg 2018: 502).

The superb composer was not aware that while Mickiewicz began his rough draft with “Ojczyzno Litwo moja,” he only changed the phrase to something “completely definitive” in a later draft. Perhaps if Radwan had compared both drafts and the printed text, he would have come to an even more compelling conclusion. He certainly would have had a more enjoyable reading experience.

It is not always possible to establish the chronological order of handwritten documents. Even after a great deal of speculation, it remains unclear when Mickiewicz rewrote forty lines of the invocation and gave them to Ambroży Grabowski. The sheet diverges from the published version in five places, in one it returns to the autograph. Most significant is the invocation’s fourth line, which the poet kept changing across documents; his continual search for a new order of words to catch the beginning of the process of creation.¹⁶ In a rough draft he tried, “I see and I want to praise, because I miss you.”¹⁷ He changes it in a later draft, writing, “I see, I feel, I praise, because I miss you.”¹⁸ The first print offers a different version, now known to all Poles: “[Today] I see and I tell anew // Your lovely beauty, as I long for you (,Widzę i opisuję, bo tęsknię po tobie”).¹⁹ Still, Mickiewicz’s search continued; he wrote different versions in albums. In a copy taken from a now-lost album on the 17th of June, 1843, the line read: “I feel and want to describe when I miss you.”²⁰ Grabowski’s autograph offers the simplest – if not the coarsest – version of all: “I feel and describe, because I miss you.”²¹

¹⁵ “Lithuania! My homeland! You are health alone.” (Mickiewicz 2018: 1) [Translator’s note].

¹⁶ Kazimierz Wyka addresses the start of the invocation in detail. See: “*Ojczyzno Litwo moja*”, in: Wyka 1963: 40–83.

¹⁷ „Widzę i chcę opiewać, bo tęsknię po tobie” [Translator’s note].

¹⁸ „Widzę, czuję, opiewam, bo tęsknię po tobie” [Translator’s note].

¹⁹ „Widzę i opisuję, bo tęsknię po tobie.” (Mickiewicz 2018: 1) [Translator’s note].

²⁰ „Czuję i chcę opisać gdy tęsknię po tobie” [Translator’s note].

²¹ „Czuję i opisuję, bo tęsknię po tobie” [Translator’s note].

Feeling, one of the most important words in Mickiewicz's lexicon, returns as the author attempts to find the perfect phrasing because it always turned out to be more powerful than seeing. And because it begs the question: what beauty means if it can only be felt through its loss. I would venture to say that this version was developed after the work was already in print, but I do not have concrete evidence for this speculation. Observing the author as he returns to his text and tries to reshape it offers a more fascinating entry point for readers and opens a new field of associations. It bears remembering, however, that the poet's play with his work cannot be defined by a single comment or reduced beyond a doubt by any decision (see for example Gabler 1987: 107–116).

Translated by Jessica Jensen Mitchell
jmittell1@g.harvard.edu

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