

## Chapter 2 – Odes

This collection of poems includes odes to various objects, ideas and organizations. Again, her subjects show what was important to Bernice and her community.

The first two poems are included here because they set the tone of acknowledging the creative process itself. The rest are historic references that most people today wouldn't know about. Two poems about the Baltic refer to the Second Polish Republic's access to the Baltic Sea, which was economically important to the newly formed country, but also provided the rationale for Germany's resentment and eventual invasion. The remainder of the dedications are to organizations that were part of Bernice's life in 1930's Chicago.

"Salute to the Chicago Journal!" honors one of her publishers. Newspapers were the social media of the day and foreign language papers were especially important to their communities. It is nice to know that by printing her poems, these publications allowed Bernice to share her thoughts and hopes with others.



MS Piłsudski, photo from Wiki Commons

## **To Poetry!**

Oh, poetry! Oh, noble, wondrous speech,  
Your words are pearls! You are like sunshine,  
The sound of your words, like the living pulse of blood.  
Whether they tremble with sadness – or with adoring song.

Whether you proclaim the miracle of the world – of nature –  
Or the amorous sweetness of youth,  
Or the sound of choral hymns to honor God,  
You always contain mysterious magic.

You reveal the happiness of life on earth,  
You tremble with the ecstasy of tender words of love,  
You are the star amid earthly shadows,  
You feed us with hope – you shine for mankind.

Oh, poetry! You are fragrance and balm...  
You fill our souls like the hymns of angels!  
Although our heart is suffering – and our eyes shed tears...  
You change our life to paradise in this earthly vale.<sup>35</sup>

Oh, poetry! You give wings to my thought,  
That it may rise ever higher and higher,  
That, drawing balm from the treasury of your creative force,  
I may comfort human pain.

So as long as I am among people on this earth,  
May I comfort their pain – with the song of your rhymes...  
Under your inspiration, may love awaken  
Among mankind – to deeds of brotherhood.

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **O Divine Muse!**

Oh divine Muse! Is it possible  
To put your beauty into words – to frame it with rhyme?  
When you flow with the music of archangels...  
So today my heart adores you!

You are like incense offered in paradise,  
In censers raised by angels at the feet of God,  
They proclaim their sweetness with choral hymns,  
You are the shining light of happiness, of these unearthly  
singers.

Oh Muse, you are the sun! And guiding star in the blue sky,  
That leads mankind in the path of its radiance,  
You fill our souls like fragrant flowers –  
In the colors of the rainbow, manifesting life.

In poetry, you are like amorous Venus,  
In musical tones, you are like a singing princess,  
Whether resounding with joy – or with a sadder note,  
You fill us with nectar... like fresh springtime.

You kindle an ardent flame in human hearts,  
With sweet magic, you proclaim miracles to the world –  
That earthly treasures, are falsehood and deceit;  
Oh, Muse, in life... you are the brightest torch!

*By Bronislawa Wolnik 1935*

## **Baltic Polish Sea**

Oh, virgin Vistula<sup>36</sup>, -- Whose destiny  
It was, to unite the Polish land with the Baltic,  
As its tributary – through Poland’s wedding with the sea,<sup>37</sup>  
You have affirmed the rights, which were given to us  
Centuries ago; therefore, let the waves of the Baltic  
Serve Poland faithfully and perpetually!

Oh, Baltic, whose arms have embraced  
The princess Vistula – our Lechitic<sup>11</sup> river,  
Who no longer languishes with longing for us,  
Let your waves proclaim the triumph of the “Eagle”!<sup>22</sup>  
When above you today, like a silver-white seagull,  
Our flag with the “Eagle” flies proudly above us!

Let the sea winds greet with fanfares  
The Polish ships that rip the silver depths, --  
Let them sing a song of brotherhood with the Baltic...  
When you rock them on the bosom of your waves;  
Like a triumphant victor on a splendid steed  
The Polish ship sails on the Baltic!

Although sometimes your waters are frothy with danger,  
And raise their ruffled manes like a wild horse,  
Oh, Baltic, be a brother to the ship, -- let it pass all obstacles,  
Let it arrive happily at the shore!  
For even though for centuries we have been a nation of knights,  
Who among us can measure up to the sea’s mighty force?

Our beloved sea! That man is famed for his might...  
Whose destiny it is to stand on your shores;  
Today on your waves our “Piłsudski”<sup>38</sup> sails –  
The ship is the “Namesake” of Him, who led the knights  
To freedom! Although the battles were bloody,  
He did not rest until he conquered your shores!

Today, the ship “Piłsudski” is the prince of the sea,  
It sails to reach the Polish brothers who “wander”,

It rips through the deep expanse of the Baltic;  
Today, a crowd of people presses towards it at the port;  
Today, our hearts beat for it...  
Because the “spirit” of great deeds lives forever!

We greet you, most splendid lion of the sea, battle steed,  
On the other shore of our adopted Motherland;  
Under the flag of the sign of the “Eagle”,  
May you be a perpetual bridge  
Between the two Nations joined in vigorous brotherhood;  
In the bonds of friendship, let the spirit  
Of Kościuszko and Pułaski unite us!<sup>39</sup>

We greet you, welcome! Oh, Poland’s pride of the sea,  
With what joy do our hearts overflow!  
May the power of God protect you!  
May you bring fame... to our Lechitic Poland,  
Whose destiny it is to be a gateway to the sea –  
May our Polish ships – be blessed by God!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935*

## **The Pride of Poland**

Oh, Gdynia! As a Polish port, you are the pride of our Nation!<sup>40</sup>  
You are a treasured pearl – the fruit of our sacrifice and labor  
For Poland which is now independent today! with access to the  
sea,  
And therefore, our future is as bright as the dawn.

Gdynia, the Port! A city which looks at its reflection  
In the Baltic's mirror waves – in sunshine when the weather is  
fine,  
Or else when the white fog embraces it in its hug...  
Just like a bride enwrapped in her wedding veil.

Gdynia, the bride, betrothed to the sea,<sup>37</sup>  
Given to the masculine arms of the Baltic,  
Let her stand guard to the sea for centuries to come...  
Admired by the world – for the glory of Poland!

Today let all our neighbors wonder,  
Let them admire! Let them not be led astray  
By the hope of some aggressive revenge,  
Because Gdynia is ours now! For ever and ever.

Today, let Polish hearts beat with joy,  
When they come from beyond the seas to Poland's shore,  
When they admire this Port, this marvelous Gdynia!  
And when they disembark – they are on Polish soil.

And we, who only knew it from the news,  
When our heart has tender dreams of Gdynia,  
We also take pride in this great deed,  
Because we feel like her Daughters – and Sons.

Glory to You, oh Nation! For your great devotion,  
Great sacrifice! In the past, you sacrificed blood – now  
possessions,  
When you are capable of such great deeds,  
May the Lord God crown you with a laurel wreath!<sup>41</sup>

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

**On the Silver Jubilee of the Society of J. Słowacki**  
Group 82 of the Polish Women's Alliance of America<sup>42</sup>

Let us rejoice Sisters! Let us rejoice together,  
Sitting at the table together today,  
Let joy light up our faces...  
Let our hearts be uplifted with pride!

That we have lived to see the long-awaited Jubilee  
Of our Society of Juliusz Słowacki<sup>43</sup>;  
We are celebrating twenty-five years of work,  
And let us encourage each other to further work...

Let every Polish woman hurry  
To the Banner of Polish Women: Let us stand guard just like at  
the border,  
Of this our famous Mecca of Polishness,  
Let all Polish women unite here together!

Here let us live our sisterly life together,  
United together under this Banner,  
On which these words are etched in gold:  
God! Service! Country:<sup>44</sup> they are so splendid.

Let the Polish Women's Alliance stand guard,  
Defending our Polishness – of Independent Motherland  
Let every woman in whose veins flows Polish blood,  
Stand together with us here, in our team...

And those dearest ones, our young girls,  
Let us unite them together, entwine them – into flower wreaths<sup>45</sup>,  
Because our whole future depends on them,  
So we must encourage them to join us...

So let us fulfill our duty  
Let us shout out! Long live the Polish Women's Alliance!...  
Let the Society of Juliusz Słowacki  
Live long to see its Golden Jubilee!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1936  
President of Group 82*

## **Polish Women's Banner**

*FOR COMMISSION N<sup>o</sup> 1 OF THE POLISH  
WOMEN'S ALLIANCE OF AMERICA<sup>42</sup>  
On Its 10<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, as well as the Consecration  
of the Banner*

The Polish Women's Banner is sisterly love –  
Uniting all together hand in hand,  
Before us, our future is bright – rosy...  
After the toil of labor – let us proudly lift our heads!

The Polish Women's Banner – God and our Motherland!  
So none of life's toils can wear us down –  
Our Polish Women's Alliance, everyone admits  
Is growing... Bearing the miracle of young Polish Women.

The Polish Women's Banner – is strength of action,  
So that we can raise the blossom of young Polish maidens,  
And after years of hard work – a laurel wreath<sup>41</sup>  
Will be our reward: the world will recognize us today.

Under this Banner, in the chariot of our labor,  
Many of us have grown silvery-gray –  
But even if we all should pass away,  
Our daughters will join hands in this work one day!

They will stand ready for action – under this Banner,  
They will follow the footsteps of these noble paths –  
Their hearts are an offering cup of Polish blood,  
Their watchword will be Polishness – and God!

Under this Banner, the dear little Flower Wreaths<sup>45</sup>  
Of our young girls, like the unfolding buds of roses,  
Will sing joyful Polish songs,  
Like the colors of the rainbow and morning dawn!

The Polish maidens, ready to stand guard  
Of the family hearth – take Polish wedding vows,

At that time, we will not lack the little rose wreaths,  
And nothing will separate us – but the dark grave!

So let us go forth boldly! Nothing will wear us down,  
Because the Polish Women's Alliance keeps watch – stands  
guard!

In this please bless us, oh Almighty God...  
Long live our Polishness! As You live eternally.

Our Polish Women's Banner – let us raise high!  
Because the deeds of Polish daughters on it shine.  
Let it earn glorious fame far and wide.  
Let it serve as a model of Polish virtue to others!

Under the Banner, let us march strong and overcome!  
To attain our goals – the enemy will not defeat us,  
Because the Polish Women's Alliance will be for us a wellspring  
Of all the Polish virtues! – So help us God!<sup>46</sup>

*By Bronisława Wolnik*

## **To Unionists on the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Equal Rights**

TO FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE POLISH NATIONAL  
ALLIANCE<sup>47</sup>  
ON THE 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF EQUAL RIGHTS

Oh, Twentieth Century! The time of equal rights  
Of Female Members of the Alliance, which were granted to us  
When equal rights were given to women –  
Their untiring work full of ideals;  
They bring glory and growth to the Alliance,  
They build up the fortress of Polishness in America!

Here under the flag of their adopted homeland,  
Polish Women are active in society,  
Here their old scars have healed –  
Here they have worked, to see Poland rise  
In victory! – For Her rebirth,  
Polish Women are famous for their devotion!

Today's Woman in the progress of science,  
Reaches the greatest heights with her knowledge,  
In every domain of culture and the arts...  
And reaches the summits of inventions;  
Even if she hurts her white hand in the toils of work,  
She has overcome superstition and deceit!

Today's Woman is not afraid of work –  
She shines like a star with her enlightened mind...  
And she will also comfort pain and sadness with love –  
At that time she is charming-feminine,  
When by doing good, like an angel on earth,  
She comforts and supports [her loved ones] with her own hands.

Polish Women, brave Members of the Alliance,  
Always understand the power of the Alliance,  
And as long as a drop of Polish blood flows in us,  
We will always build up the Polish National Alliance...  
And in the unshaken faith of this ideal,

Let us raise our daughters and sons as Scouts!<sup>48</sup>

Oh, Polish Mothers! That is our duty,  
To feed our beloved children with their mother tongue,  
Let the Alliance serve as Mother-Poland for them,  
Let the young birds not fly away amid foreigners,  
But live and work together with us in the Alliance,  
Let them love and respect their heritage!

So, Female Members of the Alliance, born of Polish blood,  
Let us build up power through our children,  
Let us not lack noble impulses,  
And let our legacy be the golden chronicle of our deeds;  
So Sisters, let us harmoniously link our hands in work,  
When the star of equal rights shines for us!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935  
President of Group 2566 of the Polish National Alliance<sup>49</sup>  
Chicago, Illinois*

## **On the 35th Jubilee of the Work of the Polish Women's Alliance** <sup>42</sup>

Oh! how beautiful these two words are to our ears,  
In our alliance – we feel the power of action!  
And the historic work of Polish Women –  
Has lived for centuries in the Polish Nation!

Here, in America, Polish Women –  
Wanted to work proudly uniting together,  
The daughters of one Motherland – as sisters,  
Aiming to build – our Alliance!

Therefore, united as a strong chain,  
When our Alliance was given its name,  
The beautiful idea was a successful one,  
Our work has endured for thirty-five years!

Today, we celebrate our Jubilee –  
It is a beautiful and joyful day for us!  
We are so proud of our fruitful work...  
On this day in May – in sunny spring!

While nature is full of youth today,  
We pioneers already are growing gray –  
But in our chest our heart beats with joy...  
Let us unite ever more strongly as sisters, hand in hand!

Oh Polish Women – our union makes us strong!  
Therefore today, the Polish Women's Alliance is powerful,  
Our union has gathered here the "Flower Wreaths"<sup>45</sup> of our  
daughters,  
And this work will write the chapters of history!

In the Flower Wreaths of our daughters our future lies –  
Therefore, oh mothers, fulfill your duty,  
Let us teach Polish culture to our youth,  
And then our Polish Women's Alliance will grow!

Today, looking with respect at our matrons –  
We want to build our Polish Women's Alliance!  
We, the young Flower Wreaths, mothers and wives,  
Vow to honor the Name of Polish Women!

The women's banner – their beautiful deeds...  
We prize so highly – we will carry proudly!  
Through our work we will win new laurel wreaths<sup>41</sup>...  
And today I pay HOMAGE to our women Pioneers!

*Specially dedicated to the Jubilee by  
Bronisława Wolnik, 1937*

## Salute to the Chicago Journal!

For forty-five years – the Chicago Journal<sup>50</sup>  
Has kept guard over the name of Polishness,  
Has sown the pearls of the beauty of the Polish language...  
It defends our rights, it teaches generations  
To stand steadfast in the faith of their fathers  
And safeguard the customs of Polish virtue!

It is a brave Luminary! At work for many years  
It was our guard, our torch, our light –  
It bid us consider each compatriot as our brother,  
And was a rampart of defense against enemies;  
No matter whether the enemy – was rich or from the upper class?  
It was like a righteous Pole – like a beloved leader!

The power of the press, is an eye to the universe,  
With which it looks upon the arena of the world –  
It is a sensitive listener and often a prophet,  
Therefore it holds such great value for us;  
So we need to value it and support it,  
And not to look for foreign ones under a false sky.

The Chicago Journal shone like a candelabra,  
Because of its fighters, untiring in their work,  
The knights of the pen, modest, but full of concern,  
The warriors of the word and the spokesmen of truth;  
Such was each righteous Pole, like a priest,  
The guardian and the sun of each good cause!

Forty-five years of tilling the field...  
Where at work there were frequent storms and thunder,  
But You, oh God, are leading us to victory!  
And You bless us and give us strength;  
May a new dawn shine on this field,  
And no foreign power wear us down!

Oh, Luminary! You are the torch of Polishness!  
Let every Pole respect your prestige,

By understanding that strength lies in unity!  
So let us build up the Polish Newspaper with our own resources;  
May the Polish Press not idly vegetate,<sup>51</sup>  
But after years of work... may it triumph!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935*