

Memories of Youth

Oh, youth! You are the spring season amid life on this earth;
In the blue heavens, you are the Milky Way –
Your precious gift, the charm of sunny rays;
In sweet dreams we hold for our life – you give us the drink of faith.

Oh, youth! Oh, my rosy, magical dream –
How happily did my youthful years run!
Today – on my life's road I am an itinerant pauper,
A thirsty pilgrim – where are the water springs of happiness?

Oh, youth! Return – oh, come back again!
So that I can forget my hardships and strife,
Let me once more feel your charm's caress;
From infancy, let me once more begin my life...

Or else, do not return. – Let me, on suffering's soil
Reach the end of my days, beyond this world –
So that I can come down from the blue heavens, and in life's toil
Behold how the flowers of golden dreams can fade?

And yet those memories of my bygone youth
Now hum to me such a caressing tune...
Oh, the sweet moments of past bright days!
– Oh, how I regret – that they will never return.

By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935

Translated by Joanna Radwańska-Williams, 2022

Wspomnienia Młodości

Młodości! Wiosno wśród życia na ziemi,
Ty jasna, mleczna drogo na błękicie –
Urokiem darzysz słonecznych promieni,
W marzeniach słodkich – poisz wiarą w życie.

Młodości! Śnie mój różany, czarowny –
Jakże szczęśliwie biegły lata moje!
Dziś, -- w życia drodze jam nędzarz wędrowny,
Spragniony pielgrzym. – Gdzież są szczęścia zdroje?

Młodości! Wracaj – ach powróć raz jeszcze!
Aby zapomnieć tego trudu życia,
Niechaj urokiem twoim się znów pieczę,
Niechaj znów zacznę życie od powicia...

Albo nie wracaj. – Niech na tym padole
Dojdę do kresu życia, poza światy –
By zejść z błękitów, by w ziemskim mozole
Patrzeć jak giną złotych marzeń kwiaty?

Lecz te wspomnienia minionej młodości,
Takie mi cudne pieścizny dziś nucą...
Słodkie momenta dni jasnych przeszłości!
– Ach, jaka szkoda – że już nie powrócą.

By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935

ANNOTATIONS

Młodości: This is the vocative case of *młodość*, “youth”. (The vocative case is used when addressing someone.) Although the content of Bronisława Wolnik’s poem is different, there is a very famous poem called “Ode to Youth” (*Oda do Młodości*) by the 19th century poet, considered the Polish national bard, Adam Mickiewicz, which also addresses youth in the vocative case (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_to_Youth, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oda_do_m%C5%82odo%C5%9Bci).

Wiosno: This is the vocative case of *wiosna*, “spring”.

mleczna droga: This is the vocative case of *mleczna droga*, “milky way”. The poet has not capitalized the astronomical phenomenon of the Milky Way, the usual name for which in Polish is *Droga Mleczna*.

na błękie: Literally, “on the blueness”. The noun *błękit*, here used in the locative case, *błękie*, refers to the color sky-blue, i.e., light blue, not the dark blue of the night sky. The corresponding adjective is *błękitny*, “sky blue”.

Urokiem darzysz: Literally, “you give/gift the charm”.

W marzeniach słodkich – pójź wiarę w życie: Literally, “In sweet dreams – you give to drink faith in life”.

zdroje: This word is the plural of *zdrój*, which refers to a spring/source of healing water (and also a place/resort/spa where people come because of the healing water).

Aby zapomnieć tego trudu życia: Literally, “So as to forget this hardship of life”.

od powicia: The word *powicie*, here used in the locative case in the idiomatic expression *od powicia*, “from infancy”, originally refers to the act of wrapping a baby in swaddling clothes.

na tym padole: This is an idiomatic expression referring to this earth, as opposed to heaven, especially in reference to suffering in life on this earth. The full expression, *na tym leż padole*, is a quotation from the Polish version of the Latin prayer *Salve Regina* (*Hail Holy Queen*), which in Latin reads, “in hac lacrimarum valle” and in English, “in this vale of tears” (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salve_Regina, and <http://sanctus.pl/index.php?doc=279&podgrupa=338>). The archaic word *padół* means “valley, vale, dell” (cf. <https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/padol;2497420.html>).

poza światy: Literally, “beyond the worlds”. The word *świat* “world” is here used in the plural.

by w ziemskim mozole: Literally, “so that in earthly toil”. The word **mozół** means difficult effort, “toil, labor” (Vol. 1, p. 528, *Wielki Słownik Polsko-Angielski/ The Great Polish English Dictionary*, by Jan Stanisławski, Warsaw, 1988).

– **Ach, jaka szkoda – że już nie powrócą:** Literally, “Oh, what a pity – that they will no longer come back”.