

Stars that shine for a stray boat — about journeys of Jan Lechoń

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During 57 years of Jan Lechoń's life 26 passed on journeys, emigration and constant mental travel. Thanks to the help of Anna Jackowska the wife of Tadeusz Jackowski and Leon Schiller's sister, Lechoń travels to Italy (in 1925) and a year later to Geneva — this journey saved him at the time of severe depression, trips to Prague, Berlin, London, Brussels, and then a long stay in Paris covering years 1930–1940. He worked there as a Polish cultural attaché but he came many times on a vacation to Jackowska and his beloved Wronczyn. Wronczyn was the place of an idealized happiness not only a source of physical and spiritual rest but also the inspiration and strength, a sign of what Lechoń jokingly called himself 'Leszek wronczyński'¹. With the onset of World War II and the situation of France in 1940 Lechoń left Paris in a hurry and rush and since the summer of 1941 he stopped in Rio de Janeiro a place mentally foreign to him. He departed quickly and willingly mainly because of that fact. In August 1941 he sailed to the U.S. and soon resided in New York.

Period in Paris is summarized by friends and acquaintances of the poet as the time of his glamorous popularity among the elite: intellectuals, politicians and artists. Being a part of such better world gives Lechoń fulfillment. As time goes by he begins to dwell in more and more beautiful and spacious premises situated in good locations². Lechoń loves Paris times full of glamour as he writes: "The life I lead in Paris is so different from Warsaw,

1 See Lechoń J., *Listy do Anny Jackowskiej*, ed. Loth R., Warsaw 1977, p. 26. Letter from Florence from 11 IX 1925.

2 See Morawski K., *Podzwonne*, [in:] *Wspomnienia o Janie Lechońiu*, ed. Kądziela P., Warsaw 2006, p. 98.

one that I think it's good and informative and even though I sometimes miss people close to me — I would like to stay here as long as possible.³ Paris seems to serve Lechoń — as we can see it from his letters in which he provides:

Do Polski na stale, pod żadnym pozorem nie wrócę, ale czuję, że czeka mnie nędza w Paryżu i że nie umknę memu losowi, który każe mi przechodzić same ciężkie rzeczy i nigdy nie mieć normalnego życia. Piszę do Ciebie [do Anny Jackowskiej], choć wiem, że rady na to nie ma i że wyrok na mnie zapadł. Czuję to nerwami, które są w strasznym stanie⁴.

For some reason though nerves and obsession that almost everyone around want to harm him Lechoń preferred to be in Paris and not in Warsaw. The desire to stay in Paris he argues that he can write easily there. We know, however, that this period was rich of Parisian cultural activities: lectures, exhibitions, editions of Polish literature which came to fruition with the strong involvement and efforts of Lechoń. But it was not a successful period as far as poetry is concerned. Let us hear Lechoń's voice: 'Go away from Paris would be a disaster for me for personal reasons. My life is now arranged by my nature and only here I can find peace and the opportunity to work'⁵.

However, one should correct that the impression of Lechoń's friends that he bathed in luxury in Paris are not entirely true. It is true that he has a maid but he has to refuse an invitation to Wronczyn several times due to the fact that there is not enough money for the journey, what's more, 'he has not any penny for the telegram'⁶.

Lechoń is tossed by nerve storms all the time. From the trip to Florence he writes that he was torn by the nerves and 'the impression was utterly spoiled by clinical melancholy and a foolish thought after which any decisions could go'⁷ — that I would never go back to my country and that I am practically waiting just for the worst⁸.

While in Paris he states: I have my blood in the veins frozen from the cold from that glacier of jealousy that surrounds me⁹. At the same time, as typical of him, he believes that failures came from the stars¹⁰.

3 Lechoń J., *Listy do Anny Jackowskiej*, op. cit., p. 12.

4 Ibidem, p. 151. Letter from Paris from 1932.

5 Ibidem, p. 155. Letter from Paris from 1 V 1932.

6 Ibidem, Letters from 4 XI 1930, 8 XI 1930, 1 V 1933 etc.

7 Probably the suicidal decision.

8 Lechoń J., *Listy do Anny Jackowskiej*, op. cit., p. 28. Letter from Florence from 26 IX 1925.

9 Ibidem, p. 155. Letter from Paris from 1 V 1933.

10 Ibidem, p. 159. Letter from Brussels from the summer of 1933.

And in times of good health of nerves Lechoń wants to live for a long time and come back to his homeland. He writes to Jackowska from New York that:

Jeżeli będę żył tyle, ile mi się należy — powrócę na pewno w warunkach jakie sobie zamysliłem — to nie moje pragnienie, tylko myślowa pewność. Siądziemy sobie w Ożarowie albo w Laskach, albo po prostu na Plantach i jestem pewny, Niusiu droga, że będziemy się śmiali do lepszej przyszłości innych i do naszych dawnych wspomnień, których nam nikt nie zabierze¹¹.

The second, longer time away from the country covered the years 1941–1956 and was spent in New York. Lechoń came to New York as repeatedly stressed as a refugee and not an immigrant. The status of Lechoń's New York journey which is the key to our discussion is not only a record of the passport documents but also a permanent condition of the soul of that great poet, Pole, patriot and man of Warsaw. At that time he made his living from the cooperation with Free Europe Radio, Voice of America, some cultural centers and National Culture Scholarship. Most of his time was dedicated to the Polish community affairs as he was an animator of its cultural life. For the first ten years he lived in rented rooms and hotels or with friends and since 1951 in his own flat. Throughout the whole time he benefited from financial assistance of the Poles that have settled in New York. While the Paris period not conferred Lechoń with financial problems being the New York refugee he constantly struggled with embarrassing and humiliating poverty¹².

Temporary stay in New York prolonged because Lechoń did not see a place for himself in a new reality gradually filled with communism. He was not a man inclined to compromises and what made his blood boil was Polish progressive subordination towards Russian dictates, limitations in the culture and art which became the servile tools of socialist realism. Former Poland remained only in the memories of the poet in which she is nurtured and worshiped with reverence with more and more fearful premonition that he will never come back to her. The Lechoń's Paris period is not full of his literary work but the drama of his homeland wounded by blows of Nazi attack prompted him to speak. In Paris in 1940 he delivered a series of lectures on Polish literature in which he commanded the link

11 Ibidem, p. 181. Letter from New York from 2 V 1947.

12 See Lechoń's records from *Dziennik* in which he writes about his 'lack of money', mistreated teeth due to financial problems, about stained and small suit and holes in socks: Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, ed. Loth R., v. I, Warsaw 1992, p. 58. Record from 25 IX 1949; p. 115 – record from 11 XI 1949, p. 374 – record from 10 VIII 1950.

between culture, art and life of the nation. It was the apotheosis of the homeland, a tribute for refreshment of hearts. In New York the poet returned to writing poetry very characteristic for him, having as Kazimierz Wierzyński claimed the nature of small tragedy in the classic manner: dramatic incorporation, climax and shocking finale providing that Lechoń believed in Poland as in God¹³.

Polish identity was the source of his emotions he reveled in Polish painting, music and literature. He never really left Warsaw mentally and in heart he remained there until his death. He ‘furnished’ Paris and New York with Polish customs, traditions, habits keeping distance to the world around him. In a discussion with Irena Wiley waged in obtaining Polish citizenship by Lechoń he said: ‘When I have to — ‘ll take this paper, but with the heaviest heart a with sense of abominable lies.’¹⁴ The previous month he wrote in *Dziennik*: ‘I’m going back to New York, almost in despair. Because it’s not my home. But my honest ladies did everything to make me think I am back’¹⁵.

In the second half of the 40’ties Lechoń published sketches devoted to Warsaw that were to become part of a larger literary work. However, it was not created. The past for him is a constant reference point for everything that is happening in the present a contribution to the ongoing settlement with himself. One evening, the poet confesses: ‘this afternoon at odds with myself most lonely because even far from myself — I suddenly heard Chopin’s etude played in one of the apartments of my how un-poetic house how. I trembled as if awakened from a bad dream by the sound close to me, the closest’¹⁶.

In the 40’ and 50’s Lechoń wrote many poems dedicated to Poles, people from history as well as the living that he likes so much to be around. Among them were: Julian Tuwim, Jan Potocki, Antoni Malczewski, Artur Oppman, Juliusz Słowacki, Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Chelmoński, Jan Matejko, Jan Kazimierz, Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin and others. In the first months of 1951 died six Poles from the local Polish community. Lechoń concluded it referring the situation to all the people in the same life condition like his: ‘There is something tragically grotesque as we still bury the same man. For we bury him. This symbolic (unknown expatriate) who is dying of longing and inability to breathe in a foreign world’¹⁷.

13 Wierzyński K., *O poezji Lechońa*, [in:] *Pamięci Jana Lechońa*, London 1958, pp. 58–59.

14 Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., p. 362. Record from 28 VII 1950.

15 Ibidem, p. 366. Record from 1 VII 1950.

16 Ibidem, v. II, p. 59. Record from 26 II 1951.

17 Ibidem, p. 119. Record from 5 V 1951.

Lechoń's attitude to the Polish issues is clearly depicted by Ferdinand Goethel remembering bringing the body of Slowacki to Poland and Lechoń who performed an honor guard upon the body of the great poet:

„Stałem na przystani wraz z delegacją pisarzy, oczekując, aż posuwający się wolno statek żalobny przybije do brzegu. Wszakże ani widok statku, ani tłum milczący na brzegu, nie poruszył mnie tak bardzo jak postać Lechonia, który stał przy trumnie, pełniąc straż honorową. Musiał trwać długo na swoim posterunku, gdyż twarz miał osmoloną dymem z jarzących się na statku pochodni. Dzień nie był ciepły. Lechoń, mając na sobie tylko frak, stał z odsłoniętą głową. Zdumiał nas. Odziani w palta, gotowi do uchylenia kapeluszy na krótką chwilę, widzieliśmy w jego postawie patetyczny gest, który jednych wzruszał, innych gniewał, głupców śmieszył”¹⁸.

Lechoń sought for Polish readers to the end. He worried when the new poems did not meet with attention of friends but he did not care about the place in American literature. He was not fond of the English language, stating that ‘an attempt to really feel English I consider as heavy pressure’¹⁹. On the other hand, the lack of contact with ‘living language’ makes him lack increasingly of Polish words²⁰.

Kajetan Morawski watched immigrational Lechoń and characterized him very accurately:

„W gamie światel na Broadwayu nie odnajdywał barw ani karmazynowych, ani czarnych. Zatykał uszy na wycie klaksonów i głośników, aby wsłuchiwać się w brzmienia z oddali wspomnień arie z kurantem. W wierszach swych raz jeden wymienił Nowy Jork i natychmiast pomyślał, że to Warszawa i śnieg prószy. Cienie Rejtana, Książnina, Jana Potockiego stawały przy jego biurku, gdy tylko chwycił za pióro. Modlił się Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej i wierzył w rusalki. Za młodu chciał wiosnę, nie Polskę zobaczyć. Teraz zamykał oczy na otoczenie, by w ciemności ujrzeć dobrej przeszłości popiół i kwiat. Pelen żalu i oburzenia żegnał przyjaciół, którzy zdecydowali się na reemigrację, bo wrosła im w serce zgoda na wszystko. Sam nieugięty w życiu, w wierszach swych wrócił do Kraju na zawsze”²¹.

The voice of Lechoń's soul in his poems borns in long-term pain in the midst of protracted and painful creative impotence. Poet vows allegiance to Warsaw till immigrational grave. He dreams of an eternal rest in the shade of Powązki, on Skalka or in Laski. Last rest at homeland cares Lechoń not only in the last years of his life:

18 Goethel F., *Lechoń*, [in:] *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 92.

19 Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., p. 26. Record from 31 VIII 1949.

20 Ibidem, p. 43. Record from 15 IX 1949.

21 Morawski K., op. cit., p. 100.

To, w co tak trudno nam uwierzyć,
Kiedyś się przecież stanie jawą.
Więc pomyślałem: chciałbym leżeć
Tam, gdzie mój ojciec — pod Warszawą.

Niech ci ta myśl się nie wydaje
Ani małością, ni znużeniem,
Z największym kocha upojeniem,
Kto się z miłością swą rozstaje²².

Lechoń walking through the streets of New York in his comic suit and bowler hat full of the din of a big city detects with reverence similarities to his beloved, familiar Warsaw. Craning his head he observes in relief ‘the sky similar to Polish one’²³.

New York’s winter and impressive Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center does not impress the Polish refugee too much. In his memoirs he goes on a trip to the piece of the world closest to his heart:

Mróz nie daje Ci odetchnąć,
Biegniesz szybko i trzesz uszy,
I w tej chwili pomyślałem:
„To Warszawa i śnieg prószy”.

Przystanąłem przy drapaczu,
Skąd melodia jakaś płynie.
To ślizgawka! I muzyka
Jak w Szwajcarskiej gra Dolinie.

[.....]
Wszystko wraca w jednej chwili:
Piec kaflowy, domy w Rynku,
Łukasz, woźny mego ojca,
I głos drogi: „Śpij już synku”²⁴.

The poet rarely felt happy in New York. Nevertheless sometimes he feels happiness when a detail of nature allows him to forget where he is and feels Polishness²⁵. The old photographs on the desk bring back memories and interfere with the writing process²⁶, Polish evokes very strong emotions: ‘When Doda Conrad began to sing the songs by Chopin with Mickiewicz’s lyrics I started to cry. First, because of Polish, later because of Chopin’²⁷.

22 Lechoń J., [*** *To, w co tak trudno nam uwierzyć*], [w:] *Poezje*, ed. R. Loth, Wrocław 1990, pp. 63–64.
The following quotes on the basis of this volume.

23 Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., p. 80. Record from 12 X 1949.

24 Lechoń J., *Nasładowanie Or-Ota*, [in:] op. cit., pp. 81–84.

25 Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., 131. Record from 26 XI 1949 etc.

26 Ibidem, p. 138. Record from 3 XII 1949.

27 Ibidem, p. 111. Record from 6 XI 1949.

Being of service for Polish issue constantly indulged Lechoń in all the years of travel-immigrative existence, it gave him a feeling of being close to Poland. And it kept him alive. The 50's, when he slowly began to realize that maybe he will not come back to his homeland are years of gradually falling into the abyss of his own darkness, slowly towards self-destruction:

Dziś we śnie mnie nawiedził anioł polskiej doli
I płakał, szumiąc w mroku skrzydłami srebrnymi,
Jak gdyby chciał powiedzieć: „Umierasz powoli,
Samotny, tak daleko od rodzinnej ziemi”.

— „Daleko? Co ty mówisz? Mnie wszystkie zapachy
Ogrodów i pól naszych co dzień niosą wiatry,
We mnie, we mnie jest wszystko: mazowieckie piachy,
I jeziora litewskie i Wisła i Tatry²⁸.”

Throughout the refugee times beautiful poems dedicated to Warsaw are created, centered around personal, intimate relationship to the place of the poet's childhood and youth and which symbolize feelings of Poles scattered around the world. The most important confession of the Polish patriot-refugee is the poem *Hymn Polaków z zagranicy* (*The Anthem of Poles Abroad*) written in the Parisian period in the 30's:

Jedna jest Polska, jak Bóg jeden w niebie.
Wszystkie me siły Jej składam w ofierze.
Na całe życie, które wziąłem z Ciebie,
Cały do Ciebie Ojczyzno należę.

Twych wielkich mężów przykład doskonały.
tych bohaterów wielbię święte kości,
Wierzę w twą przyszłość, pełną wielkiej chwały,
Potęgi, dobra i sprawiedliwości.

Wiem, że nie ucisk i chciwe podboje,
Lecz wolność Ludów szła pod Twoim znakiem,
Że nie ma dziejów piękniejszych niż Twoje.
I większej chluby, niżli być Polakiem.

Jestem, jak żołnierz na wszystko gotowy.
I tak w Ojczyźnie, tak i w obcym kraju,
Czuwam i strzegę skarbu polskiej mowy,
Polskiego ducha, polskiego zwyczaju.

Z narodem polskim na zawsze związany.
O każdej chwili to samo z nim czuję.
Do wspólnej wielkiej przyszłości wezwany
Wszystkim Polakom braterstwo ślubuję²⁹.

28 Lechoń J., *Rozmowa z Aniołem*, [in:] op cit., p. 192.

29 Lechoń J., *Hymn Polaków z zagranicy*, [in:] op cit., pp. 175–176.

In a similar tone another poem was created in which Lechoń refers to himself as an exile who is faithful to his young love till death. He feels Polish identity in heart, soul, and with all his senses:

Droga Warszawo mojej młodości,
W której się dla mnie zamykał świat!
Chcę choć na chwila ujrzeć w ciemności
Dobrej przeszłości Popiół i kwiat.

Zanim mnie owa ciemność pochłonie,
Twoich ogrodów chcę poczuć woń.
Niechaj twych ulic wiatr mnie owionie,
Połóż twe dłonie
Na moją skroń!

Jak kiedyś zapach bzowych gałązek
Wśród kropli rosy i słońca lśnić,
Tak inny z Tobą marzę dziś związek:
Starych Powązek
Głęboki cień.

Marzę, że Ty mi zamkniesz powieki,
Lecz choćbym z ciężkich nie wrócił prób,
Będę Ci wierny, wierny na wieki
Aż po daleki
Wygnańczy grób³⁰.

On the anniversary of *Karmazynowy poemat* (*The Crimson Poem*) the poet moves guests with the conclusion that ‘the memory of Warsaw will make us die less awful’³¹. Lechoń very painfully experiences the war and the destruction of Warsaw. Many of the poems is a fearful bending over the rubble of the capital or waiting full faith for her lift up from the ruins of ancient splendor³².

Lechoń sees his fate as destiny which should meet with humility. The poet fond of splendor has a remarkable humility in relation to fate, God and life. He fights the darkness of his soul with work and prayer. Being a romantic classic to the bone he considers classic poetry as a perfect work. Poetry is his mission and vocation so he treats her so seriously that when he divines that he cannot write something outstanding he prefers to remain silent.

30 Lechoń J., *Piosenka*, [in:], op cit., pp. 124–125.

31 Janta A., „O dwa palce od serca czułem się szpony”. *Przyczynek do nowojorskich dziejów życia i śmierci Lechonia*, [in:] *Wspomnienia...*, op cit., p. 226.

32 See *Pieśń o Stefanie Szarzyńskim, Polonia resurrecta* etc.

Wokół tylko trwogi i troski tak liczne,
Ale Ty się nie buntuj przeciw przeznaczeniu:
Spokojnie pisz do końca swe wiersze klasyczne,
Które wtedy są dobre, gdy cierpisz w milczeniu³³.

The desire to achieve literary excellence in young Lechoń's poetry vaccinated by his mother accompanied him to the end of his life, in all ways, in all his journeys. Shadows of his life are also returning psychological problems which, according to Lechoń's relative Józef Adam Kosiński, Lechoń inherited genetically from the mother³⁴. Just as beauty.

The poet described his daily struggle in the diary which was widened everyday with regular records since the summer of 1949 and having finished nine days before his suicide. *Dziennik* was a space of confession and self-therapy — the intention of Lechoń was to write it for curing nerves with the recommendation of his doctor³⁵. He also talked many times with his friends about his bad mental states threatening them in jest or in earnest with his death³⁶.

As it was mentioned, the first over a dozen years of traveler's lifestyle Lechoń rarely visits home, he visits Warsaw and stays a few days with friends in Wronczyn, he pays brief visits to other places. At the end of the 30's he sees his homeland for the last time. This long and final separation dug his hypersensitive inside slowly but steadily and effectively throwing him into a totalness of the past surrendering him to the power of 'old' Furies. He knew them from the beginning of the 20s, when tried to commit suicide with overdosing of veronal, and even earlier, at the stage of formation of his debut volume at the age of thirteen sensing with amazingly reliability the decadent atmosphere. Once again Lechoń thought about committing suicide was not in New York during a painful and protracted exile but in Paris where he had a suicidal jump from a window at the Atala Hotel³⁷ in his mind. He believes in stars, zodiacs and predictions. He remains at Stanisława Nowicka's place a friend of him who deals with esoteric and staring into a crystal ball listens to her convictions. He believes in the stars as an incurable romantic.

Lechoń does not specify in *Dziennik* or in the numerous sent letters the source of his spiritual terrors and sorrows. On the contrary, what multiply

33 Lechoń J., *Jabłka i astry*, [in:] op. cit., p. 97.

34 See Kosiński J. A., *Album rodzinne Jana Lechonia*, Warsaw 1993, p. 174.

35 See Urbańska M., „Udawac do końca”. „Dziennik” *Jana Lechonia jako świadectwo*, Łódź 2010.

36 For instance in 15 IV 1956 he confessed to his female friend: 'I have to emphasize that soon you will be attending my funeral. I do not want to live', see after: Janta A., op. cit., p. 230.

37 See Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., p. 90. Record from 29 IX 1950.

are stipulations about the inexplicability of conditions that appear most often suddenly out of nowhere and attack on the day do not allow to rest at night: ‘Bad night. I wake up with the feeling that I am suffocating — I realize that I live in constant fear which is only a faint foretaste of what may be a constant, inexplicable fear’³⁸.

We can only guess from where Lechoń gets his fears. Certainly his emotions are associated with prolonged immigration. After all he constantly repeats that far from Warsaw he is like a fish on the sand³⁹. Fish suffocates and dies on the sand. In middle of 1955 he asked himself: ‘Did I change on exile?’ and gave the following answer to it: ‘Not at all — and totally. All my instincts are the same as in Poland thirty years ago but that’s what I think about the world has been taken from all of my life — not only of Polish dreams of French culture but also from America’⁴⁰. It is said that a direct cause of the dramatic suicidal step are Lechoń homosexual inclinations hidden by him very much. The alleged lover of Lechoń is Aubrey Johnson who is mentioned several times in *Dziennik* as a casual information using only the name. Lechoń wrote only about having dinner with Aubrey or that Aubrey is working to 7.00. p.m. As far as this name is concerned it is hard to find more sensitive feeling to its owner if any. Thinking about the idea that during his stay in New York Lechoń is associated with Johnson it should be considered that every time he writes about the dearest person he talks about Johnson. These records are overflowed by extremely intimate and sensitive feelings although generally unenthusiastic in the form of life-saving affirmation repeated several times: ‘To love the dearest person!’ You can try to adjust certain provisions of the poet to the complicated situation of his sexual personality. However, this is only one possible interpretation. Several times he speaks of guilt, betraying holiness. These feelings are included, however, in very general terms: ‘(...) there is always a feeling in me that my life betrays some kind of holiness towards which you cannot be faithful than becoming a saint.’ We will never know if the described conflict between sexual orientation and Catholic upbringing of Lechoń who just as his parents did not like the hierarchical structures of the Church but in the privacy of his heart he conducted dialogues with God. It should be noted here some relations of Lechoń’s close friends who talk about his strong fascination with Wanda Serkowska — his love and poetic muse⁴¹ in the college. To complete the image we must also quote those friends who spoke

38 Ibidem, pp. 25–26. Record from 31 VIII 1949.

39 T Nowakowski T., *Ryba na piasku*, [in:] *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 275.

40 See Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., v. III, Warsaw 1993, pp. 635–636. Record from 5 V 1955.

41 See Kosiński J. A., op. cit., p. 177.

about his homosexuality with discretion: 'Only a few of us knew that he was plagued with complications of personal life very brutal, very intimate, personal in nature'⁴². Aleksander Janta tried to reconstruct Lechoń's fears searching for the possible cause of depression and suicide:

Niedostatek pieniędzy wobec dość znacznych potrzeb, jakie warunki życia i «koszta produkcji» wytworzyły, był jedną tylko z trwóg, jakie cisnęły na niego wizjami dotkliwych zagrożeń. Miał uraz na punkcie donosów i zeznań, które dotyczyły jego intymnych upodobań i nie ułatwiły mu sytuacji, gdy chodziło o znalezienie odpowiedniej pozycji, mogącej zapewnić stałe zarobki. Obawiał się, że te sprawy będą mogły dodatkowo zaszkodzić mu z racji starań o obywatelstwo amerykańskie. Bał się też związanych z nimi przesłuchań. Przyznaje, że krył się z tym, iż go czekają, nawet przed swoim *Dziennikiem*. Przyjaciele określali żartobliwie ten normalny administracyjny zabieg, stosowany do każdego, kto się stara o obywatelstwo, jako «męki». Mówili: «Idzie na męki». Lechoń natomiast brał to niezmiernie poważnie.⁴³

The big blow for Lechoń was the departure of the dearest person to Europe in March 1956. It seems that in the most difficult stage of his journey and his exile he was alone.

Lechoń pondered his situation in his own interior many times. He was not only *homo viator* of many countries and continents but also a continuously pilgrim into the darkest depths of his personality. He achieved settlements, faced with death, fought to the end, 'You know about death but you do not believe in it. You just know that you cannot return to the Country but you cannot believe it, you cannot live with that faith — even though many did not come back and even after death they do not come back'. Last year of the poet's life is marked by undeniable spiritual and external crisis in the fight against which helps prayer when everything deceived him:

Modlić się, paść na kolana i modlić się. I, wbijając sobie paznokcie w ręce, pracować nad czymś poważnym, szlachetnym, żebym znów powrócił do siebie i nie było we mnie miejsca na tego zrozpaczonego szaleńca, który mi żyć nie daje⁴⁴.

In the last the longest trip of his lifetime Lechoń did not return. Going into the next, final, dramatic one started by suicidal falling from the high floors of Henry Hudson Hotel in New York on Friday afternoon of June 8, 1956. Four days later he was buried in Calvaria Cemetery with a handful of Polish soil thrown on his coffin. In May 1991 when his beloved homeland regained freedom he returned to her finally in an urn containing the ashes

42 Hemar M., *List o Lechońiu*, [in:] *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 228.

43 Janta A., op. cit., p. 229.

44 Lechoń J., *Dziennik*, op. cit., v. III, p. 604. Record from 11 IV 1955.

to rest, as wished, in the tomb of his parents in Laski under Polish trees and sky:

I nagle widzisz: jest noc chmurna
I niebo polskie ponad nami,
I stary ogród. A w nim urna
Z naszego życia popiołami.⁴⁵

45 Lechoń J., [*** *To, w co tak trudno nam uwierzyć*], [in:] op. cit., p. 64.