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LEON SCHILLER'S THEATRICAL ADAPTATION OF *VICTORY* IN LWÓW

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2251-434X
(University of Silesia, Poland)

Abstract: Although Joseph Conrad's dramatic work is rather limited, he is a writer whose fiction is frequently imbued with theatricality and dramatic irony. He wrote three plays altogether: the one-act *One Day More* (1905), the two-act *Laughing Anne* (1922) and a full-length play, *The Secret Agent* (1922). However, there are also novels of great dramatic potential, for example, *Victory* or *Under Western Eyes,* which proved most popular for adaptation. The present paper aims to show how *Victory's* dramatic potential was creatively transformed into a theatrical performance by Leon Schiller (1887-1954). Schiller was one the most prominent and influential Polish theatre directors as well as theatre pedagogue and activist, composer, singer, translator, and scriptwriter. He studied philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, next he went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne. When he returned to Poland, he became a theatre critic showing himself an expert on the European theatre. He was employed as artistic director of Teatry Miejskie in Lwów [the Lviv City Theatres] and introduced and developed the idea of monumental theatre that he borrowed from Edward Craig. *Victory* was chosen by Schiller as the spectacle to inaugurate his new theatrical season in Lviv in 1930.

Keywords: drama, Leon Schiller, *Victory*, Joseph Conrad, adaptation, Lviv theatre, performance

Although Joseph Conrad's dramatic work is rather limited, he is a writer whose fiction is frequently imbued with theatricality and dramatic irony. He wrote three plays altogether: the one-act *One Day More* (1905), the two-act *Laughing Anne* (1922) and a full-length play, *The Secret Agent* (1922).[1] However, there are also novels of great dramatic potential, for example, *Victory* or *Under Western Eyes*, which proved most popular for adaptation. The former was dramatised by Basil Macdonald Hasting (1919), in whose production Conrad was actively involved[2]; the latter was composed

[1] For a brief summary of Conrad's dramatic career, see Alison Wheatley, "*Laughing Anne*: 'An almost unbearable spectacle,'" *Conradiana* 34, no. 1-2 (2002), p. 63. The reviews of the performances were collected and annotated by Peters, see *Conrad's Drama. Contemporary Reviews and Observations*, ed. John Peters (Leiden–Boston: Brill, Rodopi, 2019).

[2] Neill Joy, "The Conrad – Hastings Correspondence and the Staging of *Victory*," *Conradiana* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2003), pp. 184-225. For a comprehensive analysis of the stagings of *Victory*, see Richard Hand,

bearing in mind "scenic effects all the time" and with a view of the effect of a "performance" (*CL*5 695-696).[3] In his study on Conrad's theatre, Richard Hand rightly observes that Conrad's "fiction is imbued with the characters, conflicts, crises, scenarios and atmospheres that are the making of great drama. This is undoubtedly why his fiction has always enjoyed screen and radio adaptation."[4] The present paper aims to show how *Victory's* dramatic potential was creatively transformed into a theatrical performance by Leon Schiller in 1930 in Lwów.

CONRAD AND THEATRE

The recollections of Conrad's childhood friends reveal that he was interested in the performing arts since his early years. As a young boy in Cracow, he wrote patriotic plays extolling Polish nationalism. According to Jadwiga Tokarska, an acquaintance from the Lviv period, the eleven-year Konrad used to write patriotically charged "plays," usually on the subject of the insurgents fighting against Muscovites to be enacted by his play-mates. His friend recalled that

> [Konradek] was the author of a number of short comedies, which he used to bring along and then distribute the parts between my brother and me; and if we did not learn our lines, he used to get angry. Large cardboard boxes served as stage settings and blue and red pencils represented our only paint. […] To rise to the occasion, I had to dress in my brother's clothes… "Insurgents" sat round a camp fire with their commander (in the red square-topped cap) and sang patriotic songs. Konrad knew those songs and made us repeat the last stanzas. Then the Muscovites crept on us noiselessly. A fight would follow with the breaking of chairs and stools […]. The best play was called *The Eyes of King Jan Sobieski*.[5]

At the threshold of his writing career in 1897, Conrad admitted in one of his letters: "I greatly desire to write a play myself. It's my dark and secret ambition" (*CL*1 419) and later in 1909, he confessed, "I have a theatrical imagination" (*CL*4 218). Having published several of his most outstanding novels and achieved a stable status as an

The Theatre of Joseph Conrad. *Reconstructed Fictions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 53-86.

[3] This novel has been adapted for the stage three times in Poland: *Spiskowcy* [Conspirators], trans. Wit Tarnawski, adaptation: Zygmunt Hübner, Michał Komar, director Zygmunt Hübner (1980); *Spiskowcy*, trans. Wit Tarnawski, script Jan Englert, director Jan Englert (2017); *W oczach Zachodu* [Under Western Eyes], trans. Wit Tarnawski, adaptation Janusz Opryński, director Janusz Opryński, Teatr Polski (2018). The abbreviation *CL* was used throughout this article. See *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad,* vols. 1-9, eds. Frederick Karl and Laurence Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983-2008).

[4] Richard Hand, *The Theatre of Joseph Conrad*, p. 3.

[5] Roman Dybowski, "From Conrad's Youth," in *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, ed. Zdzisław Najder, trans. Halina Carroll-Najder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 262-265. This information about the young Konrad writing and staging plays is also confirmed by Tekla Wojakowska (see Zdzisław Najder, *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, trans. Halina Carroll-Najder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 135-136) and Leon Syroczyński (see Gérard Jean- Aubry, *Joseph Conrad Life and Letters*, vol. 1 (London: Heinemann, 1927), p. 27.

acknowledged writer of fiction, he still dreamt of composing plays in collaboration with other artists (e.g., Perceval Gibbon, Stephen Crane).

ADAPTATIONS OF *VICTORY*

A number of critics have noticed the dramatic features of the novel *Victory*. To begin with, Muriel Bradbrook considered the characters in *Victory* as figures from a "morality play," each representing "a facet of experience, or a type of mind, with statuesque impressiveness they remain fixed in that representative pose throughout the simple narrative of [a] few, violent and sudden events."[6] It should come as no surprise then that on the only occasion when Conrad gave a public reading from his works, he chose to read the excerpt describing the death of Lena.[7] Cedric Watts pinpointed the novel's structural elements such as a "tropical island, 'fallen woman' living with gallant rescuer, invasion by three desperadoes, attempted rape, spectacular conflagration" which make it easily adaptable into performance.[8] Also, the interpretation of *Victory* by Robert Hampson highlights the theatrical and performative aspects of the novel. The critic argues that "the scenic method is […] much in evidence in *Victory* in its stagings of encounters, its dramatic handling of dialogue and in its use of stage directions."[9]

In England, Conrad actively participated in adapting *Victory* for the stage which was principally done by Basil M. Hastings. Hand notes that "the 1919 stage adaptation of *Victory: A Drama* by Basil Macdonald Hastings [was] indubitably the most commercially successful theatrical adaptation of Conrad's fiction,"[10] running eighty-three performances. However, in Poland, *Victory* was staged by Leon Schiller with mixed success, which will be examined further in the following sections.

LEON SCHILLER AS THEATRE DIRECTOR AND REFORMER

Leon Schiller (1887-1954) was one the most prominent and influential Polish theatre directors as well as stage arranger, theatre pedagogue and activist, composer, singer, translator, and scriptwriter. He studied philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, next in 1907, he went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne. In Paris, he met and wrote essays

[6] Muriel Bradbrook, *Joseph Conrad Poland's English Genius* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 62.

[7] Bradbrook, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 62.

[8] Cedric Watts, *Writers and Their Work: J. Conrad* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 40.

[9] Robert Hampson, *From Stage to Screen: 'The Return,' Victory, The Secret Agent and Chance*, in *Joseph Conrad and the Performing Arts*, eds. Katherine Isobel Baxter and Richard J. Hand (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 60.

[10] *Conrad's Victory. The Play and Reviews*, ed. Richard Hand (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 62.

on theatre for Edward Gordon Craig, one of the well-known twentieth-century theatre reformers. During his sojourns in Munich, he was interested in the theatrical projects of Max Reinhardt's (1910), and in 1911 he may have visited Emil Jacques--Dalcroze's Eurythmics Institute in Hellerau. When he returned to Poland in 1912, he became a theatre critic and reviewer, showing himself an expert on the European theatre. He propagated German leftist drama (Bertolt Brecht *The Threepenny Opera*, Warszawa 1929; Friedrich Wolf *Cyankali*, Łódź 1930).[11] In 1930, Wilam Horzyca employed Schiller as artistic director of Teatry Miejskie in Lwów [the Lviv City Theatres].[12] At this time he produced Conrad's *Victory* (1930), Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1931), as well as contemporary "Zeittheater" plays, such as Gerhart Hauptmann's *Dorothea Angermann* (1930) and Arnold Zweig's *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* (1931) (culture.pl; iPSB). He introduced and developed the idea of monumental theatre that he borrowed from Edward Craig, who postulated the creation of such a spectacle that towers over the commonality of life as a monument towers over the hubbub of the street.[13] Schiller reshaped this idea with the specific elements of Polish romantic drama derived from Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński and continued by Cyprian Kamil Norwid and Stanisław Wyspiański.[14] His performances were famous for their respect for the word, courage in tackling social issues, interest in revolutionary changes, pageantry, the suggestiveness of the scenic image, poetical ambience, musicality, expressive light employment, demonstrative crowd performance and conjoining all of the theatrical elements in a harmonious whole (iPSB).

SCHILLER'S THEORETICAL PREMISES

Victory was chosen by Schiller as the spectacle to inaugurate his new theatrical season in Lwów in 1930. He published a general manifesto before that, outlining the changes he planned to introduce in Lviv theatres in the local press. Also, he wrote a theatre programme for the spectacle itself. In the manifesto, he claimed that only a "living theatre, that is a theatre which adjusts its productions to the rhythm of contem-

[11] The spectacles caused social scandals, which more often than not resulted in Schiller's dismissal as a theatre director from those theatres. This became a pattern for his career: he directed a theatre for one or two seasons and was dismissed for promoting avant-garde and potentially disruptive social and political ideas.

[12] Schiller became the artistic director of three municipal theatres in Lwów: Teatr Wielki [The Great Theatre], Teatr Rozmaitości [The Variety Theatre], and Teatr Nowości [The Novelty Theatre].

[13] Wojciech Dudzik, "Teatr monumentalny" [Monumental theatre], http://encyklopediateatru.pl/hasla/166/teatr-monumentalny [accessed: 26.01.2021].

[14] Leon Schiller, "The New Theatre in Poland: Stanisaw Wyspiaski," *The Mask* 2, no. 3 (July 1909), pp. 12-27, https://bluemountain.princeton.edu/bluemtn/cgi-bin/bluemtn?a=d&d=bmtnaau190907-01.2.12&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN-------# [accessed: 26.01.2021]; Dariusz Kosiński, "*Lekcja XVI*; 'lekcja teatralna' Adama Mickiewicza" [A. Mickiewicz Theatrical Lesson], http://encyklopediateatru.pl/hasla/357/lekcja-xvi-lekcja-teatralna-adama-mickiewicza [accessed: 26.01.2021].

porary life and participates in it fulfils its *raison d'être*."[15] Such theatre should be affordable for the masses, responding to their needs and sometimes imposing issues whose currency and usefulness would be recognised and appreciated later. In other words, theatre should be artistic and cheap. The performances should be based on the idea of "team work and collaboration of the whole troupe of actors, not on the performances of the principals."[16]

In the spectacle's programme, Schiller observed that many critics are prejudiced against the stagings of novels because they are accustomed to the structure of the French well-made plays consisting of three or five acts. It is no wonder then that the theatre of yesterday is "arid and boring."[17] As examples of the new theatre, he cited August Strindberg (*To Damascus*, *A Dream Play*) and Frank Wedekind (*Spring Awakening*). He argued that people's lives could be framed in more monumental forms than those employed by the old theatre. Schiller explained that although *Victory's* scene construction may be fragmentary and characterised by kaleidoscopic change and weak cohesion (which seem to be cardinal dramatic errors), they are closer to real-life and truth (1930: 76).[18] He believed that it was thanks to absolute artistic freedom of shaping the scenic reality and the rejection of the act-structure that it was possible to recreate Conrad's novel's beauty and depth on the stage.

Interestingly, Schiller chose Conrad's novel to launch his first theatrical season in Lwów. It was not as revolutionary as Hauptman or Zweig, so the question may arise why this text? The decision was apparently made in an effort to draw new audiences to the theatre since Conrad was widely read at that time in Poland and as a 'big name' could ensure box office success which was much needed at the beginning of Schiller's directorship.[19]

VICTORY ON STAGE

It is important to note before the analysis of the play's script that Schiller's spectacle was not an adaptation proper in which the adapter transforms the novel into a new

[15] Stanisław Czapelski, Leon Schiller, and Zygmunt Zaleski, "Nasz program" [Our Manifesto], *Słowo Polskie* 147 (1 June 1930), p. 5, in Leon Schiller, *Droga przez teatr 1924-1939*, ed. Jerzy Timoszewicz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983), p. 70.

[16] Czapelski, Schiller, Zaleski, "Nasz program," p. 72.

[17] This type of theatre was characterised by Hand as "a theatre in which, in some countries, radical ideology is repressed for political reasons and in others where originality is generally stifled and is dominated by populistic traditions of melodrama. But there is an antithesis to this crowd-pleasing and escapist genre of performance: this is to be found in the burgeoning movements of realism and naturalism" (Richard Hand, "Conrad's Drama in a World," in *Beyond the Roots: The Evolution of Conrad's Ideology and Art*, ed. Wiesław Krajka (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006), p. 387).

[18] Leon Schiller, *Zwycięstwo* [unpublished manuscript]. 1930. Biblioteka Śląska, call number 5931, p. 76.

[19] Stefan Zabierowski, "Stefan Żeromski," in *Dziedzictwo Conrada w literaturze polskiej* [Conrad's Legacy in Polish Literature] (Kraków, Oficyna Literacka, 1992), pp. 7-23; Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, "Joseph Conrad Reception in Poland (1896-2018)," in *The Reception of Joseph Conrad in Europe*, eds. Robert Hampson et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

dramatic version.[20] This was done, for example, by Hastings[21] or Harold Pinter,[22] but rather as a slightly modified scenic version of the novel. Thus, the twenty-two scenes rather slavishly follow the plot of the novel. Schiller expunged very little from the original plot as whole paragraphs were rewritten in the form of scenic directions. The play consisted of 22 scenes that lasted from 10 to 20 minutes, and the whole spectacle continued for five and a half hours. There were eleven rehearsals starting on 20 August and ending with a dress rehearsal on 31 August 1930[23]. The premiere was on 1 September 1930 in Teatr Rozmaitości (Fig. 1). The play consisted of the following 22 scenes (Fig. 2):

1. [In front of Schomberg's hotel, restaurant on the terrace] Heyst and Morrison:
   Heyst meets Morrison, decides to lend him money to pay the fine for his trading brig. Morrison talks about his trade with the natives. Morrison mentions an uninhabited island, Samburan and the coal mine.
   Schomberg warns his guests about Heyst, whom he compares to a spider catching naïve victims in his web.
2. [Restaurant on the terrace] Schomberg, other visitors, and a new guest, Davidson:
   Schomberg gives an account of Heyst's double-dealing with Morrison to the new guest. The other visitors give the details of the rise and fall of the coal company. Davidson talks about his meeting with Heyst on Samburan. Suddenly, Heyst enters the open-air restaurant and sits at the table.
3. [Theatre hall at Schomberg's hotel] cabaret and knees-up; Schomberg, Heyst and some guests:
   Lena sings a song. Applause. The other girls mix with the guests. Zangiacomo pinches Lena and pushes her down from the stage to the guests. Heyst asks her to sit at his table. They talk. He says: "Command me."
4. [Theatre hall at Schomberg's hotel] Schomberg and Lena, Mrs Schomberg; Lena and Heyst:
   The aggressive Schomberg harasses Lena. He promises to get rid of his wife, plans to sell his hotel and depart with Lena. Mrs Schomberg enters and hits the gong. Heyst talks with Lena. She tells him about her past. He proposes to steal her away.
5. [Theatre hall at Schomberg's hotel] Davidson, Schomberg, Mrs Schomberg; other guests:
   Davidson looks for Heyst. Schomberg refuses to tell him anything and leaves. Mrs. Schomberg throws him a piece of paper (a note from Heyst) and tells him how she helped Heyst and Lena escape. Schomberg reenters the stage and discloses the details of Heyst's stealing of one of the girls. He

[20] Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London–New York: Routledge, 2016).

[21] Hand, *The Theatre of Joseph Conrad*, pp. 53-86.

[22] Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, "Harold Pinter's Screenplay of Conrad's *Victory* and Its BBC Radio 4 Adaptation," *The Conradian* 43, no. 1 (2017), pp. 81-93.

[23] Handwritten notes in pencil on the inside cover of the manuscript of Schiller's *Zwycięstwo*.

accuses him of fraudulent activities, spying and killing Morrison. Davidson discusses the scandal with the other guests.

6. [Samburan; quay] Davidson and Heyst; Heyst and Wang; Lena and Heyst:
   Davidson talks with Heyst on the quay. Heyst reveals the reason for his actions: he wanted to protect Lena from cruel persecution. He asks Davidson to give the shawl back to Mrs. Schomberg just in case Schomberg asks about it. On Davidson's departure, Heyst tells him that on the island, they can defy fate.
   Suddenly Wang appears. Heyst suggests that he should leave the island with Davidson. Wang refuses and informs him that he has found a wife from the Alfuro tribe. Lena talks with Heyst about his past and the reasons why he was living on the abandoned island. He tells her the story of Morrison. She is shocked and frightened when she hears that name. Heyst is angry with her. He tells her that he neither killed nor loved anyone in his life.
7. [Restaurant on the terrace] Schomberg, Jones, Ricardo, Pedro:
   Jones and Ricardo introduce themselves and ask for accommodation at Schomberg's hotel. Jones imparts the story of Pedro and mentions killing his brother.
8. [Restaurant on the terrace] Schomberg and Mrs Schomberg; Schomberg, Jones, Ricardo:
   Schomberg tells his wife that he must get rid of the threesome because they have turned his hotel into a gambling den. She warns him to be careful because she saw in their room boxes with guns and knives.
   Jones informs Schomberg that they are going to stay at his hotel for several months. He is furious and urges them to leave. Ricardo threatens Schomberg with setting fire to his hotel.
9. [Theatre hall at Schomberg's hotel]:
   The men are playing cards, and Ricardo does some card tricks. Ricardo tells Schomberg the story of his adventures with Jones in Nicaragua and Columbia. Schomberg incites him to attack and rob Heyst, who lives on a desert island with a hoard of treasure.
10. [Samburan – Heyst's room] Heyst and Lena; Wang:
    Heyst and Lena talk about his father. Lena asks him to try to love her. Heyst assures her that nothing can disturb them there on the island.
    Suddenly, Wang enters the room and tells them he saw a boat with three white men.
11. [Samburan – bay] Heyst, Ricardo, Jones, Pedro:
    Heyst helps the men get out of the boat and onto the wharf; gives them water; and offers them a bungalow to stay in.
12. [Samburan – Heyst's room; at night] Heyst and Lena:
    Heyst looks for something in his room. Lena wakes up. He tells her that probably Wang took the gun from his desk. Heyst goes out on the balcony and smokes a cigar.

13. [Samburan – bungalow; at night] Ricardo and Jones; Heyst:
Ricardo sees Heyst on the balcony. Ricardo and Jones talk about Heyst's treasure. Suddenly, Heyst enters the bungalow asking if they need anything so late at night. Ricardo sneaks out by the back exit.
14. [Samburan – Heyst's room; at night] Lena and Ricardo; Wang:
Ricardo attacks the sleeping Lena. Their fight is observed by Wang, who silently leaves the room. Ricardo tells Lena that they can be friends if she helps him find the treasure. Lena agrees. Suddenly, they hear Heyst's voice calling Wang. Lena helps Ricardo to escape through the window. He loses his sandal, and Lena throws it through the window – Wang observes it. Heyst is surprised that Lena is not asleep. She does not tell him about Ricardo's visit. Wang informs Heyst that he is leaving him because he does not like the outcasts.
15. [Samburan – bungalow] Jones, Ricardo, Heyst
Heyst warns the men that his Chinese servant has run off with a stolen gun. They offer him Pedro as a new servant to cook for them all.
16. [Samburan – Heyst's room] Heyst and Lena:
Heyst tells Lena that Wang left them for good because he did not like something that had happened in the bedroom. Lena does not explain anything.
17. [Samburan – bungalow] Jones and Ricardo:
Ricardo dissuades Jones from killing Heyst right away. Jones wants to play cards with Heyst and orders Ricardo to invite him to their bungalow. Ricardo leaves the bungalow to eat dinner with Lena and Heyst.
18. [Samburan – forest] Heyst and Lena:
Heyst and Lena go into the forest where the Alfuro tribe lives. Heyst asks Wang to take Lena to the tribe. He refuses to accept her.
19. [Samburan – Heyst's room] Ricardo, Lena, Heyst, Pedro:
Ricardo comes to dinner and asks Heyst to go to the bungalow to play cards with Jones. Heyst agrees on the condition that Pedro leaves the house and goes to the boat.
Heyst tells Lena to put on her black dress and run into the forest. In case he does not come back before dawn, she is to go to the Alfuro tribe. A storm starts.
20. [Samburan – bungalow] Heyst and Jones:
Heyst confronts Jones while playing cards with him. Jones tells him that he is "the world itself to pay [him] a visit" and reveals the real reason for their coming to the island and Schomberg's plottings. Heyst informs him about Lena and Schomberg's desire for vengeance. Jones realises that Ricardo has betrayed him.
21. [Samburan – Heyst's house] Lena and Ricardo; Heyst and Jones; Davidson and Wang:
Heyst observes Ricardo and Lena's intimate *tête-à-tête*. Jones fires at Ricardo but misses. Lena is wounded and dies. Jones attacks Ricardo and kills him on the veranda. Davidson, with Wang's help, kills Jones.

22. [Surabaya – at the governor's office] Davidson, the governor, other officers: Davidson gives a detailed account of the final events and the fire on Samburan.

Strictly speaking, little or nothing was added, and the original events remained unmodified. Schiller's main operation while transforming the novel for the stage was the simplification of the plot's chronology. In Conrad's novel, there are narrative flashbacks (the meeting with Morrison; Heyst and Lena's escape, Heyst's conversations with his father,[24] whereas Schiller presents the events chronologically. Schiller's only modification was the change in Lena's occupation – she is a singer, not a violin player, and Zangiacomo's troupe is a cabaret, not an orchestra. Schiller wrote a song that Lena sings in scene 3, and its lyrics were reproduced in the spectacle's programme.[25] This may be because he was fond of composing songs and producing plays consisting of a significant musical component. The swap of the orchestra for a night girls' cabaret could be motivated by the latter's greater spectacularity and attractiveness for the audience, as well as its sleazy connotations.

Moreover, Schiller compressed some episodes, for instance, the description of Heyst meeting Lena, offering her help, and their final escape,[26] the adventures of Jones and Ricardo, the story of Pedro,[27] the story of Heyst's youth and the influence of his father.[28] He expunged the forest episode when Heyst was furious with Lena and kissed her.[29] The most significant change, however, was made in the scene of Lena's death. After Jones has fired his gun, Lena goes to the other room and lies down on the bed. Heyst talks to Davison, and they enter the bedroom. Lena wants Heyst to give her the knife, and he sees that she has a small wound on her breast. It is unclear how she got injured for the viewers, and some of them thought she tried to take her own life. Since she went to the other room on her own (in the novel, Heyst carried her after he saw she got wounded), the audience is unsure as to what is the real cause of her death. It was seemingly an insignificant modification in the actress's scenic movements and location, but it entailed a significant change in the interpretation of the whole performance.

[24] Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 10-11, 40-42, 174-176; Joseph Conrad, *Zwycięstwo*, vols. 1-4, trans. Aniela Zagórska (Lwów: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1920).

[25] Jerzy Timoszewicz, "Noty" [Notes], in Leon Schiller. *Pisma. Droga przez teatr 1924-1939* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983), p. 450.

[26] Conrad, *Victory*, pp. 78-90.

[27] Conrad, *Victory*, pp. 127-134, 137-142.

[28] Conrad, *Victory*, pp. 91-92.

[29] Conrad, *Victory*, pp. 203-215.

teatry miejskie we lwowie

WIELKI

We wtorek dnia 2 września 1930 r. o godz. 8 wieczorem
Gościnne występy
Dyr. EMILA MŁYNARSKIEGO
STANISŁAWA GRUSZCZYŃSKIEGO
I ZYGMUNTA MOSSOCZEGO
HALKA
Opera narodowa w 4 aktach Stanisława Moniuszki

ROZMAITOŚCI
(ul. Rutowskiego 23)

W poniedziałek 1 i wtorek 2 września 1930 r. o 8 wiecz.
Po raz 1-szy i 2-gi
JOSEPH CONRAD KORZENIOWSKI
ZWYCIĘSTWO
22 sceny w układzie dramatycznym LEONA SCHILLERA
Przekład Zofii Zagórskiej

MAŁY

W środę 3 września 1930 r. o godz. 8 wieczorem
Premiera
EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER
PAPA KAWALER
Komedja w 3 aktach (7 odsłonach)
Przekład Stanisławy Kuszelewskiej

DYREKCJA: STANISŁAW CZELSKI i ZYGMUNT ZALESKI

Kierownik artystyczny: LEON SCHILLER

Dyrekcja: MAXIMILIAN STATKIEWICZ
Kapelmistrz: DYR. EMIL MŁYNARSKI

Drukarnia Narodowa Lwów, Sasinochy 2.

Fig. 1. *Victory* poster from the premiere (1 September 1930) in the middle. [The Variety Theatre, on Monday 1 Sept. and Tuesday 2 Sept. 1930, at 8 pm for the first time presents JOSEPH CONRAD KORZENIOWSKI, VICTORY, 22 scenes in the dramatic staging by LEON SCHILLER, translated by Aniela Zagórska] (courtesy Barbara Maresz, PhD, custodian of the manuscripts of Lwów Theatres in Biblioteka Śląska, Katowice, Poland)

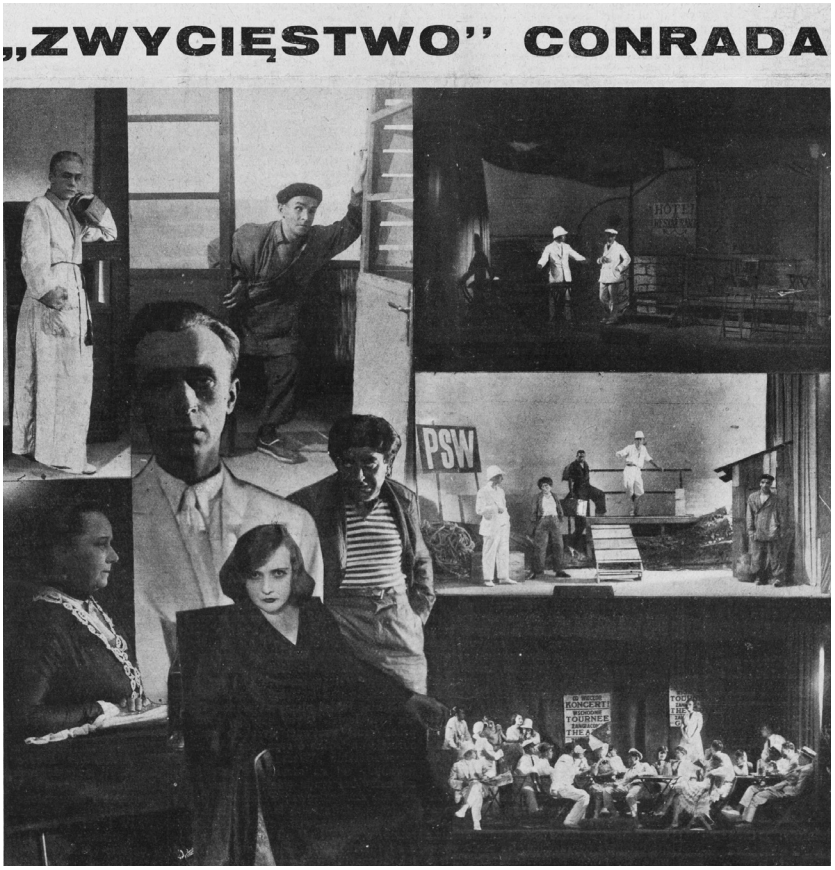

Fig. 2. Scenes from the 1930 Schiller's production of *Zwycięstwo* [*Victory*] published in *Wiadomości Literackie* (September 1930) (Małopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa)

Caption: The new director of Lviv's theatres, as expected, begun his activity with a courageous enterprise, challenging the audience with new issues and aesthetic possibilities. The performance of *Zwycięstwo* was an absolute triumph of the director, actors and decorator, contrary to what the gaga organs of criticism (of Mr Hoesick's and Krzywoszewski's – *Kurier Warszawski* and *Świat*) claim, although they did not see the spectacle. The Lviv press was able to appreciate the novelty of staging efforts, praising the performance style of the actors playing the leading roles: Mr Strachocki (Heyst), Ms Malanowicz (Lena), Mr Chmielewski (Ricardo), Ms Dobrzańska (Mrs Schomberg) and especially Mr Chodecki (Jones), who comes to the fore of the younger generation of actors. A revelation for Lviv was – and could have been for Warsaw, too – the well-thought-out and expressive decorations prepared by Daszewski, who is a talented companion for Schiller's neorealistic explorations.

VICTORY: RECEPTION

Prior to an analysis of the critics' reception of *Victory*, we should remind ourselves that Schiller had many opponents to his antibourgeois and leftist ideas due to his former theatrical activities and the aforementioned manifesto. It will be visible below in the case of two reviews in Warszawa. The long run of the play caused many reviews that ranged from the laudatory to the dismissive. The initial reception was positive, even enthusiastic.[30] The *Gazeta Lwowska* [Lviv's Newspaper] reviewer found Schiller's idea to open the season with Conrad's text ambitious because it heralded "a comeback of Lviv's theatre greatness of Pawlikowski's times"[31] (3 September 1930). The *Słowo Polskie* [Polish Word] praised Schiller's decision to reject the old act structure "produced by talentless hacks" and his choice to lay on a long array of scenes following the novel's plot (4 September 1930). Also, Tymon Terlecki complimented Schiller for his courage to produce ambitious spectacles in a new form. The montage of facts based on "a great deal of details, emphasising certain motifs, and quick changes of images" created "the illusion of richness, the fullness of life. Instead of the harmonious and abstract parable of the old drama, the audience receives the irregular and altering waves of concrete life" (*Słowo Polskie*, 14 September 1930).[32] For the *Dziennik Ludowy* [People's Daily], the play was well-dramatised with an exemplary realisation of collective scenes and lighting effects (5 September 1930). The fact that each scene ended with an impactful final effect was also praised.

Despite the favourable assessments, a notable current in all those reviews was that the play was too long and "got on the viewers' nerves" since it lasted from 8 pm to 2 am. The reviewer continued, "the actual dramatic conflict begins with the arrival of the three rogues on Samburan. It takes place in the 11th scene (if I remember correctly). Everything that happens earlier and amounts to almost half of the performance constitutes an exposition – which is beautiful and expertly laid on – but it makes the spectacle go beyond the boundaries of accepted time (*Słowo Polskie*, 4 September 1930). A similar observation was made by Artur Ćwikowski, who wrote that "for the play proper the action starts when Heyst brings Lena to the island, all that happens before could be encompassed in a short exposition."[33] The *Gazeta Lwowska* raises the same objection that Schiller "bedazzled with the richness of scenic possibilities, featured them with too detailed accuracy." The spectacle abounded in a number of notable suspenseful moments, effective dialogues, but because of its length, it lost its character and impact (3 September 1930). Because most critics

[30] Stefan Zabierowski, "Conrad na scenie polskiej (okres międzywojenny)" [Conrad on the Polish Stage (the Interwar Period)], *Informacje Polskiego Klubu Conradowskiego* [Information of the Polish Conrad Club] (Gdańsk: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Centralnego Muzeum Morskiego, 1980), p. 9.

[31] Tadeusz Pawlikowski (1861–1915) was the director of The Municipal Theatre in Lviv (later the Theatre of Opera and Ballet) from 1900 to 1906.

[32] Tymon Terlecki, "Impresja o 'Zwycięstwie,'" *Słowo Polskie* 251 (14 September 1930), p. 6, https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/publication/224880/edition/213408/content [accessed: 26.01.2021].

[33] Artur Ćwikowski, "*Zwycięstwo* J. Conrada Korzeniowskiego w inscenizacji L. Schillera," *Dziennik Ludowy* 201 (4 September 1930), p. 8.

claimed that such a long performance diminished the play's dramatic quality, Schiller expunged four scenes and shortened the other; subsequently, the performance lasted three hours (*Gazeta Lwowska*, 4 September 1930).

However, the spectacle received several negative reviews, some quite hostile, published later in Warsaw. The most extensive and in-depth critique was written by Józef Jedlicz for the major cultural weekly *Lwowskie Wiadomości Muzyczne i Literackie* (3 October 1930). Jedlicz argued that the choice of *Zwycięstwo* was a wrong one since the novel was soaked with "in-depth analyses of souls" and because it was intellectual and contemplative, it was lacking in dramatic elements. He clarified that although there is an inherent dramatic conflict in *Zwycięstwo*, it was located "within the realm of spiritual and abstract experiences" which are very difficult to present on stage. One more reason for the director's failure was the employment of the "cut out method," not an adaptation proper. He believed that Schiller should have transformed the whole novel into a coherent play (similarly to what Conrad did with his *Secret Agent*) rather than pick out (i.e., 'cut out') separate scenes without context. "Even the most effective staccato of more than 20 scenes" – the critic continued – "with the same number of forced pauses in the action, tearing the scenic illusion and the concentration of the audience, becomes tiring and unbearable with time."[34] It resulted in a misunderstanding of the motivation for Lena's death for those viewers who did not know the novel (some of them thought that she committed suicide). This method could have been applied to Conrad's other works such as *Almayer's Folly*, *Rescue*, or *Lord Jim* but not to *Victory*. Jedlicz concluded that the first performance in the Lviv theatre under the new director was definitely a failure.

The two most damning reviews were written by one critic – Wacław Grubiński and appeared in Warsaw's rightist press, the *Kurier Warszawski* [Warsaw Courier] and *Świat* [World]. Both papers attacked Schiller personally as a follower of the Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold. They denounced him as a fraud who tried to "reform" the theatre by staging novels which is "like cutting out a tailcoat from a winter coat."[35] The review abounded in such irrelevant comparisons. The other review was not substantive either: Grubiński compared Schiller's effort to make a drama out of a novel to the experiments of making a bird out of a mouse which resulted in producing a monster that flies badly, i. e. a bat. He concluded that the play was a complete fiasco. It is noteworthy here that Grubiński openly admitted that he had not seen the performance. Hence, it is my assertion that much of the criticism levelled at Schiller was unfair and ideologically grounded. Another one, Władysław Tarnawski, claimed that Schiller diminished the novel's general significance because he brought to the fore the sensational aspect by which he changed the work's mean-

[34] Józef Jedlicz, *Lwowskie Wiadomości Muzyczne i Literackie*, 1930, p. 2, https://dlibra.kul.pl/dlibra/publication/40937/edition/37757/content [accessed: 26.01.2021].

[35] Wacław Grubiński, Zreformowany teatr lwowski [Reformed Theatre in Lviv]. *Kurier Warszawski* 252 (14 September 1930), p. 8, https://crispa.uw.edu.pl/object/files/214931/display/JPEG [accessed: 26.01.2021]; Wacław Grubiński, "*Zwycięstwo* i klapa" [*Victory* and Fiasco], *Świat* 37 (13 September 1930), p. 8, http://mbc.cyfrowemazowsze.pl/dlibra/publication?id=57930&tab=3 [accessed: 26.01.2021].

ing. The critic claimed that "a subtle psychological novel became a mere sensational spectacle."[36]

To conclude, Schiller's production of *Victory* turned out to be of mixed success. The reasons for it were varied. First of all, Schiller faced ideological opposition and no matter what type of performance he staged, his opponents attacked him for his opinions, not for the artistic quality of his spectacle. Other reasons were inherent in the play itself. Schiller did not decide to properly adapt the novel for the stage. Rather he chose the "raw material" – the fragments of the novel and rewrote them into the script. Furthermore, the initial length of the performance was unacceptable for the audience and put off both the critics and the viewers. It is noteworthy, however, that Schiller chose Conrad's work for the grand opening of his directorship of Lviv theatres, which points to the status of Conrad as a probable box-office hit at that time in Poland.

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