


LEON SCHILLER AND HIS THEATRICAL ADAPTATION OF *VICTORY*: THE PHENOMENON AND CONTROVERSIES

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Abstract: Leon Schiller's *Victory* was prepared as an introduction of Schiller's theatre management in *Teatr Rozmaitości* in Lviv. That was both a symbolic and significant decision, even if, from contemporary perspective, Schiller's motivation for choosing Conrad's work for his repertoire might seem unclear. The memoirs of Władysław Daszewski, Schiller's scenographer and his close companion, can be helpful in this respect. Daszewski recalls the demanding working conditions in *Teatr Rozmaitości* – the preparation of all the elements of decoration in summer heat and without any support of artisans – and also emphasises Schiller's deep commitment that might be identified with that of Heyst. Other unarticulated reasons could have haunted Schiller during his preparations for the staging and at an even earlier stage when he made his repertoire choices: with Conrad's *Victory*, he probably attempted to, firstly, win the hearts of Lvivian melodramatic viewers, and, secondly, to play, warmly but ironically, with their specific, if narrowed, expectations and their elitist theatrical routine. To trace the possibilities, I refer to the studies of melodrama by both Polish and English specialists, i.e., by Partyga or Ratajczakowa, and by Brooks or Williams, respectively.

Keywords: Leon Schiller, Polish reception of *Victory*, Władysław Daszewski, *Teatr Rozmaitości* in Lviv, melodrama, scenography

Leon Schiller (1887-1954), a prominent Polish theatre director associated with the original concept of the Polish monumental theatre, was very cautious, careful, and overly watchful during his preparations regarding the adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Victory* in 1930 for Lviv's City Theatre. Undoubtedly, Schiller remembered the scandals induced by his Warsaw theatrical activity when, first in 1926, he directed Stefan Żeromski's novel *The Story of Sin (Dzieje grzechu)* and was blamed with immorality, and afterwards, in 1929, while still in Warsaw he worked on Bertold Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, exposing himself to the attacks triggered with his alleged Bolshevik-Jewish sympathies. In this situation, planning the theatre season 1930/1931 in Lviv required special caution. As can easily be guessed, Schiller did not know much regarding the successful dramatisation of *Victory* as prepared in 1919 by Basil

Macdonald Hastings – *Victory. A Play in Three Acts*.¹ For his own needs, or for his own “implementation,” the remarkable director wrote his own dramatised version of the great Conradian novel. Nowadays, analysing the dramatisation alongside with two special recollections of the theatrical work coming from Schiller and Władysław Daszewski (1902-1971) – his Lvivian scenographer who had only begun his career in those days – can provide a very unique insight into the legendary moment of the start of Joseph Conrad’s adaptations in Poland. I have said “legendary” not without reason... Schiller’s *Victory* was the genuine milestone, the real pattern that served for for all types and all genres of the theatrical movement that swirled near Conrad and his legacy, and turned into studied adaptations of his works in later years.

The basic ideas of Schiller’s dramatisation are, to a certain extent, clear. We owe some knowledge on this matter to the aforementioned Daszewski, the scenographer of *Victory*, who admits that *Victory* “was the first theatrical work made by me fully independently, from the beginning to the end”² and reminds us that “this time Leon Schiller’s emotional involvement was exceptionally strong.”³ This insight by Daszewski’s is extremely valuable as are also his various (cordial) complaints about Schiller. In the text, Daszewski complains on the excessive requirements of the director. They were especially challenging and stressful for Daszewski due to the many limitations of stage geometry in Lviv:

The play required, if my memory serves me right, six or seven different areas of action – interiors and exteriors, and the stage was perhaps as many meters across and deep. A solid, brick-built horizon in the shape of a shell circled the stage, which had only a passage on one side to a narrow corridor, with entrances to the actors’ dressing rooms. No other backstage space, probably just enough for a single actor to squeeze through.⁴

Daszewski’s recollections considering the “six or even seven various action areas” may easily suggest the expanded and monumental compositions within thirty or perhaps forty continuous scenes. This may be evocative of what was planned in the case of the (in)famous staging of *The Story of Sin* also set in the epical frame of “4 parts, 38 pictures.” Another piece of information about the distribution of the dramatic content of *The Story of Sin* was given by Schiller in “Wiadomości Literackie” (1926 no. 42). Here also, the director gives the reader an exceptional opportunity to immerse themselves in the secrets of his methods of dramatisation:

I divided the work into 44 scenes. It is so fortunately constructed that I could strictly maintain their chronology and did not need to create artificial or re-connecting scenes, justifying the development of the action. Each scene explains both the previous and the next scene. I naturally had to condense the text – in such a way as to extract the most vital moments of the work. I built each scene independently, as a one-act play, self-sufficient in itself, each with its own point of gravity. Here again I followed the cinema, opposing the habitual dramatic technique in which

¹ Basil MacDonald Hastings, *Conrad’s “Victory”: The Play and Reviews* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

² Władysław Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby” [First Rehearsals], *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 1 (1955), p. 438. If not indicated otherwise, all subsequent quotations from the Polish language are by the Author.

³ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby.”

⁴ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby.”

the preparatory and developing action often fetters its entire dynamics. I placed great emphasis on the final cadences of scenes, always ending with a strong accent.⁵

Such a contextualisation of Schiller's works on *The Story of Sin* is not without significance here. In his very significant study on Żeromski/Conrad parallel, Dariusz Trzeźniowski claims that *Victory* of 1915 might have derived much inspiration from *The Story of Sin* of 1908 since the plot in both novels is modelled along similar lines and with a special prominence of erotic themes and the female's leading role. Those were the aspects of narration preferred by Żeromski. Perhaps Conrad had been influenced by Żeromski during their encounter in Zakopane in 1914? Trzeźniowski states that the inspiration might have been formed even earlier:

Żeromski's fascinations with eroticism seem reflected in Conrad's work in the last phase of the latter's work – and thus we can probably speak of a direct influence. Conrad noticed the woman when he turned fifty and after he read Żeromski. The change was brought in *Freya of the Seven Isles* (1912), *Chance* (1913), and *Victory* (1915). For Conrad's scholars worldwide, the woman as she appears in *The Story of Sin* is a tempting mystery. In *Victory*, beautiful Lena remains incomprehensible to men "like any writing to the illiterate"; and, at the same time, she does not exist without them; she says to one of them: "Do you know, it seems to me that if you were to stop thinking of me I shouldn't be in the world at all!"⁶

Having decided to stage Conrad's *Victory* after staging Żeromski, Schiller accords with the mood of the novel which is determined by the expressionist narration as presented in *The Story of Sin*. His *Victory*, that is the dramatised *Victory*, disposes of only half as many scenes as *The Story of Sin*; thus, Conrad's dramatisation counts 22 of them, and Żeromski's is contained within 38 or 44 scenes. It seems that the textual material took up the space of an entire notebook consisting of 160 pages, with numerous deletions, and its writing consumed the time of two months, counting from July 22 till the very end of August of 1930. Schiller had to work in a hurry as the premiere of *Victory* was planned on September 1. It meant 22 expanded scenes that needed to be prepared in less than 40 days. In spite of that demanding task, Schiller managed to write his own poem in that time, a poem which was finally performed as the song sang by Lena. Daszewski wrote down the text and successfully quoted the memorable song in his own recollections. Apparently, in his staging, Schiller concentrates on the bloody, suspenseful, and romantic plot, giving the picaresque a total expression. Its first stanza reads:

⁵ Leon Schiller, "Sensacyjna premiera. *Dzieje grzechu* w Teatrze Polskim. Rozmowa »Wiadomości Literackich« z Leonem Schillerem" [Sensational Premiere: *The Story of Sin* in Polish Theatre: An Interview of „Wiadomości Literackie” with Leon Schiller], *Wiadomości Literackie* 42 (1926), p. 1.

⁶ Dariusz Pniewski, "»Niech stanie się zgroza...«. Paralela: Żeromski – Conrad" ["Let the Horror Happen...": Parallel: Żeromski – Conrad], in *Żeromski. Tradycja i eksperyment* [Tradition and Experiment], eds. Anna Janicka, Alina Kowalczykowska and Grzegorz Kowalski (Białystok, Rapperswil: Alter Studio, 2013), p. 466. Recently I also wrote a study focused on that parallel: Karol Samsel, "Żeromski i Conrad. Rozważania o wzajemnym oddziaływaniu" [Żeromski and Conrad: Considerations about Mutual Influence], in *Żeromski. Powroty* [Żeromski: Returns], ed. Maria Jolanta Olszewska (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2004), pp. 101-123.

Dark streets – Dark streets – Wrapped in red mists – Tell me, please, Dark streets – Where is my lover?

He came this morning – To my little room – Hands soaked in blood – He did not look at me – As he knows how – He looked into the distance through the window.

The clock strikes twelve – The Thames splashes – The lamps drown in it.

The clock strikes twelve – Who is it that wept? – O Jimmy, Jimmy, come back!⁷

And the following stanzas, the second and the third, continue as:

Filthy pubs – Filthy pubs – Nightclub shelters – Tell me filthy pubs – Where is my lover?

A bundle of banknotes – He threw it to the orchestra – He gave it to everyone around.

All the girls – He took them dancing – And he was pale as a corpse.

Two o'clock – The Thames splashes – The tin scales of waters

Two o'clock – Who laughed?! – O Jimmy, Jimmy, come back!

A gloomy tree – A gloomy tree – That sticks out like a cross – Oh tell me – A gloomy tree – Where is my lover?

A torturer in gloves – An evil judge in a robe – A silent crowd all around – A smile on the lips – And an abyss in the eyes – A slippery knot on the neck

Four o'clock – The Thames splashes – The splash of bloody foam.

Four o'clock – Who suddenly shouted?! – O Jimmy, Jimmy, come back!⁸

“Here again I went after the cinema,” confesses Schiller for “Wiadomości Literackie” when discussing his earlier staging of Żeromski’s novel. Nevertheless, in the case of Conrad’s adaptation, we do not know if he ever saw Maurice Tournier’s *Victory* of 1919. Similarly, we should doubt if he ever heard about Basil Macdonald Hasting’s dramatisation of Conrad’s narrative – a 1919 dramatisation entitled *Victory: A Play in Three Acts*. In contrast to the Polish *Victory*, the dramatised English *Victory* was divided into three regular acts, while the Polish version was prepared as a dramatic epic story within the field of dramatic continuity and action. It continued the scenes conceived of as one-act-composed plays, as was the case with *The Story of Sin*. One of the reviews of Schiller’s *Victory* mentions the three-hour-long spectacle and Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech points out that the spectacle lasted even six hours, starting from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.⁹ As Schiller did not give up epic retardations

⁷ Lena’s song was included in the third scene of the play. Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby,” p. 313.

⁸ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby.”

⁹ Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, “Leon Schiller’s Theatrical Adaptation of *Victory* in Lwów,” *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)* 16 (2021), pp. 44-45. Eventually, the spectacle was shortened to 3 hours and 18 expanded scenes.

and tirades, the result was perhaps discouraging. By contrast, Tourner's *Victory* lasted only 62 minutes.

In his memoirs, Daszewski claims that Leon Schiller actually identified with the figure of the male protagonist of the Conrad's text, Axel Heyst, and he did so not only during his work on *Victory*, but also long before the staging:

Here I understood that the character of Heyst was somehow especially close to him and – there is no room for jokes... Schiller had clearly defined directorial ideas for each area of the plot, both in terms of mood and situation. This time he began to sketch the plans himself [...].¹⁰

Schiller was perfectly aware that *Victory*, translated by Aniela Zagórska's as *Zwycięstwo* [*Victory*] not earlier than in 1927, must have seemed completely new and exotic for Poles during the Lvivian theatrical premiere. It was only 1930 and the director decided to explain his crucial decisions in a special note as, after the publication of Zagórska's *Zwycięstwo* [*Victory*] in 1927, he willingly referred to this particular translation, without any adjustments, revisions, or stylistic interventions. He opened his staging with a critical statement against the *pièce bien fait*'s concept, consequently reducing the experimental possibilities of the theatre. In search for the remedy, he pointed towards the use of novel material and creating the culture of dramatising various types/genres of the epic fiction. He argued that the solution could be liberating:

The prejudice of some critics against staging novels is the result of their habituation to the stereotypical three- or five-act structure of French plays, or those written in the French manner. Anything that goes beyond the framework of the normal *pièce bien faite* is pedantically judged as unstageable. Certain concessions are made only in relation to the past (Shakespeare, the Romantics) or purely poetic literature (symbolism and pre-war aestheticism). What about realism and the themes inspired by contemporary life? For these there are canons sanctified by tradition, recipes based on box office experience: Sardou and the superficially Ibsen-like French. [...] In this state of affairs, it is no wonder that yesterday's theatre has dried up, that it reeked of boredom a hundred miles away and that the production of a novel posed a challenge in terms of thought and form. How much would we give for Flaubert, Barbey d'Aureville, Zola or Dostoyevsky to speak to us from the stage, rather than the veristic librettists of life operas! [...] And now, today, no one is surprised that Zweig writes his *Grisha* in two versions, one for the stage and the other for the novel; that Dreiser does the same; that Upton Sinclair, Hašek and so many other novelists enjoying international fame are being re-adapted. [...] And *The Story of Sin*? So maybe Conrad's *Victory*? Conrad, a citizen of the world, consumed to the very bottom of his soul by the tragedy of Poland, Conrad, who is now read with passion thanks to the brilliant translations by his cousin Aniela Zagórska. It is certain that no re-creation of the beauty and depth of Conrad's novel would be possible if it were not for the absolute freedom with which we can shape reality on stage today and for the rejection of the sheer technique.¹¹

This challenging, avant-garde perspective displayed by Schiller had been noticed by Tymon Terlecki and highly appreciated. According to Terlecki, the merit was con-

¹⁰ Daszewski, "Pierwsze próby," p. 438.

¹¹ Leon Schiller, "Zwycięstwo Conrada w kształcie scenicznym" [Conrad's *Victory* in Stage Form], in Jerzy Got, "Zapomniane publikacje Schillera" [Forgotten Texts of Schiller], *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 2 (1979), pp. 311-312.

nected with the size of achievement in *Victory*. In this specific case, the Polish critic was exceedingly enthusiastic: he certainly exaggerated when complementing Conrad on *Victory* by admitting that the book was “probably most intrinsically Polish and, at the same time, most universally human achievement.”¹² This praise reflected the high appreciation of Joseph Conrad’s novel in Aniela Zagórska’s new Polish translation. In Terlecki’s opinion, *Victory* enabled the depiction of a universalised Polishness on stage, which prevailed for Conrad’s story in a juxtaposition with *The Story of Sin*. Similarly, it appeared Schiller’s most ambitious and significant enterprise. Terlecki openly highlighted the shape of the play being entirely liberated “from the dramatic template.” Schiller’s adaptation of Conrad’s *Victory* appeared a majestic novel version, materialising a dream on stage. The great scale of the enterprise and the depth of the general experiment marked Schiller’s premiere as an outstanding achievement. Terlecki states as much, admitting:

The courage of the undertaking; the span of the precipice intended for the jump... This constitutes one of Schiller’s most essential features: the courageous, responsible ambition of an undertaking alongside the search for challenges. Amongst all the expeditions to dangerous peaks: “Książę Potemkin” [“Prince Potemkin”], “Achilleida” [“Achilleid”], “Róża” [“The Rose”], “Dzieje grzechu” [“The Story of Sin”] – this [“Victory” – K.S.] is perhaps the most difficult venture, at least, no less difficult than others.¹³

The value of Terlecki’s recognition is also based on the essential diagnoses about Schiller’s epic theatre – its continuity, integrity and coherent vision. This vision characterised Schiller’s theatrical adaptations of such novels as *Victory* and *The Story of Sin*. The vision is evocative of certain methodologies engaged with the studies on literary cycles and series such as, among others, that formulated by Rolf Fieguth.¹⁴ They comment upon specific aspects of Schiller’s project of epic theatre that would not exist without processing a diegetic continuity of epic texts put on stage. In his criticism, Terlecki underlines that such an appropriately transformed text “is not based on the principle of isolation [of the following episodes, events and scenes] as it is the case with traditional drama, but on the principle of the selection amongst the phenomena.” Moreover, the critic adds:

We get through the multiplicity of facts; through the selection of details according to their importance; through the emphasis of certain lines; through the rapid changeability of images, which creates the illusion of richness, fullness and movement of life. Instead of the harmonious, abstract parable of the old stage drama, we derive the living, irregular, and changing undulation of real life.¹⁵

¹² Tymon Terlecki, “Teatry lwowskie. Impresja o *Zwycięstwie*” [Theatres in Lviv: Impression on *Victory*], in Tymon Terlecki, *Od Lwowa do Warszawy* [From Lviv to Warsaw], collected and ed. Edward Krasieński and Mariola Szydłowska (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 2016), p. 19.

¹³ Terlecki, “Teatry lwowskie,” p. 17.

¹⁴ Vide especially Fieguth: Rolf Fieguth, *Rozpierzchle gałzki. Cykliczne i skojarzeniowe formy kompozycyjne w twórczości Adama Mickiewicza* [Scattered Twigs: Cyclic and Associative Compositional Forms in the Works of Adam Mickiewicz], trans. Miłosz Zieliński (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2016).

¹⁵ Fieguth, *Rozpierzchle gałzki*, p. 19.

Though abstract and philosophical, the description is significant. The mention of “multiplicity,” “changeability,” “richness,” and “fullness” points towards the complexity characteristic of the epic point of view; it must be transformed in the theatrical, stage manner. In Terlecki’s opinion, Schiller created persuasive theory of transmitting such qualities while adapting both Conrad and Żeromski to stage, which was a real breakthrough in the theatre of his times. From that point of view, Schiller advanced to the new level of the theatrical model – the theatricalisation of epic prose...

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It is difficult to assess how much aware of Schiller’s ambitions Daszewski was. Interestingly, Schiller made Daszewski’s scenography debut possible, which took place in Warsaw in 1927 when the play, “Wojna wojnie” [“War to war”], was personally directed by Schiller. Also, there is no exaggeration in claiming that Daszewski decided to arrive to Lviv in the footsteps of his informal protector. Thus, it seems plausible to accept his words as true when he states that, in the effort of adapting *Victory*, Schiller “looked for the special form – stage, compact, concrete and laconic.”¹⁶ With references to Terlecki and Daszewski, we might carefully conclude that Schiller’s overall aim was to give “the illusion of richness, fullness and movement of life” in his simple and solid solutions, intuitive and compact, by naturally implementing practical innovations connected with the staging of contemporary prose. It seems plausible to assume that Schiller probably trained his scenographer, Daszewski, in those strategies. Daszewski suggests Craig as the source of inspiration:

The concreteness and compactness of artistic forms alongside the enrichment of the stage floor as well as the rejection of banal and disturbing decorativeness – these were the values that Schiller had already learned to appreciate from Gordon Craig.¹⁷

Schiller and Daszewski’s *Victory* was significant. Apparently, the play set the prominent scenographic pattern for the subsequent staging of Conrad’s exotic novels. It is worth mentioning that Schiller’s scenographic model of staging was often termed as ‘neorealism’ or ‘magic realism.’ As regards the scenography, Daszewski’s visualisations of *Victory* were based on three outdoor locations: an Indonesian coal port, a café terrace, and a tropical forest. However, the well-defined task was a challenge due to the unfriendly circumstances with which Daszewski had to confront right after his arrival to Lviv. In fact, in Lviv, no one took his requests into consideration, the scenographer was completely isolated. Firstly, the staff of Lviv theatres insisted upon decorations crafted in a traditional way, with the help of easel painting. Secondly, in the meantime, most of the staff worked on the decorations for “Halka” [“The Petticoat”] at the Grand Theatre, which was the reason why Daszewski could receive help merely limited to three people in total, that was two carpenters and only one painter. Unfortunately, Daszewski recalls: “Due to the lack of space in the workshops

¹⁶ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby,” p. 439.

¹⁷ But Daszewski adds further nuances to that observations: “He now appreciates the dangers of a »timeless« interpretation, of a view of matter taking place “everywhere and anywhere”. Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby.”

near the theatre, I was given a rather uncomfortable place to carry out my projects – an old shed of the former municipal slaughterhouse in the suburbs.” The premiere was scheduled for September 1 which forced Daszewski to proceed in extremely difficult conditions – the summer 1930 was hot in Lviv:

With the premiere approaching, I spent entire days on the slaughterhouse, in a low, August-heated shed, for the first time, anxiously supervising the personal execution of my scenographic designs. Given the small number of personnel in my workshop, work went at a snail’s pace and I had justified concerns about whether everything would be ready before the dress rehearsal.¹⁸

The critical moment occurred during the preparation of the third stage plan. Sadly, Daszewski had to announce a certain defeat:

I had a real problem with the image of the tropical forest. Due to the lack of time and staff, I had to give up the planned three-dimensional view of the trees. Schiller, who, seeing my stage fright, encouraged me and advised to treat them flatly, especially since the forest scene was to take place in night lighting. I hastily designed the view of the forest. It was already painted on the day of the dress rehearsal in the theatre corridor. The rehearsal started late and lasted all night. After a few weeks of effort, unused to the intensive work in the theatre, I collapsed from exhaustion. Waiting for their scenes, the actors and extras fell asleep in chairs in the audience. Only Schiller, sipping his coffee, was as full of energy in the morning as he was at the beginning of the rehearsal. At one point I fell asleep. I was woken up by Schiller’s voice, who calmly declared that the “forest” was too high for the change to be successful and quick enough, so “we will have to give up this decoration.” I was devastated. Even though the scene looked much better against the black curtain that Schiller had arranged and went smoothly, I considered this incident a personal tragedy.¹⁹

“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,”²⁰ points out Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech. To highlight some essential aspects of that courage and novelty, we should pay special attention to the issue of melodrama, which was known to Schiller from his work on *The Story of Sin*. Conrad’s *Victory* was also created in accordance with that pattern, which situates Conrad in the centre of a nuanced debate²¹; with reference to Ibsen and Czechov melodramatic manipulations, Ewa Partyga claims that “the melodrama was such a flexible structure that it could function as a kind of a mirror of social consciousness or as a tool of manipulation, or even of ideological persuasion.”²² Therefore, staging *Victory* and the earlier staging *The Story of Sin*, meant an extension of Schiller’s gen-

¹⁸ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby,” p. 442.

¹⁹ Daszewski, “Pierwsze próby.”

²⁰ Adamowicz-Pośpiech, “Leon Schiller’s Theatrical Adaptation of *Victory* in Lwów,” p. 43.

²¹ The issue still calls for a detailed consideration in Conradian scholarship. Vide: Zdzisław Najder, “*Tajny agent, czyli melodramat przenicowany*” [*The Secret Agent, or Melodrama Distorted*] in Zdzisław Najder, *Sztuka i wierność. Szkice o twórczości Josepha Conrada* [Conrad in Perspective: Essays on Art and Fidelity] (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2000), pp. 117-125.

²² Ewa Partyga, “Ibsena i Czechowa gry genologiczne” [Genological Games of Ibsen and Czechow], in *Oblicza realizmu* [The Faces of Realism], eds. Mateusz Borowski and Małgorzata Sugiera (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007), pp. 84-85.

eral project of staging melodramas as unique media, mirroring certain ideas, and especially, the idea resting upon the revolutionary, meta-revolutionary, contra-revolutionary, and anti-revolutionary elements:

Melodrama was to integrate the most diverse influences into a structure that was a hybrid of things unorthodox and impure in the eyes of the classicists. The genre was thus an excellent breeding ground for popular tastes; thanks to the radical democratisation of its characters, plot, action, and style, it appealed to the melodramatic imagination that used the melodramatic mode, thus launching the “career” of melodrama [...]. This imagination was co-created by the Manichaean image of the world within which the society of nineteenth-century modernity was created and functioned. After all, the continent had remained under the pressure of revolutionary movements for years – about 20 revolutions took place in various countries in the first half of the [nineteenth] century, and that was not the end. The melodramatic imagination, as it were “on the fly,” organised the reality co-created by the ideologies that were fighting each other – socialism, anarchism, capitalism, various emancipatory ideas.²³

Did Schiller intend to shape the consciousness of the Polish melodramatic viewer, using Żeromski and Conrad? It does not matter if he acted with awareness or un-awares. Another extended question asks for articulation: how can Schiller’s *Victory* be entered into the evolution of the psychoanalytic movement in Poland?²⁴ As proven,²⁵ the melodramatic viewer can also become the potential subject of psychoanalytic interest. With Schiller’s adaptations of Conrad and Żeromski, the Polish melodramatic viewer was created in Polish theatre. To quote Partyga: “seated [to watch Schiller-Conrad’s *Victory*], there was an audience waiting for a melodrama, with all its escapism”: “The heroes and the audience were united by the dream of

²³ Dobrochna Ratajczakowa, “Melodramat – największa hybrydyczna struktura teatralno-dramatyczna” [Melodrama – the Largest Hybrid Theater-Dramatic Structure], *Rocznik Komparatystyczny* 11 (2020), p. 24.

²⁴ Vide volumes (in chronological order): Lena Magnone, *Emisariusze Freuda. Transfer kulturowy psychoanalizy do polskich sfer inteligenckich przed drugą wojną światową* [Freud’s Emissaries: The Transfer of Psychoanalysis through the Polish Intelligentsia to Europe 1900-1939], vol. 1-2 (Kraków: Universitas, 2016), and an available English version: Lena Magnone, *Freud’s Emissaries: The Transfer of Psychoanalysis through the Polish Intelligentsia to Europe 1900-1939*, trans. Tul’si Bhambry (Geneve, Lausanne: Sdvg Press, 2023); also *Psychoanaliza w Polsce 1909-1946* [Psychoanalysis in Poland 1909-1946], ed., introd. and selected Lena Magnone, vol. 1-2 (1: “Psychoanaliza i Polacy, psychoanaliza i literatura, psychoanaliza zbiorowości, psychoanaliza kobiet” [Psychoanalysis and Poles, Psychoanalysis and Literature, Psychoanalysis of Communities, Psychoanalysis of Women]; 2: “Psychoanaliza stosowana, psychoanaliza i filozofia, psychoanaliza i historia” [Applied Psychoanalysis, Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and History]) (Warszawa: Fundacja Augusta hrabiego Cieszkowskiego, 2016); also Paweł Dybel, *Psychoanaliza – ziemia obiecana? Z dziejów psychoanalizy w Polsce 1900-1989* [Psychoanalysis – the Promised Land? From the History of Psychoanalysis in Poland 1900-1989], vol. 1-2 (1: “Okres burzy i naporu. Początki psychoanalizy na ziemiach polskich okresu rozbiorów 1900-1918” [A Period of Sturm und Drang: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in Poland during the Partitions 1900-1918]; 2: „Między nadzieją a rozpaczą. Dzieje psychoanalizy w Polsce międzywojnia 1918-1939” [Between Hope and Despair: The History of Psychoanalysis in Poland between the Wars 1918-1939]) (Kraków: Universitas, 2016).

²⁵ Vide among others Peter Brooks, “Psychoanalysis and Melodrama,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018), pp. 277-288 (in fourth part of volume, entitled “Extensions of Melodrama”).

melodrama offering them a transparent and justly ordered world and transforming the so-called ordinary life into a real, eventful drama.”²⁶

This audience, especially the Polish audience who strongly believed in the integrating power of Conrad’s word and legacy, were dreaming of an ideal communication: their high expectations encountered the high possibilities of Schiller’s competencies of staging the melodrama which was written with the help of Conrad’s competencies. Paraphrasing Kaoru Yamamoto’s metaphor, we can say that what took place in Lviv, in Teatr Rozmaitości in 1930, was a variation of “rethinking Joseph Conrad’s concept of community,”²⁷ with the theatrical background of Schiller’s creation and imagination. Daszewski’s memoirs emphasise the significance and the depth of Schiller’s project. Thus, the relation between Schiller and Conrad calls for multifaceted research that would embrace social, cultural, and inter- or trans-disciplinary contextualization of Schiller’s staging of *Victory*. Several issues seem particularly interesting, amongst them: the theatrical strategies adapted in the staging; Conrad’s reception and Schiller’s autocreation; the aspects of melodrama and psychoanalysis, and also, the social and political movements in Poland of the 1920’s and 1930’s. It seems plausible to assume *Victory* as staged in Lviv was planned as an act extending beyond theatre and perhaps aimed at integrating Polish theatre and Polish society? Perhaps the impulse to reach out for Conrad came from the Borderlands? What were the motivations? Was it important that this impulse did not come from the centre or Warsaw, but from Lviv and the peripheries?

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²⁶ Partyga, “Ibsena i Czechowa gry genologiczne,” pp. 102-103.

²⁷ The phrase is meant to connote Kaoru Yamamoto’s publication entitled *Rethinking Joseph Conrad’s Concepts of Community* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

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