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(NON)EXISTENCE OF JUDAS IN THE NOVEL

«ELECTRIC BANANAS» OF

MIROSLAW P. JABŁOŃSKI

**(НЕ)БУТТЯ ІУДИ В РОМАНІ «ЕЛЕКТРИЧНІ
БАНАНИ» МИРОСЛАВА**

П. ЯБЛОНСЬКОГО

Ключевые слова: *М. П. Яблонский, роман «Электрические бананы», персонаж Иуда, онтология в литературе, секуляризация персонажа, современный роман.*

Клаудия Бончик. (Не) бытие Иуды в романе «Электрические бананы» Мирослава П. Яблонского.

Авторы XX - начала XXI в. возродили интерес к герою-предателя Иуды. Рассматривая его с новой точки зрения, они секуляризировали тему персонажа. Не обогащая нравственного значения образа, новые тексты будут показывать Иуду как неотъемлемый элемент мира в агонии. Такое футуристическое видение было принято также Мирославом П. Яблонским, который не в полной мере выяснил, кто такой Иуда на самом деле, он предопределил существование такого героя, который становится предметом сомнений и этот персонаж будет сравниваться с другой марионеткой Творца.

The authors of XX and the beginning of XXI revive an interest in the character of Judas the traitor. Looking at him from a new perspective, they secularise the theme of the character. Lacking the moral input, new texts will be showing Judas as an integral element of the world in agony. Such futuristic vision will be adopted also by Mirosław P. Jabłoński, which does not completely reveal who Judas is. The existence of such character will be a subject of doubt and the character will be compared to another puppet of the Creator.

Although remaining known only to few, Mirosław P. Jabłoński¹ is an author of many pieces of science fiction genre. The world created in his stories presents reality as its' own anti-utopia. Such seemingly popular subject often disqualified the author, resulting in many years passed before the actual publication of his pieces.

The novel 'Electric bananas, the last contact of Judas', which fragment found a place in anthology of Polish science fiction 'Alternative vision 2', had met with similar destiny. Still, in the same year the whole piece has been published by Wydawnictwo SR, to be renewed in 2013 by Solaris.

The story preserves Jabłoński's loyalty to science fiction. Screened under a mask of sarcastic humour, there is an apocalyptic vision of reality, predicting an upcoming fall of the world. The prophetic vision on one side became largely acclaimed by critics, however on the other it was dubbed not very original, so also predictable and sometimes even banal.

Romuald Pawlak described the piece as: 'a satire of reality and the countless absurds it encounters'².

Jacek Sobota stands his ground presenting the piece as postmodern vision shown in full grotesque. He points at a largely present irony, which only highlights the nonsense of given reality. He outlines that: "Electric bananas" is an epic novel - Jabłoński presents incredible prozaic abilities. However, author's black humour should not hinder his sad conclusions. The abundance of nonsense seems oddly familiar to us. Whether we walk on the street or look at the condition of mass media and everything falls into place: the world has gone mad and it is falling in front of our very eyes. Reality chases Jabłoński's vision in a blink. There is no visible factors which could possibly contribute to any improve³.

In such drastic vision everything seems terrifying, with an apparent devaluation of authorities.

There is nothing certain in this world anymore, people doubt not only the existence of gods but also their own humanity, confronting 'existence' with 'presence'. Nevertheless, they decide to keep playing their parts, surrendering to the script without conviction. In the countries created by them, according to Wojtek Sedeńsko, there is a room for: 'completely new traditions, new laws acclaiming even the most immoral ideas, the lack of ethical authorities. The novel stretches exactly this: a total devaluation of culture and sacrum. We shall not be misled by the lightness of Jabłoński's story, either his humouristic narration: the novel treats about things which are not only important, but also disturbingly sad.' The existencional tragism touches everyone in the story, from scriptwright to the pope. The eschatological

character of the novel is being stressed by the title itself. And indeed it was the title which encountered the largest wave of critique. The main argument criticising the author were the references to New Testament, not as a sign of interest in biblical theme, but rather to place his novel among commercial apocryphical pieces. The creation of the novel itself was supposed to confirm the storyline's conclusion: devaluation of culture⁴.

The negativity of such conclusion simply portrays catastrophism of our destiny, which determines even the actions of the author himself. By interrupting the storyline with advertisements, he outlines the commercialization of literature, not able to attract readers simply by itself anymore. Following the science fiction convention, any boundary of direct confrontation between a real world and a futuristic world is getting erased. Everything which is presented as a part of action, happens here and now. Author opens in front of the reader the door to Autonomous Kingdom of Hollywood, remaining in apathy for years. The land's inhabitants had stopped on a certain level of civilisation, alongside stopping development of culture and education. Theatres are being visited only by 'deviants- all of the sensitive misfits, melancholics, onanistas, intellectualists and lazy ones'⁵. Literature responds the readers' needs by resting on foundations of pornography, creating a specific mixture for 'mass readers'. Also, the new literary kinds have been created, such as 'literary barre walking', limiting the role of the reader to answering the questions in the text, making them the creators of the story. Moreover, the amendments within well known literary pieces were more than acceptable, if that mattered to fit them into the contemporary reader's needs. The society was also not able to understand complicated films, which reduced the script's subject to erotic instincts⁶. The world has become ruled by countless deviations of individual, while the power laid the only authority was capitalism itself. The society has been divided, and the only differentiating factor was money. All of the ancient values has lost its' meaning. Also religious symbols have undergone a necessary change, conforming to the requirements of the new times. The church has been secularised, keeping the power only on the surface, without the actual faith in God. The pope, highest authority of New Vatican, instead of looking after worshipers, dedicates himself to amelioration of theory of Holy Bible's economical exegesis. He doubts the existence of God, only playing his part in public space. The Kingdom, however separated from Hollywood by marble angels, does not provide shelter for lost souls anymore. The world is simply full of heretical sects, amongst them: abelots, adamits, adventists, ebionits, fosarians, ofits. Their enormous influence to the

countries' economy makes society wanting a symbolical sacrifice, when such death would supposedly end their inner conflicts. In the world with no alive Saviour, people start thinking about murdering the pope, who would then become just another, demanded by the crowd victim. In that way Jabłoński smuggles into the storyline metaphysical themes, searching for the basis of religious dogmats.

Judas created The principal character of the novel is Gaspar Romeo Homer, who's real name is Daniel C. Shapiro. He had decided to change his name for several reasons. The first one was the try to hide his Jewish roots. As he states, belonging to Jewish community disqualifies him, strengthening his feeling of unworthiness. That is why Gas decides to conceal his real origin, not mentioning to anybody his relationship with Brooklyn Jewish Import-Export Company. Another factor contributing to the name change became also advice he received from his family, the Rosenbladts, who had been taking care of the boy's education by sending him to school of 'pleasant stories writing'⁷ In the novel he is presented as an unfulfilled artist, scriptwright sticking to movies class B and C, not able to find his place in the immoral world of devaluation.

Following his feeling of being different, he starts losing faith in any sort of professional success and accepts his position of 'quasi-artist'. He is not bothered by fact, that his works keep falling down the ranks, as he is unable to fit into standards and avoid intelligent conclusions in his work.

He often takes on metaphysical subjects, as since he was twelve he has been searching proves confirming the theory of Non-existent God. reaching slowly his disbelief, he subjects himself to influence of atheist god, proclaiming the power of reasoning his only source of faith. Despite his talent he needs to keep compromising. Such censorship suppresses his ambition, which is however supposed to rise again and in the deciding moment drive him into action. Until it happens, he decides to keep a low profile, which is being distracted by unfulfilled dreams of his lover. Being aware of the power of money, from time to time he creates erotic passages or random advertisements, such as new foot salve campaign. All that only to be able to survive. However the turning point approaches him faster than he had expected. While attending reception at oscar Akido Yazumi, who holds the power in Autonomical Kingdom of Hollywood, he is being given an offer to write a script for a new production of the most acclaimed director, Morales. The plot would be constructed around an attempt of murder of the current pope, Bartolomeus. Completing the work would require from Gas a lot of preparation, such as getting close to the cardinal in order to acquire necessary information to make the story looking real.

After receiving the offer Homer has started to believe in his own abilities. His confidence and self-belief has reached the level of putting himself on pedestal, while looking at the others with contempt and often not even trying to hide this attitude. The switch in his character has been triggered by discovery, that it is indeed possible to create something ambitious, which at the same time can sell well and result in guaranteeing him a certain position. He felt happy as he: 'believed that, the world of his surroundings- with it's culture, economy, religions, problems and multiple kinds of science and art- is only a subject to cinema. Not the other way round'⁸. Acquiring the power over words, Gas felt like he also held the power over the world. The process of creation consumed him so much, that he lost contact with the outside world, not being able to see the difference between reality and fiction anymore. At some point he even believed, that he himself is a real creator, influencing destinies of the people around. Being some sort of a prophet, predicting the redemption of the world, he decided to prepare himself as well as fellow folks to this incredible moment.

The murderer was supposed to be a man alias Judas, and his every step was about to be the next level of the search attempted by Gas. Alongside with unveiling another secrets of the pope as well as the kingdom of Vatican, Homer was supposed to gain sufficient amount of information to drive his fictional characters. He did not notice, when he started being identified with a described character. While being a guest of the nuncio, for the first time was called a Judas⁹, at the same time being dubbed a traitor. Martin Hernades-Ochoya accused him a real attempt of murder the pope as well as hypocrisy of his motives, as Gas appeared to him as a non-believer. The scriptwright tried to justify his actions at the beginning, explaining, that everything he creates is just a performance. Although, not having any strong evidence supporting him, he restrained from defending his convictions and engaged in a discussion about atheism. That conversation was his first attempt of clearing, understanding the power of one's faith. He admitted, that he is unable to trust any god, as there is no evidence confirming the existence of such being. Gospel according to Gaspar was supposed to become an alternative for a human lost in the world of capitalism, giving answers to the pain of an alienated individual, no able to fit into given reality. Somehow, he wanted to become a guide for the lost ones, including Gas himself. Adapting a cardinal's identity, he became entangled in the conflict between Hollywood and Vatican. In the end, remaining a threat to each of the sides, he tried to use various masks to gain as much information as possible, and at the same time, save his life.

What Gas was not afraid of was living in hipocrysy. Because of that he found out, that Gambino, he boss of the mafia, had planned to kill him and therefore Gas was not safe anywhere anymore. Despite of the increasing danger, he decided to remain faithful to his idea of creation a masterpiece. For him everything had it's specific meaning: the outside scenery, the fellow passengers as well as the description of the carriage. A cinematographic masterpiece- not only according to him afterall!- was being created once it got mixed with reality preserving the right proportions. The recipe was phenomenally simple, the issue however was, that no one really knew the right proportions. It seems like Gas was not able to find them himself. Soon he started getting lost in the world he once created. Gaspar, even hidden behind a false identity, truly searched for a truth about himself. Surrounded by the world of absurds, he started doubting his own attitude, and that is why his journey to Vatican has come for him so helpful, as well as conversation with the pope. Manipulated by the nuncio, he starts a philosophical discussion with Bartolomeus, only to realize afterall that doubt is a common thing and he should not feel anything worse because of that. It turns that even the head of church had lost his faith long ago, while setting the world with a programme directed by God. In such reality people are puppets, forced to beg their Creator to show them even a shadow of care, not to get bored with them. Such philosophy has caused a storm in the thoughts of Gas. Once again he felt his lack of significance, and the lack of knowledge about existence started feeling overwhelming. Finally he started doubting his own existence and for the first time since a very long time he felt his need for Toni, to prove to himself her authenticity. Homer creates a script, which is far from his primary vision. Enriched by his new knowledge, he assumes the non-existence of people. Following that, created by him Judas rejects the offer of murder, as the potential victim, pope Bartolomeus, does not exist. And us, however, either¹⁰.

The completed script will bring him fame, and prizes will become evidence of his talent. The pope will continue cursing Hollywood, the old conflicts will remain alive, but Gas will not be playing any part in it anymore. The association of him with Judas will disappear as soon as it first occurred, and he will be cleared of all accusations. The people will, on and on and again, start searching for heroes to calm their disbelieves. The show will have to go on, even if filled with fictional characters in an unreal world...

Instead of Saviour. The pope Bartolomeus was the one ruling the Kingdom of New Vatican. The church he led was far away from perfection. Just like in the other countries, the main driving factor

was money. To meet the needs of contemporary market, the kingdom has become a commercial place, gaining sources from a corporate body called 'God's Angel', among the others.

The pope, fascinated by the sins of mortals, kept watching their very steps only to condemn them later in public. Bartolomeus was a pope predicted by prophets. Dark skinned, muscular man had been once a monk at Red Dragon Mission. There he developed his love for sport, especially eastern martial arts. His choice for a pope, after atomic attack, did not surprise anybody. Bartolomeus seemed to be the perfect person to take over such function: he was sincere, courageous and not vulnerable to compromise. With a true interest he analyzed the influence of God to the society, trying to find the destiny of each individual. Comparing himself to others, he perceived himself as chosen and, however deprived of ability to dream, gifted with sensitivity which enabled him to notice the unreal in the surrounding world. In relation to his special role, he was openly criticising every attempts of those identifying themselves as new impersonifications of Old Testament's characters. In his views God was a creator of Programme, who: pressed the button titled 'Power' and turned the Blue Computer on¹¹.

In such views people either do not exist or they are just meaningless streams of bits. Not aware of their non-existence, they pray with devotion asking their Creator not to get bored with them. They become a part of a big show, where everyone has some certain role. Their meaninglessness does not allow them to see the bigger picture and notice, that they are indeed only puppets, dependent on the creator of Programme. At the same time the pope does not insist that his vision is the only possible and true. He is fully aware of his vulnerability to be mistaken. He leads the kingdom, but for him it is only the role he received in the show of the world. He is dedicated to this work, while realizing that he does not really exist and every scream of such existence is only a projection of imagination. He accepts the part he plays, as he remains only one of the elements in the programme, which has been created by the Creator himself. After talking to the potential murderer, he reaches conclusion, that he is indeed save and a symbolical sacrifice is not going to happen. People, however they need Saviour, still reject false prophets. According to Bartolomeus the actions of Gas from the very beginning are not set on finding a new Jesus, but to unveil a new traitor, a contemporary Judas. As it turned, he was an author of the whole conflict, the murderer of mafioso, whose actions were driven only by egoistic motives. His agenda, alike in the Bible, brought death of two people: his victim, and himself. Not being able to face his own defeat, oscar Akido Yazumi commits a

suicide with his own knife, not waiting for a redemption. The suicide ends the tragic life of an unhappy man, who's greed almost brought a destroy to the whole civilisation.

Judas and futurology. In his novel Jabłoński touches a very important problem: continuous search of a traitor. The need of unveiling someone who could play the part of contemporary Judas is being strong enough to survive generations. The fall of civilisation seems to only outline people's need to find a responsible, to hold a public lynch. When authorities are gone and morals vanish, and Jesus appears to be only a literary creation, people decide to destroy the pope. However, such move is only one of the many levels of conflict between Autonomous Kingdom of Hollywood and the New Vatican. The characters, staying out of awareness of that, place themselves in the centre of this fight, becoming puppets not only manipulated by the person of power, but also, as it is supposed to reveal, God himself.

Following the path towards making their dreams come true, they have to face the obstacles of destiny and their own non-existence. Realizing how shallow is their existence is the issue of only those, who are strong enough to see the meaning of life. The majority of the society will continue to ignore the confusion of their convictions, chasing only constantly appearing innovations. Struck by technology, they do not notice, that the world they live in drives them towards destruction, and they are the reason for that. Jabłoński, through the form of science fiction, which has its roots in literature of adventure, creates a piece, in which a non-believer Gas is looking for his place in the world of idiots powered by desire of easy gain and fast sex. As one of the few intelligent individuals, he is unable to accept the fact, that his life is going to be just vegetation. After encountering the theory of non-existence, he agrees to the further being, understanding, that his attempts are unworthy and senseless, as in the end he is only one of many elements and his ambition does not have any purpose. Jabłoński appeals to the fear of existence of contemporary people, writing a novel with a terrifying conclusion, and presents the end of culture as the beginning of the end of the world. It seems that 'Electric bananas' as nothing but such a warning, against human restlessness, worship of technology and turning from not only gods, but also from humanity. In the world, where one forgets about their brothers, everyone becomes another personification of Judas, as Jesus remains silently forgotten...

Reference:

¹ According to the note in 'Fantastyka', born in 1955 in Zakopane, mechanical engineer, gardener, profes-

sional driver and labourer, recently graduated from Scriptwriting Studium functioning at PWSFTiTV in Łódź. There are two of his known novels: *Kryptonim Psima* (Iskry, 1982)- partly used by P. Szulkin in the movie *Ga.ga- chwala bohaterom* and programme III of Polish Radio- *Schron*, and published together with A. Drzewiński compilation of short stories *Posłaniec* (Nasza Księgarnia, 1987). *Fantastyka*, 1987, at <http://jablonski.ceti.pl/biografia.php>.

² Pawlak R., op. cit.

³ Sobota J., *Koniec blisko*, <http://jablonski.ceti.pl/recenzje.php>. [27.06.2013]

⁴ Sedeńko W., *Posłowie do Wizji Alternatywnych 2*, <http://jablonski.ceti.pl/recenzje.php>. [27.06.2013]

⁵ M. P. Jabłoński, *Elektryczne banany, czyli ostatni kontakt Judasza*, Warszawa 1996, s. 239.

⁶Sex played an important role in this world, however was completely lacking emotional bonds. The reader can observe the situation when: 'a non-psychic intimacy of the partner is subjected to further fragmenting: it is not them as a somatic wholeness anymore, but only his sexual characteristics. After the increase of concentration on genital aspect of partner such deviation can be called 'fetishism'. (S. Lem, *Fantastyka i futurologia*, t. 2, Kraków 1973, s. 446-447.)

⁷ Jabłoński M. P., *Electric bananas, the last contact of Judas*, Warszawa 1996, p.195

⁸ Ibid, p.75

⁹ Ibid, p.81, 82 Nuncio was associating Gas with negative Bible characters: *Apage, Satanas!; Are you, there, traitor? I am calling you, Judas!*

¹⁰ Jabłoński M. P., *Electric bananas, the last contact of Judas*, Warszawa 1996, p.246.

¹¹ Ibid, p.225.

Клаудія Бончик. (Не)буття Іуди в романі «Електричні банани» Мирослава П. Яблонського. Автори ХХ - початку ХХІ ст. відродили інтерес до героя-зрадника Іуди. Дивлячись на нього з нової точки зору, вони секуляризували тему персонажа. Не збагачуючи морального значення образу, нові тексти будуть показувати Іуду як невід'ємний елемент світу в агонії. Таке футуристичне бачення було прийняте також Мирославом П. Яблонським, який не повною мірою виявив, ким постає Іуда. Існування такого героя стає предметом сумнівів і цей персонаж порівнюватиметься з іншою маріонеткою Творця.

Стаття є результатом дисертаційного дослідження з полоністики.

Світ, створений в оповіданнях Мирослава П. Яблонського, представляє реальність його власної антиутопії. Такий, здавалося б, популярний предмет часто дискваліфікує автора, в результаті чого пройшло багато років до фактичної публікації його творів. Роман «Електричні банани, останній контакт Іуди», який фрагментарно увійшов до антології польської наукової фантастики «Альтернативне бачення 2», зажив подібної долі. Проте, в тому ж 2013 році вся п'єса була опублікована у видавництві «Wydawnictwo SR».

Історія означає вірність Яблонського науковій фантастиці. Екранований під маскою, саркастичний

гумор, є апокаліптичним баченням реальності, прогнозуючи подальше падіння світу. Пророцтво, з одного боку, було в значній мірі позитивно оцінене критиками, проте з іншого боку, - було назване не дуже оригінальним, також і передбачуваним, а іноді навіть банальним, з огляду на сюжети сучасних творів.

Трагічне проступання історії продовжується девальвацією культури: так, протягом розвитку фабули роману перед читачем не постає видимих причин покращення ситуації. Яблонський, через форму наукової фантастики, яка має своє коріння в літературі пригод, створює частину, в якій невірний Гас шукає своє місце в світі ідіотів споживацького способу життя (від бажання легкої наживи до швидкого сексу). Зіткнувшись із теорією небуття, він погоджується на подальше буття, розуміючи, що його спроби негідні і безглузді, як і, врешті, він є лише одним з багатьох елементів, і його амбіції не мають справжньої мети.

Отже, можна резюмувати, що у світі, де мовчазно позабутий Ісус, як символ творчості і духовної дії, напротивагу йому панує Іуда, що уособлює кінець культури як початок кінця світу. «Електричні банани» демонструють що, відвертаючись від людства людина забуває не тільки про богів про й про своїх братів.

Ключові слова: М. П. Яблонський, роман «Електричні банани», персонаж Іуда, онтологія в літературі, секуляризація персонажа, сучасний роман.

Klaudia Bączyk – Doctor of Humanistic Sciences (finished with distinction); Phd dissertation: *Creations of Judas in the Polish epic of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (a PhD exam was on March 2014 at the University of Wrocław); Major of Polish Philology (specializations: teaching and journalist). From September 2011 until now working as a teacher of Polish as a foreign language (including three years spent working in Ukraine). Scientific interests of the author are the following: methods of teaching foreign languages, Polish contemporary literature and religion. Author of numerous publications and conference presentations (including Poland, Ukraine and Latvia).*

Клаудія Бончик – викладач польської мови як іноземної Вроцлавського університету, докторант (докторантський іспит з філософії зданий у березні 2014 р. у Вроцлавському університеті); магістр польської філології (спеціалізації: викладання і журналістика). Дисертаційна робота: "Персонаж Іуда в польській прозі ХХ-го - початку ХХІ-го ст.". Наукові інтереси автора такі: методи викладання іноземних мов, польська сучасна література і релігія. Автор численних публікацій і виступів на конференціях (в тому числі у Польщі, Україні та Латвії).

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