

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/kw.2020.29.153-167>

## Conscience of “Judas of Karioth”. On the universality of the drama of Karol Hubert Rostworowski<sup>1</sup>

Agnieszka Droś

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6310-5788>

In the article there is presented the universality of Karol Hubert Rostworowski's drama *Judas of Karioth* based on the presentation of the psychological profile and conscience behavior of the main character. Judas's universality was built on the situation in which there found himself, the main character facing the choice of heroism or dishonor. *Judas'* drama is also important from the point of view of conflict arising in a man living in a group that values other than himself and the lack of compromise. *Judas* of Karol Hubert Rostworowski is a drama that has lasted since the dawn of time, and received the most explicit character during the tragic events of the last century.

Keywords: Karol Hubert Rostworowski, *Judas of Karioth*, conscience, moral issues, drama

It was said about Karol Hubert Rostworowski as Wyspiański's successor, who “achieved Shakespeare's universality and the rank of a masterpiece.”<sup>2</sup> In his dramaturgy you can talk about one general hero, who is a man – not a concrete

---

AGNIESZKA DROŚ, MA in philosophy, MA in Polish philology, PhD student in philosophy at the University of Zielona Góra; address for correspondence: al. Wojska Polskiego 71A, 65-762 Zielona Góra; e-mail: [agnieszka.dros@gmail.com](mailto:agnieszka.dros@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> Translated by: P. Kruk, A. Droś.

<sup>2</sup> Lesław Eustachiewicz, *Dramaturgia Młodej Polski. Próba monografii dramatu z lat 1890-1918* (Warszawa: PWN, 1982), 204–205.

man, but a man in general. This character is full of emotions: he is greedy, duplicitous, he allows to humiliate himself through the weakers, while at the same time humiliating the others. But psychology does not play a major role in Rostworowski. The strength of a playwright's works is to put a man in front of his conscience – discovering the darkest corners of the soul in him. The author puts his heroes before the choices, for which there are no compromises that are *de facto* turning away from the ideal of moral unity<sup>3</sup>.

In February 1913, there took place the premiere of *Judas of Karioth* at the Juliusz Słowacki Krakow Theater. The spectacle was undoubtedly an amazing success, it met with very good reception not only from the audience, but also from the critics. This work was awarded in 1915 by the Lewental Award in Warsaw for the best Polish drama written in the last fifty years. The unquestionable success of the drama, apart from many artistic values, was influenced by its universality, because the tragedy of *Judas* of Rostworowski takes place in the form of many minor dramas of people to the present day. *Judas of Karioth* is the work that presents problems that have troubled humanity since the dawn of time:

The problem of Judas is a problem of universal and fundamental importance, not limited to that only, in the history of the accident, known as the betrayal of Christ by Judas. The fight between what is the most valuable in us, between what gives us the power of spirit and courage, what leads us to earthbound matters of the stomach and pocket, this fight did not begin in Judas's soul and did not end in it. This fight lasts as long as humanity exists and will last forever...<sup>4</sup>

Rostworowski achieved the universality of the work by expanding the psychological profile of Judas, to which he made many adversities, thus extracting a human being from the symbol of betrayal. The most hated criminal in history has become the hero of a tragedy in which, guided traditionally by a biblical path, he stands on the verge of going berserk through his conscience.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Irena Sławińska, "Wokół teatru K. H. Rostworowskiego," *Ateneum* 1938, no. 4/5: 694–695.

<sup>4</sup> Zbigniew Generowicz, "*Judas z Kariothu* w teatrze nowym," *Ilustracja Tygodniowa* 1946, no. 4: 56.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that about the conscience of Judas there says Evangel according to Saint. Matthew (Mt 27.3–5) according to which Judas wishes to give testimony of Jesus' innocence after passing

In Judas behavior of Rostworowski there can be seen emotional dynamics, very clear and rich conscience behavior,<sup>6</sup> which are an invaluable advantage to this tragedy. *Judas of Karioth* becomes the drama not only of Judas himself, but also the drama of all those who faced the choice of heroism or dishonor, as well as those who developed a morality in themselves other than that which their near environment requires from them.

Some threads have been intentionally omitted in this work, which are less important from the point of view of the task set. The aim of the work is to present Judas as the representative of all mankind – people who face alone situations in which there is no right choice. Despite the existence of many extensive and deep analyzes of Rostworowski's work,<sup>7</sup> most of them have not been taken into account, and the topic of the work has been approached from the perspective of ethics and the psychology of morality. Due to the fact that the main theme is the conscience of Judas, the demonic thread, the possession of conscience, and thus unconscious decision making are irrelevant in the work. Another aim of the article is to prove that the study of Judas of Rostworowski is very important not only from the point of view of ethics, but also from the point of view of sociology and psychology. In Rostworowski's drama, in my opinion, Judas was not the source of evil, but its victim. In this context, the most important thing is in what circumstances the protagonist of the drama finds himself and what features of his being came to the fore in a difficult situation. I believe that Judas did not act mainly out of weakness and cowardice, but his attitude can be situated in broad frames, patterns of human behavior and even features of human nature. Due to the small size of the work, these tasks cannot be fully amplify.

---

judgment. The intervention was unsuccessful, so Judas returned the payment received and, under the influence of feelings of helplessness, committed suicide.

<sup>6</sup> In Włodzimierz Szewczuk's definition, "conscientious behavior is the whole of internal (emotional-mental) and external (motor-expressive) reactions of an individual who, through his intentional or accomplished action, came into conflict with moral principles" – Włodzimierz Szewczuk, *Sumienie. Studium psychologiczne* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Książka i Wiedza”, 1988), 72. Oddly enough, the author himself gives an example of the conscience behavior of Judas from Kariat along with Raskolnikow and Antigone.

<sup>7</sup> About Rostworowski wrote, among others Tadeusz Sinko, Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, Stanisław Pigoń, Henryk Życzyński, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, Andrzej Pleśniewicz, Jacek Popiel. In 2016, Rostorowski's granddaughter, Maria Rostoworska, published the book "Szczery artysta. O Karolu Hubercie Rostworowskim".

## Psychological image of Judas of Karol Rostworowski

From the first scene of the drama, we see Judas as a confused and scared person. Iscariot accuses the Teacher that he does not want to make signs, but willingly talks about Jehovah, which a shopkeeper apparently fears. Judas claims that there is no justice in the world, people are too busy with the affairs of temporal life and he himself "had to hide from his own brothers in Nazareth,"<sup>8</sup> he also confesses openly that "when we believe we afraid."<sup>9</sup> Iscariot realizes that being in the presence of a man calling himself the Messiah can bring him to death sentence. He is also aware that the people who are behind him can turn away from him at any time. To propitiate the people, he needs signs, but the Master did not speak to the people by miracles but by the words, so Judas goes to deception by making false signs by "resurrecting clay birds." Soon he falls into the trap of Ezra, who urged the people to demand miracles from the Nazarene. Eleazar and Abraham threaten Judas with death, deliberately hitting his most sensitive point.

Arriving at the Sadducees, Judas appears to be out on his feet. His condition reminds a dream, and he is not able to realize that in fact he is needed to Annas and that he "could demand Zion's Treasures at this moment."<sup>10</sup> This is the moment of the total moral collapse of Judas. The former shopkeeper from Galilee is unknowingly drawn into the performance by Caiaphas, he is a small, frightened child, but he refuses to agree to the release of Jesus, shouting: "do not make me... oh! criminal!"<sup>11</sup> Judas is trying to resist, trying to gather the last of his dignity, shouting: "Lord! – I matter here!!!"<sup>12</sup> However, Caiaphas quenches his enthusiasm with a blow to the face. But this is not the end of the drama of this scene. For extortion of the crime someone pushed money into Judas' hands. Judas, however, does not feel them, allowing them to fall out freely. He is degraded to such an extent that he does not react when his wife is captured and led to death. This moment of the drama is symbolic, because: "in the scene there takes place a process – not for the life and death of Christ (that has been settled long and

---

<sup>8</sup> Karol Hubert Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane. Judasz z Kariothu, Kajus Cezar Kaligula*, vol. I (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), 90.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, 230.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, 243.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 245.

forever) – but for an incomparably more contemporary thing: a trial for a man who would like to have freedom of choice, but they don't want to let him."<sup>13</sup>

Judas gives up and goes to the hall, aware of the crime he will commit soon. From this moment the hero's actual drama begins. Unlike the biblical Judas, whose post-deed conscience led to suicide, Judas of Rostworowski has to face the pre-deed conscience, commit a crime with full awareness of what he does. He is faced with a choice: heroism or death, martyrdom or betrayal. His condition is close to madness. He cries, says frantically and anxiously, accuses his Master. He is not so bad being that unscrupulous save his own life at the expense of an innocent person, but does not have enough courage to oppose and sacrifice his own life.

### **In defense of Judas**

#### **(a) Judas a coward and Judas a dignitary**

In the traditional interpretation, commentators see Judas as a small man who could not bear the weight of the great idea. A shopkeeper from outside of Galilee could not understand the true meaning of Jesus' parables and promises, his little earthbound imagination he did not compass the mystical threads of his teaching. At some point, he realized that he had made a mistake and that his expectations in regard to Jesus would never be fulfilled, and that he was a small and cowardly man, he betrayed his Master.<sup>14</sup> Rostworowski himself judged Judas from the point of view of a Catholic. Maria Czanerle in the introduction to *Judas of Karioth and Caiaphas Caligula Caesar* notes that Rostworowski looked at Judas in the eyes of Rachel and the apostles, saw in him evidence of a blunt mind, limited and unable to pull himself away from a character tainted with private interests and egoism.<sup>15</sup> From the statements of Rostworowski himself there arises, the desire to approach the absolute testifies to mental health: "only degenerates, unable to go beyond the borders of their own positivistic backyard, reject everything that does not fit in this backyard [...]. They spread the cult of wordliness and littleness

---

<sup>13</sup> Maria Czanerle, "Introduction," in: Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 28–29.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 19–20.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, 27.

around themselves.”<sup>16</sup> In addition, Rostworowski openly talks about the role of Christian ethics in his work: “in both of my plays [*Judas of Karioth and Caligula*] the person of the drama is Christian ethics [...],”<sup>17</sup> therefore the moral assessment of Judas’ act in the drama must be determined in advance.

In addition to Judas a coward, understood as a weak and small being, we can also see Judas a dignitary who has never been given the chance to use his skills. Judas realizes that the success of Jesus’ idea depends on the support of the inhabitants of Galilee and Judea. That is why he cares about miracles so much. At the same time, he feels great as an activist and agitator. The happiest moment he had was Jesus entering Jerusalem, which he organized. According to Maria Czanerle, if Jesus became a true Jewish king, it would be on the shoulders of Judas the whole organization of the new power. Only Judas would know how to realistically direct the idea of the Teacher, and his sense of reality would gain the real proving ground. However, the Iscariot did not get the chance to develop his skills, which gives the impression that he has passed his time and vocation. The author suggests that if Judas had been born later, he would have probably become a Church dignitary who, like him, began to bend the idea of Jesus for his own interests. Judas fought for the “grounding” of his Master’s ideology, which is why he can be called an ideologist, and a consistent ideologist, because all his readings were dictated from ideological considerations, from joining to Jesus’ followers to treason of his Master. A former shopkeeper saw a chance in the teachings of Jesus that revised the old and ossified in the principles monastery and opened up promotion prospects for him. He saw in Jesus a prophet and a revolutionary (and he is not the only one, as evidenced by the Sanhedrins’ assessment of the new faith), who will reinstate religion to its ideological purity and justice in social life. That Jesus promised the Kingdom of Heaven to little ones, Judas explained to himself in real terms – as a kingdom from this world. He approached the new task with ardour and fervor, which schematic apostles and Rachel fiercely destroyed in

---

<sup>16</sup> Rostworowski’s statement I give as: Maria Czanerle, “Introduction,” in: Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 27. The author gives the source: *Mauriac i Ewangelści* and the year of publication 1936; however, she does not specify the page, place of publication, or author. I couldn’t find this source.

<sup>17</sup> Karol Hubert Rostworowski, “Pro domo mea,” *Głos Narodu* 1917, no. 97: 2. This quote was used by Jerzy Starnawski in the text “Tragizm *Judasza* Rostworowskiego”, which was published in *Przegląd Powszechny* in 1951 in volume 231. However, the quote from the article is not consistent with the source, the author changed Rostworowski’s words by writing “In my art a person of the drama is Christian ethics [...]”.

him. When he understood his mistake, he felt lonely and abandoned. His relatives had him as a dissenter, the masses he promised too much, scorned with a lying agitator. Rejected and disappointed, he found himself in front of the Synhedrion, and the rest was done by "Pharisaic methods" of qualified torturers.<sup>18</sup>

### (b) Judas' morality

The nickname "Iscariot" is the Greek transcription of the Hebrew phrase "husband of Karioth." On this basis, it can be concluded that Judas came from Karioth or was closely associated with this village, which in turn leads to the conclusion that he was the only Judean among the other Galilean apostles.<sup>19</sup> Judas was therefore an outsider, a stranger raised in another society. Reading the drama proves that completely different factors influenced the formation of morality in him than it happened in the immediate surroundings of Jesus.

The apostles and Rachel saw in Iscariot an ordinary, mortal sinner who by his nature errs, but who can convert at any time. However, they did not err themselves, their faith seems indisputable. Being in their company, Judas could not determine whether he is a good or a bad man. While conducting an emotional monologue in the company of Jan, he was struggled by opposing thoughts. On one hand, he accused himself of emptiness of the soul: "And me? When I open my mouth,/even if I speak word for word,/it's nothing! sounds! an empty bubble!/because I have a soul...barren!"<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, however, he could not forget that he was chosen by Jesus among many: "He had enough people around,/and he took me as an apostle,/so I am not so mean./(*Malignantly*)/Unless His thoughts deceived him./But this time even He is wrong!"<sup>21</sup> However, in conversation with Jan he confesses: "I am married/to the evil."<sup>22</sup>

According to commentators, Judas of Rostworowski is far from a symbol of evil and demonism. As Grzymała-Siedlecki writes, faith cannot fill the whole being of Iscariot, because he is filled with daily worries, a small shop and ambitions. Judas chose the path that most of his surroundings followed. Believing

---

<sup>18</sup> Czamerle, 22–26.

<sup>19</sup> Hubert Ordon, "Anatomia judaszowej zdrady," *Ethos* 2004, no. 1-2: 99.

<sup>20</sup> Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 133.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 133.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 119.

in the Messiah, he only wants to be promoted superficially, from a common shopkeeper he wants to become a Teacher's treasurer. The Iscariot's desires are therefore typically human, they do not testify to the demonic character of the hero of the drama.<sup>23</sup> According to Jerzy Starnawski, Judas was an honest shopkeeper, he fulfilled his duties, kept God's Commandments, observed fasting, gave alms. Despite the positive character traits and modest fair life desires, he was not liked by his surroundings. Everyone was a wolf to each other in his environment. Judas did not have happiness in his youth among his peers. There was no warmth in his family home, and he never had kind friends.<sup>24</sup>

Judas does not agree to exploitation, although he desires profits from Jesus' activities for himself, he represents the entire exploited social class. Thus, the main motivation of Judas is to change the political system, not to receive certain profits just for himself. Judas of Rostworowski is not a biblical Judas, shown in the context of fondness of money and greed. This is not the figure who was destroyed by money obsession. The hero of *Judas of Karioth* is a being who wants to improve his living conditions and meet his basic needs. Everyday dilemmas kept Judas too firmly on the ground, his eyes were still turned to the problems of the earthly day, they did not have time to learn to look at the light of the divine idea: "I saw all around/violation. I was sipping tears,/Iniquity from the walls on me...from ceilings."<sup>25</sup> In the system of Judas' values, social justice seems to be the most important. He says regretfully: "And the elements! Tithes!/Carried baskets to the priests!/(*affecting and decreasing*)/And those bitter, bitter tears/when a man mulls over the fate/when he starts to calculate:/this is mine, and this I take out.../for what? why? who?/if it could stay at home/for two, so in two parts/divided, not into three..."<sup>26</sup> Inspired during the monologue in the company of Jan, he says full of pride: "Woe to you, bloodline of lizards!/Like a slave before the lash,/so your greatness will shrink/before the voice of justice!/Woe to you, exploiters,/bankers who are selling God!"<sup>27</sup> However, the fight against the clergy was not easy and safe. Judas knew that he had to commit fraud by "resurrecting

---

<sup>23</sup> Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki, "Judas z Kariothu," *Kurier Warszawski* 1916, no. 7: 3–4.

<sup>24</sup> Jerzy Starnawski, "Tragizm *Judasza Rostworowskiego*," *Przegląd Powszechny* 1951, vol. 231, 425–426.

<sup>25</sup> Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 150.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, 143–144.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 132.

clay birds,” because the people were not interested in words and signs, and if they did not receive them, they could bring to Judas the death sentence: “It is the people, Fathers, how is it with the people./Today they humbles themselves before you/and tomorrow... they lead... to the cross.[...]/That is why I am afraid of the people.”<sup>28</sup>

Facing Caiaphas, being completely terrified, Judas tries to protest, shouting: “don’t make me...oh! a criminal!”<sup>29</sup> Despite further pressure, he continues to protest: “Lord! – I mean here!!!”<sup>30</sup> At least at the moment one can get the impression that judging an innocent man is a limit for Judas that he cannot cross and that the life of the Teacher may be more important for him than his own. Judas has been aware from the beginning of the death threat hanging over him, but still he is against committing the treason. It is also important that Judas ultimately does not surround to demands by intimidation. He is forced to commit a crime by finally aimed cheek, which broke his declaration of personal dignity. Maria Ossowska, by pointing to examples of practices in relation to prisoners of concentration camps, shows that public denial of values that man has professed so far ultimately breaks human personality.<sup>31</sup> Judas fell victim to manipulation. The destruction of his personality began in the first act, when two stranger hikers came to him. Facing Caiaphas, he was ordered to make a choice: either heroism or death, and when that was not enough, he was humiliated, his dignity was destroyed, there also proved that he is worth nothing, and the only way he should go is to renounce the values with the last of his strength he defended. What would Judas do if Caiaphas did not slap him? Would he betray Jesus? This question will remain unanswered.

### **The pre-deed conscience of Judas of Kartioth**

After the lost fight, Judas goes to the hall. Standing in front of the Nazarene’s door, he stares at it, wonders, hesitates. Lowering his head, he asks Peter if he is allowed to enter. After receiving an affirmative answer, he does not decide to take

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 145.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 243.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 245.

<sup>31</sup> Maria Ossowska, *Normy moralne. Próba systematyzacji* (Warszawa: PWN, 1970), 57.

advantage of this opportunity. He seeks for an expostulation to delay his crime, he asks: "Maybe he is sleeping?..."<sup>32</sup> Hearing that he could wake Him up, because Jesus is waiting for him, he still hesitates. He cries for a moment, pointing at the door, screaming frantically: "Get Him out of here!/Immediately! Nothing to you about Rachel!/He is more important!/(calmer after a moment)/Judgment on Him/They will give him up today. Today at night/I know who."<sup>33</sup> When the apostles ask who betray Jesus, he is overwhelmed by fear. He shouts: "Coward! – Coward! – Let He escape from the coward/the God himself!"<sup>34</sup> He does not admit that it is about him, he talks about the traitor in the third person, he claims that he cannot look at the torment, that "he's got the arms ... and the heart of a boy..."<sup>35</sup> Suddenly he informs that one has to "hurry him with help.../because he is feeling sorry for the man..."<sup>36</sup> He winds up, thinks aloud about the value of life, still refusing to enter the room, behaves as if he has lost his mind. For a moment he reflects on the power of a small man, saying: "Moses stirred the heart of a rock,/because the rock is large, and he is small"<sup>37</sup>, and after a while: "Have you seen the Satan? [...] In the well. [...] He is floating on the surface,"<sup>38</sup> thus alluding to the fact that he is the person who will betray the Nazarene. Sitting at the table with the apostles, he takes the place of Jesus and in a lot of different thoughts he admits that he will betray. He becomes aggressive, yells menacingly at Jan as he tries to get up from the table. After a while, he admits with impassivity that the reason for betrayal is the nation, to next confess that it is not true, that the reason is the lack of his faith, which is beyond his control. He again speaks of the lack of strength and accuses Peter of having apostles stoned him with hearts, emphasizing how destructive the presence of believers had influenced him, asks for forgiveness, and then goes to the room of his Master.

Judas' behavior in the hall clearly indicates that despite the fact that his fate has been sealed, a fight is taking place in him. The Iscariot does not want to betray, but he feels too weak to leave, thereby passing the death sentence on himself. He calls himself a coward, but also accuses companions and the nation. In his

---

<sup>32</sup> Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 257.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 259.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 261.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

behavior there can be seen fear, anxiety, shame and self-tormenting tendencies. These feelings, however, are not intended to bring Judas to compensation. As components of the pre-deed conscience, they will torment this weak man until the crime is committed.

Fulfilling Caiaphas's demands makes Judas's torment end. By giving up Jesus, he ended the conflict ongoing in him – this conflict is so tragic, because the final result of this fight was resolved long ago, and also because only betrayal could raise the flame of faith in Judas. According to Karol Koniński, in *Judas of Karioth*, there was aptly included a dangerous paradox of moral life and the purification of the soul through sin.<sup>39</sup>

When in the final scene the Christ stands in the door of the hall, Jan says: "Because there is a great miracle in the world/ Because there is not enough hearts in the world/ Fighting people with heart.../ fighting with consciences,/ until the Word Body became..."<sup>40</sup> Judas ends: "And will live – among you."<sup>41</sup> Judas' words end the drama, we do not know further fates.

### **Drama of Judas of Karioth – can we become Judas?**

Although the commentators blamed the weakness, cowardice and materialism of the main character of the drama for the betrayal of Jesus, Judas may not differ from any other mortal who was at the wrong time, at the wrong period, on whose shoulders there dropped too much weight. Judas, faced with the choice of martyrdom or betrayal, chooses the latter, because the alternative is impossible for him to realize. To defend the ideas, Judas would have to do the impossible – he would have to defeat himself. As Edward Leszczyński writes, the Iscariot "from a miserable man would have to become a hero – not necessarily a hero of Christianity but of his own humanity."<sup>42</sup>

When analyzing the statement of Edward Leszczyński, one should ask whether the inability to defeat oneself determines tradition or weak character.

---

<sup>39</sup> Karol Koniński, "Dwa dramaty o Judaszu (Rostworowski – Tetmajer)," *Mysł Narodowa* 1932, no. 18: 248.

<sup>40</sup> Rostworowski, *Dramaty wybrane*, 271.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Leszczyński, "Problem etyczny w *Judaszu z Kariothu*," *Museion* 1913, vol. 3: 43.

While one can agree with his statement in the context of biblical tradition, not necessarily in a psychological issue. Research conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s were repeated by Polish researchers, Dariusz Doliński and Tomasz Grzyb, psychologists at the SWSP University. The effect of the work became the book *Obedient to Pain*, in which the authors repeated the research in a slightly different version, raising new, previously unexplored issues. Among others, there was examined the influence of personality traits on the results of the experiment. Researchers have confirmed the opinion of most psychologists claiming that strong situations in which the examined person receives clear orders from the authority do not allow clear disclosure of personality factors as predictors of behavior. Thus, not cowardice of Judas could have had a decisive impact on his fall. Indeed, Judas was afraid of death, but this fear was not dictated by his cowardly nature. The Iscariot can be accused of the fact that from the moment of meeting with Caiaphas to the arrival in the hall some time passed, in which the future criminal could cool down and retreat. A similar accusation can be made against the employees of the Chernobyl power plant, who are mentioned by the authors of *Obedient to Pain*. Research by Doliński and Grzyb as well as the events of the last century show to how terrifying tragedies obedience led in history. According to the authors, the explosion of the power plant was caused by blackmail on employees whose supervisor intimidated losing his job and any profits associated with it. Although the employees knew that carrying out the requested activities could lead to a serious break-down, they did what was required of them. So, what is the difference between Judas' act and that of power plant employees? It seems that only because Judas had this bad luck to find a real Messiah, not a cheater.

In a traditional interpretation Judas of Rostworowski is defined as one of the parties to the conflict of idea with materialism. The author of *Judas of Karioth* himself described his hero as a dull and limited being, unable to leave his "positivistic garden". It can therefore be concluded that going beyond the biblical content, expanding the psychological profile of the hero, placing him in political and cultural space was not intended to defend the Iscariot. Anyway, Rostworowski wanted to present the story of Judas, without compromising the content of the Evangel. Perhaps Rostworowski set himself a didactic goal, showing on the basis of Judas to what sufferings can lead blindness to divine ideas to and that only living in accordance with Christian ethics can save us from the Judas fate.

Unaware of what he was doing, Rostworowski included much more content in his drama. He showed the suffering of a man who is required to choose between heroism and condemnation. Although it seems that in the author's opinion, the right choice depends on the choice of one of the extreme sides, which makes human character strong or weak, studies by Milgram as well as Doliński and Grzyb prove something quite the opposite. Judas does not present extreme materialism, dullness and mental illiteracy. Judas is every man who may find himself in a similar situation, which is why, despite his infirmities, he can enjoy greater sympathy than the paper figures of the apostles and Rachel. He is the person that viewers and readers will try to identify with. It is easier for us to understand Judas' fear than Rachel's most raised ecstasy, says Wiesław Gorecki.<sup>43</sup>

*Judas of Karioth* is also a picture of the conflict of realism with idealism, the conflict of two morals that cannot communicate and different motivations. It is also the drama of a man who, not agreeing to exploitation, picks on every opportunity for justice to happen. And although justice is the common goal of him and his companions, the paths to it are parallel and they will never be met. That is why Rostworowski's drama is so extremely important not only in the history of literature, but also in reflections about psychology and morality.

At the end of this paper I quote the words of Leszczyński, being an excellent summary of the moral issues of *Judas of Karioth*: "The tragedy of Judas – in Rostworowski's work – it's his ethical problem, and this problem can be summarized in the following dilemma: heroism or dishonorableness, martyrdom or treachery. This dilemma is to be resolved by a man of weak character, a man of a common level of thoughts, aspirations and feelings, no worse and no better than the thousand people of medium measure, whose life the Sphinx never makes to solve, similar difficult problems, who have never encountered a brilliant idea on their path, the living slogan of indomitable act. They will die, how they lived, calm and forgotten, when he not worse and not better perhaps than all of them is to become a hero or a no-gooder."<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Wiesław Gorecki, "Teatr Krakowski," *Gazeta Literacka* 1933, no. 7: 108.

<sup>44</sup> Leszczyński, "Problem etyczny w *Judaszu z Kariothu*," 40.

## Bibliography

- Biblia Tysiąclecia*, edited by Augustyn Jankowski, Lech Stachowiak, Kazimierz Romaniuk, Tomasz Hergesel and Ryszard Rubinkiewicz. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 2003.
- Doliński, Dariusz and Tomasz Grzyb. *Posłuszni do bólu*. Sopot: Smak Słowa, 2017.
- Eustachiewicz, Lesław. *Dramaturgia Młodej Polski. Próba monografii dramatu z lat 1890-1918*. Warszawa: PWN, 1982.
- Generowicz, Zbigniew. "Judas z Kariothu w teatrze nowym." *Ilustracja Tygodniowa* 1946, no. 4: 56.
- Gorecki, Wiesław. „Teatr Krakowski.” *Gazeta Literacka* 1933, no. 7: 108–109.
- Grzymała-Siedlecki, Adam. „Judas z Kariothu.” *Kurier Warszawski* 1916, no. 7: 3–4.
- Komiński, Karol. „Dwa dramaty o Judaszu (Rostworowski – Tetmajer).” *Mysł Narodowa* 1932, no. 18: 246–248.
- Leszczyński, Edward. "Problem etyczny w *Judaszu z Kariothu*." *Museion* 1913, vol. 3: 37–46.
- Ordon, Hubert. "Anatomia judaszowej zdrady." *Ethos* 2004, no. 1-2: 98–110.
- Ossowska, Maria. *Normy moralne. Próba systematyzacji*. Warszawa: PWN, 1970.
- Rostworowski, Karol, Hubert. *Dramaty wybrane. Judasz z Kariothu, Kajus Cezar Kaligula*, vol.1. Kraków: Literary Publishing, 1967.
- Rostworowski, Karol, Hubert. "Pro domo mea." *Głos Narodu* 1917, no. 97: 1–2.
- Sławińska, Irena. "Wokół teatru K. H. Rostworowskiego." *Ateneum* 1938, no. 4/5: 689–698.
- Starmawski, Jerzy. "Tragizm *Judasza Rostworowskiego*." *Przegląd Powszechny* 1951, vol. 231: 421–442.
- Szewczuk, Włodzimierz. *Sumienie. Studium psychologiczne*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Książka i Wiedza”, 1988.

### Streszczenie

#### Sumienie „Judasza z Kariothu”

#### – o uniwersalności dramatu Karola Huberta Rostworowskiego

W artykule przedstawiono uniwersalność dramatu Karola Huberta Rostworowskiego *Judasz z Kariothu* w oparciu o przedstawienie sylwetki psychologicznej i zachowania sumieniowego głównego bohatera. Uniwersalność *Judasza* zbudowana została na sytuacji, w której znalazł się główny bohater, stanąwszy przed wyborem bohaterstwa albo hańby. Dramat ten jest również istotny z punktu widzenia konfliktu powstałego w człowieku, żyjącym w grupie wyznającej inne wartości niż on sam i braku możliwości kompromisu. *Judasz* Karola Huberta Rostworowskiego jest dramatem, który trwa od zarania dziejów, a najbardziej wyraźnego charakteru otrzymał podczas tragicznych wydarzeń ubiegłego wieku.

Słowa kluczowe: Karol Hubert Rostworowski, Judasz z Kariothu, sumienie, problematyka moralna, dramat

### Zusammenfassung

#### **Das Gewissen von „Judas aus Karioth“ – über die Universalität des Dramas von Karol Hubert Rostworowski**

Im Artikel wurde die Universalität des Dramas *Judas aus Karioth* von Karol Hubert Rostworowski in Anlehnung an die Darstellung der Psychologie und des gewissenbezogenen Verhaltens des Protagonisten. Die Universalität von Judas gründet auf der Situation, in der sich die Hauptfigur – vor die Wahl zwischen Heldentum oder Schande gestellt – befand. Das Drama von Judas ist auch bedeutsam vom Gesichtspunkt des inneren Konfliktes in einem Menschen, der in einer Gruppe lebt, die an anderen Werten festhält als er selbst, und der keinen Kompromiss eingehen kann. *Judas* von Karol Hubert Rostworowski ist ein Werk, in dem die dargestellten Konflikte von Anbeginn an bestehen und ihren deutlichsten Ausdruck während der tragischen Ereignisse im vorigen Jahrhundert bekamen.

Schlüsselworte: Karol Hubert Rostworowski, Judas aus Karioth, Gewissen, Moralproblematik, Drama

Informacje o Autorze:

AGNIESZKA DROŚ, mgr filozofii, mgr filologii polskiej, doktorantka Filozofii na Uniwersytecie Zielonogórskim; adres do korespondencji: al. Wojska Polskiego 71A, 65-762 Zielona Góra; e-mail: [agnieszka.dros@gmail.com](mailto:agnieszka.dros@gmail.com)

