Review of the book by Michał Mazurkiewicz
“Sport in Literature and Art”

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An interesting book on the humanistic aspects of sport has recently appeared on the publishing market. In “Sport in Literature and Art” – because this is the position we are talking about – by Michal Mazurkiewicz, sport, painting, poetry and cinema have been combined in an interdisciplinary manner.

The author analysed the works or biographies of artists from various areas of art – sport being their common link. And so, at the beginning of the book, the reader learns not everyone knows facts about the life of Edgar Allan Poe. The author shows him as a sports lover – runner, jumper, boxer, swimmer, amateur of hiking. Poe’s passion for physical activity is visible in his work, which is also analysed in detail by Michał Mazurkiewicz.

Remaining in the area of literature, the author focuses on the figure and poetry of Kazimierz Wierzyński – gold medallist in the literary competition of the 9th Summer Olympics in Amsterdam in 1928. Wierzyński already loved sport from an early age, he distinguished himself in the game of football, cricket, stick-ball (a game similar to cricket). He was an excellent swimmer and footballer for Pogoń Stryj. This is probably why sport appeared in his works, for example, in the famous “Olympic Laurel” awarded with an Olympic gold medal. Wierzyński was also the editor-in-chief of Przegląd Sportowy [Eng. Sports Review]. Michał Mazurkiewicz writes about this and other curiosities of Kazimierz Wierzyński’s sports passion. He also analyses the presence of sport in painting – referring to the works of leading artists. However, he devotes most of his attention to Scottish art and to the game of golf depicted in paintings.

Following literature and painting, another area of analysis is film. Michal Mazurkiewicz focuses here on the person and work of Alfred Hitchcock – a devoted fan of the London West Ham club. His films feature sports threads – boxing, cricket, tennis, horse sports.

In the second part of the book “Sport in Literature and Art”, the author searches for the Christian roots of sport in America. Sport was accepted and promoted by organisations such as the YMCA, which allowed for the development of such disciplines as basketball and volleyball. In further considerations, Mazurkiewicz looks for connections between sport and patriotism in a specific group, that is sports fans. He cites here various charity and patriotic campaigns, the authors of which are supporters. It seems beneficial to also show the fan community in a positive light, demonstrating their socially-accepted or rewarded activities. The media usually focuses on the acts of hooligans associated with pseudo-fan groups. Michał Mazurkiewicz also introduces a sports hero – Alex Ferguson, the outstanding football coach, presenting this figure in a multifaceted manner.

In conclusion, the book “Sport in Literature and Art” is interesting, not only for representatives of the humanities or arts, but to show sport in art or, if you prefer – art in sport.