

temat autorów, protagonistów, prądów, opracowań czy — w końcu — osób zaangażowanych w powstawanie obrazów nurtu *film noir* inspirowanych twórczością Chandlera.

Opisana publikacja nie jest jedyną, w której Patrycja Włodek wypowiada się o Chandlerze. Jako filmoznawczyni opisuje adaptacje jego utworów w takich artykułach, jak „Świat był przemoczoną pustką”. „Wielki sen” Raymonda Chandlera i Howarda Hawksa czy „Wielki sen” Raymonda Chandlera. Zbrodnia i prawda w *hard-boiled fiction* i *film noir* oraz *Czarny kryminal* i *nieklasyczna narracja* — „Wielki sen” Howarda Hawksa, „Żegnaj laleczko” Edwarda Dmytryka i „Tajemnica jeziora” Roberta Montgomery’ego. Twórczość Chandlera była tłumaczona na język polski głównie przez Krzysztofa Adamskiego, Beatę Długajczyk, Violetkę Dobosz, Roberta Ginalskiego, Zbigniewa Gieniewskiego, Agnieszkę Klonowską, Jana Kraśko, Juliusza Marka, Dorotę Pomadowską, Michała Ronikiera, Leszka Stafieja, Władysława J. Wojciechowskiego.

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**The Hanged Man — the Meanings. The Image
of the Hanged Man in the Power of Western Culture, from
Marsyas to the Lesson of Anatomy**

Review: Zbigniew Mikolejko, *We władzy wisielca. Z dziejów wyobraźni Zachodu*, słowo/obraz, terytoria, Gdańsk 2012, 490 pp.

A French historian of culture, Jean-Jacques Courtine, asked himself the question: “how did the body become a subject of historical research?”¹. This question can be expanded: how did the human body become a source of symbolic culture ideas and how do the researchers discover and decipher it today². Marcel Mauss was one of the first who drew attention to the cultural conditioning of the body. In his article *Les Techniques du corps* (1934) he admired, and also analysed, the ways people from different societies use “the first and the most natural human tools” — their bodies³. Some researchers, e.g. Norbert Elias or Michel Foucault, analyzed the body in cultural and historical terms, and researchers from the fem-

¹ J.-J. Courtine, *Wstęp*, [w:] *Historia ciała*, vol. 3. *Różne spojrzenia. Wiek XX*, ed. by J.-J. Courtine, transl. K. Belaid, T. Stróżyński, Gdańsk 2014, s. 5.

² It is worth noting that currently the problem of “body” and its perception becomes very important in the popular literature.

³ M. Mauss, *Sposoby posługiwania się ciałem*, transl. M. Król, [w:] *idem, Socjologia i antropologia*, Warszawa 1973, s. 543.

inist mainstream, Simone de Beauvoir and Margaret Mead, included gender in the mainstream considerations.

Body anthropologists look at “the first tool” of man, asking questions that go well beyond the area of the basic functions performed by the body, as the authors of the three-volume work *Histoire du corps* edited by Courtine did. In the Polish humanities there are not many papers concerning the body in cultural and historical terms. Significant works include the book *Monstruarium* by Anna Wieczorkiewicz (2009), in which a deformed body is subject to analysis. Zbigniew Mikołajko, a philosopher of religion, a historian of religion and an essayist, followed a similar trail and in his book he tells the hangman story, after Gregoire Chamayou it should be said “a vile body”: a body spurned, condemned and dead shamefully, and which “in fact, secretly inhabits Western culture and celebrates its governance”⁴.

Mikołajko leads the reader through a labyrinth of mythical, fictional and real living characters. Each chapter, which is also a separate story, raises a different aspect of the hangman figure.

Art, social phenomena, historical events and life sciences are the sources of clues, hints and cues used to decrypt hidden messages written in the hanged body. The whole book begins with the mythological story of satyr Marsyas and Apollo, which, as evidenced by the author, had its continuation during, among others, the French Revolution (the sewing of leather shoes from the bodies of dead insurgents) or during World War II, when Ilse Koch (Red Witch of Buchenwald, Ilse the Lampshade), the wife of the commandant of the nazi concentration camp Buchenwald, ordered for herself making leather objects from the bodies of executed prisoners. In *The Myth Residents' Lesson* Mikołajko proposes to look at women's suicidal death by hanging, as a way to freedom, and further, as the beginning of the road towards emancipation. The story of Judas, his demonisation and mythologizing, is the basis of one of the chapters.

The chapter *Anatomy Lesson (not only on the Rembrandt's table)* is of particular interest, and the basis for further reasoning is the image of *The Dr. Nicolaes Tulp's Anatomy Lesson* (1632): “focus our attention with the conviction that this is one of the most important icons of the West, one of its sublime symbolic depictions, which are intertwined in a homogenous and coherent framework of Art and Reason, Humanity and Progress”⁵. At this moment a peculiar march of characters recorded in history and art, who are accompanied by the “corpse's second life”, begins.

In the works of art quoted by Mikołajko, traces of contemporary medicalization, which is characterized by the ruthlessness and treatment of the human body — no matter whether it is still alive or dead — as the object of analyses and research, can already be seen. Nicolaes Tulp cited above, like the seventeenth-century Frankenstein, is devoted to medical observations and creates the so-called

⁴ Z. Mikołajko, *We władzy wisielca. Z dziejów wyobraźni Zachodu*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 23.

⁵ Ibid., s. 207.

monsters book. No wonder that the Rembrandt painting's main actor in the "anatomical theater" is standing over a villain's corpse.

Understanding of the hanged man idea in Mikołejko's book takes place only within the framework of a comprehensive model that is constructed on the basis of myths, scientific discourses and stories about personal experience. Physiological data, cultural signs merge and begin to function within the framework of the integration — formation of longer narratives⁶. First of all the hangman figure reveals primarily „disliked” aspects like death, humiliation, rejection, to a Western culture recipient.

In one of his interviews, professor Mikołejko sums up the contemporary image of death: “The modern culture is trying to appease and misrepresent death and suffering. It creates shallowish illusions, and a pop culture plastic fairy tale is formed, a fairy tale from a supermarket”⁷.

The book is written in colorful language, and the enormity of factual material has been embellished with fine art reproductions and extensive fragments of literary works from various eras. There are numerous literary references, and Zbigniew Herbert and Sylvia Plath, among others, are the cited authors. The author also does not omit popular culture, and references, among others, to Harry Potter and other characters created by writers from these cultural circles appear.

The graphic design is also noteworthy, numerous reproductions have been carefully described, and the footnotes allow for further own research. Indices of geographical names, mythological and biblical characters facilitate the search for specific content.

It is worth noting that this is the book for a discerning reader, well-oriented in Western culture texts. The reasoning complicated in its structure, although written in vivid and plastic language, can hinder the perception.

A feeling of some dissatisfaction, which could remain on some of the problems, was already partially replenished in the second volume: *Under the Power of the Hanged Man. Dark Powers, Cruel Liturgies* published in 2014. However, has the topic been entirely explored? Courtine wrote: “At the time when the number of virtual entities is growing rapidly, when visual exploration of living organisms deepens, when the blood is transfused and organs transplanted [...], when the boundary between mechanic and organic is blurred [...], thinking about the border of humanity and its checking has become necessary more than ever”⁸.

⁶ J. Pacunkiewicz, *Kulturowe granice fizjologii. Mit troglodyty jako narracja liminalna*, „Kultura Współczesna” 2013, no 3, p. 61. See D. Wężowicz-Ziółkowska, *Moc narrativum. Idee biologii we współczesnym dyskursie humanistycznym*, Katowice 2008.

⁷ I. Gierblińska, K. Olczak, *Drugie życie trupa*, „Wprost” 33, 2013, p. 84.

⁸ J.-J. Courtine, op. cit., p. 8.