

Summary

CEZARY WAS (Museum of Architecture in Wrocław) / The traditions of the ancient drama as a structure of Mark Ravenhill's piece *Shopping and Fucking*

Beside plays of Sarah Kane and Anthony Neilson, performances based on the texts of Mark Ravenhill, especially on his first big play *Shopping and Fucking* from 1996, are regarded in the contemporary theatre as extremely distinct representations of problems of feelings of alienation and axiological emptiness of residents of big cities. Not denying this opinion it should be noted, however, that despite appearances created, among others, through the use of vulgar language expressions and references to the social situation in the UK after a period of extreme liberalism during the rule of Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990), the drama of Ravenhill in a wide range refers both to issues of substance and basic formal patterns of the ancient drama. Comparison of individual scenes of the piece with the knowledge of the Greek drama clearly indicates that a proper understanding of the author's presentation is only possible in the context of historical research on the classical traditions of stage works.

Excessive exposure in the piece of the British author issues of sexuality reminds about the sources of the Greek drama inherent in songs and poems in honour of Dionysus. Disgusting scenes of vomiting, murders and mutual instruct aim at shaking the recipient, but also at arousing the feelings of compassion for people who find themselves in a situation of a culpable or non-culpable misfortune. Such function of art would therefore be consistent with Aristotle's definition of tragedy, which assumed that it is a "representation of action [...], which by way of pity and fear leads to the purification of those feelings". Vicissitudes of characters of the performance start from a wanton conduct of one of them, go through a set of situations in which they defend themselves against the effects of errors resulting from their personal vices, and finally end almost happily. Such a scheme for a comedy also belongs to those described by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. In addition, any reference to the role of money and describing them as parent for the fate of a man, despite appearances of reflecting the condition of the contemporary world, were also a problem for poets of the ancient Greece. In the end, the thread, running through the entire play, of unceremoniously presented homosexual intercourses (along with a number of their perversions) can as well find its pattern in the Greek art of the Archaic and Hellenistic period.