

The trivialization of an
already trivial word:
an analytical
exploration of the a...



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The world in which we live is one of immense complexity, and its navigation often proves difficult for the ill-fated individuals who occupy it. Society and the pressure it puts on individuals has become increasingly worrying to many intellectuals; notably, Eugene Ionesco. In his mind's eye, the world had become abusive, manipulative and controlling, and he chose to make a statement about it in his work. In his 'anti-play' *The Bald Soprano*, Ionesco was able to make a profound comment on modern and postmodern society by dint of his employment of one-dimensional characters, the trivialization of time, and the banalization of society's expectations for one's behavior.

The first way in which Ionesco was able to criticize society was by way of his characters. The Smiths, Martins, Mary and the Fire Chief are all bland figures who seem to have no opinions that are their own. Rather than developing over the course of the play as traditional dynamic characters would, all of the individuals in *The Bald Soprano* are static. This is further complemented by the fact that none of the characters develops profound ideas on their own, rather they say things that are but the echoes of what had been previously said, as seen in the arguments that the couples have with each other that quickly become circular as the viewer notes that no new ideas are being introduced. Ionesco chose to do this to comment on the state of intellectualism during his time. He felt as though the community of intellectuals was being praised for avant-garde thinking without reason, and that these revolutionaries were simply reverberating ideas that had already been put forth. By translating this idea into his characters, Ionesco is able to show the absurdity of his contemporary intellectuals. Therefore, by making

his characters one dimensional, static, and close-minded, Ionesco is able to mock society.

The second method by which Ionesco was able to satirize society and its constructs was by trivializing time. 1 o'clock, 2 pm, 3 am 4. These numbers that society has assigned to our lives are but constructs around which individuals build their day. Ionesco banalizes this by placing a clock in the middle of his stage and allowing it to ring 7 times in the period of a minute, and in the next scene, it will ring as many times as it wants. By doing so, he is commenting on the absurdity of the construct of time. Why should all of humanity revolve around an idea of time, if time is something that we created? It isn't real, so why should we adhere to it so strictly? Who cares if Bobby Watson died 3 or 4 years ago because he is dead either way isn't he? Why should it matter? Why should time matter? These are the questions that Ionesco raises, and these are the questions that provoke the constructs of time.

The final tool that Ionesco utilizes to mock his contemporaries, is banalization, and in particular the banalization of behavioral constructs. This banalization is done in two ways, the first is making the world of his play devoid of certain social constructs that play immense roles in the lives of people in the 'real' world. For example, as the play comes to an end, Mrs Smith and Mrs Martin both kiss the Fire Chief in front of their husbands, yet the married men give no reaction. This brings to light the absurdity of the institution of marriage. Why do people get married? Why does this bond have such a large impact on the way people live their lives? The whole institution is brought into question. Ionesco is able to call further constructs <https://assignbuster.com/the-trivialization-of-an-already-trivial-word-an-analytical-exploration-of-the-authorial-message-of-the-play-the-bald-soprano/>

into question by giving them an excessive presence in the world of *The Bald Soprano*. For example, when the Martins are attempting to figure out whether or not they are actually married, they end each sentence by saying either “ my dear sir” or “ my dear lady.” After about two pages of interlocution, these phrases have been repeated so often that they begin to lose the meaning that society has bestowed upon them, and it becomes evident that the characters are saying these words because they have to, but not because they mean what they are saying. This further calls into question society’s demands of individuals and how they are supposed to act. Why must we end our sentences with this phrase, if it isn’t adding anything to my idea? Why must we waste our breath to utter words without meaning? This also ties into the aforementioned criticism of intellectuals and how they too say things with no meaning. As a whole, by banalizing society’s demands for people’s behavior, by putting disproportionate emphasis on said demands, Ionesco is able to reinforce his criticism of society.

Ionesco felt as though modern and postmodern culture needed to be reevaluated and he was able to translate this into his play *The Bald Soprano* by not adding depth to his characters, by questioning the construct of time, and by examining the society’s influence on individual behavior. By doing so, he was able to make a profound statement about the world in which he lived and communicated his plea for change. Art is a medium for visionaries, to visualize their hopes and dreams for the future, and reflect upon the mistakes of the past. Ionesco chose to question the present and ponder the future, and the audience takes what he says and changes, or not.