



## Aesthetics of Contradiction in *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* of E. Ionesco\*

Mohammad MOHAMADI AGHDASH\*\*

THE new play has its origins in the ruins of atrocious violence and unleashing fascist barbarism of France after the second devastating world war. Upsetting the world's political order as well as human thoughts led the critics and the literature to understand the absurdity of the world and of human existence, where freedom of expression and rational systems have given way to boredom and nightmare. So, the defeat of human thoughts, the metaphysical despair, and the anguish of humanity in extermination (racial) constitute the thesis of these so-called 'new' plays which are staged in Paris theaters during those years. It is basically a dramaturgy which, for reasons mentioned above, attacks a decaying universe, which, having lost its meaning is no longer capable of answering the questions of the man who wished to measure every event by the principle of causality. The question is just there: to seek a logical basis for desolate cruelty in a world upside down by illogical and insignificant facts. This avant-garde theater is in total opposition to the dramatic tradition. In fact, it is more seriously a question of a 'renewal of the literary language', alongside the other artistic current, the new novel, largely questions the true and literary realism based on the balzacian method which now had nothing to do with what was happening on the international scene.

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\*\*Assistant professor, University of Tabriz, Iran, E-mail: mohammadiaghdach@yahoo.fr

Evoking by this political, social and cultural context, we would like to say that the originality of Eugène Ionesco's play, as the founder of this new wave, which is known among contemporary critics for a dramaturgy of "contradiction" in the general sense of the term. Ionesco, at the head of a literary movement called new theater - with authors such as Beckett, Adamov and Genet - challenged the conventions of the dramatic tradition that no longer reflected the human condition. The man, following extreme violence of the fortieth, cut off from his socio-human roots, has the impression that life no longer has meaning and that the world is absurd. This is the concern of the avant-garde theater of Ionesco, which is trying to redefine the contemporary man who says "no" to the nonsense of existence, by renewing the conception of the dramatic genre. What is new at Ionesco is that on a philosophical-linguistic level, negativity and the spirit of the contradiction serve as a very effective language medium to oppose the banality of everyday life and the insignificance of the world.

But why a theater of contradiction? It can be answered by the fact that the expression "tragedy of language" comes from this famous contradiction which is the motor of the Ionesco's speech. Indeed, the semantic vacuum is the work of the acts of opposition in the characters of Ionesco, who contradict each other at any time. This is the reason for the emergence of major themes such as loneliness, uncertainty, ambiguity, dispute and ultimately incommunicability. Yes, otherwise, said, immersed in the platitude and banality of everyday life, the protagonists of Ionesco are constantly opposing each other because the repetition, the monotony and the uncertainty of the context evoked here, destroy the thought and the language. It is to be said that the absurdity of dramatic language in Ionesco's plays results largely from the spirit of contradiction, the latter as a weapon at the disposal of the author to oppose in a comic manner, in the philosophical sense, universal conformism that threatens humanity. But on the linguistic level, contradiction is a useful linguistic means to refuse clichés and ready-made proposals. In fact, Ionesco, having tried to learn English without difficulty by the Assimil method (1962, *Notes and counter-notes*), had discovered the automatic aspects and clichés of the everyday language. Then, every act of rejection of automatism and the banality of language is the revolutionary will to renew it, as Ionesco recaps it in these terms: "To renew language is to renew the conception, the vision of the world. The revolution is changing the mentality".

So, since the contradiction is the foundation of all Ionesco's theatrical discourse, the verbal contrast often comes in *The Bald Soprano* because language does not mean anything, and it also comes more often from the perversion of the logic that calls into question the theatrical discourse. But to that extent, language is everything for the character; being devoid of

meaning, it has occurred to only avoid being silent in front of his interlocutor who does not want to hear the other protagonist or when he remains indifferent. It should be noted that Ionesco's play is dealing with the 'conventional' man and his conventional language which E. Ionesco is dealing with since the aforementioned language hides the real. As we are in the age of suspicion and the universal nonsense of the post-war period, we are wary of language that is terribly out of touch with reality, and words are no longer capable of expressing existential malaise. The degradation of human thought, due to suffering, boredom, incommunicability and loneliness, creates uncertainty and insignificance. In a word, this play illustrates by all linguistic and scenic means that time has changed.

To end, we rephrase that Eugene Ionesco brings to the scene, by the bald cantatrice in 1950, the thesis of the absurdity of the agonizing human condition, while attacking the forms of expression of the genre. The existential malaise, of which we speak in the plays of the absurdity, is manifested rather linguistically than literary. The Ionesco's characters deal roughly with the philosophical notion of incommunicability on the stage of the theater which is reduced to small gestures and insignificant words. Moreover, the theatrical speech that has just been read in the two forerunners of the new French play, *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*, is after all the dysfunctional discourse of language that cannot seem to signify. What is remarkable in Ionesco's work is the insignificance of contradictory work which is seen as the central theme of this dramaturgy. The contradiction, an excellent linguistic means to reject the other, is at the disposal of the author to tackle the banality of everyday conversation. The spirit of contradiction, putting the protagonists in opposition to each other, thus undermines any idea and will of communication, destroying the outmoded forms of expression, to put in place a new language that suits modern man whose systems of thought are in a state of degradation. The theatrical discourse that occurs in the context of enunciation in Ionesco's characters is pure and neutral, breaking with the dramatic tradition.

**Keywords**— contradiction, nonsense, loneliness, incommunicability, absurd.

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