

Panel 15

Ethics and Care

Architectures of Sentiment in Samuel Beckett: Designing Textual Infrastructures as Self-care Practices

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This paper explores the notion of “architecture of sentiment”, introduced in Samuel Beckett’s first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, as a generative framework for understanding Beckett’s literary practice as a form of designing self-care practices. It is grounded in his early fiction (*Dream of Fair*, *Murphy*, and *Watt*), addressing how aesthetic form becomes infrastructural: a way of organizing time, sensation, and relation within precarious environments. Drawing on Beckett’s philosophy notes, psychological reflections, and his aesthetics as formulated especially in his first novel, and his essays, *Proust* and *Three Dialogues*, my approach frames these writings as vectors of design thinking, where the relation between character, affect and spatial logic is deliberately composed to negotiate pressure and dissonance. Rather than retreating from the world, Beckett builds micro-environments that mediate lived experience: slow forms, recursive movements, and affective delays that resemble what Lisa Baraitser calls “enduring time,” or what Maria Puig de la Bellacasa describes as “care time.” These narrative architectures function as both fragile infrastructures and ethical gestures, that is, structures of persistence and minimal repair. In conversation with theories of infrastructure (Latour, Berlant), affect (Brinkema), and dissensual aesthetics (Rancière), this paper argues that Beckett’s work models design not as a problem-solving practice, but as a mode of attention to thinking, as a practice of care and composition. At its core, Beckett’s architectures of sentiment offer a literary mode of critical reconfiguration, where the text itself becomes a space of compositional care, oriented toward co-existence, delay, and the aesthetic labor of staying with negativity.

Biography

Thomas Symeonidis teaches Aesthetics at the Athens School of Fine Arts and European Literature at the Hellenic Open University. He also serves on the scientific committee of the Master’s in Transdisciplinary Design (AUTH). His research bridges literature, philosophy, and design. His latest book, *Designing the Body of Writing*, is forthcoming in English.