

Beckett and Post-War Experimental Fiction in Poland

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In my essay I would like to discuss the problematic issue of experimental fiction in general and Samuel Beckett as an experimental writer from the perspective of post-war experimental fiction in Poland in particular.

In the first section I will briefly analyse some definitions of experimental art in the context of tradition and normativity in literature (diachronic axis) as well as relativity and individuality (synchronic axis). Subsequently, I will propose a typology of experimental fiction grounded in the categories of small and large semantic units (J. Sławiński, 1967). The artistic activities within the order of the large semantic units will be further subdivided into the following types: formal (i.e. a group of dominating phenomena that have to do with narrative form), thematic (i.e. a group of dominating that refer to contents), and generic (i.e. a group of dominating phenomena that regard genre and text type). Each type of experimental work will be illustrated with an example from Beckett's fictional oeuvre.

In the second part of my paper, I will contextualize my findings by providing a far from exhaustive list of novels by Polish experimental writers after World War Two (Andrzejewski, Białoszewski, Buczkowski, Gombrowicz, Mach) with analogous phenomena to Beckett's novels. The purpose of this will be to demonstrate a number of text features common for the Irish and Polish artists. Ultimately, I will not explore Beckett's influence on Polish writers, as it is virtually improvable, but rather parallel approaches to novel and language, yearnings to "make things new" or attempts at expressing the post-war reality at both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Short Bio :

Bartosz Lutostański is an independent scholar currently based in Warsaw, Poland. He actively participated in organising four literary conferences. He taught narrative theory, literary theory and British literature. The list of his publications includes studies of contemporary literature (S. Beckett, W. Gombrowicz, J. Berger) and narratology. He is also a translator of numerous articles by, amongst others, H. Porter Abbott, S.E. Gontarski and Wład Godzich into Polish. After successfully doing the PhD (January 2016 at the University of Gdańsk, Poland) he has dedicated himself to his three passions: teaching English, writing, and playing the bass guitar.