

BECKETT

SAMUEL BECKETT: OUT OF THE ARCHIVE

THE UNIVERSITY of York



CONFERENCE AND FESTIVAL REPORT

This international academic conference and surrounding festival – composed of an exhibition, two readings, two plays, and a concert – took place between the 16th and 26th June, 2011, at various locations around the University of York. The events were organised by Bryan Radley and Prof. Lawrence Rainey (Department of English and Related Literature), and Dr. Peter Fifield (University of Oxford).

The conference and festival reached over 2,500 people in person. These included members of the public, staff, students and alumni of the University, and conference delegates. Our website has received over 82,500 unique page views (updated 2018), with over 50% of visitors to the site coming from outside the UK.

The following were the events' sponsors and funders. At the University of York: the Centre for Modern Studies; the Department of English and Related Literature's 'Writers at York' fund; External Relations; the Vice-Chancellor's Office; the York Annual Fund; and the inaugural York Festival of Ideas. External funding bodies: Culture Ireland; the Modern Humanities Research Association. Sponsors: BDP architects; the Dean Court Hotel (sponsorship in kind).

“At the conference in York the various plays, music and a reading by Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee showed the living resonance that Beckett's texts have today.”

Anja Kampmann, DRadio (German radio station), 28th June 2011 (trans. D Russell)

“[...] it was for you, the university and the city of York, a fantastic event. It was a real privilege for us to be involved as much as we were.”

David Brooks, Dean Court Hotel

“Again let me congratulate you [...] on a wonderfully organized and exciting conference. I was pleased to be a part of it. You've certainly demonstrated that the UK is the centre of Beckett Studies today.”

Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel-Aviv University, keynote speaker

“nice to have access to the local community”

Jane and family, Badger Hill

“[The Festival] brings together a range of world-class speakers, exhibitions, and artistic performances exploring a series of intriguing links between past and present as well as showcasing contemporary ideas, arts and culture [...] It explore[s] the work of the 20th century dramatist Beckett, through readings by Nobel Laureate J M Coetzee and fellow novelist John Banville (a winner of the Booker Prize) [and] feature performances of the playwright's works by the Gare St Lazare Players.”

Yorkshire Post, 2nd June 2011

JOHN MINIHAN: BECKETT IN PHOTOGRAPHS
Exhibition, 16th-26th June 2011, Ron Cooke Hub

Exhibition curated by Bryan Radley and Lawrence Rainey
Multimedia installation created by Morag Galloway, Ben Madden, and Nik Morris

Total number of visitors: 833

Comments taken from visitors' book unless otherwise attributed

Photographs copyright Deborah Russell or Ian Martindale



"Fantastic portfolio of work displayed in the most sensitive of manners."

Kate and Ian Burns, Dubai, UAE

"One of my heroes. Lovely exhibit. Wonderful film."

Dame Helena Kennedy, London

"Powerful works and nice to have access for the local community."

Jane and family, Badger Hill

"Wonderfully evocative photographs, which conjure up a great sense of place and period. The use of the demonstration room is incredible."

Morven and Matt, TFTV

"What an amazing, moving and innovative exhibit - brilliant. Thank you."

Josephine Taylor, Virginia, USA

"Very impressive and a marvellous example of how a video installation should be. Bravo."

Catherine Jeffrey, Whitley Bay, North Tyneside



"It. Was. Awesome! + very enlightening!"

Ashleigh Cole and JoJo Thorogood, Goodricke College

"Fascinating and well presented. Thank you!"

Imke Heuer, Bremen, Germany

"Poignant and beautiful words and images, glimpses of something ... golden."

Lindsay Whitwell, Grantham Drive, York

"Truly captures the man and his works."

The Poole Family, Belfast

"Pure stimulation for the senses! Excellent."
Kev Sherratt, Health Sciences

"Wonderful, wonderful photographs!"
Hersh Zeifman, Toronto, Canada

"Profoundly affecting photographs so sensitively exhibited, all speaking of [Beckett's] spare, quiet, enduring power. Thank you for your warm welcome."
Sheila Taylor, High Oaks, York



"York was a great buzz... never have I seen my work look so good, again many thanks for all the energy that was put into the show."

John Minihan, seen below in action at the exhibition opening, via email



"[...] a stunning exhibition [...] Intimate and memorable photographs"

Hello Yorkshire blog, 19th June 2011

"a stunning exhibition of work [...] with] a moving montage set to original music"

The York Press, 10th June 2011

"It is clear Beckett was in good hands [with Minihan]. Seeing a literary figure whom many find intimidating to discuss or understand in a light both impressive and benign, ordinary and extraordinary, provides real insight into both this individual and the medium that captures him so well."

Sarah Jilani, Nouse, 22nd June 2011

JOHN BANVILLE
Reading from a forthcoming novel & interviewed by Hugh Haughton and Bryan Radley
23rd June 2011, Physics Building

Audience numbers: estimated 260

Photographs copyright Ian Martindale

Comments received via email unless otherwise attributed



"John Banville [...] can certainly attract a crowd. [...] Banville speaks in a brisk and undramatic manner. He allows the words to speak through him, adding his Irish lilt to the many other accents already in the room. [...] Entering into discussion with his two 'interrogators,' as he wryly terms them, the audience is then also given the opportunity to ask questions. Banville talks about what it means to be a novelist, an Irish author, and the influence of Beckett on his work with an engaging frankness and truthfulness."

Anne Mellor, *The Yorker*, 25th June 2011

"Thanks for all your attentiveness and good care when I was in York. I enjoyed the evening."

John Banville



"Hearing John Banville was a unique experience [...] His thoughts about the process of conceiving literature, delivered with a generous dose of self-irony to an excited audience, instantly forged a vivid image of a writer at his desk, conjuring up literary universes that 'think themselves'. Right away [...] this naggingly familiar tableau of harmony was collapsed by Banville himself pointing out that it is the 'sudden eruptions of the darkness and the ignorance' that make art. [...] [This was] almost a leisurely but shrewdly structured interview by two literary scholars [...] As a reader of his work [...] I am absolutely grateful to the author and conference organisers for this shared moment of aesthetic experience."

Jurate Butkute, Vilnius University



J. M. COETZEE
Reading from work in progress, 24th June 2011, Central Hall

Audience numbers: estimated 750
Photographs copyright Ian Martindale

"J M Coetzee made a rare public appearance at the University of York's international conference, 'Samuel Beckett: Out of the Archive' [...] Coetzee's attendance was a main highlight of York's first Festival of Ideas."

Books Live, South African online newspaper, 27th June 2011

"A dapper, silver-haired figure stands centre stage in Central Hall, reading from loose sheets of paper with a quiet intensity [...] The reading is [...] a privileged glimpse into a new fictional world."

Anne Mellar, *The Yorker*, 26th June 2011



"Coetzee read very well, for nearly an hour, and really captured his audience. He has an intensity which draws the listener in. He read from a work in progress, and it was enthralling."

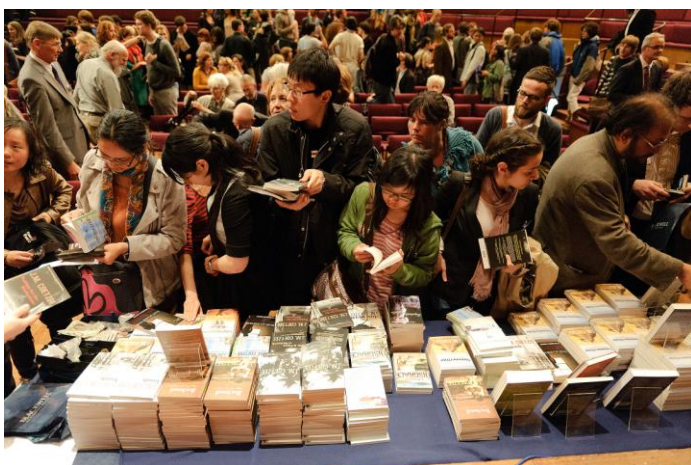
Julie Campbell, *The Beckett Circle* journal, Fall 2011

"J. M. Coetzee made an exciting but rare public appearance at York University, reading from a work in progress [...] It was wonderful to finally see Coetzee in person. As for the work he read from, he indicated no title, or possible publication date, but the two chapters that he let the audience into were just captivating."

Lucy, *Literature and Human Rights York* blog, 11th July 2011

"Such a rare occasion from such a great yet publicity-shy writer."

@psychometricsuk, SRS Group Ltd, Twitter, 30th June 2011



"Coetzee read his work in a quiet, understated tone [...] it was in fact deceptively expressive: he read the sections of dialogue, in particular, with subtle intonation [...] When it was] announced that Coetzee had agreed to sign copies of his books [...] a hundred-strong queue of people immediately materialised, as the rest of the audience filed out of the hall talking over the narrative fragment they had just heard."

The Coetzee Collective website, 7th July 2011

"J. M. Coetzee's appearance at the 'Samuel Beckett: Out of the Archive' conference in York this June is a timely point to reconsider the dynamics of [...] 'literary paternity'"

'Into the Archive: J. M. Coetzee and His Precursors' conference publicity, University of Leeds, June 2011

FIRST LOVE AND THE END
Performances by Conor Lovett, Gare St Lazare Players
22nd-25th June, 2011, Wentworth College Dixon Studio Theatre

Director: Judy Hegarty Lovett

Lighting: Lorraine Wales

Audience numbers: estimated 320

Photograph copyright Ros Kavanagh

Comments received via email unless otherwise attributed



"First Love and The End were a real joy. Hearing The End after the Coetzee reading was particularly interesting: the relationship was striking."

Catherine Laws, Department of Music

"I thoroughly enjoyed First Love, and thought it was great that a show of this calibre was on offer to the general public for free."

Kate Highman, York

"The End was, I thought, outstanding."

Paul Sheehan, Macquarie University, Sydney

"Lovett encourages the audience members to listen and watch attentively, and thus enter into the strange worlds of the two novellas, through voice and gesture alone, and this was helped by the intimacy created both by the space [the Dixon Studio Theatre] and his delivery. Lovett spoke directly to the audience, making eye contact, and even responding to audience member's laughter or sounds of dismay. He used pauses and silences to great effect [...] The End managed to reach really interesting depths, and to convey a sense of the darkness, the strangeness and the mystery of the piece."

Julie Campell, *The Beckett Circle* journal, Fall 2011

"Conor Lovett, considered by many to be the definitive Beckett performer, brings these one man tours de force to life, while Judy Hegarty Lovett's innovative direction is typical of a company renowned for their ability to expose the compassion, humour and integrity of Beckett's work."

Rhys Tranter, *A Piece of Monologue* website

"For our part we were very very impressed and we truly enjoyed our time there. We think you did a great job! It was one of the best organised events that we have attended. We were delighted to be part of it."

Judy Hegarty Lovett, Gare St Lazare Players (director of *First Love* and *The End*)

BECKETT IN MUSIC
Concert, 25th June 2011, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall

Performance curator: Catherine Laws

Performers: Damien Harron, Catherine Laws, John Tilbury, Jos Zwaanenburg

Compositions: John Tilbury, *Cascando* (2001) and *Three Late Poems of Samuel Beckett* (2010); Martin Iddon, *head down among the stems and bells* (European premiere); Damien Harron, *what is the word* (world premiere)

Audience numbers: estimated 230

Photographs copyright John McGrath (Tilbury) or Damien Harron

Comments received via email unless otherwise attributed



John
Tilbury

“Beckett in Music is a four piece musical programme which showcases a number of innovative performances inspired by the writings of the radical twentieth-century Irish playwright, poet, and novelist Samuel Beckett.”

‘The Best Events in York this Summer’,
Enjoy Bed & Breakfast.com, May 2011

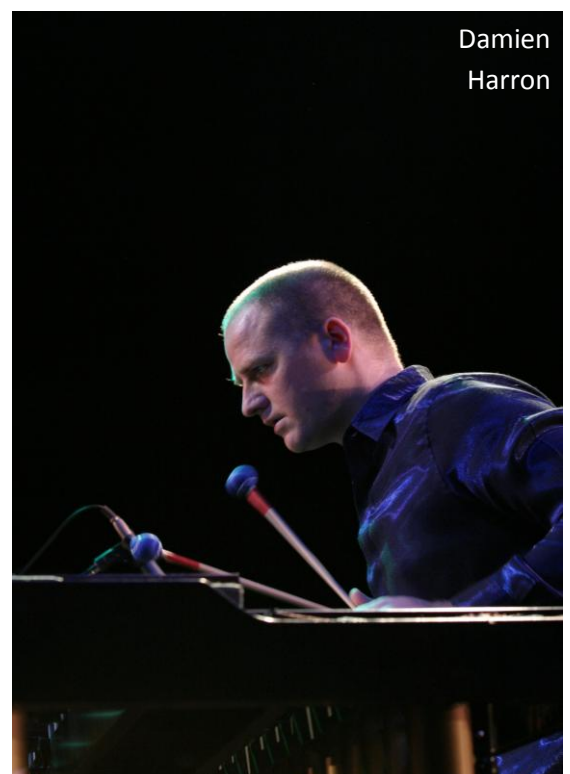
“The [Sir Jack Lyons Concert] hall is a large, impressive space with wonderful acoustics, and the audience encountered a large, dark performance area, with four musicians totally still, two grand pianos, percussion instruments and a flute. What followed was a varied programme of music inspired by Beckett texts, with each performance lighted in turn, the rest of the space left in darkness [...] Listening to these performances was a mesmerizing experience, and strangely fascinating [...] In the programme Laws points out Beckett’s ‘finely tuned sensitivity to sound’ and this kind of sensitivity was apparent in all the performances. Beckett’s work, Laws suggests, encourages the reader, spectator or listener ‘to concentrate on what it is to listen,’ and this is surely what this concert achieved for the audience: a strong awareness of ‘our own acts of listening.’”

Julie Campbell , *The Beckett Circle* journal, Fall 2011

“The Beckett in Music lunchtime concert was a highlight of the ‘Out of the Archive’ conference. Beckett continues to inspire composers around the globe, and this event offered a taste of some of the most exciting Beckett-related music of recent years to a large audience of international Beckett scholars and members of the public.

It’s rare to see John Tilbury perform and the chance to hear him perform two of his Beckett-related works, *Cascando* and his recent settings of three late poems, was a real treat. The programme was well structured, held a theatrical thread throughout, and the focus on new works echoed the conference’s focus on cutting edge, groundbreaking Beckett work – featuring a European premiere of Martin Iddon’s *head down among the stems and bells*, performed beautifully by Catherine Laws on prepared piano, and a world premiere of Damien Harron’s *what is the word*. Overall, the concert marked a successful and important step in increasing recognition of Beckett’s significance to modern music.”

John McGrath, University of Liverpool



Damien
Harron

'SAMUEL BECKETT: OUT OF THE ARCHIVE'
International Academic Conference, 23rd-26th June 2011, Humanities Research Centre

Delegate numbers: 170

Keynote speakers: Linda Ben-Zvi, Lois Overbeck, and Jean-Michel Rabaté

Special guests: John Calder, Marek Kędzierski

Comments received via email unless otherwise attributed

DELEGATES AND GUESTS

"At the conference in York the various plays, music and a reading by Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee showed the living resonance that Beckett's texts have today."

Anja Kampmann, DRadio (German radio station), 28th June 2011 (trans. D Russell)

"It was a very successful and well organized conference, and the way it was structured worked towards a relaxed rather than a high-pressured atmosphere, with breaks for coffee and lunch that gave the delegates the chance to meet fellow Beckett scholars and discuss the various panels, exhibitions and events, and the diverse and often fascinating issues raised."

Julie Campbell, *The Beckett Circle* journal, Fall 2011

"[A] pioneering Beckett archive conference"

Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative website, 17th May 2011

"I just wanted to say that I appreciated hugely all the efforts you made to smooth [John] Calder['s] path. I know he – and certainly I – had a wonderfully interesting time. Your conference was a model of planning and execution. Many, many congratulations."

Sheila Colvin, former Associate Director of the Edinburgh International Festival and Director of the Aldeburgh Music Festival, special guest

"Again let me congratulate you [...] on a wonderfully organized and exciting conference. I was pleased to be a part of it. You've certainly demonstrated that the UK is the centre of Beckett Studies today."

Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel-Aviv University, keynote speaker

"All my thanks for a brilliant conference and perfect organization [...] It has been amazing, truly. I'll be very proud to be in the special issue of *Modernism/modernity* that will commemorate it."

Jean-Michel Rabaté, University of Pennsylvania, keynote speaker

"I just have to reiterate to you and all the other organizers of the conference how terrific everything was and how happy & fortunate I feel to have been able to participate in it [...] Above and beyond the high quality of all the speakers and activities you convened for us, the conference was simply a model of efficiency, organization, and attention to detail [...]"

Marc Caplan, Johns Hopkins University

"Just a quick note to thank you all for your extraordinary work in organising the conference last week. Both in things small and large I thought the conference excellent."

Mark Nixon, University of Reading

"[...] an extremely successful and well organised conference. I regularly attend and enjoy generalist Irish Studies conferences, but 'Samuel Beckett: Out Of the Archive' offered challenges and rewards of a different order. Well done, and many thanks."

Ulf Dantanus, Gothenburg University / University of Sussex

"I would like to thank you for a wonderful, and wonderfully varied, conference. The performances, readings, exhibition and interviews, in particular, made for an extraordinarily special experience."

Brynhildur Boyce, Goldsmith's, University of London

"Thank you all for organising such an amazing conference, with so many different kinds of events (readings by Banville and Coetzee; stagings of the novellas; concert; photo exhibition, etc) that all ran like clockwork. An amazing feat, and hugely enjoyable. It's an event that will be remembered in the Beckett world."

Ulrika Maude, Durham University

"What a pleasure to have met you all – it was a great conference, and I'm grateful to have been included."

Toby Zinman, University of the Arts, Philadelphia

"I just wanted to say thank you for allowing me to participate in the really wonderful conference on Beckett this past weekend. It was really well planned and organised and just such a pleasure to attend."

Katy Masuga, Université Paris IV La Sorbonne

"I wanted to thank you for what has been four amazing days and far and away the best conference I have ever attended."

Claire Lozier, University of Leicester

"Thanks very much for putting together a wonderful conference."

Michael D'Arcy, St. Francis Xavier University

"It really was a fantastic conference and you have all reason to be very proud of how it went. It might have been one of the smoothest and most interesting conferences I have been to."

Jan Wilm, Technische Universität Darmstadt

"I wished to thank you all very much for the considerable energy you put in to making this event such a success [...] We all were delighted with an event that was extremely rich in stimulating exchanges and in warm human contacts."

Llewellyn Brown, Université Paris Ouest - Nanterre - La Défense

"Well done on the conference [...] Really, a terrific gathering."

Ronan Crowley, University at Buffalo, State University of New York

"Thank you again [...] for a wonderful event. I am delighted to have been part of this great conference."

Nadia Louar, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

"Congratulations for such a wonderful conference and such great organization."

María Jesús López Sánchez-Vizcaíno, University of Córdoba

"Back home and back to work [...] with very happy memories that I bring with me from York. Thank you for organizing such a fantastic conference; I learnt a lot, met very interesting people and of course the plenary speakers were first rate."

José Francisco Fernández, University of Almería

"Heartiest congrats on the conference organisation. As an international Beckett event, it certainly ranks with the best of them [...] I particularly enjoyed the mixture of events - music, photography, theatre [...] and the canny organisation of the panels."

Paul Sheehan, Macquarie University

"Thanks to you all for organising such a wonderful conference."

Paul Stewart, University of Nicosia

"Thanks again for a truly remarkable event. It was an experience that I'm sure many of us will remember for many years to come."

Yael Levin, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

"Thank you again for the inspiring conference in York! It must have been a huge effort considering the sheer amount of topics addressed - and the special events."

Asja Szafraniec, University of Amsterdam

“Thank you for organizing a great conference; many of us benefited a great, great deal from it.”
Lin Li, National University of Singapore

“Thanks again for a welcome, wonderful and exciting conference!”
Matthijs Engelberts, University of Amsterdam

“Thank you for an excellent welcome to York and a stimulating conference. I was particularly impressed by the extra-curricular activities, which complemented the paper panels so well. Congratulations on a very fine conference.”
Cóilín Parsons, University of Cape Town

PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS

“May I say that as a volunteer, I've never been treated better! So thank you.”
Pojanut (Fai) Suthipinittharm, conference helper

“It is great to hear how successful [the multimedia presentation] was – and I thoroughly enjoyed working [...] on it. It was a real pleasure to be part of the exhibition.”
Morag Galloway, creator of the soundtrack for the multimedia presentation at the Minihan exhibition

“[It] was a great project and I really enjoyed the whole event. Looking forward to future collaboration with you all.”
Nik Morris, coordinator of images and post-production for the multimedia presentation

“It was a very good event, and I continued my Beckett experience by viewing the exhibition in The Hub – amazing images.”
Celia Frisby, Concerts Administrator, Department of Music

“I just wanted to write to say thank you again for giving us space to exhibit at ‘Samuel Beckett: Out of the Archive’. It was a very successful event for us and, on a personal note, a very enjoyable one as well. Talking to some of the other attendees, I think I can safely say that I was not alone in thinking this [...] Please pass on my thanks as well to all involved in making sure things ran so smoothly.”
David Avital, Senior Commissioning Editor, Continuum International Publishing Group

“[...] it was for you, the University and the city of York, a fantastic event. It was a real privilege for us to be involved as much as we were.”
David Brooks, Dean Court Hotel



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CENTRE FOR MODERN STUDIES

BECKETT

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