

<p>Institution: University of Reading</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature</p>
<p>Title of case study: Samuel Beckett's Legacies</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The impact activities described in this document are dedicated to altering cultural perception of the creation, production, and performance of modern literature through re-presentation of the work of the Irish writer Samuel Beckett in a variety of informed contexts. Beckett research at Reading is underpinned by the university's exceptional archival resources, which include manuscripts of his writings alongside rare editions, letters, production notes for his dramas, and intriguing ephemera. Our impact-generating activities around the archive are focused upon the deployment of those resources in ways which enhance understanding of the processes behind the creation of literary works and dramatic performances. This approach to impact has involved researchers in the Department of English in the curation of exhibitions relating to the archive; in giving talks at sites crucial to Beckett's literary development; and also in the digitization of materials relating to Beckett's major works. Out of this has come testimony from a variety of people and organisations to the change that has come about in their attitude and response to a variety of creative phenomena.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The University of Reading has, across several departments (English; Film, Theatre and Television; Modern Languages) a diversity of Beckett scholarship, and Reading contains the highest concentration of Beckett scholars in the world. These scholars' research activities centre on the manuscript and book archive of the Beckett International Foundation (BIF) at Reading. Across past decades, colleagues in English have used and interpreted the resources of the archive in order to publish a large number of important research pieces, which primarily aim at increasing the accessibility, availability, and understanding of Beckett's published texts, as well as of his manuscripts and other unpublished documents. <i>The Ideal Core of the Onion: Reading Beckett Archives</i> (Beckett International Foundation, 1992), edited by Professor John Pilling (English) and Professor Mary Bryden (French), was an early attempt to analyse Beckett's manuscripts and abandoned, unpublished work. This was followed by other scholarship such as Pilling's <i>Beckett's Dream Notebook</i> (Beckett International Foundation, 1999), which alerted readers to the complex process by which Beckett evolved his writings from the outset of his career, as in his 'neglected' novel <i>Dream of Fair to Middling Women</i>. Pilling's work, with Sean Lawlor, on the recent edition of Beckett's <i>Collected Poems</i>, is the latest example of this branch of his research and publication activity.</p> <p>Consequent archival research conducted by Department of English scholars has led to the publication of many editions of Beckett's works, including manuscript notebooks. Dr Mark Nixon (2004-present, Reader in Modern Literature since 2012 and Co-Director of the Beckett International Foundation) has edited <i>Texts for Nothing and Other Shorter Prose 1950-1976</i> (2010) in the new Faber edition of Beckett's complete works, and is editing forthcoming volumes of the previously unpublished <i>Echoes Bones</i> and of Beckett's <i>German Diaries</i> (2 volumes). A former member of the Beckett research group in English, Professor Ronan McDonald, edited, while at Reading during this census period (2003-10), <i>Endgame</i>, also for Faber (2010).</p> <p>Latterly, this process of providing accessibility to the choices and processes behind Beckett's work has taken on a further aspect. Nixon, in association with Professor Dirk Van Hulle (Centre for Manuscript Genetics, University of Antwerp and Visiting Research Fellow in the English Department at Reading) were given exclusive access to Beckett's surviving library in his Paris apartment. This research consolidated their scholarship in sourcing Beckett's use of quotations in his work at all archives (including, of course, Reading) which hold Beckett manuscripts; this research underpins their co-authored study, <i>Samuel Beckett's Library</i> (2013). Nixon's collaboration with Van Hulle around the evolution of Beckett's manuscripts also underpins the initiative behind the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, which is detailed below.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Recent additions to the English staff, Dr Conor Carville (2009-present, Associate Professor since 2012) and Professor Steven Matthews (2013), have enhanced the impact potential from Beckett at Reading in future years. Carville's work on Beckett and visual art, included in the 'References' below, has led already to his giving talks on Beckett's visits to the National Gallery and to the Wallace Collection, in London, at those venues, and will yield a monograph in the next cycle. Matthews's work focuses on poetry and Beckett's late style, Beckett and phenomenology, and Beckett and death. His interests in Beckett's later work will lead to curation of a public exhibition around Beckett's last, 'Sottisier', Notebook at Reading in 2016, so continuing the long tradition of research-led re-presentation of Beckett's work and practices to a wide body of professionals and to a broad public.

3. References to the research

The references here are the most prominent outputs, under our internal and external review process, which have been produced by colleagues during the last REF iteration. They deliberately contain evidence of our manuscript editing alongside more discursive outcomes of our research in the Beckett archive.

1. *Texts for Nothing and Other Shorter Prose 1950-1976*, ed. Mark Nixon (London: Faber and Faber, 2010). <http://www.google.co.uk/> - # ISBN-10: 0571244629 [REF output: of at least 2* quality]
2. Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) ISBN: 9781107001268 [REF output: of at least 2* quality]
3. Mark Nixon, ed., *Publishing Beckett*, British Library, 2011. ISBN: 9780712358262 [REF output: of at least 2* quality]
4. Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German diaries 1936-37* (Continuum, 2011). ISBN: 9781441152589 [REF output: of at least 2* quality]
5. *The Collected Poems of Samuel Beckett*, ed. Sean Lawlor and John Pilling (London: Faber and Faber, 2012) ISBN-10: 0571249841 [REF output: of at least 2* quality]
6. Conor Carville, 'Autonomy and the everyday: Beckett, late modernism and post-war visual art.' (Beckett Today/ Aujourd'hui, 23, 2011) [REF output: of at least 2* quality]

4. Details of the impact

The University of Reading holds the world's largest archive of materials relating to the Irish writer Samuel Beckett. The Beckett manuscript and book archive, housed in the University's Special Collections (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/sc-beckett.aspx>), is the focus of Beckett-related research at Reading, and is also open to academic researchers from other institutions and to the public. Each year it attracts over 250 visitors, including scholars, curators, theatre practitioners, media, publishers and interested members of the general public. All visitors to the archive are invited to contact Reading researchers working in their specific area of enquiry, to support their visit. The archive itself therefore not only provides a resource for Reading researchers, but also facilitates their direct interaction with a broader non-academic constituency of users of the archive and the related research.

We have chosen to evidence three major recent moments in this REF cycle as illustrations of the impact that Beckett projects from our staff continue to make, as well as to suggest the grounds for our future initiatives. These moments have been selected to demonstrate the range of our impact initiatives with regard to Beckett and the archive: from making available the processes of his creativity through manuscript editing; to public engagement activity derived from material at Reading; to deployment of the manuscript and documentary materials in the archive to inform new

productions of Beckett's dramatic work. Each area is signalled in the narratives of specific instances below.

Across this impact census period, however, there have been many other interventions into a variety of cultural activities related to the case study – interventions which have altered awareness of the significance of drama, cultural innovation, and artefacts. Beckett scholarship at Reading is derived from attention to the processes of creation which underlie the published works, and it is a shared concern between colleagues to curate events and display archival materials in informed ways that both speak to our research, and alter public perceptions of authorship. These interventions include theatre productions and media events drawing upon our tradition of engagement with the history of Beckett theatre production (most recently *Waiting for Godot at 60* (2012)). There have also been significant exhibitions involving curated materials from the archive relating to the creation of Beckett's unique published work, which have had key importance in their contexts (e.g., the loan of the 'Film' notebook to Kinemathek Berlin for the exhibition 'Experimentelles Fernsehen' 19 May to late July 2011; and also to the Irish Museum of Modern Art: 'The Moderns', 20 October 2010 to 13 February 2011). The link between Beckett and Visual Art, integral to Carville's interest and reflected in 'The Moderns', has underscored our various recent loans to the Beckett Festivals at Enniskillen (2012, 2013). These have excited theatre practitioners, critics, and local people. The Festival Director, has noted that 'It was the positive feedback on the Beckett archive presentation last year that has led the festival to commission the much larger exhibit of 'Samuel Beckett: Witness to the Twentieth Century' for 2014'.

- 1 **Manuscript editing:** The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project makes available to the broader international public the writer's manuscripts in an accessible electronic format (www.beckettarchive.org) with accompanying print analyses. Tools available on the site allow visitors to see Beckett's manuscripts in their original, handwritten, format; in a variety of languages; and through a print transcription. The project is opening up the archive to a wide range of constituencies (including theatre directors, education professionals, therapists, language specialists, and artists). The project also generates new ways of thinking about Beckett's work, especially for users in the field of creative practice, by enhancing understanding of his compositional strategies and his engagement with advances in the arts, technology, media and science. The release of the first three modules (*Stirrings Still*, *The Unnamable*, and *Comment Dire*), has reached constituencies including, for example, theatre practitioners working with the public sector, in schools, hospitals and prisons. Responses from various areas of interest have been positive: one arts website urges 'I hope this is the wave of the future and that more libraries and estates will enter into projects such as this one. I encourage readers to go check out the impressive [demo](#).' Another writers' and artists' site praises the 'rather wonderful resource that has just debuted on the World Wide Web.' As further modules are added to the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project site (the project runs to 2037), it is anticipated that the impact of the initiative will expand significantly, with regard to thinking about the processes of creation of text, theatre performance, and film.
- 2 **Public Engagement:** A further key aspect of our impact activity involves intervention in those places and sites crucial for the development of Beckett's distinctive writing across genres. Carville has created outreach events around his research on Beckett and Visual Art. This has involved talks at the venues where Beckett himself had been a visitor in the 1930s, venues which provided him with indelible images that then recur in his work. Carville spoke to audiences of 50+ at the Wallace Collection, London in March 2013, and at the National Gallery, London, in April 2013, drawing attention to the correlation between those paintings which we know that Beckett admired, and the occurrence of similar images in the novels, and in the design of the production of several of Beckett's dramas. Carville's research, which draws upon the notebooks held at Reading, is therefore being carried into the original contexts Beckett was familiar with. In the process, people's perception of particular art collections, and of the relation between the visual and the verbal, is changed. The Education Officer at the Wallace Collection, has noted that 'Dr Carville's lecture was a fascinating insight into how the art of 17th century Holland influenced one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. It challenged both the museum and our visitors to interpret and

engage with our collection in new and interesting ways and encouraged us to make new connections between art and literature that we hadn't made before.'

- 3 **Theatre Productions:** English staff frequently host theatre and film directors and producers at Reading. Staff deploy their research into the development of Beckett's own plays and past international productions of his dramas, in order to inform new productions of his work through textual and theatre history, including the author's own decisions about staging and performance. These discussions frequently involve close consideration of the manuscript record. That material, in its turn, is frequently curated or re-presented in connection to specific productions. A recent instance of this is in connection to Beckett's *Not I*, which was performed by Lisa Dwan at the University in April 2013, and subsequently at the Royal Court Theatre. The performances were staged (and filmed for *Sky Arts*) against the backdrop of a curated exhibition, which included Beckett's original manuscripts for the drama alongside materials relating to its performance history, to create a unique event attended by over 200 people. The aim was to alter public perception of the immediacy of performance by placing it within various creative histories. Feedback taken subsequent to the events recognised the ways in which they had changed peoples' sense of the possibilities of relating the writing process *per se* to performance, and the alteration the performances had made for a sense of what art is and can achieve. Examples include: 'Having the original manuscripts helps to bridge the gap between what was in Beckett's mind and what the audience experiences on stage'. 'I had the opportunity of having contact with a new kind of theatre performance I wasn't familiar with.' 'It made me realise that most of even our unconventional theatre is conventional.' Our intention is to continue these links of performance to manuscript text and theatre history in future international biennial Festivals, and to expand our outreach to include younger viewers during the next iteration.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

For *Not I*:

- Audience feedback reports taken in consequence of the events, available on request.
- Events were broadly reported on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-22397436>
- Further information available at: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/releases/PR502016.aspx>

On Enniskillen exhibitions: correspondence from Beckett Festival Director, available on request.

For Carville talks at National Gallery, London and Wallace Collection, London: correspondence with Education Officer at the Wallace available on request.

For blogs on BDMP:

- <http://sebald.wordpress.com/2011/08/10/manuscript-genetics-samuel-beckett/> ;
- <http://www.superflutiesredux.com/2011/08/04/following-the-hand-that-writes/> ;
- <http://jjqblog.wordpress.com/2011/08/08/beckett-digital-manuscript-project/>