

The Politics of Performing Beckett in Argentina
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Context: I am applying for funding to support initial fieldwork for my research topic: 'The Politics of Performing Beckett in Argentina'. This topic belongs to a larger book-length study entitled: *The Reception of Irish Authors in Argentina*. The study will document and analyse the complex interactions between Ireland and Argentina, including the cultural effects of the Irish Diaspora, the construction and dissemination of Ireland in the Argentine imagination, and the ongoing dialogue between Irish and Argentine writers.

Research Objectives: Samuel Beckett's legacy in the 21st century emerges as a global, multilingual, and pluralistic cultural paradigm which is constantly pointing towards new directions. At a time when literary studies have gradually shifted from restricting Eurocentric perspectives to a wider approach aiming to forge a more democratic model of 'world literature', it remains fundamental to examine Beckett's far-reaching legacy in Latin America. This study will investigate the most significant performances of Beckett's dramatic works on the Argentine stage from 1956 to the present day. It will expand upon current scholarship which has neglected the political aspect of theatrical performances of Beckett in Argentina. It will examine how the reception, staging, and translation of Beckett's plays had a profound impact in the cultural identity of a country during a historical period of political turmoil and traumatic social events. It will raise important questions such as, how have Argentine playwrights used Beckett as a platform to interrogate the wider political events of the time? Does Beckett's theatre offer an answer to the larger search for identity of a nation? And, how have different audiences reacted to the staging of Beckett's plays through the decades? The answers to these questions will address specific issues which will be of particular interest for scholars and students in the subject areas of Hispanic and Latin American Studies, Comparative Literature, Irish Studies, and Theatre Studies.

Methodology: Four kinds of methodology will be combined in the study: Comparative Literature, Theatre and Performance Studies, Identity Politics, and Interdisciplinary Research. The first case study will investigate the stage history of Beckett's plays in Argentina with particular reference to the socio-historical context of the time. A detailed archival investigation will seek to demonstrate that the political events concerning the exile, return, and re-election of the ex President Juan Domingo Perón infiltrated in the reception of *Waiting for Godot* (dir Jorge Petraglia), successively staged in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, thus going hand in hand with one of the most important chapters in 20th century Argentine history. It will demonstrate that theatre audiences linked *Waiting for Godot* with an overtly political drama, *El avión negro* (1970) (*Black Plane*) by four contemporary Argentine playwrights (Cossa, Rosenmacher, Somigliana, and Talesnik) which had been deliberately written to dramatize this revolutionary social climate. It will also deal with the staging of *Waiting for Godot* by other directors, as well as performances of *Endgame*.

Linked closely to the previous study, the second case study will comprise the performance history of Beckett's so-called 'late plays' in the 21st century. It will take into account the crucial fact that the year 2006 simultaneously crowned the centenary of Beckett's birth in Dublin, 1906, as well as the 30th anniversary of the 1976 military coup in Argentina. Significantly, Beckett's centennial celebrations took place in the prestigious Borges Centre in Buenos Aires with a programme that included productions of most of the short plays. It will also examine a variety of adaptations of Beckett's plays, including *Mirá lo que hay que escuchar* (See What There is to Hear) (dir. Patricio Orozco), which merged *Play* and *Not I* in an attempt to revisit the wider canvas of Argentine history. *Mirá lo que hay que escuchar* multiplied the number of faces which appeared on stage and presented not the story of a love triangle but the *historia* of a nation, resurrecting the spirits of dead political figures, including Perón and Evita. Interdisciplinary research undertaken in the fields of Argentine History and Theatre and Performance Studies will establish the interface between Beckett's theatrical production and historical memory as a means of resurrecting past traumas, especially the phantasms of the thousands of people who disappeared during the military dictatorship.

Research Programme: In order to achieve my research objectives I will require a research schedule of 5 weeks to consult primary material in Argentina's National Library. This includes, but is by no means restricted to: **Argentine Press:** notes and reviews of Beckett productions which appeared in the following newspapers: *El Hogar; El Mundo; Mundo Argentino; Época; Lyra; Babel; El Cronista Cultural; Las palabras y las cosas de Sur; La Voz del Interior*. It is essential to explore these archives as I am in the initial stages of my research. **Academic journals:** *Beckettiana, Quadrivium, The Beckett Circles; Los Andes*. These journals are not available in electronic or on microfiche. **Interviews:** I will also conduct interviews with former and current directors of Beckett productions. **Translations:** access to unpublished manuscripts of Spanish-Argentine translations of Beckett's plays specifically used for certain productions.