

**The Irish in Argentina:
Language, Memory, Diaspora**

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This paper explores the present-day Irish Diaspora in Argentina, using a sociolinguistic theoretical framework to draw out occulted strands of contemporary Hiberno-Argentine identity. While a cursory awareness of the emigration of over 60,000 Irish to South America in the nineteenth century exists among a historiographical-specific academic audience its exploration remains restricted to the field of Irish studies, thereby limiting possibilities for comparison across global migrant groups and undervaluing the particular historical and political events that shaped migrant experience in Argentina, from the idealization of the *gaucho* in the late nineteenth century to the social repression of the Argentine military dictatorship in the 1970s. This paper redresses this imbalance, using the oral narratives of Irish-Argentine descendants to trace the evolvment of a European community in South America from the 19th century into the present day. As well as contributing to an understanding of an immigrant linguistic journey over three generations the paper also provides a vital ethnographic portrait of modern hybridized Argentine identity, and discusses the extent to which its individual and collective form continues to be informed by the inherited and often fictionalized narratives of an immigrant ancestry. Methodologically influenced by Hymes' ethnolinguistics and Glassie's folkloric frameworks, the paper provides space for participants to engage with migrant discourse in a multidisciplinary way, through narratives that allow an organic flow of identity to become accessible to the reader.¹ Featuring stories that are lighthearted and somber, evocative and humorous, political and social, defiant and resigned, the paper illuminates the legacy of 19th century migration to Argentina through the narratives of its survivors.

¹ Glassie, Henry, *The Stars of Ballmenone*, (Indiana University Press, 2006); *All Silver and No Brass, An Irish Mumming*, (University of Pennsylvania press, 1983). Hymes, Dell, *Now I Know Only So Far, Essays by Dell Hymes*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2003)