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- 1 Though Samuel Beckett's short fiction is relatively abundant, texts which are easily identifiable as short stories are limited in number to the ten collected in *More Pricks than Kicks*, written in English and published in 1934, and the four stories written in French in 1946: "La fin", "L'expulsé", "Premier amour" and "Le calmant", later translated into English either in collaboration with Richard Seaver or solely by Beckett. By writing these stories in French, the language of Beckett's adopted country, Beckett firmly crossed the linguistic border for the first time in his career, something that would become characteristic in future years as Beckett wrote either in French or in English, then translated into English or French.
- 2 The title of the story "L'expulsé" conjures up notions of exclusion, uprooting and even more archaically, of birthing. It implicitly suggests two territories, one to exit and one to enter into. The space between two such territories is a "discomfort zone" in its lack of landmarks, but also, and perhaps because of that lack, a zone for exploration. The aim of this article is to determine where and how cultural in-betweenness manifests itself in "L'expulsé"/"The Expelled" – for example in the form of hesitations, both stylistic and situational, in the choice of language – and to study how Beckett manages it. The fact that Beckett's later short fiction evolved generically away from the easily identifiable short story towards a more hybrid genre more difficult to define certainly attests to the importance of in-betweenness in Beckett's writing. Beckett was not the first Irishman to continue his writing career abroad after having begun in Ireland, but he was, in the footsteps of Joyce, a self-exiled writer who made language one of the major questions of his aesthetics. In choosing a *foreign* language in which to express himself, Beckett also chose, as Michael Edwards put it, "the foreignness of language." "Being written in a foreign language" says Edwards "is part of the works' meaning."<sup>1</sup> For Beckett, as several critics have remarked<sup>2</sup>, choosing a foreign language in which to

write is a catalyst for a reflexion on the arbitrary nature of the sign, an opportunity to explore more fully the notion of language, what it means to use language, to communicate, to write a story.

- 3 The unnamed narrator-protagonist of "L'expulsé" finds himself on the steps of the house he has been thrown out of, or technically "expelled". He reminisces with some difficulty about his childhood there and about the purchase of the hat which has been insultingly thrown out after him in a comic gesture of reiteration. As he wanders through the streets following his expulsion, he meets a horse-drawn cab, gets in, rides about the unnamed capital city with the driver and eventually proceeds to the driver's house for shelter. He spends the night in the driver's cab parked in the stable and the next morning extracts himself from the stable window and leaves to pursue his wandering.
- 4 The locus of the story is between two spaces, suggested first of all by the "no-man's land" of the setting. Because the story was originally written in French and begins on "le perron", a typically French construction leading up to a house, and here the house in which the expelled was born, the reader of the French story probably assumes that the story is set in France. Yet Gerry Dukes observed in his introduction to the English version that readers "conversant with the social and economic history of Ireland"<sup>3</sup> would easily recognize references to Ireland: the "displays of public piety", when for example during his ride through the city, the expelled comes upon a funeral and observes the onlookers: "There was a great flurry of hats and at the same time a flutter of countless fingers. Personally if I were reduced to making the sign of the cross I would set my heart on doing it right, nose, navel, left nipple, right nipple. [...] The more fervent stopped dead and muttered."<sup>4</sup> Or the odd name of the lawyer, Mr. Nidder, resolving itself when reversed into Reddin, a common Irish surname ("Intro", 3). But then as a child the protagonist "thought life would be good in the middle of a plain and went to the *Lüneburg heath*" (36, my italics), a German geographical cultural reference. These contradicting cultural references suggest that the setting is neither France, nor Ireland nor Germany, but somewhere in between.
- 5 Two territories are implicit in the title itself: one territory to exit and one to enter into, and indeed the dichotomy between inside and outside is a prevalent topos in the story. Interiors and the comfort, safety and often warmth they provide abound, beginning with the double interior of the room in the house from which the protagonist was expelled. In an analeptic remark about his youth, the protagonist remembers "hastening back to the depths of the room, where the bed was" (35). During his wandering, he "enters a cab" and "curls up in the corner", envies cabdrivers who "spen[d] their day snug and warm inside their cabs [...] waiting for a customer" (42) and takes joy in lighting the gas lamp attached to the cab, closing the glass "at once, so that the wick might burn steady and bright, snug in its little house, sheltered from the wind" (44). Finally he spends the night, once again doubly enclosed, in the cab in the stable provided as shelter by the benevolent cabdriver.
- 6 The hostility of the outside appears first of all in the grammatical form used in the title. In this passive voice construction – to be "expelled" – the action is imposed on the subject by an agent, his perception of the action is negative, he is presented in the position of victim. Being "out of doors in all weathers" (42) is one of the unfortunate working conditions enumerated by the cabdriver and when he asks the protagonist to

"climb up beside him on the seat", the latter had "for some time already [...] been dreaming of the inside of the cab and [...] got back inside" on that "winter's day" (43).

- 7 Indeed moving between two territories as the protagonist does in this scene moving from the outside of the cab to the inside is a striking leitmotiv in the story which begins, as mentioned earlier, on the "perron" in French and on the "steps" in English, a locus of in-betweenness. The incipit and the entire first page of the story are devoted to the protagonist's preoccupation with the number of steps and his obsessional attempts at determining the proper count by going up and down, foregrounding not only the in-between space, but the back-and-forth movement therein: "There were not many steps. I had counted them a thousand times, both going up and coming down, but the figure has gone from my mind" (32), etc.
- 8 All of the places mentioned earlier – room, house, cab and stable – feature windows or doors, places of passage between inside and outside. Shutting and opening the windows and doors are repeated actions, hindering or facilitating passage. As a youth the protagonist would "go to the window, part the curtains and look out" (35), during his cab rides windows and doors are repeatedly opened and closed and it is finally from the stable window that the protagonist extricates himself at the end of the story. One of the few descriptions in the story is of the greatly admired "green door" out of which the protagonist was peremptorily and vigourously thrown, the door then being "slam[med]" behind him: "How describe it?", begins the narrator. "It was a massive green door, encased in summer in a kind of green and white striped housing, with a hole for the thunderous wrought-iron knocker and a slit for letters, this latter closed to dust, flies and tits by a brass flap fitted with springs. So much for that description", concludes the narrator (35).
- 9 Finding himself in "the gutter" (33) upon his expulsion, the protagonist eventually rose and "advanced down the street, keeping as close as [he] could to the sidewalk" (37), in other words he remains by choice in the gutter, a second locus of in-betweenness along with the steps. The particular intermediary nature of this space becomes apparent when the reprimanding policeman stops the protagonist saying "The street for vehicles, the sidewalk for pedestrians. Like a bit of Old Testament. So I got back on the sidewalk, almost apologetically, and persevered there" (37). In her study of topography in "Premier amour", the French title of Beckett's short story "First Love", Anne Cousseau astutely observes that "space acquires an ontological value. For one of the problems the Beckett subject is so often confronted with is finding a place to be, to mark himself out. And there is duplicity in that anchorage point: it is both refused and sought, an object of anxiety and of uneasiness, but also an object of quest and of desire."<sup>5</sup>
- 10 Indeed the outside, open space, in which the expelled finds himself is a space for wandering and wondering. Just as an infant is *expelled* into the world to accomplish his journey from birth to death, just as Adam and Eve are exiles from the Garden of Eden, so the protagonist is thrown out of the "beautiful" house with "geraniums in the windows" (34). His journey through the streets of the city is an existential exile, a quest that will last from "cradle" to "grave": "I got up and set off. I forget how old I can have been. In what had just happened to me there was nothing in the least memorable. It was neither the cradle nor the grave of anything whatever. Or rather it resembled so many other cradles, so many other graves, that I'm lost" (34). The quest motif is also suggested in the protagonist's remark to the cabdriver: "I described my situation to

him, what I had lost and what I was looking for. [...] He understood that I had lost my room and needed another, but all the rest escaped him" (42). The elliptical and derogatory "all the rest" is Beckett's glib reference to the nebulous of life itself, whose meaning indeed escapes not only the cabdriver, but the protagonist as well, "whose soul writhed from morning to night, in the mere quest of itself" (34).

- 11 The remainder of the story recounts this wandering, resumed indefinitely, we assume, after the night in the stable. It is accompanied by innumerable hesitations and uncertainties – a "fog [that] won't lift" (37) – which appear in the story both lexically and in the form of repeated stylistic devices expressing hesitation. For example, "not knowing", "not remembering", being faced with a "dilemma" are recurrent difficulties encountered by the narrator-protagonist. Interrogative forms, though not used abundantly, are used significantly. The narrator asks himself twice "How describe this hat?" (33, 34) or "How describe this door?" (35). When asked by the cabdriver the simple yet ultimately metaphysical question "Where to?", the protagonist responds with a quæsitio of unanswered questions ("Is your cab for sale? I said. I added, Without the horse. What would I do with a horse? But what would I do with a cab? Could I as much as stretch out in it? Who would bring me food?") before finally coming up with an answer which also fuses the trivial and the metaphysical: "To the Zoo" (39). Binary constructions appear repeatedly in the text, expressing hesitation between two possibilities, and often in the form of epanorthoses, a stylistic device which Bruno Clément observed in much of Beckett's work and which consists in an affirmation followed by its negation.<sup>6</sup> The protagonist advises, for example: "So you must not think of certain things, of those that are dear to you, *or rather* you must think of them" (32, my emphasis), or comments upon his childhood companions: "I have always been amazed at my contemporaries' lack of finesse [...]. *But perhaps* they were simply being kind" (34, my emphasis).
- 12 This hesitating, uncertain protagonist is also the Narrator and the quest undertaken also that of the Narrator. Indeed, choosing a Narrator as protagonist is a way of foregrounding the act of narration, of making narration a subject of the story. Evidence of the self-consciousness of the narrator is abundant throughout the story. The reminiscing narrator makes his reminiscing obvious with distancing comments such as "I remember" or "funny the things you remember". The metatextual comment which concludes "The Expelled" makes even more explicit the storytelling role of the protagonist, though once again in a hesitant manner: "I don't know why I told this story. I could just as well have told another" (46). The narrator both names the activity and surprisingly gives priority to it by undermining the content of the story, since "another" story could easily replace "this" one.
- 13 The content of the story is further undermined by the absence of verisimilitude or referentiality. As Gerry Dukes observes in his introduction to the French stories: "Beckett's earlier, English language fictions, however experimental they may have appeared, still have recourse to the traditional elements of plot, character and recognizable settings. In the transfer to first-person narratives, in which the narrators are endowed with only vague notions of where they happen to be, the necessity to designate specific locations evaporates" ("Intro", 2). One might add that along with recognizable settings, the traditional elements of plot and character are also put into question. Cause and effect are not the bases for plot construction. The protagonist points out that his expulsion was unmotivated in a highlighted paragraph exceptionally

composed of only one sentence: "And yet I had done them no harm" (35). His wandering has no real climax and the story has an open end as the wandering continues indefinitely. The protagonist is unnamed, has no age or nationality and is void of believable emotions: he dislikes children, the elderly, the cabman and his horse, and indifferently watches the funeral pass. The logic of the story resembles more closely the logic of dream-like recollecting – association of ideas – than that of cause and effect. The text, which occupies fifteen pages in the 2000 Penguin edition, is composed of only twelve paragraphs, the fewest subdivisions into paragraphs coinciding with the protagonist's physical wandering, and though it doesn't yet have all the characteristics of some of Beckett's more abstract writing, the text does share similarities with automatic writing.

- 14 The penultimate scene in the story has the protagonist extricating himself from the womblike cab within the stable: "I got out of the cab. I went out [of the stable window] head first, my hands were flat on the ground of the yard while my legs were still thrashing to get clear of the frame. I remember the tufts of grass on which I pulled with both hands, in my effort to extricate myself" (46). And just as the protagonist gives birth to himself, Beckett gives birth to a new style. His experimentation with the foreignness of a language, the foreignness of language itself, is extended to experimentation with the conventions of plot-oriented storytelling. Using a language theoretically void of emotion for Beckett – French is not his "mother" tongue – , Beckett proposes situations and characters with which the reader cannot identify emotionally. Rather than inviting readers to read with their emotions, he invites them (as the expelled will do following his expulsion) to "begin to reflect on the situation, notwithstanding its familiarity" (33), to reflect on what language is and how stories are told.
- 15 The cradle/grave juxtaposition quoted earlier in this article appears later in Beckett's writing. In *En attendant Godot*, also originally written in French, Pozzo declares in a now oft-quoted existential line: «Elles accouchent à cheval sur une tombe». ("They give birth astride of a grave").<sup>7</sup> In French, "être à cheval", literally "to be on a horse", is an idiomatic expression which means "to be in between". The secondary yet insistent presence of the horse in "The Expelled" ("Several times during the night I felt the horse looking at me through the window and the breath of its nostrils" (45), "The horse didn't take its eyes off me. Don't horses ever sleep?" (46), etc.) could very well be the manifestation of a latent preoccupation with in-betweenness. "Being on a horse" or "walking in the gutter", Beckett has found an intermediary space in which to write, a place for the expelled.

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## NOTES

1. Michael Edwards, "Beckett's French", *Translation and Literature*, Volume 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992) 69.

2. See Michael Edwards, but also Helena Shillony, « 'L'expulsé' de Samuel Beckett: la naissance d'une écriture », *Les lettres romanes* 45,3 (août 1991) : 207-214 or Stefano Genetti, « La plaine dans

la tête j'allais à la lande » : a propos des variantes éditoriales de 'L'Expulse' », *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, n° 7 : *Beckett Versus Beckett* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998): 25-40.

3. Gerry Dukes, "Introduction" to Samuel Beckett, *First Love and other novellas* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 4.

4. Samuel Beckett, *First Love and Other Novellas* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 38. Further references appear parenthetically in the text.

5. Anne Cousseau, « De l'importance des lieux dans 'Premier Amour'. Topographie affective et topique littéraire », *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* n° 10 (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000) 53. (My translation).

6. Bruno Clément, *Œuvre sans qualités. Rhétorique de Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994).

7. Samuel Beckett, *En attendant Godot* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1952) 126. The period separating the writing of "L'expulsé" and *Godot* is relatively short: "L'expulsé" was written in 1946 and *Godot* in 1948. In *Damned to Fame*, James Knowlson refers to this period (1946-1953) as "an extraordinarily fertile period during which [Beckett] produced four stories, four novels and two plays, all written in French" (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996) 358.

## ABSTRACTS

Les récits brefs de Beckett sont relativement abondants mais les récits facilement identifiables comme nouvelles sont limités aux dix réunis dans *More Pricks than Kicks*, écrits en anglais en 1934, et les quatre écrits en français en 1946 - "La fin", "L'expulsé", "Premier amour" et "Le calmant" - puis traduits en anglais, soit en collaboration avec Richard Seaver, soit par Beckett seul. En écrivant ces nouvelles en français, la langue de son pays adoptif, Beckett entre de pied ferme dans une aire linguistique nouvelle et débute une carrière d'écrivain bilingue. Une de ces nouvelles, "L'expulsé", est l'objet du présent article. Son titre évoque l'exclusion, le déracinement ou même, de façon plus archaïque, la naissance. Il suggère aussi l'existence de deux territoires, celui à quitter et celui à intégrer. L'espace entre les deux est un "no-man's land" dépourvu de repères mais aussi lieu possible d'exploration. L'objectif de l'article est d'étudier la nouvelle sous cet angle de l'entre-deux culturel. L'hybridité générique des récits brefs ultérieurs atteste en effet de l'importance de l'entre-deux dans l'écriture de Beckett.

## AUTHORS

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Linda Collinge-Germain is an Associate Professor at the University of Angers where she teaches English language and literature and is an active member of the Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires en Langue Anglaise. She is the author of *Beckett traduit Beckett: de Malone meurt à Malone Dies, l'imaginaire en traduction* (Droz, 2000), a study of Beckett as self-translator, and has also published articles on the subject which have appeared in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* or thematic collections. Her areas of interest are the bilingual works of Samuel Beckett, reception theory and more currently, cultural in-betweenness in short-story writing and the relation between short story and cinema. She has been co-editor of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* since 2000.