

Simon Kemp, chapter about Darrieussecq in the book *Writing the Mind: Representing Consciousness from Proust to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2017)

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Brain

Marie Darrieussecq

Marie Darrieussecq (b. 1969) is the only living writer considered here, and the only writer to engage with the new models of the mind emerging from cognitive science and evolutionary psychology. A trained psychoanalyst, Darrieussecq is equally at home with more traditional understandings of the mind, and maintains an irreverent and often sceptical stance towards all the ideas on which her fiction draws. She may not yet have achieved the canonical status of the other authors in this study, but her two-decade writing career has already made a major impact on French literary culture, and it is not purely for her neuroscientific leanings that she is included here.

After her controversial and best-selling debut, *Truismes* (*Pig Tales*, 1996), a searing satire in which a woman metamorphoses into a pig, while society around her collapses into brutal totalitarianism, Darrieussecq has gone on to produce eight further critically acclaimed novels, along with novellas, translations and children's tales, a memoir of motherhood (*Le Bébé*, 2002), a collection of short stories (*Zoo*, 2006), a play (*Le Musée de la mer*, 'The Sea Museum', 2009), and an essay ('Rapport de police', 'Police Report', 2010). The later novels

are all psychological studies centred on female protagonists, filled with detail of the characters' thoughts and perceptions, with little emphasis on plot. Unlike *Truismes*, they are set in recognizable environments in which characters live through familiar and routine activities, although the familiarity is tempered by subtle elements of science fiction or the fantastic, and the routine is liable to be disrupted by sudden, shocking intervention.

Naissance des fantômes (*My Phantom Husband*, 1998) explores the psychological disintegration of a housewife following her husband's disappearance. It is followed by *Le Mal de mer* (*Breathing Underwater*, 1999), which shifts focalization between consciousnesses to recount the story of a woman who has fled the family home with her daughter in tow. After *A Brief Stay with the Living* (2001), Darrieussecq's longest novel to date, and the one with the most sustained focus on the mind, comes *White* (2003), a love story in a near-future polar research station, and *Le Pays* (2005), the semi-autobiographical story of a Parisian writer's return to her newly independent homeland, which strongly resembles Darrieussecq's own native Basque country. Most recently, *Tom est mort* (*Tom is Dead*, 2007) is a therapeutic diary written by a mother in mourning for her child, and *Clèves* (2011) recounts the sexual initiation of a teenage girl in the 1980s, whose story is continued in the Médicis-prize-winning *Il faut beaucoup aimer les hommes* (*Men*, 2013), in which the protagonist is a successful film actress in an interracial relationship. The workings of the mind are a central theme in all of Darrieussecq's work. Mental life is rendered subjectively through stream-of-consciousness and related techniques to express interior monologue, while a variety of often experimental methods is used to evoke non-linguistic thought. The nature of mind is also considered in the abstract, using discourses from folk psychology to Freudian psychoanalysis to Darwinian theory and neuroscience. As with Proust, there is a particular interest in memory, and the involuntary return of the past, as well as a concern to

evoke the particularities of different states of consciousness, such as somnolence, concentration, or blind panic. As with Beckett and Sarraute, there is a suspicion of language, with both writers challenging both the primacy of the linguistic in our conscious thoughts, and the efficacy of conventional psychological language in describing mental activity. With Sartre and phenomenological thought, Darrieussecq shares an interest in the mind as an embodied entity, and as an active engagement with the world it perceives. And with both Breton and Bernanos is shared an interest in the uncanny aspects of consciousness, including the possibility of telepathic communication or the survival of consciousness beyond death, although in Darrieussecq's case it is the symbolic potential of such themes, rather than the advocacy of their real existence, which is foregrounded. In this chapter we shall end our investigation by exploring in turn Darrieussecq's conception of consciousness; her depiction of the images and words of mental life; her interest in the irrational mind of dreams, madness, and the unconscious; and her treatment of the body and brain upon which the mind supervenes. As a writer with a keen sense of her own literary ancestry, a stake in traditional psychoanalytic conceptions of mind, yet also an enthusiasm for science and for science fiction, Darrieussecq's work stands as a twenty-first century milestone to mark how far we have travelled since Proust, and the continuity of the route which has led us here.

Darrieussecq's eclecticism in her influences means she is not to be co-opted into the 'neuro-novel', which, with its cousin the 'neuro-film', has become a major phenomenon in Western culture. These fictions, in which the psychological depiction of characters is laced with liberal reference to cognitive science and neurophysiology, are nevertheless an important element of the cultural context to Darrieussecq's work. Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), with its neurologist hero, is a notable example:

Even as he turns towards Baxter in surprise, and even as he sees, or senses, what's coming towards him at such speed, there remains in a portion of his thoughts a droning, pedestrian diagnostician who notes poor self-control, emotional lability, explosive temper, suggestive of reduced levels of GABA among the appropriate binding sites on striatal neurons. This in turn is bound to imply the diminished presence of two enzymes in the striatum and lateral pallidum-glutamic acid decarboxylase and choline acetyltransferase. There is much in human affairs that can be accounted for at the level of the complex molecule. Who could ever reckon up the damage done to love and friendship and all hopes of happiness by a surfeit or depletion of this or that neurotransmitter? And who will ever find a morality, an ethics down among the enzymes and amino acids when the general taste is for looking in the other direction?

Elsewhere, Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* (2001) explores how psychoactive pharmaceuticals affect our understanding of the self, in an era where brain chemistry can be 'corrected' to free us of anxiety or depression, and contemporary fiction and film overflow with evocations of neurological disorders, from Capgras syndrome to de Clérambault's syndrome, anterograde amnesia to autism. Darwinian views of human nature are also much in evidence in contemporary literature. In French fiction, Michel Houellebecq's cynical outlook on social and sexual behaviour presents the human race as still in thrall to genetic imperatives. Houellebecq's Goncourt-winning *La Carte et le territoire* (*The Map and the Territory*, 2010), describes the family as an institution designed for the reproduction of the species, and fashion trends as an oscillation around Darwinian norms. The view of human sexuality held by the novel's protagonist is one often repeated through Houellebecq's work:

Probably marked by the trendy ideas of his generation, he had up to that point considered sexuality to be a force for good, a source of union which could increase harmony between humans via the innocent pathways of shared pleasure. Now, though, he saw more and more often the struggle,


brutal fighting for dominance, elimination of rivals and the risky proliferation of acts of coitus for no other reason than to ensure the maximum propagation of genes. **iii**

Texts like these contribute to the cultural environment in which Darrieusecq published her most significant novel on mind and brain. *A Brief Stay with the Living* recounts twenty-four hours in the lives of the Johnson family, the unnamed mother and her three daughters, Jeanne, Anne, and Nore, plus, for a brief interlude, the English-speaking father and ex-husband. Through a mixture of stream-of-consciousness and free indirect style, the novel narrates the thoughts, emotions, and perceptions that pass through each character's mind, switching abruptly from one to the other in a manner that can leave readers struggling to orient themselves each time they are plunged into the middle of a new train of thought. **iv**

The characters are geographically separated, with Jeanne in Argentina, Anne in Paris, the father in Gibraltar and the mother and youngest daughter together in the Basque country, and the novel juxtaposes the dreams of Jeanne asleep in Buenos Aires with the simultaneous morning routine of her sisters awake in France. Despite their isolation—even the mother and daughter who share a house don't meet in the course of the day—the characters are connected through their shared memories, common familial traits, and concern for each other. One memory in particular links the characters: twenty-seven years previously, a moment of distraction on the beach allowed their three-year-old brother, Pierre, to be washed out to sea and drowned. The anniversary of the recovery of his body falls in the month of October, in which the story is set. None of the characters marks this anniversary, or discusses the incident in any way, but the traumatic event lurks in all their minds, including, to some extent, that of the teenage Nore, who has been kept ignorant of the tragedy in her family's past. The novel encourages the reader to piece together the story from the associative flashes and veiled allusions which appear unbidden in the characters'

thoughts. Also linking the characters are more uncanny psychic connections: two sleeping sisters, Nore and Jeanne, share the same dream, while the third, Anne, has schizophrenic delusions of telepathic powers, yet seems genuinely to perceive her distant sisters, and perhaps her brother's ghost, at the novel's close. The professional scientific knowledge of the mind and brain of psycholinguist Anne, and the amateur interest in the same displayed by the other characters, all of whom spend much of the novel thinking about consciousness, is counterbalanced by this strain of the fantastic which links Darrieussecq's novel into the tradition of psychological ghost stories.

The 'hard problem' of the relationship between neuronal activity and conscious experience is a fascination for Darrieussecq, and her fiction shifts perspective constantly between mind and brain. 'What is it that thinks, inside our cranium?' she asks in the essay 'Rapport de police':

Neurons and biochemistry, how can we leave it at that? How can we understand that this is what is thinking, these two whitish lobes shaped like a cauliflower, like a foetus, like intestines, like a labyrinth? The same and not the same for every human being, and nobody knows what happens in there, what is thought in there, not why nor how. [. . .] Yes, what is it that thinks, in that hard casing traversed by air, saliva and blood—my head, balancing on my neck? What thinks, the next floor up from my mouth, perched between my ears, between my pulsing temples, what thinks when I think that I am thinking? It would be easier to believe in thinking with your guts, writing with your heart, all those myths of our own offal, than writing with these intangible *nothings* that are our thoughts. 

In *A Brief Stay*, the narrator and characters frequently imagine the physiological substrate on which their conscious thoughts supervene. Jeanne imagines her own small epiphany of recognizing an animal as a platypus in terms of 'two neurons linked up', or sleepily confuses

the 'bang in your head' of orgasm with the bang of a literal bullet through the brain; Nore wonders if her lack of childhood memories stems from neurons lost while sniffing ether. **vi**

The mind's dependence on the physical brain is heavily underlined by Anne's anxious thoughts about the effect on the self of damage to or experiment on the brain: her knowledge of neurology skips from Wilder Penfield stirring memories with electrical stimulation of the temporal lobe to Edgar Moniz's Nobel Prize for lobotomizing the mentally ill, and thence to the horror of Shiro Ishii's vivisection of the conscious brains of Chinese prisoners of war: 'Imagine being in that head at that moment. . . . A stretch of the world goes blind, a colour vanishes, half my body, the bit of my brain that says "I" is snipped off'. **vii** This last example stands as a vivid refutation of the immaterial Cartesian mind.

Descartes's *Méditations* proffer as evidence for dualism the claim that 'there is a great difference between mind and body, in that the body is by its nature always divisible, while the mind is wholly indivisible'. For Descartes, the divisibility of the material body (in the very literal sense that parts of it can be lopped off) proves that the mind can't be of the same substance, since 'I cannot distinguish any parts to it, but conceive myself as something sole and entire'. **viii** The parallel Darrieussecq imagines between the scalpel carving out the victim's grey matter and the corresponding loss of a specific sector of mental function takes on Descartes's postulate to the letter, and makes divisibility itself the evidence for a materialist understanding of consciousness.

The self conjured by this materialist mind is fragile and subject to drastic transformation. Anne's sleepwalking, for instance, presents her unconscious behaviour as another persona, perhaps even a more authentic one: 'The person she was in her sleep liked Coca-Cola, didn't bother to close doors and went for walks in the moonlight, and these three trivial characteristics seemed more real to her, more *Anne*, than everything her

waking self pretended to be'.^{ix} Minds without self-consciousness, 'absent from yourself' (p. 40; trans. 22) are figured even in the typography of the text as 'j/e', a First person that has been struck through or split apart.^x Where the self is present, it is sometimes doubled through reflexive thinking. Nore crashes her car as her consciousness is filled with self-awareness, to the extent that the mental processes involved in driving a car are crowded out: '*I'm driving*, she's gripped, brutally assaulted by the idea. Amazed, not because she's driving, but because she's here. I was observing myself observing myself'.^{xi} There is a Sartrean flavour to Darrieussecq's representation in this regard, as the essential reflexivity of consciousness is linked to its intentionality: 'When I was little, with Jeanne, we played at not thinking, at thinking of nothing, in our woolly way'. Anne remembers at one point. 'But you still think about thinking nothing, you reproduce yourself, that's the snag in exercises like this, you see yourself thinking and so no longer think'.^{xii} The impossibility of an empty consciousness occupies the thoughts of several characters in the novel, and, in a move typical of Darrieussecq, serves to connect a philosophical question to an emotional drama: for these women, a clear consciousness is not an abstract notion but an unreachable ideal for minds haunted by guilt and pain. Elsewhere the changing self through different states of consciousness is evoked through the style and rhythm of Darrieussecq's prose. Anne's thoughts and perceptions are an incoherent, disjointed rush during her panic attack as she flees the Bibliothèque nationale after a failed morning rendez-vous; at the other end of the day, the narrative of her thoughts luxuriates in slow associations, clumsy wordplay, and emphatic capital letters as she dances, drunk and alone, in a night-club.^{xiii} Most strikingly, the novel's climactic scene takes Jeanne through a range of disparate mental states as she is trapped in her slowly sinking car after driving off the road into a canal in a moment of distraction. The episode begins with complex syntax and logical connections as Jeanne

marvels at her own calm and attempts to reason her way out of the situation. We then follow her increasing panic through shorter, choppy phrases reflecting half-formed thoughts and snatched perceptions, interrupted by angry expletives and futile imperatives ('stop calm down'). With resignation comes wandering attention, as perceptions and practical thoughts are interspersed with fragments of memory, songs, regrets, and morbid imagination. Imperceptibly the episode moves into its final phase as Jeanne's oxygen-starved brain enters a dream-like state of perceptual hallucinations ('green and black, sparkling flies') and cognitive misfires, before breaking down into single words and silence. **xiv**

This emphasis on differing mental states builds an image of a self which is less permanent and less coherent than we may find comfortable. Such an impression is reinforced both by the impersonal content of many of the characters' thoughts, and the frequent lack of volition in their manner of development. Helena Chadderton comments on the patchwork of song lyrics, nursery rhymes, advertising slogans, and clichéd expressions that make up much of the mental flow of all the characters: 'Paradoxically, the reproduction of social discourses is essential to the authentic capturing of individual consciousness'. **xv**

The characters are immersed in a shared cultural soup, as, presumably, is the novel's implied reader, and are recognizable as contemporary Europeans through the extent to which these cultural artefacts infuse their mental life. What is more, these artefacts are not simply a passive mental stock to be called on and manipulated by the mind at will. Rather, they actively divert and control the stream of thought, as the characters' structures of mental association are hijacked by ear-worms and viral memes. Anne's contemplation of the courtyard 'forest' at the National Library conjures a whimsical image of wildlife leaping to safety as a rectangle of woodland is uprooted wholesale to be airlifted to Paris; unbidden,

an image of James Bond leaping from a telephone box in similar circumstances appears in her mind (p. 9; trans. 2). Such lack of control of your own thoughts can be distressing: 'Get it out of your head, those gunshots in your head, bang, bang, coming back like a song, a tune that sticks in your head', Jeanne tells herself as she is tormented by a memory of the Stephen King novel, *It*, with its children lured to death by drowning, which leads in turn to association with the memory of her own brother's death. **xvi**

Mental association of this kind acts as one of the guiding principles of *A Brief Stay's* narrative structure. Intrigue is generated as the largely trivial daily activities of the protagonists spark associations, through which the network of an emotional history between the four women is gradually sketched in, and, most particularly, the mysterious event in their shared past that they each try *not* to think about. Darrieussecq's narrative records the flow of thought, slipping into first-person stream-of-consciousness to capture inner monologue, then sliding out to free indirect style when an impersonal narrator is required for purposes of elucidation or to evoke non-linguistic thoughts and perceptions (to which we will return shortly). As we saw in the Introduction, the subject-matter may be closely related to Proust's, but the effect is different. This is mental activity as it is experienced, flowing as if in real time, with no attempt to pause, delve and analyze retrospectively the nature of the processes which have taken place. Darrieussecq's decision to eschew introspection would be endorsed by William James, who laments in his *Principles of Psychology* the inefficacy of the introspective method to comprehend the flux of conscious experience:

Let anyone try to cut a thought across in the middle and get a look at its section, and he will see how difficult the introspective observation of the transitive tracts is. The rush of the thought is so headlong that it almost brings us up at the conclusion before we can arrest it. Or if our purpose is

nimble enough and we do arrest it, it ceases forthwith to be itself. As a snowflake crystal caught in the warm hand is no longer a crystal but a drop, so, instead of catching the feeling of a relation moving to its term, we find we have caught some substantive thing, usually the last word we were pronouncing, statically taken, and with its function, tendency, and particular meaning in the sentence quite evaporated. The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks. **xvii**

A Brief Stay with the Living is a novel of the transitive tracts—the flights between the perchings of thought in James’s metaphorical terms. Darrieusecq strives to reproduce, insofar as it’s possible to do so in a linguistic medium, the bazaar of competing thoughts and impressions that make up a consciousness constantly in motion. **xviii** As she freely admits in discussing the novel, psychological analysis must give way in order to evoke subjective immediacy, and in this it is Joyce, rather than Proust, who is the novel’s more closely related antecedent:

I write psychological books in opposition to psychology. I don’t settle for sentences like ‘I felt very anxious’ or ‘She was very happy’. Those sentences were expanded upon, stretched to their fullest extent, at the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth, with Proust. Then there came the break that was Joyce: how it happens in the mind itself. *Ulysses*, among other books, gave sustenance to *A Brief Stay with the Living*. I want to know what anxiety is, what happiness is, what the sea or a baby is, what it is from the inside, as if it were the first time I’d entered these regions. I want to say to the reader: ‘See, feel, hear: this is a wave, this is a woman who’s losing herself, this is a mind thinking’. **xix**

The lineage is not a direct one, however. Darrieusecq, perhaps surprisingly, rejects the label ‘stream-of-consciousness’ to categorize her novel’s style, and indeed, the relationship

between the discourse of her novel and that of her modernist precursors is sufficiently intriguing and complex to be worth a quick detour. **XX**

Interior monologue of the kind pioneered by Édouard Dujardin in *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888) and made famous by *Ulysses* (1922) is generally more coherent and controlled in its flow than Darrieussecq's, as well, of course, as being exclusively linguistic in its content. Dujardin's claim to have invented the form from scratch may be exaggerated, but his story is the first attempt to narrate an entire novel through what purports to be a fragmented running commentary of thoughts and perceptions passing through the protagonist's mind. As we can see, the realism of the monologue is hampered by the need to introduce characters, describe settings and narrate action within the idiom:

The waiter. The table. My hat on the hat-stand, take off my gloves. They should be thrown carelessly on the table, next to the plate; or in my coat pocket, rather; no, on the table. Little things like this are a matter of manners. My overcoat on the hat-stand; I sit down; ah, I was weary. **XXI**

Nevertheless, his work is acknowledged by Joyce as the inspiration for the famous 'Penelope' episode at the end of *Ulysses*, in which we eavesdrop on the thoughts running through the head of Leopold Bloom's wife as she lies in bed, rendered in conversational idiom, associative structure, and without punctuation or division of any kind. Here is an extract, in which Molly Bloom recalls her tryst with Boylan earlier that day:

no thats no way for him has he no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing in his nature slapping us behind like that on my bottom because I didnt call him Hugh the ignoramus that doesnt know poetry from a cabbage thats what you get for not keeping them in their proper place pulling off his shoes and trousers there on the chair before me so barefaced without even asking permission and standing out that vulgar way in the half of a shirt they wear to

be admired like a priest or a butcher or those old hypocrites in the time of
Julius Caesar **xxii**

Joyce evades Dujardin's problem of communicating meaning to the reader via a discourse which is essentially non-communicative by placing his own stream-of-consciousness writing at the very end of his novel. (The interior monologues of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom feature prominently in earlier parts of the novel, of course, but are intercut with impersonal narration to orient the reader.) There is thus little burden of imparting information to the reader, since the characters and their relationships, the setting and actions of the day have all been laid out already in the preceding chapters, and 'Penelope' simply offers a meditation on the established story from a new perspective. In this extract, for instance, we know that 'Hugh' refers to Boylan, and we know already, or at least share Leopold Bloom's strong suspicions, of the sexual encounter referred to. Molly Bloom is not required to tell herself stories inside her head: she performs no actions in the present, and doesn't so much recount past events as pass judgement upon them, allowing Joyce to obliquely sketch in the memories which arouse her feelings.

Stream-of-consciousness style has had a huge impact on the representation of the mind in western literature in the century since Joyce's novel. Notable examples of it in subsequent French fiction include Simone de Beauvoir's 'Monologue' (1967), Philippe Sollers's *Paradis* (1981), and Nina Bouraoui's *Mes mauvaises pensées* (2005), although the latter two texts blur the boundary between internal monologue and written or spoken language, while closely adhering to the Joycean form. Stream-of-consciousness also has affinities with the products of the 'automatic writing' experiments of Breton and the Surrealists, and even makes a somewhat incongruous appearance in Roquentin's diary in *Nausea*. Joyce and his successors restored a sense of chaos and spontaneity to the

representation of thought, and foregrounded the immediacy of consciousness as never before. We might query with Beckett and Sarraute whether a continuous verbal commentary really exists in mental life (a question that you may find curiously difficult to answer, even with reference to your own consciousness), and whether language is the dominant mode of thought and thereby deserving the focus of our attention. Proust, who died the year *Ulysses* was published, offers a pre-emptive critique of the interior monologue in the final volume of his novel:

But while, in cases where the imprecise language of, say, vanity is involved, realigning interior indirect speech (which as it goes on moves further and further away from the original, central impression) until it coincides with the straight line which ought to have run directly from the impression, while this realignment is a difficult matter and something which our idle nature is reluctant to take on, there are other instances, where love is involved for example, where the same realignment becomes painful. **xxiii**

Like Sarraute after him, Proust's concern isn't so much with the presence of running monologue in consciousness as with its authenticity. For Proust, inner monologue is a poor guide to the truth of mental life, since it may often be mendacious and self-serving. Extended consciousness, acting in something very like Sartrean bad faith, employs inner monologue to distract itself from psychic realities which are very much present at a more primal level of the mind. Literary representation which restricts itself to the monologue thus risks offering a distorted view of what the subject is 'really thinking', and would do better to look at what lies behind the linguistic thoughts. This, as we have seen, was precisely the project to which Sarraute devoted herself, and one which she explicitly formulated in opposition to stream-of-consciousness style. In *L'Ère du soupçon*, she declares her own principal interest to lie in:

what is hiding behind the interior monologue: an immeasurable abundance of sensations, images, feelings, memories, urges, latent little acts that no inner language expresses, which jostle at the gates of consciousness, gather in compact groups and suddenly burst forth, disintegrate immediately, combine in different ways and reappear in a new form, while within us, like the ribbon which patters out of the slot on a Teletype, the uninterrupted flow of words continues to unfurl. **XXIV**

Sarraute befriended Darrieussecq after the publication of *Truismes*, becoming what the younger writer refers to as a 'spiritual grandmother'. Darrieussecq notes in interview both the similarities and differences between their literary projects:

Nathalie Sarraute gave me the strength not to write 'she felt very anxious'. I tried to find something else. Her own thing was subconversations, what was going on at the margins, and mine is not exactly that, it's, how can I define it, an absence from oneself. [. . .] I try to describe this void that we are, which is filled by all these other things that aren't us, but become us. [. . .] As for her, she was much more interested in dialogue, conversation, what's going on beneath the words. I'm more interested in what goes on beneath the skin, I'd say, I'm almost more physical than her, I deal with a form of desire.' **XXV**

Sarrautean aspects to Darrieussecq's representation are not hard to find in the text. The relatively few lines of direct speech in the text are inevitably accompanied by *sub-conversation* at variance with the spoken meaning, as when Nore attempts to make small-talk with a good-looking stranger walking his dog on the beach:

Nice dog you've got there, the little bugger's sniffing at my, which only makes him laugh, Charlie! What a clown. . . Say something, speak when you're spoken to, they're calling to you from the back of the house, I've seen you here a few times, brilliant **XXVI**

Nore's inner monologue encompasses the dialogue, which is inserted seamlessly within it without attribution to tell us which words Nore speaks and which she hears. As is often the case with Sarraute, the thoughts are comically at odds with the social façade presented by the spoken language, although there is nothing reminiscent of Sarraute's extreme or violent imagery here, simply an honest inner discourse flowing in counterpoint to the spoken presentation of the social self. Even when she draws a distinction between herself and Sarraute, Darrieussecq's description of the self as a void filled with the stuff that permeates into us from outside is interestingly reminiscent Sartre's (mis)interpretation of Sarraute in his preface to *Portrait d'un inconnu*. Sartre suggests in the preface that Sarraute's minds are under the 'reign of the commonplace', in that the characters' thoughts are banal, and that they are communally, rather than individually, produced. He goes on to compare her writing to conventional novelists who 'attempt [. . .] to persuade us that the world is composed of irreplaceable individuals, all exquisite, even the bad ones, all passionate, all unique. Nathalie Sarraute shows us the wall of inauthenticity; she shows it everywhere. And behind this wall? What is there? Precisely nothing'. **xxvii** The image of empty minds bombarded by the commonplace thoughts of a common culture doesn't precisely match Darrieussecq, who presents markedly different characters despite shared culture and upbringing, but it is a closer likeness than the writer Sartre is actually describing.

One feature of non-linguistic thought that is very much more prominent in Darrieussecq than Sarraute is the visual. Like Breton's *Mad Love*, Darrieussecq's text brings the reader into direct contact with the perceptions of its characters. Line drawings reproduce imagined images, while typeface mimicry serves to reproduce the magazine horoscopes read by the characters as if they have been literally cut and pasted into the book. Less directly, perceived sounds and remembered tunes are rendered through

inventive onomatopoeia and quoted lyrics, to give the text as near as possible its own soundtrack. The procedures foreground the raw material of perception in order to offer the reader a taste of the immediacy of the characters' subjectivity, and to allow the author to break down the processes of interaction between the perceived world and the interpreting self. Perception in Darrieussecq is not a precise and neutral recording of reality. 'Since the phone rang, you can hear the garden. A contrast', notes Nore, as a previously subliminal noise accedes to her awareness. **xxviii** Rather, perception is an active mental reconstruction, reminiscent of what Ramachandran memorably dubs the 'best-fit hallucination for data'. **xxix** Darrieussecq's characters speculate on how other minds might hallucinate their perceptual data differently. Looking at the sea, Nore thinks of those who are unable to combine and interpret their raw sense-impressions to produce a coherent object:

There are sick, sad people for whom the sea is just a stack of parallel blue, white and grey lines, but having sound, smell and motion. But they can't make the connection, unfortunately their illness makes them incompatible with this idea, not so much as far as the sea is concerned, but with vision, the coherency of the world. **xxx**

Anne offers the philosophical formulation of the same issue when she refers to the 'Molyneux problem', the question posed to John Locke by his friend William Molyneux as to whether a man born blind would, on regaining his sight, be immediately able to distinguish a cube from a sphere. **xxxi** Locke thought not, and Anne confirms his intuition with evidence from neurology:

A person born blind will never really see anything. He will see colours, lines, a varied muddle of optical stimuli, but no relief, no way of organizing them. His brain will be incapable of decoding what his eyes are capturing and his nerves

transmitting. To see, you must have already seen. Of the two case studies: 1) committed suicide; 2) committed suicide. Because the promised light was incomprehensible. **xxxii**

Much later, Nore considers idly how her seascape might impress itself on the mind of a cat: 'What would he see? A shadowless, hostile world. The soft sand beneath his feet. The seaweed stinking of fish'. **xxxiii** Thus, not only is perception a construct from data, it is a contingent construct, ordered differently according to who or what is doing the perceiving. This is also suggestive of phenomenological attitudes to perception: the world is perceived, not as it *is*, but according to the projects of the perceiver and the 'readiness-to hand' (to borrow Heidegger's term) of what is present. **xxxiv** Feline priorities are different from human priorities, and so the shore is a different world in the cat's eyes from how it appears in ours. The best-fit hallucination is a common model of perception across Darrieussecq's work, from the literal aural and visual hallucinations caused by the low-stimulus environment of the South Pole in *White*, to the poignant metaphor which concludes *Naissance des fantômes*, when the question of whether other animals (including 'cats, birds, fish and flies with compound eyes') perceive the world as humans do becomes an acknowledgement that the narrator has never really known how her husband saw her, or how he viewed the state of their marriage. **xxxv**

Darrieussecq's interest in visual consciousness extends beyond issues of perception. *A Brief Stay with the Living* is filled with mental images from dreams, memory and imagination, and their centrality to mental life is emphasized. Nore comments: 'There are images with different densities, night dreams and daydreams, memories and flashbacks, and sometimes I see places and people from way back, even from before I was born, but Arnold doesn't believe me. Showers of barely glimpsed, wordless images. They must mean

something'. **xxxvi** Darrieussecq explains this element of her work as a deliberate reaction against models of the mind which would seek to assimilate thought and language:

I'm chasing after something impossible in that zone where there are no words, but that's what drives me onwards. I remember my philosophy teacher in the sixth form, quite excellent and always very convincing: she opened up a whole universe for me, the conceptual universe, but in doing so she also explained to us that there is no such thing as a wordless thought. That really bothered me, because it really did seem to me that in my own head thoughts could exist without words. And note that she wasn't talking about the unconscious mind, about which I had no idea at the time, incidentally, and which also is constituted without words, even though it is a complex entity. My philosophy teacher represented that French tradition of 'anything that can be well conceived can be clearly expressed'. Well, it seemed to me that you could also conceive of things 'poorly': you could think, not 'well' according to the great French tradition, but think all the same, without clearly expressing things in your head, without necessarily using words. **xxxvii**

The idea that thought requires language is discussed and explicitly rejected in *Le Bébé* with regard to the writer's own infant son ('that you need to speak in order to think, that concepts only come with words, seems a poor theory'), and in *A Brief Stay with the Living* too it is early childhood that is the focus of much of the discussion of linguistic determinism. **xxxviii** Nore's tutor offers the determinist thesis: 'Arnold says that infants don't speak and so have no memories. That nothing exists apart from what is thought, in other words what is spoken'. **xxxix** Arnold's ideas recall the hypothesis of linguistic relativism, expounded by Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir, according to which our thoughts are determined by the language in which we (necessarily) express them, and thus different language-groups will share within the group distinct conceptions of self and

world.^{xl} Such ideas found favour in several quarters of French poststructuralist thought, including in Michel Foucault's 'epistemes' of successive historical conceptions of truth and knowledge, or in the emphasis of Lacanian psychoanalysis on the linguistic structure of the mind. While there is evidence that, say, people distinguish two colours more easily if their language has a separate word for each, the stronger implications of Whorf's hypothesis now have little credit among linguists and psychologists.^{xli} In *A Brief Stay with the Living*, the suggestion that different languages build different minds is touched on facetiously when Jeanne's Argentinian husband wonders if she is the same person when she speaks Spanish as she is when she speaks French. Her response is double edged. On the one hand, the most significant difference between Spanish-speaking Jeanne and French-speaking Jeanne is the position of her tongue: 'If I am different, then all I can say is that French is pronounced at the front of the palate'; on the other hand: 'I don't even know if I'm the same from one sentence to the next'.^{xlii} Her self may not divide along a linguistic fault-line, but it is no less fragmented for that. It is the psycholinguistic research carried out by Anne, though, that allows the novel to make its case clearly against linguistic determinism. In experiments modelled on genuine research carried out by the psychologist Peter Eimas and colleagues, Anne plays nonsense syllables to one- and two-month-old infants, sometimes made up of the phonemes of French, sometimes from foreign languages, and observes the results:

When their dark blue eyes (a common colour at that age) suddenly stop for a second, stare fixedly, when their fingers stop fiddling with their rattles, and their mouths stop sucking for a second, then you can see a wordless idea forming, a wide-open idea, which seizes them, shakes them to the bone, unfolding at once, *I RECOGNIZE THIS, I'VE ALREADY HEARD IT SOMEWHERE, BUT WHERE?* when they hear, taratara, their mother tongue.^{xliii}

The extract asserts unequivocally that (in Anne's view at least) the infants are capable of conscious thought, and of quite complex conceptual thought, without the use of language. Furthermore, it demonstrates to the reader of *A Brief Stay with the Living* that the language of the text itself can be employed not only to record the language of inner monologue, but to transpose into words thoughts that were not themselves linguistic—in this case the capitalized infant epiphanies, which are obviously not intended to be understood literally as words expressed in the babies' minds. Elsewhere in the novel the same point is made with regard to adult cognition as Nore considers the case of an unnamed man who wakes up in the hospital with his mind wiped clean of both memory and language, and imagines his first thought on opening his eyes: 'He sees the whiteness of the hospital, his first unspoken idea is that everything's white'. **xliv**

The relationship of thought to language has been of interest to psychologists and philosophers of mind throughout the period we are discussing. On Darrieussecq's side of the argument we find both Bergson (as touched on in the previous chapter) and William James: the former refers to the 'unhoped-for good fortune' with which the creative writer discovers the word that encapsulates his wordless concept, while the latter's stream of consciousness is not a flow of language, but a flow of 'mind-stuff' that may include words, images, and much else besides. **xlv** Sartre too is concerned to include the non-linguistic in his representation of consciousness. 'I am struggling against words', declares Roquentin in *Nausea* as he fights to explain his Bouville park revelation. **xlvi** In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Sartre directly considers the validity of the novelist's stream of words in representing the mind's flow of thought:

In the end, it is not without a certain amount of doctoring that the flow of consciousness can be reduced to a succession of words, even malformed

ones. If the word is given as an intermediary *signifying* a reality which, in its essence, transcends language, then so much the better: the word makes itself forgotten, offloading our attention onto the object. But if it presents itself as *mental reality*, if the author, in writing, claims to be giving us an ambiguous reality which is a sign in its objective essence, i.e. to the extent that it relates to something outside us, and a thing in its formal essence, i.e. as immediate mental datum in that case we can reproach him for not having taken a side, and for ignoring the rule of rhetoric which might be formulated thus: in literature, where you use signs, you must use *only* signs; and if the *reality* you wish to signify is *a word*, you must render it to the reader by means of different words. We might also reproach him for having forgotten that the greatest riches of mental life are *silent*. **xlvi**

Sartre's aesthetic objection to stream-of-consciousness is dubious: if it's acceptable to quote the words of spoken language directly in dialogue, there seems no good reason why the unspoken language of inner monologue shouldn't be treated the same way, since in both cases the word is at the same time an existent in itself and a signifier of something beyond itself. However, his suggestion that consciousness is better represented by words on the page standing as intermediaries to signify thoughts which are not those same words connects closely to Darrieussecq's literary project, at least where thoughts concerned are more than, or other than, words. As for the mental silence Sartre mentions in the final line, Howells has commented on the phenomenon in Sartre's own fiction, examining the silent inner shame of Daniel in *L'Âge de raison* as he returns from his failed attempt to drown his cats, and noting that, when the character's inner monologue returns, it comes as a (Proustian) distraction from his mental state rather than an expression of it. **xlvi** Mental silence is not something readers would readily associate with Darrieussecq's representation, however: mental cacophony would seem nearer the mark. Even here, though, there is a connection between the writers. Sartre reproaches literary stream-of-consciousness for

neglecting the times in which the mind is filled with silent attention, emotion or sensation. Darrieussecq rejects stream-of-consciousness for drowning out the hubbub of competing mental events with a smooth flow of joined-up monologue. Both seek to disrupt the stream of inner words in order to make room for the rest.

Current scientific thinking on consciousness and language also generally sides with Darrieussecq in uncoupling the two phenomena. Steven Pinker argues against linguistic determinism in *The Stuff of Thought*, and proposes instead his own model of 'conceptual semantics', in which a proto-linguistic level of thought, which Pinker dubs 'mentalese', maps simple 'digital' concepts of space, time, substance, and causality onto the 'analogue' flow of reality, combining them into propositions about the world, and, through metaphor, into complex and abstract ideas at the higher level at which language operates. **xlix** Damasio also downgrades language, claiming that core consciousness is a 'non-linguaged map of logically related events'. **l** Interestingly from the perspective of literary analysis, he suggests that, while language is not central to consciousness, narrative *is*. Telling stories is, for Damasio, a 'brain obsession', but with a process that has closer parallels to the image-flow of film narrative than the language-based storytelling. Damasio speculates that the phenomenon of creating a second-order mental narrative to reflect what is happening to the organism and its environment is widespread in the animal kingdom, and that what sets humanity apart is our creation of a third-order verbal translation of this narrative. Language is thus a transposition of non-linguistic concepts which exist prior to it in the core self. In this regard, Damasio finds himself at odds with some contemporary theorists, including Daniel Dennett and Julian Jaynes, who emphasize the linguistic aspects of consciousness. **li** The disagreement is perhaps not ultimately over the role of language in the mind, but simply, as with so many other arguments in this area, over the definition of 'consciousness' itself. The

most sophisticated activity of the mind is often linguistic or language-related; the most basic functions operate on an instinctive level in which language plays no role. Once we exchange the psychoanalytic model of a sharply divided mind for a continuum of activity from unconscious, through core consciousness, to extended consciousness, the limits become blurred. As we saw with Beckett, the more you restrict the definition of consciousness to the highest and most complex mental activity, the more central language appears to be. Darrieussecq, we can be sure, favours no such restriction in her own view of the mind.

Away from the question of language, we find Darrieussecq has more in common with psychoanalytic models when it comes to another of her obsessions: the irrational mind. Dreams, madness and the uncanny feature strongly in *A Brief Stay with the Living*, often linked to a traditional Freudian conception of the Unconscious as product and repository of repressed trauma. The characters' psyches have many conventionally Freudian traits: Anne's earliest memory is a 'primal scene' of listening through a door to her parents having sex; the scarred face of the mother's second husband leads to 'inevitable slips of the tongue' from his conversation partners; Nore is 'excited' by the idea of going back in time to kill her mother and have sex with her father, and is given pause for thought by the reminder that no time machine is required for either activity. Darrieussecq's treatment of mental illness in the novel offers the most sustained example of psychoanalytic influence on the writer's understanding of the mind. Anne, the middle daughter, exhibits symptoms of what appears to be a form of paranoid schizophrenia, a distressing condition to herself and her family, with none of the associations of creativity or liberation celebrated by Breton. She believes herself to have been 'recruited' into a network of global telepathic surveillance, the agents of which are selected for their 'extraordinarily open mind' in order to watch over the global consciousness of humanity. She believes that people she sees in the street may be

recruiters, that such people are able to read her thoughts, and that she too has the power to read minds. The novel explicitly connects Anne's mental health to the childhood trauma of her brother's death. The mother refers to her as 'the only one who really went mad' in the aftermath of the drowning.^{liv} This is not necessarily at odds with current medical knowledge: the causes of schizophrenia remain in debate, but the 'stress-vulnerability' model, in which a combination of neurological vulnerability and life events trigger the onset of the condition, is now widely accepted.^{lv} Where the representation of Anne's mental illness takes on a distinctly Freudian tone, though, is in the linking of the symptoms manifested with the traumatic event in the character's past. Darrieussecq explains in interview:

In the network of this family, there was a momentary lapse of guard, by the whole family's lack of attention a child drowned. They all feel guilty, and Anne has developed paranoia because she needs to control the world and to think that an infallible network exists to watch over us, in which she imagines she plays a role.^{lvi}

Thus, the common schizophrenic delusion that others may be able to read your thoughts becomes in *A Brief Stay with the Living* an idiosyncratic reaction which reflects the particular trauma that gave rise to it. Anne blames herself for a failure of surveillance at the beach on the day her brother drowned, and this unmastered guilt has been repressed into her Unconscious, from where it makes its presence felt through coded symptoms: Anne becomes part of a universal supernatural surveillance network, through which she and all humanity will be forever under a watchful eye, and no such tragedy can ever recur. The amenability of Anne's delusions to being traced back to an original cause, and interpreted in the light of this cause, clearly sets Darrieussecq on the side of psychoanalysis, against clinical psychology and psychotherapies based on cognitive models of the mind. For these latter,

the particular symptoms exhibited by a mentally ill person are unlikely to have such a direct link to events which triggered the onset of the illness, and there would be little profit in exploring the details of the delusion in the hope of understanding its origin. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, in fact, would be inclined to dissuade a paranoid patient from dwelling on her delusion, believing that to do so would more likely exacerbate the symptoms than elucidate the condition.

There is a further twist to Anne's illness which complicates the situation, and that is the fact that her telepathic powers may not be delusional at all. Towards the end of the novel, Anne has a vision of her sister Nore having sex in their childhood home precisely as it occurs. Anne also perceives a third, ghostly presence in the house, which the reader presumes to be that of Pierre. The lovers themselves feel haunted: Nore is spooked by a face at the window, and Nicolas finds the atmosphere of the house 'hostile'. A little later, Anne wakes screaming at the moment her elder sister drowns on the other side of the world. Other incidents corroborate the existence of the supernatural in the diegesis: the mother may also glimpse Pierre's ghost, and Nore and Jeanne appear to share a dream. **lvii**

The supernatural is boldly presented within the materialist framework of the novel: Anne considers herself to be 'tied hook line and sinker to the flow of my neurons into everyone's thoughts' and says of the surveillance network, 'they can film the inside of my mind' ('l'intérieur de mon cerveau' in the original French, which can mean both 'inside my mind' and 'inside my brain'). **lviii** The contradiction between the immaterial mind implied in the existence of ghosts and telepaths and the resolutely material brain activity emphasized throughout Darrieussecq's text isn't directly addressed within her work, but it is one of several elements pointing to a metaphorical reading, and indeed a psychoanalytic reading, of the supernatural themes in her work, as we shall see.

Darrieussecq has made clear that she doesn't believe in the real existence of the supernatural phenomena described in her novels: 'I've often found myself making clear once again that ghosts, in my opinion, exist only in fiction', she writes in *Rapport de police*, but also declares elsewhere: 'The fantastic comes naturally to me. It offers a description of the way we can experience reality within ourselves. There's nothing rational about reality'.^{ix} Across her œuvre apparently supernatural events disturb otherwise rationally explicable narratives, from the animal transformations of *Truismes* to the abundant ghosts, who also make their presence felt in one way or another in *Naissance des fantômes*, *White*, *Le Pays*, and *Tom est mort*. With the exception of *Truismes*, where magical metamorphoses are accepted at face value as part of its surreal dystopian world, all Darrieussecq's texts present psychologically plausible characters in largely realist settings. The supernatural forms an uncanny irruption into these worlds, and the narratives leave open the question of whether the protagonists' experiences are a matter of coincidence, hallucination, or genuine encounters. With reference to the supernatural experiences of the protagonist of *Naissance des fantômes*, Darrieussecq explains: 'I want to take my character at face value. That means that, what she is saying and experiencing, she really is saying and experiencing it and you have to believe her'.^{ix} If we're wondering whether Anne is 'really' telepathic, or if Pierre's ghost is 'really' there, we are asking the wrong question. The intent is not ontological but phenomenological: Darrieussecq is interested in the subjectivity of her protagonists' minds, not the objective truth of reality, and the reader's uncertainty allows us to share in the characters' uncertainty, the better to experience the disorienting effect of the unexplained.

The psychoanalytic reading of Darrieussecq's supernatural is encouraged by several comments within her novels and outside of them. In an interview, Darrieussecq defines her

ghosts as ‘everything that is kept silent, everything that is unspoken, everything that is left unsaid’.^{ixi} In *Le Pays*, the protagonist connects seeing the ghost of her dead brother with her recent visit to her psychoanalyst, ‘whose work raises spectres like dust under a broom’, and the narrator ends the novel with the assertion, ‘ghosts are born from our haunted minds, which spark and extinguish them, guttering, feeble candles. They are for us alone’.^{ixii} All Darrieussecq’s ghostly visitations are the return of lost loved ones to grieving parents and siblings, who are often burdened by guilt over the death, as is the case in *A Brief Stay with the Living*. Freud’s definition of the uncanny is built around such situations, playing on etymological connections between the German word, *unheimlich*, and related terms *heimisch* (‘homely’) and *heimlich* (‘secret’). The uncanny is thus ‘something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it’.^{ixiii} This has clear validity for Darrieussecq’s ghosts: in *A Brief Stay with the Living*, when the memory of Pierre’s death appears in the characters’ consciousness, it generally comes as an involuntary association, and is quickly displaced by less painful thoughts. In fact, while the traumatic memories may have been ‘repressed’ in the commonly used sense that characters avoid thinking of them, they are not repressed in the strict psychoanalytic sense, which would imply they have been sealed in an area of the mind beyond the voluntary reach of consciousness. Darrieussecq’s characters, in line with current psychological theories on the consequences of trauma, are only too aware of their painful memories, as this description of the mother makes clear: ‘the inside of her brain colonized by hermit crabs, thoughts snapping their tiny pincers . . . her maddening tune in the hollow of her ear, in the depths of the lobes of her brain—that tweeting never stops’.^{ixiv}

Darrieussecq's experience with psychoanalysis as analysand and later analyst demonstrates the discipline's importance to her view of the mind, and her comments on the subject attest to the deliberate inclusion of its theories in her work:

I've read Freud a little and practised him a lot, which is to say I've undergone psychoanalysis myself, for eight years, which allowed me among other things to separate (as far as it was possible to do so) my neurosis from my writing. Before, my manuscripts were all about me, my family, my navel. I couldn't have written *Pig Tales* without psychoanalysis. I wouldn't have managed to invent a character, to separate my voice from the character's voice. Thanks to the analysis, my neurosis feeds into my books without overwhelming them, and in doing so makes them readable, orients them outwards. I also have to thank it for giving me a career which is an adventure in itself, since, besides the writing, I have now become a psychoanalyst myself. It's a whole other story, which includes a long training period and infinite readings of Freud. And Lacan. But it has to be said that Freud is a writer as well as being a great researcher. [. . .] The guy is a great western sage, like there are great eastern sages. **ixv**

Psychoanalysis is one of the few points in which Darrieussecq finds herself in serious disagreement with Sarraute, and comments on the older writer's critique of Freud as follows:

I did like it when Nathalie Sarraute would get worked up about that charlatan, Freud. I think that if she put so much vehemence into denying the validity of his theses, it must be because she saw him as her double. She valued 'her own' invention, sub-conversation, what she had unveiled with that. And the room that Freud left her, broad as it was, must have seemed to her to be dangerously narrow. **ixvi**

Darrieussecq here employs a familiar psychoanalyst's response to criticism of the discipline, which is to recast the critique from a reasoned objection to an emotional response, allowing

resistance to psychoanalysis to be itself psychoanalyzed. As we've seen, Sarraute's view of the mind is in several respects incompatible with Freud's, and it seems unlikely either that she secretly regarded him as her double, or that she thought he left her little to say on the nature of consciousness.

Where her own work is concerned, Darrieussecq's attitude to psychoanalysis offers an implied endorsement to critics' efforts to interpret her fiction through its framework, and many have taken up the invitation. These range from the implausible, such as the critic who would read the narrator's transformation in *Truismes* as a female fantasy of penis-envy, on the grounds that the nipples of her new breasts might be seen as resembling atrophied male genitals, to more subtle application of psychoanalytic theory, which, regardless of its validity in the real world, convincingly mirrors the mentality of the fictional characters. Kathryn Robson's discussion of melancholia is an example of the latter: taking Freud's conception of melancholia as a lingering state of unresolved grief due to a failure to work through the process of mourning, Robson profitably interprets Darrieussecq's literal hauntings as metaphors for grief and loss. **lxvii**

Stories which blur the supernatural with the psychological are, of course, legion, and many of them pre-date Freud's theory of the uncanny, which was itself inspired by Hoffmann's *Sand Man*, as we saw earlier. Darrieussecq's uncanny owes at least as much to this literary heritage, which includes such notable French texts as Maupassant's *Le Horla* (*The Horla*, 1887), as it does to her psychoanalytic grounding. On this reading, Darrieussecq's supernatural becomes a further means to write the mind without using the hackneyed discourse of the psychological novel: the ghosts are an externalized symbol of inner grief and guilt, and their manifestations to the characters allow emotions to be played out as if an interaction with something outside of the self. We might incidentally read a

similar literary-psychological metaphor into *A Brief Stay with the Living's* telepathy. There are two ways in which a human mind can slip inside another person's consciousness to experience their thoughts vicariously: telepathy is one, and fiction is the other. The novel lists its protagonists to the reader on its back cover, before announcing: 'We are inside their minds'.^{lxviii} If Anne is really dipping in and out of the minds of her sisters in the latter pages of the story, then her actions mirror what we as readers have been doing since the first page, and what might be seen as the quintessential literary experience.

French psychotherapy may be riven by the 'guerre des psys' between psychoanalysts and cognitive therapists, while the 'Freud Wars' rage in the humanities with bitter exchanges between the proponents and detractors of the psychoanalytic view of the mind.^{lxix} In Darrieussecq, however, psychoanalytic elements coexist harmoniously with scientific ideas drawn from various areas of cognitive science, neurology and evolutionary theory. As we have seen, Darrieussecq is fascinated by the brain as well as the mind. Her characters are equally interested: Anne recites to herself the organ's vital statistics: 'The human brain weighs in at 1.4 kilos, it is made up of 20,00 to 30,000 million neurones and about 10,000 times more synapses linking them together'.^{lxx} They also consider themselves in some sense to *be* their brains, or at least to be the product of its activity. Nore remembers where she left her car 'after she'd quite simply plugged her brains in' (the French original uses the more anatomically specific 'mninges').^{lxxi} Anne fantasizes about reshaping her self with a re-modeled brain via a pre-frontal lobotomy administered with a sharp pencil: 'No more anxiety, no more mood swings, no more crises or blues, no more projects, no more concentration: a complete, pleasant, carefree distraction'.^{lxxii} A focus on the physiological underpinning of the mind inevitably raises the question of how different physiologies might give rise to different kinds of minds. Three such differences are

particularly at issue in Darrieussecq: the difference between simple and complex brains in human development from infant to adult, the difference in both complexity and configuration between human brains and those of other animals, and the differences, or lack thereof, between male and female brains. Let's take them in turn.

Darrieussecq's characters have no time for the Cartesian idea of a divinely implanted soul at conception. 'You're not going to tell me eggs can think', scoffs Nore. **lxxiii** Rather, for Darrieussecq, consciousness is a phenomenon that dawns gradually with increasing neural complexity in the foetus. Jeanne considers in detail how the mind might develop *in utero* in tandem with the development of the brain:

How to know at what age it starts thinking? Bang, conception, contact between two conducting bodies, a time bomb. . . . First connection, it was black and then. . . . Even if it's just the sensation of being here, of being here rather than nowhere, warmth, presence, and the din of a train, a beating heart, no ears yet, just the vibrations of the mother's heart, and skin not yet skin, something growing and beating in turn. **lxxiv**

This might be seen as another version of Beckett's spiral: an adult mind thinking its way back to the simplest, blankest state of conscious awareness, which in this case is represented by the beginnings of cognition in the womb. As the human develops from a bundle of cells to embryo, infant, child, and adult, the increasing sophistication of its mental activity rapidly matches and outstrips that of other forms of animal life. This reflection of evolutionary development (phylogeny) in the development of the individual (ontogeny) interests Darrieussecq's Darwinian side, and forms the basis of her exploration of the human mind within the wider sphere of living things. Anne as a baby had 'the wet fur of a little creature'; Nore as a toddler might well have been mentally bested by a chimpanzee at the zoo, as her sister speculates:

Who was looking at who, we wondered, with its emotively human eyes, its human hands, and it could sit up better than Nore, take objects between thumb and index finger better than Nore, you might even think that at triangles and triangular holes Nore would have been. . . . Who had more brainpower? **lxxv**

We have seen earlier how Darrieussecq uses animal cognition to reflect on different ways of perceiving the world. Just as frequently, however, it is the similarity between human and non-human minds which draws her attention. Nore notes that pigs and octopuses have the most human-like eyes of the animal kingdom, and speculates that they see the world as we do (p. 36; trans. 19); later she finds ‘troubling’ the quivering eyelids of a cat in REM sleep, evidence that dreaming is not an exclusively human phenomenon (p. 205; trans. 125). Nore herself is playfully demoted down the cognitive scale in the scene on the beach, where her sexual interest in the dog-owner is referred to in terms of her ‘snout snuffling inquisitively’. **lxxvi**

Darrieussecq’s most famous exercise in blurring boundaries between human and animal minds is not in *A Brief Stay with the Living* at all, but in the metamorphosis into a pig of the narrator of *Truismes*. The pig-woman of this novel, and to a lesser extent her werewolf lover, offer the reader a fictional account of the subjective experience of being a human, being an animal, and, for much of the novel, being an undecidable hybrid somewhere between the two. Naama Harel’s study of metamorphosis literature notes a conventional ‘psycho-physical split’ in such tales, which is to say that the stories generally recount a metamorphosis from human to animal where the character’s body is concerned, but no corresponding transformation of their mind. **lxxvii** Aside from minor preferences, like Gregor Samsa’s developing taste for rotten food in *Die Verwandlung* (*Metamorphosis*, 1915), metamorphosis literature presents us with the story of a human mind trapped in an

animal body, and Harel includes Darrieussecq's tale as uncontroversially inhabiting this genre. Certainly, the character retains human-like mental traits while in pig form: other pigs are wary of her, as 'they are well aware that the thinking in there continues to be like human thinking'.^{lxxviii} The author goes so far as to say: 'For me, at the end she is much more human than at the beginning. Whatever she may look like'.^{lxxix} As a monster and outcast the narrator does indeed learn to re-evaluate her life and her treatment by society, and to escape the received ideas she originally lived by, and according to which she was abused and exploited. She also gains the power of self-expression, both in the episode in which she talks the werewolf down from murderous bloodlust with a calming evocation of the natural world, and in the act of narrating the novel itself. However, Harel is surely wrong to claim that the novel deals purely with corporeal rather than psychological transformation. The human mentality sensed by the other pigs in the pig-sty is maintained only tenuously and with great struggle, as is made clear by the narrator's attempt to escape:

My body didn't understand why it had to wrestle with the piece of steel, my body's movements lacked conviction while all my neurons were exhausting themselves to keep this one idea in mind, *the bolt, the bolt*, it was exhausting to struggle against yourself like that.^{lxxx}

Elsewhere, she forgets human things when in pig form, like the fact that church services happen on Sundays (she was becoming 'un peu bête', she explains in an untranslatable pun).^{lxxxii} Memory of her human life fades, and she can no longer recall her boyfriend's face, and no longer read. Rather than feeling frustration at this latter phenomenon, she attempts to eat the books; she also eats corpses and sleeps in her own excrement in the same period. Most disturbingly, the narrator in pig form comes across a baby strapped into a car-seat, the mother of whom is loading up the car in haste as if to escape an abusive

husband. The truth of the woman's situation occurs to the narrator 'like a flash of understanding' in retrospect, after the woman has fled. **lxxxii** During the encounter itself, however, there is little of the human in the narrator's cognition as she roots through the scattered belongings, fails to distinguish whether the sounds made by the baby as she pokes at it with her snout are laughing or crying (we presume the latter), and appears to be at real risk of killing and eating the infant: 'It seems, how can I put it, that it would have been easy to eat it, to sink my teeth into that nice pink flesh'. **lxxxiii**

What is particularly striking about Darrieussecq's representation of the narrator's mind is its ever-shifting position on a continuum between human and animal. Just as the narrator's body is in constant flux between the two states, making it often impossible to visualize her, so her mentality moves between the two, while never completely reaching one or other condition. Crucially, the early stages of the transformation are already underway at the novel's opening, so there is no 'purely human' yardstick against which to measure the narrator's change. We infer that the narrator's character has always been one of naïve, trusting stupidity and uninhibited appetites, and that her social status has always been that of someone exploited for others' pleasure, profit, and contempt, all of which characteristics are exaggerated by the metamorphosis, until the exploitation at last turns her naivety to self-assertion and revolt. The novel is of course primarily a satire on society's attitudes to women, not a study of non-human cognition, and as a referent for what the narrator becomes, the 'grosse truie' ('fat sow') of misogynistic insults is at least as important as the actual farmyard animal, *sus domesticus*. Nevertheless, the novel does offer a striking portrait of the non-human, as in this example of animal fear:

She shut the door, it went click clack, and that put a kind of restlessness in the air. I couldn't sleep because of these fearful waves, everything was

quivering and getting off balance. All my fellow pigs were stirring, their good, honest smell was going sour, full of bad hormones, of stress, of fear. The smell split into separate blocks, each smell around each pig, their snouts seeking out the corners of the room, underneath the doors, a gap through which to flee, each wanting to leave the other to his own victim smell. **lxxxiv**

In these few lines, sense-impressions, quasi-scientific physiological analysis, and physical metaphors to externalize emotion all combine to present a recognizable depiction of anxiety, but one that excludes higher cognitive functions specific to human fear.

Darrieussecq's experiments in focalizing narrative through animal minds—a pig in this novel, and brief forays in other novels into the mental perspective of a basking shark or a sealion—exploit the representation of non-human consciousness in order to comment on the human. **lxxxv** '[Animals] force us into on-the-spot metaphysics: what is it that separates us from them? What is it that makes us human?', the writer asks in an interview. **lxxxvi** First of all, Darrieussecq is asserting that there *is* such a thing as non-human consciousness, in contradiction of the Cartesian concept of animals as unconscious automata, and the philosophical tradition that would make language a prerequisite for true consciousness. Second, in placing human and animal minds on a cognitive continuum, she figures the human as no more than a 'thinking mammal', as the narrator of *Le Pays* describes herself. **lxxxvii** This sets her at odds with religious ideas of ensoulment, as reflected in Bernanos, as well as the exceptionalism of Sartre's being-for-itself. In other strands of philosophy, Darrieussecq's approach has elements in common with philosophers like Thomas Nagel, whose famous essay, 'What is it like to be a bat?' grounds its definition of consciousness on the presence of subjective experiences which cannot be described in neurophysiological or other scientific discourse. **lxxxviii** Among recent French thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari stand out for their concept of 'le devenir-animal', for which

Darrieussecq expresses enthusiasm, although she was not aware of it at the time of writing her first novel. *Truismes* is not in fact particularly close to Deleuze and Guattari's idea: their conception of a loss of human individuality in the undifferentiated multitude of animal existence is quite different from Darrieussecq's own example of a human becoming animal, in which the process leads to an escape from cultural conditioning into self-assertion. **lxxxix**

Closer in modern thought is Darrieussecq's affinity with evolutionary psychology, with its search for parallels between human and animal behaviour to demonstrate adaptive origins to our psychological traits.

In the end, though, Darrieussecq's contextualization of the human mind among other kinds of mind stops short of the 'Darwinitis' diagnosed by Tallis among humanities scholars eager to emphasize the *bête humaine* at the expense of the uniquely human. If we return to Nore on the beach, we see Nore initially conceive Nicolas's dog in anthropomorphic terms—'the dog, looking playful, delighted'—only for this view to be queried. 'Even supposing the dog's eyesight is centred on itself', thinks Nore checking her train of thought: 'even supposing it can see the difference between itself and the world (its master, smells, this great stretch of water)—or else it may have a pleasant tendency to confuse itself with the world, who knows?'. Moments later, she goes on to wonder: 'Dogs recognize their dead, and why is it that they always blink when you stare at them? How do they know where your eyes are? They could look at our noses, for instance, our chins or our feet'. **xc** The idea that true consciousness requires a differentiation of self from world—a negation which constitutes the perceiver by subtracting it from the objects of perception—is the keystone of Sartre's philosophy, as we saw in *Nausea*, and countered by Beckett through the awareness without self-awareness attributed to Worm. Nore's speculation (as ever in the novel, left undeveloped in the constant flow of new impressions and ideas) at

first considers the possibility that the dog's mind lacks this implicit sense of self which would distinguish extended consciousness from basic sentience. Her next thought, though, implicitly rejects this idea, and instead attributes a theory of mind to the dog: the dog looks at its master's eyes, rather than his nose, because it knows that this is from where the master is looking out. It is not just looking at eyes, it is meeting a gaze. Of course, none of this tells us what it's like to be a dog, or if it is 'like' anything at all. The ability to detect and respond appropriately to a (possibly predatory) gaze is a useful adaptation for any species, and possessed by many which we would be unlikely to consider conscious in any meaningful sense. But Nore's tentative speculations on the creature in front of her, speculations made up more of questions than of answers, move from ideas of automatism to intimations of inner life, and end distinctly in the latter camp, while respecting the gulf that separates human mentality from that of other animals.

Animal consciousness, finally, brings Darrieussecq back into contact with the opening sequence of *In Search of Lost Time*, and to the comparison with which we began this study, many pages ago. A few lines further on from the passage examined in the Introduction, Proust narrates the transition from sleep to waking through reference to non-human and early-human consciousness:

When I woke in the middle of the night, since I did not know where I was, I did not even understand in the first moment who I was; all I had, in its original simplicity, was the sense of existence as it may quiver in the depths of an animal; I was more bereft than a caveman; but then the memory—not yet of the place where I was, but in several of those where I had lived and where I might have been—would come to me like help from on high to pull me out of the void from which I could not have got out on my own; I passed over centuries of civilization in one second, and the image confusedly

glimpsed of oil lamps, then of wing-collar shirts, gradually recomposed my self's original features. **xcii**

The passage offers a further example of Proust's off-hand Darwinism, demonstrating the cultural status of evolutionary theory at the time of writing as 'a popularized scientific reference that has entered everyday language', as Céline Surprenant puts it. **xcii** The 'void' from which the Narrator emerges ('néant' in the French original, the same term as the 'nothingness' of Sartrean existentialism) is not sleep, but rather the core consciousness of the just-awoken mind, which Proust likens to animal awareness, here again figured as little more than bare sentience. As with Beckett's Worm and Darrieussecq's dog, the relationship between consciousness and self-consciousness is in question. Proust's imagery is equivocal here: a sense of existence that 'quivers in the depths' of the animal mind is a dim but not entirely absent awareness of self as distinct from the world around. We are a fraction further along the path towards full human complexity than the place where Worm is said to dwell. From this starting point, the journey to extended consciousness is playfully viewed as a race through human evolution and history from animal minds to those of the earliest humans, presumably without language or culture, and then dashing through the centuries to the present day. Parallel to this, a journey through the Narrator's own history, in terms of his past bedrooms leading towards his present situation, reconstitutes an autobiographical self around the core self as past experience returns through memory. **xciii** These personal and evolutionary histories in Proust mirror the spiral of increasing sophistication that links Worm to Molloy in Beckett, and Proust's first moment of waking offers a similar view of starkly denuded mentality as do the animal speculations and the evocation of the first moment of foetal awareness in Darrieussecq.

After adult and child and human and animal, the last of the three differences explored by Darrieussecq is that of the male and female mind. Darrieussecq sets herself firmly with Sarraute on the side of social constructivism where gender difference is concerned. She asserts that 'writing is sexless, as is the brain', and explicitly links this belief with feminism: 'What I love about feminism is that for me the human brain has no sex. For me, we all have the same brain'.^{xciv} While both cognitive and physiological differences between male and female brains have now been convincingly demonstrated, Darrieussecq isn't necessarily wrong on this point: it remains an open question how far such differences might be counterbalanced by natural variation among the population, as well as by cultural and developmental factors in the individual.^{xcv} There are wide psychological variations within each sex, and countless psychological similarities between the sexes, such that sex difference is in no way the most 'natural' or self-evident line of division between the mentality of any two individuals. And, of course, we can't refute Darrieussecq's assertion with regard to the male and female minds in her novels, who are the fictional inhabitants of her fictional universe. From the premise of the ungendered brain follows the Beauvoirean argument that psychological and behavioural differences between men and women are a result of familial and social conditioning. Unlike with Sarraute, however, there is little in Darrieussecq's fiction with which to test the validity of the assertion, since the later writer specializes in psychological studies of female characters. In *A Brief Stay with the Living*, only the six-page English-language episode in which John, the father, talks to Jeanne on the telephone, ventures into a male consciousness. We might note a tendency towards the practical and goal-oriented in his case, and a lesser emphasis on the emotional and interpersonal than can be seen in the female characters. John is chided by Jeanne for failing to keep in contact with his daughters, his interest in her life seems dominated by

geographical details of Argentina, and he is intermittently distracted from the conversation by thoughts about wind-turbine engineering (p. 253–59; trans. 156–62). In other novels, the minor character of the detective in *Le Mal de mer* and the more substantial figure of Peter in *White* are the only other male characters for whom the reader is granted access to their consciousness. (Her most substantial male character, Kouhouesso of *Il faut beaucoup aimer les hommes*, is seen exclusively from the outside.) Peter is another engineer—this time of heating systems—and similarly phlegmatic in his emotional life and prosaic in his imagination. He does, however, have the most in common with Darrieussecq's female protagonists. He too is haunted by the loss of a sibling; he too has a mental life filled with associative leaps, half-formed thoughts and chaotic interruptions from memory and perception. In this respect, at least, his mind is not different from those of Darrieussecq's female characters. As for the practical bent, social awkwardness, and emotional restraint shared by Peter Tomson and John Johnson, it may be that Darrieussecq considers these to be typical male psychological traits, or it may be that she considers them typical traits of engineers, or of northern Europeans, or not to be typical of any group at all. While men remain at the margins of her psychological studies, questions of the gendered mind are difficult to fathom. There is perhaps a warning not to delve too deeply to be seen in Darrieussecq's satirical play with the hackneyed tropes of gender difference: Nore's attraction to Nicolas is expressed in terms of the 'mystery' of the inscrutable masculine thought-process (p. 105; trans. 63), while in *Truismes*, the narrator must cope with irrational and aggressive mental states on a regular twenty-eight-day cycle as a consequence of having a werewolf for a boyfriend.

Darrieussecq's minds are very much embodied, probably more so than with any of the previous writers examined here, and while the sex of the mind may be irrelevant to the

author, the sex of the body is often to the fore in characters' thinking. 'It's the brain that comes', asserts Jeanne in *A Brief Stay with the Living*. 'When the vaginal surface and brain surface precisely coincide, then it's orgasm time, no doubt about it. . . . Membrane to membrane, fibre to fibre, nerve to nerve, two adjusted organs, brain/vagina'.^{xcvi} For Anne, this inextricability is perceived as a burden. She rails against her status as 'this body linked to this consciousness', and indulges in a dualist fantasy of the body as a separate instrument of the mind: 'Put my body someplace, be in charge of myself, as though of the mothership. Technical control. Autonomy'.^{xcvii} (The image recalls Descartes's image of his mind 'housed within my body like a sailor on his ship', which he raises only to dismiss: even the Cartesian mind is 'confused and intertwined to such an extent' with its body as to form an apparently unified whole.)^{xcviii} Solange in *Clèves* feels alienated from her body as a self-conscious teenage wedding guest: 'She doesn't know what to do with her arms. They've burst out of her body and she's lugging them around hanging from her shoulders'.^{xcix} However, this latter kind of Sartrean *être-pour-autrui* is rare in Darrieussecq. More usually, mental life is lived out through the body with hardly a distinction between psychological and physiological. The mental breakdown of the narrator in *Naissance des fantômes* is an 'physical implosion' to mirror the 'physical explosion' of *Truismes*.^c Indeed, throughout this novel, the narrator's distress at her husband's unexplained disappearance is described in resolutely corporeal terms, as the following typical example shows:

I stood up. The void in my chest seemed to dissipate a little with the movement, the void's strange heaviness vanished, and then it returned, it installed itself again, centred right between my bones, boring into the hollow of my chest, enough to make you spit blood.^{ci}

Darriussecq's embodied consciousness is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body-subject, which rejects the notion of the body as an assemblage of parts, or the instrument of the mind, and conceives it rather as a global unity which includes and is wholly permeated by the mind:

The psycho-physical event can no longer be conceived after the model of Cartesian physiology and as the juxtaposition of a process in itself and a cogitatio. The union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence. **cii**

Merleau-Ponty takes up Descartes's account of the phenomenon of the 'phantom limb' experienced by some amputees to support his own, anti-Cartesian view. For Merleau-Ponty, the stubborn presence of the missing appendage in the subject's sense of self demonstrates how consciousness conceives of itself, not as a free-floating bubble of intellect, but as a corporeal presence in the world, a thinking being down to the fingertips. **ciii**

Contemporary science may quibble with the details of Merleau-Ponty's understanding of phantom limbs, which are now known to be caused more by the physiology of nerve impulses from the remaining stump than by the psychology of loss, regret, and wish-fulfilment, as the philosopher's rather Freudian interpretation would have it. In his reintegrated conception of mind and body, however, Merleau-Ponty is very much in tune with current thinking on consciousness (and rather more so than his fellow phenomenologist, Sartre, on this score). The 'error' committed by Descartes, which Damasio famously sets out to correct in his book of that name, is 'the separation of the most refined operations of mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism'. **civ** Damasio's thesis is that the ancient sub-cortical processes of basic regulation of the body continue to

underpin the complex neo-cortical mental activity that our species has evolved, and thereby remain the basis of our sense of self. Perception is not an unmediated meeting of mind and world, but an active modification of the whole organism in order to interface with the environment; emotions are somatic feedback which colours our decision-making with neural and hormonal responses born in the flesh. This kind of 'thinking with the body' is precisely in harmony with Darrieussecq's own representation of consciousness, made tangible in the corporeal despair of *Naissance des fantômes*, and equally so in *A Brief Stay with the Living*, the aim of which, according to its author, was above all to represent 'something cerebral, in the sense that the brain is an organ of the body'. cvi

*

For Shirley Jordan, *A Brief Stay with the Living* 'may be regarded as a novel approaching the question of what, in this new century, it will mean to be human'. cvi We have seen how Darrieussecq's representation in this novel and others is strongly influenced by recent advances in our understanding of the mind and brain. The stamp of neuroscience, along with those of contemporary clinical psychology and evolutionary theory, is much in evidence throughout the writer's work. In it, we are shown minds which are brought into being by the electro-chemical activity of the physical organ, but which are neither reducible to nor explicable by this biological substrate. While uniquely human, these minds are also part of a wider sphere of cognition encompassing animal life more generally, and the contrasts and connections between human and non-human mentality are explored in Darrieussecq's comparisons and metamorphoses. These new conceptions of mind afford new possibilities for the literary representation of consciousness, but they also affect the minds represented. Darrieussecq's protagonists are aware of their Darwinian status as naked apes, and reflect on the echoes in their own mentality of their evolutionary cousins

and ancestral past. They are equally aware of their ontological status as material beings, composed of brains and bodies within which neural and hormonal systems connect up every part, and whose thoughts are a consequence of electrical activity between the synapses of their neurons. While accepting intellectually the fact that they are part of the animal kingdom, the characters wonder at the gulf between their human nature and their fellow mammals, whose mental life can only be guessed at. Accepting the fact that they are the product of their brains, the characters struggle in vain to bridge the conceptual gap between their subjective experience and what they know of its biological basis. In Darrieussecq's world, scientific advances in our understanding of the human mind have not demystified the once-miraculous phenomenon of consciousness. Rather, they have opened up whole new mysteries and miracles, leaving us confounded by the blossoming of our immensely rich and complex inner lives from cellular activity, and marvelling at the aeons of blind mutation and incremental change which have built our brains from the constituent parts we still share with the humblest forms of life.

Yet alongside this forward-looking, science-inspired novelist is another Darrieussecq. This writer declares herself 'deeply haunted by Freud, quite simply', combines her creative work with psychoanalytic practice, and conceives her characters' haunted psyches very much in the manner of Freudian neurosis. **cvii** The narrator of *Tom est mort* writes down her story as an explicitly therapeutic act, and, as in the psychoanalytic talking cure, it's at the very end of the process that she is able to face her traumatic memory and recount it in words. Elsewhere, as we have seen, Darrieussecq's own storytelling echoes the structure of the Freudian case-study, allowing the reader to piece together the story of a past trauma from oblique mental references and involuntary glimpses. Mourning processes stall, leaving characters trapped in melancholia; mental illness encodes its cause within its symptoms.

Darrieussecq's minds have much in common with the Freudian psyches explored by André Breton, and exhibit none of the hostility towards the psychoanalytic model that is often found in enthusiasts of neuroscientific, cognitive, and evolutionary paradigms of mind.

In the final reckoning, though, the impression held by the reader is not of two Darrieussecqs, one scientific, the other psychoanalytic, clashing through the course of her novels. There is only one vision in these texts. Darrieussecq's representation of the mind is eclectic, but it is not incoherent: ideas from science, philosophy, and psychoanalysis jostle together, with no attempt to build a unified system of interpretation of mental phenomena. Rather, the subjective experience of consciousness is her central concern, and she invites us to share the subjectivities of her protagonists, minutely described, riotous with thoughts, feelings, memories, and perceptions, and ever-changing in quality as the mental and emotional state of the character varies with situation. The characters, and the texts, strive to understand the nature of the mental activity displayed, and to connect it to a broader realm of mind and brain, but more questions are offered than answers, and the psychoanalytic or scientific analyses proposed are tentative and partial.

Darrieussecq's writing on the mind is situated at a cultural and historical crossroads, and none more so than *A Brief Stay with the Living*, written at the very end of the twentieth century and published at the very start of the twenty-first. We see in the novel the legacy of a century in which public discourse on the mind was dominated by the theories of Freud and his successors, where childhood traumas and dark desires are locked in the Unconscious mind, to be liberated by a winding path of narrative. Equally we see one of the earliest attempts in French literature, or indeed literature of any language, to put into fiction the new concepts of the mind coming from advances in neuroscience, along with renewed interest in consciousness from clinical psychology, psycholinguistics and evolutionary

theorists. The last century was most certainly the century of Freud where the understanding of the mind was concerned. It's still too early to tell if the present century will be the century of cognitive science, although its extraordinary rise to prominence and eclipse of much earlier thought on the topic certainly holds promise. If so, Darrieussecq's work stands as a marker of the point of change, a time when old and new models of the conscious and unconscious mind coexist, and each offers a possible understanding of what lies behind our subjective experience.

Notes

i Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Cape, 2005), pp. 91–2.

ii Capgras syndrome appears in *The Echomaker* (2006) by Richard Powers and *Atmospheric Disturbances* (2008) by Rivka Galchen; de Clérambault's syndrome appears in McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) and its 2004 film adaptation, as well as the French thriller, *À la folie. . . pas du tout* (2002); anteretrograde amnesia is the subject of *Memento* (2000), and autism of Mark Haddon's novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) and its acclaimed stage adaptation.

iii 'Marqué sans doute par les idées en vogue de sa génération, il avait jusque-là considéré la sexualité comme une puissance positive, une source d'union qui augmentait la concorde entre les humains par les voies innocentes du plaisir partagé. Il y voyait au contraire maintenant de plus en plus souvent la lutte, le combat brutal pour la domination, l'élimination du rival et la multiplication hasardeuse des coûts sans aucun raison d'être que d'assurer une propagation maximale aux gènes', Michel

Houellebecq, *La Carte et le territoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), p. 303. The views on fashion and the family in can be found on pp. 73, 105.

IV

The English translation includes the name of the character at the head of each section.

Darrieussecq comments: ‘Dans la traduction anglaise, j’ai accepté que l’on mette le nom du personnage en entrée de paragraphe parce qu’il semble que les Anglais sont plus bêtes que les Français. C’était l’avis en tout cas de mon éditeur’ (‘In the English translation, I allowed the name of the character to be included as a header, because the English are apparently stupider than the French. That was my publisher’s opinion in any case’), “‘Comment j’écris”, entretien avec Marie Darrieussecq’, with Jean-Marc Terrasse, *La Création en acte*, ed. by Paul Gifford and Marion Schmid (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 253–68 (p. 263).

V

‘Qu’est-ce qui pense, dans nos boîtes crâniennes? Neurones et biochimie, comment s’arrêter là? Comment comprendre que ça pense, ces deux lobes blanchâtres en forme de chou-fleur, de fœtus, de boyaux, de labyrinthe? Les mêmes et pas les mêmes pour chaque être humain, et personne ne sait ce qui s’y passe, ce qui s’y pense, ni pourquoi ni comment. [. . .] Oui, qu’est-ce qui pense, dans cette boîte dure traversée d’air, de salive et de sang—ma tête, en équilibre sur mon cou? Qu’est-ce qui pense, à l’étage de ma bouche, perché entre mes deux oreilles, entre mes tempes battantes, qu’est-ce qui pense quand je pense que je pense? Penser avec ses tripes, écrire avec son cœur, on y croirait plus facilement, à cette mythologie des abats, qu’écrire avec cet intangible rien qu’est notre pensée’, *Rapport de police* (Paris: POL, 2010), pp. 197–8.

VI

‘Deux neurones se connectant’, Marie Darrieussecq, *Bref Séjour chez les vivants* (Paris: POL, 2001), p. 176; trans. 108; ‘Bang dans la tête’, p. 86; trans. 51; p. 119; trans. 71.

Translations from this novel are taken from *A Brief Stay with the Living*. All other translations are my own.

vii ‘Imaginer être dans cette tête à ce moment-là. Un pan du monde devient aveugle, une couleur disparaît, une moitié de mon corps; la part de mon cerveau qui dit *je* s’enraye’, p. 112; trans. 67.

viii ‘Il y a une grande différence entre l’esprit et le corps, en ce que le corps, dans sa nature, est toujours divisible, et que l’esprit est entièrement indivisible’; ‘je n’y puis distinguer aucunes parties, mais je me conçois comme une chose seule et entière’, Descartes, pp. 203–204.

ix ‘Celle qu’elle était dans son sommeil aimait le Coca-Cola, se fichait de fermer les portes, et se promenait sous la Lune: ces trois maigres traits de caractère lui semblaient plus vrais, plus *Anne*, que tout ce qui prétendait, à l’état de veille, être elle’, p. 220; trans. 135.

x ‘L’absence à soi-même’; ‘J/e’ appears in *A Brief Stay* in the narration of Jeanne’s dream: ‘j/e suis très grande, agrandie de haut en bas m/e dirigeant vers ce point’, p. 16, and more extensively in *Le Pays*, which opens with a sequence evoking the absent state of mind of the protagonist while running.

xi ‘*I’m driving*, un saisissement, une brutale attaque opérée par cette idée. Stupéfaite, non de conduire, mais d’être là; je me constatais, je me regardais’, p. 268; trans. 165 (translation modified), italics Darrieussecq’s.

xii ‘Petites, avec Jeanne, on s’amusait à ne pas penser, à penser à rien, cotonneusement. . . Mais on pense à ne rien penser, on se dédouble c’est le problème de ces exercices, on se voit penser et on n’y pense plus’, p. 30; trans. 15.

xiii Thoughts on an empty consciousness occur on pp. 40, 62; trans. 22, 35; the panic attack is on pp. 18–20; trans. 8–9; night-club thoughts are on pp. 269–73; trans. 166–8.

xiv ‘Arrête calme-toi’, p. 299; trans. 184; ‘Vert et noir mouches paillettes’, p. 306; trans. 189.

xv Helena Chadderton, *Marie Darrieussecq’s Textual Worlds: Self, Society, Language* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 129.

xvi ‘Arrête avec ça mes coups de revolver dans la tête bang bang qui reviennent comme des chansons, des scies’, p. 166; trans. 102, translation modified.

xvii William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), I, p. 244.

xviii Gerald M. Edelman, whose ‘internal Darwinism’ of a plethora of different neural impulses competing for access to consciousness made a poor fit for the Sartrean mind in Chapter 4, seems very much more in tune with Darrieussecq’s view: ‘When we think, it’s very rare for a full sentence to occur to us; it’s more like a fleeting memory or a fantasy, a smell or a song heard on the radio coming back to us. . . . That’s what the mind is, a great bazaar structured differently for each of us’, Busnel and Gandillot.

xix ‘J’écris des livres psychologiques contre la psychologie. Je ne me satisfais pas de phrases type “Je me sentais très angoissée” ou “Elle était très heureuse”. Ces phrases ont été élaborées, tendues à leur point maximum, à la charnière du 19^{ème} et du 20^{ème} siècle, avec Proust. Ensuite, il y a la cassure Joyce: comment ça se passe à même le cerveau. *Ulysse*, entre autres livres, a nourri *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*. Je veux savoir ce que c’est, l’angoisse, le bonheur, la mer, un bébé, ce que c’est de l’intérieur, comme si c’était la première fois que j’abordais ces parages. Je veux dire au lecteur: “Voyez, sentez, entendez: ceci est une vague, ceci est une femme qui se perd, ceci est un

cerveau qui pense”’, Becky Miller and Martha Holmes, ‘Interview with Marie Darrieussecq’, Marie Darrieussecq website, University of Arizona (December 2001) <<http://darrieussecq.arizona.edu/fr/entetien2001.html>>.

xx Gaudet, p. 117.

xxi ‘Le garçon. La table. Mon chapeau au porte-manteau, retirons nos gants. Il faut les jeter négligemment sur la table, à côté de l’assiette; plutôt dans la poche du par-dessus; non, sur la table; ces petites choses sont de la tenue générale. Mon par-dessus au porte-manteau; je m’assieds; ouf; j’étais las’, Édouard Dujardin, *Les Lauriers sont coupés, suivi de Le Monologue intérieur*, ed. by Carmen Licari (Rome: Bulzoni, 1977), p. 103.

xxii James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922) (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 923–4.

xxiii ‘Or si, quand il s’agit du langage inexact de l’amour-propre par exemple, le redressement de l’oblique discours intérieur (qui va s’éloignant de plus en plus de l’impression première et centrale), jusqu’à ce qu’il se confonde avec la droite qui aurait dû partir de cette impression, si ce redressement est chose malaisée contre quoi boude notre paresse, il est d’autres cas, celui où il s’agit de l’amour, par exemple, où ce même redressement devient douloureux’, Proust, *RTP*, *IV*, 469; trans. 199.

xxiv ‘Ce qui se dissimule derrière le monologue intérieur: un foisonnement innombrable de sensations, d’images, de sentiments, de souvenirs, d’impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu’aucun langage intérieur n’exprime, qui se bousculent aux portes de la conscience, s’assemblent en groupes compacts et surgissent tout à coup, se défont aussitôt, se combinent autrement et réapparaissent sous une nouvelle forme, tandis que continue à se dérouler en nous, pareil au ruban qui s’échappe en crépitant de la fente d’un

téléscripteur, le flot ininterrompu des mots’, Nathalie Sarraute, ‘Conversation et sous-conversation’, *L’Ère du soupçon, OC*, pp. 1587–607 (p. 1594).

xxv

‘Nathalie Sarraute m’a donné la force de ne pas écrire “Elle se sentait très angoissée”.

J’ai essayé de trouver autre chose. Elle, son truc c’était les sous-conversations, ce qui se passait autour, et moi, ce n’est pas exactement cela, ça serait, comment définir ça, ça serait l’absence à soi-même [. . .] J’essaie de décrire ce vide qu’on est et qui est rempli par des tas d’autres choses qui ne sont pas nous mais qui le deviennent [. . .] Elle, elle s’intéressait beaucoup plus au dialogue, à la conversation, à ce qui se passe sous les mots. Moi, c’est plutôt à ce qui se passe presque sous la peau, je dirais, je suis presque plus physique qu’elle, je suis dans une forme de désir’, Nelly Kapriélian, *Écrire, écrire, pourquoi? Entretien avec Marie Darrieussecq* (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque publique d’information/Centre Pompidou, 2010), p. 7.

xxvi

‘*Beau chien que vous avez là, saloperie de chien qui me flaire la, ça le fait rire, Charlie! il est joueur. . . dis quelque chose, on te parle répond, on t’appelle du fond de la maison, je vous vois depuis quelque temps, bravo*’, pp. 81–2; trans. 48, italics Darrieussecq’s.

xxvii

‘Règne du lieu commun’; ‘s’efforcent [. . .] de nous persuader que le monde est fait d’individus irremplaçables, tous exquis, même les méchants, tous passionnés, tous particuliers. Nathalie Sarraute nous fait voir le mur de l’inauthentique; elle nous le fait voir partout. Et derrière ce mur? Qu’y a-t-il? Eh bien justement *rien*’, Sartre, Preface to Nathalie Sarraute’s, *Portrait d’un inconnu, OC*, pp. 36–7.

xxviii

‘On entend le jardin depuis que le téléphone a sonné, contraste’, p. 22; trans. 10.

xxix

Ramachandran, p. 229.

xxx

‘Il y a des gens très malheureux, malades, pour qui la mer se résout à une série de lignes superposées bleu blanc gris parallèles, et à du son, une odeur, un mouvement: ils ne font pas le lien, ils sont incompatibles par malheur par maladie avec l’idée, non de mer, mais de vision, de cohérence du monde’, p. 42; trans. 23.

xxxi

p. 140; trans. 85. The Molyneux problem is discussed in Locke’s, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book Two, Chapter Nine.

xxxii

‘Un aveugle-né ne verra rien. Il verra des couleurs, des lignes, tout un bazar de stimuli optiques, mais sans relief, ni principe organisateur. Son cerveau ne saura pas décoder ce que l’œil capte et que le nerf transmet. Pour voir il faut avoir déjà vu. Les deux cas étudiés se sont 1) suicidé 2) suicidé. Car la lumière promise était indéchiffrable’, p. 140; trans. 85.

xxxiii

‘Il verrait quoi, une étendue hostile et pas d’ombre. Le sable, mou sous les pattes. Les algues à odeur de poisson’, p. 206; trans.126.

xxxiv

For Heidegger, the objects of our perception are usually seen, not as inertly present-at-hand (‘vorhanden’), but are rather conceived within a framework of our own desires and intentions in terms of their possible role in our projects: they are ready-to-hand (‘zuhanden’) in the manner of a tool. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 101–8.

xxxv

White, p. 99 and elsewhere; ‘les chats, les oiseaux, les poissons et les mouches aux yeux à facettes’, *Naissance des fantômes*, p. 158. Darrieussecq notes of the former: ‘It’s an extremely cold place where the air is saturated with ice crystals and all the explorers and scientists who have been there and are there now claim to be victims of various optical illusions because the sunlight is refracted in the crystals and produces images. There are also auditory illusions, to the extent that the most rational and

scientific people think they hear creatures calling to them, or see processions, herds, things like that', Terrasse, p. 267.

xxxvi

'Il existe des densités différentes d'images, le rêve et la rêverie et le souvenir et le flash-back, et parfois je vois des lieux et des gens d'il y a très longtemps; d'avant même que je sois née; mais Arnold ne me croirait pas. Des cascades d'images entrevues, sans mots, elles veulent bien dire quelque chose', p. 178; trans. 108.

xxxvii

'Je cours après quelque chose d'impossible dans cette zone où il n'y a pas de mots, mais c'est ce qui me fait avancer. Je me rappelle ma prof de philo en terminale, absolument excellente et toujours très convaincante: elle m'a ouverte à tout un univers, celui des concepts, mais ce faisant elle nous a aussi expliqué qu'il n'y a pas de pensée sans mot. Cela m'a beaucoup troublée, parce qu'il me semblait bien que dans ma tête la pensée pouvait exister sans mots. Et notez bien qu'elle ne parlait pas de l'inconscient, dont je n'avais d'ailleurs pas idée à l'époque, et qui se fait aussi sans mots, même si c'est complexe. Ma prof de philo était une représentante de cette tradition française du "ce qui se conçoit bien s'énonce clairement". Or, il me semblait qu'on pouvait aussi concevoir les choses "pas bien": penser non pas selon la grande tradition française, "bien", mais penser tout de même, sans énoncer clairement dans sa tête, sans nécessairement les mots', Kapriélian, p. 5.

xxxviii

'Qu'il faille parler pour penser, que les notions ne viennent qu'avec les mots, la théorie me paraît pauvre', *Le Bébé*, p. 112.

xxxix

'Arnold dit, les enfants ne parlent pas, donc ils n'ont pas de mémoire. Que rien n'existe hors ce qui est pensé c'est-à-dire parlé', pp. 150–51; trans. 91.

xi

On the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, see Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1967).

xli The theory of linguistic determinism is countered by Stephen Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (London: Allen Lane, 1994), pp. 55–82.

xlii ‘Si je suis différente, tout ce que je peux dire, c’est que le français se prononce à l’avant du palais’; ‘Je ne sais même pas si je suis la même d’une phrase à l’autre’, pp. 96, 95; trans. 58, 57.

xliii ‘Quand les yeux bleu foncé une seconde s’immobilisent, s’ouvrent en grand, quand les doigts cessent de tripoter le hochet, et que la bouche, une seconde, cesse de chuquer, on la voit, là, l’idée, sans mots, l’idée grande ouverte, qui les atteint, les occupe à fond, déferle une seconde, *JE CONNAIS ÇA, J’AI DÉJÀ ENTENDU ÇA, ÇA ME DIT QUOI*, au son de la langue maternelle’, p. 226; trans. 139. For the original research, see P. D. Eimas, E. R. Siqueland P. Jusczyk and J. Vigorito, ‘Speech Perception in Infants’, *Science*, 171 (1971), pp. 303–6.

xliv ‘Il voit le blanc de l’hôpital, c’est sa première idée, sans mots, que tout est blanc’, p. 175; trans. 107.

xlv ‘Bonne fortune inespérée’; Henri Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Alcan, 1932), p. 43; James, *The Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 233.

xlvi ‘Je me débats contre les mots’, *La Nausée, OR*, p. 153; trans. 185.

xlvii ‘Enfin, ce n’est pas sans quelque truquage qu’on peut réduire le fleuve de la conscience à une succession de mots, même déformés. Si le mot est donné comme intermédiaire *signifiant* une réalité transcendante, par essence, au langage rien de mieux: il se fait oublier, il décharge la conscience sur l’objet. Mais s’il se donne comme *la réalité psychique*, si l’auteur, en écrivant, prétend nous donner une réalité ambiguë qui soit signe, en son essence objective, c’est-à-dire en tant qu’elle se rapporte au dehors, et chose en son essence formelle, c’est-à-dire comme donnée psychique immédiate,

alors on peut lui reprocher de n'avoir pas pris parti et de méconnaître cette loi rhétorique qui pourrait se formuler ainsi: en littérature, où l'on use de signes, il ne faut user *que* de signes; et si la *réalité* que l'on veut signifier est *un mot*, il faut la livrer au lecteur par d'autres mots. On peut lui reprocher en outre d'avoir oublié que les plus grandes richesses de la vie psychique sont *silencieuses*', Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, pp. 200–1, italics Sartre's.

xlvi Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom*, p. 63. The episode in *L'Âge de raison* is to be found in Sartre, *OR*, p. 490.

xlix Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought*, pp. 153–233.

i Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, p. 185.

ii See Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, pp. 227–52, and Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

iii p. 49; trans. 27; 'lapsus inévitables', p. 194; trans. 118; p. 267; trans. 164.

iiii 'Disponibilité mentale', p. 30; trans. 15.

lv 'La seule qui ait viré folle', p. 274; trans. 169.

lv See J. Zubin and B. Spring, 'Vulnerability—a New View of Schizophrenia', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 86 (1977), pp. 103–26.

lvi 'Dans le réseau de cette famille, il y a eu à un moment un défaut de surveillance, par inattention de toute la famille un enfant s'est noyé. Ils se sentent tous coupables, et Anne a développé une paranoïa parce qu'elle a besoin de contrôler le monde et de penser qu'existe un réseau de surveillance infaillible auquel elle imagine participer', Nicholas p. 2.

lvii

Anne's vision is on p. 272; trans. 167; Nore sees the face on p. 283; trans. 174; Nicolas finds the house 'hostile' on p. 308; trans. 190; Anne screams on p. 307; trans. 189; the mother sees Pierre on p. 273; trans. 168; the shared dream is on pp. 12, 16; trans. 4, 6.

lviii

'Reliée fil à fil par l'influx de mes neurones aux pensées de tous', p. 113; trans. 68; 'on filme l'intérieur de mon cerveau', p. 49; trans. 27.

lix

'Je me suis souvent retrouvée à préciser que les fantômes, à mon avis, n'ont d'existence que fictive'. *Rapport de police*, p. 18; 'Le fantastique m'est naturel. Il offre une description de la façon dont nous pouvons vivre intérieurement le réel. Le réel n'a rien de rationnel', 'Marie Darrieussecq, *Truismes*', with Alain-Philippe Durand, online discussion, 20 September 2011, <<http://nonlieux2011.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/marie-darrieussecq-truismes-1996.html>>.

lx

'J'ai envie de prendre au pied de la lettre mon personnage. C'est-à-dire que ce qu'elle est en train de dire et de vivre, elle le dit et le vit vraiment et il faut la croire', Gaudet, pp. 113–14.

lxi

'Tout ce qui est passé sous silence, tout ce qui est tu, tout ce qui est non-dit', Gaudet, p. 111.

lxii

'Dont le travail soulevait les spectres comme la poussière sous un balai'; 'les fantômes [. . .] naissent de notre hantise, qui les allume et les éteint, oscillants, pauvres chandelles. Ils ne sont que pour nous', *Le Pays*, p. 236.

lxiii

Freud, *The Uncanny*, in *The Standard Edition*, xvii, pp. 219–52.

lxiv

David S. Holmes's study, quoted in the opening chapter, is an example of current thinking on trauma. 'L'intérieur de son cerveau colonisé par les Bernard-l'hermite, la pensée qui claquette de ses petites pinces [. . .] sa scie musicale dans le creux de

l'oreille au fond des lobes du cerveau—ça n'arrête pas', pp. 73–4; trans. 43

(translation modified).

ixv

‘Freud, j’ai lu un peu et pratiqué beaucoup, c’est-à-dire que j’ai fait une analyse, huit ans, qui m’a permis entre autres de séparer (autant que faire se peut) ma névrose de mon écriture. Avant, mes manuscrits ne concernaient que moi, mes proches, mon nombril. Je n’aurais pas pu écrire *Truismes* sans analyse. Je n’aurais pas réussi à inventer un personnage, à séparer ma voix de la voix du personnage. Grâce à l’analyse ma névrose vient nourrir mes livres sans les étouffer, et donc les rend lisibles, les tourne vers les autres. J’y ai aussi gagné un métier qui est une aventure en soi, puisque, en plus de l’écriture, je suis maintenant devenue psychanalyste. C’est une autre histoire, qui passe par une longue formation et la lecture infinie de Freud. Et de Lacan. Mais il faut dire que Freud est un écrivain en plus d’être un grand chercheur. [. . .] Ce type est un grand sage occidental, comme il y a les grands sages orientaux’, ‘Je suis devenue psychanalyste’, interview with Baptiste Liger, *Lire*, 1 November 2006. Other comments demonstrate that Darrieussecq subscribes to the existence of such psychoanalytic phenomena as the Œdipus Complex and the Death Drive (see *Rapport de police*, p. 42), which mainstream psychiatry now views with scepticism.

ixvi

‘J’aimais beaucoup quand Nathalie Sarraute s’énervait contre ce charlatan de Freud. Je pense que si elle mettait tant de véhémence à nier la validité de ses thèses, c’est parce qu’elle le percevait comme un double. Elle tenait à son invention “à elle”, la sous-conversation, ce dévoilement-là. Et l’espace que lui laissait Freud, pour large qu’il fût, devait lui sembler, à elle, dangereusement étroit’, *Rapport de police*, p. 182.

lxvii

Kathryn Robson, 'Virtual Reality: The Subject of Loss in Marie Darrieussecq's

Naissance de fantômes and Regine Detambel's *La Chambre d'écho*', *Australian*

Journal of French Studies, 61 (2004), pp. 3–15.

lxviii

'Nous sommes dans leur cerveau'.

lxix

On Darrieussecq and the tensions between scientific and psychoanalytic concepts of the

mind, see my earlier article, 'Darrieussecq's Mind', *French Studies*, 62 (2008),

pp. 429–41.

lxx

'Le cerveau humain pèse un kilo quatre il est constitué de vingt à trente milliards de

neurones et d'à peu près dix mille fois plus de synapses les connectant', p. 140; trans.

85.

lxxi

'En faisant marcher tout bêtement ses méninges', p. 50; trans. 28.

lxxii

'Plus d'anxiété, plus de sautes d'humeur, plus de crises ni d'idées noires, plus de projets, plus de concentration: une totale, agréable et insouciant distraction',

pp. 183–4; trans. 112.

lxxiii

'On ne va pas me faire croire qu'un œuf, ça pense', p. 117; trans. 70–71.

lxxiv

'À partir de quand ça se met à penser, comment savoir . . . clic, la conception, mise en

contact des corps conducteurs, petite bombe . . . première connexion, tout était noir,

opaque, ça commence par quoi, par rien, et puis . . . ne serait-ce que le sentiment

d'être ici, d'être ici plutôt que rien, chaleur, présence . . . et le fracas de locomotive,

battement, pas encore d'oreille, juste les vibrations du cœur de la mère et la peau pas

encore peau, ce qui pousse là battant à son tour', p. 231; trans. 142.

lxxv

'Le poil mouillé d'un petit animal', p. 22; trans. 10; 'qui regardait qui on se demandait,

ça a des yeux humains pathétiques, et des mains humaines, et ça s'assoit ça s'asseyait

mieux que Nore, ça saisissait entre pouce et index mieux que Nore, à se demander si

au jeu du triangle dans le triangle elle aurait été, question méninges, la mieux lotie’, p. 202; trans. 124 (translation modified).

lxxvi ‘Truffe inquisitrice’, (p. 82; the phrase is omitted from Monk’s translation).

lxxvii Naama Harel, ‘Challenging the Species Barrier in Metamorphosis Literature: The Case of Marie Darrieussecq’s Pig Tales’, *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2 (2005), pp. 397–409.

lxxviii ‘Ils sentent bien que ça continue à penser comme les hommes là-dedans’, *Truismes*, p. 141.

lxxix ‘Pour moi, à la fin elle est beaucoup plus humaine qu’au début. Quelle que soit son apparence’, Gaudet, p. 111.

lxxx ‘Mon corps ne comprenait pas pourquoi il devait s’acharner sur cette pièce d’acier, mon corps se mouvait sans conviction alors que tous mes neurones s’épuisèrent à garder cette idée en tête, *le verrou, le verrou*, c’était épuisant de lutter ainsi contre soi-même’, *Truismes*, p. 145.

lxxxi *Truismes*, p. 74. ‘Bête’ means ‘stupid’ as an adjective and ‘animal’ as a noun.

lxxxii ‘Comme une éclair de compréhension’, *Truismes*, p. 84.

lxxxiii ‘Il me semble, comment dire, que ça m’aurait été facile de le manger, de planter mes dents dans cette chair bien rose’, *Truismes*, p. 84.

lxxxiv ‘Elle a fermé la porte, ça a fait *clic clac*, et ça a mis comme une agitation dans l’air. Je n’ai pas pu dormir à cause de ces ondes angoissantes, ça vibrait et ça déséquilibrait tout. Tous mes congénères remuaient, leur bonne odeur bien franche devenait aigre, pleine d’hormones mauvaises, de stress, de peur. L’odeur se scindait en blocs isolés, chaque odeur autour de chaque cochon, les groins cherchant les angles des murs, le

bas des portes, l'interstice par où fuir, chacun voulait laisser l'autre à sa propre odeur de victime', *Truismes*, p. 144.

lxxxv

The basking shark appears in *Le Mal de mer*, p. 128, the sealion in *Naissance des fantômes*, p. 65.

lxxxvi

'[Les animaux] nous obligent à une métaphysique instantanée: qu'est-ce qui nous sépare d'eux? Qu'est-ce qui nous fait humain?' (with Becky Miller and Martha Holmes), 'Interview with Marie Darrieussecq', Marie Darrieussecq website, University of Arizona (December 2001)
<<http://darrieussecq.arizona.edu/fr/entetien2001.html>>.

lxxxvii

'Mammifère pensant', *Le Pays*, p. 170.

lxxxviii

Thomas Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', *Philosophical Review*, 83 (1974), pp. 435–50.

lxxxix

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2: Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), pp. 284–380. Darrieussecq writes of Deleuze in 'Rapport de police': 'ni Derrida ni Foucault ni Barthes n'avaient théorisé si bien et si à l'avance ce qu'allait être mon imaginaire' ('Neither Derrida, nor Foucault, nor Barthes theorized so well and so much in advance what my imagination would hold'), p. 152. She cites the Deleuzian concepts of 'le devenir-animal, la déterritorialisation, le corps sans organes, les plis et les rhizomes' as having parallels in her own thinking (p. 152).

xc

'Le chien, œil farceur, ravi'; 'Même à supposer que la vision du chien soit centrée sur lui-même, même à supposer qu'il fasse une différence entre lui et le monde (son maître, les odeurs, cette grande plaine d'eau)—ou au contraire, aimable tendance à se confondre avec le monde'; 'est-ce qu'un chien reconnaît un chien mort, et comment se fait-il, là, que les chiens clignent des yeux quand on les fixe, comment savent-ils

que ce sont là nos yeux? Ils pourraient regarder, je ne sais pas, le nez, le menton, les pieds’, pp. 79–80; trans. 46–7 (translation modified).

xcI ‘Quand je m’éveillais au milieu de la nuit, comme j’ignorais où je me trouvais, je ne savais même pas au premier instant qui j’étais; j’avais seulement dans sa simplicité première le sentiment de l’existence comme il peut frémir au fond d’un animal; j’étais plus dénué que l’homme des cavernes; mais alors le souvenir—non encore du lieu où j’étais, mais de quelques-uns de ceux que j’avais habités et où j’aurais pu être—venait à moi comme un secours d’en haut pour me tirer du néant d’où je n’aurais pu sortir tout seul; je passais en une seconde par-dessus des siècles de civilisation, et l’image confusément entrevue de lampes à pétrole, puis de chemises à col rabattu, recomposaient peu à peu les traits originaux de mon moi’, *SLT*, I, pp. 4–5; trans., I, 9.

xcii Céline Surprenant, ‘Darwin and Proust’, in *The Literary and Critical Reception of Charles Darwin in Europe*, ed. by Thomas F. Glick and Elinor Shaffer, 4 vols (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), IV, pp. 431–57 (p. 432).

xciii Erika Fülöp examines this passage in detail as part of an exploration of liminal states of consciousness in Proust, arguing that the transition from sleep to waking echoes F. W. J. von Schelling’s theory of the development of self-consciousness. Erika Fülöp, *Proust, the One and the Many: Identity and Difference in A la recherche du temps perdu* (Oxford: Legenda, 2012), p. 56. The Schelling parallels are examined more generally in Anne Henry, *Marcel Proust: theories pour une esthétique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983).

xciv ‘L’écriture est sans sexe, de même que le cerveau’, Interview with Amy Concannon and Kerry Sweeney in March 2004, <www.uri.edu/artsci/ml/durand/darrieussecq/fr/entretien2004.html>; ‘ce que j’aime

dans le féminisme, c'est pour moi que le cerveau humain n'est pas sexué. Pour moi, on a tous le même cerveau', Lambeth p. 815.

xcv The chapter on 'Gender' in Pinker's, *The Blank Slate*, pp. 337–71, includes an overview of evidence of neurological difference between male and female brains, and of psychological and behavioural difference between men and women.

xcvi 'C'est le cerveau qui jouit [. . .] Quand se superposent très exactement sans plus la moindre incertitude la zone vaginale et la zone cérébrale alors jouissance. membrane à membrane fibre à fibre nerf à nerf, deux organes ajustés cerveau/vagin', pp. 97–8; trans. 58–59.

xcvii 'Ce corps cette conscience accouplés'; 'Être à la tête de soi comme à la tête d'un *spaceship*: maîtrise technique, autonomie', pp. 19, 76; trans. 8, 44.

xcviii 'Logé dans mon corps, ainsi qu'un pilote en son navire'; 'tellement confondu et mêlé', Descartes, p. 195.

xcix 'Elle ne sait pas quoi faire de ses bras. Ils ont jailli de son corps et elle les trimballe accrochés à ses épaules', *Clèves* (Paris: POL, 2011), p. 223.

c Lambeth, p. 810.

ci 'Je me suis levée. Le vide dans ma poitrine se dissipait peut-être un peu avec le mouvement, la pesanteur bizarre de ce vide s'annulait, et puis il revenait, il se remettait en place, bien centré pile entre mes os, foré au creux de mon thorax, à en cracher le sang', *Naissance des fantômes*, p. 24.

cii 'L'événement psychophysique ne peut plus être conçu à la manière de la physiologie cartésienne et comme la contiguïté d'un processus en soi et d'une cogitatio. L'union de l'âme et du corps n'est pas scellée par un décret arbitraire entre deux termes

extérieurs, l'un objet, l'autre sujet. Elle s'accomplit à chaque instant dans le mouvement de l'existence', Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 105.

ciii Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 87–105.

civ Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, p. 250.

cv 'Quelque chose de cérébral au sens où le cerveau est un organe qui appartient au corps', Kapriélian, p. 7.

cvi Jordan, "Un grand coup de pied", p. 66.

cvii 'Très hantée par Freud, tout bêtement', Kapriélian, p. 17.