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“La même d’une phrase à l’autre’’: Language and Selfhood in Marie Darrieussecq’s Twenty-First Century Fictions

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Marie Darrieussecq is still probably best known for her scandalous 1996 debut novel, *Truismes* about an exploited young woman in a violent misogynistic dystopia who finds herself metamorphosing into a pig. Since then she has published nine further novels, without the shock tactics of *Truismes*, but retaining its strong feminist voice, along with a memoir of motherhood, a biography of the artist Paula M. Becker, short stories and children’s fiction, translations of Ovid, Joyce and Virginia Woolf, and an essay on literary plagiarism after having been accused on two occasions by other French women novelists of stealing their ideas.¹ Darrieussecq is of particular interest where the representation of the mind and self are concerned for two reasons: firstly, she is perhaps French literature’s leading contemporary psychological novelist. From her second novel onwards, she has held a consistent focus on subjectivity, using first-person narratives, stream-of-consciousness, literary tropisms borrowed from Nathalie Sarraute and a variety of other techniques to dip into her characters’ minds and render as many aspects of their mental process as she can on the page. Secondly, as a trained psychoanalyst with a keen interest in cognitive neuroscience, she offers an interesting perspective on psychology: in a country described as the most psychoanalytic in the world, where in 2005 70% of psychotherapies employed Freudian methodology, and where government mental health guidelines sparked a *guerre des psys* through their negative assessment of psychoanalytic efficacy (Meyer 5), Darrieussecq is unusual in keeping a foot in both cognitive and psychoanalytic camps. Her psychological tales have occasional flavours of traditional psychoanalysis – the unbidden return of repressed memories of past trauma is a common theme – within a representation based primarily on cognitive neuroscience. In *Bref séjour chez les vivants* (2001), the most ‘neuro-novel’ of Darrieussecq’s works and the one I want to focus on here, three sisters experience neurotic symptoms and uncanny phenomena as the anniversary approaches of the day their little brother drowned while under their care, in a manner that reveals the same shadow of Freud to be found over most French psychological novels. And yet, the mental life of these three sisters is resolutely cognitivist, its supervenience on neuronal activity much emphasized: one sister imagines the small epiphany of linking a word to an image as two neurons connecting; another wonders if her lack of childhood memories stems from neurons she lost sniffing ether, and the third, a clinical psychologist, emphasizes the mind’s dependence on its physical substrate as she recalls how the neuroscientist Wilder Penfield stirred up memories with electrical stimulation of the temporal lobe, or more terrifyingly, imagines the conscious experience of Chinese prisoners of war as their brains were vivisected in Shiro Ishii’s horrific Second World War experiments: ‘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*’ (*Bref séjour* 176, 86, 112).

This article focuses specifically on the relationship between selfhood and language in Darrieussecq’s representation of the mind. A fluent speaker of French and English and originating from the dual culture of the French Basque country, Darrieussecq has taken a great interest in language, exploring in her novels bilingualism, language development in children, or linguistic and non-linguistic thought, all of which themes circle the question of language’s relation to the self. One character in *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, thinks he has the answer worked out : ‘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’ (*Bref séjour* 150–51). According to this view, the self *is* the language spoken by the voice in your head. An autobiographical self, which relies on the presence of memory, can thus not exist without language, and, if thought itself is to be assimilated to language, it seems that even consciousness is being denied to infants. A less extreme but related view is expressed by Diego, an Argentinian character in the same novel, who wonders aloud whether his bilingual wife, Jeanne, is the same person when she is speaking Spanish to him as she is when she speaks French with her family: ‘Diego qui me demande si je suis la même dans toutes les langues’ (*Bref séjour* 95), Jeanne recalls. There are two related issues of language and selfhood at stake here. The first, raised by Arnold, is the degree to which the self is a linguistic construct. If the essentials of mental life – thought, memory, consciousness – are dependent on language to exist, and if thinking in particular is, as Arnold maintains, synonymous with inner speech, then it would not be possible for our minds to construct a stable personal identity without the use of language. Any self that the human mind does manage to construct must be made through language, and it seems, if thought is inner monologue, must be made *out of* language. The second issue, raised by Diego, is the question of whether, or how far, the self is determined by the particular language we speak. If different languages divide up reality in different ways, link ideas together with different connotations, and channel thought down different paths, then mental life will be different for a speaker of Spanish than mental life for a

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speaker of French. This brings the possibility that the different mental lives of the Spanish and French speakers will form personalities with a perceptible difference between them, which brings the further dizzying possibility, envisaged with trepidation by Diego, that a bilingual French and Spanish speaker might switch between perceptibly different selves as she switches between languages.

Diego's and Arnold's musings make reference to what is known in philosophical and cognitive debates as linguistic relativity, or, in its strong form, linguistic determinism. Stephen C. Levinson defines the central hypothesis of linguistic relativity through the following syllogism:

- (1) Languages vary in semantic structure;
 - (2) Semantic categories determine aspects of individual thinking;
- Therefore
- (3) Aspects of individuals' thinking differ across linguistic communities according to the language they speak (Levinson, 133)

The basic form of this hypothesis can be dated back to the German Enlightenment, where Johann Gottfried von Herder's *On Diligence in Several Learned Languages* (1764) advances the theory that thought is dependent on language and limited by the capacities of the thinker's language: nothing can be thought which cannot be expressed in language. Herder's theory influenced other philosophers of mind and language, notably G. W. F. Hegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt, and surfaced in twentieth-century linguistics and anthropology through the eye-catching claims of Benjamin Lee Whorf and his mentor, Edward Sapir. Sapir was himself the student of Franz Boas, the anthropologist whose work is the apparent source of the pervasive legend of the multitude of Inuit words for snow, which dubious factoid propelled the idea of linguistic relativity into the broader public consciousness in the later twentieth century. Sapir's own argument was that the phenomenal world of our perception and experience, what we consider to be the 'real world', is to a large extent founded upon language habits we share with fellow speakers, but not with speakers of other languages: 'We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation' (Sapir 69). Whorf developed these ideas further, bolstered by examples taken from anthropology, including the notorious claim that differences between the way English and the Hopi Native American language express concepts of time meant that the Hopi experienced temporality in a fundamentally different way from English-speakers. Whorf sums up his theory as follows:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way — an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (Whorf 213–14)

This formulation of linguistic relativity is often known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, although Sapir and Whorf never published jointly, and neither labelled their views a hypothesis. It is at the stronger end of linguistic relativity theories, since it posits not just that language influences our ways of thinking, but that it very much determines them, creating chasms of incommensurability between different language communities in their conceptions of reality and of themselves and others. Linguistic determinism is now largely discredited among linguists and cognitive scientists, but it found a broad echo in late-twentieth-century post-structuralist 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.

On the other hand, 'weak' linguistic relativity retains currency in linguistic debates. There is evidence that, for instance, people distinguish two colours more easily if their language has a separate word for each, as explored in a much-cited paper by E. H. Lenneberg and J. M. Roberts (1953) on Mexican speakers of the Zuni language. Stronger implications of minds fundamentally shaped and limited in their cognitive functions, or drastically different in their worldviews due to different words and structures of their languages, have mostly been left in the last century by scientific researchers in the field, although remain widely believed among the general public. Antonio Damasio is one cognitive scientist to advance a view of the mind in which language plays a non-essential role. He suggests that our core consciousness consists of a 'non-languaged map of logically related events' (Damasio 185), from which the mind constructs a mental narrative through which to understand the world. Even this constructed narrative has more in common with the wordless flow

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of film imagery than with an internal monologue, and it is only in the highest order of our consciousness that we, on occasion, translate this narrative into a verbal commentary that might resemble the famous literary 'stream-of-consciousness'. Steven Pinker offers a similar model in *The Stuff of Thought*, arguing strongly against Whorfian conceptions of the mind, and suggesting that the most essential level of our thought is pre-linguistic, in which we map simple 'digital' concepts of substance, causality, time and space onto 'analogue' reality to form propositions about the world, using a proto-linguistic medium he dubs 'mentalese' (Pinker 153–233). For both Pinker and Damasio, thought is not to be reduced to language, and mental life is neither reliant on language to exist, nor determined by the particular language through which we communicate with others. The 'neuro-philosopher' Daniel C. Dennett is one contemporary thinker who continues to emphasize the role of language in the mind. For him, language is the origin and driver of conceptual thought and reflective consciousness (Dennett 153–68). But even here, there is no engagement with theories of linguistic relativity: the focus is on the fundamental difference between the language-endowed human mind and the non-linguistic minds of other animals, not on the trivial distinctions between human minds endowed with different languages.

How do linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism fare in the fictional worlds Darrieussecq creates? Diego and Arnold may present the case for the dominance of language in mental life, but a wider view of the writer's œuvre shows sympathy with the other side of the debate. Darrieussecq's representation of thought places strong emphasis on the non-linguistic. As I have discussed elsewhere (Kemp 436–37), interpolated sketches and diagrams, changes of typeface and 'extreme' onomatopoeia bring visual and aural perception and imagination into her texts in as literal a manner as possible. Helena Chadderton has explored in very much more detail the disruption of language in Darrieussecq's writing: she argues that Darrieussecq's neologisms and noises, wordless blank spaces and signifying images combine to draw attention to the materiality, arbitrariness and limitations of the signifier in the linguistic sign (Chadderton 99–113). But, as I shall demonstrate here, Darrieussecq's understanding of the nature and development of the self also relegates language to a less than crucial role. Deterministic views are voiced in her novels the better to highlight the distance from these commonly held views to the mental life Darrieussecq is showing us. Her own view can be seen in a memory she recounts of a high-school philosophy class, which leads her to formulate a mission statement for her fiction on language and mind:

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 5)

Here we have an autobiographical retelling of the situation in *Bref séjour chez les vivants* in which Arnold confidently imposes such a view on his pupil, Nore. Nore does not formulate a clear refutation as Darrieussecq does here, but her musings elsewhere on non-linguistic consciousness in animals suggest a certain scepticism towards Arnold's claims. Seeing a dog on the beach, for instance, Nore considers the possible existence of canine selfhood, which would imply the existence of selves without language:

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 (79–80)

We can detect here an existentialist flavour to Nore's conception of the self. Selfhood, in Sartrean philosophy at least, is a negation of a consciousness from the object of that consciousness's attention. Thus, in Sartre's own most famous illustration, Roquentin in *La Nausée* is entirely absorbed in contemplation of a chestnut tree root, yet retains the awareness that he is a subjectivity detached from the object of his absorption: 'J'étais la racine du marronnier. Ou plutôt j'étais tout entier conscience de son existence. Encore détaché d'elle – puisque j'en avais conscience – et pourtant perdu en elle, rien d'autre qu'elle' (Sartre 156). Nore's speculations do not reach a firm conclusion on whether this essential subtraction of mind from world that is needed for selfhood, as existentially conceived, is indeed part of the dog's mentality, but the course of her musings leans heavily in this direction. (Firm conclusions, as we are already seeing, are generally lacking in *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, which follows the flow of its characters' drifting, scattershot thoughts in a world of limited attention and infinite distractions.) Nore attributes a distinct personality and mood to the animal as she looks into its 'œil farceur, ravi' (79), and infers from the meeting of their gazes a pair of subjectivities, each aware of the other mind before it:

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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. (80)

Later in the novel, Nore considers how the beach might be experienced by another animal mind, a cat's, and offers a sketch of feline subjectivity: 'Il verrait quoi, une étendue hostile et pas d'ombre. Le sable, mou sous les pattes. Les algues à odeur de poisson' (206). Here the emphasis is on otherness: the cat's different priorities and adaptations from human ones lead to a different subjectivity and an alien experience of the same environment. But the most fundamental assertion is one of similarity: for the cat, as for the dog, the presence is asserted of a phenomenal inner world perceived by a self, in the absence of language.

The possibility of non-linguistic *human* consciousness is also a major theme of Darrieussecq's writing. Pre-linguistic infant mentality is the most obvious case-study for this, and Darrieussecq returns to the topic on several occasions. Arnold's view in *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, we recall, was that infants could have no self and no real consciousness, since thought and memory cannot exist without language ('rien n'existe hors ce qui est pensé c'est-à-dire parlé', Darrieussecq 2001 151). Darrieussecq sets out the opposing view using her own voice in her memoir of her son's infancy, *Le Bébé*:

'Fin', 'début', 'continu', 'discontinu', 'séparé', 'ensemble': est-il donc possible qu'il n'ait aucune idée de ces concepts ? J'ai du mal à croire à une telle virginité du cerveau. Qu'il faille parler pour penser, que les notions ne viennent qu'avec les mots, la théorie me paraît pauvre' (112)

Darrieussecq's conviction that minds without language are also able to grasp and manipulate concepts within consciousness is not a radical view, although it does run counter to the 'linguistic turn' of much French thought in the late twentieth century, as predictably encountered by Darrieussecq in her teenage philosophy classes, and this may account for Darrieussecq's tendency to set up her view of the mind in specific opposition to linguistic determinism. Indeed, in the same interview in which she recalled those philosophy classes, Darrieussecq also describes the novel *Bref séjour chez les vivants* as a deliberate project to explore and represent non-linguistic consciousness: "Ce livre a été pour moi une étape vers ce que je cherchais par-dessus tout : le « sans-mot » – ce qui se passe dans le cerveau des gens, là où il n'y a plus de mots, où ça passe à autre chose de bien présent, vivant et humain, et qui reste de l'ordre de la pensée." (Kapiélian 5)

Shirley Jordan's reading of the novel concurs, describing it as a 'convincing articulation on the page [of] the often non-verbal nature of the "mental events" which characterize our most intimate experience of self and world' (Jordan 58). This non-linguistic consciousness appears most clearly of all in the psycholinguistic research carried out by another of *Bref Séjour's* three sisters. Anne, the Parisian sister, is engaged in experiments modelled on genuine research carried out by the psychologist Peter Eimas, testing whether babies of under three months old are able to differentiate between speech-sounds of their parents' mother tongue and speech from other languages (Eimas 1971). 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 a recognition reaction to the familiar language:

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 (*Bref Séjour* 226)

What is particularly interesting, though, is the way Darrieussecq chooses to characterize that recognition on the part of the infant. The words in capitals are intended to represent the thought process occurring within the child's mind as they hear the sounds, in a way that would be taken for straightforward internal monologue, were it not that the very premise of the episode is that these minds have not yet developed a capacity for speech. What we have here, then, is a transposition into language by the narrator of thought that is conceptual, and has recourse to memory, but is not in itself linguistic. Arnold is bluntly refuted. Darrieussecq even attempts to trace this wordless consciousness back further, into the dawn of awareness in the unborn foetus:

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 (*Bref Séjour* 231)

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The notion of foetal consciousness, like the animal consciousness we saw earlier, radically separates notions of language from consciousness. In the 'sentiment d'être ici' we have even the beginnings of a pre-linguistic proto-self, that will quickly build to the self-assertion of the – still wordless – infants: 'JE CONNAIS ÇA, J'AI DÉJÀ ENTENDU ÇA, ÇA ME DIT QUOI'. Not for Darrieussecq the Lacanian association of awareness of self and entry into language; the roots of the self lie much deeper, and its development into being is a more gradual process that begins well before language arrives on the scene.

Darrieussecq is also intrigued by how this language-free, virgin mentality of the infant might be experienced beyond early childhood. The theme is touched upon in adult cognition as Nore considers the case of an unnamed man who wakes up in hospital with his mind wiped clean of both memory and language, and imagines his first thought on opening his eyes: 'il voit le blanc de l'hôpital, c'est sa première idée, sans mots, que tout est blanc' (*Bref Séjour's* 175). Darrieussecq returns to and expands upon it in her latest novel, *Notre vie dans les forêts* (2017), which explores the relationship between an identical pair of cloned women. One of the pair is a psychotherapist named Marie, unaware of her clone status, while the other, at whose bedside she sits for hours at a time, has been medically maintained in a state of unconsciousness since birth. Marie believes the unconscious clone to be her personal organ bank for any future transplants she may need, but will learn late in the novel that both clones were created for organ-harvesting by a third woman. Marie, who narrates the novel, is preoccupied by the question of whether her unconscious double might be said to have a mind or a self. Again, a minor male character supplies the negative view: Marie's acquaintance Romero (presumably named for the prolific director of zombie movies, George A. Romero), sees the unconscious clones as no more than 'des corps démembrés: un puzzle d'organes dissociables, en sursis', ranked below corpses in the personhood stakes, since even corpses are 'des corps qui ont contenu des personnes' (*Notre vie* 98). Marie, however, is convinced that the clones have an inner life, despite the absence of either language or conscious experience, and speculates on the dreams that accompany the rapid eye movement she observes:

À quoi rêvait-elle ? À être allongée la ? A dormir ? À des froissements de drap ? Ou à sa naissance, probablement sa seule expérience éveillée ? À un vécu strictement organique, rouge et humide, intérieur, au battement de son cœur, au gonflement de ses poumons ? (*Notre vie* 86)

Marie is proved correct when the clones are successfully awakened and rescued from their institution to a new life in the forest, where they gradually develop the skills to walk, speak, work and play. While the clones are not entirely without language – Marie suggests that the language used around their bedsides percolated into their minds during the long period of unconsciousness – Marie's clone nevertheless takes two months to learn to speak, and even then, has 'rien à dire', as the narrator notes irritably (*Notre vie* 165). In the early stages of her awakening, however, the clone's mentality is similar to that of the dog or the infant previously seen (and the clones are explicitly compared to both in the novel itself), in the presence of thought and emotion experienced and expressed without the medium of language: 'Elle m'interrogeait du regard. C'était touchant mais pénible. Le vide de ces yeux. L'angoisse, pas d'autre mot. Par quoi commencer?' (*Notre vie* 12–13).

If Darrieussecq's work expresses a belief in the self in the absence of language, what, finally, of the self between languages? You will recall that the second linguistic determinist with whom we began this investigation was Jeanne's Argentinian husband, Diego, from *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, who wonders if his wife is a different person when she speaks Spanish from the person she is when she speaks French. Her response, from which I take the title of this article, is that she certainly feels her self to be fragmentary and plural: 'Je ne sais même pas si je suis la même d'une phrase à l'autre' (95). However, while she may be a different person from one sentence to the next, the language in which those sentences are uttered seems to have little bearing on the matter. Facetiously, she offers as the most significant difference between Spanish-speaking Jeanne and French-speaking Jeanne the position of her tongue: 'Si je suis différente, tout ce que je peux dire, c'est que le français se prononce à l'avant du palais' (96). A later novel, *Le Pays* (2005), also deals with multilingualism, in which the narrator returns to a newly independent and culturally resurgent Basque country, and her young son, 'petite éponge à mots' (143) effortlessly adds a third language to the French and Spanish he already speaks, with little effect on his inner conceptual thought:

Une colonne de plus à la diversité du monde n'était pas un problème. Les mots étaient les portants d'un système qui se ramifiait et se complexifiait de jour en jour, lent d'abord, puis à une allure prodigieuse. [...] Qu'on dise bonjour ou *un autre mot*, maman ou *un autre mot*, eau ou *un autre mot*, son cerveau de trente mois trouvait tout naturel. On mangeait avec une cuillère, le ciel était bleu et l'herbe verte, la mer était grande et les flaques petites. [...] Tout nouvel élément n'était qu'une donnée à stocker et à organiser. (145)

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Of course, there are complexities ahead for the child. Not every concept has a neatly equivalent term in each of the three languages he speaks, and structures of expression will vary how these terms are to be combined. But the central point asserted in the novel stands: the child does not have three different selves, and he does not inhabit three different worlds. He has access to a far richer range than most people of means to describe and communicate his experience, but his experience is not determined by these means at his disposal.

Darrieussecq's fictional worlds, then, have no room for the linguistic determinism of mind. The self can exist before the acquisition of language and endure beyond its loss. Selfhood is not even an exclusively human attribute and may exist in the language-free mentality of other mammals, as we saw Nore speculate about in *Bref Séjour chez les vivants*, and which Darrieussecq elsewhere in fact evokes directly in the first-person, as with the evocation of a basking shark's mentality in *Le Mal de mer* (Darrieussecq 1999 128). The scattered examples across her work where Darrieussecq asserts explicitly the presence of non-linguistic thought in her characters' minds has significant implications for our interpretation of her writing more generally. If non-linguistic thought is being represented through words on the page at these points in the texts, how can we be certain that what seems like inner monologue elsewhere might not also be the transposition into language of thought that was not in itself linguistic in nature? The answer is that we cannot. Joyce's Molly Bloom may have a ticker-tape of chatter running through her head, but Darrieussecq's stream-of-consciousness is made up of more than words, and we can never be sure whether the words we read on her pages are transcriptions of inner language or transpositions into language of some wordless thought. A century on from literature's early experiments in the stream-of-consciousness, Darrieussecq is at the forefront of those who would continue this project of rendering the life of the mind in literature, but embraces the paradox of presenting the non-linguistic mind in a linguistic medium. Within language, between languages, and in the absence of language, the self in Darrieussecq endures. It may be fragile in many respects, but it is not beholden to a single natural language, and not fragmented by the presence of several. In this respect, Darrieussecq's work reflects a contemporary understanding of mentality in which words are no longer seen as the stuff of which selves are made.

Notes

¹ Marie NDiaye published an article in *Libération* in 1998 accusing Darrieussecq's *Naissance des fantômes* of 'singerie' in relation to her own work. On the publication of *Tom est mort* in 2007, Darrieussecq was accused of 'plagiat psychique' by Camille Laurens, with reference to her memoir *Philippe* (1995). Darrieussecq denies the charges, while acknowledging the role of intertextuality in her work, in the essay, *Rapport de police* (2010).

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