

NATURE AND DISPLACEMENT: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO FIVE WORKS BY

MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ

by

KATHLEEN MARIE RIZY

(Under the Direction of JONATHAN F. KRELL)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of nature in three novels and two short stories by the French author, Marie Darrieussecq: *Truismes* (1996), *Le Mal de mer* (1999), *Le Pays* (2005), “Connaissance des singes” (2006), and “Plage” (2006). Using a holistic model, Darrieussecq’s works address societal issues related to the current ecological crisis. Her works provide an image of humans *in* nature and embrace the global identity of humankind as it relates to the environment, including varied landscapes and non-humans. Each work offers a descriptive account of a protagonist or protagonists who undergo physical and psychological displacement. Darrieussecq uses displacement in order to absent the narrator, protagonist, and reader from a given social milieu so that he or she may gain a broad point of view of nature, society, and the evolution of both. By exposing the supposed oppositions that exist within nature, like femininity and masculinity or human nature and animal nature, she does not rely on simple, traditional dualities. Instead, she is an author *sans frontières*. In this way, her works reveal nature and human beings as processes.

INDEX WORDS: 20th Century French Literature, 21st Century French Literature, Marie Darrieussecq, Ecocriticism, Displacement, Nature-Culture, Human-Animal, littérature française

NATURE AND DISPLACEMENT: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO FIVE WORKS BY
MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ

by

KATHLEEN MARIE RIZY

BA, University of Tennessee, 2007

MA, University of Tennessee, 2009

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

© 2015

Kathleen Marie Rizy

All Rights Reserved

NATURE AND DISPLACEMENT: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO FIVE WORKS BY
MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ

by

KATHLEEN MARIE RIZY

Major Professor: Jonathan F. Krell
Committee: Catherine M. Jones
Timothy Raser

Electronic Version Approved:

Julie Coffield
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2015

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my intelligent, supportive, and generous parents Tom and Colleen, whose love for our Tennessee home influenced my own appreciation of nature. To my sister Caitlin, whose love, friendship, and shared interest in French make me profoundly happy and proud. To my brother Jeff, whose gentle heart and unique perspective of the world are inspirational. To my brother Pat, whose wit and sarcasm have always kept me laughing. Above all, to my life partner Jaume for his love, kindness, and patience through this process. I couldn't have completed this dissertation without his steadfast support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor and chair of my committee, Dr. Jonathan F. Krell. I am extremely grateful for his direction through this process. My own love for contemporary French literature, and particularly ecoliterature, has grown as a result of his mentoring and teaching. I would also like to thank him for introducing me to Marie Darrieussecq's first novel, *Truismes*, the outset of this dissertation.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of my committee, Dr. Catherine M. Jones and Dr. Timothy Raser. Thank you for taking the time to read and edit drafts, as well as offer support throughout the writing process.

I have been extremely fortunate to work with these prolific scholars, whose passion for French literature is evident in their scholarly work as well as their teaching. I owe them for my development as a writer, scholar, and teacher.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 PHYSICAL DISPLACEMENT	18
3 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISPLACEMENT	69
4 ANIMALITY	116
5 CONCLUSION.....	166
REFERENCES	172

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite a shift in ecological consciousness in the United States and Europe, newspaper headlines still feature environmental devastation, species added to the endangered list, and human activity that threatens the fragile biodiversity of a given region. According to a map on the Environmental Protection Agency's website, regions of the United States experience impacts of climate change that include sea level rise, increased hurricane intensity, storm surges, threats to infrastructure and more frequent and severe droughts, to name but a few. The European Environment Agency points out that France has not been immune to global warming, with an average increase of 0.9°C throughout the 20th century.¹ The prominence of environmental issues in political, scientific, and social contexts emphasizes the consternation with the current situation and the need to advocate change.

As Al Gore put it, ecological crises may be “inconvenient truth[s],”² but they are truths nonetheless. Climate change is undeniable, but it has been a source of contention in recent political debates, especially in the United States. Conservative politicians often deny climate change. For instance, Republican Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky,³ refuses compliance with an aggressive climate change agenda and urges other politicians to

¹ “In France, as in the rest of the world, the last decade has seen a systematic increase in the mean temperature for 1971-2000, and seven of the ten hottest years since 1901. Minimum temperatures have also increased more (from 0.9 to 1.5 C) than maximum ones (from 0.3 to 1.1°C)” (“Climate Change Mitigation—State and Impacts (France)”).

² The film *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Al Gore and Davis Guggenheim, was released in 2006 in order to educate the general public about climate change and its consequences.

³ Mitch McConnell wrote that ““The Obama administration’s so-called ‘clean power’ regulation seeks to shut down more of America’s power generation under the guise of protecting the climate”” (Davenport, “McConnell...”).

follow suit. Florida Governor Rick Scott⁴ banned the use of the terms “climate change,” “global warming,” and “sustainability” in state communications and publications after he took office in 2011. An article in *USA Today* points out that “[i]t's more than just not saying the phrase ‘climate change.’ [...] While [Republicans] happily spread misinformation [...], they blindly ignore the costs of climate change Americans all across the country see in their lives already” (“Reid, Whitehouse: GOP in Denial on Climate Change”). Skepticism on the part of politicians poses problems for environmentalism, since environmentalists concerned with issues such as pollution or global warming “look to governments or non-governmental organizations [...] to provide solutions” (Garrard 19).

The French coined the term *le climatoscepticisme* for those skeptical of climate change. According to an article in *La Croix*, an overwhelming majority of the French population, 80% to be exact, believe rightly that climate change is due to human activity. “Mais il y a encore des poches de résistance, notamment aux Etats-Unis,” says François Gemenne, a specialist in environmental geopolitics (Réju, “Les Français de moins en moins climato-sceptiques”). In October 2014, less than half (48%) of the American population rated global climate change as a major threat, and in an international survey⁵ conducted in 2013, Americans were among the least concerned about climate change threatening their country.⁶ This may come as no surprise when one takes into account the pervasiveness of *le climatoscepticisme* among America’s politicians.

⁴ “Though it was not a written rule, ‘we were told [by our superiors] not to use the terms ‘climate change,’ ‘global warming’ or ‘sustainability,’” [said] Christopher Byrd, a former attorney with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of General Counsel” (Rice, “Fla. Gov. Bans...”).

⁵ The survey was conducted by the Pew Research Center (a nonpartisan fact tank based in Washington, D.C. that conducts public opinion polling) in 39 countries among 37,653 respondents from March 2 to May 1, 2013 (“Climate Change and Financial Instability Seen as Top Global Threats”).

⁶ “[N]early half of Americans rated global climate change as a major threat, [but] well behind concerns such as the militant group ISIS (67%), Iran’s nuclear program (59%), and North Korea’s nuclear program (57%)” (“Polls Show Most Americans Believe in Climate Change, But Give It Low Priority”).

Despite differences in American and French consideration of climate change, the trajectory of our planet continues down a path of destruction. Each and every day, the newspapers only reveal what we already know: humankind's mistreatment of nature has destructive, devastating, and irreversible results. While activists like Al Gore and Yann Arthus-Bertrand⁷ may be labeled alarmists, they simply highlight ecological crises that have resulted from our rather recent (in the context of humanity's existence on Earth) predilection for technology and consumerism.

How did we get here? What can we learn from our mistakes? Lynn White, Jr. explains the evolution of science and technology as they relate to the current ecological crisis:

Natural science, conceived as the effort to understand the nature of things, had flourished in several eras and among several peoples. [...] But it was not until about four generations ago that Western Europe and North America arranged a marriage between science and technology, a union of the theoretical and the empirical approaches to our natural environment. The emergence in widespread practice of the Baconian creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature can scarcely be dated before about 1850, save in the chemical industries, where it is anticipated in the 18th century. Its acceptance as a normal pattern of action may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture, and perhaps in non-human terrestrial history as well. (4-5)

Therefore, human activity as a destructive force on nature is relatively recent, but this mastery of nature has, of course, led to pollution, deforestation, depletion of natural resources, and the destruction of natural habitats and entire species. "Monopolisée par la science et l'ensemble des

⁷ Yann Arthus-Bertrand directed the documentary *Home*, released in 2009. With the aim of demonstrating the consequences of climate change, the film is mostly comprised of aerial shots of various locations on Earth.

techniques associées au droit de propriété, la raison humaine a vaincu la nature extérieure” (Serres 63). Before technology, humans were preoccupied with agriculture,⁸ attached to nature, and cooperative with it. Human subsistence was dependent upon the proper care of nature and its abundant resources.

Adaptation is characteristic of the human race, but mastery of nature, rather than collaboration with it, has overtaken adaptation as the principal attribute of humankind in the 20th and 21st centuries. Agricultural practices changed to suit mass food production to feed the growing, postwar population, but this also instigated a change in attitude toward nature:

Deux hommes jadis vivaient plongés dans le temps extérieur des intempéries: le paysan et le marin, dont l’emploi du temps dépendait, heure par heure, de l’état du ciel et des saisons; nous avons perdu toute mémoire de ce que nous devons à ces deux types d’hommes, des techniques les plus rudimentaires aux plus hauts raffinements. (Serres 52)

Once, there were people who depended upon an attachment to and an understanding of nature’s changing moods. These people adapted themselves to any subtle shift in atmosphere, temperature, or other environmental factors. Now, humans have adapted the environment to suit their own needs, profoundly and irreversibly changing the course of ecology.

The Oxford dictionary defines ecology as “the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between organisms and their environment” (“Ecology”). Ariane Debourdeau points out that the origin of ecology is often the subject of debate among historians and specialists of natural sciences and humanities, but one can find “la voie à une pensée écologiste” as early as the 18th century, with the foundational work by Linné, Buffon, and many others. However, it was

⁸ For Michel Serres, “Le plus grand événement du XX^e siècle reste sans conteste la disparition de l’agriculture comme activité pilote de la vie humaine en général et des cultures singulières” (53).

Ernst Haeckel, an admirer of Charles Darwin and his *On the Origin of the Species*, who coined the term “ecology” in 1866 in his work *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen*: “La définition de l’écologie de Haeckel rassemble l’économie de la nature, les équilibres entre les espèces et l’adaptation des êtres vivants à leurs ‘conditions d’existence’”⁹ (Debourdeau 12).

During the 20th century, war and industrialization wrought ecological destruction:

Car la guerre totale est écologique: du gaz moutarde au napalm et aux défoliants de la guerre du Viêt Nam en passant par Hiroshima et Nagasaki, l’environnement devient simultanément la cible et l’outil de pratiques belliqueuses toujours plus destructrices. L’industrialisation effrénée en est le corollaire civil, source de pollutions et autres atteintes innombrables à la biosphère. (Debourdeau 15)

In other words, not only did humans further destroy the environment, they also used it to destroy each other. Throughout history, our humanity has been closely linked to our attachment to (or detachment from) nature.

In the 1960s, environmental consciousness gains momentum, due to “a threefold cultural transformation that marked the sixties generation: a widespread ambivalence toward technological modernity; a sharpening sense of militancy among scientists; and a potent new form of radical dissidence manifesting itself in the counterculture” (Bess 81). Although there were environmental activists prior to the 1960s, it was during this decade that widespread environmental action became popular in the U.S. and France. Many credit *Silent Spring* (1962), Rachel Carson’s controversial book aimed at highlighting the malpractices of the agricultural industry, particularly the indiscriminate use of pesticides, as the catalyst for environmental

⁹ Haeckel defined ecology thus: “Nous entendons par écologie la science des relations des organismes avec le monde environnant, auquel nous pouvons rattacher toutes les ‘conditions d’existence’ au sens large. Ces dernières sont de nature organique ou inorganique et jouent toutes, comme nous l’avons montré précédemment, un rôle prépondérant dans la conformation des organismes car elles les contraignent à s’adapter à elles” (Debourdeau 12).

revolutions in Europe and the United States. Most importantly, for the first time, ecology had a reach beyond the laboratory, “[elle] essaime dans des sphères aussi variées que la littérature, la philosophie, le droit, l’économie ou la politique” (Debourdeau 15-16). This begs the question: How does literature function in environmental contexts?

To answer this question, scholars employ ecocriticism, a term first used by William Rueckert in “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” and that was later defined by Cheryl Glotfelty as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). An important aspect of ecocriticism is its applicability to numerous fields of study.¹⁰ Therefore, the humanities may play a central role in the progression of the ecological movement and in social and political issues, since ecocriticism has cross-disciplinary influences.¹¹ “Because the condition of the Earth is intrinsically important to all beings living on the planet, the decrease and outright destruction of the biosphere ought to be of concern to all thoughtful people, including scholars working in the humanities” (Slovic 225). In other words, ecocriticism embraces the importance of humans and non-humans alike and their survival in the ecosystem, dependent upon the consideration of human and non-human needs. The health of the planet and its non-human inhabitants greatly affects the health of humanity. “In today’s society one of the most basic roles of environmental writers and their scholarly commentators is simply to redirect our attention to the world beyond human construction—to make us pay more attention to ourselves and to nature” (225).

¹⁰ In previous publications, Scott Slovic “defined the field more broadly: ‘It is the study of explicitly environmental texts by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relations in any literary text, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the non-human world. In other words, any conceivable style of scholarship becomes a form of ecocriticism if it is applied to certain kinds of literary works; and, on the other hand, not a single literary work anywhere utterly defies ecocritical interpretation, is off-limits to green reading” (Slovic 225).

¹¹ These cross-disciplinary influences may “show how environmental problems are often fundamentally linked to social problems and social injustice” (Slovic 226).

Therefore, literature assumes many important roles in addressing ecology and in redirecting our attention to nature and non-humans. Literature is the creative space where one can imagine new realities, and, in relation to ecology, new interdependencies, or relationships (“Vers une écocritique française...” 86). These relationships incite the following questions: How does nature affect culture and vice versa? How does humankind see humanity, nature, and non-humans?

The two opposing views of nature are anthropocentric and ecocentric. Both pose problems, in that each takes a side, whether it be that of the human in the case of anthropocentrism or that of the non-human in the case of ecocentrism. Ecoliterature is the middle ground in which the two may no longer oppose one another. “All writers and their critics are stuck with language, and although we cast *nature* and *culture* as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream” (Howarth 69).

In contemporary literature, what is needed is a holistic approach. We live in a global society, one in which symbiosis, between humans and non-humans and between cultures, is essential. Betty Jean Craige defines cultural holism as a vision of human society as an evolving system of interdependencies of cultures, individuals, and their non-human environments. She rejects the idea that any individual has superiority over another (5). She explains the advantages of transnational cooperation:

The global society has accelerated the emergence of holistic thinking in the West, replacing the model of individual autonomy for international relationships with one of interdependence. Easy travel and widespread migration contribute to an intermingling of races and cultures in all the industrialized countries and in many of the developing nations; and instant communication connects all parts of the

planet. More than ever before, cooperation among the planet's diverse inhabitants is necessary if the human race is to survive through the next few centuries. (60)

We must embrace the diversity of the human race and its experiences with nature in order to better understand each other and the natural world. In this way, a holistic approach may also serve to, as Glen Love puts it, “embrace the non-human” (23).

Rather than fall into the categories of anthropocentrism or ecocentrism, the works of French author Marie Darrieussecq follow a holistic model by addressing societal issues related to the current ecological crisis. As the title of her first novel *Truismes*¹² suggests, her works allow for a study of the extrication of humans from clichés, such as the reductive tradition upheld by philosophers such as Descartes, who in his *Discours de la méthode*, considers human beings to be “maîtres et possesseurs de la nature.” Her writing is its own form of skepticism. Although not *climatosceptique* in the traditional sense, her writing is *sceptique du climat philosophe* because it questions the application of traditions such as the dualist model to our understanding of nature in literature. For Darrieussecq, truisms, or “[I]es clichés, c’est une forme d’absence à soi-même, c’est-à-dire qu’au lieu de penser et de parler avec ses propres mots, on prend le ‘on dit’ général, toutes les phrases qui circulent [...] au lieu de parler avec ses propres mots” (Lambeth and Darrieussecq 807). Instead, Darrieussecq provides an image of humans as described by Catherine and Raphaël Larrère in *Du bon usage de la nature*: Humans are *in* nature and *with* nature (18-19). Darrieussecq explores human identity as it relates to nature. Her works call for an ecocritical analysis because they examine humankind’s changing relationship with nature and resulting

¹² Darrieussecq’s own dissatisfaction with her teaching position and anger with the social injustice in France was a catalyst for writing *Truismes*: “Je détestais la Fac de Lille. Je détestais tout le monde—les profs, mon mari, les étudiants. C’est terrible. Cela coïncidait avec une explosion sociale: les grèves de décembre 1995. Tout était paralysé. C’était le bordel; il n’y avait plus ni train, ni métro, ni avion. Rien du tout, ni Poste. Donc, je marchais dans les rues de Paris et j’étais à la fois extrêmement en colère, et je ne savais pas trop pourquoi, et totalement euphorique. Et je crois que c’était un peu l’état des gens dans la rue. C’était le bordel. J’ai écrit *Truismes* dans cette atmosphère-là” (Lambeth and Darrieussecq 813).

cultural reactions and adaptations, the invention of new truisms for humans and non-humans in the current ecological climate.

Marie Darrieussecq was born and raised in the French Basque Country,¹³ in a small village near Bayonne. The dramatic and varied landscape had an impact on her writing:

Ça m’a marquée très tôt parce que c’est un tout petit pays pris entre les quatre points cardinaux. À l’ouest, il y a la mer, au nord les Landes, au sud la frontière de l’Espagne et à l’est toute l’Europe. Petite, j’avais l’impression d’être au centre du monde, comme tous les enfants d’ailleurs, mais dans un lieu géographiquement très déterminé. C’est très riche aussi d’avoir la mer, le continent, la forêt, la montagne, l’Espagne, ça a structuré plus ou moins tous mes livres. (Darrieussecq and Gaudet 116)

The richness of the Basque landscape can be found in the mountains of *Le Pays*, the maritime descriptions in *Le Mal de mer* and “Plage,” and the forest and stream that serve as a backdrop to “Connaissance des singes.” The concept of a frontier is also central to each of these works, as Darrieussecq questions physical and psychological boundaries between humans and nature. She also has a special interest in science, about which she says, “[Elle] enrichit mon imaginaire, m’apporte des images, des métaphores et des fictions pour rendre compte du monde” (“Sa Vie”). She is both an author and a psychoanalyst.¹⁴

¹³ “Situé à l’extrême sud-ouest de la France, le Pays Basque Français fait partie du département des Pyrénées Atlantiques. Le Pays Basque s’étend au sud de l’Adour entre Côte Atlantique, Pyrénées et Béarn, il se compose de 3 anciennes provinces: Le Labourd regroupant les villes portuaires bien connues de Bayonne à Hendaye, la Basse Navarre et son chef Lieu, Saint Jean Pied de Port, enfin La Soule aux paysages Montagneux autour de Mauléon” (“Le Pays Basque”).

¹⁴ Marie Darrieussecq began practicing psychoanalysis in 2006 (“Sa Vie”).

Recurring themes in Darrieussecq's works include identity, transformation, the exploration of boundaries, displacement,¹⁵ and humanity versus animality. Her works allow for a broader application of ecocriticism, such as the definition Greg Garrard provides:

Many early works of ecocriticism were characterized by an exclusive interest in Romantic poetry, wilderness narrative and nature writing, but in the last few years ASLE [the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment] has turned towards a more general cultural ecocriticism, with studies of popular scientific writing, film, TV, art, architecture and other cultural artifacts such as theme parks, zoos and shopping malls. As ecocritics seek to offer a truly transformative discourse, enabling us to analyze and criticize the world in which we live, attention is increasingly given to the broad range of cultural processes and products in which, and through which, the complex negotiations of nature and culture take place. (4)

From an ecocritical perspective, Darrieussecq's works offer a broad range of cultural processes and address cultural, social, and political problems in relation to nature, rather than glorifying an opposition of the three or showing a preference for one over another.

Through literature, how does Darrieussecq use the universal tool of language to describe our changing world and humankind's changing relationships with nature? How do her works fit her own description of contemporary literature as a place where "tout reste à découvrir, faire entendre, faire voir" (Lambeth and Darrieussecq 809)? What can her fiction contribute to the environmental movement?

¹⁵ In an interview, Darrieussecq said, "Ecoutez, j'ai tellement de choses à dire sur l'absence que j'écris en fait là-dessus. Pour moi, tous mes livres, tous y compris *Truismes*, *Le Bébé*, tous parlent de l'absence, une forme particulière d'absence qui est l'absence à soi-même" (Lambeth and Darrieussecq 807).

Darrieussecq embraces a broad point of view of nature while evoking and creating her own panoramic views of the environment. By exposing the supposed oppositions that exist within nature, like femininity and masculinity or human nature and animal nature, she does not rely on simple, traditional dualities. Instead, she is an author *sans frontières*. It is in this way, she exposes the role of nature in a manner defined by Lawrence Buell: “the environment is represented as a process rather than a given” (Posthumus 103).

I will refer to a theory of nature discussed by Catherine and Raphaël Larrère to address Darrieussecq’s descriptions of nature in her works. “La nature-artefact,” first studied by the Greeks (e.g. Plato) and further developed by Descartes and other Christian philosophers, claims human superiority over nature. As a result, humans become detached from nature. “La nature-processus,” on the other hand, also first considered by the Greeks (e.g. Aristotle) conceives humans to be part of and attached to nature. Darrieussecq’s works support the second definition of nature because she describes a nature to which humans attach: there is symbiosis between nature and culture.

For Lucile Desblache, Darrieussecq’s novels constitute an ecological discourse since they “[exposent] nos paradoxes plus qu’il[s] ne propose[nt] de solutions” (“Introduction: profil d’une éco-littérature” 1). She depicts a nature that is perpetually evolving, a nature that is not quantitative. Her novels surpass reality as we know it, as she describes in *Zoo*: “La fiction dépasse toujours la réalité, quoi qu’on dise, et en rend mieux compte que les témoignages” (52). It is necessary to study contemporary literature like that of Marie Darrieussecq because “[elle] nous faut interroger les tendances actuelles de la connaissance de la nature, pour savoir si une nouvelle vision peut en être recomposée” (Larrère 19). Ecoliterature may not propose solutions, but it can certainly motivate change in perception of nature and our subsequent treatment of it.

Although there are those who think that Marie Darrieussecq's work is part of a French ecocriticism,¹⁶ I disagree that one cannot find a global ecocritical perspective in Darrieussecq's works. If one is to address Darrieussecq's work from a holistic perspective, one may find a universality in her writing. Although there are examples of political and cultural specificities in her works, she defies any sort of national identity in creating new spaces, landscapes, and scenarios that can be applied to understand the entirety of humankind. I reject such an interpretation of her work because it is a pitfall for many intellectuals who "[seek] solutions to global environmental problems [...] [to] perpetuate international, intercultural, interregional, and interracial competition" (Craigie 60). For example, in *Le Pays*, the reader is reminded repeatedly that the author is not writing about real landscapes or a real country,¹⁷ even though it might resemble her native Basque Country. By occupying the space between literature and reality, Darrieussecq may take into account a national identity without imposing boundaries that allow only for an understanding of French ecocriticism. As a result, Darrieussecq opposes the marginalization of ecocriticism in French literary studies, to which Stéphanie Posthumus refers ("Writing the Land/scape..." 103). One can therefore echo her effect of repositioning and apply the ecological aspects of her work to all of humanity, or all cultures. For instance, the phenomenon of metamorphosis provides a means of ecocritical and social commentary, repeated and rendered more contemporary in Darrieussecq's novels.

¹⁶ Stéphanie Posthumus states that, through her narration in *Le Pays*, "Marie Darrieussecq's work fits squarely within the purview of a French *écocritique* that takes into account cultural specificities while also acknowledging the ways in which the literary text speaks to a larger public about global issues" ("Writing the Land/scape..." 115). However, Posthumus has said that ecocriticism is not transferable from one national literature to another. There is a long history of ecologically-minded philosophers and writers in France, but it is necessary to establish ecocritical approaches based only upon the cultural specificities of these philosophers and writers (Posthumus, "Vers une écocritique française" 87). She argues against a global ecocritical perspective because she calls for a uniquely French ecocriticism, based upon the attitudes, representations, and traditions related to nature in France (87).

¹⁷ Darrieussecq even invented the word "yuoangui" to refer to those living in this imaginary country: "'Yuoangui,' c'était le cauchemar des traducteurs. [...] C'est un mot inventé qui pour moi sonne africain, à tort ou à raison. Mais c'est un mot pour designer tous les damnés de la terre, tous les immigrants, tous ceux qui n'ont pas de place dans cette société, etc." (Darrieussecq and Gaudet 112).

Darrieussecq's works are "textual loc[i] of identification" (Darrieussecq, "Fiction in the First Person" 70) in relation to the environment. Through displacement, Darrieussecq absents the narrator, protagonist, and reader from a given social milieu so that he or she may gain a new portrait of nature, society, and the evolution of both. Physical displacement,¹⁸ is an effect of ecological degradation, whether it relates to pollution, urbanization, or other ecological phenomena. Physical displacement reinforces psychological displacement¹⁹ of human beings, in relation to nature or the environment. Darrieussecq's characters fit within the new purview of psychology, as described by Glotfelty:

Psychology has long ignored nature in its theories of the human mind. A handful of contemporary psychologists, however, are exploring the linkages between environmental conditions and mental health, some regarding the modern estrangement from nature as the basis of our social and psychological ills. (xxi)

Therefore, it is necessary to question the relationship of humans with the nature into which they are thrust or to which they flee. For example, in *Le Pays*, Paris is synonymous with "l'exil" (90). Urban life reinforces the narrator's solidarity with nature: "Une phrase qui me tournait dans la tête: il était temps de rentrer au pays" (85).

The works that constitute this study can be categorized by milieu. *Truismes*, Darrieussecq's first novel, takes place in a dystopic France, governed by a xenophobic,

¹⁸ "Environmental factors have long had an impact on global migration flows, as people have historically left places with harsh or deteriorating conditions. However, the scale of such flows, both internal and cross-border, is expected to rise as a result of accelerated climate change, with unprecedented impacts on lives and livelihoods. Such migration can have positive and negative effects on both the local coping capacity and the environment in areas from which these migrants originate, as well as in their temporary or permanent destinations. Migration, climate change and the environment are interrelated. Just as environmental degradation and disasters can cause migration, movement of people can also entail significant effects on surrounding ecosystems" ("Migration and Climate Change").

¹⁹ In their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Laplanche and Pontalis develop a definition of psychological displacement, which has "une fonction défensive évidente: dans une phobie par exemple, le déplacement sur l'objet phobique permet d'objectiver, de localiser, de circonscrire l'angoisse" (119).

misogynistic political party. *Le Pays* and *Le Mal de mer* address a sort of exile, an escape from the city to another landscape. In the case of *Le Pays*, the protagonist (an author) escapes to the countryside, presumably the Basque Country, while the protagonist in *Le Mal de mer* escapes her husband and goes to the seaside with her young daughter. *Zoo* is a collection of short stories from which I have chosen to examine “Connaissance des singes” and “Plage.” “Connaissance des singes” is about a writer who feels she has to flee to Iceland in order to gain clarity and continue writing and can thus be categorized as addressing the idea of exile, while “Plage” is about the evolution of the sea, now polluted and rendered ephemeral by humankind’s touch.

I have noted the importance of the milieu because it has influenced my choice to focus on the three themes of physical displacement, psychological displacement, and humanity versus animality that are iterated throughout the aforementioned works. Ecology and ecocriticism call for the study of interdependencies. With ecological developments such as urbanization and pollution, there arises a need to examine the new interdependencies that result from these changes.

In my second chapter, I will examine the physical environments portrayed in all five of the selected works. I will argue that displacement allows the protagonists to be positioned *in* nature. First, I will compare and contrast urban and rural landscapes in *Truismes* and *Le Pays*. A maritime landscape constitutes the study of “Plage” and *Le Mal de mer*. In “Connaissance des singes,” the protagonist travels from her house in Paris to her mother’s house in Rogny-les-Sept-Ecluses. By comparing and contrasting these landscapes, I aim to establish the complications that incite displacement due to the nature/culture dichotomy and the consequences of not incorporating a holistic view of the environment. Finally, I will demonstrate how the displacement of Darrieussecq’s characters results in place attachment to natural landscapes,

which incites intellectual curiosity, physical and psychological liberation, and contributes to the overall well-being of the characters.

In my third chapter, I will elaborate on the concept of place attachment and the psychological effects of physical displacement. I intend to broaden the scope of place attachment, often limited to one's home or region, to nature as a whole. In the space of fiction, Darrieussecq creates landscapes that are both familiar (i.e. Paris, in *Truismes* and *Le Pays*) and unfamiliar (i.e. Yoanguï in *Le Pays*), all the while attributing new characteristics to urban, rural, and maritime landscapes, allowing for a reexamination of humanity and its relationship to the environment and non-humans. Nature is a universal space to which Darrieussecq's protagonists attach.

Darrieussecq's works "go beyond the narrowly anthropocentric scope of most literary scholarship, which has traditionally emphasized interactions among human beings" (Slovic 225). Instead, *Truismes* and "Connaissance des singes," both of which I have chosen for my study of the theme of animality in my final chapter, reject an anthropocentric viewpoint with hybrid characters. They allow for the most explicit study of human and non-human relationships.

In *Truismes*, the nameless protagonist becomes a sow. Desblache writes that the theme of metamorphosis reinforces the thought that our current identity crises or existential problems are linked to questions of the relationships between nature and culture and humankind's relationship with the environment ("Introduction: profil d'une éco-littérature" 3). The use of metamorphosis is also an example of how Darrieussecq's literature embraces the non-human. One sees the complexity of this theme as addressed by Darrieussecq, since she does not only study the boundaries between human nature and animal nature but also the relationships between men and women. Ecocriticism encompasses various fields of study, hence the creation of various

subfields, “like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology [which] have emerged in an effort to understand and critique the root causes of environmental degradation and to formulate an alternate view of existence” (Glotfelty xxi).²⁰ An alternative view of existence includes “*Connaissance des singes*,” with another hybrid character, Marcel, a talking ape.

One could say that these works constitute animal studies, but they extend to intercultural studies as well (By culture, I mean human culture *and* animal culture.) because they shatter the human-animal dichotomy. We can no longer divide the Earth into “us” and “them,” or worse “us” above or before “them.” Darrieussecq’s writings reject the traditional representations of animals in literature, as described by Frédéric Boyer:

Depuis des millénaires que nous nous aimons, que nous nous détestons, que nous nous éliminons et que nous nous reproduisons, et surtout que nous nous intéressons complaisamment, presque exclusivement à nous-mêmes, nous le faisons avec un animal dans la tête. Dès les origines de ce que nous appelons la littérature, nous avons fait parler les chevaux et les lions, nous avons fait penser les mouches et les oiseaux... Comme s’il n’avait jamais suffi de nous faire parler, de nous faire penser nous-mêmes. C’est avec l’animal que nous nous sommes animés, que nous nous sommes représentés à nous-mêmes. [...] L’animal fut si longtemps notre métaphore. On l’humanisa autant qu’on s’animalisait. [...] C’est

²⁰ **Deep Ecology:** Arne Naess defines deep ecology as the radical form of environmentalism “concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all *members* of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable *entities* or *forms* in the ecosphere” (*Sessions* 270; quoted in Garrard 21-22). **Ecofeminism:** “[While] [d]eep ecology identifies the anthropocentric dualism humanity/nature as the ultimate source of anti-ecological beliefs and practices, [...] ecofeminism also blames the *androcentric* dualism man/woman” (Garrard 23). **Social Ecology:** “Social ecology [is] explicitly political. [It has] a distinctive view of the place of humans in nature [and] promotes a decentralized society of non-hierarchical affiliations avowedly derived from an anarchistic political tradition” (Garrard 28-29).

l'histoire d'un déchirement, d'une distinction floue, d'une domination flottante et cruelle. Je fais comme si l'animal était ce que je suis tout en pensant ne pas être comme lui. [...] Notre animalité est devenue chez nous ce que nous disons ne pas vouloir être, notre face obscure, anarchique, incontrôlable. (11-15)

Humanity's mistreatment of the physical environment has extended to this negative conception of animality. With physical displacement and ecological degradation that calls for increased protection of animals and their natural habitats, the physical distance between humans and non-humans diminishes. It is necessary, therefore, that the psychological and philosophical dichotomization of humans and non-humans cease to render animality inferior to humanity.

Finally, in my fourth chapter, I will argue that Darrieussecq's works call attention to the negative effects of anthropocentrism and call for a reconsideration of animality. It is necessary to reexamine our relationships with non-humans in order to have a holistic understanding of our own human nature and the environment. The representation of animals in Darrieussecq's work is not at the expense of the animal world, as is too often the case in anthropomorphic representations. Instead, anthropomorphism is a tool for understanding the spectrum of emotions and behaviors that cross the boundaries of the human and non-human worlds to bring the two together for a holistic study of both humanity and animality.

CHAPTER 2

PHYSICAL DISPLACEMENT

Marie Darrieussecq displaces her narrators, protagonists, and readers in order to present new portraits of nature, society, and the evolution of both. Migration, or physical displacement, in her work is an effect of ecological degradation, whether it relates to pollution, urbanization, or other ecological phenomena. “De fait, tout commence et finit chez Marie Darrieussecq par un basculement, par ‘un événement originel qui fait cassure’” (Lambeth 810; quoted in Simon 17). This change of orientation is linked to the physical environment. Therefore, it is necessary to question the relationship between humans and the nature into which they are thrust or to which they flee.

Lynn White attributes our anthropocentrism to the biblical myth that “a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes for the sake of human beings, and then had created humans in his own image. Humans shared God’s transcendence over nature” (White 25; quoted in Craige 96-97). Descartes, who called humans “possesseurs de la nature,” and other seventeenth-century philosophers, “developed their rigorous methodology for investigating nature from within this model” (Craige 97).

This model supported humans as superior to nature, above or outside of it. However, in Darrieussecq’s work, human beings are instead placed *in* nature. More specifically, migration takes the form of displacement, or the act of compelling a person to leave a place. Displacement is often an effect of changing ecological circumstances related to phenomena such as pollution or

urbanization. However, physical displacement may also be linked to one's psychological connection to a place, or place attachment, which "[f]undamentally [...] entails an emotional--usually positive--bond between a person and setting (Brehm, Eisenhauer, & Stedman 523). In this chapter, I will focus on physical displacement.

The act of writing is itself also a form of displacement, or "une différence de centrage," in that the reader is repositioned, realigned as an observer of this creative space and can then understand nature from a new point of view, imagined by the author (Laplanche and Pontalis 118). The literary imagination manipulates language and may replace one image with a more psychologically significant one. Darrieussecq herself emphasizes the need for a new approach to literature which considers its affinity with the environment. Therefore, it is necessary to examine first the environments portrayed in her works in order to understand the relationships established between the human or animal characters and their physical milieu, before analyzing their psychological significance for her characters.

In Darrieussecq's work, displacement is not always synonymous with exile, but it is always a result of the evolution of the relationship between culture and nature. This traditional dichotomy is challenged in her works. As Kim Sorvig explains: "Splitting Nature from Culture is an ancient habit of the 'Western' or 'European' mind. For centuries, if not millennia, philosophers have debated how and whether to draw lines between nature and culture, and whether these lines are watertight or permeable" (1). Any distinction between the two serves a purpose in Darrieussecq's novels: to provide a solution to their traditional opposition, which is that the boundaries between nature and culture *should* be permeable. The relationship between nature and culture is important in her work because "[u]nderstanding environmental change and its effects, such as population displacement, requires reframing nature-society relations from a

duality to a mutuality, essentially positing that nature and society are inseparable, interpenetrating, each implicated in the life of the other, each contributing to the resilience and vulnerability of the other” (Oliver-Smith 1063). This supports the perspective of the cultural holist, “for whom nature is an ecosystem whose well-being is affected by the interaction of its diverse constituents” (Craigie 5). Darrieussecq does not intend that nature be in opposition to culture. Her refusal to oppose nature and culture often results in a lack of cultural specificity in order to capture a more holistic view of the desired symbiotic relationship between human beings and nature. To study this phenomenon in Darrieussecq’s works, it is then necessary to categorize them based upon milieu.

I will first examine those works in which urban and rural landscapes are contrasted: *Truismes* and *Le Pays*. Then I will study the role of the sea in “Plage” and *Le Mal de mer*. Finally, “Connaissance des singes” calls for an examination of displacement in the form of travel. By examining these different environments, I intend to demonstrate that similar complications incite displacement, due to the traditional nature/culture dichotomy. Darrieussecq emphasizes rather the need for collaboration between the two. I therefore intend to show how she resists cultural specificity and avoids “an ethnocentric, culture-bound definition of [nature]” (Sorvig 6).

Truismes, Darrieussecq’s first novel, is set in a dystopic France of the near future. The narrator undergoes a physical transformation from a woman to a sow. This transformation, which will be discussed further in the following chapter (as it relates to psychological displacement), is closely linked to her affinity with nature. This is related to the political and ecological degradation of the city of Paris, from which the narrator finally flees, searching for nature. The urban landscape alienates the protagonist.

Truismes offers the most overt example of an attachment to nature, since the narrator undergoes a physical transformation into an animal. “Darrieussecq describes the birth of a writer in a country that is not only the prey of a xenophobic party, but also the victim of an openly fascist government, led by a man known as ‘Edgar,’ a thinly veiled disguise for Jean-Marie Le Pen” (Lantelme 527). Although one can easily attribute societal specificity to this novel in with its reference to Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National, I believe that it is representative of a global society, meaning that one can apply the societal issues and consequent attachment to or detachment from nature to all societies. The issue addressed is one of global concern, that of the treatment of women in a misogynistic society.

Nature in this case provides a sort of refuge from a hostile environment—society—in which the narrator lives. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes her trip to Aqualand, an artificial representation of nature: “Alors je m’étais offert un après-midi à Aqualand. Il pleuvait dehors mais à midi à Aqualand il fait toujours beau et chaud” (*Truismes* 14). The narrator is quick to point out, however, that one must be careful in Aqualand, since it is in this place that she is first approached by Honoré, who will later become her boyfriend and who will frequently and consistently mistreat her.

Therefore, from the beginning of the novel, the narrator establishes a distinction between two views of nature that are essential in understanding Darrieussecq’s description of it. It is imperative for the current ecocritical movement to understand both viewpoints since, as Catherine and Raphaël Larrère write, the notion of nature as an artifact is only able to exist because of the existence of nature as a process (Larrère 20). The former vision of nature as “nature-artefact,” was a philosophy first studied by the Greeks, including Plato, and further developed by Christian philosophers, such as Descartes. They claimed the superiority, and

resulting detachment, of human beings over nature since they were created in God's image. In this sense, the definition of artifact as an object created or manipulated by humans, as opposed to natural processes, is pertinent ("Artifact"). Considered an artifact, nature was defined as homogenous and created by God (Larrère 65). Descartes and other theorists elaborated on this idea by relating human beings' possession of nature as a transfer of God's ownership of it, which has then been transferred to humankind. On the other hand, "la nature-processus," attributed to Aristotle, is a conception that considers humans beings to be part of nature. In her novels, Darrieussecq favors the "nature-processus," or a nature that is in perpetual motion, evolution, and that is not to be quantitative.

In *Truismes*, the opposition between nature as an artifact and as a process is established with the description of a society that upholds possession and control by human beings of the environment, as opposed to the "nature-processus," to which the narrator is driven, seeking an evolutionary process which will free her from domination by men and the city as "nature-artefact," a landscape that human activity constructs. This artificiality extends to the use of medication by many of Paris's citizens. Already undergoing her transformation, the narrator is unlike other citizens in that she does not depend on medication: "[J]e m'éveillais avec facilité, toute seule, je n'avais plus besoin ni de Tamestat le soir ni d'Excidrill le matin alors qu'Honoré et toutes les personnes autour de moi continuaient à s'en gaver" (*Truismes* 20). On the contrary, she has developed an affinity for nature: "[C]e qui restait de la nature ça me faisait tout à coup quelque chose" (20). Her affinity for nature extends to a change in diet, for she now craves fresh vegetables: "[J]'avais demandé à un client de m'en rapporter de sa maison de campagne, il me donnait aussi des pommes" (22). As a result, her relationship with nature reinforces the artificiality of the city and its people. The only sanctuary the narrator is able to find there is a

small square: “Mes quelques minutes de répit dans le square avec mes pommes, au milieu des oiseaux, ça faisait pour ainsi dire le bonheur de ma vie. J’avais des envies de vert, de nature” (22). Unsatisfied with the lack of green within the city limits, the narrator asserts that the tiny square is still representative of nature as an artifact, created and controlled by society.

The first mention of a truly natural environment occurs when the narrator accompanies a client to his home in the country, where she is in fact kept as a prisoner:

La maison du client était belle, entourée d’arbres, isolée, c’était la campagne tout autour, je n’avais jamais vu ça. Mais j’ai passé tout le week-end à l’intérieur, le client avait invité des amis à lui. Par la fenêtre je voyais des champs et des fourrés, j’avais une envie comme qui dirait extravagante d’aller mettre mon nez là-dedans, de me vautrer dans l’herbe, de la humer, de la manger. Mais le client m’a gardée attachée tout le week-end. (*Truismes* 23)

Although a rural environment surrounds her, the woes of her urban environment, represented by the client, are still present. It is striking that the narrator considers her wish to be one with nature extravagant, or wasteful, since such a desire would not be tolerated by the artificial and corrupt society in which she lives. This is a criticism of the traditional nature/culture dichotomy, in that an appreciation of nature is scorned by culture, for Darrieussecq points out over and over that nature cannot be opposed to culture without being subordinated to it. The narrator’s physical position opposite her surroundings is also indicative of the opposition between nature and culture. Although trees and countryside surround the client’s home, she is enclosed, and left only with a view of her surroundings. There is still a border between the narrator and nature.

The hostile environment of *Truismes*’ society is heightened by the political situation. As I stated earlier, the party that takes power represents Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National. Its

president is Edgar, introduced in the scene at Aqualand. From her vantage point under a mangrove tree, the narrator describes the introduction of the new political candidate Edgar, whose campaign slogan is “pour un monde plus sain” (*Truismes* 64). This provides a contrast between those who are considered “clean” and those who are considered “dirty.” The narrator is once more portrayed as “dirty,” as she is found by a group of men with dogs: “Un des hommes a tiré son revolver et il a dit : « *Il faut abattre cette chienne* », moi je n’avais vu que des mâles. C’est maintenant que je comprends le sens de cette phrase. A ce moment-là un monsieur en costume est entré” (65). This man in a suit declares her fit to meet Edgar, but only after she is “cleaned” by one of her former sales associates. Her hair is cut, makeup is applied, and she is sprayed with perfume. She is then declared the representative of Edgar’s campaign. Upon seeing her, Edgar and the other men present repeat the slogan: “Pour un monde plus sain.” She is finally subjected to a night-long, paid photography session (66-67). In this way, she takes part in another form of prostitution, paid for her beauty and submission. At this point, the narrator serves as a example of nature as an artifact, as Edgar and his associates first artificialize her by transforming her appearance with man-made products and by dominating her. They are “possesseurs de la nature,” represented by a woman.

This scene recalls the argument of Val Plumwood about dualism:

A dualism is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or non-identity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualized other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior. (*Feminism...* 47)

In *Truismes*, the ‘other’ is the female protagonist, seen objectively by men, but given a voice, albeit naïve. In spite of her naïveté, the protagonist reveals the suffering of women from social domination and ostracization. “In our Western cultures, women and animals have been deified, demonized or abused in ways which are often similar” (Desblache 381). The narrator is not valued in this hierarchical society. “An ecofeminist perspective propounds the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognizes that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love” (Mies and Shiva 6). Although the narrator ends this scene by remarking, “Tout ce que je regrettais, c’est de n’avoir pas vu la fin de la fête à l’Aqualand, moi qui jamais de ma vie n’avais été invitée à des raouts de cette classe” (*Truismes* 67). There is a quick return to her description of the polluted city juxtaposed with her animalistic character and resulting attachment to nature, where she can, from an ecofeminist perspective, “[develop] a vision of freedom, happiness, the ‘good life’ within the limits of necessity, of nature” (Mies and Shiva 8).

After returning home, she finds that Honoré has thrown her belongings on the ground outside of the apartment building and killed her pet guinea pig. Exiled from the city, she walks in the suburbs and finds solidarity with the limited nature that exists there. She listens to the birds chirping. There is a description of the polluted city: “Le ciel était gris pâle avec des traînées roses, et les fumées des usines étaient vert vif dans l’aube” (*Truismes* 68-69). However, she is “éveillée et affamée” in this natural space : “J’étais bien plantée dans le sol, ça tenait ferme sous moi, je n’avais plus mal nulle part ; c’était comme un intense repos dans le corps” (69). The suburbs act as a middle ground, a step between the urban environment of Paris and the rural environment of the countryside she saw while accompanying the client. She emphasizes a need

for a purely rural environment: “J’avais un intense goût d’eau et de terre dans le bouche, un goût de forêt, de feuilles mortes” (69).

Her attachment to nature is further reinforced by numerous examples of the protagonist’s inability to adapt to the city space. After being thrown out of her private space with Honoré, she is forced to confront more public spaces, such as a church, roadways, and a hotel, all of which prove to be hostile for her. After staying on a park bench outside of Honoré’s building for a few days, she decides to go to mass: “J’ai hésité à aller à la messe. J’avais un étrange sentiment de bien-être et de malaise à la fois, je ne sais pas comment dire; je pensais que peut-être communier m’aurait fait du bien” (*Truismes* 72). Seeking solidarity in the city space, she is sorely disappointed by her trip to the church and subsequent conversation with a cleric: “Je lui ai dit que je voulais me confesser. On est entrés dans le machin. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, je me sentais mal à l’aise dans cette église, pour tout dire déplacée” (75). She feels uneasy because of the priest’s scrutiny and general disapproval of her presence in the church. He denies her the body of Christ when it seems to him that she has not confessed all of her sins. Finally, he tells her to leave: “ ‘Sortez!’ m’a dit le curé. Je l’ai payé à travers le guichet et je suis sortie” (76). Like her clients at the perfume shop, the priest expects payment.

She comes closer to nature with her journey through Paris. She is no longer alone and has pleasant dreams “de fougères et de terre humide” (*Truismes* 81). She takes note of the city’s environmental deterioration: “Il y avait de la boue partout dans les rues à cause des averses de la veille et de la *dégradation chronique de la voirie*” (82-83). The roadways prove to be extremely hostile for her, as she runs to cross a boulevard and finds it difficult to leave the neighborhood “parce qu’ils avaient bouclé les rues et organisé une battue avec des chiens” (86). The poor condition in which she finds the roadways is also indicative of the lack of permeability between

nature and culture, as it is extremely difficult physically to migrate from the urban to the rural environment. Additionally, the border between the neighborhood and its exterior is clear, as its inhabitants have blocked access to the outside in order to organize a dog fight, a clear indication of their lack of respect for nature and those linked to nature, represented here by the dogs. The protagonist's solution is to imitate rats and enter the sewers. She stays there until nightfall. However, this is only temporary, as she recognizes that she is not like the rats and expresses again her need to be in the country, in nature: "Je voulais partir à la campagne, je sentais que j'y serais mieux. Je commençais à avoir faim sous la terre, je ne mange pas comme les rats tout de même" (86). These rats, although animals, are strangely humanized: detached from nature, they live underneath the city, eating the citizens' waste.

After exiting the sewers, she continues on her journey to a hotel close to the periphery of the city. Although the hotel is not in the city proper, it is still a public space associated with the artificiality of the urban environment with which she is familiar. "L'hôtel ressemblait à une sorte de sas entre la ville et le périphérique. Tout y était automatique. . . . Par la fenêtre je voyais les fumées d'Issy-les-Moulineaux, quelques oiseaux dans le ciel, des parkings immenses, des supermarchés" (*Truismes* 88). She is still aware of the polluted city, with its sparse traces of nature, and all-consuming commercial amenities. In this urban setting, she metamorphoses to her more human state: "Je ne sais pas comment ça se fait, au bout d'un moment j'ai pu entrer à nouveau dans mes vieux vêtements. . . . C'était peut-être la douche, ou les hamburgers, ou dormir dans un vrai lit, ou alors le contact quotidien avec l'homme de ménage" (89). But appearing once more in human form, she is again subjugated. Although she is unable to speak with the cleaning man because he speaks Arabic, she is able to carry out a physical relationship with him and become pregnant.

The reader is once again made aware of Edgar's campaign and its efforts to "clean" the city and some of its inhabitants. Edgar is elected, and the narrator witnesses one of the first actions of Edgar's party: "Et puis les gendarmes sont venus à l'hôtel et ils ont embarqué l'homme de ménage. . . . Je me suis dit que puisque Edgar avait viré tous les Arabes il allait me donner facilement du travail, cet Edgar c'était le bon cheval" (*Truismes* 90-91). But Edgar is not "le bon cheval," since the narrator remains jobless and becomes one of the rejected members of society, joining "un groupe de clochards" (92). Her role as mascot of Edgar's campaign does not save her from the "cleansing" performed by Edgar's party. She is told by the SAMU-SDF²¹ that there are few jobs available to women: "assistante privée ou *accompagnatrice de travels*" (93). She cannot return to her job at the perfumery either because all perfumeries will be closed "pour le respect des bonnes mœurs" (94). The SAMU-SDF will soon disappear too. She thinks about her future: "Je me suis dit que si par le biais d'Edgar je n'arrivais à rien je me mettrais à marcher le long des rails, parce qu'au bout il y avait forcément la campagne et des arbres" (95). Once again, it is made obvious that the best solution is for the protagonist to flee to the countryside, free of the repressive and corrupt society that mirrors its degraded environment.

Edgar's reign also results in a lack of psychiatrists because the gendarmes have taken them away (*Truismes* 96). The physical and psychological well-being of the city's inhabitants are neglected, a neglect that exemplifies an all-encompassing disregard for and mistreatment of people, and also reflects a physical disrespect and a lack of consideration for nature. One day, the narrator finds a newspaper in a trashcan: "[Le journal] . . . se félicitait de la décision qu'Edgar avait prise de nettoyer l'asile à grands coups de *napalm*. Ça sentait encore drôle dans l'air, il y avait des cendres qui voletaient partout dans le quartier comme une neige pas saine" (99). The

²¹ In France, SAMU is an organization that provides urgent medical care to victims of accidents or those in critical condition. More specifically, SAMU-SDF treats homeless individuals.

city has been affected by manmade pollution, resulting in a general filth. This is especially ironic considering the premise of Edgar's campaign, "sa grande campagne sanitaire" (100).

This campaign, seemingly more concerned with racial, political, sexual, and economical sanitation rather than environmental cleanliness, also represents an intellectual cleansing. The narrator begins reading a book by Knut Hamsun: "Ça racontait des animaux disparus, des baleines, des harengs, et puis de grandes forêts et des gens qui s'aimaient et des méchants qui leur prenaient tous leurs sous" (*Truismes* 99). It seems that the narrator understands Edgar's role in the fulfillment of the novel by Hamsun;²² she considers the book useful to Edgar's campaign and wishes to show it to him: "J'ai trouvé facilement le Service de la Censure, c'était juste à côté du Palais. Ils ont eu l'air bien embêté avec mon livre. Personne ne connaissait *Knut Hamsun* et moi je ne pouvais guère les renseigner" (100). However, the Superior does not approve. He goes so far as to say, "[L]'unique régime intellocratique, capitaliste et multi-ethnique lui avait accordé le *prix Nobel* ou je ne sais quoi, à *Knut* truc, et que ça c'était une preuve irréfutable de subversivité" (101). Equating subversiveness with intellectuality and multi-ethnicity, Edgar's campaign clearly creates a hostile environment.

The narrator is asked to film a commercial for Edgar's campaign, but she falls ill and suffers from terrible cramps, a symptom of her transformation, the very night before filming. Although she considers herself Edgar's muse, it is clear that she is nothing more than a submissive female whose pretty face is to be plastered on walls and on TV in the name of a "sanitary" society (*Truismes* 102). She is asked to replace an actress found guilty of high treason. The vocabulary in this passage indicates solidarity between the narrator and the actress, in that

²² Knut Hamsun (August 4, 1859 – February 19, 1952) was a Norwegian author, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920. Hamsun's work spans more than 70 years and varies with regard to subject, perspective and environment. Hamsun's prose often contains rapturous depictions of the natural world, with intimate reflections on the Norwegian woodlands and coastline. Hamsun saw humankind and nature united in a strong, sometimes mystical bond.

the narrator herself is also subversive. This is foreshadowed in the following passage: “Au matin, tous mes cheveux jonchaient l’oreiller. Pour le coup je me suis dit que ça y était, que c’était le cancer, que j’étais atteinte d’un *développement anarchique des cellules* parce que je n’avais pas assez vécu *au diapason de mon corps*” (103). In this case, her body represents nature as a whole, indicating that she has not previously been attached to nature, an impossibility in the environmentally, politically, and socially contaminated landscape of the city.

The narrator finally finds Edgar. When Edgar first sees her, he repeats his famous slogan: “*Pour un monde plus sain*” (*Truismes* 103). Due to her metamorphosis from human to pig, Edgar calls a doctor, who asks her if she walked near “*Goliath. . . C’était la nouvelle centrale nucléaire qu’avait fait construire Edgar*” (103). When the narrator denies having been near the nuclear power plant, she mentions having worked at the perfumery. Edgar asks the doctor if the chemical products could have affected her. The doctor points out that it would have required exposure to a very high dose of chemical products to result in such a metamorphosis. “Edgar a dit que ce serait tout de même marrant si on pouvait transformer les prisons en porcheries, qu’au moins ça fournirait des protéines pas chères. Le docteur s’est mis à rigoler avec Edgar” (103). With his dismissive attitude toward those who do not adhere to his guidelines for the ideal individual, Edgar renders those unfit to join his ranks as edible.

After being rejected once again, the narrator is eventually sought out by Edgar and “tous ses gorilles” (*Truismes* 104). This scene portrays our pig-like narrator led to the slaughter by a drunk Edgar and his henchmen singing during a New Year’s Eve party he hosted at the Palace. Edgar sings songs of “*cochannes assez gratinées*” (104). Strapped into a halter by his henchmen, she is led to the Palace, where a party awaits, complete with roast deer and giraffe, caviar, maple syrup cakes, African fruits, and truffles, which the narrator, of course, finds particularly delicious

(105). Thinking it is the end of the world, the narrator finds herself surrounded by screaming and exclaiming partygoers kissing each other at midnight, sounded by twelve bell tolls from the cathedral Edgar has built to replace the Arc de Triomphe (106). Religion, with its traditional embrace of hierarchy, is valued in Edgar's new vision of France. As a result, the arrival of the third millennium, celebrated on this New Year's Eve, calls for the prayer that "la Spirale inspire bienheureusement notre chef béni" (109). The extreme totalitarian society over which the "blessed" Edgar presides is the opposite of the holistic society described by Craige: "an inclusivist social order [that] would ideally be characterized by a respect for differences, an appreciation of diversity, a preference for cooperation over competition, equality of educational and economic opportunity, and social responsibility [and a concern for] the well-being of *all* its citizens" (Craige 7).

Consequently, the third millennium does not bless Edgar, as he meets the same fate as our narrator: "[V]ous souvenez, on en a beaucoup parlé de la maladie mentale d'Edgar. Il paraît qu'il hennissait et qu'il ne mangeait plus que de l'herbe, à quatre pattes. Pauvre Edgar. Bon après, vous connaissez la suite. La guerre a éclaté et tout ça, il y a eu l'Épidémie, et puis la série de famines (*Truismes* 114). Edgar's mistreatment of the environment and its inhabitants has led to his own metaphysical evolution. While this seems to be a fitting punishment for him, our narrator benefits from a profound affinity with nature, strengthened by her relationship with Yvan, to which she refers as "la plus belle période de [sa] vie" (121).

Yvan is a werewolf and has a particular relationship with nature, in that "chaque pleine Lune, [il] allait manger un bout" (*Truismes* 121). He teaches the narrator to adapt her own rhythm to the "fluctuations de la Lune" (121). His relationship with nature is not easily mimicked by the narrator, as she is not a werewolf like he is; nonetheless, the nature of their

relationship is based on mutual respect. Since Yvan is also attached to nature, exemplified by his own transformation, he accepts the narrator's metamorphosis as well: "Yvan m'aimait autant en être humain qu'en truie. Il disait que c'était formidable d'avoir deux modes d'être, deux femelles pour le prix d'une en quelque sorte, qu'est-ce qu'on rigolait" (122). However, their life together becomes complicated due to Yvan's government acquaintances. He has government connections after making a large donation to the "Gouvernement des Libres Citoyens pour reconstruire le Pont-Neuf" (122).

His donation causes a scandal because the reconstruction is not very practical for traffic flow. "[H]eureusement le Ministère a eu l'idée d'exploiter la brèche dans l'ancien Palais pour faire une autoroute urbaine. Bon, ça gâchait un peu le paysage, Yvan s'est demandé s'il allait intervenir, mais Yvan, par choix, n'avait presque plus de vie mondaine ni politique" (*Truismes* 123). This provides insight into the scheming and exploitation of the land and citizens by the corrupt government portrayed in *Truismes*. The consequences of these actions affect the narrator, as she is linked to Yvan. During what she refers to as "des Grands Procès," several government officials are imprisoned (124). Additionally, "[I]es Nouveaux Citoyens" demand that the reconstruction of the Pont-Neuf be halted and even requisition Yvan, drawing from his personal bank accounts for compensation for work on the bridge (124-25).

Because of this political blunder as well as their animal nature, the couple is unable to leave the apartment. As a result, Yvan is no longer able to hunt outside of the house. Instead, he eats pizza delivery men. When they try to move, the narrator is completely transformed into a sow, exhibiting her need for a natural environment and leading the SPA to put her "dans une camionnette et ensuite dans une cage au zoo" (*Truismes* 136). She finally escapes and boards a train, more specifically "un wagon à bestiaux" (138). This passage, and Edgar's behavior toward

those he deems unfit to be part of his “clean” society, recalls the ethnic cleansing of Jews in Europe during World War II. Like our narrator, they were also subjugated, treated as less than human, and sent away in cattle cars.

This journey from the urban environment to the rural one is echoed by her oscillation between her human nature and animal nature: “Je me suis laissée aller et j’ai beaucoup dormi, quand le train est arrivé à destination j’oscillais entre mes deux états” (*Truismes* 138). Her destination is her mother’s house in the country, but before arriving she allows herself to be *in nature*:

Je me suis approchée des arbres. C’était la première fois que je voyais des arbres aussi hauts, et qui sentaient si bon. Ils sentaient . . . toute la puissance endormie de l’hiver. . . . J’ai trouvé une grosse truffe noire et j’ai d’abord pensé à cette Saint-Sylvestre de l’an 2000 où j’en avais tant mangé parmi ces gens si turbulents, et puis ça s’est effacé, j’ai croqué dans la truffe, du nez le parfum m’est entré dans la gorge et ça a fait comme si je mangeais un morceau de la Terre. Tout l’hiver de la Terre a éclaté dans ma bouche, je ne me suis plus souvenue ni du millénaire à venir ni de tout ce que j’avais vécu, ça s’est roulé en boule en moi et j’ai tout oublié, pendant un moment indéfini j’ai perdu ma mémoire. (139)

Directly after this description of the narrator’s displacement and resulting harmony with nature, she goes to her mother’s house. Her mother remarks that the narrator has “terriblement changé, qu’elle avait du mal à [la] reconnaître” (143). It is evident that the narrator’s displacement to the countryside is closely linked to her sow-shape, the state of being to which she has migrated, establishing her affinity with nature. As a result, she lives among the other pigs in the sty.

The director of her former workplace, the perfumery, arrives at her mother's farm, and the narrator panics. She discovers that her mother and the director are selling pigs on the black market. When he enters the "porcherie," he tries to trap her, but she summons the strength to transform into a human in order to defend herself by shooting both the director and her mother. After killing them, she escapes into nature: "Ensuite je suis partie dans la forêt. . . . Désormais la plupart du temps je suis truie, c'est plus pratique pour la vie de la forêt" (*Truismes* 148). Finding solace in her natural surroundings, she chooses to resume her human nature only when she writes: "J'écris dès que la sève retombe un peu en moi. L'envie me vient quand la Lune monte, sous sa lumière froide je relis mon cahier" (148). It is important to note the relationship between writing and displacement as it relates to the nature/culture dichotomy. Resisting this traditional opposition, *Truismes* ends with the narrator remarking, "J'essaie de faire comme me l'avait montré Yvan, mais à rebrousse-poil de ses propres méthodes: moi c'est pour retrouver ma cambrure d'humain que je tends mon cou vers la Lune" (149). Her affinity with nature renders her existence as a human more tolerable and beneficial, in that she can express herself through the medium of writing.

Writing also plays an important part in Darrieussecq's novel *Le Pays*, in which there is the same contrast between urban and rural environments that we find in *Truismes*. Once again, Paris fulfills the role of the urban environment, from which the protagonist migrates to a fictional country that closely resembles the Basque Country. *Le Pays* is divided into five parts: *Le Sol*, *L'État Civil*, *La Langue*, *Les Morts*, and *Les Naissances*: "the principal factors involved in the negotiation of the human subject" (Damlé 308). The divisions of this particular novel are important to note because they emphasize the contrasts typically found in nature and in

geographical studies, as the reader is given a culturally holistic view of disparate landscapes and the correlations with human activity.

Betty Jean Craige defines cultural holism as a vision of human society in terms of an evolving system of interdependencies of cultures, individuals, and their nonhuman environments (5). The Cartesian viewpoint opposes nature and culture, humans and animals, on the basis of alleged human superiority. In contrast to this anthropocentric point of view, advocates of zoocentrism limit inherent value to animals. Craige's holistic vision reconciles these diametrically opposed points of view and can be applied to Marie Darrieussecq's works. For example, *Le Pays* comprises descriptions of a rural environment (*Le Sol*) contrasted with an urban environment (*L'État Civil*) and the two natural processes that every living thing must undergo: life and death. *La Langue*, or language in the form of writing, bridges the gap, so to speak, connecting these juxtaposed ideas so that the novel may remark on absence and presence, or existence and non-existence, and how these universal truths are equally relevant and cooperative rather than dichotomous.

Although it is uncertain at times where her exile is, as the protagonist feels a place attachment to both her adopted home of the city of Paris and to her native land of Youanguï, this ambiguity reinforces the importance of understanding one's existence as it relates to geographical location. Therefore, the first chapter of the novel presents the protagonist's displacement as paramount. For example, she is running in the countryside when, "[t]out ce qui courait en moi me tenait debout, me portait. Je devenais j/e" (*Le Pays* 11).

In order to reinforce the displacement of the protagonist, Marie Rivière, "*Le Pays* . . . vacillates between two voices, both belonging to Rivière. The first is an internal monologue, narrated by Marie who seems to be writing a novel called *Le Pays*, the second a constructed

third-person narrative, which may or may not be the manuscript of *Le Pays* itself” (Damlé 312).

In keeping with Marie Darrieussecq’s holistic style, the reader is given two different perspectives of Marie. These voices “slip in and out of linear narration,” and this “narrative slippage . . . highlights the experience of *dépaysement*, in the sense of Rivière’s literal move” (312).

The narrator’s displacement calls for an ecocritical reading, in that the protagonist emphasizes the importance of writing as it relates to the environment: “s’absorber dans, absorber le paysage, c’était une partie de la pensée, une partie de l’écriture” (*Le Pays* 12). This introductory passage, like the veiled reference to the Front National in *Truismes*, resists cultural specificity, a culture defined as a “total learned behavior specific to a particular community or group” (Sorvig 6). Instead, she finds a universality in the countryside: “Le psychologique et l’étatique, le privé et le familial avait disparu” (13). For instance, the fictional landscape of Youanguï encompasses various geographical qualities. It becomes “scandinave” and has a climate that is “parfois presque équatorial” (*Le Pays* 13-14). In fact, “[C]e paysage familier [...] devenait tous les paysages” (13). This description of *Le Pays* fits the theory of holism defined by Betty Jean Craige:

Holism is thus a model of reality and a way of understanding. It is also an ideology, an ideology which in its cultural manifestation is incompatible with absolutism of any sort. Whereas absolutism signifies an intolerance of differences, holism signifies appreciation of differences, of diversity... (5).

By creating a country devoid of cultural or geographical specificity, the novel realizes both diversity and acceptance of differences.

In *Le Pays*, the reader is reminded repeatedly that the author is not writing about real landscapes or a real country, so that there is “un réenclenchement sur un nouveau méridien, un

nouveau fuseau horaire, une nouvelle latitude, voire une repolarisation” (Simon 18). By occupying the space between literature and reality, Darrieussecq may take into account a national identity without imposing boundaries that allow only for an understanding of French ecocriticism. As a result, she resists the marginalization of ecocriticism in French literary studies, to which Stéphanie Posthumus refers (“Writing the Land/scape” 103). The protagonist is in fact marginalized herself, in that she takes part in two different cultures, having been born in Le Pays and having lived in Paris. The reader may focus on the universality of existence and humanity as it relates to the environment.

The first chapter of *Le Pays* remarks on the spatial differences between Paris and other urban environments, and “le Pays,” the countryside, that will extend into the subsequent chapters. When Marie and her husband, Diego, make the decision to move to the country with their son Tiot, she remarks, “[M]aintenant que la décision était prise mon mari et moi n’osions plus nous regarder : de peur que l’un de nous deux craque et supplie de rester à Paris” (*Le Pays* 16). However, the description of Paris that follows equates the city with ecological degradation, while the country is equated with spatial expansiveness:

J’ouvris la fenêtre et respirai dans les vapeurs d’essence, la nausée allait et venait comme une faim bizarre. Il suffirait pourtant de se laisser glisser au Sud en tenant l’Atlantique à sa droite [...] et d’attendre, là, que le pays se redéplie autour de nous. Les montagnes pousseraient, la mer se déroulerait, tout se remettrait d’aplomb. (17)

The countryside offers vast horizontal and vertical views, as opposed to an urban landscape, like that of Paris, where one’s view is limited.

Juxtaposed with an image of the countryside that fans out, the narrator provides a description of Paris limited to a vertical perspective. While throwing away her garbage, she looks up at the Paris sky, “un des plus beaux du monde,” but she imagines her perspective to be like that of a bird: “Vent d’altitude, nimbus se nuançant de rose et sirius effilochés très haut, traînes d’avion orange et or. Lumière du soir filant Sud-Ouest vers le méandre de la Seine, les quartiers verts et puis la plaine, la France et le pays et la mer” (*Le Pays* 36). By imagining a journey above Paris and past the city limits, is she able to find the expansiveness that characterizes the countryside or the sea. To reinforce this spatial constraint, she ends this particular passage by citing a song, “*Clouds are sliding fast these days* Du fond de la cour se laisser dans le bleu, tout le ciel pour moi dans le triangle entre les toits” (36). From her vantage point, she is limited to a small, triangular-shaped sliver of the sky. The narrator takes this line from the song “Artificial Life” by Kat Onoma: “You keep on seeing little cars in the corner of your eye / creeping lenses with antennas bending toward light / Clouds are sliding fast these days, season changing every hour. / Baby robots are sunflowers turning round and round. / All the reports they fax you never have time to read / unrolling and unrolling a bill you’ll never pay.” This reference is reminiscent of the contrast, defined by the Larrère, between nature as a process and nature as an artifact. Here, Paris is equated with artificiality: untamed, expansive nature is severely limited.

It is precisely for this reason that Marie and Diego return to the countryside: “Ils rentraient au pays pour échapper aux squares, à la torpeur des squares et des jardins publics. Ils avaient adoré Paris, ils étaient *de Paris* . . . [m]ais le square était une épreuve désormais au-dessus de leurs forces” (*Le Pays* 44). When the narrator describes the square closest to her residence in Paris, the square to which she would accompany her son Tiot, the triangular patch of sky finds its counterpart in the following description:

Dans les squares on voit parfois le sol: un petit triangle sous la racine d'un orme. C'est le sol de Paris. Calcaire et silice; humus de marronnier, fiente, carburants: ce qui s'use et ce qui pousse, ce qui fait la poussière ici comme ailleurs, graines et pollen, météores, squames, cendre... Un sol, pas une terre; ou alors de la terre aussi battue et rebattue qu'un court de tennis ou un hall de gare. (*Le Pays* 45)

This passage befits Lawrence Buell's study of place: "Those who speak on behalf of place-attachment need to face certain intractable ambiguities inherent in the concept of place. [...] Not attending to this reciprocity of nature and culture, one misconstrues one's place in space and how it came to be" (66).

Place-attachment requires analysis as it relates to the notion of place, as a personal experience, versus space, an abstract concept. In their study of space, Ancient Greek Atomists, such as Democritus and his pupil Leucippus, "held that there is nothing but 'atoms and void.' . . . The Atomist model entails a double infinity: the infinity of space and the infinity of the atoms that populate this space. . . . Nevertheless, Epicurus, unlike Leucippus and Democritus, explicitly identifies void proper with what we must begin to call *space*" (Casey, *The Fate of Place* 80-83). Space provides a limitless location for the atoms' movement (83).

In *Physics*, Aristotle focused on place "in the cautious, finite terms of container and limit, boundary and point. . . . On [his] view, one simply cannot study the physical world without taking place into account: 'A student of nature must have knowledge about place'" (Aristotle; quoted in Casey, *The Fate of Place* 51). This pertains to my ecocritical approach to Darrieussecq's works because she makes a distinction between places, like cityscapes, which are limited by urban planning, and more natural, boundless landscapes, like the countryside.

The power of a place “determines not only *where* I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but *how* I am together with others. . . . Place bestows [...] a ‘local habitation and a name’ by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world. This implacement is as social as it is personal. . . . [I]t is also collective in character” (Casey, *Getting Back Into Place* 23). With a collective ignorance of nature as it relates to place, how can Diego and Marie have a reliable sense of place in the artificial environment of Paris?

The evolutionary process of the urban ground has been halted, which is why the narrator calls it “un sol,” translated as ground or the surface of the earth, rather than “une terre,” meaning soil, usually associated with fertility. To emphasize this, the narrator continues her description by saying that if the ground resembles the earth it is “[t]ellement battue et rebattue qu’on pouvait la dire vierge, de la terre de grande ville. Pousse qui s’y mette. Canettes et noyaux, grains et mégots” (*Le Pays* 45). It is a ground tamed by human activity, a superficial space, “[u]n carottage de siècles” (45). By contrast, one can find in Patagonia, for example, “de la terre jamais foulée,” earth that has not been trampled on or “beaten” by human activity (46).

The contrasts between urban and rural spaces reframe “nature-society relations from a duality to a mutuality. . . . In a sense, the question of how well a society is adapted to its environment must now be linked to the question of how well an environment fares around a society. The issue of mutuality is now at the forefront. Environmental migration clearly expresses that mutuality” (Oliver-Smith 1063). In opposition to the ephemeral and artificial qualities of the city, where buildings and people come and go, the narrator is struck by the continuity of nature when she spends time in her garden in the country: “[E]lle regardait tous les jours, tous les jours et parfois les nuits. Et pourtant le monde était là. Avec des constantes et des fidélités, l’air en haut et l’herbe en bas, les pommes sur les pommiers et les lucioles à luire” (40).

In the countryside, it is more noticeable that nature is its own force: “L’espace était fait de feuilles disjointes, qui si pliaient avec des froissements. Il aurait fallu une oreille autrement faite que la sienne, l’oreille des chats, des ours ou des extraterrestres, pour bien les appréhender. Son monde à elle n’avait que trois dimensions, elle n’en connaissait que des bribes” (*Le Pays* 41). It is a complex system that is, at times, not easily ascertained by human perception. The narrator acknowledges the difficulty of comprehending a force that, although witness to and often victim of human touch, is not to be regarded as inferior. It merits consideration. Thus, “the barrier between human activity and eco-systemic activity must be collapsed, transforming a relation of difference into a relation of mutuality of the natural and social worlds” (Oliver-Smith 1064).

At the end of the chapter, Marie attends a colloquium, where a fellow writer, Unama, explains the importance of literature as it relates to humankind’s consideration of nature. Literature allows for a symbiotic relationship, or mutuality, between the writer and nature: “Le poète épouse la nature, et la nature lui offre ses fruits, qu’il met en mots” (*Le Pays* 62-63). In other words, literature illustrates an attachment to nature as it relates to reshaping our concept of nature and its inhabitants. This is a call for diversity in literature. As Heidegger said, “The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling,” but Greg Garrard points out that “[f]or Heidegger, ‘dwelling’ means much more than living somewhere. . . . he relates Poetry (the real thing, of course) to dwelling and claims that it can be written only when humans are ‘attuned to Being’ (169). Therefore, nature writing allows the writer to “[attend] to [the] reciprocity of nature and culture,” to acknowledge humanity’s attachment to nature as part of a diverse ecosystem (Buell 66).

To reiterate, *Le Pays* addresses existence, or Being, by contemplating the protagonist's attachment to nature. In the second chapter, "L'État civil," she confronts absence and presence as they relate to culture: "La personne de l'écriture n'était pas une personne; la voix, si elle advenait, n'était enregistrée par aucun état civil. Dans la chambre d'échos qu'était l'absence à soi-même, l'écriture trouvait sa résonance" (117). By opposing boundaries, such as those enforced by governments to delineate their possession of a given geographical space, writing may speak for humans, nature, and the Other, anyone who is marginalized by dualistic constructions. The Other is the "not-human," as defined by Val Plumwood:

[T]he Western definition of humanity depended—and still depends—on the presence of the "not-human": the uncivilized, the animal and the animalistic. European justification for invasion and colonization proceeded from this basis, understanding non-European lands and the people and animals that inhabited them as "spaces," "unused, underused or empty." (Plumwood 53; quoted in Huggan and Tiffin 5)

Ecoliterature may speak for humans, nature, and "not-humans," those whom society demeans.

Marie's attachment to nature is gradual, in that she is at first most comfortable in her country home, "qui était comme une marge, une étape avant le pays" (*Le Pays* 73). However, she migrates to the country, the nature she sought by leaving Paris: "Elle voudrait entrer dans les arbres, dans les autres. Comprendre, connaître: se déplacer dans les corps" (75). Her connection with nature is most clearly suggestive with the following phrase: "*La vie est une rivière...*" (179). Rivière is, in fact, her last name.

She finds diversity her move to the country, as she recognizes that "[l]es éléments du paysage n'étaient pas réductibles à un plan" (*Le Pays* 89). However, humankind has traditionally

tried to assert its dominance by imposing the aforementioned borders on space. In fact, “[l]’espace, la distance d’un point à un autre, n’a été inventé que pour se découper dans ses bords aériens” (93). The discovery of new spaces, such as the moon, has emphasized this domination of humans over nature. Marie was born the year Armstrong walked on the moon, a moment that “fit trembler la croûte terrestre sous la plante des pieds humains. Quadriller le ciel, recenser les lieux, habiter l’univers: l’espace ressemble à ces jouets de papier que les enfants ouvrent et referment pour y lire l’avenir” (103). Therefore, her gradual attachment contrasts with the progressive preeminence of humanity in relation to nature.

Humans’ tendency to classify, appropriate, and impose limitations on nature extends to language. Language results from the systematic opposition of concepts, such as absence and presence, by creating a new reality of diversity and mutuality. In the third chapter of *Le Pays*, language is central to the Marie’s exploration of her homeland. Again, Darrieussecq opposes cultural specificity because the language of the fictional country of Yuoangui is “comme la patrie de ceux qui n’en avaient pas” (133). The language exists for those without a nationality. Their nationality resists limiting constructions meant to marginalize them.

There is a universality in “la vieille langue,” as she refers to the language of *Le Pays*. This universality extends to the grammatical structure of the old language, as Marie learns from Yuoangui that “le temps et l’espace découpent d’abord un monde avec des couleurs, une manière, un climat; que le verbe le fend d’une action, et que le sujet, en bout de la chaîne, l’ancre dans un corps dont le sexe n’est pas dit. Locuteurs neutres, objets sans genre” (*Le Pays* 156). As opposed to French, “une langue d’autorité,” “cartésienne”, and a language for which gender is important, “la vieille langue” opposes the limitations of gender (133-34). She also argues that the country itself is without borders: “Les Yuoanguis n’existait pas hors de leurs frontières. Mais

ces frontières n'existaient pas" (158). This echoes the desired effect of writing: "l'absence à soi-même, l'accès au monde sans le je," ou "[u]n devenir-monde où le moi n'était plus une passerelle mais une présence décentrée, épanouie" (179).

As opposed to a national identity associated with government-imposed borders, one's existence and "homeland" are instead, naturally, determined by birth: "La matrice détermine la patrie. Par le sexe des femmes le sol devient national" (*Le Pays* 153). The womb, and hence the mother, is the source of nationality, rather than the "patrie," a word, that although feminine, evokes masculinity, sharing its etymology with the word "patriarchy," a system of fatherly authority.

This passage necessitates further analysis of the concept of fertility as it relates to the current ecological situation. It also calls for an ecofeminist focus, for many ecological problems can be linked to the mistreatment of women since it is analogous to the mistreatment of the earth. By personifying the environment as a woman, and associating the degradation of the environment with the abuse of women, the problem takes on greater urgency. Regarding the abuse of women, "ecofeminism also blames the *androcentric* dualism man/woman. [This] distinguishes men from women on the grounds of some alleged quality such as larger brain size, and then assumes that this distinction confers superiority upon men" (Garrard 23). Furthermore, "[i]f women have been associated with nature, and each denigrated with reference to the other, it may seem worthwhile to attack the hierarchy by reversing the terms, exalting nature" (23).

This connection between reproduction and the earth echoes an epigraph from Meridel Le Sueur: "The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and create each other" (Le Sueur; quoted in Slicer 63). Marie exemplifies ecofeminism as defined by Charlene Spretnak, who "grounds a kind of women's spirituality in female biology and acculturation that

is ‘comprised of the truths of naturalism and the holistic proclivities of women’” because she is *in nature*, one with nature (Spretnak 128-9; quoted in Garrard 24). In fact, she discovers she is pregnant soon after her move to the countryside. Her body is a fertile landscape like that of her [mother]land.

However, human activity that poses a threat to nature is not completely ignored once the protagonist moves to a more natural landscape. That is to say, her displacement to the countryside does not eliminate the damage already done by humankind. However, it brings recognition to the problems that invade those landscapes still considered fertile and verdant. Following the ecofeminist vein, the narrator broaches the subject of nuclear power, but, embodies a characteristic of ecofeminism defined by D’Eaubonne, since she is “more concerned with others: other people, other women, other species, the planet itself” because the “bond between women and earth remains and frequently manifests itself in the present” (D’Eaubonne; quoted in Gates 17). While driving in the countryside with her husband and discussing possible baby names, the narrator observes the nuclear power plant: “Nous avons laissé derrière nous la presqu’île de C. Ouest et nous suivions des yeux le courant vers le large. Les radiations de la centrale étaient entraînées vers les profondeurs” (*Le Pays* 174). Subtly connecting this ecological threat to her unborn child’s health, she remarks, “Je suis quand même contente qu’elle soit normale” (174). She follows D’Eaubonne’s theory of women and environmental interest by expressing concern for another person: her daughter.

After remarking on the nuclear power plant, the narrator looks at the sea once more:

Elle pèse contre le pays. Nous admirons sa résistance, faite de dunes, de falaises et de phares, de granit et d’iridium, et d’aires de pique-nique au bord de l’Atlantique. Et je sais qu’en avançant tout droit, le fond plonge vers des fosses

merveilleuses, avec des yeux, avec des tentacules, des cils fluorescents, une masse organique énorme, qui pousse. Si le bonheur est la chose du monde la plus mal partagée, nous en avons reçu une dose massive. (*Le Pays* 176)

Water, a lifesource, represented by the sea, has its own force. The contiguity of the narrator and water is further reinforced by the activity of swimming: “Nager était le contre champ physique de l’écriture. Corps libéré de la chaise et de la pesanteur, cerveau dans l’écriture mais sans la main, sans la page: une écriture nagée, un rêve. . . . Phrases et corps étaient au bord de se confondre” (178). Her physical displacement, immersion in the water, reinforces the displacement provided by writing: “Ce qu’elle obtenait en nageant ou en écrivant--l’absence à soi-même, l’accès au monde sans le *je*” (179).

Thanks to her writing, she provides an example for attachment to nature: “Une autre capacité d’être là, un envol. Un devenir-monde où le moi n’était plus une passerelle mais une présence décentrée, épanouie...” (*Le Pays* 179). By ignoring pre-supposed definitions of nature and its inhabitants, by decentering oneself, it is possible to be attached to nature and present *in* nature. Absence is then the subject of the fourth chapter of *Le Pays*, entitled “Les Morts.” In fact, the third-person narrator says, “[L]e vide descendait en elle, ce vide qui est l’écriture et la possibilité de l’écriture,” and “elle, son domaine, c’était l’absence. Écrire était le lieu où elle faisait l’expérience du vide” (191, 201). In “Les Morts,” writing is more profoundly connected to the protagonist’s surroundings as she explores her migration to the country where she was born. The country, however, lacks many qualities that are often imposed upon a physical space by humankind. For example, “Les plaques temporelles se superposaient, passerelles mentales et toboggans logiques. Le pays n’était pas un lieu, c’était du temps, du temps feuilleté, et elle était revenue y habiter” (209). This approach to nature is therefore in opposition to the traditional

view of nature as belonging to humankind. The narrator alludes to this conventional thought in observing her husband and son: “Ils jouent, parce qu’ils sont les maîtres du monde. Tiot joue, parce qu’il est un petit maître du monde, et que l’océan miniscule, la planète pelée, le ciel vide et les mouettes outragées sont à lui” (230). The protagonist finds instead a “solidarité indigène” (213).

“Les Morts” also explores the protagonist’s progressive attachment to a rural rather than urban environment. Her former conversations with her friend, Walid, included a game of choosing “la plus belle ville,” and they continue their conversations on the telephone after Marie has moved. For Walid, it is “toute ville où on ne se perd pas,” so Marie refuses to speak to him about the countryside, “de la beauté des arbres, de la brume sur les collines, ni des mouvements d’Épiphanie,” her unborn daughter, because she imagines that he would laugh (*Le Pays* 254). The narrator’s holism is accentuated with her new response to their game: “Quelle ville peut remplacer le monde, puisqu’on ne peut habiter le monde entier?” (255). Her displacement to nature resists the delineation of cities, countries, and territories. Instead, like a blank page, “le pays [était] un pays de possibles” (255). This holistic thought is bolstered by the act of writing, as Marie may imagine possibilities by addressing anew topics that have always received attention, such as “la naissance et la mort, des humains et des nations, et les amours, la mer, les rêves” (257). As is *Le Pays*, writing is a landscape in which she finds orientation: “écrire, mon droit chemin” (257).

Finally, in the fifth part of *Le Pays*, “Les Naissances,” the narrator addresses the subject of exile: “Le Pays, Paris; Paris, le Pays: le point d’exil basculait” (*Le Pays* 265). Positioned next to the coast, the sea and water represent the flowing nature of life and the prolific character of writing and language. She has taken it upon herself to capture the fluency of nature through the

medium of writing. As water flows, so does her writing. The narrator is not exiled, for she grasps the expansiveness of the environment: “[L]e monde était là, déployé” (286). She continues by saying, “[C]’était simplement du travail, mon travail, qui ne laissait rien d’indicible” (286).

Darrieussecq is “mi-chemin,” because she travels in the space of writing, creating new landscapes and environmental and cultural possibilities. Her examination of identity as it relates to one’s milieu is related to the ecocritical objective outlined by Garrard: “[E]cocriticism cannot contribute much to debates about problems in ecology, but it can help define, explore, and even resolve ecological problems in this wider sense” (6).

My ecocritical exploration extends to another type of landscape in Darrieussecq’s works: the sea. With an analysis of “Plage,” followed by *Le Mal de mer*, I will explore humankind’s relationship with this other type of landscape. In “Plage,” Darrieussecq observes the sea and its coastlines, from which previous writers, such as Baudelaire and Proust, have drawn inspiration and which have served as a child’s first idea of infinity (“Plage” 186). Beaches, however, are disappearing, and sand is fabricated in laboratories (191). The sea has now been rendered ephemeral by man’s touch. By analyzing the evolution of the sea in this short story, I intend to examine the consequences of a reductionist approach to the perception of nature. Jacques Bril defines humankind as migratory. Its history is based on a complex and often unconfessed network of long transhumances, laborious assimilations, and secret nostalgias (11). This is the case with “Plage,” exposes our unconfessed and complex relationship with the sea.

By beginning the short story with a linguistic study of the word *plage*, the narrator summarizes the progression of the sea and its coastlines as it relates to human perception. While *plage* is a calm word, “ample et court à la fois: le *a* s’allonge, le *g* chuinte,” the word itself is also reminiscent of loss: “nostalgies, amours perdus, clichés qui s’écrivent sur la page très tôt

reconnue des plages” (“Plage” 183). The word *nostalgie* is particularly interesting, in that it can signify nostalgia, as well as homesickness, implying that the word “plage” may also rouse a sense of homesickness for the sea, a space that has undergone such a change in human perception that its original destination is no longer attainable. The sea itself is that “lost love” to which humanity cannot return.

The sea is linked to the history of human migration, in that it was simply a gateway to the exploration of other landscapes: “Au début il y a les marins, ceux qui cherchent les toisons d’or ou s’égarent chez Calypso. Il y a les rois et les guerriers, qui traversent pour les yeux d’une Hélène des mers minuscules” (“Plage” 183). The narrator distinguishes between those men associated with the sea, warriors and kings, and those men associated with land: “Au début, il y a les terriens: ceux pour qui la mer n’existe pas, ceux pour qui la plage n’est que la bordure des terres agricoles, un endroit traître et stérile, où parfois s’échouent des sirènes” (183). Despite their proximity to the sea, these people were not attached to the sea. Riding atop the waves, these warriors, kings, and explorers positioned themselves, literally and figuratively, above the sea, rulers of this maritime domain.

Explorers, whom the narrator deems “aveugles,” also used the sea as a means of transportation in order to impose their classifications on unheard of peoples and spaces. Using the sea as their compass, these explorers commenced the tracing of the coastlines. The narrator characterizes these explorers as a blind, a seemingly incongruous judgment, because they presumed to discover places but these places were only unknown to them, while well-known to indigenous peoples. Therefore, these explorers make claims of discovery, of the sea, other landscapes, and people. Although the sea existed long before human beings, its discovery by

humans marks a new beginning in its history, a pivotal landmark in its evolution as it relates to human activity.

From oceanic exploration, there results a romanticism of the sea, which has inspired literature and songs. Alain Corbin points out that although the Romantic writers did not traverse the sea as warriors, kings, and explorers, they did capture the traditional concept of it as a source of contemplation and pleasure, giving us a certain panorama coastal landscape (187). For instance, Darrieussecq quotes Baudelaire's "L'Homme et la mer" in reference to "des jeunes gens [qui] grimpent sur des rochers, aiment le vent et la tempête et gréent leurs poèmes de métaphores : leur âme est le flot tourmenté, leur exil celui de l'albatros, *homme libre toujours tu chéris la mer*" ("Plage" 184). For the Romantic poets, the sea is synonymous with freedom. To be torn from the sea would deny their personal liberty. These "créateurs romantiques" captured the pleasure of the sea as it related to its "indécise frontière" (Corbin 187). That is to say that the sea was infinite, serving as a contrast to the mortal lives of human beings, until humans imposed frontiers, by means of cartography relay their spatial limitations, on it. Referring to Proust, Darrieussecq's narrator describes the invention of Balbec and its beach culture: "Ensuite, c'est la mer qui devient plus petite, de plus en plus petite après qu'on trace ses ultimes frontières, Australie, Antarctique ; et puis un jour, on la voit depuis l'espace" ("Plage" 184). Now the maritime domain can be seen horizontally and vertically, buoying humankind's all-encompassing domination of it.

As a result, the sea becomes smaller and less impressive. In other words, by means of classification, the sea becomes a delimited space, even imposed on other spaces. The narrator describes how, seen from outer space, its qualities are applied to the moon, where Neil Armstrong walks alongside the "mer de la Tranquilité, mer des Tempêtes" ("Plage" 184).

Although it may seem that the sea's frontiers have expanded because of humankind's extension of its characteristics to outer space, it is in fact reminiscent of explorers' desire to delineate its latitude. Since discovery of something implies knowledge gained of what was previously unknown, it is impossible for humans to have truly discovered the sea since its existence preceded theirs and any discovery was simply physical rather than intellectual. This ignorance echoes the fact that humankind presumed the sea's characteristics could be imposed on an environment so starkly different from its own. Unlike the Sea of Tranquility, the Earth's seas are not dry and desolate (184).

Besides imposing spatial limitations, humans have also implemented a temporal limitation to the sea and its coasts, epitomized in "Plage" by its association with Proust's beloved beach culture. Darrieussecq emphasizes this with a reference to Jacques Prévert's "Les feuilles mortes": "Y percevra-t-on le son terrestre des ritournelles, *les amants désunis, quand vient la fin de l'été, on the beach... ?*" (185). In this case, the love affair is the one which humans have with the beach and its diversions during the summer months. With the fall of the autumn leaves, those who take part in the beach culture are separated from their cherished beach.

In other words, the sea is synonymous with summer, since its sense as a vacation destination in the summer months. In addressing this temporal limitation, it calls to mind nature as a process versus nature as an artifact, concepts that are essential in understanding the progression of the sea in this story and in our history. In "Plage," we see the progression of humankind as "maîtres et possesseurs de la nature," who now possess and manipulate the sea in order to suit their system of classification and their desires. The sea is therefore an artifact. Many beaches have manmade infrastructures, such as hotels and restaurants. Alain Corbin describes the invention of the beach as a result of social needs: the organization of space imposed by

fellowship, spurred by the collusion between tourists and their desire to possess the shore and its coastlines (283).

As Darrieussecq's narrator describes the beach culture, the tone becomes nostalgic. She points out the difficulty of seeing the sea as its own entity, separate from humankind's activities, a notable step in the artificialization of the sea. Instead of favoring nature as a process, considering human beings to be part of nature and collaborates with it, we have instead claimed ownership of it to suit only our needs: "C'est difficile, de voir la plage, de voir le sable et la mer: de les dénuder de notre histoire, de notre humain va-et-vient, de nos poèmes et de nos parasols" ("Plage" 185). The narrator's nostalgia becomes personal, as she recounts her own memories of the beach and sea: "J'ai six ans, c'est la plus belle plage du monde, et la seule" (185). This unnamed beach, which looms so large in the narrator's reverie, signifies the infinity that the sea would represent if humans beings were to resist the urge to personify, limit, or classify it: "La plage est mâle et femelle, cambouis et crinolines, abysses et cachalots. Dans l'enfance et sur la plage, lieux conjugués, s'apprennent les limites et les limites des limites: leur incertitude, le doute" (186). While it is during childhood that one is taught the definitions and limits of things, the narrator expresses the uncertainty and doubt in doing so because, she explains, the sea and beach represent something else from a child's perspective: "C'est la plage qui, grain par grain, donne aux enfants leur première idée de l'infini. . . . La plage résiste à ce que je sais du monde terrestre" (186). Rather than presenting traditional dichotomies defined by human culture, such as masculine and feminine and life and death, the sea seems ageless, as water and sand mix at its edge. From this perspective, there are no contrasts that delineate its coast.

The narrator's vision of the sea as a child thus favors "nature-processus," or a nature that is in perpetual motion, evolution, that is not quantitative or dichotomous, and from which human

beings can learn. The narrator continues to describe her childlike wonder and categorizes different sea-dwellers, such as shrimp, or “leçons d’anatomie dans l’eau,” hermit crabs, starfish, sea anemones, and sea urchins. She also recounts a time when humans told time by the sea and its tides “car la mer, métaphysique et ruminante, a deux estomacs: elle dévore et recouvre, dans un sens ou dans l’autre, d’une saison à l’autre...” (“Plage” 188). Whether the season provides a story, such as the year when the sand reached the caves on the shore, or a disaster, such as the year when a swell broke a pontoon, the beach serves as an hourglass for those living on its coast (188). Such coastal dwellers allow nature to remain a process, for they are part of nature, taking in stride the unpredictable actions of the sea.

In addition to distinguishing two views of nature, it is important to mention three positions that humans have occupied in relation to it. The first placed human beings at its center, “in a position of observation.” The second situated humans *outside* nature, “in a position of experimentation and mastery.” The third considers humans to be *in* nature, “without a privileged position,” and, as Aldo Leopold wrote, “fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution” (Leopold 97; quoted in Larrère 18). This third vision is the most recent and reinforces our affiliation with nature (Larrère 18-19).

Throughout “Plage,” the most detailed description about the sea has been given via the narrator’s childhood memories. She fulfills the role of the “fellow-voyager,” positioned *in* nature. The narrator continues her childlike view of the ocean with other tales of wonder and awe inspired by the sea’s prowess, such as the following anecdote: “Et l’hiver où s’échoua la baleine, quand nous, l’école primaire, dûmes pendant des jours arroser cette agonie, en pleurant et vomissant sous le joug d’une écologie débutante...” (“Plage” 188-89). Capturing the inspirational qualities of the sea as recounted by the Romantics, the narrator advances these

qualities by showing how different the sea is from humans: “le temps de la plage est un temps granuleux, une autre horloge, un autre rythme que celui des récoltes ou du corps” (189). The narrator’s description of her perception of the sea as a child allows study of the position of humans within nature, rather than outside of or above it. Since, as a child, she was without preconceived notions and did not know “les limites des limites,” the narrator is able to, from her altered perspective, grasp the sea’s otherness, that which distinguishes it from humankind and its relentless proclivity to anthropocentrism, as well as the importance of the role of the sea as it relates to humankind’s occupation of space and subsequent displacement. Although the narrator’s childhood experience of seeing the beached whale was traumatizing, it reinforces the theme of displacement. As the whale died when displaced from the ocean, so too will humans suffer when displaced from their natural environments as ecological degradation continues.

Displacement becomes unavoidable as beaches disappear. The narrator mentions the beach at which her mother spent her childhood: “*la Réserve* ; mal nommée, puisqu’elle n’existe plus” (“Plage” 189). According to the narrator, “La plage était partie sur une vague. Il existe ainsi des plages imprévisibles, tournantes, de côte en côte” (189). Despite their best efforts to dig and bulldoze new beaches, the inhabitants of the coast are unable to recapture their hourglass, the sea that provided the tales sprang from its changing tides. Instead, the sea’s undercurrent emerges as a narrative of human destruction.

The migratory patterns of the human race have taken their toll on the sea and its coastlines. Now it is the sea, witness to the centuries of struggle between humans, cemetery to many of their dead, which swallows and destroys these artificial coastlines. Evoking a traditional sea shanty, the narrator emphasizes the struggle between the sea and human beings: “Tu devras combattre / Tu devras lutter / Si tu veux savoir / Où est la légion / Tu n’auras qu’à la chercher /

Au fond de la mer” (“Plage” 190). It is not only the sailors now who must combat the sea, it is humanity that chooses to be its antagonist. We no longer enjoy “des jours heureux quand nous étions amis,” as Jacques Prévert writes in “Les feuilles mortes.”

The narrator warns against extinction as a result of artificialization by inviting the reader to imagine what may become of the sea and its coastlines. At this point, the reader is more explicitly invited to become a *compagnon-voyageur*: “Imaginez: la plage, calme et plane, étendue sous les ombres des promeneurs” (“Plage” 190). The narrator continues to describe a peaceful day at the beach, when suddenly everything halts, becomes quiet, and the cliff breaks in two. Just as one hears the sound of the cliff hitting the beach, the narrator says, “c’est que la pellicule s’est remise à tourner, aboiements, exclamations, affolements d’oiseaux, rire de ma mère, désordre et cinéma des souvenirs d’enfance” (191).

In the narrator’s imagination, the manipulation of the sea and its beaches reaches its zenith with the fabrication of sand. Among the items needed to make this artificial sand are both natural and synthetic products: water, earth, glass and plastic waste, saliva, pieces of pyramids and UFOs, and even small quantities of Notre-Dame-de-Paris (“Plage” 191). However, the narrator ends her description of fabricated sand with a final ingredient and a question: “et silice évidemment, beaucoup de silice, mais de la silice, qui se soucie?” (191). It may seem that there are more disconcerting objects found in this artificial sand, such as guano and lead, but the narrator focuses on silica.

Silica is “a hard, unreactive, colourless compound which occurs as the mineral quartz and as a principal constituent of sandstone and other rocks” (“Silica”). Silica, while a natural product, speaks to a larger problem: the artificial metamorphosis of a landscape. The narrator points out that, among the other products found in artificial sand, one “obviously” finds silica, but it should

not be obvious to find a natural product in just any place in nature, especially a natural product that is used to fabricate damaging materials, such as glass, abrasives, and cement. Exposure to synthetic silica has been linked to lung diseases and some types of cancer. To be harmful, silica has to be in the form of silicon dioxide or free-silica, which is generally found as quartz (Méndez-Vargas, María Martha et al. 384).

This is a call to inform ourselves, as searching for knowledge, according to Jacques Bril, is an important role for the traveler. As we readers have traveled through this short story, we have become “fellow-voyagers,” since writing constitutes a form of displacement (Laplanche and Pontalis 118). So we return to narrator’s final question: “[M]ais de la silice, qui se soucie ?” (“Plage” 191). Although the narrator does not propose a solution, this question may remain with us long after the reading of “Plage.” We may continue to be “fellow-voyagers” in reality. Thus, a seemingly rhetorical question is a call to action.

The sea and the voyage are also important in *Le Mal de mer*, a story about a French woman who suddenly leaves her husband. She brings her small daughter with her on a five-hour drive during which she crosses the border into Spain. For Maryann De Julio, “Whatever action there is in this story of powerful but unfocused emotion and interrelationships is subordinate to the presence of the sea and its effect on all the characters” (104). This is the case in *Le Mal de mer*, since the sea is the most important character in the novel. Mittlefehldt writes that, “The lexicon of water itself invites clear connections between water and creativity: fluidity, reflectivity, mutability” (137). It may also serve as “a metaphor that embodies both the world being described and the process of trying to hone that description into words” (137). Therefore, the imagery of water, most notably the sea, reflects the evolutionary relationship between humans and nature, one that includes attempts by writers to capture the essence of the sea. The

difficulty of discerning the edges of the ocean paralleled only by the challenge of determining to whom the third-person singular pronouns “il” and “elle” refer throughout the novel, and by a “fluid style and an experimental narrative technique--no paragraph breaks to indicate a change in voice or person, for example” (De Julio 104).

Margaret Cohen writes, “despite the preeminence of maritime transport in making the modern world, literary scholars across the twentieth century passed over its impact with their gazes fixed on land. . . . [Hydrophasia] is part of a pervasive twentieth-century attitude that the photographer and theorist Allan Sekula has called ‘forgetting the sea’ (48). At the turn of the twentieth-first century, however, hydrophasia is starting to ebb” (657-58). This is evident in *Le Mal de mer*, since, one’s gaze is fixed on the sea as the central figure of the novel. *Le Mal de mer* is reminiscent of Baudelaire’s verse in “Plage”: “[H]omme libre toujours tu chériras la mer” (184). “Plage,” for Baudelaire and other poets, the sea is synonymous with freedom. In *Le Mal de mer*, the vagueness of the narration suggests the universal importance of the sea in the lives of humans. It is not individually or culturally specific. Water is reflective of our aspired attachment to nature, as “[o]ur bond with water is more than metaphoric. . . . Our bond with water is literal and organic. We are 75% water. To return to water is to return home” (Mittlefehldt 138).

The sea’s influence is manifested physically and psychologically throughout the novel. Portrayed as limitless, it is not to be spatially confined as humans have done throughout the ages. The sea is a diverse ecosystem regarded with awe by the novel’s characters. The mother’s journey and her husband’s search for her is contrasted with the all-enveloping nature of the ocean, always present.

Like the narrator of “Plage,” the reader perceives the sea in *Le Mal de mer* through a child’s eyes. The beginning of the novel is her first view of the ocean, and it is important that this

first description of the sea be provided by a child, since a child is less apt to impose limitations that personify, objectify, and deify the sea in order to highlight its power and diverse nature:

C'est une bouche, à demi ouverte, qui respire, mais les yeux, le nez, le menton, ne sont plus là. C'est une bouche plus grande que toutes les bouches imaginables, et qui fend l'espace en deux, l'élargissant, si bien qu'il faut faire un arc de cercle avec le corps pour tenter de tout voir. (*Le Mal de mer* 11)

Although the child compares the sea to a human body, it is so large that she must reorient herself in order to view the sea clearly.

The immensity of the sea is thus immediately established: “Il est difficile d'envisager le bord de cette chose, de décider où elle se trouve exactement, à quelle distance” (*Le Mal de mer* 11-12). It is comparable to a deity in that it occupies physical and metaphysical spaces: “Elle se remémore la montée, pour retrouver ce moment (alors que la mer est là devant elle et occupe sa tête)...” (12). The mother remarks that her daughter has the look of certain people, especially children, “ceux qui ont vu la mer” (13). Furthermore, “[e]lle passe la main sur le visage de la petite, rond, imprécis, rendu plus imprécis encore par l'impact de la mer...un flottement imprimé sous la peau: une enfance lâchée, distendue, maritime” (13). The word “imprécis” is especially important in understanding any relationship between the characters of this novel and the sea. At this moment, the mother notes the difference between those who have seen the sea and those who have not, those who confuse the sea with infinity and those who limit it. The characters in this novel, however, are part of the group who have seen the sea and are consequently attached to it.

As in Darrieussecq's other works, the displacement of the characters in this novel reverses the long-held tradition of humans as superior to nature. We are once again reminded of

the importance of a symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment. However, a better understanding of the non-human characteristics of nature, the sea in this case, is necessary for a wholesome relationship between humans and non-humans. As in “Plage,” the literal voyage emphasizes the metaphorical, evolutionary journey that physical displacement initiates.

The mother’s and daughter’s first arrival to the seaside already evokes an attachment to nature:

La mer a tout envahi... L’air se retire à chaque inspiration de la mer; puis revient; avant que l’eau ne gonfle à nouveau, prenant toute la place; si bien que respirer n’est possible qu’à petites goulées, entre deux mouvements énormes de la mer, entre deux secousses du ciel: en hoquetant, joues ruisselantes, un goût d’huître et d’algue dans la bouche. (*Le Mal de mer* 33)

The mother is *in* nature, as the sea is part of her. She observes her surroundings with all of her senses.

After spending the day in an agency, with the intent of hiring a detective to search for his wife, the husband is struck by the vastness of nature wherein his wife may be found: “Il est sidéré par la porosité des frontières, par l’indifférence de l’espace, des routes, par leur continuité; par la largeur des continents, par la massivité de la mer” (*Le Mal de mer* 46). This passage recalls a time before maritime exploration, before humans imposed limitations. Instead, this novel captures the boundless quality of the sea.

After the mother sells her car to a mechanic at a seaside resort, there is a description of the sea from the mechanic’s perspective. He unfolds an atlas:

Sur la double page du planisphère, la mer n’est pas démesurée, mais partout elle cesse et commence. Comment décide-t-on qu’ici est le bord de la mer? Oublie-t-

on les bateaux, les avions? . . . Il s'est entraîné très tôt à voir l'envers du planisphère, c'est une hygiène, presque une ascèse; ça tire sur les nerfs optiques, sur les artères et sur les muscles; les abdominaux se tendent, le sexe se rétracte; il faut oublier les villes, les plaines, les vallées; envisager les golfes comme des avancées, les ports comme des têtes de pont, le ressac comme la fin du monde, et les îles comme des abîmes: alors on voit le bleu, la forme qu'a le bleu. Il ferme l'atlas, s'étire. Il irait dans un endroit où il y a des vagues. (60)

His manner of living is to see the planisphere differently, in such a way that he may deny himself material satisfaction, or artificial pleasure. His attachment to nature is thus specific to the sea. This is perhaps because cities, valleys, and plains, for example, are often delimited or inhabited by people and rendered artificial. Moreover, the spatiality of the sea is contrary to a two-dimensional, partial representation such as that found on an atlas that cannot convey the depth of the seas.

When the mother goes to a rental agency, the agent finds an apartment where one can be “tranquille [et] dominer la mer” (*Le Mal de mer* 54). However, the mother chooses not to dominate the sea. Instead, the view from her apartment further captures the expansiveness of the sea: “La mer a pris toute la place, les côtes se sont écartées, s'écartent encore [et] la pièce devient bleue, avec deux petites calottes aux pôles et des semis de continents” (62). The sea engulfs the protagonist, as it would sea creatures. Her oneness with the sea is heightened by the act of swimming, during which she feels a sense of solidarity with the ocean: “Il faudrait rentrer, mais avec le bruit de la mer, cette épaisseur d'humidité marine, il semble que rien ne puisse arriver, que personne ne soit laissé tout à fait seul ici” (89).

Her little girl takes swimming lesson, and she also has an affinity for the water. For her, “[l]’eau est un grand repos, une main tendue sous le corps. On n’a plus à se garder du sol, à le tenir à distance, à se souvenir des muscles et tenir droite la colonne; on n’a plus à veiller. L’eau ressemble au sommeil” (*Le Mal de mer* 65-66). This recalls the sea’s infinite and sacred nature: “Time is the medium of memory. Water carries time, is time, covers time. . . . In this submersion into [the water], we come into contact with the source of our Being. We also . . . come into contact with the holy--with the source of all life” (Mittlefehldt 141). Humankind’s mortality is therefore contrasted with water’s immortality and a temporality that cannot be measured.

When the detective arrives in the seaside town, he also goes swimming at the beach, and he too has a symbiotic relationship with the sea: “La masse ronde de l’eau se balance, presse doucement son corps; il tient tout seul, appuyé contre l’eau, dans le mouvement délicat de l’eau; il fait partie de la plage, de la mer, et de tout ce qui dans la mer balance” (*Le Mal de mer* 96-97). The detective’s submersion in water calls to mind the diverse qualities of water and the sea: massive yet delicate.

The diversity of oceanic space is emphasized by alternations of temporal and spatial scales, sonic diversions, and the changing atmosphere of the sea. For example, as mother and child watch the sunset, it is important to note the mother’s description of the sea and the space surrounding it. This reminds us that, in terms of temporality, humankind depends on nature. “[L]’horizon se fond dans la mer parce que les yeux brûlés par le couchant ne distinguent plus le ciel de l’eau; ou parce que au zénith et au crépuscule existent, comme on le dit du versant des marées, des moments étales diurne et l’autre nocturne, arasant en alternance les hauteurs ou l’horizon” (*Le Mal de mer* 15). It also affects our sense of space, as, without the sun, the sea and sky combine into a larger expanse of darkness.

The sea is simultaneously clamorous and silent. While sitting on the sand, the mother notes the coexistence of these two aspects of the sea: “Le bruit de la mer monte, comble ces trous de l’espace où ne sonnent plus ni oiseaux ni insectes. Pourtant ce qu’elle entend est comme une exagération du silence, un silence liquide, matériel” (*Le Mal de mer* 29). The description is hyperbolic; the sea is marked by excess. It transcends sonority and becomes palpable.

For Lawrence Buell, “environmental writing and criticism intervenes most powerfully within and against standard conceptions of spatial apportionment [. . .] by challenging assumptions about border and scale” (76). Darrieussecq resists such standard characterizations of the sea by using vertical rather than horizontal metaphors to describe it; then, as the mother is walking on the beach at night: “La mer est une paroi verticale, à travers laquelle il suffirait de passer; l’eau glisserait du nez aux joues, de la poitrine au dos, du ventre aux hanches puis aux reins, et se refermerait: on entrerait dans la mer comme on passe un rideau” (*Le Mal de mer* 31). Rather than describing the line formed by the horizon, there is a view made possible by darkness.

Furthermore, the sea takes on a circular shape, as the girl recalls her swim instructor, Patrick, and his stories of Australia, his home country, where there is the “Grand Siphon, qui tournoie au centre de la mer lors du renversement de la planète, dans un sens, ou dans l’autre, selon qu’on est au Nord ou au Sud” (*Le Mal de mer* 82). However, this center does not always exist, as the moon and gravity take effect: “[C]’est la Lune qui chasse l’eau, bandant les forces de gravité, écrasant l’océan et son centre en levant la marée” (81). Tides capture the diversity of the seas, as they can be “rondes, hautes et franches” ou “[des] vagues en diagonale” and can alter according to the weather (123-24). Nature is unpredictable: “La planète a peut-être dévié de son axe, inclinant vers le soleil sa tête bleue; le magma s’est déplacé, décentrant la gravité et rompant l’équilibre des rotations” (112).

But the equilibrium to be sought is that between humans and nature. The mother in *Le Mal de mer* develops an attachment to nature so profound that she abandons her daughter in search of other natural landscapes: “À Sydney, elle trouvera un petit travail, ensuite elle voyagera, le désert, les sentinelles de pierre rouge, la forêt vierge, les lagons bleus, les ranchs si vastes qu’il faut plusieurs semaines pour en faire le tour à cheval” (*Le Mal de mer* 135). There is, however,—as often in the work of Marie Darrieussecq—a reminder that nature “is not a domain cut off from human practice. . . . Rather, we now understand nature as an environment, a *socio-ecosystem* that is both natural and a theater of human action--and, as we are now discovering, a theater where the vast forces of nature not only rule human history but are profoundly shaped by it as well” (Cohen 658).

In the mother’s new location, “[l]e taux de cancers de la peau est le plus élevé du monde parmi la population blanche; la couche d’ozone se perce” (*Le Mal de mer* 135-36). Like “Plage,” this novel ends with a reminder that, absent a symbiotic relationship between nature and humans, nature will disappear after artificialization (Larrère 10). This is embodied by fabricated space in which the mother finds herself at the end of the novel: the airport. The final sentence, “L’embarquement a commencé,” is a call to the reader to follow suit, to be a fellow-voyager. As the mother embarks on a plane for her voyage, we too must begin a journey that leads to an attachment to nature (138).

As in *Le Pays*, the narrator protagonist of “Connaissance des singes” is an author. Struggling with writer’s block due to a strained relationship with her daughter, she decides on a change of scenery: “Il aurait fallu bouger, changer d’atmosphère, de territoire. Commencer ma pièce de théâtre ailleurs, à nu, à vide. Respirer un autre air, entendre un autre silence” (“Connaissance des singes” 40).

The protagonist proposes her ideal location for writing: Northern Iceland, six hours by jeep from Reykjavik, where her friends have a chalet (“Connaissance des singes” 40). It is near the Arctic Circle, and she describes a phenomenon that occurs there: “Le soleil fait le diablo sur l’horizon. Il reste en équilibre. Il ne cède pas. Il remonte, comme par un énorme effort de volonté. Je pourrais assister à ce phénomène nuit après nuit, jour après jour, je crois que je serais toujours aussi dépaycée” (41).

According to the Larousse Dictionary, to be “dépaycé” is to feel disorientation or an interruption in one’s routine due to different surroundings, climate, or habits. Although there is no direct English translation, the word “displaced” captures some of the meaning of the French adjective. The dictionary associates the effect of being “dépaycé” with upsetting or disturbing someone. However, the narrator provides a positive image of “dépaycement,” or displacement, one that is associated with creativity. Once again, physical displacement reflects the creative act of writing in Darrieussecq’s work. To reiterate Jacques Bril’s theory of migration, it is evident that “Connaissance des singes” also exposes our unconfessed and complex relationship with the environment, but in this case, that environment includes a rural landscape as well as a non-human, Marcel, her mother’s pet chimpanzee. Throughout the story, displacement as a means of reorientation rather than disorientation is accentuated as tantamount to progress.

A sense of incongruity normally accompanies “dépaycement.” Travel, as in *Le Mal de mer*, is central to “Connaissance des singes.” However, the protagonist in this story does not arrive at her preferred location. Instead of going to Iceland, she agrees to go to Rogny, where her mother lives, in order to babysit Marcel while her mother leaves for a trip to China. Her mother’s absence contrasts with her presence in the company of the chimpanzee.

As writing is itself a displacement, the narrator remarks on her previous ability to write:

Passer de la phrase dans ma tête à la phrase sur le papier ne m'a jamais posé problème. Un simple changement de support, un déplacement. Mais voilà, ça ne fonctionnait plus. [...] Je ne retrouvais plus cette absence à moi-même qui est comme une chambre d'échos, où le monde se met à bruire pour s'écrire à travers moi. ("Connaissance des singes" 41-42)

Instead, she needs a greater displacement in order to create, a place in which she can remove herself from her usual surroundings in order to experience a psychological displacement as well.

Her mother's trip to China includes a cruise on the Yangtze River, or the "Blue River." Curiously enough, her mother's home is situated on a canal ("Connaissance des singes" 44). Once again, water plays an important role in Darrieussecq's work. The canal serves as a backdrop for the narrator's reclaimed creative progress. Meanwhile, her mother stresses the importance of going on her journey to China: "C'est maintenant qu'il faut y aller . . . avant qu'ils ne noient tout avec leurs nouveaux barrages. Des vestiges inestimables. Des milliers d'années qui vont disparaître sous les eaux. À l'écouter, il n'y avait rien de plus urgent à faire, pour tout être humain sur la planète" (42). This passage calls attention to the effects of human activity as it relates to nature and ecological degradation.²³

This passage, along with the motif of travel, call attention to the current effects of travel and migration:

Easy travel and widespread migration contribute to an intermingling of races and cultures in all the industrialized countries and in many of the developing nations; and instant communication connects all parts of the planet. More than ever before,

²³ The Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River is the largest hydro-electric power station in the world. In recent years, the river has suffered from industrial pollution, agricultural run-off, siltation, and loss of wetland and lakes, which exacerbates seasonal flooding.

cooperation among the planet's diverse inhabitants is necessary if the human race is to survive through the next few centuries. (Craige 60)

The mother's trip to China calls attention to global awareness of ecological crises. Travelers gain knowledge of other landscapes and universal reactions to ecological problems, to which they may more intelligently propose solutions. This is comparable to the metaphysical journey of the reader of ecologically pertinent literature, which, in spite of its lack of concrete solutions, may inform the reader about human activity as it relates to the environment.

Although the narrator chooses an environment seemingly free of ecological degradation, humankind's mistreatment and lack of comprehension of nature is ever-present, as the narrator must watch after Marcel, a non-human living in a human environment. While speaking with her mother, she insists on going to Iceland, she chooses finally to go to Rogny²⁴ instead. In this short story, Rogny represents wilderness. The narrator leaves the city of Paris, where she can no longer write. She escapes to "a place for the reinvigoration of those tired of the moral and material pollution of the city," a place unlike the towns along the Yangtze River, for example (Garrard 59). As Garrard points out, "[w]ilderness has an almost sacramental value: it holds out the promise of a renewed, authentic relation of humanity and the earth" (59). In other words, it holds the promise of "[t]he ideal of ethical holists [of a] world without absolutes, a world of continuous change" (Craige 114).

In Rogny, the narrator says, "Moi, j'avais envie de m'étendre dans l'herbe" ("Connaissance des singes" 51). Seeking an attachment to nature, she situates herself in this "place of freedom" where she can more closely observe nature and its inhabitants (Garrard 70). "Le ciel était bleu, les lilas se balançaient dans le vent doux, les abeilles faisaient leur travail d'abeilles" ("Connaissance des singes" 51). This short story requires an ecocritical reading

²⁴ Rogny is a commune in the Aisne department in Picardy in northern France.

because it supports “the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (Glotfelty 1).

The narrator’s connection to the physical world is also supported by the presence of Marcel. It emphasizes the idea presented by Dominique Lestel and Hollis Taylor that “[h]umans form their self-representation not *in opposition* to animals, as all Western histories of human evolution recount, but *with* them and *through* them” (183). Therefore, to be more fully immersed in the natural world, it is imperative that humans form a co-existence with non-humans. The distinction between nature and culture in this short story serves to provide a solution to their traditional opposition, which is that the lines between nature and culture should be permeable. The creative essence of the short story is important because, in the words of Michel Serres, ecoliterature allows the reader to enter into a natural contract between nature and humans, which may allow him or her to envision a world without borders, a world where humans and non-humans are mutually accepted.

A world without borders recalls the relationship between space and place. For Edward S. Casey, “A landscape seems to exceed the usual parameters of place by continuing without apparent end; nothing contains it, while it contains everything, including discrete places, in its enviroing embrace” (25). In terms of writing, a literary landscape exceeds the parameters of reality limitlessly and acts as a space of possibilities, rather than a culturally-limited place. Since there is a collective need for humans to develop an affinity for nature, the personal, psychological responses of Darrieussecq’s characters to physical displacement recall the concept of “placescapes,” in which “body and landscape collude, [...] especially those that human beings experience whenever they venture out beyond the narrow confines of their familiar domiciles and neighborhoods” (Casey 25). Darrieussecq favors broad landscapes, such as the countryside

and sea, and narratives that address the unfamiliar, such as a talking chimpanzee, in order to question the nature-culture dichotomy and the consequences of not incorporating a holistic view and of the environment and its inhabitants.

CHAPTER 3

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISPLACEMENT

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the various landscapes in Darrieussecq's works in order to establish the physical displacement of her protagonists. Regarding the idea of place, there is a psychological dimension that must not be overlooked, since place attachment encompasses a physical and psychological presence in a specific space. Place attachment means that, for the an individual, "[w]hat matters most is the experience of *being* in that place, and more particularly, *becoming part of the place*" (Casey, *Getting Back Into Place* 33). This is certainly the case for the characters in Marie Darrieussecq's works. Her protagonists are alienated from artificial landscapes, in which they do not experience a sense of well-being. They are therefore displaced physically and psychologically. In this case, the study of Darrieussecq's literary landscapes embody the concept that a "[l]andscape itself, usually a most accommodating presence, can alienate us" (34). Normally, a landscape refers to the visible features of one's surroundings, but the concept of place and one's relationship to landscapes play a more important role in the modern era because of modernization and globalization. The use of the term *place* is more common to refer to the study of identity as it relates to the reconsideration of landscapes, from which some have even been forcibly displaced due to ecological crises.

Recently, critics and writers have attributed more significance to the function of literature in the study of place. Bertrand Westphal, for example, says, "Car si l'écriture se coule dans le temps, elle s'étale aussi sur l'espace de la page" (38). Modern ecological literature necessitates a

study of physical and psychological interaction with place. How do the “activities of our minds” change in relation to place?

In their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Laplanche and Pontalis develop a definition of psychological displacement, which has “une fonction défensive évidente: dans une phobie par exemple, le déplacement sur l’objet phobique permet d’objectiver, de localiser, de circonscrire l’angoisse” (119). In order to cope with the anguish or negative sentiments that come from the reality of ecological degradation, the protagonists in Darrieussecq’s works shift their focus to nature. They form a place-attachment to natural landscapes.

This definition of displacement may be applied to Darrieussecq’s works since her use of language as a means to describe our world, our surroundings and all its paradoxes in opposition to a reductionist duality (human and non-human) provide examples of writing as a process acting on the natural world. In an interview, Darrieussecq stressed the need for new literary forms to help us imagine our rapidly changing world: “Je cherche à inventer de nouvelles formes, à écrire de nouvelles phrases, parce que c’est le seul moyen de rendre compte du monde moderne” (Interview by Becky Miller and Martha Holmes; Posthumus 11-12). In an ever-changing world, it is important that writing evolve as well. Through the medium of fiction, she is able to create new realities, an important aspect of literature as a model of ecological behavior: “La prétendue crise environnementale ne demande pas l’invention de solutions, mais la recréation des choses elles-mêmes [...] (Everden; quoted in Blanc, Pughe, and Chartier 17-18). She could even be called an ecopoet, for whom, “[l]e concept d’un travail écologique de l’écriture littéraire—qui, comme le travail freudien du rêve, traduirait en langage poétique ce qui ne peut pas être dit dans d’autres formes de discours—est au cœur de l’*éco-poétique*” (18). Her works are a call to examine place as it relates to nature and its changing definition due to changing landscapes.

Through the use of various narrative techniques, Darrieussecq gives place, or nature, a new face in order to redefine humans, non-humans, and their environments.

Another term for place-attachment is nature bonding, which “focuses on individual emotional connections to nature” (Raymond, Brown, and Weber 424). In the previous chapter, I discussed the differences between space and place as defined by Edward S. Casey. It is necessary to recall that Aristotle emphasized the importance of taking place into account while studying the physical world (Aristotle; quoted in Casey, *The Fate of Place* 51). The power of a place also determines one’s position in the world socially and personally. Place-attachment is, therefore, not only personal, it is a collective determination of one’s environment. Nature is a universal space to which the individuals in Darrieussecq’s works bond.

Psychological displacement is thus equally important as physical displacement, since the role of the natural environment and its influence on “les sentiments, les comportements, les manières de penser, de sentir et d’agir” (Lambin 46) is a topic of interest for psychologists. In Darrieussecq’s works, a sense of prosperity indicates the protagonists’ connectedness to nature and its influence on them. This is important because well-being, “can have no form, expression or enhancement without consideration of place” (Atkinson, Fuller, and Painter 3). There is a collective, human need to have a sense of happiness, or comfort, as it relates to one’s place:

The processes of well- being or becoming, whether of enjoying a balance of positive over negative effects, of fulfilling potential and expressing autonomy or of mobilizing a range of material, social and psychological resources, are essentially and necessarily emergent in place. (Atkinson, Fuller, and Painter 3)

Darrieussecq’s protagonists face a lack of equilibrium in urban (artificial) spaces. They look to natural environments for a sense of happiness, or comfort.

In *Truismes*, the environmental discrepancies between the city and country instigate the psychological displacement of the narrator. Her displacement from a harmful, dystopic environment to one that is beneficial and expansive delimits her anguish and improves her existence. As opposed to Darrieussecq's other works, dreams and sleep are essential elements of this narrator's transformation from woman to sow. Displacement was particularly important in Freud's explanation of dreams. "En effet la comparaison entre le contenu manifeste et les pensées latentes du rêve fait apparaître une différence de centrage" (Laplanche and Pontalis 118). Descriptions of dreaming and sleeping provide clues as to her "pensées latentes" related to a progressive place-attachment to nature due to a sense of well-being she discovers there.

The narrator's discomfort at Aqualand provides a stark contrast to her sense of relief when she is in a natural setting or dreaming of one. The narrator says Aqualand is "un endroit de détente mais il faut tout de même se méfier" (*Truismes* 15). It is not possible for her to feel comfortable in a place where "il y a toujours des messieurs pour attendre devant les portes côté femmes" (14). It is a predatory zone, where men hunt women. It is no coincidence that Honoré, the narrator's abusive boyfriend, is introduced in this scene, during which her description of him directly follows Honoré's anecdote about Aqualand's tendency to put sharks in the pools during parties (16). "Aqualand is a place where bodies are on display, wet bathing suits are exhibited, and muscles are paraded" (Lantelme 529). In other words, it represents a preoccupation with physical, and often artificial, beauty and the objectification of women.

The narrator's transformation brings her closer to nature and supports the idea that "in patriarchal thought, women are believed to be closer to nature than men" (King 18). Set apart and often categorized as non-human, animal representation in *Truismes* is used to reflect "women's difficulty in conveying positive values of femininity," since their femininity is only

seen negatively in a misogynistic society (Desblache 384). However, it is also a means of empowerment. Writing, the act of conveying one's thoughts in a creative manner, displays the intellectual, emotional, and psychological potential of women.

Honoré, like the other men in this misogynistic society, does not value the psychological well-being of the narrator. His attraction to her is solely based upon her physical attributes, including “une mine [...] resplendissante” (*Truismes* 18). In addition to stressing the subjugation of the protagonist, the vocabulary in this part of the passage shows the hypocritical, paradoxical nature of men: “Honoré voulait que j’arrête de travailler, il se méfiait, il devait se douter de quelque chose. A côté de ça il était assez fier de moi, paradoxalement” (28). Although Honoré is proud of her job at the perfumery, it seems that he will still try to subjugate her by keeping her from her work. “Women’s suffering seems so normal and so pervasive that it is scarcely noticed. These restrictions, degradations, and acts of violence are so embedded in our societies that they appear natural, but they are not natural” (Kelly 114). The details of the narrator’s abuse by Honoré and other men reinforce the exceptional cruelty of this conservative society.

She is objectified in her work as a prostitute at a perfumery that serves as a front for the business’s illegal, sexual activities, but her transformation emphasizes her objectification and her clients’ resulting treatment of her: “Ils ne se rendaient compte de rien, trop occupés d’eux-mêmes et de leur plaisir” (*Truismes* 27). She is only the object of their desire. Darrieussecq’s choice of a first-person narrator is therefore clear; although naïve, the narrator provides insight about her well-being as it relates to nature versus the corrupt urban environment in which she resides throughout most of the novel. She exposes the pervasiveness of male domination and its effects on individuals and the society as a whole.

The passage during which the narrator compares her sleep patterns to those of other citizens accentuates the contrast between artificiality and nature and supports the idea that the narrator finds repose in nature. She awakens easily when she hears the rooster crow and eats her lunch in the square. In the park, she has “une fringale terrible; l’air, les oiseaux, [...] ce qui restait de la nature ça [lui] faisait tout à coup quelque chose” (*Truismes* 20). Her hunger is both physical and psychological. The narrator desires nature (22). “On an environmental level, nature bonding is an implicit or explicit connection to some part of the non-human environment, based on history, emotional response or cognitive representation” (Raymond, Brown, and Weber 426). She has a literal hunger for “des légumes frais à un prix abordable, [...] des pommes, but her emotional response to a few moments of respite in the park is happiness, “le bonheur de [sa] vie” (*Truismes* 22). Environmental behaviorists have studied happiness and connectedness with respect to nature relatedness, finding that positive emotional responses resulted from mental connectedness to nature²⁵ (Zelenski and Nisbet 4). In other words, personality traits as well as mental health are affected by contact with nature.

The biophilia hypothesis, first defined by Edward O. Wilson, argues that humans have an “emotional affiliation” for nature and other living organisms that is innate (quoted in Kellert and Wilson 31). As explained in the previous chapter, there is an opposition between nature as an artifact and nature as a process. Nature perceived as an artifact obstructs biophilia, since “[t]he human need for an aesthetic experience of nature has been suggested by the apparent inadequacy of artificial or human-made substitutes when people are exposed to them” (Kellert and Wilson 49). The narrator’s environment is artificial and threatening, explaining why she seeks refuge. Her temporarily unthreatening natural setting, to which she responds positively, is the park.

²⁵ Mental state is generally a literary or legal term, and is only used in psychiatry or psychology as the mental state examination, where it refers to the condition of someone's mind.

The narrator goes to the park one evening after leaving her apartment. There, she experiences “un intense repos dans le corps” (*Truismes* 69). Her physical displacement in this small natural landscape effects a psychologically beneficial displacement. As in a dream, figures in the park are vague: “J’ai vu l’ombre de quelqu’un qui passait et j’ai réussi à me redresser un peu, à faire comme si je cherchais quelque chose” (69). This shadow, and others who merely pass by this space, contrast with the narrator’s sense of belonging. They threaten her comfortable space, where she says, “[J]e sentais mieux là où j’étais” (70). She is happily eating dirt and roots but attempts to hide in case the shadows notice her unusual behavior.

Another evening in the park refers to the narrator’s dreams as well as those of animals surrounding her:

J’entendais, en haut des arbres, les plumes des moineaux se froisser dans leur sommeil précoce, [...] et je sentais leurs rêves glisser sur ma peau avec les derniers rayons du couchant. Ça faisait des rêves d’oiseaux partout dans l’ombre tiède des arbres; et des rêves de pipistrelles partout dans le ciel, parce que les pipistrelles rêvent même éveillées. Ça m’émouvait tous ces rêves. (*Truismes* 80)

These dreams touch the narrator because she finds solidarity with the non-human environment of birds and bats. “An environmental identity can be similar to another collective identity [...] in providing us with a sense of connection, of being part of a larger whole, and with a recognition of similarity between ourselves and others” (Clayton and Opotow 46). After initially feeling alone in the park, she realizes that “[i]l n’y avait plus rien qui [la] retenait dans la ville avec les gens” (*Truismes* 81). She is no longer alone as she dreams of ferns and wet earth. She says, “J’étais bien” (81). Her connection to this natural environment ameliorates her perception and psychological health.

When she returns once again to the urban environment, her transformation differentiates her from the rest of the population. She is threatened by their disgust. After she approaches a woman and her child, a policeman confronts the narrator, saying, “*C’est monstrueux!*” (*Truismes* 85). After escaping to the sewer, she thinks of the countryside: “[J]e sentais que j’y serais mieux” (86). Aware of her unfortunate existence in the urban environment, she expresses her sadness upon her arrival at a hotel in the suburbs: “J’ai pleuré un peu, sous la douche” (87). Sleep is also central to this passage as evidence of the narrator’s discomfort in the non-natural landscape: “Je m’efforçais de retrouver figure humaine, je dormais beaucoup, je me coiffais” (88). She forces herself to return to her human state and, in order to do so, must sleep a lot. In this case, sleep is a coping mechanism. Her behavior suggests a depressive state associated with her human nature.

When she escapes the hotel and enters the sewer again, she encounters piranhas, pets that citizens have discarded after growing tired of them:

Quand j’ai vu les piranhas et que j’ai senti les premières morsures, ça a fait comme une onde de terreur en moi, je n’ai plus du tout contrôlé ce que je faisais et j’ai fui vers le dehors. Je ne savais pas que je tenais encore à ce point à la vie. Ça m’a comme qui dirait réveillée. Mes neurones se sont remis en place. A l’extérieur, à l’air, j’ai réussi à me calmer, à retrouver quelque peu mes esprits.

(*Truismes* 92)

Although jarring, this encounter with nature reminds the narrator of her desire to live. She is awake again and conscious of nature’s effect on her psyche. “Exposure to a view of a natural environment [...] or access to a nearby natural setting such as a park or garden, has been shown to strengthen cognitive awareness, memory, and general well-being and to decrease depression, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, and stress” (Clayton and Opotow 48). The narrator’s mention of

her neurons, or nerve cells that respond to light, touch, sound, and all other stimuli, supports the psychological stimulation that results from her displacement to nature.

There is an overall lack of appreciation for psychiatry and psychological well-being in this corrupt society which Edgar's campaign illustrates with the elimination of all psychiatrists: "Il n'y avait plus aucun *psychiatre* parce qu'un jour les gendarmes les avaient tous embarqués et même certains de leurs corps pourrissaient dans la cour, on avait entendu des coups de feu" (*Truismes* 96). There is no need for psychiatrists in Edgar's society, since he views the narrator as "the Other," or non-human, as an object, as "an intentional nullity, never itself a reciprocal knower or active in disclosing knowledge" (Plumwood 45). However, through the first-person narrative of *Truismes*, the reader is aware of the narrator's plight. She discloses knowledge of the society's misdeeds through her narrative.

The narrator's time with Yvan, her werewolf boyfriend, marks the most beautiful period in her life (*Truismes* 121). Darrieussecq's choice of the word "belle" to describe this moment in the narrator's life has a double meaning. Although "belle" means beautiful, it is also slang for escape. The narrator "se fait la belle," or escapes the corrupt society during her time with Yvan.

The narrator is content to live as a sow: "De toute façon, maintenant, qu'est-ce que ça peut bien me faire d'être un cochon? Je suis très bien comme ça, je ne vois plus personne sinon quelques congénères et à l'idée de retourner à la ville je suis fatiguée d'avance" (*Truismes* 122). She is content to be with "the Others," those cast away from society. However, during her time with Yvan, she has not yet gained control over her two states of being and oscillates frequently between them. Yvan accepts this: "Il disait que c'était formidable d'avoir deux modes d'être, deux femelles pour le prix d'une en quelque sorte, qu'est-ce qu'on rigolait" because, like the narrator, Yvan also vacillates between human and animal states of being (122).

She and Yvan are in tune with celestial bodies, with the moon and stars:

A l'aube, pendant que toute la ville dormait encore, nous étions réveillés par le croisement chaud et froid du soleil et de la Lune, et par le souffle des étoiles qui plongent de l'autre côté du monde [...], et puis dans la journée on faisait plusieurs siestes, heureux comme des bêtes. (*Truismes* 125-26)

This passage necessitates an analysis of the psychological aspects of humans' relationship with the moon, the subject of literature, art, mythology, etc. Lunar phases, the observational changes to the shape of the moon, change as the moon orbits the Earth. These cyclical changes have led some to believe that there is a correlation between stages of the lunar cycle and human and animal behavior. For example, "[t]he moon has been associated with mental disorder since antiquity, as reflected by the word 'lunacy' itself, derived from Luna, the Roman goddess of the moon" (Raison, Klein, and Steckler 99). The English jurist Lord Blackstone differentiated between two types of insanity: "the state of 'non compos mentis' as one in which a person 'has had an understanding, but by disease, grief, or other accident, has lost the use of reason,'" and "the condition of a being a lunatic [who] has lucid intervals, sometimes enjoying his senses, and sometimes not, and that frequently depending upon the changes of the moon'" (Raison, Klein, and Steckler 104). Although Yvan has a particular relationship with the moon as it relates to his transformation, both he and the narrator fit Blackstone's definition of lunacy. Their lucid intervals, however, occur as a result of an affinity with nature.

Yvan feeds on humans, and the narrator helps him by ordering pizza. When the deliverymen arrive, she devours the pizza while Yvan devours the men. When the police discover their scam, there is a search for the two criminals. Regarding the search, the narrator questions the rationality of her fellow citizens:

Les enquêteurs ont perdu beaucoup de temps à chercher l'arme du crime, eux ne pouvaient pas croire à une bête, évidemment, ça fait longtemps qu'il n'y a plus de bêtes sauvages alors en plein Paris, vous imaginez. C'est la *rationalité* qui perd les hommes, c'est moi qui vous le dis. (*Truismes* 126)

The narrator's rationality is not put into question. Rather, it is the citizens of Paris who are irrational. "Rationality consists in the appropriate use of reason to resolve choices in the best possible way. To behave rationally is to make use of one's intelligence to figure out the best thing to do in the circumstances" (Rescher 1). In the case of *Truismes*, the city's political and ecological degradation maintains the people's irrationality, since "[r]ationality is not *just* a matter of thought, but of action as well" (Rescher 3). Although Edgar takes action, he does so in an irrational way, since he does not figure out the best thing to do in the dire circumstances. "To preserve the natural world and its diversity is [. . .] in the profound interest of individuals of humanity" (Lambin 160). However, Edgar and his followers do not support this ideal.

The campaign fails to take into account that, as Eric Lambin contends, "[notre] bonheur dépend étroitement de l'environnement naturel" (21). This ecologist insists on the importance of three components of well-being: "the subjective perception of a happy existence, health, and security" (9). As Darrieussecq's narrator has dreamt of nature to improve her own welfare, she creates dream sequences of nature to calm Yvan during a particularly painful transition, when she sees the pain in his eyes as he tries to resist his instinctual behavior as a wolf:

Je lui ai parlé de la steppe, de la neige d'été sur la taïga, des forêts gauloises, du Gévaudan, des collines basques, des bergeries cévenoles, de la lande écossaise, et de la pluie, du vent. Je lui ai fait la longue liste de tous ses frères morts, le nom de chaque horde. Je lui ai parlé des derniers loups, ceux qui vivent cachés dans les

ruines du Bronx et que personne n'ose approcher. Je lui ai parlé des rêves des enfants, des cauchemars des hommes, je lui ai parlé de la Terre. Je ne savais pas d'où je sortais tout ça, ça me venait, c'était des choses que je découvrais très au fond de moi, et je trouvais les mots même les plus difficiles, même les plus inconnus. (*Truismes* 128-29)

Rather than focus on one particular aspect of nature, the narrator provides an all-encompassing view of the environment. She also makes the connection between nature and dreams. Following the holistic paradigm, “a model of interaction and connectedness [that] replaces that of opposition, a concept of network [that] replaces that of vertical hierarchy,” the narrator brings together humans and nature because “[i]n dreams, [. . .] things that don't seem to belong together are in fact found together” (Foulkes 28). This passage also supports one of the nine perspectives of nature defined by Lambin: “Dans toutes les cultures, la nature occupe une place centrale dans l'expression artistique” (Lambin 43). The narrator's efforts to comfort Yvan resemble a hymn, one in which she lauds nature's genealogy.

The narrator conveys the importance and reciprocity of this moment with Yvan. While helping him, she discovers this affinity for nature within herself:

Je ne savais pas d'où je sortais tout ça, ça me venait, c'était des choses que je découvrais très au fond de moi [...] C'est pour ça que j'écris maintenant, c'est parce que je me souviens de tout ce qu'Yvan m'a donné ce soir-là, et de tout ce que j'ai donné à Yvan. Yvan a gémi doucement et s'est roulé en boule et il s'est à moitié endormi. Je voyais les rêves passer sous ses paupières soyeuses. (*Truismes* 129)

Her awareness of her own nature and affiliation with the environment supports the idea that “[t]he symbolic experience of nature reflects the human use of nature as a means of facilitating communication and thought” (Lévi-Strauss and Shepard; quoted in Kellert and Wilson 51). Thus far, the narrator has not properly actualized her rapport with nature. When the SPA captures her and Yvan, she is put in a cage at the zoo: “Je me suis couchée et j’ai attendu la mort” (*Truismes* 137). Her well-being is at stake. A group of veterinarians administer medication, but they believe she is dead and place her in a refrigerated truck: “C’était peut-être d’avoir touché le fond” (137). The cold awakens her, and she returns to her human state.

When the narrator decides to flee to the countryside where her mother lives, she chooses to be cautious and ride in a freight car for animals: “Avec les vaches, je me suis sentie un peu mieux. J’ai bu du lait. Je me suis laissée aller et j’ai beaucoup dormi, quand le train est arrivé à destination, j’oscillais entre mes deux états” (*Truismes* 138). Her oscillation is illustrated by her solidarity with her fellow animals as a sow, and sleep as an effect of letting herself transition. It also precedes the dream state, her approach to nature. “Dreaming has been described as the closest most of us ever come to symbolically recreating ‘raw sensory experience’” (Foulkes 159). The narrator’s neurological acquaintance with nature occurs upon a walk in the woods near her mother’s home:

Je me suis approchée des arbres. C’était la première fois que je voyais des arbres aussi hauts, et qui sentaient si bon. [. . .] J’ai fouillé, j’ai creusé, cette odeur c’était comme si la planète entraînait tout entière dans mon corps, ça faisait des saisons en moi, des envols d’oies sauvages, des perce-neige, des fruits, du vent du sud. Il y avait toutes les strates de toutes les saisons dans les couches d’humus, ça se précisait, ça remontait vers quelque chose. (*Truismes* 139)

Not only is this a tactile experience, it is also psychological. Nature affects her individual consciousness: “[P]endant un moment indéfini j’ai perdu ma mémoire” (*Truismes* 139). Like a dream, nature is part of her consciousness and being. “[Dreaming] is a form of conscious recollection in which bits and pieces from various memory ‘files’ seem to have caught up together, although they pose, in the dream, as fitting together naturally in some unified impression” (Foulkes 28). Her presence in nature is a process of dreaming, as she absorbs, physically and psychologically, the many details of her surroundings:

La terre chauffée s’est mise à fumer autour de moi, je me suis allongée, j’ai posé mon museau sur mes pattes. Les mottes se sont éboulées sur mon dos et je suis restée là très longtemps. Le soleil de l’aube m’a caressé le groin. J’ai humé le passage de la Lune qui tombe de l’autre côté de la Terre, ça a fait du vent dans la nuit et comme une odeur de sable froid. (*Truismes* 140)

Gretchen T. Legler lists certain “emancipatory strategies” that contemporary women writers use “in their effort to reimagine nature and human relationships with the natural world” (227). The first is the “[r]emything’ [of] nature as a speaking, ‘bodied’ subject” (227). The second is the “[e]rasing or blurring of boundaries between inner (emotional, psychological, personal) and outer (geographic) landscapes, or the erasing or blurring of self-other (human/nonhuman, I/Thou) distinctions” (227). Darrieussecq employs these strategies in this passage. Because the narrator is a sow in this passage, signified by her muzzle and hooves, she embodies nature as a speaking subject. As she is connected to nature, there is a blurring of self-other.

In this passage, the narrator mentions the sun and the moon, incorporating traditionally juxtaposed temporality. Humans have designated the sun’s reign as daytime, while the moon

rules over nighttime, but this passage highlights the symbiotic condition of nature of seemingly contrasting aspects harmonizing. She has found an equilibrium with nature: “Dans tout mon corps j’ai viré à nouveau avec le tournoiement de la planète, j’ai respiré avec le croisement des vents, mon cœur a battu avec la masse des marées contre les rivages, et mon sang a coulé avec le poids des neiges” (*Truismes* 140-41). There is continuity between her and nature. Her body’s rhythm follows nature’s rhythm.

Her physical symbiosis with nature emphasizes a psychological one as well, as she gains an understanding of nature:

La connaissance des arbres, des parfums, des humus, des mousses et des fougères, a fait jouer mes muscles. Dans mes artères j’ai senti battre l’appel des autres animaux, l’affrontement et l’accouplement, le parfum désirable de ma race en rut. L’envie de la vie faisait des vagues sous ma peau, ça me venait de partout, comme des galops de sangliers dans mon cerveau, des éclats de foudre dans mes muscles, ça me venait du fond du vent, du plus ancien des races continuées. Je sentais jusqu’au profond de mes veines la détresse des dinosaures, l’acharnement des cœlacanthes, ça me poussait en avant de les savoir vivants ces gros poisons, je ne sais pas comment expliquer ça aujourd’hui et même je ne sais plus comment je sais tout ça. (*Truismes* 141)

The fact that she is unaware of how she arrived at her newfound familiarity with nature and its inhabitants concurs with the definition of displacement as an unconscious defense mechanism. In nature, she has found her place because “[p]lace is what takes place between body and landscape” (Casey, *Getting Back Into Place* 29). She is *in* nature and *becomes part of nature*. Implacement “is that which informs a place in concert with other human beings, through one’s

bodily agency, within the embrace of a landscape” (Casey, *Getting Back Into Place* 33). In this case, she is in concert with all of nature, not just other human beings.

In the end, the narrator chooses to alternate between her human and animal states, since nature has given her a newfound strength and sense of contentment:

Je ne suis pas mécontente de mon sort. La nourriture est bonne, la clairière confortable, les marcassins m’amusent. Je me laisse souvent aller. Rien n’est meilleur que la terre chaude autour de soi quand on s’éveille le matin, l’odeur de son propre corps mélangée à l’odeur de l’humus, les premières bouchées que l’on prend sans même se lever, glands, châtaignes, tout ce qui a roulé dans la bauge sous les coups de patte des rêves. J’écris dès que la sève retombe un peu en moi. L’envie me vient quand la Lune monte, sous sa lumière froide je relis mon cahier. C’est à la ferme que je l’ai volé. J’essaie de faire comme me l’avait montré Yvan, mais à rebrousse-poil de ses propres méthodes: moi c’est pour retrouver ma cambrure d’humain que je tends mon cou vers la Lune. (*Truismes* 149)

Unlike Yvan, who metamorphosed into a wolf at the sight of the moon, the narrator cranes her neck toward the moon to return to her human state. Thus even metamorphosis need not be reduced to one definition.

The narrator’s movement between her states of being is also indicative of her newfound place in nature, since “[t]o be in a place is to be somewhere in which movement in the local landscape and thus journeying in that landscape becomes possible. [. . .] Between places and journeys there is a relationship of mutual implication” (Casey, *Getting Back Into Place* 289). It is not just a physical movement, since she has also undergone a shift in consciousness. A psychological journey follows a physical one.

The physical journey in *Le Pays* also brings about a psychological shift in the narrator, Marie Rivière. Her transformation is not as radical as the one we have just seen—from woman to sow—but there is still a subtle change in consciousness illustrated by a shifting narrator. The use of the “je déchiré” is a formal method that Darrieussecq employs in *Le Pays* to reinforce the psychological displacement of human beings and the resulting new reality. For Rimbaud, “Le moi du poète devient *un autre*, un non-moi par une projection au niveau de la psyché collective, en agrandissant son être à l’échelle du cosmos et de l’humanité, en puisant son inspiration dans le réceptacle de ‘l’âme universelle’” (106). This implies another conception of the subject. In the case of *Le Pays*, the narrator is able to defy the boundaries imposed by society, to exist in a place without boundaries since “[l]a personne de l’écriture n’était pas une personne” (*Le Pays* 117). The j/e is a “sujet fendu, décollé” (211). The j/e defies reality.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator’s run in the woods represents her psychological displacement to be further illustrated throughout the novel. She describes a continuous movement:

Je m’étais mise à courir depuis que j’étais arrivée ici. Ignorante encore de ce qui se passait. J’enfilais mes chaussures et hop, je courais. J’avais le sentiment de faire quelque chose. Comme quand on fume, ou quand on écrit: le temps passe.

On le sent physiquement s’écouler. On sent le flux. (*Le Pays* 9)

As in *Truismes*, the narrator is unconscious of what is happening to her. She is unaware of her displacement. The flux she mentions is her progressive attachment to nature.

First, she must become “an other,” as Rimbaud says: “Peu à peu, en courant, je m’évaporais. Les coureurs le savent, au bout d’un moment on se détache de soi-même. Étape par étape, je ralliais des jalons, un arbre, un panneau, un champ” (*Le Pays* 10). The figurative sense

of the word “jalon” is one’s bearings. With a move to a natural environment, she finds her bearings in nature. Her journey is both physical and psychological: “Tout ce qui courait en moi me tenait debout, me portait. Je devenais j/e. Avec le même soulagement que lorsqu’on glisse vers le sommeil, j/e basculais vers d’autres zones” (11).

She likens this change to other realms to insomnia: “Il existait peut-être une zone cervicale de l’insomnie, comme il y en a une de la parole, de la mémoire, de l’écriture. Une zone qui chauffe et maintient le dormeur à la surface, comme une bulle empêche un sac de sombrer” (*Le Pays* 38). She is displaced and has not yet found the switch that will relieve her imbalance: “Elle ne connaissait pas encore l’emplacement des interrupteurs, ses doigts glissaient le long des murs. . . . Elle était un minuscule point dans un vertige de maison, dans une rue d’un lotissement d’un pays, elle était debout sur la Terre et ça tournait” (38-39). There is still a separation between the protagonist and the Earth, as the Earth turns independently of her.

Even though sleep and dreams are not central to the narrative of this novel, it is important to note the description of sleep here, when the narrator refers to her movement between spaces. This kind of displacement recalls Freud and his explanation of dreams, reinforcing the narrator’s realignment. With the shifting narrator, the reader is aware of the manifest content, the narrator’s surroundings, as well as her latent thoughts with her first-person narration.

Nature’s affect on her psychological state is made clear in the following passage:

J/e courais, devenue bulle de pensée. Un personnage de bandes dessinées surmonté par sa bulle. Le corps à son affaire, le cerveau dans son contentement d’organe, tout à son fonctionnement. J/e devenais la route, les arbres, le pays. S’absorber dans, absorber le paysage, c’était une partie de la pensée, une partie de

l'écriture. Se remémorer le monde, une heure de rang, en courant. Le pays m'entourait, ce paysage familier qui devenait tous les paysages. (*Le Pays* 12-13)

In this passage, the word “bulle” has a double meaning: “speech bubble” and “sterile environment.” Nature encourages the thought process, so the image of speech bubbles floating above her head is apt, but she has also become one with the environment and is herself a “sterile environment,” devoid of any cultural specificity that may interfere with her psychological rapport with the natural environment. That is why the countryside that surrounds her becomes all countrysides. There are no culturally imposed boundaries.

To recall the world suggests that it was forgotten, that there was once a relationship with it that has been lost. In this hour, she attaches a value to nature: “Ce qui avançait sur la route c'étaient des sphères jouant les unes autour des autres, un équilibre de chutes et de rebonds, un ensemble de sauts. Ni moi ni autre ni personne” (*Le Pays* 13). This set of leaps, or figurative transitions, represents the narrator's journey in nature, where her individual identity is not applicable. At the end of her run, “[e]lle restait assise sur la margelle, dans le bruit de l'eau, seule. Aussi ignorante et aveugle que le sang qui bat” (14). These leaps are also indicative of her progressive journey to nature-attachment. At this point, she is ignorant of her growing affinity for nature and its impact on her well-being.

The move to her home in the countryside is a new beginning: “Elle était réveillée maintenant. Peut-être venait-elle de se réveiller; une traversée intacte du sommeil, comme si elle sortait sèche d'un lac. Dans cette maison, dans cette nouvelle maison” (*Le Pays* 37). The language in this passage evokes a reversal of consciousness due to the narrator's new surroundings. Her prosperity comes from a move to the refuge of the countryside, representative of nature as a whole: “Elle avait toujours vécu ici. Elle était d'ici, sous ce ciel” (41). “Here” is

never named, other than to say that it's a natural environment in the countryside. Despite a presumed sense of familiarity with the countryside, her homeland, the countryside is in fact representative of nature, from which she has been alienated while living in the urban environment of Paris: "Ils rentraient au pays pour échapper aux squares, à la torpeur des squares et des jardins publics" (44).

Psychologically, the urban environment is associated with depression. While the narrator is at the park in Paris, she reflects: "Elle se disait: quand je serai au pays je me souviendrai de ces pauses comme autant de vignettes de dépression" (*Le Pays* 44). She goes on to say that in that particular moment she is content. However, the language implies that her contentment is temporary and superficial:

Pourtant en ce lundi de fin d'août, comme les voitures rentraient en masse dans Paris et qu'ils longeaient le périphérique en direction du square, malgré la pollution, malgré le bruit et ce soleil idiot, de fait elle était plutôt contente. [. . .]
[E]lle était plutôt contente, elle avait lutté contre le rien, elle avait vaincu la pente d'inertie, elle avait triomphé du ciel vide et du soleil stupide, elle avait héroïquement réussi à accompagner Tiot jusqu'au square ... (44)

The use of the imperfect tense indicates that her contentment was perfunctory. She was happy in that moment, but her happiness is related to the sole action of accompanying Tiot to the square, the small patch of ground, rather than cement, that is surrounded by pollution, noise, and the harsh sun, its heat most likely intensified by the season and the exhaust fumes from the cars.

The narrator's feelings toward the countryside change with her relocation: "Adolescente, je me disais que revenir ici serait un enterrement. Que je reconnaîtrais ce pays comme un corps à la morgue. Maintenant il me semble que c'est l'inverse: pour assouvir le désir géographique je ne

peux qu’habiter, habiter ici sans relâche” (*Le Pays* 48-49). This passage highlights the importance of a sense of belonging as it relates to place.

This sense of belonging is attached to one’s origins. Rather than one’s ethnic origins, the narrator is referring to one’s relationship with nature, one’s human origins: “Et en France, trouvait-on un seul coin doté d’une sorte d’esprit des origines? Un coin où soufflait la forêt, la prairie, la rivière? Alors qu’il suffisait de s’éloigner de la route pour trouver, en Patagonie, de la terre jamais foulée” (*Le Pays* 45-46). She alludes to a time before the artificialization of nature, before humankind manipulated nature to such an extent that there may be none left in urban environments. Surrounded by “[l]es fougères, les eucalyptus, les sapins du reboisement, et l’herbe fluorescente, grasse de pluie,” as well as “dalles violettes devenues noires sous l’eau,” her breathing calms.

Scientific research has established nature connectedness as analogous to well-being. In *Le Pays*, the narrator’s connectedness to nature correlates with the establishment of her purpose, or meaning, in life, as it relates to her origins. This supports the following research:

Importantly, Butler (2006) proposed that a connection with nature is related to our search for both meaning *and* happiness. Therefore, to the extent that nature provides us with feelings and experiences of self-transcendence, connectedness, and continuity in an unstable world, affiliating with nature can enhance our sense of meaning in life, and ultimately lead to increased happiness and well-being” (Howell et al. 1682-1683).

Humans come from nature, exist in nature, and return to nature upon death, so this continuity contrasts with the uncertainty and instability of the artificial world, one which delineates space arbitrarily, hindering the quest for one’s origins due to cultural specificity. Instead, in *Le Pays*,

there is an emphasis on one's origins as they relate to birth and death, absence and presence. Writing plays an important part in this exploration.

As in *Truismes*, the narrator of *Le Pays* mentions the writing process as it relates to self-discovery and place:

Ce livre-là parlerait d'habiter et d'être née quelque part en conjuguant ces modes à diverses personnes, puisque écrire: 'je suis de là', elle ne savait pas bien ce que ça voulait dire. Il fallait tenter l'expérience, placer un sujet dans un lieu, étudier les lieux communs des personnes et des pays. Ça commençait comme ça, paysages et questions. (100)

The narrator refers to her own work of fiction, similar to *Le Pays*, which questions the position of a people in relation to place. She is able to speak for others and study the universal experience because "[I]a personne de l'écriture n'[est] pas une personne; la voix, si elle [advient], n'[est] pas enregistrée par aucun état civil" (117). Self-discovery as it relates to the environment is a universal journey, shared by all of humanity, regardless of citizenship. "Le moi est un vaisseau spatial, capable de relier des univers, de rabattre les unes sur les autres des galaxies lointaines" (56). The writer is a conduit between the landscape and the physical production of a book. Through this medium, she can communicate her interpretation of nature as she approaches it more closely, from a metaphysical approach. During a conversation with her husband, the narrator discusses the importance of the book: "--Tu commences une livre, ou une dépression ? --Un livre. La dépression, c'est quand je ne sens plus la planète sous mes pieds. Être ici ou ailleurs devient indifférent. 'Je ne sais plus où j'habite,' c'est comme ça qu'on dit" (230). Although the narrator undergoes a change in her psychological state, she insists that it is not

depression. The book is the landscape in which she feels grounded. The book is evidence of her psychological displacement and then implacement with the change in place:

Il aurait fallu écrire j/e. Un sujet ni brisé ni schizoïde, mais fendu, décollé.

Comme les éléments séparés d'un module, qui continuent à tourner sur orbite. J/e courais, devenue bulle de pensée. La route était libre, j/e courait. J/e devenait la route, les arbres, le pays. [. . .] Un pas de tir, voilà d'où j/e venait. (211)

The narrator's contention that j/e is not schizophrenic signifies that she has not broken with reality. The subject's detachment is in fact displacement. By displacing herself from the artificial landscape, she attaches to nature. She becomes one with the countryside. It is the launch site from which she initiates her self-discovery.

Although her husband argues that depression is metaphysical, she links her psychological state to space:

Toute sa vie s'était passée de l'euphorie à la dépression, de la dépression à l'euphorie. D'une zone à l'autre, la musique de fond était si différente, le disque semblait passer à des vitesses si incompatibles, que la texture du monde en était transformée, et ce qu'on appelle le moi devenait un ectoplasme. 'La dépression est une maladie métaphysique' disait Diégo. (*Le Pays* 116-17)

The ectoplasm²⁶ is the narrator's writing. The narrator's inner thoughts, her psychology, are displaced onto the page: "Il y avait des champions de jeûne et des athlètes de l'esprit, elle, son domaine, c'était l'absence. Écrire était le lieu où elle faisait l'expérience du vide" (210). The page is the landscape of her words, words that can move others, inspire others: "Est-ce que ça existe, la mentalité d'un pays?" (219). Words that, although distant and surreal like her brother's

²⁶ Ectoplasm is said to be formed by physical mediums when in a trance state. This material is excreted as a gauze-like substance from orifices on the medium's body and spiritual entities are said to drape this substance over their nonphysical body, enabling them to interact in the physical and real universe.

schizophrenic thoughts, have a truth to them. Writing is the place in which one can imagine new possibilities: “Tout était distant et surréel, j’étais dans *Le Pays* et pas dans le pays. L’espace entre les deux était un territoire, un pays de possibles” (225).

This in-between space, or void, recalls Jacques Derrida’s definition of absence and its importance in writing:

The concept of *différance* is at the heart of Derrida’s formulation of absence, since difference between word and thing, signifier and signified” exists only in terms of absence. That is, when two (or more) things differ they are described according to the attributes they do *not* have in common, the attributes that are *absent* in one (or more) of the entities being examined. For Derrida, *différance*, absence, is the place to begin philosophical and literary investigations for it is there that critics and thinkers can begin to repudiate the constraining presumptions of Western metaphysics and to recognize the neverending play of meaning that is not so much *in* a text as the condition of its existence. (Childers and Hentzi 2)

In the context of ecoliterature, the novel is the “*différance*,” or absence, the place where the author may investigate humankind’s relationship with nature without preconceived notions of Western philosophy.

Although the narrator insists that her subject is not schizophrenic, *Le Pays* is the kind of “speculative” fiction described by Robbie Goh, focusing “on space-time disruptions and inversions [and] offer[ing] a narratological mediation of reality [. . .] which move[s] us towards a schizophrenic consciousness” (61). It considers the coexistence of humans and nature, two

seemingly contradictory elements according to Western tradition. The narrator is present *in* nature and is content:

Elle sent à nouveau la présence, quelqu'un debout à ses côtés. Une verticale fugace... comme un pinceau dans le verre d'eau du paysage. Si c'est un fantôme, il est de l'espace furtive: un léger moment de fêlure... un bref accès sur l'envers des choses... il lui semble voir l'air se rider... Elle redescend. Le vent du Sud commence à souffler. C'est une autre montagne. Inverse. Maintenant elle connaît le chemin et va d'un bon pas joyeux. (*Le Pays* 57)

This wrinkle in time follows the definition of a chrono-schizophrenic narrative that “attempt[s] the difficult and spectacular reverse narrative throughout the entire text” (Goh 65). Goh also gives the example of a music video that is both an exploration of loss and guilt but also invokes overtones of anxieties about fast-paced contemporary urban life (65).

Le Pays has a similar effect because its reverse narratives “defamiliarize the [reader's] sense of linear time, narrative and causality [and] follow the normal chronological-causal order within defined segments of the narrative, although the order in which these segments are arranged reflect a reversal of the expected chronological-causal order” (Goh 65). While the reader is privy to the narrator's own self-exploration as it relates to place, one is also made aware of the contrasts between landscapes as they relate to modernity. Reverse narratives “throw particular emphasis on issues of memory, identity, causality, blame, guilt, and fatalism, particularly as they relate to the anxieties of late capitalist urban existence” (65). One's psychological experience with space is central to modern ecological studies. Westphal explains, “Au début du XXI^e siècle, les coordonnées du temps et de l'espace doivent être corrélées; pour certains, elles sont même indissolublement mêlées, inextricables” (48).

From the beginning of the novel, the narrator's psychological displacement is marked by her dissociation with the use of the pronoun J/e. This marks the importance of both an individual experience as well as a collective one. When Marie and her husband leave Paris with their young son, she remarks on the psychological effects of this physical change:

Un avion molletonné. Je somnole. Je suis bien. J/e me dissocie lentement. [. . .]
 J/e me diffuse... J/e me regarde assise dans l'avion, j/e me regarde à travers le hublot. Le temps se dédouble. Il y a le curseur sur lequel l'avion avance; et le présent actif dans mes veines, dans mon souffle et dans mes neurones. Si j/e m'endors, le présent va s'effondrer, et l'avion va tomber. J/e me concentre pour que l'avion reste en l'air. Tout se détermine, l'avant et l'après, autour de ce point... Mon corps a pris une étrange densité: un corps léger qui flotte en halo, et un corps présent, une agitation de molécules, un petit monde dans lequel circulent des avions, des cumulus, des corpuscules... J/e suis ici. J'observai désormais ma vie par le hublot, hier et demain. Nous allons atterrir bientôt mais j/e vais rester là, une bille en suspens... (*Le Pays* 42-43)

This passage differentiates between the physical and the psychological. She is cognizant of her psychological displacement. The use of the word "bille" emphasizes her knowledge of the process, since the word can be slang for "head." Her psychological self is unsettled in this transitory state.

There is solidarity in this process, as we are a community of beings trying to navigate places and their psychological significance: "Le *nous* existe, affirmait mon mari. La communauté. [. . .] Et moi, passeport français, je voyais encore la planète comme un espace

idéal. Ceux qui souffraient de ne pas avoir de frontières, je leur opposais la petitesse de leur pays et la splendeur d'un monde ouvert (*Le Pays* 113-14).

A common human feeling related to place is nostalgia. The narrative is devious as it follows the narrator's thought-process related to memory, identity, presence, and absence, and nostalgia is central to her feelings of presence and absence:

Elle avait eu, à Paris, le sentiment de l'exil. Elle avait pris ça pour de la nostalgie.

Mais la nostalgie est le sentiment du retour: reconnaître et ne pas reconnaître, et dans cet écart, mesurer à quel point on était parti. Ce qui la rendait mélancolique, à Paris, c'était cette prémonition: elle ne rentrerait jamais. (*Le Pays* 90)

Nostalgia is a longing for a sense of place. There is an "indispensable link between nostalgia and the experience, real or imaginary, of an actual place [and] without the sense of *algos* or pain over a real absence, nostalgia becomes something else altogether" (Illbruck 184). Although the narrator initially associates nostalgia with Paris, her feelings change: "Un renversement s'inaugurait: Paris devenait là-bas. Le sentiment de l'exil est un poids d'abord léger, plus la balance penche, l'axe de la géographie s'incline...le Pays, Paris; Paris, le Pays: le point d'exil basculait" (*Le Pays* 265).

Because she does not experience pain over a real absence, as the two places are muddled, her nostalgia is in fact psychological displacement. Melancholy and solitude result from the narrator's displacement. However, she proposes two solutions: "Elle ne connaissait que deux remèdes à la solitude: être enceinte, ou se sentir au centre du monde, c'est-à-dire dans un lieu qui vous tient compagnie" (*Le Pays* 142). She discovers that "[p]resence is within reach of us all the time, [. . .] in the seaside and the countryside [and] all we have to do is to recognize presence to awaken it" (Harper 112). The narrator finds presence in her pregnancy with her daughter,

Épiphanie, and in nature: “Je suis pleine d’une nombreuse faune. Je suis un paysage rempli d’animaux, je suis un pays amniotique” (*Le Pays* 141).

It is important to note that the narrator stresses the importance of solidarity in one’s relationship with nature. Through the natural process of pregnancy, she is not alone. Her relationship with her brother is also central to her relationship with nature. The mental health of the narrator’s brother is important to the development of this novel. Her brother, Pablo, suffers from schizophrenia:

Je ne sais jamais quel visage aura mon frère. J’oublie d’une fois sur l’autre, je ne m’habitue pas. Je crois revoir celui que je connais et quelqu’un d’autre est à sa place. Entre mon petit frère et le fou, le peu que je retiens de la schizophrénie—on me l’explique et je perds toute mémoire immédiate, les phrases battent mon cerveau en neige—ce que je retiens c’est qu’on est schizophrène sans que ça se voie, longtemps; on se bricole un système, qui un jour vole en éclats. (*Le Pays* 22)

The language in this passage indicates the gradual progression of schizophrenia, with the expression “on se bricole un système.” Schizophrenia is not readily visible because the person suffering from the disease manages, for a while, to arrange a system of living with it. The progression of her brother’s mental illness mirrors her shift in consciousness, since she manages for some time to live in the artificial landscape but finally experiences displacement.

The term schizophrenia was first introduced by Eugen Bleuler “for a psychotic mental disorder of unknown etiology characterized by disturbances in thinking, mood, and behavior” (Kaplan and Sadock 167). In *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Laplanche and Pontalis elaborate on this:

Cliniquement, la schizophrénie se diversifie en des formes apparemment très dissemblables d'où l'on dégage habituellement les caractères suivants:

l'incohérence de la pensée, de l'action et de l'affectivité [. . .], le détachement à l'endroit de la réalité avec repli sur soi en prédominance d'une vie intérieure livrée aux productions fantasmiques ... (433)

The narrator's parents adopted Pablo from Peru, but he has no recollection of his native country: "Du Pérou au Pays, tout est erratique et hasardeux dans la généalogie de Pablo, comme Christophe Colomb qui prit un continent pour un autre. [. . .]Mais le fou qui a pris sa place ne fait plus jamais référence à ses origines ..." (*Le Pays* 22-23).

In other words, following Laplanche's and Pontalis's definition, Pablo is detached from the reality of the place from where he came. His fantastical anecdotes are not unlike the fiction spun by Darrieussecq. She creates a new reality, where imagination reigns.

The narrator tells the story of young Pablo lost in the woods:

Il avait disparu depuis plusieurs jours, et ce sont les flics qui l'ont retrouvé, un matin de juin, alors que mes parents retournaient tout le pays. Il se promenait dans la forêt. À la question des flics sur son identité, mon frère, Pablo Rivière, fit cette réponse: "Je suis le fils du général de Gaulle." Puis il se mit à hurler et à projeter autour de lui tout ce qu'il avait sous la main, cailloux, branches, et jusqu'à ses chaussures. (*Le Pays* 26-27)

Pablo does not remember his true identity, but his journey through the woods and subsequent physical attachment to nature, including stones and branches, underlines the importance of his rejection of his origins. He does not experience place attachment to any one country: "La folie de mon frère s'agence autour de lieux communs qui étaient étrangers à sa forme d'intelligence. [. . .]

Mon frère est du Pérou comme Tintin est de Moulinsart, c'est un pays qui n'existe pas" (*Le Pays* 27). For Pablo, Peru does not exist. The protagonist, Marie, is from a fictional country. As a result, they both experience place attachment to nature rather than to a specific country.

Detached from reality, Pablo's statement that he is Charles de Gaulle's son is definitive:

Toutes les quinze minutes sa parole s'interrompt, ou semble s'interrompre comme un disque rayé, en tout cas c'est d'un ton péremptoire que Pablo Rivière réinvente son ascendance. Le récit fossilisé de sa révélation, le même qu'il fit aux flics dans la forêt, ce récit prend trois minutes. (*Le Pays* 27)

He repeats this statement constantly. The use of the word "révélation" indicates awareness, a change in consciousness, in this particular instance evoked by his walk in the woods.

Pablo's behavior as a child foreshadows the narrator's own displacement: "Pablo hurlait. Elle, la sœur, allait au lycée. Ne reconnaissait personne en rentrant à la maison. Rythme, expressions, attitudes et même odeur, tout disparaissait. Les déplacements dans l'espace, la façon de se pencher, de s'asseoir, tout était bouleversé" (*Le Pays* 122). Referring to his screaming with the word "hurler," the narrator associates Pablo with nature once again, since "hurler" can also mean the howling of an animal:

Pablo hurlait. [. . .] Comment s'installer, dans les hurlements de Pablo? Pablo occupait le centre de la maison, et le centre de la maison débordait, gagnait le jardin, la rue. Il leur semblait que tout le village entendait, que Pablo assourdissait le pays, la planète, que seule la mer peut-être arrêta ses cris. (122)

This evocation of the sea represents desired displacement as it relates to the environment. Before this description of Pablo, the narrator evokes the sea:

La mer, surtout en automne, est d'une compagnie mélancolique. L'été, c'est une autre chanson: plage et plagistes, bleu vif, jaune vif. Mais dès la saison des bains passée, la mer vous prend à part et vous dépossède. Ce que vous êtes à l'intérieur se retrouve à l'extérieur. Vos molécules se mélangent au ciel et à l'eau, la solitude se diffuse. Les mots et les choses s'écartent, la pensée ne suit plus, les signes se désamarrent; et le moi devient une grande béance pleine d'eau salée. L'espace qui claque entre la vague et le rivage, elle connaissait bien cette hypnose, adolescente: la consolation du vide. [. . .] Et le moi existe, vivant, mouvant, quand le monde défait le sujet familial dans son souffle. (99)

The sea is consolation, since, as previously mentioned, nature can be a remedy for solitude or other psychological problems.

Another passage in which the sea has a congruous effect is the narrator's memory of her return to France after a trip to London. The narrator's brother Pablo eclipses the memory of her dead brother, Paul, whom she thinks she sees while traveling in the Eurostar: "À peine assise dans l'Eurostar je m'endormis. [. . .] Quelqu'un était assis à deux rangs de moi. Je savais que c'était mon frère. [. . .] Mais nous étions dans un train sous la mer. [. . .] L'appeler par son nom? *Paul*" (*Le Pays* 242-43). It is no coincidence that his imaginary resurrection takes place under the sea, since water is the ultimate source of life. The moment is brief because, for the narrator, the definition of a brother is Pablo:

Un frère pour moi c'était Pablo. Avec Pablo on avait eu un peu de temps. [. . .] Le nom de mon frère m'échappa. Quel prénom avaient choisi mes parents, quel prénom avaient-ils choisi *en premier*? Je ne l'avais jamais appelé, ce frère-là. [. . .] Des années plus tard, quand Tiot naîtrait, j'aurais, les premiers jours, la même

hésitation. D'autres noms me viendraient sous la langue que son nom neuf, jamais porté. Et ce serait souvent "Pablo", Pablo sur le berceau de Tiot, Pablo l'enfant que jusqu'à Tiot j'avais le mieux connu. (244)

Pablo even eclipses this new life, her own son. This is because of Pablo's uncommon disposition, since he is connected to nature in a way that is attainable through psychological displacement. For the narrator, Pablo is more than human. She refers to him as a "petite fée penchée et bancale" (244).

The contrasts between birth and death represent the ephemeral quality of human life in opposition to much of nature that is, in comparison, enduring. It is human contact that has cut short the life span of many living organisms and natural landscapes. Human perception of landscapes hinders nature's time-telling: "Le temps était fait d'histoires, l'espace était fait de failles. La géographie découpait le temps, par marches et par entailles. Elle arrêta des bords, plantait des limites, creusait des lignes" (*Le Pays* 88). Place cannot be limited as such: "Les éléments du paysage n'étaient pas réductibles à un plan" (89). The narrator's own relationship with landscapes is tied to humanity's manipulation of it:

Je suis née l'été miraculeux où Armstrong a marché sur la lune, dans un espace ancien; quand cet événement fit trembler la croûte terrestre, sous la plante des pieds humains. Quadriller le ciel, recenser les lieux, habiter l'univers: L'espace ressemble à ces jouets de papier que les enfants ouvrent et referment pour y lire l'avenir. (103)

Her perception of the landscape is different from the traditional concept, temporal rather than spatial: "Le pays n'était pas un lieu, c'était du temps, du temps feuilleté, et elle était revenue y habiter" (209).

Instead of conferring geographical specificity on the countryside, the narrator's language evokes the idea of a journey. The expression, "du temps feuilleté," is analogous to skimming the pages of a book, such as *Le Pays*, or the verb "parcourir," also meaning to browse the pages of a book. However, "parcourir" can also signify to wander. When speaking of life, the narrator says, "Un appel d'air, un nouveau plexus qui s'ouvrait. Une autre capacité d'être là, un envol. Un devenir-monde où le moi n'était plus une passerelle mais une présence décentrée, épanouie" (*Le Pays* 179). Like the plane that took her to the countryside in the beginning of the novel, her existence has taken off as well. She has found harmony in an unconventional existence. She says, "*La vie est une rivière.*" Marie Rivière is life. She has found a new presence, a new life, *in* nature.

The adaptability of her experience contradicts the theory that we now live in the anthropocene era, "a new unit of geological time, one in which human beings are such a major determining force on the Earth that the unit should be named after them [. . .], a radically new state, one in which humans had become a major planetary force" (Szerszynski 168-69). Instead, the narrator desires an exchange with nature, a reciprocal relation with it: "Elle voudrait entrer dans les arbres, dans les autres. Comprendre, connaître: se déplacer dans les corps. Un travail de l'imagination en échange, en échange..." (*Le Pays* 75).

Marie has achieved a state of mindfulness, which Howell describes as "being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present [which] enhances the richness and vitality of moment-to-moment experiences" (Howell et al. 167). Furthermore, "[t]he enhanced sensory impact of experiences in nature fostered by mindfulness may strengthen nature connectedness among mindful individuals" (Howell et al. 167). The narrator working in unison with nature is indicative of a naturalist:

He goes alone into a field or woodland and closes his mind to everything but that time and place, so that life around him presses in on all the senses and small details grow in significance. [. . .] His mind becomes unfocused, it focuses on everything, no longer directed toward any ordinary task or social pleasantries” (Wilson 103).

The narrator desires to know the details of nature : “Mais le monde n’était pas un secret de famille, le monde était là, déployé. Il suffisait d’oser le prendre, c’était simplement du travail, mon travail, qui ne laissait rien d’indicible” (*Le Pays* 286). The world is unfolded, like a map, available for discovery as a means of cooperation with nature.

Whether one chooses to act in cooperation with nature during its discovery is the subject of dispute in “Plage.” One’s motivation for discovery is important to address. For example, Bachelard remarks that nature is an object of love:

La nature, on commence par l’aimer sans la connaître, sans la bien voir, en réalisant dans les choses un amour qui se fonde ailleurs. Ensuite, on la cherche en détail parce qu’on l’aime en gros, sans savoir pourquoi. La description enthousiaste qu’on en donne est une preuve qu’on l’a regardée avec passion, avec la constante curiosité de l’amour (Bachelard 155).

This loving regard for nature has long inspired the creative process of writing. In particular, the sea has been lauded throughout time. “Plage” describes the sea’s discovery. However, its discovery has also led to humankind’s domination of it. The narrator’s description of her relationship with the sea as a child captures her own admiration and love of the sea, as defined by Bachelard. She equates her own childhood discovery of the sea with the comprehension of its details: “C’est difficile, de voir la plage, de voir le sable et la mer: de les

dénuder de notre histoire, de notre humain va-et-vient, de nos poèmes et de nos parasols” (“Plage” 185). The sea has been an integral part of human actions as well as thoughts. The sea is a part of our human psychology.

Recalling the contrast between space and place, it is important to note the various definitions of place that Lawrence Buell inventories. Places are “centers of felt value (Tuan 1977: 4), discrete if ‘elastic’ areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify (Agnew 1993: 263) [. . .] ‘A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered’ (Walter 1988: 142)” (Buell 63). The narrator depicts the sea as a place rather than a space because humans have developed an attachment for it.

The sea is powerful and encapsulates seemingly contrary things: “le passé et le présent, la vie et la mort, le masculin et le féminin; puisque ni le sable ni l’eau n’ont d’âge” (“Plage” 186). It challenges our human perception: “Dans l’enfance et sur la plage, lieux conjugués, s’apprennent les limites et les limites des limites: leur incertitude, le doute. C’est la plage qui [. . .] donne aux enfants leur première idée de l’infini” (186). Even the creatures of the sea exhibit strength: “Une étrille brandit ses pinces dérisoires, elle dix centimètres, moi un mètre dix, un mètre trente, un mètre soixante-dix: elle me tient tête, que je sois enfant ou adulte, mouette ou pélican” (188). Even the small details of the sea, such as this crab, capture the comprehensive power of the sea and its presence.

As a child, the narrator’s image of the sea is that it is “la plus belle plage du monde, et la seule,” befitting Bachelard’s description of our love for nature as whole (“Plage” 185). The narrator’s childlike wonder is in stark contrast to the ominous tone of the final paragraphs of the short story, which evoke a polluted sea. After describing both the collective and individual

experiences with the sea, the narrator's change in tone underlines the fact that the sea is not infinite. The progression of childlike wonder to adult domination has led to its deterioration: "D'année en année la falaise s'effondre" (190). Here, it is important to note the following definition of the ocean:

'[O]cean' is derived from the ancient Greeks' Oceanus, described by Rachel Carson as 'an endless stream that flowed forever around the border of the world, ceaselessly turning upon itself like a revolving wheel, the end of the earth, the beginning of heaven. This ocean was boundless; it was infinite. If a person were to venture far out upon it—were such a course thinkable—he... would come at last to a dreadful and chaotic blending of sea and sky, a place where whirlpools and yawning abysses waited to draw the traveler down into the dark world from which there is no return (202).' Two aspects of this should be underscored. Firstly, the ocean is represented here as the very limit to the known world, and, secondly, this limit is registered not only in spatial but also in temporal terms. That is, it marks the limit of both the world and history, and it does so by its assumed limitlessness. (de Villiers 39)

De Villiers outlines a seeming contradiction: the sea as limited and limitless. "Plage" illustrates the human relationship with the sea. The narrator first paints the scene of "la plage, calme et plane, étendue sous les ombres des promeneurs" ("Plage" 190). That quickly changes, when "d'un coup, tout s'immobilise. Le chien se raidit, le phare se tend, et le bâton lancé fait une virgule au ciel. Alors la falaise se fend en deux. . ." (190-91). Her happy memories of the sea, "abolements, exclamations, affolements d'oiseaux, rire de [sa] mère, désordre et cinéma des souvenirs d'enfance," seem impossible to recapture because of the sea's artificialization (191).

The sea, source of inspiration, calm, and happy memories, cannot be associated with one's welfare if the sea's own prosperity is threatened by human activity. This, like the "virgule" in the sky, punctuates our history. Now, sand is fabricated in a laboratory and the narrator ends the story with a question: "[M]ais de la silice, qui se soucie?" ("Plage" 191). Will we consider our well-being in relation to our mistreatment of the sea? Water typically "s'offre donc comme un symbole naturel pour la pureté; elle donne des sens précis à une psychologie proluxe de la purification" (Bachelard 181), but Darrieussecq demonstrates the inevitable corruption of this natural element if human activity continues to manipulate it. We may render the sea ephemeral.

Le Mal de mer also addresses the perception of the sea as infinite. Bachelard recalls Marie Bonaparte's description of the sea's maternal symbolism: "La nature est pour l'homme grandi, nous dit Mme Bonaparte, 'une mère immensément élargie, éternelle et projetée dans l'infini.' Sentimentalement, la nature est une *projection* de la mère. En particulier, ajoute Mme Bonaparte: 'La mer reste pour tous les hommes l'un des plus grands, des plus constants symboles maternels'" (Bachelard 156). Darrieussecq's third novel, *Le Mal de mer*, follows the journey of a mother and daughter to the sea. The "attention to fantastic landscapes provides a fresh gloss to the homonymic link that is now a cliché of literature ('mer'/'mère')" (Jordan 152). The sea is arguably the most important character in the novel, fulfilling the role of nature as mother.

The fluid narrative style means that "[t]here is no dialogue or reported speech, for Darrieussecq is no longer working at the level of articulated thought. Instead, in Sarrautean fashion, she records the sub-currents of conflicting sensations by a series of unnamed '*ils*' and '*elles*'. . .'" (Jordan 149). Although it is difficult at times to distinguish to whom the narrator is referring or who the narrator becomes, the sea is always present and has distinct psychological effects on the characters.

As the superior presence in the novel, the sea gives the characters a sense of inferiority as well as security, calm, and restfulness. Even en route to the sea, she is calm: “Elle est beaucoup plus calme sur l’autoroute” (*Le Mal de mer* 14). When she arrives at the sea, the mother experiences its companionship:

Elle se remémore la montée, pour retrouver ce moment (alors que la mer est là devant elle et occupe toute sa tête), pour retrouver ce moment où l’espace s’est fendu par le milieu,[. . .] Pour retrouver ce moment où la dune est devenue, brusquement, la mer, il faudrait redescendre, recommencer, fermer les yeux et faire semblant d’avoir oublié, et les rouvrir en haut seulement, absorber le choc sans vaciller, imposer au corps de rester debout face au vide. (12-13)

She descends the dune and faces the open sea in order to re-experience the psychological displacement she felt previously on another journey to the sea. The mother is in search of a moment, a vague measurement of time, during which the environment splits the space. Standing on the dune, the mother sees a distinction between the sea, “sans fin,” spatially and temporally, and the diminution of herself and her young daughter: “Elle sent un allègement, un temps d’arrêt; l’intuition qu’on peut la laisser là” (14). Time and space are intertwined in this passage because the sea’s vastness occupies both time and space.

The child also has a sense of self-importance, as she stands on the sea’s edge: “Elle se sent grande d’être ici, seule au bord de la mer; de se tenir ici, à l’exacte jointure de la terre et de l’eau. Elle s’est assise sur la chaise qu’occupe d’ordinaire sa mère; collée à la vitre, le balcon est trop étroit. Elle guette. . .” (*Le Mal de mer* 83). In another passage, the child sits on the balcony of the vacation rental she shares with her mother and eavesdrops on her mother’s conversation with the rental agent:

Sa mère discute, de balcon à balcon, avec le monsieur de l'agence. Du fond du couloir, sous les draps de la banquette haute, elle entend le zigzag des voix dans la nuit rouge. Ils parlent de la mer, du calme en ce moment et du travail de la Lune, de la houle attendue pour le solstice (quand la Terre, se renverse, d'un coup, sur son axe, alors dévalent de grosses vagues) et des championnats de surf à venir, des touristes, qui commenceront à arriver; la voix de sa mère devient poreuse, pourpre, traversée par les derniers rayons; les mots ralentissent, s'allongent, s'enroulent, elle n'entend plus la voix du monsieur, elle voit la mer et les surfeurs, le glacier dans sa voiturette, la falaise qui fume dans la lumière blanche. (57)

Just as their voices are woven by the ambiguity of the narration, the characters' rapports with the sea are also interchangeable. The adjectives used to describe her mother's voice are also comparable to the sea's characteristics. The span of her mother's voice echoes the expansiveness and permeability of the sea. Her mother and the mother sea are compatible, powerful presences for the child.

The sense of calm that the sea evokes also supports the imagery of the sea as a mother: "L'eau est un grand repos, une main tendue sous le corps" (*Le Mal de mer* 65). Personification is important because it portrays the embrace of the sea. Its presence is reassuring and has a physical effect:

Aujourd'hui la mer est à peine formée. Elle se soulève avec négligence, retombe sans effort, une élastique pulsation d'artère ; d'ici deux heures elle sera basse, à midi, en plein soleil, et puis ça recommencera, la montée vers le vieux port, vers le Casino, vers la vitrine bleue. A sept heures, quand il baissera le rideau, elle sera

haute. Il la sentira derrière lui, proche, énorme, paisible. Il rentrera par la falaise, on voit plus loin, on respire mieux. (53)

The calmness of the sea relaxes him. The use of the pronoun “on” expresses the universality of the human experience with the tranquil sea.

The sea is the characters’ mother and its waves demonstrate its power over nature as well:

Ça tremble, elle ne s’est jamais approchée aussi près. Le sol tremble, cogne. L’eau s’écarte, s’élargit, on dirait qu’elle augmente : entre la masse qui vient de s’effondrer, l’écume qui souffle et bouillonne, là, à la toucher ; et le pan qui se lève par-derrière, qui aspire et creuse : ça s’étire, on dirait l’intérieur d’un mollusque, bleuté, veiné de blanc, une huître, un dessous de langue : ça bâille sans rompre, c’est lisse, luisant, une paroi d’organe qu’ils doivent traverser. (*Le Mal de mer* 121)

In *Figures III*, Gérard Genette analyzes metonymy in the works of Marcel Proust. In *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, during a second stay in Balbec, the protagonist, Marcel, has just visited the church in Marcouville. Anticipating another church like this one, he employs marine imagery, comparing the bell towers to fish, when imagining the church in Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu. Genette says that this imagery is fitting because it captures the marine essence of Balbec. Just as Proust uses metonymical and diegetic metaphors, so does Darrieussecq in the aforementioned passage. In particular, the description of the mollusks and oysters depend on the “contiguïté de deux sensations, sur leur coexistence dans le même contexte mental” (Genette 41). As in the case of Proust, “la proximité (spatiale, temporelle, psychologique) de la mer qui oriente vers une interprétation aquatique le travail de l’imagination métaphorique” (43). Approaching the sea, the

strength of its waves is striking. With its many walls, or layers of waves, it is a complex being, likened to mollusks and oysters, creatures for which it is a dwelling place.

The reader's gaze is shifted upward, as the narration describes the sky and its expansiveness:

Le ciel est énorme, beaucoup plus grand que la mer. Le ciel ne la touche pas, reste à distance ; et la côte, déjà, semble si loin, qu'elle comprend qu'on se noie de tant de solitude ; puisqu'il suffit de jeter un regard sur la terre, là-bas, sur les maisons, les terrasses et le glacier, pour se sentir abandonnée (les astronautes sont entraînés à ne pas perdre la raison quand ils verront la Terre, ronde et bleue, plus petite que leur hublot). (*Le Mal de mer* 123)

The sky separates the astronauts from the earth. They are displaced, but the narrator indicates that they receive training in order to cope with this displacement. However, others, like the mother and her daughter, still feel the solitude of displacement from nature.

When the mother and daughter visit the sea, the mother's narration conveys the psychological awareness that accompanies physical repositioning: "Puis c'est comme un second réveil, la sensation d'être replacée, de savoir à nouveau exactement où elle est: ici, devant la mer, à la jointure du monde" (*Le Mal de mer* 85). Although "replacée" can mean to be put back or replaced, there is also the connotation of a return to a familiar place. After a date with Patrick, her Australian boyfriend who is also her daughter's swim instructor, she remarks on the feeling of companionship she feels with nature:

Il faudrait rentrer, mais avec le bruit de la mer, cette épaisseur d'humidité marine, il semble que rien ne puisse arriver, que personne ne soit laissé tout à fait seul ici.
Il l'emmène, en haut de la falaise il la prend dans ses bras. Elle distingue le toit du

grand immeuble, il semble tenir toute la ville. Sa salive est salée. Leurs joues collent, leurs cheveux sont tissés de gouttelettes d'eau. Elle aime cet engourdissement, les lèvres qui s'effacent sous l'afflux du contact ; le visage qui s'emplit, coule, gagne le corps ; le corps qui se retourne, la bouche qui descend, s'enfoncé, creuse la chair à mesure que les membres, multipliés et courbes, se renversent autour d'un centre de plus en plus présent. (89)

She is together with Patrick, but their collectivity is further supported by their solidarity with the sea. It is difficult to discern whether the passage describes the lovers' kiss or the physical impact of the sea. Is it the force of a kiss that takes over her physical sensation or the humid, salty air that numbs her body? Just as a lover's kiss may envelop someone, so does nature.

In the darkness, the protagonist still finds her way through the trees to the cliff:

Avec la pluie, serrée, brutale, la nuit est devenue totalement noire, sonore, un grondement. De la main, elle suit la rampe, sent sous ses pieds les volées de marches ; plus aucune lumière ne parvient à percer, seule une étrange douceur, rapide, régulière, vient par moments ralentir le vent : ce qui reste sans doute de la gloire du phare. Une griffe ruisselante s'abat sur son visage ; elle a retrouvé les arbres, la falaise. (*Le Mal de mer* 93)

This passage exemplifies the experience of place, "made present by language [. . .] capable of triggering a disorganized intensity of sensory experiences or sensory memories of taste, color, smell, touch, warmth, cold, and so on" (Moslund 31). Her walk to the cliff encompasses touch, sight, sound.

Once again, nature envelops her: "Le soleil traverse la peau ; les poumons, les organes, chauffent et s'étalent délicieusement . . ." (*Le Mal de mer* 111). She is one with nature, part of the

sea now. A passage conveys this with a comparison of the protagonist's body to the physical attributes of sea dwellers and plants:

Elle s'endort dans le bain, les algues se défont dans l'eau de mer chauffée, cuisent, épaississent, elle ne sent plus ses jambes sous les longs fils gluants ; ses mains sont des coraux, ses bras des anguilles mortes, et ses seins des poissons-lune, qui flottent, lâches, sous le filet errant de sa peau. (113)

The substitution of human body parts for those of marine life supports an analogous relationship between the protagonist and the sea. Proust's "réseau continu d'analogies" in his episodes at Balbec endeavor to eliminate any demarcation between the sea and those who visit it or live next to it (Genette 52). Metonymical metaphors reinforce the protagonist's contiguity with the sea, and Darrieussecq succeeds in emulating Proustian imagery, "la continuité de l'espace—espace du monde, espace du texte—les choses voisines et les mots liés" (55).

In *Le Mal de mer*, nature also has a healing quality. During the first half of the novel, she struggles with a migraine, physical pain that is centered in her head: "La migraine avait pris toute la place, ne laissant, épuisante et familière, aucune prise aux autres sensations" (18). As well as causing physical pain, the migraine obstructs her psychological state: "Cet après-midi, elle aurait pu acheter un sac de couchage et des pulls supplémentaires; elle n'y a pas pensé. C'est à cause de la migraine" (25). She is also unable to sleep: "[N]on qu'elle ait vraiment compté sur le sommeil, mais elle aurait aimé, au moins, souffler un peu dans la migraine" (28).

She is also sick with an unnamed malady. However, her insecurities and discomfort are eradicated by her voyage to the sea: "Le ciel est traversé par une longue pliure blanche. Elle se sent virer lentement; posée sur la dune et sous le ciel. La mer a tout envahi..." (*Le Mal de mer* 32). For her, the sea is an escape: "Une seconde on échappe à la mer; on retrouve les lois de la

terre, du corps, des muscles, une seconde on croit s'appartenir ; puis on est sous le tourbillon” (*Le Mal de mer* 124). For this protagonist, it is irrepensible movement that sustains her. She is accustomed to displacement. She is going to travel again, this time to Sydney:

À Sydney, elle trouvera un petit travail, ensuite elle voyagera, le désert, les sentinelles de pierre rouge, la forêt vierge, les lagons bleus, les ranchs si vastes qu'il faut plusieurs semaines pour en faire le tour à cheval, et que les cavaliers se servent des mirages pour évaluer, au gré de l'heure et de la chaleur, la distance jusqu'au prochain point d'eau. (135)

The final scene is of the mother at the airport, leaving her daughter behind to embark on a new journey to Australia: “Elle joue à faire varier la lumière entre ses cils, en étoiles plus ou moins floues. Un groupe de retraités passe en parlant anglais, elle finit son café, se redresse pour les suivre. L'embarquement a commencé” (137-38).

The final sentence of the novel connotes a journey for the protagonist and reminds the reader of his or her own metaphysical journey, thanks to the author. Writing as representative of physical and psychological displacement is also central to the short story “Connaissance des singes.” The narrator stresses her writer's block: “Mais je n'arrivais pas à écrire” (“Connaissance des singes” 39). It is summer in Paris, but she is not vacationing because “[l]es écrivains n'ont pas vraiment de vacances, plutôt un creux entre deux livres” (41). However, due to her inability to continue writing, she experiences a new psychological state:

Je n'arrivais pas à reprendre. C'était la première fois que j'étais dans cet état.
[. . .] Ma respiration s'accélérait, je sentais mon corps sur la chaise, je sentais mes bras raidis, et je ne parvenais plus à m'oublier pour écrire. Je ne retrouvais plus

cette absence à moi-même qui est comme une chambre d'échos, où le monde se met à bruire pour s'écrire à travers moi. (41-42)

This passage underlines the importance of displacement as both physical and psychological. Her words indicate her desired attachment to nature. She longs for a physical displacement during which nature will murmur to her and evoke a psychological displacement necessary for the writing process. Her presence *in* nature will absent her from the uncomfortable, unproductive psychological state in which she finds herself during her writer's block.

The narrator's stress due to her inability to write is coupled with a strained relationship with her daughter: "Comme tous les soirs au coucher du soleil, j'eus envie d'appeler ma fille—de lui laisser un message—mais un reste d'orgueil me retint. [. . .] Ma salope de fille. Elle était devenue critique littéraire. Le cauchemar, pour une mère écrivain" ("Connaissance des singes" 50-51). The tension between the narrator and her daughter is like the narrator's relationship with nature. As previously stated, for an adult, "[s]entimentalement, la nature est une *projection* de la mère" (Bachelard 156). Just as she is disconnected from her daughter, she is also detached from Mother Nature.

Despite her desire to go to Iceland, the narrator travels instead to her mother's home in Rogny, where she babysits her mother's pet chimpanzee. This is an example of how cultural specificity is unimportant in establishing place-attachment to nature. By displacing herself from the urban environment of Paris and relocating to a rural environment, whether it is Iceland or Rogny, she may more easily develop an affinity for nature and advance her writing. Furthermore, it is her relationship with her mother that brings her to Rogny, where she will be attached to nature. Once again, in this story, the importance the mother-daughter relationship indicates the degree of place-attachment to nature.

Although Marcel, the chimpanzee, can speak, he and the narrator do not have a lot to say to each other. At first, “[i]l y eut un lourd silence” (“Connaissance des singes” 49). However, the silence proves advantageous for the narrator. The following day, she says, “Moi, j’avais envie de m’étendre dans l’herbe” (51). Her newfound attachment to Rogny and its rural environment ends her writer’s block: “Mais j’avais écrit, en dix jours de villégiature rognyssoise, les cinquante premières pages de mon nouveau roman. . .” (52). She and Marcel develop a routine: “J’écrivais, il mangeait, il reprenait du poil de la bête. [. . .] Nous n’avons pas grand-chose à nous dire, mais le silence ne nous pesait plus” (53).

Suddenly prolific again, the narrator finds company in the environment rather than Marcel. Her newfound affinity for nature coincides with her lack of concern for her daughter’s new profession: “À la rentrée, quand j’achetai le journal, ma fille était devenue rédactrice en chef des pages littéraires. Ce sont des choses qui vous tombent dessus, dans la vie” (“Connaissance des singes” 54). Having improved her relationship with nature, she is no longer overly concerned with her daughter’s change in profession. However, as the final sentence of the short story, it urges a closer reading. Ending the short story with a reference to the mother-daughter relationship solicits an ecocritical response. Our relationships with other people are important, but our relationship with Mother Nature is equally important. Just as her relationship with her daughter is best not defined with a cliché, nature should not be regarded as banal.

Darrieussecq’s works provide landscapes in which nature is anything but a secondary character. The value of nature as inspirational, simultaneously formidable and approachable, and as a central character in each of the works analyzed in this chapter situates Darrieussecq in the genre of ecoliterature. More specifically, the stories I analyze here clearly belong to the genre of eco-poetic literature, whose objective, according to Blanc, Pughe, and Chartier, is “dire l’altérité

de la nature (ce qui est sauvage) sans la civiliser, sans la cultiver” (17-18). Through her description of symbiotic relationships with nature, Darrieussecq’s literature does not recreate nature. Rather, “elle réinvente sans cesse, par le travail de l’écriture, les interactions entre l’homme et la nature, et les représentations que l’homme se fait de la nature” (19). The complexity of language allows reinvention of “les normes et les valeurs qui façonnent [notre] environnement” (19). Darrieussecq’s literary landscapes allow the reader to reimagine his or her own surroundings and subsequent physical and psychological interactions with them.

CHAPTER 4

ANIMALITY

In my final chapter, I will examine the role of animality in Darrieussecq's works. If human beings are to reexamine their nature in terms of their environment, they must also reexamine their relationships with non-humans. Despite the ubiquity of the animal in literature, art, and popular culture, there are those who insist on the human/animal divide, or distinguishing humans from animals. The search for a resolution to ecological crises often ignores the importance of psychological barriers related to non-human entities. "Even when an individual is aware of the environmental crisis, psychological barriers may still interfere with actions aimed at coping with it" (Tam 276). One such barrier is the conviction that humans are superior to animals. Therefore, the barrier between the human and non-human worlds must be eliminated in order to better understand our position, as humans *with* and *in* nature and our role in the environmental movement.

In terms of literature, our definition of humanity is often in opposition to our definition of animality. Anthropomorphism,²⁷ also referred to as personification, as a literary device is important in many cultures. For instance, Jean de la Fontaine's *Fables* weave stories of anthropomorphized animals and plants. However, "[e]ven when a poem tells only of animals and plants, a human presence may lurk hidden, man surreptitiously intruding into the world of nature" (Slater 91). In this sense, works that offer depictions of animals and plants by means of anthropomorphism often mean to highlight certain characteristics of *human* nature by attributing

²⁷ In art and literature, anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human objects or entities, such as animals or plants.

human characteristics to non-humans. Although the use of anthropomorphism is not always a critique of animality, it is often a critique of humanity at the expense of the non-human world. Too often, anthropomorphism reveals aspects of human behavior at the expense of our conceptions of animals.

For this reason, many philosophers, including Derrida,²⁸ “have shown that once the anthropomorphic layer of assumption has been peeled back, there appears the abyss of incomprehension between humans and the non-human animals” (Park 150). I disagree with Park because anthropomorphism can in fact be a useful tool in the study of human and non-human relationships. Since the publication of the *Fables*, for example, we have learned more about animal behavior and the non-human environment. Furthermore, instead of focusing simply on animal *behavior*, we can study animal *emotions*, thanks to groundbreaking work such as Charles Darwin’s *The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.²⁹ Belief in the existence of an insurmountable barrier between the human and non-human worlds supports the idea that “modern philosophers have defined our relationships with animals around our insufficiency—what we don’t know about animals” (150). We cannot discount the possibility of learning even more about the animal world. Although we cannot fully understand the non-human experience, we can attempt to do so by means of anthropomorphism.

An ecocentric perspective encourages the use of anthropomorphism in the study of human *and* non-humans. A new approach insists on asking oneself whether representations of animals serve to bring humans and non-humans closer together or to increase the distance between the two (Weil 154). In other words, does the representation or presence of animals in literature serve to insist on the traditional nature/culture dichotomy or to oppose it? If we

²⁸ In *L’animal que donc je suis*, Derrida sees his cat as an other with whom he is in a relation of alterity.

²⁹ Published in 1872, the book addresses modes of emotional expression peculiar to particular species, including man.

maintain the idea that there exists an “abyssal difference”³⁰ between humans and non-humans, we risk applying Cartesian theory to human/non-human relations. By ignoring this “abyssal difference,” we embrace a holistic view of humans and non-humans, that there is a spectrum of emotions and behaviors that are shared by humans and non-humans. To deny the “abyssal difference” is to embrace evolutionary process, one aspect of which is that survival depends at least in part on cooperation between one species and another in order to engage in mutually beneficial symbiosis. Richard Nash articulates the importance of symbiosis: “Our observations of the physical world have for some time now been demonstrating that ecology matters in fundamental ways to evolution—that it simply does not work to imagine evolution of a species independent from its elaborate ecosystem” (93). As humans, we must not set ourselves apart from non-humans, since we share the same ecosystem, the same earth.

A modern ecocritical examination asserts that a more complicated model than subject-object or human-animal is necessary to account for the relation of people to their environment. The term entanglement,³¹ a concept based on Charles Darwin’s tangled bank metaphor in *On the Origin of Species*,³² is a better descriptor of such complicated models. Entanglement is about the cooperation and the interdependence of “species of all kinds, living or not,” when “[t]o be one is always to *become with many*” and through which “those who are to be in the world are

³⁰ This “abyssal difference” has other consequences; it may also serve to separate our cognition from the world and therefore promote the solipsism for which Descartes’s theory is famous: “A conscious being is characterized by its ability to cope with the environment—to perceive it, sometimes change it, and perhaps react on it. Surprisingly, most studies of the mind’s place in nature show little interest in such interaction. It is often implicitly assumed that the main questions about consciousness just concern the status of various entities, levels, etc., within the individual. [...] The predominant use of these notions in cognitive science can be traced back to Cartesianism” (Lagerspetz 5).

³¹ “Donna Haraway uses the word *entanglement* to speak of the inseparability of human and non-human worlds and of the “naturecultures” that have evolved as a result” (Weil xvii).

³² “It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us” (Darwin 297).

constituted in intra- and interaction” (Haraway 4). Instead of maintaining boundaries between human and non-human worlds, we must embrace the inextricable link between the two.

Displacement is an essential part of entanglement, in that physically and psychologically displacing ourselves as human beings allows us to realign our previously conceived notions of animality in the physical world and in our consciousness. By displacing emotions, ones we have established as inherent to humanity, to non-humans, we can better comprehend the animal world and empathize with it. Therefore, when used effectively, anthropomorphism can be useful in this process because “[w]hen nature is anthropomorphized, people should feel more capable of understanding, predicting, and effectively changing the natural world” (Tam 278). The role of animals in literature is therefore two-fold: it enables humans to study the importance of our relationship with non-humans, and it emphasizes the natural surroundings in which animals are found and to which they are attached.

Marie Darrieussecq’s works question boundaries between humans and non-humans. In the limitless space of literature, she formulates new realities, ones in which animals speak and humans attach to the non-human world. Her works are a study of the interdependency of humans and non-humans. This perspective, different from the reductionist ones with which we are all too familiar, is conducive to learning more about nature and its processes. We may, as Glen Love puts it, more fully embrace the non-human (23). Darrieussecq juxtaposes and even integrates the human and non-human worlds, putting into question any definition of humans in opposition to non-humans and presenting instead a definition of humans in collaboration with non-humans. Darrieussecq’s works place human beings *in* nature. She introduces “l’*éternelle* question de la

nature de l'homme, de sa place par rapport aux autres créatures de l'univers" (Cocula 154).³³

Through an ecocritical analysis of works such as those written by Marie Darrieussecq, one may more easily respond to what Susan McHugh calls the central question³⁴ of the twentieth century: "what is human?" (488). To answer this question, we must answer in terms of our relationship with the environment and non-humans.

For my final chapter, I have chosen to focus on *Truismes* and "Connaissance des singes" because these two works incorporate the concept of entanglement through the mechanism of hybridity. The word hybrid refers to the composition of two "heterogeneous sources" or elements of "different or incongruous kinds," and its application has been useful in discussing biology, race, identity, and multiculturalism ("Hybrid"). In the case of Darrieussecq's works, hybridity is manifest in the sow-woman narrator of *Truismes* and in the speaking chimpanzee, Marcel, in "Connaissance des singes." In addressing the confrontation of humanity and animality, Frédéric Boyer writes the following in his *avant-propos* to Jean Birnbaum's *Qui sont les animaux?*:

Nous avons tous un animal dans la tête. Ne cherchez pas. Depuis des millénaires que nous nous aimons, que nous nous détestons, que nous nous éliminons et que nous nous reproduisons, et surtout que nous nous intéressons complaisamment, presque exclusivement à nous-mêmes, nous le faisons avec un animal dans la tête.

(11)

³³ Cocula is referring here to Vercors's *Les Animaux dénaturés* (1952), an important novel for anyone studying the place of animals in the modern French novel. Vercors questions the very definition of human beings, and how they differentiate from animals.

³⁴ The central question in the 18th century was *What is Enlightenment?* This was the title of an essay by German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who addressed the necessity of developing one's own autonomous intellect rather than a dependence on authority, such as the Church or monarchy. In the 19th century, Romanticism emphasized expression through aesthetic experience. While intellect and rationalization were the foci of the Age of Enlightenment, intuition and emotion became central to Romanticism. The 20th century brings about an intellectual and aesthetic examination of humans *with* nature.

Darrieussecq illustrates this in a more literal sense, since not only does the narrator of *Truismes* have an animal in mind, at times she *is* the animal. She is the embodiment of physical and psychological anthropomorphism, in that her hybridity provides a means of ecocritical—or “zoocritical”³⁵--and social commentary about the human and non-human world by attributing human characteristics to a sow.

Truismes fits into the ecological movement that speaks for the “other,” the one that has no voice and no subjectivity in our society (King 20). The narration takes place in a dystopic future where the subjugation of women is a part of an ultra-conservative French society. Since femininity is not seen positively by the misogynistic society, the protagonist becomes a “Wild Human,” “part-human, part-animal,” a “semi-bestial being” that lives between the human and the natural world” (Ferrer-Medina 67). The reader is aware of the protagonist’s animality at the beginning of this passage, where the protagonist says, “je devenais rougeaude, insensiblement les clients prenaient des habitudes fermières avec moi” (*Truismes* 27). She is already objectified in her work as a prostitute at a perfumery that serves as a front for the business’s illegal sexual activities, but her objectivity is emphasized with her transformation and her clients’ resulting treatment of her. Because of her “otherness,” at this point, she is invisible as a woman, since her clients do not even acknowledge her: “Ils ne se rendaient compte de rien, trop occupés d’eux-mêmes et de leur plaisir” (27). She is only the object of their desire.

This theme becomes all the more complex in Darrieussecq’s treatment of it, since she does not just study the boundaries between human nature and animal nature but also the relationships between men and women. She uses “pig symbolisms to elucidate the devastating difficulties women face when attempting to combat discriminatory social constructions through

³⁵ “[Z]oocriticism [...] is concerned not just with animal *representation* but also with animal *rights*” (Huggan and Tiffin 17-18).

hybrid pig-women references” (Yang 2). She exposes the paradoxes of a misogynistic society by describing an unrealistic but resonant situation. She addresses an integral theory of the ecological movement that any faulty structure incapable of resolving its issues will either disintegrate or undergo a metamorphosis (Morin 115), just as the narrator in *Truismes* does.

Truismes may scandalize its readers. The plot is not intended for the light-hearted, a fact that the narrator is quick to point out from the beginning: “Je sais à quel point cette histoire pourra semer de trouble et d’angoisse, à quel point elle perturbera de gens” (*Truismes* 11). After all, she is a prostitute, and others frequently mistreat her. Katie Jones argues that disgust is an acceptable emotion for the reader:

[F]irstly, the narrator is a source of disgust for others, as both a sexually active woman and an animal; secondly, she also feels physical disgust as a symptom of her transformation (for example vomiting at the sight of pork products); and thirdly, disgust figures as a more widespread framework structuring social hierarchies. (163)

While I agree with the first and third reasons for feeling disgust when reading this novel, I do not accept that the narrator’s vomiting indicates disgust with herself. I will argue that her hybridity is emancipatory both physically and psychologically. While the narrator is at first alarmed by her condition, she eventually finds that her animal nature and subsequent attachment to the natural environment bring psychological well-being as well as physical liberation from her misogynistic society.

Our narrator stresses the urgency of her situation because she has completely metamorphosed into a sow: “Mais il faut que j’écrive ce livre sans plus tarder, parce que si on me retrouve dans l’état où je suis maintenant, personne ne voudra ni écouter ni me croire. Or

tenir un stylo me donne de terribles crampes” (*Truismes* 11). She realizes that her porcine condition is not conducive to conveying her story, so she writes it as quickly and legibly as possible while she still can, struggling with her hooves. She continues saying, “J’espère que l’éditeur qui aura la patience de déchiffrer cette écriture de cochon voudra bien prendre en considération les efforts terribles que je fais pour écrire le plus lisiblement possible” (11). She writes as a pig, but she also provides the first clue about her mistreatment as a sow. Typically employed as a term to denigrate those with illegible handwriting, the narrator’s use of “écriture de cochon” attributes a literal sense to the expression. It is important to note that the narrator is indeed writing as a pig, not as a woman, providing the first clue about her emancipation as it relates to her metamorphosis. Her tone is apologetic: “Je supplie le lecteur, [...] de me pardonner ces indécentes paroles [...] et je prie toutes les personnes qui pourraient s’en trouver choquées de bien vouloir m’en excuser” (12). Her “écriture de cochon” may also refer to the “indecent” content of the novel.

In regards to her physical transformation, the narrator begins her story with a description of her porcine shape: “J’avais pris un peu de poids, peut-être deux kilos, car je m’étais mise à avoir constamment faim; et ces deux kilos s’étaient harmonieusement répartis sur toute ma personne, je le voyais dans le miroir” (*Truismes* 12-13). After experiencing physical symptoms, the narrator understands what is happening to her. She insists that it is not from any effort on her part that her body is changing: “Sans aucun sport, sans activité particulière, ma chair était plus ferme, plus lisse, plus rebondie qu’avant. Je vois bien aujourd’hui que cette prise de poids et cette formidable qualité de ma chair ont sans doute été les tout premiers symptômes” (13). The use of the word *ferme* is a play on words, since it can refer to the narrator’s firmer skin but can also allude to a farm. The adjectives *lisse* (smooth) and *rebondie* (rounded) can refer to flesh or

meat, underlining the ambiguity of her current state of being and her role as a commodity for clients and Honoré.

When the narrator first mentions her boyfriend, Honoré, she also talks about her new figure: “J’avais rencontré Honoré le matin où pour le cinquième printemps consécutif j’avais voulu ressortir du placard mon vieux maillot de bain. C’est là, en l’essayant, que je m’étais aperçue que mes cuisses étaient devenues roses et fermes, musclées et rondes en même temps” (*Truismes* 14). In other words, the very morning she meets Honoré, she notices her physical transformation. Honoré will focus on her body rather than her emotional well-being, and will subjugate her. This, as many ecofeminists have noted, is the common lot of women and animals.³⁶

The manner in which her clients at the perfumery treat her is directly related to her metamorphosis: “Mais les clients continuaient à me trouver terriblement sexy, c’est tout ce qui comptait. Ils faisaient même la queue” (*Truismes* 24). Again, there is a play on words with the word *queue*, which can refer to the clients lining up to engage her services or to a new aspect of her porcine figure: a pigtail. Her boss congratulates her on her success. Once again, she makes it clear that her success is directly related to her physical attributes resulting from her metamorphosis:

Il est vrai que l’uniforme du travail, une blouse blanche sérieuse comme dans les cliniques esthétiques, était seyant, coupé très près du corps, avec un profond décolleté dans le dos et sur les seins. Or c’est à cette même époque exactement que mes seins ont pris du galbé comme mes cuisses. C’en était arrivé à un point où j’avais dû abandonner mes bonnets B, les armatures me blessaient. (18)

³⁶ “[A] central reason for woman’s oppression is her association with the despised nature [ecologists] are so concerned about. The hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing” (King 18).

This particular passage accentuates the sexualization of her body. She is more desirable because of her larger her animality. She is like a commodity, which her clients line up to buy.

While her clients stand in line to have a quick sexual encounter with her, our narrator's daily habits change to reflect her progressively more animal-like condition:

Non, c'était juste qu'il faisait pour ainsi dire toujours soleil dans ma tête, même dans le métro, même dans la boue de ce printemps-là, même dans les squares poussiéreux où j'allais manger mon sandwich le midi. Et pourtant ce n'était pas une vie facile, objectivement. Il fallait que je me lève tôt, mais curieusement, dès le chant du coq, enfin dès ce qui y correspond en ville, je m'éveillais avec facilité, toute seule, je n'avais plus besoin ni de Tamestat le soir ni d'Excidrill le matin alors qu'Honoré et toutes les personnes autour de moi continuaient à s'en gaver.

(Truismes 20)

Unlike the humans around her, she does not have to rely on medications to regulate her sleep cycle. She wakes at dawn with the rooster. Despite the mud and dust, the square is a refuge for her.

Another physical effect of her transformation is the cessation of her menstrual cycle. She says, "Mes règles ne revenaient toujours pas" (*Truismes 22*). Although one of her clients suggests that she might be pregnant, there is more evidence to support an estrus cycle:

Les clients essayaient parfois des choses que je n'aimais pas, et en temps normal cela aurait dû me déprimer; mais là non, j'étais gaie comme un pinson. [...] [Une cliente] m'a dit que c'était sans doute hormonal. [...] On doit le sentir sur son corps, une odeur de maternité en quelque sorte, et moi qui étais devenue si sensible aux odeurs je ne sentais rien de ce genre sur ma peau. (20-24)

In this same passage, she references her inability to eat pork: “Je ne pouvais plus manger de sandwich au jambon, cela me donnait des nausées, une fois même j’avais vomi au square” (22). Instead, she has a taste for fresh vegetables and apples: “Il fallait voir comment je les mangeais, ces pommes. Je n’avais jamais assez de temps au square pour bien les croquer, pour bien les mâcher, ça faisait plein de jus dans ma bouche, ça craquait sous mes dents, ça avait un goût!” (22). Although her time in the square is limited, the narrator expresses her delight at satisfying her new craving for apples.

The narrator’s taste for apples is significant. The apple is often a forbidden or mystical fruit in religion and mythology. For instance, it has come to symbolize the forbidden fruit for Eve in the garden of Eden in the Bible: “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’” (*NRSV: Catholic Edition*, Genesis 2.16-17). Of course, Eve does not heed God’s warning: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate” (2.6-7). Our narrator has found her own temporary garden of Eden in the square, where she eats the forbidden fruit and gains knowledge, consciousness, of good and evil. Her growing attachment to nature gives her a new awareness of her surroundings and the consequences of her actions.

Her weight gain and appetite for new foods could be attributed to pregnancy, but after going to a clinic, she deduces that her symptoms are not due to that:

J’ai un peu mal au ventre, aujourd’hui encore, de tout ce qu’ils m’ont fait à la clinique. Je suis restée femelle malgré tout. Et ce qui me fait dire, encore

maintenant, que je n'étais pas enceinte, c'est que presque tout de suite après la prétendue fausse couche mes règles se sont de nouveau arrêtées, et les mêmes symptômes, la faim, les dégoûts, les rondeurs, ont persévéré. (*Truismes* 24)

The similarities between pregnancy and her symptoms call for an ecofeminist reading. The narrator's use of the word *femelle* accentuates her hybridity and her mistreatment as a woman, since the word can be used both to refer to a female animal, as well as a pejorative term, "bitch," for a woman. Ecofeminists say that women, like nature (including animals, in this case), are victims of male domination. The patriarchal system is founded upon the appropriation of procreation and fertility. They also speak of an interconnected web of life that encompasses all of the earth's residents, human and non-human: "Il s'agit de ne plus considérer les individus comme des atomes isolés, mais dans leur capacité à nouer des relations: une telle éthique serait [...] caractéristique de l'écologie (nous faisons partie d'un tout dont les composantes sont interdépendantes)" (Larrère 108-09). Interconnectedness is a response to patriarchy because there are no hierarchies in interconnected systems. However, it is clear in *Truismes* that this interconnectedness, or interdependency, between humans and non-humans cannot exist in a misogynistic and xenophobic society.

At first, the narrator is disgusted with herself: "Ce n'est qu'à partir de ce moment où j'ai pris un peu trop de poids, avant même que les clients ne s'en rendent compte, que j'ai commencé à me dégoûter moi-même" (*Truismes* 26). However, her psychological well-being improves as her transformation progresses. She becomes more defiant, conscious, and thoughtful.

Paradoxically, she becomes stronger as a thinking subject as she falls into animal subjectivity:

Je crois d'ailleurs que ces nouvelles idées et le reste, c'était lié à l'absence de règles ; même si je gardais toujours cette curieuse bonne humeur, cette bonne

santé, je supportais de plus en plus mal certaines lubies des clients, j'avais pour ainsi dire un avis sur tout. [...] [J]e suis bien contente d'être débarrassée des clients. (26)

The phrase *absence de règles*, or a lack of “rules,” accentuates her defiance as well as the lack of an important aspect of her femininity: menstruation. While she describes herself as having an opinion about everything, it is due to her lack of menstruation. From an ecofeminist perspective, it calls to mind the correlation between women and rationality, a connection based upon the female menstrual cycle,³⁷ the length of which coincides with the lunar cycle. However, it is only as a pig that she develops an intellect and human identity. This suggestion that her psychological well-being relates to female human biological characteristics indicates the severe mistreatment and lack of self-worth she has experienced as a woman. She is able to think more clearly as a sow because her thoughts as a woman are neither encouraged nor tolerated in her misogynistic society.

The narrator's descriptions of her physical appearance emphasize her sow-like qualities:

Encore un mois ou deux, et je ne pourrais plus du tout entrer dans ma blouse, mon ventre débordait, et déjà ce n'était plus si excitant que ça aux bretelles et au décolleté, la chair ressortait trop. [J]ai eu droit à des fonds de poudre et je m'en suis mis tous les matins, ça atténuait un peu mon côté fermière à joues rouges.
[...] Mais je grossissais de partout, pas seulement du ventre. Et mon ventre

³⁷ The word “menstruation” is etymologically related to “moon.” The terms “menstruation” and “menses” are derived from the Latin *mensis* (month) and to the roots of the English words *month* and *moon*. The term lunar effect refers to the belief that there is a correlation between specific stages of the Earth's lunar cycle and behavior in animals, including humans, that cannot simply be explained by variation in light levels. In their meta-analysis of 37 studies entitled “Much Ado about the Full Moon,” James Rotton and I.W. Kelly concluded that the lunar effect is unfounded and that lunar phases do not affect human behavior.

ressemblait pas du tout à celui d'une femme enceinte, ce n'était pas un beau globe rond mais des bourrelets que j'avais. (*Truismes* 29)

She tries to maintain her womanly appearance by applying makeup, but it does not completely eliminate her “agricultural” characteristics.

As her breasts and hips become larger, her transformation initially makes her more desirable: “C'était maintenant mon derrière le plus beau. [...] Ils s'intéressaient de plus en plus à mon derrière, c'était le seul problème. [...] [J]e veux dire que mes clients avaient de drôles d'envies, des idées tout à fait contre nature si vous voyez ce que je veux dire” (*Truismes* 36). The *bourrelets* and her *côté fermière* emphasize her growing attachment to nature as part of her metamorphosis and account for another opposition: industrial versus agricultural (or Paris versus the French countryside, in this instance). She consumes nature, eating flowers, as others try to consume her, literally and figuratively. Since her metamorphosis would free her from her life as a prostitute, as an object of desire, her clients are vehemently opposed to it: “[J]e suis navrée de le dire, les clients sont devenus des chiens. Toutefois j'en ai perdu quelques-uns qui semblaient regretter l'ancien style de l'établissement et mal supporter la métamorphose” (38). The clients' behavior resembles that of a dog, eager to consume the narrator's sow flesh. Yet she finds strength and pride in her animality:

Dans les miroirs je me trouvais belle... [...] Il y avait comme de la fierté dans mes yeux et dans mon corps. [...] Il y avait des clients tellement affolants que j'aurais pu les manger. Et ceux qui persévéraient dans leurs anciennes habitudes, [...] ceux qui voulaient encore du guindé et de l'effarouché et du derrière, je les remettais à leur place il fallait voir comment. [...] Il se passait en moi quelque chose de si extraordinaire que même la séance de remise en selle que m'a fait

subir le directeur de la chaîne m'a à peine arraché quelques cris. Il me trouvait trop délurée maintenant, j'avais pris un mauvais genre, les *chattes en chaleur* ce n'était pas pour la maison. (38-39)

This passage supports my assertion that the narrator is not disgusted with herself for the entirety of the novel. Instead, she finds herself beautiful. She has control over her clients, so much so that the director reprimands her for her behavior. Likened to a cat in heat, it is evident that her sexual pleasure is of no concern to her clients or the director. Such insolence will not be tolerated.

At this point in her transformation, she is not submissive. Her duty is to fulfill the sexual desires and whims of her clients. The director wants her to be “une *petite fille* sage et docile et qui garde les yeux baissés sans un murmure,” but she has another idea: “[J]e prenais moi-même l'initiative” (*Truismes* 39-40). There are even some religious fundamentalists who show up to correct her behavior, “qui venaient en groupe pour me *corriger*, disaient-ils, et ils n'avaient que le mot *malheureuse* à la bouche” (44). The irony of the situation, the fact that the men try to correct the narrator's behavior instead of vice versa, recalls the symbolism of the apple in the square. Based on the passage from Genesis, women are the essence of sin, but here it is the *men* mistreating the narrator who incarnate evil.

She is “malheureuse,” but not in the sense that the fundamentalists mean the word. She is unhappy. Her psychological well-being is linked to her affinity with nature, which she gradually develops: “[C]e que j'ai du mal à avouer c'est que les fleurs, je les mangeais. [...] C'était leur parfum, sans doute. Ça me montait à la tête, toute cette verdure, et la vue de toutes les couleurs. C'était la nature du dehors qui entrait dans la parfumerie, ça m'émouvait pour ainsi dire” (*Truismes* 35). Her connection to nature is physical and psychological. For her, the natural environment is not simply a landscape. She is constantly hungry: “J'aurais mangé des

épluchures, des fruits blets, des glands, des vers de terre” (51), but this hunger, which I consider to be figurative as well as literal, persists because she still has not escaped to a natural environment. Instead, others continue to consume her and mistreat her, triggering vivid nightmares:

Je voyais Honoré ouvrir la bouche sur moi, comme pour m’embrasser, et me mordre sauvagement dans le lard. Je voyais les clients faire mine de manger les fleurs de mon décolleté et planter leurs dents dans mon cou. Je voyais le directeur arracher ma blouse et hurler de rire en découvrant six tétines au lieu de mes deux seins (52).

Her metamorphosis continues, and her body becomes increasingly more sow-like. G.K. Chesterton argues that “[t]he actual lines of a pig (I mean of a really fat pig) are among the loveliest and most luxuriant in nature; the pig has the same great curves, swift and heavy, which we see in rushing water or in rolling cloud... [...] he has that fuller, subtler, and more universal kind of shapeliness...” (G.K. Chesterton; quoted in Sillar & Meyler 1). Her new body emulates rushing water or a rolling cloud in two senses. Physically, she has become overweight and curvaceous, but her transformation also occurs in stages, coming in waves. Her body follows a new rhythm: “Je me suis mal habituée à ce nouveau rythme de mon corps. J’avais mes règles tous les quatre mois environ, précédées juste avant d’une courte période d’*excitation sexuelle*, pour appeler un chat un chat. [...] Je m’embrouillais dans mes états, dans les moments où il fallait que je simule ou que je dissimule” (*Truismes* 45). She still fluctuates between two states and between liberation and control. She cannot fully express her newfound sexual excitement. Since she is still a prostitute, she must conceal her identity, pretend to be someone else or fake sexual excitement with certain clients.

As a hybrid being, closer to nature than her fellow citizens, the narrator cannot tolerate unnatural products, like the creams she applies in a desperate attempt to treat her skin and third breast: “En plus de développer une profonde graisse sous-cutanée ma peau devenait allergique à tout, même aux produits les plus chers. [...] [J]e me couvrais de plaques rouges, et [...] j’avais beau passer toutes les crèmes du monde sur mon troisième téton, rien n’y faisait, il ne voulait pas disparaître (*Truismes* 46-47). In addition to growing a third breast, her body endures other changes:

Mes cheveux se hérissaient comme du crin et tombaient par poignées, ils devenaient difficiles à discipliner. Je mettais des baumes, je me faisais des mises en plis cache-misère... [...] J’avais toujours des éruptions cutanées... [...] Mes yeux dans le miroir me semblaient maintenant plus petits et plus rapprochés qu’avant... [...] Le pire, c’étaient les poils. [...] Mes dents étaient très solides aussi, je n’aurais jamais cru ça. (48-51)

The choice of vocabulary leaves no mystery as to her current state of animality. She now has “du crin,” or animal hair, unruly and resistant to human treatments, such as perms. Why is the animal hair the worst part of her transformation? It is not easily removed like human hair, which women are expected to shave. She is less desirable to her clients if she does not conform to their idea of female beauty.

After noticing these drastic physical changes, she is finally unable to stand up straight for several hours one evening:

Quand j’ai enfin réussi à bouger, cela a fait comme un arrachement en moi, comme si l’usage de ma volonté demandait de terribles efforts à la fois à mon cerveau et à mon corps. J’ai voulu me mettre debout et curieusement mon corps

s'est comme qui dirait retourné sous moi. Je me suis retrouvée à quatre pattes.

(*Truismes* 54)

As a human, she is an object of desire for others, but as a sow, she gains the desire to act on her own behalf. She gains a sense of self. Her initial reaction is fear: "C'était effrayant, [et] [c]'est le pire cauchemar que j'ai jamais fait de ma vie. [...] J'étais tellement bouleversée par tout ce qui venait de se passer que j'ai ressenti le besoin de me regarder dans la glace, de me reconnaître en quelque sorte" (54-55). She tries to recognize her *human* self and finds instead her *animal* self:

La peau de mon dos était rouge, velue, et il y avait ces étranges taches grisâtres qui s'arrondissaient le long de l'échine. Mes cuisses si fermes et si bien galbées autrefois s'effondraient sous un amas de cellulite. Mon derrière était gros et lisse comme un énorme bourgeon.[...]. Le téton au-dessus de mon sein droit s'était développé en une vraie mamelle, et il y avait trois autres taches sur le devant de mon corps, une au-dessus de mon sein gauche, et deux autres, bien parallèles, juste en dessous. J'ai compté et recompté, on ne pouvait pas s'y tromper, cela faisait bien six, dont trois seins déjà formés. (55)

Because of this change in state, she is a sexual being. She mainly describes her breasts and her buttocks, which resemble a "bourgeon," or bud, which could suggest a large breast or even a large clitoris.

She quickly finds strength in her new state: "Enfin à nouveau il y a eu comme un dé clic dans mon cerveau et dans mon corps, ma volonté s'est en quelque sorte roulée en boule dans mes reins, j'ai poussé, j'ai réussi à me mettre debout. [...] Le jour se levait. J'ai été prise d'une soudaine impulsion" (*Truismes* 54-55). Her impulse is to find companionship in someone who would understand her animal condition, other animals for example: "J'ai acheté un joli cochon

d'Inde aux yeux verts, une femelle, les mâles me dégoûtaient un peu avec leurs grosses trucs. Et puis j'ai acheté un chien. [...]. Je cherchais un compagnon, quelqu'un qui me comprenne et me console, pas quelqu'un qui m'exhibe comme un phénomène de cirque" (56). This is further proof that our narrator seeks to understand her female nature as it relates to her animality. She desires to understand what being female entails without being put on display or mistreated by others. Instead, she puts masculinity on display and criticizes it. She modifies the noun "trucs," normally masculine, with a feminine adjective, "grosses," to symbolize her reference to the male guinea pig's testicles,³⁸ an aspect of his anatomy that she finds disgusting. When she returns home to her apartment with Honoré, he quickly rejects her pet dog: "Je n'ai pas regretté le petit chien quand Honoré l'a jeté par la fenêtre, seulement les sous qu'il m'a coûté" (56). She has not found companionship with the dog, but this is perhaps due to her analogy between her clients and dogs.

Honoré continues to degrade her. When they go to Aqualand, the narrator says, "Dans la cabine Honoré a fait un effort sur lui-même et il m'a sodomisée. Je crois qu'il ne pouvait même plus penser à mon vagin" (*Truismes* 58). Although sodomy is generally defined as anal sex between people, it can also refer to sexual activity between a human and non-human. During the sexual act, the narrator looks at her own vagina:

[J]'avais pour ainsi dire une vue imprenable sur ma vulve, et je trouvais qu'elle dépassait étrangement; je voudrais pas vous infliger trop de détails mais en quelque sorte les grandes lèvres pendaient un peu plus que la normale et c'est pour ça que je pouvais si bien les voir. Dans *Femme femme* ou *Ma beauté ma santé*,³⁹ je ne sais plus, j'avais lu que le plat préféré des Romains, et le plus raffiné, c'était la vulve de truie

³⁸ In French, slang words for testicles are feminine: *les boules*, *les bourses*, *les couilles*.

³⁹ *Femme femme* and *Ma beauté ma santé* are fictional magazines, but they are probably inspired by magazines such as *Femme actuelle*, with articles about beauty, love, health, etc.

farcié. Le magazine s'insurgeait contre cette pratique culinaire⁴⁰ aussi cruelle que machiste envers les animaux. (58)

As Honoré sodomizes her, it is no coincidence that she thinks about another cruel, chauvinist act against female animals. The narrator says, “Je n'avais pas d'opinion sur la question, je n'ai jamais eu d'opinions bien précises en politique” (59). Our naïve narrator may not express political ideas, but she has adequately conveyed her discontent with the misogynistic society.

The reader may deduce that it is the narrator who is to be Honoré's delicacy. During their dinner at Aqualand, he allows the narrator to eat as much as she wants, “et pourtant ça coûtait rudement cher” (*Truismes* 59). Honoré gets up from the table before dessert is served and invites the narrator to return to the dressing room where he previously sodomized her. This time, he offers her a bathing suit “luxueux, très échancré” (60). His consumption of her is therefore physical, visual, and psychological. When he demands that she put on the bathing suit, she says, “Moi, je ne voulais pas; mais comment refuser? Le maillot de bain a tout de suite craqué” (60). Despite her docility and willingness to comply with Honoré's whims, he is so furious that he pushes her in the water: “C'était le moment des grosses vagues. Le contact de l'eau ça a fait tout à coup comme une onde de terreur en moi” (60).

A young boy reaches out his hand to help her out of the water, but he lets go of her while laughing:

[I]l m'a traitée de grosse vache. Je me suis mise à pleurer. [...] [I]l y avait toute une bande de jeunes garçons à m'embêter, entraînés par celui qui m'avait insultée. Ils tiraient sur la dernière bretelle de mon maillot et voulaient me forcer à lâcher les

⁴⁰ “The Romans, who cured hams and sausages, [...] had recipes for delicacies we no longer appreciate, wombs, vulvas, and udders. *Porcus* also meant cunt, [...] [and] the womb and vulva of a sow were once among the most esteemed pork delicacies” (Riley 271).

bribes loqueteuses qui couvraient encore mon derrière. Cela faisait un joyeux bazar autour de moi, je vous jure. (*Truismes* 61)

This menacing band of young men rip off her tattered swimsuit and rape her, confirming, in Honoré's mind, his opinion of her: “[I]l m’a dit que j’étais vraiment au-dessous de tout, que je l’avais bien trompé, que j’étais une sale traînée. Ce sont ses mots” (61). It is ironic that he should call her corrupt, as he has been one of many to defile her without concern for her well-being. “Le dernier mot qu’a eu Honoré en partant c’est de dire aux gamins qu’il fallait m’apprendre à vivre” (61). As a woman and as a sow, others judge the narrator’s life in this misogynistic society by her indecent acts and submission.

During a visit to the square, the narrator notices a photograph that has been glued to a new advertisement on a bench. She provides a meaningful description of herself based on this image:

C’est-à-dire que ce que j’ai cru voir d’abord, c’est un cochon habillé dans cette belle robe rouge, un cochon femelle en quelque sorte, une truie si vous y tenez, avec dans les yeux ce regard de chien battu que j’ai quand je suis fatiguée. [...] [E]t que cette impression de groin, et d’oreilles un peu proéminentes, et de petits yeux et tout ça, n’était due qu’à l’atmosphère campagnarde qui se dégageait de l’affiche, et surtout à ces kilos en trop que j’avais. (*Truismes* 73-74)

She tries to blame her appearance on the rustic atmosphere of the poster, but she finally recognizes herself and decides to make a change: “Alors j’ai pris la ferme décision de maigrir, et de me ressaisir un peu. Cette photo m’a aidée à me lever. Cette photo m’a aidée à comprendre qu’il fallait que je me lave, que je quitte ce banc, et que je reprenne les choses en main” (74).

However, her determination to change is short-lived. After walking to a church, where she feels uneasy and “déplacée,” she finds it increasingly difficult to walk like a human: “J’ai replié mes jambes sous moi pour avoir moins mal au dos et j’ai creusé la poitrine. Je sentais mes seins pendre, ils étaient lourds et douloureux. J’avais du mal à les porter, c’était peut-être ça qui me donnait si mal au dos quand je marchais” (*Truismes* 77). Her attempt to return to the society and confess to a priest in the church does not have the desired result, since the priest, like so many others, refuses to help her. The weight of her breasts corresponds to the figurative weight of the misogynistic society on her overall well-being. It is a heavy burden to bear to try to exist as a woman in such a society.

When she returns to the square that she loves, she sees a dog: “Un chien s’est approché de moi pour pisser et j’ai senti qu’il voulait me parler pour ainsi dire, et puis il s’est ravisé et a rejoint prudemment son maître” (*Truismes* 80). When the dog leaves, she describes her own acute, emotional reaction: “J’ai senti la solitude au creux de la poitrine, là, avec violence, avec terreur, avec jouissance; je ne sais pas si vous pouvez comprendre tout ça en même temps” (80-81). This emotionally charged scene demonstrates the importance of anthropomorphism as a means of empathizing with nature. “[F]or people to show concern toward nature, a belief that the natural world’s emotions and cognitions parallel humans’ is needed” (Tam, Lee, and Chao 514). The narrator challenges the reader to understand her feelings, but anthropomorphism in this case allows the reader to more easily consider her feelings and their significance as part of her transformation.

Although her emotions as a sow allow for empathy on the part of the reader, they also differentiate her from the rest of the city’s inhabitants because of her attachment to nature: “Il n’y avait plus rien qui me retenait dans la ville avec les gens. [...] Je rêvais de fougères et de

terre humide” (*Truismes* 81). She is comfortable in her animal state: “Mon corps me tenait chaud. J’étais bien. Quand le soleil s’est levé j’ai senti la lumière couler le long de mon dos et ça a fait du jaune vif dans ma tête. Je me suis dressée sur mes pattes. J’ai secoué la tête et étiré les jarrets” (81). The sun’s touch is like a caress. It reassures her and gives her life.

She cannot stay in the city. Her time in the square is temporary since her presence there frightens visitors. One such visitor is a young woman with a baby. When the lady screams and runs away, leaving her diaper bag behind, the narrator searches through the belongings and profits from her time in the park:

J’ai mâché quelques jouets en plastique pour me faire les dents, et puis j’ai cassé des petits pots pour voir si c’était bon. Ce n’était pas mauvais, ça m’a fait des protéines. [...] J’ai roté et je me suis assise par terre. [...] Et puis j’ai vu une flaque, sous le banc. Une belle flaque avec de la boue bien tiède sous le soleil et de l’eau de pluie fraîchement tombée. Je me suis allongée dans la flaque et j’ai étiré les pattes, ça m’a fait un bien fou aux articulations. Ensuite je me suis roulée plusieurs fois dedans, c’était délicieux, ça faisait du frais sur ma peau irritée et ça détendait tous mes muscles, ça me massait le dos et les hanches. Je me suis à moitié assoupie. J’étais toute parfumée à la boue et à l’humus. (*Truismes* 84)

Now it is the earth that caresses her. The verticality of the sun and the horizontality of the earth shape nature’s holistic embrace of the narrator. Her interest in the newborn’s belongings reinforces her own early stage of development as a sow. Her new life is marked by this pivotal moment, during which she is satisfied to roll around the mud in the park. She is at one with nature. However, her time there is cut short by the return of the young woman, her baby, and a

policeman. She flees the park and finally realizes her predicament; she must leave the city for the countryside: “Je voulais partir à la campagne, je sentais que j’y serais mieux” (86).

When SAMU-SDF captures her, humans maintain a physical distance from her: “Les gendarmes n’ont plus voulu me toucher [...]. Personne ne voulait s’occuper de moi. Je ne pouvais plus du tout marcher debout et je dormais dans mon caca” (*Truismes* 95-96). However, she finds solidarity with the others held by SAMU-SDF: “Je suis devenue copine avec pas mal de monde. Personne ne parlait là-dedans, tout le monde criait, chantait, bavait, mangeait à quatre pattes et ce genre de choses” (96). She is with another marginalized group that has been persecuted: the insane. Her insane companions resemble animals, underlining the ambiguity of the species boundary. John Passmore provides an explanation for the tendency to marginalize certain human beings:

We can argue with human beings, expostulate with them, try to alter their courses by remonstrance or by entreaty. No doubt there are human beings of whom this is not true: the hopelessly insane. And just for that reason there has been a tendency to exclude them from humanity, in some societies as supernatural beings, in others as mere animals: old Bedlam was, indeed, a kind of zoo. (129-130)

The human beings held by the SAMU-SDF are in fact in a cage: “Le problème, c’est que les grilles étaient fermées par des chaînes, et qu’on n’avait plus rien à manger” (96). The narrator is not the only one to question the species boundary. Other “sub-humans,” such as the insane, question it too because Edgar’s government is not only misogynist, it is racist and ableist. This passage highlights the complexity and difficulty in interrogating the species boundary in a society that mistreats animals, as well as marginalizes certain groups of humans.

The narrator maintains her animal state: “Moi, tous les matins, je fourrais mon museau dans les panses, c’est ce qu’il y avait de meilleur. Ça fouissait et ça grouillait sous la dent, ensuite je me faisais rôtir au soleil” (*Truismes* 96). Her affinity for other marginalized humans and her continued fondness for what exists of the natural environment in this space emphasize her need to leave the city.

When she meets Yvan, her werewolf lover, she finally finds someone who accepts her as a hybrid being: “Il m’avait montré comment adapter mon propre rythme aux fluctuations de la Lune [...]. [L]e tout était d’y mettre une grande volonté. Quand j’en avais assez d’être truie, [...] je faisais des exercices de respiration, je me concentrais au maximum” (*Truismes* 121). In other words, it is *her* will that matters. She may choose how to live. She says, “C’est encore ce que j’essaie de faire aujourd’hui pour écrire mieux, pour mieux tenir mon stylo[...]. De toute façon, maintenant, qu’est-ce que ça peut bien me faire d’être un cochon ? Je suis très bien comme ça” (121-22). She says that merely thinking of returning to the city makes her tired. She is happy with Yvan: “[Il] m’aimait autant en être humain qu’en truie. Il disait que c’était formidable d’avoir deux modes d’être, deux femelles pour le prix d’une en quelque sorte, qu’est-ce qu’on rigolait” (122).

The narrator experiences acceptance and togetherness with Yvan. For a time, they are content and one with nature:

Les journées se passaient délicieusement. A l’aube, pendant que toute la ville dormait encore, nous étions réveillés par le croisement chaud et froid du soleil et de la Lune, et par le souffle des étoiles qui plongent de l’autre côté du monde. Yvan me léchait derrière les oreilles et se postait à la fenêtre pour humer l’air frais, et puis il me pressait mon jus de patate, je paressais encore au lit. Nous nous

faisons des câlins. Ensuite quand le ciel était entièrement doré nous prenions le soleil sous la véranda, nous nous vautreions, et puis dans la journée on faisait plusieurs siestes, heureux comme des bêtes. (*Truismes* 125-126)

Although she is happy with Yvan, this passage indicates that her hybrid existence is at a turning point, like the juncture of the sun and moon during her waking hours. It is no coincidence that she and Yvan stay awake while the city sleeps. It is important to note that the narrator stays in bed while Yvan breathes in the “fresh” air. Why doesn’t our narrator, who has previously expressed her own desire for nature breathe in this fresh air? The air is polluted, and the narrator contents herself with reveling in the sunlight with Yvan, “happy like animals.” This expression emphasizes Yvan’s and the narrator’s hybridity, since “animaux” can refer to animals as well as a person who is beastly, embodying the characteristics of an animal.

Yvan demonstrates the complexity of hybridity, in that he is gentle and loving with the narrator, but he is also ferocious because he murders citizens of Paris to satisfy his hunger:

Du coup on ne s’est pas méfiés quand ils ont commencé à parler de la série de meurtres sur les quais. On se disait qu’avec le désordre qui régnait, personne ne s’intéresserait à quelques cadavres de plus, mais ces ânes de Citoyens ne se débrouillaient pas si mal, ils avaient organisé une police terriblement efficace. Je pense que c’est la façon dont les cadavres étaient égorgés qui les intriguait tellement. (*Truismes* 126)

After all, Yvan is still part *human*, part *man*. His ferocity as a werewolf resembles the bestiality of the narrator’s clients. Just as they treat the narrator like an animal, so Yvan kills his victims in a beastly manner, butchering them as one would butcher meat.

It is difficult for him to suppress his appetite: “Yvan s’est mis à tourner en rond. Il ne me parlait plus” (*Truismes* 127). The narrator never becomes accustomed to his transformations to a werewolf⁴¹ because of his subsequent ferocity. When the citizens become concerned about the number of dead bodies found in the Seine and the manner in which they were killed, Yvan has to find another way to try to alleviate his hunger. Home-delivered pizza is the answer; the narrator eats the pizza while Yvan eats the deliverymen.

The television program, *Un seul être vous manque*,⁴² broadcasts an episode about the pair’s murders. During the broadcast, the host insists on the narrator’s liaison avec Yvan: “Il a dit que les riches nous mangeaient sur la tête, qu’ils ne nous laisseraient que la peau sur les os et les yeux pour pleurer” (*Truismes* 131). After the broadcast, it is the first time that the narrator and Yvan argue:

Quand Yvan a réussi à se calmer on a essayé de parler de tout ça froidement lui et moi, et Yvan a dit que tout ce que voulait ma mère c’était du fric. C’est la première fois qu’on s’est disputés. Je lui ai dit qu’il ne savait pas ce que c’est que d’être pauvre et d’avoir faim, et des absurdités de ce genre; quand j’y repense ça me fait mal de m’être fâchée pour si peu avec Yvan. A ce moment-là nous ne savions pas combien de temps pour être heureux ensemble nous était compté.

(132)

Yvan is wealthy. As director of the perfume company “chez Loup-Y-Es-Tu,” he has in fact earned money from a product that often made the narrator more enticing for her clients. Even Yvan has taken part in the consumer-based society, one in which the production of beauty

⁴¹ A werewolf is a mythological or folkloric human with the ability to shapeshift into a wolf or a hybrid wolf-like creature, either purposely or after being placed under a curse or affliction.

⁴² This title comes from a line in Alphonse Lamartine’s “L’isolement” (*Méditations poétiques*, 1820). The poet reflects on his sadness due to the death of his lover, Julie Charles. Nature plays an important role in the poem.

products is lucrative and plays a role in the devaluation of women as products themselves. The cosmetics industry is also famous for its animal testing. Now Yvan and the narrator must worry about those who intend to “[les] manger sur la tête” (131), those who wish to destroy them.

The title of the show is a reference to the poem “L’isolement” by Alphonse Lamartine, which punctuates the ephemeral nature of the relationship between Yvan and the narrator, as well as accentuating the inability of the narrator to stay in the city as long as she is hybrid or completely transformed into a sow. One could interpret the poem as the lamentations of a disheartened poet after the death of his lover, but isolation in this sense can have several meanings. In one sense, the narrator separates himself from others. However, I think it connotes physical and psychological displacement, contemplation in another place, a natural environment. Nature envelops the poet after he has left civilization for mountains, hills, rivers, etc.:

Souvent sur la montagne, à l'ombre du vieux chêne,
 Au coucher du soleil, tristement je m'assieds ;
 Je promène au hasard mes regards sur la plaine,
 Dont le tableau changeant se déroule à mes pieds. (“L’isolement” 1-4)

His juxtaposition with nature allows the reader to understand his state of mind, which changes over the course of the poem. At first, he claims indifference at the sight of nature’s scenes:

Mais à ces doux tableaux mon âme indifférente
 N'éprouve devant eux ni charme ni transports ;
 Je contemple la terre ainsi qu'une ombre errante
 Le soleil des vivants n'échauffe plus les morts.

De colline en colline en vain portant ma vue,

Du sud à l'aquilon, de l'aurore au couchant,
 Je parcours tous les points de l'immense étendue,
 Et je dis : "Nulle part le bonheur ne m'attend." ("L'isolement" 20-28)

He articulates his angst with the verse quoted in *Truismes*: "Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé!" ("L'isolement" 28). This line describes the emptiness that comes with losing someone special, but also foreshadows the narrator's attachment to nature and the opposition between Yvan, the narrator, and the rest of Paris. Yvan is carrying out the second half of Lamartine's famous verse. Because of Yvan, "[Paris] est dépeuplé." For Lamartine and our narrator, hope comes from nothingness and despair. The poet wishes to leave his current state, or world, for another one:

Quand la feuille des bois tombe dans la prairie,
 Le vent du soir s'élève et l'arrache aux vallons ;
 Et moi, je suis semblable à la feuille flétrie :
 Emportez-moi comme elle, orageux aquilons ! ("L'isolement" 52-56)

Like a weathered leaf carried on the wind, the poet seeks solace in the departure to other places:

Mais peut-être au-delà des bornes de sa sphère,
 Lieux où le vrai soleil éclaire d'autres cieux,
 Si je pouvais laisser ma dépouille à la terre,
 Ce que j'ai tant rêvé paraîtrait à mes yeux ! ("L'isolement" 40-44)

Contrary to early romantics who conceived of nature as a mirror of man's soul, Lamartine conceived of a nature that was stable, changeless, and hence indifferent to human suffering. This changelessness is an ironic reminder of his past happiness with his love, Julie Charles. In other words, Lamartine captures the importance of displacement as it relates to psychological well-

being. The reference to his poem directly precedes the end of the narrator's relationship with Yvan and her move to nature. The poem captures the period of despair the narrator experiences in this France governed by misogynistic politics, but there is hope for her as a sow in a natural environment.

The mounting tension in the relationship between the narrator and Yvan corresponds to his continued slaying of deliverymen and his refusal to leave Paris. The narrator remarks, "Yvan a balancé le poste de télé dans la Seine et on s'est décidé à déménager. Mais Yvan, il aimait trop la Seine, on n'a pas été assez raisonnable pour quitter Paris. Les frontières étaient fermées, mais on aurait dû au moins partir à la campagne. On y serait encore tous les deux aujourd'hui" (*Truismes* 134). Yvan does not fully appreciate the natural environment to which our sow narrator is drawn. As a result, he wishes to move to another apartment in Paris: "Le nouvel appartement qu'on avait choisi était juste de l'autre côté de la Seine, près de l'ancien pont Mirabeau" (134).

The reference to the Pont Mirabeau recalls another poem: "Le pont Mirabeau"⁴³ by Guillaume Apollinaire. The dissolution of the couple's love arrives with the passing of time, but as Apollinaire says, "La joie venait toujours après la peine" ("Le pont Mirabeau" 4). The narrator's joy will be found in nature, away from bridges and other human artifacts in the city. The use of this poem and "L'isolement" reinforce the process of the narrator's transformation and subsequent move to nature. She is the "feuille flétrie," debased by others. She has found love with Yvan, but her displacement is not complete.

During the move, the narrator is uncomfortable:

⁴³ "Le Pont Mirabeau" is part of Apollinaire's collection of poems entitled *Alcools*. The poem represents the dissolution of love over time, the metaphor of which is the river Seine, flowing beneath the bridge through the city of Paris.

[J]’étais un peu perturbée, moi je n’aime pas bouger de ma tanière; alors j’étais entièrement truie, le groin, les pattes, les reins à l’horizontale, impossible de déguiser quoi que ce soit. Yvan a été obligé de me fourrer dans un grand sac, mais moi en truie je suis très claustrophobe, impossible de tenir là-dedans. Quand Yvan a garé la Mercedes j’ai bondi hors du sac, ç’a été plus fort que moi. (*Truismes* 134-35)

This passage also highlights the narrator’s discomfort during her time in the city, even with Yvan. She describes their home as her “tanière,” which connotes a hideaway but, in the literary sense, can also mean miserable living conditions. As a sow, she craves a larger space, but Yvan shoves her into a small bag, from which she promptly escapes.

Although she and Yvan take precautions to avoid being seen, the SPA finds them:

[U]n voisin quelconque nous a sans doute dénoncés. La SPA a débarqué au beau milieu de la nuit. [...] Yvan venait de manger et dormait comme un loir, moi je somnolais à ses côtés, gavée de pizza. Je ne sais plus dans quel état j’étais, à force ça se mélange dans ma tête, mais quand j’ai entendu « *SPA! Ouvrez!* » j’ai senti jaillir ma queue en tire-bouchon. [...] La SPA a défoncé la porte et ils nous ont encerclés avec leurs mitraillettes. Yvan s’est réveillé et a montré les crocs. La SPA, ils n’en revenaient pas de trouver un si gros loup et un cochon ensemble, et dans un appartement parisien encore. (*Truismes* 135)

Although she is unsure of which state she is just before the SPA’s arrival, it is clear that she is a sow upon their entry to the apartment. Her reaction to their arrival correlates animality with survival mechanisms. This passage also highlights the seemingly unnatural coupling of a wolf and a sow. From an ecocritical perspective, this is a call to realign our expectations of species

boundaries between the animal and human worlds. For instance, “Much attention to date has focused on how the Euro-American individuation of the human subject intensifies the asymmetries inculcated by [the divisions between the human and animals that keep humans distinct, and apart, from other animals]” (Latimer 77). In my opinion, one could go even further to say that these “asymmetries” have also affected our definitions of animal interactions. The narrator’s and Yvan’s togetherness recalls the idea that we have built our knowledge of animals on what we *do not* know about them. Therefore, the coupling of two ostensibly incongruous animals and the device of hybridity, the consolidation of two contrary states of being, embrace the idea of “being-with” non-humans, rather than the notion of “alongsidedness, as a form of intermittent and partial connection” to the non-human world (77). Donna Haraway clarifies this difference in her novel *When Species Meet*, in which she explains agility training with her dog and a process she describes as a “‘transforming partnership,’ for the training she insists is mutual, and involves not just learning about and feeling with the animal, but evolving as a person. The evolutionary model [is] co-adaptation, cooperation, and cross- or multi-species organisms” (Haraway; quoted in White 130). There is a mutually reinforcing relationship that exists between Yvan and the narrator, one in which there is co-adaptation and cooperation between cross-species organisms.

The events that follow mark the end of Yvan’s life, as well an important period of the narrator’s journey:

Pauvres de nous. Moi je communiquais sourdement avec Yvan, je lui disais surtout de rester calme [...]. Mais les gens de la SPA, ils n’avaient jamais vu ça, ils avaient peur. Une bonne femme en uniforme [...] a dit : « *Bon, commençons par le cochon.* » Un type s’est approché de moi avec un grand filet et un autre m’a

jeté un lasso autour du cou. Yvan a bondi. Les coups de feu ont claqué avec les coups de crocs. Yvan a eu le temps de décapiter deux ou trois types et puis il s'est traîné dans un coin et il est mort. Moi je suis morte aussi. J'ai voulu me coucher sur Yvan et pleurer mais j'ai trébuché dans les mailles du filet. Ils m'ont mise dans une camionnette et ensuite dans une cage au zoo. J'ai hurlé pendant plusieurs jours. Je ne mangeais pas (*Truismes* 136).

This passage also questions what we do and do not know about the non-human world. The narrator claims that she communicates silently with Yvan, suggesting that animals, like humans, may convey emotions without speech. They are capable of developed thoughts and emotions. This passage also reinforces the aforementioned idea of “being-with,” as the narrator’s connectedness to Yvan is so profound that she too feels psychologically dead after Yvan’s physical death. In the zoo, she expresses her distress by crying and refusing to eat.

Her time in the zoo is pivotal. She goes to sleep and waits for death, but she finally awakens and continues her journey:

C'est le froid qui m'a réveillée. J'étais toute nue, avec un corps humain de nouveau. C'était peut-être d'avoir touché le fond. Je me suis levée et j'ai tout bêtement tourné la poignée intérieure. La porte s'est ouverte, j'ai attendu un feu rouge et j'ai sauté. J'ai soulevé une plaque d'égout et je me suis réfugiée dedans, il faisait chaud, personne ne risquait de me voir. Il fallait seulement faire attention aux crocodiles. J'ai trouvé un passage vers les catacombes et je suis ressortie sous le Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, je voulais dire un dernier adieu à Yvan. (*Truismes* 137)

Although the placement of crocodiles in the sewers may seem to be further evidence of the threatening in which the narrator finds herself, crocodiles symbolize the narrator's transition to a new life:

One side of crocodile symbolism involves fertility, virility, the underworld, water, and sunrise. [...] [A]ccording to Barbara Walker, the crocodile symbolizes reason, because it can see clearly even when its eyes appear obscured by the nictitating membrane (369). [...] In Australia, indigenous peoples believe that Ancestral Beings created and gave shape to the land, and are the ancestors of all living things, plants, animals, and people united in a complex web of interrelationships. The crocodile is one of many Ancestral Beings. (Werness 117).

Like the crocodile, the narrator also represents reason in her animal state. In nature, she will be like the Ancestral Being, the crocodile, since she too will belong to “a complex web of interrelationships” once she has left a society in which entanglement is not possible.

After escaping the zoo and descending into the sewers, it is important to note her journey from a passageway near the catacombs to her entry to the Natural History Museum. Here, she wishes to say a final goodbye to Yvan, but she also says goodbye to her existence as a human in the misogynistic society. Her choice of the passageway near the catacombs indicates the final period of her human life. She has, after all, met death, but it is a metaphorical one. It may seem unusual to find a Natural History Museum⁴⁴ in this society that seems to find little to no value in non-humans and natural environments, but one can deduce from the tone of the novel that its

⁴⁴ A Natural History Museum is a museum that conserves and presents exhibitions about natural history (zoology, botany, geology, ecology, climatology, etc.). There are three principal functions that are typical of a natural history museum: 1) scientific development and knowledge; 2) pedagogy; 3) updating and conservation and management of collections.

purpose is to showcase zoological phenomena, such as Yvan, rather than to fulfill the purposes of conservation and pedagogy.

Finally, our narrator escapes Paris: “J’ai pris un train à l’aube. Par précaution je suis montée dans un wagon à bestiaux” (*Truismes* 138). She grieves for Yvan and says that it is difficult to continue without him. She finds it easier to live as a sow: “C’était plus facile de se laisser aller, de manger, de dormir, ça ne demandait pas d’effort, juste de l’énergie vitale et il y en avait dans mes muscles de truie, dans ma vulve de truie, dans mon cerveau de truie, il y en avait suffisamment pour faire une vie de bauge” (140). In other words, the energy necessary to live can be found in her sow body and consciousness. Her physical and psychological displacements as a sow allow her to continue living. Although the expression “une vie de bauge” can refer figuratively to a life in a pigsty, in filthy living conditions, it acquires another sense for the narrator, for whom this pigsty life is synonymous with liberation.

The narrator insists on her hybrid nature: “Même dans la forêt avec les autres cochons, ils me reniflent souvent avec défiance, ils sentent bien que ça continue à penser comme les hommes là-dedans. Je ne suis pas à la hauteur de leurs attentes” (*Truismes* 141). Now the narrator must face disapproval from her fellow pigs, but it is due to her hybrid nature. As a sow-woman, she still thinks like a human and does not meet the expectations of her porcine companions. This passage accepts hybridity while rejecting anthropocentrism⁴⁵--as well as “swine-centrism,” one might say-- in the study of human/non-human relationships.

Upon arrival at her mother’s farm, the narrator finds a pigpen:

⁴⁵ Anthropocentrism is the belief that human beings are the central or most significant species on the planet (in the sense that they are considered to have a moral status or value higher than that of other animals), or the assessment of reality through an exclusively human perspective. The term can be used interchangeably with humanocentrism, and some refer to the concept as human supremacy or human exceptionalism.

Quelques cochons furetaient librement dans la boue et venaient me renifler, ça faisait plaisir de voir comme ils avaient l'air bien nourris. Je me suis cachée dans l'étable et j'ai pris une douche sous les jets hygiéniques latéraux de la trayeuse dernier cri. J'avais l'impression d'avoir connu ça toute ma vie, et pourtant je suis née à Garenne-le-Mouillé . (*Truismes* 142)

Her attachment to this place, to this sort of life is evident. Garenne-le-Mouillé refers to “les HLM pourris” (132), where the narrator lived with her parents. In a sense, she was born in a pigsty, in dirty, corrupt, low-income housing. However, she experiences place attachment to the pigsty on her mother's farm. Her time there marks a transition between Paris and complete liberation in the countryside.

The narrator no longer resembles her human self: “Ma mère m'a dit que j'avais terriblement changé, qu'elle avait du mal à me reconnaître. [...] Ma mère m'a dit que décidément j'étais toujours restée aussi bête, que j'aurais pu au moins faire ma pelote, que je m'étais bien fait avoir” (*Truismes* 143). Dismissing her animality and using the word “bête” pejoratively, her mother is not concerned with her daughter's physical or psychological well-being. Instead, she reproaches her daughter for not having saved money. Rejecting these material concerns, the narrator runs to the pigsty, where she reiterates her sense of belonging:

Me retrouver dans la porcherie m'a fait du bien, j'ai pu me laisser aller. Je me suis couchée, je n'ai même pas réussi à me demander ce que j'allais devenir. J'avais la tête pleine d'odeurs, c'était doux, agréable, riche. Quelques cochons sont entrés et m'ont flairée, c'étaient de bons gros castrats assez sympathiques, il y avait aussi une grosse truie pleine qui a boudé dans son coin en me voyant. L'odeur franche et épaisse me réchauffait le cœur, je me blottissais pour ainsi dire dedans, je me

blottissais dans mon corps massif, rassurant, au milieu des autres corps massifs et rassurants. Cette odeur ça me protégeait de tout, ça me revenait du fin fond de moi, j'étais en quelque sorte rentrée chez moi. (143-144)

Her oneness with this space is clear through the merging of physical and psychological well-being. A human might find the odors in a pigsty repugnant, but our narrator finds them so comforting that she desires to cuddle up and stay in the space. She is comfortable with the castrated males and her own body, which she now finds reassuring despite its mass. One can discern her sense of belonging through the use of the words “chez moi” to refer to this pigsty.

The extra pig in the pigsty surprises the narrator's mother. Suddenly, the narrator smells a familiar perfume, Du Yerling for men: “J'ai réussi à me mettre debout, ce parfum ça me rappelait ma vie d'avant, la parfumerie, le directeur de la chaîne. L'onde d'un très vieux dégoût m'a saisie, enfouie jusque-là profondément en moi. Ce parfum c'était le parfum du directeur de la chaîne le jour de mon entretien d'embauche” (*Truismes* 145). Unlike her reaction to the odors in the pigsty, the narrator's reaction to this scent is disheartenment.

In response to smelling the perfume, the narrator says, “J'ai essayé de tourner le verrou. Les autres, de me voir me transformer à moitié comme ça, ils se sont mis à pousser des hurlements[...]. J'ai entendu le pas de ma mère qui [...] se dirigeait vers la porcherie. Ça m'a fait retomber à quatre pattes” (*Truismes* 146). Her attempt to turn the key of the pigsty's door can also refer to a figurative barrier, that of her attempt to metamorphose again to her human body in order to escape the director. When her mother enters the pigsty, the narrator is “un bouillonnement de terreur” (146). She describes the fearful scene in the pigsty:

Il y avait une odeur d'acier inoxydable qui arrivait avec ma mère, et une détermination tranchante dans l'air, quelque chose d'inexorable, ça s'est mis à

sentir affreusement la mort. Les cochons ont couru dans tous les sens entre les quatre murs de la porcherie et je me suis salement fait piétiner. Je n'avais pas encore l'habitude de ces déplacements paniques. (146)

The smell of death fills the enclosure because her mother is there for the slaughter. The narrator, like her porcine companions, is afraid, but she struggles to metamorphose because her metamorphosis in this case would be a “déplacement panique,” or panic-stricken shift to her human self. This moment captures the fear and panic that the narrator felt progressively in the society. The normalization of this mistreatment complicated the narrator's metamorphosis because she did not have reassurance from others that her exploitation was unmerited.

Therefore, this scene with her mother in the pigsty provides insight into the narrator's progression as an animal. She must readjust her state of mind, her psychological health, because it has changed along with her physicality. Her animality allows her to cope with negative situations and deal with them appropriately rather than succumb once more to debasement:

Maintenant je sais qu'au moindre orage aussi il faut se concentrer très fort pour rester calme, pour ne pas céder à l'affolement qui monte au ventre, pour retenir un peu cette terreur qui revient dans le ventre des bêtes depuis le premier orage du monde. Avec la mort c'est pareil. La mort tombe autour de moi et il faut rester calme. (*Truismes* 146)

Not only does the narrator confront terror and death, she also confronts her mother and the director, who arrives at the farm to help her mother slay pigs. Suddenly, her mother unknowingly points out her own daughter. However, as a sow, our narrator has the strength necessary to confront her mother and the director:

Ils se sont approchés de moi. Les autres cochons se sont enfuis dans une bousculade terrible et ça a fait un grand cercle vide autour de moi. Je me suis préparée à vendre chèrement ma peau. Ma mère en plus d'être un assassin était une voleuse, elle allait tuer un cochon qui ne lui appartenait pas. J'ai montré les dents et le directeur de la parfumerie s'est mis à rigoler. Il m'a envoyé la corde dessus. (147)

She identifies her mother's wrongdoing. Instead of accepting the blame, as she did when she was fully human, she designates her mother as responsible for serious crimes against her animal self.

In an effort to explain her subsequent actions, the narrator recalls her final moment with Yvan: “[Ç]a m’a empli les neurones et le ventre et les muscles, je me suis levée de tout mon corps, de toute ma haine, de toute ma peur, je ne sais pas, de tout mon amour pour Yvan peut-être” (*Truismes* 147). She fires two shots, killing the director and her mother. She leaves the pigsty and goes into the forest:

Certains des cochons m’ont suivie, les autres, trop attachés au confort de leur porcherie moderne, ont dû se faire récupérer par la SPA ou par un autre fermier, en tout cas je n’aimerais pas être à leur place aujourd’hui. Désormais la plupart du temps je suis truie, c’est plus pratique pour la vie de la forêt. Je me suis acoquinée avec un sanglier très beau et très viril. (148)

After asserting herself, the narrator has followers. There is a reversal of roles; the pigs who once deemed the narrator too human, now follow her into the forest. Uncertain of what to do with their newfound freedom, they follow the sow who willingly goes into the new natural environment. Unlike these pigs, the narrator fully embraces her new life in the forest. She becomes intimate with a male pig. Her use of the verb “s’acoquiner,” meaning a courtship,

reveals the nature of their relationship and her emancipation as a sow. With the use of “s’acoquiner,” the subject is usually a man, while the object complement is usually a woman, evocative of a power relationship in which the man is dominant and the woman is submissive. However, our narrator is the subject and her male companion is the direct object.

Despite the fact that the program *Un seul être vous manque* once again features her as a wanted individual, she is not “mécontente de [son] sort” (*Truismes* 148). She espouses her attachment to nature and her animality:

Rien n’est meilleur que la terre chaude autour de soi quand on s’éveille le matin, l’odeur de son propre corps mélangée à l’odeur de l’humus, les premières bouchées que l’on prend sans même se lever, glands, châtaignes, tout ce qui a roulé dans la bauge sous les coups de patte des rêves. (148)

In fact, she advocates such an existence, an attachment to one’s natural environment, as beneficial for all beings, with her use of the pronoun “on.” Her body’s odor mingles with the smell of the earth. The collectivity of our narrator and her natural environment affirms the importance of displacement and a subsequent symbiosis with nature and its inhabitants.

We cannot all biologically be hybrid like the narrator of *Truismes*, but we can mimic the concept of entanglement through physical and psychological displacement by reconsidering our relationship with the non-human world. Darrieussecq’s short story, “Connaissance des singes,” explores another type of hybridity through Marcel, a talking chimpanzee. In the short story, the narrator is not hybrid, but she is the one through which the reader may learn more about the hybrid being. Through the narrator, one can discern how anthropocentric treatment has harmed Marcel and how the narrator’s treatment of him will lead to his return to nature.

When the narrator's mother, about to leave on a trip to China, asks her to babysit Marcel, her pet chimpanzee, the narrator agrees begrudgingly. Upon her arrival in Rogny, the mother informs her that the ape's first name is Marcel and his surname is Chimpanzee. At this point, the narrator makes a remark that is repeated throughout the story: "Ce sont des choses qui vous tombent dessus, dans la vie" ("Connaissance des singes" 43), as if the situation were perfectly ordinary, an everyday occurrence. Yet Marcel is far from ordinary, since his ability to speak differentiates him from his chimpanzee counterparts and challenges the notion that "humans are the only animals capable of symbolic thought and the development of a reflective self" (Meddin 99). Marcel's progressive attachment to nature and subsequent return to it will exemplify a development of a reflective self. The narrator's external observation of Marcel will coincide with what can be interpreted as his own introspection.

The protagonist reflects, "Dans les zoos, devant la cage des singes, je me demande toujours qui regarde qui" ("Connaissance des singes" 52). She challenges an anthropocentric hierarchy by suggesting that the exchange between humans and non-humans in the environment at the zoo is of equal curiosity. Her use of the word "qui" also rejects an objectification of the ape inside the cage. However, a hierarchy still exists, in that the narrator makes certain assumptions about his character and capabilities. For instance, when she thinks about taking care of her mother's pet chimpanzee, she says, "Il était évident qu'il ne pouvait pas voguer sur le Yang-tsé. Il resterait donc à Rogny. Il fallait quelqu'un pour s'en occuper" (43). She insists on his animality and presumes that he is incapable of taking care of himself or sailing on a river, an activity from which the narrator and her mother exclude him. Her mother also says, "Il faut sortir Marcel tous les jours, [...] il est morose" (43). While this can refer to his inactivity, it also speaks to his emotions and his treatment; he is sad and dejected. For instance, the narrator reveals, "Je

n'ai jamais voulu entendre parler du singe de ma mère. Mes neurones ont bien imprimé, quelque part, qu'un singe était entré dans sa vie, je n'ai jamais voulu m'y intéresser" (43). This statement references the psychological barrier that often exists between the human and non-human worlds. Humans are aware of their non-human counterparts, but they often do not look past their physical presence. Animals are often just a part of the physical landscape, nothing more.

It is also important to note the choice of an ape as the non-human entity in this short story. Humans are also classified as great apes. Humans and chimpanzees share about 99% of their DNA. In her short story, Darrieussecq extends this physiological similarity to the ability to speak. This challenges the Cartesian concept that the human is a rational animal, that there is a part of the human that is *not* animal, which is the consciousness. Once again, she questions the species boundary. It is therefore necessary to insist on the physical *and* psychological similarities between the human and non-human in this case. It allows for an examination of physical and psychological displacement as indicative of attachment to nature and entanglement.

The protagonist spends three weeks living with Marcel, during which she observes his human-like mannerisms, such as his polite use of "vous" in addressing her, as well as his "gestes de majordome," despite his tendency to waddle when walking. He seems to mimic human behavior, a fact supported by the word "singe." Although "singe" can refer to apes or monkeys, when used as a verb, it means to mimic someone's behavior. Although his mannerisms seem human, the narrator's description of Marcel's physical appearance captures his animality:

Je distinguais son visage, aussi plissé qu'un poing fermé. Ses bras semblaient très longs, peut-être parce qu'ils étaient très maigres. Ses grandes mains surgissaient, comme gansées de cuir. Le pouce s'articulait bizarrement sous la paume, deux fois plus longue que la nôtre, faite pour s'accrocher aux branches. [...] Ses

oreilles étaient la seule partie un peu charnue de son visage. Sous ses joues creuses, sa mâchoire inférieure semblait énorme, prise d'une sorte d'autonomie.

("Connaissance des singes" 46-47)

Therefore, despite possessing human characteristics, he is also an animal. The narrator presumes that his animality conflicts with his humanity: "Quand il parlait il paraissait conscient de la lourdeur de son crâne, de la trop grande masse de sa carcasse, et tout embarrassé de lui-même" (47). However, Marcel never articulates his embarrassment.

He tells the narrator, "Je n'ai pas le droit de sortir. [...] Elle me permet d'aller derrière, dans le jardin" ("Connaissance des singes" 47). He cannot cling to branches as he pleases. This passage recalls the narrator's comment about the zoo. Marcel is trapped inside a human environment, one in which his access to the natural environment is restricted. He may as well be in a cage, like the apes in the zoo, and the narrator's mother has been his zookeeper.

The narrator comments, "On n'avait pas le droit de traiter un singe comme ça. C'était inhumain" ("Connaissance des singes" 47). One must consider the importance of this comment as an ecocritical approach to the consideration of animals. While one may consider the narrator's mother to be inhumane, lacking compassion or kindness, in her treatment of Marcel, the narrator does not specifically refer to her mother. Instead, she uses the pronoun "on," recalling its use at the end of *Truismes*, when the narrator calls attention to the sense of attachment one may feel in nature. In "Connaissance des singes," the use of "on" in this passage highlights the importance of a collective reconsideration of the treatment of animals. It should be inhumane, or unkind, for all humans to treat animals as subordinate.

The narrator elaborates on the mistreatment of Marcel as a domesticated ape and refers to a television program:

Il y a de moins en moins de singes sauvages. La déforestation, les captures, le braconnage, font que même les zoos ne parviennent plus à en exhiber. Le savoir des Bonobos se perd, eux qui connaissaient l'outil. Les cérémonies que les gorilles organisent autour des naissances ne se laissent plus observer qu'une ou deux fois par an. Quant aux singes parleurs, ils naissent tous en cage désormais, et ils se taisent. ("Connaissance des singes" 48)

This passage clarifies Marcel's previous comment about lacking a culture. He was in fact referring to his lack of attachment to nature. He is like the apes that have lost their instinctual characteristics, like the Bonobos' diminishing knowledge of tools. This passage acknowledges the loss of landscapes, such as the forest, but also recognizes the loss of animal culture. Animals are thrust from nature due to ecological crises caused by human activity.

Marcel does not eat very much, saying that eating makes him feel clumsy and stupid: "Quand je mange, je deviens lourd et stupide. Je ne peux plus rien articuler" ("Connaissance des singes" 49). The narrator finds his behavior peculiar and says, "Un singe qui ne mange pas est un singe qui ne va pas bien, forcément" (50). As in *Truismes*, the subject of food is important in conveying the contrasts between the human and non-human entities. In this case, Marcel's owner feeds him sparingly, "[u]ne petite poignée de millet pour lui occuper les dents, et une banane tous les deux ou trois jours" (45).

The deprivation of food is a means of domination by which the narrator's mother fulfills her own wishes in her relationship with Marcel. She tells the narrator, "Ce dont il a besoin, c'est de compagnie, [...] [e]t de prendre l'air dans le jardin. Il aime faire la conversation. Sous les lilas, tu lui mets un transat, et tu lui fais la conversation. [...] Plus il a faim, plus il parle" ("Connaissance des singes" 45). It is clear that it is the narrator's mother who initiates conversation and

maintains Marcel's ability to converse with her by mistreating him and denying him food. After all, she does not say, "Il te fait la conversation."

The narrator is uneasy at the thought of denying Marcel food:

Au retour je m'arrêtai au supermarché et achetai du millet pour canaries et des bananes. J'achetai aussi, sur une impulsion, de la pâtée pour chiens, des croquettes pour chats, et de la salade, des noix, du lait. Est-ce que les singes boivent du lait? Les jeunes singes, sûrement. Cette histoire de diète me déplaisait. ("Connaissance des singes" 46)

Although she disagrees with her mother's treatment of the ape, she also shows a lack of knowledge regarding his diet. She says, "Et de la viande, mangent-ils de la viande? Il faudrait que je regarde dans une encyclopédie. Ou sur Internet" (46). Her curiosity about this specific aspect of a chimpanzee's life exemplifies the need to increase our overall knowledge of the animal world.

Marcel's diet is likened to that of an Anchorite:⁴⁶ "Vous me faites penser, Marcel, à ces anachorètes qui offraient leur jeûne à Dieu. Ils mangeaient sept olives par jour : huit auraient été de la gourmandise, et six, de l'orgueil" ("Connaissance des singes" 49). Here, it is important to note the negative connotation of "dépaysement." Although "dépaysement" is beneficial for the protagonist, as she is able to write again, the comparison of Marcel to an Anchorite emphasizes the fact that, for him, dépaysement is a form of asceticism,⁴⁷ as it was for some monastic orders: "Dans la littérature monastique, [le dépaysement] désigne la démarche par laquelle le moine

⁴⁶ Anchorites withdrew from secular society to lead an intensely prayer-oriented, ascetic, and—circumstances permitting—Eucharist-focused life. While anchorites are frequently considered to be a type of religious hermit, unlike hermits they were required to take a vow of stability of place, opting instead for permanent enclosure in cells often attached to churches.

⁴⁷ Asceticism describes a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals. Ascetics believe that a deeper level of satisfaction and fulfillment is to be found than that offered by sensual pleasures and therefore promote the value of abstaining from these common, ordinary pleasures in the pursuit of acquiring deep inner peace.

quitte sa patrie pour aller vivre dans un pays où il aura toujours le sentiment d'être un étranger" (Guillaumont 32). Marcel is a stranger in the human world because he is a victim of anthropocentrism. Marcel's response to the protagonist is, "Je n'ai aucune culture. Excusez-moi" ("Connaissance des singes" 50). Although he is living among humans, he is not part of their culture. In this passage, culture also refers to breeding and education, neither of which Marcel has access to as an ape. Donna Haraway stresses the importance of "being with" other species in her criticism of Derrida's "L'animal que donc je suis" and his discourse about the glances he shares with his cat: "But with his cat, Derrida failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him in the morning" (20). Marcel, in the same way, suffers from a lack of companionship. His owner has not examined him beyond his most basic needs of shelter and food, and only sparingly with regard to the latter. However, her daughter questions the glances shared between the two beings on either side of the cage or between the two species sharing the same space.

Marcel's belief that he is without a culture questions the traditional dichotomy between nature and culture. For Kim Sorvig, "Splitting Nature from Culture is an ancient habit of the 'Western' or 'European' mind" (1). For centuries, if not millennia, philosophers have debated how and whether to draw lines between nature and culture, and whether these lines are watertight or permeable" (1). The distinction between nature and culture in this short story serves to provide a solution to their traditional opposition, which is that the lines between nature and culture should be permeable. The anthropocentric treatment of Marcel has rendered him physically and psychologically unwell. Wishing to conform to human culture, or habits, he stops eating in order to avoid being sluggish and unable to communicate effectively. However, by refusing to eat, he

becomes weak. While putting him to bed, the protagonist says, “Il faut manger, Marcel, lui dis-je en le bordant. Il grogna faiblement. Selon les instructions de ma mère je lui lus son livre favori, *Porculus*, et sur les derniers mots il se mit à ronfler” (“Connaissance des singes” 50). His inability to speak has rendered him more animal-like.

This reference to his favorite book, *Porculus*,⁴⁸ written by Arnold Lobel, supports the concept of anthropomorphism, a favorite topic of the author, who wrote stories in which animals became humanized while living among humans. I think this is also a reference to Darrieussecq’s first novel, *Truismes*, during which the protagonist’s metamorphosis is closely linked to her affinity with nature. She flees the political and ecological degradation of Paris in order to search for nature. Much like the protagonist of *Truismes* and the little pig in *Porculus*, our monk-like Marcel is on a pilgrimage for nature.

The juxtaposed displacements of our main characters follow contrasting trajectories, as the protagonist is able to write the first fifty pages of her new novel in ten days, while Marcel becomes bored and stops speaking. The narrator accentuates the importance of his psychological health and acknowledges his consciousness as a non-human when she says, “Faire venir un médecin était impensable. Un vétérinaire, c’était délicat. Il aurait fallu un psychologue pour singe, car celui-ci, visiblement, était au moins doté d’un surmoi” (“Connaissance des singes” 50). It is significant that the narrator suggests a psychologist for apes instead of a doctor or a veterinarian. First of all, she rejects the notion that a veterinarian, a medical professional who works only with animals, or a doctor, a medical professional who works only with humans, would be well-suited to treat the hybrid Marcel. Second of all, she suggests a medical

⁴⁸ Arnold Stark Lobel was an American illustrator and author of children’s books. In *Small Pig* (*Porculus* in French), he tells the story of a little pig who loves to eat, sleep, and run. Most of all, he likes to sit in a mud puddle. One day, the farmer’s wife cleans up everything, including the pig’s mud puddle. As a result, Small Pig runs away to the city, sure that he will find a puddle there since the city is so dirty.

professional who would focus on his psychological, rather than physical, well-being. She even observes that he has a superego.⁴⁹

This marks a pivotal moment for Marcel. He continues to become more animal-like: “J’écrivais, il mangeait, il reprenait du poil de la bête. Il passait le balai dans toute la maison, il faisait des grimaces dans le miroir, il rigolait en poursuivant les oiseaux. Nous n’avions pas grand-chose à nous dire, mais le silence ne nous pesait plus” (“Connaissance des singes” 53). Normally sullen and uncommunicative with the narrator, he finds joy in the simple act of chasing birds, during which he even laughs. His attachment to nature grows.

It is essential to examine more closely the element of communication. There is an initial discomfort when the main characters are seated at the dinner table together in oppressive silence. This is an illustration that contradicts one of the principal reasons why Western theorists, such as Descartes, argued wrongly that humans were superior to animals, as Elisabeth de Fontenay explains, “Ici, pourtant, apparaît une supériorité humaine : outre les plus grandes qualités de l’esprit, la parole semble particulièrement accordée à l’homme” (*Le silence des bêtes* 490). The protagonist is neither satisfied with Marcel’s silence nor the possibility that he may gossip about her with her mother: “Je le savais discret jusqu’au scrupule, mais j’étais mal à l’aise, à l’idée qu’il lui rapport mes questions inquisitrices” (“Connaissance des singes” 53). She eventually adopts a method of communication that suits them both, for she encourages him to eat despite his disinterest in food: “On apprend vite, en compagnie d’un singe, à donner des ordres. –Mangez, dis-je à Marcel quand je rentrais. Et bon anniversaire. –J’aime mieux pas. –Mangez, Marcel. On

⁴⁹ “The superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. The superego consists of two systems: The conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the ego through causing feelings of guilt. The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society” (McLeod).

ne refuse pas un gâteau d'anniversaire. Je vous l'ordonne" (53). Her use of "vous" is a sign of respect and rejection of a hierarchy between herself and Marcel. The narrator interacts with Marcel and meets his gaze. It indicates their entanglement.

Eventually, Marcel says his last sentence: "Je n'ai plus faim" ("Connaissance des singes" 54). By the time the narrator's mother has returned, he is no longer speaking. While her mother considers it a catastrophe, the protagonist responds by saying, "Ton singe n'a jamais eu grand-chose à dire" (54). The narrator encourages him to be himself, and not a human. Marcel finally overcomes anthropocentrism with a return to nature. Having discarded his overalls, he goes into the garden, crying out while swinging from branch to branch. Due to an environment of non-acceptance, an ecologically damaged environment, polluted by a human reductionist point of view, Marcel flees to a more natural environment rather than one where human culture takes precedence. The narrator's displacement has emphasized the importance of creativity, as it relates to the writing process and the environment, while Marcel has exemplified the importance of co-acceptance and co-adaptation between species.

The narrator insists on her acceptance of Marcel's animality. One can infer that he is the focus of her new novel, but she does not need him to finish her manuscript: "[T]out ce qu'aurait pu ajouter Marcel ne me servirait à rien. La fiction dépasse toujours la réalité, quoi qu'on en dise, et en rend mieux compte que les témoignages" ("Connaissance des singes" 52). There is always reality in fiction and fiction in reality. Through the narrators and characters in *Truismes* and "Connaissance des singes," the reader has access to a *new* reality, one in which a pig-woman finds liberation in nature and a talking ape flees an unhealthy, anthropocentric habitat. Although the title of the novel (*Zoo*) in which one finds "Connaissance des singes" suggests a zoological setting in which animals are enclosed, the reader finds instead that the bars have been removed.

While Darrieussecq's works explore the role of nature in terms of landscapes, it is evident in *Truismes* and "Connaissance des singes," that there is an attentive awareness of animality as well. An examination of the identity of animals allows us to consider their merit as individuals, companions, and as part of a larger ecosystem. We may recognize human and non-human entanglement as one of those things "qui vous tombent dessus, dans la vie" ("Connaissance des singes" 43), as ordinary or commonplace.

By means of hybridity, these works demonstrate the importance of animal studies in the ecocritical movement, the elimination of the prevailing assumption that humans are apart from and above non-humans and the acknowledgement of a shared gaze between humans and non-humans. Darrieussecq's works blur the boundaries between human and animal, redefining animality *and* humanity, to put an end to the radical separation of humanity and animality, to "un cycle maudit [qui] a servi à écarter des hommes d'autres hommes" (Fontenay, "Un abécédaire" 29). Instead, humans must respect "toutes les formes de vie en dehors de la sienne. C'est seulement ainsi qu'il se regarderait du risque de ne pas respecter toutes les formes de vie au sein de l'humanité même" (29). In conclusion, a holistic ecocritical approach espouses entanglement studies because "human society and non-human nature constitute one system" (Craigie 6). Therefore, social *and* ecological changes are dependent upon the collectivity of nature, non-humans, and humans.

CONCLUSION

Through this study of three novels and two short stories by Marie Darrieussecq, we have traveled through urban and rural landscapes, to the mountains and to the seaside, and met human, non-human, and hybrid protagonists grappling with both physical and psychological hardships, but one character has been at the forefront of each work: the natural world. In *Truismes*, our narrator finds liberation from oppression and prejudice in her move from Paris to the countryside. Marie of *Le Pays* embarks on a quest for her identity in the fictional landscape of Yuoangui. The sea is a simultaneously formidable and familiar presence in “Plage” and *Le Mal de mer*. Finally, Marcel flees the anthropocentric clutches of his owner in “Connaissance des singes.” In each case, the character or characters displace themselves or are displaced by exterior factors to a natural environment, to which they become attached.

Darrieussecq is at the forefront of ecoliterature, for her works face the challenges presented by the ecocritic Greg Garrard:

There are two key challenges for the future. One is the relationship between globalization and ecocriticism, which has barely been broached. Sustained attention to the idea of place as locale has provided us with no sense of the place of the whole Earth in contemporary culture. The second is the difficulty of developing constructive relations between the green humanities and the environmental sciences. This notion of nature’s wisdom is so deeply ingrained in environmentalist discourse and ecocriticism that only sustained research at the borders of the humanities and the new postmodern biological sciences can

disentangle it from our systems of basic presuppositions. [...] The Earth is perhaps better seen as a process rather than an object” (178).

In my analysis of the selected works by Marie Darrieussecq, I have shown that a sense of place does in fact give attention to the whole Earth, to the entirety of nature, since the characters attach to the natural world rather than a specific locale, like the city of Paris or the country of France. Darrieussecq conveys the depth of an attachment to the natural world. It is not merely driven by agricultural cultivation or expansion of human activity. Nature permeates every facet of human culture, blurring the boundaries between the two.

In his essay *Une écologie du bonheur*, Eric Lambin wonders: “La vie humaine est-elle enrichie par l’expérience du monde naturel? Peut-on vivre heureux sans relation intime avec lui? [...] Qu’est-ce qui nous rend heureux dans nos relations avec le monde animal? [...] Peut-on vivre heureux en étant séparés du monde naturel par un écran d’artefacts?” (27). The first question can be answered simply: Yes! In *Truismes*, our protagonist finds liberation, a sense of well-being, and contentment in the natural world. Without it, she would still be subject to routine mistreatment. In *Le Pays* and *Le Mal de mer*, we meet women for whom nature provides solace and solidarity. “Plage” calls attention to the role of the sea and the great loss we would face without its presence. In fact, all of these works give prominence to the necessity of an intimate relationship with nature as central to our well-being. “Connaissance des singes” answers the third question, accentuating the essentiality of reciprocal human and non-human relationships, and Darrieussecq’s quest even extends beyond a narrowly anthropocentric view to deliberate what the natural world gains or loses from its relationship with humans. Darrieussecq’s conception of nature is thus holistic.

Her works also address the second challenge of ecocriticism that Greg Garrard presents, since Darrieussecq embraces a broader point of view of nature by suggesting what humans and nature *can* be in collaboration with one another. Through the creative process of writing, Darrieussecq reveals nature, humans, and non-humans as processes themselves. By exposing the supposed oppositions that exist within nature, like femininity and masculinity or human nature and animal nature, she does not rely on simple, traditional dualities. Instead, she is an author *sans frontières*. She shows the reader a nature that is perpetually evolving, a nature that is not quantitative. With a penchant for science, she experiments with vocabulary, finding new and different ways to express ideas and emotions:

Ce qui m'intéresse c'est le vocabulaire de la science, les mots que j'aime, que je trouve beaux. C'est pour moi un réservoir de mots, la science, comme peuvent l'être aussi le vocabulaire du bricolage, de la mer. C'est un réservoir de métaphores, tout simplement. Plutôt que d'écrire pour la énième fois "je me sentais très angoissée" comme dans toute la littérature psychologique, j'essaie de trouver d'autres moyens de me demander c'est quoi l'angoisse ou la joie, comment on la ressent dans le corps, et comment le monde se transforme sous l'emprise de cette émotion-là. [...] C'est un bon réservoir de métaphores ou d'explication du monde tout simplement. (Darrieussecq and Gaudet 115)

What better place than the literary landscape to conduct experiments with metaphors and discover how language shapes and explains our world? In fact, language joins literature and science, an essential aspect of ecocriticism:

We know nature through images and words, a process that makes the question of truth in science or literature inseparable, and whether we find validity through

data or metaphor, the two modes of analysis are parallel. Ecocriticism observes in nature and culture the ubiquity of signs, indicators of value that shape form and meaning. Ecology leads us to recognize that life speaks, communing through encoded streams of information that have direction and purpose, if we learn to translate the messages with fidelity. (Howarth 77)

Thanks to Darrieussecq's metaphors, we have met characters like Marie in *Le Pays*, who "voulait entrer dans les arbres, dans les autres. Comprendre, connaître: se déplacer dans les corps. Un travail de l'imagination en échange, en échange" (75). The literary landscapes in the works we have studied have facilitated our own displacement as readers, since we have had the privilege of reorientation via Darrieussecq's thoughtful and thought-provoking narrators.

Although Darrieussecq often addresses specific, societal issues facing France, these issues can indeed translate to a global scale. One can echo her effect of displacement and feel the ecological aspects of her work resonating with all of humanity, all cultures. This is clear in the use of different narrative voices in each work. In *Truismes*, despite her naïveté, the narrator reveals her own mistreatment due to undesirable social and political conditions. She represents all those who suffer oppression, man or woman, human or animal. This novel calls to light a central problem of the dichotomy of nature and culture: "[A]dvocates of sexual and racial equality of opportunity have come to believe that much of what was once thought 'natural' in gender and racial differences is actually 'cultural'" (Craig 29). This may also extend to what we have come to believe about non-humans as well. The narrator's escape from her misogynistic society is a call to cultural holism, for which "inclusivism represents an understanding of nature in which human society may be conceived not as a ladder, not even as a ladder laid-down, but as

a web of men and women of various colors and beliefs whose well-being is a responsibility of the whole” (30). This extends to the whole ecosystem, to include non-humans as well as humans.

The shift in narrative voices throughout *Le Mal de mer* and “Plage” reveals that we must embrace diversity while recognizing that there is a collective experience with the natural world, *our* place. “Connaissances des singes” defines *our* as human and non-human, since the narrator *and* Marcel attach to nature and benefit from displacement. Finally, in *Le Pays*, the narrator vacillates between an inner monologue and third-person narrative, demonstrating the importance of displacement, of reorienting ourselves to broaden our lens to shift our psychological focus and to embrace other points of view of the world.

Darrieussecq is *mi-chemin*, much like her protagonist in *Truismes*, because she travels in the space of writing, creating new landscapes and environmental and cultural possibilities. Her literature has the capacity to treat a scientific or societal problem and render it a larger, more recognized ecological problem in order that it may be considered by cultural, political, and legal means (Garrard 6). The role of ecoliterature, and more specifically Darrieussecq as an author of ecological fiction, is important in this sense because, in the words of Michel Serres, it can serve as a *contrat naturel* between nature and humans, and encourage the latter to envision a world without borders. Therefore, one should not disregard the merit of textual analysis of ecoliterature as a window into the environment, but also as a means of understanding humanity.

One must not underestimate the importance of literature in the environmental movement. Reflection on the natural world and literature’s role in the environmental movement is what motivated this dissertation. “Notre réflexion a une résonance pratique importante. Elle concerne une motivation essentielle pour la modification de notre mode de développement vers une trajectoire moins destructrice de la nature” (Lambin 10). Although literature may not fall into the

purview of political or social activism that many die-hard environmentalists have in mind, its importance in understanding our relationship with the environment is undeniable. Darrieussecq herself said in an interview, “Je préfère les livres qui posent des questions, aux livres qui apportent des réponses” (Darrieussecq and Gaudet 111). How will *we* make use of our “paysage intérieur” to act upon the “paysage extérieur” (Barnet, Jordan, and Darrieussecq 127)? With reflection on what *can* be, as presented in ecoliterature, we the readers can be those who propose solutions.

REFERENCES

- Apollinaire, Guillaume. "Le Pont Mirabeau." *Alcools: poèmes, 1898-1913*. Paris: Gallimard, 1920. Print.
- "Artifact." Def. 1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2013. Web. 12 Sept. 2013.
- Atkinson, Sarah, Sara Fuller, and Joe Painter, eds. *Wellbeing and Place*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Pub., 2012. Print.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *L'Eau et les rêves: Un Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*. Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942. Print.
- Barnet, Marie-Claire, Shirley Jordan, and Marie Darrieussecq. "Entretien avec Marie Darrieussecq." *Dalhousie French Studies* 93 (2010): 123-29. Print.
- Bess, Michael. *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.
- Birnbaum, Jean. *Qui sont les animaux?* Paris: Gallimard, 2010. Print.
- Blanc, Nathalie, Thomas Pughe, and Denis Chartier. "Littérature et écologie: vers une écopoétique." *Ecologie et politique* 2.36 (2008): 15-28. Print.
- Boyer, Frédéric. "Un animal dans la tête." *Qui sont les animaux?* Ed. Jean Birnbaum. Paris: Gallimard, 2010. 11-25. Print.
- Brehm, Joan M., Brian W. Eisenhauer, and Richard C. Stedman. "Environmental Concern: Examining the Role of Place Meaning and Place Attachment." *Society & Natural Resources* 26.5 (2013): 522-38. Print.

- Bril, Jacques. *La traversée mythique ou le fils accompli*. Paris : Éditions Payot, 1991. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. Print.
- Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: U of California, 1997. Print.
- . *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993. Print.
- Childers, Joseph W., and Gary Hentzi. "Absence/Presence." *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1995. 2-3. Print.
- Clayton, Susan D., and Susan Opatow. *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Print.
- "Climate Change and Financial Instability Seen as Top Global Threats." *Pew Research Centers Global Attitudes Project RSS*. Pew Research Center, 24 June 2013. Web.
- "Climate Change Mitigation - State and Impacts (France)." *The European Environment State and Outlook 2015*. European Environment Agency, 26 Nov. 2010. Web.
- Cocula, Bernard. "Les Animaux dénaturés, fable anthropologique." *Vercors (Jean Bruller) et son œuvre*. By George Cesbron and Gérard Jacquin. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999. 147-157. Print.
- Cohen, Margaret. "Literary Studies On The Terraqueous Globe." *PMLA: Publications Of The Modern Language Association Of America* 125.3 (2010): 657-662. Web. 17 May 2014.
- Cole, Lucinda, Donno Landry, Bruce Boeher, Richard Nash, Erica Fudge, Robert Markley, and Cary Wolfe. "Speciesism, Identity Politics, and Ecocriticism: A Conversation with Humanists and Posthumanists." *The Eighteenth Century* 52.1 (2011): 87-106. Web.
- Corbin, Alain. *Le territoire du vide : L'Occident et le désir du rivage 1750-1840*. Paris : Aubier,

1988. Print.

Craige, Betty Jean. *Laying the Ladder Down: The Emergence of Cultural Holism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1992. Print.

Damlé, Amaleena. "Posthuman Encounters: Technology, Embodiment and Gender in Recent Feminist Thought and in the Work of Marie Darrieussecq." *Comparative Critical Studies* 9.3 (2012): 303-18. Web.

Darrieussecq, Marie. "Fiction in the First Person, or Immoral Writing." *L'Esprit Créateur* 50.3 (2010): 70-82. Print.

---. *Le Mal de mer*. Paris : P.O.L., 1999. Print.

---. *Le Pays*. Paris: P.O.L., 2005. Print.

---. *Truismes*. Paris: P.O.L., 1996. Print.

---. *Zoo*. Paris: P.O.L., 2006. Print.

Darrieussecq, Marie, and Jeannette Gaudet. "'Des livres sur la liberté': conversation avec Marie Darrieussecq." *Dalhousie French Studies* 59 (2002): 108-18. Print.

Davenport, Coral. "McConnell Urges States to Defy U.S. Plan to Cut Greenhouse Gas." *The New York Times*. 04 Mar. 2015. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

Debourdeau, Ariane. Introduction. *Les Grands Textes fondateurs de l'écologie*. Paris: Flammarion, 2013. Print.

De Julio, Maryann. "Le Mal de mer." Rev. of *Le Mal de mer*. *World Literature Today* (2000). Web.

"Dépayser." Larousse Dictionary, Larousse Publishers. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.

Desblache, Lucile. "Beauties and Beasts: Contrasting Visions of Animal Representation in Women's Contemporary Fiction." *Comparative Critical Studies* 2.3 (2005): 381-409.

---. "Introduction : profil d'une éco-littérature." *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.2 (2006) :

1-4. Print.

Descartes, René. *Discours de la méthode*. 1637. The Project Gutenberg EBook of Discours de la méthode. 25 Oct. 2004. Web.

de Villiers, David W. "Being At Sea: Ontologising The Sea Narrative." *English Studies In Africa* 55.1 (2012): 35-49. *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*. Web.

"Ecology." Def. 1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2013. Web.

Ferrer-Medina, Patricia. "Wild Humans: The Culture/Nature Duality in Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." *The Comparatist* 31 (2007): 67-87. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 13 Apr. 2012.

Fontenay, Elisabeth de. *Le silence des bêtes*. Paris: Fayard, 1998. Print.

--. "Un abécédaire." *Qui sont les animaux?* Ed. Jean Birnbaum. Paris: Gallimard, 2010. 27-46. Print.

Foulkes, David. *Dreaming: A Cognitive-psychological Analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1985. Print.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Gates, Barbara T. "A Root of Ecofeminism: *Ecoféminisme*." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. By Greta Claire Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy. Urbana: U of Illinois, 1998. Print.

Genette, Gérard. "Métonymie chez Proust." *Figures III*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972. 41-63. Print.

Glotfelty, Cheryl. Introduction. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996. Print.

- . "What Is Ecocriticism?" *ASLE*. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.
- Goh, Robbie B. H. "Myths of Reversal: Backwards Narratives, Normative Schizophrenia and the Culture of Causal Agnosticism." *Social Semiotics* 18.1 (2008): 61-77. Web. 10 July 2014.
- Guillaumont, Antoine. "Le dépassement comme forme d'ascèse, dans le monachisme ancien." *Ecole pratique des hautes études* 80 (1967): 31-58. Web.
- Haraway, Donna J. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2008. Print.
- Harper, Ralph. *Nostalgia: An Existential Exploration of Longing and Fulfilment in the Modern Age*. Cleveland, OH: of Western Reserve U, 1966. Print.
- Howarth, William. "Some Principles of Ecocriticism." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996. Print.
- Howell, Andrew J., et al. "Meaning in Nature: Meaning in Life as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Nature Connectedness and Well-Being." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14 (2013): 1681-696. 24 Nov. 2012. Web. 10 July 2014.
- Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- "Hybrid." Def. 1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2014. Web. 12 Dec 2014.
- Illbruck, Helmut. *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2012. Print.
- Jones, Katie. "Apolitical Animals? The Politics of Disgust in Novels by Monika Maron and Marie Darrieussecq." *German Life and Letters* 64.1 (2011): 156-68. Print.
- Jordan, Shirley. "Saying the Unsayable: Identities in Crisis in the Early Novels of Marie Darrieussecq." *Women's Writing in Contemporary France: New Writers, New Literature in the 1990s*. By Gill Rye and Michael Worton. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. 142-

53. Print.

- Kaplan, Harold I., and Benjamin J. Sadock. *Comprehensive Glossary of Psychiatry and Psychology*. Ed. Robert Cancro. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1991. Print.
- Kellert, Stephen R., and Edward O. Wilson, eds. *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Washington, D.C.: Island, 1993. Print.
- Kelly, Petra. "Women and Power." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed. Karen Warren and Nisvan Erkal. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 112-19. Print.
- King, Ynestra. "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed. Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. Print.
- Lagerspetz, Olli. "Experience and Consciousness in the Shadow of Descartes." *Philosophical Psychology* 15.1 (2002): 5-18.
- Lamartine, Alphonse. "L'isolement." *Méditations poétiques*. 1820. Paris: Hachette, 1915. Print.
- Lambeth, John, and Marie Darrieussecq. "Entretien avec Marie Darrieussecq." *The French Review* 79.4 (2006): 806-18. JSTOR. Web. 13 Apr. 2012.
- Lambin, Eric F. *Une écologie du bonheur*. Paris: Éditions Le Pommier, 2009. Print.
- Lantelme, Michael. "Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales*: Marianne's Misfortunes at the Turn of the Millenium." *Romanic Review* 90.4 (1999): 527. Print.
- Laplanche, Jean, and J. -B. Pontalis. *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*. Paris: PUF, 1967. Print.
- Larrère, Catherine. "L'écoféminisme: féminisme écologique ou écologie féministe." *Tracés: Revue de sciences humaines* 22 (2012): 105-21. Web.
- Larrère, Catherine et Raphaël. *Du bon usage de la nature : Pour une philosophie de l'environnement*. Paris : Aubier, 1997. Print.
- Latimer, Joanna. "Being Alongside: Rethinking Relations amongst Different Kinds." *Theory*,

- Culture and Society* 30.7-8 (2013): 77-104.
- Legler, Gretchen T. "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed. Karen Warren and Nisvan Erkal. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 227-38. Print.
- Lestel, Dominique, and Hollis Taylor. *Shared Life*. London: SAGE Publications, 2013. Print.
- Love, Glen A. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2003. Print.
- "Le Pays Basque." *Tourisme et vacances au Pays Basque*. Web.
- McHugh, Susan. "Literary Animal Agents." *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 487-495. Web.
- McLeod, Saul. "Id, Ego and Superego." *Simply Psychology*. 2008. Web.
- Meddin, Jay. "Chimpanzees, Symbols, and the Reflective Self." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 42.2 (1979): 99-109. Web.
- Méndez-Vargas, María Martha et al. "Silicosis and industrial bronchitis by exposure to silica powders and cement." *Revista Médica del Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social* 51.4 (2013): 384-9. Web.
- Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Publications, 1993. Print.
- Mittlefehldt, Pamela J. "Writing The Waves, Sounding The Depths: Water As Metaphor And Muse." *Isle: Interdisciplinary Studies In Literature And Environment* 10.1 (2003): 137-142. Web. 17 May 2014.
- Morin, Edgar. *L'An I de l'ère écologique : suivi d'un dialogue avec Nicolas Hulot*. Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2007. Print.
- Moslund, Sten Pultz. "The Presencing of Place in Literature: Toward an Embodied Topopoetic

Mode of Reading.” *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Robert T. Tally. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 29-43.

Print.

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition. Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1989. Print.

Oliver-Smith, Anthony. “Debating Environmental Migration: Society, Nature And Population Displacement In Climate Change.” *Journal Of International Development* 24.8 (2012): 1058-1070. *EconLit*. Web. 17 May 2014.

Park, Sowon S. “‘Who Are These People?’: Anthropomorphism, Dehumanization and the Question of the Other.” *Arcadia International Journal for Literary Studies* 48.1 (2013): 150-63. Web.

Passmore, John. “Attitudes to Nature.” *Environmental Ethics*. Ed. Robert Elliot. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. 129-141. Print.

Pick, Anat. “Pigscripts: The Indignities of Species in Marie Darrieussecq’s *Pig Tales*.” *Parallax* 12.1 (2006): 43-56. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 13 Apr. 2012.

Plumwood, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

---. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.

“Polls Show Most Americans Believe in Climate Change, But Give It Low Priority.” *Pew Research Centers Global Attitudes Project RSS*. Pew Research Center, 23 Sept. 2014. Web.

Posthumus, Stéphanie. “Writing the Land/scape: Marie Darrieussecq's *Le Pays*.” *The*

- Environment in French and Francophone Literature and Film. Ed. Jeff Persels.
Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012. 103-17. Print.
- . "Vers une écocritique française: le contrat naturel de Michel Serres." *Mosaic, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*. 44.2 (2011): 85-100.
- Raison, Charles L., Haven M. Klein, and Morgan Steckler. "The Moon And Madness Reconsidered." *Journal Of Affective Disorders* 53.1 (1999): 99-106. *PsycINFO*. Web.
- Raymond, Christopher M., Gregory Brown, and Delene Weber. "The Measurement of Place Attachment: Personal, Community, and Environmental Connections." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30 (2010): 422-34. Print.
- Rescher, Nicholas. *Rationality: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature and the Rationale of Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988. Print.
- Rice, Doyle. "Fla. Gov. Bans the Terms Climate Change, Global Warming." *USA Today*. 09 Mar. 2015. Web.
- Riley, Gillian. "The Nomenclature of the Pig and Its Parts." *Food and Language: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2009*. Ed. Richard Hosking. Devon: Prospect, 2010. 270-78. Print.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. *Lettres du voyant (13 et 15 mai 1871)*. Ed. Gérald Schaeffer and Marc Eigeldinger. Genève: Droz, 1975. Print.
- Rotton, James, and I. W. Kelly. "Much Ado About The Full Moon: A Meta-Analysis Of Lunar-Lunacy Research." *Psychological Bulletin* 97.2 (1985): 286-306. *PsycARTICLES*. Web.
- "Sa Vie." *Marie Darrieussecq*. The University of Arizona. Web.
- Serres, Michel. *Le Contrat naturel*. 1990. Paris : Flammarion, 1992. Print.
- "Silica." Def. 1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2014. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.

- Sillar, Frederick Cameron and Ruth Mary Meyler. *The Symbolic Pig: An Anthology of Pigs in Literature and Art*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961. Print.
- Simon, Anne. "Déterritorialisations De Marie Darrieussecq." *Dalhousie French Studies* 93. Women and Space (2010): 17-26. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Mar 2014.
- Slater, Maya. *The Craft of La Fontaine*. London: The Athlone Press, 2000. Print.
- Slicer, Deborah. "Toward an Ecofeminist Standpoint Theory: Bodies as Grounds." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. By Greta Claire. Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy. Urbana: U of Illinois, 1998. Print.
- Slovic, Scott. "Ecocriticism." *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. Vol 1. Ed. J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 225-228. Print.
- Sorvig, Kim. "Nature/Culture/Words/Landscapes." *Landscape Journal* 21.2 (2002): 1-14. Web.
- Szszynski, Bronislaw. "The End of the End of Nature: The Anthropocene and the Fate of the Human." *The Oxford Literary Review* 34.2 (2012): 165-84. Web. 10 July 2014.
<www.eupjournals.com/olr>.
- Tam, Kim-Pong. "Anthropomorphism of Nature and Efficacy in Coping with the Environmental Crisis." *Social Cognition* 32.3 (2014): 276-96. Web.
- Tam, Kim-Pong, Sau-Lai Lee, and Melody Manchi Chao. "Saving Mr. Nature: Anthropomorphism Enhances Connectedness to and Protectiveness Toward Nature." *Journal Of Experimental Social Psychology* 49.3 (2013): 514-21. Web.
- Westphal, Bertrand. *La Géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007. Print.
- White, Lynn, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader*:

Landmarks in Literary Ecology. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1996. Print.

Wilson, Edward O. *Biophilia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984. Print.

Yang, Karen Ya-Chu. "Pig-Women on the Meat Market: Problems and Potentialities of Ecofeminist Hybridity." *Literature and Identity* 3.1 (2013): 1-12. Web.

Zelenski, John M., and Elizabeth K. Nisbet. "Happiness And Feeling Connected: The Distinct Role Of Nature Relatedness." *Environment And Behavior* 46.1 (2014): 3-23. *PsycINFO*. Web.