***Not Knowing* and the Problematics of Naming Eating Disorders: OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS** **and Annie Ernaux’s *Mémoire de fille***

**Abstract**

*Mémoire de fille* describes acting on a fifty-years-repressed imperative to write about Ernaux’s first traumatic sexual encounters and their ramifications, including disordered eating, initially misnamed pica, then, later, bulimia. Instead, the behaviours correspond to problematic medical categorizations for ‘a-typical’, eating disorders, which albeit little known, account for up to 50% of diagnoses and are the most prevalent (including ‘other specified feeding and eating disorders’ (OSFED); ‘trouble du comportement alimentaire, non spécifié’ (TCA-NS); ‘eating disorders not otherwise specified’ (EDNOS)). Examining Ernaux’s exploration of *not knowing*; her bringing into question of the possibilities of (self) knowledge and of articulating traumatic experiences; and her emphasis on disordered eating and its naming elucidates how discourses of knowledge (patriarchal, medical, religious, philosophical and consumerist) control knowledge about, and may contribute to, eating disorders. The potential is raised of the contribution of the literary to interdisciplinary debates challenging the *not knowing* of eating disorders (particularly OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS).

Keywords: OSFED, EDNOS, TCA–NS, bulimia, eating disorders, Ernaux, *Mémoire de fille*

In grateful memory of Lucille Cairns

# **Introduction: Naming Disordered Eating in *Mémoire de fille***

In *Mémoire de fille* (2016) [*Memoir of a Girl/* *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*],[[1]](#endnote-1) Annie Ernaux writes about her attempts to re-connect – at a fifty-year distance – with her first, traumatic sexual encounters in 1958 and their mental and physical consequences over the following two years, including amenorrhea and disordered eating. After the initial pages, the text is narrated in the first person, occasionally by her younger self, the ‘girl’, but predominantly from the time of writing. Throughout, readers are reminded that Ernaux has no access to her eighteen-to twenty-year-old self’s words or feelings. Instead, these gaps are emphasized, and lost experience evoked through imaginative projections emerging from descriptions of photographs, images, diary entries and letters. Ernaux has made her literary name from narratives which return to facets of her experience of traumatic events – from the violent outbursts, dementia and death of her parents to her own abortion, failed love affairs and cancer treatment – as they intersect with the enduring tensions bound up with her trajectory from her childhood in a working-class Norman café-cum-grocery and Catholic school to aspirational student, bourgeois teacher, mother and successful writer (Hugueny-Léger 2018). Yet Ernaux’s own comments in interviews chime with critics who read *Mémoire de fille* as the first text in which Ernaux overtly addresses the sexual trauma of 1958 and the first time she so prominently and self-reflexively addresses questions of the impossibility of accessing lived experience and of reconciling past and present selves. If *Mémoire de fille,* then, is very much concerned about the problematics of *not knowing,* for Ernaux and for those who comment on it*,* the text is not – ostensibly *–* about disordered eating. Indeed, Ernaux and the resounding majority of her critics and interviewers describe the eating disordered behaviour evoked simply as bulimia (see, for example, Baudry 2017; Blanchard 2016; Bras 2016; Leyris 2016; Darrieuveux 2016; Kawakami 2019; Schwerdtner 2017; Schwerdtner 2018; Viart 2017).[[2]](#endnote-2)

However, the changing instances of disordered eating in *Mémoire de fille* do not correspond to diagnostic criteria for bulimia.[[3]](#endnote-3) Instead, the behaviours described might – assuming any knowledge of such terms – be diagnosed OSFED/‘other specified feeding or eating disorder’ [TCA-NS/‘trouble du comportement alimentaire, non spécifié’] (APA 2013); or EDNOS/‘eating disorders not otherwise specified’ (APA 1994); or [‘Eating disorder, unspecified’(ICD-10) [‘Trouble de l'alimentation, sans précision’(CIM-10)].[[4]](#endnote-4) My intention here is not to impose or legitimize potentially alienating and politically- and economically-inflected labels. Instead, whilst recognizing them as problematic, I take this opportunity to identify that these little-known names and acronyms are estimated to classify up to 50% of eating disorder diagnoses, whilst only 8% of diagnoses are for anorexia, and 19% for bulimia (Beat 2017). Paradoxically, knowledge of anorexia and bulimia – two far less common eating disorders – far exceeds that of the most prevalent ones variously labelled OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS. This means that, diagnostically, as well as in terms of treatment protocols and research, heterogeneous eating disorders prone to change in behaviours are not recognized (Murray and Anderson 2015).[[5]](#endnote-5) The same is true for media and public awareness, yet people with such heterogeneous eating disorders also experience the profound, enduring and too-frequently fatal effects of anorexia and bulimia (Beat 2017). They no doubt also suffer as the ramifications of the enduring lack of knowledge of what causes *all* eating disorders (which labels and acronyms elide). What is more, given the low circulation of knowledge about heterogeneous eating disorders, people who have them are disadvantaged by both the generalized and their own lack of knowledge about how to identify, name or seek treatment for their individual illnesses. It is not surprising, then, that Ernaux, her interviewers and her critics – academic and in the media – describe the disordered eating in *Mémoire de fille* as bulimia. And of course, it is not my intention to criticize Ernaux or her commentators for incorrectly naming eating disorders which do not correspond to better-known names. Instead, Ernaux’s self-reflexive exploration of *not knowing*; her bringing into question the possibilities of (self) knowledge and of articulating traumatic experiences; and her emphasis on the naming and evocation of disordered eating all fuel this new reading of *Mémoire de fille*. A reading which then, raises questions about the role of the literary in debates about the control and circulation of knowledge about eating disorders.

Strikingly – immediately after her extraordinary three-page projection of a binge – Ernaux draws attention to how she remembers that literary representations of food are particularly compelling, or, perhaps more accurately, triggering for her younger self, the girl with the eating disorder: ‘La description d’un repas, dans un roman, m’arrête aussi brutalement qu’une scène sexuelle’ (2016: 101) [‘The description of a meal in a novel stopped me in my tracks just as suddenly as a sex scene’]. This description also provides an invitation to consider Ernaux’s own arresting evocations of disordered eating and the ambivalence bound up with them. At the same time, this resonates with important debates about pedagogical trigger warnings which may seek to avoid provoking traumatic symptoms yet risk preventing understanding that may arise from the imaginative representation of the full diversity of human experience. This is not my subject here, but it is important to signal that for people with eating disorders, reading *Mémoire de fille* may be triggering, although readers will not find details about *modus operandi*, weight lost or weight-loss goals, glamorization of emaciation, or any implication that there may exist any idealized eating disordered sensibility or aesthetic.

I take further cues from how Ernaux asserts and problematizes her imperative to write in the first person to uncover commonly-shared yet unsayable experiences which cannot be expressed or expunged but which, through the attempt to figure them, may increase identification and provide some form of solace. What is more, as well as using the term bulimia, Ernaux’s narrative includes an earlier mis-labelling of her disordered eating as pica. This invites a further problematizing of diagnostic criteria and classifications (and their lacunae) as they relate to the experience of OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS from the representations of disordered eating involved in the self-reflexive exploration of writing in *Mémoire de fille* itself (notably the foregrounding of tensions between naming and shaming; pleasure and pain; and of control and lack of knowledge and of eating behaviours). The *not knowing* intrinsic to Ernaux’s representations of disordered eating examined below provides the springboard for the examination of the effects of discourses of knowledge – past and present; social, cultural, medical, economic and religious – that Foucault argues construct normative and stigmatizing categories governing laws, bodies, minds and sexuality (Foucault 1963, 1971, 1975, 1976) (and which may contribute to eating disorders). And, since Ernaux brings into question the purpose and effectiveness of her own writing, I end by considering how, whether intentionally or not, alongside uncovering an experience of OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS*, Mémoire de fille* brings into relief the potential importance of literary representations of disordered eating to intervene in interdisciplinary debates beyond the narrative.

**Knowingly Writing about *Not Knowing*: Ernaux’s Imperative for Writing the Unsayable**

Ernaux has long acknowledged the influence on her ‘auto-ethnographical’ narratives (Kawakami 2019) of Pierre Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology (Bourdieu 1970 and 1979; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964) for elucidating mechanisms of distinction, class domination and symbolic violence (Ernaux 2010; Thumerel 2004). She argues that she deploys a ‘je transpersonnel’ (Ernaux 1994: 218) [transpersonal ‘I’] not to construct a self-identity ‘mais de saisir, dans mon expérience, les signes d'une réalité familiale, sociale, ou passionnelle’ (Ernaux 1994: 218) [‘but to seize, from my own experience, the signs of familial, social or relationship realities’], and Ernaux is critically acclaimed for eliciting readers’ identification with difficult experiences with multiple contributing factors (McIlvanney 2001: 5). She further asserts a belief that writing about personal experience has a political imperative:

J’ai toujours senti qu’écrire était intervenir […]. Ce n’est pas parce que les choses me sont arrivés à moi que je les écris, c’est parce qu’elles sont arrivées, qu’elles ne sont pas uniques. […] ce n’est pas la particularité d’une expérience que j’ai voulu saisir mais sa généralité indicible. Quand l’indicible devient écriture, c’est politique. (Ernaux 2014: 107–108)

I have always felt writing means intervening. […]. I do not write about things because they have happened to me, but because they have happened, and because they are not unique to me. […] it is not the specificity of an experience that I have tried to get across, but the common experience of it as unsayable. When the unsayable becomes writing, it is political.

Such an uncovering of experience that may then be recognized by others with parallel experiences is implicit in *Mémoire de fille*, as it overtly foregrounds this notion of writing as seeking to expose experiences and feelings which are beyond knowing:

à quoi bon écrire si ce n'est pour désenfouir des choses, même une seule, irréductible à des explications de toutes sortes, psychologiques, sociologiques, une chose qui ne soit pas le résultat d'une idée préconçue ni d'une démonstration, mais du récit et qui puisse aider à comprendre, à supporter ce qu'on fait? (2016: 96)

what is the point of writing, if not to uncover buried things, even just one thing, a thing that cannot be pinned down to any kind of explanation, be it psychological or sociological, a thing that does not come out of any preconception or from a case study, but comes out of the narrative and may help with understanding, with coping?

Here, something which cannot be explained or controlled by discourses of knowledge or through preconceptions is bought to the fore through writing, through the literary exploration of *not knowing*. Ernaux’s stated aim is to work towards some recognition and form of understanding and even some form of personal coping strategy for those who can neither know or un-know the effects of the experiences of their past selves. If the thing that Ernaux’s text sets out to uncover is her sexual trauma and its ramifications, here I argue that the heterogeneous disordered eating that appears to follow her trauma is a further thing uncovered, one that does not fit the diagnosis of bulimia.

This further uncovering is, if unintentionally, an imperative, which as well as evoking Lacan’s figuring of inexorable lack and of the return of repressed trauma (Lacan, 1973, 1996), resonates with the insatiable hunger and emptiness reported by people with eating disorders: ‘J’ai voulu l’oublier aussi cette fille. […] Ne plus penser que je dois écrire sur elle, son désir, sa folie, son idiotie et son orgueil, sa faim et son sang tari. Je n’y suis jamais parvenue. […] C’est le texte toujours manquant. Toujours remis. Le trou inqualifiable’ (2016: 16–17) [‘I also wanted to forget her, this girl. […] To no longer think I have to write about her, about her desire, her madness, her idiocy and her pride, her hunger and her dried up blood. I have never managed it. […] It is the text that is always missing. Always postponed. The hole that defies description’]. At the same time, this unpluggable hole raises the question of whether recovery from any eating disorder can ever be complete, a question which echoes a few pages later: ‘Cette fille-là de 1958, qui est capable à cinquante ans de distance de surgir et de provoquer une débâcle intérieure, a donc une présence cachée, irréductible en moi’ (2016: 22) [‘And so this 1958 girl, who, fifty years on, can still come flooding back to cause an emotional breakdown, is still an irrevocable hidden presence in me’]. What is certain here is that Ernaux does not set out to offer any of the putative comfort of the notion that talking, writing or reading about disordered eating might simply fill the hole of trauma or of an eating disorder. Indeed, *Mémoire de fille* dismisses Ernaux’s 1977 fictionalized version of the summer of 1958 (featuring a consensual relationship and bingeing as a symptom of boredom): ‘il est vain de vouloir reconstituer comme j’ai cru possible de faire en écrivant *Ce qu’ils disent ou rien*)’ (2016: 31) [‘it is futile to try to re-construct as I thought was possible in *What they say, or nothing*’]. The painful experiences and ramifications of OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS can neither be re-created nor repressed; the traumatic experience is embodied but unreachable: ‘pour atteindre la réalité passée, il n’en demeure pas moins ceci: c’est dans mon corps que je saisis la réalité de ce qui a été vécu’ (2016: 89) [‘to get back to the reality of what happened, there is still this: it is in my body that I can grasp the reality of what I have gone through’]. Nonetheless, Ernaux’s attempt to articulate this simultaneously psychological and embodied presence – and the absence of words to express it – exposes the constructs and systems of power which ongoingly affect the person with the eating disorder in *Mémoire de fille* (as well as those *not knowing* but experiencing a whole range of eating disorders beyond the text)

**Naming Eating Disorders: Knowledge Constructs for Not Knowing**

In the concluding pages of *Mémoire de fille*, issues with food are identified as an unconscious structuring principle for the text: ‘Je m'aperçois que ce récit est contenu entre deux bornes temporelles liées à la nourriture et au sang, les bornes du corps’ (2016: 146–47) [‘I realize that this narrative is held between two temporal boundaries linked to food and blood, the boundaries of the body’]. Whilst the references to the drying up and resumption of the periods and the disordered eating behaviours which punctuate the narrative are a deliberate ploy or evolve organically, they have left enduring psychological marks, and Ernaux’s previous texts have made passing reference to disordered eating patterns, bulimia and amenorrhea.[[6]](#endnote-6) What is more, the behaviours evoked exceed the diagnostic boundaries Ernaux more or less knowingly brings into question. The staged mis-labelling when the eating disordered girl happens on the term pica in a dictionary, drawing attention to lack of access to knowledge and to the potential of official discourses to control knowledge and elicit shame: ‘Je n’imaginais pas qu’il puisse y avoir un nom pour mon comportement sauf celui que j’avais lu un jour dans le Larousse: Pica – Appétit dépravé. Perversion. Je ne connaissais pas mon mal, je le croyais moral’ (2016: 103) [‘I did not realize that there could be a name for my behaviour other than the one I happened upon one day in the dictionary: Pica – depraved appetite. Perversion. I did not know what I had, I thought it was a moral failing’]. Pica has been used since Antiquity to describe the compulsive ingestion by human animals of non-nutritive substances and is the only term available to the girl in 1958. Of course, this literary happenchance may be intended to remind readers of the license that comes with ostensibly autobiographical first-person narratives, but it also foregrounds the systemic obstacles to naming eating disordered experiences and the construction of shame around them, here medically legitimized. The subsequent self-diagnosis of bulimiais also represented as only arrived at by chance, or at least Ernaux reports happening upon it in a medical text some twenty years later, further underscoring the difficulty of accessing medical knowledge and the control of its circulation. This term is repeatedly used in *Mémoire de fille*, without ostensibly self-reflexive intent.

Whether or not Ernaux’s reported access to the diagnostic label of bulimia in *Mémoire de fille* is another instance of serendipity or of literary license, although now familiar due to media exposure, bulimia was only described as a medical diagnostic category by Gerald Russell in 1979. As Russell notes, the word ‘bulimia’ (like pica) has been used in the vernacular to denote bingeing or excessive eating (Russell 1979). In French ‘boulimie’ and 'boulimique’ are also used with negative connotations to describe excessive and compulsive behaviours and to connote potentially more productive elements in prolific behaviours, such that Ernaux could be described as ‘boulimique d’écriture’ [‘a really prolific writer’]. The ‘chance’ discovery (albeit of the wrong label) along with the ambivalent slipperiness of bulimia in French reminds us how systems for diagnosis are constructs, drawn up by medical practitioners and in turn influenced by other interest groups to respond to – and as Foucault might argue – to control knowledge. I am aware of the necessary irony bound up with deploying classifications only to criticize them, especially when the main purpose of this article is not to add to the critical debate around diagnostic criteria *per se*, and the DSM categorization in particular, which is rehearsed comprehensively elsewhere. However, the discussions which follow resonate strongly with concerns about the bio-medicalization of complex mind-body issues with etiologies as yet unconfirmed by research; questions of whether political lobbies, Big Pharma and health insurance companies may militate for bio-medical treatments to preserve profits; and debates over whether deferring to powerful and power-invested and investing diagnostic criteria may lead to unnecessary pharmacological interventions or no treatment, and to diagnoses and classifications that normalize, stigmatize and exclude. Indeed, the following discussion of discourses involved in what is purported to be known and what is not with regard to eating disorders demonstrates how medical, economic, media, academic and even not for profit organizations control knowledge, in ways which intersect tellingly with Ernaux’s narrative of *not knowing*.

With the example of Ernaux’s belief that writing involves the imperative to uncover experience that may be shared, and in the spirit of amplifying her ‘transpersonal I’, I shall now exemplify some of the discourses of knowledge that control access to knowing about eating disorders. Examples are limited to samples from the most used diagnostic criteria, and given the experiences related by Ernaux, predominantly to the French medical, academic and not-for-profit sectors, which are broadly representative of UK and American equivalents. In the wake of Russell’s 1979 paper, bulimia was first categorized in the American Psychiatric Association’s third *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM III) (APA 1980). It was in 1994 that the classification ‘eating disorders not otherwise specified’ (EDNOS) was added for eating disorders not meeting diagnostic thresholds for anorexia and bulimia. In 2013, the DSM-5 included re-categorizations for anorexia and bulimia; categorized binge eating disorder (BED), added classifications for pica, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) and rumination disorder; and replaced EDNOS with ‘other specified feeding or eating disorder’ (OSFED) (APA 2013); in French the DSM-5 name still echoes EDNOS: ‘trouble du comportement alimentaire, non spécifié’ (TCA-NS) (APA 2013). This re-categorization led to a reduction of ‘atypical’ cases diagnosed as OSFED because re-categorized thresholds enabled more anorexia, bulimia and BED diagnoses (Machado et al 2013: 60). Nonetheless, it is thought that up to 50% of diagnosed eating disorder cases may qualify as OSFED (Keel et al 2011: 253).

Reflecting concerns over the political and economic influences on the DSM, and over its global influence, the official psychiatric classification in France is the WHO’s International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10)][‘Classification statistique internationale des maladies et des problèmes de santé connexes’ (CIM-10)] (WHO 2016), although it is believed that when ICD-11 is introduced, it will be much closer to DSM-5. Alongside anorexia and bulimia and binge eating disorder. ICD-10/CIM-10 includes ‘Eating disorder, unspecified’/ ‘Trouble de l'alimentation, sans précision’. HAS, the state consultative body providing independent scientific advice to the French public authorities, only mentions ‘boulimie partielle’ [‘partial bulimia’] in a framework paper addressing bulimia and binge eating disorder (BED), albeit noting that the incidence of such cases is 2–3 times greater than bulimia, with equally severe consequences (HAS 6). In the ‘other eating disorders’ section of the *Référentiel de Psychiatrie et Addictologie*, the single reference point for psychiatry and addictology in the ECNi exams sat by all French medical students, only pica, BED, ARFID and rumination disorder are covered, but not OSFED/TCA-NS (AESP, CNUP, CUNEA 2016: 378). The *DSM-5 Clinical Cases* handbook also does not include any example of OSFED (Barhill 2013).

The focus on anorexia and bulimia and gaps in classifications, medical training and treatment protocols for heterogeneous eating disorders also prevails in the not-for profit sector. La Fédération Nationale des Associations (et personnes physiques) liées aux Conduites Alimentaires (FNA-TCA) [National Federation of Associations and People linked to Eating Disorders] establishes ‘Troubles Alimentaires sub-syndromiques’ [’Sub-syndromic eating disorders’] as the most frequent diagnosis, but then defines it by default, as failing to fit the criteria for anorexia and bulimia. The erstwhile Association Française pour le Développement des Approches Spécialisées des Troubles du Comportement Alimentaire [The French Association for the Development of Specialized Treatments for Eating Disorders] changed its name in 2017 to the Fédération Française Anorexie Boulimie (FFAB) [French Federation for Anorexia and Bulimia], and only mentions anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder in its ‘What is an Eating Disorder?’ section (FFAB, 2012). Similar lacunae exist in academic research. A June 2018 search of the digitized archive (2011 to2018) of one of the longest-running psychiatry journals, Les Annales medico-psychologiques reveals no articles featuring the keywords ‘TCA-NS’, ‘trouble de l’alimentation ou de l’ingestion d’aliments, non spécifiés’, ‘OSFED’ or ‘EDNOS’, yet anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder occur 67, 52 and 12 times respectively. Literary scholars researching representations of eating disorders similarly focus on anorexia and to a lesser extent bulimia and BED.[[7]](#endnote-7) Meanwhile, the focus in Anglo-American critical disability studies is on physical disabilities rather than the mutually-influencing mental and embodied health issues experienced by people with eating disorders. In France, the field is nascent, and likewise physically-focused, despite the inclusion of mental disorders in the 2005 ‘loi handicap’ (Thompson 2017).

This overview points to how whilst, despite their relatively low incidence, anorexia and bulimia are the most frequently named and mediatized of eating disorders, medical professionals, researchers and volunteers are not being made aware of the significantly greater prevalence of heterogeneous eating disorders. Accordingly, knowledge of the seriousness, multiplicity and changeable nature of the full spectrum of disordered eating patterns will remain dangerously low (likewise support, treatment and research). It is important to stress that all eating disorders involve *not knowing* and occur across socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, ages, beliefs and body shapes, sexual identifications and gender (up to 25% of people with eating disorders are male (BEAT 2017) although a lack of knowledge for and around men with eating disorders also prevails). Indeed, Ernaux might be a successful, white, cis woman writer, but the links she makes between her experiences of disordered eating and her struggle to negotiate her working-class background productively destabilize the dangerous cliché of eating disorders as the preserve of the middle-classes. It is, of course, also vital to underscore how it is still not known what causes eating disorders (current research points to, but has yet to prove, genetic, epigenetic and environmental etiology involved). This article does not suggest that a literary text will itself bring about change, but instead that examining representations of disordered eating in *Mémoire de fille* uncovers problematics of *not knowing* about eating disorders currently labelled OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS. Furthermore, the following textual analyses explore how the literary may serve to bring to the fore some of the discourses of knowledge which may at once contribute to the development of eating disorders and control their treatment and awareness of them. My reading of *Mémoire de fille* invites again the question of the critical potential there may be to contribute to interdisciplinary debate in Ernaux’s literary evocation of heterogeneous eating disordered experiences.

## **Narrating *Not Knowing*: Knowledge and Control, Naming and Shaming**

Ernaux opens her narrative in the third person – a voice which bespeaks control over others – imagining how people may behave in the grip of obsession: ‘emportés dans le désir et la volonté d’un seul Autre. […] Ils se dissolvent et regardent leur reflet agir, obéir, emporté dans le cours inconnu des choses. […] Vous attendez le Maître’ (2016: 11–12) [‘swept away by the desire and the will of a single Other. […] They disintegrate and watch their own reflections acting, obeying, swept up in the oblivious course of things. […] You are waiting for the Master’]. This is the first evocation of *not knowing* and of the challenges of naming an unsayable driving force. It is presumably intended to introduce the narrator’s obsession with H (the man she desires as a young girl), but also references patriarchal power and resonates with therapeutic attempts to personify eating disorders as controlling voices to be resisted such as ‘Ed’ (for eating disorder), ‘Ana’ (for anorexia) and ‘Mia’ (for bulimia). Tellingly, ‘atypical’ eating disorders have no such voice. The ensuing narrative can be read as the uncovering of feelings arising from structures of knowledge and of control which may contribute to disordered eating. In the interests of uncovering the OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS story, the following discussion of *Mémoire de fille* takes a broadly chronological route, grouping influences more systematically than does Ernaux’s ingenious narrative.

Moving into the first person, Ernaux then imagines how a working-class, convent-school-educated virgin avid for sexual encounters looks as she travels to work as a *moniteur* [group leader] at ‘S’, a *colonie de vacances* [summer camp]. Here, the experience is an ambivalent mix of desire and of social inferiority identified by Ernaux herself in an interview as expressed though realizing her lack of knowledge of eating etiquette: ‘très gênée parce qu’elle ne savait pas comment faire pour manger proprement la pêche’ (2016: 42) [‘covered in confusion because she did not know how to eat the peach without making a mess’] (see Ernaux and Viart 2019). The head *moniteur* ‘H’ beds the girl, then rejects her for a slim, blonde primary-school teacher who better fits patriarchal and idealized consumer images of femininity. She remains obsessed with H and the night before his departure, he again sleeps with her but leaves without any further contact, stoking others’ judgments, reflecting a Catholic, patriarchal society where women’s power over their reproductive futures is withheld and expressions of female sexuality are sanctioned. The girl begins to take daily, solitary trips to the local bakery followed by tearful gorging on cakes, and eats more and more whilst at work: ‘profitant sans retenue de l'abondante nourriture à discrétion, en éprouvant un plaisir qui lui devient indispensable, ne pouvant s’empêcher d’avaler en cachette, à même le saladier les tranches de tomates destinées aux enfants de l’infirmerie’ (2016: 76–77) [‘benefiting freely from the unlimited supplies of food, feeling a pleasure which she cannot do without, unable to stop herself from covertly devouring, right out of the serving bowl, the slices of tomato meant for the children in the infirmary’]. The repressed psychic and societal load, then, seems to find expression in a nascent eating disorder, which like the freedom that daily cake-buying expresses, involves the ambivalent mixture of intense pleasure and pain.

The girl then starts at her sixth-form convent boarding school, where her sense of class distinction-fueled inferiority grows in an environment combining the dominance of class, patriarchy and Church. Her previously self-defining academic confidence is undermined, and she experiences ‘une angoisse sans nom […] un manque indicible’ (2016: 86-87) [‘an anxiety that has no name […] an unspeakable state of lack’]. Already, there are symptoms linked to eating disorders: withdrawal, and an inability to know or name feelings, expressed in the anxiety that cannot be named, the sense of powerlessness and lack: a constant, insatiable mental hunger. This *not* *knowing* points to the possibility of a link between the repressed trauma of her damaging sexual experiences and the encroaching eating disorder (there is significant co-morbidity of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and eating disorders (Brewerton 2008)). Yet – as researchers hypothesize of eating disorders – a hitherto unidentifiable nexus of contributing factors come into play here, including low self-esteem and high academic ambition (although she is not middle-class; nor is she seeking to repress her sexuality, another factor linked to eating disorder etiologies: this working-class girl is still obsessed with H).

By October, *before* she begins to restrict food, the girl stops menstruating. Her mother calls in the doctor who has legislated over her body since birth. Instead of treating imbricated mental and physical health, he falls back on a non-sexual example of amenorrhea in women traumatized during the Second World War, suggesting an ideological manipulation of knowledge in the patriarchal systems governing women’s reproductive futures. He prescribes an egregious injection, the first of several unquestioned, futile interventions, no doubt economically beneficial to the doctor and later to a gynecologist. These medical encounters underscore the potentially detrimental power of medicalized discourses, as well as exemplifying a Cartesian lack of understanding of mind-body relationships. By January, the girl’s eating behaviours change again, accompanied by the assertion: ‘le pire était à venir’ (Ernaux 2016: 96) [‘the worst was yet to come’]. Becoming H’s lover is a ‘rêve actif’ (2016: 97) [‘an active dream’], which manifests in a programme of perceived self-improvement that will, in fact, evolve into the living nightmare of her eating disorder. This compulsion to assert control is encouraged by the internalizing of her philosophical education, its unseen sanctioning power demonstrated as the girl writes to a friend: [‘C’est fou ce que la philo peut nous rendre raisonnable’ (2016: 99) [‘It’s crazy how philosophy can make us reasonable’]. With retrospective irony, this formal education in reason – a coercive ‘enlightenment’– is identified as stoking shame: ‘Je suis saisie par autant de limpidité: Descartes, Kant et l’impératif catégorique, toute la philosophie condamne la conduite de la fille de S.’ [I am struck by so much clarity: Descartes, Kant and the categorical imperative, the whole of philosophy condemns the behavior of the S girl’].

A few months later, the girl reads Beauvoir’s *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) [*The Second Sex*].[[8]](#endnote-8) Beginning ‘Je la suppose’ (2016: 116) [‘I assume that she’], the narrative carefully positions as a projection the ways in which the girl may have responded to reading Beauvoir, perhaps achieving ‘a retrospective understanding that she had colluded in her own objectification’ and ‘“les clés pour comprendre la honte” if not “le pouvoir de l’effacer”’ (2016: 110) [“‘the keys to understanding her shame’ if not “the power to erase it’”] (Jordan 2019). Whilst this reading is not simply swallowing the patriarchal philosophy prescribed by her education, feminism cannot stop shame: ‘Une honte historique, d’avant le slogan “mon corps est à moi” dix ans plus tard. […] Et rien ne peut faire que ce qui a été vécu dans un monde, celui d’avant 1968, et condamné par les règles du monde puisse changer radicalement de sens dans un autre monde’ (2016: 100) [‘A historical shame, from before the slogan “my body belongs to me” that came ten years later. […] And nothing can make what was lived in a pre-1968 world, and condemned by the rules of that world, change radically its meaning in another world’]. The inference here is that subsequent acquisition of knowledge – including from later feminist philosophy – about women’s rights over their bodies and over their reproductive futures cannot erase the shame constructed in the past. Given how knowledge around eating disorders circulates (or does not for OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NA) and given the sense of shame that can be part of disordered eating, women with eating disorders may enduringly express feelings that their bodies do not belong to them. The word ‘honte’ [‘shame’] recurs no less than thirty-four times in *Mémoire de fille*, a shame no doubt multiplied by patriarchal education, philosophy and culture as well as by not knowing what is happening to her body and mind.

As well as the history of women being inculcated with shame, marketing discourses are shown here to exploit it, such that weight loss is at the top of the girl’s list as she exercises her ‘free will’ by implementing a programme of self-transformation to emulate her ‘love rival’. When restricting, she has ‘[u]ne sorte de volonté malheureuse. Je l’exerce d’abord sur mon corps, radicalement’ (2016: 100) [‘a grim kind of will power. Early on, I wield it with an iron grip over my body’]. There is also the elation that may accompany self-starvation: ‘l’orgueil d’une championne du jeûne’ (2016: 101) [‘pride at being a fasting champion’] and ‘une affirmation orgueilleuse de la volonté, acharnée à poursuivre des buts qui l’enfoncent peu à peu dans le malheur’ (2016: 100) [‘a proud triumph of will power, hell-bent on achieving the goals that are slowly burying her in misery’]. However, these highs are momentary and shame prevails. Rather than any denial of external markers of sexuality in an emaciated body sometimes mooted in anorexic etiologies, the behavior is fueled by the economic power exemplified in the pressure of idealized media images of femininity: ‘J’ai cessé de me nourrir […]. J’ai remplacé la jouissance des derniers mois – toujours trop fugace […] par celle de la privation volontaire […]. Je refuse tout ce qui, d’après la notice des comprimés de Néo-Antigrès […] fait grossir’ (2016: 100–101) [‘I stopped eating […]. I replaced the ineffable pleasures of the last few months – always too fleeting […] with choosing to deprive myself […]. I refused everything that the pack of Néo-Antigrès diet pills […] says is fattening’]. The power of such media-constructed images of bodily perfection and the societal sanctioning of female self-deprivation is referenced in the lure of Néo-Antigrès diet pills. The influence of consumer culture is underscored by the way in which, in previous narratives where disordered eating is elided, these diet pills are nonetheless cited; for example, in *La Honte* [*Shame*] she writes: ‘Je ne me nourrissais que des aliments dont les bienfaits étaient énoncés’ (Ernaux 1997a: 128) [‘I ate only foods that were proclaimed to have health benefits’], and in *Les Années* [*The Years*]: ‘Dans quelques semaines, elle va arrêter de manger, acheter du Néo-Antigrès, n'être qu'une conscience pure’ (Ernaux 2008: 76) [‘In a few weeks, she is going to stop eating, buy Néo-Antigrès diet pills, become a pure consciousness’]. Yet philosophical and marketing constructs do not shore up against shame, instead they promote it: ‘Elle a honte d’être hantée par la nourriture, de ne plus avoir ses règles (Ernaux 2008: 77). [‘She is ashamed to be haunted by food, not to have periods’].

The girl continues to restrict her food intake but loses control on return to her parents’ food- and business-dominated home. Across three pages, Ernaux imagines her first binge. When questioned in an interview with Dominique Viart structured around her use of food in her writing, Ernaux asserts that her experience of plenty in her *café-épicerie* home exacerbated her homesickness and obsession with food in a setting where only refectory meals were available (Ernaux and Viart 2019: 3). In comparison with what Ernaux herself has described as her characteristic ‘écriture plate’ [‘flat writing’] (Ernaux 1983: 21), Viart notes a surprisingly unrestrained mode of expression, a change which he argues is precipitated by the abundance of food at her parents’ *café-épicerie*, a reading with which Ernaux retrospectively concurs: ‘Je ne suis pas loin du lyrisme, en effet, sans m’en rendre compte’ [‘Indeed, without realising it, I am not that far from lyricism’] (Ernaux and Viart 2019: 3). However, as the following citation demonstrates, the unfettered access to food in both *Mémoire de fille* and in Ernaux’s first novel, *Les Armoires vides* is much more ambivalent than this interview suggests (see Cruickshank 2019).

The arresting representation of the binge is worth quoting at length. It is also worth noting that this extraordinary change of pace might be described as a ‘boulimie d’écriture’[‘compulsive writing’] yet is simultaneously crafted and *not knowing*. This vivid representation of compulsion evokes how the experiences of the past, even though they cannot be retrieved, continue to mark the present. The passage nonetheless conveys the abject, shame-imbued compulsively dissociative feelings and actions while also foregrounding the issues around power, knowledge, naming and writing:

Je ne sais pas à quoi pense la fille qui perd d’un seul coup tout contrôle sur son désir, se jette – j’imagine – sur le fromage à la coupe, les madeleines au détail, les caramels. Peut-être à rien. C’est la première scène d’avidité où la conscience assiste, impuissante, à la frénésie des mains qui happent, enfournent, de la bouche qui mâche à peine, avale – au plaisir du corps devenu un gouffre sans fond. Avec l’écœurement, la fin arrive: le désespoir d’avoir chuté et la décision de faire diète toute la semaine pour éliminer la plus petite parcelle de cette énorme quantité de nourriture ingurgitée en une demi-heure – m’alléger du poids de la faute.

Ce jour-là, la fille dans l’épicerie ne sait pas qu’elle est entrée dans la ronde infernale de l’abstinence draconienne suivie de la retombée dans la crise de gloutonnerie, au déclenchement obscur et irrépressible. La première bouchée de l’aliment désirable et interdit emporte toutes les résolutions, il faut aller au bout de la déréliction, manger le plus possible jusqu’au soir pour réattaquer le jeûne de bon matin, café noir et rien d’autre.

Elle ne sait pas qu’elle va devenir la proie de la passion la plus triste qui soit, celle de la nourriture, objet d’un désir incessant et refoulé qui ne peut s’accomplir que dans l’excès et la honte. Qu’elle est entrée dans une alternance de pureté et de souillure. Une lutte dont la perspective de la victoire va s’éloigner au fil des mois, quand redeviendrai-je normale, quand cesserai-je *d’être comme ça*. (2016: 100)

[I do not know what the girl who suddenly completely loses all control of her desire is thinking as – I imagine – she sets upon the slab of cheese on the counter, the bulk-bought madeleines, the piles of caramels. Perhaps nothing. It is the primal scene of greed with the consciousness looking on, powerless, at the frenzied hands grabbing, cramming, the mouth barely chewing, swallowing – at bodily pleasure turning into a bottomless pit. With the feeling of nausea comes the end: despair at having failed and the decision to fast for the whole week to get rid of even the smallest amount of the vast quantities of food gobbled down in half an hour – to lighten the weight of my guilt.

On this day, the girl in the grocery store does not know that she has entered into the hellish round of draconian abstinence followed by relapsing into bouts of gluttony, triggered by something dark and irrepressible. The first mouthful of the yearned for, forbidden food breaks through all her resolve, the dereliction must be carried through to the bitter end, eating as much as possible until the evening and starting to fast again in the morning, black coffee and nothing else.

She does not know that she is going to fall prey to the most tragic of passions: food, object of an incessant, repressed desire that can only end in excess and shame. That she will oscillate between states of purity and contamination. A battle in which the prospect of victory will fade as the months go by, when will I become normal again, when will I stop *being like that*.]

To evoke compulsion and loss of control, Ernaux’s account requires an extraordinary act of literary control. This includes shifts from the third- to the first-person pronouns, and the dissociative emphasis on the frantic movements of hands and mouth echoing repeated references to loss of control. Here, Ernaux uncovers some of the effects and affect of *not knowing* into the writing present, evoking repression, powerlessness, insuperable craving and compulsive inevitability, along with religious and cultural stigmatization and internalized blame and shame. Choosing to describe the obsession with food as the most tragic of passions foregrounds the detrimental power of the value judgements implicit in dominant discourses (here the Church) and the fatal potential of eating disordered compulsion. The unpunctuated rhetorical questions perform how the girl at the time and then fifty years later has no answers for how to name accurately or to seek help for ‘being like that’.

Following her mis-labelling of the disorder as pica and the subsequent ‘discovery’ of the term bulimia, Ernaux has the tensions between pleasure, pain, shame, desperation and life force confront the potential of medical knowledge:

Cette obscénité, ce plaisir inavouable, qui fabrique de la graisse et des excréments à évacuer, du sang qui ne coule pas – […] cette forme monstrueuse, désespérée, du vouloir vivre à tout prix, même celui du dégoût de soi et de la culpabilité: la boulimie. Difficile de dire aujourd’hui si cette connaissance m’aurait été d’un grand secours, si j’aurais pu être soignée – ou accepter de l’être – et comment. Qu’aurait fait la médecine contre un rêve? (Ernaux 2016: 103)

This obscenity, this unspeakable pleasure, which makes fat and excrement to be got rid of, and makes blood no longer flow – […] this monstrous, hopeless kind of will to live at any cost, even those of self-disgust and shame: bulimia. It’s hard to tell today whether this knowledge would have been of any great help, if I could have been treated – or if I would have accepted treatment – and how. What could medicine have done against a dream?]

Ernaux’s poignant rhetorical question points at once to diagnostic failure, to the problematics that endure with classification of eating disorders, to the lack of knowledge of factors which contribute to them and to those medical hypotheses which may wrongly be treated as fact.

Having chosen to train as a primary school teacher rather than pursuing her studies in an elite institution as do her middle-class peers, renewed restriction follows (but not purging), in a cycle with less than weekly binges and no other compensatory behaviours, which does not meet the diagnostic criteria for bulimia. Here, the girl is imagined as ‘désespérée, boulimique’ (2016: 124) [‘hopeless, bulimic'], imprisoned both in the college and in her eating behaviours (and her lack of power to name or control them, and their ambivalent pleasure and pain). Restriction continues, but binges only appear to occur when she and her friend ‘R’ steal sweets from the college-run tuck shop (a shared behaviour which is not typical of bulimia). She fails the practical part of her training and only enjoys the cookery elements of the taught course, when she could snaffle handfuls of dried fruit. Only one memory remains that might evoke her psychological state and ambition: eaten up by her own obsession, her sole desire is to be the girl in the canteen with a food trolley. Working in a different *colonie* that summer – and having just read Beauvoir – she chooses the nickname Kali-Nag, after the blood-craving, entrails-devouring Hindu Nãga Kaliya, coincidentally described in Susan Bordo’s discussion of female anorexia as ‘symbolic of potency of female hunger as a cultural metaphor for unleashing female power and desire’ (Bordo: 116). This name foregrounds the societal pressures to conceal her powerlessness in the face of non-normative desire for food which, with habitual self-recrimination, she refuses, only to devour the spectacle of others eating and to gorge later seeking to ‘[d]issimuler son vice, cette obsession de la nourriture’ (2016: 113) [‘Hide her vice, this obsession with food’]. There is only one significant binge (on a crate of bananas) and there does not appear to be any purging, or compensatory activities. However, symptoms linked to eating disorders are once again evoked: subterfuge; fascination with others’ food; stealing sweets from a child’s locker; dissociation; mood swings and an inability to enjoy anything. As the sanctions of knowledge systems leave no means of self-expression beyond self-recrimination, and as her disordered eating evolves, the figure of *not knowing* also recurs: ‘La fille […] ne sait pas, ne peut pas nommer “ce qui ne va pas”: elle mange’ (2016: 115) [‘The girl […] does not know, cannot name “what is wrong”: she eats’].

An au-pair job in London plugs the gap of academic failure, and reflects the limits of socially-acceptable, gendered horizons for the girl in 1958. Whilst far from ‘recovered’, she is reported to have turned a mental corner (although fifty years on, this shift is still marked with self-recrimination): ‘Même si elle n’est pas délivrée de son appétit dépravé’ (2016: 128) [‘Even if she has not escaped her depraved appetite’]. Yet disordered eating still dominates her life as she and her friend R join forces in shared binges, along with walking for miles as a compensatory activity:

persuadées comme nous sommes de perdre à force des kilomètres les kilogrammes gagnées avec tout ce que nous mangeons, lemon curd, shortbreads, trifles, Smarties et Milky Way, tablettes de Caramac et Dairy Milk, glaces neigeuses délivrées entre deux wafers. […] La nouveauté des saveurs sucrées nous excite. […] J’entraine R dans mon avidité. La fille de Londres a trouvé en R une bonne partenaire de boulimie et de jeûne alternés (2016: 133–34).

convinced that the miles walked would help us lose the pounds we were putting on from everything we were eating, lemon curd, shortbread, trifle, Smarties, bars of Caramac and Dairy Milk, snowy ice-creams sandwiched between wafers. […] We find these new sweet tastes exciting […]. I sweep R up with me in my greed. The London girl has found in R a perfect ally for alternate bulimia and fasting.

Once again, and once again along with self-recrimination, bulimia is evoked here in a binary with fasting. However, as well being an a-typically shared activity, and a-typically noting the enjoyment of new tastes, the bingeing described does not meet diagnostic criteria for bulimia in terms of the volume or frequency of food consumed. Looking back at a photograph as the girl prepares to leave and begins to write (neither about traumatic sexual experiences, nor about disordered eating), the girl resembles the slim, blonde teacher, a market-led image which conceals (and perhaps contributes to producing) the devastating mental and physical symptoms of disordered eating: ‘une pin-up froide, boulimique’ (2016: 142) [‘a cold, bulimic cover-girl’]. In what seems a surprising level of certainty, then, given such serious and evolving symptoms and their remarkable resonance in the present of writing ­– and given recent research gauging levels of complete recovery from eating disorders at up to only 40% (Beat 2017) – on beginning to write and on returning to France the girl’s periods return along, it is reported, with her previous appetite. Nonetheless, Ernaux goes on to conclude by foregrounding the potential of literature when faced with *not knowing*: ‘C’est l’absence de sens de ce que l’on vit au moment où on le vit qui multiplie les possibilités d’écriture’ (2016: 151) [‘It is how what you are living makes no sense at the time you are living that multiplies the possibilities for writing’].

***Mémoire de fille***: **The Potential of the Literary in Uncovering *Not Knowing* in Experiences of Disordered Eating**

Just as the label of bulimia does not fit the eating behaviours represented in *Mémoire de fille*, then, the transition from ‘pin-up froide, boulimique’ to ‘être littéraire’ (2016: 143) [‘literary being’] does not contain the narrative of heterogeneous disordered eating uncovered in this analysis. Likewise, as already discussed, the representations of OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS in *Mémoire de fille* exceed the temporal boundaries of the narrative identified as the interruption and resumption of menstruation and the disruption and amelioration of eating behaviours. This is necessarily the case, since eating itself destabilizes boundaries of inside and outside, of pleasure and danger, carrying a symbolic load that may never be entirely digested (Cruickshank 2019). Eating is furthermore a matter of mind and of body, marking and changing both, and nowhere is this clearer than in the case of eating disorders. Imagining having finally found the girl of 1958, then, is not a dream come true: ‘Je pensais que durant trois minutes je redevenais réellement la fille de S. Mais ce n’est pas elle qui resurgit, c’est la réalité de son rêve’ (2016: 74) [‘I thought that I had actually gone back to being the S girl for about three minutes. Yet what comes flooding back is not the girl but the reality of her dream’]. The ‘dream’ that Ernaux so powerfully evokes across her text is bound up with the nightmare of the evolving, ongoing *not knowing*: the reality of people with heterogeneous eating disorder.

To be sure, Ernaux does not set out to offer any putative cathartic or therapeutic outcome from writing or reading about sexual trauma (and, by extension here, about disordered eating). *Mémoire de fille* does not – and cannot – make sense of the potentially deadly *not knowing* of the most prevalent of eating disordered behaviours, those variously and problematically designated OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS. Nonetheless, my analysis of this extraordinary text demonstrates how, by imagining across gaps and absent memories, across compulsive pleasure and pain, across the mind-body nexus and across the past and the present, Ernaux’s literary writing uncovers experiences, at once of heterogeneous disordered eating behaviours and also of the discourses which feed into them, normalize them, stigmatize them, or relegate to many of them to be not known: not otherwise specified. My reading also prompts a consideration of the dangers of medical classification and elucidates how discourses spanning class, patriarchy, Church, medicine, education, philosophy and consumer market economics may at once control knowledge about and contribute to eating disorders. Indeed, Ernaux’s *Mémoire de fille* raises the important question of the potential for the contribution of the literary imagination and for literary analysis in interdisciplinary debates seeking to challenge the *not knowing* of eating disorders.

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1. All translations are my own. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. In one notable exception, Shirley Jordan describes ‘'alimentary disarray, including tendencies both anorexic and bulimic' (Jordan 2019: 9). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. I shall henceforth use the acronyms OSFED/EDNOS/TCA-NS and ‘heterogeneous eating disorders’, which, albeit problematic, here are used to recognize the plurality of such experiences. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5* (DSM-5), bulimia is described as ‘recurrent episodes of binge eating’ (on average ‘at least once a week for 3 months’ which do ‘not occur exclusively during episodes of anorexia’; characterized by eating ‘an amount of food that is definitely larger than what most individuals would eat […] under similar circumstances’; by a ‘sense of lack of control over eating during the episodes’; and by ‘recurrent inappropriate compensatory behaviors to prevent weight gain’ (APA 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Examples of the DSM-5’s OSFED classification include atypical anorexia whereby the individual’s weight is within or above the normal range; bulimia of low frequency and/or limited duration; binge-eating disorder of low frequency and/or limited duration; purging disorder and night eating syndrome. ‘UFED’ designates ‘unspecified feeding and eating disorders’ which meet none of these classifications but cause clinically significant distress and/or impairment of functioning yet fail to meet full criteria for a feeding or eating disorder (APA 2103; Dahlgren et al 2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *La Honte* [*Shame*] has one oblique reference: ‘Je ne me nourrissais que des aliments dont les bienfaits étaient énoncés’ (Ernaux 1997a: 128) [‘I ate only foods that were proclaimed to have health benefits’]. *Je ne suis pas sortie de ma nuit* [*I Remain in Darkness*] describes having ‘descendue au fond […] gavée de nourriture, puis […] cessé de manger pendant des semaines’ (Ernaux 1997b: 65-66) ‘[hit the bottom […] stuffing myself with food, then […] not eating for weeks’]. In *Se Perdre* [*Getting Lost*], an overt reference is framed as an unanswered rhetorical question: ‘Comment m’étonner de ma folie en 58, […] mes deux années de boulimie, de détresse?’ (Ernaux 2001: 70) [‘What is so surprising about my madness in ’58, […] my two years of bulimia, of distress?’]. *Les Années* [*The Years*] states ‘Elle a honte d’être hantée par la nourriture, de ne plus avoir ses règles (Ernaux 2008: 77). [‘She is so ashamed that she is haunted by food, that her periods have stopped’]. There is no mention of 1958 to 1960 or of disordered eating in Ernaux’s 1982 to 2007 writing journal (Ernaux 2011), or in her 2014 extended interviews (Ernaux and La Porte 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. For a recent example, see Bagley, Calamita and Robson (2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ernaux’s choice of title recalls Beauvoir’s account of her adolescence: *Mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée* (1958) [*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*]. The resonance may intend to mark Ernaux’s remove from the privileged Beauvoir; however, Ernaux’s title implies that she sees herself as ‘dérangée’ [‘deranged’]. The resonance is lost with the Joycean intertext in the forthcoming translation by Alison L. Sayer *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman* [*Mémoire de Fille*] (Ernaux 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)