



# Representations of Posthumanism in Contemporary Fictions Written by French Female Authors

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## 1. Introduction

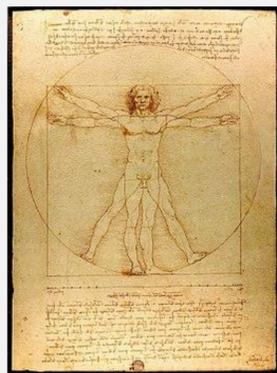
My project analyses the theme of **metamorphosis in novels** written by French female authors since the 1990s. While one can surely notice a rich diversity in women writers' voices, it is nonetheless striking that many of them engage with the theme of body metamorphosis as a way to reflect upon human identity. Through representations of characters with fluid and multiple identities, their literary creation could be read as an attempt to deconstruct the idea of a **human's essence**.

## 2. Research questions

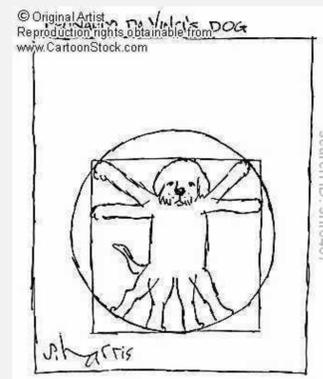
Through the recurring theme of body metamorphosis are female authors suggesting that some persons who do not embody the human norm still live outside the realm of humanity? Are women writers emphasizing the need to question traditional understandings of what it means to be human?

## 3. Theoretical framework – posthumanism

I will analyze the theme of body metamorphosis in light of theoretical tools including the emerging theory of posthumanism which **aims at redefining humans and the place they occupy within our world**.



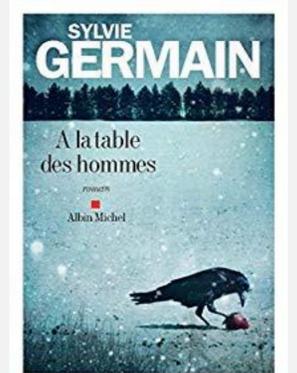
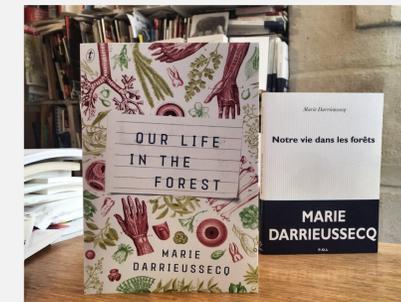
“At the start of it all there is a He: the classical ideal of ‘Man’, formulated first by Protagoras as ‘the measure of all things’, later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model and represented in Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man” (Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 2013).



With this drawing depicting a dog in Vitruvian pose, Donna Haraway ironically questions the place of human, wondering if other living species could be the measure of all things. (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 2008)

## 4. Sample of novels studied

Feminist scholars, among others, have questioned the traditional understanding of human as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied man. Today, the growing presence of science and technologies in our lives contributes to further challenge our understanding of the human. For example, the human body can now be modified through pacemakers implants and could be further transformed with ongoing research in the field of xenotransplants. As such, the divide between **humans and machines** and **humans and animals** becomes less obvious and encourages us to rethink human relations to each others, to other living species and to the non-living. It is precisely these dualisms that authors of fiction seem to reflect upon and question.



Sherryl Vint notes the importance of studying fiction in order to explore the posthuman because it allows to think of “the consequences of various versions of the posthuman within its imagined worlds. [...] If we can change the representations that are available for identification, we can change the subjects who are so produced.” (Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow*, 2007)

In Marie Darrieussecq’s work, a woman exploited within a misogynist environment ironically gains a degree of independence by transforming into a sow (*Truismes*, 1996). In a more recent work, the author’s characters attempt to escape a society highly controlled by technologies and robots (*Notre vie dans les forêts*, 2017). In Sylvie Germain’s novel, humans’ thirst for power over all the living surrounding them is portrayed. As her main character, a pig, changes into a man, he learns a new language, new norms and quickly becomes disenchanted with a world filled with violence and competition for control and resources (*À la table des hommes*, 2015).