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MASTER'S THESIS

Posthuman Identities: Cyborg Characters in Young Adult Fiction

Posthumanistisk identitet: Kyborgkarakterar i ungdomslitteratur

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Master in Children and Young Adults' Literature

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I confirm that the work is self-prepared and that references/source references to all sources used in the work are provided, cf. Regulation relating to academic studies and examinations at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), § 10.

“What if a cyber brain could possibly generate its own ghost, create a soul all by itself? And if it did, just what would be the importance of being human then?”

- *Major Motoko Kusanagi*

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Abstract

This thesis explores how humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected through the representations of relationships between human and cyborg characters in young adult dystopian fiction, and what role biotechnology plays in these narratives. By looking at the novels *Tankborn* (2011) and *Partials* (2012), the thesis has found that humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected in the way that the societies in the novels are structured by class, and how human and cyborg characters address each other. Human characters try to utilize humanist definitions to justify their position as a superior being compared to the cyborgs, but as the characters begin to form relationships that transgress the social gap between them, this construction is challenged, and the characters begin to adopt posthuman ideas. Biotechnology functions as a wedge between human and cyborg characters, as it is the humans who control the technology, and the cyborgs are a result of it. At the same time, biotechnology is used as a catalyst to drive the characters forward, as biotechnology is also the solution to the problems it has caused.

Samandrag

Denne masteroppgåva utforskar korleis humanistiske og posthumanistiske idear blir reflekterte gjennom representasjonane av relasjonar mellom menneskelege og kyborgkarakterar i dystopiske ungdomsromanar. Ved å sjå nærare på bøkene *Tankborn* (2011) og *Partials* (2012) har denne oppgåva funne ut at humanistiske og posthumanistiske idear vert reflekterte i klassestrukturar i samfunna i bøkene, og at verdisynet til karakterane kjem fram gjennom språket dei brukar om kvarandre. Menneskelege karakterar har forsøkt å nytte seg av humanistiske idear for å forsvare sin posisjon som overlegne ovanfor kyborgane, men idet menneske og kyborgar byrjar å skape relasjonar på tvers av det sosiale skiljet, blir konstruksjonen om det overlegne mennesket satt på prøve. Bioteknologi i bøkene fungerer som ein kile mellom menneske og kyborgar, då det er menneska som sit med makta til å bruke den, og kyborgane er resultatet av teknologien. Samstundes fungerer bioteknologien som ein katalysator for å drive historien framover, fordi bioteknologi også viser seg å vere løysinga på problema den har skapa.

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1 Introduction

“What is the human anyway? What is the non-human?” Francesca Ferrando asks in her 2014 article “Posthumanism” (p. 169). At first glance, these might appear to be simple questions to answer; human beings are humans, and all other beings are not. But history and literature have shown that it is not that straightforward. Throughout Western social, political and scientific history, not everyone has been considered human, when “human” is understood as the thinking subject known to us from the Enlightenment period. Rosi Braidotti writes that some of us are still not seen as fully human, but that the term “human” still is widely used, and that people seem to share a consensus on the meaning of the word (2013, p. 1). Over the course of history, the notion of the human has been explored and challenged through literature, predominantly through science fiction narratives such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932/2007) or Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968/2009), and George Orwell’s *1984* (1949/2008). All of the novels mentioned explore what the human is, what it is not, and the relationship between human and non-human. When recent developments within biotechnology are added into the equation, with the prospect of giving us “superhuman” abilities or bodies altered through technology, the question of what makes us human gets even more complicated. These complexities have been discussed since the early 1900s under the heading of *the posthuman*. A central posthuman figure is the cyborg: a technologically altered human being.

First published in 1818, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or the modern Prometheus* (2007) demonstrates that the literary world was quick to embrace ideas of the posthuman, and Frankenstein’s monster can be considered a cyborg. Shelley’s work is regarded as one of the first science fiction novels ever written, and is a classic with enduring relevance. The novel explores the human through posthuman and transhuman ideas, revising the boundaries between life and death, and the creation of a sentient being through technology instead of reproduction. Through the novel, Shelley starts a discussion regarding whether humans have the right to use science to alter or create life, and what responsibilities come with the use of such technologies (2007).

Since Shelley's time, a great number of books depicting cyborgs or posthuman subjects have been written, especially within the genre of young adult fiction. The popularity of these books is evident as many of them have been adapted into blockbuster movie franchises, such as the *Hunger Games* series (Collins, 2008-2010) (Lawrence, Ross & Jacobson, Kilik, 2012-2015) and the *Divergent* trilogy (Roth, 2011-2013) (Schwentke, Burger, Krieger & Fisher, Wick, Shabazian, 2014-2016).

Human-enhancing technology and cyborgs have been a prevalent topic in young adult fiction for decades. Victoria Flanagan writes that up until the mid-2000s, the presentation of technology and its effect on humans and society in young adult literature, was marked by the concern that human identity and autonomy were being compromised by technological development. This concern manifested itself as an anti-technology pattern in stories, making futuristic technology look rather grim and frightening (2014, pp. 1-2). Flanagan argues that since the mid-2000s, this negative image of technology has been challenged by authors who are writing narratives about technology in a more positive way (2014, p. 2). There is more than one explanation as to why there has been a change in how technology is represented in young adult literature, Flanagan explains (2014, p. 3). One of the reasons is that its readers are children who associate technology with fun and enjoyment (Applebaum, 2010 in Flanagan 2014, p. 3), and another reason may be that many of the authors grew up or were young as the internet first gained popularity in the early 1990s, and thus have a more positive view on technology.

Flanagan states that humanist ideology has been and still is an important part of young adult fiction (2014, p. 13), but in a world where a large portion of the population interacts and integrates with various technologies on a daily basis, the question of where the human ends and where technology begins has never been more relevant. Hence, another explanation for the shift in how authors write about technology can be the growing influence of posthuman theory, along with an accelerated technological development. The high profile entrepreneur Elon Musk has founded a company called Neuralink (Silva, C. D. 2017), which aims to develop "ultra high bandwidth brain-machine interfaces to connect humans and computers" (Neuralink, n.d.).

Neuralink consequently represents how close we are to the posthuman, making literature about cyborg hybridity more important and relevant than ever. When technology challenges our perception of the human, how are relationships between the human and the non-human affected?

1.1 Research Question

In young adult dystopian fiction a shift from techno-negative storylines to more techno-positive stories is reflected in the growing popularity of novels featuring cyborg heroes. Cyborgs are no longer merely presented as an enemy species that is threatening human existence, but rather as a part of the solution to complex problems such as environmental catastrophes, disease and starvation. While cyborgs are posthuman subjects, humanism as a philosophy is still very much part of Western culture and is thus still reflected in Western literature. Since young adult dystopian fiction with cyborg protagonists display both humanist and posthuman influences, this thesis will examine how the relationships between cyborgs and humans in young adult dystopian novels are described by drawing on both humanist and posthuman theories, and look at what role biotechnology plays in the narratives.

The research question of this thesis is;

How are humanist and posthuman ideas reflected in young adult fiction's representations of the relationship between human and cyborg characters and what role does biotechnology play in this relationship?

Although this thesis recognizes that there is a great number of ethical implications connected with the creation of new life forms, it will not be discussing the morality of the cyborg in the novels. The focus of the thesis will be on the relationships between human and posthuman subjects, and on the technology influencing this relationship.

1.2 Research Material

This thesis analyzes two contemporary young adult dystopian novels depicting genetic cyborgs, that is: humanoid beings that came to be through technology and genetic engineering rather than reproduction. The books explore mixed societies comprised of humans and cyborgs. Based on these criteria, the research material of this thesis is *Tankborn* (2011) by Karen Sandler and *Partials* (2012) by Dan Wells. Both novels revolve around genetically engineered or technologically altered beings, set in a not-so-far-away future with a female protagonist. The books chosen for this thesis are relatively unknown, compared to works that have been adapted into larger franchises, and have not previously been analyzed to the same extent.

1.2.1 Partials

In a dystopian future, where humanity is on the brink of extinction because of a lethal virus, Kira and her friends set out to find a cure and to save mankind. They are told that the virus was created and released by a group of man-made soldiers called Partials that turned on their creators. Kira believes that the cure to the disease is to be found at the source, the Partials, and journeys out to capture a Partial with the intention of studying it. During this dangerous adventure, Kira comes to realize that the world is not as black and white as she was led to believe growing up. Samm, the Partial she captures, proves to be kind and helpful, despite what Kira was told by authorities. Kira eventually discovers that she is a Partial as well, and this sends her into an identity crisis. She asks herself: does this mean that she is a traitor, evil or even dangerous? The cyborgs in this novels are represented by the Partials. In a prequel to *Partials* called *Isolation* (Wells, 2012), it is explained in detail how Partials are grown in a vat in a lab, similarly to a human fetus in a womb. Over the course of nine months, the Partial develops into a grown soldier before they are removed from the vat and put into combat training. Partials thus have a biotechnological origin.

1.2.2 Tankborn

This novel is also set in a dystopian future. After destroying Earth, humans colonized the planet of Loka. People are divided into different social classes: High-status trueborn, demi-status trueborn, minor-status trueborn and lowborn. To afford the journey to Loka, the poor lowborns originally agreed to work for the trueborns for a period of 50 years. When that time was up, the trueborns found it hard to let the lowborns go. The lowborns consequently revolted, and GENs were created to replace them as labour. GEN is short for Genetically Engineered Non-natals, but to give the trueborns control over the GENs, they are referred to as Genetically Engineered Non-humans. They are treated poorly and used as slave labour. As a way of coping with daily struggle, GENs turn to religion, where they believe that they were created to fulfill a purpose to their best ability, and then become free. GENs in *Tankborn* are cyborgs in the sense that they are made of human and animal DNA in a tank, grown in a lab, with specialized genetic traits, making them fit for different tasks. Thus, GENs too are posthuman cyborg characters created through biotechnological means.

1.3 Previous Research

Since *Frankenstein*, the literary world has featured many cyborg characters that have been used as a tool to challenge the reader's perception of the human. In "Girl Parts, The female body, subjectivity and technology in posthuman young adult fiction" (2011) Flanagan examine three contemporary female cyborgs in light of Donna Haraway's cyborg concept, and explore how the relationship between technology and feminine subjects are constructed. Flanagan notes that technology and its effect on the female body in the narratives is used to rework the female subject, and that even though technology paves the way for posthuman subjectivity, humanist values are not completely abandoned. "Girl Parts" contributes to a feminist discourse, debating whether technology empowers or oppresses the feminine subject.

Flanagan has also dedicated the whole book *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* (2014), to examining the representation of technology in young adult fiction, and argues that literature is facing a paradigm shift, leaving the human subject behind in favour of the posthuman. Flanagan states that instead of demonizing technology, writers of young adult narratives use it to “interrogate the status of the human subject in the modern era” (2014, p. 186). In *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* Flanagan focuses on posthuman subjectivity in young adult narratives, and she accepts that her book can be criticised for overlooking characters with humanist values but argues that posthumanism rather reformulates the humanist subject than reject it.

Flanagan’s studies both examine the effect that technology has on the *subject* in young adult narratives, and confirms that both humanist and posthuman theories are represented. This thesis looks at how *relationships* are impacted as technology forces the characters in young adult fiction to reflect upon their own subjectivity.

Relationships between human and non-human are also examined in the master thesis *The cyborg as a posthuman figure in science fiction literature* by Mona Håland Aarsland (2015). She examines cyborg characters’ representation of the posthuman in science fiction, and how they are used to comment on the posthumanization of the human species. By analysing meetings between humans and cyborgs from a selection of science fiction novels, Aarsland attempts to illustrate how the boundaries between human and cyborg are in the process of disappearing as the boundary is exposed as a social construct, and how literature affects the reader’s comprehension of the increasingly technologized human species. Aarsland argues that science fiction narratives featuring oppressed cyborg characters can be seen as a commentary on contemporary society and how we view the developing human species.

In her thesis Aarsland has examined cyborg characters in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Isaac Asimov’s *The Complete Robot collection* (1982), and Paolo Bacigalupi’s novel *The Windup Girl* (2009), which are all science fiction novels written for

adults, and of these only *The Windup Girl* was written after the mid-2000s. Readers of young adult literature today were born into a world where the sciences of fiction and cyborgs are a part of their daily lives, actualizing the study of relationships between human and posthumans in contemporary young adult fiction. The protagonists in Aarsland's study were "natural" humans, but in contemporary young adult fiction the trend is that the protagonist is a cyborg. This adds a new perspective to the relationship between humans and cyborg characters that is interesting to explore.

Aarsland looks exclusively at the cyborg as a representation of the posthuman in her thesis, arguing that "even if we do not realize it, our species has changed and is changing. We are already cyborgs. We are posthuman now." (2015, p. iii). Posthuman theories are used to explain the relationships between humans and non-humans in Aarsland's thesis, but in young adult fiction, humanist theory is still a prevalent ideology. This master thesis consequently examines relationships in young adult fiction's representations of the posthuman also in relation to humanist ideas.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into four chapters, the first of which is the introduction chapter. The body of the thesis is divided into three main chapters, which are then divided into several sub-sections. Chapter two, *Theory and Criteria for Analysis*, presents theories relevant to analyzing the representation of the relationship between human and cyborg characters in the chosen primary texts. This chapter has five sections. The first section, 2.1, discusses the origin of the concept of the cyborg, and develops a working definition of what a cyborg is. The second section, 2.2, explores the dystopian young adult genre, focusing on narratives with a female protagonist, as the primary texts of this thesis portray young female protagonists. The next section, 2.3, is devoted to presenting theories discussing the human condition and humanist theories, which is then followed by the discussion, 2.4, of the posthuman condition and posthuman theories,

focused on critical posthumanism and transhumanism. Based on the discussions and definitions in this chapter, the final section, 2.5, draws up a set of criteria that are used to analyse the primary texts in the following chapter.

The third chapter, contains the examination of the primary texts, and follows the structure of the criteria presented in the previous chapter. First in 3.1, the protagonists of the novels are presented and discussed in relation to the genre-traits from chapter 2.2. Section 3.2 explores the representations of relationships between human and cyborg characters in the narratives, and how humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected in said relationships by looking at social structures and the language used about the cyborg characters. Lastly, section 3.3 examines the role biotechnology plays in the two narratives, focusing on the role of reproduction, and the consequences of using biotechnology.

The fourth and final chapter of the thesis discusses the findings from the analysis in light of the theoretical framework. It sums up the argument and discusses how humanist and posthuman theories are reflected in young adult fiction's representations of the relationships between human and cyborg characters, and what role biotechnology plays in these relationships.

2 Theory and Criteria for Analysis

The following chapter and its five sections lay the foundation for the analysis and discussion in this thesis. The first section presents the concept of the cyborg, ending in a working definition of the cyborg that can be applied to the two novels. While literature has featured cyborgs for several hundred years, it now seems they are especially present in contemporary young adult literature, possibly as a response to the rapid technological advances and the growing number of real life cyborgs in our own society. The cyborg characters from the novels analyzed here all closely resemble human beings, blurring the concept of the human. The second section presents a definition of young adult dystopian fiction, and introduces a set of traits that are common in young adult fiction with a female protagonist. The third and fourth sections discuss humanist philosophy, which focuses on the human being, and posthuman theory, which seeks to deconstruct the humanist notion of the human being. Both discourses are concerned with ontology, the nature of being, and are relevant here because they help to answer the research question of this thesis. Based on the theoretical discussions and clarifications in this chapter, the final and fifth section presents a set of criteria that will be used to analyze the relationship between cyborg, human and biotechnology in *Partial* and *Tankborn*.

2.1 The Cyborg

“Cyborg” is a contraction of the words *cybernetic* and *organism* (Cyborg n.d). Cybernetics is defined as “the science of communication and control theory that is concerned especially with the comparative study of automatic control systems (such as the nervous system and brain and mechanical-electrical communication systems)” (Cybernetics, 2017). Organism is a synonym for life form, and the cyborg can therefore be seen a hybrid between life and technology. The word cyborg was first introduced by Manfred Clynes and co-author Nathan Kline in their 1960 article “Cyborgs and Space” (Madrigal, 2010). Clynes and Kline envisioned the cyborg as a man that had been altered through technology to withstand challenging conditions in space. In the

beginning of the space age, scientists attempted to understand how man could survive an extraterrestrial journey. At the time, Clynes (1960, p. 26) argued that it would make more sense to alter man's bodily functions to survive in space, rather than trying to create a livable environment around him off-planet. Space aviation has since revolved around vessels carrying humans, but the term cyborg has prevailed.

In 2010 Clynes said that he always believed the word "cyborg" would survive, but that some of the original meaning has been lost, as the word took on a life of its own (Madrigal, 2010). One theorist who has famously added to the meaning of the word cyborg is Donna Haraway, who has become known as one of the most influential posthuman theorists of our time. In her pioneering article "A Cyborg Manifesto" Haraway defined the cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (2000, p. 291). Theresa Senft expands on Haraway's definition, noting that;

"Cybernetics" is the study of communication and control processes in biological, mechanical, and electronic systems. Accordingly, a "cybernetic organism" is one that functions according to a communication and control network. In addition, a "hybrid" in genetics refers to the offspring of genetically dissimilar parents or stock. Something that is a "hybrid of machine and organism" would of necessity contain both organic and inorganic materials. Put another way, a cyborg would have elements that would qualify it as classically "alive" and then again, not (2001, pp. 3-4).

As for "a creature of social reality" and "a creature of fiction", Haraway states that "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" and that "the cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience" (2000, p. 291). First written as a response to the radical feminism of the 70s and 80s, Haraway and her manifesto are important to this thesis because she is one of the most central posthuman theorists, albeit now Haraway claims to be a compost-ist, and not posthuman-ist (2015, p. 161). In her essay she was one of the first theorists to link the

cyborg to politics, feminism, science and technology, which are all important perspectives within contemporary posthuman thought.

Since this thesis investigates the cyborg in young adult fiction, it is useful to incorporate Victoria Flanagan's definition of the cyborg as well. Flanagan examines the cyborg in young adult fiction, and states that "cyborgian hybridity" reflects "the way that the boundaries between nature/artifice and human/machine are linguistically blurred" (2014, p. 111). Such linguistic blurring is explored in this thesis through the analysis of the pronouns used to describe cyborg characters (see chapter 3). In her book, Flanagan looks at the link between identity and technology in young adult fiction. This perspective also is relevant here because the thesis examines relationships between technologically altered beings and humans, and sense of identity is a key factor when cyborgs and humans interact in *Partials* and *Tankborn*. Humans making use of technology to *enhance* themselves do not regard themselves as cyborgs, but beings *created* through technology are seen as cyborgs and are often treated as second-class creatures in both novels.

Theresa Senft (2001) interpreted Haraway's definition of the cyborg as having some elements that would be considered living, and some as not living, like mechanical parts or electronic devices. The cyborgs in *Partials* and *Tankborn* are all mostly made up of organic material, that is: living tissue without inanimate elements, but the *Partials* were programmed by humans, indicating some form of integrated electronic circuit in their brains, and the *GENs* are equipped with an "annexed" brain connected to dataports disguised as tattoos on their faces. Even though the cyborgs in the primary texts appear to be fully organic, the programmed component qualifies them to be cyborg in this thesis. Biotechnology has also made significant advances since Haraway first published her *Cyborg Manifesto* in 1991, and this technology adds to the artificial or non-living element both the studied texts.

Biotechnology is defined by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology and Food Science as "technology that utilizes biological systems, living

organisms or parts of this to develop or create different products.” and they write that “With the development of genetic engineering in the 1970s, research in biotechnology (and other related areas such as medicine, biology etc.) developed rapidly because of the new possibility to make changes in the organisms' genetic material (DNA)” (NTNU, n.d.). This definition and branch of biotechnology is useful to this thesis because it describes the kind of technology that is used to create cyborgs in the novels.

The cyborg characters of *Partials* and *Tankborn* came to be through biotechnological means, and not through reproduction like a “natural” human being would. In *Partials*, the cyborgs are grown in tanks, and are “born” when they have reached the size of a grown human of approximately nineteen years of age, and stay the same age until they expire. The cyborg characters in *Tankborn* are grown in tanks as well, much as the title of the novel indicates, but are still “born” or “emerge” as infants, and are raised by an assigned nurture mother, and age as normal humans would. Based on the nature of the cyborgs in the primary texts and on the definitions by Haraway and Flanagan, this thesis will operate on the understanding that the cyborg is a hybrid being with integrated human and biotechnologically crafted traits.

2.2 Dystopian Young Adult Fiction with a Female Protagonist

The word “dystopia” is made up of the Ancient Greek words dys- and -topia, which translates to “bad place”, and can be described as “an imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one” (Ordnott, n.d.). John Joseph Adams (2011) writes that in dystopian literature, society itself is often presented as the antagonist of the story, working against the protagonists’ goals and wishes. Adams also explains that totalitarian governments often enact oppression through restricting civil liberties by controlling living conditions, using constant surveillance and dictating a person’s sexual or reproductive freedom. The right to decide over your own body is indeed one of the themes in *Partials*, where the government has made pregnancy mandatory for all girls that have reached

the age of 18, in an attempt to cure the virus that is killing every newborn baby. In *Tankborn* every GEN is chipped with a tracking device, allowing the government to monitor their every move.

Sara K. Day (2014, p. 3) writes that the strong, female lead is a trend in contemporary young adult dystopian fiction. Day explains that these young women “occupy liminal spaces as they seek to understand their places in the world, to claim their identities, and to live their lives on their own terms”. Kira and Kayla represent the female protagonists of *Partials* and *Tankborn*, and as Day points out, they find themselves in a position in between the individual and the society they live in, in between genders as they break with traditional gender patterns, and in between species, as they are cyborgs with both human and non-human traits.

In ““Is He Still Human? Are you?”: Young Adult Science Fiction in the Posthuman Age” Elaine Ostry (2004) reviews a selection of young adult science fiction novels that depict different types of cyborgs, and points to several traits that are prevalent in young adult science fiction. Ostry agrees with Day that the search for identity is one of the most important traits of this genre, and that the hunt for a sense of self is often underscored by a realization that the protagonist is not a standard human being (Ostry, 2004, p. 224). In *Partials* Kira discovers towards the end of the first book that she is a cyborg, and in *Tankborn* Kayla is informed that she was born human and made into a cyborg at a later stage, and both of them struggle with coming to terms with who they are because of this. The realization that one is not quite human does not necessarily come as a surprise, because, as Ostry writes, the protagonist usually has some form of special abilities, powers or gifts, making them different from others (2004, p. 227). Kira can not recall ever being sick growing up, and Kayla experiences flashbacks of a childhood she believes she never had.

Another frequent trait in young adult science fiction that Ostry describes is how the boundaries between human and machine are challenged (2004, p. 233), where does the persona end and the machine begin; can one be both machine and human at the same time? The books that Ostry examines also question what exactly makes us human (2004, p. 234). The novels analyzed in this

thesis are good examples of this debate, as they depict characters that are almost indistinguishable from traditional human beings, physically, emotionally and intellectually, but they are still treated inhumanely by humans, because technology has made them into an “other”.

The posthuman body, meaning the technologically enhanced body, has a great appeal in young adult science fiction because it might give the teenager exceptional abilities that make them both powerful and vulnerable (Ostry, 2004, p. 235). Kira, the protagonist in *Partials*, is afraid that she will be shunned by her human peers if they find out what she is, but is also curious about where her genetic makeup can lead her. Ostry writes that many characters end up rejecting their posthuman bodies and abilities, because they are afraid to become less human since “Ironically, human weaknesses – including a moral base and emotions – are strengths” and by relinquishing power, the cyborg teenagers gain moral power and become more human (Ostry, 2004, p. 239). This is based on a traditional view on humanity as being founded on empathy, so that being inhuman means lacking moral, emotion and empathy. In *Tankborn* Kayla expresses discontent in relation to her own body and what it can do. Her genes have been spliced with those of another animal to give her a certain “sket”, or skill set, in her case to give her larger and stronger arms. Throughout the novel, Kayla dreams of becoming human, and not having to live with what she sees as an ugly appearance, even though she is a morally good person with or without her “sket”. Many young adult science fiction books stress emotion as a key part in being human (Ostry, 2004, p. 236). Taking away a cyborg’s emotions, or the ability to control them, is in this view to take away their humanity, like the *Partials* that were made to be “unthinking, unfeeling inhuman killers” (Wells, 2012, p. 17).

The teenage girls of young adult dystopian narratives are not only concerned with learning who they are and finding their place in the world; they also seek to challenge and change the world they live in, as an attempt to make a more progressive, free and equal society. This, Day writes, is accomplished when the adolescent female protagonists learn to accept their liminal condition, and use it to their advantage in the rebellion against controlling social orders (2014, pp. 3-4).

Kira and Kayla both make use of their transgressing conditions between human and non-human to build bridges between different species in the novels.

The thesis will operate with Adams' (2011) definition of dystopia as a "bad place", an alternative world in which people live under constant oppression and observation by a totalitarian government, as they are facing environmental catastrophes, violence, brutality and loss of civil liberties. Day (2014) explains that the protagonist of young adult dystopian fiction typically is a teenage girl, who finds herself in a liminal space, where she struggles to find a sense of self and a place in the world. Ostry (2004) writes that such dystopian stories are driven forward as the female protagonist searches for her identity, to the point in the story where she realizes that she is special, a cyborg in this case, or she realizes that she is a pawn in a political game. Finding out that she is part of a larger scheme prompts her to begin resisting the rules of society around her. She starts to embrace her cyborg abilities, but often she finds that she needs to show some weakness to become "more human", since "human" is traditionally seen as a synonym for moral and empathy. Finally, Day writes, the teenage girl rebels and breaks the chains of the society she grew up in, so she can begin to build a more free and equal world for everyone in it. In the analysis chapter, the development of Kira and Kayla will be examined to see how closely they correspond with the generic pattern outlined by Day and Ostry, where protagonists evolve from being part of an oppressed minority, to becoming inspiring leaders.

2.3 Humanism and the Human Condition

Flanagan describes humanism as "a dominant ideological force" in Western children's and young adult literature, and points to the fact that the narratives often revolve around the search for identity, individuality, independence and autonomy (2014, pp. 13-14), supporting Day (2014) and Ostry's (2004) observations. The term humanism was not coined until the 19th century when German scholars started to focus on the Renaissance of the Classical era, but humanist philosophy precedes its name, and is documented as far back as ancient Greece (Grudin, 2017).

Since then, humanism has taken on many different meanings, and has been used to refer to literary and cultural studies, secularism and devotion to human welfare. Historian Edward P. Cheyney notes that even though the term humanism has had several different meanings over the course of history, it has since the 16th century been widely understood as a “philosophy of which man is the center and sanction” (Lamont, 1997, p. 12). The term “man” points to the limited inclusiveness of the humanist vision historically speaking. Because humanist thought has such a long history, the word “humanism” is now used as an umbrella term covering several theoretical frameworks, and this thesis will limit itself to the works of two of the most relevant theorists for this thesis, Corliss Lamont and Hannah Arendt.

Lamont was born in Englewood, New York in 1902, and through his life he came to be known as a humanist, philosopher, philanthropist and a free thinker that often held opinions that differed from the norm. His education is vast and varied, including English literature and history at Harvard, Geneva School of International Studies, and Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford. In 1925, he wrote on a PhD-thesis at Columbia University, working along other known philosophers such as Frederick Woodbridge and John Dewey. It was here that he found inspiration for his own philosophical thought (Gregory, 1995). His most acclaimed book *Humanism as a Philosophy*, first published in 1949, is now known by the title *The Philosophy of Humanism*, the book has been published in its eighth edition and is translated into several languages. In his book, Lamont describes humanism as;

The viewpoint that people have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness; that human happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources (1997, p. 15).

According to Lamont’s statement, humanism regards the struggle towards human happiness as the most important aspect of life, holding that happiness itself gives life meaning, without the aid from religion. Lamont (1997, pp. 13-15) lists ten positions he believes are central in humanist philosophy. Not all ten of these positions are relevant to this thesis, since it focuses on young

adult fiction, but five of the listed positions are relevant when examining cyborg characters in young adult dystopian fiction. First, humanism rejects the supernatural, such as religion, and considers nature to be a constantly changing system of matter and energy. Second, humanism regards the human as part of nature and a product of evolution, arguing that body and mind cannot be separated, thus making a conscious life after death impossible. The third position regards humans as able to solve their own problems through reason and scientific methods. Fourth, humanism believes humans are shapers of their own destiny, through freedom of choice and action. Lastly, humanism believes in a fundamental ethics and morality, where the ultimate goal is happiness, freedom and progress for all human beings.

These positions are here taken to mean that humanist philosophy dismisses the thought of a divine creator, and that it emphasizes how the human emerged from a natural evolutionary process. The notion that matter and mind cannot exist separately contradicts the theist idea of the eternal soul and the posthuman trope of a potential disembodiment of consciousness, which may then be “downloaded” into electronic systems (Hayles, 1999, p. xii). The humanist position that humans have free will and are able to use it to pursue the life they want, and the humanist belief in a fundamental morality which demands that the human seeks happiness for all human beings are further significant points of departure for the analysis of humanist ideas in the primary texts. The adjective “humane” derives from the word “human” and has come to describe “having or showing compassion or benevolence” or “inflicting the minimum of pain” (Ordnnett, n.d). “Inhuman” on the other hand, is to be “lacking human qualities of compassion and mercy; cruel and barbaric” (Ordnnett, n.d). Humanism argues that through the freedom of will and action, human beings might be able to fulfill the ultimate goal of reaching human happiness. The books that are analyzed in this thesis depict both humans and cyborgs, and following humanist philosophy people are entitled to try to make the best out of their own life through freedom of conscious choice and action. That raises the question whether cyborgs in the novels can be considered people, and whether humans contradict humanist philosophy in their interaction with cyborgs. Do they break their own moral code by treating cyborgs inhumanely?

In order to decide if cyborgs can be considered human, the question of what a human is has to be answered. Through history the definition of the human being has changed, but this thesis will draw on Hannah Arendt's understanding of the human. Arendt was born in Germany in 1906 to German-Jewish parents, who were forced to flee to Paris in 1933, before immigrating to America in 1941. Arendt has written several significant books and articles, and regarded as one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century (d'Entreves, 2014). In 1958, one year after the first satellite was launched into space, Arendt published *The Human Condition*. In the prologue Arendt expresses concern about the technological advancements of that time, and writes that "For some time now, a great many scientific endeavors have been directed toward making life also "artificial", toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature" (1998, p. 2). This statement is a reference to test tube technology, and how Arendt fears it can be used to create superior human beings as a way to escape the natural human condition (1998, p. 2).

It is evident that Arendt closely connects the human to nature, and that by nature she means Planet Earth. She writes that life on Earth is "the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice" (1998, p. 2). Two years later, Clynes and Kline introduce concept of the cyborg, describing a technologically enhanced man that could withstand the perils of an extraterrestrial journey. Arendt believed that science would be able to produce posthumans that could live for hundreds of years, but questions whether it should be done just because we can (pp. 2-3).

To Arendt, the human condition is concerned with the fundamentals of being human, and proposes three human activities, *vita activa*, connected to the human condition; *labor*, *work* and *action*. *Labor* refers to the biological processes of the human body, starting with spontaneous growth, metabolism, and decay. Labor is connected to biological life itself, concerning issues such as ensuring the survival of the individual and the species through reproduction. *Work* corresponds to how humans shape the environment around them, that is culture as opposed to

nature. *Action* concurs with the plurality of humanity or how we interact with each other, and co-exist as one, humankind, whilst still being individuals (Arendt, 1998, pp. 7-9).

The three activities identified by Arendt are philosophically complex and Chris Higgins discusses the three categories, arguing that Arendt in fact identifies six basic conditions for human existence (2010, pp. 277-278); *Nativity* and *mortality* correlate to *labor*, and are temporal conditions. The condition of birth means that all of us have made at least one radical beginning, and that we all have the potential to do so again, by beginning a new life through reproduction. The second condition is death, since everyone who is born must contend with the fact that they will die. According to Higgins, the activity of *work* are practical conditions; *biological survival*, and *worldliness*. Biological survival is directly related to our mortality, we must engage in certain activities in order to survive, such as eating food and providing shelter. Worldliness is also connected to our imminent deaths, and throughout our lives we shape our surroundings by making monuments that can be viewed as a measure of performance to last when we perish. *Action* can be divided into *plurality* and *contingency*. Plurality signifies how humans have an equal ability to distinguish themselves and that we live our lives with others who are different from us, we are all human, but also individuals. Contingency correlates to how the things we are conditioned to make, begin to condition us. Higgins uses the car as an example to illustrate how we as embodied and worldly beings shaped the car to help us get to work and the store, while the presence of the car has shaped us, as highways replaces sidewalks (2010, p. 278).

Higgins writes that living a life of merely labor would not be considered to be a complete human life, and a life of work would be more humane, but still not a complete and fulfilled human life. Because we are embodied beings, labor and work are eminent to our existence, we must reproduce, eat, and cultivate to survive, but it is action that fully expresses our humanity (Higgins, 2010, p. 275). Arendt explains how action is the activity that fully represents the human;

Men can very well live without laboring, they can force others to labor for them, and they can very well decide merely to use and enjoy the world of things without themselves adding a single useful object to it; the life of an exploiter or slaveholder and the life of a parasite may be unjust, but they certainly are human. A life without [...] action [...] is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men (1998, p. 176).

According to Arendt, a life can be lived without *labor* and *work*, but it would not be a human life without *action*. Action is the activity that distinguishes us from others, while at the same time appear to each other in the capacity of *being human*, and not merely as physical objects. Human beings need to exist in relation to each other in order to be individuals (Arendt, 1998, p. 176). Arendt's concepts are useful to this thesis because they give a concrete understanding of what the human has been defined as historically, before the onset of biotechnology. In relation to *action*, as the condition that turns and begins to condition us, it is interesting to examine whether the cyborgs that humans create in the primary texts, eventually begins to shape the humans.

In the analysis of the primary texts, this thesis will operate with a view of humanism that is based on the definitions of Lamont and Arendt. Central to this view on humanism is the idea of the superior human being as the measuring rod for all things and beings, and the viewpoint that in the one life we have, humans have the right to make the best life that they can for themselves, and that the prospect of happiness is enough of an argument in itself to do so. This pursuit of happiness is supported by five core positions in humanist philosophy; Humanism does not believe that humans were created by a god, but believes that we are a result of natural evolution. Where many religions have operated on the premise of the existence of an eternal soul which lives on after the physical body dies, humanists do not believe in such a separation of mind and matter. Free will for all humans is another core value in humanist theory. Central is also the belief that people are born with a fundamental moral ability, and that people will use their free will for the greater good of the individual and the community around them.

Humanist philosophy concerns the human, and according to Arendt the human being is a being that fulfills all three *vita activa*; *Labor*, *work* and *action*. According to Arendt, the human is also fundamentally connected to nature; she even calls us “children of nature” (Arendt, 1998, p. 2). The cyborg characters in this thesis problematise some of Arendt’s criteria for the human condition and thus humanist philosophy should not concern them. Still, many of the cyborgs express a desire to be able to pursue a happy life. The analysis and discussion will therefore examine the impact that humanist ideas has on the relationships between human and cyborg in young adult dystopian fiction.

2.4 Posthumanism and the Posthuman Condition

Even though humanist philosophy has been firmly rooted in Western societies and literature for several hundred years, the literary theorist Ihab Hassan says that: “five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call the posthuman” (Bradford, Mallan, Stephens & McCallum 2011, p.159). In recent years, theorists have begun to question and criticize humanist philosophy, arguing that humanism promotes a binary understanding of the human, and propose posthuman theory as an alternative (Ferrando, 2014, p. 169). Humanism has been criticised for being overly positive towards humankind, and humanity’s supposed “naturalness” has also been problematized. One critical response to humanism that has developed over the past few decades is posthumanism. Francesca Ferrando describes posthumanism as an empirical and theoretical frame that could give us invaluable perspectives on our own existence (2014, p. 168). “Posthumanism” is used as an umbrella-term that incorporates several different perspectives, but in essence it examines existential questions such as “who and what am I?”, and “when and where are we?” (Ferrando, 2014, p. 168). Posthuman theory gives a basis for the discussion of what humanity was, is, and is in the process of becoming. The main focus in this chapter will be on two branches of posthumanism; critical posthumanism, and transhumanism, because they can be linked to the cyborg as a posthuman subject.

Critical posthumanist theorists consider the posthuman condition as already accessible, since they believe that we were never human to begin with, arguing that “human” is a concept constructed on humanistic and anthropocentric terms (Ferrando, 2014, p. 170). Transhumanist theorists use “posthuman” as an expression of the next evolutionary step, they believe that “the human is a work in progress, and that through responsible use of science and technology we can create posthuman beings with abilities beyond those of the present human” (Bostrom, 2003, p. 493). The cyborg can be seen as the embodiment of both the critical posthuman and the transhuman idea of the posthuman condition. The critical posthuman definition of “human” argues that human was never the one, but the many, thus making room both for the human and the cyborg, contrary to humanism where cyborg traits cause a discord. Because the cyborg is engineered and enhanced with technology, it also fits with the transhuman image of the posthuman, as transhumanism is open to the possibility of making healthier, happier beings through technological means.

Rosi Braidotti states that; “The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming” (2013, p. 12). In this thesis “posthuman condition” refers both to the critical posthuman understanding that the human is not a static way of being, and the transhuman image of the posthuman as a technologically enhanced human being.

2.4.1 Critical Posthumanism

Critical posthumanism is a revision of humanist philosophy, decentering the human, and Flanagan cites the French philosopher Michel Foucault, as saying:

Posthumanism, especially the interdisciplinary tenet which is more properly referred to as “critical posthumanism”, *begins* with the assumption of the constructed nature of the

human - her/his body, functions, attitudes, behavior, relations, consciousness - in which the very process of construction of the human is exclusionary (2014, p. 19).

Foucault here claims that according to critical posthumanism the notion of the human is a social construct, and that by delimiting the human, automatically some would be excluded. An example of this is described by Ferrando (2014, p. 169), who writes that during the 1970s the notion of the human was revisited by feminists, who argued that Western culture had only recognized one specific type of human: the heterosexual, white male. Further Ferrando notes that the feminists demanded recognition for all the “other” humans, and thus challenged the dualistic thought of opposites: nature/culture, male/female, us/them. The notion of borders was the focus of feminist discourse during the nineties, and they concluded that opposites such as nature and culture could not be clearly separated (Ferrando, 2014, p. 169). In the case of this thesis the cyborg is a perfect example of how this binary view is problematic, as they exists in a space between traditionally human, and non-human.

In Western societies much bias can be traced back to the *Scala Naturae* or The Great Chain of Being, the hierarchical social and cultural episteme which ranks all matter and life (Ferrando, 2014, p. 170). In *Partials* and *Tankborn*, the idea that the cyborgs and humans are fundamentally different is used to exclude the cyborgs from the very rights that the humans believe are elementary to themselves. Humans in the novels generally consider themselves as more important, more “human” than the cyborgs. Critical posthumanism breaks with a hierarchical view of life and matter, and Ferrando (2014, p. 170) concludes that “Existence is entangled, symbiotic, hybrid. There is no clearly defined borders which allow fixed notions of being”. As the notion of the human as a white, heterosexual male was challenged by feminist discourse, people were urged to recognize “the others”, such as women, queers, and people of colour as humans as well. Furthermore Bradford, Mallan, Stephens and McCallum (2011, p. 181) writes that “Ideas of the posthuman question what we consider to be “natural”, and create possibilities for the emergence of new relationships between human and machine, biology and technology.” If women can be people, can cyborgs be as well?

The cyborgs in the novels examined in this thesis do not quite fit with Arendt's definition of a human. They are not naturally conceived and born, the Partials do not age and die, and they are denied the ability to shape their surroundings, and they are not presented as individuals that are different from each other. Still, they are beings capable of thinking, feeling and sensing; They are posthuman beings. Flanagan writes that one common misconception about posthumanism is that the core humanist concept of subjective agency is not possible (2014, p. 20). The boundaries previously used to define the human have been challenged by posthumanism. Consequently, agency can now be attributed to non-humans such as animals and cyborgs, because posthumanism views subjectivity as more collective than individualistic (Flanagan, 2014, p. 21). Following the discussions of Ferrando, Flanagan and Foucault, critical posthumanism is here understood as the notion that the human is a socially constructed concept. Through analysis and discussion, the thesis will examine how critical posthuman values are expressed through the novel's human and cyborg encounters.

2.4.2 Transhumanism

Where critical posthumanism has been decentering the human, separating itself from humanist philosophy, transhumanism has its origins in secular humanist thinking, and seeks to radically improve the human condition (Bostrom, 2004, p. 494). Nick Bostrom refers to transhumanism as a movement that has developed and grown during recent years, and that promotes the possibility of enhancing the human condition and the human organism through the use of technology (2004, p. 493). Such enhancements might include extending the human lifespan, eliminating disease and suffering in humans, as well as expanding our mental, emotional and physical abilities.

Transhumanism is not limited to scientific and technological advances, it also encompasses economy, culture, institutional designs and psychological techniques (2003, p. 493), but this thesis will be focused on biotechnology and genetic engineering, as it examines genetic cyborgs in young adult dystopian fiction.

Transhumanists encourage human genetic enhancement, but are not naively optimistic about the technology and acknowledge that there are several risks tied to the use of science and technology to enhance the human condition. If not used with caution, the worst case scenario could be the extinction of all intelligent life (Bostrom, 2003, p. 494). Bostrom continues to argue that the presence of negative ramifications connected to manipulating the human condition must be weighed against the possibility of enormous human benefit, and that only after a thorough analysis of the risks and benefits, a conclusion can be made (2003, pp. 497-498). Bostrom discusses several of the risks and benefits connected to interfering with the human genome. He believes that making people healthier benefits both the individual and society, and should be encouraged as a way to decrease suffering and to consume less of publicly funded welfare (2003, p. 501). If the positive outcome outweighs the negative, enhancements to the human condition should not only be permitted, but subsidized, and augmentations that only benefits an individual's status or attractiveness should be discouraged by society, and even possibly sanctioned through tax (Bostrom, 2003, p. 502).

Even though Francis Fukuyama acknowledge that; "Transhumanism of a sort is implicit in much of the research agenda of contemporary biomedicine", he still expresses a concern for what the transhumanist movement might mean for human equality and autonomy (Fukuyama, 2004). Fukuyama is not as optimistic as Bostrom when it comes to enhancing the human condition, and fears that it would result in greater social inequality; "the most clear and present danger is that the large genetic variations between individuals will narrow and become clustered within certain distinct social groups [...] that social elites may not just pass on social advantages but embed them genetically as well" (Fukuyama, 2002, in Ostry 2004, p. 228).

In *Tankborn* the inhabitants of the planet of Loka are divided into several different classes based on their genetic makeup. Romantic relationships across the different classes are prohibited, resulting in less genetic variation within each group, and vast gaps between the upper and lower

classes. Bostrom is aware that there is a risk that genetic enhancement might lead to greater inequality, where the social elite are the only ones with access to the technology, because we see that many children from wealthy homes today have access to privileges that poor children have not (2004, p. 502). Still, he argues that we accept vast inequalities in today's society, because we believe that they are somehow deserved or unavoidable, and that these excuses could discharge some of the inequalities caused by genetic engineering (2003, pp. 502-503).

One of the most radical branches of transhumanism is not satisfied with merely enhancing and expanding the human lifespan, but seek to cure the cause of death in order to live forever. Zoltan Istvan is the leader of the Transhumanist Party in America, and ran for president in the 2016 election. Istvan believes that reversing ageing and death is possible through scientific advances, and believes that research in human immortality should be embedded into American politics (Solon 2016). The idea of eliminating death, speaks to Hannah Arendt's concerns that humans separate themselves from the natural human condition by outliving our current biology. Bostrom does not believe that scientific advances necessarily means favouring the posthuman over the human condition, and writes that;

Transhumanism does not require us to say that we should favor post-human beings over human beings, but that the right way of favoring human beings is by enabling us to realize our ideals better and that some of our ideals may well be located outside the space of modes of being that are accessible to us with our current biological constitution (2004, p. 495).

Transhumanist ideas are not only futuristic dreams, and examples of real life posthumans are found everywhere around us; Amputees, for example, may now be equipped with artificial limbs that with practice can be moved through thoughts translated into electric impulses. In the world of sports, medical technology is used to boost performance, and it can even be argued that people use social media to create a hybrid form of existence online.

In this analysis, the term transhumanism refers to the idea that technology is a tool that, if used with caution, could contribute to maximizing human happiness, and minimizing human suffering. Transhumanism, like humanism, values human life, and believes in the human right to pursue a longer and healthier life, and to reach the posthuman condition. This is not only seen by transhumanists as a benefit to the individual, but as a benefit to society as well, because healthier people are happier and able to contribute more. Another core belief in the transhumanist movement is that enhancing the human condition will result in a more equal society, if the methods used are carefully regulated. The idea is that if genetic advantages and disadvantages are leveled out, social inequalities will diminish as well. Whether such social levelling takes place in *Partials* and *Tankborn* will be discussed further in the analysis, which will also draw on transhumanist theory to examine how the novels portray the consequences of using science and biotechnology to enhance humans or to create living beings, and how such technologies affect the relationships between human and cyborg characters.

2.5 Criteria for Analysis

The thesis asks how humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected in young adult fiction's representations of the relationship between human and cyborg characters, and what role biotechnology play in those relationships. In order to conduct a structured analysis and to answer this question, some criteria have been developed based on the discussions and definitions in the previous sub-chapters. The criteria for analysis are divided into three main parts, the first part deals with the character development of the two protagonists of the novels, Kira and Kayla. By reviewing several young adult science fiction novels, Ostry (2004) has identified several traits that are commonly found in narratives depicting young female protagonists. By combining Ostry's traits and Day's (2014) image of the strong female protagonist in young adult fiction, this thesis examines whether *Tankborn* and *Partials* follow the same generic patterns as other young adult dystopian narratives (see chapter 2.2).

The second part of the criteria is focusing on the relationship between human and cyborg characters in the books. As explained in the theory chapter, humanist philosophy has concerned itself with defining the human and its purpose (Lamont, 1997), and in the process this has led to a distinction between “us”, the humans, and “them”, the others (Ferrando 2014, p. 169). Posthumanism puts an emphasis on closing the gap in favour of a more inclusive “we”, as posthuman theory believes that human existence is not a fixed state of being (Ferrando, 2014). Even though critical posthumanism criticizes humanism, it has not replaced it, and as Flanagan (2014) stated, humanist theory is still a major ideological force in young adult literature. These conflicting value systems will be examined by looking at different class structures and social hierarchies in the primary texts. Because cyborgs are posthuman subjects, this part of the analysis will also examine how humanist and posthuman theories are reflected in the way cyborg and human characters address each other through names, pronouns and other labels.

Fukuyama (2002) and Arendt (1998) both express a concern that altering human genes might result in superhumans that will compromise regular human beings, and even though Bostrom (2003) admits that there is a risk of that happening, he still expresses an optimism towards using such technologies. Hence, the third part of the criteria looks at the role of biotechnology in the two narratives, such as the significance of reproduction, and the consequences of discovering and using new technology to enhance the human condition.

Consequently, the next chapter will analyze the following aspects of the two texts:

1. Character development
2. The relationship between human and cyborg
 - a. Social hierarchy
 - b. Names, pronouns and labels
3. The role of biotechnology in the story
 - a. Cyborgs and reproduction
 - b. Consequences of using biotechnology in the novels

3. Analysis

The following chapter contains the analysis of the primary texts, beginning with character development in the protagonists. Then the relationships between human and cyborg characters are examined, and lastly the analysis looks at what role biotechnology plays in the two narratives.

3.1 Character Development

In *Partials* the cyborgs are represented by the genetically engineered soldiers by the same name. Our protagonist Kira is a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in a colony called East Meadow on the Eastern coast of what once was the United States of America. She has been raised in the belief that she is human and that the mysterious Partial soldiers are a dangerous enemy whose only goal is to annihilate the human race and to take their place in the world. During the course of the novel, Kira learns that she is in fact a Partial herself, and this compromises everything she thought she knew about herself. Thus, she also begins to question everything she has been told by authorities. Kira meets a Partial soldier by the name of Samm, and because Kira considers herself human for the first half of the book, she will for the most part represent a human perspective in her meetings with Samm. The main focus in this part of the analysis will be on the interactions between Kira and Samm, but other characters' perspectives will be taken into account when appropriate. When the story begins in chapter one, eleven years have passed since the last time there was any contact between humans and cyborgs. In the first half of the novel, the relationship between human and Partial is elusive, because Partial characters are not present until the middle of chapter 14. The information that the reader gets, is conveyed through dialogues between human characters and through their narrated thoughts.

The cyborgs of *Tankborn* are represented by the GENs, or genetically engineered non-humans, who were created by using artificial human embryos, and combining them with DNA from animals. The protagonist of the story is Kayla, a fifteen year old GEN girl. The humans in the

novel are represented by trueborns and lowborns. Trueborns are conceived and born from two parents, and they have civil rights and freedom of will and action. Trueborns are divided into high status, demi status and minor status, depending on how much land and capital they possess. Lowborns entered into a contract with the trueborns in order to pay for their journey to Loka, a planet that was colonized from Earth, where they were to work for the trueborns for a set period of time. When this contract expired, the trueborns were hesitant to release their workforce, and the lowborns started an insurrection. Much like the Partials were made to serve a purpose, the GENs are an engineered workforce, created to do the jobs that the humans feel are beneath their status. A GEN infant is placed with a nurture mother in segregated sectors where they go through Doctrine School to learn about their purpose, and about how to behave towards trueborns. The whole society on Loka is built on the notion that humans are superior to GENs, and that humans have the right to treat GENs like property or livestock, because they are not natural humans. The story begins as Kayla is about to be Assigned to work for Zul Manel and his family, including his great grandson Devak. When GENs turn fifteen, enforcers from the government come and collect them to transport them to their “Assignment”, the job they supposedly were designed to do for the trueborns.

Several of the characters in the novels go through substantial growth, but because of practical reasons regarding the length of the thesis, the main focus will be on the development of character in the two female protagonists; Kira and Kayla.

3.1.1 Dystopia and the Strong Female

The worlds of *Partials* and *Tankborn* are both typical dystopian societies, as dystopia is defined by Adams (2011). The people of East Meadow are under strict control by the authorities, who present themselves as the only alternative if people want to survive in a world where humanity is on the brink of extinction, and people comply because they are driven by the fear of an invisible enemy, the Partials. Kira starts off as just a normal citizen in the colony, doing her job like every other person, and hanging out with her friends in her spare time. Were it not for the Hope Act,

she could be almost like any other teenager in any other time. The Senate has made pregnancy compulsory for any girl above eighteen years old, in an attempt to increase the chance of producing babies that are immune to the deadly RM virus – this law is termed the the Hope Act. The Hope Act is not a popular law amongst the people of the colony, who feel like they are reduced to breeding stock, but they have yet to refuse the Senate.

Kira has seen how emotionally painful it is for young mothers to be forced to carry a baby to term, only to watch it die, and then to be impregnated and repeat the heart wrenching ritual again. Kira does not believe in the Hope Act, and she begins to challenge the authorities, demanding that they expand their research. She is not afraid to raise her voice or to speak her mind when she feels like someone is treated unfairly. Kira represents the strong, female lead that Day (2014) describes, who refuse to play by the rules of society as they search for their place and purpose in life. When the Senate decided that the age limit for the Hope Act is to be lowered from 18 to 16 years, Kira argues to her friends that they need to take matter into their own hands, and to capture a Partial soldier and to study it. Over the past eleven years, not a single newborn baby has survived, and Kira shows the initiative to do her own research to overcome the virus, even if it means that she goes against the authorities;

“I tried talking to Skousen, and there’s no way the Senate would ever go along with it. I’m talking about us, here, in this room. The Partials may be the key to curing RM, so I want us to go out, cross the sound, and catch one.” (Wells, 2012, p. 121).

This act of defiance represents both the ability to make independent choices, and to use reason and science to solve a problem, two of the central positions in humanist philosophy as determined by Lamont (1997).

In *Tankborn*, the cyborg citizens of Loka live in a society where their every move is monitored, and the humans have total control over every aspect of their life, from work, to housing and even what they get to eat. When GENs emerge from the tank, they are placed with and raised by

nurture mothers, older GENs that have been programmed to be caretakers for children. As they grow up they attend what is called a Doctrine School, where they are taught, or brainwashed, to believe that they are inferior to natural born humans, and that their purpose in life is to serve the humans to please the GEN god, The Infinite. This indoctrination of religion from an early age is a perfect way of dominating the tankborns, because it provides a form of social control, as the idea of straying from the liturgy is seen as an act of blasphemy amongst the GENs. The lack of freedom, the totalitarian authorities and the utter oppression of a minority in *Tankborn* makes Loka a typical dystopian society, and it is indeed working against the protagonist's goals and wishes. In Kayla's case that means to be free to make independent choices for herself, and to pursue a happy life, a right reserved exclusively for naturally born humans.

Compared to Kira, Kayla comes off as a lot more timid in her interaction with authorities. She never raises her voice or speaks against humans, and where Kira shows initiative to take action to save the lives of both humanity and cyborgs, Kayla seems to just randomly stumble into someone else's plan. When Kayla is first Assigned, she is uploaded with an update where she is asked to assist an organization, later revealed as "The Kinship", by smuggling a small packet. More than the desire to assist, Kayla is driven by the fear of being accused of doing something illegal, and accepts the task she is given. Where Kira was the driving force in starting a rebellion against the regime, someone else has already started the job for Kayla; "The Kinship" is an organization that is officially working to better the conditions of lowborns on Loka, but secretly they are working to free the GENs from slavery. Zul reveals himself to Kayla as the leader of the organization; "We're all over the continent, in every sector. Trueborns of all statuses, lowborns, and GENs. Everyone within the Kinship has the same goals." (Sandler, 2011, p. 253). The word "kinship" can mean relationship, blood relative or common ancestry (Ordnott, n.d), and the organization's ideology is that trueborns, lowborns and GENs are equally human, and should be granted the same rights. The Kinship rejects the binary understanding of the human (Ferrando, 2014), and they challenge the understanding of what the human was, is, and is in the process of becoming (Braidotti, 2013). This represents a critical posthumanist position in *Tankborn*.

Kira is presented as a human in the beginning of the novel, and from a humanist perspective this might contribute to her courage to defy the community leaders. Even though they seem to take the definition of humanism as the stance that *man* is the center and sanction of all things (Lamont, 1997), and treats the female population as wombs on legs, Kira still regards herself as a human being with worth, rights and morals. Kayla on the other hand has been indoctrinated with the idea that she and her kind are less worth than humans, and she struggles throughout the whole novel to see how someone like her can have any significance. Initially she truly believes that humans are superior beings, and she is too afraid of them to make any radical decisions on her own. Kira is portrayed as a typical strong female character that will go out of her way to fight injustice and to protect compromised groups. Kayla comes off as more of a thinker than a doer, who spends her time reflecting on the inequality that she experiences, rather than trying to protest it.

3.1.2 Identity and the “Chosen One”

Ostry (2004) and Day (2014) note that the search for identity is the most important trait in young adult fiction, and that the protagonists often come to realize that they are not traditionally human. The cyborgs of young adult dystopian fiction often feel like there is something missing in their life, or that there is something different about them, they are special in some way, almost like a “chosen one”. GENs in *Tankborn* are generally marked with a tattoo on their left cheek, but Kayla, and a selected few others, are tattooed on their right, and this is the first hint that Kayla is different. Kira on the other hand, is not marked in any way, and the only vague hint the reader is given, is that she is exceptionally stubborn and resolute in her beliefs. Kira experiences feelings of being different in *Partials*. War and disease left only a few immune survivors, that gathered on Long Island where they could defend themselves and produce food. Orphaned children were placed with surviving adults, and Kira was placed with an elderly lady called Nandita. Kira has many fond memories of Nandita, but feels bad that she can not remember anything about her mother. We get to know that Kira has a few memories of her father, and that he just disappeared when Kira was around five years old, and that she just presumes that he is dead.

Growing up without knowing her parents, Kira lacks someone to relate to, and Nandita is functioning more as a mentor than a mother. Compulsory pregnancy is the last thing Kira wants for herself and her future, and she is struggling with identifying with her peers who blindly follows orders from the government.

Trying to establish a sense of self gets even more complicated for Kira as she is told by a Partial scientist that she is in fact a Partial herself;

Kira was shaking her head, only dimly aware of what anyone was saying. *I'm not a Partial.* Once again, faced with a problem her mind seemed to split in two: on one side a scientist, counting all the reasons she could never be a Partial. *I age, and they don't. I don't link, and they do. I don't have their strength or reflexes, and I definitely don't have their miraculous healing.* But even there she had to stop herself, suddenly unsure. *My leg recovered abnormally quickly from the burn, without any of the expected side effects if the regen box.*

She shook her head. *More than anything else, I don't remember being a Partial - I grew up in a human house, I have a human father. I went to school in East Meadow for years. I've never been contacted by Partials, approached by Partials, nothing. It makes no sense at all.*

And yet even as she analyzed her life, behind it all was the other side of her, the emotional side, the lost child crying in the darkness: *Does this mean I never had a mommy?* (Wells, 2012, p. 402).

When she realizes that she is a Partial, she also realizes that she had no mother. Growing up, Kira believed that she was human, and that she had a mother and a father, even though she never knew them. Not having parents is not uncommon in Kira's peer group, but it is evident that there is a difference in having deceased parents, and to never have had parents at all. Even though Kira does not even remember her mother, it is the idea of not having a mother that bothers her, illustrating how important a mother can be to a young girl that is in the process of figuring out

who she is. She was never born, and Partials do not die, they expire, or rot alive, which means that she does not qualify to neither *natality* or *mortality*, the two parts of Arendt's human activity of action.

Kira is forced to assess the image she has had of herself, and to reevaluate how she feels about the Partials. It is evident that she struggles to accept the fact that she is a Partial, and she feels guilty for betraying her friends, even though she never knew what she was; "Kira felt a pang of conscience, as stark as if she'd willfully betrayed them all. *What would they do if they knew what I really am?*" (Wells, 2012, p. 434, italics in original). It is as if Kira begins to question her own moral as soon as she discovers that she is not human, reflecting the idea that only humans can be moral beings (Lamont, 1997). Even though Kira learns that the Partials are not mindless killers, the human society does not yet share her views, and she fears what will happen if anyone were to find out that she is a Partial herself. Driven by the immense desire to find out who and what she is, and why she was raised as a human, Kira sets out on a dangerous journey to find some answers.

In *Tankborn*, Kayla is also struggling to identify and come to terms with who she is. As long as she can remember, Kayla has been experiencing nightmares where she is a small child reaching for her mother, but she realizes that she has no arms. This should be impossible since she believes she was gestated in a tank, she had no mother, but the dream still haunts her and leaves her with many unanswered questions about who she really is. When Kayla is Assigned and on her way to the house where she is going to perform her task, she meets a GEN called Skal, and as they strike up a conversation he says; "You're starting your real life now. It's your chance to find your place. To be of service." (Sandler, 2011, p. 37). Even though they are both GENs, he obviously has faith in the doctrine that tells the GENs that they are merely tools to be used in a larger, divine scheme. By saying that Kayla's "real" life is starting now, he is diminishing the value and validity of the life she has lived up until this point. The fact that she is ordered to leave her friends and family behind, without knowing if she will see them again is reduced to a small trifle compared to the important task of working for the trueborns. Skal might accept the situation, but

Kayla thinks to herself that “this would not be her place, only where the trueborns wanted her to be.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 38). Though she would never dream of uttering such a “sacrilege”, her thoughts indicate that her feelings are conflicted; she knows that her duty is to fulfill her destiny for *The Infinite*, but she also desires to be free to choose for herself. The search for identity in Kayla’s case is initially centered around the process of coming to terms with the idea of being *someone*, to accept that even though she is “only” a GEN, she is worth something to someone and to society.

Through interaction with a trueborn young man named Devak, Kayla begins to acknowledge that she is worth something, and she slowly begins to respect and value herself even though she is still a GEN, but towards the end of the novel, Kayla is informed that she was born human. She learns that because she was born without arms, her parents decided that they did not want her, and she was then turned into a GEN by using animal DNA to grow her two arms in a gen-tank. Kayla has expressed a desire to become human several times in the novel, but finding out that she is in fact human sends her into an identity crisis. She never believed that she was worth something as a GEN, and then she learns that she was not worth anything to her parents as a human either.

In the case of both *Partials* and *Tankborn*, a part of the plot revolves around a young female character that is in the process of determining who she is, in line with what Day (2014) and Ostry (2004) described as typical traits in young adult fiction. The two protagonists also learn that they are different somehow. Both Kayla and Kira exist in liminal spaces between human and non-human in the novels; Kayla because she was once a natural born human that was turned into and brought up as a cyborg, and Kira was brought up in the belief that she was human, only to find out that the enemy soldiers she was taught to hate, is her kin. The two girls’ unique circumstances puts them in a position where they can relate to and empathize with both human and cyborg characters in the novels, and contribute to a broader understanding of human life. As they begin to reflect upon and reject the binary understanding of the human that humanist

philosophy promotes, and by using their own experiences as “the other” to deconstruct ideas of hierarchy, they represents a critical posthuman shift in the novels.

3.1.3 Boundaries and the Posthuman Body

In science fiction narratives, the boundary between human and technology is challenged (Ostry, 2004), and while the novels examined in this thesis are defined as dystopian fiction, the cyborg characters epitomize the increasingly fluid boundary between human and technology. In *Tankborn* Kayla is described as having exceptionally strong arms, genetically engineered with animal DNA, resulting in “repulsive blots” (Sandler, 2011, p. 26) on her arms, and she hates them, thinking “*Sometimes I want to tear my own arms off.*” (Sandler, 2011, p. 10, italics in original). Kayla is well aware that animal DNA was used to grow her superstrong arms, and even though they are part of her body, they feel alien to her. In this example, Kayla attempts to separate her *person* from the *technology*, because she longs to be more like a human, with human rights and worth. Kayla’s image of a human starts out as the conventional humanist image of the human, as a thinking, autonomous being, bound to nature through birth (Arendt, 1998).

Kayla and her fellow GENs are equipped with an “annexed” brain, which seems to be like an additional hard drive or computer in addition to their “bare” brains. It seems as if Kayla is distancing herself from this technology as well;

Up until now, the only things in her annexed brain were stuff the gene-splicers had stored there in the tank. Her inner clock, a map of Chadi, images of poisonous Lokan arachnids. From now on, any time a trueborn felt like slapping a datapod to her cheek, they would have a free pass to add more to her annexed brain (Sandler, 2011, p. 61).

The annex-brain is used to store practical information, and trueborns have access to this part of her mind through the data-port on her face, and they can also upload and download data. Even though it is an integrated part of Kayla’s body, she does not consider it to be “her”, and she has

spent several years practicing to be able to retrieve information that was stored in her annexed brain, and she still find it easier to access memories from her bare brain. In one way, Sandler has managed to create a distinction between technology and person by giving Kayla two brains; her person resides inside her “natural” brain, and the technology is represented by the “artificial” brain. But on the other hand, it is the information in the bare brain that is deleted when the cyborgs are reset. If a GEN deviate from their assigned task or sector, their programming is proclaimed “corrupted”, and their brains are consequently reformatted. Personality, thoughts and memories are removed and the GEN’s body is reprogrammed with a new “person”. This trait goes against the humanist idea of the inseparable body and mind, and embrace the posthuman trope of potential disembodiment of consciousness (Hayles, 1999).

Because of her annexed brain and superstrong arms, Kayla is able to process information and perform physical tasks that normal humans would not be able to, and because of her artificial origin and foreign DNA, she would not be considered human as defined by Arendt (1998). Still, Kayla is able to think, feel and reason like a human. She even expresses a moral sense, clearly capable of distinguishing right from wrong, a central humanist value (Lamont, 1997). Even Zul, the man that created her regards her as human, despite her artificial traits; “You’re built with human DNA, in human form, with only a little assistance from the animal DNA. You’re no more non-human than I am.” (Sandler, 2011, pp. 319-320). Zul accepts that the traditional human form can be enhanced, and still be considered to be human, in line with transhumanist thought which sees the current and “natural” human as a stepping stone in the evolutionary process to become posthuman.

When Kira in *Partials* is told that she is a cyborg, she immediately begins to analyze the facts to try and make sense of the statement;

Am I really a Partial? How could I not have known? Partials heal quickly, but this is the first major injury I’ve ever really had, so I’ve never had a chance to see my own healing abilities in action. I’ve never really been sick, either - does that mean anything? She

racked her brain for anything else she knew about them. *Partials are sterile, and that's never come up. Partials are fast and strong and agile, but is that only the soldiers? [...] If I'm not a soldier, what am I?* (Wells, 2012, pp. 408-409, italics in original).

Nothing in Kira's life has prepared her for this reveal, and as the excerpt illustrates, she has no indications that she is not like her peers. For eleven years she has lived among humans without anyone suspecting that something is wrong or different about her. The new knowledge about her genetic origin challenges Kira's perception of herself. She is not the human she thought she was because she was made, not born, and she struggles to identify with the traits that defines the other Partials. In a private conversation Samm questions Kira about her background;

“You really didn't know?” He squinted at her in the fading sunlight. “You really thought you were...” He trailed off, and Kira felt grateful he hadn't said it out loud. “I had no idea. I'm still not convinced.”

“You're definitely not like me,” he said, “but you're”- he nodded at her friends- “not like them either. You can't link, and yet, I almost feel like you can, like there's something between us that... I don't know. I don't know what you are.”

Kira opened her mouth to respond, but she didn't know either. “I'm Kira Walker,” she said finally. “What else is there to know?” (Wells, 2012, p. 415).

Kira and Samm both establish that she is not like him, and not like the humans, but Kira states that she is the person, Kira Walker, identifying more with her name than her biology.

Ostry pointed out that cyborgs often need to relinquish some of their special powers in order to show some weakness and become “more human” in order to be moral beings, a core humanist value (Lamont, 1997). Kayla is offered the opportunity to be turned into a human, to be relieved of all the things that she longed to be rid of; her facial tattoo that connects to her annexed brain and her ugly, strong arms. Through the whole novel Kayla has longed for the chance to be rid of everything that makes her “less human”, but when she is presented with a treatment that can turn

her into a lowborn, she eventually declines. There is only enough medicine to treat one GEN, and Kayla decides that it would do more good for her best friend, Mishalla, who would then be free to marry her lowborn boyfriend. By deciding to keep her special powers so that her friend can be rid of hers, Kayla shows an act of consideration and compassion, a moral decision, so by choosing not to relinquish her power, Kayla still expresses humanist values.

Throughout *Partials*, Kira does not display any special powers that she could give up to become more human, because she is already seen as human by her group. There are no visible signs that reveal that she is not human. Wells rather use Samm to show a cyborg that relinquishes his power;

It watched her, eyes cold and hard, as if studying her for any break it could use, any hole in her defenses it could slip through-

-and yet behind the cold eyes it was terrified. She could tell, just by looking at it, that it had never been this scared in its life. She took a step back, looking at the situation from its perspective: It was alone, a prisoner of war, beaten and chained and strapped down to an operating table, and not she was holding a gun to it. (Wells, 2012, p. 212).

The Partials' lack of emotion has been presented as one of the fundamental traits that separates them from humans, and in a sense, their strength. If they do not have emotions, they can not empathize with others, or be moral creatures, the way humans are. As Samm is laying undressed and vulnerable on an examining table, Kira realize that he is scared. He has emotions, and suddenly he is not the unfeeling monster that Kira had made her out to be.

Both Kira and Kayla live under oppressive regimes, and they both see the harm caused to people around them. Kira is more fierce in her approach to the problem, while Kayla is more hesitant to take up the torch and do something to change the world they live in. Compared to her peers, Kira is more of a fighter than her soldier friends, because she dares to question what she is told by authorities. The discovery that she is a cyborg sends Kira into an identity crisis, and she feels

compelled to journey out and search for answers about who and what she is. Kayla also discovers that she is not like her peers, but in her case she finds out that she once was a naturally born human. This opens up a Pandora's box of questions for Kayla, and she also decides that she needs to find out more about who she is, and what her role in this world is.

3.2 Relationships Between Humans and Cyborgs

The two following sections will examine the relationships between humans and cyborgs in *Partials* and *Tankborn*, first through the representations of social hierarchy, then through the use of names, pronouns and labels that are used about the cyborg characters. Social hierarchy is examined in the light of different class structures that are present in the two novels, and by looking at the significance of freedom of will and action. When looking at the names, pronouns and labels that are used about the cyborg characters, the thesis first examines how Devak speak to and think of Kayla, a cyborg character, then how Kira as a representation for a human character address the cyborg character Samm.

3.2.1 Social Hierarchy

3.2.1.1 Class Structures

In both novels cyborgs and humans are ranked by their status and worth. There is a wide social gap between “us”, the humans, and “them”, the cyborgs, in *Partials*. The humans clearly see themselves as superior beings when they speak of the Partial soldiers as inhuman killing machines or biological robots without any of the human traits they affiliate with themselves. At one point in time, America was at war with China, and the mysterious corporation ParaGen developed weapons for the Americans. The Partial soldiers were one of these weapons, proving very effective in combat. The United States of America was victorious and the soldiers were sent home. They came home to America and faced severe discrimination and racism from both authorities and the general public. The Partials had trouble finding work because nobody would

hire them, and no schools would accept applications from those who wanted to get an education to qualify for a job. The only jobs they got were poorly paid positions in mines and they ended up living in slums, because they could not afford proper housing, and; “Who wants to live next door to the artificial people” (Wells, 2012, p. 256). This remark was made by a Partial, and even though it comes off as somewhat sarcastic, it gives the reader a sense of how ostracized they were by the humans in their society.

Even though they had a big role in the victory against China, the Partials are not celebrated like heroes or thanked for their service. Senator Hobb pronounce that “They kill because that’s what we built them to do” (Wells, 2012, p. 17). By using the term “built”, he makes the Partials out to be more like machines that can be owned, rather than people. To Hobb, the Partials were no more than a tool the humans could use for their own benefit. The Partials and humans have lived separately for eleven years in *Partials*, so the social gaps between human and cyborg does not really exist in practice, but the stance that humans are worth more than the cyborgs lives on.

The gap between human and non-human is also very much present in *Tankborn*, maybe even more so than in *Partials*, because the whole world is based on a class-divided structure, and there are more than two casts. The highborn trueborns control most of the capital and land, followed by demi-status trueborns, then minor status trueborns. After them comes the lowborns, who are not allowed to own any land even if they are natural humans, and they earn a lot less money for the work they do. At the bottom comes the GENs. GENs have no say in where they live, what job they do, and they make next to no money for the jobs that they are Assigned. Trueborns wear elaborate garments and jewelry that reflect their social class, and the cyborgs wear practical work wear, often handed down from a previous owner. In addition, they are marked with a facial tattoo that doubles as a data-port, and trueborns can use a device to connect to them and download all the information that is programmed into them. Thoughts are usually a private matter, but for the GENs, even what goes on in their minds is violated by humans.

All GENs are also marked with a GPS-tracker, so that they are under constant control and surveillance. At the beginning of the novel, this is not problematized by either human or cyborg, because humans do not consider GENs to be people, and the cyborgs believe that their god, the Infinite, has chosen this life for them. Still, being under constant observation and control, creates an intensely stressful environment for the cyborgs, and they live with the constant fear of being “reset and realigned” (Sandler, 2011, p. 15).

The idea of ranking beings, placing the human at the top of the chain of beings, resonates the idea that man is the center and sanction of all things (Lamont, 1997). From a humanist perspective, it is useful to define the human in order to determine who is included in the human species privilege. In the case of *Partials* and *Tankborn*, the cyborgs are excluded from the human category because they are not connected to nature through birth. Humanist philosophy sees the human as something natural, a result of an evolutionary process. Arendt (1998) believed that by altering the human, we would separate ourselves from the natural world, and become something other than human. If a human is no longer intertwined with nature, he or she is no longer seen as human, effectively breaking the bond with the humanist philosophy that holds the human being in such high regard. The cyborgs in *Partials* and *Tankborn* are not conceived and born from two parents, they were artificially grown in laboratories, and their genetic makeup was altered to give them certain abilities that are not considered to be natural to humans. Kira and Kayla are the very beings that Arendt feared would be the result of using test tube technology, severed from the nature that is so quintessential to the human condition.

Arendt’s concerns are reflected in *Partials* and *Tankborn* in the way the general public view the cyborgs. The Partials are presented as a vicious enemy who only desires to kill humans. Senator Hobb, one of the community leaders describes them as “unthinking, unfeeling, inhuman killers” (Wells, 2012, p. 17). To be human is in humanism taken to mean a thinking, feeling and moral being, and by defining the cyborgs as the “inhuman”, they effectively make them into monsters that are threatening the human race. Looking at the large number of measures that enables the humans to control the GENs in *Tankborn*, it is evident that they also fear that the cyborgs

threatens their “natural” humanity. Thus the humans do what they can to dehumanize the cyborg characters. The Partials are seen as property and humans as their possessors, they were created and exists only because they serve a purpose for the humans. The GENs in *Tankborn* have this in common with the Partials, they were created only to be used as slave labor for the trueborns when the lowborns refused to work any more. The argument that the GENs are not human is used to legitimize how they are treated. When Kayla asks Devak what it is that makes him human and her not, he answers; “You’re tankborn. My mother gave birth to me.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 194). Devak uses the distinction between human reproduction, or *labor* (Arendt, 1998), and artificial reproduction to argue that Kayla does not qualify to be human like him.

Bostrom (2003) also predicted that one of the outcomes from human genetic enhancement would be a new type of human, with physical and mental abilities far beyond our own. This *posthuman*, Bostrom believed, would not necessarily compromise the human as we know it, but rather provide an opportunity to close social gaps, eradicate disease and suffering, and to expand our mental and emotional abilities. Transhumanism share a human-centered ideology with humanism, but as they are part of the posthumanism movement, they do not believe in the supposed naturalness of the human, but rather that the current human is a work in progress, and the next evolutionary step can be reached through the use of biotechnology. From Bostrom’s transhumanist perspective, Kira and Kayla are perfect examples of the posthuman, with accelerated healing abilities, enhanced mental abilities and immunity to disease. All traits that could be used to minimize suffering among human beings.

Arendt (1998) defined *action* as the one activity that truly expresses our humanity, and she defines it as human interaction, where we relate to each other as one species, while still maintaining our individuality. Humans in the novels view themselves as individuals, and as members of the human race. The same does not go for the cyborgs. Even though we learn that the Partials have names, they are programmed to link with each other and to operate in units, not as individuals, and GENs are described as parts of a machine that can not have meaningful

relationships with their kin. They are in practice denied to perform the activity that Arendt argued makes us fully human.

It is not only the cyborgs who are treated badly in the novels. Because of the strong stigma connected to them, the people who sympathise with them are ridiculed and ostracized as well. Having been observed talking to Kayla, Devak is broadcasted as a “jik-lover”, and no one except one close friend will talk to him. Both GEN and human children are taught not to touch each other, because the lowborns’ and trueborns’ skin would turn black, develop painful blisters, or their bones would become crooked. The cyborgs believe in this myth, and are deadly afraid of touching a trueborn by accident and be reset, and the humans are scared to become ill or filthy.

When Kira is trying to convince the Senate that she needs more time before they terminate Samm, she makes the mistake of referring to Samm as “him”, rather than “it”, and the authorities sense that she has formed a relationship with what they see as a test subject, that could compromise their position;

“The tests have already revealed priceless medical data,” said Kira. “Even the first blood test alone told us more about Partial physiology than we’ve ever known before. He has an advanced platelet system –”

“It,” said Dr. Skousen.

Kira frowned. “I’m sorry?”

“‘It’ has an advanced platelet system,” said Skousen. “You are talking about a machine, Kira, not a person.”

Kira scanned the room, seeing the senators’ eyes filled with a mixture of disgust and anger, all aimed at her because she was speaking on behalf of the enemy (Wells, 2012, p. 241).

By calling Samm “he”, Kira demonstrates to the Senate that she has begun to see him more as a person than an object, and consequently they view her with “disgust and anger”. It is as if

Kayla's affiliation with Samm taints her humanity, and the authorities start to dehumanize her and distance themselves from her. When Kira then helps Samm to escape the colony, other human characters strongly feel that Kira is betraying human kind;

“I have sacrificed everything I had, and everything I am, to save your daughter. Are you really going to be the one to stop me?”

“You're a Partial agent,” said Haru. “You're in league with them – God only knows what you're trying to do to my daughter, but I will die before I let you do it.”
(Wells, 2012, p. 458-459).

Even though Kira returns with what she claims is a cure for the virus, her former friends find it hard to believe her, and she has a hard time convincing them to let her try it out. Without a cure the baby will most definitely die within hours or days, but Kira's alliance with the Partial soldier has stripped her of any credibility as a moral human being in the eyes of her peers.

3.2.1.2 Freedom of Will and Action

Lamont (1997) puts freedom of will and action as one of the core positions of humanist philosophy, giving *all humans* the chance to shape their own destiny and pursue happiness and moral lives to serve the greater good for humanity. Arendt (1998) defined *work* as one of the basic activities connected to the human condition, and work correlates to biological survival and how we shape our surroundings through our actions. To be able to form the environment around you, you need to be in position to make free, independent choices for yourself. In the novels in this analysis, the cyborgs are not viewed as human, and according to humanist theory this means that they are not able to live moral lives, pursue happiness or so shape their own destiny. The Partial soldiers are manufactured and programmed by humans, so all their thoughts and actions should be based on the will of a human. Removing the ability to make independent choices in this case removes the Partials further from the human condition, and further from humanist principles. The same goes for the GENs, whose autonomy and freedom is removed through the

use of tracking devices and “branding” of their face. The Partial was programmed like machines, but this method proved faulty as they managed to develop an ability to think and act against their programming.

The anthropocentric values in the societies of *Partial* and *Tankborn* lead to humans feeling superior to cyborgs, which in turn leads to a caste system. The very society in *Tankborn* is based on dividing people into different social classes, beginning with the rich and powerful trueborn humans at the top, and the poor and disposable cyborgs at the bottom;

It wasn't so long ago that lowborns were to the trueborns what the GENs were now. When Earth's climate finally collapsed under the weight of hurricane floods, seared by droughts and drowned by melting ice, not everyone could afford passage here. Lowborns bought their way to Loka with servitude. It wasn't until the GENs came along sixty-five years ago, when the Infinite shaped the first GEN souls and whispered the secret of creation to the prophets, that the lowborns were released from their debt (Sandler, 2011, p.62).

Even before travelling to Loka, humans ranked themselves based on status and economy, and before the GENs were created, the lowborns were at the bottom of the scale. The lowborns could not afford to buy a place on the spaceships to Loka, and agreed to work fifty years for the trueborns to pay for their passage to the new world. The lowborns believed that they would be like trueborns when their contract ended, but the trueborns did not want the poor to climb the status ladder, and created an even lower class of beings to do the work and to give the illusion that the lowborns were not treated so badly. The cyborgs were supposed to take the place of the lowborns, but in reality they were even lower. Because even though the lowborns were treated like lesser citizens, they had a choice from the beginning. The GENs were never given the opportunity to decide who they wanted to be. The tankborns never asked to be made, and their lives are predetermined from the day they emerge from the gen-tanks. When she encounters a

lowborn who is unhappy with her situation, and chose to target her anger towards GENs, Kayla reflects on the concepts of birth and freedom;

So why shouldn't they be happy? They were free. They might not have the status of a trueborn, but they were natural-born. Not something fermented in a tank.

They weren't tattooed, weren't Assigned, weren't monitored on the Grid like a GEN was. They could never be reset or realigned. They picked their own jobs and earned ten times the dhans a GEN would for the same work, even when they worked right alongside GENs.

And they were human. Their homes might be rundown and piecemeal, pushed to the ugly edges of trueborn territory, but they were born from a mother instead of a tank and no trueborn could change their humanity (Sandler, 2011, p. 62).

Comparing herself with the lowborn, Kayla can clearly see the benefits that she is denied as a non-human. The lowborns are angry that they are not allowed to own land, and that they make less money than trueborns, but Kayla only desires to be human. To her, to be human means to be free. A human can choose their own job, home, they have parents, and they do not have to live in fear of being monitored by authorities. Kayla as the protagonist makes humanist values central to the narrative, because she believes in the humanist idea that freedom of choice equals happiness.

Flanagan pointed to what she sees as a misconception about posthumanism; that the core humanist value of freedom of will and action, or subjective agency, is not possible for non-humans (2014, p. 20). Critical posthumanism and transhumanism have challenged the notion of the human, and the more inclusive category of posthuman allows for agency to cyborgs as well as humans. Cyborgs who make independent choices are found in both novels. In *Tankborn*, Devak realizes that GENs who stray away from their positions are not driven by corrupted programming; "If they stepped beyond their radius, they'd made a conscious choice and knew the danger they faced." (Sandler, 2011, p. 217). Through the process of getting to know Kayla, Devak learns and acknowledges that the GENs are self aware, and that even though they are

genetically engineered to do specific tasks, it does not mean that they desire to do them. By recognizing that the cyborgs are conscious beings who are able to think and act freely, Devak represents a shift from the more restrictive humanist view of the human, to the more inclusive critical posthuman idea of the posthuman. Devak reasons;

If GENs were different from one another, if they were individuals, how could they be part of a machine? If they suffered pain, if their hearts sometimes ached like any man's or woman's did. If they fought for life like the injured GEN girl. If they showed Kayla's sharp intelligence – how could they be less human than a trueborn or a lowborn?
(Sandler, 2011, p. 222).

In *Partials*, the Partials turn out not to be the unthinking and unfeeling machines that they were intended to be either. After several years of oppression they rebelled against the humans, starting what is referred to as the Isolation war. At the same time, a deadly virus spread across the globe, killing most of humanity, leaving only a small colony of immune survivors on the East Coast of America on an island called East Meadow. As nearly all of humanity got wiped out, the Partials suddenly withdrew their attack and have not been seen for eleven years. The Senate of East Meadow still speak of the Partials in a condescending tone, even though they had the power to almost wipe out all of humanity; “There was another group, not so long ago, who used the same methods– a group who didn't like the way things were and decided to rebel” (Wells, 2012, p. 17). But by saying that the Partials “Didn't like the way things were” and that they “Decided to rebel”, the humans place the blame for the conflict on the Partials, and in a way saying that they were in the wrong feeling oppressed and discriminated. By using the verb “decided”, they also ascribe to cyborgs the ability to make free and independent choices for themselves, contradicting the image of cyborgs as unthinking machines. Taking into account the humanist belief in independent thought as a central value (Lamont, 1997), this undermines the notion that cyborgs in *Partials* are not human.

The sudden willingness to recognize the Partials as self-aware beings with their own opinions can be explained by a shift from humanist to critical posthuman ideas in the human characters; Because the Partials were created and programmed by humans, the humans should ultimately be responsible for the cyborgs and their actions. When the cyborgs revolt, it is theoretically a result of the programming by the humans, implicitly the humans' programming is immoral. As long as the cyborgs were behaving the way they were supposed to, their creators had no problems with taking responsibility for their actions, but as soon as they rebelled, the humans began to separate themselves from their product. The human race was dying, and it was easier to grant that Partials have freedom of will and action so they could be held accountable, rather than to take the blame.

Lamont (1997) argued that humanist philosophy believed in the human's ability to solve problems through science and reason, a stance that seems to overlap with transhuman ideas in *Partials*. Kira is aware that within a relative short period of time, humanity will die if a cure is not discovered. As Bostrom (2003) explained, transhumanists are concerned with enhancing the human condition through technology in order to eliminate human suffering. It seems as if Kira is thinking the very same thing; "If RM targeted humans, specifically and directly, then the only defence against it was to not be human anymore. Maybe the only way to survive was to be a Partial" (Wells, 2012, p. 235). At first Kira discards this idea as nonsense, as if the idea of a enhancing the human being, to turn them into a cyborg to withstand a dangerous virus is an absurd thought, maybe because the prospect of becoming less human is more scary than to die, because death is an inevitable part of the human condition (Arendt, 1998). It might also be that Kira fears that she believes that being less human means that she will become *inhuman*, like the Partials. When a bomb goes off and destroys the lab, Samm chooses to save Kira's life instead of taking advantage of the situation to escape, proving that he can express kindness towards other beings. Later, when Kira again contemplates on the prospect of changing the human condition in order to withstand the virus, she does not seem as reluctant to the thought; "For just a second - just the briefest fraction of a moment - she thought about Samm, and wondered if a half-Partial child would be immune." (Wells, 2012, p. 273). Even though Samm is "inhuman", he is not evil, proving to Kira that cyborgs can be moral as well. Because of this realization, Kira is willing to

go beyond the natural human condition, to use technology to create immune, posthuman beings, merging human and non-human and save the both of them in the process.

As the example with Kira and Samm shows, the relationships between human and cyborgs are not static in the novels. As the narratives are driven forward, the relations gets increasingly nuanced, reflecting how the cyborg characters are resisting the traditional humanist view of the human and strive to become accepted as equal beings to the humans. Critical posthumanism has been focused on questioning what the human can be, rejects the idea of the human, and states that it is a socially constructed concept (Foucault in Flanagan, 2014). In a conversation with Devak, Kayla challenges this construct;

“I’ve heard that medics sometimes put trueborns into tanks to re-grow an injured arm or heal a child’s deformity. Are they still human when they come out? Or partly GEN?”

His stomach lurched at her question. “They went in human, they come out human.”

“But you could say I went in human – most of my DNA, anyway. The parts that were animal, they’re such a small fraction. And the embryo that started me might have been artificial, but wasn’t it pure human once?” (Sandler, 2011, p. 194).

By arguing that the humans make use of the very technology used to create GENs to enhance themselves without considering themselves to be cyborg, Kayla confronts Devak’s idea of the natural and superior human. Stating that GEN and human alike started out purely human before going into the tank, Kira tries to explain the hypocrisy in treating GENs differently than humans. Devak is uncomfortable with the idea of comparing humans and desperately tries to argue that there is a clear distinction between them; “The dividing line is animal DNA. Trueborns and lowborns have none. Every GEN has some.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 195). The argument falls flat from a critical posthuman point of view, since they do not view human existence as a “fixed notion of being” (Ferrando, 2014).

Humanist philosophy has identified the human as a naturally ethical being that is able to separate right from wrong, and to use their free will to act in favour of the greater good for humanity (Lamont, 1997), and to treat someone humanely means to treat them with compassion. After being captured by Partials, Kira lies naked and strapped to a table, and she tries to appeal to her captors ethics by saying that she treated Samm kindly when she studied him; “My people did not treat him well,” she said slowly, “and I’m sorry for that, but I helped him. I studied him noninvasively. I was humane.” The woman smirked. “Humane? Even the word is an insult.” (Wells, 2012, p 391). Using the word “humane” to describe her methods does not impress the Partials. To them, “humane” has nothing to do with kindness or compassion, as humans have done nothing other than to exploit and oppress them. “The Humane Treatment Edicts” is a set of laws laid down to supposedly protect the GENs so called “rights”, some of them being “that every Assignment be suitable for each GEN’s programmed abilities.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 53). The law states that they should be placed somewhere they can benefit from their special “sket”, the Defence Grid is forbidden to track the cyborgs more than once every five days, and the cyborgs are entitled a “restday”, where they are released from their duty for a day and can travel to visit their friends and family, if they are not too far away.

The Humane Treatment Edicts is supposed to ensure that GENs are treated fairly, but it does not give them any real freedom or equal rights to humans. Devak reflects on the way the cyborgs in his society are treated, and he realize that “treating someone kindly and considering them equal were light years apart. He could respect a pet seycat, treat it kindly, but that didn’t make it human.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 201). His recognition fittingly sums up the paradox of characters claiming to be “humane”; They use it to state their own humanity, while at the same time reducing the humanity of the cyborgs. Humans can claim to be moral beings that treat others kindly, but they refuse to acknowledge “them”, the cyborgs, as equals.

As for ideology in *Partials*, Kira expresses clear humanist values through her actions several places in the novel. She demonstrates that she is willing to sacrifice herself if she can save another person’s life by doing so, reflecting the humanist belief in the moral human (Lamont,

1997). According to Arendt (1998), the first basic human activity is *labor*, the biological survival of the individual and the species: humans are born, they live, reproduce and they die. Kira is obsessed with finding the cure to the virus because she cares deeply about people and the survival of humanity. She is ready to fight to find a cure for the RM virus so that newborn babies can live to grow up and carry on the human species. This shows will to solve one of the greatest problems the human race has faced, and Kira thus reflects Lamont's (1997) belief in the able human that can solve their problems through reason and science. The way Kira is set up as a human character with strong humanist values, her moral would not allow her to harm other human beings. Amputating a an arm or performing painful or harming scientific experiments on a person is not something Kira would allow herself to do, but as long as she is able to see the Partial as less than human, she can justify her actions with the prospect of saving the human species, giving them a chance to pursue a life of happiness and prosperity.

As the narrative unfolds, it is evident that Kira shows posthuman values as well. As she spends more time with a Partial soldier, and gets to know his name and person, she begins to reflect upon what it is that makes her human and him not. She has already concluded that the Partial looks like any other human, and she sees that he can think, speak and feel like any other human. Kira begins to discard her old beliefs on what the human is.

Through idolizing the "pure" humans in *Tankborn*, Kayla also convey humanist ideas, as she supports the idea that the human is more important than other beings, and that the human is something "natural". Kayla is aware that she is treated badly by humans, but because her DNA is not purely human, she does not believe that she deserves to be treated like one. Instead of longing to be accepted for who and what she is, and to be treated like and equal, she secretly longs to be human. Even though Kayla does not regard herself as human, she acts like a moral humanist subject. When she realize that a young trueborn man in a levitating car is on collision course with a much larger public transport car, she use her special strength to stop his car and save his life. Because of her status, the young man only scolds Kayla for touching his car rather than praising her for saving his life, and Kayla accepts his outburst noting that; "I guess that's a

trueborn's idea of a thank you" (Sandler, 2011, p. 138). She does not feel like he owes her a sincere "thank you".

Growing up Kayla never knew any trueborns personally, other than the enforcers that used violence and degrading language to state their superiority over the GENs. Kayla does not know of an alternative to the social hierarchy that she has grown up in, and the trueborns almost seem to be as "other" as the GENs are to the humans. When Kayla then begins to develop a relationship with Devak, she discovers that their similarities outnumber their differences. This effect can be compared to Levinas' face-to-face-theory (Marcus, 2010), when two beings meet face to face, it becomes impossible to reduce the other to an idea. Previously the trueborns were only an idea of a superior being in Kayla's mind, but now that she knows Devak, this idea is fading. Critical posthumanism seeks to deconstruct the humanist idea of a hierarchy of beings, and Kayla contributes to such ideas by questioning whether there really is a difference between herself and Devak.

As for transhuman ideas in the novel, Zul explains that they first began to experiment with genetic engineering to try to make people resistant to disease; "We's hoped to prod the body into fighting off the Abeni and Geming viruses." (Sandler, 2011, p. 310). The GENs were not created to perform as slaves for the trueborns, but they were supposed to be an enhanced version of the human being that could withstand disease, the very image of the posthuman that Bostrom (2003) envisioned.

Humanism rejects the idea of a divine creator, and do not believe in a separation of body and soul. In *Tankborn* religion is part of the plot, and the GENs believe in The Infinite, also referred to as "the creator of creators", because even though they know that they are created by humans, they are also convinced that humans were sculpted by a celestial god. Kayla is deeply invested in her religious beliefs, praying to her god when she finds life difficult, and part of her identity is rooted in her spirituality. Even when she learns that her god was fabricated by humans, she finds strength in her prayers;

Kayla could not turn her back on the Infinite so easily. The prophets may have invented her faith, but who was to say it was not with the Infinite's guidance. Kayla still felt His touch on her heart in her dark moments. She refused to abandon Him (Sandler, 2011, p. 367).

The concept of a god is not immediately present in *Partials*, and the word is only mentioned six times, and it is used more as an expression than an actual reference to a higher power; “killing their own flesh and blood – their own brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and, God help us, their own children.” (Wells, 2012, p. 15).

In both *Partials* and *Tankborn* there is a hierarchical structure of power between humans and cyborgs, where humans are ranking higher than cyborgs. In *Partials*, the humans are afraid of the cyborgs, because they know that they are capable of killing every single human being alive. Like in *Frankenstein*, it seems as if humans have discovered the possible dangers of creating life. Still, the *Partials* are initially described as mindless beings, not worthy of human decency, and as an enemy that must be overcome. In *Tankborn* the cyborgs are systematically oppressed in a society that is founded on a class structure. The books have in common that they feature a new kind of being, capable of thinking, feeling and action, the same way that humans are. These beings were created to be slaves to humans, doing hard or hazardous work that the humans were hesitant to do themselves. This coincides with Arendt's (1998) idea of action as the foremost human activity, because human characters in both novels force the cyborg characters to labor and work for them so that they can focus on realising themselves as individuals. The human characters were conditioned to create the cyborgs, and in turn the cyborgs began to condition the humans. Higgins explained this phenomena by using the car as an example of how the things we shape turn around and begin to shape us, but in *Tankborn* and *Partials*, the cyborg characters are the car. Cyborgs are initially presented as lesser beings whose sole purpose is to be there as servants for humans, legitimized by the notion that the cyborgs themselves are not, and never will be,

human. But, as the narratives unfolds, the social hierarchies are challenged by the novels' protagonists Kira and Kayla, and the image of the differences between cyborg and human gets more nuanced, as they begin to form relationships across the gaps that has separated them.

3.2.2 Names, Pronouns and Labels

Humanist and posthuman theories in *Partials* and in *Tankborn* are not only seen in class structures, but are also clearly expressed through the language used about the cyborgs. Development in the relationships between human and cyborg is shown in the way they address each other through the use of pronouns, names and other labels. "It" as a pronoun is often used about animals and things, and is used about Partials throughout the first half of the novel, in effect dehumanizing them by reducing them to objects or animals. Partial as an adjective means "existing only in part; incomplete" (Ordnett, n.d.). This definition is consistent with how the Partials are described as less than human in the beginning of the book, even though it is revealed that "they have human DNA [...] at least in part" (Wells, 2012, p. 113). The name given to them is designed to separate them from humans; they look like us, but never forget that they are only part human.

In the same way that Partials are given a name indicating that they are meant to be less than human, *Tankborn* have several names for the cyborg characters. Tankborn refers to how the cyborgs are made in a gen-tank, a vat functioning as an artificial womb. The technical term for them is GEN, or genetically engineered non-human. Yet another nickname for these cyborgs is "jik", often used in a derogatory manner, such as "An insolent jik is a rank jik" (Sandler, 2011, p. 53) and "kill the jik, save the meat" (Sandler, 2011, p. 60). Trueborns compare GENs to animals on several occasions in the novel, because they were genetically engineered by combining human and animal DNA. Kayla encounters two trueborns who are loudly speaking about her in a demeaning manner;

The good-looking trueborn spoke to his friend, pitching his voice loud enough for Kayla to hear across the river. “What kind of DNA made that one?” He pointed at Kayla. “Looks like sow to me.”

“Pig for sure,” his fat friend agreed (Sandler, 2011, pp. 4-5).

The trueborns are speaking about Kayla as “that one”, as if she was a thing and not a person, and they also compare her with farm animals, animals who are of service to humans. In another instance, Kayla is approached by a trueborn, and he asks her if her nurture brother is all right, referring to him as “the young male” (Sandler, 2011, p. 7), and then to Kayla as a *female* rather than *boy* or *girl*. When GENs presents themselves, they give their name, a number, place of origin and who their nurture mother was. This ritual associates their labelling with that of electronic devices such as cell phones or laptops, that are inscribed with a serial number, place of manufacture and production company, making the GENs even more like objects. By using several different names for the cyborgs, many of them degrading and dehumanizing, the humans are signalling the unimportance of the cyborgs. They are not even worth a real name, because they are barely existing and live at the mercy of the humans. A single name would create a strong identity and community amongst the GENs, so by giving them several names, labels and numbers, it becomes harder for them to feel a sense of common identity, making them more manageable.

3.2.2.1 Kayla and Devak

The developing relationship between human and cyborg in *Tankborn* is demonstrated by how Devak the trueborn thinks and speaks to and about Kayla the GEN. When they first meet, Devak is struggling to distinguish himself from the non-humans; “His hand twitched, as if he’d been about to offer it to shake, then remembered he was a trueborn and she a GEN.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 9). Apart from the skin on her arms and the tattoo on her face, Kayla looks like a human, and in Western cultures it is polite to shake hands with people you meet. But Devak has been taught that he is superior to GENs, and when Kayla is then Assigned to work for Devak’s great

grandfather Zul, he is more hesitant to greet her; “*Why do I have to be polite? She’s only a GEN.*” (Sandler, 2011, p. 73, italics in original). In his world, she is “only” a GEN, and Devak has been taught by his father that he is superior to GENs, because they are no more than small parts of a larger machine. Devak remembers his father quoting that; “They were truly happiest that way, [...], each GEN a properly functioning part of the whole [...]. GENs didn’t see themselves as individuals, so it didn’t make sense for a trueborn to consider them that way (Sandler, 2011, p. 221). Because of his upbringing, Devak has always viewed the GENs as property that needs to be taken care of, like you take care of your house, car or pet. When he discovers that Kayla’s living quarters has not been cleaned out or prepared for her, he feels bad for her, but not because he thinks that she will care, but because he believes in taking proper care of his possessions; “He supposed that a lowborn like Jeramy or a GEN like Kayla wouldn’t notice the shortcomings of their quarters. But shouldn’t a trueborn do better for the lowborns and non-humans he was responsible for?” (Sandler, 2011, p. 81).

When Zul, Devak and Kayla are on an errand to the city together, a trueborn boy yells at them out of his car window; “Jik-lover! Do your parents know what you do with your jik sow when they’re not looking?” and Devak shouted back; “I don’t do anything! She’s not mine!” (Sandler, 2011, p.135). Because of the enormous social gap between them, Devak is insulted that someone would insinuate that he would have any kind of intimate relationship with Kayla. To avoid further stigmatization, Devak distances himself from Kayla by answering that she is “not mine”, like she is a thing that can be owned, but Kayla does not seem to be offended that he does not stand up for her, and accepts that it was a grave insult to insinuate that Devak would care for her.

Through working for Zul, Kayla and Devak are forced to spend time with each other, and in the process they start to get to know each other. The idea of GENs and humans touching is taboo on Loka, but as he gets increasingly curious about her. He has seen her touching his great grandfather without hurting him, and Devak decides that he wants to touch Kayla’s skin; “Why had Devak thought Kayla’s skin might feel different than a trueborn girl’s? GENs might be non-human, but they were created using human DNA. Certainly the skin that covered them

would feel the same.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 191). Even after touching Kayla, Devak thinks of GENs as non-humans, but Kayla seems different to him. Devak’s father is responsible for monitoring the GENs and resetting them when they get “corrupted”. Previously this had seemed only natural, but now Devak thinks that “his father had been talking about faceless GENs, not this one sitting in front of him. Devak felt hollowed out by the thought of the Brigade erasing Kayla.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 194). It is as if Kayla became a real person when they touched; “he’d touched Kayla. And there had been nothing about her that had seemed less than human.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 201).

Because of the enormous stigma connected to touching GENs, touching Kayla’s skin displays a significant amount of trust on Devak’s part. Kayla, who has been deadly afraid to come in direct contact with humans, see this trust, and it gives her the courage to stand up for herself and to challenge his perception of her even further and ask him “What is is about you, and me, that makes you human and me not?” (Sandler, 2011, p. 194). Devak tries to give her an answer, but he realize that his arguments lack any validity, and he begins reflecting even more about what he has been taught;

Devak had blindly accepted his father’s lessons when he was younger. But once he got older, he’d started to question. Spending time with Kayla over the last few weeks, talking with her last night, he’d thought his attitude about GENs had changed even more. That he was seeing that maybe some non-humans did have unique personalities.

[...]

If GENs were different from one another, if they were individuals, how could they be parts of a machine? If they suffered pain, if their hearts sometimes ached like any man’s or woman’s did. [...] If they showed Kayla’s sharp intelligence – how could they be less human than a trueborn or a lowborn? (Sandler, 2011, p. 222).

Through his interaction with Kayla, Devak has begun to see the GENs as individuals, the same way that humans are individuals. He sees that they display intelligence, emotions, the ability to make choices and to express a desire to be treated like equals. The concepts that previously were a natural part of life for Devak, suddenly become an unpleasant illustration of how humans in his world claim to be pure, moral and humane, while they oppress and dehumanize others for their own benefit;

Trueborns always talked about Assigning GENs. But wasn't it really true that they were selling them? Like a drom, or a new wristlink? So that instead of being Assigned to a job, they were sold like an animal or a thing. For the first time, that felt shameful (Sandler, 2011, p. 292).

Up until this point, Devak's struggles with how he feels about GENs and Kayla has been shown through his inner dialogue, where he has confronted his preconceived ideas about non-humans with his real life experiences with Kayla. Like critical posthumanist theorists he has gone through the process of revising the established notions of what the human was, is and can become, and has concluded that the difference between him and Kayla is nothing more than a socially constructed barrier. When Senia, the lowborn housekeeper refers to Kayla as a "jik", Devak decides to stand up for Kayla; "Call Kayla that again, Senia, and I'll have you removed from the house." (Sandler, 2011, p. 240). Previously he would have done what he could to deny any form of association between himself and the GEN girl, but because he has accepted the posthuman condition, he no longer feels threatened by the stigma connected to the cyborgs.

Towards the end of *Tankborn*, the name "non-human" is revealed to be wrong, and the actual name is genetically engineered *non-natals*, referring to the artificiality of their origin. Following Arendt (1998), there would be no difference between "non-natal" and "non-human", because in any case, the GENs were created in a laboratory and not a womb, and changing the name would not make them more or less human. But Zul, the man who created the GENs in the first place represent a critical posthuman perspective, because he does not discriminate between cyborg and

human in the novel. Zul used biotechnology to make the GENs, but he does not see himself as their owner or divine creator, he sees them as equals;

“To my way of thinking, every GEN is human,” Zul said. “The animal DNA means nothing to your humanity. Your time in the tank is inconsequential. When we created the first GEN prototypes, Jemali, Hala and I devised the acronym Genetically Engineered Non-natal. A discrimination between someone gestated inside a woman’s womb versus a gen-tank. Pouli and Cohn changed it when they took over the project. Their version of the acronym – non-human – went into their cursed liturgy and that’s what everyone believed (Sandler, 2011, pp.319-320).

Zul also represents a transhumanist perspective in the novel, because he first began to experiment with genetic engineering to try and cure diseases that were threatening humanity. He never intended for the technology to be used to create slaves, he only wanted to use technology to enhance the humans so that they could live longer, happier disease-free lives.

3.2.2.2 Kira and Samm

In *Partials* the developing relationship between cyborg and human can be illustrated through the interaction between Kira and Samm. Kira is on a mission to find a cure to a deadly virus, and believes that the answer lies with the source of the virus; The Partials. She organizes a secret mission with some of her friends, to travel north into Partial territory in an attempt to find a Partial and amputate “its” arm to take back and study. They encounter a group of Partials in a building in the middle of Manhattan, and a violent fight breaks out, resulting in a collapsed building, and Kira is stuck with a Partial soldier in the ruin;

The Partial arm still strained, the debris slid and shifted, and slowly a helmet came into view. The thing’s face was covered with a black visor, but she could hear it growl, low and guttural.

[...]

The Partial lunged forward, its hands like claws, and in that moment the couch gave way, plunging forward like a boulder, catching the Partial in the face and slamming it backward to the floor (Wells, 2012, p. 170).

The narrator describes how Kira sees the Partial as a “thing”, an “it”, that makes guttural growling sounds and has hands like claws, words that are more often associated with animals. Kira has been taught all her life that the Partials are evil monsters who only wants to kill humans and that is reflected in the pronouns used. Marcus (2010) has explained Levinas’ theory about how a relationship is instantly formed as two individuals come face to face, and how this meeting with “the face of the other” manifests the other and makes it impossible to reduce them to an idea. This phenomenon is illustrated when Kira captures an unconscious Partial soldier, and consequently begins to question her idea of the Partials as man-killing monsters when she sees the soldier’s face for the first time;

Kira pulled off the Partial’s helmet and stopped, staring. She had expected them to look human - of course they looked human, that was the whole point - but even so, seeing one for the first time was... She couldn’t put it into words.

A human face. A human mouth and nose. Human eyes staring blankly at the ceiling. A young man, handsome, with short, dark-brown hair and the beginning of a bruise on its jaw. The greatest enemy mankind had ever faced, the vicious monster that had ended the world.

It couldn’t have been more than nineteen years old.

“It’s weird, isn’t it?” said Yoon. “All this talk about how they look like us, and then they just... look like us.”

Kira nodded. “I don’t know if that makes it less scary, or more.” (Wells, 2012, pp. 173-174).

Even though Kira sees that the Partial looks like a normal, young man, he is still referred to as an “it”, but it is evident that she struggles to uphold the divide between humans and cyborgs, pointing to their striking similarity.

Following some dramatic events after capturing the Partial, it is taken back to East Meadow alive and in one piece, where Kira, after some disagreement, is trusted with the task of examining the prisoner. The agreement is that she gets five days to study the Partial before “it” gets “dismantled and disposed of” (Wells, 2012, p. 200). Again, the words used about the Partial is chosen with the intention to dehumanize the cyborg. “Dismantled” refers to how a machine is taken apart when it is no longer in use, and you “dispose of” garbage, things that no longer have a value.

Kira is nervously talking to herself and the Partial as she is working in the lab, not really expecting a response, when all of a sudden the Partial says: “You talk too much”. Up until this point, Kira has strictly thought about the Partial as an “it”, but now she thinks of “him” for the first time; “*The first human to communicate with another species in eleven years, she thought, and he tells me to shut up*” (Wells, 2012, p. 212, italics in original). Not only does the Partial look like he is human, he also communicates like one, voicing his own opinion, reflecting the humanist value of free will. Kira thinks of the Partial as “it” and “him” interchangeably for another chapter, but is slowly beginning to view the Partial less as a scientific experiment, and more like a person. This means that she wishes to perform her studies as humanely as possible, and that can only be done with a trusting, cooperative test subject. She then decides to ask the question that breaks down the final barrier between them;

“Do you have a name?”

The Partial eyed her carefully, that slow, studying look that made her feel like he was calculating everything about her.

“Why do you want to know?”

“Because I’m tired of calling you ‘Partial.’”

He studied her a moment longer, then smiled, slowly and warily. “Samm.”

[...]

He hesitated. “Tell me your name.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m tired of calling you ‘human.’”

She cocked her head, looking at him. Was that a joke? His voice was still flat and unemotional as ever but there was something almost playful behind it. Was he reaching out to her? Testing her? Behind it all, that calm, calculating look never left his eyes. Whatever he was doing, he must have more than one reason for doing it. She pursed her lips, thinking, and decided to go along with it. “My name is Kira.” (Wells, 2012, pp. 231-232).

Kira reflects upon Samm’s intentions, deciding that he must have a reason to ask her name. He is well aware that he has got only a few days left to live before the Senate will issue an order of termination, and it is not unlikely that he tries to bond with Kira as a way of getting her sympathy and help. The development in how Kira view Samm shows a clear shift from her humanistic view, to a wider understanding of the posthuman. Calling someone by their name gives a deeper sense of intimacy, and this exchange of names give Kira and Samm the opportunity to get to know each other as individuals. In viewing each other as individuals, Kira and Samm are moving away from the idea of “us” and “them”, that one is an “other”, and are rather moving toward a fellowship of “we”. Instead of pointing to what makes them different, they are seeing what they have in common, making them more equal. It seems as if when working so closely with each other, it demands more energy to uphold the divide between the self and the other, and it is easier to just acknowledge their fellowship, and view themselves as a “we”.

“What do you mean, *you’ll* need gas?” she asked. “You’re not coming?”

Samm shook his head, looking out at the water, up at the house, anywhere but at Kira. “Your people will kill me.”

“The Partials will kill you, too,” said Kira. “You’re a traitor now. At least with us you’ll have... something, friends, I don’t know. We can help each other.” (Wells, 2012, pp.413-414, italics in original).

At this point, both Kira and Samm has learned that she is a Partial as well, but Samm still refer to the humans as “your people”, not acknowledging her as part of his race. Kira do not identify with the cyborgs either, calling them “The Partials”, but instead of separating herself from the Partial soldier, she is inviting him to join her, offering him friendship and help, a community that recognize him as a person. Here, Kira’s stance exemplifies critical posthuman theory: by accepting more than one type of being, and rejecting the binary idea of either human or non-human (Ferrando, 2014), Kira moves away from her earlier humanist position towards a posthumanist one. Her interaction with Samm moves her towards a posthuman point of view, valuing not only the human but all species varieties.

Initially, Devak and Kira represent a human and a humanist point of view in their interactions with Kayla and Samm; Kira sees Samm as a thing, because she has been raised in the belief that Partials are machines without feelings or thoughts. In the beginning, Samm is nothing more than a scientific experiment to Kira, but she gradually begins to change her opinion about him as she is forced to spend time with him. The same goes for Devak, who sees GENs as property in the beginning of the novel, but slowly begins to view them as individuals as Kayla gives them a face. In the close encounter with the “other”, Devak and Kira are forced to confront their preconceived notions of who and what they are, and why. Kira goes from thinking about Samm as an “it”, to a “he”, and then finally as “Samm”, consequently identifying the gap between them as a social construct of the society they live in.

In *Tankborn*, Devak use Kayla’s name when he speaks to and about her, he never talks about her as an “it”, the way Kira does with Samm. Still, it is evident that Devak reworks the way he view

Kayla as they get more acquainted. At first, he thought of her as “only” a GEN, representing how he saw them as beneath himself in status, and when his peers called him a “jik-lover” he was ashamed to be associated with her. He was taught to see them as mechanical parts, without feelings or desires other than to do their duty. Through conversations with Kayla, he begins to change this perception, and he starts to think of her more like a human like himself. This is reflected in his inner dialogue where he goes from thinking about Kayla as property, to a girl, and finally as an equal. Devak’s transformation is expressed as he finally defends Kayla when a lowborn member of staff calls her a “jik”, and Devak threatens to fire the staff member ever dares to insult Kayla that way again. *Tankborn* and *Partials* have in common that the human characters that interact with the cyborg characters stop viewing the cyborgs as objects, and begin so see them as a person.

3.3 The Role of Biotechnology

The role of biotechnology in the novels is closely connected to the hierarchical structures in the novels, as the ones who are in control of the technology are also the ones in power. The two following sections examines the role of biotechnology in the narratives, beginning with an analysis of the significance of reproduction in the novels, and then a section about the consequences of using biotechnology.

3.3.1 Cyborgs and Reproduction

The first human activity that Arendt listed was *labor*, which represents biologic human life. Because humanism considered human existence to be embodied, without reproduction, there would be no human life to carry out the next activities; *work* and *action*. Humans are driven to reproduce and to secure the next generation of humanity. In *Partials* humanity faces extinction because their newborn children are dying from a deadly virus, and Kira’s motivation in her research is to find a cure so the babies will live. In a conversation between Kira and Samm, he

assert that; “We don’t have children, so their absence didn’t seem odd at first, but you don’t have any, do you? You’re trying to cure RM because your children don’t survive it.” (Wells, 2012, p. 218). Samm here confirms that Partials are sterile and that they do not have children like humans do. At first, the Partials did not see an issue with not having children, because they were programmed not to age, and they did not need to breed to make sure that their species survived because they believed that they were immortal. Then they discovered that they were programmed with an expiration date; “At twenty years, the process that halts our aging reverses, and we shrivel and die within weeks, sometimes days. It’s not accelerated aging. It’s decay. We rot alive.” (Wells, 2012, p. 311). When the Partials realize that they are not immortal, they also realize that sterility is a problem that needs to be solved if they are to survive;

“When the humans fell, we began to research the question of Partial sterility, to see if we could undo it.” [...] “Eventually we were caught up in... other concerns, but when the crisis of the expiration date began to surface, we realized we needed to take up the studies again.” (Wells, 2012, p. 396-397).

The Partials are using science and reason in an attempt to solve the enormous problem of how to carry on a species, a concern connected to humanism and *labor* (Arendt, 1998). Even though Partials never have been able to reproduce, Samm uses *labor* as an argument when he suggests that they should work together to ensure the survival of both their species; “Why would we want anything else?” asked Samm. “It’s the most basic instinct of life – to outlive yourself. To build another generation that’s going to see tomorrow.” (Wells, 2012, p. 282). It is not clear whether Samm is trying to appeal to Kira’s humanity, or whether he feels the urge to continue his species himself. In any case, he has an understanding of the importance of reproduction, and that humans are driven by the compulsion to continue their species.

The GENs in *Tankborn* are also designed to be sterile, but early on in *Tankborn*, it is revealed that Kayla and GEN girls still get their periods;

With each cramp, Kayla's dark mood only grew blacker. She ranted in her mind – bad enough the gene-splicers had genned her so awkward, with her mismatched strength and ugly splotched arms. Why did her monthly courses have to be so uncomfortable? And why did GEN girls have them at all when they had only part of a uterus and couldn't conceive? (Sandler, 2011, p. 23).

Menstruation is an indication of fertility in humans, and may in this case be used as a reminder to the cyborgs that their origin is human, but that they would never be able to reproduce like a human could, or even be human. The GENs are programmed to age and die like normal humans, but they are not dependent upon reproduction like the Partials are, because human characters use technology to create more of them when needed. The only place in the novel where the lacking ability to reproduce is problematized, is when Mishalla, Kayla's best friend is turned back into a human with the help of medicine, and marries her lowborn boyfriend;

“There would be no children though. Jemali [a trueborn scientist] had confirmed for Mishalla that her trueborn uterus – and Kayla's as well – had been altered in the tank. Enough tissue for the girls to cycle, but not nearly enough to grow a baby.” (Sandler, 2011, p. 368).

The couple solve this problem by choosing to adopt an orphan boy, and the issue is not problematized further. Also, Mishalla and her boyfriend are now defined as “human” in the novel, and as humans are free to reproduce as they see fit, the couple does not represent an endangered species. The Partials on the other hand live under the pressure of an impending expiration date.

Humanism sees the human as inseparable from nature, a being that has developed through a natural evolutionary process (Lamont, 1997). The onset of a being more interlinked with technology than nature, threatens the idea of the natural human being. By producing sterile cyborgs, the danger of crossbreeding and possibly replacing the “natural” human being with an

enhanced posthuman subject is removed, and the humanist notion of the human can be safely preserved. By removing the ability to reproduce on their own, humans can put themselves in the place of God, to be the almighty creator, and in that way to grant themselves full control over the cyborgs.

Because they are not able to multiply, they are vulnerable to extinction, and are dependent upon the humans' mercy if they want to live. In *Tankborn*, favourable genes are concentrated within certain privileged social groups, but it is not the altered genes that are pooled together, like Fukuyama predicted. Because the cyborgs are so stigmatized, their genes are not desirable to humans. The only use for tankborn-genes is to recycle them into new tankborns when they die.

Sterility is a recurring theme for cyborgs in the young adult dystopian novels in this thesis, and it is used both as a means to confirm established humanist values, such as that humans are "children of nature" (Arendt, 1998) and a result of a natural evolutionary process (Lamont, 1997). Sterile posthuman subjects do not threaten the idea of the "pure" and "natural" human being, as cyborgs are unable to multiply, and they can not dilute the human genome. On the other hand, barren cyborgs can be used to address fertility treatment methods, adoption and alternative family constructs in society outside of literature. From a critical posthuman perspective, the ability to reproduce naturally is not necessary since they reject the idea of the "natural" human being, and even that the concept of the human is a social construct. Transhumanists believe that technology can be used to create healthier and happier beings, and since pregnancy and childbirth proposes a health risk to different women many places around the world, avoiding pregnancy and birth altogether proposes a way of reproducing without the risks connected to it. Hence, *Tankborn* and *Partials* can contribute to the discussion of reproductive rights, technology and to teach tolerance towards others who are not quite like ourselves.

3.3.2 Consequences of Using Biotechnology

In 1958, Arendt was worried that humans would use biotechnology to alter the human condition, and in the process remove themselves from nature, and Fukuyama (2004) stated that he felt that the research in biomedicine could end up compromising the equity and autonomy of human beings. Today, a small group of people control a significant amount of the world's capital, and Fukuyama fears that if genes becomes a currency as well, social elites will be able to monopolize genes as well as other privileges, resulting in an ever wider social gap (Fukuyama, 2002 in Ostry, 2004). Bostrom acknowledged Arendt and Fukuyama's concerns, but strongly believes that enhancing the human condition through technology bears the possibility to do more good than bad. Though the three theorists represent a polarized view on biotechnology, they all have in common that they predict that the use of biotechnology can lead to immense consequences for the future of the human condition.

In the novels that this thesis examines, humans have already developed futuristic biotechnologies that can be used to interfere with and change the human genome and condition. The foremost consequence of this is that the technology is used to manufacture artificial people, or cyborgs. Both GENs and Partials are cybernetic organisms (Haraway, 2000), composed of both organic and inorganic materials (Senft, 2001). The Partials are described as "genetic perfection" (Wells, 2012, p. 143), designed with superhuman strength, speed and agility, to be immune to disease and with accelerated healing abilities. In addition they are programmed not to age or reproduce, and to decompose after a defined period of time. This indicates that they are made with some form of integrated electronic circuits that can be programmed, despite their convincingly organic appearance. The same goes for the GENs, who have facial tattoos that also functions as data-ports that are linked to their "annexed" brains, which are basically a supercomputer that can store and process information at a much more rapid pace than their "bare" brain; "No way to guess this [code]. There were billions of possibilities. If someone had uploaded a code-guessing algorithm into her annexed brain, she could run through them all" (Sandler, 2011, p. 237). The GENs are tailor made to fit specific tasks, some are strong, some have a heightened sense of

hearing or eyesight. Others are “genned”, or genetically engineered, to be exceeding at electronics and technology.

Bostrom (2003) described the transhumanist posthuman as the next evolutionary step, beings with physical and intellectual capacities that go far beyond those of the present human, and Elon Musk dreams of integrating computer chips in people’s brains, much like the “annexed” brains the GENs are given. Looking at the cyborgs in *Tankborn* and *Partials*, they appear to be the very manifestation of the posthuman that Bostrom envisioned. GENs and Partials could be the answer to eliminating disease and suffering, giving people a chance to live happier and healthier lives, with superintelligence that could enable them to solve other problems such as environmental changes and disasters, or to be increasingly moral. Sadly, they are not seen that way in the novels, but rather they are seen as a threat to the “natural” human. Instead of using biotechnology to create a more equal society, social inequalities are magnified, but not in the way that Arendt and Fukuyama predicted.

Cyborg characters are genetically, physically and intellectually superior to the human characters, but humans are ranked higher than them. When a human character attempts to describe a Partial, he states that; “They’re not people,” [...] “they’re machines - biological machines, but machines nonetheless.” (Wells, 2012, p. 122). The GENs are compared with machines as well; “Do you change the power source for your sekai reader to give it variety? Of course not. It’s a machine. It doesn’t matter how you power it. What does it matter what a GEN eats?” (Sandler, 2011, p. 183). In both narratives, the cyborgs are seen as machines that needs to be controlled by thinking human beings. Humans do not express any desire to become more like the cyborgs, but the cyborgs long to become more like humans, or at least to be treated with more decency. When Kayla is presented with a treatment that can make her human again, she is almost overwhelmed with the idea; “*To no longer be a GEN. To live as she wished, to have her own life.*” (Sandler, 2011, p. 360). Fukuyama predicted that favourable, enhanced genes would be concentrated within a small elite, but in this case, the “pure” human genes are the ideal, both among the cyborgs and humans. Implicit in this idolization of the “natural” human being in the novels, is a

humanist value system that ranks the human above other beings, the way Cheyney (Lamont, 1997) described, the “center and sanction for all things”, hence being “unnatural” equals being less significant.

At first glance, it might seem as if the novels are written as cautionary tales, warning about the dangers of using and misusing biotechnology and experimenting with the human genome. As the narratives progress, this image gets more nuanced, and technology is presented as both the cause of, and the solution to conflicts between humans and cyborgs. Flanagan (2014) stated that young readers today interact with technology in a positive way every day, and that the techno-negativity that dominated young adult dystopian fiction up until the mid 2000s, has been replaced by a more hopeful outlook on futuristic technology. Examples of this can be how Kira discovers that the cure to the virus that is slowly killing what is left of humanity, is actually to be found in a pheromone that the Partial soldiers are sending out when they exhale;

“I found a particle in Samm’s breath that bore a resemblance to RM, though it wasn’t a virus. It turns out it’s one of their pheromones that they don’t have any use for - all it does, literally it’s only function, is to bond with RM. The RM particles I saw in the newborn’s blood is really an inert form of RM created through interaction with the pheromone.”

Marcus furrowed his brow. “So the infants die because we don’t have any Partial around?” (Wells, 2012, p. 411).

Up until this point, the human characters have believed that the situation is “kill or be killed” by the Partials, reflecting a humanist social scale, placing the human above the cyborg, and the human activity of what Arendt terms *labor*, concerned with ensuring the survival of the human species. As the humans are faced with the prospect of a cure for the virus, they are forced to think differently about the Partials; where the Partials previously were seen as a threat to humanity, they are now presented as the solution to the pandemic that is currently threatening to

annihilate the human race. This implicates a more positive view on technology (Flanagan, 2014), because it is not the technology that threatens human autonomy, but rather the lack of it.

Creating sentient beings through technology creates a dilemma for the humans as well; either they need to be responsible for the cyborgs, or they need to ascribe them agency. Cyborgs never had a saying in whether they wanted to come into existence, so do they even want agency, and if they do, are humans still responsible for them? Children do not ask to be born, and parents are ultimately responsible for them and their behaviour. The difference between children and cyborgs though, is that children develop and grow into agency, while the cyborgs in the novels are created to fulfill a specific task or purpose, and not to come into being as an autonomous and equal subjects.

Finally, using biotechnology to create sentient beings in the novels creates the opportunity to discuss and challenge the definition of the human. Kira is one of the few people who has seen a Partial in the last eleven years, and she has discovered just how similar they are to humans, and wonders if they could have placed spies among them;

“They look exactly like us,” said Kira. “If I hadn’t watched two of them survive an explosion, I’d never have even known they weren’t human. Given how easy it would be, and how chaotic it was when we retreated to this island in the first place, we’d be idiots to not at least entertain the theory.” (Wells, 2012, p. 187).

Genetically engineering a new creature that is so similar to the human that it becomes impossible to tell them apart, force the human characters to reflect on what it means to be human. If they look exactly like humans, but are not, what is it then that makes a human, human? Kayla in *Tankborn* asked the very same question, and was told that she was not human because her DNA had been mixed with that of an animal. Still, she argues that; “I speak. I feel. I laugh and cry.” She broke off and looked away briefly. “Some things I want so badly I think I’ll die of it. I do worship the Infinite. But to be told every day that I’m not human...”. Clearly, Kayla wishes to be

human, but she also sees that she has several human properties such as thoughts, feelings and desires. Devak and Kira both have their world views challenged as they are forced to interact with the cyborg characters Kayla and Samm, and they both show a shift from humanist to posthuman values.

This chapter has examined how humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected in the relationships between human and cyborg in the two novels *Tankborn* and *Partials*, and what role biotechnology plays in said relationships. The analysis has found that humanist and posthuman ideas are reflected in the social structures and language used among cyborg and human character in the novels, and it is evident that the level of intimacy in the relationships is strongly affecting how the characters perceive each other. The less the human characters interact with and know about the cyborgs, the more likely they are to discriminate between themselves and the cyborgs and vice versa. When characters are forced to spend time together, they also get to know each other as individuals rather than just an idea of the “other”, and they begin to deconstruct the socially constructed norms that have been used to create social gaps.

Using biotechnology to genetically engineer sentient beings or to enhance the human condition has momentous consequences in the primary texts. In the case of *Partials*, biotechnology is used as a way for the humans to reinstate a form of slavery, that can be warranted through humanist ideas of a binary existence. The human characters have the right to pursue a happy life for themselves, and as they see themselves as a superior form of being, they feel that they are entitled to mistreat those who does not fit within the narrow definition of what a human is. Initially the GENs were created as a way to enhance the human condition to be able to withstand disease, but in the end they were made into slaves as well. The nature of the genetically engineered cyborgs and their striking similarity to the human characters is used as a way to challenge the idea of what a human being really is, reflecting posthumanist thoughts.

4 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the findings from the analysis chapter and answers the main research question. Cyborg characters are posthuman subjects, and both critical posthuman and transhuman ideas are duly represented in young adult dystopian fiction, but like Flanagan (2014) noted, young adult fiction still frequently represent humanist ideas as well. Hence, this thesis asked the question; *How are humanist and posthuman ideas reflected in young adult fiction's representations of the relationship between human and cyborg characters and what role does biotechnology play in this relationship?*

By examining the representations of relationships between human and cyborg characters in *Tankborn* and *Partials*, this thesis has found that humanist and posthuman ideas are expressed through social hierarchies and the language used among the characters. Humanist ideas are foremost reflected through and idolization of the “natural” human condition, especially in *Tankborn*, where the protagonist explicitly expresses that she wishes that she was human. Because humanist philosophy considers the human as the center and sanction for all things, it could explain the cyborgs' desire to become more like a human. If they become human, human rights would also apply to them, they would be free to lead the happiest life that they can, and to shape their own destiny. Human characters also believe that because they are “real” humans, they have more worth than artificial humans, and can justify mistreating the cyborgs.

Like Ferrando (2014) argued, humanism promotes a binary understanding of human existence; either you are human, or you are not. The different pronouns and labels used about the cyborgs reflect what values the characters have in the novels. In *Partials*, cyborgs are called “it”, and in *Tankborn* the cyborg characters are referred to as “non-humans”, and consequently there are formed large social gaps between human and cyborg characters, since only humans are considered people. But, when the characters begin to form relationships that transgresses these gaps, the language changes. When human characters are speaking of a faceless servant, it is

easier for them to envision themselves as superior to others, than when they are face to face with a cyborg that is almost indistinguishable from any other human. Devak begins to view Kayla as a *person* when he gets to know her, and Kira talk of Samm as an *individual* when she learns that he can think, speak and feel like she can. This represents a shift to critical posthuman ideas in the narratives, where the characters have deconstructed the idea of “us” and “them”. Critical posthuman ideas become useful in the novels when the characters begin to struggle to distinguish themselves from “the other”, because critical humanism allows for more than the one mode of being that humanism has spent hundreds of years to define. Because of the biotechnology that is used, the cyborgs in *Tankborn* and *Partials* are so similar to normal human beings that it becomes virtually impossible to tell them apart from humans, and it becomes harder for the human characters to justify the oppression of the cyborgs.

In *Partials* transhumanist ideas comes into play when the human and cyborg characters realize that they can both benefit from cooperation. The Partials are sterile and they expire, but they are immune to the RM virus. The humans live full lives and are able to reproduce, but their babies are not immune to the killer virus and dies shortly after birth. Kira is able to create a cure for the virus from the blood of a Partial, but she recognize that since all living human beings are carriers of the virus, the cure will disappear along with the Partials, soon. She then begins to reflect on whether a child that is a hybrid between human and cyborg would be born immune. Kira is thus representing both a critical posthuman and a transhuman mindset, because she wants to enhance the human condition to withstand disease, but she also recognize that the Partials also have worth equal to that of a human. In *Tankborn*, the cyborg characters that were originally human, get the chance to be turned back into humans again, which is quite the opposite of what transhumanists want, so even though the GENs were initially created as an enhanced form of the human, *Tankborn* does not convey a clear transhumanist ideal. Still, in the end Kayla declines the cure, because she believes that her special skills as a GEN are useful to her and the cause, representing a transhuman mindset.

Because humanism has had such a long history in literature, and posthuman ideas are relatively new in comparison, it seems as if humanist ideas in young adult fiction is used as a way to make the reader relate to the cyborg characters more easily. If Kira and Kayla are not too alien to the readers' own lives, they do not seem as frightening as cyborg characters in young adult fiction might have before the mid-2000s. But humanism as a philosophy is not adequate to build equal relationships between humans and cyborgs, and posthuman ideas become useful in the narratives when it is no longer possible to distinguish human from cyborg, because the traditional humanist definitions are outdated when biotechnology is part of the plot. The role of biotechnology in the novels, and its effect on the relationships between human and cyborg characters is that biotechnology grants tremendous power to the ones that can control it. Initially it is the humans who make use of biotechnology to create slaves that can labor and work for them, but as both the narratives progress, biotechnology is used as a tool to teach tolerance, because the characters in *Partials* and *Tankborn* gives the cyborgs a face that the human characters can relate to. So in a sense, using biotechnology forces the human characters to make an epistemological break with how they view themselves and others. Both Devak and Kira realize that they are not being good, moral people as long as they mistreat others just because they are not like themselves, and they begin to open up to posthuman ideas.

In a world where technology is a large part of the readers' daily life, and Braidotti pointed out that not everyone are seen as human even today, humanist theories are not enough to describe the relationships in the narratives. By using biotechnology and cyborg protagonists as part of the plot, the writer forces the reader to reflect on the very questions that Ferrando asked; "What is the human anyway? What is the non-human?" (2014), promoting posthuman thought. Instead of the cautionary tales such as *Frankenstein* and *Brave New World*, warning about the dangers of playing God, *Partials* and *Tankborn* represent a more positive view on biotechnology. The cyborg characters are not scary monsters, but rather they are individuals with thoughts and emotions that young readers can relate to.

Tankborn and *Partials* are both the first volumes of young adult book trilogies, and the conclusions in this thesis do not represent the whole series. Because of the small size of the data material, the findings of this thesis can not be taken to represent the whole genre of young adult dystopian fiction with cyborg characters, but since the two novels follows the generic pattern of young adult fiction as presented by Ostry (2004) and Day (2014), one could assume that some of the findings occurs in other young adult narratives as well.

4.1 Further Research

Hassan (Bradford, et al, 2011) noted that “five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call the posthuman”. Hassan believes that humanist ideas are being revised and replaced by posthuman theories that can keep up with an increasingly technologized society and human subject. Posthuman subjects and ideas are currently prevalent in young adult literature, but like this thesis has shown, humanist ideas are still strongly embedded in such narratives as well. It would thus be interesting to follow the development in young adult fiction in the years to come to determine if humanism as an ideology is indeed is coming to an end, and whether posthumanism is replacing it.

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