

# **The Second World War and Technological Progress in Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*: A Thematic Analysis**

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**Tomas Bata University in Zlín**  
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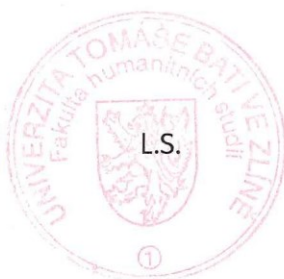
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem války a technologického rozvoje a jejich vlivem na hlavní postavy Marii-Lauru a Wenera v knize Anthonyho Doerra *Jsou světla, která nevidíme*. V první části bakalářské práce je nastíněn dobový kontext díla, doba druhé světové války, konkrétně situace Francie okupované Německem. Druhá část práce předkládá analýzu románu, zaměřenou na téma války a technologie a jejich dopadem na hlavní postavy, Francouzku Marii-Laure a Němce Wenera. Práce dochází k závěru, že obě postavy, ať už na straně okupantů nebo okupovaných, jsou v románu znázorněny jako oběti války. Technologie, konkrétně rádio, v románu slouží jako nástroj, který spojuje obě postavy a vede k jejich setkání.

Klíčová slova: Jsou světla, která nevidíme; Anthony Doerr; Druhá světová válka; technologický rozvoj; rádio; okupace

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis deals with the themes of war and technological progress and their impact on the main characters Marie-Laure and Werner in the book *All the Light We Cannot See*. In the first part of this bachelor thesis there is a description of historical background of the Second World War, concretely between occupied France and Germany in the role of occupier. In the second part of this thesis there is analysis of the book focuses on the themes of war and technology and their impact on the main characters French girl Marie-Laure and Werner, who is part of German army. The thesis comes to the conclusion that war, together with the impact of technology, has transformed both characters. Although one of them is occupier and another one is occupied, both of them are portrayed as victims of the war. Technology, concretely the radio, serves as a tool of connection, as it connects both characters and leads to their meeting.

Keywords: *All the Light We Cannot See*, Anthony Doerr, Second World War, technological progress, radio, occupation

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## INTRODUCTION

*“War is a bazaar where lives are traded like any other commodity: chocolate or bullets or parachute silk.”*

– Anthony Doerr

The Second World War was a difficult time for everybody who got involved in it. Not only people who suffered under occupation, but also people who were on the side of the occupants, had to deal with difficult situations. This is the starting point of Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See* (2014). The main purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the impact of war and technology on the main characters Marie-Laure LeBlanc and Werner Pfenning via thematic analysis of the novel.

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part takes the opportunity to introduce the American author, Anthony Doerr, who belongs among the latest authors of the 21 century. His traveling experiences constitute an important part in all his books and *All the Light We Cannot See* is no exception, as it was devised during his travel to Europe. The second part of this thesis deals with the description of historical background of the Second World War, especially the situation between France and Germany, the occupied zone and the occupier. Technological progress is included as an important part of the war period. Focus in this part is on hardship of French people to sustain occupancy of Germany, which also leads to many uprisings. Technological progress in the novel is represented especially by the radio which is closely connected with the uprising and serves as a connecting element.

The third and the fourth part of the thesis presents a particular thematic analysis of war and technological progress, as both war and technology slowly change and transform lives of the main characters, Marie-Laure and Werner, and lead them into the center of the war. This analysis describes almost the whole childhood of Marie-Laure and Werner, where it is clearly visible how war, together with the impact of technology, has transformed both characters.

This thesis is going to prove that although the war and technology have a significant impact on both main characters, Anthony Doerr portrayed Werner as weaker character than Marie-Laure. Even though Marie-Laure is a blind, handicapped girl on the side of occupied France, she is able to get through the war as a victor. On the other hand, Werner, who is on side of occupier, is not able to sustain the cruelty of the war and at the end of the war he dies.

## 1 ANTOHY DOERR AND HIS WORKS

### 1.1 Anthony Doerr

“Open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever.”<sup>1</sup> The human sight is one of the most important senses. It allows us to fully enjoy our life; however, it is not powerful enough to capture all phenomena that follow people in their everyday activities. In other words, humans are able to see touchable things, but they are not able to catch all waves which float in the air and enable us to communicate with each other. This is the main idea of American author Anthony Doerr and his latest book *All the Light We Cannot See*.

Each life is somehow special and unique and Anthony Doerr’s one is not an exception. Anthony Doerr was raised in Cleveland where also his career of a writer began.<sup>2</sup> When he was little, he was interested in writing and often played with a typewriter that belonged to his mother. When he grew up, he studied history at Bowdoin College and after finishing his studies, he worked as a cook.<sup>3</sup> In 2001 he showed his talent in a short story ‘The Hunter’s Wife’, published in *The Atlantic*,<sup>4</sup> which connected him with the Scribner and opened him a gateway into the world of writers.<sup>5</sup>

Travelling and writing go hand in hand in Doerr’s books. Every excellent story should be original and catchy, but if the topic is closely linked to the author’s attitudes and character, then it may make the story even more interesting. This is the case of Anthony Doerr, who has traveled around the world widely; he has been able to explore destinations such as New Zealand, Europe and Africa.<sup>6</sup> Later on, he interjected all his travel experiences into his writing.<sup>7</sup> According to his biography, this man seems to be a great

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), 264.

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, “Biography.” Accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/biography/>.

<sup>3</sup> See Alexandra Alter, “Literary Jackpot Against the Odds: Anthony’s Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See* Hits It Big,” *New York Times*, December 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/27/books/anthony-doerrs-all-the-light-we-cannot-see-hits-it-big.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See Anthony Doerr, “The Hunter’s Wife,” *The Atlantic*, May, 2001, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/05/the-hunters-wife/302198/>.

<sup>5</sup> See Michelle Dean, “Anthony Doerr: ‘I grew up where to call yourself a writer would be pretentious,’” *The Guardian*, April 22, 2015, accessed January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/22/anthony-doerr-pulitzer-interview>;

<sup>6</sup> See Cover page, Anthony Doerr, *Jsou světla, která nevidíme (Brno: Moba, 2015)*.

<sup>7</sup> See Martha Schulman, “How the Story Comes Together,” *Publishers Weekly* 261 (2014): 26-27, accessed January 28, 2017,

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=8e474ebd-f140-46ce-b733-f611761781f5%40sessionmgr103&hid=115>.

adventurer, but appearances are deceptive. Even though he often travels around the world and has written many books and essays, he considers himself to be a family man as well. Nowadays he lives in Boise, Idaho with his wife and two sons.<sup>8</sup>

As most writers, Anthony Doerr is a passionate reader. Few wonder that today he is a successful writer. He comes from a literary based family, where books are part of everyday life.<sup>9</sup> On the list of his favorite novelists, the reader can find for instance W. G. Sebald, Virginia Woolf or Herman Melville.<sup>10</sup> Although he has read dozens of books, he has not read everything he would like to. On the list of his unread books are still the Brontë sisters, *The Tale of Genji* or *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.<sup>11</sup> Even though he has been working hard on his own books, he still has time to educate himself by reading books by other authors. Not only they can broaden his horizons, but they may also provide inspiration for his future writing.

## 1.2 Anthony Doerr's Works

In his writing career, he has written not only novels but also stories and essays.<sup>12</sup> Anthony's first work from 2002 is called *The Shell Collector*. This book consists of eight stories, which all contain one dominant element and that is nature.<sup>13</sup>

Just think about the opportunity that you can do anything you have ever dreamed about. Your desires and wishes come true just by you wanting them.<sup>14</sup> This is the main idea of the book *About Grace* (2004), where Anthony Doerr also describes different parts of the world such as Alaska, the Caribbean and many other places.<sup>15</sup>

Anthony Doerr's book *Four Seasons in Rome* (2007) is an impressive piece of work as he really lived in Rome and he shares his experiences, family moments and travelling memories with his readers. What differentiates this book from his other works is openness

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<sup>8</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, “Biography,” accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/biography/>.

<sup>9</sup> See “Anthony Doerr: By the Book,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2015, accessed January 28, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/05/books/review/anthony-doerr-by-the-book.html>

<sup>10</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, “Biography,” accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/biography/>.

<sup>13</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, “The Shell Collector,” accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/books/the-shell-collector/>.

<sup>14</sup> See Neel Mukherjee, “About Grace: Dream Lover,” *New York Times*, November 07, 2004, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/07/books/review/about-grace-dream-lover.html>.

<sup>15</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, “About Grace,” accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/books/about-grace/>.

through which reader can be in touch with him and learn something new about his family and his style of living.<sup>16</sup>

The human brain is an amazing storage because myriads of memories, dates, conversations, photos and texts are kept there. Sometimes people are not aware of how much information their brain is able to absorb. *Memory Wall* (2010) is a novel about a woman who wants to download her memories because she is seriously ill and is afraid that she might lose them. The story takes place in the future, where this operation is possible. Is this a future which is waiting also for today's society?<sup>17</sup>

It is obvious that all his books contain an interesting topic, together with the travelling experience. One element which distinguishes his works from other writings may be his uniqueness because each of his books differs in genre. Not only memoirs and historical novels but also short stories and science fiction are genres that readers can find in Doerr's works.<sup>18</sup> Essays represent another part of his work; the most famous being is for example: "Cloudy Is the Stuff of Stones", "Let Us Now Praise Libraries, Librarians" and "Planet Zoo".<sup>19</sup>

Not only great ratings and enthusiastic readers are proof that Doerr's works are remarkable. Each of his books is connected with an award which he received mostly thanks to his originality and formidable writing. Awards such as O. Henry Prizes, The Best American Essays, The New York Public Library's Young Lions Award, Ohioana Book Awards<sup>20</sup> and others, became part of Anthony Doerr's writing career.

### ***1.3 All the Light We Cannot See***

*All the Light We Cannot See* is Anthony Doerr's latest book which received the Pulitzer Prize, the award for "Honoring Excellence in Journalism and the Arts."<sup>21</sup> *All the Light We Cannot See* is described as a book which catches the attention not only because of a

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<sup>16</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, "Four Seasons in Rome," accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/books/four-seasons-in-rome/>.

<sup>17</sup> See Justine Jordan, "Memory Wall by Anthony Doerr – review," review of *Memory Wall*, by Anthony Doerr, *The Guardian*, February 05, 2011, accessed January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/feb/05/memory-wall-anthony-doerr-review>.

<sup>18</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, "Books," accessed February 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/books/>.

<sup>19</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, "Essays," accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/essays/>.

<sup>20</sup> See Anthony Doerr—The Web Site, "Biography," accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.anthonydoerr.com/biography/>.

<sup>21</sup> Seymour Topping, "History of The Pulitzer Prizes," edited by Sig Gissler, *Pulitzer*, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.pulitzer.org/page/history-pulitzer-prizes>.

thrilling plot, but also due to short chapters, two main characters switching in each chapter - which is not so typical and also because of the theme of nature, war and technology.<sup>22</sup>

The novel deals with two children who do not know each other. Werner Pfenning is a German boy whose appearance is typical for former Nazi Germany – a boy with blonde hair, blue eyes and light skin. Werner lives in an orphanage together with his sister Jutta. Since they were little, they have loved listening to a mysterious French man talking about interesting facts of our world on the radio.

On the other side of the story is Marie-Laura LeBlanc, a blind young girl from France, living with her father, who is a locksmith in a Paris museum. Her father wants to help Marie-Laure to live with her blindness and that is why he decides to build her a small wooden model of Paris so that, despite her handicap she could learn how to move in the city. Werner realizes he is really good at technology. He is able to fix a radio and thanks to this ability he gets the chance to go to a German school. This school is meant to be only for chosen boys, for those who meet Hitler's requirements. At school, Werner proves he is really handy and teachers allow him to cooperate with them. Later Werner realizes that school is really cruel and if students do not follow the rules, they are expelled.

When the Germans arrive in Paris, many Parisians decide to leave and they are moving into safer places. Also Marie-Laure and her father leave Paris and they are travelling into Saint-Malo, where their uncle Etienne and Madame Manec live. Although German soldiers banned the radio and all the radio sets need to be out of the houses, uncle Etienne hides one in the loft. Another part of the story is about a precious stone from the museum, which is hidden in father's pocket.

Marie-Laure's father wants to build her a new wooden model of Saint-Malo. Unfortunately, soldiers arrest him and take him into a POW camp. He did nothing wrong, he was just walking across the city and drawing streets so that later he could build a small wooden house for Marie-Laure. He was suspected for doing something illegal and they arrested him. Marie-Laure will never see her father again. Meanwhile, Werner becomes handier with the radio station and they sent him to "radio transmission across Russia and Central Europe".<sup>23</sup> After some time, German soldiers send him to Saint-Malo because they

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<sup>22</sup> See Alison Flood, "Pulitzer Prize for fiction goes to *All the Light We Cannot See*," *The Guardian*, April 21, 2015, accessed January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/21/pulitzer-prize-fiction-all-the-light-we-cannot-see-anthony-doerr>.

<sup>23</sup> Carmen Callil, "*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr review – a story of morality, science and Nazi occupation," review of *All the Light We Cannot See*, by Anthony Doerr, *The Guardian*, May 17, 2014,

realize that somebody still broadcasts secret codes via radio. These codes come from Etienne and Marie-Laure who try to give signals to the Allies. Since this moment it is obvious that Werner and Marie-Laure will meet.

The story becomes complicated when a German soldier, Reinhold Von Rumpel, starts to look for the precious stone. Marie-Laure does not know that her father put the stone into the small wooden house which he made for her before they arrested him. One day, Etienne leaves the house and does not return back. Marie-Laure stays at home alone because Madame Manec has passed away. Fortunately, Etienne has shown her a cache in the basement where she decides to hide. After a few days, Marie-Laure crawls out and goes upstairs, where the radio is. In August 1944, the Allies are bombing Saint-Malo and even though Marie-Laure knows what is happening, she turns on the radio and reads from a book, with Braille to all people who can hear her because she wants to spread joy even during the war time. Meanwhile, Werner is getting closer to Marie-Laure's house because he can hear her radio, but also Von Rumpel is getting closer to the stone.

Von Rumpel enters Etienne's house and he is looking for the stone. Marie-Laure hears somebody in the house and she hides. After a few days, Werner enters the house and he saves Marie-Laure from Von Rumpel. For the first time, they talk to each other, but unfortunately, Werner and Marie-Laure have to separate and later on Werner dies. After the Allies liberate France, Marie-Laure finds her uncle Etienne. The book ends in 2014, when Marie-Laure is an old lady and has grandchildren.

#### 1.4 Inspiration for *All the Light We Cannot See*

When Anthony Doerr was writing this novel, he had no idea that it will become such a successful work. He spent 10 years writing it and even if he was not so passionate about it, his family was. Despite the fact that he was not sure about the topic and he rewrote it many times, from the beginning he was truly interested in the idea of technology which interconnects two children.<sup>24</sup>

The whole story was like a puzzle. He was slowly collecting ideas and then he put them all together. His first hint was the idea about the radio. Once, while he was travelling

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accessed January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/17/all-the-light-we-cannot-see-anthony-doerr-review>.

<sup>24</sup> See Brad Hooper, "The Booklist Carnegie Medal Interview, Fiction," *Booklist* 111(2015): 6-7, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=d51cc282-9f6d-455a-8f76-91a82ef966c1%40sessionmgr4007&hid=4212>.

he saw a man talking on the phone. He realized that now, people are living in the age of technological progress, when talking to each other through a medium is a common activity, but in the past it was something special. Other puzzles came from his research or accidentally appeared in his head. Whereas the story about the French city of Saint-Malo originates from his travels around Europe, Marie-Laure and her father came to his mind and fulfilled the whole story.<sup>25</sup> “Once I conceived her as blind and I started trying to plausibly render her world in language, it allowed me to play with other types of blindness—and visibility and invisibility—in the book. Marie-Laure can’t see in the physical universe, for example, but she sees a lot more in the moral universe than Werner can.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Martha Schulman, “How the Story Comes Together,” *Publishers Weekly* 261 (2014): 26-27, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=8e474ebd-f140-46ce-b733-f611761781f5%40sessionmgr103&hid=115>.

<sup>26</sup> Hooper, “The Booklist Carnegie Medal Interview, Fiction,” 6-7.

## 2 THE SECOND WORLD WAR

### 2.1 The Beginning of the Second World War

The Second World War was one of the major political events of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has influenced the whole society for many decades. Existing documents and other evidence still remind us of the war horrors and atrocities. The most deterrent examples are the Jewish holocaust and Nazi concentration camps which are accessible in the whole of Europe. The past is still haunting society not only in the form of remnants of these camps, graves and sadness but also via words that people use. For instance, the word war itself but also words like Nazism and fascism have become part of a regular vocabulary.<sup>27</sup>

What remains a mystery is how one person was able to influence history to such considerable extent. “Once Hitler had achieved power in Germany, war was certain to come”.<sup>28</sup> Not only Hitler’s leadership skills and the Nazi party, but also the atmosphere after the First World War, were the main instruments that helped Hitler to gain his power. The timing was perfect and people were willing to believe him. He was slowly getting closer and closer to his goals and thanks to these instruments he reached the peak. To strengthen his dictatorship, the changes began. He decided to get rid of Jews and he established concentration camps.<sup>29</sup>

In 1939 the Second World War began as a conflict between “Britain, France, the USA, Poland, the Soviet Union and assorted smaller countries on one side, and Germany, Italy, Romania, and Hungary on the other.”<sup>30</sup> The war commenced when Germany attacked Poland from the east. After 16 days, the German army occupied the capital city of Warsaw. “While Poland was fighting for her survival in the east, in the west, her two allies, Britain and France had declared war on Germany”<sup>31</sup> Although, a declaration of war is usually associated with warfare, this situation was distinct from others. Due to the fact that Britain and France did not actively fight with Germany, this declaration is known as the Phoney war.<sup>32</sup> The Phoney War is now known as a period thanks to which France and Britain tried to avoid warfare, unfortunately they were just helping to Germany. While France and

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<sup>27</sup> See P. M. H. Bell, *Origins of the Second World War in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

<sup>28</sup> R. P. W. Havers, *The Second World War II (2)* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002), 13.

<sup>29</sup> See Havers, *The Second World War II (2)*, 13-20.

<sup>30</sup> Havers, *The Second World War II (2)*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Havers, *The Second World War II (2)*, 44-45.

<sup>32</sup> See Havers, *The Second World War II (2)*, 45.



Britain were waiting, Germany grew and then attacked the Allies. That confusing idea that the Phoney war could be a step forward came from the First World War, where France and Britain were much stronger than Germany. The Allies believed that they could intimidate Germany, but they did not cogitate on the idea that the Nazi's plans involved much more.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.2 The Fall of France

The situation for Germany sounded more than promising. The road toward victory started with the Sichelschnitt plan, which worked as well as the Germans expected. Through the Netherlands and Belgium they invaded French town of Sedan and then, without obstacles, they arrived in Paris.<sup>34</sup> The French preparation was inadequate, French soldiers were confused and they did not know what to do. Moreover, Germany had an advantage because they possessed more airplanes than France. It appeared that France would become adversely affected and besides that Italy declared war on France too.<sup>35</sup> France was weak and hemmed in. The French government became desperate and tried to save the situation by calling for help to London and Washington. However mainly due to the lack of time, other countries were not able to help them. By June 1940, Paris remained without a government and French people became more and more confused. Parisians were abandoning their homes and they were moving to safer places. In June 1940, Philippe Pétain became a prime minister and he decided to accept a ceasefire with Germany and also with Italy.<sup>36</sup>

France split into two parts. "The northern part of France, the Atlantic coast, and the border areas with Belgium and Switzerland were to be occupied by the Germans. In the south, Pétain and his government would retain control, holding their capital at the provincial town of Vichy".<sup>37</sup> The Germans occupied France from 1940 to 1944 and it was a hard time for all French inhabitants. Germany started with the conversion of France.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Norman Davies, *Evropa ve válce: 1939-45* (Praha: BB/art, 2007), 93.

<sup>34</sup> See Davies, *Evropa ve válce*, 93-94.

<sup>35</sup> See David T. Zabecki, ed., *World War Two in Europe: An Encyclopedia* (London: Garland Publishing, 1999), 1564.

<sup>36</sup> See Jaroslav Kudrna, et al., *Dějiny Francie* (Svoboda: Praha, 1988), 573-576.

<sup>37</sup> Havers, *The Second World War* (2), 83.

<sup>38</sup> See Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years: 1940-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed January 28, 2017, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=xLSly2RN2wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Julian+Jackson+,+France:+The+Dark+Years,+1940-1944,&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwitgo220efRAhXGbZoKHQeTCd4Q6AEIGzAA#v=onepage&q=Julian%20Jackson%20%2C%20France%3A%20The%20Dark%20Years%2C%201940-1944%2C&f=false>.

“Eventually 650,000 civilian French workers were compulsorily drafted to work in German factories; 75,000 Jews from France perished in Auschwitz; 30,000 French civilians were shot as hostages or members of the Resistance; another 60,000 were deported to German concentration camps”.<sup>39</sup>

Whereas Pétain wished for a bright future, Hitler aimed for different plans. Pétain hoped that in the future, they could cooperate with Germany, but this was not the main aim of Hitler’s. On the contrary, his plans involved the invasion of Vichy France.<sup>40</sup> Commencement of resistance was proof that French inhabitants wanted to change the situation in their country. The Allies decided to help them “and established organizations to provide material support, such as weapons and explosives, which were parachuted in.”<sup>41</sup> The resistance showed that French people did not just want to wait, but they were brave and fought. However, there were many casualties also among uninvolved, innocent people.<sup>42</sup>

The situation in Germany started to change slowly in 1943, but not for their benefit. In 1943, the German army attacked Kursk. Originally, the attack was supposed to start in May, but Hitler wanted to make sure that his soldiers would be prepared well, so he postponed this military operation until July, which was a mistake that gave the advantage to the Soviet Union to prepare better. The year 1944 was a crucial year, which brought important changes. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, 1944 came one of the most important days of the Second World War, which is now known as the Normandy Landings, “Operation Overlord or D-Day as it has entered the popular lexicon.”<sup>43</sup>

### **2.3 The Normandy Landings and the End of the Second World War**

“The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you ... I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory!”<sup>44</sup> - General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

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<sup>39</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*.

<sup>40</sup> See Jaroslav Kudrna, *Dějiny francie*, 576-578.

<sup>41</sup> Havers, *The Second World War (2)*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> See Havers, *The Second World War (2)*, 84.

<sup>43</sup> Havers, *The Second World War (2)*, 89-90.

<sup>44</sup> “D-day,” *American History* 49 (2014): 69, accessed January 28, 2017,

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=6628b18a-09e6-4132-8bbf-83cb8459de99%40sessionmgr4010&hid=4212>.

The Normandy Landings became one of the most important landmarks of the Second World War. This was the day when the Allies began to liberate Europe and dispose of Hitler.<sup>45</sup> It was the day that changed part of a history and a new and better era began. It all started in 1943, when they decided for Normandy as the best place for the mission. Then in 1944, under the control of Eisenhower, Montgomery and Dempsey, the whole action commenced.<sup>46</sup>

The reason why they could not start earlier was that they wanted to make sure that the preparation would be flawless and also, they had to provide all important materials because they could not afford to make a mistake. These were factors they could influence. However, the weather was one of the obstacles that could destroy the whole landing as it obviously cannot be planned. They set up the date on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944, but unfortunately, the weather conditions were not ideal, so they had to postpone the whole action to June 6<sup>th</sup>, thankfully, without any complications.<sup>47</sup>

It had been a great decision to conduct this military operation in Normandy, because the Germans were not expecting it. Meanwhile, American and British units were getting closer to Normandy. The code names for beaches of Normandy, where 156,000 soldiers landed, were Utah, Omaha, Juno, Gold and Sword.<sup>48</sup> Although the preparation had been impeccable and the landing was successful, some problems occurred. The major ones were on the beach Omaha, where it was hard to beat the German units, but finally, although many Allies soldiers died, “they held the beach.”<sup>49</sup> Also the Germans had to face a serious problem. They thought that Normandy was just a false destination and that the whole landing was supposed to be elsewhere. This excellent confusion of the Germans helped the Allies to continue with their plan.<sup>50</sup> Through the cities of Cherbourg, Caen, Saint-Lo and Le Mans they got into Paris and by August 25, the city was free.<sup>51</sup>

After four years of the German occupation, Paris was liberated in August 1944. Needless to say that it was a memorable victory for all French inhabitants. However, in 1944 and 1945 France was not in a good state, because the war had brought complete

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<sup>45</sup> See Lloyd Clark, “Operation Overlord: D-Day to Paris,” BBC – History, February 17, 2011, accessed January 28, 2017, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/overlord\\_d\\_day\\_paris\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/overlord_d_day_paris_01.shtml).

<sup>46</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> See James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), HarperCollins-ebooks, 176-178.

<sup>48</sup> See Davies, *Evropa ve válce*, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II*, 179.

<sup>50</sup> See Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II*, 180.

<sup>51</sup> See Margaret J. Goldstein, *World War II: Europe* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 2004), 69-71.

destruction. Not only that many people had died in the war, but besides, the Nazis destroyed a great deal of buildings and machinery. It was hard to start from the beginning, but France had to recover from the consequences of the war.<sup>52</sup>

When the Allies set Paris free, they continued on their way to Germany and Berlin.<sup>53</sup> Hitler did not want to believe the fact that Germany could lose and he did not want to give up. In December 1944, Hitler tried to save the situation by fighting in the Ardennes, but he was not successful.<sup>54</sup> The USA, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union invaded Germany and “split Germany and Berlin into four zones of occupation”.<sup>55</sup> On their way they witnessed the dreadful reality of the war, for instance concentration camps, dead and starving people and they could not believe it. The end of the war came, when the Soviets surrounded Berlin on April 25.<sup>56</sup> Hitler knew that there was no chance to save the situation and he decided to commit suicide. From this time, war was certain to end and on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Germany capitulated. May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 became the day when the Second World War in Europe was finally over.<sup>57</sup>

What the Nazis did during the war was horrible, but what the Red Army did during the liberation of Germany was also horrendous. They were supposed to liberate the people, who suffered for many years under command of Hitler but instead they behaved like beasts. Not only did they kill German men, but they also raped German women and in this case, their age was not important. It was meant to be punishment for what Germany had done to other countries and to innocent people. It is hard to believe that the person who caused all that terror had not been punished, but instead of him, they humiliated German inhabitants.<sup>58</sup>

## 2.4 Technology and World War II

Weapons such as rifles, tanks and planes, but also the radar played an important role in the Second World War. The year 1888 enrolled in the world's history because of the discovery of electromagnetic waves. Through the years the research continued, but usage of the radiolocation was important mostly for ships and submarines. Whereas during the First

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<sup>52</sup> See Jaroslav Kudrna, et al., *Dějiny Francie*, 595.

<sup>53</sup> See Goldstein, *World War II: Europe*, 74.

<sup>54</sup> See Havers, *The Second World War (2)*, 90.

<sup>55</sup> Goldstein, *World War II: Europe*, 81.

<sup>56</sup> See *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>57</sup> See *Ibid.*, 82-84.

<sup>58</sup> See Davies, *Evropa ve válce*, 332.

World War, the development of radiolocation did not progress that much, in the Second World War, the research of radiolocation upgraded and armies realized that radio waves could also be helpful in the war.<sup>59</sup>

“Beginning in 1934-1936 a new radio technology emerged independently in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States. It was called Radio Detection and Ranging – radar – and used radio waves to detect the presence of remote objects, such as incoming enemy aircraft, and to measure their ‘range’ or location.”<sup>60</sup> During the war, British research became more successful and they established a new type of radar called ‘Chain Home’. This type of radar was successful and helpful because it stood on a high tower. Moreover, it became a useful element during the war in Britain.<sup>61</sup> Although the Germans were also developing new technology, they were not able to build as good radar as Britain had, because they “concentrated most of their efforts on fire control radar and they virtually ignored air-warning and surface search radars.”<sup>62</sup> That was the main reason why Britain had a better radar system than Germany. Although today radar is a matter of course, during the Second World War this technology was new and a better radar system ensured Britain the victory.<sup>63</sup>

Many people consider weapons to be the most powerful tool of war, but waves flying above our heads may have a more significant effect than people think. Anthony Doerr introduces the radio as one of the major elements of the war time. “Radio—and perhaps airplanes, and then of course, the atom bomb—was the preeminent technology of the first half of the 20th century. It was how the Third Reich controlled its citizens, spread lies, and disseminated fear.”<sup>64</sup>

During the World War Two the radio was used for more types of operations. Thanks to the radio, French people could communicate with the Allies and supported their resistance. The radio was their only hope and means of communication with them to break

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<sup>59</sup> See Guy Hartcup, *The Effect of Science on the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 18, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The Real History of World War II: A New Look at the Past* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2008), 73.

<sup>61</sup> See Zabecki, *World War Two in Europe*, 1067, 1180.

<sup>62</sup> Zabecki, *World War Two in Europe*, 1069.

<sup>63</sup> See Zabecki, *World War Two in Europe*, 1069.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony Doerr, interview by Nancy Smith, *The Rumpus*, May 28, 2014, accessed January 28, 2017. <http://therumpus.net/2014/05/the-rumpus-interview-with-anthony-doerr/>.

free from the Nazi occupation.<sup>65</sup> In Germany, the situation with the radio was slightly different. “With radio, the Nazis achieved the greatest success, and this medium was used extensively as the primary medium of official propaganda.”<sup>66</sup> Nowadays, it is really easy to spread information through the internet and social media. In the past, people did not have these inventions, but still, Hitler’s propaganda manages to spread information among people and influence their opinions. The radio was a tool which was frequently used as an instrument of propaganda; moreover, it had another function. The Germans used it as a checker to give them information about the number of people who listened to that radio station.<sup>67</sup>

At present, film producers are still creating new movies about World War II and people base their opinion on those films. Depending on the movies, some people may see Hitler as a beast, but some others do not. Today, movies have become means of propaganda and manipulation too.<sup>68</sup>

Not only in the film industry but also in literature the Second World War remains a serious topic. Writing new novels about the war carries on and Anthony Doerr has ranked among authors who also became inspired by this topic. In his book *All the Light We Cannot See* he tries to emphasize the technological progress during the Second World War.

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<sup>65</sup> See Matthew Feldman, Henry Mead, Erik Tønning, eds., *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 246.

<sup>66</sup> Garth S. Jowett, Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 5th ed. (London: Sage Publication, 2012), 244.

<sup>67</sup> See Jowett and O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 244.

<sup>68</sup> See *Ibid.*, 244, 252.

### **3 ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE: THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS, A THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

This part of bachelor's thesis will deal with the analysis of the two themes of the book *All the Light We Cannot See*. One of the major themes of this book is the impact of the Second World War and technological progress on the two main characters – Marie-Laure LeBlanc and Werner Pfenning. Although the chapters in the book are not sorted chronologically, in my thesis I will proceed chronologically in view of better interconnection and clarity.

#### **3.1 Childhood of Marie-Laure and Werner before the War**

The book opens in 1934 when Marie-Laure is six years old. She lives with her father Daniel LeBlanc, who works as a locksmith in the Paris museum. Marie-Laure's mother died when Marie-Laure was a small child and that is also the reason why Marie-Laure and her father have a strong relationship. Werner Pfenning is a German boy who lives in the German city of Zollverein. He is eight years old and his parents passed away so he grew up in an orphanage together with his little sister Jutta. From the very beginning of the novel, apparent similarity between both characters arises. Marie-Laure lost her mother so now she is dependent on her father. Werner lost both parents, but his significant support is his younger sister Jutta. It shows that family and relationships play a big role in a whole book.

Marie-Laure becomes blind when she is six years old and thenceforth she walks with her father everywhere. Even if she cannot see anything, her father tries to help her with this handicap and he builds her a small wooden house, which serves as a replica of Paris. Thanks to this wooden house, Marie-Laure is able to walk in the streets independently. Marie-Laure's father is her support and he tries to make her life easier, as is demonstrated in the following quote:

At home, in the evenings, her father stows their shoes in the same cubby, hangs their coats on the same hooks. Marie-Laure crosses six evenly spaced friction strips on the kitchen tiles to reach the table; she follows a strand of twine he has threaded from the table to the toilet. He serves dinner on around plate and describes the locations of different foods by the hands of a clock. Potatoes at six o'clock, ma chérie. Mushrooms at three.<sup>69</sup>

This help which father provides to Marie-Laure will become important in the future where

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<sup>69</sup> Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), 30.

Marie-Laure has to take care of herself during the war. Marie-Laure's father tries to make her as independent as possible. It is not easy, but he is patient and Marie-Laure is teachable and persistent girl which makes the whole procedure easier. Later, Marie-Laure is able to move in the city and she learns that she can live quite ordinary life even though she is handicapped.

Where Marie-Laure needs help in order to gain certain skills, Werner, already as a little boy, is naturally exceptionally skilled. He is able to fix almost anything and technology is his favorite diversion. One day he finds a radio, he fixes it and he and his sister Jutta are listening to the broadcast from the outside world, which is something completely new for them. Both Marie-Laure and Werner are pictured as skilled, brainy and inventive individuals who are able to overcome barriers because their life is not easy. Although, Marie-Laure and Werner derive from different conditions, he is orphan from Germany and she is motherless girl from France, both of them are interested in learning new things and improving themselves.

There is also another similarity visible between Marie-Laure and Werner. Marie-Laure is blind and she is afraid that one day her father will leave her so her future is unsure. She and her father do not have many friends and their closest family is uncle Etienne who lives in Saint-Malo. Marie-Laure's father has always been saying that uncle Etienne is quite insane because he is an old veteran from the First World War. Werner's future looks also lamentably. He lives in the center of factories, because Zollverein is an industrial city and the future of most boys from orphanage is already predestined when they turn fifteen they will most probably start work in the local mines. One day vice minister and his wife visit the orphanage and when Jutta tries to show how good Werner is at fixing technology, the vice minister confirms that Werner has no real chance in life, as the choice of future will not be available to him:

“The only place your brother is going, little girl, is into the mines. As soon as he turns fifteen. Same as every other boy in this house.” Jutta scowls, and Werner stares at the congealed liver on his plate with his eyes burning and something inside his chest compressing tighter and tighter, and for the rest of supper the only sound is of the children cutting and chewing and swallowing.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 58.



However, work in the mines is not the main aim of Werner, because he is fascinated with technology and the radio and he clearly wishes something more for himself.

Marie-Laure is portrayed as a vulnerable young girl. She is dependent on her father because he is the only one who takes care of her and helps her with her handicap. Werner is portrayed as an enthusiastic young boy who is interested in technology but unfortunately, his future is almost predestinated as it is said he will end up in the mines. From the beginning of the story, it is visible that life of both characters is not easy and their future does not seem very bright. Since their childhood, they have to face several difficulties, either the status of an orphan with no real choice of the future life, or a handicapped motherless child.

### **3.1.1 The Radio as an Interconnection between Marie-Laure and Werner**

Even before the war comes, the main characters Marie-Laure and Werner are connected via technology, concretely via the radio. Werner finds the radio, which does not work, but he is able to fix it and then together with his sister Jutta, they are listening miscellaneous radio stations throughout the Europe. One day, they catch waves of a radio station of a fascinating French man talking about interesting facts regarding light.<sup>71</sup> This unknown man is Marie-Laure's grandfather from Saint-Malo who died during the First World War, but before that, he produced several recordings and now his brother (Marie-Laure's grand-uncle) Etienne telecasts these via his radio. Therefore, even though Marie-Laure and Werner do not know each other personally, and they have no idea of each other's existence, they are already interconnected via radio. Technology here serves as a connecting element, as it unites people also from different countries.

## **3.2 The Coming War and its Impact on the Main Characters**

In 1939 the war was on the rise and lives of both characters change slowly. Not only that it alters a whole life of them, but it also pushed them into something they do not want to do. When the Second World War breaks out, Werner is now 14 years old and he has become increasingly handy with the radio. He fixes the radio of an important German man – Mr. Siedler, who helps him to get into a prestigious school in Germany. National Political Institutes of Education in Essen is a school for boys who are to become a part of Hitler's

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<sup>71</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 48.

army, but Werner has no idea about this option. Werner is glad that he will not end in the mines and that he will do what he really wants – work with technology.

He goes to that school because he sees it as an only gateway from the hellish mines. During the entrance examination of this school, Werner is interviewed about many questions, mostly about his origin. He also has to pass through physical test and other tests where he needs to prove the purity of an Aryan race. Aryan race was important part of that school and all boys on an entrance examination look the same. All of them were chosen because of the ideal Aryan appearance. Werner's color of hair is as white as snow, his eyes are blue and skin is light. Although boys do many physical tests and Werner is not so good at these, his appearance may be the reason why the head of school decided for Werner.<sup>72</sup> It is also visible how Werner desires for a better future and he is so afraid of mines that he even does not discover that this school may be even worse than the mines. Werner wants to attend this school because he needs to escape from cruel reality of mines, but he does not think about the consequences which this school will bring.<sup>73</sup> He wants to choose his future and he believes that this school is main key to his dreamed job. He may think that he can choose what he wants to do but he does not realized that he lives in the time where these options are hard to implement. Even though Werner can think that this school is helping to him in fact, the school is helping to Hitler Reich and nobody cares about wishes of a small boy. What is more, Werner has no idea but this school leads him to become a Nazi, a supporter of Aryan race and a dissenter of Jews.

When the Second World War breaks out, Marie-Laure is 12 years old and she and her father are forced to leave Paris, which is no longer a safe place. Daniel LeBlanc and Marie-Laure travel to Saint-Malo where Daniel's uncle Etienne and his housekeeper Madam Manec live. Lives of Marie-Laure as well as her father change quickly. Marie-Laure is not prepared to leave her beloved home where she gets used to walking by herself. She gets accustomed to their house where she knows everything but now she needs to leave well-known place and starts a new life somewhere else.

This shows us how becoming war slowly changes lives of both characters. Marie-Laure has to leave her home and together with her unsecure future, she and her father are traveling into the house of uncle Etienne. Even though this is not her choice she has to travel to Saint-Malo. Now she is disappointed and afraid but later this traveling will bring

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<sup>72</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 113, 114.

<sup>73</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 133.

her new relatives and friends. Werner, even if he is not yet aware of it, is pushed right into the war; just like the other boys from the school he will become a member of Hitler's army. At first, he is blinded with the possibility to work with technology and educate himself, but he is about to realize that what looked like a perfect chance for his future development, is actually just another form of enslavement. It is highly ironic that he thinks that he is helping himself to better education but in fact he is helping school and Hitler's Reich.

It is visible that war pushes both of them further. The main difference is that Werner thinks that he leaves behind sad past and he is moving toward luckier future but he has no idea that he is pushed into something which will later destroy him. On the other hand, Marie-Laure feels unsure and unsecure because she needs to travel somewhere where she knows nobody and even though she will have to face several difficulties these changes will also bring her new relatives, independency and courageousness.

Werner finds a friend, Frederick, in the school. There is a significant difference in boys' motivation regarding school. Frederick attends the school just because of his parents but he is not interested in it at all. He loves birds and nature. On the other hand, Werner attends this school because he believes that it will help him to reach his dream job. In the school Werner shows that he is really handy and teachers allow him to do more interesting work. He is put into laboratory and Werner is happy that he can do what he really likes. In the laboratory he work with "trigonometry – a way to use two known points to find the location of a third and unknown point."<sup>74</sup> This work just confirms what Werner has thought that he can do what he has always dreamed about. He still thinks that the main purpose of the school is to fulfill desires and ambition of all these boys. It may look as a great opportunity but this is exactly what the school wants to. They choose young boys and transform them into tools of the war. Werner has no idea that the main purpose of the school is to create Nazis and he enthusiastically agrees with the work in the laboratory. He has no idea about the main purpose of the school and he believes that the school will help him to reach his aim. Werner is young boy from orphanage and his future was already predestinated. It was said that he would go to the mines but now he gets this chance to go to the school where he can do what he has always wanted to. It is obvious that for such a young boy it will be like a blessing and he will not think about consequences.

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<sup>74</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 153.

It proves how the coming war slowly changes lives of both characters. Whereas Werner thinks about his dreams and he wishes that he can finally do what he wants, Marie-Laure has to deal with a difficult situation of losing her home and security. Even though they are not aware of it, both of them are pushed into the center of the war.

### 3.2.1 The Radio as a Medium in the Coming War

Jutta can see much more clearly what Werner's decision may bring him in the future. Even though she is younger than Werner, she is able to see much more. Werner is blinded by the vision of his dream job but Jutta is able to see, thanks to the radio which she listened to, that Nazi Germans are beasts who are capable of killing innocent people in the name of crooked ideology and she does not want Werner to join them. She thinks that he will become one of them. The main reason is that she is not blinded by any vision and she can clearly see the reality and what is really happening. Thanks to the radio that Werner fixed, Jutta listens to also an abroad radio station and she can hear the other side of the war, a side where Germany is shown as a damager and evil. Jutta says to Werner information she knows from the abroad radio:

“Broadcasts from Paris. They'd say the opposite of everything Deutschlandsender says. They'd say we were devils. That we were committing atrocities. Do you know what atrocities means?”

“Please, Jutta.”

“Is it right,” Jutta says, “to do something only because everyone else is doing it?”<sup>75</sup>

Jutta knows that Werner's decision is wrong and that what Germany does is vicious but Werner does not believe her. Werner sees Jutta as a small girl who cannot understand the world and against her will he goes to that school.<sup>76</sup> He believes that this school is his gate to a better future and only way how to escape the cruel mines.

Meanwhile in Saint-Malo, Marie-Laure has an opportunity to meet uncle Etienne and she realizes that he is a really kind person. Etienne is glad that he can meet her and he shows her all radio stations he has in the house. From this time, Marie-Laure gets in touch with the radio and technology and she will be connected with it till the end of the war. Etienne shows her also one radio hidden in the attic and Marie-Laure is only one who

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<sup>75</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 133.

<sup>76</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 133.

knows about this secret and she knows about all the taping which Etienne and his brother recorded. Even though Etienne is afraid and from the First World War he has serious problems and he cannot come out of the house, thanks to the radio, he is closely connected with almost whole Europe. He says to Marie-Laure: “I can hear ships at sea. Madrid. Brazil. London. I heard Pakistan once. Here at the edge of the city, so high in the house, we get superb reception.”<sup>77</sup>

In this part it is visible that the radio serves as a connection between people, between Werner and Marie-Laure. Since Werner was a little boy he listened to the taping of French man. Etienne is the one who spread these tapings into the world because he is interested in the radio as well as Werner is. Author tries to demonstrate that radio serves as a connection between everybody without an exception. It connects friends with enemies, Nazi Germany with France, Werner and Marie-Laure and also Etienne with countries as Pakistan which is not connected with this war at all. It also connects Jutta with European countries which helps her realized the truth about Germany. In the novel, the radio serves as a connecting element as it unifies people without differentiation.

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<sup>77</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 134.

#### 4 WAR, OCCUPATION AND THE END OF THE WAR

As was mentioned in chapter 2.2. Fall of France, Germany occupied France from 1940 until 1944 and many French inhabitants lived in fear. That is also the reason why in the novel Marie-Laure has not gone outside. The whole time she has been closed in the house because her father is afraid that something can happen to her. On the other hand, her father comes out quite regularly because he tries to capture all details of streets and houses on the paper so later he can build another small wooden house of Saint-Malo and Marie-Laure can move in the city easily.

Meanwhile, Werner attends the school and one day they play the game ‘The Weakest.’ The main purpose of this game is to choose a physically weak boy and while he is running, other boys have to catch him. This game is initiated by teachers of the school whose aim apparently is to exclude weak boys. During this game it is visible that Werner does not fit into that school. Whereas other boys try to catch that poor boy, Werner wishes that the boy would run, that he would be faster than other boys. It may look like an innocent game, however it discloses underlying cruelty, if other boys catch that boy they will beat him. This shows that even though Werner is raised to be part of the German army, he is not prepared to witness cruelty and he does not understand why they have to play this game. This demonstrates that most probably, Werner will not be a proper material for dehumanized war machinery, where one is expected to kill without asking any questions. Werner hoped that the school will provide him with a new and better life, in which he will do what he is interested in, not that he will witness tyranny and beating and become desensitized war tool.

One day in Saint-Malo, all inhabitants of this city have to hand in all radio stations they possess. Main reason, of course, is that via radio people can communicate easily, radio serves not only as a tool for entertainment but also as a tool of resistance and Germans see it as a threat which needs to be destroyed. Although all radio stations needs to be out of a house, one of them stays in Etienne’s house, in the attic, where Etienne hid it. Marie-Laure helps Etienne to conceal this radio even more and they put a heavy wardrobe before the entrance into the attic because they know how dangerous it is to possess the radio station. Anytime German armies may decide to come to their house, seek through to find something and then arrest them all.<sup>78</sup> This is something Etienne is afraid of and he

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<sup>78</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 171.

decides to hide the radio station properly because he wants to protect his family. This radio station will become important part of uprising process where also Marie-Laure and Etienne will participate.

Werner continues in his work in the school and he uses trigonometry to look for the unknown third point. He still has no idea why he is looking for something like that. Nobody has ever told him why he really calculates these numbers. He thinks that it is just math but he has no idea that they try to exploit him as a tool of war. Moreover, Werner also refines special radio station. Later in the war, thanks to the special radio station and calculations, they will be looking for forbidden broadcasting. Here it is visible the main purpose of the school that these innocent young boys are raised to be part of German army. When there is some skilled boy as Werner is, they will turn all his knowledge for the purpose of the war. Werner lives in his own world because he thinks he is skilled but he does not see the reality that the school uses him to raise a Nazi. Boys in the school are taught that Hitler is their family and Aryan race is the only pure race. Werner tries not to pay attention to this indoctrination and he concentrates on his work in the school. It demonstrates how Werner does not care about Nazism and Hitler regime which is presented in the whole Germany. He is not thinking about the war because this is not the reason why he comes into this school. Werner is portrayed as a young boy whose aim is to learn more about technology as he wants to do what he really likes. He has no idea that his blinded vision of work with technology leads him directly into the war.

Marie-Laure's father receives a telegram which reads that he can come back into Paris. He decides to travel on his own and later he will come back for Marie-Laure. He tries to keep her safe because her blindness can be easy way how to get into Nazi's hands. Before he left, her father was able to finish a wooden replica of Saint-Malo so now Marie-Laure can touch it and learn where she can go. It is visible that he loves Marie-Laure more than everything, he tries to make her life easier and he wants to help her with her disability. When he is on his way to Paris he gets arrested and he is shipped into a POW camp in Strasburg. Marie-Laure has no idea but she will never see her father again. At the beginning of the war she was afraid of losing her father because without him she feels she is not able to survive. After he disappears she had to take care of herself which shows her maturity and independency. Although she thought that she is not able to exist without her father, she is able to survive the war.

One day in Werner's school there is another day to play 'The Weakest'. They vote for Frederick – Werner's best friend, as the weakest one and other boys catch him and beat

him. Werner does not participate on beating but he does nothing to save his friend. This incident shows Werner's weakness and that is impossibility to change something. Werner deals with a big issue, when there is something he does not like or does not want to do he is not able to change it. This weak quality will later reflect into his future when he will become part of German army, against his will. He could do something to stop Frederick's tyranny but instead he is just trying to do not think about it. He is avoiding the reality and he tries to escape from the real world by thinking about Jutta. He is not independent enough to see the truth which is hidden in the school and it is hard to admit that the school which looked as the best choice is not as great as it seemed to be. It is hard to observe that the school, which was supposed to be a great opportunity for him, is turning into something much worse.

Marie-Laure feels lonely, sad and unsecure without companionship of her father. She lost part of herself, the most important family member but she tries to stay strong because fortunately, uncle Etienne and Madame Manec are there to support her. Here it is visible how war serves as an evil element which does not give but takes - beloved people, family members, and friends. It also portrays other family members as angels who are there for Marie-Laure to help her with everything. Even though she lost her father she does not stay alone. Uncle Etienne and Madame Manec become her family. Unlike Werner, Marie-Laure is always accompanied by people who are able to help her, so even during the severe war time, she does not stay alone.

Werner starts to realize that the school is cruel and he does not want to sustain the practices of the school. The main incident which makes him realize that this is really wrong place is that Frederick is, again, chosen as the weakest one for three times in a row. Later, Frederick is beaten so much that he ends up at home, where his mother has to take care of him because due to the beating his brain is affected. This shows us another similarity between Marie-Laure and Werner. Both of them lost their close people. Even if Werner has known Frederick only for a few months they were really close friends. Werner stays at school alone without close friend and he has nobody to talk with. He is not surrounded by any supporters and he has to deal with his problems by himself.

Werner is able to see what is really happening and he is disgusted by the reality. Frederick is pictured here as a dreamer who follows his dreams, his hobbies (birds) and in the end he ends up badly because he differs from other boys and he is not scared to show



that he is different.<sup>79</sup> This is something Werner is not capable of, but this incident with Frederick was his first step to perceive that something is wrong with this school and Werner starts to realize the truth. There is also huge dissimilarity between Marie-Laure and Werner when it comes to the support from another people around them. Werner does not have any supporters, people who can help him with his feelings, with his loss and there is nobody who could give him some advice. That may be the reason why he is not able to make some decision, because there are no people around him who can tell him what is right and what is wrong. Jutta, his only family, stays in the orphanage and Werner will never see her again. Werner thought that escape from orphanage and from the mines to the school can ensure him better future but instead, he loses close person and his future looks also unsecure because school does not seem to be as great as Werner expected.

Marie-Laure receives letters from her father where he has written he is in the camp but he is alright, food is amazing and all people are very nice. Obviously he tried to calm her by telling lies, as he wants to make her feel happier.<sup>80</sup> At least, Marie-Laure knows that her father lives which gives her strength not to give up. After Werner learns trigonometry on the paper, he starts to learn it practically and together with the leader Hauptmann and another elder boy Volkheimer, they start to look for the real third point. Firstly, Werner learned about it in theory and now they are testing it outside. Werner proves that he is able to find the third point even outside which makes the leader - Hauptmann happy.<sup>81</sup> They use Werner's calculations and a special radio machine. Looking for imaginary third point outside is just testing before Germans will use it in the war. Werner has no idea, but he is helping them with the process which is able to find forbidden radio stations. All people who use forbidden radio stations are indicated as people who help the resistance and they need to be killed. Werner, even though he does not know it is participating on killing innocent people, thus becoming a tool of the war machinery.

As was discussed in subchapter 2.2 Fall of France, French inhabitants were not satisfied with the situation in France and they try to oppose. Also in the novel, Marie-Laure, Madam Manec (Etienne's housekeeper) and Etienne became part of resistance process. The radio became really important, because Madame Manec was able to find

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<sup>79</sup> See Anthony Doerr, interviewed by Jill Owens, *Powells*, April 23, 2014, accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.powells.com/post/interviews/anthony-doerr-the-powellscom-interview>.

<sup>80</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 241.

<sup>81</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 246.

secret codes and although firstly, Etienne refuses to be part of resistance later he telecasts these secret codes via radio. They hope that the Allies will catch their codes and help them to save France. As the war progresses, Marie-Laure becomes a part of resistance, which shows that she is not afraid, even though many things can go wrong and Germans can catch them and maybe kill them all. Here it is visible main difference between Marie-Laure and Werner. Even though Marie-Laure lost her beloved father she is able to fight for the end of the war. She is not afraid to show what she fights for and she does what seems to be right.

Werner, even though he is disgusted by the practices of the school, he does not do much to change his destiny. He feels lonely and he wants to go home but Hauptman does not let him go and Werner has to stay and serve Hitler Reich. This is all he does, ask question if he can leave the school but the answer is no so he continues in what he did. He even does not fight for his freedom and dreams because he is probably afraid to do something against Hauptman's will. At least, Werner starts to realize the truth about the school, as is demonstrated in this quote:

It seems to Werner as if all the boys around him are intoxicated. As if, at every meal, the cadets fill their tin cups not with the cold mineralized water of Schulpforta but with a spirit that leaves them glazed and dazzled, as if they ward off a vast and inevitable tidal wave of anguish only by staying forever drunk on rigor and exercise and gleaming boot leather.<sup>82</sup>

Finally he is able to see that these boys are raised to be just puppets and tools of the war, which makes him deeply unhappy. He chose this school as a gateway from the mines, he thought that this is right decision but he did not realize that he came maybe into worse place than the mines. He started to find out the whole truth about what is happening, that he is part of German army and that he is helping the war. Even though he has not fought in the war, he is part of the school which is preparing him for it so he is one of them. He slowly becomes one of the Hitler's army.

When Werner is 16 years old, principal tells him that he is 18 years old and he will go to the war. Werner is confused because he knows he is only 16 and he has never thought about possibility of becoming a soldier in the war. Werner has no choice, he cannot go home, nobody asks him about his opinion and he has to go to the war. It is visible that

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<sup>82</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 263.

Werner's destiny is repeating itself. He had to go to the mines but he had opportunity to go to the school. Unfortunately, from the school he is sent to the war without asking so basically he has no option to choose his life. He has no freedom and he is always pushed into something he does not want to do. It demonstrates how Werner's vision to go to the school slowly changes into a nightmare and he gets into the war. Although he has not wanted to be part of that war machinery, he is forced to be. His dreams are slowly disappearing and he becomes one of the German's soldiers fighting for Hitler.

In June 1942, comes the sad news that Madame Manec passed away. Marie-Laure, young girl which should enjoy her life already lost two close people, father and Madame Manec. Marie-Laure tries to stay strong for uncle Etienne, who is devastated by the loss and refuses to leave the house for few days. It is visible that even if Marie-Laure is young, blind girl she stays strong. Now comes the time when she should use all that independency her father taught her and she needs to put on her own legs. She thinks independently and she makes her own decisions. One of the decisions also is that even after Madame Manec death, Marie-Laure wants to continue in the resistance process.

Werner enters the war when he is sent into Russia but he feels lost. He wants to go back to his sister because he misses her so much but he cannot leave. The only positive sign that helps him overcome this is meeting Volkheimer in Russia – an acquaintance from school. At least he is not alone. It is important to mention that Werner does not participate in combat but he is part of the 'radio war'. His main aim is to look for forbidden radio stations and for people who telecast via these stations. This is the point where radio and war meets and together create air war and Marie-Laure and Werner became center of that war. Marie-Laure is on the side of the France, side of resistance and Werner is on the side of occupier and Nazi. The truth is that Werner does not choose his position and he does not fit it. Even though he is forced to stand on the side of Germany he has never get used to it. He does it just because nobody asks his opinion and he is forced to be part of the war. He is pushed into the war and even though he does not sympathized with it, he needs to observe tyranny and killing.

Marie-Laure and Etienne continue with broadcasting secret codes via radio station in the attic. They come up with a system which works, but it is quite dangerous. Marie-Laure goes to bakery, which belong to a friend of Madame Manec. This friend is also part of the resistance and they make a deal that the friend bakes the secret codes into the bread, Marie-Laure buys that bread and Etienne telecasts secret codes. Even though it is hazardous both Marie-Laure and Etienne decide to be part of this resistance, because they want to set the

France free. They are fighting for the end of the war. This also differentiates Marie-Laure from Werner. Both of them appear in the center of the war but none of them wished so. The main difference between them is that Marie-Laure participates in the resistance because it is her choice. She wants to be on the side of France and she has her place but Werner does not. The result is that Marie-Laure does what she seems is right but Werner does what he has to do and he suffers.

Marie-Laure and Etienne broadcast not only secret codes for the Allies but also music because they want to spread joy and cheerfulness. Marie-Laure is portrayed as a fighter, regardless her disability and sad past. Even though presence of a war atmosphere in the whole France is visible, Marie-Laure and Etienne try to make also another people a little bit happier by spreading the music via radio. It demonstrates that even though Marie-Laure is in a hard situation, she tries to be helpful as she fights for a good side of the war. She also have had to go through many difficulties involving moving to Saint-Malo, losing her father and later losing Madame Manec, but she tries to stay strong.

Werner is really handy in looking for radio stations. Usually, when he detects some banned radio he reports it to his unit, they find the place of forbidden broadcasting and they kill all the people who are participating on it. Sometimes, these are innocent people who have nothing to do with the resistance but still Werner's units kill them. Werner has not killed anybody; he just has to search for these radio stations but still it is hard for him to observe the killing. Sometimes when there is something he does not want to see he start to think about his childhood, he thinks about Jutta and that makes him happy at least for a moment. This shows that he is not able to face the truth and the reality and instead he hides in his memories. He has already realized that there is no chance to do what he has ever dreamed of and he feels lost. Now he works as a robot. He does what he needs to do and he tries not to think about it because he knows that what he does is wrong. Werner becomes part of a war and part of a German army and he does what Jutta told him at the beginning. He does atrocities.

In 1943 when Marie-Laure is 15 years old, some changes appear. Not only that Marie-Laure and Etienne broadcasts codes, spread music and cheerfulness but they also start to telecasts messages. Usually these messages consist of birthdays, funerals, family news, joys but also sadness. The war serves here as an element which separates friends and families and in this case the radio becomes a tool of connection. Marie-Laure and Etienne helps to connect separate people by broadcasting messages about them so people can be all the time in connection and know what is happening. Marie-Laure and Etienne are actively

participating in broadcasting and they are closely connected with the war, with threats, dangerousness and fear. The Second World War has changed them both. Etienne is now braver and Marie-Laure, even though she is young blind girl and she suffers after the loss of close family members, is still able to continue and helps other people. Same as Werner, also Marie-Laure is now in the center of the war but she is on the good side of the war.

Werner often thinks about the war and the death. He tries to concentrate on happier things, for example an oblivious Austrian girl, playing outside, not knowing about the war and killing people. As, she has no idea what is happening around her, her happiness is unspoilt. When Werner watches her, he is able to forget about everything and also he feels happy. It portrays Werner as a person who suffers in the war. It shows that not only people who are occupied but also people who occupy are victims because they are forced to do something they do not want to do. Even though Werner is a young boy who does not want to be involved in the war, he becomes part of it.

Werner, together with his unit is now in Vienna and he catches forbidden broadcasting. Volkeheim immediately bursts into the apartment and he kills people who are considered to be part of uprising. Later, it comes to light that Werner determined bad apartment and they killed that little Austrian girl, together with her mother. Other innocent people died because of war, because of Werner. From this time Werner is not able to think reasonably. He blames himself for death of that innocent girl and he cannot stop thinking about it. Werner becomes part of the German army who is killing other innocent people. On the other hand it is also visible that even though he went through hard Nazi school it has not changed him. It shows that he has not sympathized with killing and with the war but unfortunately he has no choice and this tragically event has changed him a lot because it brings even more sadness into his life.<sup>83</sup> He cannot control his life and even though he hates what he does there is no way how to change it. It is quite sad life considering the fact that Werner is young boy who used to be full of ideas and enthusiasm but now he has to do things that slowly destroy him.

One day some garrison commander connects with Werner and Volkheimer and tells them about people who broadcast secret codes via radio somewhere around Saint-Malo.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See Anthony Doerr, transcription of a discussion led by David G. Pace at the event of Utah Humanities Book Festival, September 22, 2014, <http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/index.php/author-anthony-doerr-the-inverted-interview/>.

<sup>84</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 372.

They are talking about Etienne and Marie-Laure who still broadcast and both of them hope that somebody is listening to them and is able to help them. Marie-Laure and Etienne have no idea that Germans have already identified them. It demonstrates how are Marie-Laure and Werner interconnected via radio and how the radio unifies people without differences. It connects people inside the country but also people from different countries as inhabitants of Germany and France. The radio becomes important tool of connection between Marie-Laure and Werner as it leads to their meeting.

As was discussed in chapter 2.3 Normandy Landings, from 1944 the Allies tried to set the France and also other European cities free. It was rumored that they are going to save the France. Marie-Laure and Etienne are still continuing in broadcasting. It shows that even though they have reached their aim and the Allies are on their way, Marie-Laure and Etienne want to be helpful as long as possible. Although Marie-Laure and Etienne do not know what all these secret codes are, because Madame Manec has never told them all the details, they hope that it will leads to the end of the war.

Once Werner arrives into Saint-Malo he catches that broadcasting. He immediately realizes that this is the same broadcasting he listened to with Jutta in Germany. All that memories on Jutta, on orphanage, on Germany and on old, pure Werner are projecting in his head.<sup>85</sup> Werner does not tell anybody about that radio station because he is aware that if he does so, this French man will be killed immediately. Werner would like to enjoy the broadcasting as he used to do with Jutta but he cannot because he is now on the side of the Germany and occupier whose aim is to kill all people who are involved in the resistance. He cannot stop thinking about the French man and he decides to search for that station and he finds it. He sees all that antennas, coil and wires and he is excited about it. While he is watching the house and wishes to see that mysterious French man, Marie-Laure comes out of the house and it is for the first time Werner sees her and he likes her so much. Instead of talking to her, he is just watching her and then comes back to his unit, full of feelings. Here it is visible that Werner has no choice and he cannot control his life. Even though he wants to do something he cannot because he is part of Nazi Germany and his aim now is to look for forbidden broadcastings. He thought that the school could give him freedom, experiences and teach him something about technology but instead Werner ends up in the middle of the war, unhappy and full of fear. He will not reach what he has wanted to and

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<sup>85</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 407.

his dreams break up. On the other hand Marie-Laure does what she thinks is the best choice and she is part of the uprising. She can control her life even though it is hard during the war. She is not afraid even though as a handicapped young girl from the occupied land she can be seen as an easy target for Nazis.

Meanwhile, American units continue in their way to save the Europe and they have already crossed borders of France. Marie-Laure and Etienne continue in their broadcasting but unfortunately Etienne, as part of a resistance, needs to find coordinates of cannons of German army and then broadcast it to the Allies army. In order to find these coordinates he needs to use trigonometry, the same calculation as Werner uses. Unfortunately, he ends up arrested. The connection and similarity between Etienne and Werner is visible. Etienne participates in the First World War and he saw tremendous things which affect him for long period of time, fortunately (thanks to the other war) he meets Marie-Laure and thanks to her he starts to live again. Werner's figure is described similarly. He is part of the war but he saw horrible things which make him think about death. The death of that little girl scares him in his nightmares and he feels horrible but then he saw Marie-Laure, he likes her and he thinks about her quite often. Marie-Laure serves as some kind of calmness and pureness. She is able to stay calm, take care of herself and deal with difficulties. She is described as a big fighter and supporter. Anthony Doerr portrays Marie-Laure as strong person. He shows that even young girl whose destiny is not very bright and from her early childhood she had to deal with blindness is able to stand on her own feet and fight for good side of the war.

In August 1944 the Allies come to Saint-Malo in order to destroy Germans unit, which also involves bombing and destroying almost the whole city of Saint-Malo. Marie-Laure, who is home alone, decides to hide in the cellar of the house, as she feels it is safe. Werner remains in the cellar of the hotel together with their units and they are trying to survive because the bombing is really strong and unfortunately they get stuck in the cellar. This shows the similarity when both main characters hide in the cellar and hope to survive the war. The war imprisoned both of them in a confined place and forced them to fight for survival. It does not matter that one of them is the occupier and the other one is the victim – both of them are in the same situation where they are fighting for survival. However, both of them are dealing with the situation differently.

Werner believes that this is revenge for what he did.<sup>86</sup> He believes that he needs to be disciplined for what he caused to that small Viennese girl. Werner starts to think about suicide because he feels that he cannot live with the feeling that he witnesses these horrendous things in the war and besides he takes the blame for killing that small girl. Werner tries to take his mind off things and he decides to fix the radio which he finds in the cellar and at least he does what he is interested in. Here it is visible that Werner choice to go to that school was not as great as he thought because it brings him into the war where he has to witness killing. He ends up in the war where he, ironically, can use technology and he works with radios but in the opposite way. He uses his technological tools to find radio stations of people who broadcast and then his unit will kill these people. Werner thought that the choice is up to him. Either he would go to the mines or to the school where he can learn something more. He thought that the school is the best choice but unfortunately he has no alternative, because both of these choices were road to the hell.

Marie-Laure also waits in the cellar but she tries to think differently than Werner. She does not think about suicide but how to get out of this situation. Marie-Laure tries to get out of the cellar and she is on her way to upstairs when she hears somebody inside the house. She is afraid and she hides in the attic where the radio is hidden. Bombing of city of Saint-Malo continues and because of that noise the intruder who stays in her house cannot hear Marie-Laure so she takes the book in Braille and reads from it and broadcast it via the radio to all people who can hear her. She uses radio for good things to calm down herself and also other people who suffer. She hopes that somebody can hear her and can save her so between readings she also calls for help. This demonstrates that even though Marie-Laure gets into desperate situation, she tries to stay calm and she thinks about way how to save herself. She is able to think clearly even though it is really hard. Fortunately, Werner can catch her broadcast and he can hear her but unfortunately he cannot answer. Both of them are now in the connection Werner can hear Marie-Laure but she cannot hear Werner.

Werner thinks about Jutta. How she was able to see everything clearly.<sup>87</sup> Now he sees the whole truth but it is too late to come back in time. Werner suffers but Marie-Laure's voice gives him strength not to commit suicide. Again it shows that Marie-Laure is described as a good human being, which helps Werner to overcome all the horrendous experiences. When Marie-Laure ends with the book she plays the music via radio which

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<sup>86</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 205.

<sup>87</sup> See Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 393.



gives Volkeheim some energy and he shovels all the ruins which have kept them inside the basement and both of them (Werner and Volkeheimer) are free. Werner immediately goes to Marie-Laure's house to save her. It is visible that the radio serves as some kind of a connection thanks to which Marie-Laure and Werner meet. This demonstrates that the radio does not make differences but it connect everyone and it does not matter if one of them is one the side of Germany and other is on the side of France. Thanks to the radio broadcasting Werner saves Marie-Laure from the dangerous man who came into her house and Werner kills him. For the first time Marie-Laure and Werner are talking to each other and for the first time Werner feels that he does something good - saving somebody's life. Even though he had to kill that man, he presumably sees him as a danger which needs to be destroyed. This shows that Werner, even though he was supposed to be on the side of Germany, he helps Marie-Laure and that demonstrates that Werner although he is raised to be a Nazi is in the bottom of his heart a good young man who hates the war. He is just pushed into something he does not want to do. Here, the main difference between Marie-Laure and Werner is visible:

He says, "You are very brave."

She lowers the bucket. "What is your name?"

He tells her. She says, "When I lost my sight, Werner, people said I was brave. When my father left, people said I was brave. But it is not bravery; I have no choice. I wake up and live my life. Don't you do the same?"

He says, "Not in years. But today. Today maybe I did."<sup>88</sup>

Marie-Laure does what she feels is right. She lives her life but this is not the case of Werner. He does what he needs to do and it does not matter if it is right or not. He cannot fully enjoy his life because he is forced to do something against his will. He may be free in terms of being on the side of occupiers, but inside he is like prisoner who cannot do what he would like to do.

When the bombing stops they have decided to leave the house, Marie-Laure and Werner need to separate but somewhere inside Werner still hopes that he will see her again. Marie-Laure finds Etienne and both of them are so beatific because they survived and together they are moving into Paris. Werner was kept by American soldiers and

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<sup>88</sup> Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 469.

because he was really sick he stays in a medical tent. Due to the strong fever he is not able to think. He sees all that things that happened in his life, he thinks about Jutta and he goes out of the tent and he dies because he steps on a mine, ironically, German one. War ends and Werner dies. When he was small child, technology was his dreamed job but his skills drove him into the center of the war where he could not fully enjoy his life because he suffered for what he did and what he had to observe. He did not fulfill his dreams and he died in the young age for something he hated. Werner thought that he could escape destiny of mines but instead he was pushed into the war where he suffered and later died. It just confirms what was already mentioned that Anthony Doerr tries to portrayed German inhabitants also as victims, who suffer in the war. It demonstrates that not only people who were occupied but also people who occupied had to go through difficult times.

As was discussed in chapter 2.3, after the Allies set the Europe free, Russian units invade Germany and raped innocent women and girls. In this novel, one of them is also Jutta. As was previously discussed, author tries to show that people who were on the side of Germany – German inhabitants also suffered throughout the war. An ordinary German inhabitants who did not fight in the war as Jutta but also soldiers as Werner, both of them also become victims of the war.

Marie-Laure and Etienne survive and even if Marie-Laure has tried to look for her father she never learns what happened to him. Even though she is affected by the war she decides to go to school and later she will work in the museum where also her father worked. This shows that even though Marie-Laure has to go through difficult times she stays strong and she is able to continue with her life. This is the main difference between Werner and Marie-Laure. Werner was not able to reach anything because he was forced to do what he did not want to and that destroys him. Reader will never know if Werner stepped on the mine on purpose or not but it could be sign that if he survives the war, he would not be able to come back to his ordinary life because he was remarked by all that things he saw. He witnessed killing, murders and tyranny and even though he hated it he was on the side of the people who did it.

#### **4.1 The Radio during the War**

During the war, in the novel the radio fulfills important function. Most of the time it connects Marie-Laure and Werner and then it lead to their meeting. Nowadays, connection between two people via technology is seen as something common and ordinary. However in the novel, such connection during the Second World War is precious, fragile and also

dangerous. The overall importance of technology in the novel is undeniable - radio is the main tool which helps Werner to get into Nazi school, which represents a chance in life for Werner, a possibility to escape the dreary future in the mines. Nevertheless, Werner's dreams do not come true and his technology skills lead him directly into the war where he finds his death.

In the case of Marie-Laure, she has never thought about the radio but then she gets into contact with the radio through uncle Etienne and both them become part of resistance, which also leads them into the center of the war. It indicates that the radio goes hand in hand with the war in the book as it connects all people in the war. Importantly, the radio becomes momentous element between Marie-Laure and Werner and leads to their meeting. It portrays the radio as an element which connects people from both sides of the war without any differentiation.

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of this bachelor's thesis was to analyze the themes of war and technological progress and their impact on the main characters, Marie-Laure and Werner, in Anthony Doerr's novel *All the Light We Cannot See*.

From the very beginning of the book, Werner is pictured as a boy who is interested in technology. Thanks to his ability to work with technology he is admitted to the school where he dreams of defeating his predestination of a poor orphan and fulfilling his dreams of becoming something more than just a miner. Unfortunately, his skills lead him into the center of war, where he is supposed to fight on the side of German army. The war changes his personality and transform him from an enthusiastic young boy into a robotic being who, under pressure, performs the require atrocities. He has to observe things he hates, but he has no other option. At the end of the war Werner dies, which shows that fighting for something he detest leads to failure.

Marie-Laure is at the beginning pictured as a blind and fearful young girl who is afraid of staying alone. In the course of the war she becomes independent and fearless as she becomes a part of resistance process. Marie-Laure is portrayed as a stronger character, who does what she believes in and fights for it, and her strength not to give up leads her into the more successful end of the war than Werner.

The war serves here as an element which changes people. Werner is becoming weaker as he is forced to witness the atrocities of war, while Marie-Laure, even though she also suffers through the war, is portrayed as stronger character because of her independence and patience. As for the impact of technology, the radio serves as a tool which connects both of the characters. The radio connects people without division and leads also to meeting of Marie-Laure and Werner who are supposed to be enemies. The radio serves as a reflection of their relationship. It does not matter if Marie-Laure is French and Werner is German, they do not feel they have to be enemies and when they meet face to face, it is visible they like each other.

Anthony Doerr demonstrates that not only occupied people but also occupiers suffer during the war and both sides of the war are victims in some way. Presence of the radio in the book just confirms what the author tries to say, as it connects both sides of war throughout the whole book. The radio serves as a connection between Marie-Laure and Werner as it leads to their meeting.

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