Terms and Conditions

Section 1: About our Website

The first party understands that Literature is categorizable as a man-made deity-like collection, alive and beyond traditional human abilities or circumstances. The following document, an introduction assignment, demonstrates the mode of Literature in the capacity as a deity, highlighting the functions and properties of Literature.

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Critical Methods ENG3010
16 January 2024

Literature: The Man-Made God

Literature is the man-made god. Two primary attributes define a god: being beyond reality and influencing reality. Literature as a collection of all works of literature exists almost timelessly and is entirely conceptual until a work is communicated from one person to another, making it beyond reality. The impact that literature has on cultures and society is sufficient to state that literature influences reality. To decide what is and is not a work of literature, it is only necessary to find what written works exist most beyond reality while holding the most influence over reality. Different works of literature will satisfy these criteria to different degrees, leading to some works being certainly of literature and particularly good literature as well, while other works might only be lesser literature. Some works only remain literature for a little while or might leave for a period before they become literature again. Therefore, literature is a living

entity with needs, especially the need to be read to remain alive and potent. Finally, to distinguish a powerful object from an entity, literature exerts a symbiotic sentience, allowing authors to alter it like neurons as the world changes and even as literature becomes better understood so that it is constantly aware of the world and itself.

The description as a god applies to literature as a collection of all works of literature that meet the first two criteria: transcendence from reality and influence on reality. These works each display an aspect of literature to varying degrees of strength. The better that the work meets the criteria, the better that it displays its aspect of literature and the more that it can display.

A transcendence from reality could be when a work of literature does not refer to any existing reality, but such a level of transcendence could be achieved by any ambiguous author. When a reader reinterprets the original context in which the work of literature was written, a more successful transcendence from reality is achieved. There are two ways a reinterpretation can result in a transcendence of reality. If a work of literature is reinterpreted as referring to a completely original idea, it has without a doubt transcended reality. More commonly, a work of literature is reinterpreted to a context that is more relevant to the reader (the context is not necessarily more interesting, but simply more applicable to the situation that the reader is in). Even though the work of literature has been re-grounded in a reality, the reinterpretation plucked the literature from the original reality and context, allowing the literature to momentarily transcend reality, and thus satisfying that criterion. The distance between the ideas and contexts that the work of literature is interpreted and written in then decides the potency of the transcendence.

For example, a sonnet about love could be written in the context of one person in whom the poet is interested. A reader might read that sonnet and reinterpret it, not deciding that it has a meaning other than love but repurposing that meaning of love for an entirely different person in whom the reader is interested. The sonnet would then have transcended reality but only minimally, making it a lesser work of literature. On the other hand, Shakespeare's Macbeth has been reinterpreted countless times; through its interpretations, "*Macbeth* became an emblem of African American artistic equality and a revolutionary statement about shifts in racial, artistic, and political power in the USA;" "redefined Lady Macbeth's femininity and ambition;" and "[questioned] the role of the English literary tradition in an independent India" (Kusch 2).

As transcendence occurs with varying potency, so does influence, albeit more straightforward to ascertain. A greater work of literature will exert a greater influence over reality. The greatness of the influence is measured through many factors, including but not exclusive to the length of time that the work influences reality and the degree to which the work influences society emotionally, socially, spiritually, mentally, and legislatively. A pop song might greatly influence society emotionally, but it will likely fall short in other influences and length of influence, whereas the Catholic bible influences society in all manners for an increasingly extended time.

As a reader and an author, I hope to better understand literature and contribute to it. Literature is my own goal. I just want to be a part of it. If literature is to be referred to as a god, it might not be incorrect to refer to me as a worshipper or follower of literature.

After a trip to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, I wrote “The Bodies on the Beach.” It was the first poem I wrote that was a work of literature, to my knowledge. I had written it from the perspective of a personified Death in Normandy after D-Day reflecting on the systemized murder and global warfare that occurred during WWII. A friend whom I shared the poem with came up with a different interpretation of a young soldier who survived D-Day but is now horrified by the part he has played in the murder and misses the peace back home. It gave me a goal to reach for in future works: the potential for reinterpretation. Without a potential for reinterpretation, it becomes exceedingly difficult for a written work to become a work of literature. With reinterpretation outlined as a necessity for the transcendence of a work of literature, it is now clearer why a work must be reinterpretable. Despite the reinterpretation of the work, it remains a lesser piece of literature because of its current failure to expand to a more distant context or exert a greater influence over reality.

Works Cited

Kusch, Celena. *Literary Analysis: The Basics*. Routledge, 2016.

Section 2: Using our Website

The second party must understand the proper consumption of content on our website. The following document, a final product, introduces, relates, demonstrates, and applies the intended mode of consumption by the second party.

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25 April 2024

Transcendence: The Impossible Burden of the Audience

Clause A: Our Purpose

The second party must be introduced to the concepts of the agreement.

Introduction

In Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*, otherness is essential to each character’s fight against the sameness of the Nazis, echoing a universal need for otherness that we must seek out rather than passively expect. The otherness in *All the Light We Cannot See* comes in the forms of different backgrounds, like having a single parent or being an orphan; different capabilities, as seen in blind Marie-Laure and war-traumatized Etienne; different circumstances, like Werner being in a Nazi school and Marie-Laure leaving her home to live with her great-uncle; and, different experiences with art. Varied experiences with art, despite the objective quality of the art, make the art neither only objective nor subjective. Rather, it is transjective: a

state that transcends the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. In the traditional understanding of binary subjective or objective, objectivity is the recognition of the actual state of reality while subjectivity is a personal, often creative perception of reality. Objectivity is nearly never creative while subjectivity is nearly never factually rooted. Art that is necessarily creative is not constrained to objectivity but rooted in subjectivity and art that is created to be interpreted is not constrained to subjectivity but rooted in the objective need for interpretation. Art can be both objectively creative and subjectively correct; therefore, some art is transjective, thus becoming an otherness to our understanding of perceptions as binarily objective or subjective.

Art, in a broad sense, encompasses all that is creatively produced, but that definition leaves too great a range with many included creative productions that are beyond the scope of this paper, making it desirable to narrow the range to what is presented in *All the Light We Cannot See*. In *Hegel's Aesthetics*, Hegel recognizes architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry as perhaps the most successful forms of art for his definition of the purpose of art. Because it is too vast of a topic to be the subject of this paper, I will exchange the purpose of art here for a study of one purpose of art: to facilitate a connection with otherness. For this purpose, painting, music, poetry, and general literature are the best-known—or perhaps only best-appreciated—forms of art. Painting and literature are both commonly perceived by the unimaginative as visual forms of art; however, a crucial component of *All the Light We Cannot See* is Marie-Laure's blindness, meaning that she cannot perceive art through its visual forms. Yet, Marie-Laure still reads. Painting is a form of art that visually conveys itself while literature is a form of art that visually displays symbols—words—that convey itself. Literature is a symbolic—perhaps narrative—form of art, not a visual one; therefore, Marie-Laure can still perceive art through literature written in braille. Thus, art, for this paper, should refer to the visual, auditorial, and symbolic or narrative forms.

Art as otherness can thus be accessed by its audience in *All the Light We Canot See* to facilitate otherness against the sameness of the Nazis; sameness was the most powerful social weapon employed by Hitler in Nazi Germany. William Desmond notes that "systematic tendencies [lead] to the devaluation of transcendence as other," but Nazism led even further to the hatred of anything other (272). The Germanic people were established by Nazism to be a master race, hence othering all other races. By imposing strict social regulations—and eventual genocide—on demographics deemed other than the master race, Nazi Germany further created a sense of necessary sameness where any deviation from what was considered "same" would lead to persecution, endangerment, and death. In such rigid definitions of sameness and otherness, Nazi Germany not only created a sense of sameness but, in the minds of others, a sense of otherness. As the "master race" was the same as themselves, they claimed that they were other than everyone else. If others perceived the Nazis with fear, those others could perceive the Nazis objectively or subjectively, and the Nazis didn't care. Thus, Nazi Germany transjectivized and othered itself from the rest of humanity through its claims of superiority, taking a part in self-transcendence.

Clause B: Third-Party Use

The second party should be aware of third-party use of the referenced material.

Literature Review

Desmond offers a philosophy on aesthetics that explores Hegel, Kant, and others to combat dualism and emphasize the in-betweenness of two extremes, especially in the application of where art functions. Transcendence is crucial to Desmond's proposed purpose of art: art is a facilitator to allow access to otherness—the same purpose that I work with in this paper. Desmond defines three types of transcendence. The first transcendence is that of the exterior. It is observable and objective, likely sublime. The second transcendence is that of the interior. It is only a transcendence subjectively, like a personal gift or note from a loved one; it is even self-transcendence to a degree: knowing and understanding otherness. The third transcendence is "not as the exterior, not as the interior, but as the superior" (269). It is both objective and subjective, encompassing both while also serving as the between—between both objective transcendence and subjective transcendence as transjective transcendence.

Phillip Mitchell analyzes moments that characters experience in *All the Light We Cannot See* through the lens of Desmond's third sense of transcendence: transcendence "beyond objectness and subjectness to transobjective and transsubjective transcendence," meaning that an object or subject becomes something that means something more to an individual (269). Through these moments of transcendence, Doerr creates intensely personal moments that translate into untraceable motivation and hope. When characters experience transcendence, they transcend from our previous notions of them, becoming part of the transcendence. Fredrick experiences transcendence when he sees the owl at the end of the book, reminding us that he is more than the state that he is trapped in due to his brain trauma. Marie-Laure experiences transcendence when she mentally maps her cities through the wooden models that her father carved. Werner experiences initial transcendence when he first hears the music. Upon hearing the music again, he goes back to that place of transcendence and "calls those times [when he hears 'Claire de Lune' on the radio] as the times before the 'cords of his soul' were severed" (Mitchell 35).

Marieta Mihaela Damian analyzes *light* as a metaphor in Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*, reasoning that perception is a universal concept that transforms into a linguistic form in the word *light*. While *light* is a wave of energy that reflects from matter, the word *light* carries a far more packed bundle of ideas that are presented as metaphors—metaphors that Damian uses to examine the meaning of *light* beyond waves of energy. It "falls under the category of universal metaphors of language, being placed at the top of the directionality of metaphorical mapping principle" (Damian 96). Damian acknowledges not only metaphors of *light* that access senses other than vision but also metaphors of *light* that access emotional states or experiences. For example, a *bright sound* is a crossover between vision and hearing. Other senses also access sight: not being able to take one's eyes off someone uses the significance of touch to access

sight. Returning to light, someone can glow with joy. The novel is full of such metaphors, even as plain and obvious as the title. Transcendence accesses otherness that is otherwise inaccessible through human understanding, but metaphors can convey the emotional states and experiences that are associated with transcendent experiences because "light generates a type of detachment from reality" (Damian 101). Metaphors are distinct from art, which facilitates transcendence, but metaphors can still be a tool of transcendence. Whereas transcendence in art facilitates a connection from sameness to otherness, a skillful metaphor connects sameness to sameness and might pass through otherness, appearing with a deeper meaning than either sameness that it references when it appears on the page.

While Desmond describes the third transcendence as "transobjective and transsubjective," transjective more eloquently describes that singular attribute of transcendence (270). A receiver of the third transcendence has necessarily played a part in the transcendence by subjectively observing otherness through transcendence. Each transcendence also serves a different purpose: the first shows the otherness in reality, the second shows the otherness in self, and the final shows the otherness through self upon reality. Desmond also defines another term: self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is the human desire to place humanity as the facilitator of otherness, where otherness becomes the glorification of humanity, although also being Desmond's second transcendence which he even describes as "the transcendence of self-being, or self-transcendence" (268). However, self-transcendence as the second transcendence becomes problematic when it excludes transcendence as other, as seen in Nazism. As the facilitators of otherness in self-transcendence, humans must understand otherness, depriving it of its nature as being other to human understanding and declaring, "We are self-surpassing, self-overcoming beings. Transcendence? I am transcendence!" (Desmond 271). Desmond despairs that science devoid of art and expression is a form of self-transcendence where humanity's understanding holds more significance than what humanity cannot understand, which is otherness.

Werner is more than a Nazi because he experiences a third transcendence when listening to "Claire de Lune," separating him from his experience in war and at the military school where Nazi reality was all that existed. Volkheimer shares similar experiences of transcendence, and "[Werner's] experiences with the third transcendence enable the reader to see him, and even his most brutish colleague, Volkheimer, as more than Nazis" (Damian 35). The transcendence links Werner to something beyond his experiences. A classification as just a Nazi would be trying to establish that Werner is nothing more than his experiences and choices—not even a person. The same is true for Volkheimer who has a transcendent reaction to the music. Mitchell profoundly likens the act of reading a story and developing an understanding beyond the words on the page to Desmond's third transcendence, stating that "like the characters experience the third transcendence, so, too, does the reader—perhaps any reader of any fiction" (Mitchell 37). As critical readers, we transjectivize the literal into the metaphorical and the implications it has on ourselves and our history. We are thrust into a reality almost entirely other than our own and guided through by the narrative: the art guides our transcendence into otherness.

Iriving Goh analyzes *All the Light We Cannot See* through the lens of touch as the primary sensation of storytelling in the novel. Goh explains the prevalence of sight-focused storytelling and questions if the strength of the focus has undermined the conveyance of other senses in storytelling, taking a closer look at touch. Touch is, indeed, a more expansive sense than any of the others, occurring on every point of our skin. Marie-Laure relies largely on her sense of touch, being deprived of any sense of sight, and "touch allows [her] to find [her] way home, if not to have a sense of the world" (Goh 257). Her sense of touch facilitates her reading of literature. Because Marie-Laure understands literature through a more powerful sense than sight, she might be said to consume art more deliberately.

Clause C: Instances of Use

The following are instances of use as outlined.

Transcendence in All the Light We Cannot See

Transcendence had no direct effect on the war in history or in *All the Light We Cannot See* because human war is essentially sameness against sameness and one side against the other side. War, like scientism, is a mode of "human self-transcendence, attempting to divinize its own scientific powers, as the light that the world will recognize as properly its own, and there will be no mystery here, and no mystery beyond this proper light. All will be light" (Desmond 272). Human self-transcendence is hardly distinguishable from other Nazi propaganda, even within *All the Light We Cannot See*. Not only is it an egotistical self-assertion of omniscience, but it is also a denial of anything beyond one's allegedly limitless knowledge: what I do not know does not exist—the death of inference and wonder. Even while Werner believes, as Hauptmann instructs him to, that "it's only numbers, cadet," his continued loss of hope implies that he knows "there is only too much darkness to all this light" (Doerr 184, Desmond 272). Darkness is in essence contrary to light in its literal meaning; however, the concepts are essential to each other. Darkness is the antithesis of light so extremely that one cannot practically conceive of darkness except as the absence of light. On the other hand, light bears little significance without the existence of darkness. In the darkness of self-transcendence as described by Desmond and experienced by Werner, "the conceptual metaphor of light highlights and amplifies the dark implications of being silenced, exposing the consequence of having everything reduced to a quiet state – death unfolds" (Damian 100). The dark light of self-transcendence is a light that illuminates substance without bringing hope: two metaphorical purposes of light. Knowledge without hope is perhaps the most dismissal of hopelessness because hope relies on an uncertain chance; when everything is certain, there is no chance. Through its dark light, self-transcendence, not transcendence, is the driving force of the Nazis.

Rather than being ineffective in World War II, transcendence is the driving force through which Doerr allows his characters in *All the Light We Cannot See* to experience transcendence to move toward otherness and away from the sameness of the Nazis; it is essential to the purpose of

the novel: to highlight individuality during a time where people on either side of the war are now generalized. Rather than transcendence winning World War II, transcendence allows Doerr's characters moments of humanity through otherness during a time when inhumanity came from sameness. When Werner hears the broadcasted music again after many years in the Nazi school of Jungmänner that are followed by his operations on the field where he tracked down enemy transmitters, "it is as if he has been drowning for as long as he can remember and somebody has fetched him up for air" (Doerr 406). To Werner, the sides of the war bear little significance: he does not properly understand the evil of the Nazis or how the Allies are any better; nevertheless, he recognizes the consequences of war and feels the significance of his circumstances as if he is being suffocated. A transcendent experience pulls him from the source of his suffocation, implying that the sameness from which he departs as he reaches otherness is what suffocates him. The direct effects of the transcendence on Werner are not ascertainable, lending more credibility toward the otherness nature of the transcendence. Werner does not come to a fact-based realization, rather he departs from the experience with a new-found hope.

Werner's drowning is a multi-sensational experience, engaging his hearing, vision, sense of motion, and touch to powerfully describe his emotional state of panic. Underwater, sound waves travel at different frequencies, altering one's perception of sound, much like Germany and Werner's situations before the rise of Hitler affected their perceptions of Hitler: Hitler was a savior for an oppressed population. If different circumstances had affected Werner and Germany, their perceptions of Hitler would be different too. While not specified in Doerr's metaphor, underwater conjures notions of darkness. At the very least, water distorts light like it does water, depriving Werner of yet another sense. In the sense of motion, this is not the first time that Werner imagines himself sinking. Rather, on his fourteenth birthday, Werner imagines the mining crews whom he will join in one more year and "their descent, sporadic and muted lights passing and receding, cables rattling, everyone quiet, sinking down to that permanent darkness" (Doerr 68). Werner does not abandon his imagined muted lights, quietness, and sinking into permanent darkness until he hears the broadcast music again which fetches him from the darkness. Damian remarks of Werner's mining fantasy that "light captures the antithesis of its previous interpretation of hope. It unfolds as a device that transposes the reader into the dark circumstances and emotional states brought about by conflict" (100). The universal perception of light as hope becomes a realization of hopelessness as the light recedes, but Werner is reunited with light and hope when he is brought out of the water by his transcendent experience. Finally, to the sense of touch, Werner is encompassed by mutedness, darkness, and water while drowning. Anyone who is drowning is surrounded by water. Drowning activates and accosts touch most of all, even as the air within the victim's lung demands replenishment. The water is like the panic that surrounds Werner and threatens to fill him. Goh asserts that "we readers are led to the heightened sensation of the absence of sight, to the failing sense of hearing, leaving touch as the remaining operative sense" for Marie-Laure when the bombs accost her hearing, leaving the already-blind girl only able to feel her surroundings, and the same applies for Werner when he is drowning (248). When the reader deliberately explores Werner's metaphorical

drowning from when he was fourteen until he hears the broadcast again, the reader gains a new level of empathy with Werner and becomes able to relate to his panic and hopelessness, making his escape even more meaningful. His experience with transcendence is what restores sound, light, and hope to him, and Doerr provides his readers with the necessary information to take part in that restored hope.

From an experience with otherness, Werner gains greater hopes for his future experiences despite being surrounded by sameness. There are two possible explanations for this hope: either Werner hopes that something can change in the sameness to not be as horrible as it has been, or he hopes that he can reach the otherness again. Werner's actions, in the end, are consistent with the former: he wants more than anything in the world to simply have dinner with Marie-Laure, and "he would walk anywhere to make it happen, bear anything; in a year or three years or ten, France and Germany would not mean what they meant now" (Doerr 473). Not only does Werner have hope for the future, but he also has the motivation to achieve the future that he hopes for. Notably, Werner does not wish to chase another experience of transcendence, despite how wonderful it appears to be, implying that transcendence is a means to an end rather than an end. However, the future that Werner hopes for is in direct contrast with his present, where he cannot enjoy simple pleasures like having a proper dinner with Marie-Laure, implying that Werner also hopes to reach something other than the present sameness of his reality. In the original dichotomy, changing sameness to not be so horrible is offered as an alternative to reaching otherness again; consider, instead, that Werner cannot change the sameness of reality without changing it toward something other than sameness—otherness. Thus, we deconstruct the dichotomy as two expressions of the same hope: to strive for change is to strive for otherness. The future that Werner imagines is so much in contrast with the present that he is in that it is not unreasonable to consider it as other than the sameness of the present. The change of sameness that Werner seeks is a transcendence from sameness to otherness—from war to peace. Therefore, Werner seeks both to change sameness and to reach otherness again, dismissing the dichotomy. If the transcendence that Werner experiences leads to the desire for a larger-scale, more permanent transcendence, then sameness becoming otherness might be the end that transcendence is the means to, not a mode of escapism but a means of rebellion.

Not only does Werner experience transcendence through the music broadcasted by Marie-Laure, but so does Volkheimer, Werner's superior and companion throughout Jungmänner and their field operations. When Volkheimer hears the music, "he listens to the notes and the silences between them, and then finds himself leading horses through a forest at dawn, trudging through snow behind his great-grandfather, who walks with a saw draped over his huge shoulders, the snow squeaking beneath boots and hooves, all the trees above them whispering and creaking" (Doerr 454). Werner's experience is an example of the third transcendence: transjective in nature. He recognizes the beauty of the music, and its meaning to him is personal. Volkheimer also experiences a third transcendence, experiencing the beauty of the music on the same level as he experiences his flashback. Unlike Werner's experience where "the recognition is immediate," Volkheimer must deliberately listen to the music (Doerr 406). This deliberate listening is not

Volkheimer's first practice of doing so; rather, Volkheimer regularly plays music from a radio with Werner when they are at Jungmänner and "will lean back in a chair… and let his eyelids slip to half-mast," simply listening to the music (Doerr 184). Volkheimer deliberately searches out art through music. Later, Werner does the same when "he sits in the lab late at night, alone again, and trolls the frequencies on the Grundig tube radio… searching for music, for echoes" (Doerr, 264). Even when he hears the broadcast again and experiences the transcendence that brings him hope again, he has been dutifully seeking it through his radio. No character in *All the Light We Cannot See* experiences transcendence without seeking it out.

While both Werner and Volkheimer experience transcendence after their field operations and education at Jungmänner, Frederick experiences transcendence after being assaulted and disabled at Jungmänner, suggesting that involvement in war is not the only hopelessness that transcendence combats. As Frederick sits outside with his mother, seemingly unable to communicate intelligibly because of his brain damage, he sees "an owl. As big as a child. It swivels its neck and blinks its yellow eyes" at Frederick (Doerr 523). After seeing the owl, he talks to his mother again. Not only the otherness of the owl but also the way "the scene harkens back to Frederick's love of birds in childhood" causes the transcendent experience that Frederick's mother does not experience (Mitchell 36). As a child, Frederick watches birds and studies *Birds of America*, a book full of pictures and information about American birds. He deliberately seeks out knowledge about nature like Werner and Volkheimer seek out the beauty of music. Years later, an incapacitated Frederick observes the owl and experiences a third transcendence that is transjective in nature: Frederick has previously understood human knowledge about birds—a product of human self-transcendence—and now sees a bird that he cannot understand because of his incapacitation; nevertheless, he appreciates the bird better than his mother does, implying that there must be a degree of subjectivity in his experience as well as the objectivity of the bird. Through the hopelessness of Frederick's brain damage, transcendence offers a hope like that which Werner and Volkheimer receive because they all three search for hope.

Clause D: Intended Use

The following is the intended use applied.

Transcendence of Literature

"Too much has been asked of art, with the result that too little, or almost nothing, is being asked of art. And too little is now asked, because too much was asked—asked in the wrong way" (Desmond 265). Art has been asked to carry all that metaphysics, ethics, and religion carry but without all the faults. Art must not be abstract. Art must not be immoral. Art must not rely on God. Art must be unblemished otherness; "that is, the artist is to be the voice and exemplary manifestation of transcendence… such a role is impossible to sustain" (Desmond 267). The audience becomes disillusioned with the minor faults of art and ceases to look for transcendence

in art. Find a person who does not find beauty in *Starry Night* or who abhors symphonies from Brahms to Beethoven; you will not need to look far. One cannot say that the artist deserves the blame for the ignorant audience. The ignorant audience will refuse the transcendence that the artist has made available to the audience without fail. While the artist bears the burden of facilitating transcendence through art, the audience bears the burden of receiving that transcendence. It is not the audience's ability to carry out their burden but their willingness to see beyond what is apparent that allows transcendence; "to shut your eyes is to guess nothing of blindness. Beneath your world of skies and faces and buildings exists a rawer and older world, a place where surface planes disintegrate and sounds ribbon in shoals through the air" (Doerr 390). Ability, beyond the ability to lend attention and focus to art, is not a requirement for transcendence, despite the greater ease with which more experience might glean from art, as seen with Volkheimer who regularly practices deliberately listening to music, his eyes half-closed. Volkheimer is in search of seeing beyond sight. Volkheimer, like an experienced audience, focuses both on the notes and the silence between the notes: the space where the audience must insert something of their own: the between.

When the reader reads between the lines in Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*—filling in the blank space between the panels of words like Volheimer's listening to the silence between the notes—they infer parts of the narrative that Doerr has left for them, creating a tie between their senses and the senses they infer into the narrative. As the bombs rain down, Marie-Laure asks one question after another: "Wherever her great-uncle is, could he have survived this? / Could anyone? / Has she?" (Doerr 96). Marie-Laure's progression of thought is one of concern for others to concern for herself, with steps being a concern for her great-uncle, a concern for everyone else, and a concern for herself. Concern for everyone else naturally entails herself, but that is not the conclusion of the significance of Marie-Laure's progression of thought. An interpretation that focuses on the transition between each idea might see Marie-Laure progress from a concern for her great-uncle to a concern for having a caregiver and a concern for her life if she has no caregiver. Or such an interpretation might see Marie-Laure imagining the bombs simply killing off people one at a time and wondering how they would know that they were dead: thus, brought to the conclusion that she might not know if she is dead. The possibilities for interpretations are barely limited if limited at all, seemingly working in Doerr's disfavor and muddling the narrative he has written.

Rather than muddling the intended narrative, the possibilities for interpretations allow readers to read between the lines and gain the most benefit from *All the Light We Cannot See*. Reading between the lines is called inferring. Some common examples are found in unresolved cliffhanger chapters or unresolved cut scenes in movies; however, the most common example is found in comic books, where the space between nearly every panel is a space of inference. Between one picture and the next, the reader must constantly infer what events occur, as simple as motion or as complex as finishing a scene. In comics, the space between panels is known as the gutter. Doerr creates a gutter of his own in a way, using a premature new line that suggests to the reader that there is more occurring than is written. Rather than spoon-feeding readers, Doerr

offers the necessary information: the rest can and should be inferred. Throughout the novel, Doerr practices the same principle of providing the necessary information to inform the reader of the events, sensations, and significances without spelling out every scene. Another frustrating example is seen in the fight between Werner and von Rumpel when a change in perspective from Werner to Marie-Laure interrupts von Rumpel's death. To see the fight's outcome, the reader must infer the sight from what Werner saw leading up to the gunshot that Marie-Laure hears. A reader without the patience to infer the situation will be disappointed to miss the villain's death, but a more deliberate reader can imagine the event with the exact vividness that they desire because all the necessary information is there: Doerr allows readers to hold a piece of the narrative to own for themselves, increasing their connection to the novel and characters.

The narrative becomes both subjective and object—transjective—as the reader completes their part in transcendence as other—other to who they were before the novel, other to who Doerr is beyond the novel, and other to anything that Doerr might have planned as an author while remaining also the same. The choice does not significantly affect the narrative but transcendences the character of Marie-Laure in a way that the reader necessarily understands to have imbued her with the character to make the choice. Effectively, the reader makes Marie-Laure into who they think she should be and likely a little of who they are, and "the anointing of art [becomes] not just the prerogative of the few. The entire culture lays its hands on [it]" (Desmond 276). Doerr does not relinquish the narrative into the hands of the reader but offers the reader the chance to mold a small detail enough for them to claim, "This is my narrative too," and become personally invested in Marie-Laure's character, allowing the participatory reader to feel the senses that Doerr describes for Marie-Laure more vividly. The reader turns otherness into sameness and can thus access that otherness through their bridge of sameness. Although Doerr gives his reader this opportunity to infer in the gutter, the reader does not benefit unless they infer. Not every inference is aware that it is an inference—some occur so naturally that the reader does not separate the narrative they create from the narrative that the author has provided explicitly—but it is not unreasonable to expect that a more deliberate inference provides greater insight into the novel. A passive reader will necessarily glean less knowledge from the same material than an active reader will. Thus, readers must constantly be aware of the gutter and the ability it holds to transfer some ownership of the material to the reader from the author. Only by taking hold of this opportunity can a reader experience the novel's narrative to the empathetic extent that is possible.

Transcendence in *All the Light We Cannot See* and beyond the novel is an invitation into otherness that transcends darkness to light and hopelessness to renewed hope—an invitation that must be accepted to take effect. Werner searches, Volkheimer meditates, Frederick studies, and the reader must infer the missing pieces and realize the metaphors to their fullest extent. The first transcendence asserts nature as the master of itself: when the dust settles and mankind has killed his last, nature will remain. The second transcendence asserts man as master: man is other, "It must submit to me, I do not submit to it, or indeed to anything. I am the Lord" (Desmond 271). The final transcendence asserts hope: I offer, to you, hope that you must facilitate—an otherness

that you might make same. Hope is given, lost, or given up, but hope is also held. The second half of transcendence as other—to hold hope—is the impossible burden of the audience.

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Section 3: Future Use

The following document, a final reflection assignment, is reserved for future use and reference as the first party continues to develop the terms and conditions of the offered creative content.

Quinn Gibson
Dr. Garrett
Critical Methods ENG3010
25 April 2024

Final Reflection

I began this semester with the belief that I am a collection of my experiences—a reflection of my experiences. I am my first break-up at sixteen and the first time I asked someone out, burned in my mind. I am every grade I've ever received, and all the A's only count as one. I am who my parents could not make me become. No. I am a prism who works in reverse and the light that combines from the experiences, reds, greens, and blues, is me: the light. I am the rhetorical triangle, and the ROYGBIV is between my purpose and my audience—a step removed from each. I am two or three things I know for sure, and two of them must be my message and my audience if none of them are me.

I have found new ways to know myself as a writer and as a person and every other attribute of myself that is a part of my identity. Locke argues that the progression of personal identity consists of being able to recall experiential memories from a previous iteration of self: if you remember yourself when you were younger, the younger you is still you. Too bad I forgot most of my childhood. I am now who I was before: new package, same great taste. I only didn't know as well who I was before. The critical methods—rhetorical analysis, critical analysis,

critical conversation, and close reading—are a way to get to know humanity, the author, and me. Literature can prove nothing because it is the result of nothing—except humanity. Literature is necessarily a product of humanity, human perspective, human experience, and human attributes.

I was surprised with how much I wrote. I've had a lot of difficulty in the past with sticking with a project to the end, whether it be creative or academic. Before this semester, my longest academic piece was just short of three thousand words, my creative pieces were under five thousand words, and my largest world-building piece was under nine thousand words. In this class, my final paper was over five thousand words. My midterm, a creative writing piece that I have continued to work on, is over eleven thousand words long. In addition to writing, I have read about two hundred pages worth of academic articles, fifty pages of peer essays and projects, three hundred pages of dismally dense philosophical writing, and nearly fifteen hundred pages of other literature. Perhaps in part the result of my caffeine detox, I have found focus again.

I'm looking forward to leadership opportunities with the Kugelman Honors Program over the summer with young kids and high school juniors and seniors. I have applied to be an Honors Peer Mentor for the upcoming academic year. I'll periodically meet with a group of UWF freshmen to guide them through their first year in college and the Honors Program. I'm talking with a professor at PSC whom I developed a strong academic relationship with about possibly helping him as a TA or GA to bolster my graduate school application (may it delay long!), and I've spoken with Dr. Evans about a similar opportunity in another year within Honors. Currently, I'm looking to publish two of the essays that I wrote this semester while I work on my creative projects—a sci-fi novel, the memoir I started in class, collections of poetry, and various short stories. Just for when I'm in different moods. In five years, I see myself in graduate school stressing about my dissertation. In ten years, I see myself at the other end of the classroom.

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