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Escaping the War:  
How the Authors of *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark* and  
*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Use Escapism in Their  
Novels

By Julie Dohmen

Julie Dohmen  
S4358058  
English Language and Culture  
BA Thesis English Literature  
Supervisor dr. Chris Louttit  
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Name of student: Julie Dohmen

Student number: s4358058

## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to find the different ways that authors can use escapism in their novels. The three novels that will be analysed are *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Escapism is the theory that readers of a book can escape their reality for a while by emerging themselves into the imaginary world of the novel they are reading. However, in these three novels, the characters are the ones who are subjected to escapism. All of these books are set during World War II and all have children as the main character. This thesis will research how books and stories help the children escape their reality and how their imaginary worlds can help them survive the Second World War.

Keywords: escapism, Second World War, storytelling, imagination, *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, books, Narnia.

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## Introduction

Many novels featuring stories set during the Second World War have been written. For example, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne about two boys living in and next to a concentration camp. The focus of the novel is mostly on the Jews in the camp and the Nazis who are guarding them. However, other authors have tried to write stories about the Germans who were not part of the Nazis and whose lives were also destroyed by the war. This thesis will particularly focus on two of those stories, *The Book Thief* and *Gretel and the Dark* by Markus Zusak and Eliza Granville respectively. The main focus of this thesis is the use of escapism within these novels, which is being presented as the main characters using books and stories to cope with their reality. As a contrast, the novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* offers an outside point of view, namely from English children who are sent away to the countryside to be safe from the air raids. Escapism also plays a role in this novel, as the children discover a mythical land and spend a lot of time there.

The research into this topic is quite new. Most of the sources used for this thesis have been written within the last fifteen years, which proves that the debate about this topic is still current, and my research, which will specifically focus on *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, will add something new to this recent debate. For example, *Gretel and the Dark* is a relatively new book, so nothing about this novel in relation to escapism has been written before. Furthermore, as escapism is usually used to describe the readers of a novel, this thesis will instead focus on the characters in the books who are subjected to escapism by their authors. Some helpful sources to aid in my research include articles by, among others, Robert Heilman, Jenni Adams, and Anna Hunter, who have all written about escapism and how it is used in certain novels.

Literature plays an important part in studying a language. As a student of English, I have learned about the various aspects of literature, and the several viewpoints that can be taken to study a literary text, such as Postcolonialism or Modernism, but escapism was not one of them. With this thesis, I want to explore a subject that I have not studied before. The main question that this thesis aims to answer is: In what ways do the authors of *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* use escapism in their novels? Firstly, with Robert Heilman's article as a starting point, the theory behind the term escapism will be examined. After that, the theory will be applied to each book to find out how escapism is used in the novels, and if there are any significant differences in the ways the authors have chosen to use it.

I will mainly use Robert Heilman's article "Escape and Escapism Varieties of Literary Experience" about escapism and escape literature and Yi-Fu Tuan's book *Escapism* to explain the theory behind the term escapism. Heilman's article explains how the term escapism was first used in the 1930s, when people realised reading books helped them forget their melancholy lives. By the 1940s and 50s, it became a fundamental part in several kinds of criticism – historical, social, literary, and artistic, among others. People started using the term more often, and around the 1960s, it had a regular place in dictionaries. Almost a century after its beginnings, it is quite a popular term, and can be applied to more than just reading books. Tuan discusses the term in a more practical sense, so he explains how escapism is used in real life and which activities can be filed under escapism.

In the second to fourth chapters of the thesis I will apply the theory of escapism to the primary sources. In the chapter about *The Book Thief*, I will use Webb's article, because it details how reading and books are relevant in Zusak's novel. Also helpful is Adams' article, about the narration by Death, which shows some interesting views about the inescapability of death. Hunter's article, which describes the link between fairy-tales and Holocaust literature, is particularly useful for the chapter about *Gretel and the Dark*, whose title already refers to a fairy-tale. For this chapter Behlman's article is also helpful, which explains how escapism can similarly be a turn away from history, which in turn can be applied to the events in the novel. The close reading of the novels in these two chapters will most likely reveal that the reading of books and listening to stories is the most important way of escaping reality for the main characters, because it enables them to use their imagination. For the last chapter, I can use Hooper's book *Past Watchful Dragons*, as it describes the importance of fantastic literature in escapism, and uses the books in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series as examples. Furthermore, Russell article "Narnia as a Site of National Struggle: Marketing, Christianity, and National Purpose in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*" describes how the novel itself is a form of escapism for the author. Even though the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* do not have to use their imagination to go to another world, their journey to Narnia is an escape nonetheless, because it literally takes them away from the dangers of the Second World War.

## Chapter 1 – Escapism

The focus of this thesis is on the different ways authors can let their child characters escape the horrible events of the Second World War. The books that are at the centre of this thesis all feature children as the main characters experiencing the events of World War II, and these children all use a different method to cope with their reality. However, the one thing that links these stories together is the imagination of the children, which is enabled by books and oral storytelling. The theoretical framework that will be the backbone of this thesis is centred around the term escapism. The theory is explained by using the article “Escape and Escapism Varieties of Literary Experience” by Robert Heilman and the book *Escapism* by Yi-Fu Tuan. Escapism can be applied to many different situations. In the real world, it can be recognised as migrating to another country to escape a war, for example. This thesis, however, will only focus on escapism in relation to literature, so the characters in a book who are doing the escaping.

### 1.1 The history of the term

The phenomenon of escaping reality has been used as early as premodern and early modern Europe, though it did not yet have a name at that time. Nowadays, this phenomenon is called escapism. Back in early modern Britain there was much uncertainty about society and the future. An important way Renaissance princes coped with this uncertainty was make-belief (Tuan 14). They produced plays and masques about gods and kings in their palaces, sometimes even playing the roles themselves, just to create “a [temporary] heaven of abundance and peace” (14).

Even though the term escapism has only recently gained popularity, because it is the topic of a relatively new debate, the word itself has been around much longer. According to Robert Heilman, the term was first used in the 1930s (439). From then on, its popularity grew, and in the 1940s and 50s it became “a staple of all kinds of criticism”, such as historical and political, but also literary and artistic (444). Several journalists, such as Marquis Childs and Frank Swinnerton, who have written articles for the journal *Time* have used escapism in their writings (444). By the 1960s, the term escapism had a regular place in dictionaries. Heilman defines it as a “habitual diversion of mind to imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine” (445).

## 1.2 What is Escapism?

The term escapism is generally used to describe the experience of escaping from reality into a dream world by the readers of a book. However, this thesis will specifically focus on the characters in a book who are reading books themselves to escape their reality. As Tuan explains in his book *Escapism*, one's imagination is "the most readily available means of transporting the self, momentarily, out of its body" (xiii). The books and stories that the children read and listen to in *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* enable the children to use their imagination to forget their reality for a while. Tuan, who is a geographer, uses nature to relate to escapism, for example when he explains that "it is good to escape from . . . threatening nature into the refinements of culture" (xv). The "threatening nature" in this statement refers to the struggle of real-life which can be escaped by cultural means such as books. The statement further enforces the argument that books and storytelling help the children in the novels escape the horrors of the Second World War.

However, Tuan points out that there are also negative impacts of escapism. He warns that people who shut themselves off from reality for too long risk "degenerating into a self-deluding hell" (xvi). This is roughly what happens in the novel *Gretel and the Dark*, where the protagonist ultimately cannot distinguish fiction from reality anymore. This will be further explained in chapter three, where this novel will be analysed. Another negative side to the term escapism, Tuan mentions, is that it suggests a weakness, "an inability to face facts – the real world" (5). However, the children in the novels do not entirely know what is going on and are shielded from the truth by their parents or caretakers.

Tuan further explains that escaping reality using only one's imagination is a typical human trait. He illustrates this claim with the example of daydreaming. He uses nature as an example once more, when he claims that humans are the only ones who can daydream about something. An animal would not close its eyes to "ponder the nature of a threat" (5), but would confront it directly. Moreover, humans have culture, which is "closely linked to the human tendency not to face facts" (5). Subsequently, culture has a big part in a person's imagination as well, since it is both "driven by imagination and a product of imagination" (xiv).

## 1.3 Applying the term to the novels

As has been mentioned before, escapism has been the basis of all kinds of criticism, such as political or social, but the circumstances which one wishes to escape can also be

political or social (Tuan 9). In the novels that will be discussed in later chapters, the main reason why the children wish to escape reality is the Second World War. However, one's reason to escape is not always to escape a certain event, but can also be to seek a better life (Heilman 453). The reader who wants to escape reality, or the 'escapist', can experience some relief from their real-life trauma, and is then able to resume life as usual, but the experience of a better life can also make it more difficult to return to real-life (455). This is the danger that the protagonists of both *The Book Thief* and *Gretel and the Dark* encounter, where they practically do not want to leave their fantasy world anymore.

Nevertheless, escaping to a fantasy world can still be beneficial. The escapist can, for example, fulfil certain desires or wishes that they could not fulfil in the real world. The escape can then be a form of therapy for the escapist, which can improve the quality of their life (Heilman 455). This comes back in *Gretel and the Dark*, where the protagonist believes her storytelling has saved her friend's life. In the next three chapters I will do a close reading of the novels *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark*, and *The Lion, the With and the Wardrobe*. The ways in which the characters can escape their reality are analysed, as well as the effect the escape has on the characters, and ultimately, if it is indeed necessary to survive.

## Chapter 2 – Escapism in *The Book Thief*

“Here is a small fact: You are going to die” – Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief* (13)

This is the very first thing that the narrator of *The Book Thief*, Death, says to the reader. It immediately establishes the tone of the novel, as the inescapability of death is a recurring theme and the possibility of death often hangs above the heads of the main characters like the sword of Damocles. This chapter will apply the theory discussed in the previous chapter to the novel *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. The focus of this chapter will mainly be on Liesel, the main character of the story, and how books and stories help her cope with the events of the Second World War that affect the town she lives in. Books not only help Liesel escape her reality, but actually save her life. In addition to this, the narration by Death will be examined as well as other characters who are close to Liesel, such as her foster father Hans and her best friend Rudy. Liesel’s story begins in January 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Liesel is nine years old when her mother takes her and her brother to a foster family, the Hubermanns, but her brother unfortunately does not survive the journey. At the funeral, the gravedigger’s apprentice drops his handbook about gravedigging and Liesel takes it with her, which starts off her career as the book thief.

### 2.1 *The narration*

The novel is narrated by Death, who narrates the story in first person, occasionally addressing the reader directly. Liesel’s story, therefore, becomes a story which Death is relaying to the reader of the book. This is not the usual narrative structure of a Holocaust text, especially in a book that is aimed at children and young adults (Stephens). Death is usually viewed as a rather disturbing figure, but in *The Book Thief* he is the opposite, as he functions to “mediate the harsh realities of the novel’s subject matter” (Adams 223). Death starts the novel by addressing the reader. The first thing he tells them is that they are going to die (Zusak 13). This immediately establishes an important theme of the novel, which Liesel will be confronted with many times in the story, namely the inevitability of death. No one can escape Death, and he keeps reminding the reader a couple of times throughout the novel. For example, when Death remarks about Rudy’s death, but explains that it will not happen at that point in the story. By this point, Rudy has become an important character and is Liesel’s best friend. The knowledge that he will eventually be killed is shocking to the reader, and reminds them again that not everything can end well. However, Death explains that people do not have

to be afraid of him, because the only thing he does is carry peoples' souls away when they die: "I am not malicious. I am a result" (16).

Even though Death is not human, he does have human traits. In the beginning of the novel for example, he explains that he actually does not carry a scythe, and that his face is in fact more like a person's than a skeleton's. Furthermore, he uses reading as an escape, a distraction. As Tuan explained in his book, escaping reality by using one's imagination is a human trait. One way of escaping reality is reading, which Death admits helps him distract himself from his work. He needs stories to distract him, because it is the only thing that keeps him sane (Zusak 15), and Liesel's story is one of those stories.

## 2.2 *The stealing of books*

The most important way to escape reality for Liesel is the stealing of books. It is the only way for her to acquire books, and is sometimes even therapeutic. As has been mentioned before, the first book that Liesel steals, is *The Gravedigger's Handbook*. She finds it in the snow at her brother's funeral, and takes it with her, because to her, it is the last link she has to her brother, and it also reminds her of the last time she saw her mother (Zusak 45). However, even though Liesel is the titular character of the novel, she did not feel at ease stealing books at first. This is shown when she steals her second book from a burning pile. She hides it under her jacket, but it is still hot from the fire. The fire combined with her own guilt cause Liesel to feel the book burning against her skin, and the feeling is described by Zusak as the book "eating her up" (128).

Though Liesel steals books, she does not just steal them without reason. Therefore, she refuses to accept the book that the mayor's wife, who is called Ilsa Hermann, wants to give to her. She feels she already has enough books at that point, and only steals books on a "need-to-have basis" (Zusak 256). Yet, the third book she steals is from Ilsa Hermann's library. Her friend Rudy joins her, but he thinks they are going to steal food. Liesel says that she is starving, but adds in her mind that she is in fact starving for a book (297). She wants to steal the book that Mrs Hermann had tried to give her, but she does not want to just get it handed to her. To Liesel, stealing is more acceptable, because "stealing it, in a sick kind of sense, [is] like earning it" (297). Afterwards, when they are on their way home, without food but with a new book, Rudy calls Liesel a book thief. "It was the first time Liesel had been branded with her title . . . and she liked it very much. That night Liesel Meminger truly became the book thief" (302).

Liesel keeps going back to the mayor's house to steal books, and picks them for different reasons. *The Dream Carrier* makes her think of "Max Vandenburg and his dreams" (Zusak 336). Max is the Jew that the Hubermanns are hiding in their basement. She chooses *A Song in the Dark* because it has a green cover, and she did not have a book of that colour yet. At this point, the stealing does not make her feel guilty anymore, like it did when she stole her second book. A good stealing now gives her pleasure and satisfaction (374) and cheers her up (523). Though how important the books are to Liesel becomes clear just after Max's arrival. As Hans, her foster father who plays the accordion, feels about his instrument, so does Liesel feel about her books. The only thing Hans can think of to ensure that Liesel keeps quiet about Max, is to threaten to burn her books if she talks to anyone about it (Webb 26). Moreover, Adams points out in her article "Into Eternity's Certain Breadth: Ambivalent Escapes in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*", that Liesel's engagement in the practice of book theft can also be seen as a resistance against the Nazi regime, an activity that simultaneously helps her mourn her brother's death and her mother's disappearance (223).

### 2.3 *The power of words*

When Liesel first goes to school in her new town, the teachers find out that she cannot read yet. Death as the narrator comments on this by saying that she was "the book thief without words" (Zusak 86). He also gives a little insight into the future, when he assures the reader that "the words were on their way, and when they arrived, Liesel would hold them in her hands like the clouds, and she would wring them out, like the rain" (86), which refers to her ultimately understanding the power of words. Her foster father, Hans, teaches her how to read, and Liesel is very eager to learn, because she wants to be able to read her first stolen book. At this point in the story, Liesel has nightmares about losing her brother and mother, and, as has been explained before, *The Gravedigger's Handbook* is the last link she has to them. Her obsession to learn to read therefore "performs a dual purpose" (Webb 24), because the reading lessons help Liesel to become literate, but at the same time they also help her in forming a close relationship with Hans, which helps her to come through the trauma of losing her mother and brother (24). Eventually, Liesel is able to read and realises what words can do. For example, when she screams at the mayor's wife for firing her and her foster mother, Liesel imagines the woman's face beaten up, "all from the words. The brutality of words" (Zusak 272). Liesel discovers how badly words can hurt, sometimes even more than physical blows can.

While the Hubermann family is hiding Max in their basement, he passes the time by writing stories. His book *The Word Shaker* is written especially for Liesel. He writes about his family, the Führer, and Liesel, but the book mostly shows the power of words, specifically Hitler's words. It describes how Hitler was able to only use his words to gain enormous power and a great many followers. However, Max also invents "word shakers" (Zusak 452) in his story, to counter the negativity and hate that Hitler spreads around. He calls Liesel the most powerful word shaker of all, because she understands "the true power of words" (452). The importance of words is a recurring theme in the novel, and particularly Hitler's words are a good example of the impact of words. Death adds to it that "without words, the Führer was nothing" (525). The reason that Liesel can understand the true power of words, is because Zusak wanted to create a character "to juxtapose the way Hitler used words" (Zusak qtd. in Webb 22). Liesel is "a stealer of books and a prolific reader" (22). She knows that words can hurt, and even uses them to hurt once, but unlike Hitler, she also understands the power of words "to heal and give life through stories" (22).

#### 2.4 *The importance of books and stories*

When the Jew Max Vandenburg is in hiding and waiting to safely travel to Himmel Street, he receives the book *Mein Kampf* from his friend who is helping him. The book contains a map showing the route to the street in Molching, and a key to the Hubermann house. "Of all the things to save him", the book that was written by the man who wanted all Jews eliminated is Max's saviour (Zusak 167). The title of the book also ironically refers to Max, as "his very existence has been a struggle against political and religious oppression" (Webb 27). Further on in the story, when Max is hidden in the Hubermanns' basement, he writes the story of *The Standover Man* on the white-painted pages of *Mein Kampf*. To Liesel, blanking out Hitler's words and replacing them with "the words of an imprisoned Jew" (27) is an act of empowerment. "[Max's] words disempower the words of the persecutor of his race and Liesel's enemy" (27).

In his story, Max details the several 'standover men' that have structured his life so far, such as his father and his friends, but also Hitler, as he is the reason Max is in hiding. However, Hitler's words are still visible through the white paint, with the effect that "the antisemitic tract is both hidden by the fable and exposed within it" (Adams 225). This way, *The Standover Man* both exposes Liesel to and protects her from the ugly truth about Germany (225). Adams goes further by saying that not only is Max shielding Liesel from the truth, but the reader of the novel is shielded as well, by Zusak. This is illustrated by the

paragraph in which Death details how he picked up the souls of the Jews in the concentration camps, and particularly in what state he found them in. The deaths are described as an escape, which Adams claims “obscur[es] the event’s traumatic historical reality” (226). So, in softening the details of the Holocaust, Zusak asserts that death can be a positive thing, because it offers an escape from torture, but at the same time he obscures what actually happened in the real world. This shows that reading stories can be a form of protection, but it can also present a voice of reason “when contemplating the awful confusions of human actions both past and present” (Webb 27).

Another moment in the novel which shows how stories can be a distraction from reality is when the inhabitants of Himmel Street are hiding from an air raid. The first time the sirens go off, everyone is afraid of the bombs that may or may not fall on their homes. To cope with her fear, Liesel starts reading one of her books that she brought with her. She reads aloud because it helps her to concentrate, and everyone stops talking to listen to her. While everyone “waited for the ground to shake”, the youngest kids “were soothed by her voice” (Zusak 389). Everyone still knew why they were in the shelter, but “at least they were distracted now, by the girl with the book” (389). Earlier in the novel, it is described how Hans can play his accordion in a way that makes it seem like the instrument is a living, breathing thing. When Liesel feels everyone looking at her reading in the shelter, she goes on “haul[ing] the words in and breath[ing] them out [while a] voice played the notes inside her” (389). This is when Liesel recognises that for her, reading stories is like Hans playing his accordion. She is able to bring the words to life in order to distract her neighbours from the terror of the air raid.

As has been mentioned before, Liesel comes to understand the true power of words throughout the novel. She ultimately uses this power to write a book of her own, but wonders what the cause of her understanding is and when she came to understand that books and words did not just mean something, but everything (Zusak 37). Webb explains that one reason for this is that Zusak wanted to show how “[t]he powerless [can] become powerful through words [and] through language” (27). Ironically, the person who enables Liesel to write her book, by giving her a notebook, is the mayor’s wife, from whom Liesel has been stealing books all this time. Furthermore, Ilsa Hermann gives Liesel a reason to write down her life story. The writing helps her to understand more about her own circumstances and experiences, and helps her to start “to control [her] past, to control [her] trauma” (27). Liesel writes her book in the basement, because that is the place where she learned to read with Hans and where Max had written his own books. This is also where she is when the bombs are

dropped on Himmel Street. Because Liesel was the only one who was in a basement at the time, she is the only one who survives. A unit from the German Air Force pulls Liesel out from the rubble, but Liesel could not let go of her book and was “holding desperately on to the words who had saved her life” (Zusak 503).

After Liesel is pulled from the rubble caused by the bomb, she has to say goodbye to her dead foster parents. To Hans, her last words are a thank you, because him teaching her to read has saved her life (Zusak 542). This is also the moment that she loses her book. It falls on the ground, but before it is thrown away, Death picks it up and starts reading it, which refers to the beginning of the novel, where Death decides to tell the reader a story. The story stays with Death, until it is time for him to take Liesel’s soul. When he comes to get her, he gives the book back to her and confesses that he is “haunted by humans” (554).

## 2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, Zusak has used a couple of different ways to let Liesel escape her reality, but the most important one is the reading of books. Zusak starts the novel by introducing Death as the narrator of the story, but even though Death is not human, Zusak gives him human traits. Death also uses books to escape his reality sometimes, and to keep from going insane. For the main character, Liesel, books are her most important possessions. However, the only way for her to acquire them is to steal them, which ultimately earns her the title of ‘book thief’. Her foster father teaches her to read, which not only makes Liesel literate, but also strengthens the relationship between the two characters. Liesel also learns to understand the power of words, and how Hitler could use that power to gain so many followers.

Ultimately, books save the lives of both Max and Liesel. Max uses *Mein Kampf* to conceal a map, a train ticket, and a key to the Hubermann house, which is where he hides from the Nazis. Furthermore, it is the ability to read that saves Liesel’s life. After she has read her books multiple times, she decides to write her own story. She is finishing her book in the basement when her street is bombed, and Liesel is the only one to survive. At the end of the novel, when Liesel is an old woman and it is finally time for her to die, Death, who had picked up Liesel’s book after the bombing, gives the book back to her, and admits that her story has deeply moved him (Zusak 554).

### Chapter 3 – Escapism in *Gretel and the Dark*

This chapter will be a close reading of the novel *Gretel and the Dark* by Eliza Granville. The novel consists of two storylines that alternate each chapter. One storyline is about Krysta, a young girl living in Nazi Germany, and the other about Lilie, a young woman who suddenly turns up in Vienna in 1899. Stories play a big part in Krysta's life and she uses them to either fight off the boredom or cope with her reality of living in Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women and children. The story of Lilie is more complicated. She claims she is a machine that has come to Vienna to "find the monster" (Granville 21). She also knows things that have not happened yet. However, at the end of the novel, the reader realises that Lilie is not real and the story is actually made up by Krysta and her friend Daniel. This chapter will focus on how both listening to stories and creating her own story help Krysta escape her reality.

#### 3.1 *Gretel and the Dark*

The novel starts off with Krysta, who is moving to a new house with her father. Because the story is written in a first-person narrative, the reader only knows what Krysta knows. For example, Krysta does not know that her father works as a doctor in a concentration camp, so the reader can only guess at what the "zoo [with the] animal-people" (Granville 36) is. However, the most important thing in Krysta's life are stories. Greet, the maid who worked for Krysta's father before they moved to the new house, kept telling stories to Krysta, which is how she became obsessed with them. Ultimately, this leads to Krysta using stories in real life, to try to survive the concentration camp where she was placed after her father's death. She also creates her own story, to express her anger towards her situation, and, as she believes, to keep her friend Daniel alive.

The other storyline in the book is centred around a young woman, Lilie, who suddenly turns up in Vienna in 1899. No one knows who she is and where she has come from, and she claims that she is not a human (Granville 20). She befriends a boy named Benjamin, who tries to find out who Lilie is and what has happened to her. Eventually, Lilie tries to persuade Benjamin that he knows her, but that he first has to "start remembering" (304). At the end of the novel, it becomes clear to the reader that Lilie's story is actually made up by Krysta as a form of escapism, coincidentally when she and Daniel are literally escaping the concentration camp. This also explains Lilie's claims that she has not existed before (302), because Krysta's story did not exist before her escape.

### 3.2 *Krysta's story*

Krysta is the unreliable narrator of this storyline, which is why many things are described very differently than what they really are. For example, she describes the concentration camp where her father works as a zoo with “animal-people” who are, as the guards tell her, “a different kind of beast altogether” (Granville 36). Krysta’s obsession with stories stems from listening to Greet, who used to tell Krysta fairy tales whenever she was doing chores. Greet’s stories included graphic descriptions of violence and murder, in line with the fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, and were also used to scare Krysta into doing something. For example, when Krysta refuses to go to bed, Greet tells her the story of “the Child-guzzler” (85), a monster who steals and eats children who are still awake during the night (86). It is enough to scare Krysta into going to bed.

How much of an impression Greet’s stories have had on Krysta is shown by the stories Krysta tells her doll, Lottie. She explains that *Hansel and Gretel* is Lottie’s favourite story (Granville 70), and tells it to her over and over, but with slight differences each time, depending on where she is or what she is doing. For example, when Krysta is hiding in the kitchen, she has replaced the characters in the story with the servants working in the kitchen. Throughout the novel, there are multiple occasions where Krysta describes a real-life event like a fairy tale. Accordingly, a forest becomes an “enchanted forest” (1), a gust of cold wind turns into “icy witch-breaths” (1), and an old woman with a cane becomes “a little old witch . . . [with a] long wand” (43). Furthermore, she explains events in real life by using examples from fairy tales. For instance, when she first meets Daniel, a young boy who lives in the concentration camp with his little sister, she hears that he is always hungry and is constantly searching for food (77). Krysta does not understand why he and his family have no food, and she uses the story of Hansel and Gretel to come up with an explanation. She thus believes that Daniel must have been lost for a long time, “though not in a deep, dark forest like Hansel in the story” (82), and that “Gretel’s lost too” (82), which refers to Daniel’s sister.

When Krysta is living in the concentration camp, she and Daniel have “a special place” (Granville 223) where they make up stories. It is their own form of resisting, as their stories all deal with killing the guards of the camp, who they call “the zookeepers” (223). Because they have nothing else, Krysta and Daniel survive their days by creating stories and applying them to real life. At that time, Krysta is still holding on to her doll, who she believes “[keeps her] stories safe for [her] until [she can] write them down” (279). She treats Lottie like it is a human being: she makes up conversations with her and she believes that Lottie stores every story she tells her, including those she makes up with Daniel about taking

revenge on the camp guards. However, she loses her hope of getting revenge when Lottie is thrown out of a window and is broken beyond repair. Krysta's childish naivety is shown when she claims her stories are lost and that she does not want to make another story ever again (279). She understands that they would need magic to bring their stories to life, but after she talked to the woman who acted as a teacher to the children in the camp, she knows that magic is not real.

Daniel then comments that stories might become real "if [they] want it badly enough" (Granville 279). This comment stays with Krysta and affects her storytelling, because she is still not sure whether stories can come to life, and she does not want the events from her stories happening to her as well. Her anxiety is shown after they have escaped the camp, when she tells Daniel the story about two children who could only eat beanstalks (323). When Daniel asks her about the end of the story, Krysta claims she does not remember the rest. However, she remembers how in the story the boy dies and the girl survives (324), but does not want to tell Daniel that. One of the women who used to live in the camp with Krysta told her that knowing stories about "other people, other places" is an "escape route, a magical journey" (326). As has been explained in the first chapter, the use of imagination to escape reality is the most important part of escapism. "Once you know about these things . . . your mind can create stories to take you anywhere you want to go" (326). Krysta then decides to create a new story, placing herself and Daniel in the middle of it, because she now knows that a story can become "a broad arena for presenting and representing . . . wishes and desires" (qtd. in Hunter 70). Therefore, her story takes place in Vienna in 1899, and that is why Lilie is searching for 'the monster'. It is Krysta's way of representing her desire to end all the suffering that stems from the concentration camps, because she believes that when Hitler, who is the cause of the suffering, is dead, her suffering will finally come to an end.

### *3.3 Confusing fiction and reality*

When Krysta and Daniel are hiding in a gardener's shed after their escape, they meet the German Agnieszka, who wishes to escape Germany and who, according to Krysta, looks like a witch. Krysta can see through her façade of friendliness, and knows that she cannot be trusted. While Krysta is helping her prepare dinner, where she has to carry the doves that Agnieszka has just killed, she tries to distract herself by "escap[ing] into that secret part of [her] where by magic [she] makes things turn out differently" (Granville 343). However, she cannot come up with a new story. "The ideas have gone. The words aren't there" (343). She wonders if this is what happens "when you invent stories inside stories that are themselves

inside a fairy tale” (343). She believes her story has come to life, and after this point Krysta starts confusing reality with fiction, thinking that she and Daniel are Hansel and Gretel, and Agnieszka is the witch. Like has been explained in the first chapter of this thesis, this is a negative effect of escapism. This is also what makes *Gretel and the Dark* a modern retelling of a classic fairy-tale with Holocaust elements (Hunter 60), because to Krysta, the story of Hansel and Gretel is now related to the escape from the concentration camp. Furthermore, the forest through which they are travelling acquires a double meaning. Like in *Hansel and Gretel*, it is a dangerous place, because they encounter Agnieszka who looks and acts very much like a witch, but it is also “a place of opportunity and transformation” (Martínez 70). In the forest, Hansel and Gretel kill the witch and Krysta and Daniel lock Agnieszka up so that she is not a threat to them anymore.

Before their escape, Daniel was attacked by a dog and was badly injured. After Krysta has locked Agnieszka in the house next to the shed, she goes to find help, which she finds in a group of Swedish doctors. She takes one of them, Lotten, to where she left Daniel, who is now very close to death. In Krysta’s mind, all her stories are now mixed up. She went back to Daniel like the girl in *The Pied Piper*, but did better than she did, “because Lotten has promised [her they’re] being taken from this place” (354). As Martínez suggests in her article “Rewriting the Fairy Tale in Louise Murphy’s and Lisa Goldstein’s Holocaust Narratives”, stories can “provide evocative metaphors that help people cope with unspeakable horrors” (66). When Krysta hears that it was a miracle that Daniel had survived for so long, she claims that they do not understand that “it was [her] storytelling that kept him alive” (Granville 354). That is why she refuses to leave his side and tells him the story of Lillie and Benjamin again, but this time with a happy ending. Metaphors can also be “an indirect means to convey traumatic experiences” (Martínez 78), which is why Krysta’s story about Lillie who does not feel like she is human anymore reflects Krysta’s traumatic experiences in the concentration camp.

### 3.4 *The importance of Lillie’s story*

Although Krysta is able to convey her traumatic experiences by using her story as a form of escapism, at the same time her story provides her with a refuge from her traumatic memories and provides a moment to forget what happened to her for a while. Just like Behlman describes in his article “The Escapist: Fantasy, Folklore, and the Pleasures of the Comic Book in Recent Jewish American Holocaust Fiction”, Krysta and Daniel elude the terms of their own history by making up a new story (61). Behlman claims that escapism is “a

turn away from history” and “a safe refuge from the memory of the Nazi genocide” (71). Their story also helps Krysta and Daniel to heal their physical and emotional wounds (61). The story that emerges includes a revision of the past (61), with Krysta as Lilie who has travelled back in time to kill Hitler before he gained his power. As becomes clear at the end of the novel, the character of Lilie in the story that takes place in Vienna in 1899 is a version of Krysta (Granville 327).

As has been mentioned before, Krysta starts telling Lilie and Benjamin’s story when she and Daniel are escaping the camp. However, shortly before their escape, Krysta was sexually abused by several guards of the camp (Granville 282). This causes Krysta to cut off her hair, “hoping being bald would make [her] ugly as sin” (283), and trying to set fire to the office of Hraben, the head of the guards. She is caught, however, and thrown in a cell. At this point, Krysta does not care what happens to her, as she feels she is already dead inside (283). This is also the first time Krysta starts referring to herself as a machine, saying her “arms and legs move mechanically” (283). She believes it is easier, because “nobody can hurt a machine” (286). Lilie’s appearance therefore matches Krysta’s and the rest of the prisoners in the concentration camp: she has a shaved head, a number tattooed on her arm, and claims she is not human (20). She is “detach[ed] from emotional response” (30) and, like the Nazis viewed all Jews as “Untermensch[en]” (138), the policemen who come to investigate her “only see [her] situation, not [her]” (309). Like Zusak does in *The Book Thief*, Granville refers to Hitler’s power of words when Lilie talks about “self-made monsters” (105). She mentions that “every time he opens his mouth he spawns more monsters” (105) and these new monsters are thus Hitler’s followers who believe every word he says, because “this monster only spews out creatures like himself” (105).

### 3.5 How Lilie’s story reflects Krysta’s story

The characters of Lilie and Benjamin are versions of Krysta and Daniel, who want to find ‘the monster’ in Vienna so they can “put an end to it before it begins” (Granville 27). This “doubling” is a common feature in fairy tales in order to convey meaning (Hunter 61). A “magical double” can act as a “substitute” for the protagonist (61), which is why Lilie is sent to Vienna in 1899, to find Hitler before he gained power, something Krysta is now unable to do. Throughout Lilie’s story, there are multiple remarks and references to what happened to Krysta and Daniel. For example, Lilie does not like to wear striped clothing (Granville 239), because it resembles the clothing of the prisoners in the camp where Krysta and Daniel lived. Moreover, Lilie tells Benjamin stories and fairy tales, like Krysta does to Daniel. Daniel is

gravely injured, and Krysta has to tell him he has to keep walking, just like Lilie urges Benjamin to get on his feet (191). Lilie claims that things will only work out for them “if [he] can keep moving . . . because [she] no longer has the strength to support [him]” (192).

As has been stated before, Krysta believes her storytelling is what kept Daniel alive. Her fear is also visible in her story, where Lilie insists she stays with a beaten-up Benjamin, because “[he] will die unless [she] stays to keep him going” (Granville 308). At this point, Krysta does not know what is fiction and what is reality anymore, so when Lilie says that she and Benjamin have been “through so much that [they’re] bound for ever” (313), she is actually talking about Krysta and Daniel. The blending of fiction and reality is evident when Lilie starts dissolving “until she was little more than . . . an illusion” (314). According to Hunter, this is what both Holocaust narratives and fairy tales do, in that their narrative frames often mask the true content of a text (60). At first, *Gretel and the Dark*’s narrative structure of two storylines that alternate each chapter makes the reader believe that they are two separate stories. However, only at the end does it become clear that Lilie’s story is made up by the characters from the other story.

The story of Lilie and Benjamin is very important to Krysta and Daniel. It becomes “*the story*” (Granville 356), and Krysta tells it to Daniel over and over, because it saved their lives (357). She compares it to a fairy tale, “shifting around a little as time passes” (357). She is telling it once again at the end of the novel, possibly for the last time, as Daniel is dying of old age, just like she did when he was dying as a young boy. Krysta finally admits that at that time, parts of her life and her story became intertwined. Because she was still scared that stories could come to life, she changed the ending to a happier one, where Lilie and Benjamin live happily ever after, so that she and Benjamin were able to do the same.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Granville has shown how important stories can be in trying to escape reality. Krysta has been obsessed with stories and fairy tales since Greet told them to her during her work as a maid in Krysta’s house. Krysta applies these stories to everyday life, for example when she compares the servants in the kitchen to witches and her friend Daniel to Hansel. When Krysta and Daniel are living in the concentration camp, they make up stories in which they take revenge on the guards of the camp just to escape their horrible situation for a while. Eventually, they are able to escape in real life too, but Daniel gets gravely injured. Krysta believes her storytelling is the only thing that can keep him alive, so she comes up with a new story, placing herself and Daniel in the middle of it.

The story that Krysta comes up with is about Lilie, a young woman who suddenly turns up in Vienna in 1899. At first, the novel's structure makes the reader believe that Krysta and Lilie's stories are two separate ones, but at the end of the novel it becomes clear that Lilie is not real, and that Krysta has made it all up. The story is a form of escapism for Krysta, both to distract her of her horrible situation and to try and keep Daniel moving. Ultimately, Krysta starts to confuse fiction and reality, and is afraid that her story has come to life. As has been mentioned before, this is one of the negative effects of escapism. However, Krysta and Daniel are eventually saved by Swedish doctors, which is why Krysta decides to make up a new ending for her story. Lilie and Benjamin live happily ever after, and ultimately, Krysta and Daniel are able to do the same.

## Chapter 4 – Escapism in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

“‘And may I ask, O Lucy Daughter of Eve,’ said Mr Tumnus, ‘how you have come into Narnia?’” – C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (18)

This chapter will analyse how escapism is used in C.S. Lewis’ novel, and this analysis will also illustrate the differences between this book and the other two books that have been analysed in the previous chapters. For example, the time-period of the story is the same as the other two books, namely the Second World War, but it is set in England instead of Germany. Furthermore, the children do not need to use books and their imagination to escape to another world, as they actually go through a passage which leads them to a mythical land. The four children who are the protagonists of the story are sent away to the countryside to protect them from the dangers of the Second World War. They play games to pass the time, and during one of these games, Lucy, the youngest of the four, finds a wardrobe with a secret passage. This passage leads to the mythical land of Narnia, where the children find that the inhabitants have been oppressed by the White Witch for a very long time (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 18). Eventually, a war breaks out between the armies of Aslan the Lion and the White Witch, and the children are stuck in between. This chapter will look at how Narnia is an escape from reality, as it can be compared to a fairy tale, but at the same time this escape puts the children in the middle of a war, something they had been sent away from in the first place. Furthermore, the novel itself functions as a form of escapism for the author, as his portrayal of Narnia expresses his desire for a utopian nation (Russell 62).

### 4.1 *The first and second escape*

Lucy, Edmund, Peter, and Susan Pevensie are the four children who are the protagonists of the story. They live in London, but are sent away to the countryside to be safe from the air raids during the Blitzkrieg. During the Second World War, Great Britain evacuated over 3.5 million children to the countryside as part of Operation Pied Piper (Talley 26). They are sent to the house of an old professor who lived “in the heart of the country” (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 9), where the dangers of war are reduced to a minimum. This is the children’s first escape, as they are literally escaping the Second World War by moving to another part of the country. Even though the children are safe now, they find their new home quite boring. They play games to pass the time and when it is raining they decide to explore the house. This is when Lucy, the youngest of the four, discovers a

wardrobe that has a secret passage. This is yet another escape, where Lucy escapes her boring new life in the country house (albeit temporarily), and discovers a new world. Interestingly, the children's first escape is to make sure that they are safe from the war. When they are living in the country, they escape for the second time: the passage to Narnia is found when Lucy is bored, and the mythical land offers the children more than enough excitement. Not only do they meet strange creatures and animals that can talk, but they end up fighting in a real war, ironically after they had been sent away from one.

The first time Lucy enters this mythical new world, she meets Mr Tumnus, a faun. He explains to Lucy that she is in Narnia, a land that stretches all the way from "the lamppost [to] the great castle of Cair Pavarel on the eastern sea" (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 18). Tumnus then invites her over for tea, and Lucy stays with him the rest of the afternoon. When she gets back through the wardrobe, however, she is surprised to discover that her siblings did not miss her at all, and that the hours she spent in Narnia are the equivalent of only minutes in her own world. When Lucy tries to explain to her siblings that she had gone to another world, they do not believe her and think that she has made up a story. Unfortunately for Lucy, the passage through the wardrobe has gone when the others go and look for it. Lucy starts to doubt about whether she really went to Narnia, or that it was all just a dream. However, Susan, Peter, and Edmund ultimately have to admit that Lucy was right, as they find themselves in Narnia after the four of them are forced to hide in the wardrobe one day when they are trying to avoid the housekeeper, Mrs Macready. The passage to Narnia has opened once again, and Lucy is glad to see she had not been dreaming.

#### 4.2 *The importance of stories and their effect on the narrative*

The story is told by an omniscient narrator who tells the story in first-person. The narrator knows what has happened in the story, but does not remember all the details, as is apparent when he says: "How long this really lasted I don't know" (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 104). Like Death in *The Book Thief*, he also talks directly to the reader sometimes, either to explain something in a bit more detail, or to make the reader identify with the story. This is what happens when Susan and Lucy witness Aslan's death. The narrator tries to explain how they feel by connecting it to something that the reader can relate to: "If you've been up all night and cried till you have no more tears left in you – you will know that there comes in the end a sort of quietness. You feel as if nothing is ever going to happen again. That was how it felt to these two" (171).

Even though the children whose story is being told by the narrator do not have to use books and stories to escape to a different world, stories still play an important role in their life. For example, when they get to Mr Tumnus' house and see that he has been kidnapped, a robin flies up to them and motions that they must follow it. Although Edmund is sceptical, saying that the robin could be luring them into a trap (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 70), Peter argues that that cannot be the case since it is a robin. Peter is sure that "a robin wouldn't be on the wrong side", because robins are "good birds in all the stories [he has] read" (71). Thus, Peter applies rules that he has learned from stories, in this case that robins are always on the good side, to real life.

The children eventually become the heroes of the story of Narnia, which is still within the story that the narrator is telling to the reader. Therefore, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* contains a story within a story, which becomes real for the main characters when they enter Narnia. This story can also be seen as a fairy tale. As has been mentioned before, when Lucy returns to her own world from her first visit to Narnia, she is surprised to learn that almost no time has passed, while she had spent quite a few hours with Mr Tumnus in Narnia. According to Jack Zipes, who has written *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, time in fairy tales is often not linear, and is therefore called "archaic, primordial, mythical time" (182). The characters in the fairy tale are "temporarily displaced from modern, linear time" (182). This is also how the four children are able to spend many years in Narnia, where they grow up. They find the passage through the wardrobe again when they are adults, but when they go through the passage to their own world again, "they were no longer Kings and Queens in their hunting array but just Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy in their old clothes" (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 202). "It was the same day and the same hour of the day on which they had all gone into the wardrobe" (202). *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is therefore what scholars call "secondary-world fantasy" (Russell 183). In such stories, the "time distortion" (183) between two worlds is almost always connected to features such as doors or magic objects (183), which is why the children return to their original age when they go through the wardrobe again, because they are back in linear time (182).

#### 4.3 *The war that they cannot escape*

Ironically, because of their escape from the Second World War, the children end up in the battle for Narnia, which they cannot escape from. Their presence in Narnia fulfils a prophecy, because they are the only ones who can stop the White Witch (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 92). As Suzanne Rahn explains in her essay "Lewis, Tolkien, and the

Ethics of Imaginary Wars”, authors of children’s fantasy novels have the power to create a war (163), and Lewis was one of the first authors to create the type of imaginary war that has become “so universally familiar [that it has] become a cliché”: a war of good against evil (163). In Narnia, the White Witch and her army of beasts are evil and use magic to defeat their opponents (by turning them into stone), while Aslan’s and Peter’s army are ‘the good guys’, who fight for their land and want to defeat the evil queen.

Lewis treats the battle for Narnia as a real war, and describes certain events in the same way that one would describe a war in the real world. For example, after the battle is over, Lucy notes that Peter, who fought on the frontline, looks pale and stern and “seem[s] so much older” (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 192). The terms that Lewis uses to describe the battle also refer to real life wars, such as the “battlefield” where “Aslan’s army [of] war-like creatures” was fighting the Witch’s army on the “enemy lines” (190-191). The children also experience the feeling of loss, especially when Aslan is killed. Furthermore, Narnia is now “an ‘occupied territory’ in which a handful of freedom fighters seek to resist and overturn the White Witch’s malign forces” (Russell 73).

As a young boy, Lewis liked to read fairy tales, because they offered an escape from “the desire to be very grown up” (Hooper 1). He then started writing fairy tales himself about his invented world of Animal-Land (1). After serving in the trenches during World War I (9), Lewis started writing *The Chronicles of Narnia* books, which were published between 1950 and 1956. He wrote the fantasy books because it was “the exactly right form for what he want[ed] to say” (Lewis, “On Three Ways” 28). At the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan has come back from the dead through magic, and during the battle for Narnia he kills the White Witch, bringing an end to the battle and to the reign of the queen. The prophecy is therefore fulfilled, and Lucy, Edmund, Peter, and Susan then assume their rightful places as rulers of a now “utopian Narnia” (Russell 62). This “idealised fantasy land” can also be understood as a “projection of [the author’s] desire for national unity” (63). Therefore, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* enables Lewis to express his wishes, and so functions as a form of escapist utopian fantasy for him as well (63).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* offers a new side to escapism than what has been discussed in the previous chapters. The children in the novel do not have to use books or their imagination to travel to another world. However, it could be said that when they enter Narnia through the wardrobe, they enter a fairy tale. This becomes evident

when they find out that time is not linear in Narnia, as opposed to the linearity of their own world, because time distortion is often used in fairy tales. Even though the children were sent to the countryside to escape the Second World War, they still end up in a war. Their presence in Narnia fulfils a prophecy, which states that they are the only ones who can stop the White Witch, but this can only be achieved by winning the battle for Narnia.

Furthermore, Narnia is presented as a utopian nation after the White Witch is defeated, which could reflect Lewis' desire for a united Great Britain after the Second World War. As has been explained in chapter three, the reason to create stories as a form of escapism is often to express certain wishes or desires. This could be the reason that Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* as fantasy novels, because this genre allows him to express what he wants through the utopian nation of Narnia.

## Conclusion

Referring back to the research question, the aim of this thesis was to research the different ways that the authors of *The Book Thief*, *Gretel and the Dark*, and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* have used escapism in their novels. This was done by analysing the three novels by using the theory of escapism taken from Robert Heilman's article "Escape and Escapism: Varieties of Literary Experience" and Yi-Fu Tuan's book *Escapism*. The definition that was used for escapism in the first chapter of this thesis is "a habitual diversion of mind to imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine" (Heilman 445). Therefore, the conclusion of the first chapter was that the use of imagination is an important part of escapism, and this is mostly used in *The Book Thief* and *Gretel and the Dark*. The analysis of *The Book Thief* in the second chapter revealed that the most important form of escapism for Liesel was the stealing and reading of books, which ultimately saved her life. Furthermore, the novel explains how powerful words can be, for example when Max describes in his book how Hitler only had to use his words to gain so many followers.

As shown in chapter three, Krysta in *Gretel and the Dark* uses the stories she has listened to her whole life to cope with her reality of living in a concentration camp. She and her friend Daniel make up stories to escape their reality and to express their desire to take revenge on the camp guards. Eventually they are able to escape the camp in real life as well. While running from the camp, Krysta creates her own story to both distract her from her traumatic experiences and to try and keep Daniel alive. This corresponds to what Lee Behlman claims in his article "The Escapist: Fantasy, Folklore, and the Pleasures of the Comic Book in Recent Jewish American Holocaust Fiction", that escapism can be a turn away from history and a safe refuge from the Nazi genocide (71). The author of *Gretel and the Dark* also highlights a negative impact of escapism in her novel, as Krysta ultimately starts confusing fiction with reality and believes her story has come to life, as she thinks that she and Daniel are Hansel and Gretel.

As the analysis of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* showed, the children in this novel do not have to use books and stories to escape to another world, as the mythical land of Narnia already offers the four children a physical escape to another world, away from the Second World War. It could even be said that entering Narnia was like entering a fairy tale, because of the time distortion between the mythical world and the real world. Although stories are not used as a form of escapism in this novel, they are still important to the main characters and play a decisive role, as is shown when Peter is sure that they can trust the

robin, because robins are good birds in all the stories he has read (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 71). Furthermore, this thesis argues that the novel itself is a form of escapism for the author, as the depiction of Narnia as a utopian nation is an expression of Lewis' wish for a united Great Britain.

As has been explained before, the research into escapism is still relatively new, and most of the sources used have only been written in the last fifteen years. Furthermore, one of the analysed novels, *Gretel and the Dark*, was published only two years ago, which means that no secondary sources could be found that focused on particular themes in this novel. There are therefore plenty of opportunities for further research into this novel. For example, future researchers could go into more detail about the relationship between the characters of Krysta and Lilie. Moreover, not much research has been done about escapism in novels, and this thesis mainly focused on escapism related to the Second World War, as that is the time-period all three novels are set in. Future research could therefore focus on escapism in novels set in other time periods, to find out what else escapism can be linked to and if there are other ways for authors to use escapism in their novels.

Lastly, although *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is a renowned children's book which was already published in 1950, and a lot of research has been done into this novel, the focus of most secondary sources was not on escapism. Therefore, further research could add to the research done for this thesis by focusing on Narnia as an escape for both the characters and the author. Additionally, because there have been a lot of sources written about Christianity in Lewis' novel, future research could look at the connection between escapism and religion. This thesis does not delve into the religious aspects of the novel, because the main focus was on escaping the Second World War, and because religion does not play a part in the other two novels.

In conclusion, the one aspect that connects all three novels that have been analysed for this thesis, is that the authors use escapism to let the main characters escape the Second World War. However, each author has used a different method to accomplish the escape. *The Book Thief* focused mostly on the stealing and reading of books, while *Gretel and the Dark* only used oral storytelling to transport the main character to another world. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* on the other hand, presented a different method, one where the children were physically transported to a mythical world, instead of just in their imaginations. All of these methods correspond to what Heilman and Tuan explained about the theory of escapism in their article and book respectively. Although this thesis has only looked at three examples of authors using escapism in their novels, this research has proven that there are many

different methods that the authors can use. Thus, there are still a lot of novels that can be analysed in relation to escapism, and so, the current debate about escapism can be expanded by future researchers who find the other methods of using escapism in novels.

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