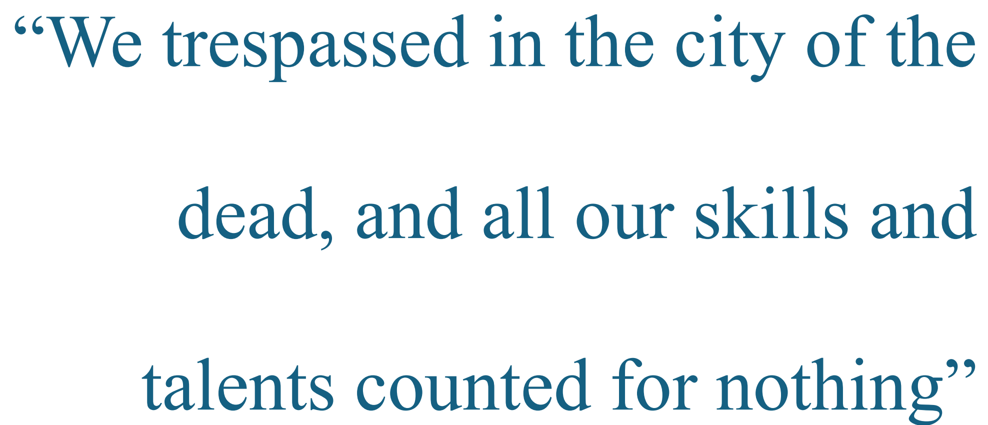

“We trespassed in the city of the dead, and all our skills and talents counted for nothing”

Challenging the borders of death in children’s literature

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Abstract

Children's literature has been under pressure the last few years. There are more and more discussions on what can be written for children and how it should be written. One way to write about heavy topics for children is through fantasy. This thesis examines how ghosts can make themes such as death, grief and trauma comprehensible for children without minimising their importance or affect. The research question this thesis intends to answer is: How do representations of ghosts in children's literature mediate and challenge the boundaries of death and its emotional impact?

The two concepts used to answer this question are the Gothic and Hauntology. The Gothic provides a frame to discuss lingering fears and traumas, both personal and societal. Hauntology is used to discuss the way the past continues to influence the present, and how things we consider as "over" are still impactful. The two case studies that are analysed with these concepts are the *Lockwood & co.*-series by Jonathan Stroud and the novel *Ophie's Ghosts* by Justina Ireland. The analysis on *Lockwood & co.* focuses on the long-lasting effects of trauma, and the discussion of *Ophie's Ghosts* demonstrates how racism and systems of oppression continue to influence our society. This thesis argues that through the inclusion of ghosts in children's literature, authors are able to introduce heavy themes in their books in a way that is still pleasant to read for children without minimising these topics.

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Introduction (2989)

"Er bestaan geen schrijftaboes voor kinderen.

Het gaat steeds om de manier waarop je onderwerpen aan de kinderen aanbiedt.

Als pesten, ziekte of zelfmoord op het pad van kinderen komt, dan moet ik daar iets mee doen.

Ik ben geen bang mens."

- Carry Slee

This quote is found in Het Kinderboekenmuseum in Den Haag. Carry Slee is one of the most popular authors for children of all ages, but especially criticized for her books aimed at children aged 9-15. I remember one of my high school teachers for Dutch Language and Literature nearly screaming every time her name was mentioned in class. She felt that Slee's books were too melodramatic for children our age, with too many inappropriate topics and highly unrealistic. How many children our age would have to deal with a murdered friend who turns out to be transgender? How many of us would fall into the hands of a loverboy? And how often would that be possible to happen in one class, in one story?

I had that teacher from age twelve to fifteen, and while she was one of the greatest teachers I had, someone who truly encouraged me to embrace my love for books and do something with it, I could never really understand why she felt so negatively about Carry Slee. I did read her books sometimes, and while I could understand her problem with the melodrama, why was it so bad that fiction was not realistic? I think the problem (mostly) teachers have with Carry Slee and authors like her, has become increasingly clear and more contentious over the years since I went to high school. A few years back, literary scholar Yra van Dijk and high school teacher Marie-José Klaver wrote an article in *De Volkskrant* about what they consider

"pulp" for young adult reader. Their anger is focused on another author, Mel Wallis de Vries, whose books share a lot of similarities with Carry Slee's, and in Van Dijk's and Klaver's critique I hear the echoes of my teacher's "tirades" about Carry Slee. The books are too simple, too stereotypical, they are morally bad books that only portray and "promote" unhealthy and bad behaviour, such as sexual assault, drugs, bullying, and social media. They are unrealistic, too dramatic, and give children and adolescents a wrong idea of what it means to grow up.

What I think is missed in this debate, is exactly what Carry Slee points out in the above quote: sadly, these are all problems children will encounter one way or another, whether she writes about it or not. The only thing that is important is how an author goes about it. That "how" is going to be the focus of this research. Carry Slee is an author who, despite my old teacher's opinion, focuses on realistic fiction. As I will show, this has been the focus of children's literature and the research into it. However, over the last decades, fantasy literature has found an increasingly important place within children's literature. Fantasy can be used to make complicated topics such as death, trauma and grief, topics usually avoided by children's media, understandable, while also ensuring that the themes are not made less heavy or serious. Since fantasy is a broad concept, I will focus on a fantastical element that not only crosses the borders of genre, but also those of time: ghosts. As will be discussed in the theoretical framework, ghosts are often used to show how time is not necessarily linear, but that past, present and future flow into each other. Since the discussion of what themes are appropriate for children and how they can be discussed is such a heated debate currently, and not for the first time, I will not only focus on the role of ghosts in the portrayal of time and life and death, but also how these books utilise ghosts to discuss grief, trauma, and other highly complicated themes in a way that is not only accessible, but also exciting to read about.

Historically, the focus of children's literature has been on realism and the educational values of children's literature, since children's literature is seen as essential to the development

of the young reader, a sentiment that is echoed in the aforementioned article by Van Dijk and Klaver. Lucy Pearson and Kimberley Reynolds explain in their chapter on realism in children's literature in the *Routledge Companion of Children's Literature* that since the eighteenth century, children's literature contained explicit lessons on morally correct behaviour. While in the course of the twentieth century these lessons became more disguised, they were still present, with the idea that they would help children to shape an identity that would develop into a responsible adult (65). Nowadays, children's literature is more about coping with difficult situations and emotions, such as grief and bullying, rather than providing children with clear answers on how to solve these problems (69).

In the same volume, Karen Coats argues in a chapter on fantasy literature that while only realism has traditionally been seen as the educational genre for children, this should not mean that fantasy does not have any educational value and can even achieve things that realism cannot due to genre limits. One of these, according to Coats, lies in the fact that fantasy often constructs a new world for children "that is manageable: small enough for them to acquire a sense of mastery and empowerment…, yet large enough to facilitate wonder and help them imagine possibilities for things to be other than how they find them" ("Fantasy" 77). In other words, fantasy is able to put children in control of a world, one that they can understand, but also a world that is rich enough to encourage children to imagine things differently. This can help children understand things they are too young to understand, or that are simply unexplainable. This often is the case with heavy topics such as death: they are hard to explain, but sadly are still things children will need to learn to deal with. This happens in a subgenre called "mixed fantasy" (Cadden 311). Mixed fantasy combines fantastical and realistic elements in a story, often leading to supernatural based stories. Due to the combination of fantasy and realism, mixed fantasy is often capable of handling darker themes than realism, while still making sure the concepts are graspable for children thanks to the inclusion of fantastical

elements.

To stick with the theme of death, it is important that children's literature does not shy away from the topic. This is explained by Karen Coats in the chapter "In the U-Bend with Moaning Myrtle: Thinking about Death in YA Literature" in which she discusses how children internalise the idea that death is a bad thing, simply because it is a subject that is often avoided by parents, teachers and other adult caregivers ("U-bend" 105). Literature can function like a "vaccine" to emotionally prepare children for the moment they are confronted by death in their real lives ("U-bend" 110). However, Coats observes that there are two common tropes around death in children's literature that prevent children from seeing death as a part of life. The first trope is the prevalence of unnatural deaths: characters who die are often killed. This means that the narrative of the novel does not tend to focus on the emotional impact of death, but, for example in the case of mysteries, on the resilience of the main character to solve a murder. This trope still does not portray death as a natural occurrence that is part of life, but something that is done by someone with the desire and/or means to kill ("U-bend" 107). The second trope is that characters who are killed are often portrayed as being socially, physically or psychologically different. In this case, death is used to appeal to a sense of empathy and outrage, and a will for social change ("U-bend" 110-1). Both tropes portray death as traumatising and unjust, a problem to be solved. In short, while literature has an important role to play when it comes to introducing children to death and grief, it often falls into tropes that essentially show that death is either a problem to be solved, or something that only happens to people that are different, rather than paying attention to the emotional impact of someone's passing.

Children's literature has often been viewed as a means to teach children how to behave morally and to help them to grow into responsible, fully formed adults. During the last decades, this view has shifted, but research is still focused on how literature is beneficial to children. I intend to analyse my case studies as I would do with any other book, but I want to focus on the

emotions and problems fantasy, and in this case ghosts, can portray. As discussed, there has been a lot of discourse of death and the discussion of darker themes within genre fiction for children; however, there has been but little consideration of the figure of the ghost that is central to both Gothic literature and the theme of death. This is remarkable since ghosts in stories are a clear marker that death is always present and comes for everyone (Owens 27), without distinguishing between social, physical or psychological differences. Besides that, ghosts are a prime example of "time out of joint", as put by Derrida (as cited in Shaw 7). This is the gap in which my research finds itself: the lack of study into the ghost in children's literature, and how it can challenge notions of time in a way that enables children to see that death is part of life, not a definitive ending. Besides that, ghosts can take up the function of mixed fantasy, making the big theme of death smaller and "physical", and that way easier to understand.

This is where my research question comes from: How do representations of ghosts in children's literature mediate and challenge the boundaries of death and its emotional impact? With this research question I intend to study the way in which ghosts problematise our conceptions of both death and time. People tend to see life and death, past, present and future as clearly delineated concepts that cannot be doubted. Ghosts challenge these delineations as they are the traces of dead people re-entering life, and therefore also show how the past is never really over: it can always come back to haunt us. This is also where the discussion on difficult events, complicated emotions and children's literature returns. The ghosts in these case studies are often ghosts because of their own traumatic deaths, allowing for representations and discussions of cycles of violence and how past traumas can have long-lasting effects. The ghosts are essential in this since they allow the authors to make complicated themes smaller and comprehensible for children.

This research question will be explored through the close reading of two case studies: the *Lockwood & co.*-series by Jonathan Stroud (2013-2017) and *Ophie's Ghosts* by Justina

Ireland (2021). The three case studies have been chosen based on the following criteria: 1) they are all aimed at children aged 12-15. This is due to the fact that books in this age group are already more mature and dare to handle more complicated themes and situations, but are still clearly meant for children, not young adults. 2) They have all been published within the last ten years. I want to focus on more recent children's literature, to see how ghosts and death have been present in children's literature in the last decade, and how this theme might be connected to the current societal issues. This also allows me to discuss works that have not been analysed before. 3) The ghosts in these books have a central role in the story, whether this is as antagonist, sidekick, victim, or a combination. I have excluded works that do have ghosts within the story, but only as minor character, as seen in for example the *Harry Potter*-series by J.K. Rowling.

For this research, I define ghosts as recognisable traces of people who have died and make their lingering presence known. This definition is partly inspired by that of Susan Owens in her book *The Ghost: A Cultural History* (2017), in which she writes that "a ghost is the spirit of a person who was once alive and which returns and makes its presence felt in some way" (13). I think that while this definition does encompass a lot of elements traditionally seen in ghosts, it is still quite broad. My definition excludes both other ghost-like characters such as the Genie in the bottle (often, he has not died), just like Owens' definition, but also ghosts from folktales such as the "witte wieven" or "white women" from the east of the Netherlands, because while according to most tales they are the spirits of women who have died, you cannot recognise them as the person they were while alive. I use the word "trace" in my definition partly to emphasise the link between my thesis and Derrida's concept Hauntology, to which I will return in the first chapter, but also because it is the best word to describe the ghosts in my case studies: they are there, but they are not physically present; in other words, they signal the absence of something, or someone, that once was present. This will also be further explained in the theoretical framework. The characters know what they are and who they were, while they

are not physically present. Their lack of physicality also distinguishes the ghosts in my case studies from other dead/not dead figures, such as vampires and zombies.

Besides the three baseline criteria, these books have also been selected due to the fact that besides ghosts, they also have other themes that show how the past bleeds into the present. These themes will be central to the chapters of the respective books: for *Lockwood & co.* this is trauma and for *Ophie's Ghosts* this is racism. Of course, themes might overlap, but the goal is to focus on these themes within their own chapters and case studies.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides the theoretical framework. It explains the concepts that are central to the analysis and shows how they are connected to each other. It starts with an exploration of the Gothic, with a focus on how it has developed and how it uses certain tropes and themes, leading in to the role of the American Gothic within both the Gothic and American Literature. The second part discusses Hauntology, a concept coined by Jacques Derrida as an answer to ontology that tries to show how things are not as easily defined as they are, since they are always influenced by what they were and under pressure of what they will be. This will lead to several other discussions as Hauntology has also been influential on sociology, the study of trauma and different places, and objects. An important focus of these smaller points within Hauntology is connected to the study of trauma, and how trauma also transgresses time: several of the scholars discussing trauma and Hauntology argue that trauma is not simply the event itself, but also everything that results from that event.

The second chapter will discuss the *Lockwood & co.*-series (2013-2017) by Jonathan Stroud. In this series consisting of five novels, Great-Britain has been plagued by "the Problem" for over fifty years: ghosts have been appearing all over the country, threatening everyone's lives, and the only ones able to see them are Talented children. These children are now organised in several ghost-hunting agencies who are tasked with finding the Sources of the hauntings and

making them harmless. These agencies are usually led by adults who are unable to sense the ghosts and often refuse to listen to their agents, regularly leading to dangerous and deadly situations. This is not the case with Lockwood & co., an independent agency led by the children Anthony Lockwood, Lucy Carlisle and George Cubbins. The ghosts in this series died a traumatic death: murder, suicide, or an accident. These traumas and their attachment to their so-called Source, objects that were important to the ghosts when they were alive, are what keeps them bound to earth. The fact that the way they died is the reason ghosts do not "stay dead" shows how some traumas are so intense and invasive that it is not simply something one can get over, but it is something that will continue to haunt the victim and, especially in this case, the bystanders. However, it is not just the ghosts whose actions are determined through trauma; of course, the heroes have experienced more than enough traumas themselves, fighting ghosts and watching their friends and foes fall victim to the ghosts. Their behaviour is just as much influenced by trauma as the ghosts' traumas. This makes *Lockwood & co.* an interesting case study to discuss Hauntology with the theme of trauma in mind.

Chapter 3 discusses the novel *Ophie's Ghosts* (2021) by Justina Ireland. Ophie is a young black girl growing up in the southern states of the United States during the Jim Crow period. She only learns that she can see ghosts after her father has been lynched, and his ghost comes to her to warn her and her mother to flee their home before his murderers show up to burn their house down. After that, Ophie and her mother travel north to Pittsburgh to go and live with her great-aunt, and Ophie is forced to quit school and start working in a manor for a rich white man and his elderly mother, for whom Ophie becomes a nursemaid. The old woman verbally abuses Ophie, and her only relief is the ghost of a young woman who befriends her and helps Ophie to deal with her boss. Ophie finds out she was murdered, and decides that she will find the murderer in order to help the ghost move on. *Ophie's Ghosts* creates an interesting juxtaposition between ghosts, the position of black people in 1920's United States and children.

The interplay of hauntings, racism and the history of slavery in the US will be the focus of this chapter. Not unlike the connection between trauma and ghosts in *Lockwood & co.,* the ghosts that Ophie meets show how death and racism do often go hand in hand, and that while traumatic events seemingly lie in the past, this does not mean they do not exercise influence on the lived presence. *Ophie's Ghosts* offers an interesting new view on this issue, by sometimes taking up the perspective of the haunted buildings and streets of Pittsburgh, showing that humans are not the only ones always aware of and impacted by the past.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework (6576)

This chapter aims to give an overview of the most relevant concepts to this thesis, namely the Gothic and Hauntology. Both are very broad concepts with a lot of history and interpretations, so in both cases I have chosen to focus on specific elements. Instead of giving an extensive overview of the history of the Gothic, I have chosen to focus on the Gothic as it is seen in contemporary fiction, with specific focus on the Gothic in children's literature and other media aimed at children, and focus on the American Gothic as that will become especially relevant in the third chapter of my research. I have decided to focus on the Gothic as genre rather than fantasy, as the ghosts in my case studies lean more into mixed fantasy than fantasy. As I explained in the introduction, mixed fantasy is a combination of realistic and fantastical fiction that uses fantastical or supernatural elements to make difficult themes accessible in a way that cannot be done in realistic fiction. As I focus on ghosts in this research, I have decided to focus on the supernatural element of mixed fantasy and the Gothic. This chapter will show that the connection between mixed fantasy in children's literature and the Gothic is an old one, and both share important elements when it comes to using supernatural tropes to portray societal anxieties. In the case of the second central concept, Hauntology, I acknowledge that Derrida's initial use of the concept was not aimed at literary or cultural studies at all, but was more focused on philosophy and history. For that reason, I will discuss works that have applied Hauntology to specific cases, ranging from film and literature, to research into the influence of trauma on the environment, rather than the more abstract works of Derrida himself. I have chosen to do it this way to give an idea of how Hauntology will be applied to my own case studies, as well as to be able to define the concept in a way that is not as broad as Derrida's initial application. While the theme of trauma will bleed into the discussion of both the Gothic and Hauntology, it will receive some more consideration at the end of this chapter, because it has special importance with regards to the discussion of both case studies.

The Gothic has grown into such a broad cultural form in different media and different regions of the world, that it is hard to define, both in popular culture and in research. Over the years, the Gothic has spread out over the world, forming several nation-specific Gothics, such as the American Gothic, regional forms such as the Southern Gothic, but it has also influenced and created subcultures, literary subgenres, music and film. This makes it hard to give a precise definition to the meaning of "Gothic". One of the more typical ways to define the Gothic in literature is through the atmospheres a literary work creates, as is noted by, for example, Jerrold E. Hogle in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion of Gothic Fiction.* He writes that

> a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space …, or some new recreation of an older venue… . Within this space, or a combination of such spaces, are hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise at the main time of the story (2).

Hogle, focusing on Gothic in fiction, considers the Gothic as something that is primarily concerned with the past and the way it still influences the future, and the anxiety that comes from it. It is important to note that while Hogle focuses on the Gothic in the literary field, in the modern day the Gothic has expanded beyond the literary field (Bloom 2020).

Gothic is also often read as the return of the repressed. Hogle argues that the Gothic focuses on anxieties of the past, yet in the chapter "The contemporary Gothic: why we need it" in *The Cambridge Companion of Gothic fiction* Steven Bruhm gives examples of anxieties that have risen during the twentieth century and have been used in several forms in Gothic literature of the same time period. These anxieties include national safety, the fight for emancipation, and technological developments (260). He argues that Gothic texts assimilate broad societal anxieties into smaller personal problems that are experienced by the protagonist of a text (261). This makes these anxieties smaller and easier to grasp for both the protagonist and the reader.

These social anxieties, named "traumas" by Bruhm, are characterized by their incomprehensibility, since they exceed reason and cannot be grasped; and while the Gothic is able to make these traumas more understandable, the Gothic itself is also seen as impossible to comprehend by Bruhm. He connects the trauma a Gothic protagonist experiences to the trauma the reader might experience in their real life, and by knowing the Gothic trauma "inside out", it helps the reader to make sense of the incomprehensibility of their own experiences (272-3). Bruhm's insights are relevant for this research since his argument resonates well with the argument Karen Coats makes in regards to fantasy and children's literature. As shown in the Introduction, Coats argues that the wonderous fantasy worlds children might find within literature can help them to make sense of things in the real world that cannot, or are not to be understood. However, while Gothic fiction and fantasy are not the same, there still is an interesting connection to be found between Gothic literature and children's fantasy fiction.

In their introduction to *The Gothic in Children's literature,* Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis write that the presence of the Gothic in contemporary children's literature should not be a surprise. Gothic literature and children's literature did not only rise to prominence around the same time during the Long Nineteenth Century, but they argue that children's literature was written as a response to Gothic literature, to make children read "books that seasoned sound instruction with the tame delights that came from light whimsy rather than the more piquant pleasures of a good shiver" (2). Scary, Gothic tales were seen as improper for children, as it would threaten their innocence and discourage proper moral behaviour. However, as the development of children's literature shows, these are the tales children were, and still are, most interested in. This meant that Gothic was further developed as a strictly adult genre, and children's literature was meant to "construct an innocent child that could be trained up into a rational adult of Enlightened values" (3). Nevertheless, this attitude to the identity of the child and the meaning of childhood has shifted. Focusing on the popularity of Gothic comics among

children, Jackson, Coats and McGillis note that society sees more and more children behaving badly, and not just in the sense that they sometimes steal a piece of candy, but they mention children taking weapons to school or making sexually explicit pictures of each other (6). While part of the blame is still put on the adults responsible for the child, we also start to grant children their own complex motivations as to why they act a certain way. The authors argue that

> these ambiguities of childhood innocence, children's need for protection, their ability to be resilient and competent in the face of adult corruption, and the relocation of the monstrous find a ready home in Goth comics, which directly challenge traditional paradigms of a neglectful and often oppressive patriarchal adult culture (7).

In short, the Gothic has developed from a genre that children were actively prevented to have access to, into a genre that might be crucial to understand the modern child, both for adults and for children themselves. This is also noted by Victoria Carrington, who writes in her article "The Contemporary Gothic: Literacy and Childhood in Unsettled Times" that there is a societal panic about the meaning of contemporary childhood: with media present everywhere, children learn too much too soon, and grow up way faster than children from earlier times. It is important to note here, however, that this loss of innocence and growing up fast is something that can be said for children in the nineteenth century that were forced to work in factories; childhood innocence is something that traditionally has only been acknowledged in upper-middle class boys (Kileen 61). The Gothic helps to challenge the boundaries of what is considered "normal" for children and recognises that modern children are often not the innocent children that were envisioned in the philosophies of childhood during the Enlightenment in one way or another (Carrington 306). Gothic children's fiction often portrays children that take back the agency over their own actions. As I discussed in the introduction, children's literature has developed from the moral educational book of the nineteenth century into literature that allows children to see complicated and emotional situations unfold, without being explicitly taught how to deal

with these situations. Gothic fiction does the same, argue Jackson, Coats and McGillis. Children are often (partly) responsible for the presence or influence of evil in their world. However, rather than fleeing from this, they "turn to face the evil for which they are partly responsible, and work to expel it from their world" (7). Just like other contemporary children's fiction, Gothic fiction for children shows characters dealing with their problems, as opposed to being given the answers by adults or walking away from it. However, since this is a relatively recent development within both the production and research of children's literature, this has not received a lot of academical consideration yet. Furthermore, the development of the agency of children and the resistance to it coming from adults is also an important theme in both *Lockwood & co.* and *Ophie's Ghosts.*

The importance of the portrayal of children that deal with their problems rather than being helped by adults is also noted by Karen Coats in her chapter "The Gothic in American Children's Literature" in *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic.* She suggests that "the goal of Gothic literature for young children is to achieve mastery over turbulent emotions, most often through humor and the domestication of personified inner demons" (173). In other words, Gothic literature does not only teach children that they have agency and responsibility, it also helps them with the emotions that might come from dealing with the consequences of one's actions. Coats argues that this is done through the use of monsters that personify the complicated emotions might deal with, such as grief or anxiety, The child (both character and reader) is forced to reckon with the idea that not every person is good, and has to deal with emotions such as fear and trauma. In short, most gothic children's literature appears to focus on the regulation and repression of difficult emotions. Interestingly, similar preoccupations can be found in debates about regional varieties of the Gothic, such as the American Gothic.

American Gothic has been defined as a counter-genre to frontier literature, to share the dark sides of American history. In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to the*

American Gothic (2017) Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock argues that the fact that the Gothic focuses on transgressions makes it an ideal "tool for teaching and socialization" (2). On the one hand, these stories can show what happens to people who wander off the path into the dark woods, warning against going of the rails, while simultaneously portraying monsters that do not behave according to social norms and for that reason can only exist outside of society. The portrayal of transgressions and determining what is "good" or "bad" behaviour is also closely related to the theme of power within Gothic fiction, according to Weinstock. The power dynamics of American society determine what is taboo and what is proper, and Weinstock argues that in the American Gothic the power dynamics stem from slavery, racial antagonism and anxieties (3). Weinstock argues that the anxieties central to the American Gothic are concentrated around four themes: religion, geography, racial and sexual otherness, and rationality (6). All four function within their own boundaries, but are simultaneously connected to each other, especially in the case of geography and racial otherness. Weinstock discusses how the idea of the frontier as a "liminal zone of contact between civilization and wilderness" is emphasized within the American imagination (7). To go into the wilderness "is to leave civilization behind, to forsake faith and family, to flirt with danger, and to return changed – if one returns at all" (8). This is partly due to the American wilderness of course, with its wild mountain ranges, endless forests and deadly desserts but, as Weinstock asserts, has as much to do with America's racial anxieties. The wilderness is also the place where "the Indians" live, and in several American Gothic tales they are connected to supernatural forces threatening the white settlers (9). Interestingly, in more recent Gothic stories written by Indigenous authors such as Stephen Graham Jones, the reader sees Indigenous characters attempting to fight of (supernatural) threats that are brought to them by white Americans through, for example, gentrification. However, Weinstock, using analyses from Teresa A. Goddu (1987) and Justin Edwards (2003) argues that in the nineteenth century, the focus on race in the American Gothic shifted from anxieties around indigenous

people to black people and slavery. Weinstock claims that the history of slavery in America is what sets not only the American Gothic apart from other Gothics, but also what differentiates American literature as a whole from other literatures. Here, the American Gothic does not only grapple with anxieties around race mixing and the end of segregation, but also with the history of slavery (9).

Teresa A. Goddu was one of the first to consider slavery as crucial to the contemporary American Gothic, calling it "the 'ghost in the machine' that constitutes – even as it troubles – American literature's dominant narrative of freedom" (71) in her chapter "The African American slave narrative and the Gothic" in *A Companion to the American Gothic.* In other words, the American Gothic actively contradicts the dominant narrative of the United States as the "Land of the Free". In another chapter titled "American Gothic" for *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic*, Goddu argues that slavery in Gothic texts, whether explicitly present or not, confronts the reader with the fact that the racialised narratives of light and darkness find their roots in chattel slavery. The Gothic makes the unspeakable horrors of chattel slavery something that can be discussed, though often indirectly (63). Goddu explains that the fact that the Gothic is rooted in the violence of history is not unique for the American Gothic, but that the violence is slavery is what makes the American Gothic unique (65). While the horrors experienced in Gothic tales might be supernatural in nature, this does not mean that these horrors are imagined or individual; they expose the hidden roots of oppression that the modern United States are built upon. Goddu states that the American Gothic is able to bear witness to the history of slavery, especially the parts that have been repressed, and because they bear witness to this, "the American Gothic enables the objects of terror and torture to haunt back" (65). In other words, Goddu argues that it is essential to the American Gothic that it reveals the American history of slavery upon which the United States have been built and makes sure discussions about it cannot easily be avoided. Although the horrors of slavery are unspeakable,

the American Gothic reveals the horrors and the consequences that slavery has to this day and ensures it is seen as it is.

While the trauma of slavery might to some extent be specific to the American Gothic, as Goddu argues, it is here we return to Bruhm's approach to the Gothic as continually confronting us with "real, historical traumas that we in the west have created but that also continue to control how we think about ourselves as a nation" (271). The Gothic defies the idea of unspeakable horrors and portrays them in such a way that the reader has to grapple with real historical traumas. What is fascinating here is that both Goddu and Bruhm appear to touch on a similarity between Gothic texts aimed at adults and Gothic texts aimed at children that they themselves do not notice. As I discussed, most Gothic texts that are meant to be read by children focus on repressed and turbulent emotions; the monsters present in these texts are meant to portray these emotions and enable children to grapple with them while reading. However, the way Bruhm and Goddu discusses the portrayal of traumatic historical events in Gothic texts give the idea that the events and their related traumas are central in Gothic narratives aimed at adults. Since ghosts and Hauntology, the following topics in this chapter, also appear to focus on events rather than on emotions, my analysis will try to find how events and the emotions that come from them can reach across time in several forms.

Hauntology

As explained, Hauntology is a concept first coined by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (1993). The way he discussed Hauntology is very broad, covering almost all of human history and future. Due to the scope and aim of my thesis, I will focus on a more exact sense of Hauntology, namely the way other academics have used Hauntology to analyse cultural objects. A good definition of Hauntology is given by Line Henriksen in her article on creepypasta, an online horror phenomenon, where she explains that Hauntology is "a wordplay on ''haunting''

and ''ontology,'' suggesting that all that can be said to exist – which, according to traditional Western ontology, means to be immediate and present – is haunted by all that which it is not – that is, the absent and the deferred" (270). This idea is aligned with Derrida's deconstructionism in general, namely that nothing is purely present: everything this is defined by which it is not, which means that everything in a sense is "haunted" by the things they are not. For example, we know what "day" is because it is not night; the fact that day is defined by not being night means that this not-being hangs over it, in other words, everything depends on an Other in order to be known. Mark Fisher develops the nuances and complications of Hauntology further in his article "What is Hauntology?". He also subscribes to this definition of Hauntology, but adds to it that Hauntology is not just a wordplay on ontology, but that it actively works to contrast it. Hauntology denies the idea that something's presence is what identifies it. The ghost, or spectre, as Derrida named it, functions as a figure that cannot be fully present, and therefore is defined by what it was or will be (Fisher 19). This distinguishes Hauntology from deconstructionism in general: while deconstructionism argues that things are "haunted" by what they are not, Hauntology argues that things are haunted by what they were and what they could be, and that this is also what defines them: we can never truly know what something is, since it is also what they were and what they might be.

Katy Shaw uses the concept of Hauntology in her analysis of twenty-first century British literature (for adults). She agrees with Fisher's interpretation that Hauntology recognises that the present is not as self-sufficient as it claims it to be, and as humanity wants it to be (2). Shaw views Hauntology as a new way to think about time, past, present and future: rather than seeing the past as something that "ended", Shaw argues that the past continues to influence the present (5). She takes up the example Derrida gives as well, namely that of the Berlin Wall. After the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, some people, following the philosopher Francis Fukuyama, would claim it was "the end of history" and that the Berlin Wall, the Iron Curtain and all tensions

were definitely gone. However, Derrida argued that while the Wall was not physically present anymore, the fact that it had been there would continue to haunt both German and Western society (Shaw 5). In other words, the Berlin Wall never really "ended", its presence and absence are still felt to this day. This is, again, where the spectre comes in. Shaw argues that the spectre "facilitates an encounter with the past, in the hope that it will shape our understanding of the present, and of the future" (8). Spectres deconstruct our notion of a linear chronology, since they are the past returning in the present, and besides that, they also shatter the limits between life and death. Additionally, spectres are still not really present; they are comparable to the traces one might find in the forest. When one sees the print of a hoof it points to the fact that, apparently, a deer has been there. It is yet also clear that the deer is not there anymore; if it had been, the print would have been invisible beneath the hoof of the deer itself. A spectre, or a ghost, functions similarly: they make clear that a person was there once, but they are not anymore (at least not physically). Both the print of the hoof and the spectre point to an absence: something that was present, but has disappeared now, though signs that it used to be present lingers. Shaw argues that this is exactly what it means to be haunted: "The experience of being haunted is one of noticing absences in the present, recognizing fissures, gaps and points of crossover" (2). The primary motivation of Hauntology is to highlight these absences, to prevent people from losing a past they might wish to forget, to make sure people continue to see how the present connects to the past (19). In order to do so, the spectre needs to be recognised, to be engaged with; humanity needs to open up to the spectre and give it a voice, so we can hear what has been lost over time: "Although it is related to something past, the spectre is always current, its motivations and intervention are aimed at the present moment, and aim to highlight the precarious nature of that moment" (11). The reason the spectre (re-)appears is in order to warn the one on the receiving end of the spectre's appearance.

Nevertheless, in the introduction to *The Spectralities Reader,* María del Pilar Blanco and

Esther Peeren argue that ghosts do not always appear in the same manner, rather they act as a figure of surprise. Unlike the traumatic experiences that cause the aforementioned "gaps", ghosts not only mark the absence due to a traumatic event, but also show that something has to be done (13). As discussed before, "something" that has to be done can take on several forms, but both in general and in the context of this research, this often means that a protagonist has to listen to the ghost and act on their wishes. Sometimes this means that they need to find justice for the ghost who has been wronged in life, and sometimes this only means that they try to fulfil the ghost's final wish, but in both cases, they bear the responsibility to make sure that the ghost can move on. The appearance of a ghost, or haunting in general, also disrupts the conventional structure of chronology, reshaping history (Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 14). Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren argue that haunting counters historical overdetermination, the search for truth in a single point of history, since Hauntology/the ghost show how the past still influences the present, thus demonstrating how certain traumas or gaps can have several points of origin or relevance. The interference of the ghost complicates pointing to one (interpretation of) an event, since the ghost can have several origins, be influenced or have influenced other events or ghosts as well. Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren discuss how this disruption of history works through the connection between spectrality and the discourse of loss. "Being possessed" suggests that one is held by an anachronistic event, something that has happened in the past but that they cannot let go of. This connection between, loss, possession, trauma and Hauntology/ghosts demonstrates how the ghost has also become a useful metaphor – or a conceptual metaphor, as Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren call it – for discussions outside of cultural studies.

To this idea of the ghost as a conceptual metaphor, Michael Fiddler adds in his article "Ghosts of Other Stories: A Synthesis of Hauntology, Crime and Space" the use of Hauntology to study the influence of crime and the trauma that results from it on the place or environment the crime takes place in. Rather than calling it "the discourse of loss" he talks about the

incorporation of an object lost through trauma. For example, when person A loses a loved one, person B, and is unable to process that loss and grief, person B becomes part of the way of thinking and living of person A. However, even though person A would deny that loss, person B is still gone, and because person A refuses to accept the loss, they have to go through the realisation that person B is gone over and over again. While the discourse of loss speaks more about loss in general, incorporation is a specific process that happens when one denies that the loss has happened. Therefore, the loss is doomed to be repeated: the person who has lost the object denies that it is lost, they are for some reason confronted with the loss, going through the trauma again, and back to denial, repeating the cycle endlessly, sometimes passing on the trauma of loss to the next generation (466). This then turns into a ghost haunting the person. Even though the effects of incorporation are only discussed in relation to a single person, Fiddler believes the same can happen to a community or a whole nation. Fiddler agrees with Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, Derrida and Shaw that a haunting, in this case the result of incorporating a trauma, destabilises the distinction between past and present (468). As a response to the haunting, he suggests that people should try to find the ghost, or the loss, through the absences that stem from the loss in the first place. To explain this, Fiddler uses the artwork of *Die Familie Schneider* as an example. *Die Familie Schneider* was an artwork that consisted of two identically built and decorated houses, but "opening the front door and moving into the hallway revealed an initial shocking blankness. There were nails (positioned identically in both houses) to hang frames, but there were no pictures, no photos. The signs of living, of dwelling, were absent" (472). While some art critics suggest that this would mean that the visitor would be the ghost, haunting the inhabitants living in the two houses, Fiddler believes that the lack of signs of life, of the houses being lived in, show how the traumas of the surrounding area infuse the houses and make it feel empty and hostile, with the small bedrooms representing the claustrophobic rookeries, and the silent habitants show how generations of people have lived in

the area without being heard or moving forward (473). In other words, *Die Familie Schneider* shows how places can be haunted by not only the traumatic event itself, but also by all the events leading up to it to allow us to "hear the ghosts of other stories" (475). Fiddler's analysis shows that when we think of trauma and Hauntology, it is too limiting to only consider humanity's response; buildings and other places are just as much influenced by the event and the events surrounding it. Within my case studies, this becomes exceedingly clear when analysing the description of the haunted houses of *Lockwood & co.* and the perspective of the places given in *Ophie's Ghosts.*

The recognition of the environment in which a haunting/traumatic event took place is also emphasized by Avery Gordon in her book *Ghostly Matters.* Gordon, a sociologist, considers how Hauntology can be used as a framework to analyse how oppressive systems exert their power in daily life, without people noticing. She argues that haunting is the most apt way to describe the way in which abusive systems of power make their impact felt in everyday life, especially when people deny the fact that they are oppressive and/or when they are supposed to be over. However, the haunting of oppressive systems is not the same as it being simply exploitative or traumatising: "What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely" (xvi). In other words, Gordon specifically argues that the idea of being haunted cannot only be applied to trauma, but also to oppressive systems with their roots in the past. Just as with trauma and Hauntology, the idea is that events or systems that we think of as "past" are still very much present and influential today. However, Gordon says that hauntings happen and ghosts appear when there is nothing left to conceal them. For example, the system behind American plantation slavery has been abolished, yet the systems, such as capitalism and white supremacy that enabled slavery to happen in the first place are still present in contemporary American society. This suggests that African-Americans today are not

only haunted by the intergenerational trauma coming from slavery itself, but that they are also haunted by the institutional racism behind it. In other words, to exorcise the ghosts of oppressive systems of past and present, we need to change society and bring new systems into place, systems no ghosts are attached to. Interestingly, just like Fiddler, Gordon emphasises the importance of places and objects (physical or not) when it comes to hauntings. Where Fiddler argues that places are infused with the traumas and the circumstances leading to the traumatic event, Gordon argues that the same goes for the systems that make up our society as a whole. Both come back to Derrida's original discussion of Hauntology: the past is never simply over and done, it continues to influence everyday life in the present. This is especially interesting for the analysis of *Ophie´s Ghosts,* in which the primary location Daffodil Manor is not only built on the profits of slavery, but is also maintained by the system that enabled slavery to happen, even though slavery has been abolished at the time of the story. Where Fiddler spoke of specific places and Gordon discusses more abstract systems that are haunted, Mark Fisher gets even more specific and discusses objects and their hauntings.

Fisher adopts the term "xenolithic artifacts" in the article "What is Hauntology" from author and philosopher Rema Negarestani, who defined it as "relics or artifacts … in the shape of objects made of inorganic materials (stone, metal, bones, souls, ashes, etc.). Autonomous, sentient and independent of human will, their existence is characterized by their forsaken status ..." (as cited in Fisher 20-21). Xenolithic artifacts are what Fisher calls "stained by time" (19), places or objects implicated in an important event that continues to influence the present, "where time can be only be experienced as broken, as a fatal repetition" (21). These objects seemingly contain a certain agency of a being that no longer physically exists in our world, yet is still able to hold power over our world and ourselves. Negarestani calls xenolithic artifacts "parasitic" as they get their power from a human host, and through that host they (often) threaten the world. In the case of ghost stories that centralise an object, such as M. R. James' "Oh,

whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad", these xenolithic artifacts have taken in vengeful spirits that in their turn unleash their anger onto other people who are not necessarily connected to the original event that made them vengeful in the first place. Negarestani and Fisher are not unique in this approach to the agency of objects. In their article "Stoelen, manden stenen: objecten in de hedendaagse roman" Ben de Bruyn and Pieter Verstraeten argue that modern novels showcase an interest in objects that are able to materialise a memory, in other words, objects are essential to bring memories about (149). They trace this trend back to modernist literature, but also state that interest in the object in academic spheres is something more recent, with discussions around the agency of objects and their role in the creation of interpersonal relationships (150). They conclude that the contemporary novel pays more attention to the role of the object and the way it shapes the characters, though it happens indirectly (167). Though De Bruyn and Verstraeten ascribe less malicious intentions to objects compared to Negarestani and Fisher, the idea remains similar: objects can contain a bit of history and spread that in the present.

The power of objects is also relevant when it comes to a more direct relationship to the dead. In her book *Objects of the Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life* Margaret Gibson speaks with several people about the importance of objects that belonged to a person that has passed away. From these conversations, she draws several conclusions. Firstly, after a person has died, their personal belongings suddenly come to the foreground for the surviving relatives: objects are suddenly seen in a new light and have renewed importance, that can make people decide to keep them (6). However, Gibson also notes that there is a certain hierarchy between the emotional importance of these possessions that is not monetary: personal items that were "close" to a person, such as jewellery, clothes, books and decorative items are seen as more important than furniture or kitchen gear (7), even though the items are still quite ordinary in nature (9). Several interviewees have told Gibson that these items, and their grief, have

started to haunt them, though they do not necessarily experience this as something negative; rather, when using or seeing those items they feel closer to the person they have lost (82). Put differently, objects take up an important place in processing one's grief, and this is experienced quite intensely. The importance of objects and the emotions bound to them will be essential to the analysis of *Lockwood & co.* that reverses the emotional bond between a living person and the object of a dead person, to the lingering connection between an object and its dead owner. This is also seen in literary analysis, for example in Ruth Heholt's and Rebecca Lloyd's analysis of Louisa Baldwin's work in their article "Ghostly Objects and the Horrors of Ghastly Ancestors in the Ghost Stories of Louisa Baldwin". They argue that the objects inherited from horrible ancestors are central to the hauntings and horrors that take place in Baldwin's short stories. The objects in these stories "consider the power of family and history in concrete material form, when the physical world bears down as a malevolent force on the human subject, as artefacts and houses that represent family history are animated and menace that family to destruction" (198). This goes to show that haunted objects in ghost stories do not only have a function with regards to the horror central to the ghost story, but that they also tell a family history of transgenerational trauma on their own. The discussion of objects and their power, whether that is supernatural as with the xenolithic artifacts, or emotional is crucial to my case studies, in which the emotional connection to an object is a way in which the ghost can return and be fought against.

Trauma, and transgenerational trauma, have come up several times already with regards to the Gothic and Hauntology. In *The Spectrality Reader* Del Pilar Bianco and Peeren argue that intergenerational trauma is a haunting force, "where the notion of haunting, as site of comparison, clarifies both the temporal and spatial aspects of the affliction" (8). Haunting is an apt metaphor for (intergenerational) trauma since it considers both the fact that it is something that has happened in the past still impacting the present as well as the importance of space with

traumas and hauntings. As discussed before, once a traumatic event has occurred in a certain place, that place is forever "stained by time" due to that trauma taking place there. This is also noted by Anna-Lena Werner in her work *Let Them Haunt Us: How Contemporary Aesthetics Challenge Trauma as the Unrepresentable.* She argues that the idea of trauma does not only imply the traumatic event itself, but also the aftermath of it. Both Werner and Ashlee Joyce in *The Gothic in Contemporary British Trauma Fiction* argue that trauma is not something that is experienced in a logical chronological order. Joyce writes that "since the initial instance of trauma is not fully integrated into the victim's psyche at the time of its occurrence, the victim's experience of trauma is forever experienced as belated" (6). What is haunting about trauma, then, is not only the experience itself, but also the knowledge that there is a chance that the full violence and impact of the event might not be yet known, and might never be. The solution to this has also been suggested by Katy Shaw in relation to hauntings: other people, not the victims themselves, have an ethical responsibility to bear witness to these traumatic experiences, to turn them into shared experiences and take the burden of the victims (6). One way of bearing witness suggested by Joyce is through literature, and as the title of her book already hints at, she believes that Gothic fiction can take up a special place in this process. Trauma is seen as something that is so horrible that it cannot be spoken of (11); whereas the Gothic is known for its ability to represent the unrepresentable through metaphors and symbols (13). Besides that, many Gothic tales already rely on a testimonial structure, ideal for a story that needs to bear witness to horrible events (14). A downside of using the Gothic to narrate traumatic experiences however is that it often can venture into horror, turning a testimonial of a traumatic event into something bordering on the voyeuristic (10). Thus, while the Gothic can be a useful tool to discuss trauma due to its genre conventions, anyone writing a Gothic trauma story or using the Gothic to critique trauma narratives needs to be aware of the sensibilities that surround both.

To conclude, both the Gothic and Hauntology are broad concepts that offer many

different perspectives and ways to analyse literature. The Gothic, being the more senior of the two, has developed and changed a lot over time and across cultures, but is still a popular choice when an author wants to portray contemporary anxieties. Hauntology forces one to reckon with the boundaries of time and, in the case of ghosts, death. These two main themes will be central to the following two chapters. The next chapter on *Lockwood & co.* focuses mostly on the relationship between trauma, the Gothic and Hauntology. An interesting discussion here will be on the importance of places and objects and their connection to death and trauma. Besides that, the series also offers a lot of insight on trauma and the Gothic in (children's) literature. The final chapter on *Ophie's Ghosts* will return to the topic of the American Gothic, as the history of slavery and racism are an integral part of the story. Connected to that, the link between ghosts, history and emotions is made all the more pressing in this chapter, leading to some interesting contradictions in the story and its own themes.

Chapter 2: *Lockwood & co.* (9266)

Lockwood & co. is a series written by Jonathan Stroud aimed at children aged 12-15 and consists of five books: *The Screaming Staircase* (2013)*, The Whispering Skull* (2014)*, The Hollow Boy* (2015)*, The Creeping Shadow* (2016) and *The Empty Grave* (2017). The books follow a company of three young "agents": Anthony Lockwood, the owner, 14 years old at the start of the series, and colleagues Lucy Carlyle and George Cubbins, both 13 years old. Lucy has a special Talent, that allows her to hear the ghosts speak more clearly than others. The series is narrated by Lucy as the three hunt down ghosts and try to make this alternative 21st century London that is plagued by ghosts safer for adults, who themselves cannot see the ghosts. Their modus operandi is relatively simple: find out who the ghost might have been, how they died, and find the Source that connects them to this world and destroy it. Lockwood & co. is a unique ghost-hunting agency, one that is fully run by children with no adults in sight, which often leads to mistrust from adults, both clients and overseeing organisations (admittedly, sometimes rightfully so). The lack of limits they set for themselves leads them to uncover a lot of mysteries that certain powerful people prefer to remain hidden, and in the end to find out what the origin of the Problem is, the name for the ghostly pandemic razing over England.

This chapter focuses on the theme of trauma and how trauma can cross the boundaries of both time and life and death, and how ghosts can visualise this for children. In order to fully show how ghosts can make trauma understandable for children, the first part of this chapter focuses on the "science" behind the ghosts in *Lockwood & co.*: where do they come from, and how can the agents fight them. The next part discusses how the Problem affects the children who are now forced out of school to risk their lives every night to fight ghosts. The emotionally challenging situations children have to deal with will be further explained through Lockwood and Lucy themselves, and how both deal with it in ways that could not have been more different. The third part focuses on how trauma can affect the physical environment. The way England

functions has completely changed due to the Problem, but this can also be seen on smaller scales. Here the effect historical trauma can have on a place will be discussed, and the different responses from society to both these traumas and these effects. All these different elements lead into the final part of the analysis: not only the way ghosts cross the border between life and death, but also the way living humans try to fight against this border: the ghosts can only exist because that border is so feeble. In this final part the consequences of toying with this border will be central.

One thing everyone knows in this series is that ghosts enter our world through Sources: objects that used to belong to the ghosts while they were alive, and were especially meaningful to them. In most cases, this means that the Source are the bodily remains of the ghost, but this is not always the case. The team, and especially researcher George, wonder about the nature of the Sources: what is it about these objects that allows ghosts to come back? George explains it as follows: "'Now, we know that ordinary Sources represent weak points where Visitors can slip through from … from wherever it is they *ought* to be. Imagine them as holes in old fabric'" (*Shadow* 316). Sources are a sort of gate through which ghosts can cross over; destroying the Source is destroying the door, and banning the ghost. A Source can also be temporarily closed off by encasing it in silver or iron. As said, the Source is often the body of the ghost, but the most powerful ghosts usually have a Source that is an emotionally charged object. For instance, in the case of Annabel Ward, the first ghost the reader encounters in the series, the Source was the necklace she got from the lover who killed her. As Margaret Gibson argues, after a loved one has passed away, people tend to feel a closer emotional connection to the objects that used to belong to the dead; *Lockwood & co.* uses that feeling many people recognise to tell the story of the connection between the object and the dead. While people can hold onto a loved one through an object of theirs, *Lockwood & co.* shows that the dead might actually hold on. This connects the Sources also to another trope of the haunted object; namely, the idea that objects

in ghost stories can represent a trauma that is being passed on through generations. Sources are quite literally objects of trauma: in the case of Annabel Ward, the necklace is arguably the reason she died, representing the toxic relationship she had with her lover. When Lucy touches the necklace, she hears and feels "… joy and terror mixed together, and knew I couldn't get off no matter how I tried. And all at once came sudden silence, and a cold voice talking in my ear, and a final blaze of fury that ascended to a desperate shriek of pain" (*Staircase* 192). She feels the abusive relationship and how it ended in Annabel's murder. The necklace does not only hold the emotional connection that allows Annabel's ghost to enter the world of the living, but it also passes the trauma on.

People tend to experience a strong connection between an object and the person it belonged to. The Sources have a similar connection, but it has become something darker. This is similar to the "possession" that Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren discuss: the refusal to let go of something, either psychological or physical, can mean a person becomes possessed by the loss and the object that symbolises the lost one, rather than that they are the ones possessing the object. A similar thing happens to the ghost: they are so strongly connected to their trauma they are unable to let go and move on. The Sources, like Annabel's necklace, are objects that symbolise their trauma and the reason why they cannot move on.

What Lucy did with the necklace does not only showcase the importance of the Sources, but also Lucy's connection to ghosts. As Katie Shaw argued in her work on Hauntology and modern literature, it is important to listen to the ghost and give them a voice, in order to highlight the absences. Lucy listens to the ghosts she encounters and from that, she develops her own technique to get rid of ghosts that involves listening to the ghost, rather than fighting it: "My hunch relied on two things: that many ghosts had an objective in returning; and that, if you calmly sought to discover this, they would leave you alive long enough to find it out" (*Boy* 103). Lucy believes that if she is able to figure out the purpose of a ghost, she will be able to

sever the ties of a ghost to the living world without violently destroying the symbol of that tie, the Source. This is also the case with Annabel Ward: when they have figured out who the killer is and are confronted by him, Lucy takes the necklace out of its silver encasing that prevented Annabel from coming out and attacking them. Rather than turning on everyone in the room like Annabel did previously, she now only attacks her murderer, after which her ghost dissolves, while the necklace is still intact. Lucy believes this is because she finished her final business, exacting revenge, and Annabel is now able to move on. Contrary to her colleagues, Lucy listens to the ghosts and acts based on the information she gets from them, using their knowledge and past experiences to inform her present actions and decisions.

The intrusion of the ghosts in the world of the living has profoundly changed English society. In the first book, Lucy recounts how the Problem was discovered and what happened afterwards: about fifty years ago, two children, Marissa Fittes and Tom Rotwell, discovered that ghosts would enter this world, but that only they and some other children could see them. Together, they developed ways in which the ghosts could be fought and exorcised. They started two ghost hunting agencies that have become the most important and powerful agencies at the beginning of the series (*Staircase* 67-68) The pervasiveness and spread of the Problem has changed the way society functions:

> …the country got used to living with the new reality. Adult citizens kept their heads down, made sure their houses were well stocked with iron and left it to the agencies to contain the supernatural threat. The agencies, in turn, sought the best operatives. And because extreme psychic sensitivity is almost exclusively found in the very young, this meant that whole generations of children like me found themselves becoming part of the front line (*Staircase* 67-68*)*.

Adults have become fully dependent on children to keep them safe, yet they do not trust children enough to hunt ghosts by themselves. Every team of agents goes out with an adult supervisor,

often someone who used to have psychic abilities but lost them when they reached adulthood. However, as will be discussed when looking closer at Lucy's traumas, these supervisors often only care about their own safety, with no consideration for that of the children.

The danger of the work they have to do means that quite a lot of children are killed, leaving their friends and colleagues behind. The way this reality is talked about, both by the main characters as well as the adults, is almost jarring, as most people barely seem to care that children are killed while protecting adults. The first instance of this is when Lucy goes for her interview at Lockwood & co. and asks Lockwood why there is an open position at his agency: "'Perhaps "passed on" would be more accurate. Or, indeed, "passed over". Ah – good! Tea!'" (*Staircase* 93). Lockwood at first tries to avoid the topic, and as soon as there is a possible distraction he moves on. This can of course simply be explained as Lockwood feeling uncomfortable, but what is more striking is that this old employee is never mentioned again. As Lucy said in the previous quote: children simply are the front line, dying in action just is part of that. Other times, the deaths of their colleagues from other agencies are used as a warning: "A girl at Rotwell's had died the previous week after forgetting to restock her magnesium flares" (*Staircase* 16). Because of this, Lockwood and Lucy double check their own stock before leaving on a case. The deaths and mistakes of other children are what keeps them alert and alive.

Even though the children have now been responsible for public safety for fifty years, adults are still uncomfortable with it. In some cases, it is because they feel it is unfair. During their first case in *The Screaming Staircase,* their client Mrs Martin says as a goodbye to them: "'So very young! How terrible that the world has come to this'" (9). Mrs Martin does not appear to be concerned about their expertise, but more about the fact that she needs to hire children to solve her, possibly lethal, problem. However, she sadly is an outlier. When Lockwood & co. go to solve a possible murder mystery in a bed and breakfast, they are met with hostility and

distrust from the couple who run the place (and who also turn out to be the murderers). Mr Evans tells them: "'I am of the generation that remembers when children *were* children. Not psychic investigation agents with swords and an over-inquisitive manner'" (*Boy* 12). He finds it hard to tolerate that there are now children who ask personal questions about their sleeping arrangements and enter their home without permission. Both Mrs Martin and Mr Evans struggle to accept that children do not go to school or play anymore, but work to keep everyone else safe. At the same time, Lockwood finds it hard to understand it the other way around: "'Come to think of it, what did kids *do* with themselves in the days before the Problem? Most of them didn't even have to work, did they? What was it – school or something? Life must have been so *dull*'" (*Boy* 145-6). While the adults find it horrible that children cannot go to school and have to risk their lives every night, Lockwood cannot imagine a different life. He thinks life that way would be very boring, even though the threat of a life like that looms over him; once he becomes older, he will lose his psychic abilities and a "normal" life will be the only possibility for him. While the past haunts the adults in the sense that they are still shocked by the fact that children are now the experts on their safety instead of the other way around, Lockwood and other agents fear the future in which they will be useless. Looking at this through the lens of Hauntology, this tension between the past of adults and the current reality of children shows how time can haunt different people in different ways: the adults refuse taking advise from children as, in their eyes, they are just children. However, every action of the children is motivated by the threat of losing their talents in the future: as soon as they cannot hunt ghosts anymore, they risk becoming useless. This shows that children are handed a great responsibility, and while it is strange for both the reader and the older adults in the series, the children cannot imagine a different life. This reflects the role children often have in Gothic stories aimed at children: they have an important part to play in the defeat of evil, and that agency is frightening to the adults who still prefer to imagine them as innocent.

Both Lockwood and Lucy are severely traumatised by events and their own actions in the past, but they respond in different ways which shows how trauma can affect the way one experiences time. Before Lucy joined Lockwood & co., she worked for a smaller agency in the north of England, with four other children and an adult supervisor. One night, something went terribly wrong: Lucy felt the threat of a powerful ghost, but no one felt the same and she was unable to prove her intuition was right, so their supervisor forced them to continue. As a result, Lucy's whole team was killed and Lucy herself barely made it out alive. Though she was allowed to continue working for the agency, it would have been under the same supervisor who had neglected his team. As a result, Lucy fled form her village and went to London, where she ended up at Lockwood & co. The guilt still bothers her, as she tells Lockwood and George

> 'I *don't* always get it right. I've made bad mistakes before now. I never told you about my last case before I came to London. I sensed the ghost there was a bad one, but I didn't trust my intuition and my supervisor didn't listen to me either. Well, it was a Changer, and it fooled us all. But I *almost* saw through it. If I'd followed my deeper instincts, I might've gotten us out in time…' I stared down at the tablecloth. 'As it was, I *didn't* act. And people died' (*Staircase* 435).

Lucy blames herself for the deaths of her friends, feeling like it is something she could have prevented. She weaponizes her talents as if it is the only thing that can protect her and her friends, while also being too insecure to fully rely on them due to this accident. As Lockwood tells her, it was more the fault of the supervisor who refused to listen and act. Still, as a result at every turn in the series, Lucy makes decisions that she feels will keep everyone safe, even if Lockwood and George do not agree or are not aware of Lucy's instincts. This becomes the biggest problem at the end of the third book. During their final case in the third book, Lucy loses control over her emotions and endangered both their team and the team they were working with. After this, Lucy is torn away from her team and confronted by a ghost that takes the shape

of a dead Lockwood, telling her this would be the future: Lucy will make another mistake, killing Lockwood in the process. Because of this, Lucy decides to quit without telling Lockwood, George or Holly, a new hire, her reasons why. This is the exact opposite to what Lucy did when her first team was killed, she listens to her instincts and acts on it, though as Lockwood later points out: ghosts figure out what someone's weakness is and use it to play with their victims.

Lucy's trauma, from when she ignored her intuition and got people killed, is related to the way in which she sees the future as a constant possible threat. She constantly tries to predict and know what is going to happen and does everything in her power to prevent that from happening. In her case, it is not as simple as her present being haunted by a past trauma; her future is haunted by it as well. Interestingly, this is totally opposite from what Lockwood's trauma response looks like. When Lockwood was nine years old, his older sister Jessica died. Their parents were psychic investigators, researching how other (indigenous) cultures dealt with death and ghosts. After their passing in an apparent car accident, Jessica, fifteen years old and lacking psychic talents, tried to clean some of their stuff up. She accidentally broke a jar that held a ghost, which resulted in the ghost coming out and attacking her, killing Jessica before Lockwood had the chance to save her. Lockwood avoids talking about her, locking her bedroom where she died. Only at the end of the second book and in the beginning of the third Lucy, George and the reader learn what happened to her. He takes them to Jessica's room and tells the story, constantly repeating it is "ancient history" (*Boy* 68, 69, 71). This exemplifies Lockwood's approach to everything: "Whatever happened then is in the past. What counts now is the future" (*Staircase* 129). He wants to leave the past behind and go on, forgetting everything that has happened in order to make Lockwood & co. the biggest agency in London. However, his behaviour suggests otherwise. Lucy is the first to realise this when they are in Jessica's room: "Look at this place! Look at this room and what's in it! This is *so* right now" (*Boy* 71). Lucy is

aware that Lockwood is not over his sister's death, and this also shows in Lockwood's actions. After a case in the third book, where they suspect a child has been killed and has now returned as a vengeful ghost, Lucy feels pity for the ghost, something that frustrates Lockwood: "'And let's have less of the 'poor little guy', please Lucy. Whatever he was in life, Tom's ghost is part of this dangerous haunting'" (*Boy* 160). Lucy realises that she cannot possibly say anything to change Lockwood's perspective; she knows how his sister died and that that is why he feels this way about ghosts. Despite Lockwood focusing on the future, saying it is all "ancient history", he is undoubtedly still stuck in the moment in which a ghost killed his sister and he was too late to save her; and since all ghosts have the ability to kill, all of them need to be removed, no matter their history.

Lucy appears to be scared of the future: what might happen, and how is she going to prevent that from happening? This fear informs every action she takes. However, her interest always appears to lie in the past: what has happened to a ghost and what can she do to make their suffering end? Lockwood is the opposite of that: while he claims to be always looking forward to the future, he is almost like a ghost himself, always reliving his traumatic past, but making sure it ends before the ghost can kill someone. This comparison is one Lockwood himself also seems to make, though implicitly: "'Under the anger and sorrow, Lucy, I was just left feeling hollow. Because I should have been in the room. I should have been there for her. And it's not going to happen to me again'" (*Boy* 392). As discussed, ghosts in *Lockwood & co.* are stuck in a loop, always reliving the same event, often their death, over and over again. Stronger ghosts are also stuck, but try to fight their way out, attacking the living. Lockwood admits here that he relives the death of his sister regularly and wants to prevent anything like it from happening, but he forgets that Lucy and their friends are not helpless like his sister was. Both Lockwood and Lucy feel the guilt of their perceived failures in the past. While Lucy tries to predict the future based on past experiences, Lockwood assumes that the past will happen

again, and that he alone is responsible for preventing that. What makes the two traumas even more interesting, is that Del Blanco Pilar and Peeren argued that while ghosts are often related to trauma, they are distinct in that traumatic experiences are often remembered in similar fashion, whereas ghosts are surprising and do not manifest the same way every time. Interestingly, in the cases of both Lucy and Lockwood, their traumas manifest more like the ghosts they encounter than as trauma. Both of them try to act differently in response to their traumas, they try to break out of the loop, either by fleeing (Lucy) or fighting back (Lockwood). In short, their traumas and their responses demonstrate how traumas can move across time and influence both present and future, and keep someone stuck in the past. The series does not give an answer to what is the right way to deal with trauma. Lucy appears to embrace her trauma, weaponizing it to prevent a similar thing to happen. Lockwood on the other hand tries to forcefully lock it away, as will also be discussed later on when it comes to his sister's room. While Lucy appears to be able to move on and Lockwood is stuck, Lucy clings on to her past as well, which results in as many issues as Lockwood's negligence of his trauma. In the end, the only correct answer appears to be that the characters need to be able to talk openly with each other to prevent their trauma from coming back and causing problems, as seen with the conversation on the grave of Lockwood's parents that will be discussed later on.

While the theme of trauma might seem heavy for a children's books, as explained in the Introduction, mixed fantasy books like this are ideal to make these topics understandable for children. However, *Lockwood & co.* is not just mixed fantasy, but also Gothic, and as discussed in the theoretical framework, Gothic can be especially useful to narrate stories of trauma. Partly this is similar to mixed fantasy: the Gothic has symbols and tropes that are closely related to trauma, such as, in the case of this series, ghosts. Simultaneously, many Gothic stories are written like testimonials: an intradiegetic narrator is telling what happened to them. This is also the case with *Lockwood & co.* but interestingly, *Lockwood & co.* deviates herein from what

other children's books do. Often the narrator in these books is the title character: think of *Harry Potter, Percy Jackson,* and *The Ranger's Apprentice. Lockwood & co.* seems to follow in the footsteps of *Sherlock Holmes*: the narrator is the right hand of the title character, Lucy, who tells us the story, not Lockwood. On the one hand, this might suggest a more objective perspective on the events of the series, but as already discussed, Lucy's perspective is also heavily coloured by her own experiences. This narratological choice conforms to the conventions of one of the series' genre, while also deviating from another. However, the fact that it is done this way means not only that we get more insight into the ghosts, since Lucy is the only character that can hear them clearly, but also that the conflicts between Lucy and Lockwood are more nuanced. As said before, there is no judgement on how Lockwood and Lucy deal with their respective traumas; but Lucy's trauma and her way of dealing with it are so closely related to her connection to the ghosts, it would have been impossible to get the same nuance from Lockwood's perspective.

The different sites are almost as important as the ghosts in *Lockwood & co.* Before going on a case, the team starts with research on the place. Who lived there? What happened? Who could be the one causing the trouble? Moreover, not only these specific, often private places are important. As explained, the Problem has completely turned society upside down; public places, especially those connected to the dead, are not what they used to be. As explained in the precious chapter, places can hold a lot of history. As Fiddler argued, the atmosphere of a place can completely change due to a traumatic event. In *Lockwood & co.* certain places are completely avoided due to their connection to the past. For example, in *The Whispering Skull,* Lockwood & co. are asked to assist with a case on the Kensal Green Cemetery. Lucy fills the reader in on what happened to cemeteries after the Problem: "Today, the cemeteries were overgrown, the bowers wild and laced with thorns. Few adults ventured there by daylight; at night they were places of terror, to be avoided at all costs" (*Skull* 75). Places that used to allow "respite from

the metropolitan whirl" (74) and to "muse upon mortality" (75) are now seen as dangerous and potentially lethal due to the Problem. Kensal Green Cemetery is now not a place to think about mortality, but, in the worst case, a place to experience mortality yourself. Yet this treatment of cemeteries does not only show that people tend to avoid cemeteries and places connected to death since the Problem, but also death and the emotions that come from a loved one's passing. In *The Empty Grave,* Lockwood takes Lucy with him to visit the graves of his family, where he tells her: "'Lives lost, loved ones taken before their time. And then we hide our dead behind iron walls and leave them to the thorns and ivy. We lose them twice over, Lucy. Death's not the worst of it. We turn our faces away'" (*Grave* 90-91). The Problem means that many people cannot mourn their loved ones anymore; instead they live in fear of them returning as ghosts, and put them as far away as possible, unable to go to their graves to pay their respect. Graveyards and other places for grief have been taken away from people; all that is left is the fear of the dead. This conversation between Lockwood and Lucy shows how mixed fantasy in children's literature can help with discussing complicated themes with children. It shows the difficult balance between on the one hand having to accept a loved one is gone, while on the other hand also acknowledging that their influence is not. Refusing to accept death is wrong, and will only result in getting stuck in a loop; yet completely shutting death out and refusing to acknowledge it means refusing to grief and process a loss. This balance will be further discussed in the third chapter on *Ophie's Ghosts.*

Nevertheless, cemeteries are not the only places that have been radically changed by the problem. Lucy tells the story of a ghost in her hometown, a girl named Penny Nolan who drowned herself after a broken heart. While they were able to retrieve her body, this was not the Source of her haunting, and they could not figure out what or where it actually is. Instead, "… they rerouted the path, and let the field lie fallow. It's now a pretty place of wild flowers" (*Staircase* 72). Both this story and the cemeteries show how people adapt to hauntings, though

they refuse to deal with the events surrounding a haunting. Besides that, Penny Nolan's place of haunting also demonstrates how trauma can influence the area in which it happened. While Lucy says it is now a pretty place covered in flowers, underneath that a terrible event is concealed and everyone avoids it. A similar thing can be said for Jessica Lockwood's room, the place where she died. Lucy describes it as follows:

> It was a place of absence; we were in the presence of something that had gone. It was like coming to a valley where someone had once shouted, loud and joyously, and the echo of that shout had resounded between the hills, and lasted a long time. But now it had vanished, and you stood on the spot, and it was not the same (*Boy* 74)

Penny Nolan's field, but especially Jessica's room are interesting examples of Hauntology. Both show a place that is marked by an absence, someone who once was there, but not anymore, yet Lucy can still feel that they are missing from that place, even though she knew neither of them. Again, this relates to the discussion of the influence of trauma on places by Fiddler: I discussed this already with regards to Penny's field, but while her spot was allowed to be overgrown with flowers, Lockwood keeps his sister's room locked away, spotless, inaccessible to anyone except for himself. Though he can claim that it is all ancient history, it is history that not only influences his own behaviour, as we have seen, but also his own home.

The influence of trauma on houses is not only felt in the Lockwood home, but also in the places the three agents visit for their cases. The houses, that are also the site of the more dangerous hauntings Lockwood & co. face, are almost personified. The house they visit in *The Hollow Boy,* where it appears as if the kitchen help is chased up the stairs by his murderer is described as follows: "It [the staircase] *was* a remarkable elegant construction and the dark heart of the building. … The stairs hugged the right side of the oval … ." (*Boy* 143). Other times, halls and stairs are described as "the arteries and airways" of a house (*Staircase* 11) or a building as a "breathing giant" (*Grave* 124). All these places are described as if they are not just

alive, but also threatening. The hallway in *The Hollow Boy* is a dark heart and hugging, further narrowing the space the characters are in. This is a theme with all three buildings described here: they infringe on the personal space of the team, threatening them, and the human-like descriptions emphasise this feeling. Furthermore, it appears as if the houses come to life, which, in a sense, might be true. The ghosts, lacking a body of their own, often use the house to scare the characters. For instance, Annabel Ward, the ghost of the house described in *The Screaming Staircase,* uses the stairs to make the sound of a body falling down from it, echoing the way in which she killed a previous inhabitant and threatening Lucy and Lockwood the same might happen to them. By describing the buildings as bodies, it is implied that they are the embodiment of the ghost. Finally, these descriptions focus on the liminal spaces in the house: hallways, staircases, and doors. As discussed, ghosts are liminal beings themselves, hovering between life and death, past and presence. This is emphasised by their presence in these liminal spaces and their embodiment of them. The ghosts rarely find themselves in a single room, instead using the liminal spaces of the house they are haunting to keep them out. In the case of the ghost of *The Hollow Boy,* they also find his Source underneath the staircase. The Source of Annabel Ward is more interesting, as it is found in a room, seemingly negating the trend of Sources in liminal spaces. However, her Source is entombed in a wall, which is arguably even more curious. A wall is not a liminal space, but rather a physical border between two spaces, one that Annabel has been crossing to threaten Lucy and Lockwood. This is certainly not the only border that Annabel has been crossing: the wall represents the border between life and death, one that every ghost has crossed.

Just like the idea of a strict border between life and death, the idea of time as a straight line that has a beginning and an end has become highly problematic due to the presence of ghosts. This becomes apparent for the first time in the third book, in which London is plagued by a sudden surge in supernatural appearances. DEPRAC, the organisation that tries to register

the amount of ghosts and the destruction of Sources, is unable to figure out how it is possible that there is such a rise in ghostly appearances. George poses a few theories:

> 'So what's a cluster? There are two kinds. One is when a single terrible event has created a whole lot of ghosts in one fell swoop. Blitz bombs did that … . The *other* kind is when there's a powerful original haunting that gradually spreads its influence over the area. Its ghosts kill others and so, over many years, a troupe of spirits, from different times and places, is assembled' (*Boy* 222-3).

George's first theory is relatively simple: a single trauma causing many traumatised victims that still come back. These ghosts are often considered Type One ghosts, weaker ghosts that do not necessarily have a purpose in coming back; their death simply was so sudden and violent that they cannot let go of life. The second theory suggests that the pandemic of ghosts functions like any other pandemic: one ghost can create more ghosts, like one infected person can infect others. According to George, the victims of ghosts are often similar to the ghosts of the Blitz: lethargic and passive, unable to accept they are dead, but not necessarily violent. Of course, this does not go for the primary haunting, the one that causes the cluster, which has to be extremely powerful in order to create a cluster. This second theory is a case of a past event, or person, infiltrating the present and over time endangering it. Yet George still thinks this is not what is going on:

> 'These ghosts haven't been building up *slowly*; they've all become super-active almost overnight. Two months ago the Problem wasn't any worse here than anywhere else in London. Now we've got whole streets being evacuated. … What if it isn't some terrible *ancient* event that's igniting all these spirits, but something terrible that's happening *now*?' (*Boy* 223).

George switches the narrative of his second theory: what if it is not the past haunting the present, but the present haunting the past, causing the ghosts to act up? While Derrida argued that the present can be haunted by the promises, possibilities and threats of the future, the present influencing the past is something completely different. Of course, George is not saying that the present is changing what happened in the past, but present actions (that will be discussed later) do influence the consequences of that past. As discussed, Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren argue in *The Spectrality Reader* that the concept of haunting counters historical overdetermination, in which people look for the truth of our present in one single event in the past. This is what DEPRAC, the organisation that coordinates the research into the outbreak, is doing according to George: he believes that they are looking too closely at the past, while for once the answer might lie in the present. The ongoing outbreak in this book confronts the reader with the idea that our understanding and actions of the present might also impact our understanding of the past; history is not a singular event, but it is still shaped to this day. The epidemic shows that present events can influence the understanding of the past and the way it (in this case literally) comes back to haunt us.

George turns out to be right: certain people were doing something that upset Sources that were inactive until then. The first hint at what might be going on, not just with the epidemic in book three but with the Problem as a whole, is given in the second book. After Lockwood & co. have helped with securing an old grave at the Kensal Green Cemetery, they discover the body was that of a doctor called Edmund Bickerstaff, and he was buried with a strange object they compare to a mirror. They all feel the pull of looking into the mirror, even though they all somehow realise it is dangerous to do so. The mirror appears to be a glass surrounded by bones. Lucy figures out that these are Sources, though weak, because she can hear the ghosts begging to be released. They later learn from the titular whispering skull, a unique ghost stuck in a ghost jar that Lucy can communicate with, that the mirror is actually called a bone glass, and the skull

was there when it was made. It says that the bone glass "'*gives enlightenment'*" (*Skull* 245), and though it refuses to say anything else, it does give them instructions on where to find Bickerstaff's notes in which he explains how the bone glass was made and what it does: "'It's not a mirror. It's a window. A window to the Other Side'" (*Skull* 314). This is the first time they are confronted with the idea that maybe the gate from the world of the dead to the world of the living is not a one-way street: perhaps the living can also access that which comes after life. The bone glass turns out to be a dangerous object that kills everyone that looks directly in it. Still, as the rewording from "mirror" to "window" suggest, there might be a way through from one side to the other.

After they ended the outbreak in book three, the team thinks of what might have caused it, and Lucy and George believe it might have been something similar to the bone glass, though at a greater scale. At the heart of the outbreak, the source of it all, they found a site that appeared to have been used for rituals, with Sources organised in a similar way to the bone glass, and Lucy reports hearing sounds similar to the bone glass while there. They continue working on this theory, and George explains in the fourth book: he starts with the previously given explanation on how Sources work like weak spots in the border between life and death, and so if one would put a lot of Sources together, "'the weak point would be correspondingly bigger, …. It would create a bigger hole, for want of a better word'" (*Shadow* 317). This visualisation of the border between life and death represents that border as something that is not absolute or unbreakable: it is weak and can be crossed. It is as if the dead are never far away.

This also means that life is not far removed from death either: George, again, turns out to be right when a new outbreak starts in a small village, that ask for help from Lockwood & co. The village is situated close to a research facility belonging to the Rotwell Agency, earlier mentioned as one of the most important ghost hunting agencies of London together with the Fittes Agency. When the team goes to help, they quickly find out that things are different. Lucy

implicitly seems to notice this in the way she picks up sounds from ghosts: "'I can hear faint sounds … . Like someone shouting angrily. An adult, I think, but it's very far away.' 'Very long ago, you mean,' Lockwood said" (*Shadow* 359). Lucy's phrasing is interesting: it is as if Lucy does not experience ghosts anymore like something in the past, but something distant, as if it is present at the same time as she is, though farther removed. This is not the only hint that something is going on in this village: later in that week, Lucy and Lockwood spot a ghost in a graveyard that looks off: "Unlike many apparitions, it conjured no other-light … . It was formed of a translucent gauzy greyness, and you could see right through its body to the jumble of stones and crosses in the yard beyond" (*Shadow* 395). They later find out that this apparition is not a ghost, but a living person that has entered the world of the dead, and his presence there upsets the ghosts and makes them active; exactly what happened during the epidemic in London. When they infiltrate the research facility, Lucy and Lockwood accidentally enter the world of the dead in order to prevent detection. George later on deduces that this is probably not a "definitive" afterlife, but the place where the dead stay until they can either enter our world through one of the weak spots, or until their Source is destroyed and they have to move on. Interestingly, when they return, Lucy describes the world in terms of absences:

> But from what I saw, it wasn't a heaven or a hell; just a world very familiar to our own, only freezing cold and silent and stretched out under a black sky. The dead walked there, and it was their home – while Lockwood and I were the interlopers. *Ours* was the unnatural presence in their endless night (*Grave* 19).

The Other Side is lacking light and warmth, in other words: life. It is reminiscent of Lucy's description of Jessica's room, where she also notices that she is in the presence of an absence. Her awareness of ghosts, and now also of the Other Side, makes it harder to acknowledge that death is a definitive ending, something Lockwood also notes when describing the difficulties of grief when you live in the fear your loved one might come back. The emptiness of the Other

Side emphasises the absence that should come with death, yet her presence there negates that.

Their experience with the Other Side reveals quite a bit about the border between life and death. As already discussed regarding the Sources, this border can be weakened through extreme emotions or trauma, allowing the dead to enter the world of the living. Contrary to traditional ideas of "the past is in the past", as Lockwood also believes, the suggestion here is that trauma and the past cannot simply be seen as "ended" but that they will continue to influence the present. This view is more in line with Hauntology, and forces both the characters as well as the readers to think of how the past is still present in their daily life. However, as also seen with the ghost epidemic, the present can also haunt the past. A similar thing is happening here: so far, the theory was that the Problem was as simple as the dead haunting the living, but the discovery of gateways to the Other Side suggests that maybe it is actually the living haunting the dead. As Lucy says after her return:

> Our experiences had indicated that there was a strong connection between the activity of spirits – in particular their keenness to return to our world – and the presence of living persons on the Other Side. It seemed that when the land of the dead was invaded, the dead became active, and much more likely to invade the land of the living (*Grave* 20).

However, even though they now know how ghost epidemics are started, this does not explain the Problem as a whole. They suspect the two might be related, but cannot explain how. This changes when the skull Lucy can talk to suddenly recognises Penelope Fittes, head of the Fittes Agency and the granddaughter of the aforementioned Marissa Fittes, as being her grandmother. This happens in the fifth and final part of *The Creeping Shadow,* titled "An Unexpected Visitor". This is already odd, since up until this point, "visitor" has been used most often when it comes to ghosts, not people. Nevertheless, in this part of the story, the woman they know as Penelope Fittes visits their house. After she leaves, the ghost in the jar identifies her as Marissa Fittes,

who is supposed to have been dead for a long time now. In the final book, Lockwood & co. find out that Marissa Fittes is indeed a ghost, and that she found a way to bind her ghost to the body of her granddaughter: Penelope Fittes was an actual person, but now she is possessed by her grandmother. In order to sustain this, Marissa needs to consume ectoplasm, the "matter" ghosts are made of, which is why she regularly enters the world of the dead. She built a trap, forcing all the dead of London to come to one place for her to consume. This is what caused the Problem: her fear of death actually brought death into our own world. Fear of death urging people to do bad things is a running theme in the books. Edmund Bickerstaff created the bone glass because he feared for what might come after death; however, his fear meant that he was too scared to look into it himself, forcing other people to do so and killing them in the process. The skull in the jar is one of the most powerful ghosts in the books because he is also scared to move on: he fears the loneliness of death, enabling him to communicate with Lucy. Additionally, he turns out to have been one of Bickerstaff's helpers, making him complicit in the deaths caused by the bone glass. The Rotwell institute did research into the Other Side for the same reasons as Marissa: finding a way to become immortal. Arguably, the supervisor responsible for the deaths of Lucy's first team was also caught in the fear of death, refusing to save the lives of children because it would have meant he needed to risk his own life. This returning issue of adults fearing death causing problems for everyone else stems from the idea that when a person is dead, they are definitively gone. Some of them, like the whispering skull or even Marissa Fittes, prefer being something ghost-like over being dead: a liminal state of being neither is better than a definitive end. The series goes far to show that for the people who remain, it is easier to be gone, as shown by the conversation Lockwood and Lucy have by his parents' grave.

Another important organisation that tries to fight death is the Orpheus Society, a group of elder scholars brought together by Marissa Fittes to research the secrets of life and death. As

their secretary explains: "'We too seek to find ways of subduing ghosts. We are a motley band of inventors, industrialists and philosophers – anyone, in fact, with an interesting perspective on the Problem. We discuss, we debate, we work on devices that might stem the ghostly invasion'" (*Shadow* 323). The Society has already created several objects that might make life easier and safer, such as a silver cloak that wards of ghosts and goggles that make ghosts visible to adults, however, contrary to what the secretary seems to say, these objects are not available to everyone. Only members of the Orpheus Society have access to them. The reason they invented these objects was to be able to enter the Other Side in order to help Marissa with her immortality project. The name "Orpheus" is fitting: Orpheus is a Greek hero, who, after his wife's Eurydice's death, entered the Underworld to ask Hades if he could take her back to the world of the living. While the secretary states that the common goal of Orpheus and the Society is to control ghosts, their actual goal would be controlling death: they both enter the world of the dead in order to make a deal with death, whether that is the personification or simply death. Nevertheless, their motivations are different: Orpheus does not want to negate death for himself, but for his wife. The motives of the Orpheus Society and Marissa Fittes are purely to save their own skins, which is shown in the fact that they keep their protective gear to themselves rather than sharing them. The Orpheus Society also tries to challenge death itself, but unlike their namesake, they do so completely selfishly and at the cost of others; however, like Orpheus, they fail in the end.

The Orpheus Society is not the only independent organisation that tries to research ghosts and life and death. Lockwood's parents were ghost researchers, focusing on the way native cultures in the Amazone rainforest deal with their dead. They often brought objects back from these people which they used to communicate with their ancestors. These things are still present in Lockwood's house, and are mentioned a couple of times with disdain: "The inspector snorted into his moustache. 'Looks more like foreign mumbo-jumbo, if you ask me…'"

(*Staircase* 154). The objects, like Lockwood's parents, are not really taken seriously: how can a cape with colourful feathers ever be helpful in their fight against the Problem? However, in the final book, Lockwood finds the script of his parents' final lecture, in which they speculated that the world of the dead might be accessible while still alive. Sadly, they gave this lecture to the Orpheus Society who, scared that their secret might come out, staged a car accident that killed both of them. Still, their research does save Lockwood & co. in the end. The feathered capes they found work just as well as the capes invented by the Orpheus Society, allowing Lockwood and Lucy to enter and leave the Other Side unharmed. The disdain shown by others, but also Lockwood's own incomprehension of his parents' work, has complicated their work for a long time; the capes would have offered them protection while hunting ghosts. The focus in the final two books on the value of these objects that have mostly been mocked in the previous books shows the importance of research in general, even when others might think it is worthless. Without his parents' research, Lockwood would never have been able to solve the Problem. This tension between the work of the Orpheus Society and that of Lockwood's parents also shows the conflict between exotic knowledge and Western Enlightenment. At first, the objects Lockwood's parents found are treated as useless stereotypes, but when the Orpheus Society finds out the power these objects and the research hold, Lockwood's parents are quietly killed.

The only people not gripped by the fear of dying are the children putting their lives on the line every day to keep adults safe. The truth of Marissa Fittes and all the other adults looking to solve "the problem" of death reveal that indeed the border between life and death is weak and unclear, but this is not the fault of the ghost. If humans were able to accept life ends after a while, the Problem would have never been a problem, and children would not have had to risk their lives. This sets *Lockwood & co.* apart from other children's books that extensively talk about death. As discussed, children's books about death often do so through two tropes:

someone has been killed and the protagonist needs to solve the mystery, focusing on the intelligence of the protagonist rather than the emotional turmoil that death often causes; or the person that dies is sick, disabled, or otherwise "Other", allowing the reader to either distance themselves from death or to see death as an injustice to be fought against. *Lockwood & co.* does certainly lean into the first trope, but that does not come at the cost of the emotional consequences that the death of a loved one has on a person. To take the example of the deaths of Lockwood's family, Lockwood is highly secretive about this in the first books. Lucy, however, is quite determined to find out what happened to his parents and sister, though she never goes as far as actually crossing Lockwood's boundaries. When the mystery finally is revealed and Lockwood tells what happened, the focus is not on Lucy, but on Lockwood's emotions and trauma that have come from the violent deaths of his family. While a mystery is used to draw the reader into Lockwood's story, the final focus of it is not on finding the solution or knowing the truth, rather on what grief can do to a person. In the end, it is not just the ghosts that cross the border between life and death: the lingering love for a lost loved one does that just as well.

To summarise, an important theme of *Lockwood & co.* is that death is not a definitive ending. This is partly shown through the presence of ghosts, a clear sign that even after death people can influence the present, but also through the way the characters deal with grief and trauma. As shown through the conversation in the graveyard, Lockwood struggles with mourning his family, since he always fears they might come back as ghosts, meaning he would have to send them away, losing them all over again. The uncertainty of death as an ending makes it harder for people to move on after a loss, both for the living and the dead themselves, but it is the fear of death as a definitive ending that caused the Problem in the first place. At the same time, the ghosts also function as a signal to the living: they show that something bad happened at the place where they haunt, since they only exist due to trauma. The places themselves are

also used and described in this manner: dark and hungry, completely influenced by the "embodied" presence of trauma. Most importantly, the ghosts show that death is not a definitive ending, and that there is also no definitive ending to pain or trauma. The ghosts linger because of their trauma: only when their last connection to their trauma is severed, their Source, they can move on. Lockwood and Lucy also show as living characters that trauma does not just end after the traumatic event: it lingers just as well, showing up in actions and behaviour. Their trauma also shows how a traumatised person can start thinking differently about time, and especially the future: to Lucy, the future is always a threat, something that she needs to prevent. For Lockwood, it is the past that is the threat. Only through understanding and discussing their traumas with each other, they start to understand their perspectives and are able to work better together, without invalidating each other. However, the book never explicitly states that this is the solution, or that the way Lucy or Lockwood handle their traumas is right or wrong. The story allows the characters to grow and change based on their experiences together and apart. This is a prime example of mixed fantasy for children: the darker, fantastical elements, the ghosts, together with the character's arcs show the reader what complicated emotions and situations are, without ever telling the reader what is right or wrong or how it should be solved. The next chapter will discuss *Ophie's Ghosts,* a story that also aims to show the reader how characters deal with their grief and problems, but this case study does try to give a solution to the problems at hand.

Chapter 3: *Ophie's Ghosts* (6906)

Ophie's Ghosts (2021) is a novel written by Justina Ireland which tells the story of a young girl named Ophelia (Ophie) who grows up in rural Georgia of 1923, that is still struggling under the reign of Jim Crow. After her father goes voting, he is lynched and their house is burnt down. Ophie and her mother move to Pittsburgh in the North, where her mother expects to quickly find a job. In order to make more money quickly, Ophie's mother forces Ophie to work in Daffodil Manor for the rich Caruthers family. Only old Mrs. Caruthers and her son Richard still live there, though the house is infested with ghosts of their past, ghosts only Ophie can see after that talent had been triggered by the murder of her father. Ophie is tasked with taking care of the mean, bedridden Mrs. Caruthers. The only glimmer of hope in Ophie's life is the young woman Clara, who sometimes shows up to help Ophie care for Mrs. Caruthers. The only problem is that Clara is a ghost, murdered a few years earlier, though she cannot remember by whom. Ophie decides to investigate and find out who did it, hoping that this will help Clara to be able to "move on".

In the previous chapter, I focused on the representation of trauma and its pervasiveness, even years after the initial traumatic event, for both living humans and ghosts. Ophie's ghosts, however, talking and behaving as if they are still alive. It is sometimes hard for Ophie to recognise them for ghosts, but they are recognisable through a soft glow, the colour of which betrays the mood of the ghost. At the same time, not only the ghosts haunt the story, the past, the history of slavery, also haunts every single event in *Ophie's ghosts*. As discussed in the first chapter, according to Teresa A. Goddu slavery is an important element in American literature as a whole, and the language and symbols of the Gothic are a useful tool to portray the horrors of slavery in a way that does it justice (63). This chapter aims to analyse how ghosts figure in this representation of the heritage of slavery and how *Ophie's Ghosts* does it in a way that is comprehensible for children. Just as the one before, this chapter starts with an explanation and

overview of the ghosts in the book: where do ghosts come from, why are they ghosts and how can Ophie help them move on? That leads into a discussion on the connection of *Ophie's Ghosts* to the American Gothic. The final part focuses on the connection between ghosts, memory and grief, and how there are parallels between Ophie's feelings and the way she treats Clara and other ghosts.

The first ghost Ophie ever sees is her father, although Ophie does not realise this at the time, as she is not even aware yet that he has been killed. She wakes up in the middle of the night to see her father standing in her room, telling her to get her mother and the hidden money under the floor and get out of the house to hide in the nearby woods. The reader gets several hints that something is wrong, the most important being the fact that Ophie's mother does not understand what is going on and does not respond to her husband. When they wake up in the morning, their house is burnt down and the local priest and his wife have arrived to tell them they found the body of Ophie's father. The prologue introduces the reader to the two primary themes of the story: ghosts and the violent racism she and other characters experience. Her father's murder is the reason she and her mother move to Pittsburgh to live with her father's aunt Rose and his sister and nieces. More importantly though, the prologue shows the loneliness Ophie experiences during the novel. Ophie tells her mother during the night that her father told her they needed to get out and after they get the news from the priest Ophie again tries to tell her mother that she saw her father when he was already dead. Ophie's mother refuses to listen: "'You did not see your father, Ophelia, and that is enough of that! You are going to leave off talking about it right this moment, and you won't ever talk about it again'" (15). Throughout the novel, Ophie feels incredibly lonely: she cannot talk about the ghosts that bother her, she cannot talk about her dad, all in all, she has to fully rely on herself to deal with her problems and feelings.

Ophie's struggle with getting people, and especially her mother, to listen to her and take

her seriously also makes for an interesting intertextual connection with her Shakespearean namesake Ophelia from *Hamlet. Hamlet* is of course one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, but it is also a ghost story in which Hamlet in haunted by the ghost of his father, and he is the only one to see him. Just like Ophie, no one takes him seriously when he says his father told him he was killed by his uncle, just as Ophie's mother does not believe her when Ophie tells her that she saw her father after he was killed. In the same play, Ophelia and her struggles are also ignored, resulting in her death. There is a constant threat over the course of the story that Ophie might end up in similar position as Ophelia, simply because no one listens to her due to which she finds her solace with ghosts, who, as will be discussed, are far from a safe haven. The only reason Ophie does not follow Ophelia's story is, as will be demonstrated, that in the end, her mother does listen to her.

Luckily, Ophie is not completely alone. Aunt Rose, who has taken Ophie and her mother in, discovers Ophie can see ghosts and is able to teach Ophie more about them and how to deal with ghosts. Aunt Rose explains to Ophie that she comes from a long line of black women that can see ghosts and help people deal with them. Aunt Rose is the only one able to teach Ophie about ghosts. She explains to Ophie that ghosts are "'folks with unfinished business that think sticking around is going to help them fix it'" (71). The ghosts in this book do not necessarily return due to trauma, like in *Lockwood & co.*, but because they still need to do something. Sometimes this is linked to trauma, as in Clara's and Colin's case, a young black boy who was whipped to death and whom Ophie befriends, but more often it is something mundane. For example, Aunt Rose's husband also still lingers, and when Ophie asks him why he answers: "'Before I died I promised I would wait for her. Because I loved her with all my heart and I never wanted to spend a day away from her. And so, here I am, taking care of her roses until she's ready to come with me'" (200). This brief conversation also shows how Ophie can get rid of ghosts: help them fulfil their final business. However, Aunt Rose advises Ophie not to do

that: "'The dead are cold, greedy things. They are shallow, they are selfish, and they only care about themselves'" (75). Ghosts that are angry and powerful are able to possess a person, to use their body to feel alive again. That is why Aunt Rose advises Ophie to always carry a nail and a bit of salt, to ward of ghosts that might try to attack her.

To Aunt Rose, this is very important. She does not see ghosts as people, or remnants of people, but as things. As she explains to Ophie:

> 'They are a shadow of who they were in life. Some might say that is the worst part. They are all hunger and want and need, and a creature made of nothing but selfish parts can't be good. They aren't bad, exactly, anymore than, say, a mosquito is. Haints can't help what they are. They crave something, and that longing keeps them from moving on. And like a starving man, they will do whatever they can to get whatever it is they need. That isn't good or bad, it just is' (142-3).

Ghosts, of course, are not fully human anymore, but Aunt Rose's description reduces them to a kind of parasites that long for a taste of humanity. Ghosts cannot move on simply because they are still clinging to life, and Aunt Rose believes this is due to their unfinished business. Looking at this through the lens of Hauntology, this is especially interesting since it suggests that the refusal of ghosts to move on does not necessarily lie in their past, but in something that they were supposed to do. As discussed, Hauntology and ghosts deconstruct our conception of past, present and future, as they are the past returning in the present. This has already been demonstrated through the analysis of *Lockwood & co.,* but *Ophie's Ghosts* adds a dimension to its ghosts that also makes one consider the future. These ghosts linger because they are haunted by the possibilities of the future. Colin explains this best to Ophie, right before he is able to move on. As already mentioned, Colin was beaten to death. He now lingers in order to keep an eye on his younger brother Mr. Henry, who still works for Mrs. Caruthers, who is the one that ordered for Colin to be whipped. After Mrs Caruthers dies, Colin can move on because he

knows she cannot hurt Mr. Henry anymore. The possible threat that was already there when he was alive, is now gone, and he can move on knowing his brother will be save. Colin’s story also demonstrates the way in which Hauntology argues that time is interlinked and not clearly delineated. Colin’s experience of the past, his murder, makes him fear for his brother’s future.

Aunt Rose also sees the influences of the past on ghosts. Due to their dedication to their unfinished business, she sees them as stuck in the past: “’People are like that, you know, living or dead. A bad thing happens, and they get bogged down in it, unable to move on’” (139). Ophie is scared she is like that as well: she still regularly thinks about her dad and their old life, but Aunt Rose reassures her that this is not the case, as she actively tries to move on to a new life with her mother. For some people, the past is never behind them, and those are the ones that get stuck. This makes clear that the difference between humans and ghosts might not be as big as Ophie wants to believe: as Aunt Rose says, both living and dead human beings can get stuck in the past. The ghosts’ physicality, or lack thereof, makes this especially clear: their lack of physical presence in the present emphasises their absence, and that something has happened to cause that. However, Ophie sees something similar happen to her living mother: even though the ghost of her father passed on, Ophie’s mother is still suffering, refusing to talk about Ophie’s father with Ophie. Ophie thinks this means she is also still frozen in the past: “Ignoring a terrible pain just seemed like a different way of getting stuck” (140). Humans can resemble ghosts if they also refuse to move on from a horrible even from their past.

Listening, in the end, seems to be the solution for both the ghosts and the unspoken pain between Ophie and her mother. Some of the ghosts of Daffodil Manor are able to pass on simply because Ophie was willing to listen to them and see them. Two of the ghosts in Daffodil Manor are a father and his young daughter. The father is stuck in his office, continually saying that he needs to finish his work, while his daughter is sitting in the library waiting for her father to come and take her outside. When Ophie is looking around in the house, she suddenly comes

across the father outside his office, looking lost. When Ophie asks him what he needs, he says he is looking for his daughter. Ophie remembers the little girl in the library and takes him there. As soon as she opens the door, the girl comes running towards her father, before dissolving, signalling that she has moved on. The last thing she wanted before moving on was to see her dad. Ophie helps the girl's father similarly: he appears to not have seen his daughter, so Ophie suggests he goes to look for her outside. As soon as he steps out of the door, he dissolves just like his daughter. Ophie has helped two ghosts move on, simply by listening to their needs and being aware of them. Nevertheless, she is disappointed that the ghosts move on after doing something that was, in her eyes, very easy. Colin, who has seen what happened, reassures Ophie: "'And, Ophie, you helped. You listened. That was exactly what they needed, … It's all anyone needs'" (213). In order to move on, it is essential to have someone listen to and help, which is what Ophie does. It is also precisely what Ophie herself is denied. When she has her first conversation with Clara after learning she is a ghost, not a living person, she thinks: "It wasn't until she'd said it out loud that she realized the first person who had truly listened to her since running away from Georgia, who had even made her feel special and fun, had been a ghost" (160). Clara does for Ophie what Ophie does for ghosts: listen and make her feel seen. In the end, Ophie's mother also realises that she has neglected her daughter by refusing to speak about her father and what happened that night: "At night, after dinner, the girl and her mother would sit together and tell stories about the good days, and the bad ones too, and realize over and over again that there was nothing they couldn't do as long as they did it together with honesty and love" (325).

These parallels between Ophie and the ghosts and Ophie and her mother communicate the importance of verbalising one's feelings and listening to each other. As explained in the introduction, mixed fantasy, or children's literature with dark, supernatural elements, often use the fantastical to explain complicated concepts, situations and feelings. Ireland is able to

illustrate how important it is for children to be able to trust another person and to talk to them and how important it is that adults actually listen to children. Because she is able to show ghosts move on "physically" after Ophie listens to them, she can effectively show how it can help to have someone listen to you and help. This implementation of mixed fantasy also makes *Ophie's Ghosts* a story that moralises quite heavily. In the end, there is a clear lesson to be learnt: people need to listen and talk to each other. However, even though this book has a more pedagogical goal than *Lockwood & co.* and other recent children's books, the lesson here seems not to be solely aimed at children: it was not Ophie's fault that she could not talk to anyone about her own grief and the ghosts that bother her, it was her mother who shut her out. While the book does, quite literally, tell children they need to talk to adults about their problems, it also tells parents and other adults who are responsible for children that they need to make themselves available.

The ghosts are not the only ones that haunt both the characters and the narrative. The history of slavery and institutional racism hang over the story as a constant threat. Of course, this has already been discussed through the prologue and the lynching of Ophie's father, as well as Colin's story, but it is also hanging in the background in more subtle, yet not less awful ways. A particular confronting moment is the conversation Ophie has with the ghost of her uncle, Aunt Rose's husband. He wakes Ophie by accidentally sending her a memory of his while she is asleep: "She was in a field with other colored folks and they were all working side by side to plant empty rows while a man on a horse yelled at them to move faster, to work harder" (196). Ophie's uncle used to work as a slave, confronting the reader with the idea that for Ophie, slavery is not a far removed history, but something that happened to her family, to people she might have known. Even though he is dead, for her uncle, it is still not really over: "'It was not so long ago that our people were enslaved, though it seems most would like to forget that. But even death is not strong enough to erase the memories of a white man owning me'" (198).

Enslavement had such a grave impact on him that even when he is dead, the memory haunts him, and is so strong it even has an impact on the living around him, like the nightmare Ophie wakes up to. At the same time, it also appears that he does not want to forget. He is aware of the fact that most people would want to forget about it, but for him, it is a way to forcefully connect with the living. This is not an example of the present wanting to remember the past: Ophie's uncle shows how the past desperately clings onto the present and tries to exert influence on it. What is also worth noticing is that Ophie's uncle is never given a name. Unlike all the other ghosts, such as Ophie's father, Clara, and Colin, he is always referred to as Aunt Rose's husband. This is a point Ireland tries to get across throughout the novel, as will be discussed next with Clara, but is also mentioned by her in her dedication. She has dedicated *Ophie's Ghosts* to "all the names we never knew". Ophie's uncle is one of them, and while Ophie tries to save Clara from the same fate, the bitter irony of the book is that Clara's story is still hidden away. The epilogue tells the reader that Ophie and her mother received a lot of money from Richard Caruthers to buy a house, but only if they promised to never tell anyone what his mother did to Clara. While Ophie is able to help Clara move on, in the end Clara is just as invisible as every other victim of slavery and the lingering racism.

As explained, Goddu sees American literature, but especially the American Gothic as inherently connected to slavery. To her, the Gothic is able to portray the horrors of slavery in a way that does them justice. While Ireland certainly uses the Gothic elements to explain slavery to children in a way that makes it comprehensible, her focus does not lie on slavery itself. Rather, she focuses on the consequences slavery has had on the American society, even after abolition, in the form of institutional racism and inequality. This is also done through the story of a ghost, Clara. Clara is the ghost that appears to be a young white woman, that Ophie encounters during her first day in Daffodil Manor. At first, Ophie does not realise that Clara is a ghost, since she looks extraordinarily "solid" for a ghost. She finds out that Clara, like Ophie,

used to be the help for Mrs. Caruthers, but as soon as she mentions Clara to Mrs. Caruthers, the old woman panics and needs to be sedated for a few weeks. The cook tells Ophie that Clara suddenly disappeared and no one knows where she went, breaking Richard Caruthers', and his mother's, heart. However, Ophie knows Clara was killed and decides to help Clara find out by whom, expecting that this will help Clara move on. To do this, she has to make sure she can continue to talk to Clara, so Ophie takes sweets up to the attic where Clara hides in order to appease her and make sure Clara is strong enough to talk to Ophie. Ophie also hopes that getting stronger might help Clara remember something about her death. While this works, it also has a darker consequence. Ophie forgets about Aunt Rose's warnings, that ghosts only want two things: to feel alive again and to end their unfinished business. By giving Clara the sweets, Clara becomes even more solid and stronger: "But just as quickly as Clara had gone purple, she was back to her usual self, no outline at all, looking more like a real person than a spirit" (187). Most spirits in the novel have an outline that show their mood. Clara's was, for a moment, purple, signalling that she is angry. Most of the time she is able to hide that, having no outline at all, but Ophie's investigation brings back old memories that upset her. Even though Ophie is scared by the purple glow, she justifies to herself why she needs to continue: "If the ghost was mad, didn't she have a right to be? Her life had been cut short, and no one even knew she'd been killed" (189). However, Ophie's biggest mistake is that she continues to trust Clara and do as she says, even when her instinct tells her it is wrong. Clara convinces Ophie to go look for a tortoiseshell hair comb that she was wearing when she was killed. Ophie is caught by another help, Penelope, when she finds the comb, and blackmailed into handing it over to her to prevent Penelope from ratting her out to Mrs. Caruthers. However, the comb still holds a bit of Clara, and when Penelope starts wearing it, Clara possesses her body. The comb acts as a xenolithic artifact discussed by Mark Fisher: like other haunted objects, xenolithic artifacts, it holds a bit of an unknown force and allows that force to enter the known world. The comb adds

another layer to the xenolithic artifact since it is also an object that has an emotional connection to Clara. Through the comb, Clara is able to take over Penelope's body and start investigating herself.

Ophie realises quickly what has happened and keeps a close eye on Penelope/Clara. She expects to find out soon what happened, since the family that is soon visiting Daffodil Manor is the same family that was present the night Clara disappeared. Richard Caruthers invited them to announce his engagement to his girlfriend, and when she hears this, Penelope/Clara freaks out and runs of. Everyone present thinks it is simply because Penelope has a crush on Richard, but Ophie knows that Clara was actually the one engaged to Richard, and she disappeared the night before the announcement. Ophie runs off to go look for her, and finds Penelope/Clara with Mrs. Caruthers, holding scissors in her hand. Ophie knows to disarm Penelope/Clara using salt, simultaneously exorcising Clara from Penelope's body. Realising what has happened, Ophie tells the crowd, including Richard, that came in after hearing the noise, that Clara never was white, like Richard thought, but mixed race, passing light, and that Mrs. Caruthers discovered this. Mrs. Caruthers refused to accept a black woman as her daughter in law: "'I offered her money to never see you again, Richard. To leave and never come back. And she said no. How dare she!'" (311). Richard realises what his mother has done and when they open her closet, that was kept locked, they find Clara's body in a chest on the bottom. Clara's murder is the most pressing example in this story of how intense racism is in American society, even when everyone knows slavery is over and tries to forget it. Mrs. Caruthers did the exact opposite to forgetting: she forces Ophie to read her books on slavery and calls her racial slurs if Ophie does not work fast enough. The reason she killed Clara is completely motivated by her memories of slavery and her desire to go back, which both lie in her complete conviction that white people are better than black people. This is how *Ophie's Ghosts* makes the connection between the history of slavery and the institutional racism of the present explicit: not only does the story

show the harrowing reality of slavery through the ghosts of Colin and Ophie's uncle, it also shows how the oppressive systems that enabled slavery in the first place, were not abolished like slavery was. This is best explained using Avery Gordon's explanation in *Ghostly Matters* on how oppressive systems can also haunt: even though old oppressive systems are abolished, like slavery in *Ophie's Ghosts,* this does not mean their impact is not felt anymore. This is also noted by Ophie while she is reading the racist pamphlets to Mrs Caruthers: "Ophie knew that colored folks had not always been free, and she understood that her work for the Carutherses resonated within the same patterns of history, even if she was paid a modest wage" (103). According to Gordon, the proliferation of these systems partly lies in the presence of places that, one way or another, took part in the existence of the oppressive system. In this novel, it is clear that Daffodil Manor, the house that has been in the Caruthers' family for a long time, certainly had a role to play in slavery itself: the Carutherses owned slaves and the house was built with the money they earned from it. At the same time, while *Ophie's Ghosts* is a heavily moralising book as mentioned before, the messaging on racism and trying to undo the systems is contradictory. I have mentioned this earlier in my discussion on the money Ophie's mother takes from Richard Caruthers in order to buy a house, in turn promising to never tell anyone what happened, hiding Clara's story, and, in effect, the stories of the other ghosts of Daffodil Manor as well. While the ghosts of the novel get to move on and have a happy ending, in as far as that is possible for a ghost, the ghost of slavery continues to hang over the story even after it has ended.

The places in the book, however, also have their own stories to tell. As Aunt Rose tells Ophie when Ophie asks why some places are more haunted than others: "'some places, it's because that's where folks died, and most ghosts, especially if they died in a bad kind of way, can't seem to get themselves unstuck'" (138-9). This is why Ophie and Aunt Rose need to help ghosts move on, so places do not get clogged with ghosts. Too many ghosts in one place

influence the character of the place itself, and the place itself influences the ghosts. For example, the Pennsylvania Railroad, which Ophie and her mother use to travel to Pittsburgh, describes the relationship between her and her ghosts as follows: “They [the ghosts] were no concern of hers, and so the dead were doomed to watch the train rush past, forgetting them just as quickly as the rest of the world had” (18). Like any train, the Pennsylvania Railroad needs to follow her schedule, and does not have time for the dead. This, in turn, makes the dead desperate for any attention they can get: “They pressed in close, reaching toward the little girl who could see” (19). The lack of caring of the Railroad makes the ghosts determined to get to Ophie, so she can make them feel alive by noticing them. Ophie at this point does not yet know what ghosts are and what she needs to do when they bother her, so she simply tries to ignore them. A similar thing happens in Washington DC, “a city of the best ghosts” (19). The ghosts of the capital feel that as they were of high standing, they deserve more: “They spent their days hoping and yearning for someone who could see them, a connection to the world of the living, for it was rare that such folks came along anymore” (19). The irony here is that, considering they were ghosts of high standing, they were very likely implicated in slavery, and now they are dependent on the help of a little black girl. Another point made here is that, while the ghosts of Washington DC feel they are better than the ghosts on the Pennsylvania Railroad, their situation is exactly the same. In the introduction, I used Susan Owens’ book *The Ghost: A Cultural History* to define the idea of the ghost. Owens argues that ghosts, especially in the Middle Ages, were an important part of the “memento mori” mindset prevalent in the Catholic Church. Ghosts could show that in death, everyone is equal, no matter your position or possessions during life (29). The ghosts of Washington DC show that their position in life does not matter anymore: they depend on the goodwill of one girl, just like any other ghost. This is an interesting deviation from the “memento mori” role of the ghost. While it is explicitly shown that these ghosts are not more or less important than other ghosts, they themselves deny that fact, acting just as

haughtily as they probably did in life. It also shows once again the doubling that happens between ghosts and humans throughout the novel: the ghosts of Washington DC believe they deserve better than other ghosts, like Mrs. Caruthers believes her white son deserves better than a mixed wife. The same thing can be said for the city itself. Washington DC also narrates itself as being better because it is the capital of the United States; but as with people, its "value" as capital is determined by exterior forces, it is not intrinsically true. This interplay between ghosts, people and places shows how past and present continually influence each other.

The most important haunted place, however, is Daffodil Manor. There is already a hint of irony in the name of the building. According to Lizzie Deas' *Flower Favourites: Their Legends, Symbolism and Significance,* the daffodil can hold several meanings. On the one hand, the daffodil blooms at the beginning of spring, holding meanings of rebirth, and hope. However, that hope can be deceitful, as at the beginning of spring, the weather is heavily subjected to change, going from warm, bright weather back to dark rainy days (Deas 70). Daffodil Manor holds al these meanings simultaneously. At first, working at Daffodil Manor is sold to Ophie is a new beginning: "'Pittsburgh is expensive, and we're never going to make enough to move out of your Aunt Rose's house with me doing folks' hair like I did back in Georgia. … For me, that means working at Daffodil Manor. For you, that means leaving school and doing the same'" (21-22). Ophie's mother believes that for them, the only hope they have at a new start lies in Daffodil Manor. However, the hope of a daffodil is deceitful, and so is that of Daffodil Manor. Ophie and her mother make very little money, and when Aunt Rose dies, the first thing their cousins do is steal the money Ophie and her mother had saved and hidden away, after which they kick Ophie and her mother out. Everything they had worked for in Daffodil Manor, and the little hope they had gotten, turned out to be empty. Just as notable is the connection between the daffodil and rebirth, considering the vast amount of ghosts haunting the place. Arguably, Daffodil Manor is *the* place of rebirth. Nonetheless, as the house tells the reader, this is only

really possible thanks to Ophie's arrival: "Daffodil Manor felt the dead within it began to move, more alert than they had been in a very long time. And as a small negro girl and her mother descended the grand staircase and entered the kitchen, the house finally, finally understood the change in the air" (48). As already seen on the Railroad, the dead notice Ophie's presence and her ability to see them. While Ophie's arrival in Daffodil Manor is a deceitful hope, a hope that turned out to be worthless, for the dead this is completely different: she is the only one that can help them move on. Simultaneously, Daffodil Manor, like the Pennsylvania Railroad and Washington DC, is a case where the place and the ghosts influence each other. As the story of the little girl in the library and her father shows, most of the ghosts of Daffodil Manor are very lonely, and so is the house: "Daffodil Manor was lonely. It would like a new family running through its massive halls, children to climb up on the grand staircase, mothers to chide them and fathers to play hide-and-seek through the many rooms" (46). No one, except for the final two Carutherses, wants to live in the house. This is largely due to the presence of the ghosts. Though no one but Ophie can see them, other people can sense them, even though they are unaware of it. Everyone complains the rooms are always cold, even when fires are burning. This is because of the cold presence the ghosts exude. More importantly, Ophie thinks Mrs. Caruthers' weak health is also because Clara haunts, sapping her life out of her. In his article discussed in the theoretical framework, Fiddler argues that trauma can infuse in an environment, changing the way it feels even to people unaware of the trauma itself. This is clearly the case with Daffodil Manor, but the interplay between ghosts and places as also seen with the Pennsylvania Railroad and Washington DC. However, in these places, there is no trauma connected to the place, at least not that the reader knows of. In other words, *Ophie's Ghosts* takes the influence of trauma on a place one step further than Fiddler does: it is not necessarily trauma that changes the way a place is perceived, but simply the past in general. Every time someone dies, whether this is in a violent manner or not, their death (their ghost) sticks to the

place and changes it. This, as seen, also works the other way around: the status of Washington DC influences the way the ghosts see themselves and what they perceive as their right. It is not just trauma that infuses an environment, the past influences the environment just as much as the environment influences the course of history: past, present and future.

In the end, the connection between racism and ghosts comes most clearly together in the motif of electricity that is woven throughout the novel. In the prologue, the reader learns that Ophie and her parents do not have access to electricity: "There were no electric lights where Ophie's family lived – though the nearby town had electricity, the power company did not consider rural Negroes to be a priority" (5). This shows already in the Prologue that, even though slavery is "over", there are still a lot of more subtle ways in which the racist structures are still in place, such as denying black people stable lighting during the night. Because electricity is something that Ophie grew up to perceive as rare, it also functions as a shorthand for white people, and in relation to that, as a warning. Ophie is very aware that white people can harm her whenever they want without her being able to fight back, not just through her father's murder, but also because to her, that is the way it is: "The more Ophie thought about it, the harder it seemed to be colored, to have to think before doing anything, to wonder if the white folks looking at her meant any harm" (29). So implicitly, electricity is connected to white people and privilege, which is connected to potential danger. This is further emphasised because Aunt Rose's house does not have electricity either, even though she lives in Pittsburgh, in the (supposedly) non-racist north and in a city, rather than a little village. The only house that does have access to electricity is, of course, Daffodil Manor: "Every hallway and room, it seemed, was lit up with electric lights; Ophie had never known anyone who actually had electricity in their house. The soft yellow glow cast by the wall sconces seemed impossibly luxurious" (40). The use of electric power by the Carutherses is portrayed as wasteful: including the staff, there are six people in the whole house; in other words, there is no need to have the lights turned on

in every room. This already says a lot about the Caruthserses: even though they are wasting away, left with only two people alive, they try to display their wealth and power as much as possible, even if the only ones to see it are their staff. There is, however, one place in the house where there is no electricity: the attic where Clara was killed and her ghost rests until Ophie arrives. Again, a black person's "living" place is the only place where there is no electricity; even in Daffodil Manor, even in death, this luxury is denied to her. Finally, electricity is not just used to signal the differences in privilege between black and white people, but also the possible danger Ophie finds herself in. As already mentioned, white people almost inherently mean danger to Ophie. Electricity, or electrical power, is something she also only sees when she is around white people. Just like the power in her day to day life, electricity is exclusively for white people, and therefore potentially dangerous. When Ophie asks Clara if they can investigate who killed her, Clara's "form flickered, the way Daffodil Manor's electric lights did during a storm, and Ophie decided to change the subject" (170). Electricity, or flickering electricity, is used here to signal danger to the reader, letting them know that Clara is, despite her apparent friendliness, still a ghost and thus potentially dangerous. The racial inequality is exemplified through electricity, and the presence of electricity, or something that looks like it, signals the inequality between Ophie and Clara. Despite both of them being black girls, Clara as a ghost is in a position in which she can harm Ophie just as easily as a white person. By comparing her to electricity, this potential danger is shown to the reader without having to say it literally. This is a great way to do so, since at this point in the story, Ophie herself is not yet aware of the danger Clara poses to her, but showing that Ophie connects her to electricity, to an imbalance in power, tells the reader that Clara is a real threat to Ophie's safety.

In conclusion, *Ophie's Ghosts* has a completely different approach to grief and trauma compared to *Lockwood & co.,* even though the ghosts here also function as a way to show how death is not a definitive end, and that trauma and history can be strong enough to permeate the

present and change the course of events. The book explicitly shows how the past can influence places, and places have had influence on that past. Considering the era in which the story plays out, there is a lot om emphasis put on the connection between the past and present when it comes to racism. Sometimes this is done explicitly, for example when Ophie realises that the work relationship between her and Mrs. Caruthers is not that different from the relationship between slaves and masters. The book shows in this way that even though slavery was abolished, the structure of institutional racism that enabled slavery in the first place is still present. A similar thing is done with the ghosts, though on a smaller scale. Clara's story shows how pervasive racism is: Mrs. Caruthers did not have a problem with her and Richard's relationship, until she realised that Clara is mixed race, killing her to prevent their marriage. This would never have come out if it was not for Ophie's wish to help Clara move on. At the same time, while Ophie does solve the murder and Clara moves on, the book shows how Ophie and her mother are still stuck within the racist social structures: they still cannot get justice for Clara, since Richard promises to buy them a house if they never tell anyone what happened to Clara.

However, as I mentioned in the beginning of this conclusion, the approach of this book to trauma and grief is still at the forefront of the story. The ghosts in the book show Ophie that if she listens and talks to them, thye might be able to move on. After all, as Aunt Rose says, ghosts are only people that are stuck in the past, talking about that past appears to be the best way to move on. There is a clear moral to this story to children: if you have a problem, you need to talk about it, preferably to an adult. Simultaneously, there is a warning there as well: the first person Ophie opens up to is Clara, who appears to only do that hoping she might be able to use Ophie to get her revenge. So while the book explicitly advises children to talk to adults when they have a problem, it also tells children that they have to be careful with who they trust. In the end, the story tries to really teach children something through a ghost story,

but it takes up too much responsibility and ends up sending mixed messages about its own themes.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the question: How do representations of ghosts in children's literature mediate and challenge the boundaries of death and its emotional impact? Ghosts in children's literature have not had much academic consideration yet, but their role in children's books has become only more interesting over the years, with growing debates and tension around the question of what can and cannot be discussed in children's literature, and how these topics should be discussed. I have found that ghosts are a useful trope to make complicated and abstract topics such as death and trauma more concrete for children, while also allowing the story itself to still be exciting and fun to read. This is a characteristic often found in mixed fantasy, as discussed earlier: even though the story and themes are darker, it is still highly digestible for children of that age, and it allows them to reflect on these topics in a very accessible way. Although arguable both case studies fall under the mixed fantasy-umbrella, I did decide to focus on the Gothic as the primary genre for these books, since neither case study is marketed or described as being fantasy. Besides that, the long history between the Gothic and children's literature allowed for a new consideration of both the books and the Gothic itself. Hauntology provided another analytical tool to focus on the way past and present are connected, and how this becomes especially clear in the case of trauma or other intense emotions.

In the first chapter I showed that even though the Gothic is an old genre with a rich history, it has developed to still be relevant and important to this day. The Gothic is seen as an ideal way to portray contemporary anxieties and traumas of the past. The same is said for the American Gothic, though this subsection of the Gothic is also strongly connected to the history of slavery and the way it influences American society to this day. Due to the testimonial structure of many Gothic tales and its unique symbolism and tropes, the Gothic is often used to tell stories of traumatic events. Hauntology allows to analyse the way time cannot be neatly divided in past, present, and future, but that times flows together and that the past haunts the

present as much as the future and its possibilities haunt the present. Due to the nature of this thesis, focusing on ghosts, I have chosen to primarily focus on the hauntings of the past. I have discussed several theories on how the past can haunt and influence the present, such as how trauma impacts the nature of a place, how old oppressive structures that we perceive as being "past" can still influence the day to day life of marginalised people, and the way we view objects, especially when they used to belong to someone who died. Ghosts are an especially useful narrative tool in stories that try to discuss this, since ghosts shows that time is not simply linear, with one origin point leading to the present. This is also why ghosts are such a viable tool to represent trauma as they show how the past can linger and influence environment, actions and events in a present day.

Trauma is a key concept in the analysis of *Lockwood & co.* as trauma is what turns dead people into ghosts. The ghosts in this series only become ghosts when they have died in a traumatic manner; people that have died of old age rarely return as ghosts. This makes the agents that hunt the ghosts not only ghost hunters, but also detectives trying to unravel the past. In *Lockwood & co.,* the boundaries between life and death become blurry through objects, Sources, that the ghosts had a strong emotional connection with in their life, and that allow them to re-enter the world of the living. If this Source is destroyed, the ghost disappears as well. The link between ghosts and their Sources show the importance of objects and the connection between life and death, as objects are also often an important element when someone is grieving. It twists the idea of expressing grief of the death of a loved one through objects: the belongings of a dead person are not used to process the death of a loved one, but are the reason a dead person can return to the living world. The ghosts are not only strongly linked to their Sources, but also to the buildings they haunt. *Lockwood & co.* shows how ghosts influence their environment, not only making places physically colder, but also feel threatening and almost alive. This dual focus on both objects and places when it comes to ghosts shows how the past

and trauma can influence the physical world as well, as argued by Fiddler, who showed how traumatic pasts can linger in an environment. However, the most important focus on trauma is found with the development of the two main characters, Lucy and Lockwood. Both feel like they have failed to save other people: Lucy could not save her previous team, and Lockwood was too late to save his sister from a ghost. While their trauma is similar, their responses are different. Lucy feels she failed because she ignored her instincts, and so every time she and her friends are in danger, she responds without thinking, trying to save everyone before anything can even happen. Lockwood, on the contrary, tries to fully ignore his trauma, relegating it to the past; however, it often comes out in anger, refusing to acknowledge that the ghosts used to be human and asserting that they are all potentially dangerous. They portray two different ways of dealing with trauma: acting on impulse to prevent something similar to happen again, or the denial that the traumatic event happened in the first place. After they open up more to each other, they are able to work better together and process their traumas. A final important theme related to ghosts is humanity's fear of death. At the end of the series, the team finds out that the ghosts enter the world of the living because the living have infiltrated the world of the dead, in their search of a way to become immortal. The Problem exists because people are unable to accept death as a part of life. In the end, the books call for an acceptance of death, to embrace one's grief and try to move on, in order to not become ghostlike.

The importance of dealing with grief is also present in *Ophie's Ghosts.* The story starts with the murder of Ophie's father, and this is an emotional thread that runs throughout the whole novel. Ophie's mother retreats into herself, refusing to talk about her husband with Ophie, who feels like she has nowhere to go with her grief. Just like Lockwood, Ophie's mother ignores her grief and thinks this is the easiest way to deal with the death of her husband, but it makes Ophie feel lonely. This causes her to trust the ghosts, and especially Clara's ghost in Daffodil Manor, where she has to work for the mean old Mrs. Caruthers. Even though her Aunt Rose warns her

not to talk to ghosts, since ghosts are hungry and only want a taste of life, Ophie befriends Clara and promises her to solve her murder, since Clara is the only one she can talk to about her father. Ghosts in this story function as a double to the humans: Ophie learns that the only way to help ghosts is to listen to them, find out what they need to do and help them finish that unfinished business so they can move on. The same, turns out, to be true for humans: at the end of the book Ophie and her mother open up to each other and talk about their grief, helping them move on to a new and better life. This is brought up quite strongly and makes that the book as a whole has a strong moralising tone. At the same time, the book also contradicts itself in this message, as Ophie is also warned against talking to ghosts. *Ophie's Ghosts* focuses on death and emotions in two ways: first, it focuses on the importance of relationships to process grief. Only when Ophie and her mother are able to talk to each other about their sadness, they can start to process their loss and continue on with their lives. Secondly, *Ophie's Ghosts* shows that even though someone is gone or something should be in the past, that does not mean it does not linger and affect the present anymore. Clara especially shows how not only specific acts can continue to impact the present, but also how oppressive systems can still have an effect on everyday lives. This is most evident in the discussion of racism in the book. The story uses ghosts to discuss the history of slavery and the impact it still has on American society during the 1920's. Ophie reflects on the similarities between slavery and the systems that are still present and force her to work for a rich white family. These themes become more explicit through Clara's story, a mixed race girl that was murdered by Mrs. Caruthers after she found out that Clara was not white and wanted to marry her son Richard Caruthers. A large part of the story focuses on Ophie uncovering the details of Clara's death and exposing what happened to her, but this is again contradicted in the end when Ophie and her mother accept Richard Caruthers' offer to buy them a house if they promise not to tell anyone what his mother did to Clara. Especially for a book that is dedicated to "all the names we'll never know", this ending feels contrary to what the

book is about. Finally, the ghosts are not the only way the book makes the difference in power between black and white people clear. An interesting motif throughout the book is the use of electricity, which becomes a shorthand for the power and privilege of white people in this story, while simultaneously signalling danger to Ophie, comparing Clara's aura to electricity when she becomes threatening to Ophie.

The two case studies are two completely different stories with different themes and motifs, yet what makes them so interesting to study together is where they compare and contrast each other. As I stated, *Ophie's Ghosts* is in the end a book that explicitly tells children what to do when they are dealing with difficult situations and emotions: they need to be able to trust an adult, preferably a parent, to tell what happened to them. However, in *Lockwood & co.* there are but few adults present, and those that are either have malicious intents or are incompetent (sometimes both). Lockwood & co. are forced to rely on themselves, to handle their own issues and to trust each other. This is never told to the reader explicitly; through the stories and their actions the reader can see the characters grow and develop. While talking and listening to each other is also important in *Lockwood & co.*, it is clear that this is more a need for healthy relationships and to work together efficiently, not just for their own wellbeing, but also for the wellbeing of the team as a whole. This also shows a similarity between *Lockwood & co.* and *Ophie's Ghosts*: while the way the stories represent the need for communication and relationships and the final message differ, they both emphasise the importance of talking with someone and trusting them.

This focus on communication has also been discussed with regards to ghosts and Hauntology. As discussed in the first chapter, Katy Shaw presents the idea of "giving the ghost a voice", as the ghost can teach us about the past, and warn us for what might happen in the present and future. The two case studies present a quite literal answer to that plea: both Lucy in *Lockwood & co.* and Ophie do this, as they both listen to what the ghosts tell them and act on

them. For Ophie, this is mostly because this is the only way she can help ghosts move on and keep the present safe. The ghosts often do not realise they are dead, and if they do, they do not know how they died, as in Clara's case. Therefore, when Ophie listens to the ghosts, she is purely focused on helping the ghost and preventing the city from getting "clogged" with negative energy. In *Ophie's Ghosts,* "giving the ghost a voice" is not a necessity for safety, but more so for closure, as it is also important for Ophie to be able to talk about her grief with her mother. For Lucy in *Lockwood & co.*, this is completely different. Even though the ghosts she has to deal with are also not always aware of their own death or the manner of their passing, the things they tell her can often lead her to their Source, and so to a way to exorcise them. Since the reason the ghosts are so attached to a certain object to the extent it becomes the only thing connecting them to the world of the living, this is often something they remember even in death, thus are able to, willingly or not, communicate this to Lucy. Another similarity between Lucy and Ophie when it comes to listening to the ghost is that they both are explicitly warned against listening by their colleague/mentor Lockwood and Aunt Rose. They both ignore these warnings, and while both are endangered due to their refusal to listen, they also both turn out to be right in the end. In the case of Ophie, this further contradicts the book's final message about talking and listening to adults, whereas for Lucy it shows that it is better to properly communicate with your peers rather than simply commanding something.

The narrative logic in *Ophie's Ghosts* depends on the idea that ghosts need to finish something before they can move on, and often that means telling someone about their unfinished business. Aunt Rose believes that ghosts are stuck in a loop, where they cannot get out due to their refusal to acknowledge their own death and/or past. The only way to get them out of that loop is to remind them that they are dead, listen to them and help the ghosts finish their unfinished business so they can move on. The ghosts in *Lockwood & co.* are stuck in a similar loop, often repeating the same few phrases, lingering in the same places and in the same

patterns as they did when they were still alive. However, the common manner of breaking the ghosts out of that loop and make them move on is through violence, by destroying their Source. Lucy discovers that she can also help ghosts to move on by listening to what they are saying and doing as they ask her to, but she is definitely an outlier in the story. Just as with the different portrayals of dealing with trauma, the author does not explicitly say whether or not Lucy's way of handling ghosts is better or not; it might be more peaceful for the ghosts, but it is a lot more difficult for Lucy and her team compared to simply finding the Source and destroying it.

The role of objects and places in both case studies also share some interesting similarities. For both stories, the places that are haunted are just as important as the hauntings themselves. However, in *Ophie's Ghosts*, the places are given a voice, just like the ghosts. This allows for a more complete perspective on how the past and trauma can affect a place, whether it is a house or a complete city. In *Lockwood & co.* the places are definitely secondary. Here we also see how trauma can change a place: in the case of *Lockwood & co.,* this is darker than in *Ophie's Ghosts.* In the latter, it is clear that past (ghosts) and place influence each other; in the former, a ghost/trauma can be so heavily present it changes the place as a whole; the ghost starts to embody the place and uses the house to scare the children away. This allows for an analysis on what it means to have a body (or not) and to be liminal, since the Sources of the ghosts that embody a house are often found in these in-between places, such as walls and staircases. When it comes to objects, they are a lot more important to *Lockwood & co.* Most Sources symbolise the death of the person or the way they died, as is the case with Annabel Ward's necklace. Ghosts depend on their connection to an object in order to come back, as opposed to the ghosts in *Ophie's Ghosts,* in which the ghosts seemingly always return, independent of an emotional connection to an object or place. However, objects do become important when it comes to possessing another person: Clara is only able to possess the other help, Penelope, because she is wearing Clara's old hair comb. In the end, in this story as well it is through objects with

emotional importance that ghosts are able to regain some power, as is also discussed by De Bruyn and Verstraeten: objects have the power to bring memories about, and in these two works, the memories return in a quite physical form.

Finally, I want to pay some attention to the differences in which the ghosts "work" in the two case studies. Often, when it comes to fantasy literature, people talk about "hard magic" versus "soft magic". The idea is that hard magic functions almost like science in our world: there are rules to be followed, within what is known people can do things, and breaking the rules always has consequences, whether that is new discoveries with new limits, or complete destruction. Soft magic does not have those rules: it is shaped according to what the story needs at any point. A well-known example of soft magic is Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: the reader never learns what kind of magic Gandalf possesses or what his limits are, which allows his power to be fluid and adjust to the story. Soft magic does not mean limitless magic, or at least not when it is well-written, it only means there are no clear rules. I think it is important to discuss the different ghosts of the two case studies through this lens as well, since it reveals quite a lot about the themes the two case studies inadvertently communicate. *Lockwood & co.* would clearly be a hard "magic" system: there are rules to how the ghosts enter the world of the living, how they act, and how they can be defeated. Breaking the rules leads to problems (arguably, it was the breaking of the rules that caused the Problem in the first place), or to new discoveries, such as Lucy's new way of making ghosts move on. Generally speaking, books with a hard magic system focus on plot and development; however, I would argue that in the case of *Lockwood & co.* the "rules" surrounding the ghosts allow for a more complete discussion of time and death. *Ophie's Ghosts*, on the other hand, would be soft "magic". There are no clear rules that state how ghosts come to be, how they can be send on or how they should be treated. Aunt Rose tries to lay some base rules, but when Ophie ignores them this does not lead to groundbreaking discoveries or insurmountable problems. The fact that the rules are

weaker, and that the most important element around the ghosts is the idea that Ophie needs to listen to them allows the story to really hone in on the themes around emotions and trusting each other. The way both stories portray their ghosts reveals the themes the story wants to get across most clearly: for *Lockwood & co.*, this comes down to the questions the story asks about the course of time and death, and for *Ophie's Ghosts,* this is the treatment of emotions. While both stories also contain elements of the other theme, the focus can be found in the way the ghosts are portrayed.

To answer my research question, ghosts challenge the boundaries of life and death in a quite literal manner by ignoring the boundaries and re-entering the world of the living. They exist in a liminal form in which they are not fully physical, but can still have an impact on the world of the living. This also challenges our perception of time: as we perceive what is dead or what is in the past as definitively "gone", ghosts show that even something that is not present anymore can still affect the present. The same happens with emotions and trauma in these stories: the ghosts show how long trauma can affect a person and how it can linger even years after the traumatic event. Both these two case studies make sure this is even more impactful by showing how trauma and grief can also impact living people, and how they can cope with it. As I explained in the introduction, traditionally children's books held explicit moral lessons for children and were written for that exact reason. The ghosts add a new layer to this old tradition: through ghosts, but also of course through other fantastical tropes in other books for children, authors are still able to "teach" children something, but the fantastical elements allow children to discover these lessons for themselves. Rather than being told what to do or how to feel, the main characters in both case studies all have different feelings and deal with them in different ways, and rarely it is said what is the right or wrong way to handle it. These books give children the opportunity to explore different situations and emotions they are bound to experience in real life one day, without being confronting or overly moralising.

I have chosen to focus on ghosts in children's literature fort his thesis, but I believe I have only scratched the surface when it comes to emotions and specifically grief in children's literature. I think a next project might want to focus on the difference in treatment of death and grief in books with ghosts, and books without ghosts, to see how ghosts exactly can function when it comes to preparing children for grief. Another research could focus on the development of the theme of death and grief in children's media. As I explained in the introduction, most adults that are responsible for children want to avoid the topic of death with children, even though it is an inevitable part of life. It would be interesting to see if this has improved over the years, or if death is still a taboo when it comes to children. Lastly, I explained that mixed fantasy is often used to represent difficult topics in children's fiction, but I could of course only focus on death and grief in this thesis. In order to gain more insight on the use of mixed fantasy to address these themes, I would suggest that there is more research to be done on mixed fantasy in children's literature and often avoided topics such as illness, gender or racism.

In the end, this all comes back to the quote of Carry Slee I opened my thesis with: the question should not be "what can be addressed in children's books?" but "how can we address these topics in an age-appropriate manner?" Ghost stories provide a frame in which authors are able to tell exciting, scary stories that are engaging to read, while also allowing a discussion of emotions and other existential questions to happen. In the end, it is clear that the fantastical and supernatural open a door to do this, and hopefully encourage children to read more and to read books that they choose themselves, rather than feeling limited.

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