



# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The gothic space in young adult fantasy

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# A place to call home

The gothic space in young adult fantasy

## 1.0 Introduction

Children’s literature might be as varied as all other genres, but according to Michael Howarth, professor of English at Missouri Southern State University, there has been a general increase in gothic themes in children’s literature in the last 30 years (p. 13, Howarth, 2015) One genre where this is very prevalent is young adult fantasy. Young adult literature is a subgroup within children’s literature, and they are aimed at young people on the threshold between childhood and adulthood. In this thesis I will elaborate on how certain young adult authors use space in their books to create certain emotions both for the reader and the characters in the books.

Other academics also write about the phenomenon of gothic children’s literature. Chloé Germaine Buckley is a British academic who has written several books on gothic literature in children’s books and has focused on young adult literature in her work.

In Buckley’s 2015 article, “Psychoanalysis, ‘Gothic’ Children’s Literature, and the Canonization of Coraline”, she writes specifically about Lewis Carroll’s Alice-books, and how it has been a trend in recent years to Gothicize it, in other words reading it in a more gothic way than previously common, and points to different medias like video games and books where this has been done. (Buckley, 2015) This shows a trend of Gothicising of young adult books and opens up for further gothic analysis of books for the age group.

Gothic Alice is part of a broader postmillennial upsurge in gothic children's fiction, accompanied by an increased critical interest in the gothic as one of the best forms in which to write for children. (Buckley, 2015)

In chapter two, I will point to how some young adult authors use gothic space in their work to create psychological challenges for the characters, and to develop strong emotions that are easily recognizable to children. This will work as an introduction to the third chapter of this thesis, in which I will elaborate on this use of space specifically in the two young adult fantasy books *The Trials of Morrigan Crow* (hereafter called *Trials*) by Jessica Townsend and *Amari and the Night Brothers* (hereafter called *Amari* in Italics) by B. B. Alston.

*Trials* follows Morrigan Crow, an alleged "cursed child" near whom accidents happen. On the day she is supposed to die, she is saved by Jupiter North and travels through a portal to Nevermoor, a parallel world to where she has grown up. Here she endeavours to join a society of elite people called the Wondrous Society (Wunsoc), along with her best friend Hawthorn. In the new world she finds out that she is a wondersmith, a Nevermoor-version of a magician.

*Amari* follows the titular character whose brother is missing. She is a black girl from a poor neighbourhood who goes to a school with rich white people, where she feels like she doesn't belong. Things are going poorly when she, like Morrigan, finds herself in a new world filled with supernatural beings. She also finds that she is a magician in her new world.

The two books both follow a similar pattern: A young, female heroine exits her own world and enters a supernatural world filled with magic and colour. They both find out that they are their world's equivalent of a magician, and in both books, this is something that makes them outsiders and shunned by a lot of people. Both books, moreover, work as good examples of novels that make use of space to symbolise the psychological and spiritual journey that the protagonists embark on and to mediate how challenging and complex such journeys can be for young people. As will be discussed, this latter point is particularly represented through the use of uncanny spaces.

## 2.0 The gothic in young adult literature

It has been debated whether gothic literature includes children's literature, thereunder young adult fantasy. Despite aspects from gothic literature being present in young adult and children's books, many academics tend to overlook the whole genre. Buckley has focused on this in her work.

*Coraline* is considered as a gothic novel within academic circles, despite it being a children's book (Buckley, 2018). Buckley elaborates on this in her 2017 book *Twenty-first-century Children's Gothic*, in which she writes about gothic elements in other children's books (Buckley, 2017). She does point out, however, that *Coraline* is atypical to the average contemporary children's gothic fiction, and that the diverse field is often ignored by academia. She writes that children's gothic is "dominated by series fiction." Furthermore, she problematises that scholars of the gothic often avoid children's literature (Buckley, 2018).

Howarth writes that children "seem to have a greater connection to gothic elements on account of their penchant for frequent emotional displays," and that "Gothicism has always been an integral part of children's literature" (p. 10-12, Howarth, 2015). Howarth goes on to describe the use of gothic themes as a practical tool with a clear goal. He writes that authors writing early, gothic children's literature, like for example the brothers Grimm, used gothic elements to teach children about etiquette and societal expectations. He does also point out, however, that even earlier gothic children's literature used Gothicism to scare children into compliance (p. 12-13, Howarth, 2015).

The uncanny is one of the gothic themes that show up most clearly in children's literature. Buckley points to the uncanny as "one of the most useful theoretical tools for understanding children's fiction." She also references other scholars, namely Lucy Rollin and Mark West, who asserts that childhood is in itself uncanny (p. 1, Buckley, 2015).

This is, in other words, an important part of the gothic children's literature. The sense of something being vaguely off, yet familiar is recurring in multiple children's books.

In the 1900s, the psychological experience of the uncanny was discussed, most famously by Sigmund Freud in his 1919-essay "Das Unheimliche" ("The Uncanny" in English). Freud describes the sensation of the uncanny as something familiar that has "undergone repression and then emerged from it." (p. 15, Freud, 1919). More specifically, it is the sense that something is off. It is familiar and recognizable, yet there is something not right, something unfamiliar in the familiar (or something familiar in the unfamiliar). Freud continues to describe the uncanny as "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." (p. 1-2, Freud, 1919) Oxford Dictionary simply describes the uncanny as "strange and difficult to explain."

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* is a prime example and is also the book Buckley often references. In it, the titular character goes through a door in her house to find another version of her house, an uncanny version, where her parents are instead dolls with buttons for eyes. The reason this is important is, as I will get back to later, how *Coraline* is in a space that is

supposed to be safe, but by entering a portal into a similar yet unfamiliar world, all safety is removed. This is something that occurs to a degree in both primary texts in this analysis.

The way the space around the character impacts their sense of safety and their psychology is one of the things that is most easily recognizable in gothic literature. In *Gothic*, Frank Botting points this out as one of the most prominent attributes in gothic literature. He writes that the physical location in gothic literature can symbolise the psyche, and that “creaking doors, dark corridors and dank dungeons stimulate irrational fancies and fears”, and that “old buildings in gothic fiction are never secure or free from shadows, disorientation or danger.” (p. 4, Botting, 2014)

There are certain physical attributes that are common in the gothic genre. Most importantly is the old building that shows up regularly; old castles, manors and mansions appear in a lot of gothic fiction. There is often a sense of ruin in these old buildings; it is often worn down or haunted by ghosts or different spectres. (p. 4, Botting, 2014)

Botting continues to write that the spaces are “located in isolated spots, areas beyond reason, law, and civilised authority, where there is no protection from terror or persecution...” (p. 4, Botting, 2014). This is true in some young adult books as well, like the elusive Hogwarts, hidden from the regular people’s eyes in the Harry Potter-books.

### 3.0 Space in young adult fantasy

Throughout our lives, we connect to spaces consistently and emotionally. Most people have strong feelings one way or the other about the schools they have gone to or houses they have lived in, and even specific spaces there, like one corner at school where they used to spend time with their friends. Most people will see a feeling of home and belonging as important, not only as children, but throughout our entire lives.

Here it is important to point out what I mean when I reference space in this thesis. According to Ruth Ronen, space is “surroundings of events, characters and objects in literary narrative” (Ronen, 1986). In other words, it is the area where something happens, or where something is. Unless there is something there, there is no space, so the existence of space depends on what is around it. Space because what it is and gains its meaning from how you perceive it and how other people perceive it.

Therefore, space has such an importance in the literary world in general, and in the gothic in particular. And for children, who are meeting all these aspects of the worlds both physical and literary for the first times, this might be seen as doubly important; are the spaces in their lives safe or unsafe? Are they few or many?

Later on, I will also write about “safe spaces”. My definition of a safe space as a small, limited area in which a person feels particularly safe and calm, and which they seek when they need time by themselves to settle down. I mentioned initially that the uncanny is important in gothic literature, and an active use of space that triggers recognition whilst remaining different from what you are familiar with can be effective to create a feeling of uncertainty and distress when reading a story.

In this chapter I will, through a close reading of the books *Trials* and *Amari*, analyse how the two authors use space to show contrast between peoples, worlds, and things. I will also aim to point out how these author’s use of space contributes to feelings of eerie relatability as well as creepy unfamiliarity to the reader and explore how this impacts the characters and readers psychologically.

Both Alston and Townsend very actively use the contrast between light and dark to create an effect of difference and otherness. They do this in the people, their moods and thoughts, and their actions. More importantly, however, they do this in the space that occur in the book. One example is when Morrigan in *Trials* arrive at the setting of most of the book, the Hotel Deucalion.

The lobby of the Hotel Deucalion was cavernous and bright – which came as a surprise after the dim, threadbare service entrance (...) from the ceiling hung an enormous rose-coloured chandelier in the shape of a sailing ship, dripping with crystals and bursting with warm light. There were potted trees and elegant furniture all around. A grand staircase curved around the walls, up and up to thirteen floors (Morrigan counted them) in a dizzying spiral.  
(Townsend, 2017)

This is Morrigan’s first view of the lobby, the part of the hotel that is visible to the public in the book. The old house is gothic in nature; it is big and sublime, the descriptions are excessive and the importance of the building in the story is established through the attention it gets from the author.

Also important in the gothic, however, is the interplay between dark and light. Botting writes that the interplay of light and dark is “evident in the conventions, settings, characters, devices, and effects specific to gothic texts” and that Gothicism “juxtaposes terrors of the negative with an order authorised by reason and morality (p. 3, Botting, 2014). And the darkness has already come to light upon Morrigan’s arrival at the hotel and is referenced in the previous quote. Upon first entering the hotel, this is what she sees:

Gas lanterns in sconces on the wall were turned low. It was hard to see much, but the carpet looked shabby and worn and the wallpaper peeled in places. There was a faint smell of damp. They reached a steep wooden staircase and began to climb. (Townsend, 2017)

Through this paragraph, we learn that the building is old and worn; the shabby carpet and the peeled wallpaper does fill us with a certain dark foreboding because it implies that things are uncared for and possibly unsafe, and the smell and the steepness of the stairs gives of a sense of negativity. This implies to us and Morrigan herself that something is wrong in this new world, that despite it being a world she is being brought to safe in, there are powers at work that does not necessarily wish her well.

It is scary for Morrigan to enter her new home in the low, flickering light because she is in a new place with nothing familiar around her. To then enter somewhere where the visibility is low, and the shadows can play tricks on you is unnerving. She knows nothing about this place, and the lack of light does not help to enlighten her. And by extension, it is scary for us to be there with her.

How Townsend describes the lobby of the hotel, however, is more positive, with colour and life; in this way, the two different entrances give off a contrasting impression, and the underlying, hidden one is negative in nature.

Instead of shabby darkness, the lobby is bursting with lights, there is a massive, eye-catching chandelier, and the potted trees give off a sense of life that the servant's entrance lacked. The colours are different as well; in the initial entrance, there aren't a lot of them, and those that are there are hard to see due to the low light. The rose-coloured crystals of the chandelier and the (assumedly) green flowers, however, is vibrant in comparison.

The building is grand and light, but that does not change the fact that it has its dark corners. This fits well in with the tradition of gothic houses, in that it is not free from shadows or danger. This is more obvious in that there is a whole wing of the house that is closed off, where no one is allowed to go. It shows up repeatedly in the book, like Brontë's attic in *Jane Eyre* where there is a wing of the building where something secret is hidden away.

In fact, the closed off wing of the Hotel Deucalion resembles *Jane Eyre* especially. For example, when the receptionist references it on page 424: "Our grey man is still hanging about the south wing, spooking people. Walking through walls and disappearing (p. 424,



Townsend 2017). It is easy to draw parallels from this to the woman hidden in Mr. Rochester's attic in *Jane Eyre*. Like in Brontë's novel, in fact, the man hidden in the forbidden part of the house is fundamental to the story at the end of the book.

The lobby in the hotel, obviously, is what the guests see. They do not see the dark and dreary servant's entrance, nor do they see the bleak, closed off wing of the building; to them the Hotel Deucalion is always light and flamboyant. To Morrigan and the other people that live their lives there, however, it has a hidden shadow, an aspect of darkness, that embeds the building thoroughly in the gothic tradition.

Whilst the building itself fits very well with the gothic tradition in this book, it differs in the physical location of the building. It isn't far off and isolated, but in the middle of an urban area. Everyone living in Nevermoor can see and feel the facade of the hotel, and it is not hidden away at all. This is also the case with the setting in *Amari*, which takes place in a building named the Vanderbilt hotel, once again in the middle of an urban area.

The difference in *Amari*, however, is that the important part of the hotel, the part where the supernatural takes place, is hidden from regular people, and is only accessible if you are of a supernatural nature. But like Hotel Deucalion, the Vanderbilt hits us with its grandeur immediately when the main character sees it for the first time:

An enormous hall greets us, and I gasp—it's filled with all kinds of strange sights. A flock of fairies twinkles past like floating Christmas lights, their laughter like tinkling bells. They all wave to me in unison. A bit dazed, I'm about to lift my hand to wave back when a loud shriek rings out. Witches zip by overhead on brooms, cackling madly and firing plumes of black smoke at one another. (Alston, 2020)

This is where the protagonist of *Amari* sees the supernatural part of the hotel for the first time, and once again the description is excessive and grand to show its importance. It invokes a feeling of the sublime, described by Edmund Burke as "a greatness beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement or imitation" ("SUBLIME", n.d.). According to Burke, it works to invoke the opposite feelings from horror and terror ("The Project Gutenberg eBook of Burke's Writings and Speeches, Volume the First, by Edmund Burke.", 2022). The result of this is that *Amari* can feel overwhelmed in a situation already filled with uncertainty and many new impressions.

The hall that greets Amari is so enormous that she is left gasping; her first sight of her new home is more like Morrigan's impression of the lobby in her hotel; the Vanderbilt is filled with lights and life. The sound of fairies laughing greets her, and witches fly around on their brooms, cackling. There is life immediately in the Vanderbilt, where Morrigan had to go through darkness to get to the light. You see it in the creatures that are flying around, in the sounds of people, and in the interactions between them. This does not invoke darkness or negativity, but instead pleasure and joy; the gothic sublime is at play.

Amari's first look is not of the lobby of her hotel, but later we observe the lobby through her eyes for the first time:

(...) Seeing the lobby for the first time feels like I've somehow stepped into one of those old black-and-white movies. The floors are covered with black-and-white tiles. The walls are glistening white, and two black pillars surround a white statue of Abraham Van Helsing driving a stake into Vladimir, one of the Night Brothers. (Alston, 2020)

This time, Alston tells several stories in his description of the lobby. The fact that everything in the room is black and white illustrates how, on certain areas, the people Amari meets has a very black and white view on things and people. Specifically, he points to their view on the nature of magicians. In the book, Vlad Tepes is one of the Night Brothers, magicians that used to tyrannise the world. That the statue of him being killed is in a black and white room lets us know that the world sees magicians as purely bad, justly or unjustly, due to Tepes' actions.

Moments later, this point is further strengthened by Abraham Van Helsing's descendant, Lara Van Helsing, pointing out the statue, and telling Amari, who is a magician, that "that's how the bureau feels about magicians (Alston, 2020). This is where the dark starts seeping in. The world Amari has entered might be filled with light and life, but there is a darkness there; to the people, to things happening around her. The colourlessness of the lobby really plays into this; light and dark, black and white, will juxtapose each other throughout the book.

At the same time, it is obvious to me that in these two young adult fantasy books, although the spaces do clearly follow a gothic tradition, the use of space are more on the lighter side in general than the darker, where the traditionally gothic tends to be primarily darker.

Townsend especially uses the dark and the negative actively throughout her book. Already on the first page of the book, one can read that "The journalists arrived before the

coffin did. They gathered at the gate overnight and by dawn they were a crowd. By nine o'clock they were a swarm" (Townsend, 2017), and soon after Morrigan describes her favourite space in her house: "The second sitting room was usually a good place to hide; it was the glummiest room in the house, with hardly any sunshine. Nobody liked it except for Morrigan" (Townsend, 2017). At this point, Townsend shows us the importance of a safe, private space for Morrigan. To have a spot to call one's own where one can hide away is especially important to Morrigan. Townsend illustrates Morrigan's personality and nature in how she describes this space; it being glum and without sunshine reflects the dark and broody aspects of her personality, and the fact that her favourite space is a place nobody else likes shows that she does not feel like a part of the family, or that she does not feel like she belongs.

A reason safe spaces are important both to Morrigan, but also to the young adult readers of these books, is human's innate need for a safe space. Even a toddler exploring their kindergarten for the first time needs a safe haven to return to, to gather energy and courage to again explore the new and scary. This need never leaves, and many children find safe spaces in books themselves.

The interplay between the dark and the light is very important when you consider this, and there is a pivot in this book in that regard. The pivot happens when Morrigan is saved and brought to Nevermoor and the Hotel Deucalion. Nevermoor is in many ways the opposite of the city Morrigan grew up in, Jackalfax.

Instead of the old, cold mansion of her father, she now moves to the hotel with its grandeur, colour, and lightness. Where Jackalfax was neat, dark, and uniform, with little variation to speak of, Nevermoor strikes Morrigan with its varied scenery. "Everywhere Morrigan looked there were rolling green parks and tiny church gardens, cemeteries and courtyards and fountains and statues, illuminated by warm yellow gaslights and the occasional rogue firework" (Townsend, 2017).

There is life and colour in Nevermoor. As a reader, one gets a feeling of energy and positivity from the rolling green parks, the fountains and statues, and the warm yellow lights of Morrigan's new home city. Once more, Townsend succeeds in strengthening that feeling through contrast; Nevermoor's light and life seems all the brighter than Jackalfax' darkness and deadness in comparison.

Even the appearance of the tiny church gardens and cemeteries, spaces that usually are seen as dark and negative, instead give of a feeling of originality, variation and life when compared to the uniformity of Jackalfax. This is important both because it shows us how big

the transition is for the main character, making her need to adapt more urgent, but also because it indicates that this world is vastly different from the old world, despite being clearly connected to it through the portal Morrigan entered.

Alston does not shy away from the dark and negative in spaces either, but once more the interplay between them is apparent. In this case we get both sides of the spectrum at once:

The dome is split into halves—the walls on the right side show cute furry animals in green meadows filled with flowers of every color. Happy cherubs take aim at grinning couples, and children laugh and dance. The left side of the dome is totally different. Ugly monsters twist themselves around dark spaces filled with angry green eyes. Some bare sharp fangs, others have sneaky grins. All the people on this side look sad, terrified, or furious.  
(Alston, 2020)

This is a space Amari encounters when searching for information about her missing brother. In describing it as being so neatly split between the light and the dark, Alston shows us once more how the good and the bad, the light and the dark, are directly opposed to each other; once more the layout of a space Amari meets reflects that of the society he describes.

At the same time, these two aspects of society, the darkness and the light, are a part of the very same dome. It is not two separate entities existing independent of each other, but two pieces of a whole. This indicates that they both play a part, both are important, and it is the interplay between them that makes people and society into what it is. This is a valuable lesson for young people, and it can introduce them to the greyness of the world, the fact that everything is not black and white.

It is also telling that the positive, light side is filled with nature and life, where the dark side is filled with the twisted and horrible; the emotions as well are important, and Alston gives us the impression that the positive emotions are directly at odds with the negative emotions by keeping them so clearly opposed to each other in the dome. He does this purely through a use of space, which is one of the reasons why space is important in *Amari*. Not to mention the presence of monsters being very gothic in itself.

In *Amari*, there is also a very prominent *safe space*, a limited space where Amari is free of negative emotions, pressure, and fear. It is when Amari joins her friend Dylan to his holiday house, where he has been practicing his magic. They do need a safe space to practice magic due to it being illegal, and this is how Alston describes the room of illusions that Dylan has made:

Dylan's illusion is a whole forest of twinkling neon lights. Trees and bushes with shimmering leaves of blue and pink and purple. (...) I follow Dylan down a little winding path, my eyes darting back and forth trying to see everything at once. A butterfly with red-and-gold wings flutters by my face, and squirrels with glittery silver fur race up trees when we get too close. It all feels so real that it takes a second to realize that I can actually hear the sounds of animals. I didn't know illusions could do so much (p. 250-251, Alston, 2020)

This space is important in the book, because it is where Amari first sees the potential of her abilities, and first gets to practice them without feeling like she must hide. Up until this moment, she has associated magic with darkness and feeling like an outsider, now she sees "twinkling neon lights" and "shimmering leaves of blue and pink and purple," which teaches her and us as readers that there is a light and colourful side to magic. With the living animal illusions, we also learn that magic is not just a source of death and destruction, but also of life and wonder.

This changes both how Amari sees magicians, and how we see them. Up until this point, we have only heard of the magicians that used dark and destructive powers to try and rule the world. Alston uses this safe space for Amari and Dylan to show us that there is more to it, that a magician can be good. He effectively uses this space to change our perception of the entire supernatural world. After this, the dynamic between light and dark is changed in the book; the previous clear cut between them has become blurry, and there is a light in the darkness.

The first time Morrigan enters the grounds of the Wondrous Society in *Trials*, there is something about the surroundings that causes Morrigan unease. Something that is hard to explain, but that makes Morrigan feel vaguely disconnected from the outside of the garden:

Something changed when they stepped through the gates. It was as if everything was slightly different, as if the air itself had shifted. (Townsend, 2017)

It is subtle, the change in Morrigan's surroundings. It is not a big change that is impossible to miss, but rather, everything is just *slightly different*. The quote continues like this:

(...) the sun felt warmer on her skin. It was strange, she thought. Outside the gates the sky hadn't looked quite as blue, and the flowers were still only tiny buds, the barest hint of spring's arrival (Townsend, 2017)

Morrigan says it herself; it is strange. The space around her is strange, but it is hard to pinpoint exactly what is wrong. The sky is just a little bluer than outside the gates, the sun only just warmer, the flowers more in bloom. This is clearly gothic in its nature, giving us a sense that something is different and wrong from how it is supposed to be, or usually is. Townsend here uses gothic aspects effectively on the spaces she describes to create a sense of otherness, an impression that what happens within those grounds are not only grand and important to Morrigan, but also to us as readers.

This might also effectively symbolise growing up; when you grow up, the world looks different from how it did as a child. No matter how you look at the world as an adult, it will have changed fundamentally since you were a toddler. Her entrance into the Wunsoc gardens can be seen as her joining the ranks of the adults and growing up, and therefore the world seems different, feels different.

Morrigan's mentor Jupiter confirms this otherness immediately after, by claiming that weather is "a bit *more*" in the wondrous society's grounds. In the next paragraph, Townsend once more uses juxtaposition to create contrast in Morrigan's surroundings:

The driveway stretching up to the main building was lined with gas lamps and – out of place among the colourful flowerbeds and pink cherry blossoms – two rows of dead, starkly black trees, untouched by the Wunsoc weather phenomenon (Townsend, 2017)

Once again, Townsend uses the space around Morrigan to show the reader that there are aspects of light and dark interplaying all the time. Even when everything seems extraordinarily pretty, there are elements of darkness and negativity there which in itself is very gothic. More importantly, however, it shows how important the uncanniness of space around Morrigan is both to her and to the reader; the feeling of wrongness or otherness constantly impact the way Morrigan thinks and react, and gives off a sense of uncertainty to the reader; can we trust what we are seeing or hearing? Can we trust what Morrigan thinks and does?

Alston also actively uses space to create a feeling of strangeness. Especially uncanny is a moment in the All-Souls festival, a festival where ghosts are attending as well as living

people, and where Amari and her friend Elsie exits the shop of an old magician, long dead, Madame Violet:

Madame Violet cackles as she and the entire shop begin to fade away. Soon Elsie and I am standing alone in the alley between two larger tents. It's like the shop was never here (Alston, 2020)

The two characters are still there, where the shop was a moment before, but now the alleyway is completely empty. For Amari, however, the place she lived in *before* all the supernatural happenings is also particularly important, because it is quite telling of who she is, and her background. Her being poor and her being black has always impacted her sense of identity, and it has made her into who she is when the story starts. We see this when she first comes back there from her school in a richer area:

“I'm not going to lie, it feels different coming back here after being on the other side of town. It's like the world is brighter around Jefferson Academy and all those big, colorful houses that surround it. Where I'm from feels grey in comparison. We pass liquor stores and pawnshops and I see D-Boys leaning up against street signs, mean mugging like they own the world (p. 5, Alston, 2020)

Here we learn that Amari has grown up in a poor neighborhood with gangs and crime, which adds to her having felt like she does not belong at her school with rich in the “regular” world. It is also an area with mostly black people, and the school she went to almost only had white students.

This translates into the “new world” as well, where she is shunned not because of the colour of her skin, but because of the nature of her abilities. The aspect of where she is from is also drawn into this new world, although it is altered slightly: she has grown up in the natural world rather than the supernatural, and that makes people doubt her abilities.

You also see an aspect of the uncanny in Alston's description of Amari's home street. Especially when he writes that “it feels different coming back here after being on the other side of town. It's like the world is brighter around Jefferson Academy.” The feeling of being in the same world, but there is something there that is unfamiliar, is uncanny, and very reminiscent of Townsend's description of the Wondrous Society grounds in *Trials*: One space being brighter than the other, despite being under the same sun. One space feeling grey and

the other colourful. This, of course, is once more an effective use of the gothic interplay between light and dark to create a contrast in moods.

## 4.0 Conclusion

This new place to call home though, is not just light and happiness, and they do not immediately feel like they belong there; instead, their former life is reflected in their new home and surroundings. What is more, they also use the spaces the characters encounter to reflect the contrasts of their new world; both characters meet spaces where you clearly see the interplay between darkness and light, and this impacts our and the characters views on their new world. At the same time, the lines between the dark and light gradually grow blurrier.

Spaces have an especially important place in young adult fantasy, and in the two books I have analysed, it forms the very base of the stories. This works so well in books directed to children because they are still exploring the world and finding their own place in it; having books with unique and noticeable spaces is especially effective to this age group, and that might be a reason it's so prevalent in this genre.

The main difference in the way these two young adult authors use space from the traditional gothic, however, is the way they tend to prefer the positive and the sublime to the terror and horror. Rather than being a shadowy house with instances of light, they live in grand, sublime houses with smaller spaces of darkness and horror. There is more safety than danger, and you have the feeling that when there is danger, it is the exception rather than the rule. In traditional gothic literature, the opposite is more often the case, where the horror and darkness are ever present.

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