

CFP for American Literature Association (ALA) Boston, May 21-24, 2025

Traditional Paper Session:

Gothic Blackness —Exploring Ethnogothic, New Black Gothic, and Afro-Gothic Themes in Literature

The Society for the Study of the American Gothic (SSAG) invites proposals for a traditional paper session addressing the varied and yet undertheorized intersections of race, Gothic literature, and speculative genres. We welcome proposals for papers that critically and creatively engage with Blackness and the Gothic tradition, addressing how race, identity, and culture shape the narratives and aesthetics of the Gothic in contemporary and historical contexts.

Our session will highlight and extend the discourse on the subgenres of *Ethnogothic*, *New Black Gothic*, and *Afro-Gothic* as developed by John Jennings, Sheri-Marie Harrison, and Maisha Wester, and others—modes of Gothic storytelling that foreground race, ethnicity, environment, and Black cultural narratives. We seek to create a vibrant discussion around how these genres have the capacity to capture the haunting effects of racial histories and ecological collapse—through the grotesque, the supernatural, and the marginalized—while offering imaginative spaces to interrogate and challenge dominant cultural and literary narratives revealing deeper societal social anxieties surrounding race, otherness, and identity.

We encourage papers that engage with (but are not limited to):

Themes:

- The Ethnogothic: How does Gothic literature intersect with ethnic histories, cultural trauma, and racialized horror? How do marginalized voices reclaim the Gothic tradition to explore themes of displacement, oppression, and survival?
- The Ecogothic: In what ways does the Gothic express environmental degradation, ecological anxiety, and the entanglements between race and nature? How does eco-gothic literature reflect on both personal and collective experiences of ecological loss and crisis?
- Afro-Gothic: What defines Afro-Gothic as a subgenre? How do Black writers use the gothic to interrogate histories of enslavement, colonialism, and racial terror while also imagining liberatory futures?
- Hauntology and Racial Trauma: How do Gothic texts depict racial trauma as a haunting force that persists through generations? How do Gothic figures such as ghosts, monsters, and specters reflect racial histories?
- The Speculative and the Black Gothic: How do contemporary speculative fiction(s) by Black writers reimagine gothic conventions to critique or resist dominant cultural narratives?

We welcome papers that analyze works from both classic and contemporary writers who explore the intersections of race and gothic literature, such as:

- Toni Morrison – *Beloved* and its treatment of memory, haunting, and slavery.
- Octavia Butler – The horror and gothic elements present in works like *Kindred*.
- Nalo Hopkinson – *Brown Girl in the Ring* and its Afro-Caribbean speculative and gothic elements.
- Jewelle Gomez – *The Gilda Stories* as a reimagining of the vampire mythos within an African-American lesbian narrative.
- Ralph Ellison – The gothic undercurrents in *Invisible Man*.
- Rivers Solomon – Gothicized themes of trauma, race, and queerness in works like *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, *Sorrowland*, and *Modern Home*
- Tananarive Due – Her works like *The Reformatory* at the intersection of African-American history, horror, and Gothic.
- Helen Oyeyemi – Gothic and surrealist themes in *White is for Witching*.

Potential Lines of Inquiry:

- Gothic Representations of Enslaved Bodies and Plantation Landscapes
- Ethnogothic and Diasporic Storytelling
- Monstrosity and Race/Gothic Monsters
- Afrofuturism/Afropessimism and Gothic Blackness
- Racial Melancholia, Grief, and Resistance
- Eco-Gothic Approaches to Race and the Anthropocene
- Folk horror, Occult Practices, and Religious Horror
- Hauntology and Racial Trauma
- Bodies as Property: The Capitalization of Blackness
- Queer Horror and Intersectional Identities
- Disability, Deformity, and Monstrosity
- Diseased Bodies and Contagion
- Genocide, Mass Slaughter, and Racialized Killing

We seek contributions from scholars across disciplines, including literature, cultural studies, race studies, environmental humanities, and beyond. Submissions that explore comparative, cross-cultural, and transnational perspectives are especially welcome.

Submission Guidelines:

Please submit a 250-300-word abstract and a brief bio by December 15th, 2024, to ddaniels1@arizona.edu. We look forward to your contributions to this exciting and timely conversation.

Organizer:

DeAnna Daniels (University of Arizona)

On behalf of the Society for the Study of the American Gothic