

### Sites of Death in the American Gothic

When discussing American Gothic literature, it is evident that sites of death and mourning often appear, with the image most often looked to is the single monument of the individual gravesite. Yet, the history of the Americas is populated with sites of mass death, whether in the space of the cemetery, to sites of large scale disaster that result in numerous and simultaneous deaths. From the single monument of the individual, to mass monuments dedicated to fallen war veterans, to the unmarked graves of lives lost in natural disasters, throughout history, death has forced us to create spaces within which we confront and contemplate immortality, afterlife, rite and ritual, and celebration of death both personal, communal, and political.

From texts such as Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) to Daniel Alarcon's depiction of the Ancash earthquake in "Lima, Peru, July 28, 1979" (2006) to the numerous invocations of burial throughout Nathaniel Hawthorne's works, to Emily Dickinson's infatuation with death and the afterlife in her poetry, and how colonial spaces like the museum in Natalie Diaz's poetry create spaces of mourning that are then divested of the palpability of death for uninformed visitors, it is clear that American Gothic texts' preoccupations with sites of death have much to say about culture, mourning, and the American Gothic itself. What can these various texts centered on a site of death reveal about a given cultural moment? Death as a larger theme has commonly been explored, but what about the spaces of death? How can an analysis of sites of death help to inform identity formation and community making? How are death sites used to advance political agendas? In what ways do the sites of death perform silent and subtle work on our psyches? This panel invites discussion on sites of death throughout the history of American Gothic literature. We welcome papers across all academic disciplines that take up the analysis of sites of the Gothic, death sites, and related subject matter. Suggested topics include but are not restricted to:

- Representations of mourning through Gothic literature, art, music, film, etc.
- Locations both literal and imaginative: mortuary spaces, tombs, cemeteries, battlefields, unmarked graves, roadside memorial tributes, altars, shrines
- Historical events such as wars, plagues, epidemics, natural disasters, acts of terrorism and despotism, etc.
- The past and future of cemeteries such as the rural cemetery movement, the golden age of mausoleums, high-rise cemeteries, virtual graveyards, interactive headstones
- Religious and spiritual practices such as burial rites, mourning rituals, evolving cultural practices
- Ethnic, raced, and gendered mourning
- Celebration of death through festivals, parades, wakes, deathaversaries
- Death as muse for artistic creation such as poetry, lyrics, photographs
- Commemoration and death propaganda

Other focuses on studies of the American Gothic will also be considered.

Please submit a 300-word abstract and a short bio to Alexander Lalama ([alalama@bradley.edu](mailto:alalama@bradley.edu)) by December 31, 2026.