

Afro-Gothic

Deadline: Nov 30, 2020

Tashima Thomas

Afro-Gothic: Black Horror and the Relentless Haunting of Traumatic Pasts Call for Papers

For Afro-Gothic: Black Horror and the Relentless Haunting of Traumatic Pasts, we seek work that explores the Afro-Gothic as an aesthetic and as a means of working through the trauma of colonial slavery. Although the Gothic genre is widely discussed as a purely European literary tradition, the gothic manifests as a global phenomenon. Every culture possesses its own ghost stories, monster tales, or myths about creatures with supernatural powers. This project examines how the tropes of the gothic—with its constructions of the monstrous, the villainous, the mad and the haunted—take on wholly different valences when they are studied within the contexts of blackness, particularly under the modern colonial project. In our view, one important characteristic of the Afro-Gothic that distinguishes it from its European counterpart is its rootedness in lived black experiences. The Afro-Gothic often addresses the everydayness of black horror in ways that attest to the repetitive violence against black bodies and the relentless haunting of traumatic pasts.

We seek work that explores Afro-Gothic sensibilities in film, fiction, performance, and the visual arts. What we might call Afro-Gothic narratives have emerged lately in popular works by Jordan Peele (*Get Out* and *Candyman*), in the series *Tales from the Hood* (1995/2018) and *Lovecraft Country* (2020), *Childish Gambino's This is America*, and Kara Walker's antebellum silhouettes, to name just a few. We are interested in works that expand and explode current generic definitions of the Gothic and highlight the ways in which contemporary black artists are reckoning with aesthetics. In what ways does the Afro-Gothic serve to frame our understanding of the contemporary moment through a dark prism of organized terror?

Possible topics to explore might include (but are certainly not limited to):

- colonial hauntings – living among ghosts and the walking dead
- the plight of the hunted and state-sanctioned violence
- dark tourism and haunted houses
- maritime Afro-Gothic – nautical narratives
- medical experimentation and the trope of the mad scientist
- miscegenation, hybridity, and the bodily mash-up
- conjuring, the witch doctor and practitioners of the dark arts
- urban decay and environmentalism – climate crisis, toxicities, eco-gothic and natural disasters
- Afro-Gothic and new technologies, soundscapes, surveillance, cyber-haunting, ghost in the machine

- menageries of the grotesque and public display of monstrosity
- cannibalization and 'Eating the Other'
- sexual exploitation and gendered violence
- bondage, dungeons, incarcerations, and the restricted body

Essays must be written in English, but we encourage international submissions on all African Diasporic Afro-Gothic topics. Accepted works will be included in our proposal for a special issue of an online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to black studies and aesthetics. Please submit an abstract (300 words) along with a brief bio to afrogothiccfp@gmail.com.

The deadline for submissions is November 30, 2020.

Tashima Thomas, Editor
Pratt Institute

Sybil Newton Cooksey, Editor
New York University

Reference:

CFP: Afro-Gothic. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 7, 2020 (accessed May 16, 2025),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/23669>>.