

Cambridge Elements[≡]

Elements in the Gothic

edited by

Dale Townshend

Manchester Metropolitan University

Angela Wright

University of Sheffield

AFRICAN AMERICAN GOTHIC IN THE ERA OF BLACK LIVES MATTER

Maisha Wester

Indiana University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-57140-1 — African American Gothic in the Era of Black Lives Matter

Maisha Wester

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009571401

DOI: 10.1017/9781009161008

© Maisha Wester 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009161008

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-57140-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-16101-5 Paperback

ISSN 2634-8721 (online)

ISSN 2634-8713 (print)

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/Wester

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

African American Gothic in the Era of Black Lives Matter

Elements in the Gothic

DOI: 10.1017/9781009161008
First published online: January 2025

Maisha Wester
Indiana University

Author for correspondence: Maisha Wester, maisha.wester@sheffield.ac.uk

Abstract: This Element explores twenty-first century Black Gothic literature and film as it responds to American anti-Blackness and as they illustrate a mode of Black Gothic fiction termed Black Lives Matter (BLM) Gothic. The various texts express frustration, rage, and sorrow over the failures of previous civil rights fights. Intended as an introduction to a complex mode, this Element explores the three central themes in BLM Gothic texts and defines the mode's pattern of tropes. The first section reviews the depictions of American anti-Blackness, and defines the mode's pattern of tropes reveal the necropolitical mechanisms at play in US systemic racism. The second section explores the ways the fictions 'make whiteness strange' in order to destabilize white normativity and shatter the power arising from such claims. The final section examines the costs of waging war against racial oppression and the power of embracing 'monstrosity'.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, racism, Black Horror, Black Gothic, race theory

© Maisha Wester 2025

ISBNs: 9781009571401 (HB), 9781009161015 (PB), 9781009161008 (OC)
ISSNs: 2634-8721 (online), 2634-8713 (print)

Contents

Introduction: Say The(ir) Name(s)	1
1 You Already Dead	9
2 Making Whiteness Strange	30
3 Becoming the Monster	48
Conclusion: When Tomorrow Comes	65
Bibliography	72