



# MUSES

A Litterātus Special Edition



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## Letter from the Howard Thurman Honors Program Director

Dear Reader:

I am pleased to present the 2022 issue of *Litteratus*, the literary journal of the Morehouse College Howard Thurman Honors Program. Although the production of this journal is a part of the longstanding tradition of creative thought at Morehouse College, this issue reflects a zeitgeist and shift in consciousness. The thematic explorations of these literary artists depict the second decade of the twenty-first century in which they have negotiated the dual pandemic of racism and the coronavirus plague, all while exploring academics and aspects of their identity and emotional terrain. These students are to be commended for their talent, commitment, and bravery.

I am reminded of the fabled blind elder woman in Toni Morrison's Nobel Lecture whom youth attempt to intimidate by asking if the bird in their hand is alive or dead. In her wisdom, she metaphorically relates the bird to language to conclude the only known truth -- that whether the bird is alive or dead, it [language] is in their hands. While I am blindly unaware and did not see this day coming, I am willing to believe in these students and to affirm that this language of their lives is in their hands, alive and well, and free as a bird in flight.

Enjoy!

*Leah Creque, Ph.D.*

Certain contents of this journal include depictions of suicidal ideation. If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a crisis, please reach out immediately to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline by calling 988 or text HOME to the Crisis Text Line at 741741. These services are free and confidential.

To reach the Student Counseling Center on campus, call (470) 639-0231 or visit the James B. Ellison, Sr. Student Health Center in Brazeal Hall, Ground Floor on the north end of campus Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

\*For emergency assistance, call the Morehouse Police Department at (404) 215-2666 on-campus or 911 if off-campus.

## Editor's Note

“My heart, which is so full to overflow, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary”

-Martin Luther

Our present time has been “filled with swift transition,” riddled with the dissonant tunes of the Covid-19 pandemic and its variants. The disharmonious melodies of our ongoing reality have often accompanied experiences and feelings of depression, despair, and death. As a college community, we have entered a process of slowly abandoning what was “normal” as a new one continues to emerge, finding ourselves located in a space of twixt and between. The sense of irregularity and “off-kilterness” of the present moment can be personified in navigating the journey into adulthood as a Black Diasporan in America with the added stressors of “Rona” and the occasional anxieties of the HBCU student experience.

This special edition of the *Litteratus* entitled *Muses* comes out of this moment and space in time. The following pages consist of a collection of short stories, poetry, and letters, crafted by ten talented Morehouse College students. This volume also includes photographs with Morehouse students serving as the principal subjects, speaking to the varied beauty of selfhood, and features original compositions designed by Honors Program Assistant Director, Mr. Keith Asberry'17. The literary voices in this anthology are shaded with various tones and timbres, reflecting the different styles and genres of the personal songs performed throughout each page. In this arranged ensemble of literary compositions, each creative is in conversation with themselves and each other, composing a concert resonant with themes of awareness and ancestors, confusion and celebration, love and loss, self-expression and self-actualization. One common thread found in this tapestry of poetry and prose is the use of the natural or observable world (the realms around us) as a mode to convey meaning in lived experiences and as a medium to communicate with readers both past and present. As you read this special edition, allow its rhythmic notes to dance off the pages, evoking music that serves as a mirror to consider the power, authenticity, and sublimity of the burgeoning creative's voice.

With gratitude,

*George Anthony Pratt'23*

Editor-In-Chief

**True to Self**  
Terrence Fosque'23  
Photographed by ZhaneProduction



**Blue Boy**  
Isaiah Hamilton'23

I open my eyes. Dew falls from the tree leaves above. I can see the sun peeking through the tree limbs. My body lays numb as nature's creatures consume it with the intention of leaving nothing but my soul. Or will they take that, too? I began descending into the earth. Bitter dirt fills my mouth and maggots make home under my skin. I can taste my fate approaching. I have finally come to terms with my destiny and as I lay here cold and dying, I realize that a void in my soul still remains. I look to the sky for one last time and then I see you, so blue and beautiful. I stare at your skin, shining in the light. Your vibrant appearance imparts life into my deteriorating existence. I desire to live for I have something to fight for and protect! You emerge as my reason to keep pushing forward. I feel all the life pouring back into my body. The creatures begin to retreat from it, and I start to gain sensation in my limbs. I feel alive and rejuvenated. Our eyes lock, connecting seamlessly like the oceans. Your eyes provide me with an entry point towards serenity.

I rise from the ground, reborn, my naked body rendered radiant, bright as the surface of the sun. Suddenly, it grows dark, and I can no longer see the sun rays reflected on the trees. The bees are no longer buzzing, birds no longer chirping, and predators and their prey all seemingly turn their attention to you, my blue boy. Your skin is blue like the ocean, your curls blossom from your scalp like a rose growing from concrete, and hair sprouts across your chest and abdomen like poison ivy. I watch as each of your bodily muscles bulge and your manhood sways in the warm breeze just as a black walnut tree. As I begin to approach, walking closer, I realize, my blue boy, you are sad. I notice your battle scars, the scrapes and

bruises etched in your melanated flesh. I see open bullet wounds leaking profusely from your chest. Tears pour from your eyes as all signs of happiness is drained from your countenance.

It is apparent that you are a fighter, a conclusion drawn from the sight of blood dripping from your knuckles. I must know, my boy, who has been cruel to you? Why have you had to fight? I am pained to see you in such a state of despair. I reach my hand to you to help ease your desperation, but in the blink of an eye, your depression becomes callousness, and your sobs turn to shrieks and your blue vibrant skin turns gray. Your tears transform into acid and the smell of decomposing flesh fills my nostrils. I realize, my blue boy, you are now holding a gun. BANG! Smoke pours from the gun like a blunt removed from one's lips. I am stunned. Visions of you rapidly fire across my periphery as I fall down, feeling the three holes carved in my chest by circular bullets of betrayal.

You have shot me, my blue boy. My body jerks violently. I cower in agony and weep as blood spews from my wounds and pain fills my chest, but still, I smile for you, my blue boy. I smile because I know how beautiful you are. Before the world hurt you, made you tough and gray, remember, you were mine as I was yours...we belonged to each other. Just as I am you and you are me, our souls are tethered together. You are the oxygen that fills my lungs, the blood that courses through my veins, the beat that sustains my heart. My blue boy, you are me. As I lay here dying, my breath becomes shallow. The gravel devours my flesh, and my body begins to become consumed by darkness. I feel my body growing cold; my soul descends into the abyss. I will never again see your coily black hair, kiss your plump indigo-colored lips, or feel protected by the warmth of your blue hands. I blame the world, for if only

they could observe what I see when I look into your eyes. If only they could love you how I do.  
My blue boy, I forgive you.

Just as I draw my last breath, your lips touch mine. You wrap your arms around me, pulling me up from the gravel. I gain sensation once again. You graze your hands over my bullet wounds and the pain slowly leaves me.

I reach to touch my chest to find that the wounds have disappeared. You grab my chin lifting my head, our eyes intensely peering into the innermost depths of each other's souls.

Your gray skin returns to a vibrant blue hue and your wounds begin to heal as the anger leaves your face. I see the light fill your cheeks as your pristine white teeth appear behind your portly lips. The tears dry from your face. You stroke my cheek as you lean in to kiss me once more, grabbing my hand placing it above your heart. Your heart beats much like a drum, each pulse sending shocks of passion and excitement to my fingertips. You then raise your hand placing it over my heart. Our hearts are beating on one accord. I start to turn blue, like you, basking in the light of the full moon.

We now stand under the stars, our blue bodies lying against one another. Warmth is generated from our skin rubbing together, the heat emitted from our bodies electrifying our desires. We have become one as we ascend into the dark midnight sky. We no longer have to look strong or prove ourselves for they can no longer target us. My blue boy, they cannot hurt us anymore. We can show love and we can love each other. You and I are love, my blue boy.



**Moon Boy**  
Designed by Keith Asberry'17



**A Piece of My Love**  
J'Kharios Conley'25  
Design by Keith Asberry'17

Because my heart was rent in two,  
I rejected love, my face blue.  
Each waking moment I put up a fight,  
My pain consumed me; I could not sleep at night.

Many have come to express their love,  
But leave empty-handed, no prerequisites thereof.  
However, you are different.  
Your love is exhilarant.  
With you, I can express the way I feel.

This is not a dream; for it is all too real.  
To tell the story of our meeting  
would be a memory, never fleeting.  
God heard and answered my prayer,  
especially those from my innermost layer.

Here you stand so elegant and wise,  
while saying vows tears ski down my eyes.  
At our wedding we are singing.  
Approaching the car, bells are ringing.

Finally, we salute pain and strife,  
for I am your husband, and you are my wife!



## Love

William Crowder'23

Design by Keith Asberry'17

Sometimes I don't think love is even real, and then I look at you...and I know it's true.  
Telepathy is my gift and that's why I never feel like I have to say I'm in love with you.

Our souls are intertwined, and we have much farther to go.  
So, lead the way, and this time we go slow.

On our last journey we stop singing, the silence causing me to cry at night.  
To end our travels, we shared a subtle glance into each other eyes, giving our final goodbyes.

I wrote my pain on paper as I wilted away with a broken heart.  
I then refused to waste away in the fray, not allowing mistakes to tear our love apart.

While the road ahead may not be clear,  
hand in hand together we can face our doubts and fears.

I sincerely hope I am not wishing for a love that is lost too far behind.  
Maybe if we take our time, we can find treasure in a reset and rewind.



## Hey

Daniel Shegogg'25

Hey.

I've written this text over and over again and all I could come up with is hey....

I struggle to find the words I want to say.

Hey...

I can't stop thinking about your eyes I see in every pool of honey in my tea.

I can't stop hearing your laugh that billows throughout the whistling wind, rippling the sea.

Hey...

I stare at the sun, burning my eyes just to sense the feeling of seeing your smile again.

Hey,

to the one who left me alone, empty, and feeling incomplete. I remain unsustained, missing a piece of me that you once filled but have since left a chasm too big to be filled.

In the night my arms feel wrong not having you in them. The softness of your skin against my cheek, your lips against mine as we would make time stop on a dime for hours at a time, with no reason or rhyme other than the fact that you were mine.

Hey...

I know it's a simple way to start talking again but it's all I could construct.

Hey,

I'm sorry for all of the ellipses you see throughout the day. It's the three wounds in my heart you inflicted upon me. I guess you've been expecting this text for a while. Sorry that all I could come up with was...

Hey.

Come back to me, I'm bleeding with the lack of words to describe the feelings I wish to convey.

Hey...

**Hello**

Design by Keith Asberry'17



## Rebirth: The Death of an (Un)known Thing

Cornell Harris'23

Neilous had always loved the rich, golden rays of the sun; color seemed to bounce off his skin and resemble the rich soil that harvested life's treasures. He was basking in the sun, enjoying the gentle breeze of the wind and the soft touch of the green grass in the meadow. The meadow in the backyard was filled with life and hope. Neilous did not enjoy staying at home. It was filled with the thick toxic fumes of disappointment and harsh reality.

The home was strict with taboos and rules; *respect and obey your parents, boys are firm and strong, boys have deep voices, boys cannot do what girls do, no talking back, and parents are always correct.* It was a place that never gave him love. The parents were not bad people; they just never really cared for the things he cared about. After all, his dad was raised in an environment that made him conform to the ways of his mother's world. Neilous' father was raised in a single parent household. His mother was a stern woman possessing strong religious convictions. It was her way, GOD's way, or no way at all. She held herself to a high standard, "holding up the blood-stained banner," enforcing this same standard on everyone in her household, especially her son. Neilous' dad constantly received whippings for disobeying her rules, which made him turn away from his mother. Eventually, he submitted to her and her ideals. He promised himself that he would never become like her, but time told a different story.

Neilous has been separated from his mother since birth. He never knew who she was. His stepmother never showed affection towards him because she never understood how to



until she had his younger sister Nina. Neilous was an outcast in a house that never quite felt like home. He questioned his existence to his parents just like they had done once before he was born. The home was a war zone filled with violent words and emotional abuse from both his father and stepmother. *Useless piece of shit... you're just like your good for nothing mom... I hate you... Sissy...you're not supposed to be like that...are you trying to make your grandmother have a heart attack...never tell anyone...I don't want to hear anything about this anymore...* The parents spewed hatred out their mouths. These were the harsh words that never left his head. These were the pain inducing phrases that were forever entrapped deep in his subconscious. They tortured him amidst the moments of happiness and pleasure, words that forever plagued his psyche.

It was hard to breathe or relax in the house. Neilous always had to wear a mask around family. Sometimes he would not eat or sleep for consecutive days. Sometimes he would stare into the depth of his mind trying to escape hell. *What had I done in a past life to deserve this torture*, he had thought? He attempted to imagine himself in a better circumstance. He never had the chance to tell his parents how he felt, because he was suspicious of his own voice, believing the lies told to him by them that his perspective was invalid. Even though Neilous was broken internally, tortured mentally, and sometimes brutalized physically, there was a shimmer of light in him that lit his low spirits with a tiny ray of optimism. *Maybe I can help them understand...At least I have a home*, he thought. *At least there is hope for my future*, he remarked.

*I can grow from this*, he hoped. Despite hearing the screams of frustration and aggression flooding out of him, he looked ahead clinging to his safe space. He had the meadow. Acres of land filled with the most beautiful flowers and plants which included his favorite sunflowers. At times he would go outside and bird watch or following the swarm of bees collecting pollen from flower to flower. Every time Neilous was in the meadow, he felt free and available to laugh and love life. From the sounds of the birds to the trickling of the stream, it filled his heart with joy and excitement.

One day his entire existence shook in the meadow. Neilous was walking to the meadow after a troubling day, and he smelled something pungent, the worst he had smelled in his life. The stench was so wretched he began to bleed from his nose, but he continued to follow the smell to find its origin. Whatever it was, it was dead. He couldn't tell whether it was a man or an animal. Its guts had been spread out across the fresh green grass. Its ligament was torn from its body and blood was still dripping from it. Its head was carved out and hung upon an oak. It was a terrifying sight, and he wanted to run away as far as possible, but his curiosity took over his body as he approached closer and closer to the dead thing. Neilous searched around, but he could not find any footprint leading up to the dead carcass. There was no trail of blood. It was shocking. Neilous was there yesterday, and he had not seen anything out of the ordinary. The creature of some sort had suffered tremendously from claw marks. Looking down in disappointment, he whimpered at the loss of life and wept before walking out of the meadow.

As Neilous walked away from the meadow, he slowly began to forget what he had seen. By the time he was home, he had forgotten where he was and what time it was. Once again, a foul smell lingered in his nose. Neilous went to bed and laid down immediately after taking a shower in hopes to cleanse the smell. Peacefully sleeping in his room absent of light, he began to picture a scene in his head. The meadow was bright and full of life but darkened by death caused by an unknown creature. Neilous imagined the carcass, once living, screaming for help and crying for mercy. He imagined each of its ligaments being torn from its body by a blood thirsty predator. Before taking its last breath, what was then prey looked at Neilous and he saw its eyes full of despair and hopelessness. Then, he saw the vicious creature turn its head, exposing its bright eyes glowing with hatred and aggression as it looked in his direction. It opened its mouth leaking out drool and blood and grinned maliciously at him. Its teeth look like sharp objects he once used to hurt himself. He tried to wake up, but it was like something or someone was trapping him within his own dream... a *nightmare*.

As it began to creep slowly in his direction on all fours, Neilous began to worry that it could kill him. As his heartbeat began to quicken so did that monster's pace until he woke up at that moment sweating profusely. His clothes and bed had been drenched with sweat and urine. This was the first time in a decade he had wet the bed. *Usually, my body signals my brain to get up whenever I have to go, but this time I don't know*, he thought. *I think my mind was too preoccupied with my nightmare*, he whispered. After going to the washroom to clean himself and the bedsheets, he tried to go back to sleep but each time he woke up drenched

with sweat and the image of the monster in his head and its malicious smile showing sharp teeth and its bright eyes.

Neilous had an awful time trying to sleep that night. Nina woke up early that day and saw him crying. She slowly walked inside of Neilous' room and comforted him. He began to see the shimmer of hope once again. *Thank you, my lovely and caring sister. You deserve a better big brother*, he whispered to her. She just began to hug him tighter. Every night after that day, his nightmares seemed to intensify. Every time he would close his eyes, he saw the image of the innocent creature screaming for help, calling out his name. A million questions filled his head after the nightmares: *Why me? What could I have done? Who was that thing? How did it know my name?* That night until dawn came, Neilous had been fidgeting at every noise and voice he heard in his head. He trembled at night, afraid of being alone and scared. He was traumatized by the sight of the malevolent creature killing the unknown seemingly benevolent thing. From twilight to dawn, Neilous was too afraid to close his eyes, too afraid to go to bed at night. Tears stained his face each night. One night, Neilous had been sobbing so much that his eyes were red, flooded with pain. *How could I feel so sorrowful for a creature I've never known? Was it because I was scared of dying or was it the fact that the creature resembled something or someone I've seen before?*

Neilous continued to have the same dreams for what felt like months until the night he went back to visit the meadow. Neilous was too tortured to care anymore about his safety in the dark. He went back to the same area where the thing had died, and the body was gone. The grass was greener than ever as if nothing had happened. Neilous looked around thinking

to himself *how crazy can I be to have imagined this?* He began to laugh hysterically looking up at the stars. The moon was full. Its face blank from the events that had occurred. Time had seemed to stop the chaos in the world.

As the dew from the midnight mist dropped ever so slightly on his face, he fell into a slumber, one containing a vision. It was reminiscent of the nightmares he had suffered picturing in the past months. Only this time had he seen the face of the innocent thing, and it was his. He was the creature that had been tortured tremendously by the monsters of this world. The feeling of withdrawal, cowardness, fear, and disbelief followed him throughout the miserable years of his childhood. Neilous woke up from the dream. He began to climb the great oak and slowly pulled out a small but sturdy rope that he hid in his pants pocket. He pulled the rope over the branch and tied a noose on one end and tied the other around the oak. Unfortunately for his family, Neilous was already dead. He could not tell them of the news, nor did he desire to. He left no suicide note nor did he say a prayer before tying the noose around his neck. Neilous hanged himself to escape the terrors, sadness, and loneliness of the world. *I can't even escape the cries through death*, he said while choking for air.

As he took his last breaths, he looked up. The sky was a beautiful bold red, mixed lightly with streaks of teal and violet. It was nothing like he had ever seen before. It was like the aurora lights, but this was way different. It was as if extra-terrestrials painted a picture in the sky depicting his life. He saw his family and the partial happy memories he shared with them. Nothing was better than those times, especially when they were savored with daydreams about crushes or future possibilities. The sky replayed those trivial yet tender

moments, which caused him to feel tremendous fear and despair. The blackened eyes caused by his father's abuse and his mother's disapproval were things that he won't miss, so his frown turned into a smile as he viewed the vibrancy of the colors in the sky that seemed to point him in a direction of a new life.

As he drew his final breath, Neilous could see someone comforting him with the most heartwarming smile and precious kiss. This gentle kiss unloosened the noose from his neck. It lifted him up far from the ground. He watched the great oak tree shrink smaller and smaller as he began to rise high above the clouds. *This is my death*, he thought. He further ascended into space and at that moment Neilous knew he was happy, content, loved, and safe.

#### Goodbye Sun

Your rays of hope and warmth shone brightly  
I think someone took your life away intentionally  
I did look over your death deliberately  
Your desire for love meant so much to me  
I watched your tears and heard you plead  
Your price was too much to pay for your life was the fee.

**AmeriCain Transgression: Abel's Blood Cries Out**

Design by Keith Asberry'17



**A Maroon Mind**  
Barrett Johnson'23

Found in the beginning of time, exists a quantum force of Divine Source.

Located within, celestial bodies embody the brilliance of Truth through thoughts motivated by contemplations of consciousness.

Illuminated by love and expressed through the flow of peace,  
a Supreme light shines its rays on the human cause to embrace the fluidity of Life.

It is the pace of fortitude that crimson bricks build the corporate sky of existence,  
polar opposite to the mundane.

What a sight to behold, a witness of abundance and creativity.

Out of darkness it appears, forecasting feelings of gladness and bewilderment.

Now is the time, for a Maroon Mind.



**Enlightenment**

Darian Bogie'23

Photographed by Tyreek Voltaire'22



## **Illumination**

Ricky Snab'24

## **Siblingshood**

Photographed by Elijah Gilchrist'25

Born and raised in the Palmetto state,  
where the moon and trees give life, thus making me great.  
Waking up on sandy beaches enjoying the sun,  
looking to the east as I rise and run.

I enjoy the presence of patience as earth becomes my heaven.  
Fruits of the spirit I seek, hearing the sermons of my father, the reverend.  
My mother is a doctor, her love heals me.  
She's the band-aid to my cuts and scars, stopping the bleeding.

Many nights I cry  
in my pursuit to reach the top of the sky.  
I ask the Lord why  
he did not gift me the wings of a blue jay to fly.

Who keeps everything together?  
Who calms the stormy weather?  
You speak of kindness and peace,  
but the tempestuous waters of my life refuse to cease.

These are the questions I ask as I prepare to go to sleep.  
A new consciousness I have dawned, the former one weak.  
I look to the sun to be illuminated by knowledge.  
I confess, I have found the light at Morehouse College.



**The House Built Me**  
Christian James Terry Taylor'22  
Photographed by Justin Evans'22



## **A Letter to Myself**

Calvin Bell III'24

Dear Lil Calvin,

Sometimes I wondered if that day would come when I could tell you that I was free, but as time passed that day seemed to never come and every time I saw you, life looked different to me. Do not think I forgot about our talks which usually detailed what Tupac called “THUG life” and the times that we spent together. And if you asked me where I would be at this point in time, I did not believe that I would be a treasure of bones six feet under.

Hey youngin', I think about you since the day I was able to hold you in my hands and cradle you back and forth in my arms. Trust me, I was scared at age seventeen, lost and gone, but when I saw you, I knew that you were going to be nothing but a charm. Maybe you would be a football player like I aspired to be or an athlete of some kind to continue my legacy. However, education seemed to be the way for you, a necessity that unfortunately was not a part of my reality.

Therefore, do not be afraid of thinking you're going to disappoint me because sometimes I felt the same when you had to see me leave with chains on my hands and shackles on my feet. Defeated is what I felt to say the least. I was lost in solitude trying to forge a way out, but every time that door closed—click—it felt like someone hit me with a knockout. I was upset, angry -- no, better yet, disillusioned with the progress I thought I made. All I wanted to be was great in your eyes, but I was afraid that would not be conveyed. They may see me as a monster, a criminal, or a fluke. Yet, you know me better than anyone that those thoughts are not true.

I was put into a position where I was not only a slave to the street game and a slave to the prison, but what got the better of me was that I was a slave to my mental state. A fate that I did not sign up for.

Son, I am sorry that this letter comes to you at my demise and that I could not cradle and hold you one more time. I am sorry that I missed your high school graduation, won't be in the stands when you receive your college diploma, and won't be able to see your beautiful wife or, hold my grandchildren who will continue the legacy that you'll leave behind. But know that despite the circumstances, I am still here by your side and even though this letter is short, I thank you for writing it through my eyes.



(Big Calvin and Lil Calvin)

Sincerely,

*Big Calvin*

**A Letter to My Grandmother(s)**  
George Anthony Pratt'23

Dear Grandma Lorraine,

Recently, I have thought about you quite frequently. For an assignment in my History of Civil Rights class, I was tasked with writing a letter to a loved one. Initially, I was going to write this letter to grandad because of the subject matter of the course, but after reflecting on how little knowledge I possess about you, I believed it was more appropriate to pen this letter instead to you. I have not written to you before and am now taking this opportunity to become acquainted with you through my dreams. I will be placing this letter underneath my pillow and a glass of water at the foot of my bed.

Firstly, thank you for raising my beautiful mother. I am sure I am who I am, in large part, because of the wisdom my mother gleaned from you that she has imparted to me. I desire to know you more and listen to your life's story, seeking to know you as a spirit guide. Also, I have thought about how you supported grandad, The Reverend Franklin D. Roosevelt, while he pastored Woodlawn Presbyterian (then Laura Street) and was a part of the local civil rights movement in Jacksonville during the 50s and 60s. Interestingly, as I was perusing through archives at the University of North Florida, I found the funeral program of activist Rutledge H. Pearson, in which grandad officiated. What was it like being married to him? Mom informs me you all were married in 1952 and met at a church camp. I hear that you reached PhD candidacy but did not finish your dissertation because of spousal duties. I am sure your...no, I

am not sure if your “sacrifice” (as my mother labels it) was well intentioned. Did you absolutely have to abandon your dream? I hope you enlighten me with this story.

I ask that you be with me in my academic journey; I am yearning to complete your dream and petition you to come back in me in this way.

Additionally, I am curious to know your mystery. Show me your story, if you please...the good and bad, the pain and pleasure. I am aware of your mother's death during child rearing. When considering the irony of your thyroid issues as a youngster (what I am told is the reason why you could not physically mother children), I cannot help but think of the trauma and pain of losing your mother and younger brother to childbirth. As I recall conversations with my mother, I begin to paint a picture of you, the brushstrokes loose with blush colors of your personality. You were quite the woman of a rare and precious quality. A Black woman working toward a PhD in the early 50s, adjunct professor, special education teacher, AKA, Presbyterian, and North Carolina native. What is most fascinating is that Mom tells me you were not too keen on taking pictures. Why was that? Also, why did you identify with age the way you did? Some women take years off their actual age, but you added ten. Could it have been that grandad was almost 10 years younger than you? Mom tells me you came from an entrepreneurial family who owned a lucrative taxi business in Charlotte during the early to mid-1900s, and on your mother's side you possess indigenous ancestry.

As I write, I am now reminded of a picture of you in a red Bible that sat on the bottom rack of the black bookshelf in Dad's office at 8052. I am also reminded of the gold Good News Bible

you gifted my father. I remember my mom telling me about how you and my dad would sit on the porch and drink black coffee together. While you did not get to watch me physically on Earth, I know you have been watching me from other realms.

I am seeking to open a portal to hear, see, and know you to serve as an intermediary between you and your loved ones on this plane of existence – my mother, uncle Morris, Justin, my father, Morgan... I am petitioning your help to heal myself and our family.

As I dream, I humbly ask that you make your presence known. I am asking if I can learn from you, gleaning some of the wisdom you taught my mother. I am asking to make contact with you, establishing a connection to other worlds, the spiritual dimension in which the ancestors live. I hope to work with you. In attempting to establish a connection with you, I have petitioned the help of my father's maternal great grandmother Celestine Margaret Hasty Robins Williams, whom my father's family affectionally calls Mother. She has emerged as a spirit guide, and I am in communication with her. Below is a letter I wrote to her, asking for assistance in putting me in contact with you:

Dear Mother,

I feel you trying to come through. You live so much in me. I feel your sweet spirit and hear your rich tone that maintained harmony in our family. Your marking of time and space, spiritual practices, softness – all things I think about when hearing your names – Mother and Beauty. What befitting names for your family and friends to call you with such reverence and high regard. I desire to tap into these qualities that your community identified in you. I am



attempting to contact you in more sensory ways than I can perceive. I am asking for both your safeguard and assistance as I use water to communicate with my mother's mother and you in my dreams. I am asking that you ward off any ancestral spirits that I am not mature enough to communicate with or those that do not serve my highest good.

Also, I am requesting for you to impart your wisdom within me as I come to learn more about my abilities. I need your ancestral knowledge to heal both myself and our family. I love you.

Ase.

—

In this letter to you, I have also included an entry from my journal. As a devout Christian woman, I think you will be able to appreciate it. I shared some of the discoveries contained within with my mother. She shared with me that while on this plane, you too were a strong woman of faith, possessing a quiet and calm spiritual fervor and discipline. You will find it below:

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Today marks the beginning of Allhallowtide (a time to remember the dead) in the Western Christian tradition. While I honor my ancestors and the enlightened ones every morning, today I remembered the holy mothers of my father's family in a different way.

Early this morning, I discovered my 2nd great grandmother's family Bible and several pictures of my family dating from as early as the late 1890s. Naturally, I began taking notes and slowly

started to piece parts of my family's story that I had not considered before through obituaries, pictures, and oral histories my grandmother has shared with me. In doing so, I began to discern the great spiritual powers of my father's maternal grandmothers, prompting me to ask my grandmother some questions. From her responses, I was amazed to learn the different ways my grandmothers have harnessed their Christian faith with spiritual practices in their daily lives,

but more intriguingly how these technologies helped them engender desired outcomes and maintain kinship. Remembering the dead, who are not dead at all, or venerating the ancestors allows one to acknowledge who they are descended from. This morning, after hours of archival browsing and talking to my grandmother, I learn I descend from a bloodline of conjurers, healers, herbalists, and mystics. We must learn to honor the ancestors who live in us. So today, I don't remember the dead, but acknowledge the living spirits who have simply transitioned. I call their names...

Dorothy Mae Robins Clemons (great-grandmother)

Celestine Margaret Hasty Robins Williams (2<sup>nd</sup> great-grandmother)

Sarah A. Ramsey Hasty Williams (3<sup>rd</sup> great-grandmother)

Caroline Winne Ramsey (4<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother)

Elizabeth Campbell Winne (5<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother)

Lang Haynesworth Campbell Tindal (6<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother)

Ase.

—

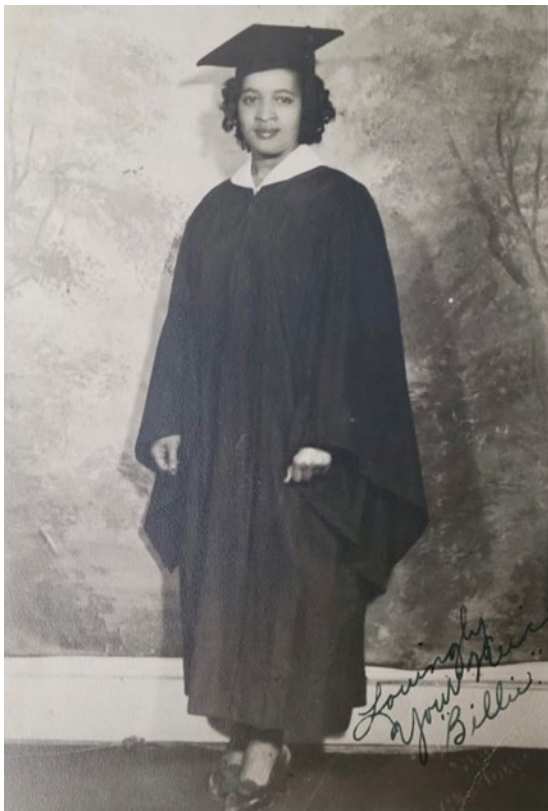
As I have come to know the gifts and knowledge of my father's maternal mothers, I am going to be intentional in learning about your abilities and insight so that I may be able to harness them as I continue to tread the sometime treacherous water of life. Recently, I have been thinking of some of the things I know you are fond of that my mother has shared with me. In addition to black coffee, during this Advent and Christmas season, I will place Queen Anne Cordial Cherries on my ancestor altar as an offering.

I strive to take time to remember you every day. I will honor you in both my devotion and living, especially in my pursuit of education and vocation of teaching. Thank you for mothering my mother, who in turn mothers me. I smell your fragrance on her – it lingers – so does your warmth.

In Love, Light, and Liberation

Your grandson,

George Anthony Pratt



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Lorraine Flowe Wilson  
(maternal grandmother)  
1923-2000

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“Mother” Celestine “Beauty” Williams  
(paternal 2<sup>nd</sup> great-grandmother)  
1906-1999

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**The Other Side of the Moon**  
Christian James Terry Taylor'22

Have you ever gone outside at night?  
Then find that it was bright as day?  
Where evergreens stand engulfed in white  
Your eyesight processes fingers  
Straight lines, purposely designed  
Everything in focus  
You are focal  
Accurate... Precise

Perhaps a full moon mirrors sunlight  
Homogenous energy, heterogenous type  
No matter the season everything is ripe  
livin' exactly what God decided to write  
Every battle, struggle, fight  
Ends in your delight  
Come Devil or God  
hell or heaven  
The plan is consistent  
Foundation firm  
Never cast asunder  
But I wonder

What happens on the other side of the moon?  
When desperation becomes your boon?  
light flees from the night  
Nothingness suffocates the orange in the sky  
Consistency concedes to Opposition  
Precision loses to dispersion  
life forfeits to death giving hope as compensation  
What's being alive when living cannot be your occupation?

Pleas clash against deaf ears  
Screams produce fantasies about being seen  
Yet, their dreams transformed into terrors

They mourned lives defined by errors

Their trauma metaphorized into artistic muse

Their blues gave others music to listen to

your short fuse, cues of insanity

Someone deposed to profanity

Gave doctors a job to do

nobody cares

For the people who they sought to be

What's a foundation bound to another's destiny?

So come outside, speak to someone

Listen don't hear

Walk in their shoes

Since you never know what one carries or buries

On the other side of the moon

**Self-Love**

Terrence Fosque'23

Photographed by ZhaneProduction



A silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is shown in profile, looking out a window. The window is covered with light-colored, sheer curtains that are slightly gathered on the left side. The light from the window creates a warm, golden glow, casting soft shadows and highlighting the texture of the curtains. The person's silhouette is dark against the bright light of the window.

M U S E S

A Litterātus Special Edition