

LITTERĀTUS



26th Edition: Duality
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**HUMANITIES,
SOCIAL SCIENCES,
MEDIA & THE ARTS**

LITTERĀTUS

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Foreword

Regine O. Jackson, Ph.D.

Dean, Division of Humanities, Social Sciences, Media & Arts

Welcome to the 26th edition of *Litterātus*, a student-edited multi-disciplinary research, creative writing, and visual arts journal. Our goal for the re-launch in 2026 was to create a space for the very best faculty-mentored undergraduate work accomplished in the Division of the Humanities, Social Sciences, Media & Arts (HSSMA). The peer-review process was managed by the Student Editorial Board (SEB) and the Faculty Advisory Board (FAB) with guidance and logistical support from the office of the HSSMA Division Dean.

On the cover: "Twin" by Kamahl Grant, class of 2024.

Grant was a mathematics major and economics minor from Gwinnett County, Georgia. "Twin" references Grant's identical twin brother, Jamal. The portrait depicts one-half of each of their faces, a reference to W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, the "two warring ideals in one dark body".

Grant is quoted in *The Maroon Tiger* (2024) explaining his motivation:

"Many times, Black people have had to assimilate to a culture that is not their own in order to thrive [or at the very bare minimum] survive in employment, especially in the business and STEM world. Yet their personalities and determination persist. The African American community has pushed against these mini-injustices and microaggressions to achieve equality in the expression, style, and health of their hair. However, to this day Black people still require an alter ego to some degree, a "twin", for which my piece was named."

Inspired by artist Kehinde Wiley, Grant remains committed to illustrating the essence of black cultural aesthetics in portraiture.

"My love for Black people comes from home. My parents have an irreplaceable library of children's books by Black authors on Black topics. I always saw myself in music, in literature, in art ... My whole house is filled with art, so I always grew up seeing art by Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringold, and more."

"Twin" was the first-place winner of the 2023 Target HBCU Design Challenge. I am honored to publish this powerful piece in the current issue.

On behalf of the FAB, I also want to congratulate each member of the SEB. You are an exceptional team with a wide range of talents, and I appreciate your dedication. I would also like to congratulate our published authors whose work is featured in this edition. Finally, special thanks are due to Zahria Cook, who provided invaluable assistance throughout the editorial and production process.

Litterātus has always showcased outstanding interdisciplinary works, each carefully edited and peer-reviewed to uphold the academic rigor and excellence we value at Morehouse College. This edition continues that longstanding tradition.

Enjoy!

Citation: Evan Spann (2024) "Morehouse Senior's Art Design is Selling Out in Target Stores Countrywide." URL: <https://maroontigermedia.com/2024/02/morehouse-seniors-art-design-is-selling-out-in-target-stores-countrywide/>

Editor Statement

An Invitation to Read

The twenty-sixth edition of *Litterātus* is centered on Duality. These works explore the tensions and harmonies that define the human experience, the coexistence of strength and vulnerability, tradition and transformation, certainty and uncertainty. Our contributors challenge readers to embrace complexity rather than seek simple answers. As you go from page to page engage with each work thoughtfully. Recognize that it is often within life's dualities that we discover our deepest understanding of ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

- Tyrone McMillian Jr.

Literature does not end at publication—it begins. Every poem, essay, story, and work of art enters an unfinished conversation across generations, answering inherited voices while daring to imagine new futures. *Litterātus* stands within that tradition: a living archive of Black thought, creativity, and liberation. We write to preserve memory, interrogate power, expand the possibilities of Black life, and make room for voices that history has ignored. Our work is not simply to reflect the world, but to remake it: one page, one idea, one conversation at a time.

Litterātus will be more than a literary journal. It will serve as a forum where scholarship, art, and imagination converge to shape the next generation of Black intellectual life. We will cultivate fearless voices, elevate emerging writers and artists, and ensure that every volume leaves the conversation larger than it found it. The future of *Litterātus* is not preservation alone; it is creation. We are not waiting for the next Black Arts Movement. We are writing it into existence.

- William Wasson

Two Worlds

Prince Zaire Bell

I've seen two worlds
living side by side
one built to consume,
and one where life blooms.

One that moves fast, no pause, just take,
where forests fall for profit's sake, where
rivers choke, and skies turn gray, and we call
it progress anyway.

Where silence is easy,
and truth feels lost,
where comfort is cheap
but the planet pays the cost.

We shape ourselves
to fit that demand,
taking more than we need
with unthinking hands,

Held our breath
as the air grew thin,
called it normal
to live like this, within

A world that forgets
what it's made of
soil, water
and sky up above.

But when the earth cracks,
it doesn't break—
it speaks in tremors,
floods, and quakes.

Whispers rising
beneath our feet,
in melting ice
and burning heat.

Cracks in the system, cracks in the ground,
cracks where a different truth is found.

And through those cracks—
I start to see
a world that lived
more carefully.

A world that listens,
that moves with grace,
that knows every life
has time and space.

Where food isn't just food—
It's the earth, its rain,
It's hands that nurture,
not systems of gain.

Where trees are elders,
not things to clear,
where oceans are sacred,
not something to fear.

Where history lives
in seeds we sow,
in what we protect,
in what we grow.

A world where my voice
joins wind and sea,
where I don't stand above—
but belong equally.

So I let it go—
Yes, I release it all,
the need to conquer,
and the need to control.

Letting go of urgency
that poisons time,
of endless growth
at nature's decline.

Letting go of a world
that only takes,
that drains the soil
till nothing wakes.

Awnd holding close
a rhythm instead—
of rivers that flow,
of roots that spread,

of sunlight dancing
on open leaves,

of balance restored
in a quiet breeze.

A world that feels
like breath, like care,
like life protected
because it's there,

like hands in the dirt,
like rain on skin,
like healing the harm
we've all been in.

A world where we rise
not above, but with,
where every small act
becomes a gift.

Where nothing is wasted,
where all belongs,
where earth is a chorus
and we are all a part of its song.

So if we must build it
with patience and pain,
with learning, unlearning,
again and again

Then that's what I'll do,
with all I choose.

Cause the world I sustain
isn't distant or new

It's in what I protect,
It's in how we move.

Self-Portrait (261)

William Midgett II.

Artist Statement

A series of smaller observational drawings inspired Self-Portrait (261). The work explores self-perception, observation, and acceptance through the repeated act of studying my own reflection. By focusing on light, shadow, and form, I sought to capture not only my physical likeness but also the experience of becoming comfortable with myself through the process of looking. The drawing reflects both technical growth and personal growth, serving as a reminder that confidence is built through patience, persistence, and trust in one's creative abilities.



Figure 1. Self-Portrait (261). Charcoal on mixed media paper, 2026. Artwork by William Midgett II.

The Male Prison

Braxton Broady

Inside the brightly lit birthing suite of Memorial University Hospital, my family, who could hardly stand to be in the same room on most days, found themselves united in a rare moment of peace. For once, there were no arguments about the best way to season collard greens, no side-eyes exchanged over old grudges. That day, love won. And that love was for me.

In that sacred space of new life, they bonded over their love for me, their hopes for my future, imagining the path I would walk long before I could even take my first steps. He will grow up strong like his father. He will go to college. He will marry a beautiful, intelligent, God-fearing woman. My destiny had already been written, my sentence handed down before I'd opened my eyes, let alone said a word in my own defense. For years, I lived inside those expectations. They hovered around me the way furniture does: so familiar, so permanent, that I stopped seeing them as something that could be moved. Home was safe. Home was warm. But I could feel the shape of the room I was expected to grow into, and how little space there was for anything else. And whenever someone spoke of my future wife, my children, my perfectly planned life, their words felt like they belonged to someone else.

Then, one afternoon, that vague discomfort crystallized into something I could finally pinpoint. After recess, as my classmates and I filed back inside, I felt a soft tug on my sleeve.

I turned to see my friend Kimyuke standing there, her warm brown eyes flickering with something unspoken. "I have a crush on you" she blurted out, cheeks pink. "Can I kiss you?"

I liked Kimyuke. She was nice, always shared her snacks, and could outrun almost anyone during tag. But a kiss? I hesitated, then nodded, more out of politeness than excitement. Kimyuke beamed and leaned in, pressing a soft, quick kiss to my lips. "Was that okay?" she asked, eyes hopeful.

"Yeah," I said slowly. But something inside me twisted, not in the fluttery way people always described. More like, nothing at all. Like eating a cracker when you expected cake. Kimyuke grinned, squeezing my hand before skipping ahead toward the classroom. I stayed behind for a second, staring at the ground, my thoughts suddenly loud. So, that was it? That was supposed to be special?

As I walked back inside under the fluorescent lights, a quiet understanding settled in my chest. The kiss hadn't felt wrong, just not right. And somewhere, in a place I couldn't quite name yet, I knew why. From that moment on though, I lived with a fear that my dissonance would sentence me to a life of misery. And then came the scandal.

Still being a child, I barely understood the full weight of what had happened, but I remember the conversations. The way the grown-ups whispered about him, the powerful bishop whose alleged sins had been exposed to the world. Eddie Long. His name was on every news channel, his face staring out from magazine covers, attached to accusations that shook the very foundation of the Black church. It was horrifying. But to me, in a way I couldn't yet explain, it was also freeing.

Not because I found any joy in what had happened, but because it shattered the biggest barrier standing between me and my truth. Religion had always felt like a prison. The rules, the traditions, the suffocating expectations, it was less about faith and more about performance. And if a respected man of God was doing what many saw as an abomination, having sex with young men, then why was my harmless crush on Frank Ocean so shameful?

When the Catholic Church faced its own scandals, I felt an even deeper sense of liberation. If the moral authority they wielded could be so deeply corrupt, then what power did they have over my existence? Over my happiness?

The first person I revealed my truth to was my mother: my rock, my protectress, my first example of courage. She had not been given an easy start in life. A poor Black girl from Nebraska, surrounded by people who refused to see her, she had learned early that silence was not an option. If she wanted space, she had to carve it out herself. If she wanted to be heard, she had to make people listen. And she did. She built a life where no one ignored her, where no one dared to decide what she could or could not have.

She never laughed at a joke made at her expense. If someone cut her in line, she said something. When she was serious, she used your full name, and you knew to listen. And she taught me early to do the same. To send food back when my order was wrong, to walk into a teacher's room and make a case for the grade I had earned. Small lessons, but through them she taught me my worth, and the power of my voice. I had inherited that from her, the ability to be commanding when I needed to be, to make my presence felt. And yet, this felt impossible to say.

But the weight of my truth had grown too heavy to bear alone on Mother's Day, in 2019. She was filled with that day's particular joy, glowing with the sort of love that comes from seeing her own devotion reflected in the eyes of her family. And somewhere in her happiness she told me she couldn't wait for me to have a wife and kids of my own someday, that I would make such a wonderful husband and father.

I knew my mother. I knew that despite her devotion to God, she was progressive-minded, the kind of woman who loved Anderson Cooper and never missed Dwight on the *Real Housewives of Atlanta*. She had gay friends she embraced without condition. I knew all of this. And still, there was a lump in my throat. When she made that comment, about the wife, the kids, what a wonderful husband and father I would be, she meant every word.

That was what made it so hard. Her love was so sincere, so certain of the life she had imagined for me, and I didn't want to shatter that on her special day. I almost let it go. But I had learned by then that there was no perfect time, and that the longer I waited, the heavier it would get. There was something else too. My family was close, genuinely close, the kind where secrets felt like a betrayal. I had never hesitated to tell my mother anything. Not once. And that made this silence feel like its own kind of lie. Telling her meant I got to exhale. But she was only the beginning.

After her came my father, which was completely different. His family was more conservative, grounded in a church where my grandfather had stood at a pulpit and openly condemned homosexuality, declaring he would refuse to marry a same-sex couple even after it became legal in every state. My father never echoed those words. He never flinched around my mother's gay friends or coworkers. But he had grown up in that house, hearing that

language, absorbing those convictions. I believed he would never support taking anyone's rights or freedoms away. What I wasn't sure of was how he would feel about his own son. But that was a door I hadn't opened yet. The one in front of me was hard enough. I hadn't realized just how much I had been holding in until the sobs tore through me. The weight, the fear, the loneliness; it had been pressing down on me for so long that I had learned to carry it without ever acknowledging it was there. Of course, there were tears.

Of course, it was emotional. How could it not be? My mother had spent my entire life imagining a future for me, one filled with the kind of love she had always known, the kind she believed I deserved. But she loved me more than any dream she had of me. And that was what mattered most. Not everyone in my family responded the same way. The whispers started, hushed at first, then louder, until eventually they faded into quiet indifference. Some relationships turned cold, like a kettle pulled off the stove before it ever got the chance to boil. But I was happy. And that happiness became my shield.

By the time I got to high school, I was out, at least to the people who mattered, at least most of the time. But being out didn't mean being free. It meant something closer to parole: released from the worst of the hiding, but still required to check in, still expected to answer for myself, still one wrong move from being sent back to silence. I hadn't escaped the prison. I had just earned a little more yard time.

However, the real battle came not from those who already loved me, but from the people who did not. Suddenly, I felt I had to justify myself. Engaged in debates about whether my existence was natural. As if I had studied my own soul, made a calculated decision, and chosen this life.

I had felt it for years. Every time I walked past my parents' wedding photo, the one that stood like a monument in our home. I would stare at it, the way my mother smiled next to my father, the way he held her so securely, and wonder if I would ever have a moment like that. If I was even allowed to want one. I tried at first, arguing my case with logic, with science, with history. But I quickly learned that no one's mind was ever changed through debate. People who believed I was unnatural weren't looking for proof; they were looking for an argument they could never lose.

They weren't judges. They were guards, and every conversation was just another headcount. Conversations would spiral from whether being gay was real to whether it would lead to the end of the human race or, absurdly, whether people would soon start marrying animals. Argue with fools, and you become one. So, I stopped arguing. Instead, after being introduced to his work in high school, I borrowed a lesson from James Baldwin and did what my Southern grandmother always scolded me for... I answered a question with a question.

“Was it natural for Germans to exterminate millions of people in the Holocaust?” “Was it natural for slave owners to tear children from their parents?”

Atrocities once called moral were anything but natural. Nature has never been the compass of human morality. So why should it suddenly matter when we're talking about something harmless: two consenting adults choosing to love one another? But even with that clarity, I still felt trapped. Trapped in the male prison, the cruelest kind. The kind with no bars you could point to, no sentence you could appeal. Every friendship with a man outside my family came with an invisible guard standing just over my shoulder, scrutinizing a hand on a shoulder, a long hug, a closeness that would have meant nothing from anyone else.

I wasn't being watched for what I did. I was being watched for what I might, at any moment, reveal.

But my prison sentence ended when I came to Morehouse, in Atlanta, the Mecca. For the first time, nobody asked for my papers. Nobody needed proof, an argument, or an explanation. The last thing anyone there needed from me was a defense of who I loved, and once I realized that, I knew I hadn't just made parole. I had been released.

For the first time, I experienced true freedom, the kind that allowed me to just be. I developed friendships across the full spectrum of Black masculinity, seeing it in all its forms. I no longer felt the need to shrink myself, to filter my words, to play a role. At night, when my friends and I ventured into the city: Midtown, Edgewood, or wherever the music and energy called us, I felt something I had rarely had before. A normal experience.

Going to parties, flirting, dancing openly with people I actually found attractive. Getting the chance to date. To make mistakes, to learn more about myself. To live. For so long, I had feared that my truth would lead to isolation. That I would be doomed to a life of hiding or fighting. But now, standing in the heart of a city that thrived on reinvention, surrounded by a community that embraced me without hesitation, I knew the truth.

I was never the problem.

The world was simply too small for me before.

And now, I am finally free.

Red Scare 2: The Resurgence of McCarthyism

Christopher Livingston

Anti-intellectualism never announces itself outright. It dresses in the attire of populism, patriotism, and ‘common sense,’ weaponizing fear and panic to silence and discredit citizens en masse. Amid its peak in the mid-20th century, this tendency was constructed into the McCarthyism phenomenon in the United States. This was a period of intense political suspicion and repression, where the label ‘communist’ became a weapon of political destruction, ruining careers, silencing criticism, all the while redirecting public anxiety away from true societal failings and towards fictitious internal enemies. That sentiment did not vanish, but rather sat dormant while it silently adapted. In contemporary political rhetoric, from unprofessional presidential announcements to factually inaccurate electoral smears, the language of the Red Scare has resurfaced not to confront a genuine threat but to devastate progressive policy. The examination of McCarthyism’s historic blueprint and its modern manifestations, like ongoing denunciations of democratic socialists such as Zohran Mamdani, has revealed that anti-intellectualism still remains a potent political tool. It corrupts democratic discourse and intellectual freedom, gradually safeguarding the very economic inequalities that fuel public discontent.

Beneath the sensational headlines of the early 1950s, McCarthyism operated through the refined machinery of anti-intellectual repression. It was not a mere witch-hunt but rather a systemic process that transformed political differences into evidence for treason. Using this, he leveraged state power and amplified the media, encouraging social paranoia in order to reinforce ideological conformity. As historical accounts from institutions such as the University of Virginia’s Miller Center, suggests former Senator Joseph McCarthy’s power stemmed less

from factual discovery, but instead leaned more into deceiving the poorly educated. Launching a series of highly publicized investigations, he claimed that communist spies from the Soviet Union had contaminated the highest levels of government. There were a lot of smoke and mirrors; the power of McCarthy's movement lay not in plain evidence, but in the atmosphere. He created a toxic high-stress level climate, perpetuating suspicion and fear across the nation. The Miller Center here documents a hysterical rant coming from the late senator, "Any man who has been named by either a senator or committee or a congressman as dangerous to the welfare of this nation [...] they should conduct a complete check upon him. It's not too much to ask" (McCarthy 1953). This paranoid fantasy transformed everyday professionals into potential suspects, where intellectual inquiry itself becomes a disloyalty marker. The resulting climate is one where no one dares to intervene with the affairs of McCarthy in fear of being labeled a disloyal. This is the heart of anti-intellectualism. It replaces debate with denunciation, and evidence with insinuation.

The Eisenhower administration's initial tolerance reveals much about its utility. Despite his private disdain, President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously refused to confront McCarthy directly. In a 1953 letter to his brother, Milton, Eisenhower explained this reluctance, writing that, "Only a short-sighted or completely inexperienced individual would urge the use of the office of the President to give an opponent the publicity he so avidly desires" (Eisenhower 1953). This was a calculated inaction. It prioritized party unity and the appearance of being 'tough on communism' over the defense of civil liberties and intellectual freedom. His approach demonstrates that for those in power, the anti-intellectual fervor of McCarthyism was a containable force—until it wasn't. It was only when McCarthy's investigations turned inward, threatening the army and then the administration itself in 1954, that Eisenhower finally acted by invoking executive privilege to shield elites from subpoenas. This pivot highlights a critical lesson that the Red Scare was enabled because it served a broader function. It diverted public scrutiny from more complex geopolitical and economic challenges by offering a simple, frightening narrative of internal corruption. The real legacy of McCarthyism

is therefore not a list of exposed spies, but a blueprint for how to wield this unsubstantiated fear as a tool of control and intellectual suppression.

The blueprint did not disappear with McCarthy's censure, it simply evolved, finding new targets and adapting to new landscapes in the media. In today's political discourse, the word 'communist' or 'socialist' has been largely drained of its specific meanings and refurbished as a catch-all smear, a rhetorical weapon deployed with precision echoing McCarthy's playbook. The purpose remains unchanged: to devastate progressive policy and silence advocates by associating them with a demonized 'other' to provide an emotional, fear-based response that bypasses rational assessment. History doesn't repeat; it rhymes. The resurgence of the Red Scare is not an accident of history but a deliberate strategy, revealing a persistent anti-intellectual undercurrent that fears the marketplace of new, better, ideas which threaten the elite class.

The current Trump administration hauntingly mirrors this. Running on immigration and economic policies, at the forefront of his 2024 campaign was his insistent determination to release the Epstein files. When he was eventually elected, the files were lost in limbo, traveling through Congress as deliberations circulated its pending release. The Red Scare strategy moves from abstract theory to concrete political warfare in the case of figures like Zohran Mamdani. In 2025, Mamdani, a democratic socialist, won the Democratic primary for New York City mayor. He campaigned on a platform of material relief for the working class such as freezing rents, building city-owned grocery stores, and funding these projects by taxing the wealthiest Livingston 4 one-percent. His proposals were not secret but very open policy debates about food security, housing, and economic equity. However, the reaction from the highest levels of power entirely bypassed all of this substance and reached straight for the McCarthyist toolkit. President Trump responded on his platform, Truth Social, not with a critique of policy, but an angry impulse-driven post on,

declaring, “Zohran Mamdani, a 100% Communist Lunatic, has just won the Dem Primary, and is on his way to becoming Mayor [...] He looks TERRIBLE, his voice is grating” (Trump 2025). His phrasing is as unprofessional as it is instructive. The addendum, ‘He looks TERRIBLE, his voice is grating,’ underscores the anti-intellectual core of the attack. It dismisses Mamdani not on the merits of his ideas, but through a combination of ideological demonization and petty personal contempt. This is designed, purposely, to trigger fear and disgust rather than critical thought.

It is important to note that this rhetorical strategy is not employed by simply one party, but functions as a bipartisan reflex and reveals just how deeply anti-intellectualism is woven into the American political language. The ‘communist’ label is weaponized not only against the left, but by it as well, stripping it of any coherent meaning and turning it into a pure political toxin. This is most starkly illustrated when former Vice President Kamala Harris, while condemning Trump’s authoritarian tendencies, reaches for the same corrosive analogy. In a September 2025 exclusive interview with MSNBC, Harris states that, “We used to compare the strength of our democracy to communist dictators [...] That’s what we’re dealing with right now in Donald Trump” (Kochi 2025). Harris’s intent was to portray Trump as a tyrant, yet the logic of her comparison is telling. To galvanize outrage, she invokes ‘communist dictators’ as an ultimate evil that needs no further explanation. In doing so, however, she reinforces the very reflexive fear that silences policies such as Mamdani’s, whether she means to or not. The term ‘communist’ now becomes a free-floating signifier of absolute evil, applicable to a domestic authoritarian and a democratic socialist alike. This bipartisan usage completes the hollowing out of the term. It is no longer a descriptor of a specific economic ideology, but an all-purpose weapon for marking any opponent as illegitimate, un-American, and beyond reasonable debate. Whether deployed by Trump against a policy agenda or by Harris against a

political rival, the effect is shortcutting democratic liberation with a cheap voltage of historical fear.

The trajectory following McCarthy's Senate hearings to today's social media smears reveal the harrowing truth that anti-intellectualism is not a ghost of America's past but an active, recurring political strategy. The historical blueprint in manufacturing fear, and hollowing out language to prevent substantive debate has been meticulously adapted for this new digital age. This strategy functions with bipartisan unity, from the containment of threatening truths in the Epstein files to the rhetorical excommunication and reflexive analogies from political figures such as Kamala Harris. The effects of this resurgent Red Scare are corrosive and multifaceted as it adapts through time. Politically, it weakens trust in democracy by replacing the hard work in policy deliberation with cheap theatrics of demonization. Thus, when a proposal for affordable housing or tax on extreme wealth is made it can be silenced by labeling it 'communist.' The arena of reasonable debate shrinks, especially in low-income regions where quality education and critical thought is rare. Resisting this new Red Scare requires not just historical knowledge, but a renewed commitment to the very intellectual courage and solidarity it seeks to rid.

Towards a Du Boisian Sociology of Sexuality

Hasan Henry

Issues of sexuality have become increasingly relevant for modern American political life. With the end of *Roe v. Wade*, the precarity of marriage equality, and the transformation of trans life into a discursive battlefield, the political degeneration of the American democratic project is increasingly defined by the sphere of sexuality. At the same time, the work of W.E.B. Du Bois has experienced a recent theoretical revival within sociology and political theory. Scholars have returned to his works and theories with renewed interest, particularly as our political situation slides—As is written in the chapter of *Black Reconstruction* under the same name—“back towards slavery.” The connection between sexuality and politics has traditionally been excavated by theorists within fields like Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, and LGBT Studies; But can W.E.B. Du Bois teach us something about the bedroom?

Particularly in the arena of Sexuality Studies, our analysis of love, romance, desire, sex, sexual identity, and the state’s regulation of these things has remained affixed to largely white epistemologies and intellectual formations. These are genealogies of thought that, at best, subordinate the issue of race as a lesser concern, and, at worst, fail to consider race’s connection to sexuality whatsoever. The field is dominated by poststructuralist approaches, White Queer Theory and Foucauldian Thought. Foucault, arguably the originator of what we understand to be modern Queer Theory, has been famously criticized for eliding the role of colonialism in the formation of biopolitics and our modern episteme.

Even in his discussion of “race,” in the *Lectures at the Collège de France*, Foucault uses the term “state racism” to refer to discourses of inter and intra-ethnic conflict between Europeans—what Cedric Robinson would call racialism—which essentially obfuscates the intense shift in political ontology that results from the creation of Whiteness and the condemnation of Blackness into slavery. This is to say that Foucault, in his understanding of racism, necessarily equivocates racialism internal to European states and between European ethnicities with the transnational exploitation and condemnation of Blackness as non-human. These things, of course, are not the same.

Judith Butler, the other major voice within Queer Theory, has only just begun to reckon with race in the twilight years of their career. Particularly in Butler’s early work, which represents seminal and foundational work for Gender and Sexuality Studies, the role of race is completely absent (see: Butler 1988; Butler 1997). Poststructuralist approaches inspired by Butler proclaim to radically deconstruct categories of identity as products of discourse and power. They reject modernist theories—approaches that attempt to give a unified account of power as vested in a particular class or group (for example, Marxism, Black Radicalism) in favor of power as capillary: not collected, unified or taken by a coherent group, but rather circulated and diffuse (Foucault 1997: 27-29). For these theorists, then, individual subjects, in their daily activities and performances, exceed the boundaries of heterosexuality, homosexuality, race, gender, and normative categorization all the time. These observations are not untrue; However, Queer theory obfuscates the role of race in the construction of sexuality by contesting the existence of a stable racial subject. Thus, the ambiguity and arbitrariness of the Color Line is taken as evidence of its non-existence or insignificance. For the poststructuralist, the idea that the Color Line

could be an organizing principle of social life is a modernist idea that ought to be rejected. But we should not assume that just because individuals often exceed racial categorization that we no longer live under a world-system defined by its global anti-Blackness.

These are political fictions that reign with Sexuality Studies, Queer Studies, and LGBT Studies precisely because the Black Radical Tradition remains starkly absent from contemporary scholarly discourse on sexuality. The dominance of the Foucauldian school means that the field has not grappled with the idea that race, empire, and anti-Blackness are not just categories apart of a long list of generic discourses constructed by power. Race is not simply a variable that runs alongside sexual identity, normativity, or the performance of gender; Rather, it is a master category, an organizing principles, and a structuring antagonism of our world-system and the sexual field—a fact that would be anathema to the White Queer Theorists that dominate the field.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake the synonymize the study of sexuality with the study of queer people, as the field of LGBT studies largely has. Issues of race and sexuality transcend sexual identity. Sexuality has it has been ordered and invested by race is of analytic concern for heterosexual, homosexual, cisgender, transgender, male, female, and non-binary populations alike.

All things considered, there is no greater urgency for a Du Boisian project of sexuality. We require an analytic that centralizes the Color Line as an organizing principle of sexual life and the larger world-system. We need a framework that explicitly takes up Whiteness as an object of concern for the study of sexuality, and recognizes Blackness not simply as a constructed category, but as a political-ontological position that is not simply exceeded through performance.

We require this project to resist the urge to situate sexuality simply as a matter of identity. In the spirit of this need, this essay will offer a brief meditation on Du Boisian Thought as a solution to these theoretical gaps. Drawing from Du Bois's major works and selections from the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine, I will demonstrate that Du Bois offers us the beginnings of an analytic of sexuality that takes seriously the role of race in structuring social life.

On The Shoulders of Giants: Du Bois in the World of Sexuality

At first glance, it would seem that Du Bois had little to say about issues of sexuality or gender. However, upon closer examination of some of his lesser-known works, we might divine the beginnings of a Du Boisian project for understanding sexuality. Du Bois reminds us that issues of sexuality and sexual regulation are connected to the larger project of social equality and multiracial democracy in the United States:

“There is no doubt but that at the bottom of the race problem in the United States is the question of ‘social equality: and the kernel of the social equality question is the question of intermarriage.”

According to Du Bois, dominant discourse constructs Black communities as “degenerates and prostitutes” (Du Bois 1922: 83) and equality for Black communities is denied on the basis that this degenerate sexual behavior would be spread to White communities through marriage. Du Bois critiques these discourses within sexology, arguing that they have produced a conceptual framework that encourages us to see all social equals as potential sex partners and condemns those understood as undesirable. This, he argues, obscures the far more important fact that social equality rests on the destruction of racial segregation. For him, the idea of racial intermarriage is far less problematic than the uneven sexual exploitation of Blackness under segregation. The discourses of sexology, then, remain integral to relegating

Blackness to undesire and degeneracy, and, thus, to a position of inequality.

Du Bois makes similar arguments in his 1913 editorial entitled “Intermarriage.” Here, Du Bois analyzes the use of sexual regulation as a tool of racial domination. He makes two important claims. First, he contends that laws prohibiting interracial marriage are fundamentally connected to anti-Black discourses of dehumanization. To accept these laws, he argues, is to accept the idea that Black blood is physically tainted. Secondly—and arguably most importantly—Du Bois connects the state’s regulation of sexuality to the sexual violability of Black women. He writes:

“What have these people to say to laws that propose to create in the United States 5,000,000 women, the ownership of whose bodies no white man is bound to respect? ... We must kill [anti-miscegenation law], not because we are anxious to marry white men's sisters, but because we are determined that white men shall let our sisters alone” (The Crisis, Vol 5).

He makes clear that his opposition to anti-miscegenation law is not necessarily rooted in a desire for Whiteness; but, rather that the legal landscape deters whites from violating Black women insofar as anti-rape law of the 1920s allows a survivor to marry her attacker. This threat of marriage, then, is supposed to act as a deterrent for rampant sexual violation. The alternative, Du Bois is arguing, would leave Black women infinitely sexually violable without any legal recourse whatsoever. Of course, in many ways, the logic of historical these laws surrounding sexual assault is highly dated and morally despicable. From this passage, instead, we should pay attention to Du Bois’ analysis of racial domination as instantiated through sexuality. For Du Bois, the way that the state regulated sexuality is directly connected to racial domination: it produces discourses and

narratives that reinforce Black inferiority, and it allows renders the Black body as an object whose consent can be violated by Whiteness. The White racial state, then, can employ and organize sexuality as a racialized tool by the dominant class to reproduce anti-Blackness.

Du Bois' account of slavery in *Black Reconstruction* is perhaps the most extensive engagement with sexuality across his work. In his chapter, "The Planter," he argues that the sexual chaos of the South extends from the slavery as an economic relation. "Sexual chaos was always the possibility of slavery, not always realized but always possible" (Du Bois 1998:35). The condition of slavery meant that Black people were always sexually violable. The fundamental contradiction of slavery, he states, was the commercialized breeding of Black slaves that were denigrated beneath humanity, which occurred alongside the "intermingling of black and white blood" (Du Bois 1998:11). Though he doesn't dwell on this fact for long, we might think of how this contradiction within the economic structure of slavery affected the production and experience of human sexuality.

Towards a Du Boisian Sociology of Sexualities

Du Bois offers us a number of theoretical tools that might rectify the silences produced by White queer epistemologies of sexuality. His conceptualizations of sexuality, always already connected to issues of racial domination and the Color Line, answers postmodern approaches that often fail to consider race at all. Contra these formulations of sexuality, Du Boisian inquiry recentralizes race as a defining feature, a structuring antagonism of how sexuality is produced and practiced. Taking this observation as a founding principle, we might envision what a Du Boisian Sociology of Sexualities would look like.

First, we should take Du Bois' analysis of racialized classes in *Black Reconstruction* as instructive for how we might model social relations as

bisected by race, class, and sexuality. Du Bois recounts multiple classes with multiple interests, sometimes aligned, other times oppositional: Black slaves, the Black proletariat, poor Whites, the White bourgeoisie, the planter class, northern industrialists, free Blacks, and so on. In his retelling of Reconstruction, Du Bois uses social and economic particularity to account for political coalitions and fractures occurring between groups that might have previously been thought of as unified. In a similar vein, a Du Boisian approach to sexuality might examine sexuality through the language of racialized classes. How does sexuality, desire, sexual interest, affect racial politics? How does it create political coalition? How does it create political fracture? Do different racialized classes have different sexual interests? How are these interests inflected by political-economy?

Du Bois's theories in *The Souls of Black Folk* are seminal interventions in the phenomenology of race and social psychology. Here, he develops the notion of double consciousness to describe the experience of racialized subjectivity under the Color Line. This experience is shaped by three components: the veil, twoness, and second sight (Itzigsohn & Brown 2020). To understand the phenomenology of racialized sexuality, then, a Du Boisian approach might apply these concepts to issues of love, romance, desire, courtship, the act of sex, pornography, marriage and the family, or social reproduction. How does second-sight affect courtship and dating practices? How does the veil show up within mixed-race families or marriages? How does the sensation of two-ness affect sexual identities that are ostensibly unified by common sexual identity?

Arguably most importantly, a Du Boisian inquiry should examine sexuality as a tool organized by the racial state—the exercise of state power along racial lines—or as a tool employed by racialized classes. As I discussed before, in *The Crisis*, Du Bois argued that anti-miscegenation law produced

a chain of social conditions that ultimately resulted in the sexual violation of Black women by White men. In this case, one sees how the state's (non)regulation of certain types of sexual behavior can be organized along racial lines and used as a type of racial domination. For the state, the protection of Whiteness from presumed Black sexual degeneracy was of far more importance than the protection of Black women from sexual crime. This can also be read alongside Du Bois' observations about the "sexual chaos" of slavery: the destruction of Black familial relations, the rampant yet unspoken proliferation of mulatto populations through rape, the connection of sexual regulation to discourses of anti-Black dehumanization. In the spirit of these observations, a contemporary project might ask: How are slavery, colonialism, and racial domination organized through and by sexuality? What are the racialized functions and ramifications of state laws about sexuality? How does the state produce, encourage, or discourage certain sexual behaviors and relations? How are these productions inflected by race?

Finally, a Du Boisian approach might examine the afterlives of slavery, colonialism, and racial domination within sexuality, desire, marriage, and family. In *The Philadelphia Negro* (1996), Du Bois emphasizes the persistent and enduring ramifications of slavery and racial alterity for Black life. White proletarian and owning classes collaborated to shut Black laborers out of the economy, relegating them to both an economic and symbolic alterity. Continuing this observation about slavery's afterlives, we might consider how sexuality is affected by these enduring relations. How are current sexual relations affected by the afterlife of slavery and racial alterity? How is racial alterity produced through sexuality and sexual relations? How did slavery constitute the sexual vulnerability of Blackness? How has this vulnerability changed over time?

This list of suggestions is by no means exhaustive. Du Bois was a prolific scientist and theorist, and, thus, there remains a near infinite trove of material from which to draw inspiration and imagine new questions. However, if the state of sexualities scholarship is any indication, a project inspired by his observations is sorely needed. A Du Boisian analytic urges us not only to correct the silenced about race within Queer Theory, but, rather, fundamentally upset the assumptions made by the field. Rather than adding race to a long list of intersections, or questioning the coherence of race as a category, a Du Boisian Sociology of Sexuality takes seriously the Color Line as a defining feature of social life.

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The Long Heat

William Wasson

The taste of sweet, cool bourbon hit my lips, and I held the cool tumbler against my sweaty forehead. Another Texas summer of sweltering heat, and not even the dark of night brought me any relief. It's the kind of sticky, humid heat that makes you feel like you're running a fever or have been sipping on something strong. The last time we hit triple digits like this was the summer of forty-six. That was a pay dirt summer for me, and after tonight's crowd, I think this summer will be too. "Last call, man," I said to Fathead, who finished off his second chicken-fried steak of the night. His chubby fist dabbed a napkin at his greasy and satisfied mouth. "Lemme get another double, Big Man."

I poured us both two doubles and raised my glass. "To another summer of cold beer, fatty brisket, and strong whiskey!" Fathead clinked his glass against mine and took it all the way down. I sipped mine and wished I had been on a beach feeling an ocean breeze. Fathead chomped on a deep brown cigar that matched his face. He struck a long match with his thumbnail, painting a red glow on the cigar's tip. "You coming to Ronaldo's for a few hands tonight?" he asked me.

I wiped down the stained and chipped wood of the bar. He insisted, "C'mon, you had a good night. Come wager some of that dough." I shook my head. "No dice, Fat. All I want is to get home and stick my head in some ice water." He grinned. "Well, it's gonna be easy money for me then." Fathead eased off the wobbly wooden stool, fastened the button on his chocolate brown jacket, gripped my hand, then made his way for the door slowly. "Good night, Big Man."

I finished my drink, unbuttoned to my white undershirt, and carried the night's cash bag into my office. I knelt down to the dark green Mosler safe behind my desk and tossed in tonight's earnings. I heard high heels echo on the solid wood floor as I stepped out of my office. It didn't take long for me to recognize her; not many women have her silhouette. The scent of Hypnotique that came off her indigo dress was unmistakable. She came into the light, and my heart started up like a Buick Roadmaster. Netta's catlike brown eyes found mine, and her full red lips parted. "Papa, I knew you would never sell this place."

I sat up on my desk and watched her get cozy on the couch just like old times as we shared a bottle of Cusenier peach. "You're the personification of 'the more things change, the more they stay the same.' Same desk, same couch, same mustache." She giggled softly. "Weren't you supposed to sell this place and move to Oaxaca?" The combination of bourbon and brandy had worn away my resolve as I replied, "No. I was supposed to sell this place, and—we were supposed to move to Oaxaca." She gave me that coy smile and sank back into the couch, and I cut to the chase.

"Whose feathers did you ruffle this time? Mo or Peanut?" Her smile disappeared, and for a second I saw the real Netta come out, then retreat back behind a smile. "You forget how much I love the ponies?" She had two horrible habits: avoiding accountability and betting money she ain't have on horses. "How much you been loving the ponies?" I asked. She shifted her head, already knowing where this was going, and held out her thumb and forefinger close together. "'Bout this much." I pressed. "Which is?" She clicked her teeth against her red lips and whispered, "Thirteen thousand worth, but I know where to get it. I just need some front money, that's all."

She sipped on her brandy to make it seem like she had things under control. I rubbed my hand over my face. I didn't know what she was planning or what the truth was with her. I never did.

"You think you could let me hold on to some collateral? When my angle hits, I'll be back with enough money, and you can buy that house in Oaxaca." Who knows, maybe she was planning a job or got roped into one. My eyes drifted to her neck, where tiny beads of sweat caught the amber light against her sepia skin. I was not going out without a fight, though. I took a deep breath and kept myself planted on the desk. She took the rest of her drink down and looked me in the eye for what felt like forever. She was off the couch and a breath away from my face not long after. "Papa, you want to live your whole life in Texas?" Her hands cradled my head, and she began stroking the smoothness of my scalp. I hadn't even noticed that my hands were on her hips, pulling her close. She whispered, "Papa," as our lips parted, and I wrapped mine over hers.

Golden light began filtering in the bar's windows as I sipped on a cup of coffee. It was barely morning, and I was already hot and feverish. Netta gave me a good morning kiss and sat next to me on a bar stool. "Just like old times, Papa. In a couple of days you're gonna be a rich man. I hope you're ready for a new life in Oaxaca." "I told you that was a dream. A young man's dream that's vanished." "What do you dream about now?" Netta asked. "I no longer dream at all," I was quick to respond. She glided her hand over my knee. "That breaks my heart. You should be dreaming of someone, some future." "Is that what your new angle is about? Your future?" I asked. "My angle is a dream come true." I finished my coffee, and she ran her hand on the top of my head. "What do you think about a vacation? You have someone that can watch the bar for a couple of weeks?" "A vacation, huh? Yeah, I can make that happen." I played along. Maybe I could find out what this angle was. "Well, Papa, let's finally make that trip to Oaxaca." I pulled a cigarette from a pack and gave it a quick light from my Dunhill. She quickly pulled one from the pack and leaned in to light it in my flame.

The orange glow of dusk gave way to a black night and an even darker highway. In the darkness, all I could see was Netta, and my thoughts drifted backward and forward. The lips I used to kiss and the hips I used to hold close were back, but so

were the doe eyes that could convince me of anything. So far she'd convinced me she was in trouble, that's not hard to believe. She'd also convinced me she'd got an angle for getting out and making me a rich man. The black highway suddenly disappeared into the bright blue water of Puerto Escondido. It's the water that I used to dream about, once upon a time when I was a young man.

I got to the Sportatorium right as the main event started. I made my way to the small colored section and took a seat. It was already steamy, and I was still sweating from my drive into Dallas. I took another look at the Dallas Express clipping Netta had sent over. The main event, with Stoker's name underlined in lipstick, and on the back a lipstick kiss accompanied by the words:

Good luck, Papa.

I kept asking myself why Netta was betting on Stoker. The man was over the hill. Besides, the biggest gangster in Dallas, Gator Harris, owned Nelson and took good care of him too. Gator had all the policies in Dallas, but Nelson was his way to slightly more legitimate success. "You a damn fool for betting a grip on Stoker." I turned to Fat Head as he plopped down with a hot dog and a sweaty beer. "That old man is past long shot, past comeback, past fucking resurrection." I suddenly felt the need to defend Netta's choice. "I got faith in the ol' cat. Have a little in me." Fat Head chortled. "I'll be happy to take your money."

Nelson was taking all of Stoker's best shots, jabs, hooks, everything, and he returned all the hits with a vengeance. Three rounds in, and it was looking like Stoker was gonna get retired tonight. "Nelson's got more on the line tonight than just the purse. Look at his new honeysuckle he's been shackled up with." Fat Head nodded his head towards Nelson's corner. There was Netta sitting ringside right next to Gator. She played me again. I just didn't know how. Stoker was huffing and puffing in his corner, while Nelson swished a mouthful of water with a steely reserve. I made eye contact with Netta, and she had the fucking nerve to smile at me.

Nelson and Stoker traded punches early on in round four. That's when I noticed Nelson suddenly losing steam. His eyelids began hanging low, his legs went to rubber, and he was gasping for breath.

Nelson tried to keep his hands up as Stoker began pummeling him. It looked like

a setup, but Nelson ain't a chump, and he damn sure wasn't no play actor. Stoker kept smacking the sweat offa Nelson's head into misty clouds. Nelson looked planted into the center of the ring, his face increasingly becoming slack. I looked over at Netta, who was grinning like the Cheshire Cat. She caught my eyes, then slowly turned her head to Nelson's water bottle and back to me. "Fuck!", escaped my lips.

Fat Head turned to me. "Motherfucker, you got me!" Yeah, and Netta got me. I suddenly felt a chill run up my spine, colder than any water anywhere. It ran deep in my bones. Nelson hit the mat, and I could feel the world stand still as I looked to Netta who was sitting like a coiled up cobra. There's a line you cross that you never come back from. Netta just crossed it and carried me over the threshold with her. I was with her the rest of the ride, all the way to the end of the line, wherever that ends.



Coda

Reflections on Duality

We hope the works featured in Volume 26 of *Litterātus* have opened doorways to discussions about duality, Black masculinities, and the diversity of Morehouse. We conclude with gratitude for our contributors, whose voices made this issue possible, and with sincere appreciation for our readers, whose engagement gives these works life beyond the page.

“An artist is supposed to be the emotional or spiritual historian of his time.”

- Amiri Baraka

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