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"Multiplied without Number": Lynching, Statistics, and Visualization in Ida B. Wells, Mark Twain, and W. E. B. Du Bois

Abstract Quantification has long played a vexed role in efforts to record and resist racial violence. Building from Ida B. Wells's antilynching crusade, this essay examines the risks and power of calculating life and death at the close of the nineteenth century. For her part, Wells pushed mere counting past itself to a profound mode of ethical accounting. Two of her contemporaries, Mark Twain and W. E. B. Du Bois, sustained a similarly supraquantitative thrust; each attempted to harness the antilynching potential of numbers by enlisting data visualization. Twain falls short in a telling fashion, as his unpublished satire "The United States of Lynncherdom" (written in 1901) exacerbates the dehumanizing tendencies of quantification. Du Bois, however, pursues a more generative experiment, creating statistical graphics in 1900 that indict and outstrip the causal circuit that yoked scientific numbering to lynching and racial violence more broadly. This latter achievement resonates with scholarly efforts to access Black life from within a desolately tabulated archive of loss and erasure. Specifically, as triangulated with Wells and Twain, Du Bois's graphics proffer a counterintuitive means to register life as a future-oriented, aggregate abstraction that is neither wholly conditioned by, nor separate from, a past whose violent legacies endure.

Keywords race, quantification, mob violence, abstraction, slavery's afterlife

Do lives matter less when they are counted? A familiar humanist argument holds that any rendering of human complexity into the abstraction of quantity poses a danger to dignity, moral valuation, and the sanctity of life itself.[1] And as Saidiya Hartman has long demonstrated, the risk of reducing persons to numbers remains particularly salient in the wake of slavery. The peculiar institution's "measure of man" and "ranking of life and worth" persist into the present insofar as "black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago" (Hartman 2007: 6). Lynching arguably inaugurated this afterlife of slavery, continuing what Katherine McKittrick (2014: 17) calls a

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"mathematics of the unliving" to churn out deathly tallies under Jim Crow. Indeed, according to the historian Christopher Waldrep (2002: 112), the concept of "racial lynching 'began' in 1882, when the [*Chicago*] *Tribune* launched its statistical reporting." Capitalizing on the cultural zeitgeist of a "trust in numbers" that buoyed public discourse throughout the nineteenth century, this newspaper's decision to enumerate fatalities in its yearly necrology tables initiated a national shift to viewing lynching as an unjustified and specifically anti-Black crime.[2] The *Tribune*'s statistics spurred early mainstream journalism on lynching and were featured in the first sociological study of the topic.[3] Although mob murder has a long and varied history, lynching first claimed widespread attention as a particularly racialized regime of violence when it emerged—like slavery before it—through a quantification of Black life in terms of privation, loss, and death.

The earliest well-known antilynching activist, Ida B. Wells, understood this perilous significance of numbers. Consider her first speech to a white audience, delivered on February 13, 1893, at the Tremont Temple in Boston. The title, "Lynch Law in All Its Phases," signals a partial recycling of her first pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892), a publication received primarily by Black audiences. But Wells modulated for white listeners by assuming unfamiliarity with lynching (see Logan 1995: 78). To dispel this ignorance, she describes several lynchings, discussing one gruesome Texas incident that "exceeded all others in its horrible details" (Wells 2014a: 108). In what the historian Grace Elizabeth Hale (1999: 207) has called "the founding event in the history of spectacle lynchings," Henry Smith was tortured and burned alive. Wells's brief description of this despicable act, and of Smith's doubtful guilt and lack of criminal charges, leads into a still more abbreviated mention of a Mississippi lynching. Immediately following, Wells (2014a: 109) states that "these incidents have been made the basis of this terrible story because they overshadow all others of a like nature in cruelty and represent the legal phases of the whole question. They could be multiplied without number—and each outrival the other in the fiendish cruelty exercised, and the frequent awful lawlessness exhibited." Wells then enumerates nearly a decade of lynching statistics, prefaced with, "the following table shows the number of black men lynched" (109).

Wells's stratagem to use lynching numbers in an effort to number the days of lynching situates her early within what Jessica Marie Johnson (2018: 59) has recently called the history of "black digital practice" wherein "black subjects have themselves taken up science, data,

and coding [. . .] in order to hack their way into systems (whether modernity, science, or the West), thus living where they were 'never meant to survive.'"[4] In one sense, Wells invokes statistics because they evidence a widespread problem and command white attention. But even while leveraging numbers to these ends, she undercuts the logic of equivalency that numbering relies on. After all, the Texas and Mississippi lynchings are said to "overshadow all others of a like nature," each "outrival[ing] the other." No measurable relation between these events and others is cognizable. These murders are so unaccountable that they cannot be made countable. Each can only be recounted as an amorphous trauma—an *overshadowing* that demands to be witnessed. The lynchings, therefore, are simultaneously singular and plural, unavailable to generalization yet illustrative of the pattern indicated by the "table" of statistics. Wells suspends her audience at this impasse of qualitative specificity (expressed through "terrible stor[ies]") and quantitative aggregation (expressed through a "show[ing]" of statistics). She confronts the irreducible cruelty of individual deaths while refusing to allow them to resolve as anomalous within, or disconnected from, the system of racial violence that—as revealed by the numbers—perpetuates so many similar yet inassimilable atrocities. Poised at this juncture, quantification is necessary but woefully limited, essential yet undone. Thus, Wells's claim that particular lynchings could be "multiplied without number" iterates a quantitative process (multiplication) that aims to transcend what makes such an operation possible (numbers).

This paradox of employing numbers to surpass them motivates my essay. Building from Wells's provocation, I locate a similarly supraquantitative thrust in the work of two of her contemporaries, Mark Twain and W. E. B. Du Bois. To vastly divergent ends, Twain and Du Bois joined Wells in attempting to marshal quantification and its transgression in defiance of lynching. Both pursued this project by engaging with modes of what we would now call data visualization. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "visualization" emerged in 1883 to describe the psychological process of "forming a mental picture or vision of something not actually present to sight."[5] Only in the following century did the term shift from mentalized to externalized imaging and come to be associated with data and "rendering practices by machines, scientific instrumentation, and numeric measures" (Halpern 2014: 21). Yet if the compound term "data visualization" is anachronistic, the late nineteenth century does mark what Michael Friendly (2008) has christened the "golden age of statistical graphics."[6] As just

one compensatory response among many to what Maurice S. Lee (2019: 3–4) has diagnosed as a nineteenth-century information overload uncannily similar to our own, visual displays of numbers flourished at the turn of the century to perform exactly the function that we now associate with data visualization—namely, a "revelatory" and "clear portrayal of complexity" (Tufte 2001: 191). Of course, as Johanna Drucker (2014: 10) insists, information visualizations always *produce*—as opposed to merely present—knowledge, offering interpretation and argument rather than "just showing us *what is*." Any picturing of data lays a claim about what, and how, that data means. That both Twain and Du Bois turn to visualization when considering how to conceptualize quantification and combat racial violence corroborates what Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson (2013: 12) have recently proffered as a basic "precept" of data—namely, that "data are mobilized graphically." "That is," they explain, "in order to be used as part of an explanation or as a basis for argument, data typically require graphical representation and often involve a cascade of representations" (12). Imaging and imagery, in other words, are intrinsically tied to the process of pushing numbers beyond themselves for the sake of a particular polemical project. As we have seen, Wells intimates this undercurrent linking quantification and visualization. Enlisting a visual register, she prompts listeners to imagine (as image) the horrific lynchings that "overshadow" all others and cannot be reduced to mere tallies in a death toll. And her recourse to this death toll suggests visuality in that she refers to her statistics as a "table" that "shows." Each in their own way, Twain and Du Bois push this latent linkage further, probing the ways that visualization might facilitate an antilynching multiplication without number.[7]

Twain is actually an informative failure along these lines, as I show in section one. Withheld from publication while he was alive, his satirical essay "The United States of Lyncherdom" (written in 1901) is deeply conflicted with respect to numbers—at first enthusiastic about their capacity to attenuate lynching before veering into a scene that "multipl[ies]" and "picture[s]" the problem as hopelessly foreclosed. In addition to obviating antilynching reform, this numbered projection reduces Black individuals to doomed copies of one another. Every Black person is a potential victim of lynching, and every victim is merely a mirror of every other. Despite his intent to condemn lynching, then, Twain multiplies it to the point of resignation, perpetuating exactly the dehumanizing erasure of numbers that Wells held so carefully in abeyance. But where Twain multiplies beyond numbers to a

counterproductive but telling end, Du Bois recalibrates visualization for a more generative undertaking. As I show in section two, Du Bois reorients the problem of lynching numbers by identifying the causal circuit that linked racial violence to quantification at the turn of the century. Attending to Du Bois's autobiographical and sociological output, I discuss his understanding of how supposedly disembodied practices of numbering abetted lynching in making Black lives depersonalized and disposable. This threatening violence prompted Du Bois's interest in what he calls the "something Incalculable"—the force of indeterminate human agency that operates just past the reductive reach of quantification. Such an interest in a fugitive trace that affiliates with numbering at its limit allowed Du Bois to work from within statistical sociology to produce something of an obverse image of Twain's essay, as Du Bois produced visualizations not of numbered Black death but rather, in his groundbreaking statistical graphics for the Paris Exposition of 1900, a stunning imagery of mass Black life. This is particularly true of the two graphs that focus on rates of freedom and enslavement over time. While both are generated by numbers, they also indicate the "Incalculable" force of "Chance" that urges past counting and the abuse threatened therein.

This imaging of numbered Black life, I propose in a concluding section, mounts a powerful rebuke to the dehumanizing fatalism of Twain's posthumously published essay. Further, Du Bois's graphs remediate and extend Wells's tactic. Where her impasse of "multiply[ing] without number" demands a witnessing to honor particular Black deaths, Du Bois pivots to a complementary vision of aggregate Black life and futurity. This latter achievement returns us to the perennial problem of how best to understand—and counter—the number-suffused archive of racial violence. Because any attempt to work from within a regime of numbering courts the violence it resists, most recovery work follows Wells, plumbing the impossible but necessary labor of realizing individual persons from traces of quantified absence. Though not a replacement for this enduring approach, Du Bois's method—read in triangulation with Wells's and Twain's texts—offers a counterintuitive alternative. His effort to work with, through, and beyond mass numbering answers the question that Hartman (2016: 213) has posed of her own historical-critical practice: "How does one conceive the possibility, chance and contingency of life as it is structured by death?" This question demands attention at a time when Black life continues to rise to public attention largely through its calculated loss, whether in the form of data related to infant mortality

rates, police shootings, or the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on Black communities. Though by no means a comprehensive answer, one way to conceptualize life amidst such numbered demise is to follow Wells's call for a multiplication without number through Twain and into Du Bois.

Figures Going for Nothing, Revealing Nothing

In August 1901, William Godley, French Godley, and Peter Hampton were lynched in Pierce City, Missouri by white mob terror that drove dozens of Black families from town. Prompted by this incident, Twain wrote "The United States of Lyncherdom," an essay that is at once sarcastic and disturbingly unfunny.[8] His home state of Missouri has "fallen," Twain (2000: 139) laments at the outset, because "certain of her children have joined the lynchers, and the smirch is upon the rest of us." This, Twain asserts, is profoundly unfair. After all, only a "handful of her children" have committed the crime (139). Why should the entire state be counted in with this disreputable crowd? Such misdesignated scorn stems from a sort of numerical illiteracy, or innumeracy. "For the world will not stop and think," Twain continues:

> it never does, it is not its way; its way is to generalize from a single sample. It will not say, "Those Missourians have been busy eighty years in building an honorable good name for themselves; these hundred lynchers down in the corner of the state are not real Missourians, they are bastards." No, that truth will not enter its mind; it will generalize from the one or two misleading samples and say, "The Missourians are lynchers." It has no reflection, no logic, no sense of proportion. With it, figures go for nothing; to it, figures reveal nothing, it cannot reason upon them rationally. (139)

While Twain initially embraces quantitative logic by insisting on the innocence of the state relative to the few lynchers, he doubles back to bemoan the inutility of numbers. The fact that only a small number of "bastards" in the "corner of the state" are responsible is immaterial because the "world" lacks the rational "sense of proportion" to see that a "handful" of lynchers does not a lynching state make. Numbers enable the defense of Missouri yet "reveal nothing" to the innumerate readers who will foolishly "generalize from a single sample."[9]

The fact that this essay on lynching begins with (mock) outrage directed not at murder but at the undue ruin of a state's reputation locates it within the mode of acerbic social critique that characterized

much of Twain's late-career writings, which frequently skewered the hypocrisies of the so-called civilized world.[10] Yet here the ambivalence regarding quantification that is evident from the first page—the uncertainty about what numbers can or cannot do—compromises Twain's critical purchase. After all, while he suggests that the world errs in damning all Missourians when it "generalize[s] from a single sample," the gist of the essay's title—and of Twain's overarching indictment of America—is that the world actually ought to generalize *more* in order to discern that lynching is a distinctly national failing. Unstable from the start, this indecision regarding figures builds throughout, eventually undermining the essay's antilynching potential. Just paragraphs after deploring the innumerate world, for example, Twain warns that lynching may one day spread to New York City before he quotes a statistics-laden paragraph from the *Chicago Tribune*. Evidencing first an "increase in lynching" from 1899 to 1900, this excerpted newspaper passage calculates the lynching count as it stands halfway through 1901, suggesting that the annual tally will increase yet again unless the nation changes (141). Faced with the grim forecast that lynching will reach the cultural center of the North, Twain attempts to forestall this future by providing readers with numbers, the very form of evidence that he earlier characterized as ineffectual and lacking in persuasive force. Statistics appear to exemplify the urgently worsening problem, and so even as Twain thinks they "go for nothing," he cannot help trafficking in them. In fact, a belief that numbers could urge readers away from a lamentable lynching future was central to Twain's drive to write "Lyncherdom" in the first place. Just days after drafting the essay, Twain (1901: 1) wrote to his editor to describe the next project he had in mind: "a large subscription book to be called—'History of Lynching in America'—or 'Rise & Progress of Lynching'—or some such title." Unfazed that "there may be 3,000" lynchings to consider, Twain wanted to tally every single one (1). "Nothing but such a book," he explained, "can rouse-up the sheriffs to put down the mob & end the lynchings" (4). Drawing again from the *Tribune*, Twain apparently approached the topic of lynching with a trust in numbers that meant to match and even surpass this newspaper's influential statistical practice. Counting up would facilitate a downward trend. But if this numerical enthusiasm spurred Twain to write and also reappeared early in the essay itself, the more skeptical attitude signaled by his discussion of the world's innumeracy remains key for understanding the bleak conclusion of "Lyncherdom."

Throughout the essay, Twain considers what might be done to

derail the combination of cowardice and imitation that enables lynching. In the end he makes the modest proposal that Christian missionaries return from China to proselytize to the homegrown heathens responsible for mob violence. To win over these missionaries, Twain (2000: 144–45) quotes from a telegram describing a lynching in Texas where a Black man—unnamed in his account—was hanged over a bonfire. At first Twain appears to think this disturbing account is sufficient to "implore" missionaries "to come back and help us in our need" (145). But apparently sensing that he needed more rhetorical ammunition, he then merges the Texas details with a redeployment of statistics, urging missionaries to "read that telegram again, and yet again, and picture the scene in their minds, and soberly ponder it; then," he continues:

> multiply it by 114, add 88; place the 203 in a row, allowing 650 feet of space for each human torch, so that there be viewing-room around it for 5,000 Christian American men, women, and children, youths and maidens; make it night for grim effect; have the show in a gradually rising plain, and let the course of the stakes be up-hill; the eye can then take in the whole line of twenty-five miles of blood-and-flesh bonfires unbroken, whereas if it occupied level ground the ends of the line would bend down and be hidden from view by the curvature of the earth; all being ready, now, and the darkness opake [*sic*], the stillness impressive—for there should be no sound but the soft moaning of the night wind and the muffled sobbing of the sacrifices—let all the far stretch of kerosened pyres be touched off simultaneously and the glare and the shrieks and the agonies burst heavenward to the Throne. (145)

This "picture" of lynching numbers brings an abrupt end to the essay's penultimate section. Twain then uses the brief final section to reiterate the numerical scope of the problem, stressing how, given the annual tallies listed in the *Tribune* and the national shortage of brave mob-defying individuals, lynching numbers will continue to increase: "We shall add 60 lynchings to our 88 before the year is out; we shall reach the 300–mark next year, the 500–mark in 1903, we shall lynch a thousand negroes in 1904" (145–46).

Channeled through a burlesque of Christian empire, this twenty-five-mile lynching scene signals an intensified trust in numbers. Implying that only statistics might persuade where one lynching alone would not, Twain returns to the *Tribune* to extrapolate murder counts. Yet to head off the world's innumeracy—its deficient "sense

of proportion"—he attempts to make these projected numbers meaningful by translating them into precisely apportioned illustration. This modulation from mathematical figures to figuration is similar to other instances where Twain sought, in the words of Tom Quirk (2001: 193), to "make the unthinkable vivid, even palpable." While Quirk has in mind Twain's dealings with numbers that were cosmically vast or microscopically vanishing in scale, the *Tribune*'s numbers manifest in "Lyncherdom" as a similarly confounding quantity in need of more direct demonstration. But even when cast in the resulting image, the quantitative underpinning of the scene endures via the conspicuously exact math involved. The *Tribune* tallies add up to a certain sum of lynchings occupying a precisely measured geometric space, corralled spectators accounted for. Even the earth's "curvature" is bent to the service of making the numbers fit within the unity of a single viewable field. Twain's dictate that pyres be arranged on a "gradually rising plain" so that "the eye" can survey all the "bonfires" stresses how the immense problem of lynching must be computed and compressed within one plottable dataset that fits together through—and despite—its immense scale. This insistence on seeing lynching numbers all at once and "unbroken" recalls media theorist Jacqueline Wernimont's observation that visual displays of quantitative data produce experiences of an "arithmetic sublime" (Wernimont 2018: 41) that promise a "view of the whole" (39) in order to impose abstracted order over complex problems otherwise distributed in space and time. In asking readers to "picture the scene" that he describes, Twain puts a verbal twist on this visualizing tack, converting imaged numbers into prose. In other words, his picture generated by numbers but set down in words amounts to an ekphrasis of data visualization.

And yet if this verbalized data visualization derives from picturing careful quantification, its cumulative effect cuts against Wernimont's insight regarding the sense of control usually afforded by arithmetic display, since the image disrupts Twain's motivating notion that numbers can help end lynching. Rather than spurring antilynching action or continuing to decry bad actors as "bastards," this "show" that is accorded "viewing-room" and choreographed direction does not wrestle lynching into submission so much as it stages it for mass consumption. The image realizes Koritha Mitchell's (2011: 3) trenchant description of lynching as a "*master/piece theater*" wherein "whites literally used *pieces* of black bodies as props to perform their *master* status." Rendering gaudily apparent this performative perversity, Twain's trivializing request that readers "multiply" and "picture" the lynching

numbers launches a scene that is *seemingly* controlled—in being fastidiously calculated and visualized—yet staggering in its apocalyptic results. In fact, while the notion of adding "flesh and blood" to statistics circulated as something of a cliché in the late nineteenth century to describe the concretizing benefits of data visualization (Friendly 2008: 516), Twain's adoption of this tactic arguably has the opposite effect. Rather than enlivening inert numbers, his imaged aggregation doubles down on deathliness, encumbering data under disaggregated and passive bodies. Scaling heedlessly from one lynching to many, his projection dehumanizes Black individuals—rendering them not only as mere blood and flesh but also "shrieks" and sacrificial objects—while at the same time excusing the crowds of white spectators who watch as something apparently not in their power sets the altars ablaze.[11] This devitalization through mass quantification speaks to what Ian Hacking (1990: 116) calls the "statistical fatalism" that evacuates agency and individuality in the face of the leveling force of large numbers. Unlike Wells's impasse of witnessing both singularity and generality sourced from—coincidentally—a different Texas lynching, Twain's math obfuscates the Black persons murdered as well as the systemized white violence responsible. Further, Twain's concluding litany of annually increasing lynching tallies actually extends this vacuous fatalism indefinitely, falling into what Kathleen Woodward (2009: 209) has called the "statistical panic" that ensues when probabilities based on past conditions are "cast into possible and alternative futures that for the most part take on a dark dimension."[12] Woodward's description of the paralytic affect engendered by "*statistics as a figure, one that looms on the horizon*" (197) uncannily captures Twain's lynchings tiered so precisely as to obscure any possibility of an alternative horizon. Belying Twain's original aim to "end" lynching by "tally[ing]" up every crime, "Lyncherdom" concludes with a tally but—quite literally according to Twain's precisely delineated panorama—with no end to lynching in sight.

There were undoubtedly overlapping reasons why Twain did not publish "Lyncherdom."[13] But whatever his mindset, it is clear that the culminating "show" inspires neither confidence nor optimism that lynching can be stopped, and especially not through quantification, since numbering in that instance enervates any possibility of "rous[ing]-up" resistance. Moreover, the fact that Twain's macabre multiplication corresponds to the quantitative fallacy that he identified earlier in the same essay may actually suggest some level of self-awareness. After all, if the "show" enacts a data visualization, the data it visualizes are produced by an act of "generaliz[ing] from a single

sample," thereby making the exact blunder of innumeracy that Twain earlier imputed to the world's miscalculations regarding lynching in Missouri. Whether Twain committed this miscalculation deliberately to emphasize its idiocy or did it unwittingly, the resulting erosion of agency within the essay and Twain's subsequent decision to turn away from writing against lynching altogether indicate that whatever hopes he elsewhere placed in quantification came up wanting in view of the absurd plenum of statistically amplified murder. In this sense, the quantification in "Lyncherdom" manifests the frustration that James D. Wilson (1975: 73) discerns throughout Twain's science-related writings: "at first enthusiastic about the abstract ideal possibilities of the enterprise, he is inevitably appalled by the grotesque human enactment of the ideal."[14] If Twain's visualization multiplies lynching beyond number, the result is also beyond redress.

The Something Incalculable

While Twain's numbering exacerbated the problem he meant to diminish, Du Bois became increasingly skeptical about numbers at the same turn-of-the-century moment.[15] Though versed in quantitative methods of sociology, which he practiced in pioneering studies in the early to mid-1890s, Du Bois recalled a specific lynching from 1899 as a turning point away from academic science. "At the very time when my studies were most successful," he writes in the autobiographical *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), "there cut across this plan which I had as a scientist, a red ray which could not be ignored. I remember when it first, as it were, startled me to my feet: a poor Negro in central Georgia, Sam Hose, had killed his landlord's wife" (Du Bois 1986a: 602). Upon hearing the accusations made against Hose, Du Bois "wrote out a careful and reasoned statement concerning the evident facts and started down to the Atlanta *Constitution* office" (602). But his dispassionate statement never made it to publication. "I did not get there. On the way news met me: Sam Hose had been lynched, and they said that his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store farther down on Mitchell Street." Du Bois "turned back to the University" and also "began to turn aside from [his] work" (603). "Two considerations thereafter broke in upon my work and eventually disrupted it," Du Bois explains: "First, one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved; and secondly, there was no such definite demand for scientific work of the sort that I was doing" (603).

Given the complexity of Du Bois's output at the turn of the century,

we should not insist on the Hose lynching as a fulcrum in any precise biohistorical sense.[16] Rather, as Vince Schleitwiler (2017: 39) argues, this memory "takes the form of a fable or parable" that both "exaggerates the naivete of [Du Bois's] ambitions and telescopes his long transformation [. . .] to provide his readers with the narrative kernel of an example." The "narrative" as opposed to straightforwardly factual inflection of this (near) encounter with lynching may help explain why Du Bois actually mis-summarizes the details: he says that Hose killed his landlord's wife when he actually killed (in self-defense) his white male employer. And the essentially literary character of the "red ray" passage also accounts for the ways it refracts throughout Du Bois's writings as a recurring motif, particularly in proximity to his thinking on science and quantification. Indeed, Du Bois's "turn[ing] aside" from his path "as a scientist" is repeated verbatim in his posthumously published 1968 autobiography (2007a: 141) and also revisited in the first memoir essay collected in *Darkwater*. The latter does not name the red ray or Hose but explains that after only a "few years" in Atlanta, Du Bois (2007b: 10) found himself "paled into nothing before this great, red monster of cruel oppression." Later, Du Bois (1990: 42–44) again discussed his early Atlanta years relative to the nation's "crimson climax" of lynchings more broadly and to Hose specifically, reflecting that, "something died in me that day." What died was Du Bois's (1986a: 596) prior embrace of sociology—his sense that the world was merely "thinking wrong about race because it did not know" and that the "ultimate evil was stupidity" that could be "cure[d]" by "knowledge based on scientific investigation." His "whole attitude toward the social sciences began to change" (Du Bois 1990: 46). There could no longer be a rift between "theory and practice, between pure and applied science" (46) because he "faced situations that called—shrieked—for action" (47). For this reason, Du Bois (1986a: 716) left his academic post in sociology by 1910, departing the "ivory tower of statistics and investigation."

According to Shawn Michelle Smith (2014: 114), the purpose of the red ray passage is to signal Du Bois's realization—at least in retrospect—that he, a Black man, however dignified and educated, was the "embodied equivalent" of Hose "in the eyes of white supremacist[s]." As Smith notes, Du Bois likely came to the same conclusion as the detective hired by Wells (2014b: 334) to investigate the Hose lynching: "a negro's life is a very cheap thing in Georgia." In fact, this dire economizing verdict raises a further detail that Du Bois (perhaps) got wrong. According to one recent commentator, Du Bois did not

understand that shop owners "displayed pig knuckles in their windows under a sign labeling them as knuckles of Sam Hose. It was a joke and an advertising gimmick" (see Arnold 2009: 172). Du Bois has rarely been accused of ignorance regarding racism, and whether he was in on this "joke" or not, he likely *did* know that the mutilated body of Hose had been divvied up by the mob.[17] And regardless of the provenance of the knuckles in question, they served their intended "advertising" purpose insofar as Du Bois only needed to hear about them to "turn aside" from his path. Such disaggregation of a Black body as so many "cheap" commodities exemplified the fundamentally quantitative logics that facilitated racial violence, disrupting Du Bois's previous reliance on sociological numbering. Lynching made not only Black individuals but even their individual body parts functionally interchangeable. The grisly fact that the body parts in question, knuckles, are associated with fingers—or digits—encodes a specific violence of rendering Black persons into discrete and (dis)aggregable units primed for numerical capture. Thus, bodily mutilation as enforced digitization stimulated economic circulation for Atlanta grocers while also manifesting in Du Bois's mind as continuous with the "cut[ting] across" that severed him from his erstwhile commitment to sociological numbers. Du Bois departed that "ivory tower of statistics" whose whiteness emblazoned the impassive racial quantification that made Black life equivalent, cheap, and expendable. Du Bois could no longer be a "calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved" not merely due to a disjuncture between science and murder but more troublingly because of the causal circuit that linked disinterested numbers to dismembering violence.

Du Bois had gestured to this causal circuit as early as "The Strivings of the Negro People" (1897), the essay that would form the first chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). There Du Bois (1986b: 368) contrasts the struggles of postemancipation Black Americans with the "cold statistician" who "wrote down the inches of progress here and there." In conflict with Black life described in terms of "throbbing human soul[s]" (462) and "warm pulsing life" (514), this blood-drained and -draining "cold statistician" figures the cutting violence of a type of science that Du Bois had once claimed for himself. After all, Du Bois (2004: 10) once reflected on his early-career sociology to recall that he had been a "cold and scientific investigator, with microscope and probe." But if the multigeneric *Souls* represents one effort to counter the cruelty of cold statistics, we find another solution in a more unexpected place—a scientific essay that clarifies how Du Bois

never abandoned quantification even as he learned to work with numbers to more life-affirming ends.

Unpublished in Du Bois's lifetime, "Sociology Hesitant" (written in 1905) reiterates criticisms of sociology that he made elsewhere regarding deductive "metaphysical wanderings" that anxiously mimicked physical sciences in pursuit of determinate laws of human behavior. Such a misguided aim neglects what Du Bois (2000: 40) says is the "Great Assumption of real life," that "in the deeds of men there lies along with rule and rhythm—along with physical law and biologic habit, a something Incalculable." This "something Incalculable," Du Bois explains, is "Chance." Aldon D. Morris (2017a: 24–26) suggests that we think of Du Bois's "Chance" in terms of "agency" versus "structure." Ronald A. T. Judy (2000: 12–13) refers to Kantian "freedom." One of the earliest treatments of "Sociology Hesitant," meanwhile, glosses "Chance" as "free will" capable of "undetermined actions" (Green and Driver 1976: 312). Whether construed as agency, freedom, or undetermined free will, "Chance" as "the something Incalculable" must for Du Bois be understood as a primary factor of human reality. "True students of Sociology," he insists, have always "flatly face[d]" a "Paradox": "They have assumed a world of physical law peopled by beings capable in some degree of actions inexplicable and uncalculable to these laws" (Du Bois 2000: 42). Only by assuming "a world of Law and Chance," Du Bois insists, can sociology study society—that "realm where determinate force is acted on by human wills, by indeterminate force" (44). Where unfounded theories of "Society" would explain away (apparent) chance as only a *seemingly* "indeterminate force" that has yet to be discovered and counted, Du Bois asserts a more radical commitment to chance as *always* being fundamentally uncountable.[18] Thus, he concludes "Sociology Hesitant" by advising that sociology should seek "the limits of Chance in human conduct" (44). Put differently—and filtered through the quantitative terms of the essay—sociology should count what can be numbered if only to make apparent, through apophatic absence, the ever-pervading force of "Chance" that names the potential for human agency to transcend determination and enumeration.

Because Du Bois describes "Chance" as an "incalculable" force, it makes sense that his discussion also alludes—in distinctly figurative rather than mathematically figured terms—to the racial violence embedded in the regime of quantification that is being eclipsed. Although Rebecka Rutledge Fisher (2005: 772) contends that "Sociology Hesitant" "lacks as no other major work by Du Bois does, any

mention for race whatever," Judy (2000: 14) argues that it actually "takes considerable effort not to see the Negro sitting at the edge" of the essay. In fact, we can locate race not only at the margin but at the beginning. Before launching his critique, Du Bois discusses the Congress of Arts and Sciences that convened for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Although Du Bois corresponded with officials about a proposed exhibit, his contribution never materialized.[19] As Morris (2017a: 24) explains, Du Bois was snubbed by his fellow (white) scientists—an exclusion that marked not an "isolated event but rather an instance of a pattern that persisted over a century." Given this discrimination, the framing of the essay vis-à-vis St. Louis would seem to make race relevant from the outset. And this salience is punctuated by what Du Bois actually says about the Congress. He laments that the meeting "served to emphasize painfully the present plight of Sociology; for the devotee of the cult made the strange discovery that the further following of his bent threatened violent personal dismemberment" (Du Bois 2000: 37). Manifestly, what Du Bois means by this metaphor of dismemberment is that the "devotee" of sociology will find himself pulled in all directions by the dispersal of sociological topics within physical space. But recalling the red ray that flashed so frequently throughout Du Bois's oeuvre, it is striking to find in this otherwise theoretically abstruse essay about sociological method a description that so uncannily replicates his account of Sam Hose. Just as Du Bois felt that he risked encountering the threat of dismemberment if he continued his path past the knuckles to denounce lynching in a white newspaper, so does he find himself in "Sociology Hesitant" concerned for a threat of dismemberment that will come from a "further following of his bent," or path, within the exclusionary white world of sociological science.

The fact that the threatened dismemberment is figurative rather than literal within the scope of "Sociology Hesitant" cannot be denied even as the specific language of detailing a "violent personal dismemberment" strains against such a metaphorical reading. That is, even if Du Bois does not think himself in immediate physical peril relative to the Congress, his description of the disjointing dangers posed by the "cult" of sociology nevertheless adopts a strikingly corporeal immediacy, as if to emphasize an urgent threat that cannot be shunted aside as mere academic squabbling. Through his thwarted attempt to contribute to the world of objective sociology ("calm, cool, and detached"), Du Bois implies that the abstracting, aggregative drive of this white science threatens him with viscerally concrete

disaggregation. As the essay goes on to explain, the imposing cultish science is misguided specifically with respect to its rampant quantitative impulse: its overzealous drive to count, calculate, and otherwise exhaustively measure human life as if it were determinate like inanimate matter. It was exactly this commitment to numbers at the expense of humanity that fueled the hollowing precision of Twain's multiplication. Like the forcefully embodied but depersonalized "shrieks" that erupted in Twain's visualization, the "shriek[s] for action" carried by Sam Hose's disassembled body through the streets of Atlanta and into Du Bois's autobiographical writings echo in "Sociology Hesitant" to interpolate a Black individual—Du Bois himself—as a brutalized Black body rather than as a person.[20] But rather than stop stunned with Twain, Du Bois turns to the opposite of numerical exactitude—to metaphorical language—to indict this devastating violence. Though perhaps not *the* problem of the color line, the red ray operates here as a problematizing color line whose fugitive trace entwines Du Bois's critique of quantification with lynching. And thereafter Du Bois elaborates his alternative method as demarcated by the *limits* of quantification. While never abandoning numbers, Du Bois stresses that sociology should pursue them only up to the water's edge of the "something Incalculable"—that essential impetus of human life (agency, freedom, free will) that is not amenable to hypostatization. The cost of dismissing this limit—of not turning aside from the path—is subjection to the cutting calculations of cold statistics.

Given Du Bois's desire to use sociology to go through and beyond quantification, it is not surprising that the turn of the century witnessed his masterful bid to push statistics past mere numbering. In 1900 Du Bois traveled to the Exposition Universelle in Paris to display the Exhibit of American Negroes, a multimedia installation he and his students helped produce that featured photographs; a bibliography of Black-authored texts; a list of Black-held patents; a transcription of Georgia's Black Codes; and two sets of hand-drawn statistical graphs and charts, one focused on Georgia and one national and international in scope. As scholars have detailed, this prize-winning exhibit exemplifies how Du Bois championed "public sociology" to demonstrate the perseverance of Black progress since emancipation *despite* racism.[21] While the exhibit photographs have been discussed at length, attention has only more recently turned to the statistical graphs and infographics—what Britt Rusert and Whitney Battle-Baptiste call Du Bois's "data portraits." Disrupting the "machinery of white supremacy" (Rusert and Battle-Baptiste 2018a: 22), these data portraits are

important because, anticipating "Sociology Hesitant," they attend to numbers as well as to the "something Incalculable."

The Exhibit of American Negroes as a whole and the quantification of the data portraits in particular are embedded within the causal circuit of violent numbering. Lynching generally—and once again Sam Hose specifically—acted as a motivating spur, as is evidenced by a fundraising letter sent by an organizer, Thomas J. Calloway, to Booker T. Washington in 1899. "Everyone who knows about public opinion in Europe," Calloway insisted, "will tell you that Europeans think us a mass of rapists [. . .] This notion has come to them," Calloway continued, "through the horrible libels that have gone abroad whenever a Negro is lynched [. . .] The social and political economics of the Old World put down erroneous accounts of such cases of that of Sam Hose as truth, and, not hearing the actual facts, reach conclusions which do us wrong. How shall we answer these slanders?" (quoted in Fisher 2005: 753). By insisting that lynching leads "social and political economics" into "erroneous accounts" of Black Americans construed as a "mass," Calloway registers the same complicity linking the massifying effects of (pseudo)scientific calculations to threats to Black life that is identified consistently by Du Bois. The answer to this problem is to make the "actual facts" accessible and irrefutable in what Du Bois himself described as among the most sociological of all displays in Paris.[22] Thus, while David Levering Lewis (2003: 30) is right to observe of the exhibit that "no lynching images jar the spectator," this is only because—as in "Sociology Hesitant"—the red ray cuts across the scene surreptitiously, shaping the visual grammar unseen. Indeed, the visual metaphor of the red ray as a trope filtered through quantification takes on particular relevance with respect to the visualized numbers that compose Du Bois's data portraits—his graphic representations of the color line graphed in so many colored lines.[23]

Rather than merely communicate quantitative data, Du Bois's data portraits produce an impression, however understated, of the force of "Chance"—of the human agency, freedom, and free will that cannot be captured by calculation. This impression is especially pronounced in the two data portraits that depict the changing proportion of slaves to free Black Americans between 1790 and 1870. One focuses on Georgia (see fig. 1); the other is national in scope (see fig. 2). Though oriented differently—along inverted axes—both images use contrasting colors to demarcate the shifting percentage of freedom over the course of nine distinct data points, one for each decade. Black is used in both to color in the shape created by the rates of "slaves"; red (for

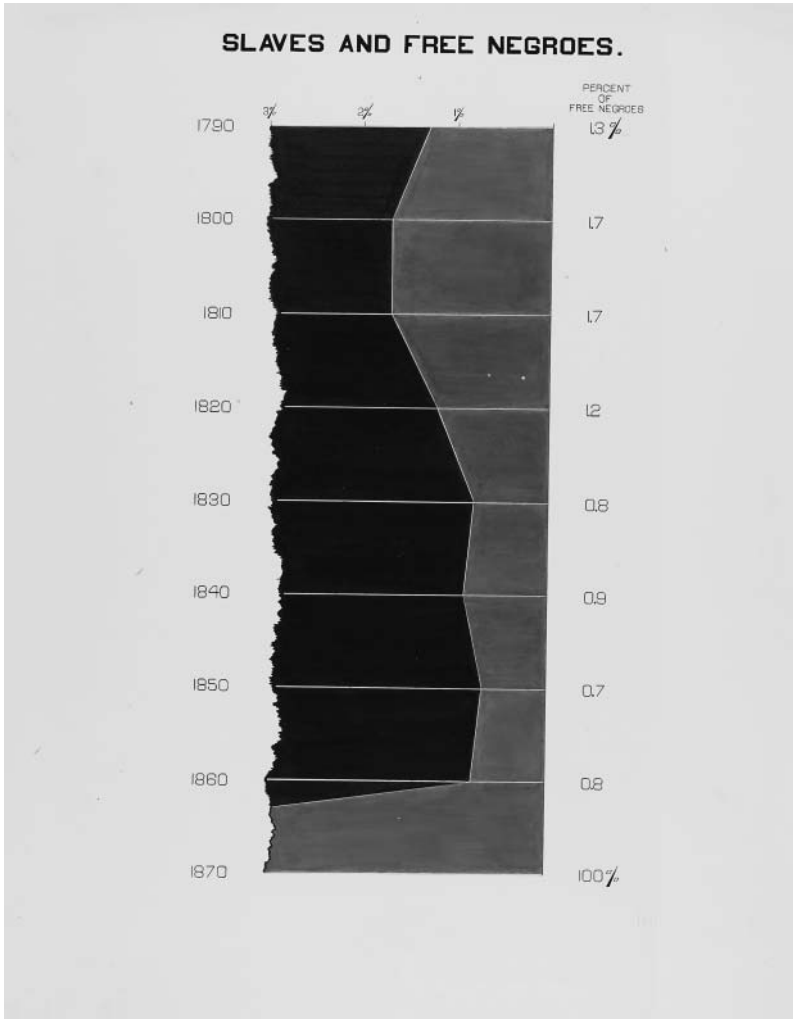

Figure 1 Georgia Plate, "Slaves and Free Negroes." Library of Congress

Georgia) and green (for the nation) fill in the "free" rates. The result is a juxtaposition of two masses of color, the convergence of which forms a line of freedom that wavers up and down by small margins until a dramatic increase circa the early 1860s, which is not designated in either case as the end of slavery. Relatively simple in tracking just one measure (freedom) over time, these graphs are profound in their incalculable visual effects.

On the one hand, the zig-zagging line that partitions the colors *before*

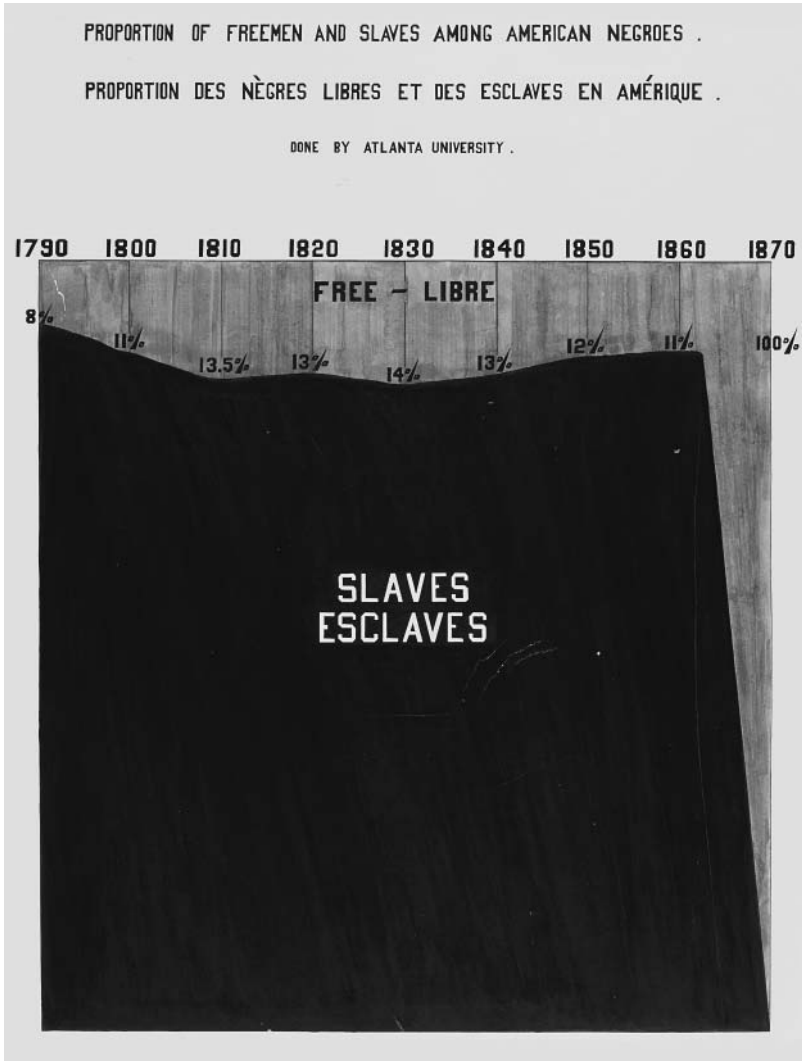

Figure 2 National Plate, "Proportion of Freemen and Slaves Among American Negroes." Library of Congress

the steep drop-off of enslavement intimates how Black Americans—even under the law of slavery—were variously using and claiming freedom through innumerable acts of agency. The crude underlying numerical data can only indicate free or unfree. But beyond this extreme quantitative reduction, the image itself prompts viewers to consider what indeterminate forces of human activity have combined

to give shape to this data in ways not communicable by numbers. This conspicuous absenting of individualized granularity is reinforced by the decision in both graphs to connect the decade-by-decade data points with a point-to-point line. Where something like a bar graph would more accurately show where the percentages stood at the discrete ten-year intervals of the data, the suturing line from one node to the next artificially smooths the intervening years, producing an angular rigidity utterly incongruous with how freedom and its opposite unfolded in the full messiness of human experience. Faced with this blatant abstraction, viewers are led to consider the untold but intimated stories necessarily obscured by massifying quantification. On the other hand, the steep drop-off of enslavement depicted in the graphs circa the 1860s figures a falling away from—or a leaping beyond—an institution of slavery that is pictured in both graphs as a black cliff. This line of flight away from enslavement so alters the landscape of each image that the entire edifice of slavery itself is seen to be a product of "Chance"—a product, that is, of human decisions that have no natural or inevitable foundation. If the variable degrees of freedom *before* emancipation gesture to innumerable human acts at variance with the regularity of enslavement, this rapid expansion of freedom toward the end of the two graphs emphasizes how the agency, freedom, and free will of individuals can just as easily work to suppress those same forces of "Chance" in the lives of others. It is not only that innumerable indeterminate human acts exercised freedom in opposition to the system of slavery; this system itself was the product of innumerable indeterminate acts that become most apparent in their dramatic and sudden collapse.

This representation of the collapse of slavery as sudden yet uneven—momentous but not occurring in a moment—testifies to the way that emancipation decreed in an abstract legal sense did not magically affect all remaining slaves at once, a theme that Du Bois would later take up in *Black Reconstruction* (1935). Moreover, the use of the color red to indicate freedom in the Georgia plate is striking considering how—as we have seen—the same bloody color functioned in Du Bois's writings to address postemancipation racial violence in that same state. This suffusion of a violent hue past slavery's collapse belies the stark distinction otherwise suggested by the data.[24] At the same time, however, in both data portraits, the starkness of the dividing line that suddenly plummets away from slavery points to the possibility of a different future. The falling line of enslavement (at once a rising line of freedom) brings each graph to an open-ended

end. That is, both compositions lead the eye of the observer rapidly down the steep decline of slavery toward the one-hundred percent rate of freedom such that the eye wants to continue beyond the frame of the graph. In the Georgia plate, this speculative continuance is actually demanded of the viewer, since Du Bois has fashioned the graph on the basis of a y-axis rupture. The left side of the chart is jagged as if torn from a larger document, signaling all the data that has been excluded for the purpose of a focused presentation. But the line of freedom runs past this rip, beyond the measured bounds of the chart. A similar effect obtains with the national graph even though it accommodates the entire range of data: the line of freedom seems to extend asymptotically into an impossibility that would, incalculably, surpass one-hundred percent. These arrangements fix slavery as a past that is acknowledged (but not overwhelming) and emphasize a bursting trajectory of ungraphed freedom. The images thus offer a visual rendition of the temporal imagination that Kara Keeling (2019: ixv) has recently described in her consideration of "those freedom dreams that take[e] flight beyond what is presently imaginable," where "'life' perhaps can be perceived, even (re)conceived, as existence beyond measure." In these ways, Du Bois's data portraits rely on numbers to suggest forces of progress and oppression alike that—unquantifiable and indeterminate—can be channeled through the supranumerical venue of visualization. Though measured out by figures, his charts figure forth more than can be measured.[25]

Aggregate Life

In their urging beyond measure, Du Bois's data portraits offer an inversion of Twain's visualization. "Lyncherdom" multiplied a single lynching to picture a generalized field of Black death and white passivity whose quantified magnitude was utterly determined and coterminous with a future imaginable only as more (and more) of the deathly same. In a sense, this result corresponds to the murderous calculations of cold statistics that Du Bois magnetized to the red ray of the Hose lynching. In fact, this circuit linking numbers to racial violence was on full display at the Paris Exhibition. Sharing an exhibit hall with Du Bois, the Prudential Life Insurance company mounted its own data-heavy display, showcasing the work of statistician Frederick L. Hoffman, whose quantitative science wrote racism into actuarial tables and insurance rates.[26] Hoffman's dubiously scientific theories about Black mortality exerted domineering influence at a time when

racism coveted the alibi of scientistic authority. But in Dan Bouk's (2015: 33) estimation, Hoffman's work amounted to little more than "prophesizing (with statistics) the black race's inevitable extinction." Itself a prophecy (with statistics) of Black death, Twain's visualization attributed the likelihood of a similarly foreclosed future not, like Hoffman, to racial degeneracy per se but rather to the all-but-inevitable increase of lynching. Arguably these accounts of ensuing mortality do not differ meaningfully in effect. If quantification appeared at first to offer Twain a means of mitigation, in practice it leads his essay all the way from its opening denigration of mob murder to what could almost be mistaken as acceptance of or collusion with prolynching rhetoric. Because although surely meant by Twain as a warning, his aloof projection at the end of the essay that "we shall lynch a thousand negroes in 1904" echoes the murderous multiplication heralded by the white supremacist Rebecca Latimer Felton, who in 1887 enjoined a Georgia audience to "lynch a thousand times a week if necessary" (quoted in Waldrep 2002: 133). Where Twain first insisted that numbering would diminish lynchings, his actual numbering in "Lyncherdom" foresees—if not exactly decrees—nothing but an increasing count.

But just as Du Bois regularly criticized Hoffman's work, he similarly rebutted the fatalism that so mortified Twain's essay.[27] His data portraits find in numbers not statistical doom but a horizon of possibility. Appreciating this paradoxically numbered flight away from an era beset by oppressive racial numbering requires a mode of attention similar to what Tina M. Campt (2017: 4) has recently described as an "exercise in counterintuition." For Campt this method refers to "listening" to the fugitive futurity of photographs. Attending specifically to the genre of "identification photographs" that comprises quotidian moments of bureaucratic capture (badges, passports, applications, etc.), Campt trains an embodied sensorium to the "recalcitrant affects of quiet" that bear forth a haptic hum. Though producing numbered portraits rather than photographed ones, Du Bois's datasets are similarly institutional in nature, sourced from government census reports and sociological fieldwork. And just as Campt "attun[es] our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register" (9), Du Bois attunes his audience to the unfixed force that vibrates through and beyond quantification. Thoroughly counterintuitive in Campt's sense, the "Incalculable" emerges against all odds—a vector of "Chance," after all—from the calculated.

While thus refuting the culmination of "Lyncherdom," Du Bois's data visualizations also complement Wells's crusade. Where she confronted Black death head-on at an ethical impasse of witnessing—

refusing both the erasure of mass abstraction *and* the dismissal of particular lynchings relative to systemic violence—Du Bois builds from this necessary groundwork to project unknowable futures. Even as the graphs considered above look further back in time than Wells does to picture the transition from slavery to freedom rather than the more contemporaneous moment of Jim Crow lynching, they nevertheless adopt what we have seen to be a more propulsive posture. Significantly, this posture embraces mass aggregation even as most attention to histories of racial violence—Wells's and Campt's included—attends to salvaging individual lives and "subjecthood" (Helton et al. 2015: 5). This latter approach is crucial because archives of racial violence obscure persons by retaining only a record of dehumanization in lines on a ledger, tallies on a table. The work of recovery is therefore articulated as a matter of adding (or revealing) texture, depth, particularity, and specificity—not to mention interiority, emotion, and kinship. That such a granularizing drive carries from studies of slavery into lynching historiography is demonstrated by the historian Kidada E. Williams (2014: 856), whose project on victim testimonies endeavors to pull "from historical limbo the uncounted women, men, and children who lived through this violence" of Jim Crow. Or consider the probing analyses of Autumn Womack (2018: 209; see also 2017), who returns to the lynching archive to register those forms of life that "escape and exceed quantification and documentation." Answering to Hartman's generative methodology of "critical fabulation" that imaginatively quests after the irrevocable intimacies of "precarious lives" (Hartman 2008: 11–12) and "wayward lives" (Hartman 2019: 8), such projects provide invaluable insight into the experiences of individuals who would otherwise be wholly lost to the abstractions of a desolately numbered past. Indeed, whether implicitly (in Williams's reference to the ever "uncounted") or explicitly (in Womack's extended discussion of the detriments of numbering), this labor of recovery prosecutes a necessarily non- or antiquantitative task.[28]

Numbers cannot replace the rigor of memorialization carried out by the work discussed above. Yet even so, the counterintuitive multiplication beyond number explored in this essay offers something like a middle way between what Stephen Best, discussing the recovery imperative, has articulated as opposed "critical assumptions" in Black studies (Best 2018: 1): a "melancholic historicism" fixated on claiming loss as communal praxis and an "abandonment thesis" that accepts the past as a dead and distanced alterity (68–72). Du Bois's data portraits transpose and splice these psychologized alternatives into a shared visual space. Produced by the abstractions of numbers, the

shadowy cliffs of slavery appear in each image as decidedly past yet formative for the arching line of freedom that departs. The lines that abandon careen to a future so different that it exceeds the frame altogether, indexing an alterity not even pictured. In Best's terms, these graphs are not committed to the "idea that the slave past provides a ready prism for understanding and apprehending the black political present" (2). Instead they quite strikingly envision "the slave past as it falls away, as that which falls away—a separateness resistant to being either held or read in melancholic terms" (72–73). But this refusal to hold Blackness-as-loss does not take the form of an abandonment across the impenetrable gulf of time. Instead, by graphing a temporal sweep of individual lives obfuscated by percentages, the pictured abstractions make loss present *as* loss—as shapes generated by the absence of the persons whose aggregated names and stories produce, paradoxically, a collective presence.[29]

However, for all that Du Bois's imaged numbers of (un)freedom make fleetingly accessible, it is important to return in closing to the turn-of-the-century moment that these particular visualizations do *not* directly address. Du Bois's data portraits are an answer to this moment, I have argued, in that they inhabit yet exceed a practice of numbering linked in his thinking to racial violence and to lynching specifically. But if the incalculability of "Chance" manifests through this counterintuitive method, lynching itself—it seems—remained for Du Bois incalculable in a more literal sense. In an important précis of his sociological vision from 1898, Du Bois notes, almost offhandedly, that:

> it is extremely doubtful if any satisfactory study of Negro crime and lynching can be made for a generation or more, in the present condition of the public mind, which renders it almost impossible to get at the facts and real conditions. On the other hand, public opinion has in the last decade become sufficiently liberal [. . .] and here lies the chance for effective work. (Du Bois 1898: 16)

If comprehending the "facts and real conditions" of lynching seemed "almost impossible" for Du Bois, this task was no less difficult for Wells, who nonetheless pressed numbers into an impossible, even untimely service. And while Du Bois does not here give her the credit, it was in large part because of Wells's unlikely labor that public opinion had so opened to make way for that "chance" that he went on to pursue in the ways I have explored. Wells's prescience in attempting to push numbering past itself to resist racial violence such that

quantification meant more than mere counting has only become more salient as various efforts have increasingly turned—with mixed results—to digital data visualizations to make sense of a lynching archive that will undoubtedly always remain incalculable to some degree.[30] As it did for Wells, Twain, and Du Bois over a century ago, visualization proves a powerful if vexed tool in the incompletable task of confronting racial violence by multiplying without numbers.

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Notes

1 For an example of this argument, see Nussbaum 1992: 101. For discussion of this ethical claim against quantification in relation to the nineteenth century in particular, see Thrailkill 2007: 56, 83 and Fleissner 2017.

2 The phrase "trust in numbers" belongs to Theodore M. Porter (1995), who shows how quantification enjoyed widespread influence in this period. For a discussion of how the *Tribune*'s mortality data fit this pattern, see Waldrep 1999: 243.

3 For journalism, see Terrell 1904 and Baker 1905. For sociology, see Cutler 1905.

4 For accounts of how Wells mobilized numbers for her antilynching crusade in the years following her 1893 speech, see Waldrep 2009; Goldsby 2006; Rushdy 2014; and Raiford 2011, 2012.

5 "visualization, n." *OED Online*. September 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/view/Entry/224008?redirectedFrom=visualization+ (accessed December 04, 2020).

6 In addition to Friendly, on data visualization avant la lettre, see Von Oertzen 2018 and Klein et al. 2017.

7 I pursue a conceptual through line from Wells to Twain and Du Bois, not a biohistorical one. But it is worth noting that where Twain never indicated any awareness of Wells (Fishkin 2002: 152), Du Bois certainly engaged with her and her work, especially around 1900, when her radical activism began to be sidelined by more moderate approaches (see Giddings 2001).

8 "Lyncherdom" was first published in 1923 with alterations imposed by an editor. I rely on Twain's authorial version as presented by L. Terry Oggel (2000).

9 Although the word "innumeracy" did not circulate until the 1970s, the conditions which gave rise to it—widespread reliance on numbers and a literate public ill-equipped to figure—are rooted in the nineteenth century (Cohen 1982: 4).

10 Rowe (2005: 130) explicates the anti-imperialism of this mode, noting—with relevance to "Lyncherdom"—that "Twain criticized sensational journalism throughout his career, and he generally considered his satire to be a popular counter-narrative." See also Fishkin 2002 for Twain's piercing treatments of race.

11 Though seemingly incongruous, Twain's combination of scientistic numbering and religious ritual corroborates Susan L. Mizruchi's (1998: 6) thesis that "sacrificial thinking in the late nineteenth century [was] social scientific thinking." As she explains, lynching functioned prominently to forge "collective life" through bloodletting.

12 Twain relies on visualized statistics, but the overpowering spectacle that he produces is suggestive of the way that lynching photography similarly retains the horrific visuality and visibility of mob murder even when wielded for ostensibly activist purposes. See Apel and Smith 2007; Wood 2009; and Raiford 2011.

13 Although Twain explained to his editor that he put aside the lynching book for fear of angering Southern readers, Oggel (2000: 129) nuances this explanation, arguing that Twain only wanted to reserve the essay until it would be maximally effective.

14 My sense that Twain may have recognized—however unconsciously—the perverse effects of quantifying lynching draws from the work of Maurice S. Lee (2019: 113–14), who notes how Twain criticized numbers in a similarly uneasy fashion with respect to literary aesthetics.

15 For discussion of Du Bois's early-career scientific training and troubled relation to quantification, see Mizruchi 1998; Zamir 1995; Farland 2006; Muhammad 2010; Weheliye 2015; and S. Wilson 2015.

16 Likely, this lynching was one trauma among several that shaped Du Bois in this period (Capeci, Jr. and Knight 1996).

17 This horrific detail was reported at the time by both Wells (2014b: 333) and Mary Church Terrell (1904: 854), among others.

18 For Lisa Lowe (2015: 98), "Sociology Hesitant" encodes Du Bois's seldom-acknowledged insistence on the "limits of positivism."

19 The archive of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst contains a letter addressed to Du Bois from Carroll Davidson Wright, a statistician and—at the time—the US Commissioner of Labor, who was apparently responding to Du Bois's request for information about how to propose and stage an exhibit in St. Louis (see Wright 1903).

20 On the depersonalizing (re)embodiment of lynching, see Wiegman 1993: 455.

21 "Public sociology" is Morris's (2017b) term for this work. See also Lewis and Willis 2003; Smith 2004; Provenzo Jr. 2013; Rusert and Battle-Baptiste 2018b.

22 In a 1900 essay, Du Bois said that his exhibit was "more than most others in the [exhibition] building, [. . .] sociological in the larger sense of the term—that is, it is an attempt to give, in as systematic and compact a form as possible, the history and present condition of a large group of human beings" (576).

23 As Mabel Wilson (2018: 39) notes, it is telling that Du Bois introduced his visual metaphor of the color line at the Exhibit of American Negroes.

24 Whereas Du Bois produced the Georgia plate himself, the US plate was probably produced (at his direction) by students, as is indicated by the authorship attributed to "Atlanta University."

25 My argument is indebted to Alexander G. Weheliye's more sweeping view of Du Bois's use of statistical graphs in Paris and in *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). According to Weheliye (2015: 27), "Du Bois uses statistics, graphs, tables, and charts to diagrammatically desediment the Negro as a 'natural' phenomenon so as to recreate the Negro as a statistical figuration, one that is created by chance via the violently imposed effects of the color line."

26 See Provenzo, Jr. (2013: 6) for a map of the exhibit hall.

27 For Du Bois's critique of Hoffman, see Mizruchi 1998: 269–366; Muhammad 2010: 62–78; and Weheliye 2015: 37.

28 In fact, Hartman has recently glossed several of Du Bois's graphics in ways that make this subversion or avoidance of quantification clear. Also building on Weheliye, she sees in Du Bois's pictorial practice an almost unconscious bid to register the futurity, "vicissitudes," and "modernity" of the race (Hartman 2019: 104). This proleptic grasping—not actually articulated by Du Bois for at least a decade—matches the forward-looking artistry of the graphs. As "moving pictures" that departed from the "arrested motion and fixed time" of photographs, they adopted a "visual lexicon [that] anticipated the cinema, form[ing] its prehistory" (105). For all the benefits of this comparative analytic, claiming that Du Bois's data portraits mark a first step toward film arguably depreciates what I have been arguing is their intrinsically counterintuitive relation to the mass numbering that produced them.

29 For a related reading of data visualization in terms of archival absence and silence, see Klein 2013. Of course, Du Bois was *also* interested in individual lives. This is clear from what Rebecka Rutledge Fisher (2005) and Shawn Michelle Smith (2004) have written about the exhibit. Sarah Wilson's (2015: 31) argument that Du Bois refused to "relinquish" the "quantified mass" stands as an important counterpoint that complements my argument. But even her reading of Du Bois's "literary uses of number" explains that he valued aggregation for its utility in clarifying its apparent, individualistic opposite—a "particular form of personhood" withheld from Black Americans (28).

30 Nearly every study of lynching supplies a number of crimes before admitting that the *true* number is unknowable (see for example Brundage 1993: 16). For a discussion of why this is, see Trotti 2013. The most prominent projects that visualize lynching data take the form of maps. See the Equal

Justice Initiative's 2017 "Lynching in America" report and The Monroe and Florence Work project. For analyses of the aesthetics and ethics of these and related visualizations, see Hepworth and Church 2018 and Mullen 2015.

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