# W.E.B Du Bois' Late ought In and After I B, ...

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### Introduction

When World War II ended, W. E. B. Du Bois was 77, an age that most would regard as an appropriate point to retire. Yet from 1945 until his death in 1963, Du Bois remained active as a public thinker, propagandist, and activist. Du Bois' political philosophy at this time was oriented around a developing synthesis of Pan-Africanism and socialism, and he was also a strident critic of U.S. foreign policy during the early Cold War period. e rhetorical thrust of Du Bois' public writings and lectures between 1944 and 1948 consisted of lampooning America for its "alliance with colonial imperialism and class dictatorship in order to enforce the denial of freedom to the colored peoples of the world". Integrating a Leninist critique of imperialism as the deployment of militarism in the interests of monopoly capital, Du Bois argued that big business had corrupted the radical democratic ideals which he viewed to be the perennially unrealised basis of the American republic. Equally scathing were his critiques of U.S. domestic policy. He viewed the red scare as undermining the liberty of all Americans, but in particular black Americans, who as a constituency at the time skewed to the political left. 2 Du Bois' militancy would increase friction between him and the leadership of the N.A.A.C.P, which he had co-founded four decades prior, to the point of breaking. During the war, the organisation had maintained an anti-imperialist line, but afterwards moved to an anticommunist position.3 After his 1948 ouster, Du Bois threw his full weight into the international peace movement, attending the congresses in Paris and Moscow in 1949, and serving as the Chairman of the Peace Information Center, a short-lived New York-based anti-war organisation that existed for around nine months in 1950. e organisation's activities were limited to circulating accruing signatories for the Stockholm Appeal, an international petition for multilateral disarmament and de-escalation dra3ities

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he was nally acquitted.<sup>7</sup> At age 84, Du Bois was all-too-aware that he was approaching the absolute limit of lived time. By closely reading Du Bois' re exive commentary of his personal experience of the trial, following where and how he places emphasis in the text, I posit that

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senator, the indictment, the defence campaign, and his acquittal. Marable's biography addresses Du Bois' entire life in a relatively slim volume and is thus less comprehensive than Horne's longer text, which is bound in scope to the postwar period. Horne provides a richer historical and institutional context, with Du Bois emerging as the exemplary gure at the nexus of broader social movements of this period: black internationalism, the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement, and the Peace Movement. However, both texts are similar in motivation, understood as book-length elaborations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s comment that "it is time to cease muting the fact that Dr. Du Bois was a genius and chose to be a communist." ey are meant to correct the

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# Du Bois, Ageing, and Lateness

Opening with a diaristic fragment penned on the eve of his 25th birthday while he was studying in Berlin indicates its continued, or renewed importance to Du Bois nearly six decades later. He relates his personal relationship to racial uplift using the metaphor of a "limit":

I am striving to make my life all that life may be—and I am limiting that strife only in so far as that strife is incompatible with others of my brothers and sisters making their lives similar. e crucial question is now where that limit comes. I am too often puzzled to know. . . . e general proposition of working for the world's good becomes too soon sickly sentimentality. I therefore take the work that the Unknown lay in my hands and work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world. 18

"Strife" has an archaic usage, referring to an earnest endeavouring disposition.

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Kenneth Mostern has also described how Du Bois' autobiographical works mediate the "particular relationship between autobiographical truth and political-theoretical truth". <sup>25</sup> In the autobiographical fragment that opens Du Bois establishes three levels of abstraction that will recur in his work: himself as an individual subject, a concept of race in general, and the sociohistorical totality, or world.

e presumed relationship between these three phenomena is spatiotemporal and cautiously optimistic—onwards and upwards. Autobiographical, racial, and historical motions are proposed to be not synchronous, but coordinated in some to-be-determined way. Du Bois' intellectual project can be understood as a continued elaboration, testing, and revision of this hypothesised historical entanglement between subject, race, and world. 25th birthday fragment remains important for Du Bois because it contains the distilled fundament anchoring this hypothesis, tested in much of Du Bois' subsequent writing. Both the theory of racial historical motions in "Of the Conservation of Races" and Du Bois' proposed program of black education and uplift, the "Talented Tenth", dovetail with the 25th birthday fragment, representing two signi cant elaborations of the notion that "best development [of the black race] means the best development of the world" in the early writings.<sup>26</sup> However, there is a further tension to be parsed out here, having to do with Du Bois' conception of history. According to Nahum Chandler, Du Bois conceives the "arrivedness" of the historical present as radically contingent and in need of constant interrogation in order to discern the historical conditions under which the gure of the Negro was, and remains possible. Which is to say, for Du Bois, history is also unstable. Chandler reads the colour line not as it is often colloquially invoked, as an  $\fint{\cite{1.5}}$  , division within the human species, but the name for an, limit that circumscribes "the global horizon of modern historicity."27 What Chandler calls the "epistemic desedimentation" occasioned by the colour line refers to Du Bois' practice of parsing out the distortions in history produced by the race concept, with an understanding that, as Hannah Black has written, "the wild strangeness of race ... is the experiential mode of the strangeness of history". 28 It is Du Bois' radical estrangement from the present that leads him to continuously think and revise his own philosophy of history, for although his colour line formulation renders the narrative of the divinely or biologically sanctioned triumph of the white race that much more spurious, it does not presuppose exactly what might replace it. In a famous formulation, Frederic Jameson wrote "history is what hurts", and the colour line is as sharp an incision as has ever been cut in history.<sup>29</sup> It is precisely in this incision that Du Bois a locus, plumbing it for personal and historical meaning. In other words, anchoring Du Bois' conception of historical agency is not so much a principle, but something like a knot, or a negativity.

It is critical to remember the kernel of arbitrariness, the "taking for granted" at the core of this claim, as it produces both conviction and insecurity, attachment and ambivalence towards the race concept. Ever the aesthete, Du Bois dresses this arbitrariness in aesthetic terms: working for the betterment of the \_\_\_\_\_\_, is presented as a harmonious third way between myopic solipsism and unbounded universalism. "Limit" has a mathematical

- 25 Kenneth Mostern, A

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  Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 59.
- 26 Du Bois, "Twenty- fth Birthday," p. 28.
- 27 Chandler,  $A_{c}$ ,  $A_{c}$ ,  $E_{c}$ , p. 30.
- 28 Hannah Black, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," *B*, 2. September/October/November 2020, <a href="https://www.bookforum.com/print/2703/claudia-rankine-discusses-race-with-friends-and-strangers-24167">https://www.bookforum.com/print/2703/claudia-rankine-discusses-race-with-friends-and-strangers-24167</a>
- 29 Fredric Jameson, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 88.

trilogy, and structure the interlude and postlude of the posthumously-published A,  $\cdot$ ,  $\cdot$ .  $\cdot$  .  $\cdot$  .  $\cdot$  .  $\cdot$  .  $\cdot$  . Because of the wilful entanglement of his own autobiographical arc with the arc of world history and the black race's place within it, these remarks cannot be dismissed as neurotic biographical u. Rather, they are symptomatic of the texts' lateness—how they are conditioned by, and yet, irreducible to their proximity to death.

Adorno was the foremost theorist of lateness as a heuristic through which to understand cultural texts. Developed in an in uential essay fragment on Beethoven titled "Late Style in Beethoven", the concept of late style is developed to correct an "abdication" on the part of theorists to defer to the "dignity of death", psychologise rather than analyse, and relegate late works to the status of a "document". 38 Adorno seeks to transcend "psychological interpretation" that would declare "mortal subjectivity to be the substance of the late work", and instead identify lateness formally. He lists a urry of qualitative attributes of late works, all of which apply to \_\_\_\_\_ and everything after it: fragmented, cipher-like, furrowed, unabashedly primitive at times, mysterious, discordant, ravaged, bipolar, and catastrophic. 39 Yet, as Ben Hutchinson has noted, Adorno cannot expunge the subject from late style, as proximity to death remains fundamental to the concept. 40 In the late work, subjectivity approaching death is registered in the absence of authorial subjectivity itself: "the power of subjectivity in the late works of art is the irascible gesture with which it takes leave of the works themselves".41 is indicates the productive di culty of transposing Adorno's blueprint to a discussion of Du Bois' late works, for we are dealing again with a particular kind of subject, the black creative intellectual whose temporal perception is yoked to three meters autobiographical, racial, historical. So, we must open the question of how Du Bois' racialised, and therefore, historical consciousness transforms the subjective negativity of lateness. Provisionally, it seems that the scars accrued by the psychic internalisation of the sociohistorical structure of race resemble and partially occlude the scars left by the subjective evacuation of a late artwork.

is is evinced by the fact that there is a germ of lateness already in the 25th birthday fragment, in its formalisation of an unreconciled relationship between the arbitrariness of race and the pursuit of truth, and Du Bois' xation on the untranscendable limit of death. Chandler has also written that "Du Bois's practice would accede to an order ... understood as a certain relation to what has for too long been understood under the heading of death". 42 To say that Du Bois is fundamentally oriented by, and tarries at, the limit of death, is bound up with his own compulsive honesty that persists even under the duress of the trial, during which Du Bois emphasises "for fty years I had always blurted out the truth on all occasions". 43 describes a real-world political enactment of Hélène Cixous' provocation that "something renders going in the direction of truth and dying almost synonymous".44 ship between truth and death helps clarify the peculiar, manic, urgent, messianic voice legible in the 25th birthday fragment in which as a young man, Du Bois writes towards an untranscendable limit concluding with a dramatic ourish, a quotation from the Book of Esther: "and if I perish—I PERISH". 45 R.A. Judy has described Du Bois as an "asymptotic thinker", which might suggest Du Bois ts into Cixous' category of "writers of extremity, who take

38 eodor Adorno, E., . . . . . . (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007ifor. 13.D

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themselves to the extremes of experience, thought, life". 46 What makes particularly interesting for analysis is that it emerges from a nexus of so many extremes—political marginalisation, biographical lateness, the limit of fundamentally held metaphysical assumptions, and a perceived eschatological threshold of history.

We might proceed by looking more broadly at the role ageing plays in the narrative structure of . . . Du Bois notes a tendency among speakers at his birthday celebrations, who would indicate "subtly that I was about at the end of a rather too long career, and could hardly be expected to keep sane and busy much longer". 47 Sardonically, Du Bois describes these attitudes as nationally-speci c: "it is an old American custom to write o as a liability, if not total loss, the age of men in public work after they have passed fty, and to regard them as practically dead at seventy". 48 Orienting the narrative around his birthday serves a number of functions: rst, the venue declining Du Bois' birthday celebration was a prelude to the chaos of the indictment. It illustrates the absurd cruelty of the state, as they are targeting an old man, and gives Du Bois' insights an arrived-at, nal quality. However, none of these reasons fully account for how Du Bois deploys his age rhetorically. Consider the passage, "I was not only getting older, but now passing the limits which folklore custom had allotted to human existence". 49 As he writes it, Du Bois emplots , as a text at a threshold, signalled by the presentism of the word "now". In other words, age is one modality through which Du Bois locates the reader in history, and prepares us for a transition, break, or rupture, after which knowledge will takes on a vulgar, forbidden, unvarnished, counter-normative quality, as by even existing, Du Bois violates "folklore custom".

e phenomenological experience of ageing introduces a new axis of alienation that interacts syncretically with that produced by racism. Du Bois feels society judges his life as having a perverse quality, having gone on too long, gone too far, and there is a homology between Jean Améry's description of alienation arising from age-"in ageing, we become alienated from ourselves, doubled and inscrutable"—and Du Bois' original double consciousness formulation. 50 Du Bois invites this alienation, using it to buttress a refashioned critical standpoint.<sup>51</sup> Age a ords Du Bois a newfound "clarity", itself a hallmark of late style, as Edward Said has noted, "lateness is being at the end, fully conscious, full of memory, and also very (even preternaturally) aware of the present". 52 If double-consciousness was conceived of as a "second sight", age further transforms ocular perception. 53 Together, racialisation and age prop open a distance from reality that yields a schematic understanding of the patterns of social relations, resulting in a viewpoint that is concurrently is might also speak to something more speci c clearer and more abstract. about Du Bois, insofar as he seemed to think in social abstractions in some fundamental way, hinted by a quip from a colleague at Atlanta University that remarked that Du Bois "very seldom thought in terms of individuals".54

Beryl Gilroy o ers a useful phrase for this convergence of racialisation and ageing, as a "diaspora of the senses". For Du Bois, this sense of psychical dispersion is compounded by bodily stress: "I can stand a good deal, and have done so during my life; but this experience was rather more than I felt like bearing, especially as the blows continued to fall." 56

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of a ght, Du Bois expresses a feeling of being at the threshold of his own capacity, with "more than I felt like bearing", demarcating a physiological or is sense of precipitousness is re ected further in the commentary on his unsuccessful, but educational campaign as the Labor Party senatorial candidate in New York. Du Bois writes, "I found myself increasingly proscribed in pulpit, school and platform. My opportunity to write for publication was becoming narrower and narrower, even in the Negro press. I wondered if a series of plain talks in a political campaign would not be my last and only chance to tell the truth as I saw it. 57 Political marginalisation e urgency of a "last and only chance" crashes into the experience of ageing. produces a hyperbolic register that poses a challenge for literary interpretation. It could be chalked up to a rhetorical ourish, the drama of biographical lateness. However, the text was also produced within the paranoid psychopolitical atmosphere of the Cold War, in which radical fellow travellers of the political left such as Du Bois were harassed by the state, and propelled by the spectral image of nuclear annihilation. 58 As Horne notes, some leftists targeted at this time faced heart attacks or committed suicide from the pressure.<sup>59</sup> Biographical lateness and real political threat cross the text like a lattice, producing a novel textual form that might be mistaken as merely journalistic because it addresses a militant, activist audience. , is pointed, and can perhaps be understood as what Alain Badiou calls an ... "in which the opportunity for action takes precedent over the preoccupation with making a name for oneself through publications... neither system nor treatise, nor even really a book. [ e author] propounds a speech of rupture, and writing ensues when necessary". 60 Tendentiously, I take Du Bois' language as not hyperbolic, but pitched to the amplitude of a crisis of thought that followed a trial that was exactly as "extraordinary" and life-changing as described. 61

# and the Rupture of Historical Motions

Du Bois describes feeling isolated and vulnerable due to the lack of sympa-

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since the black population circa-1940 has "least class dierentiation in wealth," he thinks it can still be unied based on race and led by a trained, educated superstratum. Eight years later, in a speech hosted by the prestigious graduate fraternity Sigma Pi Phi, Du Bois further refashions the Talented Tenth concept in a more internationalist, democratic direction. However, his relationship with the fraternity would sour during the trial; in

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Returning to his relationship to his historical foil, Booker T. Washington, Du Bois writes, "in the alembic of time, a strange dichotomy has arisen between the long contrasted teachings of Booker T. Washington and myself."80 metaphor of the "alembic of time" suggests clarity—something has been distilled. It also implies something volatile, gaseous, or chemical, denoted by the fact that Washington has been dead for 37 years at this point—Du Bois enunstable: triuth: Du Bois has distilled is -0.005 Tw 1.687 0 Td[(I)-20 (bid)] TJ/T10 1 4 6[(M5T] TJ/T1 has decanted a ghost to spar with. the realisation that his Talented Tenth hypothesis has been proven "true, but in much lesser degree than I expected".81 It is critical not to misread Du Bois' hedged language, which might obscure the fact that Du Bois is admitting the falsity of the hypothesis as a metaphysics of historical change. Tenth exists, but contingently, as a minor bloc within history, not as its prime mover. Du Bois describes a crisis of faith: "my faith hitherto had been in what I once denominated the 'Talented Tenth.' I now realize that the ability within a people does not automatically work for its highest salvation."82 "faith" here further emphasises that the trial has rubbed raw the arbitrary core of Du Bois' racial-historical metaphysics. "Automatically" here suggests that Du Bois' conception of history had been ,, insofar as he "studies history in order to divine the laws that actually govern its operations and writes history in order to display in a narrative form the e ects of those laws".83 But now, ability is revealed to oat freely from the operations of history. falsity of the Talented Tenth hypothesis marks an abandonment of a position that Du Bois held for nearly ve decades. A truth has crystallised under duress, but it is a \_\_\_\_\_ one, the truth of a falsity, yielding only fragments without, in Adorno's words, "harmonious synthesis". 84 With the outmoding of the Talented Tenth hypothesis, so too go hopes for racial unity, which as recently as 1944 Du Bois had rea rmed the necessity of, writing then "it is the duty of the black race to maintain its cultural advance, not for itself alone, but for the emancipation of mankind, the realization of democracy and the progress of civilization". 85 Now, eight years later, Du Bois decisively states that the "spiritual" or "cultural unity" of "the Negro group" has become historically "improbable".86 Both Du Bois' philosophy of history and his political horizon are compromised. e historical role of the "would-be black, , , , " is thrown into ambiguous indeterminacy.87 Du Bois concludes "not from the inner problems of a single social group, no matter how pressing, could the world be guided".88 e tether between autobiographical, racial, historical motions is

Now, the task is to consider the consequences. After all, what happens when a "foundation stone" shifts? at Du Bois' fundamental conceptions of temporality, history, agency, subjectivity, and race are all in profound disarray is expressed in the evocative, hyperbolic conclusion to

severed.

For many years now I have viewed in long procession the pale dreams of men wandering vaguely yet rhythmically down the years. Yet never in any single year has the frustration and paradox of life stood out so clearly as in this year when, having nished 83 years of my life in decency and honor, with something done and something planning, I stepped into the 84th year with handcu s on my wrists.89

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80 Du Bois, , p. 120.
81 I , .
82 I , ., p. 52.
83 Hayden White,
                             (Baltimore
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no.004 no.004 • no.004 no.004 • no.004 no.004 no.004 no.004 no.004 no.004 • no.004 History is conceived of as a ghostly processional sequence of dreams, the funerary theme re-ecting Du Bois' increasing identication with the dead, further articulated in the poem that concludes the text: "Scream, / O silent Dead, / Into whose sad and sightless faces / I stand and stare. / I feel what you felt." Du Bois' standpoint is schematic: the length of the procession

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and contradiction of mighty ideals, in frantic dying struggle, trying with lewd incest again to rape the All-Mother Asia from northern Heartland to southern sea, from Russia to India. And when weak and isolated by race I tried to make faint protest against this world suicide, I was slandered and shamed and threatened with ve years in prison and \$10,000 ne.<sup>95</sup>

With the gleaming clarity of the "frustration and paradox of life" occluding all else, anything appears possible, and we enter a volatile, quantum space in which this could very well be the worst of all possible worlds. Du Bois' language communicates a sense of disorientation, and in this state, he ails towards a linguistic limit. Rape, incest, and suicide are taboo concepts that circumscribe the limit of normative discourse; they point towards that which is unassimilable and irredeemable. Although their proximity to each other leads me to read this language for its intensity rather than its particular sexual connotation, it bears noting that the gendered guration of Asia as a female sexual assault victim is a strong indicator of Du Bois' unfortunate, antiquated, conservative Orientalism and his gendered conception of world history.96 Furthermore, incest in particular demarcates a constitutive limit of consciousness repressed impulse that, in psychoanalysis, as incestuous desire is the according to Lévi-Strauss, marks "the universal law and the minimal condition of the di erentiation of a 'culture' from 'nature'". 97 It is notable that after professing an unparalleled sense of clarity, Du Bois does not conclude the text with a cogent, meticulous analysis of the political economy of the early Cold War, but with an eschatological gothic depiction of total civilisational collapse and the extinction of the human species. e lack of preordained subjective determination that once a orded Du Bois a kind of plasticity, a freedom to choose how and where to limit, align, and orient his consciousness in history, has as its inverse a profound loss of sense of self. e borders between autobiographical and historical experience appear not synchronous, but confused, permeable and volatile, as personal plight rapidly escalates in language to the scale of a historical catastrophe. Yet it also communicates a personal truth of sorts, following Ato Sekyi-Otu, an "apprehension of the existing order as

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justi es his decision to write a work of historical ction rather than another revisionist historiography:

If I had had time and money, I would have continued this pure historical research [similar to A, and B, and B, B.]. But this opportunity failed and Time is running out. Yet I would rescue from my long experience something of what I have learned and conjectured and thus I am trying by the method of historical ction to complete the cycle of history which has for a half century engaged my thought, research and action.  $^{102}$ 

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Another way to read these gothic sequences would be as serving a similar function to Marx's famous description of capital emerging onto the historical scene "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt". 111 Such representations might pierce a sanguine—shbowl of appearances to provide the reader a peek at the visceral violence of the real. My reading is similar to Edwards', however, I disagree with the idea that these sequences run "contrary to the trilogy's progressive historical framing". Rather, they are the formal expression of the epistemic crisis of history that precipitated in Once again, the most lofty, embellished sections of the text serve a function: they point towards the structuring limits of Du Bois' thought.—ese sequences represent a kind of hypertrophied intensication of Du Bois' schematising vision. A helpful precursor to the formal language in the trilogy can be found in "My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom":

e 'studies' which I had been conducting at Atlanta I saw as fatally handicapped because they represented so small a part of the total sum of occurrences; were so far removed in time and space as to lose the hot reality of real life; and because the continuous, kaleidoscopic change of conditions made their story old already before it was analyzed and told.<sup>112</sup>

As Jonathan Crary has written, the kaleidoscope became a sort of shorthand for antinomian transformations in modernist perception. For Du Bois, the word has an contradictory quality as well. "Kaleidoscopic change" renders sociological inquiry immediately obsolete, and is here a formal expression of what Du Bois elsewhere described as a paradox between rhythm and chance. Kaleidoscopic images are, in a sense, patterns without limits, by virtue of being nothing but limit. ey are part and totality, seamless and constituted by seams. Du Bois can conceive of a pattern in the change of social conditions, but cannot methodologically demarcate the disciplinary contours by which he might be able to substantiate empirically what seems to be ordered in a kind of mechanistic manner. Proceeding to look at the hallucinatory sequences of the B, F, trilogy, we can see that pretty much all of them feature some kind of metaphor of immersive re ectivity as the preferred expression of an epistemic crisis of conceptual delimitation.

War is murder and murderers murder, until all is done and there is Peace and Nothing. After the Phantasmagoria, learned jackasses, spawning like ies, in lovely old universities will explain it all in thick

- 112 Du Bois, "My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom," p. 47.
- 113 Jonathan Crary, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 116.
- 114 Du Bois, , p. 52.

However, if we consider these hallucinations not as literary diagrams, but as literary expressions of a crisis of delimitation, then a more compelling trajectory can be perceived from the beginning of f, through the f, f, trilogy. Let f, trilogy marks an attempt at giving form to the crisis that emerged in f, which was, as I've shown, quite total, scaling from Du Bois' conception of himself all the way up to his theory of historical change.

is is what gives the text, following Lily Wiatrowski Phillips, a "recursive" character: the hallucinatory sequences in the B, F, trilogy in tone—messianic, urgent, schematic—and in content are in a sense, similar and oppositional to the 25th birthday fragment that opens  $\bullet$ . Considered side by side, they register a transformation from a teleological, stadial, racial theory of historical motions helmed by the Talented Tenth, to a rickety historical materialism heavily circumscribed and potentially undermined by the possibility of war.

## Coda: Lateness and Communism

Although he loved Beethoven so much that he requested the 9th symphony as his funerary music, Du Bois was not a composer. 123 Bracketing the di culty of transposing a heuristic based around musical analysis to the study of autobiographical and ctional texts, Adorno's concept of late style is also challenging as it seems to assume a contemplative standpoint a orded by old age. 124 Du Bois' late life was quite the opposite. Not only was his old age disrupted by anti-black, anti-red persecution, but it was lived in de ance of the retreat to hermeticism that he felt pressured into as he aged. Old Du Bois was a proli c, politically active, globetrotter. His late works contain a tension between an explicit concern with political strategy and the reality that he will not get to see how things play out. Recent reconsiderations of literary lateness have broached the question of how , , , lateness relates to the , , , lateness of modernity, referring to a sense of anteriority and belatedness that su uses some works of modern European literature. 125 Du Bois' writings defy this criteria. Despite being overcoded by a feeling of reckoning with the tragedy of Reconstruction from the beginning, Du Bois' literary production remained future-oriented and historically anticipatory throughout his life. His interest in historiography and his identi cation with the dead are sophisticated but instrumental to the project of making "what was worth living for e late writings do describe a decadent, ravaged world, but his pessimism derives not from a past world that has fallen, but rather the possibility that a decent, pre-eminently deserved one might never arrive, a possibility which Du Bois began to nd literally unthinkable. entertains it but keeps it at bay, consigned to the limits of thought. However, by the end of his life, lacking tools of delimitation in the midst of a kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria, it is a commitment to politics that in a sense stabilises, and provides a way out of, the antinomies of lateness. Why Du Bois would join the CPUSA and state "frankly and clearly: I believe in communism" at age 91 remains a vexing question for scholars. 127 Du Bois' turn to communism has been represented as a slight to the U.S. government, a refusal to go quietly 123 Horne, pp. 15, 355.

124 Reed, F, , , , , pp. 177-178.

125 Ben Hutchinson, "Introduction" in , ed. by Ben Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 12.

126 W.E.B. Du Bois, A , , , , , , p. 423.

127 I , ., p. 57.

into the night, and the culmination of long-held convictions. However, his last statement on communism, the rst section of the A , , , , , is not framed as a protest, but is rather couched in both the theological vernacular of "dictum" and "belief" and the actually-existing examples of the Soviet Union and Communist China. Du Bois' communism has not really been read in relation to his turn to ction, however. Read together, it seems that communism, like ction, was what nourished his future orientation during a moment in which the metaphysics of historical change appeared increasingly anarchic, all while the clock was running down. As a concrete enactment of a stubborn orientation toward tomorrow, Du Bois' communism remains admirable.

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