

Enumerology: Accountability and the Culture of Enumeration

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Abstract

My project examines the power of written, spoken, and visual modes of enumeration to shape culture, politics, and sociality. It begins with the assertion that enumeration is paradoxically constituted by imagined states of inclusiveness, wholeness, and objectivity. Though such an objective, documentary form carries forward Enlightenment fixations on rational mastery, enumeration's precision remains a fantasy of both interlocutor and audience—disguising the necessary elisions or remainders that will always plague the compilation. I term the cultural faith in such inclusiveness “enumerology”—a term whose link to “numerology” evokes occult fascinations with the quantitative; and the project explores literary and historical figures (“enumerologists”) who deploy enumeration as a mechanism for eliding cultures, groups, and beliefs that fall outside the ideological spectra propping up American conceptions of nationhood and the nationalized citizen.

Though my chapters are grounded in 19th- and 20th-century American literature, I consider the referenced literary texts within a deeper historical and geographical continuum, whose strategies are then adapted to the language of American nation-building at critical junctures. The project is anchored by chapters on Mark Twain, Djuna Barnes, Cormac McCarthy, and Leslie Marmon Silko; and for each, I develop my analysis of his/her literary response to enumerology through the lens of a specific genre of enumeration. In Mark Twain, we see a *fin de siècle* critique of the enumerologist from the perspective of an author simultaneously critical of and implicated in national narratives surrounding

exceptional individualism and an intrinsically American brand of domestic imperialism. In Djuna Barnes, a Modernist's perverse enumerations illuminate queer temporalities which speak out against the almanac genre's historical role in propagating masculinized temporal economics. Cormac McCarthy takes Judge Holden's ledgerbook as synecdochic of broader national and cultural conceptions of "accountability" and thought itself—ultimately undoing the stability of those orders by figuring an "unaccountable" or "unreckonable" world beyond comprehension. Finally, Leslie Marmon Silko offers new ways of approaching enumeration (specifically almanacs and Linnaean taxonomies) which foreground enumerative instability via the palimpsest—a multivocality that forecloses structures of monologic authority necessary to the enumerological.

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Introduction: List, *Ciboire*

“There is, however, another mode of artistic representation, one where we do not know the boundaries of what we wish to portray, where we do not know how many things we are talking about and presume their number to be, if not infinite, then at least astronomically large. We cannot provide a definition by essence and so, to be able to talk about it, to make it comprehensible or in some way perceivable, we list its properties.” – Umberto Eco

Enumeration assumes many forms—lists, accounts, catalogues, timetables, and zoological classifications being just a few of its manifestations. And though a given form of enumeration may lend itself to a unique type of content, all share a crucial mechanism: an ordering principle. In mathematics, enumeration is a “surjection,” which means, most essentially, that it entails a “well-ordered” set whose codomain directly correlates to the function of that set. Translating into common usage, then, enumeration can be said to describe a series of things existing specifically in relation to their aggregation. While the items on a list, for example, may feign juxtaposition, they actually subvert the possibility of blunt contrast which often inheres in juxtaposition, and instead produce their linkages, substantiating the list’s overarching narrative.

As ordering principles, these narratives can readily turn their comfortable logics into proponents of dominant forms of culture or sociality. In today’s technological age of databases and “quick-fact” culture—where social progress equates to enumeration of new identity groups and competence is measured against checklists—it becomes particularly important to understand the ways in which enumeration may push us toward certain conclusions or positions that are

never fully articulated. But to localize enumerative urges to the Internet age would be a mistake. The culture of enumeration is continuous with broader movements of the modern era, where economic accountings, ledgers of goods, maps of the globe, and scientific classifications have been part and parcel of the epistemic undercurrent. The core of this project will be the interrogation, not only of enumeration's constructions, but also—using works by Mark Twain, Djuna Barnes, Cormac McCarthy, Leslie Marmon Silko—of the compendious impulse's circulation within, and essentiality to, culture as a means of concretizing “exceptional” versions of national and individual self-making. Indeed, imagining the absence of enumeration might well be impossible—even tending, ironically, toward the “listing” of that vacuum's potential attributes. The enumeration of things, people, ideas, rights, etc., is so fundamental to our culture that the breakdown of enumerative forms leaves a residual horror in the reader.

Enumeration, after all, presupposes coherence. It connects discrete entities in order to form a unity that stands in for the simultaneous mastery of a whole and its parts. Michel Foucault implies this when he mentions Jorge Luis Borges' doing away with the “site” of coherence in the *Heavenly Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*: “The quality of monstrosity ... insinuate[s] itself into the empty space, the interstitial blanks *separating* all these entities from one another” (xvi). That empty space (which would generally be the site of meaning for a catalogue) is the space of narrativization—what I will call, borrowing from Umberto Eco, “contextual pressure” (15)—that occurs in the moment of a list's ingestion. Enumeration directs our eye toward its individual points, but its

completion demands the reader's unification of those entries. It is this conjectural, participatory element—its totalizing impulse—that gives a list its power. The exercising of “contextual pressure,” the readerly “narrativization” or participation, captures the fact that lists, catalogues, etc., are not static objects, but rather products of active forces that compress individual terms toward some synthetic meaning. Eco's brief analysis only touches on pragmatic functions of enumeration, and shopping lists, guest lists, library catalogues cohere for him in uninteresting ways. But the meaning of contextuality here can be expanded to think about how the public circulation of compendia might succumb to (and reinforce) the cultural pressures that govern their creation.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* frames enumeration as central to the scientific rationalism at the core of modernity and “enlightenment.” In “The Concept of Enlightenment,” they demonstrate a paradoxical historical narrative in which the (“myth-oriented”) mind transitions toward reason as a means of escaping and negating the mythical—but which, in turn, can only, ironically, reinstate (now disguised) mythical relationships between human being and nature, subject and object: “The world as a gigantic analytical judgment, the only surviving dream of science, is of the same kind as the cosmic myth which linked the alternation of spring and autumn to the abduction of Persephone” (20).¹ “Reason” is a system of methodical domination which begins with thought, and manifests materially as perceived “utility” (4):² “The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their ‘in-itself’ becomes ‘for him.’ In their transformation the

essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination” (6). Moreover, this “substrate of domination” locks in divisions between subject and object predicated on abstraction,³ where imparting, perceiving, and receiving meaning presuppose the primacy of the subject’s ability to exert “contextual pressure”: “The manifold affinities between existing things are supplanted by the single relationship between the subject who confers meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and its accidental bearer” (7).⁴ The scientist’s transmuting of nature into “the chaotic stuff of mere classification” (6) finds domination in its ability to narrativize the abstracted;⁵ and this clearly plays out in the work of scientists such as Francis Galton and Carl Linnaeus, and even pseudo-scientists such as P. T. Barnum. Less obvious is the transference of that narrative violence (and mythical infusion) into the mundane enumerations which structure our day-to-day lives.

Criticism has previously expressed interest in the anti-enumerative form, where visual representations of order actually instantiate the breakdown of order.⁶ But, as yet, little attention has been paid to the quotidian forms of listing and accounting that direct our social and intellectual trajectories—missing the simple, but always unarticulated, understanding that dominant modes of thought reside in, and circulate as, enumerative forms that simultaneously construct and define the parameters of knowledge. I suggest a culture of enumeration, which embodies a tacit faith in the list, the ledger, the almanac, the map, the Articles of the Constitution, the Three-Point Plan, as instances of truth-making, paradoxically positioning themselves as without limitation despite oral or visual encoding via

delimitation. The key to reconciling this paradox is always an act of forgetting—an unstated understanding that the culture of enumeration will ignore the elisions inherent in list-making by favoring the expediency of the parameter.⁷

To capture this intersectionality of enumerative media and public consumption, I will use the term “enumerology.” As a concept, enumerology combines the practical methodology of enumeration with the mystical, even occult, faith accompanying numerology’s insistence on the truth-telling power of numbers.⁸ Numerology’s numerical fixation, which stresses the significance of abstract digits, is especially relevant to our discussion of the enumerative, because enumeration counterintuitively abstracts the very things it pretends to describe. As items appear on a list like the Bill of Rights, their independence diminishes and they’re elevated toward new meanings which, like those found in numerology, verge on the divinatory—where the new concepts weaned into existence can only exist as interrelations. In his 1933 study *Numerology*, mathematician Eric Temple Bell says that, “Although numbers cannot lie, they have a positive genius for telling the truth with the intention to deceive” (1). And though not all forms of enumeration directly involve numbers, their ostensible simplicity and factuality nevertheless produce an aura of mysticism akin to that exploited by the numerologist—a latent occultism enabling the “forgetting” necessary to the form.

To illustrate the capacity of enumerology for shaping American cultural imperatives, we need only scrutinize a text foundational to the parameters of our conception of citizenship: The Bill of Rights. The title unequivocally states the

contextual pressures that will be shaping the individual terms. Here is a document that succinctly captures the concept of “rights,” locking in versions of citizenship and freedom, which, however fluid or incomplete they may remain in reality, are now given concrete and indelible form. In doing so, the Bill’s title demonstrates that enumerative forms are synecdochic. They stand in for imaginary totalities which can never truly be made visible or “real,” but can only be conjured, momentarily, by the realization that their terms, X-Y-Z, imply the presence of a unifying function, political membership in the nation. Yet we have to bear in mind that, because the list’s “contextual pressure” is ideological, it has the ability to animate social relations through its circulation and public consumption. In this sense, the compendium is citational, existing, as it does, only by virtue of a preexisting version of coherence through which the compiled are subsequently read. Ostensibly, we read The Bill of Rights for its specific contents. We understand from its language that “freedom of speech” is an innate “right” protected by the state. We feel secure in our collective ability to physically protect ourselves via our “right to bear arms.” But as our thought passes through the interstitial spaces between the individual amendments, we also come to realize that we are safe in the hands of the state, because here, before us, is a document that exists solely to express the limits of its power. Simultaneously, we are indoctrinated into a way of thinking where “Rights” becomes an immutable entity—delimited for us so clearly, and so obviously in our best interests, that it becomes difficult for us to consider rights in any other context.

What's most interesting about the Bill, however, is that, in a strange Borgesian twist, the Ninth Amendment reads, "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."⁹ The Ninth Amendment, then, explicitly states the falsity of listing's posited totality by enumerating the interrogation of enumeration as such. In doing so, the Bill demonstrates that enumerative forms are predicated as much on elision as inclusion, because their impulse is always to favor unity over complexity. While the Bill of Rights is unusual for openly acknowledging this, current popular discourse consistently reinforces the sense that, in its own remarkable act of forgetting, the Ninth Amendment's potential to significantly alter political trajectories is occluded by the concreteness and accessibility of other Amendments—the First, the Fourth, etc. It is as if the faith in the culture of enumeration is so strong, and its reaction so deeply internalized, that even a document which *explicitly undermines the possibility of its own completion* circulates in political and social discourse as the incontrovertible truth of citizenship, no matter how many amendments have since thrown its scope into question. The Constitution, then, and particularly recent resurgences of Constitutionalist political activism in the U.S., captures the paradoxical tensions present in a document which can only reasonably exist *as* fluid, but which, critically, the social order can never afford to truly treat as a work in progress.

Turning from the virtual sublimity of the U. S. Constitution to the rigors of daily existence, it's hard to argue that, in our American context, any mode of enumeration has exerted a more brutal and direct influence over lives and

ideologies than the slave ledger. The ledger in which the slave trader listed, named, and put a price to human life is perhaps the most explicit attempt to quantify personhood as property, and the practices of numerical conversion inherent in the chattel principle certainly literalize the violence of enumerative elision. Stephanie Smallwood frames human commodification in terms consistent with Horkheimer and Adorno's enlightenment domination/mastery: "The violence exercised in the service of human commodification relied on a scientific empiricism always seeking to find the limits of human capacity for suffering,¹⁰ that point where material and social poverty threatened to consume entirely the lives it was meant to garner for sale in the Americas" (36).¹¹ The assumed faith in the form itself—that is, the ledgerbook, the account—worked side-by-side with the chattel principle to reconcile the daily contradictions involved in willing people into numerical values. In *Soul by Soul*, Walter Johnson has reexamined the history of slavery and the slave trade in the United States, in part by reading the slave ledger against itself, and his figuration begins to reevaluate the weight of the ledger. Citing transaction records as "the most apparitional of the sources" grounding *Soul by Soul*, Johnson calls into question a traditional historical approach where "the sources produced by the traders have often been taken to be the most reliable accounts of the slave trade" (14). According to Johnson, rather than being "free of the confused purposes and strategic (mis)representations of the narratives, court cases, and correspondence[,] they represent the world as a slave trader's dream: slaves without frail or resistant bodies; sales sealed without manipulation, coercion, or opposition; history without contingency. Like the

maps and graphs they have been used to create, the traders' records treat a contested process as if it were a foreordained conclusion" (14).¹² The distillation of fraught ideological investment into the unmistakable simplicity of a line-by-line accounting closely echoes my reading of enumerological practice in general.

The elisions of humanity found in these slave ledgers are not simply manifestations of the chattel principle or the translations of black bodies into the language of economics. They are also an elision of context, "history without contingency," which nevertheless exposes the hopes and fears of their perpetrators through the fragility of the ledger's unifying impulse. But such self-deconstruction is never superficially apparent, and a reading of history which looks beyond the account will always be a form of counter-history. As Johnson notes, "Indeed, it could be said that the process by which two million people were bought and sold over the course of the antebellum period has been hidden from historical view by the very aggregations that have been used to represent it" (8). Johnson has uncovered the foundations of the enumerological, where the act of enumerating and recording seeks to contain the objectionable, the other, and its threat. For Johnson, the ledger's power exists, then, in not only its ability to rewrite present realities, but also its control over the retroactive examination of the past—the allure of the form, its neatness, its "data" appealing to the unstated faiths of even the astute historian.

Of course, enumeration's power to occlude contradictions and protect the tenuous underpinnings of violent social and political discourses cannot be limited to an American context. Along these lines, Smallwood's transatlantic study

Saltwater Slavery resonates quite directly with Johnson's. As Smallwood asserts, the heart of the slave trade, on both sides of the Atlantic, rested on a "systematic collection and evaluation of quantitative data" where people could enter "the documentary record not as subjects of a social history but as objects or quantities" (2). Beyond reinforcing the chattel principle, these processes of "ledgering" were crucial to the creation of what Smallwood, using an appropriately enumerative word, calls an "accountable" (34) history—one whose primary purpose, beyond the economic, was the suppression of fears that history "was only as real as the violence and racial fiction at its foundation. Only by ceaseless replication of the system's violence did African sellers and European buyers render captives in the distorted guise of human commodities to market" (34).¹³ Yet this need to enumerate a usable history founded on European mastery extended well beyond the practices of the transatlantic slave trade.¹⁴ The very image of the globe, whose exploration and colonization went hand in hand with African markets, was constructed before the eyes of European publics through acts of listing. Scholars such as Benjamin Schmidt and Joseph Roach have noted ways in which the wild popularity of 17th-century compendia of decontextualized exoticisms—"The Great Cabinet of Curiosities" or "The Warehouse of Wonders," for example—marketed "the pleasure of wonder and the diversity of culture in a rich and plentiful world," while also stripping "that world of all geopolitical specificity" in order to offer "a vision of the world and their audience's place within it" (Schmidt 36). These compendia gave consumers a portfolio of entertaining snapshots of global bric-a-brac that thrilled by virtue of their strangeness. But they also

mapped and collapsed the globe by figuring the world outside of Europe as a mine of curiosities waiting to be explored, collected, and enjoyed, heightening their audience's fervor for European colonial projects. As always, the technology fundamental to this process was twofold. On the one hand, the collections were founded on elision: they chose what did and didn't exist in the world beyond the European domicile, and they brutalized the complexities of the spaces and groups they pretended to figure. On the other, they appealed to publics' habituated faith in the act of collecting itself because the power of the Cabinet to shape knowledge was limited by the strength of the narrative it could tell and not the accuracy of its representation.

Johnson's specifically American study of the slave trade provides an opportunity to contemplate slavery—the enumerative practice of commodifying and trading in human beings—as the foundation of the United States as a nation. The technologies of the slave auction, as well as those found in the transatlantic slave trade, demonstrate the interrelation between the project of enumeration and the American exceptionalism that promised individual self-making, nation-building, progress, and prosperity. After all, the many paths mapped by traders and slaves alike were predetermined by the scale of the nation itself. As slavers and the forcibly enslaved traveled from Virginia to New Orleans or to Mississippi, they established the itineraries and boundaries of the nation, capturing the fluctuating body of the state as they traced both its interiors and its limits. Because the markets in different locales were fractured and contingent, systems of standardization were devised. Distributed as pamphlets by prominent

slave traders Dickinson and Hill, these classifications allowed traders to arm themselves with enumerated categories of value for their “property” as they moved from market to market. Most important to remember here is that much of the domestic trade in the antebellum U.S. was performed by small-scale traders who clung to “the promise that nonslaveholders could buy their way into the master class, and the possibility that they might one day own slaves” (Johnson 80). As Johnson says of one trader, “Jefferson McKinney had bought a slave in the hope of effecting the capitalist transformation of himself. McKinney’s was a fantasy of economic independence and bourgeois self-control” (82). Bound together by their urge to hold enumerative power over the lives of slaves, held to account by the categories crafted by Dickinson and Hill, and guided by the almanacs that codified the seasonal flow of the domestic trade, these traders enacted an archetypal dream of America’s self-made man. The lists, ledgers, pamphlets held the promise of self-making for those whose belief in the power of the form to elide complexity pushed them to follow bullet-pointed tenets or codify racialized power dynamics in the ledgers that they dreamed would come to define them.

To clearly see the connections between modes of exceptionalism and enumerology in our culture, we can turn to Benjamin Franklin, whose tedious attention to lists may well express the original image of America’s self-made man. Franklin revels in the compendium of details, the collection of activities, and even, as we will see in chapter two, the enumeration of time which, for him, always works side-by-side with the accretion of capital and the performance of

self-making. Importantly, Franklin's intellectual brand of rugged individualism distinguishes him from compendious capitalists like Robinson Crusoe—whose project is, primarily, a globalizing one even if it shares the terms of colonialist discourse we can read into Franklin. In contrast to Franklin, Defoe's novel focuses less on the coming-into-being of a perfect individual than on the technological intricacies of a colonial project resting on the appropriation of spaces. When Crusoe catalogues what Eco calls his "poor and essential" but nevertheless "obsessive collection" (67), he gives us a list of familiar tools, objects, and practices to illustrate his survival strategies. But readers complete the underlying narrative of Defoe's enumerative strategies as the novel's exhaustively detailed catalogues culminate in passages such as "by this Experiment I was made Master of my Business, and knew exactly when the proper Season was to sow; and that I might expect two Seed Times, and two Harvests every Year" (77). Crusoe's lists map the European familiar onto his otherwise exotic island in order to perform (unlike Franklin's localized individualism) the contemporary global expansion of European methodology and "Mastery of Business." Divorced from the realities of the "New World," European readers become complicit in Crusoe's project and attuned to concrete conceptions of mastery, commerce, and spatiality by reading his catalogues as the transposition of economic productivity onto exotic spaces—literalizing the survival imperative of participation in global capital and surplus accumulation.

But Franklin's enumerology emanates prosperity from within—from a more American idea of individualism. Even if his actions in the *Autobiography*

are at times highly stylized and desperately performative (extending to his pushing around a cart full of empty boxes simply to appear industrious), Franklin insists on positing a self-imposed and self-centric version of self-making. His lists and pithy phrases provide a roadmap for those wishing to “succeed,” and the burden of adhering to his tenets is placed on the individual as individual. The most notable example—his method for “the execution of [his] plan for self-examination” and the attainment of individual perfection—comes from his *Autobiography*. In an interesting turn, Franklin explains the difficulties of perfecting the list itself: “In the various Enumerations of the moral Virtues I had met with in my Reading, I found the Catalogue more or less numerous, as different Writers included more or fewer Ideas under the same Name” (149). Impeded by the inherent inconsistencies and elisions found in the attempts of others to enumerate perfection, Franklin shoulders the burden, not only of pursuing the enactment of a system of self-making, but of grasping the perfect enumeration of an ideal individual. His main contribution to this conversation becomes his ability to master the enumerative form and create, where others have failed, a paradigm that can successfully hide its own contradictions and elisions.

The enumerology in Franklin’s final list emerges from the conflation of morality and economics, a commonplace combination in the history of America’s own nation narrative. His list begins with Temperance, succeeded by terms such as Order, defined as letting “all your Things have their Places[; letting] each Part of your Business have its Time” (149). Beyond the casual use of “business” to describe even those things outside of direct economic interaction—itself a

significant linguistic phenomenon—Franklin’s idea of Order rests on the ability to locate everything within his purview, to emplace and arrange according to his perspective. Order becomes, for him, the right to enumerate context and individual, to locate spaces and practices within a neat framework that leaves no room for other perspectives or possibilities. It’s no surprise that his version of Order, being in constant conflict with the limitless realities of context, “gave [him] the most Trouble” (155).

In typical Franklin fashion, Frugality and Industry are also included in his enumeration of virtues, and, once more, most interesting here is that the idea of never losing time, of being “always employ’d in something useful” (149), situates within the contextual pressures of “virtue.” For Franklin, and for many as America manifests its own destiny, the practice of Industry becomes a moral imperative. However paradoxically, the resolve to “Waste nothing” (149) goes hand-in-hand with the practices of self-making that we now understand to be predicated on a tremendous waste of land and life. Closely related to this analysis is Franklin’s conflicted definition of “Justice”: “Wrong none by doing Injuries,¹⁵ or omitting the Benefits that are your Duty” (150). But as we know, the complexities of personal “duty”—to nation, to self, to industry—during the time of America’s expansion often warrant “doing injuries.” By building the contradiction into his definition of Justice, Franklin ensures that, if one’s duty conflicts with the well-being of a person or a group, one can still finagle one’s way out of unjustness via partial compliance.

The vitalizing substrate among these virtues is the interrelation of Franklin's methodological performance and the public circulation of his virtues. As one might expect from the *Autobiography*, Franklin spends more time on strategies for realizing these tenets than on his reasoning in assembling the list. His objective is not simply to put himself on display; it is, even more, to instruct readers in the methods they themselves might follow to become "perfect" individuals. That is, he leverages the allure of enumerological discourse—the faith that he understands will be placed in so clearly delineated a definition of perfection—and then tells his readers that they simply need to go one-by-one through the list in order to emulate him: "My Intention being to acquire the *Habitude* of all these Virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my Attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time, and when I should be Master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on till I should have gone thro' the thirteen" (150). Amusingly, he details his pursuit as a sequence of enumerations—tables and lists that he used to plan out his days (Order), to chart the fluctuations in his indulgence (Temperance), or to account for his expenditures (Frugality). Above all, Franklin sees that an economically minded conception of self-making most efficiently coheres and markets as a series of enumerations—easy to comprehend, easy to follow, easy to circulate. While Crusoe, by contrast, gives the public an image of the exciting pleasures of colonization, his work successfully informing a domestic public's conception of a globalizing practice that many only "accidentally" participate in, Franklin's genius lies in his ability not only to familiarize a public with an economic practice

(one also global given the time), but to push that public to *perform* that practice on an individual level as the realization of an ideal.

Franklin records his virtues, tables, and processes for his progeny—so they might “be informed that to this little Artifice ... their Ancestor ow’d the constant Felicity of his Life” (157): his health (Temperance), his fortune (Industry and Frugality), “the confidence of his country” (Sincerity and Justice), etc. The futural dimension of Franklin’s sentiment—his desire to see his methods reproduced in times to come—captures enumeration’s power to be recreated simply and efficiently. And there is perhaps no American figure who more directly qualifies as Franklin’s intellectual “progeny” than P.T. Barnum, whose legacy has been studied as a durable “expression of the American spirit” (Adams 196), and who was named by *The Washington Post* in 1891 “the most widely known American that ever lived” (quoted in Adams 1). Undoubtedly, Barnum’s contributions to American popular culture were as extensive as their influence, but my focus here redirects to ways in which Barnum takes a page from Franklin’s book when he understands enumerology’s potential to facilitate personal and national self-making with its accompanying “world-view.” Like Franklin, Barnum views his legacy as one that can be replicated. As Barnum says in the introduction to his own autobiography, “If this record of trials and triumphs, struggles and successes, shall stimulate any to the exercise of that integrity, energy, industry, and courage in their callings, which will surely lead to happiness and prosperity, one main object I have in yielding to the solicitations of my friends and my publishers will have been accomplished” (Preface). Thus

Barnum, despite extravagant differences, joins Franklin in embracing the performance of exceptional individualism, redeploying his position as a way of shaping culture and ideology.

Though he is primarily known in our time for “The Greatest Show on Earth,” Barnum’s beginnings—and most impactful contributions to popular culture—were in his American Museum in New York City. The museum was essentially an enormous cabinet of curiosities, presenting a “variety bordering on chaos” (Adams 78) which, much like the nation itself, was always pushing to expand its physical and intellectual territory. In Barnum’s museum, visitors were bombarded with excess—a dazzling and gaudy enumeration of ethnological items, exotic landscapes, unfamiliar animals (alive and stuffed), seashells, waxworks, and even live specimens of the racialized other that recalled Barnum’s early marketing of Joice Heth.¹⁶ The ethnographic dimensions of Barnum’s museum merged with broader imperial contexts, and the reach of his synthesis of “othering” and “public display” cannot be overstated. The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, for example, presented a “collection of ethnological villages, which featured natives of various lands, including Ireland, Algeria, Dahomey, Germany, Java, and Egypt” (193). Though the collection recalled the colonial city of Africans and Asians that had appeared at the Paris exposition four years previous, *The New York Times* nevertheless cited Barnum (who had died two years earlier) when it referred to the display as “The Greatest Show on Earth.” As with the expositions’ collections, the experience of Barnum’s American Museum was, beyond nation-building, most directly an act of world-

making. His overflowing cabinet deployed its sheer excess toward the pretense of an all-encompassing enumeration—a representation of the world as it was. But the reality lay in a dictation of the world that “would be”—out of a world that, to spectators, *must already have been*, because what else could be said to exist after an expedition through two buildings of six floors filled to the brim with articles, people, and animals of “every” description?

Barnum’s theatricality and ostentation melded the industrial and the intellectual, the commercial and the ideological—always approached through a profound understanding of tactical enumerology and the nation’s thirst for the enumerative. Barnum’s strategy was not simply to allow his publics’ preexisting notions to corroborate the contextual pressures of his collections. The American Museum operated along the axis of what Bluford Adams has termed “narratives of acquisition”:

Those narratives overshadowed all other contexts for their subjects, including aesthetic and scientific ones. Whether the management was promoting its most recently acquired waxwork, animal, or automaton, it was likely to emphasize where it had come from, how it had arrived, and how much it had cost. To be certain, the Museum always retained its . . . patriotic and Christian icons, but Barnum broke with earlier museum proprietors in presenting his collection less as a collection of sacred treasures from his country’s past and more as an intersection of stories about its entrepreneurial present and industrial future. (Adams 86)

In emphasizing narratives of acquisition over content, Barnum demonstrates quite clearly how a public's faith in the enumerative form can be manipulated. Beyond that, he accomplishes two major objectives. First, he maps the world in a way that frames its defining and ostensibly stable characteristics—people, animals, landscapes—alongside acts of exploration, commerce, white male heroism, and acquisition that bring that world to life, providing an entertaining and consumable model for nation-building and colonial interaction. Second, Barnum himself provides a larger-than-life model for self-making—one working in tandem with geographic, industrial, and national objectives—that rests on his ability to collect, classify, log, map, account, and catalogue “properly.” His decision to market primarily to the lower and middle classes, against the desires of many proponents of European-style museums, underscores this point. Barnum puts *himself* on display, becomes his own attraction, as he markets the methods of his prosperity to classes of individuals who have yet to realize their own self-making.

Figures like Barnum and Franklin are enumerologists. They leverage their ability to collect, condense, and narrativize symbols and ideas into a public and marketable iconography of the national character. In doing so, they inject moral, entrepreneurial, and epistemological imperatives into the reperformances which reify those very ideas of nationhood. The paradigmatic literary enumerologist whose specter haunts this dissertation is Judge Holden, from Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. In that novel, set late in the nineteenth century, a group of scalphunters travel through Mexico and the American Southwest, leaving a trail

of carnage inextricably tied to Manifest Destiny. Among the scalphunters, Judge Holden figures the intellectual manipulations and indoctrinations offered by enumerology, as he charts the group's journey in a ledgerbook. Accounting the world, he collects specimens, sketches images of the land and people, and records historical artifacts. But as we will see in more detail in chapter three, Holden's accounting is, equally, a mode of erasure.

Through its participation in the novel's nationalized violence, his ledger extends outward to unite its narrative with that of the world. That is, intuiting the inherent fragility (incompleteness) of his own accountings, Holden forces the unity of his inscribed version of the world and reality.¹⁷ In this gesture, the ledger's elisions act simultaneously with the "elisions" of expansionist genocide—the "remov[ing] from existence" (246) that he discusses elsewhere in the novel. This contextualizes the Judge's claim, "Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent" (194). However impressive the Judge's scientific, historical, linguistic, etc., knowledge may be, his drive is less to paradoxically comprehend some infinite reality than to re-create the world in the image of his ledger. Though we may not always take "the bloody old hoodwinker" (249) as sincere, he nevertheless operates under his stated premise that "even in this world more things exist without our knowledge than with it and the order in creation which you see is that which you have put there, like a string in a maze, so that you shall not lose your way" (243). Against this, the Judge pits his own ambition to be "that man who sets himself the task of singling out the thread of order from the tapestry [and] by the decision alone have taken charge of

the world” (195). To imagine that such a “thread of order” lies waiting to be plucked from the greater “tapestry” of the world is the fantasy of the enumerologist—a longing for coherence inseparable from “mastery.”

The authors I discuss in the following chapters offer subtle understandings of enumerology’s role in socio-political discipline. Their texts use lists, accountings, and catalogues to critique enumeration’s ability to shape American cultural and historical narratives—specifically the persistence, already nascent in Franklin and manifest in Barnum, of the expansionist narrative in 20th-century discourse and its inevitable interrelation to cultural conceptions of individuation. While my own collection of authors might appear discontinuous or difficult to narrativize—though I’ll admit that might well be part of the appeal—the ostensibly distinct historical and social contexts prompting the writing of Mark Twain, Djuna Barnes, Cormac McCarthy, and Leslie Marmon Silko unlock a continuity in anti-enumerological and anti-colonial attitudes across time and space. Additionally, the distinct foci of these authors enable insight into diverse generic iterations of enumeration and the enumerological impulse. In Mark Twain, we see a *fin de siècle* critique of the enumerologist from the perspective of an author simultaneously critical of and implicated in national narratives surrounding exceptional individualism and an intrinsically American brand of domestic imperialism. In Djuna Barnes, a Modernist’s perverse enumerations illuminate queer temporalities which speak out against the almanac genre’s historical role in propagating masculinized temporal economics. Cormac McCarthy takes Judge Holden’s ledgerbook as synecdochic of broader national

and cultural conceptions of “accountability” and thought itself—ultimately undoing the stability of those orders by figuring an “unaccountable” or “unreckonable” world beyond comprehension. Finally, Leslie Marmon Silko offers new ways of approaching enumeration (specifically almanacs and Linnaean taxonomies) which foreground enumerative instability via the palimpsest—a multivocality that forecloses structures of monologic authority necessary to the enumerological. Further, and beyond critique, each of these authors writes with an urgent need to undo the logic of the culture of enumeration by suggesting the remainder, the elision that always threatens to undermine and expose the pretense of the enumerative form.

Running to Seed: Mark Twain and the Scientific Enumerologist

“Count whenever you can!” – Francis Galton

It is not a secret that Mark Twain was fascinated with the cultural, political, and social climates of his day; his writings often proceed with an urgency to critique, satirize, and undermine the problematic institutions he encountered both within the United States and abroad. Even his literary critiques, like those levied against Sir Walter Scott, are marked by Twain’s understanding of the persistent intersections of literature and sociality: the post-Scott South a confusion of “sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries” where “the genuine and wholesome civilization of the nineteenth century is curiously confused and commingled with the Walter Scott Middle-Age sham civilization.” In this, “practical, common-sense, progressive ideas, and progressive works [are] mixed up with the duel, the inflated speech, and the jejune romanticism of an absurd past that is dead, and out of charity ought to be buried” (*Life on the Mississippi* 467-68). But alongside Twain’s commentaries on contemporary race, imperialism, religion, and political corruption lies another, less-explored line of critique regarding the very foundation of what it means to be “modern”: that of the European fixation on enumeration as a specific articulation of scientific rationalism that provided an ideological basis for many of the political and racial maneuvers facilitating American and European imperial projects. In Twain, the voice of this position becomes what we might term the “enumerological scientist”—a figuration of the generic enumerological principle that I have been

elaborating. This “scientist” combines the spirit of American and individual exceptionalism with the corollary characteristics of ingenuity and social/political finesse for the sake of a version of modernization that Twain’s work both identifies and interrogates through his characteristic forms of satire and vitriol. We might consider a character like *Connecticut Yankee*’s Hank Morgan as an amalgam of literary and historical figures such as Benjamin Franklin, P. T. Barnum, and even the slaver Jefferson McKinney, whose own performances of scientific exceptionalism always acted on behalf of power and conquest. But Twain’s skepticism also evinces a degree of satire and distance which exacts its own form of time travel—prefiguring and enriching anti-colonial literary characters and conversations that won’t come into their own for the better part of a century—while, much like political cartoons of Twain’s moment, still keeping one foot on the “terra firma” of “Expansionism.”

Twain was certainly a product of 19th-century America even as he increasingly grew to criticize its imperial imperatives. While attempting to develop a writing career, he worked as a San Francisco newspaper correspondent in the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii). His letters to California readers during that period indicate his investment in the ethos surrounding Westward expansion and early American colonialism. According to Philip S. Foner, those letters

rhapsodized over the sugar acres awaiting exploitation by American capital ... emphasizing the availability of cheap labor—Kanaka men and women and Chinese coolies—working under strict contract-labor laws.

Control of the islands, he predicted, would lead inevitably to control of the entire Pacific—the realization of America’s destiny. “American enterprise will penetrate to the heart and center of its hoarded treasures, its imperial affluence.” (Foner 239-40)

The intersection of indigenous and coolie labor captures the imperialist spirit that predicated a U.S. presence in Hawaii, and their contract labor prefigures, in his moment’s cultural imagination, a transition into a broader, more traditional version of empire: “control of the entire Pacific.” That Twain writes these letters to his “home base” in California demonstrates momentum toward Hawaii as a *continuation* of the imperial rather than a novel shift. In his 1912 biography of Twain, contemporary and friend Albert Bigelow Paine reproduces (as Appendix D) an 1866 Twain lecture which corroborates Foner’s assessment: “I have dwelt upon this subject to show you that these islands have a genuine importance to America—an importance which is not generally appreciated by our citizens. They pay revenues into the United States Treasury now amounting to over half a million a year” (Paine 1601).¹ Even at this early stage, Twain imagines imperial reach as a primarily technological maneuver, proposing that, “With the Pacific Railroad built, the great China Mail Line of steamers touching at Honolulu—we could stock the islands with Americans and supply a third of the civilized world with sugar” (1601).² And the connection between technological progress (rail lines, ocean steamers) and its ability to “unlock” areas of the globe for occupation and exploitation will figure centrally in Twain’s *anti-imperialist* rhetoric as well,

especially as expressed by Hank Morgan over twenty years later in *Connecticut Yankee*. The idea that the colonial world is crafted through the enumeration of scientific and technological progress permeates *Connecticut Yankee* and, as we will see, additionally provides the basis for the skepticism elaborated in the scientific projects of Pudd'nhead Wilson and the protagonists of Twain's "dream" stories.

While it may seem odd to discuss anti-imperial tendencies in the context of the above 1866 speech, Twain's entrenched pro-imperial phase was short-lived. As Foner explains, "Within a year following his return from the Islands, he was publicly ranked with the anti-expansionists. In 1867, his satire helped defeat Secretary of State William H. Seward's schemes to annex the Danish island of St. Thomas" (Foner 240). This position was consciously reaffirmed many years later in a press interview (*New York Herald*) of 1900 where Twain frankly stated, "I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land" (Scharnhorst 353). Of course, Twain's particular take on Western writing reveals his deep suspicion of the eagle's grip on North America as well. Criticism has generally taken race as the center of Twain's domestic cultural and political critiques, but we can also understand Twain's stance on race and slavery within the expansionist context. Erich Nunn, for example, has described Reconstruction as "a kind of internal Imperialism" which employs mechanisms that anticipate "similar endeavors elsewhere in the world in the 1890's and afterwards" (28). Furthermore, racial classifications were a crucial form of colonial enumeration both at home and abroad (and not just for the United States).

To take those classifications to task is, for Twain, not simply to humorously expose the absurdity of Southern (U.S.) hypocrisy; it is to undermine one of the tools indispensable to shaping the globe of his era. This is not to say that Twain was able to fully extricate himself from the imperatives of his historical moment. But his awkward positioning in the “middle distance” allows him keener insight into world-making potentials of the enumerologist.

Outside of his novels (and often even within), Twain’s anti-imperialist leanings manifest in satirical discourse that critiques the practices of annexation by exposing the shortcomings and absurdities of colonial power. An early example, submitted as a letter to the *New York Tribune* in 1873, responds to the death of King Kamehameha V of the “Sandwich Islands”—an event which triggered immediate cries for annexation from the U.S. pro-imperialist camp:

We must annex these people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from street-car pickpockets to municipal robbers and Government defaulters and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them and then turn them loose—some for cash, and some for “political influence.” We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. ... We can give them juries composed of the most simple and charming leatherheads. We can give them railway corporations who will buy their Legislatures like old clothes, and run over their best citizens. ... We can give them Tweed. ... We can furnish them some Jay Goulds who

will do away with their old-time notion that stealing is not respectable. ...

We can give them lecturers! I will go myself. (quoted in Foner 241-42)

Twain's opening, "we must annex these people," pretends to carry forward the initial enthusiasm he had displayed for exploiting the Islands after his return in 1866. But immediately the force of that directive is dissipated by the greater force of his distaste for the "American way." Government, traditionally seen within the colonial context as a "civilizing force," becomes something to "afflict" the colonized; and the cultural values that he proposes to impart are anything but elevating—glorified theft (at all levels of American society), corrupt systems of justice, and exploitative forms of technology and industry.³ His specific reference to Jay Gould presages *Connecticut Yankee*, where Hank Morgan (whose name suggests a connection to the powerful financier J. P. Morgan) becomes Twain's own version of the robber baron in his inability (or unwillingness) to separate technological progress from colonial exploitation.⁴

Two years before his letter to the *Tribune*, Twain had already incorporated satirical modes of anti-imperialism into his *Burlesque Autobiography*—a confusion of genre that further substantiates Twain's critiques not only as attacks on American imperial aspirations, but also as denunciations of the public exceptionalism spectacularized by pro- and proto-imperialists like Barnum and Franklin. In the *Burlesque Autobiography*, Twain describes his (fictional-but-significant) ancestor "the illustrious John Morgan Twain," who "came over to this country with Columbus in 1492, as a passenger" (7). Though the idea that his

ancestor (whose middle name, like Hank's surname, may be intended to link him to J. P. M.)⁵ came over as a "passenger" with Columbus is a joke, it nevertheless evidences the conflicted desires of "New World" inhabitants to simultaneously distance themselves from a "savage" indigeneity and hold onto some greater historical relation to land and space. That "legacy"—a satirical version of historical one-upmanship—gains momentum as Twain continues:

This ancestor had good and noble instincts, and it is with pride that we call to mind the fact that he was the first white person who ever interested himself in the work of elevating and civilizing our Indians. He built a commodious jail and put up a gallows, and to his dying day he claimed with satisfaction that he had a more restraining and elevating influence on the Indians than any other reformer that ever labored among them.

(Burlesque Autobiography 11)

Again, Twain's focus (consistent with satirical mechanisms) is less on the tirade against application of colonial notions of European superiority than on the absurdity of those notions themselves. Connections between the European's civilizing impulse and the jail/gallows anticipate the distorted conception of justice he would expose in his letter to the *Tribune*. Twain's point, while still tangibly relevant to our contemporary discussions of social and geopolitical justice, was particularly poignant in his moment. As Kerry Driscoll has noted, "his alleged ancestor's belief that the civilization of native peoples could only be

accomplished through coercive containment and corporal punishment reflects a popular view of the 1870s and 80s, one that was advanced and sanctioned by the federal government” (7). More generally, Twain’s frequent associations of imperialism, morality, and technological/scientific elevation demonstrate a distaste for “civilization”—even as articulated through his “roots”—that would persist (and strengthen) throughout his career.

In Twain’s fiction, the enumerological scientist channels these sentiments by figuring technological or scientific progress that not only “advances” a society through successful imperial and capitalistic endeavors, but also accomplishes that advancement through a combination of knowledge-construction and public performance. Nowhere is the enumerological scientist’s influence more obvious than in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, where Hank Morgan’s “civilizing” imperative inextricably links with a capacity for producing and propagating the scientific “wonders” that fuel his industrialization of Arthur’s Britain. Hank’s status as an exceptional American is deeply rooted in a mythological ancestry:

I am an American. . . . I am a Yankee of the Yankees—and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose—or poetry, in other words. My father was a blacksmith, my uncle was a horse doctor, and I was both, along at first. Then I went over to the great arms factory and learned my real trade; learned all there was to it; learned to make everything; guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery.

Why, I could make anything a body wanted—anything in the world, it didn't make any difference what; and if there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one—and do it as easy as rolling off a log. (20)

Hank's preface to his history provides a model for a linear progression of Franklinesque self-making familiar to anyone acquainted with broader narratives of the American character. As a person, he is delineated by his work, which is in turn founded on a sense of practicality, a modest capacity for sentiment, and an expansive capacity for mastery and innovation—which, as the novel unfolds, crafts out of Hank's knowledge a catalogue of the scientific and technological advancements that come to constitute civilization as such. We begin *Connecticut Yankee* with our expectations couched in the terms of a classic American success story.

Hank's American Dream-esque self-making meshes with the language of science he deploys in remodeling the terrain of this Britain. But it is crucial to remember that Hank's own pre-time-travel success story is bound specifically to his time at a munitions factory—identified as a source of “labor-saving machinery.” We are drawn to the expansiveness of his knowledge, his ability to “make anything a body wanted,” and pushed away from potential skepticism regarding exactly how employment at a munitions factory would supply the knowledge to make *everything*—let alone know that “the only total eclipse of the sun in the first half of the sixth century occurred on the 21st of June, A. D. 528,

O. S., and began at 3 minutes after 12 noon” (36). The correlation of arms production to knowledge resonates on a number of levels with Twain’s historical context. For example, as Nunn has pointed out, “the image of Hank as an industrialist reformer would not be unfamiliar to Twain’s readers, as they would recognize in it an immediate historical precedent in the Yankee reformers, idealists, and opportunists who flocked to the South after the defeat of the Confederacy and during its subsequent occupation” (22). But beyond contextualization, the idea that *arms* manufacturing is both the genesis of and outlet for expansive scientific enumerations marks a profound skepticism concerning our faith in the endless good—or goods—of scientific practice.

We do not need to take a novel about time travel to task for its realism, but the incredible magnitude of Hank’s scientific knowledge defines him less as an individual and more as the performance of a type—a hyperbolic figuration of the industrious, exceptional scientist which perfects the traits so widely circulated and lauded within American culture. David Ketterer has observed that the fantastical underpinnings of the novel’s frame narrative set the stage for a “predominantly American” sub-genre which he calls the “power-fantasy species of science fiction ... in which the hero, more or less single-handedly, affects the destiny of an entire world or universe” (xxi). The novel’s speculative genre captures and satirizes a very real desire at the heart of American exceptional ideals—that the individual, through mastery and economics, can, in fact, dictate the fate of the globe. Against Franklin and Barnum, whose autobiographies provide a roadmap of social and economic import, Hank enumerates a catalogue of scientific accomplishments that

parodies actual modes of enumerative dissemination and attempts to “educate” us in the methods of civilized superiority.

In this, Hank aligns himself with future literary figures bearing out the trope of the enumerological scientist, demonstrating notable affinity with, for example, Judge Holden from Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*. Though the humorous, light-hearted tone characterizing *Connecticut Yankee* belies its body count—which, though less graphically, eclipses even *Blood Meridian*’s—both are, fundamentally, manifestations of American expansionist desires. What is explicit in *Blood Meridian* is implicit in *Connecticut Yankee*. John H. Davis describes Twain’s novel in ways that capture the embedded similarity:

Though Hank Morgan is a [true] cowboy, the resemblance of knights to cowboys is direct, but more frequent are his comparisons of knights, whom the Yankee calls “white Indians” and treats with contempt and indifference, to American Aborigines. Subtler are the similarities of the stranger’s New Deal (his imposed society) to the unwritten doctrine of the westward movement, the encroaching civilization that annihilates them and their world, and of the final battle to genocide of a culture. (83)

Hank’s civilizing impulse—his drive to bring the “white Indians” out of their “debased” circumstances—becomes a performance of American approaches to indigeneity whereby schools and Christianity become the foot soldiers of Westernization. Hank’s similarity to George Armstrong Custer and John

Chivington further implicates him in an ideology of indigenous slaughter; and his own “last stand” represents a final decision to no longer reserve “in [his] soul some corner of clemency for the heathen” (*Blood Meridian* 292).

Twain’s satire of American settler colonialism and civilization prefigures disruptions of the American racial order that I will argue, in chapter three, are the primary focus of *Blood Meridian*. As Driscoll remarks, “Hank’s project of ‘elevating and civilizing’ the inhabitants of Camelot closely parallels the process of ‘Americanizing’ the country’s indigenous tribes through education, the acquisition of literacy, and the introduction of basic technological proficiency” (8). *Blood Meridian*’s constant intersection of whiteness and savagery undoes scientifically and culturally fabricated hierarchies that justified projects like Westward expansion and slavery.⁶ In a similar way, Twain’s desire to articulate a “savage” form of indigeneity through mythical, romanticized Anglo-Saxon ancestors defies historical narratives tracing European intellectual roots to civilizations like ancient Rome/Greece. *Connecticut Yankee* exposes the counterfactuality of deploying Europe’s own “barbarous” lineage to assert biological superiority—a strategy reminiscent of Bernardine Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots* (2008), which uses an alternative history (European natives enslaved by Africans) to critique social, scientific, and philosophical constructions of “a priori” racial hierarchies. As Twain says in *Following the Equator*, “There are many humorous things in the world; among them the white man’s notion that he is less savage than the other savages” (213).

Humor grounds this project, and, interestingly, Hank's jabs at chivalric Britain—undoubtedly lining up with Twain's distaste for Sir Walter's Southern chivalries—are often framed in terms of "indigenous" technology: "I wanted to try and think out how it was that rational or even half-rational men could ever have learned to wear armor, considering its inconveniences; and how they had managed to keep up such a fashion for generations when it was plain that what I had suffered to-day they had had to suffer all the days of their lives" (145-47).⁷ We have, of course, seen armor on display in the Tower of London at the novel's opening, and Twain's exposure of the sheer idiocy of Medieval dress derides our cultural fascination with absurd fashions that both represent a romanticized past, and (in contrasting with the trope of the indigenous warrior as "naked savage") sustain a historical narrative of technological progress. In *Connecticut Yankee*, "training is everything; training is all there is to a person" (217). By extension, the limitations of the narrative itself (Hank's own unarticulated training) also call into question the technological progress that *he* represents. This device of making "primitive" the "tribes" of early European history can be found in other literature with anticolonial themes, such as Alex La Guma's anti-apartheid novel *In the Fog of the Season's End*. La Guma thematizes the European tendency to figure "white men in heavy masks on horseback carrying shields and spears" (76) as a historical legacy while falsely construing its African counterpart as a present reality (a distinction marked in the novel's South African museums as history vs. anthropology). *Connecticut Yankee's* temporal distortions reverse that ideological position by shifting "white men ... carrying shields and spears" to the literal

present in order to undermine the same historicizing impulse that La Guma sees beneath apartheid politics. Simultaneously, they undo anthropological work done by, for example, the Cabinet of Curiosities, which concretizes colonial hierarchical thinking by (paradoxically) attributing both historical and modern significance to its artifacts.

The specifics of this scientific and technological progress presage modernity as well. Hank's improbably wide expertise comes from arms manufacture; *Blood Meridian's* Judge Holden saves the scalphunters by concocting gunpowder out of raw materials and enabling what would otherwise have been *their* "last stand" against a group of Apaches (127). Both Hank and the Judge capture an exceptionalism predicated on a seeming scientific omniscience. And Holden's claim that, "Whatever exists ... Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent" (195), problematizes that desire by providing an intersection between the "modern" lust for scientific understanding and the enumerological need to erase whatever falls outside that purview. David Sewell has commented on the "tendency of the modern imagination to make destructive weaponry the archetypal form of knowledge that the present offers to the past" ("Utopia" 141); and the carnage plaguing *Connecticut Yankee* and *Blood Meridian* underscores the extermination that will inevitably accompany such modernization. Hank's rise to power in Camelot effects a series of erasures—of culture, of social configuration, and finally of people. Even Hank's humorous idea to sandwich (and one remembers the Sandwich Islands as the genesis of Twain's perspective on imperialism) "the bravest knights" he can find "between

bulletin-boards bearing one device or another” (190) attempts to erase, beyond the culture of chivalry, the very identities of the knights themselves, as their persons and their feats are subsumed into the economic projects of advertisement and hygienic conditioning.⁸ This understands the spirit of Manifest Destiny to be one not only of total control over land, people, etc., but also of the elision of alternative possibility.⁹

The most profound similarity between Hank and Judge Holden, however, is that each brandishes scientific, intellectual, and technological prowess through acts of public enumeration; that is, both capture the public nature of the enumerologist. In this, Hank—along with the Judge—stands in for historical figures like P. T. Barnum, whose “expression of the American spirit” (Adams 196) embodies the practicality and ingenuity foregrounded in literary characters like Hank Morgan. Moreover, Barnum crystalizes the enumerologist’s capacity for performance and notoriety, and, most of all, for “training” a public’s conception of “excellence” in a way that supports contemporaneous ideological imperatives. Iain Bernhoft, analyzing the Barnumesque in *Blood Meridian*, offers a description of Judge Holden that could just as easily characterize Hank:

Holden performs magic tricks and feats of strength, humbugs and hawks tales, tells fortunes and gives lectures, exhibits novelties and freak-show grotesqueries. He displays these trappings in a text that is highly invested in contemporaneous dynamics of vision and illusion, and in economic and epistemic deception. These historical concerns inform not only *Blood*

Meridian's content but also its style, as the novel likewise stages the consumption of aestheticized spectacle ... producing an account of American consumption of Imperial violence as sensational entertainment that remains pertinent today. (27)

Just as Barnum's exhaustive scientific compendia—amounting to hyperbolic “Cabinets of Curiosities”—sought to acquaint the public with versions of science that imagined America as the center of a world ripe for exploration and exploitation, Hank's projects seek to reshape Arthur's Britain into a territory of 19th-century American ideology.

But though Hank appropriates Barnum's field of magic tricks, humbug, predictions of the future, and displays of novelty, this does not necessarily mean Twain was directly criticizing Barnum as an individual person (or public entertainer). After all, there is some difference between running a circus and *directly* governing the globe; and it can't be forgotten that Twain was himself an entertainer. In fact, he was in direct correspondence with Barnum and had some sort of relationship with him—having likely met Barnum in the early 1870's, before *Connecticut Yankee* and after the unveiling of the “Greatest Show on Earth” in 1871 (Mark Twain Project). A letter Twain sent to Barnum in 1875 indicates his feel for the entrepreneur's showmanship: “But of all the amazing shows that ever were conceived of, I think this of yours must surely take the lead! I hardly know which to wonder at most—its stupendousness, or the pluck of the man who has dared to venture upon so vast an enterprise. I mean to come to see

the show,— but to me you are the biggest marvel connected with it, after all” (Mark Twain Project). In the “second” installment of *Pudd’nhead Wilson’s Calendar* (from *Following the Equator*), Twain writes, “Let me make the superstitions of a nation and I care not who makes its laws or its songs either” (484). Extrapolating to nation-building, Hank is the “biggest marvel” in *Connecticut Yankee*, precisely because he channels those traits of humbug, showmanship, spectacle, and wide-ranging expertise.

Barnum, born in Connecticut, also lived there at various points later in his life. At the beginning of the novel, Hank believes Sir Kay, in his armor and plumes, to be a “circus man” (27), and, seeing Camelot in the distance, he immediately asks, “Bridgeport?” (22). Bridgeport was, incidentally, the town of which P. T. Barnum had been elected mayor in 1875 (four years prior to Hank’s point-of-departure from the 19th century, as specified in chapter 2 of *CY*),¹⁰ and Hank’s early invocation of Barnum sets the tone for the performative models on which he will base his rise to “bosshood” in Arthur’s Britain.

Twain’s views of Barnum’s own ideological maneuvers aside, Twain’s decision to equate “the qualities of practicality and inventiveness ... with aggressiveness” (Sewell, “Utopia” 147) nevertheless gives us tools to understand what happens when the rhetoric of pro-imperialist entertainment encounters the territory. And this, in turn, connects Hank to literary enumerological scientist Robinson Crusoe—who, despite being a product of British popular culture, nevertheless exhibits strikingly similar acts of scientific and technological prowess to colonize the tabula rasa space of the “New World.” Sewell has noted

that “Hank’s closest symbolic identification is with Robinson Crusoe” (“Utopia” 144). Early in *Connecticut Yankee*, Hank himself suggests the lineage: “I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did—invent, contrive, create, reorganize things; set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was in my line” (85).¹¹ Crusoe’s description of the process by which he becomes “Master of [his] Business” (Defoe 77) resembles Hank’s in innovative thoroughness; and regardless of national or temporal differences between the two, both use abilities derived from their respective modernities to tame and catalogue primitivized landscapes and peoples. Each has a “Friday” (though one is called “Clarence”), another form of erasure in which individual identities of indigenous persons are eradicated in favor of whatever name, whatever role the colonizer chooses to bestow upon them.

As we have already seen, *Robinson Crusoe* performs global expansion to indoctrinate the European at home, and, on the surface, *Connecticut Yankee* appears to update that project for the 19th Century. In place of Crusoe’s primarily agrarian colonization—which instantiates versions of colonialism that have been occupying the Caribbean in his historical moment—Hank institutes the Industrialism of his own moment. In place of Crusoe’s “benevolent mastery,” Hank attempts to retrain Camelot’s population into a more modern pseudo-democracy where he is acting despot—his works showing “what a despot could do with the resources of a kingdom at his command” (119-20). But while Defoe’s

novel is ultimately a sincere testimony to the power and tenderness of European colonial projects, one feels *Connecticut Yankee*'s dissatisfaction with its own genocidal conclusion. The novel propels us into that familiar world where "modern" values seem on the verge of triumph over primitivity ... only to finally pull back the veil on the violence (ideological, intellectual, and physical).

His sense of solidarity with Crusoe again reminds us that Hank's enumerations of the colonial are not unique to him, but rather part of a legacy of public performance and indoctrination. In *National Manhood*, Dana Nelson has explored ways in which "nationhood" rests on perceived, fraternal affinities of the white male citizen. Like Amasa Delano in Melville's *Benito Cereno*—who, adrift and "denied the fraternal exchange that he seeks" as a white man of stature, "finds fraternal recourse in the 'objective' exercise of a fantasy of shared ethnological ruminations on African women with the British explorer Mungo Park" (Nelson 2)—Hank, too, reaches across space-time to ground himself in Crusoe's colonial fantasy. Recalling Twain's ancestor (named Morgan) in the *Burlesque Autobiography*, Hank also reaches back to that moment of "first contact" between Europeans and Native Americans: "It came to my mind, in the nick of time, how Columbus or Cortez or one of those people, played an eclipse as a saving trump once, on some savages, and I saw my chance" (*Yankee* 66). Driscoll has noted that "Hank's recollection of this symbolic moment of early contact between the Old and New Worlds offers not only a pragmatic solution to his immediate predicament, but also an inspirational paradigm of cultural ascendancy" (10). But that "paradigm of cultural ascendancy" also relies on falsity—on the

Barnumesque humbug of the eclipse/magic, combining with Hank's ability to call upon (with almanac-like intensity) an obscure scientific detail.

This reading of *Connecticut Yankee* opens up new ways of looking at *Pudd'nhead Wilson*—published five years later, after first being serialized in *Century Magazine*—as well as other texts, such as Twain's short fiction. *Pudd'nhead* less explicitly features Hank's desire to imperialize space, yet the novel opens by telling us that he “had wandered to this remote region [Dawson's Landing] from his birthplace in the interior of the State of New York, to seek his fortune” (23). Pudd'nhead, like Hank, excels in scientific practices (his “fads” [28]); but, unlike Hank's Camelot, Dawson's Landing persists in barring the status necessary for enumerological performance. His “half of the dog” joke (and the characteristically Twainesque villager dialogue which follows) shows us that, whatever “modern” abilities he may have, he lacks the theatrical capacity to market them. In fact, his scientific interest only reinforces stigmas against him; he finds “that his fads added to his reputation as a pudd'nhead” and becomes “chary of being too communicative about them” (28). This early moment from the novel prefigures the crucial difference between Hank and Pudd'nhead. Though the latter, like Hank, possesses the ability to shape a compendium of scientific and technological data (his fingerprinting, among other things), he seems unable to translate his ability to create knowledge into a public performance. In this, Pudd'nhead figures (against Hank) a failed enumerological performance, where understanding not only falls short of translating into a replicable spectacle; it actually runs contrary to the ideological imperatives of

Dawson's Landing as a slaveholding society. Such a distinction indicates the progression of Twain's literary skepticism of science as disciplinary tool—prefiguring, as well, what we will see in the disorienting near-madness of the later “dream tales.”

Whereas Hank flaunts his aptitudes with constant performance, Pudd'nhead is forced to conceal them, to develop them secretly—and not out of desire for social gain, but because of real interest. The description of his extensive knowledge seems to rival Hank's in hyperbole; and he is “genuinely adept at the procedures of detection and proof” (Gillman, “Sure Identifiers” 95). But here Twain shuns for-profit practicality: “he interested himself in every new thing that was born into the universe of ideas, and studied it and experimented upon it at his house” (28). Pudd'nhead's scientific endeavors carry a more idealistic fascination—perhaps that of the “pure scientist” (Cummings 178)—than anything we see in Hank Morgan. The ultimate contribution his fingerprinting catalogue gives to Dawson's Landing is simply an assertion of something true—a rectification which, as we will see, is a radical one.

Hank's industrialization of Arthur's Britain, on the other hand, mirrors P. T. Barnum's concept of “profitable philanthropy” more than “love of knowledge.” Barnum's words from his 1869 book *Struggles and Triumphs* could have easily been included in *Connecticut Yankee*: “I have no desire to be considered much of a philanthropist[;] ... if by improving and beautifying our city [Bridgeport, Connecticut] and adding to the pleasure and prosperity of my neighbors, I can do so at a profit, the incentive to 'good works' will be twice as strong as if it were

otherwise” (297). But David “Pudd’nhead” Wilson shows no such drive. In fact, his “fads” (his science) result from his *inability* to successfully enter the economic sphere of Dawson’s Landing. He may gain notoriety from his courtroom theatricality, yet we acknowledge that the ideological implications of his revelations not only distance themselves from Hank’s civilizing imperatives; they effectively counter them.

If Hank Morgan functions as propagator of American Imperialism within the “empty” space of an indigenous culture, Pudd’nhead’s talent for exposing and undermining the racial distinctions that separate Tom and Chambers puts him in opposition to Hank’s agendas. It is easy to read *Pudd’nhead Wilson* as, ultimately, reestablishing the dominant order—a statement on the inescapability of its social and legal definitions of blackness and perhaps even a justification of their imposition. As Sherwood Cummings observes, “Unlike Hank Morgan, Wilson [makes] no effort to change his ... environment” (178); and the story certainly closes on an unsatisfying note—just what one expects of Twain, who seems to love transforming socially or ideologically progressive statements into absurdity before they bear fruit.¹² But the novel nevertheless confronts the open fear of miscegenation that characterized the American South and, indeed, the entire country. Furthermore, Pudd’nhead’s ability to expose difference as “training” (to use Hank’s word), rather than “race,” subverts centuries of relentless and hysterical (in the Freudian sense) attempts to enumerate precise social locations of people representing various percentages of genetic blackness. Again, it is Pudd’nhead’s failure to perform exceptionalism that drives him to this

field of study. But in the literary sense, his difference from Hank is also a marker, and one that sets him apart as an anti-exceptional scientist whose catalogue of fingerprints enumerates against enumerological imperatives—refusing spectacular “Mastery of Business” and exposing “languages of dominance and of submission” (Sewell, *Discourse* 113) by truly being *an* exception.

Pudd’nhead’s glaringly anti-enumerological *Calendar* provides a humorous epigraph for each of the novel’s chapters; but beyond the humor, there are also links to Hank’s concept of “training”: “Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education” (67). And we get an expected dose of Twain’s cynicism: “One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives” (86). Equally important, Pudd’nhead’s *Calendar* puts him in conversation with Benjamin Franklin and *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, which provides formatting and (superficial) tonality for the *Calendar* even as it differs in its proto-Imperialist and proto-Industrial content. In *Following the Equator*, which ties an additional set of *Calendar* aphorisms to a tour of the British Empire, these sayings often mock Franklin more directly. Aphorisms such as “Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it” and “Prosperity is the best protector of principle” move away from the more heavy-handed absurdity of the original (*Pudd’nhead*) entries and encounter morality in its Franklinesque conflation with economics. Like Hank, Barnum, Judge Holden, and Crusoe, Benjamin Franklin builds his legacy on the public performance of his exceptionalism and status as a polymath. The ready quotability of Twain’s re-write stresses its im-practicality—that is, it’s

practically useless—to create a different type of performance disseminating “subversive” messages, imperatives, or perspectives. *Pudd’nhead*’s usurpation of the genre and his perversion of the pithy saying undercut those models by infusing the values of skepticism, critique, and humor into a stagnant and unproductive conversation. Moreover, this differentiates him from captains of industry and hegemony (like Hank Morgan, Ben Franklin, Robinson Crusoe, and P. T. Barnum) by revealing tacit aims. Whether or not one is satisfied with *Pudd’nhead Wilson*’s conclusion, Twain nonetheless creates a space for critique which realizes the power to shape ideology inherent in public performances of America’s (and Britain’s) great enumerologists and which, above all, urges us to bring skepticism and insight into our interpretations of space, commerce, and modernity.

The social anxieties underlying *Pudd’nhead*’s crib-swap connect to a form of enumeration traditionally accompanying colonial projects in general, as well as the United States’ particular brand of slavery: the racial code produced by scientifically institutionalized racism. In order to deny the reality of miscegenation, colonial publics created exhaustive racial classifications that attempted to locate, on a conceivable and quantifiable scale, every possibility of intermixture. These racial percentages—themselves a pseudo-scientific catalogue—paradoxically enumerated the very thing they sought to deny. In the mid-19th century, a South Carolina jury asserted the importance of maintaining only two groups: “We should have but two classes ... the Master and the slave, and no intermediate class can be other than immensely mischievous to our

peculiar institution” (quoted in Gillman, “Sure Identifiers” 92). Susan Gillman points out that “The grand jury testimony verges on acknowledging the contradiction that this ‘intermediate’ group—an ‘abominable mixture,’ neither white nor black, slave nor free—violates the logic of the institution that produced it and therefore must be suppressed” (92). These indexes, “attempt[ing] broadly to control ‘black’ encroachments on ‘white’ identity, to fix racial identity as an absolute quantity with clear boundaries rather than on a continuum of gradations, one shading into another” (93), could not escape the paradox inherent in all versions of the racial-percentage hierarchies found in the United States, and in colonies like Haiti (where the French were especially exhaustive in their enumerations).¹³

In this light, the resolution of the novel’s plot gains new significance. However thoroughly Pudd’head’s own scientific practices undermine the stability of racial/social classifications, the plot is not resolved by his discovery. After the crib-swap revelation, the lawyers descend into crisis—not over a murder or a slave taking an aristocrat’s place, but because there has been an accounting error:

[T]he creditors came forward, now, and complained that inasmuch as through an error for which *they* were in no way to blame the false heir was not inventoried at that time with the rest of the property, great wrong and loss had thereby been inflicted upon them. They rightly claimed that “Tom” was lawfully their property and had been so for eight years; that

they had already lost sufficiently in being deprived of his services during that long period, and ought not to be required to add anything to that loss; that if he had been delivered up to them in the first place, they would have sold him and he could not have murdered Judge Driscoll[.]

(“Conclusion”)

Pudd’head’s failure to translate his scientific prowess into performances which inspire replication and dissemination blunts the impact of his detection. Instead, his revelation’s radically counter-institutional value lapses into turmoil over accounting—a form of enumeration whose cultural potency we will see dissected in McCarthy. The authority of accounting to outbalance Wilson’s disruption of Dawson’s Landing overrides even the conviction and expected life-imprisonment for murder—the bottom line being “not that he had really committed the murder, the guilt lay with the erroneous inventory.”¹⁴

The now-racialized Tom can only receive a punishment that balances the books: “Everybody granted that if ‘Tom’ were white and free it would be unquestionably right to punish him—it would be no loss to anybody; but to shut up a valuable slave for life—that was quite another matter” (“Conclusion”). Tom’s shift into identified blackness entails an immediate, unquestioned transition onto the pages of creditors’ books, belying the disastrous implications of Tom’s racial “passing.” If “The trial thus bears witness to the anguished tangle of contradictions surrounding the slave system, and, further, to the strange fact that while these contradictions expose themselves in the legal and linguistic

fictions of slave society, they also keep that world from falling apart under their weight” (Gillman, “Sure Identifiers” 101), then the capacity of the creditors’ ledgers to elide Tom as actor, citizen, and even person—all in a single stroke—becomes the means for restoring racial hierarchies disrupted by Wilson’s antithetical index. This provides a further critical distinction between Pudd’head and Hank Morgan. Whereas Morgan’s enumerations of the scientific, technological, and rational tenets of “civilization” simply reconstruct 19th-century colonial ideals, Wilson’s fingerprint catalogue holds potential for a narrative so alien to Dawson’s Landing that its true meaning remains illegible to the townspeople even as they are forced to acknowledge its existence. Rather than articulating a replicable, enumerological roadmap for sociality, Wilson’s revelation instead forces the citizens of Dawson’s Landing to unwittingly perform the fragile and contradictory nature of their American landscape.¹⁵

Twain’s enthusiasm for revolutionary fingerprinting technology in *Pudd’head Wilson* exceeds the convenience of the plot device. We know that Twain’s writing of the novel coincided with his reading Francis Galton’s *Finger Prints*, which, he told his publisher in a letter, was “virgin ground, ... absolutely fresh, and mighty curious and interesting to everybody” (quoted in Gillman, “Sure Identifiers” 97). A later communication confirms that he had attempted to limit his license regarding the science, keeping himself “within the bounds of [Galton’s] ascertained facts” (quoted in Gillman, “Sure Identifiers” 97). Interestingly, however, Galton (scientifically prolific cousin of Charles Darwin), was also the person who coined the term “eugenics” in his 1883 book *Inquiries*

into *Human Faculty and Its Development*.¹⁶ Though Twain may or may not have read Galton's treatise on genetics and race, *Pudd'nhead*'s fingerprints (ironically and appropriately in an anti-enumerological context) undo racial and genetic hierarchies, destabilizing connections between the social and the biological.

Twain's use of science against itself—a trope coupling fascination with scientific practice and desire to use the index subversively—becomes increasingly evident in his later, more heavily science-fictional writings (like “The Great Dark” and “Three Thousand Years among the Microbes”), generally referred to as “dream tales.” These later stories, in tandem with “a development from the relatively light-hearted to the pessimistically philosophical” (Ketterer xvi), are often scathingly critical of American social constructions. Though they still frequently foreground satire, the dream tales lack the victoriousness and revelry attached to Twain's earlier socio-cultural critiques. Patricia Mandia has observed that they deploy “a satire that does not attempt to reform” (102), instead “emphasiz[ing] that life is empty and meaningless beneath the metaphysical, scientific, and religious systems that man tries to impose on it” (104). But, though bleak, “Great Dark” and “Microbes,” rather than expressing “a new species of doubt” (Walsh 21), retain the skepticism of scientific metastasis which informed *Connecticut Yankee* and *Pudd'nhead*, as well as Twain's anti-imperial non-fiction.¹⁷

Kathleen Walsh argues that Twain's break from “earlier modes of humor and realism” addresses “certain profoundly disturbing contemporary ideas” (19) by exposing “the ironies and infirmities of our sense of reality” (21). Twain

accomplishes this via scientific exploration. The characters that we inhabit as we undertake these bizarre and surreal journeys are themselves scientists—anthropologists attempting to craft, through their studies, a catalogue of findings that might elucidate “the human condition.” We have seen shades of this in *Connecticut Yankee*. Hank’s project is, first and foremost, the construction of civilization from a “tabula rasa” landscape, and his memory of the 19th century becomes the tool for writing and executing a catalogue of intellectual and engineering feats aggregating that civilization. For Mandia, in the dream tales, “Twain satirizes science and its antithesis, religion. Science and religion are examples of man’s vain attempts to impose order on the chaos of life” (114). And while the science/religion binary is useful, enumerology shows us that the scientific catalogue entails its own brand of theological cohesion, connecting disparate points to map something *believed* to be reality, even if actual knowledge of that reality will always be incomplete.

Twain’s unfinished stories “The Great Dark” and “Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes” are stylistically distinguished from their predecessors. Rather than being treated to somewhat disengaged views of scientific study, as we are with Hank’s sure-footed descriptions of rigging explosives or Pudd’nhead’s methodical collection of fingerprints, we descend, with the narrators, into bizarre worlds where nothing—time, space, proportion, causality—is guaranteed to cohere. Unlike Hank, characters (and readers) consciously will themselves into these “sci-fi” scenarios. The “Great Dark” narrator, for example, embraces the

terms of his voyage despite warnings from the Superintendent of Dreams that it will be “not altogether a holiday excursion” (“Dark” 83).

But the thrill of exploration in that story rapidly devolves into terror and disorientation as the “very foundations of knowledge dissolve away” (Gillman, “Dark Twins” 176). Instead of a brief jaunt into the interior microbiology of a water droplet, the narrator and crew are cast into a world of distorted temporality and increasing horror—where science and technology lose their bearings. As Mark Kosinski observes, the reader encounters “an inverted world, a clock-ridden world gone berserk, a place where man’s instruments have gone willy-nilly. Laws of nature are suspended so the possibility of making referential calculations is completely eliminated” (339). The terror, inscribed by an inability to self-locate within the slide, voices the insufficiency of almanacs and geographical accounts. Near the center of the story, Turner, the ship’s mate, disoriented and vainly searching for a means by which to navigate, says, “The Moon. She’s at the full—by the almanac she is. Why don’t *she* make a blur? Because there *ain’t* no moon” (“Dark” 98). He quickly expands on the futility:

[T]he world has come to an end. Look at it yourself. Just look at the facts. Put them together and add them up, and what have you got? No Sable island; no Greenland; no Gulf Stream; no day, no proper night; weather that don’t jibe with any sample known to the Bureau; animals that would start a panic in any menagerie, chart no more use than a horse-blanket, and the heavenly bodies gone to hell” (“Dark” 98).

Turner's listing of modes of enumeration—a sort of embedded commentary—invokes the compendium by which we define our relationship to space (and indeed reality itself), but to no avail. It is “a hostile universe where man is forever alien ... a world where man is doomed to drift in indefinite and centerless space” (Kosinski 339); no almanac, no chart of islands, and (recalling Borges' Chinese *Emporium*) no zoological catalogue—no list whatsoever—can begin to describe this voyage.

“Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes” skirts the near-Lovecraftian horrific tropes seen in “The Great Dark,” but it similarly “reduces” its narrator in order to “[play] with the psychological notion of ‘unseen worlds’ via the medium of the microscope and the unimaginably microscopic, even microbic, worlds it reveals” (Gillman, “Dark Twins” 172). Again, Twain is exploring narrative techniques that reach for immersion in scientific method—to enter rather than observe the microscope slide. Though the enveloping horror of “Great Dark” disappears from “Microbes,” the latter nevertheless continues to press “narrators [and readers] to infer rather than know their own reality” (174). And consistent with Twain's critique of methods constructing the scientific compendium, Gillman's wording (“to infer rather than know”) captures the inconclusive reality of empiricism—throwing suspicion on enumerological dissemination-as-truth (rather than inference) of those things subsumed into the catalogue.

On another level, “Microbes” (like *Connecticut Yankee*) satirizes anthropological study—whose methods and inflections mime the historical correlation between colonial practice and “studies” of the other. The story’s opening is an allegory of anthropological fieldwork, emphasizing the narrator’s exploration, examination, and immersion in his new “culture”: “I was soon interested in my surroundings, and eager to study them and enjoy them. I was peculiarly well equipped for these pleasures, for certain reasons: to wit, I had become instantly naturalized, instantly endowed with a cholera germ’s instincts, perceptions, opinions, ideals, ambitions, vanities, prides, affections and emotions; ... indeed, I out-natived the natives themselves” (“Microbes” 163). Employing the trope of the colonist “going native,” the microbe-narrator announces his qualifications, authenticating his study through ideas of experience and adaptability. Further, he perfects the anthropologist’s paradoxically simultaneous immersion and distance: “It will be perceived, now, that I could observe the germs from their own point of view. At the same time, I was able to observe them from a human being’s point of view, and naturally this invested them with an added interest for me” (163). The narrative division between human and non-human uses “germ” as a vehicle to literalize the de-humanization undergirding certain anthropological assumptions. And that the narrator’s specifically a cholera germ (and not some harmless variety of bacterium)—in “the blood of a hoary and mouldering old bald-headed tramp ... shipped to America by Hungary because Hungary was tired of him” (164)—points toward something off, something toxic about this type of study.¹⁸

In multiple ways, this narrator parallels anthropological modes Hank used in describing “white Indians,” and his narrative, like Hank’s, is based on a professional continuum between his original historical context and his new one: “On earth I was a scientist by profession, and I remained one after I was transformed into a microbe” (173). And many of the circumstances depicted in “Microbes” easily evaluate as more-or-less direct, satirical “studies” of Twain’s real-world politico-cultural climate. Particularly obvious is “the mighty Republic of Getrichquick, universally known as the greatest of all the democracies” (170), which shifts its policies from isolation and toward “Benevolent Assimilation,” annexing an archipelago inhabited by the “Hispaniola sataniensis” bacterium—“first ingeniously wrested from its owners, by the help of the unsuspecting owners themselves, then ... purchased from its routed and dispossessed foreign oppressors at a great price” (171). The narrator’s relentless enumerations of his findings bring satisfaction and notoriety. And he clearly fulfills the public role of the enumerologist: inducted “into scientific society” (173), heavily quoted in “the Universal Histories” (174), and highly regarded by microbial “civilization.”

But the seeming sincerity of (this) Huck’s scientific catalogue can’t evade its own absurdity. His astonishingly in-depth table of “Time-Equivalents,” attempting to classify the correlations between human and microbe time, brings about our disorientation as much as it does his—the translation of “microbe hour into its human equivalent ... shrinking and diminishing and wasting away” (178) even in the moment of its utterance. In the end, there are no answers even for the microbe who was once “the best mathematician in Yale” (178): “we live in a

strange and unaccountable world; our birth is a mystery, our little life is a mystery and a trouble, we pass and are seen no more; all is mystery, mystery, mystery” (182). The narrator cannot, finally, extract any deeper understanding from his tables and catalogues. He can only feebly enumerate his findings, and attempt to craft some narrative, however incomplete, about the “strange and unaccountable world.”

Taken in conjunction, the dream tales demonstrate potential falsities, not only of the social and racial narratives traditionally emanating from scientific findings, but of the empirical process itself. Even in these worlds, where one is as close as one can possibly be to the thing—the microscope, the creature in the blood—we find no certainty, no culmination.¹⁹ Without doubt, Twain was fascinated (and influenced) by science, and the disorientation of these late works is in no way a revolt against the *existence* of empiricism or its catalogues. But the ever-present skepticism foundational to Twain’s fiction does expose potential pitfalls of the enumerological reproduction of technological modernity, anthropological study, or racial difference; when figures like Hank Morgan or Mr. Edwards (or John Morgan Twain) take their grasp on the finite to indicate a broader hold on an infinite set of possibility, such skepticism intervenes to check enumerological elision.²⁰ By relinquishing the inherent power of enumerological speech, Twain suggests a hope for other modes, other possibilities of understanding. The instability of empirical compendia is itself “significant ... suggestive—irresistibly suggestive—insistently suggestive. It hints at the possibility that the procession of known and listed devourers and persecutors is

not complete. It suggests the possibility, and substantially the certainty, that man is himself a microbe.” Perhaps “his globe [is] a blood-corpuscule drifting with its shining brethren of the Milky Way down a vein of the Master and Maker of all things, Whose body, maybe,—glimpsed partwise from the earth by night, and receding and lost to view in the measureless remoteness of Space—is what men name the Universe” (“Microbes” 182).

Beyond Almanacs: Perverse Temporalities in Djuna Barnes

“You have been unwise enough to make a formula; you have dressed the unknowable in the garments of the known.” – Matthew O’Connor, *Nightwood*

In his introduction to Djuna Barnes’s most widely studied work *Nightwood*, T. S. Eliot remarks that *Nightwood* “is so good a novel that only sensibilities trained on poetry can wholly appreciate it” (xviii)—later adding that his awe of the novel has grown with each reading. But he also admits that “it took [him], with this book, some time to come to an appreciation of its meaning as a whole” (xvii), and many of his critical successors have found themselves similarly—or more thoroughly—confounded by its pervading darkness. Yet it’s exactly this textual fluidity—the openness to both interpretation and self-disruption—that has led to a rich array of readings concerning culture, sociality, gender, and identity. I discuss *Nightwood* (1936) as having been anticipated by its predecessor *The Ladies Almanack* (1928), which permits me to explore Barnes’s fascination with and manipulation of the culture of enumeration’s historical legacies, to interpret her work as antithetical to dominant enumerations of time exemplified by the genre of the almanac. Barnes’s highly sexualized and distortive aesthetic shapes an *anti*-enumerative language which refuses traditional connections between time and discipline. This chapter embraces Barnes’s obfuscations and uncertainties to capture ways in which her appropriation of this dominant, enumerated articulation of time is foundational to what I term her perverse enumerations. Perversity, of course, evokes anti-normative versions of

sexuality typical of Barnes's texts, which feature a range of gender non-conforming characters and eroticisms. But, more than this, it cathects an anti-enumerological spirit of negation working against traditional almanac time—temporality redeployed as a technology of simultaneous rupture and representation, which, however paradoxically, becomes *Nightwood*'s only means of imagining wholeness.

It may be hard for 21st-century readers to grasp the influence wielded by and through the almanac genre, but, like “newer” mediums, the almanac was steeped in the ideological imperatives of its day. We need look no further than Charles Knight, 19th-century British publisher and onetime superintendent of The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (a Borgesian title destined to set off Foucauldian alarms) for contemporary perspective on the almanac's normative potential:

An Almanac, rightly considered, is a text for the most amusing and instructive comment. An Almanac directs us to the observance of periods connected with our social duties;—an Almanac has relation to all the wonderful phenomena of the heavenly bodies;—an Almanac leads us to the consideration of the changes of the Seasons and to the Natural History of the Year; an Almanac has reference to the customs of our ancestors, which shed so rich a light over the whole history of their social arrangements; an Almanac directly or incidentally notices great Historical Events—or points out the areas which were rendered illustrious by the

lives of those who have given enduring impulses to the course of the world's thoughts and actions. ("The Monthly Almanack for January, 1839" 1)

For Knight, the almanac—more than a simple enumeration of events, seasons, and speculations—was a living document which molded itself to the contours of “great Historical Events,” national (and global) knowledge, celebrated lineages, and individual triumphs. Like the readers who would have scoured its pages, the almanac “incidentally” marked social and cultural movements from a distance; but its cataloguing function nevertheless concretized the importance of those shifts and underscored them for the reading audience.

The almanac of Knight's day was grounded in a tradition of practicality. As Brian Maidment has noted, “almanacs were a vital source of information within an agricultural society” (158). Yet almanacs were not limited to farming, for they would increasingly during the 19th century take on the importance of “the encyclopaedia, the newspaper or the current affairs magazine” (Maidment 169). Almanacs could never escape the fact that “in such a genre the topical was inevitably coeval with the political” (169). In this genre, publishers created an aggregation of factual data, and because almanacs were in effect periodicals, their regularly-scheduled alterations performed exactly the paradox we have already noted in the Ninth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; that is, the almanac gradually came to represent the completion of a “useful knowledge” even as it annually demonstrated that the desired shape of that knowledge was constantly in

flux. Knight observed this without irony in his 1828 *Companion to the British Almanac*:

[B]y annually varying the contents of this little work, a body of most important information may be gradually collected; -- and a record preserved of the most important features of the passing year. The conductors, therefore, beg to impress upon the purchasers of the Companion, that it is not a merely temporary work; and they entreat them to preserve it as the first of a Series, to be annually published ... as auxiliary to the great object of increasing the ability to acquire *Useful Knowledge*. (iv)

Knight's emphasis here is on the ever-changing almanac's permanence as "not merely a temporary work," and that tension between constant evolution and static authority generates strategies for marketing his project. The address is, after all, directed to "the purchasers of the Companion," and it's important to remember that the almanac's transition into an *urban* text precisely accompanies "the development of the almanac as a mechanism through which publishers ... sought to extend their brand image and capitalize on the emergence of mass readership among the lower and middle artisan classes" (Maidment 163). Managing this readership becomes both an economic and a political proceeding, selling the reading public essential tools for shaping itself into a form appropriate to evolving social and political climates.

In an American context, the most potent, and surely the most enduring, example of the almanac's drive to shape a public embodies another evolution of (or riff on) the genre and comes from none other than that figurehead of American exceptionalism and enumerology, Benjamin Franklin. While *Poor Richard's Almanack* is at least as much literary work as actual almanac, Franklin's decision to latch onto that genre indicates how profoundly he understood the mechanisms by which forms of knowledge and social configuration propagate. One of the beauties of the Almanac-as-genre was that its consumption was not limited to the literate. As Alan Houston notes,

Colonial books, pamphlets, and newspapers were not read silently by solitary readers; nor were they read once and then either shelved or discarded. Often, they were read and discussed out loud: in the home, on the street corner, in the tavern; and always they were shared, so that a single newspaper might be read by many people over a long period of time. As a consequence, the audience for a printed text was not restricted to those who were literate; many heard a text even though they could not read it. (81)

As a result, colonial texts were central to the creation of what Todd N. Thompson has termed the "congregation of readers" (451), an idea "rooted in colonial reading practices, which, like worship services, brought people together in public spaces and often transformed written text into oral performance" (453). Through

his involvement in the print business, Franklin would have known how efficiently single texts could diffuse ideology; and *Poor Richard's* conflation of humor/entertainment with thrift/industry calibrates to enhance the experience of the social, cultural, and economic reeducation of his reading public. As Lorraine Smith Pangle notes, "Franklin knew ... that if he held up the satisfaction of self-respect and liberty as the goal of self-improvement, no one would listen. So, in his unerring gift for persuasion, he promised his readers riches, and to induce them to swallow his prescriptions for wealth, he salts and peppers his advice with humor" (23).

Poor Richard's Almanac paints economic ideology as a moral imperative which, when exercised as prescribed, engenders social and economic individuation. Principles laid out in *Poor Richard's* pithy sayings are foundational to American ideals of self-making that persist even today, and his decision to deploy them in media which would be performed and shared, both publicly and privately, captures the potentiality inherent in the culture of enumeration. If forms of enumeration draw power from the ease with which they are reproduced and internalized, then Franklin's genius lies in choosing a medium which would result in, quite literally, a shared rehearsal of his ideological position. At the same time, his involvement in print culture's latent propagandism positions him, and the culture of enumeration, within Benedict Anderson's framework for national consciousness as an "imagined community."

For Anderson, the type of desired national consciousness embodied in Franklin's thought and work—to which print-capitalism is central—rises, in part,

out of the convergence of individuality and a national community which can only be imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them” (6). The emergence of national consciousness, as we understand it today, relied substantially on industrial printing’s clamant generalization (that is, delocalization and standardization) of particular ways of knowing—across spaces which would otherwise be unable to recognize their potential solidarity. To use Anderson’s example, newspaper readers subjected to the chance, tenuous, and finally imagined connections between printed local and world events would also operate with the security that they constructed those connections with “fellow-readers,” who, “through print, formed in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community” (44). Thompson’s “congregation of readers” marks print’s dissemination as a practice which exceeded an otherwise uneven distribution of literates. Benjamin Franklin’s strategic nationalistic practices, then, rely on enumeration’s facility for puissant condensation and simplification. They turn a primed public toward imagined reperformances of communal retention which make them “Americans”—while also urging that public to reify gendered and economic, though as-yet-nascent, definitions of “Americanness.”

While many of the sayings in *Poor Richard’s Almanack*—for example, “Industry pays debts, despair increases them”—channel to Franklin’s fixation on thrift and work-ethic as moral virtues, his instruction actually extends to aspects of sociality. Aphorisms including “A little house well fill’d, a little field well

till'd, a little wife well will'd, are great riches" and "Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one" fill out Franklin's conflation of success and decorum, demonstrating his desire not simply to urge specific forms of economic progress, but also to mold the entirety of colonial America's social code to his enumerologic. Christina Lupton appreciates the durability of *Poor Richard's* impact, noting that the almanac "promotes the policy of thrift and hard work for which Franklin is still best remembered and has secured aphorisms such as 'God helps them that help themselves,' and 'There are no Gains without Pains' their place in the American popular imagination" (472-73). Moreover, Franklin's work was critical in instituting and diffusing the fundamental sensation of citizenship to a pre-national body which had yet to fully realize its own cohesiveness, and which likely owes some of even its present "coherence" to Franklin's wit. Thompson sees Franklin's "attempt to foster in his readers—urban and rural; farming, laboring, and merchant—conceptualizations of themselves as citizens with collaborative agency (defined in opposition to those who refused to act to mobilize the masses in associative efforts for the greater good)" (455). But, while Thompson indicates that this goal took precedence over Franklin's specifics regarding "economic or cultural status" (455), the conceptualization of citizenship he references does not escape the fundamentally economic, and strictly masculine, character upon which it rests.

In her 1917 essay "The Mark on the Wall," Virginia Woolf observed the relationship between the almanac genre and the diffusion of a version of citizenship predicated on masculinized articulations of time: "the masculine point

of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency” (80).¹ For Woolf, *Whitaker's* embodies an inherently marginalizing enumeration of time which, even beyond molding our sense of temporality, instantiates an idea of sociality predicated on the enumeration of positionalities. “The Mark on the Wall” conveys how deeply ingrained the culture of enumeration’s absorption of and belief in the structures and strictures of almanac time are: “for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker’s Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York. Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows” (82). Any glimmer of hope we might take from the essay stems from Woolf’s nascent belief that, one day, almanac-time “will be laughed into the dustbin where phantoms go ... leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom—if freedom exists ...” (80), and we certainly see alternative forms of temporality emerge in novels like *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and, later, come to fruition in the opacity and anti-linearity of *The Waves*.

Such an understanding extends, within the Modernist era, beyond Woolf and to Djuna Barnes, who also specifically chose the almanac as a site of resistance against hegemonic conceptions of gender, sociality, and productivity.² Analyzing Barnes’s *The Ladies Almanack*, Julie Taylor sees the similarity to Woolf, contending that, like much of Woolf’s work, “*Ladies Almanack* refuses to privilege [the] singular ‘masculine point of view’” (717) critiqued in “The Mark

on the Wall.” In a fashion typical of Barnes, *Ladies Almanack* is a primarily disruptive text, and the decision to choose the almanac as its battleground signals that Barnes, too, intuited the historical importance of enumerated time to hegemony.³ Here, as in *Nightwood*, the language confuses, narratives become difficult to discern, and the project (while partially one we would now conceptualize as “queer”) can only present a “sapphic alterity that cannot apprehend nor articulate itself despite its queerly mythical surroundings” (Shin 31). Barnes’s decision to disrupt the almanac is itself a decision to disrupt an enumerated temporality designed to enforce normative identity politics. And while the characteristic flair of her perverse enumerations tempts us to consider her primarily as a modernist *avant-garde* artist pushing the boundaries of legibility, her aesthetic contribution is more than simply experimental expression; it performs the illegibility of a marginalized group, and the text’s failure to fully articulate that position is, at the same time, an articulation of that position.

Taylor has noted that “the almanac's calendrical aspect can be used to trouble hegemonic conceptions of the relationship between time, nature, and reproduction” (726), and *Ladies Almanack*’s secondary title, “showing their Signs and their tides; their Moons and their Changes; the Seasons as it is with them; their Eclipses and Equinoxes; as well as a full Record of diurnal and nocturnal Distempers, written & illustrated by a lady of fashion,” corroborates this idea. Barnes’s transposition of the almanac’s enumerative mechanisms—the gauging of tides, the changing of seasons coupled with the historical function of the “full Record”—onto the feminine (and particularly the female body and corresponding

cycles of menstruation) literalizes the otherwise masked impositions of normativity.⁴ On another level, it delegitimizes the quack medical discourse included in many almanacs of the time.⁵ By creating an almanac which mockingly treats the human body as the thing to be enumerated, inscribed, and thus policed, Barnes redeploys an otherwise antagonistic form of knowledge production as a means to Woolf's "illegitimate" freedoms.⁶

While Barnes's choice of "almanac" might seem only an amusing way of offsetting the strangeness of her texts, the nominal appropriation of the genre indicates a historical understanding of its potential.⁷ Barnes's texts are notable for their depictions of oracular figures. In *Nightwood*, Matthew O'Connor acts as a sort of seer of the underworld for the novel's other characters, and in *Ladies Almanack* Dame Evangeline Musset's oracular tendencies enable the short book's satire of contemporary conversations about the female body and "the lesbian." Furthermore, Musset "brings into question the stable, assured position of knowledge occupied by the self-appointed prophet Masie Tuck-and-Frill" (Taylor 717), substituting a distorted iteration of the oracle—which might finally illuminate the illegible. In popular culture, prognostication was, of course, central to almanacs. According to Maidment, "prophetic almanacs remained the most interesting, and probably the most widely circulated, of the many genres well on into the [nineteenth] century" (161).⁸ Taylor, too, comments on "the prophetic or prognostic tendencies of the astrological almanac, tendencies predicated on the belief in a progressive, linear chronology and in the authority of knowledge claims" (726). Both *Ladies Almanack* and *Nightwood* consciously eschew even

passing resemblance to linearity and straightforward, progressive chronology, and Barnes's anti-enumerological disruption of that function directly counters the oracular power of enumeration itself—that ability to ensure a future by constructing its readers' participation in the present.⁹

Historically, the almanac's development was subject to continuing “anxiety about the need to represent [itself] as a rational, or even scientific, genre” (Maidment 162). And this tension between practicality/rationality and prognostication defines Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, where the practicality, industriousness, and wit that appeal(ed) to so many readers facilitate what is, in fact, an oracular performance. Richard Saunders' aphorisms appear as simple “truths,” but we have already seen that Franklin's project assumes a futural tone to shape citizenship and to concretize his vision of virtue. Like an astrological almanac, *Poor Richard* promises a future adhering to his vision; and (perhaps unlike the astrological almanac) a brief examination of our present moment seems to support his claim. Beyond this, Richard successfully captures the power of the enumerologist's performance we have observed elsewhere—most notably in the preface to the 1758 edition. Michael Drexler summarizes:

Poor Richard tells of coming upon a large number of people gathered to buy goods at an auction. Waiting impatiently for the opening of the sale, the people begin to grumble about common frustrations and bemoan the “Badness of the Times” and the “heavy Taxes.” Richard watches astride his horse as Father Abraham, a “plain clean old Man,” intercedes to quell

the mounting unrest. Admitting that “the Taxes are indeed very heavy,” he qualifies this assent to popular opinion with a speech he credits to Poor Richard, the yet unobserved listener. Abraham exhorts the crowd to consider their moral failings “Taxes the Commissioners cannot ease” and accuses them of idleness, pride, folly, and sloth. Poor Richard reports to his readers that it is pleasing to hear his words quoted in public and credited to him. The anecdote gives proof not only “that my Instructions were regarded, but discovered likewise some respect for my Authority” (59-60).

The nominally humble “Poor” Richard takes great pleasure in citing the persuasive power of Father Abraham’s performance of *his* speech, and the satisfaction he derives from Abraham’s emulation is not merely satisfaction at seeing others agree with him. Richard gains “Authority” by creating speech designed to be repeated, spread, and performed in public spaces. According to Drexler, “authority here functions in at least two senses. It both reasserts Richard’s claim as the preeminent arbiter of morality and alludes to his status as a writer, the author of the *Almanacks*” (60). As we have seen, Franklin, too, acts as “arbiter of morality” in his enumerations of virtue, and Franklin’s oft-quoted writing generates the repetition so pleasing to Richard Saunders. In a different form of enumerative prognostication, Franklin crafts his legacy through these repetitions—his pithy enumerations centering him at the heart of American popular discourse even as he aids in defining the terms of that discourse, as the

culture of enumeration fulfills the prophecies laid out in the commandments of industry.

Suggesting that “all Ladies should carry [this *Almanack*] about with them, as the Priest his Breviary, as the Cook his Recipes, as the Doctor his Physic, as the Bride her Fears, and as the Lion his Roar” (4), Barnes understands the power of these performances—turning them against themselves by giving us seers, oracles, prophets whose visions fit into no known paradigm.¹⁰ Hers, as we have seen, is an enumeration of disruption: the characteristic perversity of her texts, along with “the nonsensical nature of certain passages, suggests that Barnes does not wish to replace the old ... paradigm with a new one: instead, it is the stock ... definitions themselves that must be discarded” (Ray 97).¹¹ While Chelsea D. Ray is here speaking primarily of gender definitions, Barnes’s tenacious disruption of normative models reaches past gender and sexuality and to the perception of time, place, and identity:

May

Hath 31 days SWEET May stood putting on her last venereal Touches
while Patience Scalpel held forth in that divine and ethereal Voice for
which she was noted, the Voice of one whose Ankles are nibbled by the
Cherubs, while amid the Rugs Dame Musset brought Doll Furious to a
certainty.

“What”, said Patience Scalpal [sic], “can you women see in each other? Where is the Parting of the Ways and the Horseman that hunts? Where”, she reflected, “there is Prostitution and Drunkenness, there is bound to be Immorality, or I do not count the Times, but what is this?” (15)

Daniela Caselli touches on this anti-enumerative tendency in her analysis of *Ladies Almanack*'s secondary title, referencing the title's use of “showing” (the signs, tides, etc.): “the almanac is supposed to show, but the idea of reality implicit in the verb is questioned: what is being shown are signs (not facts) and changes (tides, moons, changes); even seasons are not stable (hence the purpose of the almanac) but depend on ‘how it is with them.’ Hardly a book of facts, this almanac is nevertheless supposed to be a ‘full record,’ a claim soon challenged by the term ‘distempers’” (472). Barnes's “almanac” follows the tradition of listing its contents and purposes on the title page, but, even as the text commences, the genre's precepts are being undermined.

Ironically, the conventional passage of time has created an analogous disconnection for Franklin's own *Poor Richard*. Original printings of that text also list the contents of traditional almanacs and do, in fact, include information about the weather/seasons and astrological signs in the way one would expect. Eventually, however, printings of *Poor Richard's Almanack* (like the ones we can buy today) leave behind the date-specific calendrical information, implying that mere lists of Richard's proverbs constitute an almanac—a phenomenon by which time has itself exposed the truer intentions of Franklin's calendar. Barnes's

Ladies Almanack follows a kindred pattern (albeit subversively) by using the crucible of a historical moment to expose the hegemonic heritage of almanac time. Ery Shin remarks that “for Barnes, rewriting the canon subverts certain male-rooted traditions by bastardizing their conservatism” (26). And Barnes’s fascination with dominant-order-enumerated time carries over into *Nightwood*—through both the novel’s tortuous temporal obscurities (regarding day, night, past, present) and its bastardization of astrological prognostication as it attempts to envision an impossible futurity.

Referring to Lee Edelman’s concept of “reproductive futurism,” Taylor notes, “Barnes’s *Almanack* ... implicitly invites a comparison between the discredited discourse of prophecy and that of authoritative modern claims that make a similar investment in the idea of the future” (717); and one cannot discuss *Nightwood* without recognizing that queer theory has produced some of the novel’s most productive recent criticism. In “Queer Texts, Bad Habits, and the Issue of a Future,” for example, Teresa de Lauretis describes the narrative’s “unmanageable excess of affect” (244): “[T]he text inscribes in the narrative the figure of sexuality as an undomesticated, unsymbolizable force, not bound to objects and beyond the purview of the ego, a figure of sexuality as, precisely, drive” (245). De Lauretis’ position as an “anti-social” queer theorist is indebted to Edelman’s reading of Lacan, which names, as queerness, “the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order” (25) in order to understand the ways in which the Freudian/Lacanian “death drive” persistently threatens the dissolution of identity and sociality (“the Symbolic order”), “tear[ing] the fabric of Symbolic

reality as we know it, unraveling the solidity of *every* object, including the object as which the subject necessarily takes itself” (25). For de Lauretis, *Nightwood’s* “unmanageable quantity of affect” inextricably links to “the shattering effects” that the death drive “has on the ego” (246-47), and the text becomes a figuration for queerness as “the inarticulable surplus that dismantles the subject from within” (Edelman 9). It is precisely through the illegible sexualities of *Nightwood’s* characters—their respective iterations of un-enumerable perversity—that this is accomplished. And we can extend de Lauretis’ methodology by noticing ways in which Barnes’s anti-futurism intersects with anti-enumerative disruptions of temporality and language that challenge figurations of the future embodied in prophetic functions of the almanac genre.

Following the language of “the remainder,” Caroline Whitley identifies the text’s “stylistic and linguistic excess” (85). Though verbal extravagance calls to mind a number of Modernist writers, as well as later writers like Cormac McCarthy, Barnes mobilizes a specific methodological discontinuity. Contrasting James Joyce with Barnes, Whitley says, “Whereas Joyce operates on the level of the word, and vertically piles up plural meanings for words, Barnes instead operates on the level of the image, and constructs sentences of multiple, discontinuous images which seem to digress from rather than to clarify a point” (89). Alan Singer uses a similar phrasing: “Barnes’s metaphors ‘shatter’ the contextual fields into which they emerge by a strategy of elaborate imagistic digression” (69). Barnes’s technique of layering disjointed images engenders a kind of false listing. The monologues of characters like Matthew O’Connor

resemble enumerative, point-by-point speech, but their refusal to fully cohere strands the reader within a broken narrative. This anti-enumerative approach pushes readers to reexamine assumed narratives within enumerological rhetoric—creating a space for critiquing prognosticative performances which usually go unchallenged.

As an example, picture the grotesquely oracular Dr. Matthew O'Connor's speech to Nora in the chapter "Watchman, What of the Night?":

We look to the East for a wisdom that we shall not use—and to the sleeper for the secret that we shall not find. So, I say, what of the night, the terrible night? The darkness is the closet in which your lover roosts her heart, and that night-fowl that caws against her spirit and yours, dropping between you and her the awful estrangement of his bowels. The drip of your tears is his implacable pulse. Night people do not bury their dead, but on the neck of you, their beloved and waking, sling the creature, husked of its gestures. And where you go, it goes, the two of you, your living and her dead, that will not die; to daylight, to life, to grief, until both are carrion. (95)

Here, geography ("East") and body ("sleeper") become conflated, and "darkness" mutates mid-sentence into a "night-fowl," whose offering is not the hoped-for secret, but "the awful estrangement of his bowels." In the next sentence, its excrement (droppings), merge with "the drip of ... tears," and shift from lacrimal

excretion to sanguine incretion (“pulse”). “The creature” (presumably the night/night-fowl), “husked of its gestures,” threatens the loss of its own already obscured signification, and introduces the disjunction of “her dead, that will not die” and “until both are carrion.” The asynchrony of these images, though generally unreckonable, doesn’t “husk” all potential meaning “of its gestures”: difficulty is not reducible to illegibility.¹² As O’Connor himself says, “I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it” (104). At bottom, the associations of images evoke what Kate Armond calls “a sense of inevitable fall and ruin, and a quality of melancholy and hopelessness” (852). More than that, they speak to one of the novel’s central problematics—the perceived impossibility of fully articulating marginalized positions. Because this problematic eludes the language available to Barnes, the novel’s project relies on the textures of O’Connor’s negative prognostics.

Beneath the novel’s queer interrogations lies a deeper interrogation of knowledge as such—the more general discourse of dominant language that O’Connor’s monologues, however briefly, interrupt. And thinking in these terms reminds us of the novel’s form—an anti-enumerological digression of images attempting to cohere in spite of themselves. Whitley has suggested that, throughout the text, Robin Vote “remains an enigma, never quite coming into focus as a person, because the images which Barnes uses to portray her never quite add up, but seem instead to be pointing beyond themselves to an unknown and unknowable referent” (90). *Nightwood* proposes an alternative to the logic of aggregation that is so foundational to the almanac genre, and suggests instead an

anti-enumerative linguistics by which parts and whole cannot intersect on any “logical” plane.

Structurally the novel is episodic, composed primarily of a series of encounters with “Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor” (87), and it is through the Doctor, “a man with a prehistoric memory” (173) whose “melancholy ... ha[s] no beginning or end” (117), that the events tend to be interpreted. “Prehistoric memory” counters constructed histories enabled by the almanac’s contents and popularity (and supported by almanac enthusiasts like Knight), and the Doctor’s obscene prognostications twist the enumerologist’s Franklinesque moral implications. The novel’s episodic and monologic dislocations have led Sharon Spencer to claim that “there is absolutely no explanation of surprising or even bizarre events or relationships” (41). Similarly, Joseph Frank concludes that the novel’s chapters “are like searchlights, probing the darkness each from a different direction,” but still senses that they ultimately join in “illuminating the same entanglement of the human spirit” (438). While the obvious structural fracturings, coupled with anti-enumerological stylistic and rhetorical innovations (in a textual *ménage à trois*), threaten to further evacuate the possibility of *Nightwood*’s cohesion, in actuality structural perversion works with its companions for the sake of a chaotic aggregation which *suggests* meaning even as it refuses to stabilize it.

In *The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation*, Louis F.

Kannenstine expresses this possibility: “The poetic nature of the imagery [in *Nightwood*] is evident ... in the monologues of O'Connor in which images and

epigrams seem to pour chaotically forth but are actually linked by a sense of intuitive order” (96). And as if pressing the limits of this essential “intuitive order,” Ahmed Nimeiri’s “Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* and the Experience of America” finds that

The book may lack logical development, yet its parts are bound together by the thought and meaning that its story only insinuates but that come out more clearly in the speeches and conversations. Barnes concentrates on ideas and develops them carefully and in such a manner that the novel reads like an argument that moves from one chapter to the next achieving coherence gradually. (102-03)

To be sure, extracting meaning from the novel depends on our willingness to absorb its full impact. And Nimeiri’s phrasing, “reads like an argument,” supposes that *Nightwood* adopts a type of a-logical (or even anti-logical) development as it reaches for meaning. That is, its form meanders, shocks, baffles, but nevertheless deploys that ostensible disorder in the name of an alternate and abrasive way of knowing. Here, the anti-enumerative seeks not simply the dissolution of order as a concept; it undoes the existing order and its modalities, attempting to summon new modes of discourse from that chaos of alterity.

“Speeches and conversations” become *Nightwood*’s structural and rhetorical sites of articulate disorder, anchored by Matthew O’Connor, the self-

proclaimed “god of darkness” (134) and intermediary between the characters and “the fury of the night” (92). As Charles Baxter observes—drawing on one of the Doctor’s several self-imposed titles—he is reminiscent of Dante, before whom “the whole cosmos stands revealed” (1178). Figuring oracularity, O’Connor instantiates the visionary who critiques existence from multi-gender perspectives. And Philip Herring points out in his biography of Barnes, “[I]t is Matthew O’Connor, Barnes’s Tiresias figure, who, since he has lived as both man and woman, is condemned to see all and explain all in the terrible world that *Nightwood* evokes” (210). But the Doctor’s gender is not nearly so straightforward. Unlike Tiresias, who, to emphasize Herring’s tense, “*has* lived as both man and woman” at separate times, O’Connor disturbs the trope by “simultaneously” inhabiting both genders.¹³

Incalculably, in “Watchman, What of the Night?” O’Connor tells Nora that seeing an encounter between Jenny and Robin was “more than a boy like me (who am the last woman left in this world, though I am the bearded lady) could bear” (107). Transitioning, in a fraction of a sentence, from “boy” to “woman” to “bearded lady,” the Doctor makes clear that his gender defies representation. Later, in “Go Down, Matthew,” he says, “I stand here ... knowing I am not what I thought I was, a good man doing wrong, but the wrong man doing nothing much[.] ... I’m an old worn out lioness, a coward in my corner” (172). Whatever he may find himself to be at any given juncture, one cannot aggregate the Doctor’s claims in order to finally stabilize his gender-identity: his speech rearticulates the Tiresian trope, only to subvert it at every turn. Nimeiri notices

this in passing: “O’Connor’s Tiresias-like character is an appropriation to modern experience and a vulgarization of the ancient seer” (111). Such “vulgarization” suggests an alternative prognostication which might, in the end, produce cultural emulations free from the dominant modes of temporality enumerated in texts like *Poor Richard*. The Doctor *perverts* the traditional oracular figure (literally and structurally), enabling anti-historical, anti-enumerological expressions of the temporal, social, and existential positions of *Nightwood*’s characters.

In “A Story beside(s) Itself: The Language of Loss in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*,” Victoria L. Smith, too, acknowledges that the Doctor “often acts as a guide for the reader and for other characters in the ‘dark wood’ of this novel” (197). While playing into O’Connor-as-Tiresias, “guide” also resonates with his status as a perversion of Christ—a failed figure of the savior. The attempted salvation of other characters is a burden that he seems to carry from some sense of duty: “hear me, Heaven! I’ve done and been everything that I didn’t want to be or do” (172). O’Connor refers to himself as “a fisher of men”—debasement of the phrase by adding “and my gimp is doing a *saltarello* over every body of water to fetch up what it may” (104). He “narrates perverse, erotic . . . stories to his listeners” (Winkiel 8), often verging on what we might call the “perverse parable,”¹⁴ where analogic form is preserved, but lessons—odd as they are—become couched in the language of obscene prognostication. As with the Christian parable, these stories function (albeit somewhat dementedly) as pedagogical tools, but their lessons impart knowledge of the inscrutable night, depravity, filth, etc. For example, O’Connor relates a story of “Nikka,” a black man “who used to fight the bear in

the *Cirque de Paris*” (19). Seeing Nikka “tattooed from head to heel with all the *ameublement* of depravity” (19)—the word “Desdemona” on his penis—the Doctor “asked him why all this barbarity; he answered he loved beauty and would have it about him” (20). The Doctor’s account of the *Cirque* recalls P.T. Barnum; but while the African subject’s presence in Paris carries the history of European globalization, Nikka manages to express his own illegibility and dislocation in ways impossible within the context of Barnum’s enumerological showmanship. Instead, the circus in *Nightwood*—though only fleetingly seen—is a kind of sanctuary for the marginalized where illegibility rather than power takes center stage.

As seer for the lost souls of the novel, the sexually bivalent Dr. Matthew O’Connor explicitly rests his anti-enumerology on a subversive understanding of history and temporality: he is the seemingly all-knowing scholar of “the ‘manifestations of [their] time’” (*Nightwood* 78). In the chapter “Where the Tree Falls,” Felix, having once hoped to ascertain a remedy for the modern *malaise*, tells O’Connor, “Once ... I wanted, as you, who are aware of everything, know, to go behind the scenes, back-stage as it were, to our present condition, to find, if I could, the secret of time” (129). Similarly, the novel’s first chapter, “Bow Down,” recounts events that have initiated the fall of the house of Volkbein—a Jewish line turned Roman Catholic fake-aristocrat thanks to the “patron,” Guido (Felix’s father), whose “saddest and most futile gesture of all had been his pretence to a barony” (5). Guido’s “remorseless homage to nobility” (5), a “preoccupation” subsequently reenacted by Felix, performs the futural

reproduction upon which the social relies as the barony passes from father to son. But from the outset, this “preoccupation” pays “remorseless homage” to the false versions of lineage and sociality embedded in almanac time. As Smith understands, “Bow Down” sets the stage for the novel’s universalization of the insufficiency of “history”: “The chapter ... implies that we can understand the individual losses experienced by Felix, Nora, and Dr. O’Connor only in the context of historical loss—the loss of ... history, identity, and culture” (196). Smith considers this “a loss of access to history, to language, and to representation in general for those consigned to the margins of culture because of their gender, sexuality, religion, or color” (194-95); still, while abjected groups circulate throughout the novel, limiting these losses to those collectives is reductive. Rather, loss—particularly loss of both identity and ability to reproduce sociality—constitutes the historical moment hypothesized by the novel’s rupturing of enumerological temporality: “The modern child has nothing left to hold to, or, to put it better, he has nothing to hold with” (*Nightwood* 43).

O’Connor, “everywhere at the wrong time and ... now become anonymous” (89), effectively unravels historicity itself by speaking of and for multiple temporalities. His prognostications, energized by a different understanding of Felix’s mantra, “to pay homage to our past is the only gesture that also includes the future” (43), inevitably assume the language of obscenity: “In the acceptance of depravity the sense of the past is most fully captured. What is a ruin but Time easing itself of endurance? Corruption is the Age of Time. It is the body and the blood of ecstasy, religion and love” (125). The rhetoric of

perversion—anti-enumerological because anti-almanac—textures O’Connor’s “prehistoric memory” and enables the deviant prophecies forging *Nightwood’s* temporal alterity.

Whitley has explored the novel’s vulgarized history through its excremental vocabulary. In *Nightwood*, she says, “history itself is figured as a waste product, ejected by the peristalsis of a nation’s forward movement in time” (81). For the novel’s characters, the problem of “reading” history becomes the difficulty of embracing filth. As O’Connor says, “Destiny and history are untidy; we fear memory of that disorder” (126). To navigate “the present condition,” the characters must enter into an uncomfortable relation to time—not Felix’s unidirectional looking-backward, but Matthew O’Connor’s untidy multi-temporality. History’s “messiness” adheres to the depravity of the night: “for the night has been going on for a long time” (88). “*La nuit effroyable!*” (88) opens onto a historical continuum of perversion which imagines a “proper relationship to history” (Whitley 96). In “Watchman, What of the Night?” Matthew asks Nora, “Have you thought of the night, now, in other times, in foreign countries—in Paris? When the streets were gall high with things you wouldn’t have done for a dare’s sake, and the way it was then[,] ... and everything gutters for miles and miles, and a stench to it that plucked you by the nostrils and you were twenty leagues out!” (87-88). This past has no idealized “canopied bed of a rich spectacular crimson, the valance stamped with the bifurcated wings of the House of Hapsburg, the feather coverlet and envelope of satin” (3)—the fantasized past

of the Volkbein family—to stand in for the constructed pasts or lineages enumerated in Charles Knight’s almanacs.

O’Connor points specifically to the night “in Paris”—facilitating our thinking about the relationships among history, nationality, and identity as they evanesce in the novel. Contesting assertions that it does not speak directly to American modernity, Nimeiri argues that “*Nightwood* is primarily concerned with ‘the experience of America’ and that its real achievement is in expressing an original though dark and desperate vision of this experience” (100). He continues: “The major characters, with the exception of Felix, are American and their Americanness is not incidental but the hallmark of their personalities and the aspect that explains their actions and relations” (101). While Nimeiri’s underlying suggestion (that non-American novels lack similar temporal and existential crises) might overreach, *Nightwood* indeed harshly critiques American identity, and figures “innocence [as] the essence of the American character” (101)—epitomized in the novel’s description of Nora:

She was known instantly as [an American]. Looking at her, foreigners remembered stories they had heard of covered wagons; animals going down to drink; children’s heads, just as far as the eyes, looking in fright out of small windows, where in the dark another race crouched in ambush; with heavy hems the women becoming large, flattening the fields where they walked; God so ponderous in their minds that they could stamp out the world with him in seven days. (56)¹⁵

Barnes's distortive appropriation of sympathetic Western images is critical to her anti-historical project, and the inability to locate any innocence whatsoever in the novel's "*nuit effroyable*" bars the possibility of taking those palliative images seriously.

On its face, American "innocence" rests on a "New World" void of history and disgusted by the deep-rooted history of Europe and its associated untidiness:

The French have made a detour of filthiness—Oh, the good dirt! Whereas you are of a clean race, of a too eagerly washing people, and this leaves no road for you. The brawl of the Beast leaves a path for the Beast. You wash your brawl with every thought, with every gesture, with every conceivable emollient and *savon*, and expect to find your way again. A Frenchman makes a navigable hour with a tuft of hair, a wrenched *bretelle*, a rumpled bed. The tear of wine is still in his cup to catch back the quantity of its bereavement; his *cantiques* straddle two backs, night and day. (91)

For O'Connor, the American's urge to "sanitize" (Whitley 96) history has, as he says elsewhere, "washed him too clean for identification. The Anglo-Saxon has made the literal error; using water, he has washed away his page" (*Nightwood* 96). Put differently, almanac time's sanitized enumerations deny the truth of

disorder, the necessary detour: “To be utterly innocent . . . would be to be utterly unknown, particularly to oneself” (147).¹⁶

Interplays of “innocence” and “experience” recall another formidable literary enumerator (or anti-enumerator), William Blake—whose chaotic, numbered proverbs more directly challenged *Poor Richard’s* enumerological wisdom.¹⁷ In Blake’s “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” “Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate” give rise to “what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason[.] Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell” (plate 3). For Blake, disruptive “Energy” resisting “passive . . . Reason” formulates self-consciousness, self-knowing. His drive to subvert order dovetails with O’Connor’s further radicalized terms: “The evil and the good know themselves only by giving up their secret face to face. The true good who meets the true evil . . . learns for the first time how to accept neither; the face of the one tells the face of the other the half of the story that both forgot” (147). The Blakean echoes may be unsurprising, since much experimental Modernism simulates Blake’s disruption of ratiocination via imaginative work. Wallace Stevens, for example, generates an equivalent opposition, aesthetically merging “imagination” and “reality” (“things as they are” [25]) to create “a new reality” (22), and the disruptive saturation of imagery in Hart Crane’s *The Bridge* follows a comparable logic. This is to say that Modernism’s experimental aesthetic often addresses the “present condition[s]” of its genesis—what Stevens terms “the pressure of reality” (22) specific to the moment. More than Stevens or Crane, however, Barnes joins

Blake in writing against “proverbial” hegemonics—counteracting the “moral imperatives” inherent in enumerological performance.

Nightwood's embrace of the anti-enumerative productively corrupts our relation to historicity—and the futural—as these “imperatives” dissolve. Following O'Connor, if one ascends into “the tree of night,” disavowing daylight discourses of practicality and dominant reason, one will experience a degree of healing—becoming part of a vast and pre-historic tradition that offers new perspective on both the individual's identity and his/her place in the world/history. He vows that the person who comprehends the night “can trace himself back by his sediment, vegetable and animal, and so find himself in the odour of wine in its two travels, in and out, packed down beneath an air that has not changed its position during that strategy” (91).

But, of course, O'Connor's monologues fall on deaf ears. As the anti-enumerologist, he can embody almanac time's antithesis, but the opacity of his monologues forecloses the emulation inspired by *Poor Richard* or Charles Knight. This profoundly reinforces the novel's negativity, and evidences the gnawing problematic: that if he is to escape the magnetic force of enumerological language, O'Connor must speak in tongues undesirable and perhaps even irreproducible. As the novel concludes, potential for some alternate, non-enumerological access to temporality remains unrealized. Robin, having retreated to a chapel in the final chapter, devolves into a “bark[ing] ... crawling” beast (179)—a disintegration that “mirror[s] the dynamics of Robin and Nora's torrid courtship, as well as indicate[s] Robin's descent back into the state of 'nightbeast”

(Faltejskova 124). The Doctor's call to action is answered only with grotesque, bestial circuses that "[attract] most of *Nightwood's* principal characters" (Winkiel 20), and the world of *Nightwood* does not emerge from "*La nuit effroyable!*"—the dreadful night. "Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor" (87)—for whom, as for Dante Alighieri, "the whole cosmos stands revealed"—though he has "done and been everything that [he] didn't want to be or do," can only end the novel in collapse. "[E]xceedingly drunk" (174), he falls asleep, signifying that he has (at least for this moment) become almost, like Robin (during her wanderings), "something dormant" (70); he is crushed under a weight of futility "as heavy as a truck horse" (175)—and from the depths of the night-wood: "*nothing, but wrath and weeping*" (175).

In the last analysis, "the pressure of reality" to which Barnes responds extends even beyond her important critiques of queerness and identity. Barnes's understanding that marginalization stems largely from an oft-invisible (but always treacherous) relationship to history/time underscores the import of pressuring enumerative mechanisms like the almanac and also the popular conceptions that propagate them. Her texts grasp the historical collation of time and morality. Eliot's introduction speaks to this: "In the Puritan morality that I remember, it was tacitly assumed that if one was ... intelligent, practical and prudent in not violating social conventions, one ought to have a happy and 'successful' life. Failure was due to some weakness or perversity peculiar to the individual; but the decent man need have no nightmares" (xxi)—precisely the mode of sociality espoused by Benjamin Franklin. Against the much-loathed (by Modernists)

“Puritan morality,” Barnes’s literary work, rather than signifying nothing “beyond the fact of its own existence” (Whitley 85), figures that failure precisely as the model of abnegation necessary for rupturing the dominant order—or sociality. As O’Connor says, “the demolishing of a great ruin is always a fine and terrifying spectacle” (151). And if, after reading, we, too, refused to “[dress] the unknowable in the garments of the known” (145), we might just find ourselves agreeing with “Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O’Connor”: “Bend down the tree of knowledge and you’ll unroost a strange bird” (147).

Scrupulous Accountings: Cormac McCarthy's Ledgers

“Deployed upon that plain they moved in a constant elision, ordained agents of the actual dividing out the world which they encountered and leaving what had been and what would never be alike extinguished on the ground behind them. ... Above all else they appeared wholly at venture, primal, provisional, devoid of order. Like beings provoked out of the absolute rock and set nameless and at no remove from their own loomings to wander ravenous and doomed and mute as gorgons shambling the brutal wastes of Gondwanaland in a time before nomenclature was and each was all.” – *Blood Meridian*

Cormac McCarthy's fiction demands, perhaps more than anything else, that its readers question ideas foundational to America's cultural mythologies and Westward expansion—in both the domestic frontier sense and that of the formation of the transnational “global West,” linked inextricably to Manifest Destiny. But what is peculiar in McCarthy, and what has yet to be systematically addressed in criticism, is the way in which individual and national acts of self-making are persistently articulated as a discourse of enumeration. Specifically, McCarthy chooses the figure of the ledger as a tool through which space and subject are delimited and held accountable by the nationalistic imperatives driving novels like *Blood Meridian*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *The Road*. As will be seen, much of the excess and brutality of McCarthy's work stems from the irreconcilable struggle between what can be accounted for—set down in individual or cultural ledgers as the known, the manageable—and what evades description, understanding, and enumeration as the unknowable, the threat, the remainder.¹ In doing so, McCarthy structures his body of work as a performance

of the culture of enumeration and its elisions. The characters that seek to tame and exploit the landscapes and peoples of their various frontiers look to the ledger, the list, the collection, as a means of manifesting their own individual destinies or, to take *No Country for Old Men*, reinforcing tenuous configurations of social and cultural order predicated on previously enumerated individual and national acts of self-making that have become all but invisible.

Given the tone of McCarthy's work, it comes as no surprise that critical readings have addressed the role of seemingly chaotic violence in his texts—many centering on the daunting excesses of *Blood Meridian*. Barkley Owens, for example, has read the novel as claiming that “mindless, atavistic violence is the true nature of mankind, a genetic heritage in common with apes and wolves” (in Frye 108). *Blood Meridian* has alternatively been explored as an “anti-Western” which engages generic and historical narratives on their own ground. As Steven Frye notes, “The novel is frequently considered as a revisionist account of the American western myth, and although mythic versions of the American West engage more than the political sphere, the violence itself becomes the ‘evidence’ so to speak of another story, perhaps the true story, underlying the most pernicious popular myths of the Western and the archetypal American hero narrative” (109)—one which critics such as James R. Giles suggest may well threaten to reproduce the mechanisms of Manifest Destiny by virtue of its spectacularity (*Spaces* 1). What these critiques share—and understandably so given *Blood Meridian*—is an emphasis on extremes of physical violence. In Frye's words, “What seems common to any definition of violence is excess,

violence in the end emerging as a response to any attempt at linguistic, symbolic, social, or epistemological containment” (109).

In this chapter, I argue that we see a different form of violence which appears consistently across McCarthy’s body of work and which both operates in tandem with and undergirds the gory travels of characters like Judge Holden. It is an intellectual and ideological violence which, nevertheless, collides with the material world and persists there as physical—the violence of accounting. *Blood Meridian* inscribes a desire for power beyond the overflow of physical violence simultaneously charting and charted by the novel’s westward movements, and nowhere is this more explicit than in the ledger where Holden attempts to control the excesses of the world itself:

In his lap he held the leather ledgerbook and he took up each piece, flint or potsherd or tool of bone, and deftly sketched it into the book. He sketched with a practiced ease and there was no wrinkling of that bald brow or pursing of those oddly childish lips. His fingers traced the impression of old willow wicker on a piece of pottery clay and he put this into his book with nice shadings, an economy of pencil strokes. (134)

The “economy of pencil strokes” bonds with the profoundly economic colonial project in which the group of scalphunters all hold stake. But as archeological enumerologist, the Judge seeks control of a thing more fundamental than the

possession of this land or that object: his is a project to control the very existence of whatever constitutes the “terra damnata” (56) of the novel’s world.

Despite the textual persistence of the Judge’s mastery over language, art, philosophy, science, etc., his own version of existence always lies imperiled by the understanding that he doesn’t know all.² When asked later in the novel about his ledger, he regards his “specimens”: “These anonymous creatures, he said, may seem little or nothing in the world. Yet the smallest crumb can devour us. Any smallest thing beneath yon rock out of men’s knowing” (194). His ledgers become a tool for eradicating what is, for Holden, the greatest offense— anonymity, an absence from the record of *his* knowing which, nameless, defies location: “This [land] is my claim, [Holden] said. And yet everywhere upon it are pockets of autonomous life. Autonomous. In order for it to be mine nothing must be permitted to occur upon it save by my dispensation” (194). This version of possession, extreme as it sounds, is not a *per*-version, since it cites, with abrasive accuracy, the cultural and political climate precipitating westward expansion. But even more compelling than the Judge’s replication of hegemonic modes of ownership is the intellectual methodology employed in his quest to become “suzerain of the earth” (194).

Holden records his findings in detail, and the novel includes several descriptions of objects “sketched in profile and in perspective” with careful “dimensions” written in “neat script” with “marginal notes” (134). But even here the process of accounting is as much associated with *elision* as with accuracy. The Judge’s “economy of pencil strokes” combines his attention to detail with

destruction: “he took up the little footguard and turned it in his hand and studied it again and then he crushed it into a ball of foil and pitched it into the fire. He gathered up the other artifacts and cast them also into the fire” (134). Later in the novel, the motif repeats:

The rocks about in every sheltered place were covered with ancient paintings and the judge was soon among them copying out those certain ones into his book to take away with him. They were of men and animals and of the chase and there were curious birds and arcane maps and there were constructions of such singular vision as to justify every fear of man and the things that are in him. Of these etchings—some bright yet with color—there were hundreds, and yet the judge went among them with assurance, tracing out the very ones which he required. When he had done and while there yet was light he returned to a certain stone ledge and sat a while and studied again the work there. Then he rose and with a piece of broken chert he scapped away one of the designs, leaving no trace of it only a raw place on the stone where it had been. Then he put up his book and returned to the camp. (168)

Blood Meridian's correlation between accounting and erasure performs precisely the enumerative elision seen in Barnum's Museum³ and Walter Johnson's readings of the slave ledgers. The Judge's drive to embody what Neil Campbell terms the “imperialist collector,” who “craves knowledge as he does power”

(223)—really knowledge as a *form of power*—is simultaneously an act of understanding and a willed forgetting. The drawing, like the ledger, becomes a simulacrum that replaces, and thus conceals, the reality (or what has passed for the reality). The “ancient paintings” entail an alternate history, one imbricated in the clash of historical epochs central to westward expansion. But as we see in *The Crossing*—where similar paintings, “old pictographs of men and animals and suns and moons as well as other representations,” would re-count their account of another time, another people—this has become a mute history having “no referent in the world although they once may have” (134). The ambiguity of the phrase “although they once may have” implies the possibility that they may not have—that the painted prefigurations of Holden’s sketches may have always been plagued by their own occlusive accountings. Perhaps, as one character says in *The Crossing*, “It is the history that each man makes alone out of what is left to him. Bits of wreckage. Some bones. The words of the dead. How make a world of this? How live in that world once made” (411).

Of course, being *the Judge*, he also stands as *a judge*, and the legal implications of Holden’s title connect him to the greater national and political context of the scalphunters’ project. As James Dorson observes, “*Blood Meridian* does not only depict ‘a space devoid of law and morality’ ... but a space devoid of law and morality that is inherently bound up with the laws and morals of our own society” (110). For Holden, acts of “law-making” (or law enforcement) bind to the economic discourses that national law strives to further. In the kid’s dream, toward the end of the novel, we are told of “the false moneyer ... who seeks favor

with the judge and he is at contriving from cold slag brute in the crucible a face that will pass, an image that will render this residual specie current in the markets where men barter. Of this is the judge judge and the night does not end” (301-02). Holden’s intellectual project—a manipulation and distortion of ideological and literal currency—derives from his ability to manipulate the configuration of a world “all logged into [his] records as a thing already accomplished” (301). The deceptions he practices and the persuasiveness of his rhetoric rely on the culture of enumeration, and, like Barnum, “he is a great favorite, the judge” (335)—carrying on Barnum’s and Franklin’s legacy of self-making via enumerologically imbued authority. *Blood Meridian* juxtaposes this hybridized Barnumite and Renaissance man with the brutality and depravity that enable his desirability. In other contexts, other narratives, the Judge could easily be a hero—and in our national narrative he likely would be. But McCarthy insists on exposing our own desire to be like the Judge—to know, to control, and to capitalize—as acts of irredeemable violence.

Physically manifested in the ledgers that house Judge Holden’s version of the world, this “singling out of order” becomes synonymous with domination of the world described within, but not between, the lines of his accountings—an iteration of the ideological that maps the material conquest of America’s West. When the Judge destroys the articles he has finished accounting, he seems “much satisfied with the world, as if his counsel had been sought at its creation” (134). And the violence here, whose extremity may exceed even the novel’s gore, is that this statement must be taken literally. This passage doesn’t liken the Judge to

God, nor claim that he is more-than-human, however much the novel's ending may tempt us to think of him as supernatural. But the intellectual technologies Holden sends Westward *do*, in fact, "create" the world anew as they become the form into which the world is struck in the forges of colonial violence: "only when the existence of each last entity is routed out and made to stand naked before him will he be properly suzerain of the earth" (194).⁴

Thinking about enumeration as a way of writing-the-world underscores differences between *Blood Meridian's* anti-Western account and that of Percival Everett's *God's Country*. Everett's novel clearly undoes the Western generic archetype, and despite emphasizing satire, it also captures many of the cultural, physical, and racial forms of violence central to Manifest Destiny. In that novel, the painfully Euro-American frontiersman Curt Marder describes an encounter with a figure who, nameless in the novel, is only legible for the duration of six words: "I celebrate myself, and sing myself" (114). Walt Whitman's presence in *God's Country*, however ephemeral, tries to figure opposition to the dominant colonialist ideology satirized in the text. *God's Country* wants, in that moment, for Whitman to embody an iteration of Americanism that opposes expansionism—voiced in the novel by historical figures such as Custer—by aspiring to a human, finally *more* than human, solidarity antithetical to the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Ultimately, and to the detriment of Everett's project, this aspiration can only be derailed; Whitman's Holdenesque insistence on enumerative elision ensures its failure.

Whitman's cameo irresistibly situates in relation to self-reflection. As Marder begins to feel the effects of a comically incomplete burial, he says, "When a man is separated from his whole body, he has an impulse to reflect. I had always resisted such impulses in the past, having found the results somewhat untidy, frequently shameful and certainly fruitless" (113). At this juncture, Marder recalls Whitman: "I remember meeting this poet fellow just before I deserted the army at Bull Run. He was sitting under a tree, and I asked him what he was doing. He said, 'Young man, I'm reflecting'" (113). Instantly, Whitman opposes the ideology represented by Marder and his white compatriots. "Reflecting," holding a special significance in Whitman's *Song of Myself*, does not intend mere contemplation; it is instead an outward-reaching action with extended impact. In section 19 of the 1881 Edition—one of only two uses in the final version of *Song of Myself*—reflection is framed in relation to what Barbara Bair calls Whitman's "ideals of human connection and communion" (665).⁵

Within the novel's interrogation of colonial attitudes, this reflective merging attempts a trans-racial accounting of the humanity of all: "I will not have a single person slighted or left away, / The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited, / The heavy-lipped slave is invited, the venerealee is invited; / There shall be no difference between them and the rest" (374-77). Even as it recurs a historically significant physiology of blackness, Whitman's poetry sees itself as articulating, in Donald Pease's words, "the 'fusing relation' between individuals" (76). Further, it has often been observed that beneath Whitman's poetry lies a new voicing for the spirit of America itself—"the universal fusing voice of

America that flows out into the melodies of separate individuals” (78). As Clarence Brown notes, Whitman “abhorred slavery” and “claimed, with considerable justification, to have been the first New York editor to oppose the extension of slavery into new territories” (178), though, indeed, his personal life may have lacked his poetry’s conviction.⁶ His aesthetic strives to catalogue an American-ness that refutes racial distinctions vital to American self-construction.⁷

Such a counterpoint speaks directly to *God’s Country*, which, as Leland Krauth observes, “does just what Hollywood, following faithfully the track of Western fiction, hasn’t: [it] reveals the sordid lust for land beneath the shining ideology of Manifest Destiny” (318). Col. Custer’s rant to Marder showcases the indictment: “We *must* have more land than we need. It’s essential to our way of maintaining a balance between greed and hypocrisy, between unhealthy subsistence and needless, uncontrolled growth. ‘Be assured, my young friend, that there is a great deal of *ruin* in a nation.’ It’s the American way” (127-28). Custer provides a succinct image of the ways in which unchecked capitalism invariably leads to exploitation or—and, as much the case here as in *Blood Meridian*—even genocide. His “there is a great deal of *ruin* in a nation” appropriates Adam Smith (Rae 343)—indicating Custer’s dependence on traditions and realities of the intellectual and social economics within which he operates. The ostensibly hyperbolic (but historically accurate) rhetoric that Custer uses roughly aligns with *Blood Meridian*’s Glanton, who, despite looting “thousands of dollars in gold and silver coins as well as jewelry, watches, pistols, raw gold in little leather stives, silver in bars, knives, silverware, plate, teeth,”

nevertheless “seem[s] to take little account of the wealth” (257) the scalphunters amass. Everett’s Whitman seems aware of, even resigned to, the dominance of this ideology.⁸ While Whitman may be overshadowed by perspectives represented by Bubba and others, the novel nevertheless insists on his figuring a mode of whiteness and Americanism that supplements the book’s rigorous anti-Expansionism; yet the central claim of Whitman’s aesthetic, “I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases” (458), resonating throughout the text as an *answer*, ultimately becomes problematic.

To understand why, we can think of Whitman’s poetry in tandem with enumerology. In Borges’ “*Deutsches Requiem*,” the narrator tells us that “Whitman celebrates the universe *a priori*, in a way that is general and virtually indifferent. ... He ... *stoops to enumeration*” (232; emphasis mine). Along these lines, Carolyn Sorisio responds to Whitman’s question “Who need be afraid of the merge?” on aesthetic grounds: “The danger the merge posed to certain groups, particularly women, African Americans, and Native Americans, is evident in Whitman’s texts; it is one of the contradictions that his poetics attempts to contain, especially through parataxis and the catalogue technique” (174). In Lawrence Buell’s more traditional analysis, this cataloguing impulse performs an “inherently ‘democratic technique’” evoking “the vast, sprawling, loose-knit country which America is” and striving for “a sort of prosodic equalitarianism” (167). But though Whitman’s poetry may incorporate limited modes of radicality, his enumeration of America as an empty land of limitless potential inevitably reinstates the colonial fervor captured by Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier

Thesis” and invests his poetry with the “mission of democracy, a duty that he, and many others, tied inextricably to possession of western land” (Sorasio 201).

Like Judge Holden, Whitman imagines expansion within the space of enumeration—an accounting of what is and what isn’t within “America.” Here, as in *Blood Meridian*, elision becomes as foundational to colonial ideology as inclusion. Most glaringly, Whitman’s poetry elides the indigenous body, choosing rather, “like so many nineteenth-century American writers [to] implicitly support the idea of the Indians as vanishing Americans” (200). His association, in “As I Sat Alone by Blue Ontario’s Shores,” of “tribes of red aborigines” with “old times” (89-90) resonates in Holden’s description of “the Anasazi. The old ones” (139). By the Judge’s account, these unremembered, nearly apocryphal builders “stand in judgement on the latter races” of Native Americans through the traces of a civilization of which there is “no memory” but stone, and the present “savages wander these canyons to the sound of an ancient laughter” (139). In a Holdenesque moment, Whitman records—in *his journal*—another temporal rationalization of indigenous erasure: “The poetical Indian is all lollypop. The real reds of our northern frontiers, of the present day, have propensities, monstrous and treacherous, that make them unfit to be left in white neighborhood” (3:565; quoted in Sorasio 200). The entry in his own ledger responds to a lecture he had apparently attended describing a violent Sioux response to “repeated treaty infringements by the government and violence by the military” (Sorasio 267, note 55). A more rigorous historical context directs us toward a reading of the Sioux attacks as resistance and even survival. But

nowhere in Whitman's extensive catalogings are the "monstrous and treacherous" perpetrators given voice.

Black voices are also silenced in Whitman. In a strange perversion of *Soul by Soul*'s project midway through "I Sing the Body Electric," the poem moves us to an auction block and accounts the black body in a way that appears progressive because it sees "The same old blood! the same red-running blood!" (VII). But then the poem reverts to an economic accounting of the slave's attributes worthy of any New Orleans slave trader: "Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition, / Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, good-sized arms and legs, / And wonders within there yet." The "wonders within" and the "all-baffling brain" attempt to undo the process of commodification by positing something else, something beyond the points of sale. But here, and even more so in the following description of the slave woman as "teeming mother of mothers / ... bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers" (VIII), the catalogues prove unable to distance themselves from the chattel principle they want to critique. We can give Whitman the benefit of the doubt by attributing irony to his self-positioning as auctioneer, but, beyond the fact that the circulation of his poetry performs a literally economic participation in slavery's cultural capital, his inability to imagine the other outside the technologies of his/her enslavement and dehumanization indicates enumeration's centrality to this political and intellectual moment.

Invoking Whitman finally fails in *God's Country* because his enumerological poetics can't outpace the aggressive and passive (aggressive)

versions of American identity—Custer and Marder respectively. Contraposing Marder and Whitman certainly plays to Everett’s satire, and within its historical moment *Leaves of Grass* does open up new ways of thinking about identity, gender, and sexuality. But McCarthy’s work presses beyond the more traditionally politico-liberal realm of inclusivity, to test the limits of the foundational structures of knowledge predicating inclusion—a possibility foreclosed by the more expressly political aesthetic of Everett’s novel and well beyond the grasp of Whitman’s catalogues.

Since the Judge’s ledger is contextualized within the greater novel, we understand at least some of the valences surrounding *Blood Meridian*’s physical violence—both white and otherwise. But Whitman’s text *is* his ledger—the detailed and “scrupulous” accounting of a vision of space and constituency—and thus leaves no room for alternative histories or realizations. In this light, one becomes suspicious of Whitman’s claim that “every atom belonging to [him] as well belongs to [us]” (*Song of Myself* 1.3), especially as it relates to the desire for ideological homogeneity embedded in the ambiguity of the poem’s second line: “What I assume you shall assume.” Whitman’s poetics—what become his ledgers—circulate to the same effect as the Judge’s notebooks. They create a version of the world, a displacing simulation, that strives to *become* reality and thrives by feeding on a deadly aspiration to force a unity of textuality and materiality. Sorisio’s reading that Whitman’s belief in “democratic progress ... necessitated land,” and that “if other bodies stood in the way of the expansion of the nation or the integrity of the Union—be they Native Americans or slaves—

they had to be either overlooked or removed” (198), parallels Custer’s “American way” (“We *must* have more land than we need”), and, more disturbingly, the Judge’s diatribe against the existence of “autonomous life.” Whitman’s “merging,” after all, definitionally prohibits the existence of autonomy in its lust for homogeneity; and what we begin to see is that, to paraphrase the kid’s dream, the Judge-*écrivain* is Whitman “as he is other things, well sufficient to the task” (134).

He does, after all, frequently enact Whitman’s trope of becoming “undisguised and naked” (*SOM* 2.6), allowing the country to “lick [his] naked body all over with its tongues” (“This Compost” 2). During one of the scalphunters’ respites, we see “the judge naked atop the walls, immense and pale in the revelations of lightning, striding the perimeter up there and declaiming in the old epic mode” (113). Later, Glanton’s doomed claim to agency faces “the vast abhorrence of the judge. Half naked, scribbling in his ledger” (240).

Consider the novel’s cryptic epilogue: “In the dawn there is a man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground. He uses an implement with two handles and he chucks it into the hole and he enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put there. . . . He strikes fire in the hole and draws out his steel” (329).

The epilogue seems to act as an extension of the Judge, his “immense and terrible flesh” (325) reaching outward from the jakes that is the novel’s world to engulf us along with the kid. The “wanderers in search of bones” that follow the man with the posthole digger “like mechanisms whose movements are monitored with

escapement and pallet,” and who enact “less the pursuit of some continuance than the verification of a principle” (329), capture the essence of the novel proper. As Dana Phillips notes, in their “verification of a principle,” these figures form “a vision of the ... world ... in which the western plains have been rationalized—settled, fenced, and punctured ... in accord with the dictates of an ideology of progress” (40). And who can miss the resemblance to the poet in Whitman’s “Blue Ontario’s Shore” lifting “a west-bred face” and “having room for far and near, / ... incarnating this land, / ... Plunging his semitic⁹ muscle into its merits and demerits, / Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars” (6). The principle at stake in both cases is the draft of the material world set down in ledgers by the Judge and Whitman—only ever manifest as elision.

Overall, McCarthy’s body of work actually follows the contours of expansionist mapping (in a strange way, as we will presently see, even in *The Road*). The original American frontier was the Appalachia in which *Outer Dark*, *Suttree*, etc., are set, linking McCarthy’s later, more traditionally Western novels to those foregrounding earlier iterations of the West. And beyond historical context, the connection surfaces in the linkages between *Blood Meridian* and *Suttree*. The opening passages of *Blood Meridian* describing the kid embed the initial push west into the Appalachians: “His folk are known for hewers of wood” (1). The clearing, civilizing process of woodcutting—a taming of the unsubmitive natural—has been read by Richard Slotkin as part of an individualist, masculinized hero-myth which “provided a fictive justification for the process by which the wilderness was to be expropriated and exploited” (554).

Such a myth would include “Davy Crockett standing proudly next to his stack of 150 bearskins,” but also extend to “the legend of Paul Bunyan clearing miles of virgin forest with a single stroke of his ax” (Spurgeon 78). And the kid’s immediately mythic context seems to mime, or perhaps under-mime, national mythmakers and frontier supplicants like Turner when, within the same page, it ties to a different iteration of American heritage: “in him broods already a taste for mindless violence. All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man” (3). Collations of violence and woodcutting reinstate the Appalachian history beneath *Suttree*’s Knoxville:

The neap mud along the shore lies ribbed and slick like the cavernous flitch of some beast hugely foundered and beyond the country rolls away to the south and the mountains. Where hunters and woodcutters once slept in their boots by the dying light of their thousand fires and went on, old teutonic forebears with eyes incandesced by the visionary light of a massive rapacity, wave on wave of the violent and the insane, their brains stoked with spoorless analogues of all that was, lean Aryans with their abrogate Semitic chapbook reenacting the dramas and parables therein and the mindless and pale with a longing that nothing save dark’s total restitution could appease. (4)

Here, “wave after wave of the violent and the insane” seem to redefine the very concept of insanity. Whereas we would likely think of disorder and hazard as

opposing the sane, these “old teutonic forebears” act *through* the “chapbook” that shapes their context and corresponds to the Judge’s ledger as enumerological tool. Like the scalphunters, these “lean Aryans” are, too, “men invested with a purpose whose origins were antecedent to them, like blood legatees of an order both imperative and remote” (*Blood Meridian* 145).

The violence of expansion rendered so mercilessly in *Blood Meridian* is no less present in *Suttree*’s memory; and, in compelling ways, this novel complicates Turner’s “Frontier Thesis.” If the waves of the frontier follow Turner’s citation of John Mason Peck’s *New Guide to the West*, then the final wave of settlement brings “the men of capital and enterprise. . . . The small village rises to a spacious town or city; substantial edifices of brick, extensive fields, orchards, gardens, colleges and churches are seen” (quoted in Turner 19). Turner’s American mythology is itself a self-ordained accounting, which meticulously reads “The United States . . . like a huge page in history . . . line by line” (10). McCarthy insists on reading *between* the lines of that ledgered historical self-representation, and *Suttree* questions against not only the “massive rapacity” of settler colonialism, but also the civilizing aftermath of that settlement. Rather than merging with Peck’s ordered and “spacious town,” *Suttree*’s Knoxville is labyrinthine and repulsive, another “beast hugely founded”: “*This city constructed on no known paradigm, a mongrel architecture reading back through the works of man in a brief delineation of the aberrant disordered and mad. A carnival of shapes upreared on the river plain that has dried up the sap of the earth for miles about. . . . A world beyond all*

fantasy, malevolent and tactile and dissociate. ... A world within the world" (3-4).

As "a world within the world," this Knoxville demarcates an elision in exposing, sometimes more forcefully than *Blood Meridian's* texts, the Judge's version of materiality. *This* world refuses historical "line by line" accounts in attempting to capture the marginal, the invisible, the "interstitial wastes" (3) lying "beyond all fantasy" because stripped of the civilizing ledger's narrative pressures.

As a counterpoint to the world-order the Judge imposes, McCarthy's work invokes the un-accountable—an illegible and repulsive disorder lying beyond the will of the ledger. The opening description of *Suttree's* Knoxville teems with similarity to "The City of the Immortals" in Borges' short story "The Immortal," where the narrator's quest for a mythic civilization only finds a city "*so horrific that its mere existence, the mere fact of its having endured—even in the middle of a secret desert—pollutes the past and the future and somehow compromises the stars*" (188). Here, as in *Suttree*, only an illegible "architecture of *no* purpose," appears, leading the narrator through the series of revelations, "*This palace is the work of the gods. ... The gods that built this place have died. ... The gods that built this place were mad*" (187-88). Finally it can only induce an "intellectual horror ... the sensation of oppressiveness and horror, the sensation of complex irrationality" (188).

But McCarthy's reimagining of the unaccountable's "intellectual horror," unlike Borges', figures the ostensibly irrational within the space of materiality and history—an intersection palpable in the remarkable "legion of horrors" passage in *Blood Meridian*:

A legion of horribles, hundreds in number, half naked or clad in costumes attic or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of prior owners, coats of slain dragoons, frogged and braided cavalry jackets, one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella and one in white stockings and a bloodstained weddingveil and some in headgear of crane feathers or rawhide helmets that bore the horns of bull or buffalo and one in a pigeontailed coat worn backwards and otherwise naked and one in the armor of a Spanish conquistador, the breastplate and pauldrons deeply dented with old blows of mace or sabre done in another country by men whose very bones were dust and many with their braids spliced up with the hair of other beasts until they trailed upon the ground and their horses' ears and tails worked with bits of brightly colored cloth and one whose horse's whole head was painted crimson red and all the horsemen's faces gaudy and grotesque with daubings like a company of mounted clowns, death hilarious, all howling in a barbarous tongue and riding down upon them. (49)

A catalogue that puts Whitman and Crusoe to shame. *Blood Meridian*, as we have noted, differentiates from *Leaves of Grass* in that the Judge's ledger circulates within the text, while Whitman's ledger is the text itself; and here the measure of that difference descends, as another enumeration rises to contest the

American frontiersman, and the Native American conspicuously absent in Turner or Whitman is legion. The passage powerfully demonstrates the will-to-illusion of enumerative technology. The frame of the catalogue's narrative conceptualizes a "legion of horrors," and the grotesque enumeration of indigenous bodies that follows seems to primitivize in its monstrosity and savagery; but the alternative narrative of this accounting inevitably subverts and deconstructs terms like savagery. The details—"pieces of uniform," the "coats of ... dragoons," the "pigeontailed coat"—point to a history of "New World" encounters predicated on violence against the Native Americans now acting in defense against Captain White's gang of invaders. Most notably, "the armor of a Spanish conquistador" traces the endurance of this history, and "blows of mace or sabre done in another country by men whose very bones were dust" recall other encounters, other invasions by Europeans operating under the same lust for land as Captain White.

Despite the veiled histories, *Blood Meridian* nevertheless emphasizes the illegibility of the Comanches in the eyes of White's soldiers. Their "barbarous tongue" remains indecipherable. The paragraph closes, unable to account for the other's positionality: "a horde from a hell more horrible yet than the brimstone land of christian reckoning, screeching and yammering and clothed in smoke like those vaporous beings in regions beyond right knowing where the eye wanders and the lip jerks and drools" (49). The Comanches, however brutal, are simply a group of men. There's nothing hell-born about them, but *Blood Meridian* deflects that gaze, instantiating instead the historical reality of the indecipherable other as fear of the total breakdown of order "where the eye wanders and the lip jerks and

drools.” “Brimstone land of christian reckoning” contrasts a familiar version of mythic justice (really punishment) with a justice so unthinkable as to be beyond the colonial imagination.

“Reckoning” brings us back to the ledger, since reckoning is, after all, a way of counting and of inscribing an accounting as much as it is a mode of judgment—even there really a balancing of accounts. McCarthy’s textual dialect may tempt us to believe that the numerous instances of “I reckon” (*Horses* 164) or “he reckoned” (263) as substitutes for “I think so” or “he thought” are simply products of Southern stylistics. But such phrases are meticulously placed, pressing consideration of persistent correlations between accounting and thinking as such. When Holme encounters the squire in *Outer Dark*, and says, “It ain’t no crime to be poor” (46), the squire warns him, “That’s right. But shiftlessness is a sin, I would judge”—to which Holme responds, “I reckon” and the squire ambiguously substitutes, “Yes. The bible reckons” (47). Beyond the conversation’s economic content, the connections among judgment, thought, and biblical law articulate a mutual economics that reminds us of the “semitic chapbooks” in *Suttree* and even the old anchorite’s “thumbing his [Bible] with a terrible dexterity. Like a moneycounter” from the priest’s tale in *The Crossing*. That last paralleled or reinstated by the priest’s own “countering from those high canonical principles to which he gave such latitude. Both of them heretics to the bone” (151).

The story of the anchorite forces us to consider the multivalence of “accounting.” The anchorite’s “gesture,” after all, interrogates “the accountability

of God” (154), and presents yet another articulation of accounting as a territorial project: “It seemed that what he wished, this man, was to strike some colindancia with his Maker. Assess boundaries and metes. See that lines were drawn and respected. Who could think such a reckoning possible? ... With what would one bargain?” (150).¹⁰ The anchorite’s understanding of “accountability” is quite literally an accounting as he “pore[s] over the record, not for the honor and glory of his Maker but rather to find against Him. To seek out in nice subtleties some darker nature. False favors. Small deceptions. Promises forsaken or a hand too quickly raised. To make cause against Him, you see” (153). What becomes clear is that accountability, which carries so much weight in the material/legal sphere, but also in culture, can only be conceived of as enumeration—a record of things done or not done, standards disavowed, that not only weigh against, but come to constitute the identity of, the person (or deity) in question.

Against the reckonings and accountings of its characters, McCarthy’s literature consistently pits the unimaginable or unspeakable—the force, however ephemeral, threatening the Judge’s suzerainty. In phrasings so consistent they might be taken as an aesthetic signature, the imagined space of whatever lies outside of ledgers of knowledge—the realm “where the eye wanders ...”—forms itself around the *unaccountable* and, most frequently, the *unreckonable*. In *Blood Meridian* we see “a solitary flame frayed by the wind that freshened and faded and shed scattered sparks down the storm like hot scurf blown from some unreckonable forge howling in the waste” (211), and the Judge hurls a meteorite wandered from some “unreckonable corner of the universe” (237). In *All the*

Pretty Horses, Alejandra's appearance as "A presence unaccountable in this place or in any place at all" (248) performs that novel's self-criticism of the romantic Western hero by aligning her with "picturebook" images of "no such horse [that] ever was" (15) and the vaqueros' sense of a rumored and illegible country to the north "for which there seemed no accounting" (95). The trope of the unreckonable infuses even the (Judge's) "truth about the world":

... anything is possible. Had you not seen it all from birth and thereby bled it of its strangeness it would appear to you for what it is, a hat trick in a medicine show, a fevered dream, a trance bepopulate with chimeras having neither analogue nor precedent, an itinerant carnival, a migratory tentshow whose ultimate destination after many a pitch in many a mudded field is unspeakable and calamitous beyond reckoning. (242-43)

And while one resists taking Holden's words at face value, the "ultimate [cosmic] destination" of the world would surely be "unspeakable and calamitous beyond reckoning" because it could only occur outside the scope of human memory and perception. In what ledger could that moment be recorded—and where endured?

In this perilous reckoning, McCarthy pushes us to grasp some trace of the impossible, the unaccountable. The Judge follows his description of the world by opposing "order in creation which [we] see" (merely "that which [we] have put there") and a different iteration of order circulating beyond conception: "For existence has its own order and that no man's mind can compass, that mind itself

being but a fact among others” (243). This “order” ultimately aligns itself with “the universe,” and in McCarthy’s work it is often invoked as “the world.” In *The Crossing*, Billy Parham meets a blind man whose lack of sight seems to give him in-sight into the nature of this world:¹¹ “He said that the light of the world was in men’s eyes only for the world itself moved in eternal darkness and darkness was its true nature and true condition and that in this darkness it turned with perfect cohesion in all its parts but that there was naught there to see” (282-83). This world, in constant motion, describes a pattern, inscribes its own accounting in ledgers “behind right knowing,” and McCarthy refuses to diffuse the universe’s own order. Countering the priest’s earlier professed belief in “a boundless God without center or circumference”¹²—which finally, in its “very formlessness ... make[s] God manageable” (153)—the blind man speaks of the world as a discrete entity, “sentient to its core and secret and black beyond men’s imagining [whose] nature did not reside in what could be seen or not seen” (283).

In *Blood Meridian*, the scalphunters encamp and the narration shifts away from the human to show us “ragged flames [fleeing] down the wind as if sucked by some maelstrom out there in the void, some vortex in that waste apposite to which man’s transit and his reckonings alike lay abrogate” (90)—the “vortex” here recalling modernist vorticism, which undid traditional descriptive modes and favored the abstraction of locomotion as the crystallization of an essence exceeding traditional techniques. McCarthy’s vortex stands in for (but doesn’t circumscribe) some other will—which appears, again in motion, in *The Crossing*. When Billy enlists the counsel of Don Anulfo, he hears that “men wish to be

serious but they do not understand how to be so. Between their acts and their ceremonies lies the world and in this world the storms blow and the trees twist in the wind and all the animals that God has made go to and fro yet this world men do not see” (45). Rather, “they see the acts of their own hands or they see that which they name and call out to one another but the world between is invisible to them” (45). The “world” is something between lines—between the acts, ceremonies, and names construed as ledgered reality, but always fragile, always eliding.

The world’s power to abrogate “man’s transit and his reckonings alike” speaks to the meanness of his mappings and accountings, and rends the pages of enumerological meaning, “as if beyond will or fate he and his beasts and his trappings moved both in card and in substance under consignment to some third and other destiny” (90). McCarthy’s language filters the unreckonable through the language of the familiar, generating oppositionalities curiously similar in structure. The “third and other destiny,” rather than being somehow abstracted, mysticized, operates economically through the term “consignment,” which, like the “I reckon” appearing hundreds of times across McCarthy’s body of work, is itself unstable—oscillating between the inscription of location and a relational economics.

Finally, the aesthetic that conveys the world, the unreckonable, the non-human, often mimics the form of the ledger itself. Beyond the economic inflections, these discussions conform to a signature, listed style, channeling interlocutors’ thoughts as linear points, however non-linear or even anti-linear

those thoughts may be. The passage about “seriousness,” quoted above, concentrates as, “The old man went on to say that the hunter was a different thing than men supposed. ... He said that men believe the blood of the slain of no consequence. ... He said that the wolf is a being of a great order. ... Finally he said that if men drink the blood of God yet they do not understand the seriousness of what they do. He said that men wish to be serious” (45). The blind man’s tale also reads, “He said that it was not a matter of illusion ... He spoke of the broad dryland ... He said that the light of the world was in men’s eyes only He said that the world was sentient He said that he could stare down the sun and what use was that?” (282-83). The passage in *All the Pretty Horses* which speaks of the souls of horses, “common soul,” and their resemblance to those of “men,” likewise enumerates: “He said ... He spoke of ... he said ... Men say ... but he said ... His own father said ... and he said ... Lastly he said ... he said ... He said that if a person understood the soul of the horse then he would understand all horses that ever were” (111). McCarthy’s technique hypnotizes, and leads us from one point to the next so easily that our sense of groundedness belies the unreckonable content. Passages like these have a particular legerdemain in the context of accounting, since they read like a ledger, and, in doing so, find some form to contain those things beyond circumscription. Finally, we see the drive to exceed these enumerations manifest in the misuse of words like “finally” and “lastly”—inevitably followed by another “he said” as a performance of enumerative limitation. We see the similarity to the Judge’s persuasions in the encounter “Among the Bones” as the accounting trails off, incomplete but

nevertheless potent, lethal: “he called out points of jurisprudence, he cited cases. He expounded ... he quoted ... he reckoned ... Then he spoke of other things” (321).

In McCarthy, then, alternative, unimaginable conceptions of order persistently articulate, not as, but *through* familiarized logics. *No Country for Old Men*'s Anton Chigurh, for example, tells Carla Jean Moss (shortly before he kills her), “I had no say in the matter. Every moment in your life is a turning and every one a choosing. Somewhere you made a choice. All followed to this. The accounting is scrupulous. The shape is drawn. No line can be erased” (259). What to make of a character whose (superficially) lunatic earmarks work in tandem with the (also superficially) mundane mechanics of accounting? In what ledger are these turnings and choosings set down, and how rendered indelible? Finally, in what space can the oscillation between morality and tenacity, evoked by the word “scrupulous,” stabilize? *No Country for Old Men* is riddled with tensions and ambiguities permeating the perceived anarchy of Chigurh's killing spree and Carson Wells' claim that “you could even say that he has principles. Principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that” (155). To consider the ledger in McCarthy is also to visualize the space in which these seeming paradoxes occur. Chigurh's “principles” may prompt us to classify him as “psychotic” or “evil,” but closer scrutiny allows that he is simply “other.” The logic he follows, less incomprehensible than *beyond* comprehension, coincides with a physical violence which surpasses the anarchy we may be tempted to map onto him. It accounts “scrupulous[ly],” a ledger inscribed in the unreckonable

vortex of “some third and other” enumeration, but a ledger nonetheless, engineering its own ruin.¹³

One reads McCarthy expecting figural villains—Holden, Chigurh, Eduardo in *Cities of the Plain*, Lester Ballard, *Outer Dark*’s grotesque triumvirate—and the shared propensities for violence (and perhaps the “vast abhorrence of the Judge”) pull us toward their affinities. To be sure, the sociopolitical contexts of McCarthy’s later novels extend the reach of the Judge’s imperialist enumerology—aftermaths of *Blood Meridian*’s journey, and evidences of the realization and durability of Holden’s project. As Phillip A. Snyder contends in “Disappearance in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*,” “The Border Trilogy, along with *No Country for Old Men* with its depiction of the violence endemic to the drug trade, raises some profound questions regarding how much change or progress has been made in the War God worship advocated by Judge Holden” (133). Especially in *No Country for Old Men*, it seems that the Judge’s accounting of the world may have prevailed, and the world proper, between the acts and the ceremonies, been stricken from the record. Chigurh would seem to be an agent of the same order. To quote the priest from *The Crossing*, “With this difference. . . . With this difference” (151). Chigurh doesn’t act on behalf of Holdenesque conquest, nor does he invest in the enforcement of a law he himself inscribes. Rather, Chigurh’s enigmatics operate on the level of the reclamation of the unreckonable.

Chigurh’s “passivity” may well be his most troubling quality, and to understand it is to understand him as having given himself up to the unreckonable.

Before he kills Wells, he describes his transformation: “Some things have fallen into place that were not there before. I thought they were, but they weren't. The best way I can put it is that I've sort of caught up with myself. That's not a bad thing. It was overdue” (173). The phrase “overdue” evokes a balancing of accounts, and suggests that Chigurh has reckoned with the world—gained unimaginable perspective. When Carson attempts to bribe him in exchange for his life, Chigurh's response that, despite the sizeable offer, “It's just in the wrong currency” (173) simultaneously disavows Wells's version of economics and instantiates a new one. As Chigurh murders his way through the novel, he acts as a sort of debt collector for the unspeakable, giving himself over to another order and forgoing any personal desire to kill. When he meets the gas station proprietor, the “everything” the man stands to win is likely his life, and the coin on which it rides recalls the “scrupulous accounting” later described to Carla Jean: “Anything can be an instrument, Chigurh said. Small things. Things you wouldn't even notice. They pass from hand to hand. People don't pay attention. And then one day there's an accounting. And after that nothing is the same” (57). Chigurh's “principles”—a conflation of the moral/economic via “principal”—directly oppose the neoimperial modes ascribed to the drug traders' corporation. They are “principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that” (155)—principal that can only be paid by yielding to the will of fate, or the world, or the unreckonable.

As is often the case in McCarthy, the distinction is clearest at its most compromised, and the textual counterpoint to Chigurh's ledgered discourse comes

from Wells. Attempting to convince Llewelyn Moss to give him the corporation's money, Wells says that his job is to "find people. Settle accounts. That sort of thing" (156). The deliberateness of the "finding people" opposes Chigurh's illegible roamings. In both coin tosses and also in the story he tells Wells (in which he lets a man choose whether or not to wager his life in a brawl), Chigurh allows something resembling fate to decide who lives and who dies. That Carla Jean loses her coin flip is simply an extension of Chigurh's promise to Llewelyn that he will hold her "accountable" (133). Nowhere does Chigurh's methodology reiterate that of the Judge. As we have seen, the Judge exists to define the terms of the world's accounting, and in that act to have "his counsel ... sought at its creation." Chigurh embodies resistance to that accounting, and in this he joins the "legion of horribles," fusing inscrutability with refusal. And within *No Country*, the negation contrasts, ironically, with Sheriff Bell's accountings—his sketches and numbers copied down to describe crime scenes (96), his impression that a newfound "breakdown in mercantile ethics" has led to the escalation in murders, and his reckoning that marrying his wife "makes up for ever dumb thing I ever done. I even I think still got a few left in the account. I think I'm way in the black on that" (133). This is not to say that Chigurh's actions aren't disturbing or that he's some sort of hero figure. There's no getting around the fact that he does join the Judge at least to plot his travels by leaving bodies. Yet he appears anarchic only because he and his principles are unfathomable. If the Judge's ledgers provide the context for *No Country for Old Men's* America, Chigurh's negativity dissolves those constructs; and that

dissolution, as for *The Crossing*'s anchorite, must also take place on a ground "perilous and transitory. And it is indeed so that you must make your case there or nowhere" (151).

Preserving this connection to *The Crossing*, another way of thinking about Chigurh is to say that he "bears witness" to an *alternative* ledgered order usually inconceivable. In McCarthy, the witness becomes a repository for events, for people themselves; and it's in the witness that the perceived world is wrought. As the priest says, "Acts have their being in the witness. Without him who can speak of it? In the end one could even say that the act is nothing, the witness all" (153). The Judge echoes this in *Blood Meridian* when Webster objects to being added to the Judge's ledger: "My book or some other book said the judge. What is to be deviates no jot from the book wherein it's writ" (134). The Judge cites the possibility of "some other book" (possibly Chigurh's) competing against his own—some alternative ledger to be wiped from existence—but also connects accounting with the witness: "Whether in my book or not, every man is tabernacled in every other and he in exchange and so on in an endless complexity of being and witness to the uttermost edge of the world" (134). And again, in *The Crossing*, the anchorite sees "the world pass into nothing in the multiplicity of its instancing. Only the witness stood firm. And the witness to that witness" (153). The witness stands as bearer of a world, but that world is always, as the Judge indicates, a product of some kind of accounting (however bizarre), some summation. Events enter the ledgers of the witness and reside there, and in that moment *a* world (not *the* world) is created in the image of the ledger's lines.¹⁴

In *The Crossing*, Billy meets a gypsy who corroborates the above, extending the shaping power of the witness to the production of history. The Judge's draft of the world manifests materially, but remains inextricable from the history presented in the novel. Acts committed or feats performed always verge on their own disappearance; and when the Judge and the kid meet at the end of the novel, the Judge asks, regarding the kid's travels, "did you post witnesses? ... To report to you on the continuing existence of those places once you'd quit them?" (322). *The Crossing* comprehends the phenomenon historically:

From a certain perspective one might even hazard to say that the great trouble with the world was that that which survived was held in hard evidence as to past events. A false authority clung to what persisted, as if those artifacts of the past which had endured had done so by some act of their own will. Yet the witness could not survive the witnessing. In the world that came to be that which prevailed could never speak for that which perished but could only parade its own arrogance. It pretended symbol and summation of the vanished world but was neither. ... The past, he said, is always this argument between counterclaimants. Memories dim with age. There is no repository for our images. The loved ones who visit us in dreams are strangers. To even see aright is effort. We seek some witness but the world will not provide one. This is the third history. It is the history that each man makes alone out of what is left to

him. Bits of wreckage. Some bones. The words of the dead. How make a world of this? How live in that world once made? (410-11)

Accountings in McCarthy operate on a number of levels, and in historical terms, the enumerological, Turner-vein histories of the West that these novels throw into question are not only subverted by textual events. They're actually written (as if for the first time) by figures like Holden. His archeology, anthropology, and connections to phrenology (incidentally another crossover with Whitman) invest entries in his ledger with historical charge. When he says to Webster, "What is to be deviates no jot from the book wherein it's writ," he follows by proposing the impossibility of the alternative: "How could it? It would be a false book and a false book is no book at all" (134). And in the interstices of the material and the accounted, we find the foundation of a voicing of history emanating from "that which prevailed," parading "its own arrogance" over "that which perished." What's at hazard in the Judge's moment is *exactly* what perishes in the novel. How can the witness "survive the witnessing"?

With the arrival of McCarthy's most recent novel *The Road*, we've actually been on "the road"—via journey narratives—for quite some time. *The Road*'s minimalist bleakness has urged critical conversations toward whether or not the novel offers hope or redemption. For John Clute, "It is a story I for one find it impossible to think of as being redeemed by a Christ. It is a story about the end of the world in which the world ends" (497). It certainly doesn't describe the world's "unspeakable and calamitous" end foretold by the Judge, even if at times

it seems unreckonable. Allen Josephs claims that “in the face of the unbearable bleakness and desolation and despair of the novel, that very mystery—the mystery of love, incarnate, emanating from the boy—gives us an exemplar and it shines a ray of hope in all that cold and all that dark” (143). Josephs’ argument effectively scours the text in a way that performs the priest’s quest from *The Crossing*, “seeking evidence for the hand of God in the” novel, and “inquir[ing] ... into miracles of destruction. Into disasters of a certain magnitude” (141). But it’s a rough road to look for redemption in a McCarthy novel that, given the possible twinning, could easily begin, “See the child. He is pale and thin, he wears a thin and ragged linen shirt” (*Blood Meridian* 1). This is not to say that *The Road* is unquestionably nihilistic—even fundamentally catastrophic—but simply to assert that reading it within the context of a body of work inarguably invested in its own intertextuality provides fresh insight into its contribution to the McCarthy canon.

If *The Road* presents itself as a reckoning, the novel’s barren terrain wakes a gory answer to the Judge’s question,

What manner of heretic could doubt agency and claimant alike? Can he believe that the wreckage of his existence is unentailed? No liens, no creditors? That gods of vengeance and of compassion alike lie sleeping in their crypt and whether our cries are for an accounting or for the destruction of the ledgers altogether they must evoke only the same silence and that it is this silence which will prevail? (321)

Whether *The Road*'s unwelcoming landscape is cacophony or utter silence remains unclear, but the ambiguity of apocalyptic causality—Manmade? Natural? Biblical?—does indeed entail “the destruction of the ledgers altogether.” Here the unreckonable lies upon the land, “a blackness to hurt your ears with listening,” which confounds the senses and thought alike. In that scene, the father stands in the pitch dark “while the vestibular calculations in his skull cranked out their reckonings” (13), seeking “an old chronicle ... the upright,” only to be met with the unaccountable: “Something nameless in the night, lode or matrix. To which he and the stars were common satellite. Like the great pendulum in its rotunda scribing through the long day movements of the universe of which you may say it knows nothing and yet know it must” (13).

The deterioration within the father persistently calls up the enumerative. When he sees a fire in the night, it moves “something in him long forgotten” and urges him to “Make a list. Recite a litany. Remember” (29). The conflation of religiosity with the list, unsettling in the greater context of McCarthy’s work, here remains sympathetic because it seems indelibly familiar. To lament the deterioration of the record. To find in that void “some reckonable and entabled moment” (259). The father’s sense of “numbness and dull despair” accompanies erasure of the ledger, with “The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought” (156).¹⁵ Even the prospect of reckoning historical lineage comes into question: “Do you think that

your fathers are watching? That they weigh you in their ledgerbook? Against what? There is no book and your fathers are dead in the ground” (194). The post-apocalyptic erasure of most wildlife (besides human wildlife) has literalized desires expressed elsewhere by the Judge. The father answers his son’s question about whether there are any crows left with, “just in books” (156)—images of birds like John Grady’s picturebook horses, but also dream-birds to Judge Holden, whose claim that “the freedom of birds is an insult to” him (195) epitomizes his hatred of autonomy.

But most disquieting about *The Road* is its location. That the novel moves east and follows a series of texts concerned with westbound, American trajectories insinuates something treacherously cyclical. The lapsed order entwines with the gruesome, the cannibalistic, the rituals of blood plaguing the landscape—the “bad guys” against whom father and son “carry the fire.” And in its gore and horror and human misery, *The Road* seems to carry *Blood Meridian*’s fire. Here, the established order torn apart and “the sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality” (259), the population reiterates Turner’s “first-wave” frontiersmanship—the descent into barbarism inevitable absent the civilized, the clinging to “A world construed out of blood and blood’s alcahest and blood in its core and in its integument because it was that nothing save blood had power to resonate against that void which threatened hourly to devour it” (*The Crossing* 73). As if to soothe Turner’s lament that “the frontier has gone” (34), the novel returns east to begin again a westward movement. Father and son appear exempt from this reenactment by resisting the savagery of the novel’s

cannibals. But they do “carry the fire.” They carry the flame for a return to the violence embedded in order—a reinscribing of the ledgers and a circumscribing of the world as counter to “the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. ... The crushing black vacuum of the universe” (*The Road* 128).

The Crossing warns of righteousness and its nearness to Holden’s intersection of ideological and physical violence. Persons finding righteousness “will not know that while the order which the righteous seek is never righteousness itself but is only order, the disorder of evil is in fact the thing itself.” We find that “this man of which we speak will seek to impose order and lineage upon things which rightly have none. He will call upon the world itself to testify as to the truth of what are in fact but his desires. In his final incarnation he may seek to indemnify his words with blood for by now he will have discovered that words pale and lose their savor while pain is always new” (292). This overlapping of the Judge and righteousness, less nihilistic than interrogative of righteousness as such, speaks to the dangers of looking for redemption in *The Road*, precisely because it pressures our definition of redemption itself. The father’s gift of “the fire,” in its very opacity, threatens to repeat McCarthy’s trope of the son “euchered ... out of his patrimony” (*Blood Meridian* 139).¹⁶ One cannot help but wonder if this son, paralleling the son in the Judge’s tale of the harnessmaker, will, ironically, be “broken before a frozen god and he will never find his way” (139). Perhaps he, too, will begin his journey in the east and go “away to the west and he himself [become] a killer of men” (139). Perhaps not.

We cannot know. What we *can* see¹⁷, however, is that the ledger pervades, even among the viscera of *The Road*. The novel may well end on a potentiality; but it remains just that. A possibility tabernacled in a ruin. Or a hope sepulchered in a book. “How make a world of this? How live in that world once made?”

Vision and Multivalence: Leslie Marmon Silko and the Palimpsestic Enumerative

“The old ones did not believe the passage of years caused by old age. They had not believed in the passage of time at all.” –

Almanac of the Dead

“Natural and Experimental History is so various and scattered that it confounds and disturbs the understanding; unless it be limited and placed in the right order; therefore we must form some tables and ranks of instances in such a manner and order, that the understanding may work upon them.”

– Francis Bacon

The authors considered in the preceding chapters unite in their desire to critique and expose the enumerological by deploying excess, satire, parody, and perversion. They aim to demonstrate an unrecognized complicity of the culture of enumeration in the performance of hegemonic projects. We see colonial erasure issue from Judge Holden’s pen, and we understand the impending dread in “The Great Dark” as taxonomical precursor to Hank Morgan’s disastrous “modernization,” but even when the unreckonable threatens to undo ordering principles, it appears as a specter of enumeration—something “beneath yon rock out of men’s knowing” (*Blood Meridian* 194)—and not as a means or strategy in its own right. Even *Ladies Almanack*, which attributes some concrete form to gendered and temporal alterities, refuses full articulation. We are ultimately left to conjure our own alternative strategies. This is not the case with Leslie Marmon Silko. Deeply rooting her arguments in indigenous history, Silko has abundant reason and means to expose the ever-present threat of the enumerative (for example the “Indian Affairs census” [*Gardens* 395]). But (moving beyond

Twain, Barnes and McCarthy) Silko uses that oft-elided history to tackle the difficulty of visualizing an anti-enumerological form of enumeration via the palimpsest.

This is not to say that Silko narratives aren't interested in exposing systemic and epistemological violences permeating Euro-American dispositions toward land and people. As Gregory Salyer points out, "Silko bares all, pulls no punches, and leaves us exhausted from the sheer force of our own moral outrage. That anger is a function of her stripping away the veneer of ambiguity that covers the moral fabric of America and showing us the ugly acts underneath" (99). But within that imperative—that stripping away—Silko pushes beyond mere exposure, deploying readerly disorientation/fracture to reconstruct perspective around an intrinsically indigenous vantage point.¹ According to David L. Moore, "Amid thousands of generations of storytelling, Indigenous literary voices have been publishing in colonial languages for centuries, and the end of the twentieth century saw a blossoming of traditional and contemporary stories in print and new media. Silko's role in that new level of expression cannot be overstated" (1). More generally, "she writes both within a long-arcing momentum of those ancient traditions and with a modern pulse of the postcolonial turn toward diversity in globalism" (1).

More than liminality, Silko captures a trans-temporal indigeneity which illuminates historical and political moments in a network of complexity—one both strategically educative and expressive of the insufficiency of dominant (Euro-American) attitudes. From these intersections, "Native American values

gradually emerge from their entanglement with colonial culture to offer some sense of hope for anyone who loves and respects the earth” (Salyer 99). As Silko says in *Yellow Woman*, “It begins with the land; think of the land, the earth, as the center of a spider’s web. Human identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land, to Mother Earth, just as the strands of a spider’s web radiate from the center of the web. From the spoken word, or storytelling, comes the written word, as well as the visual image” (21). Thoroughly rooted in the land, Silko’s conceptualizations of temporality, history, and people see interconnection and multivalence as tools to apprehending and undermining the conditions generating indigenous (and other) forms of resistance.² Equally essential, Silko extends this multivalent counteraction to the always-politicized circulation of temporal and scientific enumerological orderings without “eradicat[ing] the possibility of miracles and healing” (Salyer ix).

Enumerology presupposes that the enumerative invariably strives to be a closed system. Despite perpetual fluctuations, the narrative consistency of a list, almanac, catalogue (the perceived “point” of viewing its contents) demands the illusions of comprehensivity and fixity. If we consider the palimpsest in the context of overlay—of the layering of information, perspective, history onto some previous iteration—we see at once that a mode of enumeration predicated on textual palimpsestic engagement necessarily acknowledges its own fluctuations; that is, there can be no pretense to fixity or finality if the form hinges on persistent alteration and multiplicity. Such an enumeration would specifically mitigate the enumerological tendency by foregrounding its insistence on rectifying elision

rather than mechanizing it. The individual layers of a palimpsestic enumeration would, naturally, be works of revision, and would reflect, perhaps, a momentarily useful history, concept, or collection; yet they would always be informed by the preceding layers, whose ephemerality would reinforce the instability of the text as a whole—negating the desire for enumerology’s “closed system,” and refining critical approaches by forcing a plurality of contexts upon text, reader, and author. Silko’s work often metaphorizes palimpsestic enumeration to underscore differences of perspective and methods of colonial resistance. But the central text of *Almanac of the Dead*—the Almanac itself—literalizes the intersection of palimpsest and enumerative form. *Almanac*’s Almanac is a text in constant flux, entrusted across generations and groups in order to record history and reimagine futurity across time and place. “The ‘book’ of all the days of” indigenous America, the Almanac of the Dead circulates as a living document with “living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land” (*Almanac* 569). It cathects the experiences of its historical and contemporary guardians into a narrative only existing as a relation between disparate voices and individuals.

The text pushes outward against its own physical limitations, bearing “here and there ... scribbles and scratches ... scribbled arguments in margins” (570). The scribbles and arguments penned over existing iterations of the Almanac inform its contents, and Silko forecloses commonly held notions of coherence in this prophetic history. The “guardians” of the Almanac are frequently described in terms of “madness.” When Zeta examines “the notebook

of snakes” (a portion of the Almanac primarily gathering glyphs and drawings of snakes), she is “disappointed” to find that her grandmother “Yoeme’s scrawls in misspelled Spanish ... did not seem to be the ‘key’ to anything except one old woman’s madness” (134). In *Almanac*, “madness” (as with Dr. O’Connor, who “went mad” as Jenny “snatch[ed] the oats out of love’s droppings” [107]) doesn’t align with historically disciplinary versions of insanity. Rather, the madness exhibited by Yoeme and others solidifies a collective refusal of a primarily Western logic whose ordering principles are inflicted upon indigenous temporality.

Most poignantly, the “madness” of the Almanac’s guardians openly grounds the acts of collection enabling the palimpsestic enumerative:

The great deal of what had accumulated with the almanac fragments had been debris gathered here and there by aged keepers of the almanac after they had gone crazy. A few of the keepers had fallen victim to delusions of various sorts. Here and there were scribbles and scratches. Lecha found pages where old Yoeme had scribbled arguments in margins with the remarks and vulgar humor Lecha and Zeta had enjoyed so many times with their grandmother.
(570)

Though we might initially be tempted to think of the “debris” gathered by the Almanac’s guardians as dirt and wear accreted over time, the word’s negative connotations of “excess”/“irrelevance” foreground the impossibility of fitting its

contents to our expectations. While “some sections had indeed been splashed with wine, others with water or blood” (569), this “debris” becomes increasingly central to formulating the Almanac’s anti-enumerological “narrative” potential.

The Almanac’s “debris” demonstrates an accumulative capacity which opposes “collection” (tool of the Judge and also, as we will see, of Silko characters such as *Gardens in the Dunes*’s Edward). Whereas collection places burdens of coherence on governing narratives, accumulation subverts (to the extent possible) those narratives in favor of stratified multiplicity.³ Unburdened of the intentionality inherent in acts of collecting, relatively haphazard practices of accumulation may relay ideas and narratives along multiple axes. In short, foregoing the linearity of the collection’s narrative allows Silko to shape a space for anti-enumerological “enumerations” that, with the right kind of eyes, become plurally teleological by emphasizing dynamism, impermanence, and most of all a palimpsestic stratification of moment and perspective.

In this vein the Almanac, ostensibly closely guarded by generations of indigenous keepers, forces the obsolescence of empiricized historical authority. The novel presents it as some artifact—bearer of ancient prophecies from the Mayans and others; but as the novel progresses, even what remains of the original text becomes uncertain:

For hundreds of years, guardians of the almanac notebooks had made clumsy attempts to repair torn pages. ... Only fragments of the original pages remained, carefully placed between blank pages; those of ancient

paper had yellowed, but the red and black painted glyphs had still been clear. The outline of the giant plumed serpent could be made out in pale blue on the largest fragment. The pages of ancient paper had been found between the pages of horse-gut parchment carried by the fugitive Indian slaves who had fled north to escape European slavery. (569)

Fragmentized, the original/“authentic” portions of the *Almanac of the Dead* may serve as textual backbone, but the novel (along with the *Almanac*’s keepers) shapes and furthers the aims of living document—rather than preserving the *Almanac* as historical artifact.

One could argue that Western almanacs, like those discussed alongside Benjamin Franklin and Djuna Barnes, are “living” in the sense that they increase their scope with the passage of time. But nowhere in our cultural understanding of almanacs does temporality have a mutable texture. The difference, then, is that Silko’s text mitigates impulses to contain history and to view it through the scientific and enumerological lens. And again, this is not only crucial to situating the *Almanac* and its importance; it’s central to the physical and written construction of the text-as-palimpsest. The seemingly ancient portions of the text are unreliable: “Not even the parchment pages or fragments of ancient paper could be trusted; they might have been clever forgeries recopied, drawn, and colored painstakingly” (570). Moreover, and perhaps most interestingly, this almanac presents itself as indigenous—as being shaped by and for indigenous

temporalities—but the palimpsestic voicings are not limited to the guardians’ inscriptions.

In fact, the “debris” settling on the Almanac’s pages sometimes intersects with expressions of Euro-American authority: “Whole sections had been stolen from other books and from the proliferation of ‘farmer’s almanacs’ published by patent-drug companies and medicine shows that gave away the almanacs as advertisements” (570). Silko’s decision to weave traditional almanacs into her text—even as she chooses the almanac genre as her anti-enumerological battleground—confirms Miriam Schacht’s idea that *Almanac of the Dead* demonstrates ways in which “The indigenous nature of the Americas is powerful enough to absorb new technologies and new people without losing any of its Indigenesness” (54). Ann Brigham shows, with respect to the map-graphic labeled “The Almanac of the Dead” prefacing the novel, that Silko engages in “repetition with a difference, ... (re)presentation ... that looks different and, therefore, leads the viewer to think about those differences and their possible meaning” (304).⁴ Additionally, reconfiguring the almanac demonstrates that Silko sees the strategic significance of undermining and reappropriating enumerative representation. Unlike Barnes, whose work combines the parodic with disruption as a means of undoing, Silko integrates the traditional almanac into her generic reimagination. Her proactive approach to coping with enumerology’s magnetism allows her to both acknowledge and contain the influence of enumerological thought even as she pens new forms of resistance.

Critics have identified the Almanac's "living" history with the dynamism energizing Silko's vision of indigenous identity. Michelle Jarman observes that "For Lecha and Zeta, these pieces represent a living history, and the process of completing older sections and integrating current stories into the histories is essential to connecting the broken lines from the past with the future" (159). And Paul Worley connects the concept of "living" history to the non-linear construction of the Almanac itself: "This notion of the manuscript as living being steps outside of Western notions of author and authority, as the people who maintain the almanac, even as they adapt and copy it, do not achieve authority over the text" (13).⁵ When we say that the Almanac is unstable or untrustworthy, then, we do not mean that it can't be relied upon to express useful histories or to shape indigenous community in a way that enables reclamation of identity or land. Rather, "unstable" and "untrustworthy" become valuable characteristics—shifting our focus away from enumerological desire for linear narrative and its inherent elision, and opening up the possibility of multilateral histories.

As a *living* history, the Almanac announces its necessary incompleteness at any given moment—an option unavailable to enumerological representations of the genre which are about mastery (over time, the body, and the natural world) as much as they are about understanding. But the life within the novel also incorporates the living actors whom it describes, and who, in their revisions and re-inscriptions, describe it even as they are subsumed into its texture. In doing so, it paradoxically channels Silko's vision of a history complete in ways inaccessible to traditional almanacs—"complete" because it carries the blood of its keepers,

the voices of indigenous experience, and the reality of time as something expansively living, not something inflexibly constructed. This is Angelita La Escapía's "sacred text. The most complete history was the most powerful force" (*Almanac* 316), and the reason that "The first time Lecha opened the notebooks, she had recognized here was the real thing. ... Yoeme and others believed the almanac had living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land" (569). In order to be "the real thing," historical and cultural "enumeration" must push beyond acts of listing and accounting to deploy its layering principles in ways that embody rather than instantiate its subject; that is, a history in flux can only exist as *living* within those fluctuations. As Menardo's disavowed grandfather tells us, "All the ancestors had understood nothing stayed fixed in the universe" (258). Finally, this text can only live if its many authors relinquish "authority," embracing the anti-enumerological potential of anti-linearity.

Though Silko relishes the novel's (appropriately) incomplete representation of the Almanac, we can still turn to its more literal claims for better grasp of the distinction between traditional almanacs and this living history. Where the almanac genre has historically conflated its descriptive, listing function with authority over temporality, Silko's Almanac literalizes the idea that time (along with history) lives. In Yoeme's "Snake's Notebook" (the same notes Zeta describes as an "old woman's madness"), the Spirit Snake tells us

I have been talking to you people from the beginning

I have told you the names and identities of the Days and Years.

*I have told you the stories on each day and year so you could be prepared
and protect yourselves.*

What I have told you has always been true.

What I have to tell you now is that this world is about to end. (135).

By articulating “the names and identities of the Days and Years,” the Almanac fulfills precisely the same function that the traditional almanac purports to. It even captures the prognosticating function dismantled in Barnes’s *Nightwood*. But here the Days and Years are living beings. As such, they stand in stark opposition to conceptions of temporality relegating time to a construct with scientific and authoritative potential; “these old ones” whose perspective is layered into the Almanac “paid no attention to white man’s time” (35).

This interpretation further precludes enumerologically authoritarian linearity by assuming the cyclical nature of history and time itself. We are told, in a story about one group of Almanac guardians, that they carry “the ‘book’ of all the days of their people,” which holds that the “days and years were all alive, and all these days would return again” (247). Cyclical time functions as a relation between moments, each inflected by past, present, and future: “Copied and recopied for hundreds of years, the manuscript commingles elements of history past, present and future (or prophecy)” (Worley 11-12). Instead of the marketable farce of astrological prognostication one finds in conventional almanacs, Silko’s text intuits greater understandings of futurity by articulating its intrinsic rapport

with the past. As Angelita thinks in her interpretation of Marx, one “must reckon with the past because within it lay seeds of the present and future. [One] must reckon with the past because within it lay this present moment and also the future moment” (*Almanac* 311). Interestingly (in the context of our discussion of Barnes), El Feo qualifies Angelita’s temporal thinking almost immediately by contradicting the Euro-American drive to reproductive futurism: “Those past times were not lost. The days, months, and years were living beings who roamed the starry universe until they came around again. In the Americas the white man never referred to the past but only to the future” (313). Again, the living “days, months, and years” appear as disruptions of hegemonic time, but they are also central to the palimpsestic nature of Silko’s anti-enumerology.

Their resonant voices and identities carry across versions of the *Almanac*—across interpretations and re-inscriptions of words that were into words that will be again—and unify the text even as they express its multiplicity. The idea of multiplicity as a means of unification (contrasting with enumeration’s usual unification via elimination of the multi-textural) expresses the practical utility of the *Almanac*: its ability to instantiate indigenous community.⁶ Just as the guardians’ “notes, which, with copying and recopying, have been woven into the fabric of the notebooks themselves” (Worley 14), so, too, the multi-lateral voicings (guardian, activist, revolutionary) within and without the text craft a community from the shared space of this history. Rebecca Tillett understands the role, here, of perspectival overlay: “One of Silko’s key concerns is to depict the *Almanac* as an embodiment of communal identity, and Silko goes to great lengths

to subvert the hegemonic through the inclusion of alternative, often contradictory, and even deliberately conflicting, testimonies” (31). Though Silko is careful not to homogenize indigenous culture in *Almanac of the Dead*, she stresses the power of formulating solidarity based on indigenous experiences which are, indeed, shared.⁷

The historical bases of the Almanac provide further insight into Silko’s reimagining of enumerative mechanisms. Worley has demonstrated *Almanac* “as constituting a reperformance that points back to another document, however fictional, composed in both glyphs and Latin letters” (12)—the Mayan texts of the Chilam Balam. And indeed, there are affinities, including deep interest in history, futurity, and the nature of time. Coincidentally, Worley summarizes the research done on these texts (by Alfredo Barrera Vásquez and Silvia Rendón) in terms that recall the Borgesian system of “classification.” He suggests that we may “divide the [Chilam Balam’s] content into eight categories[:] religious texts; historical texts; medical texts; chronological and astrological texts; astronomical texts; rituals; ‘literary’ texts; and miscellaneous entries that fall outside of this classification” (4) Beyond the “miscellaneous entries that fall outside of this classification”—immediately demonstrating the insufficiency of traditional forms of enumeration—the subject matter of the Chilam Balam distortively parallels the Western Almanac. And alongside the historical and chronological functions that we have already noted in *Whitaker’s*, these indigenous codices feature the prognosticative tendencies appearing in their Western counterparts.

The conditions of the Chilam Balam's oracularity are obviously quite different from the frivolous astrological predictions so popular in Europe and the United States. Like the Almanac of the Dead, the Chilam Balam extends its chronology to foretell colonial rule and "construct the performance of Native knowledge as a self-reflexive, critical process" (14) over time. Furthermore, Worley's explication of the Chilam Balam (and similar texts) in effect corroborates Silko's critiques of enumerative performance. Predicated on "performatic" traditions, "the books of Chilam Balam [describe] particular instances of transcribed performance, instances that, in turn, are not necessarily meant to be read as static, Western-style texts but interpreted (i.e., performed) according to another set of norms, if not also reperformed at a later date" (6). In contradistinction to public readings of traditional almanacs (which take the text as a static source of authority over time and nature), these indigenous codices merge performance with text as a way of refining and exceeding their ostensibly constitutive enumerative mechanisms.⁸ This alternative interplay of performance and written enumeration generates the kind of elasticity we have already noted in Silko's Almanac. Gordon Brotherston recognizes that the Mayan codices' commitment to "embedded data and multiple reading ... so far exceeds the limits of verbal language as to render transcription an unending task" (59-60); and the "unending task" of these enumerations augments Yoeme's explanation of "how carefully the old manuscript and its notebooks must be kept. Nothing must be added that was not already there" (129).

The paradoxical relationship between “unending transcription” and only adding preexisting content (yet another Borgesian twist) reinforces these indigenous forms of recording as non-linear sites of resistance to Western temporal and historical media. Imagined as transcriptions of performances designed to be reperformed, the Mayan codices shape a medium “responsible for compiling, guarding, and performing ... a web of knowledge that had its origins in Classic Maya societies and the Postclassic Mesoamerica world system” (Knowlton 4-5). Dovetailing with Silko’s anti-enumerological project, the multiplicity of voice and meaning in these texts becomes a figurative palimpsest which prefigures Silko’s literalization—and also instantiates a technique of perspectival overlay which, we will see, Silko herself weaves into *Gardens in the Dunes* to supplement that novel’s written palimpsests.

Kimberly Roppolo’s “Vision, Voice, and Intertribal Metanarrative” explores another indigenous precursor to Silko’s reimagined enumeration. Here Roppolo shares her research on the influence that the Plains ledgerbooks may have had on Silko’s *Almanac*: these ledgerbooks indicate a tendency “to *record* and *transmit* knowledge in holistic/visual, non-linear ways” (538)—which overlaps with the non-linear (even distinctly *anti-linear*) rhetorical modes flowing through the *Almanac*. Designed to visually represent/record historical deeds “to aid in their preservation in the oral tradition of the people” (541), the Plains ledgerbooks “at first held recorded war exploits and then later ceremonial information and details from daily life” (540). These details were not simply honorific. The deeds recorded in these ledgers constituted a compound written-

oral history, woven, according to Roppolo, into cultural identity and ceremony (such as the “world-renewing” [541] Cheyenne Sun Dance). Like the elided histories sought by *Almanac*’s indigenous characters, those recorded in the Plains ledgers stood against temporal and historical narratives developing in the Euro-American mind.

And it is no coincidence that the Plains histories are called “ledgerbooks.” As Roppolo explains,

Though Plains peoples had recorded pictographs prior to this period on a variety of surfaces—notably hides, in addition to the petroglyphs mentioned above—between 1860 and 1900, a number of pictographic books were created in accountants’ ledger books with crayon, colored pencil, and sometimes watercolor. (540-41)

One would be hard-pressed to find a more exact historical example of the palimpsestic enumerative. Here, indigenous enumerations of action and history, referenced explicitly by Roppolo as “accurate *accounting* of war deeds” (540; emphasis added), are transposed directly onto the alignments and visual rhetoric of hegemonic accountings we have seen exposed in McCarthy. Roppolo asserts that the ledgerbooks, replacing other media, constitute “a more recent sort of ... writing” (540) which continues, but updates, preexisting recordings dating to Mayan culture,⁹ implying the reactive nature of such recordings—as if, in

weaving the ledger's enumerological template into a history of resistance, some fuller knowledge of the historical context might be captured.

In another interesting corollary to Silko's *Almanac*, the contents of these ledgers are often incomplete. One, in possession of the Colorado Historical Society, "originally was produced with one hundred forty-four blank pages," but only "one hundred fourteen pages remain in the book as it is" (541). As with the *Almanac*, where "Only fragments of the original pages remained," the Plains ledgerbooks purport to present an incomplete history; they were, however, likely intended to follow the "performatic" model set forth by the *Chilam Balam*. Once again working against linearity and Euro-American enumerological traditions,¹⁰ the fusion of written and oral temporal/historical representation typifying Plains ledgerbooks confounds conventional analysis, and our perspective is "severely limited by an incomplete oral tradition" (*CHS*). Even so, they join with the *Almanac* in imagining a temporal and historical enumeration that foregoes the enumerological pretense-to-completion by intertwining multiple perspectives—the book referenced above being the joint "work of fourteen author-artists" (Roppolo 541)—and subsuming the enumerological medium into palimpsestic technologies.

Thus, revising temporality becomes vital to Silko's contesting of Euro-American ideological maneuvers. We have noted that *Almanac* views time as cyclical, reinstating indigenous conceptions of both history and futurity. Textually, this imperative manifests in more than just the *Almanac*'s generic referent. Lecha, for example, sees an unorthodox use of clocks when she travels

to Mexico: “She did notice the clocks—the old-fashioned kind preferred by all the old folks in Sonora—big clocks that needed keys inserted into their faces to wind them” (150). She is told, “They are set for different times ... because this way I know how much time they would have had if they had lived” (150). Here, the clock doesn’t concern itself with situating the present moment. Instead, it articulates a disorienting possibility—an alternative timeline where a present which is not charts histories which could have been. Such a belief questions not only the desired fixity of Euro-American time; it pushes back on the latter’s claim to reality. Simultaneously, and just like the Almanac, it maps what might have been in some other context. We are told soon after that “Lecha had always made it a practice to avoid calendars and clocks except where business required them. Because they were not true” (172). Clearly, this points to the economic implications and utility of Western temporality. Furthermore, Silko posits that both reality and history exist *outside* of hegemonic enumerations, stressing the false-but-common misconception that almanac time is more than a tool—asserting, in opposition, that “what was true was a moment such as this” (172).

While the almanac genre foregrounds *Almanac*’s disavowal of the enumerological, *Gardens in the Dunes* demonstrates that Silko’s palimpsestic revisions extend to other modes of enumeration as well. This novel, also concerned with historicity and alternate temporalities, centers on the fragmentation of indigenous communities, and, like *Almanac*, attempts to imagine a unified indigenous identity across the space of forced diaspora. As the title implies, *Gardens* deploys varying images of “the garden” to rethink attitudes

toward place. But before discussing their significance to indigenous (and non-Western) perspective and experience, it is helpful to consider ways in which hegemonic ideations of gardening play to Silko's reimagining of the enumerological.

Stephanie Li has noted that, "As displayed throughout *Gardens in the Dunes*, gardening reflects social values and the complex ways that humans relate to and conceive of the natural world" (19). And while the expression of indigenous and alternative relationships to the natural are, indeed, central, the relation/conception which the novel resists is the botanical viewpoint, represented by Edward. Though often engaging in pursuits that seem less about discovery and more about economics (selling orchids from South America, citrus cuttings from the Mediterranean), Edward entrenchedly views the world through what we might term, following Mary Louise Pratt, the "Linnaean gaze" (35).¹¹ As Pratt understands, the Linnaean cataloguing impulse (like Judge Holden's imperial collecting) reflects far more than a simple desire to "better" apprehend the world around us: "The systematization of nature coincides with the height of the slave trade, the plantation system, colonial genocide in North America and South Africa, slave rebellions in the Andes, the Caribbean, North America, and elsewhere" (35). The "indigenous naturalism" practiced by characters like Grandma Fleet in *Gardens* counters this Linnaean epistemology.

Edward's scientific methods are modeled on systematist Carl Linnaeus's legacy, and if we doubted that the Swedish scientist's ghost haunts Silko's novel, we are met by Edward's pet monkey Linnaeus within the first hundred pages.

Linnaeus's (the man's) relationship to the enumerological is both straightforward and immensely complex. On the one hand, he perceives the power of the catalogue to shape knowledge and even the globe itself. On the other, a closer examination of his work demonstrates that his professional life oscillates between a desire to manifest a "complete" form of enumeration—one that actually avoids elision—and the impossibility of ever doing so.

According to Staffan Müller-Wille and Isabelle Charmantier, whose extensive work on Linnaeus charts the progression of his catalogues, "Linnaeus lived his life by lists" ("Lists" 745). In a kind of precursor moment to Galton's later "Whenever you can, count," Linnaeus strained to make sense of the global information overload "encountered" during the spread of 18th-century Europe by listing whenever he could:

A list of stimulants particular to each continent (tea to Asia, coffee to Africa, chocolate to America, and beer to Europe); a list enumerating "equivocal names for fishes [nomina piscium aequivoca]"—that is, names that designate other animals like birds or reptiles as well; and a list entitled "plants described in Linder's *Art of Dyeing* [*örter i Linders färgakost beskriřna*]" : these are just three of the many lists one can find in a notebook that belonged to the naturalist Carl Linnaeus. He began to compile such lists in 1727, when he took up his medical studies at the University of Lund in southern Sweden, and he continued this practice while pursuing his studies at the University of Uppsala. Most of the

information digested in these lists was culled from the libraries of professors Linnaeus lodged with—initially, as he later recalled, in secret and at night because he was afraid to ask for permission. (743)

So, from early in his career, Linnaeus lists. And interestingly, even at this early stage in his scientific development, the practicality/factuality of the list binds to secretive, almost occult pursuits of information. The “forbidden” nature of these early endeavors is appropriate because, as we know from Twain’s “Dream Tales,” early acts of scientific cataloguing are as much about the mystique of exploration as they are about cold facts. Over time, lists became “the main instrument for Linnaeus to explore territories of the unknown” (743-44).

Müller-Wille and Charmantier discuss Linnaean listing in terms closely paralleling our framework for enumerative limitation. From Linnaeus’s perspective, the list-as-catalogue “was a handy means to present and preserve knowledge in a concise and structured yet open-ended manner” (743). It allowed the collection of data under a specific system of organization, but its reliance on categories inevitably ran the risk of narrowing the field of possibility: “On the one hand, lists, and the permutations they invite, ‘crystallise problems of classification.’ On the other hand, by bringing ‘greater visibility to categories,’ lists may also construct a ‘conceptual prison’” (744-45). As one might expect, given Linnaeus’s obsessive enumerating, his answer was often to simply create more lists. In fact, many of his notebooks/lists appear to have been used like accounting wastebooks. These lists offered a form of temporary storage—held

under one organizational header until they could be “exploited ... for the distillation of further lists of an increasingly abstract nature” (746). Such a process illustrates the utility of classificatory systems, but it also discloses the malleability always threatening to undermine their constitutive categories.

As Linnaeus’s methodology matured, tension between “the infinity of lists” and desire for a “complete” enumeration became more pressingly apparent. For example, two different sets of draft-manuscripts survive from the early stages (beginning around 1746) of his *Species Plantarum*. In the first, Linnaeus attempts to address data overflow by creating an expandable catalogue consisting of “loose paper sheets which Linnaeus folded once to form bifolia of quarto size which in turn could be inserted one into the other to form quires. Each quire was dedicated to a genus and listed its species and their numerous synonyms in the extant botanical literature” (“Overload” 9-10). This fungibility proved to be “a great improvement on the previous notebooks, because unhindered by the constraints of covers and binding, Linnaeus could expand each quire at will, in principle *ad infinitum*” (10). As new botanical information trickled in from his emissaries around the globe (more on this later), Linnaeus was, at will, able to alter, expand, or re-organize this version of *Species Plantarum*—itself a novel species built around and openly acknowledging fundamental limitations of enumeration.

However, apparently unsatisfied with the unwieldy compilation, which by its very nature could not be bound (in multiple senses of the word), Linnaeus “aborted this manuscript in the autumn of 1746” (10). In its place, he began a new, “bound,” version of *Species Plantarum* which would meet the needs of the

emerging industry of scientific publication. As Müller-Wille and Charmantier note, “The format, however, proved counterproductive: each page was filled with numerous deletions, insertions and cross-outs, all indicating that once the information was contained within a bound manuscript, Linnaeus experienced great difficulties in inserting new material which seems to have come in ever greater quantities” (10). Again, “the case of Linnaeus” is especially interesting because it insists on foregrounding the problematics of scientific enumeration. Because his work can’t exist as separate from its need to be circulated, he’s forced to confront the reality that the catalogue’s “binding” (which makes it an intellectual contract implying coherent, “complete” work) presents, perhaps, an insurmountable limitation.

But only perhaps. In a sense, Linnaeus did find a solution to his “collective” worries, and, apropos of Silko, that approach involved a form of palimpsest. It was not uncommon practice in his time to interleave one’s own books—that is, to insert blank pages into them facing printed pages. This proved particularly convenient in editing. One could easily and neatly error-correct during revision or provide annotations useful to final/future versions of the text. Linnaeus re-appropriates this technology, filling up interleaved pages with thoughts which “neither served to amend the facing printed text, nor acted as a repository for comments and observations on the printed text, but rather to facilitate the preparation of an entirely different publication. The layout of the printed text thus functioned as a template against which information of an entirely different kind could be collected” (11). While interleaved notes are more

marginal than literally palimpsestic, they did become, for Linnaeus, a means of imposing multiple/competing (though still globalizing) narratives on top of one another, creating new affinities, describing unrecognized relationships, and simulating, in their multiplicity, something more final, more complete to his framework.

Pivotal, interleaving interacted directly with Linnaeus's participation in the publication industry. Unlike many botanists/naturalists of his time, Linnaeus submitted to the inherent incompleteness of his work by resigning himself to more frequent *republication*. If public circulation/indoctrination characterizes enumerology, then Linnaeus's investment in serialization (to encourage repurchase) directly plays into his pioneering role as a scientific enumerologist. And it adds another layer to the palimpsestic nature of his catalogues: "Surviving copies from private libraries of eighteenth century botanists demonstrate that Linnaeus's contemporaries interleaved and annotated his publications in exactly the same way he did" (11). Since his publications were accepted as works in progress, the annotations made by *other* botanists in their private copies recirculated as "feedback in form of corrections and additions communicated by correspondents. Once this new information threatened to overwhelm Linnaeus's capacities for information storage, he would simply proceed to issue a new edition" (11). In this sense, too, each new version of, for example, *Genera Plantarum* reflected multiple processes of palimpsestic over-writing which reached across multiple spaces and accelerated the text towards more thoroughgoing explorations of the natural world.

The palimpsestic iteration of scientific enumeration in Linnaeus's moment embeds in Silko's project, however different their respective perspectives and locations. Linnaeus's work remains inextricable from European colonial economics, tying into a personal vision of Swedish prosperity via control of the natural—Linnaeus's grand project of creating “a miniature mercantile empire within a European state” (“Lists” 750). The (previously mentioned) Linnaean “emissaries” supplied a “wealth” of data to be subsumed into his catalogues, and a network of such scale was destined to be concomitant to global diffusion of European mercantilism and colonialism:

He was at the centre of a dense and wide-flung correspondence network which covered the whole of Europe and beyond. Friends and other naturalists from foreign countries would draw his attention to and seek his advice on possible new species they had discovered, or point out oversights and mistakes he committed in his published works. Having sent numerous students—his so-called “apostles”—to the four corners of the world, Linnaeus also maintained a steady correspondence with each of them. All of these correspondents sent books, letters and specimens to back up their claims or to simply let Linnaeus have news, and these documents would gradually fill Linnaeus's study. (“Overload” 5)

Linnaean botany depends on European definitions of globality: “a global system of postal communications; the ships and posts of trading companies—without

which his activities could never have reached the scale that was needed to reach new levels of abstraction and generalisation” (14). But as an enumerologist successfully engaging the industry of cataloguing’s print-culture, Linnaeus shapes domestic apprehension of the globe in ways that constantly reinstantiate the equation of colonialism to knowledge. The breadth of his understanding may rest on the extent of Europe’s reach, but simultaneously, European versions of globality depend on him (and people like him) to encourage domestic support, to produce linkages between “reason” and “exploration,” and to rearticulate the globe in the language of economic resource.

In a way, then, Linnaean catalogues read as travel literature; his work morphs sequences of individual encounters with the exotic (through his “apostles”) into consumable experience. As backdrop, this methodology permeates *Gardens in the Dunes*, which redeploys the travel genre as a means of critiquing Euro-American relations to space. As Chi-szu Chen has observed, “*Gardens in the Dunes* is an exemplar revisionist travel narrative” (165) which rethinks ideas of mobility in order to undermine what Eric J. Leed has called the “gendering activity” (217) of European literary definitions of travel. Leed’s claim that the genre holds “no free and mobile male without the unfree and sessile female” (217) and that female travelers’ journeys “are secret, necessitated, or accomplished through the agency of men” (221) clearly pertains to both the revisionist implications of *Gardens* and the machinery inciting Indigo’s experience of indigenous diaspora. Even more, the novel critiques the specific, enumerological functions of botanical tourism stemming from Linnaeus’s

dreamed-of “mercantile empire.” As Silko herself has said (in an interview with Ellen Arnold), plants “come from all over the world, and they’re also another way of looking at colonialism, because everywhere the colonials went, the plants came back from there” (Arnold 181).

Edward is *Gardens*’ key connection to Linnaean enumerological culture. Through his own travels, he becomes a temporally removed “apostle” (contrasting amusingly with the novel’s Ghost-Dance-related “Messiah”). His personal collections of specimens¹² mime the collector’s fervor pervading 18th-century European naturalism—which in reality, as in literature, extends well beyond the 18th century. Edward makes exhaustive preparations for his travels, presented by Silko in lists worthy of Linnaeus:

The floor of his study had been spread with lanterns, candles, tents, tarps, a folding shovel, a trowel, a clock, bottles of chemicals—formaldehyde and alcohol—and a number of handsome cherry wood boxes that contained magnifying glasses, a microscope, a small telescope; and of course, one cherry wood box contained Edward’s camera, another the glass plates and bottles of chemicals. Specimen collection envelopes, botanical field guides, a book of maps, blank notebooks, leather boots, rubber boots, rubber hip waders, a wide-brim straw hat, a pith helmet, mosquito netting, a canteen, and a revolver all were carefully packed into huge black steamer trunks. (76)

Edward's checklist for voyages becomes its own act of collecting, where organizational tools like "specimen collection envelopes"—supposedly to facilitate contact with nature—juxtapose against equipment like "mosquito netting" and "a pith helmet" which protect/isolate him from an environment always foreseen as hostile to the "civilized" experience.

The journeys he undertakes, like those of the Linnaean "apostles," are economic as well as scientific. Edward's central narrative trauma—a botched journey up the Para River in Brazil—combines an investor-backed mission to collect specific varieties of orchids with the nationalistic (more anti-Brazilian/Portuguese) objective of smuggling out a variety of disease-resistant rubber tree.¹³ His affiliation with "the Bureau of Plant Industry in Washington" (75) affixes botany to economic aspects of "national interest," and personal investment in the success of the citrus expedition (and his own groves in California) continuously threatens to disrupt his self-image as "pure" scientist. Samples Silko gives us from Edward's botanical compendia similarly channel the language of utility/economics:

Hevea brasiliensis, the Caoutchouc Tree, the Para Rubber Tree, sixty to one hundred thirty feet tall in native sites, floodplains in the watersheds of the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers. Leaflets elliptic, two to twenty-four inches long, thick and leathery. Seeds used as food by natives; the milky juice is the best and most important source of natural rubber. (130)

The entry begins with a form of elision-via-category—the Latin name “brasiliensis” already applying an alien, national character to the natural specimen. And geographic descriptions of its “native sites” shift to a physical description dominated by implied roles in the global market.

In *Gardens*, these Linnaean enumerations coincide with ostensibly anthropological catalogues that come to define Euro-American attitudes toward indigeneity.¹⁴ For instance, when Indigo first appears at Hattie and Edward’s home, Edward attempts to find her tribe of origin. Edward, “quite interested ... in rare or extinct Indian cultures” (122), is “intrigued with the notion that the child might be the last remnant of a tribe now extinct, perhaps a tribe never before studied by anthropologists” and begins to compile “a list of simple words gleaned from linguists’ work with each of the known desert tribes” (111). As readers we see the reductiveness of such anthropology, whose Linnaean gaze writes groups into and out of existence. Like Edward’s botany, these catalogues link to governmental oppression—“the Indian Affairs census” (395), which is its own never-ending process of domination-through-enumeration. That Indigo’s (fictional) Sand Lizard tribe slips through the cracks—not appearing in any of Edward’s books—resonates with Silko’s rethinking of historical narratives. By writing about a group not documented—that in truth could not be documented—Silko implies the reality of historical elision and the impossibility of fully articulating indigenous identity through Euro-American frameworks.

But to the extent that she allows *us* a view through the Sand Lizard perspective, Silko also continues to explore palimpsestic enumeratives. In

Gardens, the palimpsest most often appears as a figurative extension of *Almanac*'s methodology. Instead of the literal "writing over" constituting the *Almanac*, *Gardens* yields a consistent form of perspectival overlay with roots in the catalogue, but which extends beyond it to a multilateral expression of experience. Initially, the novel demonstrates the centrality of lists and notebooks to Linnaean perspective—Edward's notebooks, his "volume of linguistic surveys of various desert Indian tribes" (108), or the "small notebook" Edward's Para River companion Mr. Elliot "carried in his breast pocket" (135) to keep track of collected specimens. But as the novel progresses, the work of inscribing nature passes from the scientists to Indigo, who receives her own notebook from Hattie's Aunt Bronwyn:

She gave Indigo a package that held a small silk-bound notebook where Aunt Bronwyn hand-printed the names (in English and Latin) of medicinal plants and the best conditions and methods to grow them. All the other pages in the green silk notebook were blank, ready for Indigo to draw or write anything she wanted. Bundled on top of the notebook with white ribbons were dozens of waxed paper packets of seeds wrapped in white tissue paper. (267)

Though the inclusion of English and Latin (Linnaean) names figures a familiar format for a botanical notebook, Indigo's relationship to the natural world ensures that her noting, drawing, and learning about plants will remain different from, for

example, Edward's. Paula Gunn Allen has stated that "The notion that nature is somewhere over there while humanity is over here or that a great hierarchical ladder of being exists ... is antithetical to tribal thought" (59), and the immersion in nature Indigo experiences forecloses its reduction into the languages of domination and economics—even if, ironically, "Indigo had a good head for numbers" (271).

Gardens, which become the novel's primary sites for cultivating interaction between humans and nature, have steered much of the critical work on *Gardens in the Dunes*. Li's essay "Domestic Resistance: Gardening, Mothering, and Storytelling," for example, illustrates ways in which, for Silko, "gardening reflects social values and the complex ways that humans relate to and conceive of the natural world" (19). Terre Ryan focuses on the novel's "image of the garden to illustrate imperialism on international, national, local, and domestic levels" (115-16). Within the Linnaean matrix, *Gardens* shows that the forms of botanical micromanagement pouring into 19th-century lusts for "majestic" gardens participate in an obsession (wholly alien to characters like Indigo and Grandma Fleet) with dominating spaces. The gardens reflect imperialism, not only as a localized micropractice, but as a global phenomenon fueled by multitasking botanist-traders like Edward who provide exotic/rare plants.

By contrast, Indigo experiences gardens as vital, immersive, connective. On first encountering Edward and Hattie's Riverside garden, she sees "blood red dianthus, red peonies, red dahlias, and red poppies; bright red cosmos and scarlet hollyhocks," and her "heart pound[s] with excitement at all the red flowers." As

she stands enraptured, the sky itself suddenly becomes “the color of the roses,” continuing to deepen into a “blood red” (83). Transformed away from Euro-American “landscapes ... designed to bolster the egos of their owners” (Ryan 122), the garden, through Indigo’s eyes, flourishes with a life-force foreclosed to the curio. And the notes she makes in her book strive—against Linnaean abstraction—to capture the vibrancy of the things she documents. When the eccentric *professora* Laura gives her “dozens of pencils in all colors,” she is “delighted; now she could draw the flowers with the right colors and make the hummingbird’s feathers purple and green” (285), recording things in a way truer to them. As she shapes her own, alternate version of the botanical compendium, Indigo infuses enumerative practice with her vision of a living world inseparable from human experience. Her notebook does, actually, form a true palimpsest; that is, it lists names and medicinal properties in more or less Linnaean fashion, while her descriptions and drawings reshape (as they write over) the notebook’s original content. But beyond this, her very experiences of nature repeatedly clash with Edward’s “lifeless” scientific sensibilities¹⁵—less as juxtaposition and more as radical revision. This kind of perspectival overlay forms its own palimpsest by forcing multiplicity, thus undoing Linnaean authority.

Early in the novel, Indigo listens as Edward announces the names of Susan’s garden party flowers: “Susan took notes as Edward called out the flowers’ names, and Indigo examined them carefully. She wanted to remember each detail of the leaf and the stalk for all these plants and flowers so she could tell Sister Salt and Mama” (185). And to more fully share them, Indigo “picked

up seeds and saved them in scraps of paper with her nightgown and clothes in the valise so she could grow them when she went home” (185). The existential difference is immeasurable. While Susan and Edward enumerate the flowers in the collection—the names of the flowers or categories ascribed them supplanting their very nature—Indigo plunges into the physical and olfactory details of the floral experience.¹⁶ Her alterate gaze (here and elsewhere), extending beyond Euro-American definitions of botanical study, enriches her perspective—connecting her to place and nature even as she undergoes the disorientation of familial and cultural uprooting.

Indigo’s mission to preserve botanical details expresses her desire for shared experience. She wants to “tell Sister Salt and Mama” about what she’s seen. Later, imagining that Grandma Fleet and Sister Salt would “tease her for becoming a white girl,” she thinks, “Wait until they saw all the seeds she gathered and the notebook she brought back with the names and instructions and color sketches too” (285). As in *Almanac of the Dead*, the palimpsestic enumerative in *Gardens* is, first and foremost, a communal act. Though *Gardens* focuses its palimpsests on overriding (by overwriting) Linnaean imperatives, it nevertheless sees this as a communal mode occurring across space, and across multiple iterations of identity. Just as African descendants and white veterans unite with indigenous solidarity in *Almanac*, Indigo’s reimagining of the botanical catalogue produces kinships with the “eccentricities” of Aunt Bronwyn and Laura, as well as Hattie’s shunned, mutinous doctoral “assertions that Jesus had women disciples and Mary Magdalene wrote a Gospel suppressed by the church” (77).¹⁷ Of

course, Hattie's fixation on Gnostic and other redacted, heretical Christian traditions is its own form of palimpsestic enumeration—an interleaving of forgotten gospels between canonical pages, which disrupts and reorganizes the whole of the original. The alternative Christian history her dissertation elucidates joins with Indigo's own alternate understandings of the Ghost Dance, the historical context surrounding Wounded Knee, and the continued existence of Indian "slave catchers" (231). In turn, their renovations of the historical narrative supplement Angelita La Escapía's (multi-page) list of indigenous revolutionary moments "that Europeans ... hope ... Native Americans will forget" (*Almanac* 527), and also Clinton's enumeration of African slave uprisings—a notebook of "fragments of the history the people had been deprived of for so long" (742). Like these ever-expanding acts of enumeration, the spirit of communal resistance in Silko's texts forces a reckoning with the fixity of our narratives—perhaps even, through some "mosaic of memory and imagination" (574), disavowal of autonomous authority and formulation of new solidarities across knowledge and memory.

Epilogue

“These are the invaders, the tiny beings from the tiny place called Earth, who would take the giant step across the sky to the question marks that sparkle and beckon from the vastness of the universe only to be imagined. The invaders, who found out that a one-way ticket to the stars beyond has the ultimate price tag. And we have just seen it entered in a ledger that covers all the transactions of the universe, a bill stamped ‘paid in full,’ and to be found, on file, in the Twilight Zone.” – *The Twilight Zone*

Enumerology is “winning,” and on a grand scale. Mostly unbeknownst to us, our lives are being aggregated, collated, and narrativized on a daily basis. Frank Pasquale’s *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information* explains that “big data” daily amasses a wealth of information about us, fueling a social, political, and economic war against transparency, privacy, and knowledge itself:

As technology advances, market pressures raise the stakes of the data game. Surveillance cameras become cheaper every year; sensors are embedded in more places. Cell phones track our movements; programs log our keystrokes. New hardware and new software promise to make “quantified selves” of all of us, whether we like it or not. The resulting information—a vast amount of data that until recently went unrecorded—is fed into databases and assembled into profiles of unprecedented depth and specificity. (4)

In important ways, our moment constitutes an unparalleled explosion of enumerative acts—lists and tables vast enough to be almost beyond comprehension. Appropriately enough, they aren't: "However sprawling the web becomes, Google's search engineers are at least working on a 'closed system'; their own company's copies of the Internet. Similarly, those in charge of Twitter and Facebook 'feeds' have a set body of information to work with" (7). No paradoxically "infinite list" or *Chinese Emporium*, the "sprawling" web of data is constantly scoured, tuned, and processed into obscured forms of advertising and knowledge production that dictate the routes we travel, the streets we pass, the news we read.¹

In a kind of multivalent enumerology, this process begins by setting a list of possible options. We can eat here, read this book, receive this information; we can internalize the logic of this particular political position. The contextual pressure of these options always presents itself to us as "complete reality."² As always, this is the trap. By "freely"³ granting access to unprecedented quantities of information, the Internet creates the *illusion* of a numerically endless, truly infinite list—one working ceaselessly to add to itself, to avoid elision, and to open up fresh connectivities. That promise is, itself, enumerological to the extent that it reads (enormous) lists in ways which influence our ability to navigate both it and whatever worlds it may not describe.⁴ When the Internet was first rising to prominence, it seemed to hold revolutionary potential. The world outstretched, we could finally pressure even obscure perspectival limitations.⁵ But in the world that came to be, the democratic nature of the web disguised its circular logic, and

the companies defining our online experiences were increasingly incentivized to tighten their collective grip: “What finance firms do with money, leading Internet companies do with attention. They direct it toward some ideas, goods, and services, and away from others. They organize the world for us, and we have been quick to welcome this data-driven convenience. But we need to be honest about its costs” (6).⁶ In enumerative terms, the Internet cannot extricate itself from the practical imperative of “sorting.” In a bizarre reproduction of Linnaeus’s “data overload” folio-foibles, it runs aground where the digital infinitude acknowledges a necessary reduction to comprehensibility and utility. In doing so, it admits the impossibility of its own goal—being the Cabinet (of Curiosities) to end all Cabinets—and surrenders itself to an endless repetition of search-based elision: “The power to include, exclude, and rank is the power to ensure that certain public impressions become permanent, while others remain fleeting” (14).⁷ Yet the Internet preserves (dangerously) the sentiment of actual comprehensivity.⁸

At the same time, big data makes lists of us all.⁹ We lie entangled. Pasquale warns that “Everything we do online is recorded; the only questions left are to whom the data will be available, and for how long” (2), and the secondary enumeration writing our daily routines delimits the narratives which come to define us. In this strange interplay of evaporation and condensation, we abstract ourselves into digitized actions, reactions, and interests, which feed into occluded vaults—Pasquale’s “black box.” Once enumerated, “citizens of the Internet” then re-coalesce into concrete identity-narratives, or “profiles.” This transference,

itself an act of reading and of narrativization, divides who we are into instances of ourselves appropriate to specific economic, social, and intellectual contexts.

Where we could previously point to Benjamin Franklin or Daniel Defoe, and say, “He did it,” or “He chose to propagate this paradigm,” our “index” fingers now drum coffee shop tables wondering where the algorithms have hidden the Masters. To borrow from McCarthy, “we strike out to fall flailing through demons of wire and crepe and we long for something of substance to oppose us. ... Until we must be swallowed up by that very void to which we wished to stand opposed” (*The Crossing* 153).

Algorithms hail the “larger than life” automatization of enumerology. They allow any pre-envisioned narrative to apply itself strategically (and without “supervision”), in interchange with other narratives, so that enumerations are exactly collated.¹⁰ Even the “innovation” and “progress” proposed to distinguish algorithms from older forms of enumerology are, themselves, reinterpretations of recognizable narratives about “civilization” and “modernity.” Pasquale notes that “Novelists see things about our lives in society that we haven’t noticed yet, and tell us stories about them. These prescients are already exploring black box trends” (189).¹¹ And the unsettling authors we’ve explored are attuned to the historically continuous mechanisms of Enlightenment Mastery¹² and reductionism—which now happen to drive big data.¹³ If “Our technologies are just as much a product of social, market, and political forces as they are the outgrowth of scientific advance” (197), then the socio-political critique and anti-enumerological subversion created by these literary incisions open up a space—

against the enumerative onslaught—for imagining resistance to enumerological imperatives indelibly scored into our social consciousness.¹⁴

Ironically, the fluidity of big data’s interpretations instates its own sort of palimpsestic enumerative, which seems to mirror Silko: “Profiling may begin with the original collectors of the information, but it can be elaborated by numerous data brokers, including credit bureaus, analytics firms, catalog co-ops, direct marketers, list brokers, affiliates, and others. Brokers combine, swap, and recombine the data they acquire into new profiles, which they can then sell back to the original collectors or to other firms” (Pasquale 32). But with this difference: as these groups read us (and our lives), they may create multiple, layered narratives, but each instance needs to be treated as “complete,” in context, for the system to generate profits. Its manipulations are priced into affirming the imperforation of an inherently selective process. There’s no room for alterity or for the *assumed* incompleteness of anti-enumerations like the Plains Ledgerbooks, or the “incoherence” of Barnes’s aesthetic and Queer Negativity. Pasquale proposes that “Open uses of technology hold a very different kind of promise. . . . Rather than contort ourselves to fit ‘an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose,’ we might ask how institutions could be reshaped to meet higher ends than shareholder value” (218).¹⁵ His key word, “transparency”—working against the enshadowed “black box”—highlights the public need for a corporate and governmental reckoning which unmask the machinery of big data’s enumerological hold.¹⁶ But even after that revelation, one still imagines a culminative moment, where this “immense and terrible” aggregation looms and

dares us to challenge its “totality”—to forge some new ciborium. That is our *colindancia*. But in that *colindancia*, perhaps we have some say.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Another example: “The arid wisdom [of enlightenment] which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played out, all the great thoughts have been thought, all possible discoveries can be construed in advance, and human beings are defined by self-preservation through adaptation—this barren wisdom merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects: the sanction of fate which, through retribution, incessantly reinstates what always was. Whatever might be different is made the same. That is the verdict which critically sets the boundaries to possible existence. The identity of everything with everything is bought at the cost that nothing can at the same time be identical to itself” (*Dialectic* 8).

² Elsewhere, Horkheimer says, “The story of the boy who looked up at the sky and asked, ‘Daddy, what is the moon supposed to advertise?’ is an allegory of what has happened to the relation between man and nature in the era of formalized reason. On the one hand, nature has been stripped of all intrinsic value or meaning. On the other, man has been stripped of all aims except self-preservation. He tries to transform everything within reach into a means to that end. Every word or sentence that hints of relations other than pragmatic is suspect” (*Eclipse* 101).

³ “It is the identity of mind and its correlative, the unity of nature, which subdues the abundance of qualities. Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity” (*Dialectic* 6).

⁴ In such a context, “knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] would degenerate into tautology: what is known would be knowledge itself [*das Erkannte wäre sie selbst*]” (qtd in Gordon 128).

⁵ And “The fully enlightened world is therefore also a fully administered world” (Gordon 103).

⁶ See the introduction to Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, where his analysis of Borges’ *Emporium* provides a notable example.

⁷ Enumeration’s will-to-elision parallels that of Horkheimer and Adorno’s enlightenment as a means of containment and domination: “Humans believe themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown. This has determined the path of demythologization, of enlightenment, which equates the living with the nonliving as myth had equated the nonliving with the living. Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized. The pure immanence of positivism, its ultimate product, is nothing other than a form of universal taboo. Nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the ‘outside’ is the real source of fear” (11). In this, “Enlightenment ... amputates the incommensurable” (8-9). Finally, “Abstraction, the instrument of enlightenment, stands ... as liquidation” (9).

⁸ The occult relationship to rationality tying, as well, into Horkheimer and Adorno's identification of enlightenment as reinstatement of the very myths it wants to suppress.

⁹ Similarly, Borges' *Emporium* contains the entry, "(j): innumerable ones" ("John Wilkins' Analytical Language" 231).

¹⁰ "The aim in this case being economic efficiency rather than punishment, this was a regime whose intent was not to torture but rather to manage the depletion of life that resulted from the conditions of saltwater slavery. But for the Africans who were starved, sorted, and warped to make them into saltwater slaves, torture was the result" (Smallwood 36).

¹¹ Further, "Turning captives into commodities was a thoroughly scientific enterprise. It turned on perfecting the practices required to commodify people and determining where those practices reached their outer limits (that is, the point at which they extinguished the lives they were meant to sustain in commodified form). Traders reduced people to the sum of their biological parts, thereby scaling down to an arithmetical equation and finding the lowest common denominator" (Smallwood 43).

¹² Smallwood notes that human commodification was constantly confronted by "moments in which the agency and irrepressible humanity of the captives manifested themselves." While some were heroic (uprisings, escapes), "some were more tragic than heroic: instances of illness and death, thwarted efforts to escape from the various settings of saltwater slavery, removal of slaves from the market by reason of 'madness'" (34).

¹³ Smallwood traces the "accountable" history in Captain Peter Blake's assessment of a 1676 slave uprising: "It would be a very unaccountable history that Thirteen men & four boys slaves should attempt to rise upon Seven White Men was it not that it seems they were all out of Irons by ye Master's orders" (quoted in Smallwood 33). She adds, "Only by imagining that whiteness could render seven men more powerful than a group of twice their number did European investors produce an account naturalizing social relations that had as their starting point an act of violence" (34).

¹⁴ "The economic enterprise of human trafficking marked a watershed in what would become an enduring project in the modern Western world: probing the limits up to which it is possible to discipline the body without extinguishing the life within" (Smallwood 36).

¹⁵ We should note the technical ambiguity in the phrase "wrong none by doing injuries."

¹⁶ Barnum "found his vocation as a showman ... when he successfully presented Joice Heth, a wizened black woman whom he advertised as the 161-year-old nurse to General George Washington. This human relic, on her death, was exposed as a hoax" ("P. T. Barnum"). Barnum "displayed her in taverns, inns, museums, railway houses, and concert halls across the Northeast for a period of seven months, until her death. Starting with an extended stay in New York, Heth [and] Barnum ... moved on to Providence, Boston, Hingham, Lowell, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Newark, Paterson, Albany and many towns in between, stopping back in New York several times. Wherever they went, newspapers reported Heth's

comings and goings avidly, and crowds flocked to hear her tell about how she had witnessed the birth of ‘dear little George’ and been the first to clothe him and even to breast-feed him, to hear her sing hymns she had supposedly taught him, and to ask questions about the upbringing of the father of the nation. Others came to judge for themselves the authenticity of her claims, which were supported by an impressive array of documents such as her birth certificate and bill of sale, as well as by the bodily signs of her old age; and to ponder the causes and implications of her extraordinary longevity. ... Doctors and naturalists were fascinated. Well before she died—in fact, while some were predicting that she would *never* die—her autopsy was a greatly anticipated event” (Reiss 80-1).

¹⁷ As James Dorson has noted, the Judge understands that “If everything is commensurable, then the scales of the world are fixed. There can be no contingency, no ambiguity, no resistance, because everything is already accounted for. In such a world nothing is indeterminate because everything is predetermined” (113).

Chapter One

¹ Twain links government capital to individual enterprise: “But if California can send capitalists down here in seven or eight days time and take them back in nine or ten, she can fill these islands full of Americans and regain her lost foothold. Hawaii is too far away, though, when it takes a man twenty days to come here and twenty-five or thirty to get back again in a sailing vessel” (*Hawaii* 12).

² Twain also frames his reasoning in terms of competing colonialisms: “But the main argument in favor of a line of fast steamers is this: They would soon populate these islands with Americans, and loosen that French and English grip which is gradually closing around them, and which will result in a contest before many years as to which of the two shall seize and hold them. I leave America out of this contest, for her influence and her share in it have fallen gradually away until she is out in the cold now, and does not even play third fiddle to this European element” (*Hawaii* 12).

³ Twain echoes the sentiment in “The French and the Comanches”: “NOW as to cruelty, savagery, and the spirit of massacre. These do not add a grace to the world's partly civilized races, yet at the same time they can hardly be called defects. They grow naturally out of the social system; the system could not be perfect without them” (146).

⁴ And Jay Gould himself, as contemporary reviewers noted, clearly serves as the (no doubt involuntary) model for illustrator Daniel Carter Beard’s Twain-approved illustration of “The Slave Driver” that closes chapter XXXV in the novel’s original edition (David and Sapirstein 23).

⁵ R. Kent Rasmussen also points to the Welsh pirate Henry Morgan as a possible reference (492).

⁶ “Hank's paradoxical epithet suggests that being Indian is more a cultural condition of ‘manners and morals’ ... than a strictly racial category. A ‘white Indian’ not only lacks the distinguishing outward marks of civilization, such as the ability to read and write, but also—more importantly—is devoid of fundamental respect for human life” (Driscoll 10).

⁷ Hank’s “campaign” against the chivalric rests on lists. He attempts to take control of Camelot’s military by “put[ting] together a list of military qualifications that nobody could answer but [his] West Pointers” (320). The “little account” with Sir Sagramor is settled in “the lists where the offense had been given” (112)—“lists” also being an area designated for jousting tournaments.

⁸ For Horkheimer, “The same voice that preaches about the higher things of life, such as art, friendship, or religion, exhorts the hearer to select a given brand of soap. Pamphlets on how to improve one’s speech, how to understand music, how to be saved, are written in the same style as those extolling the advantages of laxatives. Indeed, one expert copywriter may have written any one of them. In the highly developed division of labor, expression has become an instrument used by technicians in the service of industry” (100-01).

⁹ Twain similarly connects violence to civilizing imperatives in “The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation” (an essay from 1867): “I said there was nothing so convincing to an Indian as a general massacre. If [the general] could not approve of the massacre, I said the next surest thing for an Indian was soap and education. Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run; because a half massacred Indian may recover, but if you educate and wash him, it is bound to finish him some time or other. It undermines his constitution; it strikes at the foundations of his being. ‘Sir,’ I said, ‘the time has come when blood-curdling cruelty has become necessary. Inflict soap and a spelling-book on every Indian that ravages the Plains, and let him die!’” (241).

¹⁰ Though born in Missouri, Twain spent many years in Hank’s home town of Hartford.

¹¹ Jorge Luis Borges mentions Crusoe’s enumerations in relation to Mark Twain’s humor: “By definition a reader is a man alone. (Daniel Defoe enumerates Robinson Crusoe’s salvagings, his labors, his regimen, his hoods and goatskin umbrellas, his devout monologues, his lapses of foresight, his accomplishments in boat-building and pottery-making, even his dreams of York; but he says nothing of any pranks or roars of laughter in the face of the sea. Given that he is such a punctilious historian, we can infer that no such things occurred.)” (“A Vindication” 179).

¹² See, for example, Tom Sawyer’s plan for Jim’s escape in *Huckleberry Finn*, which is a satirical and absurdist enumeration/list of the hoops that need to be jumped through in order to free the slave.

¹³ In this, Twain “shows how Southern whites enabled themselves, ironically through increasingly stringent color consciousness, to deny the apparently undeniable presence of increasing racial intermixture” (89).

¹⁴ Gillman assesses the socio-cultural stakes in *Pudd’nhead*: “The ‘stock’ changeling formula in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, then, altered by Twain so that ‘twinned’ black and

white babies are exchanged in their cradles, acts out an interchangeability between the races that resonates with anxieties of the 1890s as well as of the antebellum years” (94).

¹⁵ “Wilson’s conclusion, though strictly ‘the truth,’ is also illogical and arbitrary, almost more confusing than clarifying. Fingerprints appear to be the one measure of unique, noncontingent individual identity, but are in practice relational indices that must be read in and against the context of other sets of prints. Yet in spite of the methodologically essential social context, the fingerprints tell us nothing socially, as opposed to physiologically, significant about either A or B as individuals, much less about the lives of ‘Chambers’ or ‘Tom.’ What they prove, in fact is that one can be interchangeably ‘white and free’ and ‘a negro and slave’” (Gillman, “Sure Identifies” 99).

¹⁶ Eric Weiner notes that “Galton’s motto was ‘Count whenever you can!’ To him anything worth doing was worth doing numerically, and he once confessed that he couldn’t fully grasp a problem unless he was first able to ‘disembarrass it of words’” (4).

¹⁷ Amusingly, one of Twain’s earliest sci-fi efforts, which appeared in an 1865 issue of the *San Francisco Dramatic Chronicle*, was titled “Earthquake Almanac.” Consistent with our discussion of Djuna Barnes (in chapter 2), Ketterer has noted that “The almanac form, which operates in the murky area where fortune-telling, futurology, and science fiction overlap, also provides a historical link between science fiction and the literary hoax” (Ketterer xvi).

¹⁸ According to Henry J. Lindborg, “For the microbes Blitzowski is himself the cosmos; for men, the unpleasant suspicion arises that the cosmos may be another Blitzowski” (Lindborg 655).

¹⁹ As Borges notes, “Twain’s nihilism, his conception of the universe as a ceaseless and senseless mechanism, his constant manufacturing of cynical or blasphemous maxims, his vehement denial of Free Will, his warming to the idea of suicide, his study of ‘the cheapest and most practical way to finish off humanity once and for all,’ his fanatical atheism, his cult of Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat*, are undeniable” (“A Vindication” 178).

²⁰ Along the lines of popularity, circulation, and elision, Twain says, “a successful book is not made of what is *in* it, but of what is left *out* of it” (*Correspondence* 274).

Chapter Two

¹ *Whitaker’s Almanac* is still in print and remains the UK’s premier almanac.

² Historical precedent for identifying the almanac as a battleground for resistance predates the 20th century. Almost contemporaneous with Franklin himself, Benjamin Banneker (a free African American from Maryland) “understood the need for orderliness and accuracy in the making and maintenance of mathematical

calculations” (Bedini 138). Banneker “carefully studied the format of the published almanacs and ... utilized it” (139) in a series of his own devising beginning in 1792. Coincidentally, his mathematical (temporally enumerative) work was first reviewed by “David Rittenhouse, unquestionably the foremost scientist in the country at that time,” who “had recently been appointed president of the American Philosophical Society to succeed Benjamin Franklin who had died in the previous year” (147). Banneker’s attempted resistance operated on two fronts. First, the very fact of Banneker’s authorship shaped a “precedent-shattering initiative” (Cerami 186) to disentangle deeply ingrained contemporary connections between race and intellectual capacity—to prove, in the words of Maryland Senator James McHenry’s introduction to Banneker’s 1792 Almanac, “that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the colour of the skin” (qtd in Cerami 187). Second, “Banneker Repeatedly returned to the injustice of slavery as one of his themes in the almanacs and in his personal writing. He knew that he was putting his life in danger with every one of these essays, and he recorded several more frightening incidents in his journal. But every such scare, which he did not take at all lightly, only gave him proof that his words were having an effect. Now that he had a platform from which to make himself heard, he raised his voice repeatedly” (193-94). In multiple ways, Banneker demonstrated the difficulty of resisting the enumerological. In embracing the almanac’s precision, he acknowledged the legitimizing (and assimilative) capacity of mathematical and enumerative showmanship. McHenry’s introduction, along with promotional efforts by (*heavily* white) abolitionist groups, carried the traditional requirement for black writing to be authenticated and approved by white interlocutors before it could be accepted as genuine. But even within these confines, Banneker identified the extent of the almanac’s influence and the potentiality for inserting suppressed and subversive rhetorics into the enumerological structure.

³ Susan Sniader Lanser suggests that Barnes transmuted the almanac into “a pastiche which defies generic definition” (157).

⁴ “With a characteristic quip that ‘All Women ... are not Women at all,’ Dame Musset suggests that ‘Woman’ cannot be encapsulated by a fixed definition. In the text where ‘Woman’ often serves as a substitution for ‘lesbian’ (which is used only once), Musset’s assertion suggests that lesbians cannot be defined by masculine discourse. Both this passage and the lively exchange between the Doxies illustrate that nothing regarding gender can be taken for granted in a work that refuses to conform to any genre, any norm, and any single interpretation” (Ray 97-98).

⁵ “WHAT they have in their Heads, Hearts, Stomachs, Pockets, Flaps, Tabs and Plackets, have one and all been some and severally commented on, by way of hint or harsh Harangue, praised, blamed, epicked, poemed and pastored, pamphleted, prodded and pushed, made a Spring-board for every sort of Conjecture whatsoever, good, bad, and indifferent” (25).

⁶ “Barnes’s own *Almanack* employs these features in an attempt to satirize and discredit the medical and moral authority of the contemporary sexologist, and such a strategy of course depends on the fact that the astrological almanac had itself become an object of ridicule by this time” (Taylor 717). Further, “Barnes’s appropriation serves as a satirical gloss to the sexological arguments that described lesbianism as a disorder. In what might be described as an idiom of cosmic gynecology, *Ladies*

Almanack suggests a comparison between this discredited scheme and contemporary foundational concepts of biological determinism and systems of classification” (Taylor 722).

⁷ Daniela Caselli considers “*Ladies Almanac* ... a carefully crafted artefact which identifies its genealogy as that of cheap almanacs, ancient chapbooks, broadsheet, and *Images Populaires*, thus rejecting even the marginal stability which the genre of the almanac might have otherwise offered” (469).

⁸ Consistent with the opacity of Barnes’s texts, “Riddles are related to the genre of almanac not only via its astrological preoccupations with forecasting, dispelling, and penetrating various sorts of natural mysteries, but also because the enigma or riddle played a central role in seventeenth century almanacs in general and in *The Ladies Diary* in particular, to which *Ladies Almanack* seems to draw” (Caselli 470).

⁹ As if to ensure the impossibility of reproduction, “[e]ven in the forward of its first commercial publication in 1972, Barnes does little to clarify the message encrypted in *Ladies Almanack*” (Ray 97).

¹⁰ “*Ladies Almanack* is, possibly more than any other text by Barnes, a book which plays with secrecy but resists disclosure” (Caselli 463).

¹¹ Frann Michel adds, “Barnes’s use of the capitalized Woman and repeated, contradictory, parodic definitions of Woman both raise and parody the question of definition” (177).

¹² O’Connor’s rhetoric recalls Adorno’s concept of Parataxis. As J. M. Bernstein describes, “Parataxis involves placing concepts or propositions or larger trains of thought one after the other without indicating relations of coordination or subordination between them. Paratactic orderings are subversive of the force of logical syntax: the lack of a guiding connective forces the reader to establish the linkage between propositions, or larger blocks of text, substantively rather than relying on the familiar connectives to do the work for her” (*Adorno* 356).

¹³ O’Connor inhabits a physicality that bends to both genders. We find him as a “middle-aged ‘medical student’ with shaggy eyebrows, a terrific widow’s peak, over-large dark eyes, and a heavy way of standing that was also apologetic” (17), whose hands are “always carried like a dog who is walking on his hind legs” (36) —no doubt an intended allusion to Samuel Johnson’s notably sexist comment recorded by James Boswell in his *Life of Samuel Johnson*: “a woman’s preaching is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all” (Boswell 458). Elsewhere, the “doctor’s head, with its over-large black eyes, its full gun-metal cheeks and chin, was framed in the golden semi-circle of a wig with long pendent curls that touched his shoulders, and falling back against the pillow, turned up the shadowy interior of their cylinders. He was heavily rouged and his lashes painted” (85). And about his habitat: “There was something appallingly degraded about [his] room, like the rooms in brothels, which give even the most innocent a sensation of having been accomplice; yet this room was also muscular, a cross between a *chamber à coucher* and a boxer’s training camp” (85).

¹⁴ In an early encounter, “Felix thought to himself that undoubtedly the doctor was a ... valuable liar. His fabrications seemed to be the framework of a forgotten but

imposing plan; some condition of life of which he was the sole surviving retainer” (33)

¹⁵ Here Barnes evokes the image of American-ness so brutally exposed in *Blood Meridian*, and the presumed innocence of the children (“See the child ...” [*Blood Meridian* 1]) contrasts sharply with the violent grubbiness of Westward expansion that we might substitute in its place.

¹⁶ Such terminology bears striking resemblance to psychoanalytic language, and, in fact, Caroline Rupperecht observes that Matthew O’Connor often acts “[l]ike Freud, the analyst” (110). Whitley expresses the novel’s interest in balance—between “the clean consciousness and the dirty, but vitally necessary, unconsciousness” (97-98). But beyond the psychological content of the characters (or the American in general), the novel actually performs the need to merge histories, psychological states, or what have you, through the pyrotechnics of its perverse and anti-enumerological verbosity.

¹⁷ *Poor Richard’s Almanack* ceased publication in 1758, the year after Blake’s birth. Blake’s “Marriage of Heaven and Hell” was produced in the early 1790’s.

Chapter Three

¹ Though not specifically queer, this remainder resembles the Lacanian remainder mentioned in Chapter II as the inarticulable antithesis of Symbolic/social cohesion.

² Unlike *Nightwood*’s anti-enumerologist Dr. O’Connor, who is “aware of everything” (129) but has no purchase, the Judge’s pretense to know all enacts purchase through his ledgers.

³ Iain Bernhoft has previously discussed the similarities between the Judge’s performance of “humbug” and the spectacles and deceptions of P.T. Barnum. And while the Judge is indeed showman, magician, and practitioner of imperialist pseudo-sciences like phrenology, the most striking similarity between the two is their shared fixation on the power of the collection to shape a view of the world in line with their own ends.

⁴ According to Horkheimer and Adorno, “In their mastery of nature, the creative God and the ordering mind are alike. Man’s likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the lordly gaze, in the command” (*Dialectic* 6).

⁵ “This is the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning, / This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face, / This the thoughtful merge of myself and the outlet again” (379-81).

⁶ George Hutchinson and David Drews find that he “in person largely, though confusedly and idiosyncratically, internalized typical white racial attitudes of his time, place, and class.”

⁷ As Hutchinson and Drews remark regarding his poetry, “Whitman has commonly been perceived as one of the few white American writers who transcended the racial

attitudes of his time, a great prophet celebrating ethnic and racial diversity and embodying egalitarian ideals.”

⁸ When Marder fails to understand his poetic reference, he knowingly responds, “How much do you suppose you weigh?” (114). While we could ourselves extrapolate this query to ideas of the scales of justice, Everett does the work for us. In a different encounter, a priest—who has amusingly just said, “The price of rubies is above wisdom. . . . I think I got that backwards. Hmmm, I’ll have to look it up” (115)—frames weight in terms of religion and inequality: “‘Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know my integrity.’ Job, chapter thirty-one, verse six. . . . How much do you think you weigh?” (115). Of course, the unsettling biblical story of Job demonstrates the difficulty of being weighed fairly when one lives in God’s country. And because God and America are essentially interchangeable in this novel—one claims land as “God’s country” so that it will be “America’s country”—we know that the white Marder is, in this sense, overweight, tipping scales in his favor effortlessly by virtue of his subjective position.

⁹ In later versions, “seminal.”

¹⁰ Whereas the priest sees “God everywhere” and thus sees “Him nowhere”: “He believed in a boundless God without center or circumference. By this very formlessness he’d sought to make God manageable. This was his colindancia. In his grandness he had ceded all terrain. And in this colindancia God had no say at all” (152).

¹¹ As in Barnes, we find new shades of Tiresian prognostication.

¹² And God is often used interchangeably with “the world” in that they both describe the order, the sentience beyond the human.

¹³ As elusive as: “Far out on the desert to the north dustspouts rose wobbling and augered the earth and some said they’d heard of pilgrims borne aloft like dervishes in those mindless coils to be dropped broken and bleeding upon the desert again and there perhaps to watch the thing that had destroyed them lurch onward like some drunken djinn and resolve itself once more into the elements from which it sprang. Out of that whirlwind no voice spoke and the pilgrim lying in his broken bones may cry out and in his anguish he may rage, but rage at what? And if the dried and blackened shell of him is found among the sands by travelers to come yet who can discover the engine of his ruin?” (*Blood Meridian* 105).

¹⁴ Just as “the world” embodies an unimaginable accounting, so too it provides a figure of the witness that is absolute: “Deep in each man is the knowledge that something knows of his existence. Something knows, and cannot be fled nor hid from. To imagine otherwise is to imagine the unspeakable” (147).

¹⁵ As if paraphrasing Borges’ Chinese *Emporium*.

¹⁶ “For it is the death of the father to which the son is entitled and to which he is heir, more so than his goods. He will not hear of the small mean ways that tempered the man in life. He will not see him struggling in follies of his own devising. No. The world which he inherits bears him false witness” (139-40).

¹⁷ Though, we might add: “Somos dolientes en la oscuridad. Todos nosotros. Me entiendes? Los que pueden ver, los que no pueden” (*The Crossing* 292).

Chapter Four

¹ “Much of Silko’s writing overflows traditional categories of criticism and does not lend itself to familiar interpretive strategies. Expectations of nonnative readers are likely to be overturned, and Silko explores profound themes such as language, identity, and history from a distinctly Native American point of view” (Salyer x).

² “Further, because it does not merely reverse the center and margin, but remaps it entirely by blurring those boundaries, the strength made visible by this new articulation is practical and political, rather than sentimental” (Moore 5).

³ Dorothea Fischer-Hornung aligns debris and narrative possibility: “These almanacs, literally blotted with food and human body fluids, function as a central, unifying trope in the fractured narrative time structure of the novel. *Almanac of the Dead* provides the fragmentary history of the dead who have gone before in the holocaust of the Americas and the living dead, the cannibal homosexuals and vampire capitalists in Silko’s contemporary scenario of abjection” (109).

⁴ Schacht adds, “In the front matter of Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* readers discover a map of the Americas with several boxes that contain keys not for interpreting the map but for understanding the book. ... In this text the European presence in the Americas, though destructive, is not permanent” (53).

⁵ Like the novel, which “sprawls[,] at 763 pages and containing more than fifty characters, [the Almanac] eschews linear structures and often flows into what appear to be tangential narratives” (Schacht 55).

⁶ Arnold Krupat affirms: “For all the polyvocal openness of Silko’s work, there is always the unabashed commitment to Pueblo ways as a reference point. This may be modified, updated, playfully construed: but its authority is always to be reckoned with. Whatever one understands from any speaker is to be understood in reference to that. Here we find dialogic as dialectic[,] ... meaning as the interaction of any voiced value whatever and the centered voice of the Pueblo” (65).

⁷ Tereza M. Szeghi adds that “*Almanac* argues for pan-tribal alliances based on shared histories of colonization and related political concerns; questions of culture, which are more tribally specific, are subordinated and even distorted at times in the interest of making the case for the common cause of indigenous peoples throughout the Western hemisphere” (440).

⁸ Brewster E. Fitz offers, similarly, “the possibility that the written text does not necessarily keep the story from growing and changing, that it does not freeze the words in space and time and rob stories of their meaning ... but that it can be conceived to enhance the growth and the change of the story” (4).

⁹ “The ledger books continued a long tradition by the warrior-artists of the Plains” (Roppolo 541).

¹⁰ In keeping with Silko’s own assessment of the indigenous prophetic tradition: “the old prophecies say, not that the Europeans will disappear. But the purely European way of looking at this place and relationships” (quoted in Szeghi 441).

¹¹ This term derived from the name of Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus, whose fixation on (particularly botanical) cataloguing was pivotal in the implementation of binomial nomenclature and spawned its own culture of domestic and scientific enumeration.

¹² And “he collected other curiosities as well as plants” (76), even sharing Judge Holden’s affinity for the occasional “meteorite. . . . He was quite keen on ‘celestial debris,’ as he called it” (76-77).

¹³ The rubber trade evokes other, extra-American instances of colonial violence: “Portal had a violent history from its beginning as a rubber station where an Indian village once stood. All of those Indians were gone; the rubber station at Portal was infamous for the use of torture and killing to increase the output of the indentured Indians who gathered the wild rubber” (*Gardens* 133).

¹⁴ Appropriately, Chen points out that “The direct effect of this colonial competition and bio-theft is the devastation of indigenous livelihood and natural environment” (173).

¹⁵ As Hattie says, “to Edward, the garden *was* a research laboratory” (73).

¹⁶ Elsewhere, “By describing the Sand Lizards’ subsistence practices in *Gardens*, Silko subtly reaffirms Native authority and constructs an eloquent foil for the extravagant practices of the novel’s Euroamerican gardeners” (Ryan 119).

¹⁷ “Silko intertwines the stories of heretical scholar Hattie Palmer, her botanist husband, Sand Lizards Indigo and Sister Salt to demonstrate the ways in which white European and American men have sought to dominate all other human beings and all of the earth’s landscapes” (Ryan 115).

Epilogue

¹ According to Pasquale, “these companies influence the choices we make ourselves. Recommendation engines at Amazon and YouTube affect an automated familiarity, gently suggesting offerings they think we’ll like. But don’t discount the significance of that ‘perhaps.’ The economic, political, and cultural agendas behind their suggestions are hard to unravel. As middlemen, they specialize in shifting alliances, sometimes advancing the interests of customers, sometimes suppliers: all to orchestrate an online world that maximizes their own profits” (5).

² For Ed Finn, “The story of algorithms is the story of the gap: the space between ideal and implemented computational systems, or between information and meaning.

The stories we tell ourselves to deal with the growing power of computation in our lives sometimes trace these tensions, but often they ignore the gap in favor of a more comfortable, or a more magical world” (10).

³ “Free-flowing” information isn’t free. Asking who has access to that information—economically and geographically—remains as important as asking who controls its flow.

⁴ Finn adds, “We have ... adopted a faith-based relationship with the algorithmic culture machines that navigate us through city streets, recommend movies to us, and provide us with answers to search queries. We imagine these algorithms as elegant, simple, and efficient, but they are sprawling assemblages involving many forms of human labor, material resources, and ideological choices” (7).

⁵ “Things weren’t supposed to turn out this way. Little more than a decade ago, the Internet was promising a new era of transparency, in which open access to information would result in extraordinary liberty. Law professor Glenn Reynolds predicted that ‘an army of Davids’ would overthrow smug, self-satisfied elites. Space physicist David Brin believed that new technology would finally answer the old Roman challenge, ‘Who will guard the guardians?’” (13).

⁶ Finn also addresses those costs: “The commodification of the Enlightenment comes at a price. It turns progress and computational efficiency into a performance, a spectacle that occludes the real decisions and trade-offs behind the mythos of omniscient code” (8).

⁷ In tandem with Adorno’s assessment: “The Enlightenment that once promised freedom as its highest ideal has ended by creating a human world in which freedom is little more than a counterfactual hope” (103).

⁸ While simultaneously “function[ing] as culture machines that we need to learn how to read and understand” (15).

⁹ “Few of us appreciate the extent of ambient surveillance, and fewer still have access either to its results—the all-important profiles that control so many aspects of our lives—or to the ‘facts’ on which they are based” (14).

¹⁰ “Such implementations are never just code: a method for solving a problem inevitably involves all sorts of technical and intellectual inferences, interventions, and filters” (Finn 18). Further, “designed to capitalize on systemic inequalities, they are responding to broader cultural systems that typically lack such awareness. The computational turn means that many algorithms now reconstruct and efface legal, ethical, and perceived reality according to mathematical rules and implicit assumptions that are shielded from public view” (20-21).

¹¹ “The task of the narrator is not an easy one[.] He appears to be required to choose his tale from among the many that are possible. ... He sets forth the categories into which the listener will wish to fit the narrative as he hears it. But he understands that the narrative is itself in fact no category but is rather the category of all categories for there is nothing which falls outside its purview. All is telling. Do not doubt it” (*The Crossing* 155).

¹² As Bernstein suggests regarding Adorno's "culture industry," "If the surface logic ... is significantly different from the time of Adorno's writing, its effects are uncannily the same" (*Culture* 26).

¹³ As Finn points out, echoing Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of enlightenment-as-myth, "The problem we are struggling with today is not that we have turned computation into a cathedral, but that computation has increasingly replaced a cathedral that was already here" (8).

¹⁴ Concomitantly, Adorno encourages movement "away from idealism and toward a broadly construed 'materialism' that will grasp reality as a historically and socially changing landscape whose very richness and temporal movement must forever overwhelm the subject's ambitions of conceptual totalization" (Gordon 128).

¹⁵ Here Pasquale is citing Pope Francis.

¹⁶ Finn adds to this the imperative for an apt critical framework: "We need an experimental humanities, a set of strategies for direct engagement with algorithmic production and scholarship, drawing on theories of improvisation and experimental investigation to argue that a culture of process, of algorithmic production, requires a processual criticism that is both reflexive and playful. This is how we can begin to understand the figure of the algorithm as a redrawing of the space for cultural imagination and become true collaborators with culture machines rather than their worshippers or, worse, their pets" (13).

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